**UNEARTHING FEMINIST TERRITORIES AND TERRAINS**

**Key words**: Territory; Terrain; Political Geography; Feminist Geopolitics; Non-human; Corporeality

**ABSTRACT**

The constructs of ‘territory’ and ‘terrain’ are the subject of increasing scrutiny within political geography. While momentum builds in their interrogation as both diverse and lively practices, and complex political technologies, this article takes pause. Drawing on a rich and diverse range of feminist scholarship, it seeks to reflect upon existing trajectories and provide provocation for further accounting. Inspired throughout by, and seeking to bring to bear, a feminist perspective on territory and terrain, this article follows a tripartite structure. First, it critically explores the bodies of knowledge historically underpinning the concepts of territory and terrain. Developing a call for a feminist historiography of territory and terrain, we reflect upon both the gendered evolution of the concepts, and their ongoing reproduction in conceptual debates. Second, it seeks to both highlight and diversify embodied accounts and accountings of these concepts. Here, thinking with and beyond the body, we turn to the non-human and spiritual to explore territory and terrain in expanded and extended ways. Lastly, we examine bodies of expertise, reflecting on academic territories and terrains, and highlighting potential concepts and methodologies seeking to (re-)sculpt and (re-)articulate understandings of territory and terrain. The paper, whilst not all-encompassing, serves as an important provocation that seeks more equitable accounts of political geography’s messy, muddy, and lively territories and terrains.

**INTRODUCTION**

The constructs of ‘territory’ and ‘terrain’ are the subject of increasing scrutiny within political geography. Territory, in particular, has attracted a wide range of critical scholarship, from tracing and historicising its formation (Elden 2013a, Strandsbjerg 2010, Sassen 2000), to thinking about territory beyond the confines of ‘terra’ or land (Peters et al. 2018a), and understanding it as a three-dimensional practice with heights, depths, and voluminous intricacies (Weizman 2002, 2007, Elden 2013b, Squire et al. 2019, Squire & Dodds 2020). Traditionally understood as the ‘bounded units that result from efforts by humans and their institutions to control space’ (Peters et al. 2018a: 1), territory is now considered a diverse and lively practice, a complex political technology (Elden 2013a), and a ‘social construct, a discursive strategy, or a process that is continually articulated amid competing tendencies of deterritorialization and reterritorialization’ (Peters et al 2018a: 1). While to a lesser extent, terrain is also attracting attention as a concept and a practice (Belcher 2014, Gordillo 2018, Elden 2017, Thornton 2015, Squire 2016, Bruun 2020), understood as a ‘relation of power’ forged through its ‘heritage in geology and the military’ (Elden 2010: 804). While the term has, however, been mobilised in ‘relatively unproblematic’ ways to describe the ‘types and textures that define particular spaces’ (Elden 2017: 199), it nonetheless remains one enabling the ‘establishment and maintenance of order’ (Elden 2010: 804). Terrain can thus be considered a ‘political strategic question’, one to be understood in relation to territory, and vice versa (Elden 2010: 804). Accounts have thus increasingly recognised both the geophysical properties of terrain and the materiality of territorial power as that which can be experienced and inhabited in multi dimensions (Thornton 2015, Squire 2016), weaponised for military gain (Gordillo 2018, Gregory 2016, Thornton 2015), or apprehended as a resource that can provide value to those surveilling, inhabiting, or moving through it (Bruun 2020).

As momentum builds and gathers around the constructs of territory and terrain, this paper takes a moment to pause and reflect on current trajectories. In doing so, it suggests that there remains a need to diversify approaches to territory and terrain, and that feminist perspectives offer a constructive and important means through which to do this. The following paragraphs, then, are intended to ‘stir discussion, generate insight, and provide…different ways of seeing the world’ (Coddington 2015: 215) as they relate to these two key constructs in political geography. As political geographers have long demonstrated, both territory and terrain are, at their core, concerned with boundaries. Whether the making and maintaining, defence and inhabitation, or complex diffusion of boundaries, the interrogation of the boundary as both verb and noun has remained a core sub-disciplinary imperative. This article asserts that feminist scholarship, concerned as it is with ‘boundary-breaking ideas’ around corporeal politics, intimacy, the emotive qualities of space, and the resultant dynamics of power, justice, and knowledge production, has much to offer this endeavour. Foregrounding feminist interventions that work to disrupt, unsettle, and even re-write the practices, discourses, and scholarly contexts accompanying these central concepts, this article calls for the collective recognition and re-ignition of a *feminist approach to territory and terrain*. As is outlined below, this approach is centred around re-orientation (Williams 2013), that is recognising, reflecting upon, and re-imagining the bodies of experience and expertise which underpin working understandings of territory and terrain in Anglophone scholarship. In so doing, we recognise that this is, of course, not a complete process, but rather a dynamic one that continues to undergo transformation and contestation (Coddington 2015). The article does, however, provide a moment of experimental opportunity: for a re-imagining and pushing of/at the ‘borders of thought’ and ‘sharp-edged sureties of frames and taxonomies’ that accompany the concepts of territory and terrain (Dixon 2018: 88).

In pursuit of this agenda, we bring together two key intellectual trajectories - the first of which is located in the resurgence of interest in territory and terrain as outlined above. As Sam Halvorsen (2018b) highlights, however, the construct of territory remains sustained through certain selective, dominant imaginations and practices - the same of which could be said also for terrain (Gordillo 2018). In this vein, the article seeks to re-orient these understandings, looking at their development, agendas, and edges, arguing that there may be space for reconfigurations. This follows Halvorsen’s (2018b: 5) work, which seeks to diversify these agendas through the ‘opening up [of] territory to multiple overlapping and entangled practices and ideas that exist within any historical and geographical context’ and challenging those that have been naturalised as and by history. It is in recognition of these diverse territorial ecologies that the second trajectory is found. As interest in territory and terrain is burgeoning, so too is intersectional work accounting for the voices of women, minorities, the ‘view from below’, and the non-human within political geography (Hyndman 2004, 2019, Massaro & Williams 2013, Sharp 2000, 2007, 2011, Dowler & Sharp 2001, Naylor et al. 2018, Yusoff 2018). This growing body of work accounts for the spaces, scales, and methods with which political geographers engage, and the multiple voices, narratives, materials, bodies, and experiences that are incorporated and enmeshed within (Mott & Roberts 2014, Smith et al. 2016, Anderson 2010, Belcher 2018). This trajectory, we argue, also acts to prompt a broader disciplinary question about the academic voices who are enabled to, and disabled from, shaping conversations about concepts, including those of territory and terrain.

The paper is divided into three sections. We begin by critically exploring the historical *bodies of knowledge* that underpin the concepts of territory and terrain. We then turn to *embodied accounts* of the concepts, exploring opportunities for diversification, including those of the non-human and spiritual that extend beyond the human body. Lastly, we turn to *bodies of expertise*, reflecting upon the contemporary practices of citation that act to maintain the shape of these two intersecting constructs, whilst simultaneously holding the potential to (re-)sculpt them. Finally, we offer brief conclusions. Here, we stress the importance of political geographers adopting more diverse approaches to the concepts of territory and terrain, particularly in light of the increasingly fraught and extreme territorial practices and conditions gripping earth.

**BODIES OF KNOWLEDGE: UNSETTLING AND RECLAIMING HISTORIES OF TERRITORY AND TERRAIN**

Geographical scholarship increasingly recognises both territory and terrain as processes and practices that are inherently lively, multiple, and varied (Painter 2010, Peters et al. 2018a, Halvorsen 2018b, Whitt 2018, Gordillo 2018, Squire 2016, Forsyth 2014, Fall 2005). Far from fixed entities that ‘naturally’ exist, recent work highlights the historical, material, and cultural contingency of territory and terrain by drawing attention to their multifaceted unfoldings and emergences (Sassen 2006, Elden 2010, 2013a). Yet, while the inherent multiplicity of these concepts is widely recognised, the potentially rich histories of territory and terrain remain examined through a limited set of lenses.

