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Anne Buttimer 1938–2017. Geography and Biography

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On 15 July 2017, sad news began to circulate in geographical milieus that Anne Buttimer had passed away. Buttimer was an international, transcultural and cosmopolitan geographer, known internationally for her innovative research, her command of languages, her humanity. To write her biography is a challenging task, but simultaneously an inspiring one, not least because she was one of the geographers most committed to the values of biography (and autobiography) in the discipline. Through the Dialogue Project that she launched with Torsten Hägerstrand, she valued life experiences as a critical tool in making sense of geographical engagement and was one of the co-founders of the IGU Commission on the History of Geography. The videos of the interviews realised by Anne and Hägerstrand in the context of that project, running at Lund University (Sweden) from 1976 to 1988, are mostly available online in the IGU Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1WzSi02jYP3QgjseHxKB3g> and at the page on the *Dialogue Project* at UCD Website

<https://www.ucd.ie/geography/research/lifeexperienceascatalystforcross-disciplinarycommunication/> Anne was also an inspiration for, and contributor to, *Geographers Biobibliographical Studies*.

Given the breadth of Anne's interests and materials, the present text can only be an exploratory contribution towards a more comprehensive future biography of her life and career. Notwithstanding this, this short biography is not limited to a descriptive survey of Anne's life but, rather, we aim to offer a first critical appraisal of her contribution to geography, drawing upon the scholarship in historical and cultural geography mentioned below. We posit that Anne played an overlooked, but nevertheless, influential role in the debates which have shaped what is called today 'critical geographies'. The principal components of her contribution to this field are multilingualism, cosmopolitanism, international networking, tolerance, social engagement and humanity in its widest sense.



Fig. 1 Anne Buttimer

Training in Ireland and French geography

Anne Buttimer was born to Jeremiah and Eileen Kelleher, a farming family in County Cork, on 31 October 1938. Her siblings Carmel Buttimer-Grant, Sr. Mary Dermot O.P., and

Andreas, are all living. Her father was engaged in the cooperative movement *Macra na Feirme* (Pillars of Land), and Anne considered that her rural origins and close links to the land inspired her interest in the daily life of popular classes and drive towards ‘accountability and social justice’ (Maddrell 2009, 753). Her recollections show the depth of her intellectual interests from her secondary and high-school years, spent with the Loreto Sisters in Fermoy. ‘Still I remember enjoying Molière and La Fontaine, Horace and Virgil, Yeats and the Shelleys. I did well in maths and piano, the school play and dance. I preferred poetry to prose and devoured anything I could find on classical history and myth’ (Buttimer 2001a, 23). Then, she obtained a first degree in Geography, Mathematics and Latin (1957) and an MA degree in Geography (1959), both at University College Cork. In 1959, she moved to the United States to enter the Dominican order with the Sisters of Tacoma (WA), becoming a nun with the name ‘Sister Annette’. There, it was proposed that she undertake a PhD in geography at Washington University, Seattle, in the context of an educational programme promoted by her religious order. Anne completed her doctorate in 1965, which focused on the concept of ‘social space’, taking inspiration from the early twentieth century French tradition of *La géographie humaine*. It is worth noting that ‘classical’ French authors were largely unknown in Anglo–American geographical circuits at that time, demonstrating the early originality and unorthodoxy of Anne’s approaches. Transcultural concerns were central to Anne’s works as she later explained on her University College Dublin webpage: ‘My PhD thesis explored conceptual and methodological foundations for social geography, a field then virtually ignored in American geography, but well developed in Europe, particularly in Swedish and French traditions’ (UCD Website: https://rms.ucd.ie/ufirs!/W_VA_CV_BUILDER.SHOW_ALL?OUTPUT=CV&VERSION=DEFAULT&WPBPRSN=122570). Anne’s monograph on French geography (Buttimer 1971) is widely considered a classic in studies on the history and philosophy of geography. It is no coincidence that Anne was one of the leaders of the IGU Commission on the History of Geography founded in 1968 and first chaired by Philippe Pinchemel (1923–2008), a key figure in the development of cultural and historical geography in France (Robic, Tissier and Pinchemel 2011).

Whilst emigration to the USA is a classical trajectory of ‘Migrant Ireland’ (Gilmartin, 2015), the international experiences enjoyed by Buttimer following her sojourn in Seattle reveal the outstanding originality of her life and career, characterised by teaching and research

appointments ‘in Belgium, Canada, France, Scotland, Sweden ... the USA’ (João Alcoforado and Jones 2015, 186) and of course in Ireland. In 1965–66 Buttimer enhanced her knowledge of the Francophone world with a fellowship to the University of Louvain, in Belgium, where she began to work on phenomenology and existentialism. From 1968 to 1970 she held a lectureship at the University of Glasgow, where she first experienced social field – something that shaped her future career: ‘Through interviews in working-class households, she gained insights into people’s life experiences’ (João Alcoforado and Jones 2015, 186). In her own words: ‘I looked at three very specific aspects of everyday life. One was how people imaged – perceived – space in their new environments (this was the era of mental maps and environmental perception). The second one had to do with networks of interaction, where people travelled, how far away, how far away is too far away? ... The third analytical focus was on territoriality. On large-scale local maps, I asked people to outline the general area where they felt at home’ (Maddrell 2009, 747). From that moment, daily life experience, dwelling and relationship between humans and their life-space became key elements in her research drive, including mental maps and studies of environmental perception, both of which informed her teaching at Clark University, Massachusetts, over the following years.

