

# Topologies of History

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I.

History, whether as something told or as that which is the object of the telling, is routinely assumed to belong first and foremost to the domain of time and temporality. Yet routine though it may be, the assumption is nevertheless mistaken (at least on the usual and conventional understanding of what is meant by these latter notions<sup>1</sup>). Why and how it is mistaken is something I want to address here. In doing so, I will draw on a rethought conception of the temporal as well as the spatial, but it will not be the rethinking of time or space that will be central in my discussion. Rather than primarily concerning *time*, history, I shall argue, is essentially determined by *place* or *topos*, and it will be place, and the relation between place and history, as well as between place and time, that shall be my main focus – hence my title: *topologies of history*.

I should note that the sense of topology I employ is one that derives from my own previous work on place,<sup>2</sup> and is not the same as that sense of topology deployed by some geographers (for whom it is often set against ‘topography’<sup>3</sup>) or some historians and theorists of history – for instance, Philip J. Ethington, for whom topology appears as a form of cartographic practice and history a ‘mapping of the past’<sup>4</sup> (the latter idea also appearing in John Lewis Gaddis’ work<sup>5</sup>). Moreover, if I use topology in the plural here, it is not because I see radically different forms of topology that belong to history, but because the very nature of the topological brings with it the idea of different elements and aspects that belong to the same landscape or terrain. One might well think of the different topological structures that I aim to explore here as contributing to a single topology or one may view them as offering different, though complementary, topologies – different passes over the same *topos* – each paying attention to a different feature or set of features: to boundedness, to materiality and commonality, to plurality and indeterminacy, and to narrativity.

II.

The basic claim that history arises only in place and is always shaped by the place, or places, in which it arises is to some extent a corollary of a more general claim to the effect that any and every appearance is tied to place. *To be* is to be *placed*, or as we may also say, *being* is *being placed*. Here the ontological primacy accorded to place has the important implication that place and displacement cannot be viewed as correlative notions. Displacement is not a *sui generis* concept, and to be *displaced* is not to be *unplaced*.

Displacement is thus itself a modification – a mode of – being placed. That to be is to be placed is a very old claim – it appears explicitly in the famous section in the fourth book of the *Physics*, in which Aristotle reasserts what he takes as the already familiar claim that ‘all things that exist are somewhere’ (and those things that are non-existent are nowhere)<sup>6</sup> – and the claim is so basic that it is readily ignored or forgotten. Yet the claim is no less basic for being so often overlooked.

As far as history is concerned, even a supposedly ‘global’ history is a history that emerges and is articulated in respect of specific places – it articulates a set of interconnections between or across places rather than somehow prescinding from place altogether (thus, in an artefact of its time, a patriotic imperial map from 1886, *fig. 1*, shows the globalised extent of the British Empire together with images that evoke the many different places that are drawn together within it). Similarly, those forms of history that appear to focus on political or economic events and processes are always underlain by the places – including the meeting rooms, trading floors, offices, debating chambers, halls, and corridors – in which those events and processes play out, and by the places that hold the memory of them. The belonging of history to place is indeed what constitutes history as history – every history is ‘of a place’ – and this belonging is evident in and through the way history addresses and articulates elements and structures that are evident in the place to which that history belongs. It is this belonging to place that distinguishes history from fiction – even though fiction may be inspired by or derive its materials from some place; even though there is always some place out of which fiction arises; and even though fiction may celebrate, evoke, or give voice to place; still fiction does not belong to place in the same way history so belongs.

That history and place are tied together is not, of course, a new idea. Contemporary theorists such as Ethington aside, it is already present in the work, for instance, of Lucien Febvre, whose 1922 work, *La Terre et l'évolution humaine*<sup>7</sup> stands so much under the influence of the regionalist thinking of Paul Vidal de la Blanche, and whose work, together with that of Marc Bloch, gave rise to the *Annales* School, and so also to the geographically-inflected history of Fernand Braudel. Yet what it might mean to talk of history and place belonging together depends very much on what *place* itself is taken to mean. This is an even more important issue given the supposed ‘spatial turn’ in contemporary theory. It might well be supposed that the idea that place and history are tied together is itself the consequence of the turn towards a spatialised mode of thinking. So far as French thought is concerned, there is some truth to this supposition, but mainly because French lacks the same distinction between space and place that occurs in English.

The French *espace* is already somewhat ambiguous between space and place, which is why Febvre’s work cannot be rendered into English in a way that takes it straightforwardly to prioritise the *spatial* and why Bachelard’s topological poetics appears in French as *La poétique de l'espace* (its English translation as ‘poetics of space’, while not inaccurate, can also mislead). Whereas French thinking about both space and place has tended to be encompassed by the term *l'espace*, as well as terms such as *lieu*, *territoire*, *pays*, and so the term has been genuinely equivocal in the concepts to which it refers English presents a rather different state of affairs. To begin with, English, like German, but unlike French, does

indeed possess distinct terms that allow for a clearer differentiation between space and place (or in German, *Raum* and *Ort/Ortschaft*), and so talk of a spatial turn is not, just in virtue of being a turn to space, also a turn to place. In fact, within contemporary spatialised thinking in English, place is almost invariably treated either as a problematic term to be discarded in preference for the spatial or else as a concept that is readily subsumable under the spatial – place is thus viewed as a qualified form of space, as ‘humanised’ space, ‘meaningful’ space, or even ‘subjective’ space.