While scholars have argued that ‘territory is a historical question: produced, mutable and fluid’ (Elden 2010: 812), the history of territory as a practice and an idea is often told as a history of (predominantly ‘western’) imperial, military, and economic pursuits and struggles. Within Anglo-scholarship it is told and retold as a story of control enabled by calculative technologies, most notably cartography, which reduced space to quantifiable abstractions that could be bounded, divided, and governed from a centralised position (Strandsbjerg 2010, Thongchai 1994). In such accounts, territory and terrain are narrated, known, and navigated in terms of their geometric qualities (Elden 2010, Crampton 2010, Hannah 2000). Such interventions have shed significant light on the evolution, workings, and mechanics of a particular form of territorial power, and the violent colonial presents, presences, and erasures that so often follow from it (Pratt 2007, Gregory 2004, Harley 1988, Wainwright & Bryan 2009). Yet in terms of historicising the concepts of territory and terrain, the dominance of the calculative lens and the associated separation of space from the experience of being on the ground is in itself delimiting and risks territorialising ‘the concept in a very particular set of ideas of practices’ which can ‘bracket off alternative understandings’ and inscriptions (Halvorsen 2018b: 4).

Calculative conceptualisations of territory and terrain, however, exist alongside a growing number of alternative envisionings, those which both draw upon and exceed calculation. These conceptual terrains can be found and traced across both intimate accounts of how disenfranchised bodies are enveloped within territorial projects (see Stratford & Murray 2018, Coddington 2018, Mountz et al. 2013), and through engagements with indigenous spatial ontologies (Aporta 2005, Aporta et al. 2014b), and postcolonial projects of counter-mapping (Wainwright & Bryan 2009). Such diverse interventions point to the significance of recognising the multiplicity of actors, practices, and knowledges that may inform the formation, performance, and maintenance of territorial orders.

A notable example gesturing towards the value and potential scope of such research lies in Michael Bravo’s historical, anthropological, and collaborative work with indigenous communities in the Canadian Arctic (Bravo 2008, 2010, 2019, see also Aporta et al. 2014a). As Bravo (2010: 445) notes, a dominant narration of sea ice remains as ‘an inert obstacle to progress’. This follows, as Bravo continues, Euro-American notions of ‘scientific progress…closely linked to…economic improvement through commerce, trade, and profitable shipping routes’ (ibid). In looking to alternative narrations of seascapes, Bravo’s work engages Inuit oral histories of sea ice, foregrounding a differently coded set of knowledges and practices through which processes of territory unfold. As Bravo (2008: 163) notes, ‘the notion of ice as a productive territory and homeland runs counter to most other cultural traditions’; yet in Inuit history and tradition, ice is culturally significant both as a material resource supporting livelihoods, and as a marker of a culture which extends beyond the confounds of national borders. Inuit oral histories thus offer a re-narration of the terrain of Arctic sea ice which challenges both the long-standing hegemony of colonial mappings of Arctic seascapes as monotonous, frozen wastelands, and current mappings of commercial sea routes and deep-sea resource deposits. Bravo (2010: 445) thus demonstrates and calls for further attentiveness to the multiplicity and variety of ‘nomenclature and toponymies’ associated with the territorial. Naming, narration, and language are crucially important here, and perhaps need to be re-situated as sites of representation. As Ingrid Medby (2019b: 127) notes, ‘in spite of a rich body of work on Arctic space-making practices, the actual language-practices – borders drawn by words and metaphors - are often noted in passing, but rarely discussed in an extended manner’. Terrain and territory are thus configured through multiple histories, cultures, knowledges, skills, labours, inhabitations, and intimacies. This impetus resonates clearly with feminist geopolitics’ desires to both de-centre dominant geopolitical narratives and re-centre the ‘communities that push back, challenge and re-write geopolitical relations’ (Massaro & Williams 2013: 567). This example thus highlights what can be gained from a widening of territorial perspectives, both in contemplation of territory beyond the confines of land (see Peters et al. 2018a, Bruun & Steinberg 2018), and in the engagement with alternative source materials more widely (see Domosh & Morin 2003).

A more inclusive historiography of territory and terrain may be generative of a richer conceptual understanding of the different ways in which space, power, and meaning coalesce in diverse territorial formations (see also Halvorsen 2018b). Pushing for a feminist historiography of territory and terrain, however, is not just about the diversification of perspective, but also a deeper unravelling of the dominant narratives themselves. In other words, to the extent that territory and terrain are conceptually linked to geometry and calculation, their histories need to be told, at least in part, in relation to histories of systems and cultures of scientific domination. Here we can turn for aid to the long-standing and ongoing work of feminist scholars. In their critiques of ‘western’ philosophies of science and calculation, feminist scholars have raised critical questions about ‘whose knowledges are being produced, by and for whom’ (Ash et al. 2018: 28). In response, they have sought to reclaim science and calculation as an embodied practice, an intimate encounter, and a view from a particular body (Haraway 1988, Rose 1993, Bondi 1997, Longhurst 1995, Domosh 1991). In this vein, feminist scholars have further and pertinently noted, even visualised, how both the production and accounting of the calculative knowledges and practices that often underpin territory can be understood as both gendered and racialized (Fall 2014, Yusoff 2018, Haraway 1988, Rose 1993). Disciplines such as cartography, for example, historically acquired much of their scientific credibility from being associated with masculinist ‘victories’ over unruly, often feminised, geographies (Bloom 1993, Hevly 1996, Carey et al. 2016).

As a case in point, Bruce Hevly (1996) has demonstrated how performances of masculinity by twentieth century glaciologists became a determining factor in deciding which glaciological theories were hailed as ‘true knowledge’, while other knowledges were marginalised. Following Hevly, the gendered identities of scientists had a formative impact on how glaciers-as-terrain were known and thus on how icy terrain was geometricized as part of territorial orderings (Bruun & Steinberg 2018; Bruun 2020). In laying out what they term a ‘feminist glaciology framework for global environmental change research’, Carey et al. (2016) unpick the historically rooted relationship between glaciological knowledge and masculinity (see also Glasberg 2012, Seag 2017). Much like the histories, practices, and knowledges of territory and terrain, the authors trace how ‘the science of glaciology has historically participated in imperialist, colonial, and capitalist projects’ in an effort to map out how, and to what effect, current practices may be marked by this (Carey et al. 2016: 773). The deep and sustained critical exploration elucidated within this article’s feminist historiography points to a further moment of opportunity for scholars of territory and terrain. In thinking along these lines, we argue that any conceptual anchoring of territory and terrain to a set of practices and knowledges historically associated with masculinist domination of space should spur critical questions about whether, how, and to what effect historical power relations may become embedded in current conceptualisations and practices (see Yusoff 2018). As noted by Domosh and Morin (2003: 258), change through time is ‘an important variable for understanding the relations between gender and space/place/environment’ – one makes history significant to feminist projects. As such, they suggest that historical analysis may be considered an important step in working towards a transformative feminist politics. Likewise, writing the lives, stories, voices, and experiences of women and those who have been cast as ‘other’ into historical accounts of the formations and workings of territory and terrain may be a means of adding potency to the concepts as analytical tools. If territory and terrain seek to re-cast some of their history absconded, then so too might they gain force as geographical concepts.

A feminist approach to territory and terrain should thus include, we argue, a critical historiography which traces, challenges, and grapples with both the entrenched theorisation of territory as a calculative enterprise and the (continuous) implications of gendered and racialized knowledge-formations and (re-)productions. Driven by the aim of disrupting and re-narrating non-critical reproductions of masculinised power-geometries which all too often stake out the territorial world (Massey 1993, Halvorsen 2018b), this agenda is a multi-faceted one. While aspiring to enable the recovering of hidden histories of women and minorities, it also seeks to move beyond the question of ‘the ubiquity of men and the absence and/or erasure of women’ and other underrepresented groups (Carey et al. 2016: 777). Instead, it calls for both a deeper unravelling of the masculinist logics, practices, and encounters which underpin the concept of territory, and, as importantly, for the interrogation of how these acts and mobilisations may be reproduced in current geographical scholarship. The question of all that a historical feminist geography can offer to our understanding of the contested and contingent nature of territory and terrain is an open-ended one. Yet it is one which nonetheless opens up tantalising challenges for future research in feminist political and historical geography. In what follows we trace some contours through which such work may emerge.