Values in geography and critical approaches

As a lecturer at Clark University from 1971 to 1982 (full professor from 1980), Buttimer began to exert an important influence on those geographers disappointed by positivism and the allures of the ‘quantitative revolution’. Buttimer’s early work ‘revolted against the dehumanisation and abstract space in positivist science’ (Mels 2010, 93). In association with authors such as David Ley and Yu-Fi Tuan, she became one of the leading figures of humanism in geography, though she always refused any classification, declaring that she disliked ‘-isms at all’ (Maddrell 2009, 753). Yet some of her works have become classics of the genre, and her claim that ‘there must be more to human geography than the *danse macabre* of materialistically motivated robots which, in the opinion of many, was staged by the post-World War II scientific reformation’ is often quoted (Buttimer 1993, 47). Her work correlated with Ley’s arguments that ‘there is a clear need in the human sciences for the impenetrable appearance of objectivity to be demystified to illuminate the shifting anthropocentric presuppositions masked by the firm categories and rigorous procedures’ (Ley 1980, 14).

Buttimer's early influential contribution to Anglo–American critical and radical debates is witnessed by her pamphlet *Values in Geography*, published by the Association of American Geographers (AAG) in 1974, which includes commentaries by Edward Soja, James Blaut, Edward Gibson, Torsten Hägerstrand and Yi-Fu Tuan. In this publication, Buttimer argues for the centrality of autobiographical topics by presenting first her 'positionality': 'What interest could it conceivably be to the average American geography student, particularly to those who have never lived outside the United States, to hear about the value conflicts and dilemmas faced by a native Irish girl, sent to this country to be a Dominican sister, who has become involved in social contexts as varied as Cork, Louvain, Glasgow, Seattle, Paris, Lund and Worcester?' (Buttimer 1974, 2). The commentaries of the invited discussants were sometimes critical, for instance by positing a lack of radicalism in Buttimer's analysis of class structures in society. Yet the tone of the conversation demonstrates how 'Sister Annette', at the age of only 36, already represented a scholarly force, acknowledged by the exponents of radical and critical geographies. Moreover, in this publication Buttimer expresses her own ideas of 'critical approaches' to geography not only by addressing the problems of economically underprivileged classes (her work was sometimes associated with the 'geographical expeditions' led by William Bunge) but also through her own critique of the institutions a scholar must engage with, including state and church: 'The only way I can overcome my aversion to the hypocrisy I find in some of these structures – academic, ecclesiastical or national – is by realising that I belong to them only because of a caring commitment to certain persons whom I cherish ... Because I value truth and love, I can, for the present at least, overlook the institutional trappings of each' (Buttimer 1974, 3). Among the innovative contributions presented by Buttimer in this early work is her attention to 'native worldviews' as opposed to the Cartesian technocracy of a 'social-scientist-cum-social-engineer' (1974, 3), a concern akin to what is called today 'vernacular knowledge'. Though still a member of the Dominican order, Buttimer stood out for her tolerance, stating that her ideas were 'obviously strongly influenced by Christian, and especially existential thought. But there are many alternatives' (1974, 5). Among the possible alternatives, Buttimer was keen to discuss socialism, then supported by David Harvey, Richard Peet and other pioneers of the radical turn in geography. Whilst sharing their drive for social justice, Buttimer criticised the determinism of structural Marxists, arguing that it was too simplistic to argue that a change in structures could determine a change in human behaviour because of the possibility of 'a change in the consciousness of people involved in those structures'

(1974, 31). Critically, Buttimer emphasized traditions of voluntarism in social thinking, a stance that she expressed also in intimate, personal interpretations of her work. She considered geography as ‘not a job to be done; it is one of the regions of my care’ (1974, 4).

The ‘watershed’ and the Dialogue Project

In an important interview with Avril Maddrell Buttimer declared: ‘I often considered 1976 as both a ‘midsummer’ and a ‘watershed’ year in my life’ (Maddrell 2009, 748). That year, whilst on a Fulbright scholarship in Lund, Buttimer decided to relinquish her vows with the Dominican order. One might widely speculate on the reasons (accordingly both personal and professional) which led Anne to make this decision. However, the best explanations are surely those that she explicitly provided in her recollections: ‘A new vocation was being born, namely, to building an international community of scholars, where self and mutual understanding could be springboards for better communication between science and society, between scholars and the lived world of humanity’ (Buttimer 2001a, 32). For that ambitious global programme, what Anne needed was doubtlessly more freedom.