What grounds any genuine topology of history, one that does not reduce, for instance, to a mere spatialization (which is what occurs when place is reduced to simple location or position), has to be a properly *sui generis* concept of place. Consequently, a crucial step in the elaboration of such a topology is the clarification of that grounding concept, and a good deal of what I have to say here, at least to begin with, will focus on such clarification.

III.

From the outset it is important to be clear that that despite the common tendency to think otherwise, and notwithstanding the fact that place and space are related notions, place is indeed neither simply reducible to nor derivable from space. Consequently, and despite the fact that this is one of the senses that is attached to the concept, place can indeed not be identified with mere ‘spatial location’. Instead, what lies at the heart of the concept of place is the notion of *bound*, and, with it, *surface*.

The linking of bound with surface is significant, since it indicates the asymmetrical character of bound – especially evident in the understanding of bound as horizon. It is this asymmetrical character that underlies the difference between, for instance, inner and outer (an asymmetry dramatically presented in Jacobus Vrel’s 1650 painting, *Woman at a Window, Waving at a Girl* – *fig.2*), and that also marks off bound proper from any mere demarcation (in which there is no essential difference between what lies on each side of the demarcating line, and which is therefore both spatial and arbitrary). In Aristotle, this is captured in the character of place or *topos* as the innermost boundary of that which surrounds – the place is the surface of what bounds as it faces inward to what is bounded (in much the same way as the horizon only appears from within the field that it bounds) (see *fig 3*).

Inasmuch as it bounds, so place gives ‘room’ – an aspect of place that is evident in the way another Greek term that is also linked to place, *chora* (the term is connected to both the dance and the place for dancing, echoed in the English ‘chorus’ and ‘choreography’), is taken by Plato to refer to the receptacle or matrix (the ‘womb’) out of which things come into being or presence. The way the character of place as bounding is tied to its character as open, as giving room (in much the way that the enclosed character of a civic square gives room for the events and activities that take place within it – see *fig. 4*) reflects the way space *as openness* can be said to arise *out of* place. Indeed, the modern idea of space as isotropic extension (extension that has the same properties in all directions) can be understood as an extrapolation from the idea of the openness that is given within bounds – it is that same openness but

with its bounds removed. Whether one can genuinely conceive openness in this latter fashion – openness as released from all bounds – other than in a purely formal or abstract manner, is an important question. If one focuses just on the idea of openness as such, then it seems easy to think of such openness as always capable of further extension, and in this way to extend the idea of an openness within bounds to an openness that exists outside of any such bounds. One might thus be led to say that there is nothing within the concept of openness that implies its boundedness, but that such boundedness only becomes evident once one recognises the dependence of openness on that which opens, and so on that which bounds. Yet although it may well be said that openness seems not to carry within it any sense of bound, and so to allow an expansion into an openness that is without bounds, still this is indeed to think of openness in a way that obscures the real character of openness – that forgets its real origin in the placed and the bounded.

IV.

Since it is in the placed and the bounded, and only thus, that *any* being, any presence, any appearance is possible, then so it is only in the placed and the bounded that history and the historical appears also. This is true of history as it is the product of historians and of history as that which is studied by historians. In hermeneutic terms, this point underlies the idea that historical phenomena are always presented from within some contextual frame or situation, but this way of putting things can all too easily be construed as a point about the purely *interpretative* presentation of historical phenomena, and the placed and bounded character of historical appearance applies even prior to any explicit act of interpretation. Indeed, hermeneutics itself, which should not be construed as identical with any theory merely of interpretation as usually conceived, concerns the placed character of appearing as such, which means that hermeneutics is ontological (or better, topological) before it is ‘epistemological’ (and this reflects the close connection between hermeneutics in its Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian incarnations, and phenomenology). Hence the claim that all history belongs first and foremost to a place – both as it is the history of that place and as it is written from out of the place of the historian herself. This means that there can be no such thing as a complete or genuinely universal history. Every history is ‘parochial’. Such parochialism is not a deficiency, however, but rather reflects the enabling condition of history, namely, its being placed, and so also its being bounded.