**BODIES AND BEYOND: DIVERSIFYING TERRITORY AND TERRAIN AGENDAS**

Recent innovations in thinking on territory and terrain have drawn attention to the role that the body plays within the practice and evolution of these constructs. Indeed, there are many excellent interventions highlighting the enmeshing of the body in and with a variety of territories and terrains. Derek Gregory’s work on corpographies is a case in point (Gregory 2014, 2016). Gregory explores the ways that bodies in war encounter earth, apprehending and approaching the battlefield through the body’s sensory and somatic sensibilities. Building on Gregory’s work, Pip Thornton’s autoethnographic account of her military service in the 2003 Iraq war explores how the asymmetries of territorial control can be explored through bodily experiences of darkness and (both natural and artificial) light. Relating the visceral and emotional effects of loss or excess of vision on the terrain of the battlefield, Thornton suggests that ‘the apparently small-scale, corporeal, sensory effects/affects on and through which the conditions of light and dark operate are … intrinsically linked to the wider discourses of vision, security and power which inhabit spaces of conflict’ (Thornton 2015: 579). In a different environmental, but nonetheless militarised, context, Squire (2016) explores the concept of terrain through a series of underwater living experiments conducted by the US Navy during the Cold War. Through the experiments, Squire explores how the body is integral site in which ‘terrain is corporeally experienced, but also how the immersive nature of the underwater environment necessitated that the body itself became a terrain of sorts (Squire 2016: 333). The human body as ‘a relational actor must take a prominent position’ in analysis of terrain (Squire 2016: 335). Indeed, the bodies of the men involved were mapped, managed, and manipulated to meet the demands of a voluminous undersea terrain, revealing a complex dynamic between volume, seafloor, water, and body (Squire 2016). Similarly, Gordillo’s (2018: 53) recent work explores the ‘affective geometries of terrain’, attentive to how the bodies of guerrilla fighters in Afghanistan ‘are affected by, and affect’, the terrain they are part of. In doing so, the visceral and fleshy affordances of war are laid bare through the entanglements between terrain and body. As Gregory (2016: 39) highlights, however, most of these accountings remain ‘overwhelmingly white boys’ stories of the natures of war’ (see also Saldanha 2008). There are some notable exceptions to this. Baghel and Nusser’s (2015: 25) intervention, for example, explores the embodied and corporeal experiences of soldiers working on the Siachen Glacier in the Himalayas, where ‘natural conditions are deadlier for soldiers than enemy action’. Traversing this (military) terrain, situated between India and Pakistan, is, as the authors detail, an acutely visceral and emotional experience. Frostbite sets in, cerebral oedema encroaches, oxygen availability decreases with altitude - human bodies reach their limits, and helicopters exceed their flight envelopes (Baghel & Nusser 2015: 25). Whilst these interventions attend to the ‘bodies that fill’ the boots of these men and the ‘ground through which they struggle’ (Gregory 2016: 41), they do so through a masculine, militarised, and often sensationalised contexts (Gordillo 2018). As Squire (2016: 337) asserts, there are many ‘other opportunities for the unfolding and up-rooting of terrain within geography’ and, as such, to challenge the gendered and racialized assumptions outlined above. Similarly, in an effort to re-situate the corporeal and political subjectivities of conflict zones, Thornton (2015: 580) suggest that ‘scaling the analysis right back to a (wo)man in the dark is therefore not only a useful method but should perhaps be a tactical necessity’.

This partial remit of both ‘territory’ and ‘terrain’ in recent scholarship has led to calls from Halvorsen (2018b) to expose the limits of territory as a ‘modern Anglophone concept’, and to respond through the incorporation of marginalised knowledges (see also Jazeel 2016, Radcliffe 2017, Naylor et al. 2018, Sultana 2014). The continued pursuit of a greater diversity of embodied accounts in territory and terrain is also underpinned by the feminist imperative to create ‘more accountable, embodied ways of seeing’ (Hyndman 2007: 36) and to problematise the notion of the unified ‘body’ where marginalised bodies and voices might otherwise be ‘subsumed under the neutrality of concepts’ (Colls 2012: 435). There are a number of powerful interventions that illustrate the potential of this. Fluri and Piedalue’s (2017: 534) work is but one example of how feminist scholarship offers a means through which to examine and interrogate the ‘intertwined’ and ‘intersecting’ relationship between ‘gendered corporeality and geographies of violence’. Here, the body, in all its inherent multiplicity, is central, its movement between spaces, both public and private, providing a prism through which to deconstruct spatial boundaries and in doing so, move beyond binaries (Fluri & Piedalue 2017: 536). This corporeal approach lays bare the ‘intersectional realities of power’ and reveals in process the ‘relational production of geopolitical…violence’ (Fluri & Piedalue 2017: 536). In thinking with territory and terrain, Coddington (2018) and Perera (2002a, 2002b) powerfully illustrate the potential of this approach. Combining feminist scholarship with an analysis of settler colonial territorial imaginaries, Perera traces the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers subjected to ‘tow-back’ operations conducted at sea by the Australian Government. In a process meant to ensure that refugees do not enter Australian maritime territory and are instead towed in life boats to nearby islands such as Nauru, Perera (2002a: 25) argues that a ‘line has been drawn in the water’. As such, the sea is seen as an empty frontier to be controlled, underpinned by ‘violent logics of elimination’ (Perera 2002b). The ocean thus becomes ‘the terrain upon which ideas of settler territory become grounded and manifest’ with the ambiguous and fluid materialities of the sea obscuring ‘understandings of care and responsibility’ (Coddington 2018: 190, 186). Further, it is argued, the experiences of those being ‘towed back’ - their seasickness, anxieties, and fears - all ‘testify’ in an embodied sense ‘to the particular form of territorial imaginations that can be generated in such a space’ (Coddington 2018: 193).

In addition to providing insight into the practices and processes of territory beyond warfare, feminist perspectives can also complicate understandings of what it is like to inhabit these spaces as civilians. Oliver Belcher’s (2018) work, for example, draws on feminist scholarship within political geography to explore attempts by the US Army to ‘secure’ against Taliban insurgency in the largely Pashtun population in Kandahar and Helmand. This practice, he notes, involved ‘direct intervention’ into both the home, and the kinship relations, ‘modalities of social reproduction and bodily security, shelter, food’ in a bid to control the population on a local and regional scale’ (Belcher 2018: 96). In shifting focus from the military bodies seeking to occupy Afghanistan territory to the ‘level of the Afghan household’, Belcher offers a rich account of territorial experience ‘beyond the obliteration of bodies and landscapes with which we have tragically become all too familiar’ (Belcher 2018: 96). Through the lens of ‘Afghan households, small farms, villages, and cultural institutions’, Belcher (2018: 97) highlights both alternative territorial experience, and alternative sites through which the ‘military sought to discipline and colonise Afghan bodies.’ This reorientation from the space of the battlefield to the home offers an opportunity to reflect upon the practices of territory and terrain as they are experienced by non-military bodies at the scale of the everyday. Whitt’s (2017:151) work on mud is a useful addition to this too. Addressing the muddy terrains of El Choro in the Bolivian highlands, Whitt (2017: 174) calls for greater attention to be paid to the day-to-day ‘affective relations that people have with the terrain, the different ways that terrain and people affect each other, and the politics that emerge from these relationships’. For those in the highlands, extensive muddiness can be an annoyance, it hinders mobility, and necessitates very particular bodily engagements with dynamic materiality of the highland terrain as bodies become ‘attuned’ to and negotiate with the mud (Whitt 2017:156). Thinking with terrain in such non-military contexts offers an opportunity to recognise terrain’s ‘daily engagements’ that ‘involve give and take, flexibility, and most importantly, agency and creativity’ (Whitt 2017: 174).