From 1977, Anne settled in Lund to work on the Dialogue Project, being appointed on ‘a research position ... on issues of knowledge integration’ (Buttimer 2001a, 32), in collaboration with Swedish geographers such as Hägerstrand. Precisely, her work was funded by a research fellowship from the Swedish government from 1977 to 1979 and also from 1982 to 1988. In the period between these fellowships, Anne went back to Clark resuming her teaching duties there. In Sweden, in 1979, she married Bertram Broberg (1925-2005), ‘a distinguished engineer and mathematician at Lund’ (Clout 2017, 456). After retiring from his Lund professorship in 1990, Bertram followed Anne to Canada, and later Ireland, remaining her partner until his death in 2005. The Dialogue Project, which continued until 1988, was based on interviews with geographers from all over the world and focused on autobiographical experiences ‘using autobiography to aid intra- and interdisciplinary understanding’ (Maddrell 2009, 744), and involved ‘over 300 people from 35 countries’ (Buttimer 2001a, 34). The individual interviews and collective discussions realized by Buttimer, Hägerstrand and Christine Nordin for this project are recorded and available on the IGU channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1WzSi02jYP3QgjseHxKB3g>. These materials confirm Buttimer’s interest in life experience, in this case intended as a ‘catalyst for cross-disciplinary communication’, addressing ‘a design and strategy for promoting inter-

disciplinary communication about problems and issues of shared concern ... the history of geographic thought and practice ... human creativity and milieu' (Buttimer 1986, 6). This work was conceived 'to look across boundaries in a climate that furthers reflection and self-understanding' (Buttimer and Hägerstrand 1980, v) in the spirit of 'caring for knowledge' (1980, 5). Breaking barriers of discipline, culture, language and identity was a *Leitmotif* of Buttimer's work throughout her career.

Although the project focused largely on European scholars, Buttimer was also committed to giving voice to non-European geographers, especially those from Africa and Latin America. Voices from the south are heard in several interviews and an important document to understand this commitment is Anne's correspondence with Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (1926–2001). As a leading figure of Brazilian radical geography, Santos was as multilingual and cosmopolitan as Buttimer, due to his exile wanderings (1964–1977) imposed by the military dictatorship that ruled his country from 1964 to 1985 (Ferretti and Viotto 2017). While some of Santos's letters survive in Buttimer's papers at UCD, part of her correspondences with Santos are held in Santos' archives at the São Paulo IEB (Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros). In Brazil the earliest surviving of Buttimer's letters explains the Dialogue Project, its links with the Commission on the History of Geography, and her attempt to involve Santos: 'The recurrent theme is experiential grounding, viz., provoking people to discover from their own lives and thinking, what is taken for granted about life and scholarly activity. I am enclosing also a paper prepared for the IGU Commission on the History of Geographic Thought [former name of the Commission History of Geography] plus an appendix which I shared after the Edinburgh meeting with a few colleagues from various countries. The idea is to let the living authors of geographic ideas tell the story themselves instead of force-fitting documentary material into some schema or other about the history of ideas...From such evidence, I think one can make a strong case against the Print Industry and against many of the bureaucratic entanglements which ensnare us today. Anyhow, Milton, if you could ever see your way to getting something going along these lines in Brazil, it would be SUPER. I can guarantee you a platform at least in the IGU circles' (São Paulo, IEB, MS-RS77-009, A. Buttimer to M. Santos, 22 November 1977).

In 1977, back in Brazil after 13 years of exile, Santos responded to Buttimer giving his 'warm approval to [her] initiative' and saying that he 'already talked to some colleagues who are

ready to collaborate (Dublin, UCD School of Geography, Anne Buttimer correspondence, Folder South America, M. Santos to A. Buttimer, 3 March 1978). Buttimer's contact with Santos prompted new links with other Brazilian scholars such as Bertha Becker (1930–2013), a geographer from Rio de Janeiro and Santos's close friend, interviewed by Buttimer a few years later. But what is most important in Santos's letter to Buttimer is his editorial initiative envisaging a primary role for her ideas in the rebuilding of Brazilian geography which in fact took place in the incoming Fortaleza congress of the Association of Brazilian Geographers, which is considered as a watershed in the history of Brazilian geography (Borzacchiello 2016). 'I am preparing, for one of my Brazilian publishers, a reader entitled *Geography 1975–1980*, a collection of essays on the present situation and prospect in our discipline. I liked very much your paper on "People, Paradigms and Progress in Geography", and I would like to publish it in this volume. To be honest, the translation has already been done... Thus, I need your urgent authorisation, for the book is to come in June. In July, will be held an important geographic congress (2,000 Brazilian geographers expected) and we would like to have a new departure for our field of study, which is now claiming for new ideas. I will myself have published for the occasion a new book, *Towards a New Geography*, in which I claim for a more human drive in our preoccupations' (IEB, MS RS78-036 M. Santos to A. Buttimer, 3 March 1978).

Santos also shared with Buttimer his pessimistic views on the 'alienation' implied in university work, and reaffirmed his commitment to, and need for activism. This confirmed Buttimer's promotion of a critical and radical agenda for geography worldwide. From this correspondence, it is clear that Buttimer expressed her trust in the Brazilian not only to translate accurately her work but also to disseminate her message, 'you being one of the FEW people who really understand the core of my message' (IEB, MS-RS78-037 A. Buttimer to M. Santos 9 April 1978). This might be considered surprising, given that she was a former Dominican sister and he a radical activist with Marxist leanings (though not very orthodox).

In a further exchange, which took place in 1986, Buttimer and Santos discussed some editorial issues concerning his involvement in translating her papers into Portuguese. This correspondence revealed her generosity: Santos's group did not have the means to pay the price that the *Geographical Review* demanded for reprinting Buttimer's 1969 paper 'Social space in interdisciplinary perspective', so the author sent a contribution out of her own

pocket to the North American publisher (UCD, A. Buttimer to M. Santos, 22 August 1986). In 1988 Buttimer wrote again to Santos requesting his collaboration on a book project intended to ‘address issues of international relevance, thus sketching a wider canvas than just those of geography’, and repeated to him that he was ‘among the few who understand the importance of that task’ (UCD, A. Buttimer to M. Santos, 17 January 1988).

