CRISIS AND BODY POLITICS IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CULTURAL PRODUCTION

TERRITORIAL BODIES

Edited by
Charlotte Spear and Madeleine Sinclair

This vibrant collection is timely and forceful in its address of the manifold crisis of capital and ecology unfolding in the late neoliberal era. Mobilising and extending Verónica Gago's concept of body-territory in salutary new ways, the essays in the volume are exciting in their interdisciplinary range, bringing together important strands of feminist and environmental thought to offer powerful critiques of the intertwined forces of capitalist accumulation, extractivism, racism, and heteropatriarchal and colonial violence in different global geographies. Crucially, they not only focus on bodies as sites of oppression, but also foreground the 'protesting body' as figure and material agent in territories of resistance and insubordination, both in the form of organized politics and collectivities and in the realms of culture, philosophy, and aesthetics.

Sharae Deckard, *Lecturer in World Literature at the School of English*, Drama, and Film University College Dublin, Ireland

This book is essential reading for our politically uncertain times. With its ambitious scope and masterful execution, Spear and Sinclair have curated a vital collection of chapters that explore the body as a central terrain of resistance and refusal. The authors delve deep into our contemporary perma-crisis, compelling us to rethink the concept of 'crisis' and the complex webs of socio-ecological violence spanning the past, present, and future. From ecological breakdown to oceanic geographies and from extractive violence to postcolonial spaces, this book provides an eye-opening and timely perspective. By intersecting gender, race, and coloniality, the authors reveal the profound entanglements between bodies and territories, human and extra-human natures, posing critical questions about embodied ways of knowing and resisting structural violence. Spear and Sinclair guide readers through an incisive critique of this political moment and the uneven histories that shape it. I highly recommend Crisis and Body Politics in Twenty-first Century Cultural Landscapes: Territorial Bodies for anyone seeking to understand the complex dynamics of our era.

Thom Davies, *Associate Professor in Geography*, University of Nottingham and co-editor of *Toxic Truths*

Drawing inspiration from the Latin American feminist thinking of body-territory, Crisis and Body Politics brings together an exciting variety of different analyses of spatialised embodiment. This extraordinary book more than delivers on its promise to reconstruct our ways of seeing the multivalent crises that mark our times.

Illan Wall, *Lecturer, School of Law*, University of Galway, Ireland

Territorial Bodies offers exciting new perspectives on the interrelations of territory, embodiment, culture, and the environment. Globally diverse in its geographical foci and innovative in its theoretical approaches, the book persuasively locates the body as the site where our age's multiple crises intersect. Scholars in a variety of fields – from literature and visual culture to geography, postcolonial theory, and gender studies – will find important insights into bodies as and in spaces of crisis in this wide-ranging yet meticulously organized volume.

Paul Crosthwaite, *Professor of Modern and Contemporary Literature*, University of Edinburgh, Scotland

Territorial Bodies features a provocative chorus of voices that offers a much-needed insight into embodied experiences of gender and racial violence, dispossession, and colonial displacement across the globe. At its core is the Latin American feminist concept of 'body-territory', the idea that lands and bodies are entangled and mutually constituted. The cultural narratives explored here compellingly contest the neoliberal notion of the body as individual property and celebrate the vibrant alliances formed by human and more-than-human bodies. That makes this carefully edited book an essential contribution to debates about the current ecological and political crisis.

Jordana Blejmar, *Senior Lecturer in Visual Media and Cultural Studies*, University of Liverpool, UK

Crisis and Body Politics in Twenty-First Century Cultural Production

The twenty-first century has been deemed the "Age of Crisis". We are witnessing the catastrophic unfolding of environmental crisis, financial crisis, pandemic and conflict. But are we to understand these crises as new phenomena? Is their seemingly simultaneous existence purely coincidental? Or rather do they instead form part of a singular, historically produced, unfolding crisis, which only today has reached a generalised consciousness? And perhaps most urgently, how far can we separate the crises of human experience from those exacted upon the land?

The chapters collected in *Crisis and Body Politics in Twenty-First Century Cultural Production: Territorial Bodies* deploy the framework of "Territorial Bodies" to address urgent social, ecological and political challenges. Examining themes such as (inter)national bodily governance, racialised bodies, eco-feminist movements, spatial justice and bodily displacement, this collection provides a deeper analysis of the interconnected forms of violence perpetrated against marginalised human and non-human bodies, taking this combined violence as the defining feature of contemporary crisis.

Charlotte Spear is a PhD candidate in English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick. Her thesis is titled "Locating the Human: World Literature and the Concept of Rights" and explores the role of literature in rethinking dominant human rights frameworks. She has published on the notion of the "state of emergency" in *Modern Language Review*, on refugee–migrant fiction in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, on postcolonial humanitarian intervention with *De Gruyter* and on sex workers' rights in debt economies in *The Journal of World-Systems Research*.

Madeleine Sinclair is a Comparative Literature PhD candidate and Early Career Teaching Fellow in the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning at University of Warwick, UK. Entitled "World-Literature, Neoliberalism and the Politics of the Twenty-First Century Short Story-Cycle", her Wolfson Foundation-funded PhD thesis foregrounded the short story as a distinctive genre in world literature by examining the interconnections between aesthetics and politics in contemporary short fictional forms. Her work is published, or forthcoming, in *Literature Compass*, *Journal of World-Systems Research* and *Journal of Short Fiction in Theory and Practice*. She is guest editor of a special issue on "Short Fiction: Landscape and Temporality", forthcoming with the *Journal of Short Fiction in Theory and Practice*.

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Crisis and Body Politics in Twenty-First Century Cultural Production

Territorial Bodies

Edited by Charlotte Spear and Madeleine Sinclair

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Sanita Fejzić completed a PhD in Cultural Studies at Queen's University. As part of her research, Fejzić articulated an artistic movement she calls Peasant Futurisms. Peasant Futurisms expresses peasant perspectives of the future, past and present through organic subsistence farming, local gift and cyclical economies, collaborative labour models, permaculture gardening, agro-ecology and organic regenerative agriculture (conservation

and rehabilitation approaches to growing food). In Fejzić's work, Peasant Futurisms poses a challenge to capitalist cities that centre cars and big commerce by imagining edible and wilder eco-cities surrounded by peasant food belts. Her radio play, Machines and Moss, produced by the National Arts Centre as part of its Irresistible Neighbourhoods project, is part of the Peasant Futurist movement. Fejzić has also developed an online course for the Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts, Peasant Futurisms: Cultivating Delicious Futures, accessible for free.

Introduction
Territorial Bodies in Crisis

Madeleine Sinclair and Charlotte Spear

Consider the following moments of global political protest:

April 2016: Following plans for the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, a 1,172-mile pipeline which would "transport crude oil from the Bakken oil field in North Dakota to a refinery to Patoka, Illinois" (Levin 2016), the "Standing Rock Sioux tribe and thousands of Native American supporters from across North America" (Levin 2016) set up camps to oppose the project which "[threatened] sacred native lands and could contaminate their water supply from the Missouri river" (Levin 2016). After the erection of the first protest camp in April 2016, "when members of the Standing Rock Lakota and other Native American nations rode on horseback and established a spiritual camp called Sacred Stone" (Levin 2016), the Standing Rock protests quickly developed into "an international rallying cry for indigenous rights and climate change activism" (Levin 2016), drawing intersectional support from people not only across the North Dakota region, but across the world.

November 2022: "Women across Latin America march against violence in day of protests" (Morland 2022). The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women saw women across the region march to demand action from authorities on the ongoing issue of violence against women. They were met by "hundreds of police with riot shields and protective vests" (Morland 2022).

April 2024: Student groups across the world set up encampments on university campuses, occupying university halls and facilities, "demanding an end to partnerships with Israeli institutions because of Israel's assault on Gaza" (Kassam and Agencies 2024). Alongside extensive media and Twitter engagement with the protests, images circulated of police intervention, and student protestors physically barricading university spaces (Kassam and Agencies 2024), engaging in hunger strikes (Kassam and Agencies 2024), blocking busy streets (Associated Press 2024), and breaking through fencing (Associated Press 2024).

At first glance, perhaps the above three cases seem to have little in common: they happened in different places, on different days, and in aid of different causes. And yet, their linkages are not only clear but vital to consider for an understanding of contemporary crisis. What these three seemingly disparate examples have in common is the use of the collective body to protest against acts of violence towards both human and non-human bodies. Across these distinct socio-political contexts, the protesting body becomes not only a *symbol* of resistance but its very materiality represented in protest marches, encampments and occupations. As Wall notes, unlike other "political and legal technologies such as judicial review, online petitions, letter-writing campaigns or lobbying", the physical protest movement, registered in the collective bodies of the "crowd", "quite clearly has a different set of affective dynamics. It generates atmospheres, stages forms of immediate horizontal bodily communication, collective movement, mood, demeanour and rhythm" (2021: 4). Wall's notion of an *atmosphere* of protest produced by the "crowd" is particularly striking when it comes to the central questions of this edited collection. How might this *atmosphere* of protest help us to examine the different modalities of structural violence which these protests respond to? How can we understand these examples not as individual instances of violence but rather as a singular system of crisis which binds human and nonhuman bodies across temporalities, geographies and identities? And finally, what role do global cultural productions play in mediating this embodied "atmosphere" of protest and the energetics of collective assembly emerging today?

Reconceptualising Crisis

Academic discussion, public debate, media discourse and the global politics of recent years have all been flooded by notions of crisis, from environmental crisis to financial crisis to pandemic and conflict. As early as 2013, Agamben highlighted that

> the concept 'crisis' has indeed become a motto of modern politics, and for a long time it has been part of normality in any segment of social life. . . . Today crisis has become an instrument of rule. It serves to legitimize political and economic decisions that in fact dispossess citizens and deprive them of any possibility of decision.
>
> (2013)

More recently, Heller et al. have noted that "[o]ver recent weeks, months, and indeed, years, there has been an astounding proliferation in public discourse of the word 'crisis', particularly in the European context" (2016: 7). De Medeiros and Ponzanesi highlight that "the twenty-first century might

well be on its way to being seen as the Age of Crisis. It is not that past ages were not themselves marked by profound crisis", they argue, "[h]owever, the sense of crisis in the present has come to dominate, so that instead of being perceived as an exception, or as a catalyst ushering in historical change, crisis now rather seems to be perpetual" (De Medeiros and Ponzanesi 2024: 1). Finally, Deckard, Niblett and Shapiro argue: "we are currently experiencing a manifold crisis involving neoliberalism's breakdown, ecological collapse, and the exhaustion of the social and cultural formations that rose to dominance through the long duration of centrist liberalism" (2024: 1). Are we to understand these crises as new phenomena? Is their seemingly simultaneous existence purely coincidental? Or rather should we instead be conceiving of a singular, historically produced and temporally unfolding crisis, which only today has reached a level of hegemonic Euro-American consciousness but which in fact has been in effect for much of the world population for a much longer expanse of time?

With these questions in mind, this collection takes as its focus the contemporary ubiquity of crisis in both academic discourse and popular discussion in the twenty-first century, posing that we cannot view this crisis as temporally bound to the present. Rather, crisis must be understood as historically unfolding. In many ways then, this book takes inspiration from the work of Rob Nixon who, through his theorisation of "slow violence", has proposed the notion of "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (2011: 2). In so doing, he highlights that "violence is customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility" (2011: 2). In order to thoroughly understand historically unfolding valences of violence and therefore, we want to suggest, of crisis, we must "engage a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales" (2011: 2). Building on Nixon's work in this way thus provides two key areas for further analysis of contemporary crisis:

1) In accounting for notions of "slow violence", we must recognise that, whilst ideas around "crisis" may seem to be flooding our consciousness somewhat suddenly, in fact the temporal scale of this crisis is significantly longer than our existing communication and media channels may be apt to show.
2) Recognising crisis not only as that which is "spectacular" but rather also as that which may go unseen requires us also to see those forms of crisis, which, due to systems of visibility and invisibility inherent to global media systems, may not frequently be presented as such.

On the first, that of the need to examine the extended timescales of violence, this collection attempts to do so through the historicisation of multi-valence crises, which seem ubiquitous today but in fact have their roots in histories, which may often be outside of the purview of present visibility. In many ways then, to effectively comprehend the valences of contemporary crisis requires the creation of a kind of manufactured hindsight of its roots. In so doing, we necessarily follow such theorisations as Mirzoeff's "right to look" or the "the claim to a subjectivity that has the autonomy to arrange the relations of the visible and the sayable" (2011: 474). It is only by, as Mirzoeff notes, "[acknowledging] the patriarchal slave-owning genealogy of [such] authority" (2011: 479) that we can begin to understand the very systemically uneven construction of precisely that which we call crisis, including recognising what may be missed in this definition. Indeed, as multiple chapters in this collection highlight, to truly understand crisis requires a move away from the emphasis on the spectacularised present, and instead a perception not only of the historical inception of crisis but also of the future and unfolding crises as a result of our actions and systems of today.

A core example of this form of historically unfolding crisis in play is the climate crisis, its prevalence reaching the centre of discussions in Euro-America only at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries, despite its much longer history. In fact, critics, including Jason Moore (2015) and Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley (2011), have noted the historical development of an "environmental crisis", which has been acutely impacting populations on the peripheries of the world system since as early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Lilley and Moore 2011: 136). Furthermore, Indigenous scholars have for centuries been highlighting the extended temporalities of this violence and its linkages to the human rights abuses experienced by Indigenous populations in the USA, with Nick Estes writing that "the proliferation of violence against the land [by predominantly extractive industries in North America] has been directly related to attacks on Indigenous women's bodies" (2019: 8). Indeed, notes Estes, the people of the Standing Rock Reservation on the border of South Dakota and North Dakota have sought to draw attention to the "ongoing holocaust" (2019: 10) against "both wildlife and Indians" (2019: 10). It is precisely this linkage between violent land grabbing during the colonisation of the New World, and contemporary extractive activity which forcibly moves Indigenous peoples from their historic lands, which, in Estes words, forces a reconsideration of the "linear conception of time" (2019:14). Instead,

> Indigenous notions of time consider the present to be structured entirely by our past and by our ancestors. There is no separation between past and present, meaning that an alternative future is also determined by our understanding of the past. Our history is the future.
>
> (2019: 14–15)

And yet, environmental breakdown is by no means the only example of this tendency to invisibilise. A simple Google search of the terms "invisible" and "crisis" draws up numerous examples of international NGOs and diplomatic organisations attempting to "shed light upon" those, often intractable, crises which are otherwise forgotten or ignored in Euro-American media and public discourse. From "Forgotten emergencies 2022: MSF responds" (2022), and "Quality unknown: The invisible water crisis" (2019), to "The invisible crisis: WFP chief appeals for the world not to look away as families starve in Madagascar" (2021) or "An Invisible Crisis? Women's poverty and social exclusion in the European Union at a time of recession" (Oxfam 2010), even perhaps the most basic literature review of current approaches to intractable crisis highlights the urgent need for an updated approach to contemporary crisis and its combined social and ecological impact. It is precisely this updated approach that this edited collection looks towards.

Crisis and Territorial Bodies

This collection responds precisely to this unevenness: namely, it attempts to reconstruct our very *way of seeing* crisis, in order to account for its temporal, spatial, economic and social composition. As a framing for this reconstruction, we want to begin with the suggestion that, in this *atmosphere* of epochal – though historically patterned – crisis, we have witnessed the re-politicisation of the human body as a contested site of socio-ecological investigation. As a terrain of hegemonic inscription, environmental history, and collective resistance grounded in corporeal vulnerability, the "body" presents a distinct point of convergence between intersecting forms of violence produced by neoliberalism's crisis today.

The thematisation of "territorial bodies" in this edited collection draws inspiration from the Latin American feminist concept of *body-territory*, an intrinsically deterritorialising term which "expands our way of seeing, based on bodies experienced as territories and territories experienced as bodies" (Gago 2020: 85). Emerging in the "spirit of insubordination", the hyphenated *body-territory* calls attention to the mutually constitutive relationship between land and bodies, re-situating the body as an "extensive territory" – as "expanded material" – or an "extensive surface of affects, trajectories, resources, and memories" (Gago 2020: 88). As Gago explains:

> The conjunction of the words 'body' and 'territory' speaks for itself: it says that it is impossible to cut apart and isolate the individual body from the collective body, the human body from the territory and landscape. 'Body-territory', compacted as a single word, de-liberalizes the notion of the body as individual property and specifies a political, productive, and epistemological continuity, of the body *as* territory. The

body is thus revealed as a composition of affects, resources, and possibilities that are not 'individual', but are made unique because they pass through the body of each person to the extent that no body is ever only 'one', but always with others, and also with other nonhuman forces.

(Gago 2020: 86)

The concept of *body-territory* draws on the collective knowledge of indigenous women on the front lines of resistance against neo-extractivism across Latin America (such as fracking, mining and agri-business). As Astrid Ulloa writes, the twenty-first century has witnessed a wave of transversal indigenous women's movements across Latin America, including Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Guatemala and Ecuador, who fight for the defence of the territorial body, both as a means of resisting extractive violence and as a "political proposal" for the "future of life" (Ulloa 2023: 327).[1] In the face of dispossessive territorial transformations resulting from (neo)extractive land appropriation processes, the political mobilisation of these movements, Ulloa suggests, demands "recognition" of the violence directed towards indigenous bodies and non-human nature, while making visible the inherent "relationality", or "fluidity", of "ontological borders" within ecological "networks of life" (Ulloa 2023: 327).[2] While rooted in a rich history of Latin American decolonial thought, the "political ontology" of such movements, has "configured unprecedented strategies of [collective] resistance", against the intertwined violence of "femicide, ecocide and epistemicide" (339).[3] As Gago elucidates, such collective struggles against the (neo)extractive accumulation model have energised the political "idea-force" of the *body-territory*, which has been used as a "strategic" tool to engender new forms of transversal political subjectivity on a world scale (Gago 2020: 95). By "de-liberaliz[ing] the notion of the body as individual property" backed by "individual rights", the "concept image" of *body-territory* foregrounds the political "necessity of alliance" reacting against the patriarchal, colonial and racist ideologies which underpin extractive accumulation regimes (Gago 2020: 88). In such feminist imaginaries, the renewed conceptualisation of the "body-as-battlefield" underlines the "organic connection" between accumulation, heteropatriarchal and colonial violence (Gago 2020: 84).

The notion has infused the "practical cartography" of the feminist strike in the twenty-first century – and the wave of feminised resistance noted in the example of *The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women* at the beginning of this introduction – by offering a diagnosis of intersecting forms of violence produced by neoliberalism (Gago 2020: 11). This includes both the rise of neo-extractivism targeting common resources in indigenous territories, from which the term emerged, and an expanded conceptualisation of extractivism which moves beyond its conventional association with raw materials, to include the

broader "financialisation of life" in urban spaces (Gago 2020: 247). Gago describes the strategic "idea force" of the *body-territory* as it intersects with the "expanded" extractive operations of capital:

> The notion ties together a perspective that explains how the exploitation of territories is structured in a neo-extractive mode today, and how that also reconfigures labor exploitation, mapping the ways the dispossession of the commons affects everyday life. That is why it is strategic in a very precise sense: it expands our way of seeing, based on bodies experienced as territories and territories experienced as bodies. That image of the body-territory reveals the battles that are occurring here and now, pointing to a field of forces that it makes visible and legible on the basis of conflicts. The body-territory is a practical concept that demonstrates how the exploitation of common, community (be it urban, suburban, peasant, or Indigenous) territories involves the violation of the body of each person, as well as the collective body, through dispossession.
>
> (Gago 2020: 85)

For Gago, the "image of the body-territory" "expands our way of seeing" and understanding the acceleration of extractive violence during the present neoliberal conjuncture.

While firmly rooted in decolonial Latin American feminist imaginaries, the "body-territory" resonates with a range of theorisations which call into question the "ontological" separation between "human" and "non-human" bodies, the "natural" and the "social", or the territorial and the embodied. The deterritorialising emphasis on "territories experienced as bodies" echoes a lineage of eco-feminist criticism, such as the foundational studies of Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, who critically dissected the "organic connection" between colonial, extractive and gendered violence (Gago 2020: 84). Drawing on such scholarship, Val Plumwood devised the term "critical ecological feminism" as not merely a "conceptual framework" but also a "political tool" which interrogates the assumptions of the "nature/culture dualism" by integrating a critique "of both human domination and the domination of nature" (Plumwood 1993: 1). Like Gago, Plumwood underlines the gendered ideologies engrained in the assumption of a "nature/culture dualism". For Plumwood, the "connection between women and nature and their mutual inferiorisation is by no means a thing of the past, and continues to drive, for example, the denial of women's activity and indeed of the whole sphere of reproduction" (Plumwood 1993: 21). This "backgrounding of women and nature is deeply embedded in the rationality of the economic system and in the structures of contemporary society" (Plumwood 1993: 21). Foregrounding the interconnection between "women's oppression and the domination of nature", the "critical

ecological feminism" framework, Plumwood suggests, "can illuminate many other kinds of domination, since the oppressed are often both feminised and naturalised" (Plumwood 1993: 18).

Stacy Alaimo's more recent conceptualisation of "transcorporeality" builds on Plumwood's framework of "critical ecological feminism", underlining the porous materiality of the human body enmeshed in a web of ecological relations. As Alaimo notes in *Bodily Natures*: "crucial ethical and political possibilities emerge from the literal contact zone between human corporeality and more-than-human nature. Imagining human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from 'the environment'" (Alaimo 2010: 238). Like Gago, Alaimo underscores how challenging the entrenched ontological separation between "nature" and "society" can open up new socio-political possibilities:

> Emphasizing the material interconnections of human corporeality with the more-than-human world – and, at the same time, acknowledging that material agency necessitates more capacious epistemologies – allows us to forge ethical and political positions that can contend with numerous late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century realities in which 'human' and 'environment' can by no means be considered as separate.
>
> (Alaimo 2010: 238)

The chapters included in this collection draw inspiration from the deterritorialising imperatives of "body-territory", "critical ecological feminism" and "trans-corporeality", which highlight the imbrication of human and non-human environments, in order to forge new "political positions" in an era of crisis. In doing so, we consider how the "territorial body" offers a framework for addressing what Moore describes as a "singular process of transformation that today we call a crisis" (Lilley and Moore 2011: 136), which potentially signals the "exhaustion of the longue durée" regime of accumulation. "There is a growing awareness", notes Moore,

> of a profound interconnection between biophysical transformations and biophysical problems and crises, on the one hand, with the central institutions of the capitalist world economy, on the other – of financial markets, of large transnational firms, of capital-intensive agriculture, and so on.
>
> (Lilley and Moore 2011: 136)

For Moore then, it is impossible to view these forms of crisis as separate. Instead,

> if we start from a premise that these are in fact unified processes, we get away from the notion that if we just fix the markets, fix the machines, if

we just fix this or that problem that we put in a nice convenient, tidy lit-
tle box – maybe it's population, maybe it's imperialism, maybe it's some-
thing else – then we open up a whole set of questions about how we are
all part of nature. We open up a new way of seeing those large, so-called
'social' processes that we always refer to – globalization, imperialism,
industrialization – as themselves ecological projects – ecological projects
that seek to rework the relations between human beings (human nature)
and the rest of nature.

(Lilley and Moore 2011: 136)

The conceptualisation of "Territorial Bodies" aligns with the aforementioned
critical efforts to assert the interpenetration of human and extra-human
natures. As Moore has suggested, "the binary Nature/Society" –
ideologically intertwined with the Cartesian separation of mind and body –
is "directly implicated in the colossal violence, inequality, and oppression
of the modern world; and that the view of Nature as external is a funda-
mental condition of capital accumulation" (Moore 2015: 2). For Moore,
therefore, a framework for understanding "capitalism in the web of life"
demands that we "move beyond the Cartesian dualism" in order to rec-
ognise the "bundling [of] the human/extra-human/web of life relation – a
manifold and multi-layered relation that encompasses everything from the
micro-biome to the biosphere" (Moore 2015: 28). As Moore suggests,

if humans are a part of nature, historical change – including the pre-
sent as history – must be understood through dialectical movements of
humans making environments, and environments making humans. The
two acting units – humanity/environments – are not independent but
interpenetrated at every level, from the body to the biosphere.

(Moore 2015: 28)

The theme underlying this collection foregrounds the interpenetration of
bodies and territories – from the "micro-biome to the biosphere" – thus
echoing Moore's call to eschew "modernity's most sacred binary" in
response to neoliberalism's unfolding crisis.

Interrogating "Territorial Bodies"

Taking inspiration from Gago's initial conceptualisation of "body-territory",
each of the chapters included in this collection will, in their own way,
map an extended notion of the "territorial body" to examine its radical
potential to "[expand] our way of seeing". Each author understands the
central notions of crisis, the body and territory from varying and multi-
disciplinary perspectives. As such, this collection, and its engagement with
the expanded notion of "territorial bodies" offers a critical framework for

addressing urgent social, ecological and political challenges, from ecological breakdown to the rise of statelessness, violence against women and racial exploitation. In the first instance, this collection considers how cultural works evaluate the intersection between bodies and territories registered in world culture today, and how such cultural registrations work to locate the body as a distinct site of socio-ecological crisis. By deploying the "territorial body" as a critical framework, this book thus sheds new light on how cultural works give visibility to what Nixon describes as the temporally dispersed "environmentally *embodied* violence", produced by "turbo-capitalism", by "track[ing] the persistence of unofficial hostilities in the cellular domain, the untidy, attritional lethality that moves through the tissue, blood, and bones of combatants and noncombatants alike, moving through as well the living body of the land itself" (Nixon 2011: 200). In this context, the framework of the "territorial body" arguably facilitates what Davies describes as "embodied ways of knowing polluted environments" and the various modalities of structural violence produced by capitalist modernity (Davies 2022: 10). At the same time, this collection underlines how an expanded conceptualisation of "territorial bodies" provides imaginative insight into the historical processes undergirding this "singular" process of socio-ecological crisis today. Building on Moore's depiction of the body as a site of "environmental history", we thus consider how the concept facilitates a re-historicised notion of crisis, exploring histories of oppression towards gendered, racialised and environmental bodies, and the potential for resistance when viewing contemporary crisis through this alternative temporal frame (Moore 2015: 26).

While this collection underlines the counter-hegemonic power of "territorial bodies" during the current political moment, several chapters historically dissect the "body" itself as a site of political contestation, subject to intersecting forms of gendered, racialised, and colonial inscription. The body is thus foregrounded as a site of historically patterned racialised differentiation. As Sara Ahmed notes: "the notion of 'racialized bodies' suggests that that we cannot understand the production of race without reference to embodiment: if racialization involves multiple processes, then these processes involve the marking out of bodies as the *site* of racialization itself" (Ahmed 2002: 46). For Kathryn Yusoff, this process of embodied differentiation is inextricably intertwined with territorial extractivism, or the "grammars of geology" (Yusoff 2018: xii). As Yusoff writes, "the birth of the racial subject is tied to colonialism and the conquest of space and the codification of geology as property and properties. Thereby geologic resources and bodily resources (or racialized slavery) share a natal moment" (Yusoff 2018: 58). Throughout this book, the "territorial body" offers a tool for critiquing the longue durée of extractive violence perpetrated against racialised bodies and geographies, showing how the violent

ideologies inaugurated during this "natal moment" determine the impacts of "crisis" in the present. In a related vein, other chapters in this collection interrogate reductive readings of the links between gender, embodiment and extractive capitalism. While such chapters explore territorial embodiment through the lens of "critical ecological feminism" outlined above, they also call into question the problematic gendered essentialism implicit in many eco-feminist approaches, which inadvertently reproduce the traditional association between the "female body" and "nature". By foregrounding the politics of the "body" itself as a site of simultaneous hegemonic inscription and environmental history, these chapters will add nuance to the conceptualisation of territorial embodiment, by underscoring the body's elemental imbrication in ongoing systems of structural differentiation.

Chapter Breakdown

Collectively, the assemblage of voices included in *Crisis and Body Politics in Twenty-First Century Cultural Production* considers how cultural registrations re-politicise the body as a lens through which to critique both the historical process of socio-ecological transformation and the current epochal crisis. Each of the authors featured in this volume presents an interdisciplinary perspective on the cultural registration of the body as a locus for epochal crisis. Just like the central notion of "territorial bodies", the notion of world culture is interpreted in a variety of ways, from analysis of the cultural production of literature, music, video and visual art to explorations of collective cultural struggles and the future of cultural labour. Taking advantage of this interdisciplinarity, the book is organised into four sections, with chapters linked thematically to promote cross-disciplinary conversation on the intersection between territories and embodiment in world culture. The sections take the form of a journey from the relocation of territory itself, through a questioning of the very integrity of the body, across a de-linking of body and territory, and finally to explore the future of the territorial body.

The first section, "Aquatic Bodies", delves into the artistic depiction of embodied oceanic geographies across global cultures. Danny Steur's chapter, "Inhuman Futures: Unmooring Extractivism Through Drexciyan Afrofuturism" reads the oceanic artworks of the Afrofuturist mythology initiated by Drexciya through the lens of the "territorial body". Drawing on Kathryn Yusoff's critique of "the inhumanities", Steur illuminates how Ellen Gallagher's artworks challenge the racialised geologic grammars undergirding the colonial ideology (Steur 2025: 32). For Steur, the "(re)territorial(ised) bodies" featured in Drexciyan mythology subvert colonial geo-logics, "slowly tearing at colonial pasts, presents and futures in an iterative,

ongoing process of imaginative decolonisation" (Steur 2025: 33–34). The logic of decolonisation in oceanic imaginaries infuses Beatriz Arnal-Calvo's chapter on "Feminist Aquapelagic Relational Bodies in *Mussiro Women* of Ibo Island: Diving in Submerged/Emergent Praxes of Existence, Resistance and Peace in/with the Oceans", which imagines "alternative hydro-ontologies and epistemologies from a feminist standpoint" (Arnal-Calvo 2025: 39). Building on the *cuerpo-territorio* of Latin American feminisms, alongside Gómez-Barris' conceptualisation of decolonising "submerged perspectives", and Ingersoll's notion of seascape epistemology, Arnal-Calvo proposes a new framework of "feminist aquapelagic relational bodies" (Arnal-Calvo 2025: 39). Arnal-Calvo then considers how such a framework finds imaginative expression in Cassi Namoda's artworks, *Mussiro Women, Ilha do Ibo I and II* (Namoda 2020). The final chapter in this section, Carolin Böttcher's "Troubled Waters: *Thin Places*, the Troubles and Nature Writing" examines the intersection between nature, embodiment and trauma in the Irish aquatic imaginary. Drawing on the notion of "territorial bodies" and the author's conception of a "network of environmental experience" constituted by "an affective relationship between the body and the environment", Böttcher maps the de-territorialising encounter with "thin places" in the work of Kerri Ní Dochartaigh (Böttcher 2025: 60).

The second section, "Bodily Integrity", deploys the notion of the "territorial body" in order to critique the "human" and "non-human" binary undergirding histories of colonialism and patriarchal hegemony. In "Transcorporeal Alliances: Women, Video Art, and Ecologies of Crisis in the Middle East", Oğuz Kayır examines the registration of "transcorporeal alliances" in the video-based practice of Middle Eastern women artists, Shirin Neshat and Lamia Joreige. Situating the notion of "territorial bodies" in dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari's "ontology of becoming" (1987) and Alaimo's "transcorporeality", Kayır argues that the video art practices of Neshat and Joreige "sketch out territorial bodies to disclose how the magnitudes of . . . social crises render bodies inseparable from territories" (Kayır 2025: 90). Renée Landell's chapter "The Breaking of the Body: Blackness, Nature, and Animality in David Dabydeen's *Slave Song*" examines the interplay between body, territory and 'brokenness' in David Dabydeen's 1984 poetry collection *Slave Song*. Analysing Dabydeen's poetic mediation of "territorial bodies", Landell reads the Caribbean neo-slave narrative through an ecocritical lens, considering how such works expose the "interrelated history of violence against Black men and the nonhuman world" (Landell 2025: 96). By reframing "territorial bodies" through the lens of "brokenness", Landell examines the body as both a site of racial dehumanisation and territorial control, while gesturing toward the anti-colonial potentiality of resistance by reimagining the spatiality of the body itself.

The third section, "De-Territorial Bodies", forefronts the radical possibilities of an explicit deterritorialisation of the body, highlighting the colonial and heteropatriarchal roots of this territorialisation. The chapters in this section explore how literary production might provide the space for a de-linking of the individual and collective body from the restrictive, binaries of colonial identity production. Laura Kennedy and Charlotte Spear's chapter, "Tracking the Politics of (De)Territorial Language in Postcolonial Algeria" calls for a rethinking of the colonial imposition of linguistic categories in the context of postcolonial Algeria, through a comparative examination of Assia Djebar's *Algerian White* (2000) and Kamel Daoud's *Zabor or the Psalms* (2021). Through a re-negotiation of the model of "territorial bodies" via the frame of "bodily 'prosthesis'", the authors highlight the radical potential of "seeing language as an object, experienced as in dialogue with but not inherent to the body" (Kennedy and Spear 2025: 113), meaning, "it can be manipulated and usurped from its supposed country, or culture of origin" (Kennedy and Spear 2024). In this way, they highlight how the model of "language prosthesis" might allow for a profound resistance to the colonial roots of territory itself. In "Territories of Transition: Navigating Trans Embodiment, Identity, and Activism in Neoliberal Landscapes", Yaqi Xi examines literary representations of the "transitioning body" in order to "shift the perspective from seeing 'trans-' merely as a passage between predefined gender categories to viewing it as a significant outcome of the deterritorialisation of the fraught concepts of 'transgender' and 'transsexual'" (Xi 2025: 142). Employing a Deleuzian–Guattarian approach to the notion of "deterritorialization", Xi takes the notion of "territorial bodies" to "elucidate the interconnection between personal experiences and political narratives within the trans community, revealing how individual journeys of transitioning are always embedded in political struggles against neoliberal forces that seek to constrain and normalise bodies" (Xi 2025: 142).

In the final section, "Bodily Futures", the authors examine how the notion of the "territorial body" might be reconstructed through various futured lenses which hold the potential both for the oppression and for the emancipation of the individual and the collective body. In "Inscribed Capital, Human Bodies: Interpellating Contemporary World Bank Expressions", Romain Chenet employs a Foucauldian perspective of "bio-power" "to consider bodies as 'inscription surfaces'" (Chenet 2025: 148) for the purpose of the future perpetuation of capital in policies drawn from the World Bank. Chenet makes use of the concept of the "territorial body" to examine how World Bank Group's policy documentation and communications "promote health and education outcomes aligned with idealised future worker productivity" (Chenet 2025: 148), thus centring the "territorial body" as capitalism's idealised body of the future. Matt Finch and Marie Mahon

similarly take the future as their framework for analysis of the "territorial body" in the context of the future scenarios produced as part of the 2020 Horizon-funded IMAJINE project. Through their analysis, Finch and Mahon pose the question,

> What does a radical, activist, feminist territorial lens bring to scenarios work – and, how might scenario planning enhance our use of the territorial body concept by inviting speculation on the future dynamics between individual bodies and the territories they inhabit?
>
> (Finch and Mahon 2025: 163)

In encouraging the reader to confront the uncertainty of the future, Finch and Mahon highlight how, "dealing with uncertainty means attending with care to the relational nature of existence" (Finch and Mahon 2024) in the present, thus demanding recognition of the potential limitations of any purely present framing of spatial injustice. Finally, in "Peasant Futurisms Rooted in Body-as-Territory: How Peasant Practices of Subsistence Farming and Food Sovereignty Challenge the Hegemony of Late Capitalism", Sanita Fejzić urges us to consider the entanglement of social and ecological crises through the lens of what the author calls "Peasant Futurisms" (Fejzić 2025: 196). In so doing, she argues that "our power is situated at the intersection of individual and collective bodies" (Fejzić 2025: 196), serving as "a reminder that we are stronger together if we can cultivate ways to foster plurality within our common struggles against the dramas of late capitalism and its machinery of systemic exploitation, excessive extractivism, and extinction-making" (Fejzić 2025: 196). Fejzić thus closes this book, in some ways, where it begins, with a reminder of the atmosphere of resistance which can be formed when we acknowledge our collective being and thus work towards a better future for all.

Notes

1 Translations ours, original text: "En el siglo XXI, los movimientos de las mujeres indígenas han planteado la defensa del cuerpo-territorio frente a las violencias extractivas y como propuestas de futuros de vida". (Ulloa 2023: 327)
2 Translations ours, original text: "Las propuestas de las mujeres indígenas retoman las luchas de los movimientos indígenas y las demandas del reconocimiento de sus derechos al territorio, la autodeterminación y la autonomía como pueblos, es decir su ontología política. . . . De esta manera, las propuestas de las mujeres indígenas visibilizan las violencias territoriales y hacia los no-humanos, encarnadas en sus cuerpos, y demandan con sus acciones políticas la defensa de la fluidez y relacionalidad de las fronteras ontológicas de las redes de vida". (Ulloa 2023: 327–8).
3 "Las mujeres indígenas frente a las injusticias ambientales y territoriales, y contra las violencias, los feminicidios, los ecocidios y epistemicidios, han generado propuestas conceptuales y metodológicas sobre lo político, lo espacial

y lo colectivo, a partir de su fluidez y relacionalidad" (Ulloa 2023: 339). For further discussion surrounding the heterogeneity of these emerging movements, and the distinct cultural practices relating to body-territory, see for instance: Delmy Tania Cruz Hernández and Manuel Bayón Jiménez (2019), *Cuerpos, territorios y feminismos: Complilación latinoamericana de teorías, metodologías y prácticas políticas*. Colombia: Abya-Yala, Ediciones. See also, Johanna Leinius (2020), "Articulating Body, Territory, and the Defence of Life: The Politics of Strategic Equivalencing between Women in Anti-Mining Movements and the Feminist Movement in Peru", *Journal of the Society for Latin American Studies*, 40(2), 204–219 and Amira I. Ramírez Salgado, (2024) "The body as territory: a movement perspective", *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 44(1), pp. 201–217.