Alongside critical conceptual reflections, further application of and engagement with feminist methods that alternatively and creatively approach, apprehend, witness, capture, visualise, and mobilise, would greatly benefit the deconstruction of territory and terrain (see Bosworth 2016). Following the commitment of feminist geographers to understand ‘the world through collaboration with the individuals and communities with which scholars work’ (Marston & Doshi 2016: 1658), here we might methodologically re-consider territory and terrain in conversation with both creative methodologies of sensory ethnography that attend to alternative and expanded dimensions of bodily and corporeal experience (Thornton 2015, Pink 2015, Rositzka 2018), and those attending to both the role of storytelling (Noxolo 2014) and its reimagining through digital reconstruction (Forensic Architecture 2014, Feigenbaum forthcoming). Staying with storytelling, we see that it can be mobilised to take alternative forms and roles. Through developing more creative and performative interpretative strategies, insights can be gained into both corporeal processes and practices that are otherwise ‘difficult to articulate in language’, and which can express lived experience in contested and postcolonial contexts (Noxolo 2014: 296-297). Writing about Brian Chikwava’s novel ‘Harare North’, Noxolo (2014: 291) demonstrates that literary geographies can serve as a means through which to portray and reflect upon an ‘alternative narrative space for the messy politics of asylum’, one opening up an embodied (approach to) political geographies more widely. Apprehending the territory of the page as one through which to not only recover, but to recognise, reclaim, re-orient, and seek redress of narratives, encounters, and perspectives too often elided from dominant discourse, remains an important step in disrupting the (re)production of the concepts of territory and terrain. Bernardine Evaristo’s poem *Heart of Exile: Looking for Kwaku* (2000), for example, provides a beautifully crystallised depiction of the violent colonial materiality of territory, as she imagines a ‘ghostly blue-veined hand’ drawing untrustworthy maps of her ancestral home:

Satellite the worlde of cartographers,

betraying land mass so the nerve centre

is grander than the subject body, yer majesty;

earth's sphere made one-dimension

on my injured map, new borders of Sellotape.

(Evaristo 2000: 161)

Evaristo’s poetry here not only highlights the subjugation of the fleshy colonial body to the structural ‘nerve centre’ of geopolitical empire, but also quite literally describes the cartographic (and inferred physical) violence and injury that enacts and enforces such territorial power.

As mentioned earlier, the nomenclature and language practices of minority and diasporic bodies are integral to the political geographies of territory and terrain (see Said 2001 [1978]). Arguing for a reconsideration of text and language as representational necessities of both (geo)political practice, resistance and diversification, Ingrid Medby (2019a: 1) has recently called for a ‘re-articulation’ of the academic practice of political geography. In recognising ‘language’s power to produce worlds and worldviews’, Medby (following Wittgenstein) sees ‘language-use’ as a performative site of both power and resistance (Medby 2019b: 1). Language, narratives, dialects, and accents can indeed be important sites of geopolitical voice and agency, but are necessarily bordered by the structures of power in which they are articulated, and are thus also important sites for critique and intervention. The work of Forensic Architecture artist Lawrence Abu-Hamdan is particularly pertinent here. Hamdan’s 2012 piece ‘The Freedom Of Speech Itself’ exposes the failures and injustices of voice analysis techniques used in the UK ‘to determine the origins and authenticity of asylum seekers’ accents’. Challenging ‘beliefs about the assimilation between voice and the territorial confinements of a nation-state’ (Marschall 2017: 76), Hamdan’s work harnesses ‘testimonies from lawyers, phonetic experts, asylum seekers and Home Office officials [to] reveal the geo-politics of accents and the practice of listening that led to shocking stories of wrongful deportations’ (Hamdan 2012). Also foregrounding articulation as both territorial structure, and as a potentially radical site of decentring power, Alison Phipps’ (2019) recent work asserts that the colonial linguistic agenda has been perpetuated and solidified by the normalisation of multilingualism as a requirement for participation in culture, politics and society. Mixing theory with her own poetry, Phipps’ subjective and autoethnographic account of her research into multilingualism ‘at the borders of language, the body, law and the state’ (Phipps 2019: viii) describes her ‘grappling with … the lived, felt practice of decolonising and my realisation that my own multilingualism, with which and for which I had toiled with a fiercely resistant pride, was simply that of one who is fluent in way too many colonial languages’ (Phipps 2019: 3). Collectively, such approaches offer an opportunity to methodologically disrupt the hierarchies ‘that elevate theory…and academic knowledge production to a higher plane than…community based-dialogue, and non-conventional academic writing’ (Nagar in Marston & Doshi 2016: 1659). Such methodologies thus offer accounts of territory and terrain an opportunity for re-narration: of their construction, experience, and encounter.

Attempts to re-narrate constructions of territory and terrain can also be seen in Juliet Fall’s (2014) innovative animated Lego-figure piece, that formed her response to an ‘author meets critic’ session exploring Stuart Elden’s ‘The Birth of Territory’ at the 2014 AAG conference. ‘Who are you?’, asks the Lego representation of Elden, as a host of female figures interrupt the narrative. ‘We’re all the women you keep leaving out of the story. The only ones here get raped, entombed alive or killed’, reply the only female characters in this story of territory (Fall 2014). In this vein, Tyner and Henkin (2015) powerfully offer an alternative narration of the Vietnam War. Drawing upon the diaries of Dang Thuy Tram, a female Vietnamese doctor who wrote of the people she encountered, territory is re-narrated in languages of love and loss, as ‘aspirations and frustrations…of her struggles to comprehend the transformative effects of war on the lives of the Vietnamese’ (Tyner & Henkin 2015: 289). Drawing on feminist geopolitics and emotional geographies, Tyner and Henkin (2015: 300) re-orientate the narrative of war through the ‘commonplace, the mundane, the ordinary as it is lived within an extraordinary moment’. Here, they unpick both fatality and care, and the intermingling between ‘disembodied military strategies’ and the ‘fleshiness of washing clothes or cooking a meal’ (Tyner & Henkin 2015: 288). Alongside Pip Thornton’s (2015) autoethnographic deconstruction of her own poetry to convey territorial control and subjectivity in terrain in the Iraq war, such alternative renderings remain rich resources for the widening and re-considering of territorial presence, practice, accounting, and conceptualisation. As later discussed, decentring and decolonising territory through artistic and poetic articulation (Fall 2014, Phipps 2019, Hamdan 2012, Evaristo 2000, Thornton 2015) also relies less on the citation (and amplification) of traditionally structured, masculinist and colonised works.

**What would happen ‘if territory scholars were forced to start with *birdsong*instead of guns and maps?’[[1]](#footnote-1)**

As Dixon (2014: 147) and others have powerfully demonstrated, corporeality and embodied experiences are not the ‘be all and end all of feminist analysis’. There have been growing calls to ‘open up networks of knowledge production, scientific expertise, and political decision making to a wider range of interested actors - human and non-human’ (Bosworth 2016: 23, see also Marston & Doshi 2016). Objects, materialities, environments, and animals, for example, are all generative of the geopolitical considerations through which ‘social and political formations are created’ (Bosworth 2016: 23). Thinking anew about these material and non-human states of the geopolitical – and more specifically, those of territory and terrain – opens up new possibilities for both thinking through complex non-human entanglements, and the destabilisation of geopolitical relations that underlie and privilege certain forms of thought, life, and politics (Bosworth 2016: 33-34).

In offering a ‘post-human vision’ for and of feminist geopolitics (Sharp et al. 2019), Deborah Dixon (2015), for example, turns to bones and semi-living matter to ‘materialise evidence of geopolitical (and other traumas)’ (Dittmer 2018: 86). Stating her interest in bones as less in ‘their geopolitical “life” as corporeally dissociated parts…but rather [in] the manner in which these obdurate yet breakable fragments are afforded an “afterlife”’, Dixon (2015: 85) traces how they have been ‘understood, valorised, ignored and recovered in tangible expressions of a lived experience of suffering and trauma.’ In what could be read as a material accounting of terrain, Dixon's (2015) discussion of bones highlights a multiplicity of perspectives, practices, and violences, as well as compositions, (sub-)surfaces, and (afterlife) temporalities, present in terrain (see also Krmpotich et al. 2010). While this ambitious text puts forth an agenda to ‘move beyond and into the body by examining the non-corporeal and inner substances of bodies’ (Mills et al. 2017: 299), it is one that has nonetheless sparked debate from the wider feminist community. As Faria (in Sharp et al. 2019: 165) notes, while ‘embodied, in a kind of way’ the text’s focus on ‘partial corporeality can leave the text feeling depopulated’, a departure that others have understood as potentially ‘truncat[ing] political possibilities by refusing to engage the individuated subjects of “conventional” feminist geopolitics’ (Hyndman 2019: 3).