Another exceptional archival document reveals an exchange between Anne and Keith Buchanan (1919–1997) in 1984. Considered an early critic of colonialism, and a figure underexplored in geographical scholarship (Power and Sidaway 2004; Watters 1998), Buchanan wrote a long letter to Buttimer explaining his (pessimistic) views on the state of geography. While enjoying a period of rest in a Welsh village, Buchanan felt ‘completely isolated from that great big academic world’ and was happy with this. He praised the Dialogue Project but felt unable to contribute to it directly due to ill-health and his radical questioning of the working of university and educational systems: ‘Increasingly towards the end of my academic career I become less and less certain of the value of university training as it was organised and less and less certain of the value of geography, again as it was organised’. The principal reason for this was the social uses of science and geography: ‘It seems to me that the university is quite simply a device for processing people into accepting the values of the establishment and that its real role – that of drawing out the full potential of students as human beings, aware of and attuned to the needs of the four billion other folks with whom they share this imperilled planet – has been deliberately and quite consciously abandoned...As far as geography is concerned I don't know whether it's ever had any real concern with humanity, except as raw material for a PhD and for personal academic advancement. I recall the rather doubtful role of many geographers during the time of the Vietnam war; I recall the earlier role of geographers in Europe who saw no conflict between their duties as a human being and their service to the Nazi state; I look around me and I see increasingly the growth points in geography (remote sensing and the like) being deflected once again into paths determined by the military’ (UCD, Folder Buchanan, K. Buchanan to A. Buttimer, 10th April 1984). Among the exceptions, Buchanan quoted not only radicals, but Buttimer's *Values* and Yi-Fu Tuan's works on the ‘humane facets of geography’.

Buchanan considered that geographical practice should lead to personal awareness and social responsibility: ‘Travelling as so many geographers are privileged to do, I have become

increasingly aware of the intolerable and un-Christian distances of wealth and poverty which shatter our human universe and I detect a shattering silence from most geographers, particularly the ‘heavies’, on these issues.’ Buchanan blamed those many geographers who were ready to sell their services to the military, and specifically to US counter-insurgency agencies. Buchanan portrayed some of his colleagues in New Zealand in this critical way. The British geographer recounted ironically that some of his New Zealand colleagues ‘turned up mysteriously in odd corners of S.E. Asia on ostensibly agricultural improvement projects but on what, it became increasingly clear, were in reality counter-insurgent plots’. For that reason Buchanan considered it immoral to attend IGU conferences on Southeast Asia while this region was being bombed by US forces. Yet he displayed a sample of his humour in his description of engagement with Third-Worldist and radical pacifism in the lectures he gave in New Zealand. ‘Inevitably the content of [my] lectures was such as to ensure at least a minimum of attendance (provided by my most regular fans, the Security Intelligence Service). These activities, you may know, resulted in me becoming a prohibited immigrant in the United States, as some years before I had been declared a prohibited immigrant in the South African Republic’ (K. Buchanan to A. Buttimer, 10th April 1984).

We quote extensively Buchanan’s letter because it specifically reveals another aspect of Anne’s career: her acquaintance with travellers and migrant scholars like herself. An interviewee of the Dialogue Project, Berkeley geographer John Leighly (1895-1986) expressed this general perception of Anne in the dedication he wrote while gifting her a copy of his ‘Ballade of the Errant Professors’ (1956), with a clear reference to her wanderings between different countries and continents. Another reason for the empathy Anne expressed for Buchanan was the sense of morality underlining the respective academic travels and tribulations: in both cases, these efforts were not undertaken to foster career ambitions but, rather, to follow the respective ideals.

Crucially, Buchanan wondered ‘if the intellectual community is going to be moral at all’, i.e. committed to the issues of war, poverty and hunger, while ‘the organic misery of three-quarters of humanity goes hand in hand with an intellectual emptiness which, in contrast, only makes more sacrilegious (and sometimes comical) the intellectual scene in the civilised countries ... only a few geographers (I remember, for example, a paper by Gunnar Olsson)

have shown much concern for these dangerous ethical dimensions of our subject' (K. Buchanan to A. Buttimer, 10th April 1984).

Buttimer's answer to Buchanan was a warm acknowledgment of the 'prophetic' words of her correspondent, revealing some biographical details on her experience in Sweden and the problems she faced there despite her strong local supporters. 'As you may gather, therefore, this present project has not been a matter of choice on my side. After Hägerstrand read my report on the re-location of working-class families...in Glasgow he just moved mountains to get me here for an exchange of views. I wanted to learn more about the dream and reality of socialist planning in Sweden, perhaps 'tool up' on their apparently sophisticated analytical techniques, but from the moment I have set foot on this soil, nobody has had the charity to teach me anything. They want me to share all I know about philosophy, do anything I can to be a catalyst for communication among their frozen sectors' (UCD, Folder Buchanan, A. Buttimer to K. Buchanan, April 19th, 1984). Accordingly, Buttimer's polemic was directed towards the more quantitative and technocratic sectors of the discipline, while Buchanan's letter raised topics very close to her interests. Through her correspondence with Buchanan, a shared interest in social justice in the Global South emerged. In this Buttimer referred to those friends involved in various social projects in Brazil and Chile and the respective problems they had endured.