Kant makes a distinction, though not always consistently deployed, between bounds and limits – between *Grenze* and *Schranke*.<sup>8</sup> Of knowledge, he claims that it admits of limits, but not of bounds. What he means is that although knowledge recognises that which lies outside it (and which may even be said to enable its possibility), knowledge itself can never achieve any inner completion – it has no limit that it recognises in its own terms. What is at issue in Kant is the same point that is at issue in the idea that boundedness enables openness, which is to say that there is a form of limit that enables the surpassing of limit. Put differently, one might say that even the unlimited begins its appearing from somewhere, but one should add that this is what is evident, experientially and phenomenologically, in the character of any

and every place as always having within it an inexhaustible potential for appearance. There is no 'inner limit' to a place.

In thus being bound to place, and, therefore being also bounded, history is not somehow diminished or unduly restricted. The lack of 'inner limit' means that through its boundedness history is opened to an ineradicable plurality and indeterminacy. No place has only one history that belongs to it, even though not every history that may be told of a place properly belongs to that place. Places never appear alone and apart – every place is embedded within and with respect to other places, and every place has embedded other places within it (rather like the images in Paolini's picture gallery – see *fig.5*). Histories, like places, only ever appear in the plural – for there to be one history is also for there to be many histories (which does not licence the claim that anything that purports to be a history is so).

History to one side, however, it is to some extent the lack of inner limit that sustains the notion of an unbounded openness expressed in the idea of space as a mode of unlimited extension (or at least of a mode of extension that has no limit that belongs essentially to it). Yet this latter sense of space is a purely formal or abstract concept rather than a concrete or material one – it involves the transformation of openness in its character as always allowing a further opening within it into the levelled-out openness of pure extension. The more space is identified with such a notion of extension (it is important to note that such an identification represent just one way of understanding space, and not the only such way), then the more space is construed as purely formal, and in being so construed, is also understood as essentially quantitative in character – as measurable and calculable. It is this formalised idea of space, particularly as articulated through geometrical and mathematical conceptions, that has largely come to dominate modern thinking – for which it may even be said to provide the foundation – and that has also come to over-ride any *sui generis* notion of place (which remains qualitative rather than quantitative). As a result, place tends to be viewed under the sway of formalised notion of space, and so place is understood as a point in space – a simple location – or as an arbitrary region enclosed by a set of such points.

It is significant that in the loss of the distinction between place and space, it is not space that tends to disappear (even though it does take on a narrower and more abstracted form), but place. Yet as place is tied to the notion of bound, so in the loss of the distinction between place and space – in the submersion, in other words, of place into space (or into a mode of space, namely space as extension) – we also lose any sense of the proper bound of space whether as that applies to the concept or to space and spatiality as such. Space becomes boundless as it also becomes placeless. It is precisely the almost complete disappearance of any genuine notion of place in the contemporary world – and the fact that any sense of its continuation is rendered uncertain and problematic – that signals the loss of any genuine sense of bound, whether in relation to the thinking of space or indeed in relation to thinking as such. This loss of bound, and its recovery, is central to what concerns me here – it is central to the inquiry into place, but it is also at stake in any and every inquiry into the relation between concepts, no matter what they may be, in any and every inquiry into relation, no matter the elements related. To inquire into the bounds

of concepts is to inquire into what distinguishes them, and what connects them. In the case of place, as well as time and space, the loss of the bounds that belong to these concepts is also a loss of any sense of their proper distinction and connection – a loss that comes along with the increasing dominance of space *as extension* over both place but also over time.

V.

Although it is often said that time, as well as history, dominates the thinking of modernity, the reality is that spatialization is the dominant mode by which modernity (which includes modern technology and contemporary technologized capital) reproduces and represents itself. Modernity, one might say, is essentially spatialising, and it is a spatialization that operates apart from any recognition of the prior embeddedness of space in place (this mode of spatialisation is what underlies both the economic and digital nature of the contemporary world). It is thus a form of *unbounded* spatialization (and this is the heart of the critique of modernity to be found in Heidegger as well as Camus, and, though the connection to space is not always explicit, in a range of other thinkers). The prioritisation of space is present, however, even in many of those modern forms of thought that appear to prioritise time simply because the mode of time that is so prioritised is the time of succession or duration – both of which, as Heidegger points out (and Bergson only half sees) are *spatialised* modes of time.

The idea that time and history are the dominant forms by which modernism articulates itself is thus, for the most part, a myth. But the dominance of spatialised models of time is not peculiar to modernity alone, even though such spatialised thinking does reflect a characteristic feature of modernity. Part of what is at work here is also something Kant notes, namely, the character of *representation*, including the representation of time, as *always* spatialised. Space is the form of representation, and so it is also the form by which time is represented also (although the character of what space is as it is relevant here should not be assumed as already determined). This has the consequence that even were one to suppose that time were the primary concern of history, that in which it has its origin, still the form of history, at least of history as given in the work of the historian, would necessarily be a spatialised form just inasmuch as history is itself representational in character – just inasmuch as it does indeed aim to speak *about* history and the historical. That ‘aboutness’ is at the heart of the representational, and that ‘aboutness’ already presupposes a dimensionality within which it operates (‘intentionality’ is in this respect already a spatialised and topological notion – as one might expect given that it is, fundamentally, a form of directedness towards).