Here we might turn instead to the work of Sundberg and Kaserman (2007: 739) who powerfully illustrate how the bodily leakages of undocumented migrants, whether that be urination or ‘undisciplined defecation’, ‘are woven into an understanding of threats to the US nation, in terms of territorial borders and bodily borders’. For Sundberg and Kaserman (2007: 740), body and norms of bodily comportment remain a key part of territoriality and its limits, working to naturalise the exclusion of Mexican bodies ‘that contaminate and leak’. In this vein, scope remains for a feminist account of territory and terrain to further navigate carefully and thoughtfully how it can at once attend to the non-human – as multiple, material, and agential – while retaining at its core critique of and challenge to the ‘contested quotidian power relations that produce violence and historicize the spatialities that emerge from them’ (Hyndman 2019: 23). These power relations do not solely emerge from human or non-human life, but can be produced in both materials and objects. Sundberg and Kaserman (2007), Sundberg (2008), and Vicki Squire (2014), for example, explore an extended corporeality through the lens of ‘desert trash’ at the US-Mexico border. This ‘trash’ may take the forms of “identity documents and personal mementos as well as items needed for survival, like water bottles, packaged food, medication, shoes, clothes, sanitary products and backpacks” (Sundberg 2008: 872). ‘These mundane and intimate objects’ (Sundberg 2008: 872) ‘shed important critical light’ on the politics of mobility across territories and ‘over the category of the human itself’ (Squire 2014: 13). As Sundberg (2008: 887) asserts, ‘trash-talk’ generates hostility whereby ‘Americans view their national intimate spaces as being invaded and trashed’. As a result, ‘the injuries sustained by migrant bodies, now exposed to environmental hazards like harsh terrain and extreme temperatures, are overshadowed’ (Sundberg 2008: 887). Indeed, the ‘trash’ powerfully shapes the narrative around those producing the ‘waste’ who are framed as ‘wounding’ nature and thus a threat to nature and the national body (Sundberg & Kaserman 2007: 741). As Squire (2014: 15) asserts, ‘waste destabilises the very order on which the category of the human rests’ and in doing so ‘objectifies and constitutes less than human’ the migrants themselves.

These interventions offer a re-orientation from state-led accounts of (monitoring, enforcing, bordering, and calculating) territory and terrain, to one instead focusing on an embodied accounting, comprised of alternatively encountered and narrated territorial materialities, and navigational terrains. Alongside ‘trash’, Squire (2014) points also to wildlife reserves and ranches as ‘wild’ complexities of this terrain. If we are, as Hobson (2007) and Srinivasan (2016) suggest, to take the ‘animal’ seriously as a dynamic geopolitical actor, then we must both account for their role in shaping the constructs of territory and terrain, and even extend our understandings of territory and terrain to account for the territorial practices of animals themselves. As Hodgetts and Lorimer (2015: 286) highlight, animals matter as political and ethical subjects, and attending to both their behaviours, and the practices that become enfolded around their bodies, can provide a ‘thicker sense of the Earth’. This enfolding, enveloping, and co-production maps onto discussions of territory and terrain in myriad ways. Johnson (2015) and Johnson and Goldstein (2015), for example, highlight the enmeshing of biological life into the military through the practice of biomimetics. Here, the bio- and bio-inspired act to (in)form ‘terrains of violence – where (non-human) lives are imperilled’ (Johnson 2015: 299). Indeed, a wide range of animals have been studied, experimented on, and robotically replicated by the United States Military in order to ‘execute commands as well as enemies of the state, whilst limiting risk to American soldiers’ (Johnson 2015: 308). In this context, the militarisation of biological life serves to (re)shape future warfare and battlefield terrains. The removal of human bodies is desired, and the result is a ‘technologically, rather than biologically, endowed future’, one that is predicated on violence towards and through the non-human (Johnson 2015: 309). In other words, battlefield terrains of the future are being rendered through the bodies of animals in the present, raising significant ethical and political questions for the practices, temporalities, spatialities, empirics, and conceptualisation of territory and terrain (see Shaw 2017a, 2017b).

Here, we might turn, beyond the battlefield, to Ernwein and Fall’s (2015: 155) work on invasive species and the fuelling of ‘other domains of social anxiety’ including ‘wider fears about environmental technology, science and expertise, changing environments, and threats to human health’ that unravel from the ‘invading’ non-human body. Or we might explore, as Peters et al. (2018b) have done, the implications of boundary marking practices on non-human life. Through the lens of Trump’s proposed border wall, the authors explore the threatening of some of the North American continent’s most biologically diverse spaces, and the reduced area, quality, and connectivity of plant and animal habitats. Further, while notwithstanding the above, as Yusoff (2015: 211) highlights, the ‘inhuman’ is more than a ‘supplement to the figure of the human’. Whilst humans remain ‘intact as the loci of political understanding’, the ‘expressive capacities’ and possibilities of the inhuman remain underexplored (ibid). As one of our reviewers highlighted, ‘this excess beyond our experience’ is extremely significant, further demonstrating the pathologies of territorial constructs rooted in Euro-American (often male) writing. Think how differently understandings of territory and terrain might be constructed, the reviewer stated, if birdsong were the starting point of analysis rather than guns, warfare, and maps. As Elizabeth Grosz (2008: 12-13) illustrates, birdsong is a constitution of territory. It can serve to ‘locate the singer within a particular milieu or territory’, it can mark out territory as both desirable and dangerous, and identify a ‘particular set of qualities or skills in the singer’ such as loudness, beauty, and variation (Grosz 2008: 37). It can also resonate for the ‘sake of intensity alone’ (Grosz 2008: 12-13), for emotions of fear, anger, joy, and triumph—that birds experience or observe in others (Grosz 2008: 37). This example, and others (see Hawkins 2018) open up space for thinking through how different approaches and epistemologies, such as artistic practices, are side-lined in the academic terrains of territory thinking. Clearly, practices of territory making are not only human constructs and there is much to be gained by broadening this ontological purview.

Simultaneously, this has application for thinking through ‘terrain’. As Butler (2002) highlights, animals can have a significant impact on Earth’s terrains and vice versa. They trample, feed, burrow, mound, dam (changing flows of water), dig, excavate, strip surfaces of vegetative cover, activities that can lead to accelerated run off and erosion. Known as ‘zoogeomorphology’ (Butler 1992), we might think of the formidable digging practices of the grizzly bear or their denning activities which create new caverns, paths, and displacements of the earth’s surfaces. For Butler (2006) and others (e.g. Hall & Lamont 2003, Fei et al. 2014), animals ranging from bears to fish can act as geomorphological agents capable of widespread landscape change. For Fei et al. (2014: 70), this is increasingly important amidst a climate crisis as ecological change might ‘trigger substantial geomorphic changes’. If terrain forces us to account for the complexity of height and depth, then we might ask, in the words of Kirksey and Helmreich (2010: 545), what happens when we ‘burrow deep’ into the life that can animate terrain? Thinking across and with such interventions advocating for a ‘more-than-human geopolitics’ (Shaw 2017a: 451), a feminist approach to territory and terrain thus recognises a range of actors that compose, enable, and give texture to terrain and territorial volumes more widely. So too does it seek to engage the ethical questions that accompany an interrogation of terrain far from devoid of non-human life. It responds instead with a careful and care-full approach recognising layers of violence and affordances of active, vibrant, and agential non-human territorial occupants.

**‘We don’t want to be dug out’: Complicating the spatialities of territory**

The third provocation within this section can be found in the spatialities and proximities of territory and terrain. As highlighted above, discussions on both concepts have prompted varied and rich interventions on the visceral corporealities associated with inhabiting certain landscapes and seascapes (Thornton 2015, Squire 2016, Gordillo 2018, Baghel & Nusser 2015). The intermingling of bodies with earth and nature (particularly in the context of warfare) has proved a productive prism through which to interrogate materialities, affective atmospheres, and embodied experiences in particular spatial contexts. When not premised on practices of calculation and a distant and overarching cartographic eye (Williams 2011), such accounts describe being in close proximity with the environment – crawling through mud (Das 2006, Wood 2006, Gregory 2014), encountering resistance in mudflats (Whitt 2018), operating in deserts, at altitude or in mountainous terrain (Forsyth 2014, Baghel and Nusser 2015, Belcher 2018, Gordillo 2018), inhabiting the sea floor (Squire 2016), navigating darkness and light on the battlefield (Thornton 2015), or occupying and militarising ice (Bruun 2020, Bruun & Steinberg 2018). These are valuable insights responding to calls to ‘people’ and ‘fill’ territory (Anderson 2010, Antonsich 2010, Adey 2013). Yet, as Theriault (2017) highlights, whilst political geography is increasingly attentive to these kinds of human and more-than-human assemblages, there are important forms of territorial non-human agencies that have been neglected, but which nonetheless speak powerfully to ideas of embodiment, justice, and ethics.