Beyond displaying her interest in the Global South, Buttimer's letter to Buchanan also confirmed the importance of her native Ireland as a source of inspiration for her ideas. 'From my peasant (Celtic) soul comes a strong and sometimes angry voice to assert the claims of humanity for respect and justice. I know the heights toward which the rhetoric and drama of my own compatriots have reached in order to prick the world's consciousness over the travesties of greed and power.' Concluding her letter, she told Buchanan that she had just advised an Ethiopian student to read his 'Voices from the Third World' (Buchanan 1966) and claimed the famous humanistic motto by Terence, '*nihil humanum a me alienum*' (I care everything is human), comparing it to the concept of *conscientização* (gaining consciousness) by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (UCD, A. Buttimer to K. Buchanan, April 19th, 1984).

These two short exchanges of correspondence with Santos and Buchanan show the international richness of Buttimer's archives, and expose their potential importance for future

work on the history and philosophy of geography. They also reveal a proximity between a Catholic and ‘humanistic’ geographer and ‘radical’ scholars and thus confirm our premise that humanistic and critical approaches share mutual concerns, as recently claimed by Simon Springer (2017).

This Swedish period in Buttimer’s career also highlights one of the most striking and exceptional features of her personality: her fertile and ceaseless intellectual curiosity, going well beyond academic and scholarly commitments. In 1988, having discovered the existence of early medieval studies in Lund, Buttimer published *The wake of Erasmus*, a work on the spread of intellectual ideas across Europe from the middle ages to the Renaissance. She compared the Europe-wide spread of *studia generalia* in those centuries to the humanistic tradition evoked by the 1988 Bologna Magna Charta which established the Erasmus project. If then the wandering scholars had often to ‘face the fate of frontiersmen’ (Buttimer 1988a, 64), now ‘the European humanist tradition might shout an emancipatory cry for human reason and intellectual creativity, across the barriers erected between nations, cultures, ideologies and sponsors’, to counter ‘the material imperatives of International Capital’ (1988a, 67). What is significant here is that, in the aftermath of the quantitative revolution, a geographer could claim explicitly that ‘there might be lessons to be learned from the past’ (1988a, 2), echoing the work *The past is a foreign country* by her acquaintance David Lowenthal (1985) and challenging anti-historical and anti-theoretical tendencies still present in the discipline today. Finally, it is important to clarify that, even though Anne relinquished her vows as a nun, she always considered religion as one of the main inspirations of her social thought and engagement. In many of her writings, she cited the Dominican motto *contemplata aliis tradere*. i.e. ‘bring one’s reflections to others’. This was a central task of her action as an engaged intellectual and can be secularized and extended today as a statement of the researcher’s social responsibility. Anne’s religious education was likewise important for enhancing her knowledge of Latin, which fostered her interest in authors from classic antiquity to the Renaissance who were at the centre of her social thought, such as Terence and Erasmus.

Back to Ireland

In 1988 the Dialogue Project ended. After holding invited lectureships in Austin (Texas) in 1987, Cork from 1983 to 1986 and Paris–Sorbonne in 1985-86, Buttimer moved temporarily

to Ottawa to teach at the Geography Department there. When UCD advertised a vacancy for the Chair of Geography in 1991 Buttimer seized the opportunity to come back to her country. Taking up the reins as Chair of Geography, she served as Head of the Department of Geography and simultaneously coordinated an important EU research project on ‘Landscape and life: appropriate scales for sustainable development’ (LLASS) which involved scholars from all over Europe, and led to the publication of a collective book (Buttimer 2001). After her retirement in 2003, she continued to collaborate with UCD’s School of Geography as Professor Emerita, including with her successor Alun Jones. Her small office was a treasury for colleagues interested in archives and epistemology, and up to December 2016 her weekly presence was the reassuring landmark of the continuity and vitality of a humane science, one which always remained extraneous to technocracy, self-centrism and other academic and non-academic vices.

Between 1991 and 2003 Buttimer’s passion for theoretical and socially engaged debates remained undiminished. Among the many contributions she published in the 1990s, two papers stand out as important landmarks in her thinking. The first, published in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* in 1990, explored global concern in geography, and presented the famous metaphor of Phoenix–Faust–Narcissus that she repeated in several of her writings and marked more than one generation of historians of geography. Buttimer suggested that these mythological figures have a universal value in Western imagination. She claimed that the Phoenix, a mythological bird reborn from its ashes, represents the ‘emancipatory cry, one seeking freedom from oppression’ (Buttimer 1990, 2) in the emergence of critical geographical thinking in the 1960s: ‘At times when Academy, Church, State, Syndicate, or Proletariat has tried to exercise monopoly power over thought and/or life, a humanist protest has appeared’ (1990, 2), a process that she dates back to Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494). An Italian humanist of the Renaissance, Pico was deemed by Anne an inspiration for the centrality of human beings and their freedom of judgement, especially in relation to the divine sphere, since ‘he published *An Oration on the Dignity of Man*, a document which proclaimed human nature to be ontologically free and responsible’ (1990, 10).