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I
Aquatic Bodies

1 Inhuman Futures

Unmooring Extractivism Through Drexciyan Afrofuturism

Danny Steur

Detroit-based techno-duo Drexciya (James Stinson and Gerald Donald) developed an Afrofuturist mythology that reimagines colonial history: Drexciyan myth rewrites the Middle Passage, the journey Black enslaved subjects made from Africa to the New World. During these passages, "pregnant America-bound African slaves were thrown overboard by the thousands during labour for being sick and disruptive cargo" (The Unknown Writer, 1997). But what if the unborn babies of these victims did not drown? What if they survived underwater, and established a submarine society away from the violence of coloniality and enslavement? Thus, Drexciya speculates on an alternative history that leads to radically different presents and futures. Their provocation has been taken up by a range of artists, who have in their own ways interpreted and delineated Drexciya-inspired aquatic utopias (or "aquatopias" [Eshun, 1998: 06[083]]): the Drexciyan mythology includes comic books (two *Book of Drexciya* volumes by AbuQaddim Haqq [2020, 2021]), a novella (Rivers Solomon's *The Deep* [2019]), other music (clipping.'s EP *The Deep* [2019]), and visual artworks (such as Ellen Gallagher's *Watery Ecstatic* series [2001–]). The iterations of Drexciya's mythos are populated by aquatically adapted MerPeople who inhabit the oceanic geographies their ancestors were cast into. As such, the mythology and its radical Black aesthetics provide a lively illustration of the notion of territorial bodies: they rework the violent deterritorialisation of their ancestors (their enslavement), re-territorialising themselves in aquatic environs and embodying these geographies in unexpected ways. As I will show, they contest Eurocentric notions of place and initiate an affirmative relationality to the Earth. Moreover, the Drexciyan mythos presents an opportunity to test the waters for the notion of territorial bodies; to assess how it might serve as cultural analysis in the context of contemporary socio-ecological crisis.

I operationalise the notion of territorial bodies with recourse to what Kathryn Yusoff calls the inhumanities: an analytic that names the entwinement of white liberal humanist discourses with geology (both a

discipline and practice) (Yusoff, 2018). In this twining, both Blackness (purportedly inhumane) and the Earth (the inhuman) are construed as nonagentic, extractable matter. Through the grammars of colonial geology, Black(ened) enslaved subjects were defined as a disposable, freely available source of energy and labour, while the Earth's minerals and materials were similarly construed as extractable natural resources. Consequently, Earth-matter and race co-construct each other: Earth-matter gets racialised, and race acquires a material dimension. Yusoff calls this latter part a "material geophysics of race" (2018: xiv), or more precisely a "geophysics of anti-Blackness" (2018: 99), to denote how the raciality of geology (and its Extractivist practices) have had geophysical consequences, as evidenced by the climate breakdown that has resulted from this geologic praxis. Drexciyan mythology, I argue, creatively intervenes in the construction of the inhumanities, and its anti-Black geophysics: if Eurocentric geology constructs the Earth and its materials as natural resource, Drexciyan mythology speculates on ways to contest this Extractivist regime. Below, I first delineate how I conceptualise territorial bodies. Thereafter, I proceed by addressing "how and where matter relations organize and arrange particular enduring forms of oppression" (Yusoff, 2021: 667). I first trace the *where*, examining embodied praxes of Drexciyan place-making (their submerged re-territorialisation). The aquatically mutated physiologies of Drexciyans allow them to construct a "black sense of place" amidst disorienting ocean currents (McKittrick, 2011: 950). Then, I explore the *how* – how Drexciyan myth resists colonial matter relations, which allow for their submerged Black placemaking. In Ellen Gallagher's visual artworks, I find a rejection of geology's racial grammars and a suggestion towards another geophysics of being – a non-Extractivist mode of worlding.

On Territorial Bodies

The notion of territorial bodies emerges in this volume as an analytical tool that offers a multi-scalar perspective on contemporary socio-ecological crisis, coupling questions of embodiment with matters of (political) geography. This linkage is inspired by the Latin American, feminist concept of *cuerpo-territorio* (the *body-territory*), which responds to colonial-capitalist, neo-extractivist practices in the Americas and its entangled effects on the lands, ecologies, and the bodies of those – particularly Indigenous women – living in these "extractive zones" (Gómez-Barris, 2017: xix; Vasudevan et al., 2022; Cabnal, 2010). The *cuerpo-territorio* posits "the central claim that there is no ontological difference between territory and the body. . . . When territory – including water – is contaminated, so is the body, creating an inseparable connection between space and body" (Zaragocin and Caretta,

2021: 1508). *Cuerpo-territorio*, in its critical feminist activist tradition, is strategically employed to expand

> our *way of seeing*, based on bodies experienced as territories and territories experienced as bodies. . . . The body-territory is a practical concept that demonstrates how the exploitation of common, community . . . territories involves the violation of the body of each person, as well as the collective body, through dispossession.
>
> (Gago, 2020: 85)

This way, the *cuerpo-territorio* offers a tool to think through and act on the intersections of territorial struggles and the lived experiences of colonial-capitalist Extractivist violence.

Yet, such a vivid activist praxis raises questions: what distinguishes territorial bodies from *cuerpo-territorio*? And what need exists for the term territorial bodies? Does coining another term not constitute an act of intellectual extraction, where Indigenous or non-Western thought is only valorised once translated into Euro-Western academia (Todd, 2016)? Does it not contribute to the endless proliferation of terms and concepts within an exploitative academic publishing industry? Considering these questions, I want to suggest that the notion of territorial bodies – if it is to be more than an appropriation of non-Western knowledges and praxes – ought be explicitly positioned within a different epistemic context than the *cuerpo-territorio* that inspired it. If *de*colonial thought offers a mostly Latin American intellectual tradition distinct from postcolonialism (an auto-critical interrogation of Eurocentric traditions) (Bhambra, 2014), we may position *cuerpo-territorio* within the context of the former and 'territorial bodies' in the latter lineage. As such, it provides a different, complementary perspective on similar questions, without appropriating and distorting the ideas and practices of *cuerpo-territorio*. Before wading into the analysis proper, I briefly sketch what the notion of territorial bodies entails, conceived thusly.

Drexciyan Afrofuturism, in its various guises, is centrally occupied with a process of (re)territorialisation so as to rewrite the historical violences of colonialism – to reinstall an affirmative link between territory and bodies and thus gesture towards other futures. Their ancestors were violently dispossessed of their (collective) bodies and lands, and Drexciyan myth attempts to redress that violence in another world. Addressing Drexciyans as territorial bodies in this sense, I must note that I do not mean to reduce Black subjects to bodies – as they have been historically in order to provide free labour. Rather, in using the term 'territorial bodies', I direct attention to the ways in which geographies/geologies/geophysics always already subtend and co-construct life and modes of embodiment

(just as life impacts the Earth and elaborates its forces) (Yusoff, 2013). Taken thusly, approaching Drexciyan myth with the notion of territorial bodies allows me to examine how the territories and bodies present in the mythos co-construe each other. As such, I tease out how Drexciyan myth responds to the ways that Western thought configured land inhabited by 'uncivilised' peoples as improperly used, unpropertied and empty *terra nullius*, while its inhabitants became extractable flesh (Schacherreiter, 2012; Yusoff, 2018). Drexciyan Afrofuturism regards its Black subjects not as 'uncivilised' nor its submarine geographies as empty: Drexciyans counteract the displacement of their deterritorialised foremothers, who were thrown off ships, by enacting a submerged reterritorialisation with their aquatically adapted bodies.

The Drexciyan Nation: A Black Sense of Place

With this framework in place, let us dive into Drexciyan geographies – the *where* of the resistance to the inhumanities and colonial matter relations in Drexciyan Afrofuturism (Yusoff, 2021). Drexciya's creation myth sets the stage: enslaved, pregnant Africans were thrown into the Atlantic, and so the various aquatopias of Drexciyan art are located in its waters. The waters of the Atlantic feature prominently in Black aquatic thought (Walcott, 2021), as Black intellectuals, artists and activists grapple with the histories of dispossession and displacement wrought upon the African diaspora by racial slavery. As Fred Moten writes, "It's terrible to have come from nothing but the sea, which is nowhere, navigable only in its constant autodislocation" (2013: 744). Elizabeth DeLoughrey similarly asserts the disorienting nature of the oceans: "the perpetual circulation of ocean currents means that the sea dissolves phenomenological experience and diffracts the accumulation of narrative" (2017: 33). Yet Drexciyan myths resist the autodislocating unnavigability of the Atlantic and transform its spaces into more clearly demarcated speculative geographies – principally Drexciya itself, as a submarine nation. As Kodwo Eshun writes, this "underwater paradise is hydroterritorialized into a geopolitical subcontinent mapped through cartographic track titles" (1998: 06[083]). Drexciya's track titles delineate fantastical places such as the Andreaen Sand Dunes, the Red Hills of Lardossa and the Bubble Metropolis: the capitol of Drexciya (Drexciya, 1999, 1997a, 1997b). The two comic volumes by AbuQaddim Haqq visualise and narrativise these hints at worldbuilding in Drexciya's music. *The Book of Drexciya: Volume One*, for instance, details a historic battle between Drexciyan warriors and the Darthouvens, an inimical faction of merfolk: when Drexciyan were ambushed in a canyon, they fled to the Hills of Lardossa and fought "an intense battle [that left] bloody currents in the deep sea" (Haqq, 2020). Eventually, the Drexciyans emerged victorious, and

these hills were henceforth known as the Red Hills of Lardossa. In Drexciyan mythologising, the Atlantic's aquatic terrain is thus imaginatively given new meanings (cf. Gaskins, 2016; Bay, 2023).

As this battle suggests, Drexciya's submarine nation is decidedly militaristic, evoking the register of Black nationalist movements (Eshun, 1998: 06[083]). Drexciyan myth realises a goal of such liberation movements; the "creation of a separate black nation" (Harris, 2001: 409), but this remarkably contrasts with the disillusionment with the nation state that postcolonial states have experienced. Partha Chatterjee asserts that anticolonial movements that strategically employed the construct of nationhood to counteract colonial claims of their backward-ness inadvertently "also accepted the very intellectual premises of 'modernity' on which colonial domination was based" (1986: 30). By claiming nationhood, these states were "doomed to continue [the state's] oppressive functions" (Ashcroft, 2014: 238–239), such as its propensity for antagonistic self-aggrandisement and the need to invent a unitary cultural identity (exceedingly difficult amongst the heterogeneous groups assembled within borders drawn by European forces). For an aquatopia, the nation state hardly seems like the best form, and in their hard-fought statehood Drexciya seems to replicate colonial modes of geographic thought which construct places as "sites to be dominated, enclosed, commodified, exploited and segregated" (McKittrick and Woods, 2007: 6). So why does Drexciya reproduce this rhetoric?

I hazard that this movement entails more than an unquestioning reproduction of the territorial dreams of Black nationalism. While Drexciya certainly preserves Black nationalism's revolutionary momentum (and inadvertently the ideological pitfalls of the state), the aquatic situatedness of the Drexciyan nation simultaneously complicates the notion of the nation state itself. Eshun argues that the Drexciyan mythos inhabits what Paul Gilroy calls the Black Atlantic (Eshun, 2003). This notion instigates a transoceanic thought that decentres nation-based geopolitics: Gilroy construes the Atlantic as "one single, complex unit of analysis . . . to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective" (1993: 15). As a submarine nation in the Atlantic, Drexciya does not necessarily distort and reduce Gilroy's Black Atlantic back to singular nation states: rather, I propose to read this influence the other way around – amid the Black Atlantic, Drexciya reconfigures statehood. It unmoors the construction of the nation state, which becomes a fluid entity whose borders cannot take hold because its spaces are constantly moving. The fluid spatiality of Drexciya emphasises that no nation or culture is ever a singular entity unaffected by other forces – the Black Atlantic-turned-hydroterritory foregrounds the contingency and transnationality of the nation state itself, opening it up to undulating dynamics and liquefying its borders, warping the foundation

of statehood. As such, Drexciyan myth reveals a tension within the notion of territorial bodies, pertaining to the concept's first constitutive element: territories. With its fluid, autodislocating spaces, Drexciya transgresses the conceptual basis of territory as an enclosed site – territory as, following Édouard Glissant, "the basis for conquest. . . . Territory is defined by its limits, and they must be expanded" (1997: 151). Following Drexciyan mythologising, territory exists in the notion of territorial bodies not as a claim to such expansionist statehood, but rather as a carving out of a space (like *cuerpo-territorio* does), in which Drexciyans escape colonial-capitalist extractivism. Hence, as territorial bodies, Drexciyans inhabit oceanic geographies (the nation of Drexciya) in a way that unsettles the presuppositions, the enclosures, fixity and expansionism, of colonial geographic thought.

Turning to the second part of territorial *bodies* illuminates more about how Drexciyan hydroterritory responds to the inhumanities – the colonial "geo-logic" that entwines Blackness and Earth-matter to dominate both (Yusoff, 2018: 20). While the ocean's ceaseless currents "dissolve phenomenological experience" for humans (DeLoughrey, 2017: 33) and so disallow making place from space (imbuing a space with localised meaning), Drexciyans chart submarine terrains in ways unavailable to human phenomenology. They have adapted to their submarine environments: their physiologies are replete with fins, gills and tails across the different iterations of the mythology. They thus enact what Sylvia Wynter called indigenisation: the "process of adaptation, partial retention, re-invention, and transformation, that enabled enslaved Africans to become natives in the New World" (Edwards, 2001: 21–22; Wynter, 1970). This submarine indigenisation lets them chart the (to us) unknowable ocean depths into the places named above: they sacralise places for the commemoration of colonial violence and slavery amidst – and despite – the ocean's flowing currents. That is, with places like the Bubble Metropolis, the mythology resists the unknowability of those coordinates where Black subjects were thrown off ships, speculating on ways to "localize an event that can never be truly historically localized" (DeLoughrey, 2017: 35). As such, Drexciyan myth counteracts how colonialism "incorrectly deemed black populations and their attendant geographies as 'ungeographic'" (McKittrick, 2006: xiii). Drexciyans upend this anti-Black attribution: they make place where this is considered humanly impossible, and so challenge "classificatory spatial practices [and] move us away from territoriality" (as noted above) (McKittrick and Woods, 2007: 5). Differently put, the territorial bodies of Drexciyan myth provoke a "black sense of place" because they "imaginatively situat[e] historical and contemporary struggles against practices of domination" (McKittrick, 2011: 949). Drexciya's unruly submarine geographies infuse the Atlantic with a Black sense of place – producing its Black Atlantic hydroterritory – and evoke the historical and contemporary struggles

against anti-Black, colonial geography to inaugurate other futures. Torn loose from the colonial geographic order of thought, with their submarine indigenisation Drexciyans proclaim a "subjective-geographic relation" stolen from their foremothers (Yusoff, 2018: 37fn4), and spur on "the creation of a new material grammar outside of plantation geo-logics . . . through a relation to the earth that is planetary, not territorial" (Yusoff, 2018: 37fn4). With such planetary relations, we arrive at the *how* of colonial matter relations; the material grammar that subtends colonial-capitalist extractivism.

The Earth's Memory: The Sea Is History

Throughout Black aquatic thought and artistic practices, the Atlantic and its oceanic matter is frequently regarded as a storehouse for colonial histories: the prehistory of Drexciyan myth still pervades these waters. As Christina Sharpe writes, "the atoms of those people who were thrown overboard are out there in the ocean even today" (2016: 40). Or as poet Derek Walcott phrases it, "the sea is History" – memory is kept "in that grey vault" (1986: 364). Contemporary posthumanisms and new materialisms echo these notions: Astrida Neimanis describes water as "a planetary archive of meaning and matter" (2012: 87), while Karen Barad argues that memory is "*written into the fabric of the world*" (2010: 261). Drexciyan mythologising takes this sense of the sea as history, as an archive containing histories of racial violence and exploitation, but distils a different narrative from it. To turn from the *where* to the *how* of colonial matter relations, I examine how Drexciyan mythology warps the racialisation of matter that the inhumanities engenders: the paper-cutting technique employed by Ellen Gallagher throughout her *Watery Ecstatic* series (2001–) inspires a geophysics unscarred by the inhumanities.

Gallagher's *Watery Ecstatic* takes inspiration from the originary mythology offered by Drexciya and depicts fantastical submarine worlds in dynamic, vividly coloured canvases. Gallagher employs a variety of methods and materials, but I focus here on a paper-cutting technique she frequently employs – this technique sometimes adds depth to her colourful canvases but is occasionally the only imaging technique used. As art institute Sonsbeek20-24 describes it, Gallagher

> transforms drawing by line into drawing by cutting, [combining] intentional cuts with scored and scarified paper, bringing the materiality of the surface to the fore. . . . Not only does this roughen and desublimate the clean whiteness of the paper ground, it also makes its mark in, rather than on, that ground, transforming the gesture of line into one of cleavage, a splitting of matter.
>
> (2022)

Those works that consist solely of paper cuts offer surfaces with incisions, perforations, edges and crevasses that create a texture that throws faint shadows onto the paper. Viewed from up close, these cuts reveal finely detailed images: Gallagher shapes fish, syncretically human–fish–plant Drexciyans, and disembodied Drexciyans swimming around as afro-adorned floating heads that Gallagher calls "wigladies" (Léith, 2005; Gallagher, 2007). Gallagher asserts that the technique brings a "biological surface into the form of the drawing . . . The slice I made when the paper was wet . . . opened up and became like this . . . cut that was *fleshy*" (Art21, 2014: 02:10). The fleshiness of her cuts (and by extension these artworks) echoes a vocabulary of anti-Blackness through which Black subjects became fungible, extractable flesh rather than persons (Hartman, 1997; Weheliye, 2014). The enslaved existed, in this sense, as Black flesh being shipped to the New world – their corporeal energy becoming an extractable resource of free labour.

Yet in the present context of the inhumanities, I propose to shift Gallagher's characterisation of the paper as a 'biological surface' towards a *geologic* surface: to connote the flesh of the Earth, out of which she cuts the reterritorialised bodies of her wigladies. Drexciyans thus become an expression of geologic life: a notion that describes how all life is geologically predicated, and how geology is corporeally embodied – life unfolds not just with or on the geologic, but *through* it (Yusoff, 2013, 2018). This fact of the geologic substrate of life informs how I conceive of the notion of territorial bodies: as with *cuerpo-territorio*, there exists an ontological continuity between territories (the Earth) and the bodies and beings that inhabit them. The paper-cut wigladies in Gallagher's *Watery Ecstatic* series express this continuity in how they are excavated from the Earth's matter(ing). I purposely use the word 'excavating' here, to evoke an archaeological register: carved out of geologic matter, as though they were ancient imprints found in solidified rock, the wigladies resemble fossils both visually and materially. The absence of colour in these drawings, a result of the paper-cutting technique, evokes the visual appearance of fossils as monochromatic engravings. The fact that they are carved out of (or into) a surface matter adheres to the fossil's material logic. Reading them as fossils, the wigladies lie embedded in solid matter, having left an indentation as their bodies have decomposed over time.

However, in the context of the inhumanities (the racial grammars that pervade colonial geology/geography), fossils connote a particular set of racialised meanings. Yusoff shows that early geologist Charles Lyell's notions of race are "directly informed by his account of the principles of geology. . . . He sees no difference in the crossings between social and geologic strata with regard to the language of property and possibility across fossil objects and Negroes" (2018: 75). Using the geologic principle

that "in a succession of sedimentary strata, the layers beneath are older than layers above" (Zalasiewicz, 2008: 29), Blackness is made to occupy a position belated in time: belonging, like fossils, to a lower stratum. Colonial normative civilisational progress narratives install a hierarchy in which white liberal European humanism (the figure of Man who, Wynter argues, presents himself as synonymous with all humanity but denotes only one possible genre of being human [2003]) forms the apex – an achievement Black(ened) peoples could only possibly accomplish over a geologic timespan. Blackness is "always belated and therefore never fully now and human" (Yusoff, 2018: 76), locked into this not-fully-human belatedness by geology's "spatializing of time along a vertical line" where whiteness is the ultimate achievement (Yusoff, 2018: 77). Gallagher's wigladies, embedded in their geologic surfaces, evoke this geo-logic of the fossil – but provocatively warp its meanings and Eurocentric narratives.

Liquid Fossils: Re-Turning Man's Geophysics of Anti-Blackness

Gallagher's fossil-like wigladies contest Man's dehumanising geo-logics by challenging the way fossils materialise: these works generatively contrast the rigidity of fossils with the wigladies' dynamic shapes. The wigladies' materiality appears rigid, immutable: once a cut is made, it cannot be unmade, redrawn or altered. However, the painstaking detailing of the wigladies grants them a fluidity that loosens and contradicts the firmness of the fossil. With their flowing, curly lines, varying layers and depths, delicately patterned regalia, diverse shapes and sizes, and shifting textures (sometimes scrubbed paper becomes coarse surface; at other times, incisions are sharp and precise), the wigladies appear all but fixed – rather, they are fluidly mutable. They seem to move freely through Earth-matter, as though they breathe the matter that has entombed them. They do not just inhabit the Earth, but exist *as* its very fabric: they are particularly liquid creatures. The wigladies' un-fossil-like dynamism stems from this liquidity, and from the material that has impossibly fossilised them: water – which, unless frozen, does not solidify to preserve a creature's contours, let alone that of a fluid creature. The wigladies seem to exist *as* the inhuman matter of the Earth – in that sense, they seemingly reintegrate Blackness and the Earth to (again) define Black(ened) subjects as inhuman matter, as extractable Black flesh available to provide free labour. Yet as noted before, the notion of 'territorial bodies' rather points to the ways that the Earth always already subtends and shapes subjectivities. In their inseparability from the Earth, as territorial bodies whose bodies *are* Earth-matter, the wigladies thus extend the "subjective-geographic relation" of Drexciyan geographies (Yusoff, 2018: 37fn4), which I noted above: they show how territorial bodies entails a focus on subjective-geo*logic* relations. They evoke how the

inhumanities press Blackness into an intimacy with the Earth. Yet from this intimacy, new planetary relations may arise: the wigladies recognise the inhumanities' racialisation of Earth-matter but warp the way fossils materialise. Fossils are no longer a static remnant of geologic deep time, but offer a dynamic mode of mattering: I want to think alongside the wigladies' speculations on how watery matter fossilises an organism, to see how that alters the racialised geo-logics of the fossil. As I demonstrate below, the wigladies' fluid mattering pushes for different matter relations: another geophysics of being.

If Man's geo-logics relegate Blackness to the lower strata of the Earth, developmentally banishing Black subjects to geologic deep time (time is vertically spatialised), then the stratification processes of the oceans warp this racial geo-logic – and the Atlantic Ocean is exactly where the wigladies are 'fossilised.' Gallagher's wigladies, in their liquidity and dynamic inhabitance of Earth-matter, move across the Earth's strata: as Rivers Solomon writes in their iteration of the Drexciyan mythos (novella *The Deep*), they traverse both the "dark, sparsely populated depths [and] the shallower, slightly sun-touched waters" (2019: 30). In their aqueous movements through ocean strata, the wigladies effectively travel through time, and thereby unsettle the fossilised belatedness of Blackness. They disregard the vertical spatialisation of time and do away with the racialised stratigraphic ordering of space and time. They apply the fossil's racialised meanings to another geologic realm, where its hold breaks loose: because they are fossilised in the oceans rather than in land masses, the wigladies transplant Man's geo-logics to marine geophysics. Vertically, we may roughly "characterize the ocean as consisting of two strata" (Denny, 2008: 147), two layers of water separated due to differences in temperature, salinity, density and nutrient and oxygen concentrations (Garrison and Ellis, 2016). These strata, however, are continually revolving, comprising a globe-spanning "ocean conveyor" (Denny, 2008: 158) – a phenomenon called thermohaline circulation rotates these two strata. Through such circulation, the vertical axis of time becomes undone, disrupting the stratification of race: there is no accrual of strata, but a rotation of layers and waters. This rotation unmoors Man's progress narratives: the linear, Eurocentric vertical spatialisation of time (and its racialised hierarchy) loses its grip in the marine geophysics of thermohaline circulation.

As I noted earlier, Yusoff describes the mattering of Blackness as a "material geophysics of race" (2018: xiv): this denotes how the racial grammars of geology (an Extractivist practice) have geophysical consequences. What Yusoff describes, more generally, as a geophysics of being is a process of worlding, but colonial Man has only engaged in "a world making that was for the few" (2018: 13) – a "geophysics of anti-Blackness" has made the world (the Anthropocene), but other geophysics of being are possible

(2018: 99). Gallagher's wigladies propose a *marine geophysics of being* by embracing the dynamics of thermohaline circulation, to do away with the geophysics of anti-Blackness. Such (oceanic) circularity has a longer tradition in Black poetics: Glissant contrasts circular nomadism with arrow-like nomadism (conquest) (1997); Stuart Hall casts the desire of Afro-Caribbean peoples to return to Africa as circular (1990); and philosopher-poet Kamau Brathwaite's notion of "tidalectics" (tidal dialectics) resists the teleology of Eurocentric dialectics by evoking "the movement of the water backwards and forwards as a kind of cyclic . . . motion, rather than linear" (in Mackey, 1991: 44). Importantly, cyclicality does not signal the recurrence of unchanging sameness: throughout these articulations persists a sense of non-linear progression and generative change. Cyclicality engenders a non-linear mode of mattering, one of continual change. Cyclical processes return not to an ever-same, unchanged entity but to a changed/changing world: Hall's Afro-Caribbean peoples "return to [Africa] – but 'by another route': what Africa has *become* in the New World, what we have made of 'Africa': 'Africa' as we re-tell it through politics, memory and desire" (1990: 232). To explicate the wigladies' marine geophysics of being, I draw Hall's re-telling into a more material register: it productively resonates with Barad's notion of re-turning, which is not "going back to a past that was, but re-turning as in turning it over and over again – iteratively intra-acting, re-diffracting, diffracting anew, in the making of new temporalities (spacetimematterings), new diffraction patterns" (2014: 168). Diffraction describes the physical phenomenon of waves interfering, combining and overlapping when encountering objects or other waves – and a lively ontoepistemological principle of entanglement with which to comprehend the differential constitution of the world (Haraway, 2004; Barad, 2014). (The notion of diffraction also generatively resembles Brathwaite's tidalectics [DeLoughrey and Flores, 2020].) Gallagher's wigladies claim a marine geophysics of being, which I thus articulate as a process of re-turning informed by the principles of tidalectics and re-telling.

The wigladies alter Man's Extractivist geo-logics by re-turning (to) the fossilisation of Blackness. They take the racialised workings of the fossil, and re-turn its logics – diffracting it into unexpected shapes, sizes, and matter relations. Their liquid fossilisation re-turns (to) how Blackness is made to signify belatedness: they swim through geologic strata and time, and so challenge Man's geophysics of anti-Blackness (his spacetimemattering). Colonialism's geo-logics racialise stratigraphy to bury Blackness and make whiteness the upper layer: Blackness is deposited in the Earth's crust (space), relegated to the geologic past (time), and materially fixed (mattering). But the wigladies embrace the dynamics of thermohaline circulation and claim another geophysics of being: rather than the accumulative sedimentation of rock strata, cyclicality engenders a continual re-turning

of matter and its racialised meanings. The wigladies display a great diversity of forms and sizes, and in how they are inscribed in the Earth: they continually re-turn (to) the principle of their constitution and diffract it to different effects. They float alongside, with, or as starfish and jellyfish; one's afro curls in the vortex-like formation of a crustacean's exoskeleton; their hair coils like seaweeds. Their constellations, part human, part animal, part plant, part Earth-matter, are turned over and over and over again to emerge as a great diversity of syncretic beings (cf. McKittrick, 2021; Steur, 2024). As art critic Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith writes, "Gallagher's chosen motifs appear to scatter, swarm and settle anew in different configurations from picture to picture" – the paper-cut wigladies continually re-turn in new configurations (2005). As territorial bodies, they iteratively enact reterritorialisation (or indigenisation) in their aquatic surroundings in a variety of creative ways; their marine geophysics of being evokes constantly new geologic–subjective relations, ways of co-construing territories and bodies. Embracing a marine geophysics of being rather than the accumulative sedimentation of rock strata, the wigladies thus change how Blackness comes to matter – how the inhumanities makes Blackness matter. Cyclicality and re-turning engender new forms of mattering, and open up continually new diffractions towards other spacetimematterings.

Conclusion

Taking the notion of territorial bodies as a conceptual impetus, I set out to explore how this notion could help analyse (cultural expressions of) colonial histories of anti-Black violence, dispossession and displacement, in which Black(ened) peoples were violently uprooted and deterritorialised, and have struggled to reterritorialise (or indigenise) themselves after the Middle Passage. I both conceptualised and employed the perspective of territorial bodies by examining the Afrofuturist mythology of Drexciya, a polyvocal collection of speculative fictions inspired by the provocations of the eponymous techno-duo: what if the unborn babies of those pregnant enslaved subjects thrown overboard during the Middle Passage survived underwater? Exploring the process of speculative reterritorialisation enacted throughout the mythology, and to assess how territorial bodies might address socio-ecological crisis by studying territories (or Earth-matter) and bodies in tandem, I used Yusoff's notion of the inhumanities: the "connective hinge in the twinned discourses of geology and humanism [that] establishes an extractive axis in both subjective [Black] life and geologic (or planetary) life" (2018: 5). This led me to first examine the subjective-geographic relations performed by the territorial bodies presented across the mythology (the *where* of Drexciyan matter relations), and I demonstrated that the speculative hydroterritory of Drexciya evokes an

insurgent Black sense of place that liquefies the foundations of the nation state. Thereafter, Gallagher's wigladies led me to theorise Drexciyan subjective-geologic relations (the *how* of Drexciyan matter relations): beyond laying claim to a space for existence (a liberatory territorialisation through their embodiment of oceanic geographies), the territorial bodies of these Drexciyans point to a different material vocabulary – one not steeped in anti-Black grammars. The wigladies unmoored Man's racialised stratigraphy and suggest a marine geophysics of being: a mode of worlding predicated on generative cyclicality, on iteratively re-turning the principles of their constitution. That is, framed as territorial bodies, they continually diffract relations between territories/Earth-matter and life-forms, and how these co-constitute one another.

In this chapter, I could only provide a glimpse into the rich diversity of the artworks that comprise this giddily discordant universe – or rather, this pluriverse of Drexciyan myth. Drexciyans across the mythos's iterations vary greatly in their relations to their environments, as well as in their syncretically human/fish/plant physiologies. This way, the mythos *itself* enacts a cyclical marine geophysics, through the divergent ways its artists extend Drexciya's basic premise and iteratively re-diffract it: the mythology invites a creative process of re-turning (to) Drexciyan myth, re-turning its foundational idea and elaborating it anew. The uncoordinated Transmedial nature of the mythos is not a glitch, but a feature: it engenders an unruly praxis of the imagination, dreaming up different worlds with every new diffraction of Drexciya's provocation with new artists, voices, materials and backgrounds. Drexciyan myth-making is not a corporate exercise in unified transmedia world-building, but an unruly imaginative praxis that speculates on ways to turn Man's geo-logics on their head to facilitate Black futurity. Drexciyan myth thus enacts what Kathrin Thiele describes as the political work of critique in this contemporary moment of socio-ecological crisis; the "un-working and/as rewriting of the colonial scientific order, and thereby working toward a *different imagination*, or an alternative 'spacetimemattering'" (2021: 26). The diverse iterations of Drexciyan myth constitute a radically plurivocal imaginary, initiating different modes of spacetimemattering (or, different geophysics of being). Focusing on the co-constitutive relations between the Earth and its inhabitants, the prism of territorial bodies illuminates the diverse ways that Drexciyan myth, responding to colonial-capitalist histories of anti-Black violence, imagines liberatory possibilities through other kinds of planetary relations, other modes of geographic thought. Liberation comes *through* the Earth. Vice versa, the Drexciyan mythology infuses the notion of territorial bodies with an attenuation to the ways we relate to the actual material of the Earth – in this case the waters of the Atlantic. Thus, Drexciyan myth and its variously (re)territorial(ised) bodies re-turns colonial geo-logics, slowly

tearing at colonial pasts, presents and futures in an iterative, ongoing process of imaginative decolonisation.

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2 Feminist Aquapelagic Relational Bodies in *Mussiro Women* of Ibo Island

Diving in Submerged/Emergent Praxes of Existence, Resistance and Peace in/with the Oceans

Beatriz Arnal-Calvo

Introduction[1]

We Are Water, We Are the Ocean

Our planet is fundamentally made of water. Approximately 97% is salted oceanic water (Hauʻofa, 2008). Oceans span three-quarters of the Earth's surface. They are crucial for regulating climate and dictating weather patterns. They produce the air we breathe and absorb the carbon dioxide we cannot. Above all, oceans are sites of identity, rituality, spirituality and ancestral cosmologies. They bind us and bring us together, gestating, sustaining, healing, transporting and connecting past, present and future generations of human and non-human life. Ultimately, oceans constitute an intricate web of almost infinite, liquid epistemologies and relationalities built – and rebuilt – throughout millennia. Furthermore, human communities are highly dependent on water sources and the life thriving beneath the surface. Coastal and island people are often at the frontline of marine conservation and have first-hand experience of the loss and damage related to storms, typhoons, cyclones, floods and other extreme – and ever more frequent – weather events. They also suffer the impacts of colonial capitalism, extractivism and militarism in the coast and in the very depths of the oceans, including but not limited to unexploded remnants of war, nuclear waste, offshore gas exploration and extraction and deep-sea mining for rare minerals.

Further, for many indigenous coastal and island communities the ocean is not simply a geographic boundary or immensity devoid of life. In Hawai'ian cosmology, the universe begins with the ocean's birth. Everything that exists – plants, land, humans, animals, cosmos and seas – is connected in an ontological communion where fluid relations of interdependence and reciprocity are at its very centre (George & Wiebe, 2020).

In this sense, a seascape has deep importance and profundity: it is "a relational way of being in the world that invites humans into an emergent and reciprocal dance with more-than-human lifeworlds" (George & Wiebe, 2020: 503). Or, as Baldacchino beautifully puts it, "This is the stuff of one grand cycle of liquid consummation: the sea which gives life, takes it away, and connects us all" (Baldacchino, 2012: 25).

We humans are water, too. We are all water, "floating, just below the surface" (Neimanis, 2012b: 1). Like other living beings, we emerged from the oceans. Like other life forms, "we inhabit Planet Ocean" (Baldacchino, 2012: 25). Or rather the ocean inhabits *us* (DeLoughrey, 2007). The ocean is us as much as *we* are the ocean (Hauʻofa, 2008) for water remains the main element in human bodies. "What today is blood in our veins" – Baldacchino argues – "would have been seawater eons ago" (Baldacchino, 2012: 25). As he highlights, liquids "envelop, contain and connect, providing foundational markers for islanders' histories and genealogies" (Baldacchino, 2012: 22). Feminist embodiment scholars (Braidotti, 2002; Neimanis, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2017) also acknowledge the bodily nature of water, as well as the liquid, fluid nature of our physical forms: "Our bodies are connected to water from the very start of life" (George & Wiebe, 2020: 502). Human life is generated in liquid, the amniotic fluid, which is profoundly relational for it blurs the boundaries between mother and foetus, between interior and exterior worlds, between bodies and their environments. Ultimately, between what is alive, visible and present and what is absent, invisible and yet to be born. Water here, as on the seashores, is fertile, a crossroad of histories and interactions, full of life and everchanging.

S(e)afaring Through This Chapter

Water flows freely through this entire chapter. Its paragraphs revolve around life in/with the oceans and the water-ontologies and epistemologies that make it possible. In the first part of this chapter, I develop a novel conceptual and theoretical framework in order to think and lift to the surface a myriad of praxes of existence, resistance and peace against the destructive logics of colonial capitalism, extractivism and militarism in the oceans and beyond. I call it *feminist aquapelagic relational bodies*. It departs from Hamilton Faris' invitation to imagine feminist ontologies of water (Hamilton Faris, 2019) and aims to rethink two main conceptual frameworks. The first of these frameworks – *cuerpo-territorio* or *cuerpoterritorio* (*body-territory* or *bodyterritory*) – is originally defined by a variety of interconnected feminisms from Latin America, including *feminismos territoriales*. This fundamental framework helps to rethink the interlinkages between violence against certain territories and against certain bodies, specifically

those of indigenous, black, peasant and low-income women from the Global South. However, as some scholars reflect (Ulloa, 2020; Zaragocín, 2018), *cuerpo-territorio* is predominantly land-biased as water and water relations have yet to occupy a relevant place within it.

The second of these frameworks is *aquapelagic assemblages*, developed and later revised by Hayward (Hayward, 2012a, 2012b). Unlike *cuerpo-territorio*, Hayward's concept expands the understanding of human coastal and island communities in their interrelation with the non-human worlds that surround them, whether sea, land, weather or sky beings and processes. Although this framework points to the inseparability and interdependency of all these life forms, it does not necessarily incorporate a feminist perspective that views women's bodies as the first and foremost body of water. Bearing this in mind, *feminist aquapelagic relational bodies* become fundamental if we are to imagine alternative hydro-ontologies from a feminist standpoint. In the second part of this chapter, I use Gómez-Barris' concepts of *submerged/emergent perspectives* and *fish-eye* viewpoint (Gómez-Barris, 2017), as well as Ingersoll's notions of *seascape epistemology* and *oceanic literacy* (Ingersoll, 2016), to complement the aforementioned ontological categories with an epistemological suggestion of seeing and knowing from below the waters – like fishes do – which I denominate a *submerged/emergent seascape epistemology*.

In the third part of this chapter, I imagine these new categories in the work of Mozambican artist Cassi Namoda, with focus on her *Mussiro Women, Ilha do Ibo I* (Namoda, 2020a) and *Mussiro Women, Ilha do Ibo II* (Namoda, 2020b). As I will later on argue, Namoda's depiction of these representative women off the Northern coast of Mozambique resonates with both *feminist aquapelagic relational bodies* of being in/with the ocean and a *submerged/emergent seascape epistemology* of knowing from below the surface.