Whilst a paper of this kind can only scratch the surface of such issues, resources and processes of extraction are a productive starting point. As Antonsich (2010: 422) highlights, natural resources are a crucial politico-economic dimension of territory, with their control a key facet of the territorial (Elden 2010, Braun 2000, Bruun 2018). Extractive industries (whether on land or sea) are, according to Phillips (2018: 51), ‘territorially bound’, as geological deposits represent highly selective practices of territorialisation occurring at particular sites and holes, in order to feed a global network of resource capitalism. Some of the geopolitical and territorial implications of these practices have been well examined, yet there remains room to deepen our understanding of territory and terrain, particularly when attuned to questions of justice, ethics, and power imbalances that so characterise feminist and postcolonial thought. In examining the non-human agencies that accompany resource struggles, it is clear that an embodied, physical proximity to the environment does not necessarily preclude meaningful engagement with territory. For example, in thinking again with the previous section’s discussion of the non-human both in and as territory, we might here think with Kathryn Yusoff’s (2015: 203) ‘genealogical account of coal’. Beginning with the observation that fossil fuels have a ‘history that is in/of the blood’ – one that ‘coheres at the seam, coal face, plant, and picket line’ - Yusoff (2015: 203, 204) keenly calls for further attentiveness to the role of ‘geosocial formations’ in ‘constitut[ing] the very possibilities for certain types of social, sexual, political, and labor arrangements’. Here, we are again reminded that the materialities of coal are ‘already active’ (Yusoff 2015) – and that further opportunities exist to trace the agencies, and territories, of the geological.

In alternatively approaching resources, we might also think here with territorial disputes involving indigenous communities and mining companies where both spiritual dimensions and connections to land and resources are just as significant as politico-economic factors (see Murrey 2015). As will be explicated below, territory is understood as variously mediated by, and relationally experienced with and through, a range of ‘invisible beings’ (Theriault 2017). As Theriault (2017: 125) continues, whether ‘one “believes” in these beings or not, the relational ethics those beings inspire have an impact’ on the political world and should be understood as key to processes of knowledge production (Sundberg 2014). While political geography is now attuned to the more than human assemblages of humans, plants, animals, and biophysical processes, it has not opened such ‘accounts...to what have conventionally been termed “supernatural” or “metaphysical” forms of agency’ (Theriault 2017: 114). Addressing this is an important endeavour. Not only can it work to ‘expose the ontological violence authorized by Eurocentric epistemologies both in scholarship and everyday life’ (Sundberg 2014: 34), but it can ‘unsettle the assumed stability and integrity of western temporalities and spatialities’ (Cameron 2008:383). In calls to ‘foster geographical engagements’ and openness to ‘other epistemic worlds’, then, Juanita Sundberg identifies opportunities for feminist work to ‘enact ways of worlding which do not presume political subjects as contained, discrete or even solely human’ (Sundberg 2014: 35, Sundberg in Sharp et al. 2019: 163). Accounting for the political effects of ‘invisible beings’ thus both opens accounts of territories and terrains to non-western and marginalised knowledge systems and practices (Theriault 2017: 118), and prompts further questioning of the methodologies employed in their capture (see Coddington 2017).

As a case in point, we can think *with* indigenous communities on Palawan Island in the Philippines. Here, Theriault (2017: 114) notes that decisions about land use are premised on social ‘relations with an invisible realm of beings who make their will known through mediums or dreams’ (Theriault 2017: 114). This relationality is elsewhere described in relation to the effects of mining initiatives, which through their destruction of sacred spaces mark a displacement of communities ‘from an environment with which they have established a spiritual relationship’ (Holden et al. 2011: 152). Such displacement, argue Holden et al. (2011: 153), can ‘prove devastating’ as it uproots an earth-based spirituality and a spiritual partnership with the land. A similar relationship can be seen among indigenous communities in Australia where plans to frack on Arnhem Land have been described as a ‘wilful deafness to Aboriginal spirituality’ (Davidson 2017). Here, spirits are believed to dwell in the subterranean and there are long held beliefs ‘of the endless spiritual cycle of their people through the land’s water sources’ – with a senior Yirritja man from north east Arnhem Land stating: ‘we don’t want to be dug out, because we come from the ground and we go back, like the water’ (Davidson 2017). Such examples are complemented by many others, including Carreño’s (2017) exploration of how mountains are understood as living material beings in indigenous Andean worlds. In this context, recent ‘open-pit mines are only made possible by destroying earth-beings and extracting metal from their corpses’ (Carreño 2017: 133). The case study, for Carreño, proves a starting point ‘for expanding the conception of the living and thereby allow translations of other worlds where mountains, rocks or rivers emerge as other-than-inanimate’ (Carreño 2017: 145, see also Nash 1993). This work, while significant, forms part of a longer lineage of scholarship exploring the intersections between spirituality and resources, with Taussig’s work on the ‘social significance of the devil in the folklore of contemporary plantation workers and miners in South America’ (Taussig 2010 [1980]: xv) as a prime example. In tin mines in the mountains around the city of Oruro, Bolivia, miners here have ‘statues representing the spirit who owns the mines’ and the force of life and death (Taussig 2010: 143), whilst for Andean Indians residing on the slopes of Mount Kaata, the mountain is itself a human body. Here, Taussig (2010: 157) teases out a reciprocal relationship between the land ‘understood in terms of the human body’, and the human body ‘understood in terms of the culturally perceived configuration of the land’ – each ‘body’ replenishing and rekindling each other. The ‘body’, so often the focus in feminist thought and practice is crucial here, yet these practices and narrations arguably prompt an unsettling of what materialities comprise the corporeal – the mountain here deemed to have its own embodiment and agency.

Spirituality is a pertinent issue beyond land too – particularly in ever looming deep sea mining projects. As Childs (2019) describes, for communities of the Duke of York Islands – ‘a small archipelago in the Bismarck of Papua New Guinea which lies 30km from the world’s first commercial deep sea mine site (known as Solwara 1)’ – mining the seabed has significant spiritual and cultural implications. Indeed, the clan chief of the Islands powerfully asserted that ‘when they start mining the seabed, they’ll start mining part of me’ (in Childs 2019: n.p). While it has been assumed, argues Childs (2019), that ‘there is limited human impact from mining in the deep sea… such thinking is a fallacy’ because, for the people of the Islands, ‘deep sea mining disturbs a sense of who they are’, including the spirits that inhabit their culture and beliefs. Indeed, central to this belief system is that certain spirits – masalai – are understood as guardians of the seabed and its resources. ‘The digging up of the seabed’ argues Childs (2019), therefore ‘cuts through the very fabric of their spiritual world and its sacred links to the sea and land’. More broadly, ‘many indigenous groups regard the appropriation of their resources as an act of cultural violence: that is, a spiritual assault as much as a brute act of physical expropriation’ (Castree 2004: 161).

These examples have significant implications for thinking through the territorial. As Phillips (2018: 54) highlights, claims to resources often involve cartographic divisions of surfaces (both water and land) into ‘large, angular, two dimensional blocks of territory that remain the property of the state, but over which…oil companies are granted temporary exclusive extraction rights’. Seismic surveys may also be invoked to make the three dimensional subsurface legible. The relationship between space and matter is key here (Phillips 2018), with territory an important governmental technology in extractive industries (Bruun 2018). Yet it is also inadequate to understand the complexities at play in the above examples - those that cannot be mapped, managed, or calculated. There is, as Theriault (2017: 114) highlights, a need to ‘attend more carefully to the ontological multiplicity of forces that shape spatial practices and their regulation’. As exploration for resources intensifies, such agencies are significant. Indeed, Theriault (2017: 114) suggests that within these contexts, they are ‘no less significant in the (de)constitution of state power than many of the more directly observable agencies whose interactions we are accustomed to tracing’. This does, as will be demonstrated, have application beyond extractive industries.