Yet although history cannot escape the spatialised mode of time that is at work in representation, and this spatialised mode also reflects what is the commonplace mode by which time is understood, this does not mean that time is only to be understood as reducible to spatiality. If the openness within bounds is what underlies the idea of space, it is the dynamic character of this openness, its *opening*, that underlies the idea of time, and that also provides the key to a genuine understanding of time – one that does not

reduce it to space. On such an understanding, time is place understood in its dynamic or (to draw on an idea at the centre of Claude Romano's thinking of the event<sup>9</sup>) *adventual* character, and so in its character as an opening, a presencing, a happening – and not a happening *in* time (which would again convert time to a mode of space), but a happening that *is* time. It is this 'happening' that itself allows the opening to time understood spatially – that is, to time as it might appear as a stretched-out series of objectified events – and so also to the idea of time as time as it might be given in the idea of a past that lies behind us or a future that lies ahead.<sup>10</sup>

Significantly the most important attempts to rethink time within modernity, notably Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*<sup>11</sup> and Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*,<sup>12</sup> both attempt to do so by means of place. It is thus that Proust's work, which aims to recover time through a retrieval of memory is so obsessed with place and the inter-relation of place and person – something made especially clear in George Poulet's *L'espace proustienne*.<sup>13</sup> Heidegger's 'kairotic' conception of time, which does indeed understand time as adventual – or, in Heidegger's terms, as *ekstatic* and *originary* – is such that Heidegger could himself say, though only much later in 1942, that whilst in *Sein and Zeit*, time, *chronos*, is the "fore-word" for being, *chronos* must itself be understood as a mode of *topos*.<sup>14</sup> Here *topos* appears in its in own character as adventual, and so as presencing, in a way that brings it into direct connection with the Heideggerian ideas of the *Ereignis* or Event, the *Lichtung* or Clearing, and the *Geviert* or Fourfold.<sup>15</sup> In denying that history is primarily about time, what I am thus denying is that history has anything to do with time *as it is ordinarily understood* – time as succession or duration, time as spatialised, time as something *apart from* place.

## VI.

In as much as history is concerned with time, and there is indeed a sense in which it is so, then it is with time *as an aspect of place*. And this remains true even though the articulation of place in its temporality typically takes the form of narration, and so inevitably results in a form of spatialization of the temporal – yet a spatialization that properly is not separable from place; a spatialization that can indeed remain within the frame of the topological. In belonging to place, even the spatialization of time that occurs through narration remains determined by the bounds within which it arises. The spatialised time of narration is thus still a 'placed' time. It is a time whose appearance as succession arises only out of the time that belongs to place – out of the opening of place – as is evident through the way in which such narratives are indeed narratives *of the place*.

The very structure of place is already a narrative or proto-narrative structure.<sup>16</sup> This may seem a bold claim given the frequency with which it has been asserted, especially within the theory of history over recent times, that narrative is always something imposed rather than found. Narrative has all too often been viewed as subjective 'construction', and in the case of history, as a function of its 'literary' character. This has been the claim, not only of Hayden White and Louis Mink,<sup>17</sup> but of many others (and significantly, Ed Casey once made the same claim in relation to place itself, asserting that narrative is subjective in a way

that place is not).<sup>18</sup> Similarly Frank Ankersmitt's attempt to regain a sense of connection to immediate historical experience has been accompanied by a desire to escape narrativity, and with it the 'prison-house', as he calls it following Nietzsche, of language.<sup>19</sup> The antagonism towards the linguistic that is evident in Ankersmitt's recent work is part of a more widespread tendency, one that underlies the critique of narrativity, to view *language*, to which narrative is seen as tied, as itself subjective or, at least, as always standing between us and the world, including the world to which the historian aims to gain access.

As far as language is concerned, it is important to note, however, that language belongs, not to the subject alone, but rather to the 'between' of subject *and* world. As such, one might say that subjectivity, like objectivity too, is a *function of* language rather than the reverse. This should be a familiar enough point to any serious reader of the hermeneutic tradition, and especially of Heidegger and Gadamer.<sup>20</sup> But it is also a point evident in the work of thinkers in the analytic tradition such as Davidson (or even Brandom and McDowell).<sup>21</sup> The problem with viewing language as some sort of subjective imposition onto the world is that, as Davidson himself points out, there is no way of characterising either the world or language independently of one another such that one could give genuine content to the idea of a wholesale separation of language from world.<sup>22</sup> One can certainly distinguish words from the things they designate or purport to designate, and sentences from what those sentences aim to speak about, but such capacity to distinguish arises only within language, and with respect to parts of language, rather than properly pertaining to language as a whole. Language, to put the matter hermeneutically, is that which opens up the world, rather than closing it off – which is to reinforce the point of its belonging to the 'between' (which is the kernel of the argument, perhaps first and most notably advanced by Wittgenstein, against scepticism<sup>23</sup>).