Feminist Aquapelagic Relational Bodies

In what follows I introduce the ontologies of *feminist aquapelagic relational bodies*. This framework streams along these lines and is anchored in hydro-feminist accounts of being in/with water (Chandler & Neimanis, 2013; Hamilton Faris, 2019; Ingersoll, 2016; Neimanis, 2009, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2019; Neimanis & Bezan, 2022; Shefer et al., 2024; Ulloa, 2020; Zaragocín, 2018). It departs from Hamilton Faris' *feminist hydro-ontological imaginary*, an invitation to envision feminist ontologies of water as "a[n] imaginary of immersion and relation" (Hamilton Faris, 2019: 93) into islandic life as the "space of immersive becoming" (Hamilton Faris, 2019: 93). This allows me to critically engage with two conceptual frameworks with the aim of challenging and expanding them by flooding them with these feminist hydro-ontological imaginaries: *cuerpo-territorio* and *aquapelagic assemblages*.

Cuerpo-Territorio

The first of these two frameworks which I draw on, challenge and aim to expand is *cuerpo-territorio* or *cuerpoterritorio* (*body-territory* or body-territory), as originally defined by a variety of interconnected feminisms from Latin America, such as *feminismos territoriales* (Ulloa, 2016), *indígenas*, *decoloniales* and *comunitarios*. Feminisms in Latin America have long emphasised the intersecting nature of violence against certain territories and against certain bodies, which have specific and disproportionate impacts on indigenous, black, peasant and low-income women from the Global South as well as the territories they inhabit. It is important to highlight that these feminisms are built upon indigenous ontologies, epistemologies and other collective understandings of "being, doing and feeling in interaction with the territory and with the non-human in an embodied manner" (Ulloa, 2021: 42)*. Thus, they invite us to think about, with and from women's bodies as "the central place from which to inhabit, hear, feel, perceive the territory" (Cruz Hernández, 2020: 46)*. For instance, Valdez argues that the concept of *cuerpoterritorio* shows that women's bodies and their surrounding territories shape and are shaped by each other; they are one and the same thing (Valdez, 2020). Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo, an alliance of Latin American feminist scholars and activists, understands women's bodies as the primary territory; simultaneously, their territories are represented in their bodies (CMCTF, 2017). For Cruz Hernández, indigenous women's bodies are "living and historical territories that allude to a cosmogonic and political interpretation" (Cruz Hernández, 2016: 44)*.

In this context, the link between bodies and territories is always relational. Ulloa argues that the *body-territory* implies relationships of mutual spiritual affection and reciprocity between women, their communities and other living beings and processes (Ulloa, 2021). Consequently, when the territories grieve, get hurt or fall ill, so do women's bodies, and vice versa. As Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo rightly puts it, "When the places we inhabit experience violence, our bodies are affected, when our bodies experience violence, the places we inhabit are affected" (CMCTF, 2017: 7)*. Both women's bodies and territories in the Global South are linked by processes of appropriation and dispossession (Ulloa, 2016, 2021) and other violences at the core of colonial capitalism, extractivism and militarism. In extractive sites, sexual and gender-based violence (including femicide) increases, gender roles and expectations are reinforced, and sexual and reproductive rights weaken (Zaragocín, 2018). On the positive side, understanding the territorial nature of bodies also allows women activists, defenders and leaders to create and participate in communitarian and transnational networks of care and support. This

provides safe and supportive spaces for collective processes of resistance, caring, healing and reparation. The concept of interdependency dictates that the healing of territories relies on the healing of women's bodies, and vice versa (Zaragocín, 2018).

As shown above, *cuerpo-territory* is a fundamental framework for acknowledging, addressing and redressing the multiple forms of structural violence embedded in global processes of colonial capitalism, extractivism and militarism which always have women's bodies, particularly those from marginalised communities, on the frontlines. However, as Zaragocín recognises, feminist enquiry and interventions around gendered territorial violence and extractivism have rarely included water (Zaragocín, 2018). Thus, she utilises the concept of *agua-cuerpo-territorio*, which becomes indispensable in order to highlight the multiple, constant and affective connections between water, bodies and territories. Likewise, it signals the *acuerpamiento* (embodiment) (Siderac, 2019) of processes of dispossession, appropriation, pollution and other slow violence embedded in aquatic spaces and processes, specifically by gendered and racialised populations in the Southern hemisphere (Zaragocín, 2018). In a similar vein, Ulloa emphasises the relational, gendered and political dimensions of water which, in its constant interaction with humans and non-humans, shapes and is shaped by them (Ulloa, 2020). For instance, water scarcity and water governance have specific impacts on women's bodies and in the performance of their rituals and daily chores – such us cooking, washing, healing and caring for both humans and nonhumans – as they are the ones in charge of fetching water and traveling further distances in search of this precious liquid (Ulloa, 2020). Thus, struggles for water represent power dynamics and so water (in)justice and gender (in)equalities are inextricably linked (Ulloa, 2020).

Aquapelagic Assemblages

Although both Zaragocín and Ulloa effectively address the land-biases of traditional understandings of *cuerpo-territorio*, I argue that other non-aquatic non-human and more-than-human elements – like atmospheric and weather processes and events – and their interrelations have to be considered. For that reason, the second of the two frameworks which I draw on, challenge and aim to expand is Hayward's *aquapelagic assemblages*, particularly in his revision (Hayward, 2012b) of his original definition (Hayward, 2012a). Hayward argues that the traditional definition of archipelago is unable to grasp the nuances, dynamics and interconnections embedded in the land-oceanic continuum characteristic of island settings. Thus, *aquapelago* aims to fill the gap of previous categories and provide "a more holistic comprehension and analysis of the interrelation of marine

and terrestrial spaces" (Hayward, 2012a: 1). In his second attempt, Hayward redefines *aquapelago* as "assemblages of the marine and terrestrial spaces of groups of islands and their adjacent waters that are generated by human habitation and activity" (Hayward, 2012b: 1). *Aquapelago*, however, is not a descriptive concept and does not exactly correspond to archipelago locales and temporalities; single island societies or even peninsular societies can present these *aquapelagic assemblages* as long as the communities inhabiting them have strong interactions with their surroundings. Hence, what matters in the conceptualisation of *aquapelagos* and *aquapelagic assemblages* – which are temporarily and ontologically fluid, lively and dynamic – is that, first, they refer not only to territory or water but to a space where land, air and water – and the multiplicity of their depths, currents, processes, flows and energies – are integrated. Second, humans and their activity are essential yet represent "only one of a series of actants without which the aquapelago cannot be performatively constituted" (Hayward, 2012b: 3). It is important to emphasise that the weather, air and sky are also part of these *aquapelagic assemblages* as human activity also impacts, is impacted by and interacts with them. As stated simply in Hayward's own words, in these *aquapelagic assemblages* "everything is interacting" (Hayward, 2012b: 12).

Aquapelagic assemblages* is an excellent category to ponder the multiple water and more-than-water relationalities in coastal and island settings. However, Hayward seems blind to gender and other social inequalities that take place along these multiple interactions. A feminist approach to *aquapelagic assemblages* should therefore emphasise the gendered power dynamics and positionalities embedded in them. Such interactions and interrelations do not happen in a vacuum but take place in locales with underlying hierarchies, discriminations, injustices and other forms of violence based on gender, race, class, ethnicity and other identity markers. As we have learned from *cuerpo-territorio*, women interact differently with their surrounding waters, air and territories. Their bodies are also affected differently by the impact of (hu)man–water interactions. Their leadership, representation and participation in processes of water, territory, air and weather management and governance – including climate mitigation and adaptation – are often restricted. This is similarly true when it comes to positions of power, policy and decision-making around these areas. Hence, a feminist approach to *aquapelagic assemblages* should put women's bodies at the centre as the primary body of water through which women exist, act, think, interact, represent and feel fluidly in relation to their human, non-human and more-than-human surroundings.

In order to fill the gaps of both *cuerpo-territorio* and *aquapelagic assemblages*, I suggest a redefinition of hydro-relationalities that are not only simultaneously gender-sensitive and *acuerpadas* (embodied) – as in

cuerpo-territorio – but also multi-layered and holistic, as encapsulated in the concept of *aquapelagic assemblages*. Bodies are fundamental in women's experience and relationship with the complex web of *aquapelagic assemblages* around them. This is why I refer to *feminist aquapelagic relational bodies*. This new framework manages to think and lift to the surface a myriad of praxes of existence, resistance and peace against the destructive logics of colonial capitalism, extractivism and militarism in the oceans and beyond. Hence, by drawing on as well as transgressing these two previous categories, *feminist aquapelagic relational bodies* allow us to imagine – and perhaps enable – new ways of being, feeling and doing in, under and from the oceans in a relationship of intimacy, reciprocity, responsibility, nourishment and harmony with all that surrounds us.

Submerged/Emergent Seascape Epistemologies

In the next part of this chapter, I develop a theory of knowledge in/with the oceans or *submerged/emergent seascape epistemologies*, for which I look at Gómez-Barris' concepts of *submerged/emergent perspectives* and *fish-eye perspective*, and Ingersoll's depictions of *seascape epistemology* and *oceanic literacy*. In *The Extractive Zone*, Gómez-Barris invites us to see otherwise, from below, in order to look at "what lies beneath the visible world" (Gómez-Barris, 2017: xv) and has been submerged and supressed by the destructive logics of colonial capitalism, extractivism and militarism. In the extractive zones, life-and-death dialectics operate simultaneously (Gómez-Barris, 2017). On the one hand, these are zones where colonial capitalism, extractivism and militarism convert all life into global commodities and accumulable wealth by processes of forced appropriation, dispossession, exploitation, displacement and reorganisation of social, political, economic and ecological relations. On the other hand, a multiplicity of alternative praxes of care, reciprocity and reparation flows from the peripheries of these extractive zones. They have survived and resisted alongside, in spite of and in opposition to the violent and destructive logics of the global capitalist order. Gómez-Barris defines them as *submerged/emergent perspectives*: "a too-often-ignored network of relationality, or social ecologies" (Gómez-Barris, 2017: 2). While colonial capitalism, extractivism and militarism have attempted to submerge them, they have resisted by emerging to the surface. They are, in essence, critical, interlinked, situated, embodied, relational and affective "activities of dissent" (Gómez-Barris, 2017: 16).

Given the fact that they represent alternative possibilities of decolonial presents and futures, it is important to bring them to the surface so that they are visible. As Gómez-Barris aptly states, "the possibility of decolonization moves within the landscape of multiplicity that is submerged perspectives" (Gómez-Barris, 2017: 11–12). Thus, if we are to leave the

extractive zone behind, we need to draw attention to and learn from these submerged/emergent perspectives which "open up the decolonial potential that already exists" in them (Gómez-Barris, 2017: 138). This requires "a fish-eye episteme" (Gómez-Barris, 2017: 4) or a "countervisuality" (Gómez-Barris, 2017: 15) which – just as fishes see below the ocean's surface – looks and shows us what emerges from the peripheries despite the logics of capitalist colonialism, extractivism and militarism.

Further, in *Waves of Knowing*, Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) scholar Ingersoll refers to sensorial, embodied and affective ways of knowing and being in, under and with the sea or *seascape epistemologies* (Ingersoll, 2016). She contends that oceanic knowledge happens through physical encounters in water where the human body is immersed and moves with/in the rhythm of the tides, and where the ocean and its non-human forms are at the very centre. Ingersoll's *seascape epistemology* is, therefore, not so much about *theorising* water as it is about the physicality of flowing with the currents, smelling the salted water, hearing the waves roaring, feeling the wind on the skin and moving choreographically with the tides. This is what Ingersoll describes as an *oceanic literacy* "of applied and embodied knowledge within a seascape epistemology, through which a surfer, navigator or fisher sees, reads, smells, hears, tastes and feels the ocean" (Ingersoll, 2016). Through Ingersoll's categories of *seascape epistemologies* and *oceanic literacy*, it is possible to see human–sea relations differently, where humans are no longer separate from or at the centre of the body of water. Rather, they are one with the sea, they *are* the sea and everything that lies above, around and below water.

Drawing on the above, I propose the category of *submerged/emergent seascape epistemologies* that advocates for an immersion in the restoring waters of knowing in, with and from below the surface. Although this is predominantly a theory of sensorial and embodied knowledge in/with the oceans, it is inseparable from the previous ontological framework of *feminist aquapelagic relational bodies*: the body – particularly women's bodies – is again a vessel through which we inhabit, know and relate with the seas. Both ontological and epistemological categories, moreover, have profound ethical and ecological dimensions: our bodies, submerged in and emergent from water, learn liquid possibilities of being, knowing and feeling otherwise with the ocean. They also acknowledge the complex web of interactions and relationalities where humans, yet fundamental, are not at the centre of the universe of life. With Neimanis, it is worth daring to imagine water "as a responsibility – a response-ability asking us to respond[?]" (Neimanis, 2013). This may make possible the reconceptualisation of human's responsibility as *response-ability* or the *ability to respond* (Haraway, 2008) and be ethically accountable (Barad, 2012, 2007) for our interactions with and among all beings – in, by and around the oceans, and elsewhere.

Ibo Women's Praxes of Existence, Resistance and Peace in/with the Oceans

In this section, I utilise the work of Mozambican artist Cassi Namoda, specifically her *Mussiro Women, Ilha do Ibo I* (2020a) and *II* (2020b), in order to imagine the interplay of the aforementioned feminist hydro-ontologies and epistemologies in the context of Mozambique's ongoing compounded crises. My goal is to draw attention – and pay tribute – to the submerged/emergent praxes of existence, resistance and peace in/with the oceans embodied by these women of Northern Mozambique and to put them in contrast with the destructive logics of rampant colonial capitalism, extractivism and militarism linked to the exploration, extraction, liquefaction and export of liquified gas off Mozambique's Northern coast.

Mozambique's Compounded Crises

Ibo Island, or *Ilha do Ibo* in Portuguese, is one of the Quirimbas Islands off the Indian Ocean and part of the Quirimbas National Park – a UNESCO's biosphere reserve – in Cabo Delgado Province of Northern Mozambique. Like the majority of Mozambique's northern islands and coasts, Ibo Island is mostly inhabited by the Mwani, a Bantu community who speaks Kiwani, a unique language derived from Kiswahili. In Kiwani, the term Mwani means *beach* or *coast*, and *those who live in contact with the sea*, which fluently shows how tied Mwani people are to the ocean and its currents. Their main livelihood is fishery, seafaring and the sea transport of people and goods. For this, they use long-established methods – like the iconic *casquinhas* (small traditional dhows) – just as their ancestors did.

Mozambique – particularly its coastal line and numerous islands – has experienced increasing extreme weather events, such as floods, droughts and cyclones (including the longest lasting storm worldwide on record (Cappucci, 2023)), which have caused gross devastation and suffering and left millions in need of humanitarian assistance (ICRC, 2019; UNICEF Mozambique, 2020). Indeed, Mozambique was declared the world's most climate-vulnerable country (Eckstein et al., 2021) and the seventh country with the highest disaster risk (Atwii et al., 2022). It is important to remember that the world's most vulnerable countries and communities have historically least contributed to the climate crisis, yet they suffer its worst consequences (Bharadwaj et al., 2022). Scientists agree that fossil fuels are the main contributor to global warming (Calvin et al., 2023). Not far from Ibo Island, still nestled within Mozambique's Northern province of Cabo Delgado, lies Africa's first floating gas plant and the three largest liquified gas projects in the African continent (JA!/FoE, 2020), collectively known as Mozambique LNG Project. Environmentalist organisations claim that,

on the one hand, local communities were not duly informed, consulted or compensated for the impacts of the gas industry in this area nor benefitted from it (DeAngelis, 2016; JA!/FoE, 2020). On the other hand, they warn of the ecological impacts of these activities, including sea pollution, loss of species (many of which are imperilled) and ecosystems – 60% of mangrove forest in Eastern Africa are in Mozambique – and the release of enormous greenhouse gas emissions (DeAngelis, 2016; JA!/FoE, 2020) as well as rampant militarisation (JA!/FoE, 2020).

Furthermore, fossil fuels are behind the vast majority of the armed conflicts of our times (Colgan, 2013). In addition, global militaries are the largest institutional consumers of fossil fuels and emitters of greenhouse gases that cause global warming (Crawford, 2019). The many interlinks between fossil fuels, armed conflict and the climate crisis are sadly evident in Cabo Delgado: since October 2017, ISIS-linked armed groups have attacked villages and islands (including Ibo island) nearby Mozambique LNG Project, resulting in over a million forcibly displaced people at the time of writing (IDMC, 2024; IOM, 2024). The conflict is ongoing to date and has escalated internationally, with the direct intervention of global militaries, foreign credit and private security
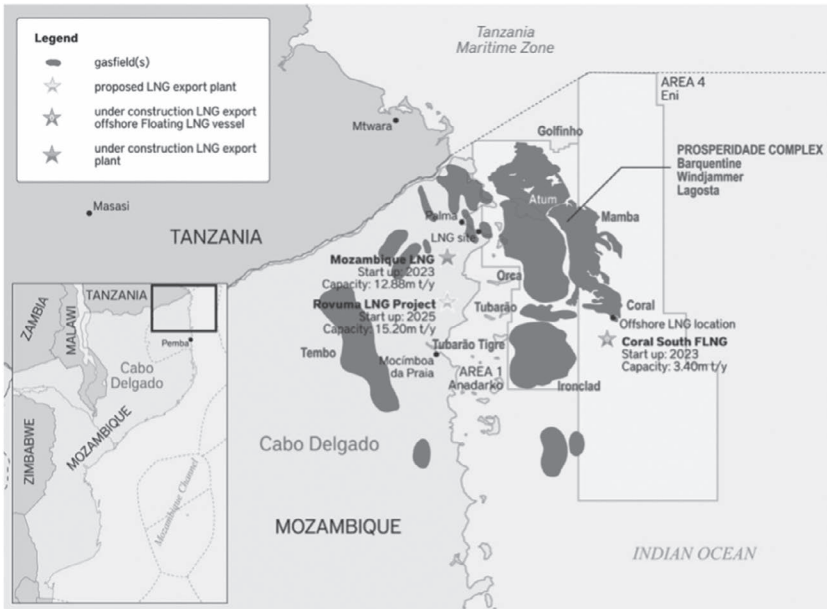

Figure 2.1 Map of LNG projects off Northern Coast of Mozambique.

companies and the mercenary company Wagner (JA!/FoE, 2020), which in many cases were deployed in Cabo Delgado with the sole goal of protecting the gas fields (JA!/FoE, 2020) – notably owned by transnational corporations like the Italian Eni and French TotalEnergies.

Mozambican women are more vulnerable to armed conflict and environmental disasters due to power relations and differentiated roles in their communities. For instance, dozens of women and girls in Cabo Delgado were raped and/or abducted into sexual slavery by armed groups (Amnesty International, 2021). Women were also the vast majority of casualties and forcibly displaced persons by both armed violence and disasters (Amnesty International, 2021; OCHA, 2024; Sturridge et al., 2022). Extreme climate events have specific impacts on Mozambican women and girls (Ribeiro & Chaúque, 2010), specifically on their sexual and reproductive health and rights (CARE International, 2016; Ipas, 2022). In addition, the climate crisis – as well as militarism and extractivism – increases the risk of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly against indigenous women (Csevár, 2021). However, Mozambican women, just like in other parts of the world, are at the frontlines of climate action and peacebuilding. Looking at the women of Ibo Island, as represented by Namoda, may help us to acknowledge women's highly valuable praxes of existence, resistance and peace with, under and in the surroundings of the ocean in the context of Mozambique's aforementioned compounded crises. They embody situated, affective and relational strategies of resistance, contestation, dissent, transgression and grief, often agonic, to the destructive logics of colonial capitalism, extractivism and militarism off the Northern shores of Mozambique.

Mussiro Women, Ilha Do Ibo I *and* II *Through*
Namoda's Fish-Eye Perspective

The entanglements of water, the ocean and coastal human and non-human communities permeate through the work of Cassi Namoda. Born in Maputo in 1988, Namoda has portrayed the vibrant life of island and coastal communities of Mozambique on many occasions, such as in *Fishing men in Namacurra whilst the moon is still pronounced* (2019a), *Costa do Sol* (2023a), *To live long is to see much (Ritual bathers III)* (2020c) and *Little is enough for those in love I* (2019b). In works such as *Condemned to perpetual earth II* (2022), *The sun has not yet burned off the dew* (2021) and *Womb* (2020d), the boundaries between oceanic human and non-human life blur, perhaps suggesting a common amphibian origin. She has also represented some of the recent years' most extreme weather events in Mozambique and their impacts in local communities, like in *Rhapsodic flood of Namacurra* (2023b) and the series *A gentle rain is dying* (2023c). Ibo Island also appears in Namoda's *Ritual Prayer in Ibo Island* (2019c). In

this chapter, however, I want to draw attention specifically to her depiction of Ibo women in *Mussiro Women, IIha do Ibo I* (2020a) and *II* (2020b).

In these two works, Namoda utilises the evocative power of her soft brushstrokes and vibrant pigments to capture the aquatic praxes of these emblematic Ibo women of Northern Mozambique. Here they perform

Figure 2.2 Mussiro women, Ilha do Ibo I (Namoda, 2020a).

Source: Images courtesy of the artist and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels

Figure 2.3 Mussiro women, Ilha do Ibo II (Namoda, 2020b).

Source: Images courtesy of the artist and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels

everyday chores with their bodies partially submerged in lilac ocean waters. Their brightly coloured clothes juxtapose with their dark skin, while their anguloid silhouettes contrast against a background of pastel clouds and a sunny skyscape mirrored in the water. Their faces are deco-rated with a thick, white paste – the *mussiro* (also *n'siro* or *muciro*) – made

from ground tree bark, root extract and other natural ingredients. These semi-sacred masks were originally associated with cultural ceremonies and rites of passage related to women's community roles, social standing and civil status in Northern Mozambique. Although the *mussiro* masks historically signified purity, beauty and femininity, their intention and meaning have undergone a transformation over time. For instance, more recently they have been used for beauty and pharmaceutical purposes. However, these *mussiro* masks have become a national symbol, which delivers more nuanced messages around identity. The application of *mussiro* ultimately reflects and celebrates the diversity of Mozambique's Northern coasts and islands: it symbolises Mozambican people's responsibility to protect, preserve and multiply their unique cultural and ecological heritage. *Mussiro* here, I argue, signals the dialectics between praxes of sustainable and responsible existence, resistance and peace in/with the ecosystems along and despite the disruptive logics of colonial capitalism, extractivism and militarism that threaten life not too far away from Ibo island.

Namoda's work becomes relevant in this chapter as her *Mussiro Women* embody Hamilton Faris' immersive and relational imagination of feminist bodies and knowledges of/in/with water (Hamilton Faris, 2019). Thus, it serves as a canvas through which to imagine the interplay of *feminist aquapelagic relational bodies* and *submerged/emergent seascape epistemologies* in the particular context of Mozambique's ongoing compounded crises. By portraying the women of Ibo Island as the protagonists of her work, Namoda draws our attention to the many layers of communion and reunion by the coast and islands of Mozambique. The bodies of her *mussiro* women seem to bridge the gap between human, celestial and aquatic life, between flesh, bone, plant, fabric, utensils, sky, sun, clouds, air, salt and water – and everything that lies under the surface. Similarly, their bodies enable a threshold between their collective presents, pasts and futures. It is worth noting that Namoda perhaps aimed to emphasise these women's ancestral connection with *mussiro* by referring to them as *Mussiro Women*, rather than, for instance, Ibo women. This reconnects them with their identity, their heritage and, perhaps most important for this chapter, their various relational praxes of ecological interdependency, responsibility, sustainability, caring, reciprocity, protection and reparation in, around and from below the ocean. They are, in the words of celebrated Mozambican writer Mia Couto (2006), rather inhabitants of an ocean. Thus, when the ocean experiences the dispossession, appropriation, pollution and other slow violence inherent to the offshore gas industry, so do Ibo women's bodies. For they exist, feel, experience, learn, connect and heal through their bodies of water, because of water and in relation to water. Reciprocally, the ocean can only be preserved, restored, protected and enhanced because of them.

Furthermore, through her fish-eye viewpoint or *countervisuality*, Namoda "uncover[s] what is submerged within local geographies" (Gómez-Barris, 2017: 2) and makes them visible. In her works, Namoda sees and helps us to see otherwise – from below. In doing so, Ibo women's unique situated and relational *oceanic literacy* is lifted to the surface. They, then, enlighten us as to other ways of being, feeling, thinking and moving in, from, under and with the ocean. Ultimately, Namoda invites us to dive into the submerged/emergent praxes of existence, resistance and peace in/with the oceans embodied by these women of Northern Mozambique which emerge in contrast with the destructive logics of rampant colonial capitalism, extractivism and militarism linked to the exploration, extraction, liquefaction and export of gas off Mozambique's Northern coasts. Unlike other works where Namoda explores the grief induced by floods, in *Mussiro Women I* and *II* water is no longer "the enemy in the era of climate change" (Hamilton Faris, 2019) but rather a seascape of everlasting interconnection and "the medium of intermingled bodies in alliance" (Hamilton Faris, 2019). Hence, Namoda's *Mussiro Women* urge us to appreciate the oceans – and the communities that rely on them and preserve them – through our entanglements, interdependency and *response-abilities* towards them.

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My goal so far was to draw attention and learn from the decolonial potential in Namoda's *Mussiro Women*. However, as a researcher born and living in the Global North, I am aware that my intention to dive into *Mussiro Women* collides with the self-reflective acknowledgement of my physical and symbolic distance from Ibo women. While not enough, I believe in the necessity to recognise the power dynamics embedded in our disciplinary silos as well as in our own practices as researchers (Ackerly & True, 2020; Shepherd, 2016). There are clear power dynamics, gaps and biases in my approach to the women of Ibo Island, as well as in my interpretation of Namoda's work. Yet, I agree with Hamilton Faris that "acknowledging the situatedness, and therefore the limits of my knowledge, is an essential part of the decolonial process, that can then be open to the possibilities of becoming something different" (Hamilton Faris, 2019: 93) – perhaps something permeable.

Final Remarks: A Wounded Ocean, but an Ocean of Possibilities

Our seafaring through the waves of *feminist aquapelagic relational bodies* and *submerged/emergent seascape epistemologies* is nearing the shore. In this chapter I have argued that feminist hydro-ontologies and epistemologies

flow extensively through Namoda's depiction of Ibo women in *Mussiro Women, Ilha do Ibo I* (2020a) and *II* (2020b). Throughout these lines I have acknowledged Namoda's tidal potential to raise to the surface Ibo women's praxes of existence, resistance and peace in/with the ocean. In *Mussiro Women* (2020a, 2020b), these practices are soaked with life-affirming and relationship-repairing forces of *response-ability*. Namoda's representation of the *mussiro* women reach a different level of significance when we understand the embodiment of these practices in a fluctuating dialectic with the disruptive logics of offshore liquified gas exploration, extraction, liquefaction and export from Cabo Delgado.

Namoda's work, further, transgresses and redresses heteropatriarchal colonial visions and imaginaries of island women from the Global South as fundamentally invisible, vulnerable and deprived of any agency. Instead, here *mussiro* women embody relational and immersive *response-abilities* in relation to their multiple interactions with present, past and future human and more-than-human generations. As I show in this chapter, their praxes of existence, resistance and peace in/with the oceans are the situated antithesis of the destructive logics of rampant colonial capitalism, extractivism and militarism in the region and beyond. As represented by Namoda, Ibo women embody *response-able* ways of knowing, moving, doing and being in harmony with the oceans and one another. As such, they defy the ruptures, disconnections, disruptions and destructions of forced appropriation, dispossession, exploitation, displacement and reorganisation of social, political, economic and ecological life currently happening in Northern Mozambique due to the exploitation of offshore liquified gas.

Ultimately, this chapter is about *mussiro* women and their submerged/emergent perspectives ascending to the surface (Gómez-Barris, 2017) and the very promise of decolonisation that streams through them (Gómez-Barris, 2017). These perspectives – fluid, dynamic, free-flowing – manage to resist the eradication of their own existence by leaking, filtering and permeating – slowly but constantly – through the artificial territorialities and anxieties imposed by the Anthropocene epoch. They inhabit the waters and coexist in and despite a world of wounded oceans surrounding them. Fundamentally, they are hopeful realisations demonstrating that other forms of thinking, feeling and being – submerged, emergent, from below – are possible, urgent and necessary. They are, simply put, an ocean of possibilities.

* My own translation.

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This chapter is dedicated to vovó and my in-laws off the Western coast of the Indian Ocean. It was only possible thanks to the unconditional love, care and support from my partner and companion, Mirco – my life raft during rough waters.

Note

1 Three sonic recommendations for the reading of this chapter: *Aquapelago: an Oceans Anthology* (Various artists, 2022), *Aquapelagos Vol. 2: Índico* (Bastien and Cooper, 2024) and *Canticum Megapterae. Song of the Humpback Whale* (Various artists, 2019).

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3 Troubled Waters
Thin Places, the Troubles and Nature Writing

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In *Thin Places*, Kerri Ní Dochartaigh writes, "since I returned to Derry – to the land whose suffering I still hold in a cellular, oozy place – I have found myself held by places that simply will not let me disappear under the surface" (2022, p. 106). Born in 1983 in Derry to a Catholic mother and a Protestant father, Ní Dochartaigh charts how the borders between nations, religions and peoples as well as the violence in Derry during the Troubles have shaped her mental and physical health. Inextricably linked to the land and the sea, she reflects on a relationship between the body and the environment outside of the social divisions that shape her home; one that emphasises an ecological consciousness. She thus expands on the concept of "body-territory": "that it is impossible to cut apart and isolate the individual body from the collective body, the human body from the territory and landscape" (Gago, 2020, p. 86). Foregrounding the affective relationship to the environment, *Thin Places* manifests this impossibility of separation for Ní Dochartaigh via the intricate links between sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, trauma and the environment. These connections reveal how she begins to heal by reconsidering her relationship with the environment, beginning with the sea as the sign of collective existence. Separating Derry from her own existence is impossible, so she must find ways to arrange herself with her past and her present. Struggling to find happiness or even a place where she feels she belongs, Ní Dochartaigh narrates her search for a home from Derry across the United Kingdom to Dublin and Cork before finally settling in a small cottage in Correaly, Co. Westmeath, with her partner. This is the furthest she has lived from the Atlantic in her lifetime as she transitions in her recovery from seascape to landscape. The trauma she has lived through as the child of a divided people only fades to the background when she finds herself in "thin places" – "where a veil is lifted away and light streams in, where you see a boundary between worlds disappear right before your eyes, places where you are allowed to cross any borders, where borders and boundaries hold no sway" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 12). Throughout her life, she has most

often encountered these when swimming in the sea. She recognises that "in those moments of full and hauntingly cathartic surrender, when I finally lie back, sky-gaze, salt-touch, fluid-embrace, I meet myself again, as if for the first time" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 106). The sea takes away her emotional trauma, and she can finally feel at peace.

In this chapter, I argue that *Thin Places* emphasises the central role the body plays in the manifestations of both personal and social trauma and the relationship between humans and the environment. The "thin places" Ní Dochartaigh identifies predate the divisions of Ireland after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921 and the three decades of violence of the Troubles that officially ended with the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Ní Dochartaigh was 15 at the time and thus grew up during the second half of the conflict "in which a generation grew up not knowing peace or stability" (McKittrick and McVea, 2012, p. x). Reconnecting with the natural world offers her the opportunity to heal and find stability. Consequently, the memoir sits at the intersection of the concepts of embodiment, affect theory, and the environment. This entanglement highlights the affective intersection of bodily experiences with ecocriticism and must be foregrounded in the context of Kerri Ní Dochartaigh's relationship with nature. In the memoir, the moment she feels her connection to the sea becomes a catalyst for her path towards healing. Only after this moment of recognition is she ready to move to Correaly and let herself be captivated by the natural world of Ireland without her associated trauma. Ultimately, she recognises the moment of healing when she feels the urge to leave the sea that is then no longer a "thin place" but simply a part of her existence.

Throughout the memoir, Ní Dochartaigh portrays her embodied experiences as equivalent to those of nature, plants and animals, dropping the veil between the human and the nonhuman worlds. Her understanding of this embodied interconnectedness reflects how

> the body is . . . revealed as a composition of affects, resources, and possibilities that are not "individual", but are made unique because they pass through the body of each person to the extent that no body is ever only "one", but always with others, and also with other nonhuman forces.
>
> (Gago, 2020, p. 86)

To capture this idea of the "body-territory" and expand it to territorial bodies – the intricate relationship between the body and the territory of which this body is a part and which it shapes, and which precedes and goes beyond social conflicts – I want to make use of, what I term, the "network of environmental experience" as a framework for my argument. This decentres the body as the focus; rather than being a composite of the "affects, resources, and possibilities", the body becomes a unified

manifestation and expression of the human-nonhuman relationship. The "network of environmental experience" is constituted by an affective relationship between the body and the environment and creates a continuum in which human primacy is reduced (and refuted) to being part of a larger, material system that does not privilege either the human or the nonhuman world. When Ní Dochartaigh acknowledges being part of this larger network, the network itself can become a source of her healing.

The relationship between humans and the environment has been investigated repeatedly. For example, the "symbiotic relationship of person and place" (Perreten, 2003, p. 6) reflects some of the core components of the network that I envision; however, where symbiotic implies a bidirectional relationship, the network opens the space for an almost infinite number of these relationships between "person and place". I employ these links to investigate how connecting with the sea can offer a way to recover for Ní Dochartaigh in the face of the trauma she has experienced. She writes, "I am often led into the sea, as if by singing that comes from elsewhere; I swim out to meet the song, finally giving to the water all those things that were never mine to carry" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 106). In the water, she can let go of the burden of her trauma into the sea. The sea offers her a space that is removed from even invisible borders and metaphorically displays the collective, indivisible body enveloping the individual body. Only when she recognises this interdependence, does she find the strength to accept her body with the physical and mental scars the trauma has left.

The main source of her trauma lies in the sectarian violence she has experienced growing up in Derry. When she was six, she witnessed "a British soldier being shot dead six feet in front of [her]" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 136). The image of his face haunts her for years. After her home was petrol-bombed a few years later, she carries the trauma of these experiences with her; this burden compounds the memories of never fitting in on any side of the various conflicts that shape Derry and Northern Ireland and which "are complex composites rather than unitary phenomena, both emergent and long-lasting, persistent and always in process of being unmade and remade" (Ruane and Todd, 2017, p. 234). Throughout the memoir, she often links these traumatic memories to her relationship with water. She describes moving away after graduating from university: "After university, I left Ireland at the very first chance I got and moved 'across the water' – first to Edinburgh, then Bristol – desperate to strip away all the layers of trauma that a childhood of devastating violence had left in its wake" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, pp. 21–22). The trauma she experienced during the Troubles has left her in a mentally unstable state, dealing with failed relationships, alcoholism and self-harm. She tries to outrun her problems by moving away from Ireland but can never truly abandon the sea until she experiences the moment of letting go of her trauma. It is only

when she realises that she can accept and overcome her trauma by letting go of the "thin place" of the sea that she no longer feels its pull.

Instead, she is pulled back to Ireland after leaving the trauma behind in the Atlantic. Even though she explicitly connects the trauma she has experienced to the environment in Northern Ireland, she repeatedly establishes a kinship with the landscape through the metaphors she uses: "A call back to the land that made me, that wounded and broke me, the land that turned out to be the only place that held the power for me to heal" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 23). The island of Ireland calls her back home: "I have returned to the site of my trauma and I am allowing the land to hold me in its strong, silent hands" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 50). She explicitly shows that the environment in Ireland, so deeply connected to her trauma, is the one place that can also heal her. Her memoir emphasises how personal and social trauma play out in individual lives and affect the body on a physical level – both in a negative way and in a positive way. Grounding herself in the natural world, in the "thin places", offers her opportunities for healing and finding herself. She is inextricably linked to the environment, which allows her to let go of some of the social trauma she has experienced.

The different theoretical concepts driving my argument – life writing, territorial bodies and the "network of environmental experience" – are connected in the genre of *Thin Places*. To emphasise the affective relationship that Ní Dochartaigh has with the environment, it is crucial to consider the confessional mode in Irish women's writing which distinguishes itself by "combining memoir, trauma, and the female experience in equal parts" (Barros-del Río and Terrazas Gallego, 2023, p. 474). Women writers in particular have traditionally been reduced to their bodies and their symbolic value in Irish literature:

> Women have not been able to loudly narrate their own life stories in literature; instead, they have been relegated to a supporting role of mother, temptress, or servant in other's works. Their bodies have been used to symbolize – as Hibernia, Mother Ireland, Cathleen Ni Houlihan, and the Virgin Mary – versions of evolving Irish nationalism over time.
>
> (Hennessy, 2021, n.p.)

Liam Harte (2007, p. 7, 2018, p. 12) has repeatedly made a similar point. Over the last few years, with the rise of female-authored memoirs in Ireland, this reduction has been categorically refuted; these women's bodies are not mere symbols but rather bear the marks of history. They cannot be held up as unchanging and perfect idols to worship, while actual women's bodies are regulated and scarred by men's decisions about reproduction, sexuality and labour. Particularly in the context of Northern Ireland,

bodily experiences are manifestations of trauma, as Caroline Magennis (2021, p. 7) points out: "when you hear of an attack in Derry and your stomach falls through the floor or read about a bomb scare near your family home and your body becomes rigid". There is a visceral reaction caused by the trauma that people have experienced in this conflict. The confessional mode of Irish women's writing thus lends itself to building a bridge between life writing and the "network of environmental experience". In the writing of Irish and Northern Irish women, this mode centres on the relationship between the body and the territory as women writers grapple with their own depiction and experience of trauma and violence.