Broadening the ‘ontological purview’ of both territory and terrain to account for the invisible offers further opportunities to account for marginalised practices and experiences of these concepts, particularly those that are not proximate or reliant on physical, corporeal encounters. As Clark (2018) highlights, feminist geopolitics can perform important work here in muddying and challenging hegemonic epistemologies. At the same time, deliberately unsettling the boundaries between the visible and invisible pushes ‘us’ to conceive of political struggles over territory and resources as ‘pluriversal’ – underpinned by ‘different ways of bringing worlds into being’ (Theriault 2017: 125). For Sundberg (2014:39), this ‘entails imagining the performative enactment of multiple, distinct ontologies or worlds’. In doing so, Hunt (2014: 29) argues that the ‘epistemic violence’ of discourses ‘creating and sustaining boundaries about what is considered real and, by extension, what is unable to be seen as real (or to be seen at all)’ may be revealed and challenged.

These modes of thinking provide space for challenging ‘ongoing processes of colonisation and dispossession’ (Theriault 2017: 125); raise important ethical questions about the conceptual distancing of space and practices beyond sight (Childs 2019); complicate and enrich our understandings of the more-than-human configurations that constitute territory, terrain, and conflict; and provide further opportunities for how territory and terrain are negotiated through ‘bottom-up practices and beliefs alongside [the] top-down’ (Antonsich 2010: 425). Whilst this is a vital process, it must, as Cameron et al. (2014: 19) stress, be undertaken with great care and consideration as to selectively ‘invoke indigenous ontologies…is to tread on intellectual terrain that is heavily shaped by colonial inheritances and interests’. This is particularly important given that such selective invocations have been used to frame various indigenous practices and belief systems as superstitious, primitive, magic, and naive (Cameron et al 2014:21) or ‘neutralised as triviality, a case study or a trinket’ (Hunt 2014:30). To avoid re-inscribing colonial power relations and to account for the ‘specific experiences and claims of Indigenous peoples’ (Cameron 2008:31), Sundberg (2014) suggests that geographers must learn the importance of walking ‘with’. This may involve questioning ‘what it means for Indigenous knowledge to be moved from spaces of lived Indigenous governance and culture’ to the space of a journal article or ‘to a conference session on ontology with very few Indigenous people and little space for Indigenous methods of teaching and learning’ (Hunt 2014: 31). It also entails becoming accountable for the epistemological and ontological habits that govern political geography (Sundberg 2014:35) and may involve, in the words of Hunt (2014: 31), becoming ‘unhinged, uncomfortable, or stepping beyond the position of ‘expert’ in order to also be a witness or listener’. In practice, this necessitates following Indigenous protocols, principles, and methodologies’ (Sundberg 2014:40) and perhaps breaking open the constraints of western ontological possibilities to enable room for practices such as ‘stories and storytelling as culturally nuanced ways of knowing, produced within networks of relational meaning-making’ (Hunt 2014: 27).

**OVERSIGHT/CITE: ACADEMIC TERRITORIES AND TERRAINS**

In this final section, we turn to *bodies of expertise*, focusing on spaces, practices, and acts of citation. While scholars of political geography have long recognised the need to ‘actively re-orientate’ scholarly perspectives (Williams 2013: 225), it remains challenging, even uncomfortable, to reflect upon the uneven contexts within which knowledges on territory and terrain are produced. In the territories and terrains of both material and citational spaces, the academic landscape remains a rocky and difficult one to navigate. Integrating a more diverse and intersectional range of voices and bodies into these discussions is key. As Jo Sharp (2019: 162) notes, the ‘politics of citation and recognition, especially for feminist, postcolonial, queer, and race theories’ are vitally important. While key, important work is nonetheless too often subject to *oversight*. The choice of wording here is a significant one. Oversight has two distinct meanings: the first refers to the action of overseeing (as in having control over a situation), and the second to the (unintentional) failure to notice or do something. Importantly, the first definition implies an abundance of vision, while the second definition is often used to justify a lack of vision – a kind of myopia perhaps. Each denotes an inherently political action, and each, we argue, importantly composes and comprises the concepts of territory and terrain. Within canonical scholarship, oversight (as aerial, military, sovereign) is of course understood as a key facet and practice of the enacting and maintenance of territorial dominion and domination (Weizman 2007, Williams 2013, Thornton 2015, Kaplan 2018, Slesinger 2018). But revisited and reconsidered, oversight also enables us to reflect critically on the enacting and maintaining of the literatures and literary grounds of territory and terrain. After all, the plurality and tapestry of wider works examining territory and terrain too often remain oversighted; sighted and cited only by those actively seeking to diversify their scholarly vocabularies, curricular and referencing practices. The result might be understood, in territorial terms, as somewhat of a chasm – both a fissure in terrain, and a significant difference in approach and feeling.

In seeking to bridge this fractured terrain, turning to Noxolo’s (2009) reflections on the politics of writing within a postcolonial and feminist context is of value. Noxolo (2009: 63) encourages us to think through the body in ‘terms of its multiple materialities’. This necessitates an ongoing attentiveness to questions around ‘identity, including nationality, race, gender, (dis)ability etc.’, as well as ‘professional status and the geographies/complexities of institutional affiliation [,] academic publishing regimes’, and the writers and writing of anonymous referees, that while ‘insisted upon’ can act to unevenly enable, preclude, and exclude (Noxolo 2009: 63, see also Kobayshi 2006). The task here, then, is to deconstruct how our bodies ‘speak in our writing’, with the aim of reflecting on how scholarship on territory and terrain can be further accountable and responsible in relation to ‘what it says’ (Noxolo 2009: 63). While this impetus centres the embodied scales at which we (re)produce geography as a discipline and as such (re)produce ourselves as geographers (Hunt 2014: 28), when coupled with the notion of oversight, the spatiality of this reflexive provocation can be extended further. We can ask, for example: which bodies occupy the higher ground in landscapes from battlefields to seabeds, from ice-sheets to governments, from digital platforms to the conference rooms in which we – as critical scholars – speak? After all, as Thornton suggests, the privilege of (over)sight from a distance is a form of disciplinary power (Thornton 2015), whether deployed on a battlefield or in an academic panel session. It thus remains important to reflectively interrogate the academic territories and terrains we inhabit, occupy, and engage, especially when, as Mott and Cockayne (2017: 69-70) highlight, ‘those who embody authoritative positions are often unaware of, or unconcerned by, their privilege, and often do not consider that their citational practices may disproportionately shift the frames of visibility and exclusion’.

This is, of course, not a new critique. There is an array of (action-oriented) scholarship on the politics of citation and inclusion across the sub-disciplines of geography (Domosh 2005, Al-Hindi 2000, Jazeel & McFarlane 2009, Mott & Roberts 2014, Maddrell 2015, Mott & Cockayne 2017, Halvorsen 2018a, 2018b, Rose-Redwood et al. 2018, Pugh 2018), and in wider academia (Ahmed 2017). Yet in the complicated and uneven territories and terrains of conference rooms, classrooms, universities, and bibliographies, there remains embedded a (geo)politics of (in)visibility and (non-)occupation that warrants ongoing attention. A process necessitating a ‘radical reorientation of scholarly practices’ (Halvorsen 2018b: 15), it requires an active looking and listening (Rose-Redwood et al. 2018) to broader and more diverse mediations on territory and terrain; as well as the adoption of referencing practices that reflect a politics of vision beyond masculinist, Anglophone, established delineations.