The character of language as enabling the opening of the world, and as belonging to the 'between' of self and world, is also to draw attention to the intimate relation of language to place. Both 'opening' and 'between' are essentially topological notions, as are so many of the ideas that come to the fore in the attempt to speak of the fundamental structures of our being in the world, or, indeed in the very attempt to speak of being or presence. Place and language thus begin together, and the emergence of the two, which is also the emergence of the world, is an emergence that gives rise to the complex relationality of place that is itself what is given more specific articulation in (and as) narrative.<sup>24</sup>

The forms of narrative are many and are not restricted to those highly literary forms of narrative that have often taken the attention of historians. And this means too that the forms of historical narrative are much greater than is often assumed. Historical narrative is not an additional narrative form that stands apart from other narratives, but rather it is a form of narrative that itself depends upon and encompasses other, often more basic, forms. The simplest and most obvious narratives are narratives of movement, of passage from one place to another, whether long or short, whether in relation to the near or the far. Narrative also arises in relation to action – itself a form of movement. There the most basic narrative is that which makes an action intelligible as action by locating that action within a frame in which the action,

and the movement in which it is embodied, can be discerned as having a particular direction and trajectory described in terms of the orientation of the agent in the world (*fig 6*). The connection to movement is important: narrative is essentially just the making explicit of a making way, of a passage or progress, that occurs within or between. The way action is tied to narrative is particularly well-expressed in the idea, originating with Elizabeth Anscombe and developed by Donald Davidson, of action ‘under a description’.<sup>25</sup> Thus an event is revealed as an action through the way that event falls under an appropriate description. What is at work in this idea of ‘description’ is a minimal form of narration, since the description operates by locating the event at issue in relation to a larger orienting frame. Such modes of narration are not impositions onto the event being described, but rather draw attention to features of that event as such.

The way a narrative connects to an event in this way cannot be at the level merely of some abstract or merely general characterisation. If a narrative is indeed ‘of’ the place, then it must be a narrative that belongs to the materiality of that place, is evident in it, and can be drawn from it – almost akin to Thomas’ demand to feel Christ’s wounds if he is to be persuaded of the risen Christ’s presence before him (*fig 7*). To put the point evidentially and epistemologically, that which grounds narration is the same as that which grounds any and every claim of the historian – it must, in Collingwood’s words, “be something here and now perceptible to [the historian]: this written page, this spoken utterance, this building, this fingerprint”.<sup>26</sup> Collingwood’s point should not be construed, at least not as applied here, simply as a point about the inevitable grounding of history – as knowledge *of the past – in the present*, but rather concerns the way past *and* present, *as well as* future, are given through and emerge out of place, which is also to say, out of the complex materiality of place. This is not to say that narrative – of history - can directly be read off a place on any first or superficial encounter. But then, one cannot do that even with a page of written text or a set of spoken words – even the text that we read or interpret, seemingly ‘without thinking’, is a text whose reading and interpretation has already been prepared for by prior familiarity and learning. The same is true of all reading, including the reading of a place, a thing, a story. For a narrative to belong to a place or a thing is for it to be readable from that place or thing, and such reading must arise out of the materiality of what is given. That means that, contrary to the oft-repeated claim, places and things have beginnings and endings no less than they have other features and properties – as a sword can have an edge, as an oak can arise from an acorn, as a human being can die. Even those generic forms into which more literary narratives may be categorised and whose shape they may follow are not, if they have any genuine connection with those places and things whose narratives they are, cannot be merely impositions onto those places and things, but must indeed connect with their material presence.

Indeed, both memory and emotional content should be understood as themselves embedded, not in some abstracted subjectivity, but as also given in the materiality of place and thing, and in the engaged inter-relation of agents in the world. This is one reason why work in the history of the emotions so often moves towards the direct thematization of place and materiality – a point made very evident in works such

as Andy Wood's *The Memory of the People*,<sup>27</sup> and which is also instantiated, though rather differently, in Pierre Nora's earlier and encyclopedia *Lieux de mémoire*<sup>28</sup> (to cite but two notable examples). There can be no inquiry into emotion, just as there can be no inquiry into memory either, that does not attend to the intimate belonging of emotion and memory to place, to locale, and the material forms of life and activity, and this reflects what is often referred to as the 'extended' character of cognition and experience as this has developed within empirical cognitive science. It is that extendedness, which is to say the materiality of the cognitive and experiential, that itself makes history possible, just as it also makes possible forms of collective memory and experience, and underlies, though in different ways, personal memory, experience and agency also.<sup>29</sup> Once again, however, this emphasis on materiality does not itself entail, even though it is often taken in this way, a mode of access to the world, including to the past, that somehow stands outside of, even prior to, the linguistic and the discursive. To assume that it does is not only to misunderstands the non-subjective character of language, but also to misunderstand, or perhaps simply to forget, the way language and discursivity are themselves given materially (*fig 8*) – in script, sign, shape, sound, and voice – a point that is a consequence, or, one might say, is itself bound up with, the intimate belonging together of language and place to which I have alluded already.