The second, the mythological figure of Faust as presented by Goethe, was for her the metaphor of European productivism and accordingly the symbol of quantitativism and

technocracy in Anglo–American geography in the 1970s. The third figure, Narcissus, represented the ‘late twentieth-century reflexive turn’ (1900, 4) which interested Buttimer but also troubled her, as she feared that post-structuralist tendencies would lead geographers to abandon militant social engagement. Therefore, for her, a return to the humanistic figures of Pico and Erasmus would have led geography to rescue its original emancipatory cry: ‘As Phoenix...the humanist turn in geography should refuse to be contained, named and claimed by Faustian structures’ (1990, 28), without forgetting the plurality of radical traditions among which Buttimer included ‘geographers inspired by Humboldt such as Kropotkin, Reclus and others’ (1990, 19).

In her second paper, published in the *Scottish Geographical Journal* in 1999, Anne reflected on the ‘death of radical geography’ as a pervasive theme of the 1998 AAG conference in Boston, commemorating the effort undertaken by ‘pioneering spirits at the launch of *Antipode*’ (Buttimer 1999b, 103) almost thirty years earlier (1969). In this key paper, Buttimer combined ‘Radical and Humanistic Geography’ (1999b, 104) and attributed this disciplinary crisis to the fact that ‘a variety of perspectives was reduced to one selectively-defined Orthodox Radicalism’ (1999b, 103). Again, she vigorously argued for a plurality of perspectives against all orthodoxies, and for voluntarism ranged against all constrictive ‘structures’.

A more comprehensive analysis of Buttimer’s scholarly contribution (including publications, translations, prestigious memberships, prizes and honours) is of course beyond the scope of this short biography. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that she was the first woman President of the IGU (2000–2004) and that, in 2014, she received the Vautrin–Lud Prize at the International Festival of Geography in Saint-Dié-des-Vosges, commonly considered the ‘Nobel Prize for Geography’. Critically, this prize acknowledged her links with French-speaking areas and her influence and popularity there, as well as her impressive command of the French language. In the same year, at the AAG meeting in Tampa, Florida, Anne received the AAG Lifetime Achievement Honours ‘in recognition of her five decades of distinguished and prolific scholarship as well as extraordinary dedication, service, and perseverance in the name of the geographic profession. In addition to being a stellar research scholar, Anne served the discipline in a number of capacities ... She has also played an active role in the AAG, serving on Council, on the *Annals* editorial Board, and on the Long-Range Planning

Committee' (AAG Newsletter, 2014). According to her last updates of her UCD webpage: 'Some of her work has been published in translation to Dutch, French, German, Japanese, Latvian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and Russian' (UCD Website).

Reflections on Humboldt and on the relevance of the geographical discipline, from 2001 to 2012, and on geographies of the sacred, from 2013, characterize Buttimer's later papers. In her last autobiographical paper published by the journal *The Arab World Geographer* in 2016, Anne defined her retirement in very active terms. Her husband Bertram worked with her until his death in 2005, an event that she defined as a big rupture: 'Mathematical physicist, material scientist, Bertram was my greatest support over the years, especially those spent at UCD. He was a gifted artist, too, and made numerous overhead illustrations for all my lectures, often encapsulating complex issues in graphic form. Over the years these graphics have been key elements in all my lectures and courses in Sweden, the United States, France, Canada, and Ireland' (Buttimer 2016, 27). However, good health and energy assisted her until the last months of her life and, throughout her retirement, she was able to accomplish many works and travel frequently to attend conferences and receive awards, as the list of publications and honours reported below amply demonstrates. During her Irish years, Anne lived in Glenomena Park, Blackrock in Dublin, very close to the UCD campus. Her death by cancer occurred on 15 July 2017. The requiem mass took place at the Church of Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom at Belfield, UCD, on 18 July, and was attended by a great number of Irish colleagues. A second service took place on 20 July at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Watergrasshill, County Cork, before Anne's burial at the Ardnageehy Cemetery.

At UCD Buttimer has left important archives (some fifty box files and a number of books and other publications) which await cataloguing to make them available to all, as her last wishes state. If her books and journals show the depth and breadth of her intellectual interests, her correspondences and working materials show the global extent of her scholarly networks.

Posterity and legacy

Over the last two decades or so, biography has become increasingly valued and practiced in cultural and historical geography, where scholars have employed the metaphors of journey and lifepath, and in doing so evoked both living and spatial experience. Anne Buttimer is widely considered as a key proponent for this genre through her work in the IGU

Commission. Indeed, according to Stephen Daniels and Catherine Nash, the Commission, in the 1970s, ‘intended to free the history of geography from the history of discovery and exploration, focusing on works of scholars ... in the form of a series, *Biobibliographical Studies*’ and, as a result of this, ‘a reflexive approach to the biography of geographers was conducted in the late 1970s by Anne Buttimer, from a humanistic perspective which focussed on the role of geography in the meaning of life’ (Daniels and Nash 2004, 455). As Elizabeth Baigent also noted, this biographical turn in historical geography accompanied the adoption of contextual readings challenging internalist histories of geography which generally portrayed the subject ‘as isolated from wider intellectual, economic and political contexts, with a happy genealogy of inspiring teachers and receptive pupils who themselves went on to become inspiring teachers’ (Baigent 2004, 542). This echoes Anne’s earlier goals to extend the analysis of scholars’ formally published output into a consideration of their lives and material experiences, which underline and inform their trajectories. As Anne herself noted, this responds to the ‘essential questions about the history of the field, and the social construction of its thought and practice thus offering a critical complement to conventional approaches which rest on archival records’ (Buttimer 1983a, 5).