Here, one potential avenue for thought lies in the moment and process of peer review. While critique has been levied of the reviewing process, such that it might rely ‘upon a masculinist model of “objectivity” that is disembodied, impartial, and unlocated’ (Berg 2001: 511), we can valuably turn here to our own reviewer experience in developing this paper. In what we found an immensely valuable, generous, and fair collection of comments, one observation in particular stood out. Writing of what they described as our ‘constructive but severe argument’, the reviewer stated that the paper nonetheless adopted ‘an almost defensive approach in voicing its purpose constructively’, an observation they associated with:

‘how any attempt to voice feminist concerns within mainstream “critical” geography can be met with disdain or, and this is the point of the paper, polite silence. That this is said in this cautious way goes some way to show how anyone invoking feminist issues within political geography has internalized that this might be a contentious claim to knowledge – particularly within the Anglo literature on territory.’

As another reviewer helpfully added, thinking through the etymology of ‘incorporation’ is also useful here. To ‘incorporate’ refers to the process of forming a body and to the constitutive parts of a corporeal whole. This critique helpfully reminds us of the importance of examining the structures and learned practices that we may naturally internalise. We ruminated with this feedback: both immediately scanning back over instances of caution in the paper’s text, but also thinking back to anxieties punctuating discussions about the very idea and foundations for the paper itself. Prompted by this reviewer, then, we think an opportunity emerges to revisit the article’s earlier discussion of the body as terrain. Here, in thinking with our own academic bodies as terrain, we can think not just of bodily interiors, but of *internalisation*. A valuable account in this vein is Carol Cohn’s (1987) seminal charting of her fieldwork with ‘defence intellectuals’ in the field of ‘nuclear warfare and defence’. Therein, Cohn (1987: 707) describes the process of ‘learning the language’ in order to participate. While speaking of ‘technostrategic [defence] jargon’, rather than of academic discourse, her description of what results from this process nonetheless remains astute. In mobilising the lexicon learned, Cohn (1987: 706) finds herself adopting a distinct tone, one that while inclusionary in this space, did ‘not allow’ for the articulation of particular questions, debates, or values. Following on from earlier discussions about the perceived and embodied territoriality of articulation, both human (Hamdan 2012, Phipps 2019) and non-human (Grosz 2008), we find here further reflection on the learning and mobilisation of territory and terrain – as textually encountered and performed citationally – to be required. We might ask how, then, the scope and inflection of the existing Anglo scholarly canon on territory and terrain effects, affects, and punctuates our own thinking. From watching tones adopted and adding caveats, to the curbing and smoothing of claims, these forms of linguistic self-moderation pose an opportunity to think about the ‘emotional geographies of feminist geographical work’ more widely (Smith et al. 2008: 533).

A further, and differently collaborative, opportunity for reflection might also lie in thinking with the observation that the discipline remains ‘in the midst of a digital turn’ (Ash et al. 2018: 25). Digital technologies, and the ‘virtual and non-proximate connections’ they enable, facilitate, and mediate, are ‘pervasively quotidian’ (Graham 2011: 212, Ash et al. 2018: 26). In recognition of the growing importance of the digital, scholars understood it ‘as a kind of spatial landscape’ to be mapped, ‘as one would any new terrain’ (Ash et al. 2018: 33). As conceptualisations of the digital evolved however (Ash et al. 2018), scholars have re-thought tropes of cyberspace as a ‘virtual’ ‘separate, perhaps disembodied, dimension of spatial experience’, instead arguing for a ‘greater attention to the material conditions of the digital’ (Kinsley 2014: 376, 364). In this vein, we see an opportunity here to think about digital citation terrains, as those which are both ‘experienced spatialities’ (Cohen in Graham 2011: 220), and encompassing critical potentiality. What we are referring to here are citation projects occurring in digital environments, such as on websites or social media/ microblogging sites such as Twitter. While there are a wide variety of relevant examples of such digital interventions (e.g. #citewomen and #CiteBlackWomen on Twitter), one notable response to oversight discussed is that of AltCite. Found on Twitter @altcite, and built from open and community contributions to the #AltCite hashtag, AltCite is an online archive of ‘alternative citations, other voices, [and] different choices’ (AltCite 2018). Launched at the 2018 Royal Geographical Society Annual International Conference, an important scholarly site, the project offered both a participatory platform for ‘amplifying’ alternative citations, and the promotion of re-orienting and re-imagining geographical canons. While an interesting initiative in and of itself, it offers, we think, a wider opportunity to think about conceptualisations and geographies of territory and terrain specifically. Noting that the re-approaching, re-framing, and re-orienting practice encompassed within AltCite is one demonstrative of the redressing and even emancipatory potential of the digital, we might think of the digital both as both extended or expanded academic terrain; and one in and through which we might critically reflect on our own conceptual mobilisations and occupations of territory and terrain. Building with and further on such interventions and reflections, encompassing a re-configuring of sites, sights, and cites, there may be some levelling in the uneven dialogical terrain that shapes current discussions (Rose-Redwood et al. 2018), whilst simultaneously enriching our understandings of the terms and constructs of territory and terrain.

**CONCLUSION: SHIFTING GROUNDS**

Amidst a burgeoning diversification of knowledges and practices within political geography, this paper has offered a number of interventions that muddy the waters of our understandings of territory and terrain. By approaching these concepts through feminist scholarship we have offered three areas of intervention, designed to prompt a more inclusive theorisation and territory and terrain politics.

The first called for a feminist historiography of territory and terrain that actively critiques the gendered evolution of these concepts and their reproduction in conceptual debates. It argued for a deeper unravelling of the often masculinist and calculative logics that underpin understandings of territory and terrain, and for further critique of the effect of historical power relations on current mobilisations, conceptualisations, and practices. The opportunities implicit in such an endeavour are yet to be fully realised. The second point of intervention lies in the narration and forms of bodily and more-than embodied encounters within territory and terrain. The implications of this are multifaceted but include further methodological innovation in challenging and interrogating the world’s territories and terrains – through, for example, Lego videos (Fall 2014), literature (Noxolo 2014) and poetry (Evaristo 2000, Thornton 2015, Phipps 2019), or diaries (Tyner & Henkin 2015). Such approaches have much to offer in destabilising hegemonic narratives and re-orientating away from military bodies for more diverse and inclusive accounts. Beyond human bodies, the paper also argues for further attention to be paid to both animal bodies and the supernatural. As highlighted above, whilst territories and terrains may be presented as devoid of non-human life, this is simply not the case. Attending to this (extended and expanded) life not only raises important and pressing ethical questions, but provides a frame for more care-full engagements with geopolitical spaces. In the case of the supernatural, spiritual beliefs and practices are highlighted, and far-reaching and underexplored questions and consequences of territorial and endeavours. The third intervention engages instead with bodies of expertise, offering a reflection on practices of citation which act to maintain the shape of the concepts of territory and terrain moving forward. Through the (revised) lens of ‘oversight’, we highlight the importance of reflexivity and accountability for how we conceptualise in key academic territories and terrains, and think through the role that digital spaces might play in the creation of new spatialities. This is intended to act as both conceptual critique of territory and terrain, and as active approach responding to an academic landscape itself constructed by and through asymmetric spaces, positionalities, and visibilities. In the words of Pugh (2018), these interventions are not intended to ‘emasculate’, but rather to facilitate inclusivity and diversity and, in the words of Halvorsen (2018b: 3), open ‘up territory to other epistemological starting points’.

This is an increasingly important endeavour as the earth’s territories and terrains are shifting, submerging (DeLoughrey 2017), and becoming increasingly difficult to inhabit in the wake of climate change. The effects of these processes are already being felt unequally and catastrophically and they raise some pressing questions for how we understand territory and terrain amidst such change. As the grounds beneath us are shifting, so too must our understandings of the concepts that underpin them within political geography. Feminist and postcolonial perspectives must be at the heart of this as new territories and terrains are explored and inhabited, both on Earth and beyond (Squire et al. 2019). Questions of ethics, care, emotion, embodiment, articulation, spirituality, and agency must be central, and offer an important counterpoint to calculative, technology driven apprehensions of the earth in all its forms. There is great scope to expand this agenda and this paper is by no means all encompassing. Rather, we hope it might facilitate the creation of more equitable accounts of political geography’s messy, muddy, multiple, and lively territories and terrains that have thus far, remained all too neat and tidy.

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1. This quote came from reviewer 1 (NAME), who made a number of really valuable suggestions. Including this was a conscious choice as we feel it important to acknowledge and cite reviewer labour, and we advocate this as good practice. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)