## VII.

I noted earlier that the fundamental ontological character of place means that displacement is always secondary to being-placed. Displacement is a modification or mode of being placed, and indeed, inasmuch as place is itself dynamic or adventual in character – as it is an opening as well as openness – so every instance of being-placed will also have something of the character of a displacement also. Place, and being-placed, is not a static, but a mobile condition – boundedness itself only becomes evident in and through movement, and boundedness is above all effective in movement. This has several important consequences that are especially significant for the understanding of history.

Although history cannot be taken as determined solely by time or the temporal as usually understood, historical inquiry is fundamentally oriented toward and determined by place *in its adventuality*. What this means is that history is also oriented towards precisely the way place is characterised by its own mobility, its own constantly mobile and so displacing tendency. It is this that is evident, to allude to Ankersmitt's emphasis on historical experience, to the way historical inquiry, but memory too, is characterised in terms of the encounter with *loss*, and, I would add, with facticity (the two being necessarily given together). It is this experience that lies at the heart of the adventual which is precisely a mode of beginning out of what is already given, even as it opens to the new, but as an opening towards is also an opening away from, and so necessarily brings with a sense of loss of what has gone before, even though it may also be accompanied, at least potentially, by hope for what might now emerge (see *fig 9*). What this draws attention to is indeed the character of being-placed, in its adventuality, as always a form of *displacement into* the world. Our contemporary situation, and with it, the situation of

much of the last hundred or more years, in which it is often said that displacement is the primary phenomenon, is thus no different in this regard than any other historical situation. The role of displacement in being-placed, and so of loss, and the possibility of hope, is an essential and inevitable one. If there is a difference, it is not that displacement has itself displaced being-placed (clearly an impossibility), but rather that being-placed has itself become something effaced, forgotten, or sometimes simply denied. The world is thus increasingly ordered as if it were merely an undifferentiated space, even though that very ordering itself operates only in and through place.

VIII.

Near the start of this talk, I made brief reference to the work of Philip Ethington and John Lewis Gaddis. Ethington explicitly talks of boundary as a key notion, as well as employing the idea of 'topology', and both draw upon notions of space, place, landscape and mapping in their treatments of historical inquiry. The idea of history as a kind of mapping enterprise has a certain usefulness, but it is important to note that mapping is not what is at issue in the topologies of history that I have begun to sketch here. One of the reasons for this is simple: not only does the map represent a particular form of spatialization, but it also fails to address the adventual character of place that is itself so fundamental. Moreover, it also offers little or no insight into the way history is indeed tied to place, not only in its adventuality and narrativity, but also its relationality and materiality. In connecting history with the enterprise of cartography, both Ethington and Gaddis seem to have in mind standard forms of 2-dimensional planar mapping of a landscape or terrain. But not all maps or charts are like this. Portolan charts (*fig 10*) show salient landmarks within sets of radiating compass points and lines of distance for purposes of maritime navigation. Such charts are not directed at mapping a landscape but are highly specific practical instruments for the management and direction of seaborne movement. Perhaps the maps that are closest to historical accounts are those that record routeways or lines of journey – a notable example being those in John Ogilvy's 1675 *Britannia Atlas* (*fig 11*). Here the map follows a line through a landscape and so through a succession of towns, villages and other landmarks. The map shows a journey, and as such, it might be an attempt at a visual narrative in a way that most other forms of maps are not (even though they can be used in the service of narrative).

Whatever view we take on this matter, however, Ethington's and Gaddis' use of the idea of history as a mapping raises a question that may be thought to have lain in the background of much of my discussion: to what extent is talk of topology and place in relation to metaphorical? Ethington and Gaddis both talk of metaphor in the context of their own treatments of these matters, and there is a widespread tendency to treat talk of place, as well as space, in many different contexts (and such talk is ubiquitous even when place and space are not directly thematized) as indeed metaphorical. Certainly, in my own discussion, neither place nor space, nor any related terms, are intended metaphorically, and to suppose that they are so intended would be to undermine any sense that might attach to the claims being

advanced. Metaphor is commonly taken to involve a carrying-across (*metaphora* from *metapherein*) of a term from one domain to another, but this way of understanding metaphor always depends on a contrast between the literal and the metaphorical, so that when used metaphorically a term no longer means what it usually means – though the nature of such metaphorical meaning is difficult to clarify. Once one recognises the ontological primacy of place, one must think the very concept of place, and can no longer assume access to some ready notion of what place might be as metaphorical or even as literal. What actually emerges here is a questionability that attaches to the very contrast between the metaphorical and the literal and that becomes strikingly evident in relation to place partly because of the fundamental and ubiquitous nature of the concept. If the thinking of place at work here is construed in any way as ‘metaphorical’, then it is not in the sense of a movement away from the ‘literal’ or the ‘real’, but rather a turn towards the capacity of the image itself to open up a place in which, in this inquiry, place itself – and history too - stands more clearly revealed.