Affective Kinship with the Sea

Ní Dochartaigh's *Thin Places* emphasises the emotional connection between the author and the natural world. Consequently, the theoretical thrust of my analysis points directly to this link; the "network of environmental experience" draws on both affective ecocriticism and New Nature Writing. Affective ecocriticism as a field has been steadily growing in the last few years, with multiple articles and volumes dedicated to the intersection of affect theory and ecocriticism (Bladow and Ladino, 2018a; Von Mossner, 2018, 2022; Caracciolo, 2021). It foregrounds the physical manifestations of the emotional bonds between the human and nonhuman worlds. Scholars engaging with this intersection work on "accounting for the ways affective attachments and exchanges infuse a lively material world in which we are deeply embedded alongside other beings" (Bladow and Ladino, 2018b, p. 8). Rather than viewing humanity's relationship with nature as hierarchical, affective ecocriticism stresses an equal co-existence. This level plane then provides a good foundation to think of the relationships between human and nonhuman entities in terms of a network rather than a hierarchy. In addition to affective ecocriticism, the "network of environmental experience" is inspired by the genre of New Nature Writing. This genre is a crossover of life and environmental writing (Moran, 2014; Oakley, Ward and Christie, 2018; Smith, 2018; Hubbard and Wilkinson, 2019), thus establishing these network conditions that allow for the recovery process through interaction with the environment. The "network of environmental experience" emphasises the multitudinous relationships that exist at any given moment in time. Broadening the scope of these relationships allows for a wider understanding of the effects all entities on Earth have on each other.

Throughout the memoir, the strongest emotional connection Ní Dochartaigh has is to the sea as a source of mental and physical comfort. Her relationship to various bodies of water frames *Thin Places*. In the prologue, she writes with hindsight, "I begin to dry myself. . . . I am shivering, now,

violently, on the wet November sand, but I feel like I have been made new, somehow" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, pp. x–xi). She presents an image of bathing in the sea as emotionally regenerative as she lets go of an older version of herself. She experiences a similar moment when she writes about swimming in the sea, "I am in the only place where I am free, the place in which the silence finds the words – I am held in that delicate, beautiful and healing place, in between" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 106). The sea becomes the ultimate "thin place" for her; here she feels physically regenerated and part of something larger than herself. She senses she can heal for the first time in a long while. Once she is ready to leave the sea, this experience allows her to also engage with the Irish landscape in a new way. This moment is also a collective experience according to her:

> Being beside water, by a river, waterfall, stream or on a shore-line, carries us into a state of existence neither here nor there. Many people experience water as a nourishing, calming thing, and water features over and over in the history, economy, culture and mythology of Ireland.
>
> (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 55)

She generalises the idea of closeness to water as a transcendent experience which highlights the entanglement between humans and nature. Initially, she views herself as somewhat excluded from the "thin place" of the sea. This uncertainty is grounded in the ambiguous relationship she has had with the sea in most of the places she has lived. Almost offhandedly, she describes this ambiguous bond while living in Dublin: "I spent lots of time by the sea but never *in* it during my time in Dublin" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, pp. 118–119; emphasis mine). While going to university in Dublin, her mental health declines rapidly, resulting in several suicide attempts. The quotation above is telling as, subconsciously, she seems to recognise the sea as a regenerative place, but she does not actually go into the water to experience its benefits. The "thin place" of the sea is only peripheral to her – almost as if she can see it but cannot bring herself to enter it.

This transcendent relationship with the sea is the most productive manifestation of the kinship between humans and the environment in *Thin Places*. Her personal and physical connections to the natural world offer a link to the landscape that goes beyond the political and social divisions that have shaped Northern Ireland, "where unionist domination over the Irish Catholic minority was created, reproduced, and executed" (Bosi and De Fazio, 2017, p. 18). The discrimination was met with civil rights demonstrations that quickly turned violent in 1969 and lasted until the 1990s (Bosi and De Fazio, 2017, pp. 18–20). However, while growing up in Derry, the lack of a clear identity, knowing who she was and where

she belonged, contributed crucially to Ní Dochartaigh's declining mental health: "We were nothing other than other – indefinable, unnamable, fallen down into the gaps in between" (2022, p. 66). Her trauma grows into an unbearable burden at the idea of not fitting in and witnessing the violence that shook Derry. Even though she acknowledges that she likely did not witness it personally as a child, she is haunted by the image of a dead soldier for decades (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 136). The impact of the sea on Ní Dochartaigh's mental well-being becomes visible in this episode. While she "dreamed of him for decades" and "saw his face in the most troubled of nights" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 136), she has finally let go of him as she writes the memoir. She writes,

> I carried the memory of him as I swam the length of the cove at Inch Island a wee while back, and as I pushed against the waves I knew that I was letting go – of his face, and of so much else that came before him, and after – and I wondered what had got me to this point.
>
> (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, pp. 136–137)

Ultimately, she realises that her physical connection to the "thin place" of the sea allows her to not forget, but to let go of the trauma that plagues her. When she ventures into the sea and later the rural spaces of Ireland and Britain, she encounters "the thin places, where the veil blows aside, allow her to feel rooted and connected to the natural world" (Magee, 2022, p. 400). She overcomes the imagined boundaries and instead re-connects with the land itself. The kinship with the sea, letting it carry her and heal her, is just one of the first steps on Ní Dochartaigh's journey to improve her mental health.

The Life Writing of Territorial Bodies

Thin Places narrates a journey towards healing trauma by focusing on the physical (and mental) engagement with the natural world. The text itself embodies this network between the body, trauma, the environment and the act of writing – all of which enable her to heal. Consequently, the confessional mode offers a hopeful, if not positive, outlook on the future. In fact, the process of writing through the trauma can result in a sense of fulfilment of having taken the first step for her. In revealing her innermost self, the confessional mode "functions as a powerful tool of self-empowerment based in personal experiences that project healing and change into societal and institutional levels" (Barros-del Río and Terrazas Gallego, 2023, p. 486). Consequently, embodiment leads to self-empowerment for these women writers. Making the body central to their experiences allows them to recognise their own existence. Describing her experiences with different

bodies of water, Ní Dochartaigh (2022, p. 159) ponders past suicide attempts:

> There was another me, inside that body. That body that had dragged itself into other bodies of water in the past. Bodies of water that were colder, darker and deeper than anything I experienced in Cornwall. Bodies of water that, if I had succeeded, I would never have come back out from. Bodies of water that I tried to drown my own body beneath.

Playing with the association of the human body and the body of water, she establishes a continuum between the sea and her own physical being. However, only in this confessional writing can she reveal her repeated attempts to drown herself in these other bodies. At the end of that same paragraph, she comes to a realisation:

> it was the first time I had ever sat, alone by the water, and felt glad that my body was still mine, that I had never taken my own life, that my body was still there. That I was still there.
>
> (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 160)

It is only then that she can understand the importance of her own body and its connection to the natural world: distinct, yet entangled. Writing through the trauma, she finds the strength to see herself as part of the natural world. The vulnerability of revealing the consequences of her trauma also prompts an understanding of the body as part of a larger system. Being vulnerable leads to the possibility of foregrounding the role the body plays in the "network of environmental experience" in *Thin Places* as she reveals weaknesses and the strength she draws from the natural world.

Thin Places thus offers a model for the intersection of the relationship between body and environment and life writing. Emphasising both the centrality of the body and the confessional mode, the memoir as a genre expands the discussion of affective ecocriticism and how the body functions as the link between the self and the environment. Ecocriticism has so far somewhat neglected the body and its affects in its research:

> theorists have tended to prioritize affect within and in relation to bodies and to overlook the environment's role in shaping it, ecocritics have too often neglected the affectivity of human bodies in their eagerness to champion greater attention to the more-than-human world.
>
> (Bladow and Ladino, 2018b, p. 4)

From a cultural perspective, we must account for the centrality of the body within any narrative that centres the relationship between humans and the

natural world. Affective ecocriticism, then, ties together embodiment and the environment (Bladow and Ladino, 2018b, p. 3). The body operates as both the expression of and the influence on our social and cultural identity and is simultaneously our only direct connection to the environment. The turmoil that Ní Dochartaigh feels in the face of the trauma she has experienced is reflected in and also shaped by both her body and the landscape in Ireland and Britain. This connection becomes visible in her reminiscing about the places she has lived in: "They are not ours but we are theirs. We are of, not in, them. We are – for the most celestial and ancient moment – a part of those places ourselves" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 223). In professing her embodied experience, she emphasises a kinship between the body and the territory that has been central in discussions of affective ecocriticism (Von Mossner, 2022, p. 193). Emblematic of the "network of environmental experience", this kinship in *Thin Places* is marked by the body as the juncture. In the memoir, the affective relationship with the environment centres the body both in relation to the place in which it exists and in a non-hierarchical manner; neither humanity nor the natural world is given precedence in this relationship. Instead, the intersection between body and environment becomes an infinite network.

The body becomes the nexus of environment and trauma as Ní Dochartaigh layers images to illustrate the various links between her experiences and the natural world. The trauma she has experienced is simultaneously individual and collective, and her body manifests both. After the sectarian violence is directed at her and her family when their home is petrol-bombed, she writes,

> I made it out from that blackened room. The cat did too. All of us made it out from the burning house . . . in a physical way, anyhow. The crow was waiting for us all on that middle-of-the-night street.
>
> (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 68)

The lasting impact of that violence is the mental toll – represented by the image of the crow – on the young girl. This image of the crow still haunts her in the same way that the image of the soldier haunts her dreams; almost three decades later, she still works on healing from these experiences, with the sea offering her the first moments of solace. In contrast, the cat's scratches on her face from the night her house was petrol-bombed fade comparatively quickly (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 65). The collective trauma that came along with growing up in Derry during the Troubles underpins every recollection of and connection with her hometown Ní Dochartaigh has. At the end of the memoir, she writes after leaving Derry once more, "I think about the past, and all of the bloodshed that can never be undone. . . . I think of the words shared between people from both sides

of that once so fiercely divided city, people who had sworn never to be together in the same room as the other" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 250). The latent collective fear and trauma are palpable in this quotation, and she hopes that the repercussions of Brexit will not open old wounds. Her individual trauma is simply one manifestation of the collective experience of violence.

Connecting and Healing with Land and Sea

Ní Dochartaigh finds the natural world to be a source of comfort throughout the memoir. Swimming in the sea marks the beginning of her recovery that later allows her to find and experience "thin places" as restorative in the Irish landscape. Two examples from *Thin Places* will exemplify the link between trauma and the experience of healing in and through the sea. In the first instance, she writes, "Places create ripples inside of us; they rise and they swell inside each of us in turn; how we experience place is completely unique to us alone" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 212). Towards the end of the memoir and the conclusion of her journey across Britain and Ireland, she creates the image of the body as the sea itself. Places influence us in the same way that a stone thrown into water would create ripples on the sea's surface. There is not only an obvious, immediate reaction but also, ultimately, a long-term change in the composition of the sea. The experience of place (and environment in more general terms) is an absolute and embodied encounter that is unique and surges like the sea. Earlier in the memoir, she provides an expanded image of this connection by using an environmental simile to describe the intersection between the body, the environment and the historical trauma she has experienced growing up in Northern Ireland: "like the landscape and the seas, we too have been moulded by the past" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 105). In the mirrored image between the human body and the landscape, she opens up the possibility of the environment allowing her to heal and affecting the body in general. Body and environment coincide in the similes and metaphors she uses to describe her personal experiences of dealing with trauma and its effects.

A conscious and sustained engagement with this connection to the environment only develops later in life for Ní Dochartaigh. The negative effects humanity has had on the natural world trigger her exploration of her embodied relationship with the Irish landscape. On the one hand, this engagement with negative effects can manifest itself in a certain disregard for the environment (Gaard, 2020, p. 230). Solastalgia – negative emotional reactions to environmental changes – actually precludes us from enacting positive change that could mitigate some of these same effects. As a reaction to this lack of engagement, writers tend to emphasise

relationships with specific places as ecocritics "have traced topophilia [the affective relationship between people and places] and other forms of place attachment back to processes of evolutionary adaptation, habituation, and social interactions" (Von Mossner, 2018, p. 51). The negative effects we witness are somewhat limited to specific spaces and places – the small scale, however, also allows for the possibility of change. Local attachment can, in turn then, attune us to the environment on a global scale.

In *Thin Places*, Ní Dochartaigh relates one incisive experience that is emblematic for this link between the local and the global scale. As she listens to the radio, a caller squashes a moth. To her, this moment is representative of the repercussions of even our small actions. She realises the overwhelming effect humans have on the environment and is deeply affected by this episode:

> The listener said: 'I don't think we will be hearing from the moth again.' Gideon Coe [BBC Radio 6 presenter] fell silent, as if he could find no way to respond. I sat at my kitchen table utterly aghast, angry, grieving for a moth I had never even seen, killed on a satnav in the car of a man I had never met. I turned the radio off that night, sat in a completely silent kitchen, and wept.
>
> (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 43)

She laments the fact that she cannot connect with the natural world in Ireland because she does not know her native language; this is another consequence of the invisible boundaries and long history of British rule affecting Ireland. Even though the shift from Irish to English over the centuries was not a linear one as different groups of peoples settled on Ireland, colonialism played a large role in the rising prevalence of English over Irish (Crowley, 2005, p. 3; Mac Mathúna, 2023, p. 89). Even before the sharp decline in native Irish speakers in the nineteenth century (Mac Mathúna, 2020, p. 46), there had been attempts to limit the use of Irish and Gaelic throughout the centuries: "Legislation by the colonizing power was first passed against the use of Gaelic in 1366, and then again in 1665, 1695, and 1733" (Crowley, 2005, p. 3). In an attempt to connect with the land and her history, Ní Dochartaigh looks up the word for "moth" and begins to learn Irish to strengthen her connection to her own history and the environment. As she searches for a translation app to navigate the Irish language, she recognises her own connection to the environment and the centrality of language to this connection: "I felt it so fully, for the first time, the link between the past and the future, the land and the language, and my place in it all" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 43). The Irish language bridges the gap between the past and the present while simultaneously being intimately tied to the landscape of the island itself.

The loss of language and its accompanying loss of connection to the environment are for her the root causes of why she is so affected by the death of the moth. The trauma Ní Dochartaigh locates in the environment expresses itself in her writing as eco-grief, which she experiences "at the thought of species extinction" (Magee, 2022, p. 403), resulting in an illustration of the "network of environmental experience". The negative response she has in the moment of listening to the careless – even violent – treatment of the moth through the radio ignites this moment of recognition of the entanglement of the human and nonhuman worlds. She takes the first step to create change: small and on a personal level as she identifies the connection between the environment and the way we speak about it and its inhabitants. Her loss and lack of the Irish language is a consequence of "the legacy of a history of invasion reaching back centuries" (Hill, 2023, p. 76). As she contemplates the consequences of this history, she writes, "the loss of the ability to name both the landscape and the creatures we share it with in Irish began to sink in" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 20). Recognising the loss of language equals recognising the "network of environmental experience" when she realises, "how interconnected, how finely woven every single part of it all [loss of the environment and loss of identity] was" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 20). Listening to the death of the moth triggers her quest to reconnect with the environment. Subconsciously, in acknowledging this network, she can then cast off her trauma when she swims in the sea. Here, she can embark on her recovery.

Thin Places offers a bridge between a particular moment in Irish history – the Troubles – and a larger context of the relationship between Irish writers and the environment. Ní Dochartaigh avoids only highlighting the Troubles and losing sight of the environmental crisis that forms an undercurrent in her narrative. It would be easy to only focus on the Troubles as the cause of her ill mental health; however, only focusing on her trauma and this one episode in history "runs the risk of over-concentration on particular crisis episodes of Irish history, and most especially modern Irish history" (Dillane, McAreavey and Pine, 2016, p. 4). In focusing too much on single episodes in Irish history, there is the risk of forgetting that the body is always situated – even beyond these episodes – and it is likely still in pain. Instead, establishing a connection between the body in pain and the environment transcends these limitations to single, historical moments. This effect thus establishes continuity between the body and the environment that exceeds individuality and so represents the concept of territorial bodies and the "network of environmental experience". Pain becomes the linking factor and allows for the recognition that humans and the environment suffer alongside each other. In *Thin Places*, the tie surpassing the specific historical moment becomes apparent in the temporal features of the memoir: the trauma is narrated in retrospective, and the experience of nature often lies in the narrator's present.

Ultimately, the "thin place" of the sea cleanses those who enter it and only does so for Ní Dochartaigh when she is ready for it. She describes the waves as both pure and purifying as she swims and reflects on her experiences throughout her life. These characteristics are visualised in their sublimity and the following images of purity and motherhood: the waves are simultaneously "white as snow" and "like mountains [the sea] had given birth to overnight" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. x). Again, she draws the parallel between the landscape (or seascape in this particular case) and the body. Notably, she connects the image of the sea to a metaphor of motherhood that eventually results in the ultimate, corporeal relationship with the environment – she is inextricably linked to the sea through a sense and experience of re-birth. Not only does the sea give birth to the waves, but its function as a "thin place" allows Ní Dochartaigh to experience a kind of re-birth herself, of leaving the political and social traumas behind and instead focusing on her entangled relationship with the nonhuman world: "A wave came, and I knew it was time to leave" (2022, p. 170). This process has renewed her will to live after the waves wash over her, and she is finally on a path to recovery. Simultaneously, the "thin place" of the sea vanishes: "The veil settled back into its sacred, safe place, and I made for shore" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 170). There is no longer a need for the direct recognition of the entanglement, but her outlook on her relationship with the natural world has irrevocably changed as she leaves the sea for the final time.

Central to my argument has been the "network of environmental experience" that ultimately results in Ní Dochartaigh experiencing a first moment of healing towards the end of the memoir. This argument is built on several strands that touch on, on the one hand, the study of life writing and how life writing engages with the corporeal experience of the author–subject. On the other hand, affective ecocriticism is crucial to the understanding of the role the landscape and the sea play for her throughout the memoir. Centring the body within the memoir emphasises the physical manifestations of the links between the human and nonhuman worlds. At the end of the memoir, she writes, "I knew that that gift of sea and stone – of here and there, then and now, and all that lies between – was meant, was sent for me" (Ní Dochartaigh, 2022, p. 234). The personal experience is grounded in the material reality of the environment, and Kerri Ní Dochartaigh recognises the role her body has played as the nexus of both the trauma she has experienced and her relationship with the natural world. The sea offers her a direct connection between the human and nonhuman worlds until she is ready to begin to heal both mentally and physically. Without the imagined borders and divisions that mark Ireland (the island), the sea literalises the collective body that cannot be divorced from the territory and environment in which it exists.

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II
Bodily Integrity

4   Transcorporeal Alliances

Women, Video Art, and Ecologies of Crisis in the Middle East

Oğuz Kayır

Introduction

This chapter considers the notion of territorial bodies along the contours of Middle Eastern women's video-based art practice. As such, it delves into a selection of artworks from the oeuvres of Iranian artist Shirin Neshat and Lebanese artist Lamia Joreige – contemporary visual artists whose works engage with the wars and exiles permeating not only the lived reality of Middle Eastern women but also their geographical territories at large. Featuring a cultural landscape tormented by numerous destructions, these women's video art stages female corporeality in a state of constant change, always without a definitive telos or a settled territory. Building upon Deleuze and Guattari's ontology of becoming (1987) and Stacy Alaimo's notion of transcorporeality (2008), I gesture towards a relational quality surrounding these women's artistic practices, which allows them to register an interconnected bond between their bodies and social environments. This relational quality seeps to the surface when these Middle Eastern artists map out how their bodies and social environments endure analogous alterations under social crises, revealing the overlaps between their shared experiences. At once arresting and unsettling, Neshat and Joreige's works underscore the extent to which women's bodies and social environments are interrelated, rendering discernible the devastating outcomes brought by war and exile.

Hence, Neshat and Joreige's videos that contain bodies with unassigned or incessantly altering territories form what I call *transcorporeal alliances*. As a cross-contaminating coalition between entities, transcorporeal alliances explicate the ways in which female bodies deterritorialise and are deterritorialised by their social environment. Uncovering how exile and war can enable, shape, or foreclose women's relationships with their social environments, I contend that these social crises occurring in their ecologies led Neshat and Joreige to fabricate transcorporeal alliances in which both female bodies and social environments forge a reciprocally affecting

relationship. In this transversal exchange, women and social environment alike affect one another to transcend the fixed boundaries ascribed to them. Interweaving the ontology of becoming with Alaimo's "transcorporeality" (2008), this chapter thus expands on the notion of territorial bodies by parsing out how Middle Eastern women's video-based art practice delineates female corporeality as a relational and ever-shifting conception, one that renders legible the affiliations between bodies and territories during a time of social crisis.

Transcorporeal Alliances

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) designate the processes of becomings as ceaseless mutations and transformations attendant to the transversal alliances occurring between entities. As ontology, becoming "is not an evolution by descent or filiation" (1987: 239); it does not gesture towards a fixed, finalised, or sedentary state with a forgone conclusion. Rather, becoming "is the pure movement evident in changes between particular events" (Stagoll in Parr, 2010: 26). Thwarting the conventional dualisms of Western reason which historically privileged the stasis and centrality of *being* above all else, the ontology of becoming and its interrelated vocabularies, such as assemblage and rhizome, are thus fluid concepts that put forth a processual, decentred, and cross-contaminating mode of existence (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Buchanan and Colebrook, 2000). Often referring to how the structural opposites between human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic, or animate and inanimate are seemingly conceived as incontestable in the traditional Western philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari predicate the ontology of becoming on relational and durational planes, staging it as an ontology that decentres the human from being the measure of all things. No longer touting the human as the centre of existence and master of nature, for that conceptualisation has by now indisputably led to socio-ecological crises such as warfare, mass displacements, and environmental decay, the ontology of becoming calls for a heterogeneous and non-anthropocentric mode of existence in the world.

As a Deleuzian-inflected philosopher,[1] Stacy Alaimo's theories also forge connections between nature and humans, with a particular interest in nature's affirmative potentials and interconnected alliances with feminist social change (2000, 2008). According to Alaimo, feminism's "flight from the natur[al]" (2000: 4) has caused theoretical impasses in which many social constructionists that approached nature as "static" and culture as "dynamic" phenomena found themselves amidst a dualistic rational that merely attends to the prevailing Western traditions (2000: 5). Neither implying to leave dichotomies behind nor proposing an overwhelming affiliation with nature, Alaimo argues that nature can be a feminist ally,

an undomesticated ground in which one can imagine a space both "apart from the domestic" and that is "untamed" (2000: 16), allocating the necessary base for female emancipation. In lieu of conceiving nature as a "pliable resource for industrial production or social construction" (Alaimo and Hekman, 2008: 4), this new materialist understanding reorients it as an agentic force, emphasising how it builds relational affiliations with humans that might postulate convenient grounds for feminist thought. Accordingly, Alaimo (2018: 435) introduces the term transcorporeality:

> Trans-corporeality means that all creatures, as embodied beings, are intermeshed with the dynamic, material world, which crosses through them, transforms them, and is transformed by them. While trans-corporeality as an ontology does not exclude any living creature, it does begin with the human, in order – paradoxically perhaps – to disrupt Western human exceptionalism.

Here, perhaps in an unorthodox method, I slightly pivot from the notion of nature in its literal sense. Unlike Alaimo, who takes nature – for the most part – as in the events and elements that compose the natural world, I rethink transcorporeality in a wider frame of ecology: one that is more attuned to the social environment. In doing so, I foreground how the constituents of the social environment such as landscapes, architecture, and other material objects are a part of the creation of knowledge and modes of existence regarding female bodies. Merging together the notions of body and territory, Verónica Gago also notes that "Body-territory", compacted as a single word, "de-liberalizes the notion of the body as individual property and specifies a political, productive, and epistemological continuity, of the body *as* territory" (2020: 86). In other words, bodies do not exist in isolation as individuals, but always in relation to other bodies and "nonhuman forces" (Gago, 2020: 86), thereby unveiling how they are intricately tied to the notion of territory. Building on such theorisation, this chapter thus argues that Neshat and Joreige envision female bodies and social environments as intertwined forces whereby "each body is a territory of battle, an always-changing assemblage, open to becoming" (Gago, 2020: 87). Hence, in what follows, I offer a closer look into Neshat and Joreige's artistic opuses, respectively.

Shirin Neshat and the Liminality of Exile

Located in between two worlds, Iranian-American artist Shirin Neshat's body of work touches upon Muslim women's identities, putting the artist as the mediator between two cultures. As Iftikhar Dadi notes, Neshat has often been recognised among the international art circuits as "the singular privileged translator who is able to mediate the image of Muslim

womanhood in the West by means of her powerful aesthetic representations" (2008: 128). Through experimentations in films, photographs, and video installations, her works draw their influence from the oppressive heteropatriarchal predicament of women in post-revolutionary Iran and the artist's own exile from her homeland. The experimental quality of her work, as Jenny Chamarette argues, "is concerned with the conjoining of structural opposites: male and female, the real and the magical, formal stillness and choreography, political concreteness and poetic abstraction" (2015: 129). Even though Neshat's experimentations oscillate between these different binary opposites, perhaps the most ostensible duality she mediates is the one between East and West,[2] in which she remains "ambivalent about being fixed in place by either" (Navab, 2007: 44).

For this reason, Neshat mediates a liminal space in which the artist herself, along with other Iranian women in her works, negotiate the dynamic interplay between the dichotomies of nature/culture, male/female, and East/West. As Farzaneh Milani aptly puts, Neshat's works incubate "a liminal space where us and them, here and there, local and global are juxtaposed seamlessly, and from their stark contrast and confluence a new landscape is produced" (2019: 173). Harnessing these multi-layered implications of her artistic prowess, I argue that Neshat and the women she films execute an entanglement with their social environments. Far from being stuck as isolated entities, the female bodies in Neshat's works are enmeshed with the social ecology, co-constituting "a world of fleshy beings with their own needs, claims, and actions" (Alaimo, 2010a: 2). To decipher these claims further, I now closely look at Neshat's video art series *Rapture* and *Soliloquy* through which the artist plays with the dualisms intrinsic to Western thought, to foreground how and on what terms female bodies and social environments interpolate.

Neshat's two-channel video installation *Rapture* is built upon contrasts as she instantaneously displays a neatly ordered, city-like town on one side and a barren wilderness on the other. While men in sleek white shirts pervade the first frame, women in black chadors gather around in the second frame of the desolate badlands. Here, what Neshat constructs is a playful mediation on the foundational dualism that associates men with culture and women with nature (Plumwood, 1993: 4). For in *Rapture*, men are delineated as working in an embroiled environment, whereas women are seen as standing still, harmonised with the serene nature of the panoramic landscape. Even though men are initially portrayed as active agents who constantly work and circulate in their sleek, urbanite environment (Figure 4.1), their routine is abruptly disturbed as women collectively start chanting and tongue-lashing, thereby disrupting the masculine economy which dominates the social order. Towards the end, while men stay put and gaze across the town, a group of women on the coastline step on a small vessel, sailing through the waves of the ocean (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.1 Men working in an urban environment.

Source: © Shirin Neshat. (1999a). *Rapture*. Film still. Courtesy of Gladstone Gallery, New York and Noirmontartproduction, Paris

Figure 4.2 Women at the beach, roaming towards a boat.

Source: © Shirin Neshat. (1999a). *Rapture*. Film still. Courtesy of Gladstone Gallery, New York and Noirmontartproduction, Paris

Avant-garde media theorist Scott MacDonald notes that the split structure in *Rapture* is an artistic enterprise that focuses "on the separation of the sexes in Islamic culture and on the various ways in which this traditional separation is articulated" (MacDonald and Neshat, 2004: 622). Given that many Iranian women have found themselves amidst a strict demarcation of public and private spheres after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, such an aesthetic choice has resonances for Neshat's feminist endeavours. As such, at play here is a juxtaposition of men with architectural landscape and women with the land and sea that characterises this traditional sexual division with an omnipresent tension. Parallelly, the video unravels as though men and women persistently wage war against each other to preserve a space of their own. Instead of leaning towards one side of these binary opposites, however, *Rapture* operates within a transitory and liminal state, opening up "a third arena of action and experience" for both the artist and the subjects filmed (Navab, 2007: 44).

This attempt to operate from a non-dualistic ground stems from a feminist compulsion in which the artist observes the prejudicial and damaging outcomes of dichotomous thinking, especially for women. As many feminist theorists point out, the association of men with culture and women with nature unequivocally marked women and nature as inferior and passive facades: as a "terra nullius, a resource empty of its own purposes or meanings, and hence available to be annexed for the purposes of those supposedly identified with reason or intellect" (Plumwood, 1993: 4). Nevertheless, unlike these shared contentions that undergird Western thought, as Grosz notes, "the natural is not the inert, passive, unchanging element against which culture elaborates itself but the matter of the cultural, that which enables and actively facilitates cultural variation and change" (2005: 47). Subsequently, Neshat's video strives for an affirmative account of nature in which women, far from being reduced to stagnant bodies without agency, start looming as subjects with vitality that actively foster and even disturb the men's alleged order.

Interweaved with nature, women in *Rapture* display a transcorporeal alliance formulated with the social environment. After the shift transpires in the narrative and women cease standing still, the artist exhibits them undertaking numerous activities, with some praying on the land, some launching a boat, and others using that boat to flow into the sea. Regarding how the concept of transcorporeality proposes relational forms of existence in the world, Alaimo stresses that "by emphasizing the movement across bodies, trans-corporeality reveals the interchanges and interconnections between human corporeality and the more-than-human" (2008: 238). In that matter, these women engender a cross-contaminating allegiance with their environment by which both parties inaugurate a process of change and enmeshment. Comparable to Deleuze and Guattari's famous writings on the wasp and the orchid in which a reciprocal exchange takes place between these two entities and enables "a becoming-wasp of the orchid

and a becoming-orchid of the wasp" (1987: 10), women in Neshat's video collectively forge a "shared deterritorialization" with their social ecologies whereby a symbiotic relationship comes to the surface (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 238). Women, taking the role of the active wasps, deterritorialise the sedentary and uncontaminated plane of their environment for their own quests of emancipation, meanwhile, the environment – embodying the passive role of the orchid – is reterritorialised into a new ecology through which it is then activated to facilitate women in transgressing boundaries. Hence, altering its own purview, the environment distances itself from being the locus of inertia, towards an energetic sphere of movement.

Unlike *Rapture* in which the split structure of the installation executes a traditional sexual division between men and women, in Neshat's next video installation *Soliloquy*, it takes on the duty of illustrating the artist's exile. Divided, once again, as a two-channel video installation, *Soliloquy* displays the artist in a black chador, roaming aimlessly in the two seemingly different cityscapes. While one screen shows a modern architectural panorama that resembles the American urban atmosphere where Neshat resides in exile (Figure 4.3), the other chooses a more traditional and noticeably

Figure 4.3 Covered in a black chador from head to toe, the artist stands in front of a modern building in a Western metropolis.

Source: © Shirin Neshat. (1999b). *Soliloquy*. Photograph. Courtesy of Gladstone Gallery, New York

Islamic background with mosques and madrasas as its setting, indicative of the artist's home in Iran. From running around in the city subways to dwelling in the gardens of mosques or coming across a group of Christian people at the church, we are shown a female figure wavering amid two cultures and yet never feeling welcomed by either side. Primarily envisaged around an East/West dualism, this is thus a work in which the artist feels belonging neither to East nor to West but rather chooses to "continue traveling in between" (Navab, 2007: 44). As an alienated body in exile, without an assigned territory, Neshat operates at the intermezzo – a state which "constitutes a zone of proximity and indiscernibility, a no-man's-land, a nonlocalizable relation sweeping up the two distant or contiguous points" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 293).

As Laura Marks stresses, many Middle Eastern artists working in the Global North are often wrapped up in a "thick intercultural fabric spanning home and diaspora" (2003: 54). Since these displaced artists are convoluted in a multitude of economic, political, and cultural forces that operate in their newly found environments, their subjectivities are carried into an ever-shifting ground that goes back and forth between the land that they yearn for back home and the land that they try to embrace in exile. Neshat, as an Iranian artist in exile, is no exception to this pattern. In *Soliloquy*, as well as in her other video installations, "national and political borders are found to be porous and pliable" (Schad, 2019: 13), waving towards a state of in-betweenness. Therefore, through the iconographies of unresolved conflicts, estrangements, and perplexities, *Soliloquy* becomes the centrepiece project that marks the artist's inner and external journeys of exile.

Even though exile is often accompanied by undesirable outcomes or as I have argued thus far, an in-between state of existence; in *Reflections on Exile*, Edward Said presents a rather affirmative account of exile in which the exilic subject "is aware of at least two cultures" via which he or she attains a "plurality of vision" (2000: 222). Remaining careful not to discard the pain of displacement, Said contends that "a life of exile moves according to a different calendar" by which the displaced subject lives his/her life "outside habitual order" in a "nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal" fashion (2000: 222). When elaborated through this vantage point, Neshat practices this plurality of vision through the dual screens of *Soliloquy* as she explores the components of the home in a divergent set of social environments. Modernised North American cityscape on the one hand, and the folkloric panorama of the Middle East on the other, she compromises the fragmented, plural, and heterogeneous nature of her existence in exile. Instead of conceiving a "home that is static – that is the home as property, as a solid line of defense", Neshat delineates the idea of home "as a place of becoming" (Alaimo, 2016: 34) whereby her exilic subjectivity attunes

with the flowing space of the in-between, trying to map the frontiers of both sides.

Speaking of mapping, *Soliloquy* presents the artist's body as entangled with the picturesque landscape of the modern and traditional architectural sites, constituting a "body-territory" by which human corporeality and nonhuman territories are morphed into a singular image (Gago, 2020: 83). In *Atlas of Emotion*, Giuliana Bruno attests that "if the landscape becomes a body, the body conversely becomes a site of mapping" (2002: 233). Underscoring how such mapping can be conducive to feminist ventures, Bruno additionally notes that "when the site of exploration is a body map, one can travel physiologically through the depths of bodily passages" and discover the potentials of "epidermic cartographic knowledge" (2002: 233). Emphasising the entwinement of the human body and the nonhuman nature, Alaimo argues in a similar vein that "the maps of transit between human corporeality and nonhuman nature are infinite" through which diverse forms of social, political, and cultural realities which are often perceived to be detached are in fact "inextricably linked by the substantial transit across bodies and natures" (2008: 259). Indeed, the body maps that Neshat conveys through the twofold duration of *Soliloquy* confirm the relational linkage between the exiled self and the social environment, particularly for women. Whether the artist in a black chador standing inertly in the maddening crowd of the New York City subway or blending in with a cluster of other veiled Muslim women in a mosque in Mardin, Turkey, Neshat's video installation displays landscapes imbued with the corporeal self of the artist, alluding to the fact that the exile befalling in the social sphere immediately affects the territorial bodies.

Therefore, selected video installations from Neshat's oeuvre showcase a constant encounter with the dualisms intrinsic in Western thought. Whether it is male/female, nature/culture, or East/West, the artist negotiates an in-between territory by a frequent oscillation between these categories. While her double frames – perhaps paradoxically – constitute a binary vision, the acumen of her artistic praxis concentrates on an alternative space beyond dualisms. As Milani notes, "hers is the epitome of an artistic trajectory with an on-the-road mentality, one that refuses to stagnate in a familiar space" (2019: 173). Stimulated by her own exile, along with Iranian women's struggles, Neshat's videos amalgamate the female body and environment into a single plane, demonstrating how the exile and patriarchal hegemony endured by Iranian women affect both their bodies and territories.

Lamia Joreige's Videoscapes of War

In her works on the aftermath of the Lebanese Wars, Lamia Joreige employs an artistic method that tries to render truth in her own terms.

Either collecting testimonies from other Lebanese citizens or projecting herself in the middle of her works, Joreige confronts the seemingly singular account of war by foregrounding the peculiar histories of each person, including her own. Mark Westmoreland asserts that many Lebanese video artists who engage with the remnants of war in such subversive modes do not attempt "to replace one 'false' history with another 'true' one, but to go against the grain of sanctioned forgetfulness, commonly referred to as 'official amnesia'" (2010: 176). In the aftermath of the civil war which gripped the nation from 1975 to 1990 and left a carcass in the country's economic and political spheres, Lebanese officials avoided addressing the violence that ruined the country and thus "enacted an unmistakable policy of containment" through passing "a law granting amnesty for war crimes" (Rogers, 2007: 9). The result was the advent of an official discourse that, instead of historicising the war, imagined "an idealized, prewar Lebanon" (Rogers, 2007: 9). Congruently, the video-based works of Joreige weave together an assemblage of memory whereby the material objects, human subjects, and urban landscapes of Lebanon are accumulated into a domain of conjunction to counteract that collective amnesia. Aiming to map these entangled videoscapes of war and the territorial bodies that they compose, I now closely inspect two works from Joreige's oeuvre – *Objects of War* and *Nights and Days*.

As Joreige's ongoing project that resists the finality of artistic productions, *Objects of War* is a series of video interviews conducted over the different decades of recent Lebanese history. In this project, participants from various generations are called in to reminisce about their memories of the civil war, especially with regard to an object of their choice. A Miss Piggy bag, family photographs, a guitar, a curtain, or an ID card without a picture constitute some of the objects that participants associate with war. Since these objects are only taken as a starting point for each person's story, *Objects of War* operates as fragments of a dispersed cultural memory. One by one, Joreige traces the plural, multifarious, and ever-changing implications of war in each person's individual and subjective history, thereby refuting the idea of a unified, singular memory that sustains the national narrative.

While the interviewees recount their personal memories attached to these objects, we are shown how their items function either as harmless nostalgic symbols for the past or as potentially disruptive entities that can radically render the present tense a "volatile" state (Marks, 2007: 22). Since these material objects carry a certain history of atrocity within them, as Marks attests, "they show us that the present is the fingertip of the past and the past is reaching to pull us into the earth" (2007: 22). Underscoring the "dangerous" potentials embedded in them, Marks further notes that these objects can be regarded as "fetishes that establish a material contact

whereby the past can leak into the present" (2007: 22). Although agreeing with Marks on the idea that the past might easily lurk through the materiality of these objects, I further argue that through this cluster of material entities, Joreige formulates an assemblage in which subjects-in-becomings emerge and unfold, creating ceaselessly fluctuating Lebanese subjects that are caught between the complex interplay of past, present, and future.