More recently, Innes Keighren argued that ‘biography ... has a vibrant presence and continuing importance in scholarship on the history of geography ... exemplified most particularly by the valuable *Geographers Biobibliographical Studies* series [which informs] much historical scholarship on geography’ (Keighren 2016, 642–43). Anne is cited not only for the *Dialogue Project* but also for her biographical work on figures such as Edgar Kant, Walter Freeman and Torsten Hägerstrand, confirming what Charles Withers has considered ‘the dual importance of geography to biography and of the geography of biography in assessing the place of biography in geography’ (Withers 2007, 69). These papers confirm her standing not only as an eminent social and cultural geographer, but also as a pioneer in the field of ‘philosophy and history of geography’. In these debates, Anne’s work mattered and continues to matter.

A full appraisal of Buttimer’s scholarly contribution has still to be done. Yet, her contribution to humanistic geographies is canonised in the main textbooks on geographical thought, which identify her as a key figure in the emergence of ‘humanistic geography’ (Cresswell 2013, 97). For Mels, ‘her association with humanism in geography can be traced back to an early

interest in phenomenology and existentialism, and a concomitant focus on human experience, lifeworld, and dwelling' (Mels 2010, 91). In one of her most famous books, *Geography and the Human Spirit*, (1993), Buttimer argued that: 'Neither humanism nor geography can be regarded as an autonomous field of inquiry; rather, each points toward perspectives on life and thought shared by people in diverse situations. The common concern is terrestrial dwelling; *humanus* literally means 'earth dweller'' (Buttimer 1993, 3). It is also noteworthy that Buttimer was among the first critics of positivism, but she always refused to be identified with post-modernism or post-structuralism. In a late interview she clarified her worries about 'postmodern' relativism, and her concerns that it might hinder action of social liberation facing predatory capitalism, for instance in the Global South (Academia Europaea, 2017). Yet, her contribution can be considered as one of the more effective challenges to essentialism and positivism, one which accordingly exerted an influence on what was then called 'cultural geography'. Her long lasting contribution to geography is complex and multidimensional. There are clear connections between her work and those authors currently at the forefront of research on humanistic discourses in geography, such as the co-founders of the journal *GeoHumanities* (Tim Cresswell, Stephen Daniels, Harriet Hawkins and many others). Her works continue to inspire those active in the IGU Commission on the History in Geography, and those colleagues who consider geography as more than a mere instrument for career advancement.

Finally, Buttimer was one of the most prominent women in geography at a time when there were few of them. Even in the Dialogue Project the gender ratio was particularly unbalanced (only 7 women out of 63 individual interviewees recorded in the IGU Channel), though some of the female geographers interviewed played important roles in their respective countries and in international contexts, as in the case of Bertha Becker, a leading figure in Brazilian geography, Jacqueline Beaujeu-Garnier (1917–1995), president of the French Geographical Society from 1983 to 1995, and Maria Teresa Gutierrez de MacGregor (1927–2017) from Mexico, vice-president of the IGU from 1984 to 1992. This gender imbalance raises pertinent questions about feminism and gender in Buttimer's career, a topic addressed by Maddrell in 2009. Maddrell argues that it is important to bring 'contextualised autobiography and gender analysis together, illustrating the specificities of Buttimer's own biography and professional life...including both overlap and tension between aspects of humanist and feminist thought and practice. While aspects of Buttimer's work show sensitivity to gender, e.g. her urban

research in Glasgow in the late 1960s and recording women’s work in her interview-based geographical thought publications, this is a result of her emphasis on the human rather than women. This may have seemed out of step with 1970s and 1980s feminism, but arguably has more resonance with the more recent...destabilisation of gender’ (Maddrell 2009, 742). If, in the interview, Buttimer clarified that she never addressed gender in the sense of ‘declared’ feminist geographers, the topics of gender difference and more widely the inclusion of women and members of ethnic minorities in geography were never far from the main concerns of her work.

Anne was considered as a ‘humanistic geographer’ (although she objected to such labelling) making a significant contribution to geographical humanism. In concluding this journey through her lifepath, we would like to evoke an early claim for ‘humane science’, promoted in 1897 by Edward Carpenter, a social activist, broad supporter of anarchism and pioneer of individual liberties, through the series *Humane Science Lectures*. Humane scientists, including Carpenter’s friend Pyotr Kropotkin, defined their work as a protest against ‘the attempt of Modern Science to get rid of human feeling and to look at everything in the dry light of the intellect’ (Carpenter 1897, viii). Conscious of the limits of science, ‘humane scientists’ called for educational action beyond the realm of academia, as a way to bring science closer to real people and to address social needs. Despite the evident differences in scope and purposes, Anne’s concerns matched the ‘spirit’ (a term she liked) of this programme.

Biobibliographical and epistemological work on Buttimer’s career and archives is just beginning. Her intellectual legacy is not just for Ireland, nor for geography: it concerns all humankind, as she would have loved to hear.