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<sup>1</sup> As will be evident below, much of my argument here can be seen as a critique of the *spatialized* understanding of time and temporality that I take to be part of the commonplace understanding of those notions. The alternative understanding that I propose is one based in what might summarily be referred to as a *topological* understanding of time (as well as of space).

<sup>2</sup> See eg. my *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012), and also *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006). In other works, I have talked of ‘topography’ rather than ‘topology’, and in *Place and Experience* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. edn, 2018) more specifically of a *philosophical* topography. For the most part, I have employed the terms more or less interchangeably, though with some slight divergence depending on context (I have sometimes glossed ‘topology’ in terms of the ‘saying’ of place – from *logos/legein* – and ‘topography’ as the ‘writing’ of place – from *graphein*). To some extent, I have tended to use ‘topology’ as the more general term.

<sup>3</sup> See eg. Mitch Rose and John Wyie, ‘Animating Landscape’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24 (2006): 475-479 [<https://doi.org/10.1068/d2404ed>]. Here topology is presented as a reduced mode of understanding (particularly in relation to landscape) compared to the richer mode of the topographical. There are other disciplinary-specific senses of topology – most notably in mathematics where it refers to the investigation of the spatial properties of objects under certain transformations or deformations.

<sup>4</sup> See Etherington, ‘Placing the past: “Groundwork” for a spatial theory of history’, *Rethinking History*, 11 (2007), 465-493. Etherington locates his own ‘topological’ approach in explicit relation to the work of Georg Simmel drawing attention to Simmel’s focus on the notion of boundary. The topology that emerges as central to Heidegger’s thinking (see my *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World*, Cambridge, Mas.: MIT Press, 2006) also takes boundary as a key notion, and there is good reason to suppose that Simmel’s thinking on this topic may well have been a direct influence. Simmel and Heidegger are placed in close juxtaposition in my ‘The Interiority of Landscape’, in P. Sparke, G. Lee, P. Brown, M. Taylor and P. Lara-Betancourt (eds.) *Flow: Interior, Landscape and Architecture in the Era of Liquid Modernity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp.149-158.

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<sup>5</sup> *The Landscape of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *Physics* IV, 208a30, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1:354

<sup>7</sup> Lucien Febvre, *La Terre et l'Évolution Humaine: Introduction Géographique à l'Histoire* (Paris: La Renaissance du Livre, 1922); in English as *A geographical introduction to history*, trans. E. G. Mountford and J. H. Paxton (London: K. Paul Trench, Trubner & Co, 1925).

<sup>8</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science*, trans. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.103-104: "Boundaries [*Grenzen*] (in extended things) always presuppose a space that is found outside a certain fixed location, and that encloses that location; limits [*Schranken*] require nothing of the kind, but are mere negations that affect a magnitude insofar as it does not possess absolute completeness. Our reason, however, sees around itself as it were a space for the cognition of things in themselves, although it can never have determinate concepts of those things and is limited to appearances alone... In mathematics and natural science human reason recognizes limits [*Schranken*] but not boundaries [*Grenzen*]; that is, it indeed recognizes that something lies beyond it to which it can never reach, but not that it would itself at any point ever complete its inner progression".

<sup>9</sup> See Claude Romano, *Event and world*, trans. Shane Mackinlay (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> As this happening is a presencing, then it is a presencing that encompasses absence as well as presence (and this can be said to follow from necessarily the bounded character of presencing). The experience of time is thus an experience of emergence but also of withdrawal, and the experience of such withdrawal can take the form of just that experience of absence and loss that is at work in the experience of the past. The key point here, however, is that this experience of the past first occurs, not in the experience of the past as a spatialised 'before', but rather in the very emergence/withdrawal, presencing/absencing – the adventuality – that is the happening that is time.

<sup>11</sup> Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1913), in various English translations, but notably *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, rev. D.J. Enright (New York: Modern Library, 1992), and *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. Lydia Davis, Mark Treharne, James Grieve, John Sturrock, Carol Clark, Peter Collier and Ian Patterson (London: Allen Lane, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Max Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1927), in English as *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) and *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh and Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> See also *Place and Experience*, esp. pp.162-173.

<sup>14</sup> "In *Being and Time*, time is experienced and named as fore-word for the word 'of' Being ... 'Time' understood in the Greek manner, *χρόνος* [*chronos*], corresponds in essence to *τόπος* [*topos*], which we erroneously translate as 'space.' *Τόπος* is place [*Ort*], and specifically that place to which something appertains, e.g., fire and flame and air up, water and earth below" – Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp.140-141.