Designating the concept of assemblage along the axis of "a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms", Deleuze proclaims that assemblage "establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures" (Deleuze and Parnet, 2007: 69). Since its heterogenic attributes entail the coming together of different forms of entities, bodies, or substances, an assemblage often refers to a "constellation that disturbs and unsettles the rigid categorisations of groups" (Baykan, 2021: 201). As a dynamic network of relations through which becomings unfold, assemblage gathers "man and nature, the organic and inorganic, the mechanical and non-mechanical, in a single sphere of interaction" (Bogue, 1989: 129).

What Joreige undertakes in *Objects of War* resonates with the concept of assemblage, in that, she brings together a group of distinct and yet connected objects and delineates Lebanese subjects in a continual state of change through their temporal linkages with these material objects. For instance, during the testimony of Nesrine in which she chooses playing cards as her object of war, we realise that the cards that once reminded her of the war are no longer affiliated with that memory. After a certain period of time spent in a state of crisis, Nesrine tells us, one simply refuses "to coexist with the war", thereby radically reordering the importance of objects (Joreige, 1999 – ongoing). As more and more stories of interviewees unravel, we begin to see that their perceptions of their own pasts, presents, and futures are altered in the rapidly changing ether of post-war Lebanon. In that respect, since the subjects enter a metamorphosing episode, the assemblage composed of their interconnected objects too undergoes a "constant variation" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 82), changing the meanings attached to these inanimate entities. The material objects and the memories that they include, thus, not only reflect the memory-making objective of the artist but also engender an assemblage containing the subjectivities of Lebanese people, one that always remains in a state of transformation.

In *The Migrant Image*, T. J. Demos stresses that Joreige's *Objects of War*, through its diverse set of archival testimonies, "reveals the violence of the war's sectarian divisions without privileging any single viewpoint" and hence registers an ever-shifting and collective account of the civil war (2013: 184). This fluid and plural chronicle of witnessing orchestrated by Joreige parallels the transitory, relational, and heterogeneous state of

female subjectivity in post-war Lebanon. In one of the testimonies, a Lebanese woman named Chaza remembers losing her identity card during an attack by the Israeli forces, an event which sparked a strong hatred towards the intruding forces (Figure 4.4). However, after coming across a young Israeli soldier with fear in his eyes and seeing the human person behind this armed conflict, Chaza explains, the feeling of hatred is enmeshed with the feeling of understanding, "all at once, both born at the same instant, during this assault" (Joreige, 1999 – ongoing). Corresponding to the material act of losing an ID card, then, Chaza's turbulent encounter with the soldier rendered her fixed identity ever so fluid, ungraspable, and easy to elude.
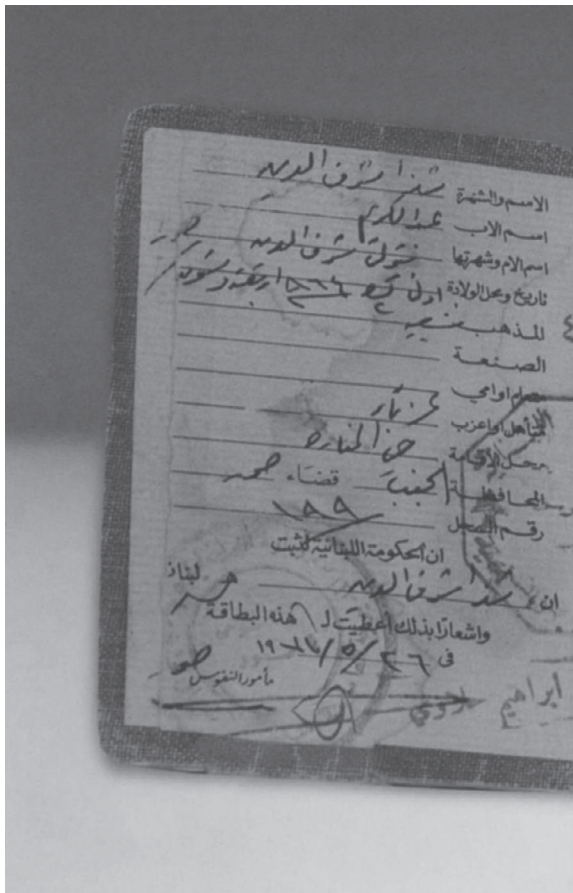

Figure 4.4 ID with a lost photograph.

Source: © Lamia Joreige. (1999 – ongoing). *Objects of War*. Film still. Courtesy of the artist

Convoluted into a spiral of socio-political crisis, namely the remnants of the civil war that lasted for more than a decade, Joreige carefully resumes sketching out Lebanese bodies entangled with their environment in *Objects of War*. While thinking through transcorporeality, Alaimo often uses the equally symbolic and real notion of "toxic bodies" to "reimagine human corporeality, and materiality itself, not as a utopian or romantic substance existing prior to social inscription", but as an embroiled phenomenon that carries "the trace of history, social position, region, and the uneven distribution of risk" (2008: 260). On a similar note, Gago also describes how the exploitation of common territories shared by groups of people discloses "the violation of the body of each person, as well as the collective body, through dispossession" (2020: 83). When the material effects of war on human corporeality are rethought within this frame of reference, I contend that Joreige illustrates the interviewees in *Objects of War* as toxic bodies – bodies that are impinged and inscribed by the reciprocal contact with the warfare state of their ecologies. Like the testimony of Rudy Khalil, who shares a family photograph of his parents in their old house – a house that was destroyed during the war – the many subjects of Joreige's project are laid out as infected by the catastrophic forces of the civil war unfolding in their environment. Hence, as "volatile, emergent, and continually evolving" corporeal entities (Alaimo, 2008: 262), the bodies of Lebanese people are contaminated by the unforeseen and unpredictable dynamism of the war. Affecting human and nonhuman entities adjacent to it, this civil war rendered their ecology as a pliable and defenceless organism, prone to vicissitudes and always without a conclusion.

Since the civil war in Lebanon spanned over 15 years, the social, cultural and architectural fabric of Beirut was permanently altered as a consequence. In the aftermath of the civil war, as Sarah Rogers designates, "the country splintered long political and sectarian lines, and in its wake, a myth of origin has been invoked that naturalizes the violence within a cycle of destruction and rebirth" (2007b: 19). While such "violent ruptures" often result in turning points in other national narratives, as Rogers continues, "the ontological status of Beirut, according to this national myth, is constituted through a series of ruins and resurgences" (2007b: 19). This cultural myth of rebirth through destruction is thus carried out in Joreige's next project *Nights and Days*, which takes place in the aftermath of the Lebanon War in 2006, a violent battle between Israeli and Hezbollah forces that once again left the city in ruins.

Nights and Days is a twofold story. In the first part of the video, while the artist reads excerpts from her journals on the war, she intercuts the images of her town – embellished with the smoke of bombings, military tanks, sounds of drones, and other such vocabularies she relates to war (Figure 4.5). During the second act, she travels to South Lebanon where the

Figure 4.5 A shot from the first part showing the growing smoke of a bombing.
Source: © Lamia Joreige (2007a). *Nights and Days*. Film still. Courtesy of the artist

central conflict of the war took place. Remarking that "the landscape of war became a genre with its own specificities and significant details" (Joreige, 2007b: 61), the artist discloses panoramic imagery of the Southern region in which roads, bridges, apartments, and schools are all demolished by the bombings. Instead of a calmly read monologue voiced by the artist, the second part is accompanied by an evocative composition of Israeli drone sounds, as the artist underlines that words could not register the devastation she endured in the warzone (Joreige, 2018). While an atmosphere of despair envelopes *Nights and Days*, alluding to the aforementioned national parable of the relentless rebirth that pervades the Lebanese ethos, Joreige nevertheless reflects "on the passage of time, the awaiting, the fears as well as the transformations forced by this war" (2007b: 59).

Aligning with the dynamic contact between female corporeality and the more-than-human world, *Nights and Days* encapsulates a gendered account of social division emerging in the contemporary conjuncture of Lebanon. In her writings in the years following the civil war, the Lebanese poet and painter Etel Adnan elucidates that "there's no more Nature,

I tell myself, in the near metaphysical, ecstatic sense of the word. And if there's no "Nature", there is no "Woman" (1993: 16). Commenting on how the urban atmosphere of Beirut has distorted over the war, Adnan further articulates that "a woman alone in the streets has nowhere to stop" since the cityscape of Beirut, which was once specifically welcoming for women dwellers and flaneuses, "has become the exclusive domain of men" (1993: 80). Likewise, a generation later, in the aftermath of the Lebanon War in 2006, one sees that Joreige's body is deterritorialised by the critical transformations taking place in her environment. Reminiscent of Neshat's shifting subjectivity in exile, which is echoed in *Soliloquy*, Joreige's identity as a woman is rendered in an unceasing flux initiated by the wars in Lebanon. From displaying how she grew afraid of staying at her house by herself to stating that how "[she] cannot remember what [she] was doing before it all began" (Joreige, 2007a), the artist is shown as a female figure wound up in the waves of change, virtually delineating in a transcorporeal mode, "a sense of fleshy vulnerability" (Alaimo, 2010b: 24). Therefore, these cultural registers of Lebanese wars gesture towards the *body-territory* of Joreige, underscoring how the social and material demolition inflicted by wars instantaneously affects the territorial bodies of Lebanese subjects.

Apart from the entanglement of bodies and environments that saturate a vast majority of Joreige's works, the scattered video passages of ravaged and derelict landscapes in *Nights and Days* insinuate an assemblage of videoscapes, captured en masse in times of war. Deleuze and Guattari state that assemblage "has neither base nor superstructure" but a "single plane of consistency upon which reciprocal presuppositions and mutual insertions play themselves out" (1987: 90). This relational interplay between the heterogeneous entities that constitute the assemblage, as Paulo de Assis notes, renders it "a fluid entity, moving from one state to another, from one phase to another" (2018: 100). Following this line of thought and considering the video excerpts of the destroyed landscapes of Beirut as forming an assemblage, Joreige's project draws the city as a constantly evolving set of couplings. Resembling the non-fixed and non-finalised nature of assemblage that avoids "an identitarian conclusion or an end product" (Baykan, 2021: 201), the constituents of videoscapes demonstrate Beirut as an ever-shifting and open-ended entity that, far from remaining settled, embraces the change itself.

Hence, the works of Lamia Joreige draw their core influence from the plural, heterogeneous, and interconnected stories of Lebanese people who grapple with the devastating relics of wars. Probing the relational affiliations foreseen between human and nonhuman, or animate and inanimate spheres, Joreige undermines the boundaries between these ontological categories. Parallel to Neshat's oeuvre in which she was rifling for an in-between ecology to inhabit, Joreige dwells around the material objects and

landscapes that collectively constitute videoscapes of war. Affirming the potential alliances that can be forged with the social environment, meanwhile aligning with the other contemporary Lebanese visual artists such as Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige that infiltrate the social landscape of post-war Beirut, she maintains "a tyranny of uncertainty about the future" (Westmoreland, 2010: 177).

Conclusion

Staging an encounter with the selected artistic praxes of Shirin Neshat and Lamia Joreige, this chapter foregrounds transcorporeal alliances as a conducive and entangled phenomenon to fathom how Middle Eastern women artists carve out female bodies as intricately embroiled with their social environments. Alaimo notes that transcorporeality affords a vantage point to reconsider ethical and political standpoints that can contend with copious modern-day predicaments "in which 'human' and 'environment' can by no means be considered as separate" (Alaimo, 2010a: 2). As such, what is at stake in Neshat and Joreige's works is an artistic endeavour that interlaces those otherwise distant ontological orders into a single fabric. Whether it is the war that alters one's relationship to the land or the exile in which a person is extracted from an environment, these artists sketch out transcorporeal alliances to disclose how the magnitudes of such social crises render bodies inseparable from territories. At once dismal and cathartic, these territorial bodies therefore thrive not to sustain the status quo but to dismantle the attendant power asymmetries beyond their reach, in the Middle East or elsewhere.

Notes

1 Alaimo refers to Deleuze and Guattari's work (1987) as eluding the "centuries of dualistic, anthropocentric Western thought by forwarding concepts such as rhizomes, strata, and assemblages" (2000: 12–13).
2 While Neshat herself does not directly state this, in her interview with Scott MacDonald on *Feminist Studies*, she discusses her exile from Iran and how that made her navigate through the differences encountered in Western and Eastern cultures. For more information, please refer to Scott MacDonald's interview, "Between Two Worlds: An Interview with Shirin Neshat" (2004), *Feminist Studies*, 30(3).

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5 The Breaking of the Body

Blackness, Nature, and Animality in David Dabydeen's *Slave Song*

Renée Landell

Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí argues that under Western epistemology, 'the body is the bedrock on which social order is founded' (Oyewumi, 2008, p. 163). If the body *is* a site for sociological analysis, such analysis becomes defective when the body is broken. Histories of colonial violence signify that the West's classification, organisation and injuring of Black *and* nonhuman bodies as a means of achieving the elusive concept of bodily 'wholeness' overlooks what was already broken. That is to say, when considering the body, we must also think of the Self. According to Farhad Dalal, feelings of inferiority and envy become 'a precipitator of racism' when the racialised Other is 'attacked for some . . . imagined fullness' (Dalal, 2002, p. 44). Indeed, white racial anxiety often manifested through the ways they perceived Black sexuality and resulted in the policing of bodies and territories to prevent miscegenation and maintain the image of 'pure' white bloodlines. Moreover, 'colonial epistemic separations between humans' – which became synonymous for white people – and 'everything else' are indicative of the historical fear of being broken and inferior in the Western world. Such anxieties resulted in the lethal rendering of ecologies, animals, and people as commodifiable and disposable objects (Caretta et al., 2020). It bids the question: In what ways is the pursuit of superiority an attempt to overcome internal fissures and insecurities?

In his 1984 collection *Slave Song*, Guyanese poet David Dabydeen expounds several historical anxieties surrounding inferiority and 'brokenness' in Western culture and reveals how they have shaped an unattainable but also racist and speciesist notion of bodily 'wholeness'. Such hierarchal thinking was substantiated through degrading rhetoric which, in turn, authorised bodily violence. For example, in the eponymous poem 'Slave Song', Dabydeen vividly portrays how violent perceptions of the nonhuman world informed the lynching, dismemberment, mutilation, and laceration of enslaved people. The narrator hopelessly taunts:

Tie me haan up.
Juk out me eye.

Haal me teet out
So me na go bite
. . .
Tell me how me hanimal
African orang-utan
Tell me how me cannibal
Fit fo slata fit fo hang

Ultimately, this harrowing depiction demonstrates how Blackness has been historically excluded from definitions of 'humanness'. Speaking about his poetry collection, Dabydeen states that 'the plantation experience had severe and traumatic psychic impacts that had to do with the loss of or traumatic changes in epistemologies and philosophies, but overwhelmingly had to do with what is the very ground of our beings, which is our body' (Dabydeen cited in Grant, 1997, p. 220).

Through vivid imagery and powerful storytelling, neo-slave narratives like Dabydeen's *Slave Song* illuminate how Black and nonhuman bodies have become battlegrounds for struggles over power, autonomy, and sovereignty. This chapter's application of the term 'territorial bodies' considers ways in which certain human a*nd* nonhuman bodies become interchangeable entities within systems of white supremacist power. It pays specific attention to the word 'territorial', which is associated with both jealousy and ownership, to explore how these bodies were historically owned and fragmented so that white(human)ness becomes 'wholeness'. Dabydeen foregrounds this nexus between racial dehumanisation and human cruelty against nature and animals from the point of slavery. However, this chapter argues that decolonial-ecocritical readings of several poems in his first collection make it an example of how the neo-slave narrative attempts to mend bodies by calling attention to imposed brokenness.

Repairing Fragments of the Critical Text

Before examining how Dabydeen's Caribbean neo-slave narrative provides an opportunity to read the breaking of both the Black human and nonhuman body together, I find it necessary to first address the fragments and fissures in critical readings of the genre. First, it is striking to me how Dabydeen's literary and visual illustrations of bodily mutilation as a form of sexual violence in *Slave Song* draw attention to the lack and fragmentation of scholarship on the violent sexual histories of Black men enslaved in the Caribbean. Indeed, despite the extensive historical documentation and literary representations of the sexual exploitation and abuse of enslaved African female people, – this is discussed and acknowledged extensively throughout Rachel A. Feinstein's (2018) *When Rape was Legal* – comparably little

attention has been paid explicitly to the sexual histories of enslaved African male people.[1] This is interesting as Anglophone Caribbean literature provides one of the richest sites for studying Caribbean and Black masculinities, respectively. Acclaimed male writers in the Caribbean have provided representations of Caribbean/Black masculinity in its engagement with hegemonic structures of white masculinity, homoeroticism, and Black male subordination. Some examples include Claude McKay's (1974) *Banana Bottom* and (1987) *Home to Harlem*, V. S. Naipaul's (2016) *A House for Mr Biswas*, and Earl Lovelace's (2022) *Salt: A Novel*. But Dabydeen's narrative of violent torture emphasises the important need for critics to pay attention to 'the full experience' of enslaved people, including sexual histories of violence (Dabydeen, 1984, p. 15).

Secondly, critical interpretations of the Caribbean neo-slave narrative have failed to historicise dehumanisation as a response to the uncertain boundaries between human and nonhuman species and as a system to oppress both the Black man and the nonhuman. While representations of the natural world (plant species, waterbodies, rocks, minerals, etc.) in Caribbean writing are beginning to gain some critical attention, representations of animals, particularly in the neo-slave narrative genre, remain underexplored. As Mel Chen argues, 'African slaves first bore the epistemological weight of animalisation' (Chen, 2012, p. 111). Just as draft animals were needed for labour, transportation, manure, meat, milk and leather, enslaved Africans were forced to be plantation workers, objects of sexual labour[2] and caretakers. These similarities of utility and labour reinscribed the subordinated status of racialised people and that of animals as beasts of burden. We can even draw links between slave auction blocks and the display of meat, between lynching and slaughtering, of which the histories of racialisation and animalisation are interwoven. Despite these violent connections, Caribbean writers have been reluctant to embrace the 'animal turn' – that is, the growing interest among scholars particularly in the humanities and social sciences in animals, the dynamic between humans and other animals, and what it means to be human.

The 'animal turn' has challenged dominant views of species hierarchies that perpetuate anthropocentrism and oppression, it is a movement which has prompted scholars to consider the agency and subjectivity of nonhuman animals. It also reflects a growing recognition that animals are critical to our understanding of the world and ourselves, leading to much-needed discussions on animal rights, and animal representation in literature.[3] As Lucile Desblache remarks, 'enslaved black Caribbeans were treated like beasts and were considered as 'not quite' human', much like enslaved people in America; however, Caribbean writers have desired 'to establish firm boundaries between human and non-human animals' instead of confronting shared oppression (Desblache, 2012, p. 125). The reluctance of

Caribbean writers is particularly striking compared to American writers, such as Frederick Douglass, Angela Davis, and W. E. B. Du Bois – all of whom have written against animal violence under the plantation regime and proposed a vision of freedom for all life. Frederick Douglass, for example, wrote against the brutality of anti-black racialisation as animalisation and condemned violence against animals under the plantation regime. Frederick Douglass to Frantz Fanon and Angela Davis illustrate how the Black radical tradition offers up – as part of what W. E. B. Du Bois called 'the gift of black folk' through the title of his book (1924) – a vision of freedom for all life.

Over the last few years, scholars outside the Caribbean have begun exploring the central role of race in the animal turn. Claire Jean Kim observes that 'interpretive success depends on our ability and willingness to engage with these two taxonomies of power, race, and species, at once – and to understand their connectedness' (Kim, 2015, p. 15). Similarly, Julietta Singh's *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements* (2017) reads authors who transcend worldviews on race and animality defined by control and power. This chapter builds on works such as Joshua Bennett's *Being Property Once Myself: Blackness and the End of Man*, Bénédicte Boisseron's *Afro-Dog: Blackness and the Animal Question*, and Zakiyyah Iman Jackson's *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World*. These three books examine the construction of Blackness, considering the wide-ranging possibilities that can emerge when one considers what it means to be 'Black' in parallel with what it means to be 'nonhuman'.

Despite the difference in attention when compared to scholarship by Caribbean writers, explicit discussions of race and Blackness in Animal Studies by American writers are still limited.[4] In an interview, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson speaks about being 'struck by the lack of serious engagement with race in animal studies' and not just 'the lack of engagement on the animal in studies of race' (Jackson, 2020b). Engaging with the notion of 'territorial bodies' offers a lens through which to build on existing scholarship as it not only calls into question how racial oppressions have shaped human and animal relationships but also uncovers how certain bodies have been inscribed and informed by myths about the nonhuman world.

The significance of colonial renderings of nature and animals in moulding and perpetuating anti-Black stereotypes has been overlooked in critical writings. To mend this gap, this chapter considers what kind of analysis can emerge from an ecocritical reading of Caribbean neo-slave narratives. This reading can be crucial for exposing the interrelated history of violence against Black men and the nonhuman world, and for understanding white supremacy as both a racist and speciesist theory. As animals and nature continue to be exploited, attempts to bring destructive eco-practices to an

end must include scholarly readings of Black humanity and the nonhuman world in neo-slave narratives. Thus, this chapter seeks to mend the fragments and fissures in scholarship by exploring how Dabydeen's neo-slave narrative depicts both the violent and sexual histories of enslaved Black men to bring attention to the historical conflation of race, gender and nonhuman species. This history is not only worth exploring but urgent, particularly in a time of both climate crisis and global racial trauma.

Pieces of Human, Nonhuman and Textual Bodies

Pieces of the Black body and the nonhuman body have been stitched together to create a hybrid creature of no form, an embodiment of the fear and anxieties of 'brokenness' in the Western world. However, to perceive these bodies is to recuperate an entangled history and expose the colonial myth of bodily 'wholeness' that has long worked to conceal the fear and anxiety of being broken that haunts the Western world. The neo-slave narrative provides an important opportunity to mend the fragments of history to cast a fresh critical eye on bodily wholeness as a concept of white supremacy. In the poem 'Slave Song', the narrator tauntingly pleas to the enslaver to 'tell me how me hanimal/African orang-utan/tell me how me cannibal/fit fo slata fit fo hang' (*SS*,), recalling a passage in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* that reads: 'sprawled out, distorted, re-colored . . . the Negro is an animal' (Fanon, 1986, p. 86). Fanon speaks about an encounter he had with a young white boy who observes him and confesses to being in fear at the sight of him. To Fanon, it was as if his body became the sight of disgust, as if it turned into an animal and handed back to him in pieces.

Fanon exposes, instead of repeats, what Claire Jean Kim calls the 'zoo-logo racial order' – an order with which everything 'human' depends upon the perpetuation of the idea that the 'Black' human and the 'animal' are unspeakably linked and worthy of being killed (Kim, 2015, p. 17). Like Fanon, Dabydeen emphasises the psychological strain such dehumanising violence had on the Black male psyche in his poem 'Love Song':

> Black man cover wid estate ash
> E ead haad an dry like calabash,
> Dut in e nose-hole, in e ear-hole,
> Dut in e soul,
> In e battie-hole

(*SS*, 31)

The staccato lines and rich rhyme scheme underscore the dirty and strenuous routine of plantation labour. With all our sensory attention, the reader

is encouraged to imagine the degrading brutality of enslavement, which forces the Black man to grapple with his Blackness, his masculinity, his sexuality . . . his entire gruelling existence ('haad', 'dut', 'dry', 'ash'). As Fanon argues, this self-disgust not only stems from the internalisation of racist stereotypes but also a general lack of recognition of Black humanity. He writes: 'a feeling of inferiority? No, a feeling of not existing' (Fanon, 1986, p. 139). What we can immediately draw from the poem 'Love Song' is how the Black man as a beastly animal not only calls attention to Darwinian, pseudoscientific theories of race and evolution but to delineations of the animal as 'Other' to the human throughout Western science and philosophy.[5] In the seminars collected as *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Jacques Derrida discusses the onto-epistemological distinction that renders the animal without speech, discourse, and reason (Derrida, 2010). Similarly, Black humanity has been defined in pseudoscientific theory, as bodies without minds (Wilkes, 2016, p. 34).

Writing on African enslavement, Cowper states that 'the endeavour of the master is to suppress alike the intellect, the passions, and the senses' of the enslaved Black man, to essentially transform him into a 'beast' (cited in Bradley, 2012, p. 70). Through brutal anatomical descriptions and animal allusions, Dabydeen gives credence to Cowper's observations. For example, in the poem 'Slave Song' the narrator satirically utters the colonial idiom 'African orang-utan', demonstrating an awareness of how he is perceived in the mind of the enslaver, before going on to depict brutal torture akin to animal cruelty. Dental imagery in the poem works to highlight how the Black man as an animal was figured in the colonial mind, just as Cowper suggests. For example, the line 'haal me teet out/so me nah go bite' presents the narrator as the wild, ravenous 'hanimal' or 'cannibal' the enslaver believes him to be (*SS*, 29). The dental references in the poem illustrate the arguments of Colette Ramuz, who states that in the Western imaginary, 'biting violently punctures boundaries between civility and animality' (Ramuz, 2020, p. 74). Dabydeen demonstrates how certain behaviours were coded in the slave system to distinguish which men can suppress their primaeval energies (and thus remain within respectable society) and which men cannot.

The threat of forceful tooth extraction to quell the narrator's supposed violent animality supports the argument of Jonathan W. Thurston who states that 'the uniquely terrifying aspect of the [beast] is in its unconscious capacity to invade our standards of civilization, disrupt any semblance of life, and pass the final frontier of fear for us; being eaten alive' (Thurston, 2019, p. 36). Dabydeen depicts torture as a method of preventing the narrator from biting. This representation is a meaningful engagement with the history of slavery, particularly in the context of the Caribbean. As a marker of animality and primitivism, cannibalism has long been connected

to Caribbean identity (both indigenous and African). The word 'Caribbean' is a toponymic adjective relating to the Caribs, an indigenous tribe of the region accused by Christopher Columbus of having a predilection for anthropophagy.[6] Reg Murphy states that representations of the Caribs as savage cannibals are entirely based on colonial accounts and became a justification for African slavery as Black men were regarded as sexually violent rapists (as just another mode of consumption). Such allegations about their behaviour inspired the word 'caníbales', the Spanish derivative of 'cannibalism'.

Thus, we can assert that the 'cannibal' – 'hanimal' in Dabydeen's collection denotes a violent, Black, yet distinctly Caribbean, Mandingo. According to Colette Ramuz, biting commonly "represents fetishized sexual behavior" in literature (Ramuz, 2020, p. 73). We see this symbolism in Dabydeen's poem in a 'disgustingly animal' scene, to use the poet's words, a scene also particularly Caribbean, where an insatiable 'black crappau' frog, a feasting 'camoudie' snake and other animals become accompanying images to the Black rapist who devours the helpless mistress (*SS*, 55). This image of various modes of consumption challenges how we determine the narrator's species, for the colonial figuration of a violent Black, specifically Caribbean male, sexuality is determined by two designations: a 'cannibal' (human but bestial) and a 'hanimal' (nonhuman) which overlap in the poem.

Just as physical bodies overlap in the poem, so too do textual bodies (as demonstrated through Dabydeen's use of intertextuality as a generic convention of the neo-slave narrative genre). Christopher Keep et al., describe intertextuality as 'fragments' that 'pass into the text and are redistributed within it' (Keep et al., 2000, para. 3). Dabydeen takes full advantage of intertextuality in his neo-slave narrative to demonstrate how the figuration of Blackness as fragmented and bestial has been fashioned through many visual and textual narratives. Limb by limb ('haan', 'eye', 'neck', 'foot', 'lip' and 'leg' (*SS*, 29) and element by element (Introduction, poems, notes and translations, illustrations, and postscript), the poet and his narrator desperately try to piece together fragments – the narrator through resistance and the poet in his defiance of narrative authority. Intertextuality is, thus, a way of accounting for the role of literary and extra-literary materials without recourse to traditional notions of authorship.

This piecing together of textual bodies works to highlight how discourses of race and species cross in the colonial text and are redistributed within it. For example, the appended illustration by Blake titled 'The Execution and Breaking on the Rack' on the page preceding the poem 'Slave Song' depicts an enslaved man bound to a wooden frame. The enslaved man depicted in the image is lying with his legs and arms tied and stretched, one hand hacked off, as another enslaved person is forced to beat him to

death. It is an image which recalls the words of Frederick Douglass about the nature of racialised and animal oppression as brokenness: '*I now saw in my situation, several points of similarity with that of the oxen. They were property, so was I; they were to be broken, so was I*' (Douglass, 1855, p. 212). Though Dabydeen does not reflect on this directly in his notes, the illustration is versified in the poem 'Slave Song', using verbs such as 'tie', 'lash', 'juck', 'whip' and 'slice' to describe the torment of the 'hanimal' narrator. As such the irony of depicting 'brokenness' through modes of intertextuality emphasises just how restorative the neo-slave narrative can be in highlighting how fragments of the Black, animal and textual body can shape our understanding of what it means to be "whole".

The tortured body of the Black male narrator as punishment for his 'animalistic tendencies' is an act of bodily breaking and an attempt to blur boundaries among species. Furthermore, the speciesist and racist colonial processes of dehumanisation are underscored by Dabydeen to promote a revaluation of Black life as "whole", which proves crucial for fighting oppression against various forms of life.

Castration and the Cutting of the Cane

An ecocritical analysis of poems such as 'Love Song' reveals how nature like nonhuman animals has also been intimately tied to the 'broken' Black body. According to Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, sugar 'employed more workers, and generated more profits, than any other crop' (Burnard and Garrigus, 2016, p. 3). It was a crop that also informed an important relationship between labour, profits, ecological destruction, and colonialism in the Caribbean and also the sexual histories of Black men. When considering discourses of slavery, it is important to draw on colonial images of the sugarcane, as a violently sexual symbol of the Black penis. Lyra Spang states that in popular culture particularly 'across the English-speaking Caribbean' several 'long and hard foods like sugarcane are seen as an appropriate metaphor for an erect penis' (Spang, 2011, p. 4). An example of this is the song 'Sugarcane' by popular Jamaican artist Shaggy, a portion of the lyrics read:

> Don't you worry about the loot
> Wanna be a mommy ripe and ready for a couple youths
> . . .
> But when she taste my sugar cane from then she hasn't been the same

But such graphic portrayals of Black men have a dark and violent history. Thinking back to slavery, images and descriptions of Black men with large penises and muscled physiques, tall stature, and dark skin worked to

substantiate myths of a violent, animalistic, Black male sexuality that finds root in pro-slave apologist writings.[7] Indeed, placing Black men as sexually craven beasts made it easier to enforce accusations of rape and murder, contributing to a rise in lynching during slavery. Moreover, several critical texts have observed this phenomenon exploring in great length how such myths have historically upheld white female supremacy by using victimhood as violence. Some examples include A. Phipps' *White tears, White rage: Victimhood and (as) Violence in Mainstream Feminism* (2021); Ruby Hamad's, *White Tears Brown Scars: How White Feminism Betrays Women of Colour* (2020); and Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (2019). In Dabydeen's poem 'The Canecutter's Song', the narrator's mental address to the white mistress reveals this violent power-play of gender and race; he states:

> . . . daylight separate me an yu, an dis mud on me haan
> Dis sweat from me face, dis rag on me back . . .
> Yu puss-mouth glow, mesh wid light, sun a see an sprout
> Me too black fo come deh –

> (*SS*, 26)

Daylight reveals the beauty and superiority of the white woman, but it also shows the colonial disgust of Black masculinity, which justifies the fear and terror of the white woman. But 'when night come', the piety and purity of the white woman unravel as she fantasises about her temporary unbecoming. 'The Canecutter's Song', for example, is quite explicit about a white woman wanting 'to be degraded secretly . . . to be possessed and mutilated in the mud' (Dabydeen, 1984, p. 53). As Alison Phipps contends, the abjection of the Black man 'relied on a circuit between bourgeois white women's tears' *and* 'white men's punitive power' (Phipps, 2021, p. 85). In other words, these tears informed the vocabulary of rape and activated the aggression of the white male enslaver. In several poems by Dabydeen, the violent chopping, slicing, and breaking of the Black male (animal) body are reflected in images of the sugarcane, in ways which uncover the violent circuit between white tears (aggression of white women) and white rage (aggression of white men).

   Lynching, genital mutilation, buck breaking, and other forms of sexual abuse often employed by white men symbolised the destruction of the Black man's sexual capabilities. This destruction, which often took the form of the castration of the Black penis, was not to ensure the safety of white women against the supposed animality of the Black man but rather aided the insecurities of the white man about his sexual potency and phallic authority.[8] Castration was ultimately a solution for the white man who saw little difference between himself and the Black man, forced to recognise the

humanity of the Black man because of the association of the human penis with masculinity. As such, the desire to castrate was a desire to *make* the Black man Other, beast and 'feminised' – all of which have been subject to white patriarchy. As Tyrone Ali describes:

> Imperialism was, from its commencement, a racially and sexually gendered reality, and the power differential among masculinities emerged in the master/slave relationship that characterized Empire. The clear hegemonic masculinity generated by the white conquistador was the ideal, creating a resultant subordinate masculine identity that came to signify the non-White man – initially slave and, later, the free African labourer – in the New World. The subjectification of this non-White man, this 'Other', proved to be fundamental to the constitution of hegemonic masculinity along racialized and sexualized frames.
>
> (Ali, 2011, p. 1)

In Dabydeen's poetry, images and descriptions of the cutlass, sickle, and blade that hack, cut, chop and stab at the cane invoke the racialised and gendered punishments enacted on the Black body. In other words, in Dabydeen's text, we can draw a parallel between the mutilation of the body, which intends to eradicate and undermine Black masculinity and the cutting of the cane, which reduced and impacted biodiversity. We see this entanglement, particularly in brutal images of the sugarcane, in the poem 'Love Song':

> Wuk na dun, na dun, na dun!
> Hack! Hack! Hack! Hack!
> Cutlass slip an cut me cack!
>
> (*SS*, 31)

The line 'wuk na dun', which translates in British English as 'work is never done', emphasises the monotony of everyday life as an enslaved person. Still, the repetition of 'Hack!' poetically simulates the incessant desecration of the Earth. Through the rhythmic pairing of 'Hack!' and 'cack' (cock), Dabydeen clarifies that the word 'wuk' operates as a double entendre in the poem. Speaking keenly about the body, Spang notes that 'Flesh has been a particularly compelling topic in the area of food/sex taboo research' but less has been said on how the consumption of the bodies of enslaved Black men portend their violent plantation labour and forced destruction of the environment (Spang, 2011, p. 4). We can go as far as to say that 'Love Song' presents Black masculinity on the plantation as being mediated through environmental desecration and the symbolic act of codifying enslaved men as 'planters'. The violent (man)ning of the plantation

becomes a grotesquely emblematic act of degradation that portends a constant threat of castration. Thus, castration as a 'cut' formally substantiates a structural order between the 'superior' and 'inferior', white masculinity and Black man/plant. Ultimately, the image of a severed cane and penis conjured in 'Love Song' connotes a loss of function and a sense of brokenness for both the plant and the narrator.

White male enslavers on Caribbean plantations used castration as punishment because it contributed to the social and physical death of the enslaved Black man and the 'sexualization of mastery' (Fischer, 2002, p. 181). As Kirsten Fischer asserts, castration 'linked sexuality and masculinity, purposefully annihilating in slaves the sexual agency that whites asserted as part of their manhood' (Fischer, 2002, p. 181). For the Black man, his physical labour, the threat of sexual castration, and his othered masculinity mean that his whole being and existence have been defined by disintegration. But Dabydeen helps to contextualise not only the polarity of Black and White masculinity/sexuality/animality but the violent (man) ning of the plantation in Guyana. These oppressive and suppressive outcomes demarcate a clear differentiation between the penis and the phallus and between the plant and the food source. The penis refers strictly to the sexual and reproductive male organ, a part of the genitalia. On the other hand, a phallus is a 'cultural construct' that 'represents a distinctly masculine superiority that extends beyond the body into the realms of intellectual authority, political power, and cultural pre-eminence' (MacMullan, 2002, p. 7).

As enslaved people, Black Mandingos only possessed penises and were characterised by them. Despite this, they could not possess any phallic authority or participate in patriarchy as it is racially constructed due to brutal physical punishment (castration and forced labour). This systemic emasculation denied them the ability to exercise traditional markers of masculine authority and power within the patriarchal system. Like 'the breaking on the rack', the illustration captioned 'a piece of sugar cane', which precedes the poem 'Canecutter's Song', is phallic in its image though it does not represent phallic power but a conquering of the Earth. Dabydeen states that:

> The ritual of cutting and planting then differs from the sower and his seeds in the pre-Christian violence of the operation. Canecutting is a savage ceremony, cutlass slashing away relentlessly at bamboo-hard body of cane; planting is equally vicious, repeated stabbing into the soil. There is no tenderness or respect for the earth. Male and female are involved in one continuous and conflicting ritual of cutting and planting.
>
> (Dabydeen, 1984, p. 12)

The illustration 'a piece of sugar cane' depicts a piece of cane cut in a longitudinal section to reveal an infestation by worms, which we can interpret as both a consumption and domination of the Earth.[9] According to Jesse Wilburn Ingram, wireworms 'seriously deplete the stand of sugarcane', making it one of the most damaging pests of the sugarcane (Ingram, 1951, p. 24). It is the larvae of click beetles that feed outwardly on the roots and bud nodes of the cane. However, the wireworm's eating of the cane to survive is contrasted by the violent threat of castration posed to the Black man, which is both autocratic and savage, an attempt at absolute dominance where white masculinity becomes a marker of white supremacy. Dabydeen's use of literary techniques customary to the neo-slave narrative genre, such as intertextuality and satire, allows us to consider how brokenness as a reconfiguration of Blackness and other 'Othered' nonhuman life was not the result of the punitive power of white men but a consequence of dehumanisation.