Chronology

1937	Born in County Cork, to a family of farmers
1957	BA (Latin, geography, mathematics), National University of Ireland
1959	MA (geography), National University of Ireland; vows at Dominican Order
1961	Standard General Teaching Certificate for the State of Washington
1962–65	Lecturer, Faculty of Arts, Seattle University, WA

1965	Graduated PhD from University of Washington in Seattle, WA
1965–66	Postdoctoral fellowship from the Belgian American Educational Foundation, University of Louvain, Belgium
1966–68	Assistant Professor of Geography, Seattle University, WA
1968–70	Lecturer in Urban Studies, Glasgow University, Scotland
1970–71	Postdoctoral Fellow, Clark University, Worcester, MA
1971–73	Assistant Professor of Geography, Clark University
1971	Research Award, Clark University
1972	Fellow of the Royal Society of Health
1973	Exchange Scholar at University of Lund, Sweden
1973–80	Associate Professor of Geography, Clark University
1976	Fulbright Hays Visiting Professor in Social Ecology, University of Lund
1977–79	Research Fellow, Swedish Council for Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Lund
1977	Research Grant of the Swedish Committee for Future Oriented Studies
1978	Riksbankens Jubileumsfond awards 1978–1979, 1982–1983, 1984–1985
1979	Marriage with Bertram Broberg
1980	Professor of Geography, Clark University
1982	Swedish Council for Humanities and Social Science (HSFR) annual grants
1982–88	Research Fellow, Swedish Council for Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Lund. Annual courses in Theory of Science at the University of Lund
1982–86	Annual two-week courses at University College Cork
1982–86	Annual one-month courses at Clark University
1983–86	Visiting Professor, University College Cork
1985	Invited Professor, Spring term, Université Paris I, Panthéon–Sorbonne. Courses on (a) aménagement and (b) épistémologie de la géographie (Spring term 1985). Organizer and host for delegation of Swedish teachers and students on an excursion to Brittany
1985	Organizer and co-host for field excursion in Sweden by 25 students from Paris, University of Lund

1986	Organizer and participant in the Second Binational Seminar between French and American geographers, Université Paris I – Panthéon–Sorbonne, Paris
1986	Association of American Geographers Honours Award
1987	Visiting Professor, Spring term, University of Texas at Austin
1989–91	Professor of Geography at the University of Ontario, Ottawa
1989	FRN Grant for Swedish–Canadian comparative study of woodland, 1989–92
1990	Honours Award, Taiwan Geographical Society
1991–2003	Full Professor and Head of Department of Geography, University College Dublin
1991	Ellen Churchill Semple Award, University of Kentucky
1993	EC (DG XII) Grant for Research Network on Sustainable Development 1993–95
1993	EC (Human Capital and Mobility): postdoctoral fellowships 1993–95
1994	Study Week for French and Irish geography students in Paris. Université Paris I – Panthéon–Sorbonne
1997	Royal Geographical Society (UK) Murchison Award
1998	Henrietta Harvey Distinguished Lecturer at Memorial University, Newfoundland
1998-2012	Member of the Jury for the Prix Vautrin–Lud
1999	Doctor, honoris causa, University of Joensuu
2000	Royal Scottish Geographical Society Millenium Award
2000	EC–Canada Award for Collaboration in Higher Education, 2000–2003
2001	Royal Scottish Geographical Society Centenary Medal, Glasgow
2001	Honorary Fellow, Société de Géographie, Paris
2002–2005	Appointed member of the International Council for Science (ICSU) Committee for Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR)
2002	Doctor honoris causa, Joensuu University, Finland
2003	Professor Emerita of Geography, UCD
2004	Doctor honoris causa, Tartu University, Estonia
2005	Anne is widowed after the death of Bertram Broberg. The couple had no children
2006	Honorary Fellow, Società Geografica Italiana

2006	NAGI Fellow by the National Association of Geographers, India
2007	Member of the Management Board for UN Year of Planet Earth
2008	Senior Science Adviser to the International Year of Planet Earth
2009	August Wahlberg Medal in Gold from King of Sweden
2010	Appointed to Board of Science for the Austrian Academy of Sciences
2010	Chair of the Social Sciences Section of Academia Europaea
2012	Vice-President of Academia Europaea
2012	Doctor honoris causa, University of Grenoble
2017	Anne dies in Dublin

Main Associations

Fellow of the Royal Irish Academy, Chair of the National Committee for Geography, 1992–2000.

Council Member of the Geographical Society of Ireland.

Member of the Academia Europaea, Social Sciences Section, Vice President Elect in 2012.

Council Member of the Association of American Geographers (AAG), 1974–77.

Life Member of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS).

President of the International Geographical Union (IGU), 2000–2004. Vice-president, 1996–2000.

Life Member of the American Geographical Society.

Member of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy.

Member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Board of Science, 2009–2013.

Member of the Institute of British Geographers/Royal Geographical Society.

Online sources

IGU Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1WzSi02jYP3QgjseHxKB3g>

IGU Commission on the History of Geography: <https://web.univ-pau.fr/RECHERCHE/UGIHG/>

UCD Webpage: <http://www.ucd.ie>

Archives

Ireland – UCD, School of Geography, Anne Buttimer Papers [collection to be inventoried].

Brazil – São Paulo, Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros (IEB), Milton Santos Archive.

Geographers, *Biobibliographical Studies*, 2018 n. 37, p. 13-40 [authors' pre-print version]

Sweden – Lund, Lund University Library, Dialogue Project Series.

Germany – Leipzig, Leibniz Institut für Länderkunde, IGU Archives.

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