<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, in Hannah Arendt's work, this topological and adventual conception of time appears in the idea the beginning and of natality (see Arendt, *The human condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p.9 and p.247) – which, although it might appear a counter to Heidegger, is actually a reappropriation of ideas already present in the work of the latter – what is *ekstatic* or *originary* temporality (as it appears in *Sein und Zeit*) but just such an idea of new and originary beginning, even of an implicit natality?

<sup>16</sup> See *Place and Experience*, pp.87-89 and pp.185-187.

<sup>17</sup> See Mink, 'History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension', *New Literary History* 1 (1970), pp.541-558, and Hayden White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980), pp.5-27. See also the discussion in David Carr's 'Narrative and the Real World: An Argument for Continuity', *History and Theory* 25 (1986), pp.117-131.

<sup>18</sup> Casey's comment was in direct relation to my own treatment of narrative in relation to place - see Casey, 'J. E. Malpas' *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge University Press, 1999): 'Converging and diverging in/on place', *Philosophy & Geography*, 4 (2001), pp.225-230, see esp. pp.229-230; see also my response: 'Comparing Topographies: Across Paths/Around Place: A Reply to Casey', *Philosophy & Geography* 4 (2001), pp.231-238.

<sup>19</sup> Frank Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), esp. chapt. 2 (pp.69-108). It might be said that Ankersmit is well-aware of the position to which I allude here (indeed, much of his argument focuses on the very thinkers to whom I refer above), and that what concerns him is precisely the tendency for the loss of any sense of the radical *apartness* of experience from language. Yet it is the very desire for such a radical apartness – for a sense of experience that somehow gets us beyond and behind language (as if this were even a possibility, let alone a requirement) – that is at the heart of the problem. Ankersmit's reaction

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here is not unique – it is paralleled outside of the theory of history by writers, of whom Christopher Norris is one notable example, who have seen thinkers such as Gadamer and Heidegger, Davidson and also Rorty (the list of names is usually very similar) as having abandoned experience or the world for some sort of linguistic relativism or anti-realism (in Norris) or ‘transcendentalism’ (in Ankersmit). See my exchange with Norris on this issue: Malpas, ‘Holism, realism and truth: how to be an anti-relativist and not give up on Heidegger (or Davidson) – a debate with Christopher Norris’, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 12 (2004), pp.339-56; and Norris, ‘Reply to Jeff Malpas: on truth, realism, changing one’s mind about Davidson (not Heidegger), and related topics’, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 12 (2004), pp. 357-374. Interestingly, Norris’s position, like Ankersmit’s, is also something of a reversal of a position he held previously.

<sup>20</sup> As Heidegger writes: “Language holds open the realm in which man, upon the earth and beneath the sky, inhabits the house of the world” (Heidegger, ‘Hebel—Friend of the House,’ trans. Bruce V. Foltz and Michael Heim, in *Contemporary German Philosophy* 3 [1983], p.101) and, from Gadamer: “This, then, is what we recognise in the essence of language: a distance by means of which, in the breath of our voice, fleeting as it is, we can embody everything that occurs to us, making it audible and communicable to others. Obviously it is this kind of distance with respect to ourselves that opens us up to the other...”. See also my discussion in “‘The House of Being’: Poetry, Language, Place”, in Günter Figal et al (eds), *Heidegger’s Later Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, in press, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> The point is perhaps less explicit in Davidson, but it is present nonetheless. It is at the heart of Davidson’s account of the role of language within the structure of triangulation: “Our sense of objectivity is the consequence of [a] sort of triangulation, one that requires two creatures. Each interacts with an object, but what gives each the concept of the way things are objectively is the base line formed between the creatures by language. The fact that they share a concept of truth alone makes sense of the claim that they have beliefs, that they are able to assign objects a place in the public world” (‘Rational Animals’, *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001, p.105).

<sup>22</sup> See Davidson, ‘On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme’, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 2001), pp.183-198; see also ‘The Myth of the Subjective’, *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), pp.39-52.

<sup>23</sup> In Davidson’s case, it is language that provides the basis for knowledge of self, other, and world – see ‘Three Varieties of Knowledge’, *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*, pp.205-220. Meaning itself appears in the same relatedness of subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and objectivity that belongs to language.

<sup>24</sup> See *Place and Experience*, pp.xx-xx.

<sup>25</sup> See G.E.M. Anscombe, *Intention* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), pp.11-12 (also Anscombe, ‘Under a Description’, *Noûs* 13 [1979], pp. 219-233); also Davidson, ‘Agency’, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 2001), pp.46-47.

<sup>26</sup> R. G. Collingwood. ‘The Historical Imagination’, in *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), p.247.

<sup>27</sup> *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

<sup>28</sup> Pierre Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–1992), In English as *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French past* (University of Chicago Press, 1998-2010).

<sup>29</sup> See *Place and Experience*, pp.185-192.