Scabs and Scars: Healing and Memory

Striking metaphors and analogies make Dabydeen's collection an exemplary text for examining how various forms of physical torture continue to chart Black and nonhuman bodies as territories on which to inscribe violent power relations. Thus, this chapter's definition of 'territorial bodies' which is mediated through colonial ideas of brokenness is informed by the poet's intricate connections between the 'corporeal' and the 'environmental', underscoring how disruptions to either can profoundly shape understandings of identity, belonging and worth. Ultimately, Dabydeen's poems demonstrate how such violent inscription has worked to fortify 'wholeness' as a conceivable synonym for 'whiteness' and 'whiteness' as a conceivable synonym for 'humanness'. In *Dangerous Crossings*, Claire Jean Kim argues that race, species, and nature are 'taxonomies of power' that are culturally constructed and jointly constitutive (Kim, 2015, p. 20). Kim's claims support the argument presented here that the presence, weaponisation, and exploitation of the nonhuman world during slavery in the Caribbean must not be ignored and forgotten (much like the sexual histories of enslaved Black men) if we are to reject mechanisms of bodily violence.

Remembering is both a healing and painful act when thinking about enslaved human and nonhuman bodies, both racialised and spatialised. Dabydeen's *Slave Song* is typical of the neo-slave narrative genre in that it operates as both a scar and a scab, simultaneously reminding us of the deep wounds inflicted by slavery and operating as a pathway towards healing and transformation. The scar signifies that trauma happened but while healing has taken place the pain has been honoured and memorialised. The scab signifies that the memory might still be raw. It is painful

to touch because something underneath still requires healing. Therefore, one corollary of the neo-slave narrative genre is the possibility of re-traumatisation; on the other hand, addressing these wounds involves uncovering hidden truths and confronting past atrocities – a painful process often necessary for understanding how historical violence still impacts the world today. These texts illuminate the complex interplay between body, territory, and brokenness, revealing how the violence against and displacement of Black bodies reverberate in spaces and within the treatment of other species.

Dabydeen's narrative challenges us to confront the ways slavery not only broke human and nonhuman bodies through torture but also how the relationship between Black humanity and the nonhuman world was fractured. Conversely, the mending of these fractures can be seen as a process of reclaiming both bodily integrity and territorial sovereignty. Dabydeen's poem promotes the importance of renegotiating Black people's relationship with the spaces they and other species inhabit, finding new ways to navigate and assert agency within them. In recognising and describing the ubiquitous presence of domesticated animals in Caribbean slave societies and by exploring how Black men, nature and animals can be read together, this chapter moves the discourse towards liberation. Furthermore, if the comprehensible but, ultimately, speciesist framing of human exceptionalism continues to be exposed and uncovered in the neo-slave narrative, then the possibilities of reviving the more ethical, life-centred philosophies (indigenous to the region) are profound.

Notes

1 Throughout this chapter I will use the term "enslaved Black men" considering the adultification inherent in the Mandingo stereotype, not ignoring but rather including the experiences of young boys. It is important to note here that Thomas A. Foster's *Rethinking Rufus: Sexual Violations of Enslaved Men* published in 2019 is the first book-length study of the sexual histories of enslaved men. According to the author, the book explores "the sexual conditions that slavery produced and that enslaved Black men lived within, responded to, and shaped" (Foster, 2019, p. 2). Foster notes that although there is evidence that the sexual abuse of enslaved men has long been referenced in narratives, "the academy has been slow" to consider this despite the "ubiquitous" research on the sexual abuse of enslaved women (Foster, 2019, p. 2).

2 There were also "breeding" farms, where healthy and strong enslaved men were forced to have sex with women to get them pregnant. Breeding farms became a lucrative business especially in the Caribbean and created the term "mother fucker" which literally explained a male having sex with his mother. Many enslaved men who were the heads of breeding farms died of sexual exhaustion and violence. This was just another form of Black male sexual exploitation, which in turn furthered the sexual violation of the Black woman.

3 See Danielle Sands' *Animal Writing: Storytelling, Selfhood and the Limits of Empathy* (2019); and the cultural understandings and 'ethics of animal use'; See Claire Jean Kim's (2015) book *Dangerous Crossings*.

4 Decades after animal studies emerged into literary thought with the appearance of Margot Norris's *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* (2019) [reprint] and Joyce Salisbury's *Beast Within* (2022) [re-print], such an absence appears increasingly glaring.

5 Darwin, along with many others, suggested that there were "lower and barbarous races" closely connected to animals such as "anthropoid" apes (p. 540). In many ways, this evolutionist theory helped shape hierarchal epistemologies of species and abject Blackness, resulting in African people's enslavement.

6 See, Whitehead, N. L. (1984). Carib Cannibalism. The Historical Evidence. *Journal de La Société Des Américanistes*, 70, 69–87. www.jstor.org/stable/24606255.

7 The Mandingo stereotype worked to discourage Black male and white female relations. Placing Black men as sexually craven beasts made it easier to enforce accusations of rape and murder, contributing to a rise in lynching. It also deceived others into believing that Black masculinity was the only form of masculinity, which was inherently violent and hyper-sexual (Messerschmidt, 2018, p. 38).

8 See Thomas A. Foster's (2019) Rethinking Rufus: Sexual Violations of Enslaved Men.

9 Dabydeen's poems in *Slave Song* are accompanied by insertions of autobiographical sketches which can be read as examples of how the chaining, lashing, and whipping of the Black male body by white men seeking power are figured through images of nature.

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III
De-Territorial Bodies

6 Tracking the Politics of (De)Territorial Language in Postcolonial Algeria

Charlotte Spear and Laura Kennedy

Tracking the Politics of (De)Territorial Language in Postcolonial Algeria

In July 2022, Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune made international headlines with his announcement that the country would begin a programme to teach English in primary schools. English is now promoted and taught, over French – despite Algeria most probably being the country with the most French speakers outside of France (Crowley 2017: 1) – showcasing the contention with which the once colonial language is still held in the post-independent nation. Indeed, in his announcement, President Tebboune went as far as proclaiming that in an Algerian context, "French is a spoil of war, but English is an international language" (Rouaba 2022).

This example sheds light on the contemporary linguistic landscape of Algeria, showcasing how, for some, language remains entrenched in the legacy of colonisation, tied to national and territorial borders. Indeed, according to Kamel Daoud, this state-sanctioned initiative demonstrates the ever-present "grudge" that exists within Algeria against the French language and the imperial culture to which it is still widely associated (Daoud 2022). Unsurprisingly, the polemic nature of language in Algerian society has heavily informed literature from and about the nation, with many Algerian authors thematising language through literature and contemplating what language to use, and to what end, when writing. This has particularly been the case for Algerian authors writing in French: the supposed bastion of French prestige and culture. For instance, Daoud regards his literary language choice as a "choice of dissidence" (Daoud 2021b) against the various structures of oppression operating within the post-independent nation. Language also inhabits this contestatory positionality for Algerian francophone writer Assia Djebar, who describes how language "rises in protest" (Djebar 2000: 34) against various forms of sociopolitical violence. For these writers – two of the most well-known Algerian authors of their contemporaneous societies – language thus holds great power, capable of being both weaponised and utilised as part of a radical resistance.

Our chapter is thus concerned with how these writers' relationships with language manifest in their work. We argue that for Daoud and Djebar, language exists as a concept and experience which is simultaneously internal and external, within and without the individual and collective body. For, although coming to us originally from without, language is often assumed to be an inherent part of the self, understood as existing from within. As John Weightman notes, it is generally taken for granted that a person's "command of language is an autonomous, inborn function, like the operation of [our] lungs or [our] digestive system" (Weightman 2000: 54), when it is actually a "collective historical construct added to us after birth" (Weightman 2000: 55). This experience of language as inherent, despite its objective exteriority, is the basis of numerous (anti)nationalist movements, from anti-imperial campaigns – such as the struggle of language activists in the North of Ireland who have long been advocating for state promotion and recognition of the Irish language – to metropolitan xenophobic claims, such as the rhetoric at the heart of Boris Johnson's 'get Brexit done' campaign, through which the then British Prime Minister directly linked being "British" to learning English (Singh 2019). When language is understood as an intimate part of the self, it becomes something that can easily be possessed, either by the individual or, more insidiously, by state or non-state forces. In such a context, language can therefore become a metonym for the nation state and its associated culture, and such a linkage was key to the French colonisation of Algeria.

Indeed, for the 132 years that Algeria was a French colony, "the imposition of French as the sole language in education resulted in a number of future generations of Algerians being illiterate in their own native languages: Arabic and Berber" (Offord et al. 2001: 13). The French language was positioned as a vehicle of French-ness, with the colonial elites intrinsically linking the "superiority of France" with "the superiority of its language" (Benrabah 2013: 35). In direct response, after Algeria won its independence in 1962, linguistic decolonisation was implemented through the policy of Arabisation, which replaced the French language with Arabic: the language seen to represent "Arabic identity and Islamic values" (Mostari 2004: 26). Both during and after French colonisation, then, language was weaponised by (post)colonial agents of authority as the carrier of culture and national identities.

This chapter's first essential claim therefore lies in our understanding of this interconnection between language, nationhood and cultural imperialism, as it is experienced by the individual and collective body. We propose that this might be understood through the notion of "territorial bodies": a concept defined, for the purposes of this chapter, as the tangible experience of making language "bodily" – as though from within – by the process of colonisation. The "territorial body" is thus both the individual and

collective body constructed by the external forces of cultural imperialism inherent to colonialism's territorial plunder.

And yet, in line with much of the writing emerging from Algeria since its independence, this chapter examines not only the oppressive characteristics of colonial language acquisition and experience but also the potential for resistance within this literary realm. In particular, this chapter proposes a synthesis of the linguistic "territorial body" with Chow's model of language in postcolonial contexts "as a type of prostheticization" (Chow 2014: 14), maintaining that language is part of the functioning of the very bodily experience, but noting the prosthetic nature of this functioning as "impermanent, detachable, and (ex)changeable" (Chow 2014: 15), since it is thrusted upon the colonised population by the colonisers. In Chow's theorisation, there undoubtedly remains a linkage between language and the body, but the 'prosthetic' positions language as fundamentally external to the self, given that it now exists as a "foreign object with which the colonized must wrestle in order to survive" (Chow 2014: 14). As such, the prosthetic holds within it not only an oppressive quality but also the potential for resistance. For, if we recognise the prosthetic nature of language, then we must recognise the way through which this prosthetic can be manipulated; it can be attached, detached, and reattached with agency by the colonial subject. Through language prostheticisation, language can transcend cultural and identarian associations. Arguably then, we must understand the politics of (post)colonial language in Algeria on two dialectically interconnected levels: that language is experienced at the bodily level, as a body bound up in the territorial conquest of imperialism; and that, when understood as "prosthetic", although still interacting at the level of the body, language is externalised. The dialectical synthesis of these two levels of the postcolonial linguistic experience – as a "territorial body" and as bodily "prosthesis" – reveals a potential for resistance otherwise perhaps unnoticed. In seeing language as an object, experienced as in dialogue with but not inherent to the body, it can be manipulated and usurped from its supposed country, or culture of origin. It no longer represents a cultural emblem, or a hangover of colonisation, but can be mobilised for numerous purposes.

In this context of language manipulation and subversion, then, we are ultimately working within a de-territorial body, and it is this de-territorial body that we are interested in; the body that takes shapes when language is experienced from without, recast and manipulated by once colonised subjects as a means of anti-colonial subversion. A framework of the *prostheticised* territorial body allows us to read the mobilisation of Algerian language politics by contemporary authors not only through a lens of colonial trauma but also as holding radical power. This chapter tests this claim through examining Djebar's *Algerian White* (originally published in 1995

as *Le Blanc de l'Algerie*) and Daoud's *Zabor, or The Psalms* (originally published in 2017 as *Zabor, ou Les Psaumes*),[1] exploring how they each theorise their own radical language politics through a synthesis of bodily and territorial frameworks. Amalgamating the models of "territorial bodies" and linguistic "prosthesis", we examine how both authors deal with Algerian language politics, showcasing in their work the subversive power of the prostheticised territorial body, through which the languages of Algeria can be galvanised and rewritten.

Linguistic Tensions in *Algerian White*

In the final pages of her heart-wrenching 1995 memoir *Algerian White*, Djebar writes:

> In Algeria today, following the serial murders of writers, journalists, and intellectuals, against which increased repression is the response – the only policy brandished against a religious fundamentalism that has decided to take power at any cost – faced with these convulsions that submerge my country in a nameless war, once again referred to as 'events', in this return to violence and its anaesthetizing vocabulary, what is 'white' (the white of dust, of sunless light, of dilution . . .) and why say so here?
>
> <div align="right">(Djebar 2000: 226)</div>

Djebar here does two things: firstly, she explicates the context through which to read her text. Referring to the 'murders of writers, journalists, and intellectuals', Djebar invokes a context of socio-linguistic oppression which defined late twentieth-century Algeria (Hiddleston 2006: 126). But Djebar also tells us precisely *how* we should read her work: through the notion of "whiteness". Taking Djebar's lead, we read *Algerian White* through this notion of "whiteness", understood inherently as a framing of contradiction: "that color, or rather that non-color" (Djebar 2000: 226). In doing so, we examine the complex and even contradictory synthesis of Algerian language politics as and through a synthesis of theorisations of "territorial bodies" and language as "prosthesis". "Whiteness", and its central contradiction, becomes a mode of understanding the inherent contradiction of language. Language for Djebar is intimately private – even bodily – with language oppression felt as violence at the very level of the individual and collective body. Indeed, Donadey notes of Djebar's work, "the linguistic battle to the death inscribes itself on the narrator's body" (2016: 148–149). And yet, in the colonial and postcolonial context of Algeria, language must also be understood as "prosthetic", "impermanent, detachable, and (ex)changeable" (Chow 2014: 14–15).

Algerian White blurs fiction, memoir and biography to explore Djebar's difficulties mourning for those she loses during and following the Algerian War of Independence, and through much of the Algerian Civil War, known also as the Black Decade. Not all the people Djebar mourns lose their lives through political violence; rather, these political events are an active backdrop for Djebar's mourning, highlighting the political implications of the language of her mourning for the very idea of a postcolonial "Algeria". In this way, we can observe three key aspects to Djebar's proposal for a (de) territorial language politics in Algeria. Firstly, whiteness reflects the empty page which she is compelled to fill. Secondly, whiteness represents mourning and consequent immortalisation, uncovering questions around the appropriate language for this form of political mourning. Finally, whiteness represents the titular "Algerian White", a simultaneously written and unwritten space, or territory. Through an exploration of these key aspects of "whiteness" Djebar's question becomes, what language can possibly be appropriate to articulate a personal and political history of Algeria: the French language, that of the coloniser which inflicted much of the violence for which Algeria now mourns; or Arabic, a language taken up by fundamentalists in postcolonial Algeria, and co-opted as part of an anticolonial cultural and linguistic violence? Instead, *Algerian White* "reminds us that to cast Arabic against French reinforces the theoretical monolingualism imposed on Algeria by the postcolonial state, itself an act of violence" (Gunaratne and Jarvis 2016: 120).

The Act of Writing

Of *Algerian White*, Hiddleston argues, "the white of the title evokes the emptiness of a blank page, the attempted eradication of literary and intellectual resistance by Islamist terrorists" (Hiddleston 2006: 122). Not only does Djebar refer directly to this intellectocide which leads to so many unwritten pages, but her text is defined by the tensions in writing to find an appropriately revolutionary post-independence language, one which avoids the tendency to "occlude the horror of their referents beneath the flowers of their rhetoric" (Hiddleston 2006: 126) and yet, "exposes the errors of ideologies and myths that smooth over the oppression of which they speak" (Hiddleston 2006: 126). The whiteness of the page becomes absorbed by Djebar's anxieties, as Djebar states,

> shall I mention my white as well? The richest of colors and the least deceiving, that round pool of language in me, in us – the language of the Other, having become tunic, veil or armor for some, or more rarely, skin!

> (Djebar 2000: 221)

Her "white", then, is defined by "that round pool of language in me", reflecting the bodily experience of this language, the "pool" representing another vital bodily fluid alongside her blood. And yet, contradictorily, this is "the language of the Other" (Djebar 2000: 221), that of the coloniser, which has become a "tunic, veil or armor for some, or more rarely, skin" (Djebar 2000: 221). Apparently inside the body, language now becomes external, denaturalised as an item of clothing. Importantly, Djebar's choice of the "tunic, veil or armor" territorialises the language metaphor; "tunic" and "veil" are items of clothing conventionally associated with Islamic beliefs, the veil in particular becoming a centrepiece of colonial and postcolonial oppression of Islamic practice. For, as Fanon notes in *A Dying Colonialism*, the process of French colonisation in Algeria was based partially on the argument that " 'If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women: we must go and find them behind the veil" ' (Fanon 2007: 37–38). Similarly, the reference to "armor" reflects the weaponisation of language in the colonial plunder of Algeria and in the consequent anti-colonial fundamentalism of the 1990s. The notion of language as "skin" arrives as a synthesis of the two other notions of the "white" of language – as a "pool of language in [her]" or as a "tunic, veil or armor" – both external to the body and yet an integral part not only of the body's physical make-up but also of the way in which the individual is identified by others.

There is a sense throughout the text – much like, as we will see, in *Zabor, or the Psalms* – of the urgency of writing for Djebar. She seems compelled to write, with the words spilling out onto the page, such that the text reads as a spontaneous overflow of her internal language. This urgency is also reflected in the text's form, which is highly experimental, absent of any clear pattern. In the book's concluding sections, Djebar reflects most deeply on the urgency of her writing, noting, "writing and its urgency" (Djebar 2000: 227), and questioning, "Why, on Algerian land and in the year '95 specifically, am I so obsessed by the coupling of death . . . and writing?" (Djebar 2000: 219). The compulsion to write is intimately tied to the territorial bounding of "Algerian land" and "the year '95" (Djebar 2000: 219). For Djebar, the process of writing is a territorial one, a bodily compulsion to the point of *obsession*, but one which is bound up in the socio-political status of Algerian territory. She later explains,

in a culturally more and more fragmented Algeria . . . any word necessarily was impaired before it could even find for itself the trembling light of its very quest. . . . Yet, I am moved only by the particularity of a word faced with the imminence of disaster.

(Djebar 2000: 227)

The true power of language, for Djebar, can therefore be found precisely in that language which is subjected to violence. Just as Chow suggests "a counterintuitive proposal" (Chow 2014: 14) that a radical power can be found in the specific postcolonial recognition of language as prosthetic "for precisely the reason that this language has been imposed from without" (Chow 2014: 14), so too is there power in the *impaired*-ness of language, "faced with the imminence of disaster" (Djebar 2000: 227).

The Language of Mourning

In large part, Djebar's compulsion to write is a need to mourn, as she states: "Those dear disappeared: they speak to me" (Djebar 2000: 15). The text's structure is also reflective of this need, reading as a kind of funeral procession, "intercut with flashbacks to the war of yesterday, an irresistible search for a liturgy emerges" (Djebar 2000: 13). Djebar's mourning is thus one which re-envisages those people within the pages. In protest against a reactionary postcolonial state which attempted to layer over cultural and linguistic memory of the colonial period, Djebar imagines a creative mourning which "[defies] the state's amnesiac demand for reconciliation" (Gunaratne and Jarvis 2016: 123). We hear in the novel, "that year of 1962 was to know the effervescence of independence. . . . As we left those seven years of childbirth behind, what could we then illuminate but ghosts that no one wanted to evoke?" (Djebar 2000: 108). The process of mourning throughout the text is thus not only a process of personal reflection, but rather an examination of the political history of Algeria itself. Mourning becomes a process of defining what the very postcolonial state of Algeria is, through the frame of language. Indeed, Djebar is particularly preoccupied with how she can communicate with the dead, questioning at various points the appropriate language for this task. She states, "I ask nothing: only that they continue to haunt us, that they live within us. But in which language?" (Djebar 2000: 52). The language for which Djebar searches, then, is one enabling communication with both the past and future states of Algeria, characterising the very identity of a future Algeria which is both intertwined in and desperately seeking escape from colonial dominance.

Near the beginning of the text, Djebar recounts speaking to her friends during their lives: "So, in the old days, I mean in life, we would chat – each of these three friends and myself, in French" (Djebar 2000: 16). She notes the apparent simplicity of this communication later clouded by the "shadowy, phreatic" (Djebar 2000: 16) death. She describes:

> Now, each of those three disappeared and myself, at irregular intervals, all speak in French. This language flows, is woven or tangled, but never masked, nor is the veiled walker – on taking the place of another; no,

it unfurls among us, truly itself, in its own right. Belatedly, our speech becomes so simple!

(Djebar 2000: 16).

In death, and in mourning, French "flows" and "unfurls among us", suggesting a naturalisation of the language, highlighted in the ease of its "flow", implying a spontaneity and unthinking nature. And yet, this language is "truly itself, in its own right" (Djebar 2000: 16). French is both *flowing* and easy for Djebar and the departed, and yet is also independent from them, "truly itself" (Djebar 2000: 16), reflecting Derrida's suggestion that "it will never be mine, this language, the only one I am thus destined to speak, as long as speech is possible for me in life and in death; you see, never will this language be mine" (1998: 2). Imposed on both Derrida and Djebar by colonisation, and yet an integral part of their communication and, for Djebar, her process of mourning, the French language becomes simultaneously within and without, reflecting something at once instinctive and external. Language thus holds in it all the violence of colonisation, experienced at both the individual and collective levels. In fact, as Djebar goes on to write, "as though the pulsion towards silence, that dark undercurrent constantly attempting to undermine the simplest of our communications, the language of our ancestors, ready to rise up, was there to be choked on" (Djebar 2000: 16). At once *flowing* so spontaneously through them, French, as "the language of our ancestors" is "there to be choked on" (Djebar 2000: 16), forcing itself through them and in so doing, thwarting them. This process of mourning then, is one of coming to terms with Djebar's own complex relationship with the French language and its hold on her: dialectically naturalised and external, instinctive, yet violent.

Writing as and of Algeria

And yet, with the invocation of her "ancestors, ready to rise up" (Djebar 2000:16), the text mourns not only those friends that Djebar has lost, but more broadly the state of Algeria, attempting to rewrite the blank pages of its future. Rousing the titular "Algerian White", the final chapter is named, "Writing the White of Algeria" (Djebar 2000: 216) and seems to structurally suggest that the text's prior mourning was leading to precisely this moment of writing the pages of Algeria. Returning then to Djebar's call for us to read the text's "whiteness", we can observe the dialectic that once again lies at the heart of her analysis: Algeria as at once a bordered and historicised space, a politicised territory, and yet also, through gaining its independence, it now holds the power to rewrite its pages. Djebar states that "[h]alf of the land of Algeria has just been seized by moving, terrifying and sometimes

hideous shadows" (Djebar 2000: 217). Arguably then, she looks for us to explore the "unshadowed" or "white" of Algeria, that which is not clouded in the past, but rather looks towards the future. And, for Djebar, it is only through writing that this "future" of Algeria can truly be understood since we must understand "Writing and Algeria as territories" (Djebar 2000: 229). Writing itself is thus a form of "territory", a mode of producing the political, economic and cultural borders – both physical and imagined – through which the state of Algeria can be understood. In Djebar's terms, "the writer once dead, his texts not yet reopened, it is around his buried body that several different Algerias are being sketched out" (2000: 14). The writing of Algeria is thus inextricable with the writer's "buried body", that body which is placed within the very Earth of Algerian space. To understand the formation of a postcolonial Algeria in Djebar's view then, is to understand the integration of those lives lost during its anticolonial resistance, incorporated into the very soil of Algerian territory, as "texts not yet reopened".

In this sense then, Djebar seeks a language to *write* the future of Algeria not as a singular national discursive vernacular, but rather through an imaginative rethinking around the very notion of Algeria itself. She calls for a deterritorialised writing of Algeria, utilising the central notion of whiteness to engage specifically with linguistic tensions at the heart of Algeria's recent violent political history. The dialectical properties of whiteness break down these oppositional linguistic tensions, "restlessly open[ing] imaginative space beyond the borders of national languages and state discourse" (Gunaratne and Jarvis 2016: 123) and thus conceiving of a discursively de-territorialised body, or, a body of writing which is essentially aware of its own prostheticised nature.

Saving the World Through Language in *Zabor, Or The Psalms*

Our attention now turns to Kamel Daoud's *Zabor, or The Psalms* (2021a). Written over two decades after Djebar's *Algerian White*, there are tangible overlaps between how each text grapples with language as something that is at once experienced as an intimate part of one's self, yet also as an external prosthetic disassociated from imperial and cultural ties. However, what is perhaps more interesting is the manner in which Daoud's appropriation and thematisation of language diverge from that of Djebar, which could in part be due to the contextual discrepancies between these two authors, as explored in our conclusion. As this section argues, Daoud's exclusively post-independent positionality – born as he was in 1970 during the anticolonial Arabisation movement in Algeria – heavily informs the manner in which he and his characters engage with language throughout *Zabor, or The Psalms*.

Zabor, or The Psalms follows the fictional story of Zabor, an unmarried, childless outcast living in the Algerian village of Aboukir. Zabor – whose self-given name means 'psalms' in Arabic – has been gifted, or rather burdened, with an otherworldly power. The protagonist believes that, through the act of writing (in French), he can stave off death, extending the lives of those in his village through the power of his words: "Writing is the only effective ruse against death. People have tried prayer, medicine, magic, reciting verses on a loop, inactivity, but I think I'm the only one to have found the solution: writing" (Daoud 2021a: 4). Zabor's life has become all-consumed by his gift; since discovering his power he has filled 5,436 notebooks (Daoud 2021a: 231) and regards his work as almost sacred, stating "God writes, I do too" (Daoud 2021a: 358). The novel centres around Zabor's dilemma when he is called to his father's deathbed in a plea to prolong the dying man's life. A well-respected, wealthy butcher, Zabor's father abandoned him years before, and being at his estranged father's bedside forces Zabor to trace his own life story, through a frenzy of notebook entries and flashbacks.

Already, the similarities between the texts of Djebar and Daoud are apparent. Although set in considerably different socio-political moments within Algerian history, with Djebar speaking to her immediate context of the Black Decade and Daoud's novel set in contemporary, twenty-first century Algeria, both of their works are undoubtedly metaliterary, engaging with the act and duty of writing and the power of words. Within such a context, the language employed by both authors is by no means incidental. With this in mind, this section will thus position itself in response to the previous, sketching a similar structural framework to assess how Daoud's language navigates both territorial and prosthetic literary imaginings.

The Act, and Burden, of Writing

Throughout the novel, there are frequent references to *One Thousand and One Nights:* the collection of Middle-Eastern folktales in which Scheherazade is able to save her life, night after night, by telling the king stories. Zabor in many ways regards himself as a modern-day, inverted Scheherazade, believing himself to have "reverse[d] the equation" that Scheherazade invented to use the "power of the tale" in order to "save the greatest number of people" (Daoud 2021a: 331) rather than just himself. A collection that explores the "function of storytelling as an instrument of healing . . . and life-saving" (Ouyang 2003: 408), *One Thousand and One Nights* underscores how the act of storytelling can be a "survival mechanism" (Liu 2021), and it is exactly this vitality that characterises writing in the novel. Thus, just as Djebar forged a link between writing and death (Djebar 2000: 219), feeling compelled to fill the whiteness of her blank

pages to evade amnesia and commemorate the dead, so too does Daoud, through such intertextuality, create an intrinsic connection between words and dying; however for Daoud, the act of writing (in French) is the antithesis of death, "the only effective ruse" (Daoud 2021a: 4) against it.

Given the gravity of the power of writing in the novel, it is perhaps unsurprising that Zabor is frantic in his compulsion to write, anxious to save as many lives as possible through his mystical powers as though it were his "secret mission, a duty" (Daoud 2021a: 19). Writing greatly burdens the protagonist, who blames this self-imposed duty as the reason for his isolation and alienation: "I didn't take a wife, I have no family . . . so that I could keep my promise and fulfil my duty" (Daoud 2021a: 351). The act of writing is thus almost debilitating for Zabor, who cannot seem to stop himself from filling "an enormous number of notebooks" (Daoud 2021a: 357) to save the perishing from their fate. This responsibility to write mirrors the compulsion at the heart of *Algerian White* regarding the writing process, with Zabor's "scrawling in notebooks like someone possessed" (Daoud 2021a: 5–6) echoing Djebar's seemingly uncontrolled and frantic prose.

While for Djebar the process of writing is a territorial one, intrinsically bound to the "Algerian land" and "the year '95" as previously discussed (Djebar 2000: 219), for Zabor – and by extension, Daoud – the writing process is primarily a bodily one. Indeed, at various points throughout the novel, the protagonist explicitly links writing to the body, positioning writing as a "miracle" whose "blood was ink black, the body was a calligraphy that I could wind and unwind" (Daoud 2021a: 165). As a life source (diegetically speaking), the act of writing cannot be separated from the body; the body is completely dependent on it and by extension the language through which the writing is composed. However, given the tangible connection between body and territory, as set out in our introduction, it follows that this linkage between language and body also extends to territory in the novel. Indeed, while writing – its language, its ink and its calligraphy – forms the body, Zabor argues that a book, in its totality, forms a world: "I discovered one day that the word for 'page' was derived from the word for 'country.' Thus, when we open a book, we enter a world" (Daoud 2021a: 169). Not only, then, is writing a source of life, but it is also a world-making phenomenon, territorialised on each page through its visceral nature and mystical power to both sustain and create life and new worlds.

This emphasis on the potentiality of literature to conceptualise worlds brings to mind Pheng Cheah's theorisation of world literature as something that can be an "active power in the making of worlds" (Cheah 2016: 2); something that can "play a fundamental role and be a force in the . . . creation of the world instead of a body of timeless aesthetic objects"

(Cheah 2016: 42). Through this world-making lens, Cheah argues that world literature has the capacity to change the world and "the lives of people within it" (Cheah 2016: 210), showcasing the power of literature and its life-altering potentiality. When read through Cheah, then, Daoud's thematic linkage between language, body and territory holds radical potential, capable not only of saving the lives of the Zabor's fellow villagers, but also of (re)conceptualising worlds, ultimately showcasing the "normative force that literature can exert in the world" (Cheah 2016: 5). Thus, although both Djebar and Daoud enact language and writing as territorial bodies, the outcome of this linkage is markedly different across their texts. For Djebar, the connection between territory and writing signals first and foremost a precarity, a source of anxiety, and thus a necessary urgency, a way through which to mourn as she grapples with the nation's bloody past and present. In notable contrast, Daoud's text stakes the claim that it is through this very linkage that we can bypass any need to mourn at all, given that, in the diegetic, twenty-first century setting of the novel, writing is the way through which new worlds are created and countless lives saved.

Language as Salvation: Writing in and for Algeria

Given the varying manners through which the connection between writing and territorial bodies manifests in their respective texts, it follows that language is mobilised by Djebar and Daoud to different ends. For Djebar, writing is a site of mourning, and as such the language of literature becomes the language of mourning, with the writer contemplating at great length what the language of mourning should be and how she, through writing, could immortalise the dead. Through the fictional Zabor, however, Daoud is more concerned with immortalising the living, positing writing (in French) as the medium through which to save them and prolong their lives. In such a context, the language of literature is thus the language of salvation, "each word designating something unique and immortal" (Daoud 2021a: 117). Indeed, the narrator states that the "primary essence of language" is to "keep a record" (Daoud 2021a: 18), underscoring the centrality of language in his quest to save the living from their inevitable fate. It sustains the body, signalling a "blessing" that spreads "to the dying man and restore[s] a cadence to him, the breathing of a slow awakening" (Daoud 2021a: 166). There is thus a pressing necessity of language; it exists as an intimate part of oneself, as essential to survival as the lungs or the heart. Language is thus represented as a crucial organ of the body, so much so that a lack of language could be fatal.

Interestingly, it is exactly this supposedly intimate, interior quality to language that enables its prosthetic potential to become apparent. As Weightman argues:

> language is peculiar in that it functions as if it were an inborn part of the body. Although it came to us originally from without, it is experienced as being inherent, just as the owner of a well-fitting set of dentures may chomp happily away, completely forgetting that his teeth are not his own.
>
> (Weightman 2000: 55)

The fundamental importance of language for Zabor's power means that it functions as this well-fitted bodily prosthetic, experienced and employed as an integral part of the body despite originating from without. When the body relies so critically on this foreign entity for its sustainment, language becomes an essential crutch upon which life leans, thus subsumed as an innate, core component of oneself.

Indeed, for Zabor the French language is the sole vehicle through which his power is enacted: the language that he taught himself and that was "the missing piece" to his gift (Daoud 2021a: 288). The protagonist is aware of how his language choice is perceived by his wider society, alluding at various points in the novel to the permeating association in contemporary Algeria between the French language and colonisation: "I wrote in a foreign language that healed the dying and preserved the prestige of the former colonisers" (Daoud 2021a: 7). Even in twenty-first century Algeria, French evidently continues to carry imperial connotations, territorialised in the colonial history of French domination. As a result, the protagonist has no choice but to be aware of the sustained linkages that exist between the French language and colonial hegemony in his society, given that, as Zabor puts it, Algeria is a country "recently liberated from colonisation and words acted as soldiers" (Daoud 2021a: 159), underlining the extent to which language was a key arsenal in the War of Independence.

However, unlike Djebar, for whom writing in the language of the former colonisers led to an inevitable confrontation with the violence of colonial monolingualism, for Zabor, writing in French is not a source of anxiety, but rather emancipation. The protagonist positions French in opposition to Arabic, the "omnipresent" language in post-independence Algeria (Daoud 2021a: 158), presented by Algerian society as the "language of God barely permitted to men" (Daoud 2021a: 161). Echoing Djebar's complex relationship with Arabic, for Zabor the official language of the nation is domineering and restrictive, and this is reflective of Daoud's personal relationship with the language. Indeed, the author believes that Arabic is a

language saturated in religious ideology: the language of "the imam, of God, and of political authority" (Daoud 2021b).[2] In contrast, however, Daoud regards the French language as deterritorialised, believing the language to have transcended its associations with the French nation, identity and colonial history. In his post-independence context, Daoud sees French liberated, ultimately representing a refuge "from a murderous society, a place where there has been room for . . . everything that is neither the official nationalist narrative nor the Koran" (Kaplan 2016: 338). Zabor's relationship with language thus closely mirrors Daoud's, with the protagonist regarding French as the language of "sex and travel" (Daoud 2021a: 263), disassociated from its imperial context. Although acutely aware of how his fellow countrymen may perceive the language, for Zabor, French exists as a free language, regarding his discovery of the language as a "major event because it came with a power" (Daoud 2021a: 333), offering Zabor a means through which to harness his gift of salvation.

In positioning French as the essential "instrument" for Zabor's life-saving power (Daoud 2021a: 288), the novel enables the language to transcend its historical, socio-political and imperial prestige. In contemporary Algeria, where languages continue to be weaponised by the elite to exert hegemonic control, such a linguistic deterritorialisation has the capacity to completely reshape the current climate of language politics in the postcolonial state, which is arguably a key message of the novel. Indeed, if we read the novel's premise – that writing in French can save lives – as an allegory for the contemporary nation, perhaps Daoud is willing his reader to appreciate the vitality of the French language in Algeria, showcasing the way through which the language can propel forward the nation and breathe new life into it. To this end, the novel highlights the galvanising potential of language deterritorialisation, whereby freeing the French language from its former colonial shackles holds the power to move the nation beyond its bloody history and into a new, post-independence era.

Conclusion

Overall then, for both Djebar and Daoud, the future of Algeria can – and perhaps *must* – be understood, and ultimately realised, through the act of writing. For Djebar, this manifests as a need to appropriately mourn the past of Algeria in order to imagine its future. Meanwhile Daoud, in his novel, seemingly suggests that by breathing new life into the French language beyond colonial considerations, contemporary Algeria can also be galvanised and finally transcend its colonial and bloody history. However, despite this compelling overlap, this chapter has drawn attention to the differences in how language is perceived by these two authors. Indeed, while in *Algerian White*, language functions as a means through which to mourn

and pay homage to the dead, in *Zabor, or the Psalms* language signals salvation, and a way through which to revive the living. Indeed, in honouring the dead, Djebar contemplates at great length the appropriate language for mourning, feeling an unease alongside a sense of being-at-home in the once colonial language, whereas Zabor, although aware of the controversial nature of writing in French in contemporary Algeria, felt a linguistic liberty in its employment to revive the living within the fictional economy of his post-independent society.

What emerges from these two texts, then, is a disparity in how Djebar and Daoud mobilise language and to what end, perhaps due to the contextual differences between the authors.[3] Indeed, it is important to acknowledge that Daoud was born in 1970, meaning that he has only experienced Algeria as a post-independent nation, unlike Djebar who was born in 1936 and therefore witnessed first-hand the bloody transition of Algeria from a French colony to an independent state. Perhaps, then, Djebar has no choice but to grapple with what has been lost in the past – and her present – when contemplating the future of the nation, whereas Daoud, writing in the twenty-first century, remains focused on the contemporary, on the living, when conceiving of the Algeria of tomorrow. Furthermore, this temporal discrepancy means that unlike "most of the other Maghrebi authors writing in French" such as Djebar, Daoud "didn't grow up with it and had to learn French as a foreign language" (Weidner 2019), ultimately resulting in the deterritorialisation of the language in his work.

However, while linguistic deterritorialisation may be more explicit in Daoud's text, Djebar is also undoubtedly engaged in this endeavour, searching as she does for a "language beyond languages" (Djebar 2000: 230). She writes:

> In the brilliance of this desert, in the safe harbor of writing, in the quest of a language beyond languages, by trying fiercely to obliterate all the furies of the collective self-devouring in oneself, finding 'the word within' again that, alone, remains our fertile homeland.
>
> (Djebar 2000: 230)

This chapter's explorations have sought to imagine how we might better understand this "fertile homeland" of the "word within" in post-independence Algerian literature. To pose a "language beyond languages" means to identify and move beyond the usual bodily and territorialised borders of language, recognising how language also exists as an external entity. The texts examined in this chapter have thus highlighted that while language in postcolonial contexts does, to a certain extent, remain inevitably tied to territorial, cultural and national affiliations, it also functions as an external prosthetic, capable of being decoupled from these very associations. The

synthesis of these two models, that of "territorial bodies" and of "language prostheticization", thus highlights the nuances and complexities of language politics for writers navigating post-independence Algeria. Reading this synthesis through the pages of Djebar and Daoud's work consequently makes for a radical overhauling of our very understanding of language as both an oppressive force and one poised for resistance. To recognise the very bodiliness of language as dialectically connected with its prosthetic value, then, is to recognise the mourning of violent colonial plunder and the salvation of a newly written Algeria as a project of collective (de)territorialised resistance.

Notes

1 Given this chapter's focus on language, it is important to acknowledge that we are reading these texts in translation, with the analysis that follows engaging with these sources through English, despite both works being written and published in French.
2 Our own translation.
3 Although beyond the confines of this study, it is important to acknowledge the gendered discrepancies between these authors, particularly given the importance of gender on Djebar's relationship to language, with the author claiming that for her, "feminism has always been tied up with the question of language" (Djebar 1992: 176). For a detailed examination of the intersection between Djebar's language use, writing and gender, see Salhi, "Between the languages of silence and the woman's word: gender and language in the work of Assia Djebar" (2008).

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7 Territories of Transition

Navigating Trans Embodiment, Identity and Activism in Neoliberal Landscapes

Yaqi Xi

Introduction

In her genre-busting book *The Argonauts*, Maggie Nelson artfully portrays her love life and pregnancy journey through donor insemination alongside her partner Harry Dodge's social and medical transitioning that includes taking testosterone. The narrative intertwines their daring love story with Nelson's reflections on queer and feminist theories as she explores parenting and kinship, language and identity, bodily vulnerability and receptivity beyond heteronormative practices. In the early pages of the book, Nelson addresses the linguistic and conceptual challenges of referring to her transmasculine husband, Harry Dodge. She critiques the simplistic introduction and rigid definition of terms such as "boi", "cisgendered" and "androfag" (2016:9), advocating instead for an awareness of their varied uses and meanings within different contexts. This discussion serves as a microcosm for the fraught history, and the difficulty, of naming the theoretical subject of what is now called "transgender studies", or in a seemingly more thoughtful turn, "transgender and transsexual studies" – a field marked by terminological contention and a diverse array of identity experiences. Nelson's reflection thus underscores the complexities of categorisation and representation within and outside the trans community, setting the stage for this chapter's inquiry into the intersection of personal trans narratives and broader academic and political contexts. The fundamental research questions guiding this inquiry include the following: *What* exactly is transitioning – a question not specified by the broad term "trans" – is it sex, gender, or something else entirely? Moreover, how does our understanding of "transition" evolve when the placeholder inherent in "trans" – "trans[]" – is filled by various lines of inquiry within contemporary trans debates, such as body, gender, sex, selfhood, identity and space?

To navigate the multifaceted landscape of trans embodiment, this chapter engages with psychoanalytic, queer and trans discourses to offer a nuanced examination of the complexities inherent in trans bodies, affects

and subjectivities, as portrayed in trans-related narratives. It scrutinises the materiality of the "trans [body]" as a pivotal site for unravelling the interplay between materiality, identity and subjective agency in trans people's transitioning practices. This analytical approach responds to Jay Prosser's critique in *Second Skins* (1998) of queer theory's inadequacy in capturing the corporeal realities of trans individuals, underscoring the importance of recognising the tangible, lived experiences of trans bodies. Extending beyond individual narratives, the chapter interrogates the broader politics of trans rights and liberation, aiming to outline the collective efforts of trans bodies to navigate, challenge and reshape the socio-political terrains defined by neoliberalism. This exploration is enriched by engaging with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concepts of "deterritorialisation", "reterritorialisation" and "assemblage", as articulated in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987). These concepts prove instrumental in illuminating the dissolution and reformation of socio-cultural boundaries, thereby facilitating an understanding of the dynamic socio-political contexts that trans bodies navigate. Through this theoretical lens, the chapter underscores the significance of both individual trans bodies and the collective "bodies" – "assemblages" – of supportive trans communities and organisations in contesting neoliberal imperatives and the marginalisation of those who defy conventional bodily norms. It frames the trans body as both a locus of continuous identity formation and a means for political action.

Consequently, the chapter addresses three critical questions: 1) How does trans embodiment, as seen by Jay Prosser and within selected trans narratives, diverge from the discursive body discussed by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1990), where trans experiences are primarily interpreted through performativity and queerness? 2) How do the physical and psychological pains associated with transitioning distinguish trans embodiment from drag performance, and in what ways do Paul B. Preciado's embodied critiques in *Testo Junkie* (2013) and *Countersexual Manifesto* (2018) challenge Prosser's conceptualisation of trans embodiment, offering new perspectives on the material and discursive construction of trans bodies and subjectivities? 3) How do Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theories of "deterritorialisation", "reterritorialisation" and "assemblage" enhance and expand our analysis of trans embodiment, and how might their theoretical framework inform the ongoing development and organisation of trans activism? This last question, by which the chapter concludes, seeks not only to deepen the understanding of trans embodiment and its political implications but also to highlight how these theoretical perspectives could influence the trajectories of trans rights movements.

Between the Physical Body and the Bodily Ego: The Transitioning Body

In *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (1998), Jay Prosser explores various autobiographical trans narratives to argue that for trans individuals, the body is not merely a discursive construct but an ego-defining material entity, a deeply felt sense of self. He derives his arguments from a deconstructionist reading of Butler's interpretation of Freud, criticising Butler for what he perceives as a misreading where she abstracts the body into mere discourse, thereby ignoring the pressing physical realities of trans bodies. Prosser argues that Freud, in "The Ego and the Id" ([1923] 2001), never posits the body as a dematerialised psychic phantom, but instead argues for the ego as primarily a "bodily ego" ([1923] 2001:26), fundamentally reliant on the physical and sensual aspects of the body (Prosser, 2006:270). Challenging Butler's depiction of the body as a visual and flattened morphology shaped by external perceptions and discourse, Prosser emphasises the need to recognise "corporeal interiority (internal bodily sensations)" and "its distinctiveness from that which can be seen (external surface)" (271) – a distinction that, Prosser contends, underpins the difference between gender identity and sex, which he posits as central to "the logic of transsexuality" (271).

Yet Prosser's reading of the bodily ego is not without problems, for if the ego arises from the physical body, a site where "both external and internal perceptions may spring" (2006:269), then external perceptions – how the body is seen by others *and* oneself – should be as influential as internal sensations in forming one's ego. Elizabeth Grosz points this out in her revisiting of Freud's writing in her essay "Psychoanalysis and the Body", proposing that the ego is shaped by two simultaneous processes: mapping the physical body and its desires onto the psyche, and identification with the image of another (1999:268), such as the process experienced in the mirror stage. This dual formation process highlights the significance of external identification in ego development. The lack of this identification – being unable to see oneself and to be seen properly in the given body – partly explains why the desire for a certain (different) image of the body can feel substantial as to "persuade the transsexual to alter his or her body to conform to it" (Prosser, 1998:69). Here, the pre-transition body is not lost in ego-formation: it serves as a constitutive outside, a reminder of one's lack and invisibility. The role of the pre-transition body and external perceptions in shaping one's ego are felt most poignantly when in *The Argonauts*, Nelson contrasts her observation of Dodge's transition with Dodge's conflicted feelings during the course – his need to be *seen* as he *feels* himself, on the one hand,

and his perspective of the bodily change as a compromise, a "wager for visibility", on the other:

> You sprouted coarse hair in new places; new muscles fanned out across your hip bones. . . . For years you were stone; now you strip your shirt off whenever you feel like it, emerge muscular, shirtless, into public spaces, go running – swimming, even.
>
> Via T [testosterone], you've experienced surges of heat, an adolescent budding, your sexuality coming down from the labyrinth of your mind and disseminating like a cottonwood tree in a warm wind. You like the changes, but also feel them as a sort of compromise, a wager for visibility, as in your drawing of a ghost who proclaims, without this sheet, I would be invisible.
>
> (Nelson, 2016:107)

Despite identifying strongly with a butch identity and often passing without the aid of testosterone (63), and despite Nelson's worries about "the potential unwisdom of making external changes rather than focusing on internal transformation" (64), Dodge eventually decides to undergo top surgery and start hormone therapy. The reasons are, as Nelson tells us in the excerpt, that he can't leave his body behind, that his ego, at the end of the day, needs to be visible to affirm itself and to grow. Nelson uses expressions like "adolescent budding" and "cottonwood tree" to depict Dodge's evolving sense of self, indicating that these changes, while initially hesitated, eventually seek and enjoy external validation. Therefore, what Prosser means by "corporeal interiority" is not so distinct and independent from "that which can be seen" (2006:271), for the former persistently pushes itself outward till it reaches the latter, to form the "surface entity" (Freud, [1923] 2001:26) that is *also* part of the bodily ego.

To illustrate the importance of the visual register in ego formation, Elizabeth Grosz adopts the Lacanian concept of "body image" (1999:269), developed from the neurophysiological concept of "body schema" and interpreted by Lacan as *perceived* corporeality or "imaginary anatomy" (269) in his account of the mirror stage. It is important to note that in his discussion of trans embodiment, Prosser also engages with the concept of "body image", but his use of the term is ambiguous and somewhat paradoxical: at times, it is deemed as a pure "mental projection" (1998:41) that should be distinguished from corporeal materiality, at other times it is said to occupy "a material force" (69) with substantial feelings that approach the reality of the bodily ego. In contrast, Grosz in *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (1994) argues that the body image represents a form of "non-physicalist materialism" (1994:viii), involving both conscious "psychological" mapping and subconscious, "neurological" processing of the movements and

extensions of our bodies (65–66). The resulting body image, Grosz contends, is highly fluid and dynamic, with "osmotic" borders that continuously integrate and release internal and external influences (79). Gayle Salamon further elucidates Grosz's use of the concept in *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* (2010), explaining that "my body schema [body image] might be so fluid as to include the feather in my hat or the stick I hold. Whatever apparatus I take up and use with or as my body becomes my body" (151). For Grosz, therefore, the body image is a *libidinal* entity – a site of psychic investments that merges the sensual and visual, continually suffused with bodily sensations yet externally malleable. Its sensations and presentations evolve, each forming an integral part of the bodily ego. The ego, in turn, is interpreted by Grosz as a "tracing" (1999:269) of this libidinal body image, suggesting a parallel in the materiality of the body image and the bodily ego: the body image that is the becoming and transitioning body that *feels* real and that which *drives* – in the Freudian sense of the word – the bodily ego to be embodied and become visible.

However – and this seems to be the point that Prosser wanted to make through his ostensibly paradoxical description of the body image – for the pre-transition subject, the body image's materiality is constantly at peril, confronting and struggling with the physical body. This is illustrated, for example, in Nelson's quandary with her partner in *The Argonauts*:

> Your inability to live in your skin was reaching its peak, your neck and back pulsing with pain all day, all night, from your torso (and hence, your lungs) having been constricted for almost thirty years. You tried to stay wrapped even while sleeping, but by morning the floor was always littered with doctored sports bras, strips of dirty fabrics – "smashers", you call them.
>
> (Nelson, 2016:38)

In Nelson's observation, Dodge's physical body seems to persistently resist his transitioning body, that is, the body image that he tries to materialise. Yet the latter, in Dodge's eyes, would not be smashed: it is, instead, the "smasher", colliding head-on with his torso, and the pain is as real as material collisions. In the next section, my arguments are based precisely on this physical pain that results from the trans subject's enduring efforts to reconcile their body image with the realities of their physical body.

The Pain/Pen of Transitioning: Reclaiming Bodies and Narrating Subjectivities

While both trans embodiment and drag performances involve the body in transition, a key difference is that the experience of transitioning is

often marked by significant pain. This pain, noted by Freud as "a model of the way by which in general we arrive at the idea of our body" ([1923] 2001:26), is central to many trans narratives. It extends beyond personal struggles, as depicted in Dodge's narrative, to include societal abuses such as violence, bullying and assault. The anthology *Written on the Body: Letters from Trans and Non-Binary Survivors of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence* (2018) illustrates how such pain, whether physical or emotional, compels trans and non-binary individuals to write letters to their body parts as acts of survival and defiance. Contributor Nyala Moon captures this sentiment, noting, "We trans folk have to reclaim ourselves, we have to reclaim our bodies. The claiming of our bodies – our bruised, broken and raped bodies – is a revolutionary act. . . . If we don't, we fade away, we die!" (2018:16). These letters, serving as poetic addresses to both lost and newly affirmed body parts, reflect the intertwined challenges of physical trauma, identity formation, and regaining "creative control" (Bean and Valdes, 2018:22) over one's body. The anthology reveals the body parts as both victims of assault and central to the writers' identities, underscoring the fraught yet resilient process of identity (re)formation and self-reconnection for trans and non-binary individuals.

One of the bodily letters included in the anthology, titled "To my voice", is contributed by the editor Lexie Bean, who prefers to be called "Lex" as indicated earlier in the book. In this letter, Lex delves into the intricate dynamics between their voice before transitioning – the voice exhausted, then muted by years of domestic violence from a male family member – and the changes it undergoes during their transition. They express apprehension that hormone therapy might alter their voice in a way that mirrors their abuser's, due to its increasingly boyish tone, which bears a resemblance to the menacing voice of their past:

> I'm afraid of you becoming a wolf.
>
> I'm afraid of the scratching, the bark of his voice that made me lock my bedroom door. Reliving my howl of the nights I told myself I would rather die than be a boy who can do those things that I know boys can do.
>
> . . .
>
> You could never stop him, Voice, your huff and puff caught under his quickening growl. You became so tired, in the third grade I set you free. You play dead. . . . I could hardly think of you as a part of my body because you could not protect it.
>
> Will hormones, your deepening into my soul turn you foul or rabid? Will your familiarity trick the rest of me into thinking he's inside the house again? The wolf dressed as a loved one just to get inside.

> If one day you deepen, grow hair on every limb, sounding like a wolf,
> please don't eat the rest of us within. Never forget, Voice, why you ran
> away to begin with.
>
> (Bean, 2018b:165)

In the text, Lex views their voice as having once been detached from their
body image – a voice that had to "play dead" for years as they grew up in an
abusive, violent household. As a survivor of domestic and sexual violence,
Lex grapples with the fear that hormone therapy will deepen their voice
into one resembling that of their abuser, highlighting a profound conflict
between their evolving identity and traumatic past. This narrative vividly
illustrates the intricate dynamics between the changing physical character-
istics of a transmasculine individual undergoing hormone therapy and their
aspiration to carve out a distinct identity within a masculine framework. It
thus reveals the broader theme of reclaiming one's body and identity from
external forces and imposed meanings, as echoed by other contributors in
the anthology.

These passages suggest that Jay Prosser's view on trans embodiment,
focused on aligning one's physical body with a consciously chosen and
socially intelligible body image, overlooks the complex influences of lan-
guage and the unconscious. Patricia Elliot, utilising Lacanian psychoanaly-
sis, argues that the formation of body and subjectivity involves not just
the physical but also the profound influence of language and the societal
"Other". Elliot suggests that Lacan's theory, which posits that one can
only acquire a body "through the image [e.g., body image] *and* the signi-
fier" (2001:304, my emphasis) – signifiers that depend radically on the
effect of *the other* and manifest themselves "in the exchange of words"
(304) – illustrates that language, far from being immaterial, materially par-
ticipates in the constitution of the bodily ego and subjectivity. This concept
of language as a material force shaping one's bodily ego resonates with
Paul B. Preciado's critique in *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in
the Pharmacopornographic Era* (2013). Like Lacan, Preciado recognises
the role of language in the production of bodies; however, he extends this
argument by critiquing Lacan's apparent oversight of the ways in which
language and social norms are implicated in the material oppression and
marginalisation of *non-conforming* bodies. Preciado attributes this over-
sight to "his [Lacan's] own position within the heterosexual patriarchate
as political regime" (2021:73). Consequently, in *Testo Junkie*, Preciado
tackles the marginalisation of trans bodies by documenting his experience
of taking pharmaceutical testosterone, revealing how both his "trans body,
a non-binary body" (2021:20) and many other ostensibly "natural" and
therefore "right" bodies (including his pre-testosterone body) are *materi-
ally produced* by a combination of discursive and material technologies,

challenging the notion of "naturalness" itself. Moreover, in *Countersexual Manifesto* (2018), he proposes radical uses of *signifiers* like drawing dildos on one's arms (52–56) to challenge medical and cultural discourses that attempt to "naturalise" or correct bodies to align them with normatively gendered body images, thereby reclaiming autonomy over one's body and its meanings. Like the initiative of *Written on the Body* (Bean, 2018a), Preciado's literal and metaphorical writing on his body underscores his argument against the imperative of a "natural" or "right" body, suggesting instead that our bodies and identities are products of diverse corporeal desires, cultural discourses and biotechnologies.

While for Prosser the crucial factor in trans embodiment is to alter the body to conform to one's body image, the body image that seems to be the destination of this process is not fully intelligible or predictable from the outset, as Lex notes in their correspondence with a friend: "I will continue to come out as many different words in the course of my life. That's why I like letter writing" (Bean and Valdes, 2018:28). Transitioning, therefore, entails not only mapping a conscious bodily ego onto the physical body but also reading in one's body the effects of unconscious investments stemming from our interactions with parental and societal Others (Elliot, 2001:304) – those that contribute to the perpetuation of heteronormative narratives, bodies and technologies. For Lex in *Written on the Body*, Preciado in *Testo Junkie* and Dodge – with his ubiquitous vocal presence in *The Argonauts* (2016) and his later self-authored book *My Meteorite* (2020) – transitioning goes hand in hand with acquiring a voice, one that calls into being the hitherto muted fears, desires and embodied experiences. It establishes oneself as a desiring, speaking subject who finds it necessary to "make sense of what we have become both subject of and subject to" (Elliot, 2001:304) through ongoing narrative.

The profound impact of discursive and material practices on the becoming of contemporary bodies and subjectivities is further explored in *The Argonauts*, where Nelson juxtaposes her journey of donor insemination (with the help of acupuncture) and supporting her partner Dodge's transition with testosterone:

> We'd been trying to get pregnant, without success, for over a year. I stayed busy trying to puff up my uterine lining by downing gobs of foul-smelling beige capsules and slick brown pellets from an acupuncturist with "a heavy hand," that is, one who left my legs covered with bruises; you had begun to lay the groundwork to have top surgery and start injecting T.
>   . . .
>   You do feel grief-stricken now, but only that you waited so long, that you had to suffer so acutely for three decades before finally finding some

relief. Which is why each time I count the four rungs down on the blue ladder tattooed on your lower back, spread out the skin, push in the nearly-two-inch-long needle, and plunge the golden, oily *T* into deep muscle mass, I feel certain I am delivering a gift.

(Nelson, 2016:64–65)

For Nelson, to use one changing body (an ostensibly "natural" body that is yet imbued with pharmaceutical practices) to reflect on the other (an "unnatural" body that does not fit into normative gender frameworks) is a mode of writing that effectively deconstructs the binary between "natural" and "unnatural" bodies, revealing the extent to which all contemporary sexed bodies are shaped by technological discourses and biotechnologies. Further, Nelson's narrative foregrounds the significance of *affective* transition that drives, informs and accompanies one's physical becoming. By contrasting her own journey from frustration during fertility treatments to peace after childbirth – described as "gone but happy" (165) – with Harry Dodge's shift from longstanding dysphoria to relief post-surgery, Nelson represents the experience of transition as a movement into new (and multiple) affective possibilities rather than a teleological journey towards a predefined bodily home. Corporeal transitioning, as her narrative shows, is not always about the quest for "the natural/right (sexed) body", but about finding a body that feels right through ongoing negotiation with one's affects and subjectivities. Such ongoing negotiations that accompany one's bodily practices – writings that lead to Nelson's playful self-portrayal as "a pregnant woman who thinks" (113), Dodge's newfound identity of "a butch-on-T" (65), and Preciado's radical "being-with-testosterone" (2013:141) – testify to the potential of bodily transition in fostering creative and productive subjectivities by engaging with bodies, affects, identities, genders and sexes in transformative ways.

Together, the closing reading of these intimate, personal accounts of transitioning evidences the theoretical significance and political potential of trans narratives, even when they initially seem isolated. That being said, the pain of isolation, of being left alone in one's journey of becoming and writing, can be as unbearable as physical suffering, and utterly detrimental to the well-being of trans individuals, especially those who are socioeconomically marginalised and lack a safe space for self-expression. The anthology *Written on the Body* addresses this by highlighting the importance of community support among trans and non-binary survivors of violence. It includes a dedicated section for the exchange of letters between two abuse survivors, Alex Valdes and Lex Bean, providing a platform for dialogue, self-inquiry and mutual support. In one letter, Lex reflects on the power of voice and the vulnerability of speaking out, noting: "When I speak to support another, I project, I use my whole voice. When I speak

for myself, I become small. . . . I wish I could trust that my words can carry" (2018:19). This sentiment underscores the solitude and challenges that they face in their journey of self-definition and advocacy, particularly after years of silence during a traumatic adolescence. Lex later expresses that the published anthology will serve as a continual source of support for them, providing a voice when their own is lost: "When I can't find my voice in my breath, I can find it in these pages" (20). Alex, on the other hand, describes their interaction as "finding connective tissue within this community" (23), an experience that helps them find trust and reconnection in themselves and others.

In "Sincerely", an essay included near the end of the book, Artist Sawyer DeVuyst comments on the anthology, recognising the authors' endeavour to transform their personal suffering and the challenges of transitioning into a communal narrative that carves out new spaces of belonging and expression. He notes that the authors, by sharing the exquisite labour of their bodies, their pain and penning, "[create] a space where there wasn't space before" (2018:181). As a handheld support group, the book acknowledges not only "the pain, hurt, and anger that the world burdens us [trans survivors] with" (181) but also their desires and capacities for healing. It fosters a sense of community, enabling vulnerable trans individuals to feel less isolated and more empowered and keeping them moving "toward integrity, connection, and aliveness" (Spade, 2018:12).

From Sexed Bodies to "Territorial Assemblages": Deleuze, Guattari and the Territorial Politics of Trans Activism

The narratives in *Written on the Body*, *The Argonauts*, and *Testo Junkie* present a departure from Jay Prosser's assertion that the desire for a "sexed embodiment" (1998:33) – the transition from a perceived "wrong" body to a "right" one – *defines* the trans experience in contrast to non-trans experiences. Prosser's view suggests that aligning one's bodily self with a desired, binary-conforming body image can mitigate the discord between an individual's physical reality and their gender identity. However, this perspective risks sidelining those whose transition does not adhere strictly to binary narratives or is driven by aims beyond alleviating gender dysphoria. For some, like Lex and Dodge, transitioning means opting for a materialist approach to becoming, creative healing and subjective telling beyond heteronormative gender codes – just like what other forms of bodily transitions mean for non-trans people like Nelson. For others, like Preciado, it may stem from political and theoretical motivations rather than traditional notions of gender dysphoria. This broader understanding of transitioning challenges the binary-focused medical narratives prevalent in places like the UK (Faye, 2021:83) and highlights a range of motivations, experiences

and affectivities that go beyond the drive for inhabiting a specific sexed body.

However, despite the vibrant array of trans narratives that robustly challenge traditional gender and sexual discourses, accusations of conservatism and even vandalism persist in academic and public debates. These include labelling trans individuals as gender conformists, pitting trans rights against feminism (Bindel, 2004; Greer, 2009), and perpetuating myths about a powerful "trans lobby" (Jeffreys, 2014:2) or "folk devils" (Faye, 2021:36) corrupting society. Such allegations often share Prosser's interpretations of transition as "inhabit[ing] a sex [the opposite sex]" (Elliot, 2001:307) and proceed to claim that trans people feel so entitled to self-identify as the other sex that they undermine the rights of biological women and men (Bindel and Newman, 2021) and sabotage the radical politics of gender non-conformity by perpetuating gender stereotypes, sexism and misogyny (Bartosch, 2020; Bindel, 2023). Shon Faye, in *The Transgender Issue* (2021), counters these narratives by highlighting the restrictive measures enforced by medical authorities and the neoliberal state, which push trans individuals towards rigid gender conformity (83). Faye also addresses the realistic risks faced by trans people who are visibly non-conforming – such as increased susceptibility to street violence in a patriarchal and misogynistic society (125), and the dangers of domestic abuse and homelessness following disclosure of their trans identity (142). Faye's critique illuminates the hurdles that trans individuals, especially those who are socially and economically marginalised like the contributors of *Written on the Body* (Bean, 2018a), face in achieving personal and political liberation. It raises a critical question: How can trans communities unite as a formidable political force to confront and reshape the biocapitalist and neoliberal constraints on sex, gender and the human body, thereby actualising their political potential as evidenced in numerous personal narratives? This inquiry underscores the need for collective action and solidarity within the trans community to navigate and transform the systemic barriers imposed by prevailing socio-economic structures.

It is at this point that we turn to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concepts of "deterritorialisation", "reterritorialisation" and "assemblage" from their work *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987) to develop a political framework supporting trans liberation amidst neoliberal challenges such as economic instability and the erosion of social protections. Deleuze and Guattari's concepts offer a nuanced perspective on the fluidity of identity, agency and social structures, challenging traditional views by highlighting the dynamic processes through which entities, both individual and collective, evolve and interact within systems of power. As such, their theoretical framework offers a valuable lens for structural analysis of the challenges that neoliberal and biocapitalist power pose to

the trans movement and provides insights into trans activism at communal and societal levels.

"Deterritorialisation" (1987:508), a key concept in their philosophy, describes the "movement by which "one" leaves the [existent] territory" (508), be it social, cultural, geographical or psychological territories. Also termed as "lines of flight" (510), the movement can involve a variety of entities from individuals, groups and concepts to cultural practices and physical spaces. Deterritorialisation can be "negative" or "relative" (508) when it is obstructed by compensatory "reterritorialisations" (508) that aim to stabilise and codify identities and spaces. However, Deterritorialisation can also become "positive" when concerted efforts of Deterritorialisation "connects lines of flight" (510) into "lines of creations" (510) and thereby "prevails over the reterritorialisations" (508), leading to the creation of new lands, new meanings and new possibilities for existence beyond the constraints of existing territories and structures.

The concept of "negative" deterritorialisation is able to elucidate the systemic challenges that trans people face, such as their forced departures from familial and societal support structures. In the "Trans Life Now" chapter of Faye's book, a homeless trans man laments after being cast out by his family and failing to find a shelter that is willing to accept him: "I was too old for some places, not woman enough for some, not man enough for others. I was in a state of limbo" (2021:44). This state of limbo starts from the domestic space, where trans individuals' gender non-conformity deterritorialises the normatively gendered bodies and living space as well as the heteronormative gender conceptions that form part of the familial norm – a deterritorialising act that can be met with significant oppression. Parents might respond by "overlaying" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:508) these efforts with their own reterritorialisation, which involves controlling the trans individual's mental, physical and domestic living spaces through abuse and eviction. In this case, the trans individuals' deterritorialising efforts, which render them vulnerable, helpless and potentially homeless, could be perceived as "negative" or "relative". Meanwhile, the family unit becomes reterritorialised, turning into a more homogeneous and normative entity than before; it "stands for the lost territory" (508) that is the trans family member, who has been evicted from this conforming unit. These adversities underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive reform of the social care system, which involves the "positive" deterritorialising and subsequent reterritorialising of shelters and charity groups to lift binary-related structural barriers and improve inclusion for trans people, helping them regain footing in societies after their advertent or inadvertent practice of "gender nomadism" (Crawford, 2008:35). Trans people do not need a striated gendered home because, as Tim Sigsworth, the CEO of akt (a charity that has been providing safe homes and supporting LGBTQ+

youth since 1989) points out: "[existent] services will compartmental-ize us, because they can only deal with one problem at a time. So they will not see the whole person . . . a lot is lost" (Faye, 2021:44). Instead, they need a home in what Deleuze and Guattari termed "smooth spaces" (1987:500), spaces that accommodate the continuous flux and reconfigu-ration of identities and societies. The liberation of trans people from their status delimited by negative forms of deterritorialisation will pave the way for the emergence of the positive cycle of deterritorialisation and reterrito-rialisation that is not confined to the negotiation of individual identities but involves the creation of new spaces of belonging and community. We have witnessed such productive cycles of space-building and reterritorialisation in the correspondence between Lex and Alex – and in many other bodily letters – in *Written on the Body* (2018), where they "make room for each other" (Spade, 2018:12) and "imagine that we are allowed to exist" (12), where one witnesses freedom where they used to "feel rigidity and shame" (12) and finds "connective tissue" (Bean and Valdes, 2018:23) within and beyond themselves. "My pieces and yours, they're here in the pages living, living as a body of work, perhaps for the first time in your life, as some-thing you can hold", notes Lex in the afterword, confirming to their trans siblings that together, *they* are "offering themselves a place to stay" (Bean, 2018b:187).

Therefore, in the context of trans activism, deterritorialisation, in its positive sense, involves not just the trans individual's initial departure from normative gender boundaries but also coordinated lines of flight from the neoliberal valorisation of individualism and biocapitalist marginalisa-tion and commodification of non-conforming bodies and identities. This broader aspect of deterritorialisation is evident in the empowering amplifi-cation of voices and the collaborative celebration of the exquisite labour of trans bodies in *Written on the Body* (Bean, 2018a), as discussed throughout the chapter. Charities like akt further exemplify this by creating "smooth spaces" essential for trans individuals, with akt notably operated and sup-ported by trans individuals who have benefited from its services, thereby fostering sustainable cycles of trans activism (Faye, 2021:45–46). In the trans celebrity sphere, such active community-building efforts are exempli-fied by Angelica Ross. Known for her role as Candy, a trans sex worker in the TV series "Pose" (2018–2021), Ross contrasts her character's tragic storyline – rejected by her community and ultimately murdered in a motel by a client – with her real-life activism. Off-screen, she founded TransTech Social Enterprises, an organisation dedicated to empowering trans people through job training and networking opportunities. Ross has reinvested her social and economic influence as a trans celebrity to uplift her margin-alised peers, building a community that resists neoliberal exploitation. Her act of deterritorialisation is deeply positive and powerful as it confronts the

very mechanisms that seek to delimit the possibilities of what trans bodies can do and become. For figures like anthology editor Lexie Bean, akt director Tim Sigsworth and actress Angelica Ross, trans liberation is more than escaping from oppression – it is about reterritorialising and creating a space that genuinely acknowledges and celebrates diversity and fluidity beyond neoliberal constraints.

Apart from trans spaces that focus on a single aspect of trans rights, numerous organisations are emerging that combine diverse elements to challenge the commodification and marginalisation of trans experiences and promote well-being. Here, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "assemblage" (1987:503) offers a useful framework for understanding the significance of the synergy of economic, social and medical support systems in trans liberation. An assemblage refers to a complex array of diverse, interconnected elements – human, non-human, material and immaterial – that collaborate effectively while maintaining their individual characteristics. These elements work together as an assemblage to foster new capabilities and opportunities. As such, assemblages are at once "territorial" (503) (formed through extraction and combination of territories from milieus) and cut across – and so constantly transformed – by diverse lines of deterritorialisation. Applying this concept to existent organisations and networks supporting trans communities reveals how they function as dynamic and productive trans spaces. Organisations like Transgender Law Centre (TLC) and Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE) form assemblages that combine legal expertise, policy advocacy and extensive networks to push for social justice and equality. Networks such as Gender Identity Research & Education Society (GIRES) and Spirit-Level Transgender Support Group, on the other hand, form knowledge-centric assemblages that empower community building and the dissemination of valuable information, which in turn challenges prevailing misconceptions, educates broader communities and supports individuals throughout their transitions.

These organisations and networks, as assemblages, are not static; they continuously evolve to meet emerging challenges and integrate new elements. One clear example is the adaptation of many trans support and advocacy groups to the digital realm, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Organisations like Mermaids UK and Transgender Law Centre, recognising the challenge of physical distancing and the closing of in-person services, expanded their digital presence, which not only allowed them to maintain support during the pandemic but also expanded their reach to individuals who might not have had access to in-person resources even before the pandemic due to geographic isolation or mobility issues. Further, recognising the intersectionality of trans identities with issues of race, economic status and disability, these organisations have also broadened their focus to address the compounded challenges faced by trans individuals at

these intersections. This has involved forming alliances with racial justice, economic justice and disability rights organisations to address the multifaceted nature of discrimination and inequality. As an embodied form of trans narratives, the evolution of these organisations in response to such challenges constitutes a literature and politics of assemblage that not only highlights the complexities of trans embodiment and rights in a neoliberal era but also posits a radical, fluid, intersectional approach to understanding and advocating for these rights. As such, it underscores the potential of the Deleuzian and Guattarian concept of "[trans-]territorial assemblage" (1987:312; 503–505) to be used as a political tool in future training and organising of trans activism.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, we explored "the transitioning body" as a key concept for understanding the experiences of trans individuals, intentionally leaving open the term "trans[]" to encourage a rethinking of what trans embodiment means. Our aim is to shift the perspective from seeing "trans-" merely as a passage between predefined gender categories to viewing it as a significant outcome of the deterritorialisation of the fraught concepts of "transgender" and "transsexual". In this context, Deterritorialisation, as in its Deleuzian–Guattarian sense, refers to one's flight from established (gender) territories, propelled by trans people's narratives that resist binary norms and pathologised views of transitioning. These narratives foster the reterritorialisation of once distinct identity territories into new, alternative trans identities, like Dodge's "butch-on-T" and Preciado's "being-with-testosterone". These identities represent a move away from hegemonic gender codes and highlight the creative ways trans people navigate their transitions. Through interactions, collaborations or confrontations with other discursive and material practices within societal contexts, this process of corporeal transitioning and subjective becoming stands in defiance of the pervasive influence of neoliberalism. Building on the political potential of these personal accounts, the latter part of the chapter expands our analysis of trans narratives by incorporating class politics and a broader critique of biocapitalism. This comprehensive approach is vital for advancing and sustaining the personal and political liberation of socioeconomically marginalised trans individuals, as called for by works like *Written on the Body* (Bean, 2018a) and *The Transgender Issue* (2021). Here, we apply Deleuze and Guattari's territorial frameworks to elucidate the interconnection between personal experiences and political narratives within the trans community, revealing how individual journeys of transitioning are always embedded in political struggles against neoliberal forces that seek to constrain and normalise bodies. In doing so, our analysis not

only advances academic discussions in trans studies but also offers action-able insights for trans activism. It underscores the importance of "positive deterritorialisation" (186–187; 508–510) as a means to challenge systemic barriers and advocates for forming productive "assemblages" (503–505) of trans networks as a step towards a more inclusive, fluid and intersectional approach to trans rights and well-being.

   In turn, by engaging with the Deleuzian–Guattarian concepts of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation through the lens of trans embodiment, the chapter echoes and expands upon the book's central tenet of "territorial bodies", drawing parallels between the struggles of trans individuals and broader socio-ecological crises. The chapter's focus on the trans body's flight from established gender territories and trans people's resistance against neoliberal constraints through reterritorialising alternative trans identities and building "[trans-]territorial assemblage" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:312; 503–505) mirrors the larger themes of the book, which examines bodies and territories as interconnected zones of struggle against patriarchal and capitalist domination. Moreover, by situating trans struggles within a global context of interconnected forms of violence, the chapter joins the book's emphasis on the need for an intersectional approach that considers the myriad ways in which bodies and territories are co-constituted and contested.

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IV

Bodily Futures

8 Inscribed Capital, Human Bodies

Interpellating Contemporary World Bank Expressions

Dr Romain Chenet

Introduction

In a post-2008 era marked by the World Bank Group's diminished relevance and practical legitimacy as a project funder, the Bank has increasingly channelled its institutional efforts towards prescribing a range of embodied experiences for humankind, to reinvigorate its lost glory days as a heavyweight funding body. Such embodied experiences, as envisioned in Bank policy, include specific roles for human subjects as tools for capital accumulation (both theirs and others') which are maximised by fostering adherence to neoliberal maxims via a vehicle also bearing more neutral aims. These show the Bank striving to garner a role in shaping knowledge, notably on what constitutes meaningful and valuable outcomes for human health and education across country contexts (Hunter and Shaffer, 2022: 37). In forwarding attempted governance of human social behaviours on a global scale through its knowledge outputs, however, the Bank has coalesced health and education indicators by creating a novel (to it) bureaucratic and political governing mechanism. In being measured by such indicators, human well-being is geared to a higher purpose of capital and form the 'embodied experiences' in question here.

Solidifying a view of human bodies as productive units in-the-making that must be shaped towards the needs of capital via labour market participation by their governing authorities, The World Bank has proliferated a discursive and metaphorical construct of 'Human Capital' through the World Bank Human Capital Project (WBHCP). Following the WBHCP launch in 2017, scholars have approached this project by, for instance, critiquing its limited valuation techniques (Yarrow, 2022: 246) or exploring its tactical use to rekindling epistemic authority in political and economic arenas where the Bank is increasingly sidelined by private finance (Hunter and Shaffer, 2022: 48). On the latter, I find an irony in the World Bank now being a victim of its own advocated centrality for the role of private capital in exerting control over human activities. Having served as a mouthpiece

for the 'propagation and enforcement of "free market fundamentalism" and neoliberal orthodoxy' since the 1980s – via structural adjustment projects and other initiatives designed to prop up hegemonic Northern interests at the expense of developing economies (Harvey, 2005: 73) – the Bank being increasingly diminished by the forces it helped set up appears somewhat fitting. However, my research interests sit parallel to aforementioned efforts targeting the WBHCP.

Responding to calls for 'fresh' critiques to revitalise critical development studies (Asher and Wainwright, 2019: 25), I proceed from a perspective of Foucauldian bio-power to consider how human bodies are temporalised 'inscription surfaces' in the World Bank's envisioned processes of perpetuity-aimed human reconstruction and adaptation via service of capital (Foucault, 2000: 82; 1978: 131). I do so by assessing governmentalising rationalities of post-2017 discourse by the World Bank Group in contemporary global contexts. In short, these priorities nestle into a Bank-led project to promote health and education outcomes aligned with idealised future worker productivity, thereby aiming to mould individual bodies towards a dogmatic fixedness on capital accumulation. Given its prominent presentation within Bank communications and my wish to maintain a tight frame on WBHCP-framing output, the policy document I orient my analysis primarily on is:

World Bank. 2018. The Human Capital Project.

As the above is itself reconstituted into a chapter of the Bank's 2019 World Development Report, a flagship annual publication, I also consider further intertextual deployments of WBHCP aims in this report:

World Bank. 2019. World Development Report: The Changing Nature of Work.

In maintaining a core focus, I aim to minimise the reconciliation of multiple and sometimes contradictory voices to explore the governmentality in question here. This is to analyse the WBHCP as it has been presented for public consumption, consider nuances of a discourse implied therein, and assess its potential embodied implications. I also deploy this frame as, in exploring textual rationalities which target a diverse and abstracted pool of humanity, the imperialising tendencies of global governance can be approached as tools for control rather than simply bureaucratic mechanisms. As such, considering the above-noted World Bank texts as modalities for an obscured exercise of extractive power via a seemingly benign discourse of 'Human Capital', I aim to unearth and problematise bodily statuses that can be enabled from its representations of humans as useful

primarily for their posited value to capital accumulation. I also explore the implications of WBHCP subjectification aims in these two texts, as they target bodily aggregations and devalue aspects of humanity rendered non-compliant with prescribed forms of economic utility. This is important as such devaluations continue a long-running marginalisation of those deemed irrelevant to ever-growing needs of globalised capital (and thus 'development' as one of its proxies), given the ambitions and desired reach of international institutional discourse.

In assessing governmentalising tendencies present in two representative policy texts by the World Bank Group (WBG, 2018, 2019), both of which occupy discourse as 'a set of diverse realities articulated onto each other' (Foucault, 2000: 232), I hope to probe at implications of human phenomena in the making, interpellating theoretical efforts such as Gago (2020) alongside textual evidence. Inasmuch, I operate as a subject self-woven into contemporary visions which appear to prioritise abstractions of accumulated capital above all else, exploring a realm that thrives on advocating the sacralised servicing of elite interests (Carroll and Jarvis, 2015: 290). This chapter also intends an openness in analysing concepts that position bodies as instruments of capital. It thus orbits the subtle violences inherent to such institutional approaches, which compel at least a response in line with academia's disempowerment to do much beyond questioning those wielding power with 'patient ideologico-critical work' (Žižek, 2009: 7). And, in this vein, I later consider 'resistance' as an increasingly challenging possibility in present times (Ettlinger, 2011: 549), given how elite-driven and capital-serving societal decays may also bring about a dwindling capacity for humans to materially subvert extractive dogmas in diverse territorial contexts. Hence, I close by noting spaces for alternatives that could push past limitations faced by in-paradigm repurposing, channelling a groundswell of advocacy for decolonial and pluriversal aims in valuing human life. Doing so, I hope to share generative opportunities for thinking about humanity's common but differentiated futures in working subtly with the provocation of 'territorial bodies' that this book explores.

A Context of Bio-Power

I write from a stance oriented on bio-power, which Foucault (1978: 140–143) states is 'what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life'. Re-engaging with a rejected Marxism in doing so, Foucault (1978: 131) views bio-power as vital to the success of capitalist extraction for its 'controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production'; managing populations towards 'economic processes'; easing 'growth of both these factors' via boosting subjects' 'availability and docility'; and

exerting 'methods of power' without rendering subjects 'more difficult to govern'. My analysis of World Bank texts will indicate how such techniques are reflected therein, as are related 'factors of segregation and social hierarchization' that affirm 'relations of domination' through bureaucratic usage of bio-power (Foucault, 1978: 131). A Foucauldian view of 'embodiment' can therefore position the human body as a locus where power interfaces, coalescing the varied societal and environmental factors that attempt to shape our lives.

This is due to bio-power being present in 'micro-level practices of power' that pattern domination via the disciplining effects of everyday contexts while appearing as a 'natural order of things' (Harcourt, 2009: 21). In turn, bio-power possesses conceptual relevance as a source of and modality for power, with roles in determining embodied ends humanity should pursue as well as offering blueprints for how these aims can be achieved. Namely via discourse and its applications and, here, as indicated by WBHCP output. Similarly, bio-power deployment with a focus on *embodied individuals* is what most enables its galvanising governmentalities to filter from and across macro- (e.g. global) to meso- (e.g. national) to micro-level (e.g. individual) interactions via a plethora of power relations, and for texts to forward effects onto individual bodies as a meaningful 'inscription surface' (Foucault, 2000: 82). In other words, by targeting humans in an age wherein individualism is prioritised over group-based or society-wide achievements, bio-power comes into its own as a potential mechanism for the redirection of human potential.

This concept also implies non-linear reality with fluctuating, complex, and potentially resistible processes of humanity in processes of becoming woven into certain visions, and I see bio-power as not *necessarily* pernicious. In our lived polyvalence of power relations, it may involve no fixed conspiracy to oppress and tyrannise, even if historical uses of bio-power within governmental rationalities have included evil and/or genocidal efforts to 'remake' society (Bauman, 2002: 1616). In this view, domination is thus not powered by a divine cookie-cutter to bear 'repercussions down below' but in 'autonomous and infinitesimal' technologies of power 'invested, colonised, used, inflected . . . and so on by increasingly general mechanisms' of imperial power across all facets of our lives (Foucault, 2003: 30–31). My textual focus *remains* textual in exploring these discursive formations via policy outputs to assess phenomena that can 'induce a whole series of effects in the real'; 'crystallize into institutions'; 'inform individual behaviour'; and 'act as grids for the perception and evaluation of things' (Foucault, 2000: 232). These features can be grasped in how texts rearticulate humanity-as-bodies towards desired ends, as I now consider.

Markers of Inclusion and Exclusion

In exploring embodied inscription aims for capital-led maxims in WBHCP policy, an explicit focus lies on ushering children (humans aged under 18) into its globalising rationality:

> For governments seeking to invest wisely in human capital, there is no better possibility than investing in the first thousand days of a child's life.
>
> (WBG, 2019: 53).

> The earlier children are exposed to better-off neighbours, the stronger the effects.
>
> (WBG, 2019: 53).

This discursive attention on children echoes how, of the WBHCP's three components, its Human Capital Index is the core calculative mechanism around which wider activities are oriented and legitimised. In turn, for its data, this index focuses on quantitative indicators which denote child 'survival' to age 5; years of schooling and test score achievements against a global average; and child stuntedness as well as 'adult survival rates' – essentially, survival to age 18 (WBG, 2018: 23). More interesting, however, is how these measures are themselves geared to illustrating a 'contribution to productivity' statistic, which benchmarks 'expected future productivity as a worker of a child born in 2018' (WBG, 2018: 23). While it may seem unsurprising that an economic actor such as the World Bank bears a dehumanising policy orientation, there are notable implications to its ordering of humanity via this focus on abstracted child bodies that are valued only for their hypothesised productive capacities.

First, it involves no nod to human rights, a concept challenging the Bank's prioritisation of economic discourse as definitive for development futures. This omission is to be expected given the United Nations tends to 'own' the rights discourse space, yet it is jarring that no reference to humans as rights-bearing individuals exists across the entirety of the WBHCP's inaugural brief (2018). By the time of the Bank's 2019 World Development Report (WDR), where the WBHCP is coalesced into wider streams of the organisation's work, human rights do nevertheless creep in – for instance in advocating for equal property rights to bolster women's economic productivity (WBG, 2019: 96). This instrumentalisation of human rights however emboldens no radical tonal shift in WBHCP output, it being clearly expressed as a means to an economic end with marginal intrinsic value. For instance, there is no palpable gendered emancipation

ordered into this depressingly expressed line from the 2019 WDR, reasserting a long-running sectoral predilection for rights-devoid approaches to empowering women as economic units: 'Empowering women will raise the stock of human capital in the economy' (WBG, 2019: 102).

Returning to the WBHCP's focus on children, this secondly adds an institutionally helpful temporal delay to this space, diverting responsibility for policy successes to a nebulous and increasingly distanced future that development agencies thrive on in asserting a continued power over knowledge generation. Put simply, 'it takes a long time for society to benefit from these investments' (WBG, 2018: 18). Key opportunities are afforded by such extensions to a longer 'time' that development now takes to materialise, which is here as much as '50 years' (WBG, 2018: 24). Interestingly, this involves the Bank now taking a stance against short-termism and the failures of pared-back nation-states, which is somewhat ironic given its own proclivities to mandating socially destructive 'shock treatment' and government funding cuts in the 1980s, embedding at least parts of the problem now being raised (Carroll and Jarvis, 2015: 289).

With the WBHCP and preceding efforts, the Bank's stance has in any case shifted heavily in public spaces towards sharing long-term visions and actions needed for development. This shift sidesteps 80+ years of development inadequacies and cements, at least discursively, a continued place for the Bank's own role in determining expert knowledge and behaviours. A difference, thus, between the WBHCP's problematisation of 'politicians [who] tend to think of shorter-term ways to burnish their reputations' (WBG, 2018: 18) and the Bank itself is that nobody voted the latter into power – which it now strives to hold onto indefinitely by writing itself into an extending future. Rather than benevolent dictators, however, it seems fairer to consider international organisations as 'self-appointed trustees' of what development means and results in for our species. This status, if not implying a democratic process, does in turn suggest that some responsibility must be levied at such organisations for the world ushered in under their trusteeship.

Third, a focus on children poses an exclusionary dilemma through its measurements. As the Index that the WBHCP orbits is based only on childhood data, feasibly a well-educated and healthy younger population could infer a high national level of 'human capital' even if older adults are unemployed, impoverished, and more generally left adrift by, for instance, how 'advances in technology call for new skills seemingly overnight' (WBG, 2019: 72). As such, questions emerge over exclusionary views and 'human value' erasures rendered possible by a longer development temporality focused *only* on data concerning children as unrealised capital – rather than the world we live in as adults *right now* and will leave to children in our future. The above also suggests an implication that human bodies, as

territorialised and iterated by the WBHCP, are rights-less units until they demonstrate economic productivity via their adaptation towards 'more' efficient lived adherence to extractive market-centric regimes that the World Bank has been central in facilitating. In other words, human rights are gained under 'Human Capital' constructs via servile adherence to maxims posited in WBHCP texts. The role of 'children' is thus more functional than restorative for human flourishing, fulfilling set institutional aims in manners discussed above. I next share more on the nature of this textualised rationality before assessing the roles of power and resistance in seeking space for alternatives to a capital-framed approach to human futures.

Human Bodies as Inscribable Surfaces for Capital Accumulation

> In the early days, many people were criticizing this term [human capital] and the underlying analysis because they believed it treated people like slaves or machines. My, how the world has changed!
>
> (Becker, 1994: 16)

The above view by its early purveyor, Gary Becker, fittingly invokes human capital as no novelty in public debates and no stranger to critique over its approach to humanity as subordinate to economic desires. Becker's 'Human Capital', published in 1964, extended ideas linking education and health to economic outcomes and gained traction amongst American economists (Teixeira, 2014: 2–3). Since then, 'human capital' has evolved into a concept well-aligned with ideological demands to refigure as much as possible in market-serving terms; as a construct that awakens capacities of bio-power to proliferate economy-centred rationalities, 'human capital' is apt. Its rationale and quantitative benchmarking focus also slot well into the mainstream development sector, not least with the latter's focus on 'calculative practices to govern global spaces' on terms set by powerful actors (Ilcan and Phillips, 2010: 846). The World Bank, however, claims novelty in setting up the 2017 WBHCP as a 'new' initiative and, as such, I next discuss what this schema suggests as a newly attempted governmentality.

Human capital maxims, as expressed in the WBHCP, aim to guide humanity to a servicing of global structures which are mediated and veneered by narratives of technological change. Doing so, it minimises how this site for human activity is not only furthered by imperial power bases to pursue destructive capital accumulation desires, but pivotal as a discursive node which obscures the mass inequality that greater technologisation results in via its proliferated spread by large-state powers. This itself involves inequality generation that advance under veils such as the WBHCP's misleading indications of contemporary ('digital') technology as

a neutral, open-ended industry, rather than as a manifestation of aims for power and capital expansion which rose up from a US military–industrial complex, and which now expects lived acceptance of its increasingly privatised nature. Put otherwise, it remains vital to note how 'the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps' (Friedman, 1999: 464). This extends to extractions of humanity enabled via multiple forms of technology, including agricultural or manufacturing-related innovations, even if WBHCP texts explicitly dwell on 'technological developments in the digital era' (WBG, 2019: 124).

For its part, the WBHCP assumes discursive space here with a treatment of humanity's technologised human future as a *fait accompli*, deploying an approach redolent to actors implying their claims over such knowledge. It, relatedly, also positions societal needs to adapt to global visions of a politically and militarily shaped future in blandified terms, which omits the roles that economically powerful backers play in fostering and provoking these self-same global needs to 'adapt':

> Individuals with more advanced skills are taking better advantage of new technologies to adapt to the changing nature of work.
> (WBG, 2019: 19)

> People with higher human capital adapt faster to technological change.
> (WBG, 2019: 50)

> Globalized and automated economies put a higher premium on human capabilities that cannot be fully mimicked by machines.
> (WBG, 2019: 50)

Bank pronouncements on 'Human Capital' via institutional policy efforts can, in short, be approached as a manual for how countries may better accommodate an implied geopolitical schema that lopsidedly favours entrenched powers. This then requires adherence for it to succeed by countries in servicing the schema via adapting their populations. Yet, if these policies are hence territorialised by the World Bank to be mediated at country level, as argued by Hunter and Shaffer (2022: 39) in viewing such benchmarking as a 'mechanism for institutional reintermediation', the targets of said inscriptions are individual and abstract human bodies which bear bio-social determinants under logics deployed by powerful global actors. Tentatively approaching Gago's (2020: 60–61) concept of a 'body-territory idea-force' as holding scope to bear multiple guises, I wonder if the bio-powered inscription aims of Bank policy here show traces of the actor's own priorities to economically and socially *re-liberalise* a

'notion of the body as individual property', setting out extractive rationalities by which this could occur. If the body thus remains 'a composition of affects, resources, and possibilities', these phenomena (and their vessels) are not immune to externally directed re-territorialisation attempts by the destructive 'nonhuman forces' of capital logics, posing stark counterpoints to Gago's emancipatory visions for the human body (Gago, 2020: 60–61).

Echoing Carroll and Jarvis' (2015: 295) definition of 'deep marketisation' as a term for our era's globalised ideology of financialising as many facets of human existence as possible, the WBHCP therefore offers the direct statement of a 'functionalist imperative inherent in capitalism to reconfigure social relations in ways that support capital and market exchange relations'. In so doing, human bodies here become policy-framed territorial sites for capital accumulation as an abstraction, proffering specific aspirations for future embodied individual experiences via discourse's unpredictable 'effects in the real' (Foucault, 2000: 233). This itself reflects an evolution in current development aims towards orchestrating emphases on individuals to better reflect power-knowledge aims of dominant actors, casting beneficiaries (or 'atomised humans on development's frontlines') as agents of their own success. The latter, under such rubrics, is positioned chiefly as valuable when in line with set expectations to serve marketised aims. I discuss this phenomenon elsewhere with reference to wider global policies (Chenet, 2023), and it appears deeply reflected in the WBHCP. Such evolutions in form for bio-power exertions, however, prompt new sites for resistance or at least agentic incredulity, as indicated by how 'contradictions inherent in deep marketisation also reveal growing threats to the neoliberal project' (Carroll and Jarvis, 2015: 297). Before turning to capacity for 'resistance', I next suggest how the WBHCP shows institutional bio-power intents in its remaking of human bodies as labouring sites for capital accumulation.

Moulding Human Bodies via Discourse – A Foucauldian Inflection on Territorial Embodiments

> If [prescriptions] have an ideality, it is that of a programming left in abeyance, not that of a general but hidden meaning.
>
> (Foucault, 2000: 231)

Discourses, whether aspiring to or exerting a tangible dominance, arise from mechanisms of power and resistance that shape them before being utilised to target behaviours onto human bodies. The point on 'ideality' (Foucault, 2000: 231) above hence relates to how 'explicit programs' such as human capital or global development are not based in 'straightforward

calculations' for 'immediate interest'. Such programming, rather, includes a 'whole technology of human training, surveillance of behaviour, and individualisation of elements of a social body' (Foucault, 2000: 231).

If I approach such constructs through policies as 'practical texts' (Foucault, 1990: 12), these examples are only part of power-imbued realms that such texts emerge from and feed into. In this manner, I have targeted only one technique of power amidst many which territorialise contemporary globality, with such discourse being 'highly articulated around a cluster of power relations' (Foucault, 1978: 30). In discussing discrete texts to explore Human Capital as a construct which sits alongside others in larger, shifting fields of power, I thereby support Foucault's (1978: 100) idea of 'discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable'. Thus, these can only *aim* to shape our unfixed broader discourses on human existence, which remain subject to shifting codes, disciplining processes, contextual regimes, and fightbacks from those existing amidst power relations – and I include Gago's (2020) radical work within this.

In turn, initiatives such as the WBHCP exist in an endlessly reconstituting 'power-diagram' that individuals and groups are 'equally trapped within' and which bears a capacity to favour 'certain individuals or groups to control more of a diagram's mechanisms of power than others' (Heller, 1996: 86). Applying this to global policies of institutions that are powerful and territorially encroaching in accepting a post-Washington or 'Wall Street' consensus view (Gabor, 2021: 454), fields of power are in constant flux, actively produced (disciplined and resisted), and comprised of countless subjects through blunt and subtle modalities across globalising efforts and their lived implications. These interactions are additionally steeped in oppression and privilege – pursuant to varied inequalities and hard-won equalities that culminate into moments of what is heterogeneously considered to be our existence as a species. The latter can guide but never inevitably mandates what development is, as our world is 'something that we make' and can remake better (Graeber, 2015: 89). In this sense, WBHCP fragments can be termed as 'calculated, reasoned prescriptions in terms of which institutions are meant to be recognized, spaces arranged, [and] behaviours regulated', but not necessarily much more than that (Foucault, 2000: 231).

Similarly, with governmentality being an 'encounter between technologies of domination of others and those of the self' (Foucault, 1997: 68), inherent instability and reversionary scope are embedded into power relations that extractive rationalities aim to (but cannot) guarantee (Foucault, 1997: 203). This is because human bodies are inevitably engaged in individual *and* group negotiations with aims present in texts such as World Bank policies, and with such visions' implications for lived reality under political regimes of extraction and the new colonialities they signify (Gago,

2020: 66). Due to this, I view WBHCP discourse as only a manifestation of wider phenomena, such as complex interactions from a diverse social consciousness that powers our lived practices and evolving rationalities. In bearing amorphous techniques, the territorialising discourse discussed earlier also cannot be universalised due to our embodied capacities for changing processes that shape and transcend it. This open-endedness may be frightening in terms of not having a *firm* blueprint for how best to challenge oligopolistic strangleholds on material power and wealth, but also heartening in considering our diverse human attempts for more inclusive futures and lived experiences. I dwell on these to close this chapter.

Conclusions: Theorising, Seeking and Exerting Embodied Resistance

> Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.
>
> (Foucault, 1978: 101)

Debates continue if Foucault's view of resistance as 'always' possible holds, which links to his reluctance in closing off resistance by those devalued by social regimes, such as those deemed criminal, mentally unwell, and/or sexually deviant (2000: 354). Gago (2020: 62) rephrases this in advocating for attention to be placed on 'dissident corporealities who . . . situate the body as an extensive territory' via their active embodied struggle. Yet, my faith fluctuates on whether our capacities to change 'rules of the game' (Foucault, 2000: 354) may be narrowing too far for material change to arise out of our many subjugated and disqualified human knowledges (Foucault, 2003: 7), which can lose scope for traction and application as inequalities based on extractive logics continue to entrench and grow across our world.

As such, exploring the scope for 'resistance' as a lived possibility is important to assessing the WBHCP as a schema aiming to re-territorialise human bodies. In power's polyvalence and capacities, 'resistance remains superior to the forces of the process [as] power relations are obliged to change with the resistance', rendering it central to the dynamics of production (Foucault, 1997: 167). This does not however imply 'equal' effects are generated, given the complex hierarchies that inform and organise discourse (Bacchi, 2017: 28). However, power as a facility or 'transformative capacity' recognises resistance exists intrinsically *within* power as an immanent 'medium of change' (Heller, 1996: 83), which supports Gago's (2020: 62) central hypothesis for 'body-territory' as a territory which is extensively demarcated by the agentic bodies 'who nourish and are nourished by' active struggle.

Following this, my analysis is open to spaces in the lived realm of development encounters where there may be capacity for 'resistance, disobedience, and oppositional groupings' (Foucault, 2000: 354). My caveat here, however, aligns with Ettlinger's (2011: 549) point that 'although the field of possibilities for resistance is ubiquitous, . . . actual resistance is not inevitable and might be relatively scarce'. This may seem to jar with more rousing claims by authors such as Gago (2020) in suggesting we can 'change everything', but I am happy to accept that resistance is only scarce until it no longer remains so. With barriers appearing to resurge against rights, equality and justice across the world, tempering the immediate gratification of near-term successes with longer narratives of cyclical change-making away from the political regimes of extractivism that dominate our societies (Gago, 2020: 63) feels more sincere to Foucault's own focus on subjugated actors in seeking reversals from oppression and domination (Schotten, 2015: 167–170). However, without material changes needed to redirect power's continued deployment by powerful actors towards alienating market-serving ends, space for 'resistance' remains fractured and fragmented – with individual embodied efforts wielded out from privileged statuses or desperate necessity being the more graspable of opportunities to reject, deny and challenge such logics.

Yet, Foucault also implies that creative opportunities exist for us to form imperfect works-in-progress away from subjectification. As 'resistance relies upon the situation against which it struggles', subjects redirecting 'oppression' via discourse can be a potential stratagem (1997: 168). Such strategic redirections – which require both thought *and* action – may offer practices past those urged in policies, limited as the latter can be when their concealments of 'business as usual' dissipate. As Hartmann (2003: 10) summarises: "If power functions through the structuration of a field of possible actions, resistance to power should not only be understood in terms of agonistic force relations, but in terms of a creative traversing of the field of possible action". An approach of 'positive resistance' offers scope to work productively with/against schemes such as the WBHCP, acknowledging complicities with oppressive structures while making inroads towards jeopardising their foundations. Here, then, spaces must be made for aims and desires to be advanced by agentic development subjects (De Vries, 2007: 26), particularly in settings where contextual and intersecting deprivations override capacities for a meaningful existence. We cannot, however, ignore the extreme colonialities shaping a lived realm where docility may be inescapable for subjects existing solely as 'inscription surfaces' (Foucault, 2000: 82). Gago (2020: 67) thus impels an imperative to challenge this dehumanised vision in her work on an 'expanded extractivism' wherein, in the present era, 'finance lands, takes root, and inserts itself into a multiform vitality that it exploits . . . by making a command

code immanent'. Put otherwise, by simply existing as human bodies within valorisation schemes serving extractive ends – which *by capital design* only dehumanisingly encroach into ever-increasing aspects of lived experiences and the societies mediating them (Gago and Mezzadra, 2017: 587) – a need to dismantle such logics grows paramount. It is for these reasons that stubborn turns to re-encounter globality afresh and inclusively must be welcomed, democratising our fields in ways which bring Žižek to mind:

> The task is not to conduct the castration in a direct climactic confrontation, but to undermine those in power with patient ideologico-critical work [until . . .] the powers-that-be are afflicted with unnaturally high-pitched voices
>
> (Žižek, 2009: 7).

Arguably, the World Bank is already experiencing a neutering of its influence, albeit one spurred by the success of liberal market visions it has championed across recent history: private finance is now showing it up with bigger bankrolls and devaluing the relevance of World Bank loans for project funding (Hunter and Shaffer, 2022: 36). We may therefore be occupying temporal spaces wherein it is vital to reject strategic visions of embodied life that prioritise not humanity, but the economistic rationalities encroaching into our experiences. As such, there is a continued need to leverage alternatives from our present and expanding range of critiques across decolonial, degrowth, and pluriversal guises, and make them into lived experiences at both individual and group levels.

Advancing this, research with decolonial visions is intersecting with feminisms and degrowth (Nirmal and Rocheleau, 2019; Dengler and Seebacher, 2019; Gregoratti and Raphael, 2019), offering analytical prisms to re-problematise silences and erasures which signal exclusionary practices (Wilson, 2015; Patel, 2020). Feminist political ecology also coheres in searching creatively for pathways to justice outside a global race-to-the-bottom humanity that weaponises extractivism for private accumulation (Wichterich, 2015; Bidegain and Nayar, 2012). Widespread, then, is the wealth of potential synergies that scholarship can draw on, open, and point to in this age of new paths. To borrow from Esteva (2014: 45) describing shifts in his own work, we have thus moved to 'formulate the invitation and the plea in a different way but the agenda remains'. This makes it feel apt to return to Escobar (2016: 24) in considering scholarship emerging in, out of, and accompanying development studies as interlinked 'discourses of transition' that, together and in their own ways, shape a diverse 'emergent scholarly-political domain' bearing profound relevance to our stultifying era of strife and global inequality overseen by neoliberal global powers.

If a violence intended for our futures is thus made plain as, for instance, a disempowering recast of human bodies as tools for capital rather than as unique and intrinsically valuable members of a species, such phenomena demarcate potential rallying points to the disparate strands of critique that foment across disciplinary boundaries. In this context, examples of elite language with dehumanising maxims such as the WBHCP's may serve as clarion calls that signify imperial actors' weakening claim to power over humanity. And that, perhaps as much as anything, is worth fixating on to continuously re-territorialise a diversity of bodies with lived meanings that render nihilistic visions of 'human capital' as themselves irrelevant.

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9 The Ghosts We See From the Mountains

Scenario Planning and the Territorial Body in Time

Matt Finch and Marie Mahon

Spatial Justice and Territorial Bodies

> *In the last days of trust, people could barely agree which way was up. Screens told the stories their viewers wanted to hear. Maps rewrote themselves to accommodate prejudice: disputed territories named according to the preference of their viewer.*
>
> *When lands could be contested, so could bodies. The language of who we are proved infinitely open to rewriting. The same flesh could be burdened or lifted by labels. The continent became a patchwork of values and beliefs: whom you could be, whom you could love, where you would be recognised.*
>
> *You've heard whispers of a place where they don't speak of men and women anymore. There are different labels there. Would they suit? It's ten days walk, and you'd have to cross the border.*
>
> <div align="right">"Instructions for Inhabiting Imagined Futures", Finch, 2021.</div>

Four visions of Europe in the year 2048: a wealthy centenarian enjoys the comforts of a smart home woven with medical technology while taking in news of refugee camps on the USA–Canadian border. An Olympic hopeful prepares for events including poetry as well as athletics, in a contest which embodies the postcapitalist values of a climate-ravaged age. A logistics expert immersed in virtual space uses all of their senses to coordinate fleets of autonomous vehicles across expansive virtual and physical geographies. A lost soul who cannot find identity within their deeply regressive corner of a patchwork Europe plans to flee in search of a new home.

These characters appeared in an output of the Horizon-funded IMA-JINE project which used second person fiction to evoke figures from IMA-JINE's scenarios for Europe in the mid-21st century.

In this chapter, we explore how such future scenarios, designed to address questions of spatial justice, resonate with the notion of the territorial body.

What does a radical, activist, feminist territorial lens bring to scenarios work – and, how might scenario planning enhance our use of the territorial body concept by inviting speculation on the future dynamics between individual bodies and the territories they inhabit?

Like Gago's *body-territory*, the scenario is "strategic, because it is a point of analysis and of practical action" (Gago, 2020: 95); "it expands our way of *seeing*" (85). In addition, thanks to their interpretive flexibility, both the scenario and the territorial body can serve as boundary objects (Star and Griesemer, 1989; Finch et al., 2024) or transition objects (Ramírez and Drevon, 2005) facilitating communication across different positions, perspectives, ideologies, disciplines and worldviews. We argue that the perspectives offered by scenario work enable fresh perception of the context within which territorial bodies are defined, including new opportunities for intervention against marginalisation and oppression.

Although we define key terms below, we use them as practitioner-researchers in a spirit of *bricolage*, "the imaginative use of materials for previously unintended purposes" (McCann and Selsky, 2012: 130) We believe that a degree of interpretive flexibility creates the space for dialogue which is fundamental to foresight work – what Van der Heijden (2005) called "the art of strategic conversation".

In this chapter, the formulation "territorial body" describes the body of the individual person in the context of its entanglement with questions of territory, incorporating the complex multidirectional dynamics which arise between the individual body, the collective, and the various territories they inhabit. It is derived from Verónica Gago's *body-territory*, "a practical concept [with origins in Indigenous women's collective knowledge] that demonstrates how the exploitation of common, community (urban, suburban, campesino, and Indigenous) territories involves violating the body of each person and the collective body through dispossession", "mapping the effects on everyday life produced by the dispossession of the commons" (Gago and Mason-Deese, 2019: 206). When we write of the territorial body in this chapter, we write of the individual body in dialogue with the territory in which it finds itself.

We use "scenario" as defined by Spaniol and Rowland (2018): a systematised set of comparatively different narrative descriptions about their users' external context, future oriented and plausibly possible. Specifically, we explore scenarios within the Oxford Scenario Planning Approach, set out in detail below.

Finally, we also define "spatial justice". Our chapter anchors its discussion in the work of IMAJINE, a Horizon Europe-funded programme of the European Commission. Its task was to

> formulate new integrative policy mechanisms to enable European, national and regional government agencies to more effectively address

territorial inequalities within the European Union, and to imagine a future for European regions in which the distribution of resources is consistent with principles of social and spatial justice.

(IMAJINE Project, 2023)

Spatial justice was the theoretical lens through which this work was conducted, incorporating empirical research, methodological scholarship and foresight in the form of scenario planning.

The notion of spatial justice originated in the work of 1960s Marxist theorists. For Henri Lefebvre (1970, translated 2003), spatial justice was a matter of people's rights to access and use urban space, but also to participate in transformation processes: the so-called "right to the city". The notion of a socio-spatial dynamic to the city was developed further by David Harvey (1973) and Ed Soja (2008) who critiqued how underlying processes of power shaped that socio-spatial context, giving rise to varied and unequal experiences of social justice. Harvey (1973) drew attention to the impact of political and economic decisions leading to redistribution of income across different parts of a city. Redistribution from inner city to suburbs prioritised economic efficiency but also created social injustice in the way it gave rise to impoverished city centre communities, with suburbs flourishing at their expense (p.78). Soja (2008) emphasised the 'socio-spatial dialectic (the spatial shapes the social as much as the social shapes the spatial)' (2008: 2), meaning that 'the geographies in which we live can have negative as well as positive consequences on practically everything we do' (2). Thus justice and injustice had spatially causal aspects, but were also 'embedded in spatiality' (2008: 2).

Spatial justice scholarship continues to evolve, focusing on how spatial patterns of inequality are produced and perpetuated, and how more just outcomes can be achieved (Fanstein, 2014; Dikeç, 2001; Jones et al., 2020; Demeterova et al., 2020; Woods, 2019). Spatial justice speaks to Gago's idea that bodies and territories are entwined in their exploitation, that extraction and violence inflicted on the land repeat themselves in domestic and intimate spaces, and that complex multidirectional dynamics may arise between bodies, collectives, and territories.

In this chapter, we set out the relationship between foresight and spatial justice, taking IMAJINE as an example. We then consider how scenarios reveal new potential configurations and dynamics of the territorial body, and new potential vulnerabilities or marginalisations. In the chapter's second part, we consider what the lens of the territorial body might bring to foresight work, and then how foresight can support intervention in the present. Ultimately this leads us to question whether the territorial body is to be understood not solely in terms of the conditions which have made its existence possible, but also speculatively, through the ways in

which it *continues to become*, and its capacity to move beyond its current form.

Manufactured Future Contexts: Scenarios for Spatial Justice

Why is foresight useful to spatial justice? As Sen (2009) has argued, no single, perfectly just imaginary exists against which all circumstances can be judged. Instead, justice is a question of our capabilities and liberties within a given context. Therefore, different future contexts may provide useful perspectives on the challenges of justice faced in the present.

As we have written elsewhere (Mahon and Finch, 2021),

> Looking at inequality doesn't just mean measuring the difference between 'haves' and 'have-nots' as we understand them today, and projecting whether that gap will narrow or widen. It means understanding the lenses through which inequality and injustice are defined now – and considering the way those issues might be framed by future generations.

Furthermore, justice is never computational, even when law courts decide a case on the "balance of probabilities" (Kay and King, 2020: 196–214). This has implications for IMAJINE's foresight work:

> Given that justice is narratively and socially defined, it won't do to just 'run the numbers' when we look at its future. We need to think, not just about how Europeans define regional inequality today, but how inequality and injustice might be understood tomorrow. No one has privileged access to the future, and it's impossible to gather data and evidence from events which haven't happened yet; even when foreseeable trends do seem to exist, the experience of COVID-19 has reminded us how easily a seemingly inevitable curve can be bent or broken by events which decision-makers had not accounted for.
>
> (Mahon and Finch, 2021)

Therefore IMAJINE's scenarios sought to go beyond current understandings of regional inequality, articulated within frameworks set by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG-REGIO).

To stretch thinking, IMAJINE developed scenarios for the year 2048 – after four rounds of the seven-year planning cycle which shapes DG-REGIO's work. Each version of Europe in 2048 construes spatial justice differently: different forms of injustice and exclusion arise across future geographies which also contrast with those of today (Finch et al., 2024).

In SILVER CITADEL, an expanded, deeply centralised European power bloc uses artificial intelligence to manage economic prosperity and equity across its territories under a new state capitalism.

In GREEN GUARDIAN, a postcapitalist global order rises in response to severe climate change. Its overriding priorities are sustainability, survival, and well-being – with the economics of "profit" and "net worth" giving way to one of "yield" and "fair share".

In SILICON SCAFFOLD, social and economic life migrates almost entirely to privatised virtual spaces, and corporate city-states have eclipsed national governments.

In PATCHWORK RAINBOW, diverging cultural and social norms cause Europe to form a mosaic of regions which are increasingly dependent on relationships and alliances with more advanced or stable powers elsewhere in the world.

These scenarios were built using the Oxford Scenario Planning Approach (OSPA). As set out in Ramírez and Wilkinson's Strategic Reframing (2018), the OSPA characterises scenarios as alternative assessments of the future context for a given entity or issue, developed for a specific user and purpose, that contrast with the way the future context is currently being framed.

Scenarios, as imagined future contexts, are therefore distinguished from strategy, the actions which one might take within a given context. Ramírez and Wilkinson (2018) delineate the transactional environment "which one can influence by interacting with the other actors that comprise it" (222) from a broader contextual environment "that is beyond the direct and indirect influence of a strategist. . . ., an actor (or set of actors)" (217).

OSPA scenarios are built by exploring multiple ways in which contextual uncertainties, perceived to be beyond a key actor's direct control, may, in times to come, change the transactional environment of relationships and dynamics which that actor perceives it can influence. Under so-called "TUNA" conditions of turbulence, uncertainty, novelty, and ambiguity (Ramírez and Wilkinson: 222), when the past no longer serves as an adequate guide to the future, scenarios provide alternative future contexts (Scoblic, 2020) to inform decision-making (Ramírez et al., 2019).

Such scenarios are neither predictive or normative; the intention is not to express the likelihood of a given situation, nor to set out "how the future should be". They inform strategy "as a way of knowing the present, rather than considering the future as something that is knowable in advance" (Ramírez and Wilkinson, 2018: 162). This resonates with the notion of the "thick present" in which remembrance and anticipation cause the past and future to be entangled with the now; such presents are anchored in a sense of agency: "It is precisely action that makes the present thick" (Sandford, 2023: 7–9).

As discussed elsewhere (Finch, Bhroin, and Krüger, 2023), scenarios thus become a way, in Donna Haraway's words, of "staying with the trouble", attending to presently "unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings" rather than pivoting "between awful or Edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures" (Haraway, 2018: 1).

The OSPA's focus on uncertainties in the present context and the currently perceived limits of agency, rather than the identification of desired or prescribed futures, does not imply passivity. Rather, the approach chimes with both Haraway's argument and Solnit's insight (2016: xiv):

> When you recognize uncertainty, you recognize that you may be able to influence the outcomes – you alone or you in concert with a few dozen or several million others. Hope is an embrace of the unknown and the unknowable. . . . It's the belief that what we do matters even though how and when it may matter, who and what it may impact are not things you can know beforehand.

In the OSPA, iterative cycles of perception and reperception allow users to refine the scenarios and explore implications. This enables them to stretch their sense of what is going on around them and what may transpire. This process may include what Nørretranders (1998), Hara (2018), and Nazir (2020) call "exformation": information which lies beyond the frame of reference within which we can take for granted a common understanding (see Finch and Mahon, 2022). Scenarios' usefulness stems from their capacity to challenge the frames through which a situation is currently considered by its stakeholders.

In IMAJINE, the OSPA served to develop and assess distinct futures of European regional development. By manufacturing future contexts for Europe in which spatial justice is construed differently, IMAJINE aimed to reframe contemporary issues of regional inequality and to understand them more extensively, in a way that would be useful and actionable for policymakers and other stakeholders.

In SILVER CITADEL's version of 2048, spatial justice is framed in terms of equitable distribution of wealth between Europe's regions, calculated using artificial intelligence under the aegis of a consolidated EU's new state capitalism.

In GREEN GUARDIAN, spatial justice is understood in terms of regions helping each other adapt to change in a postcapitalist era defined by the struggle to endure climate catastrophe. As cities and coastal areas become unappealing places to live, the traditional poles of the urban-rural axis are inverted (Finch and Mahon, 2021).

In SILICON SCAFFOLD, spatial justice means the right of regions to hold onto wealth they generated in a world where social and economic life,

migrating to transnational virtual spaces, could escape traditional jurisdictions based on physical geography.

In PATCHWORK RAINBOW, spatial justice is a cultural issue: communities' right to define their own values in a Europe where fundamental cultural and social disagreements had emerged.

This was not a case of judging which future was desirable, but rather using each scenario to gain perspective on the present. It was even possible to ask how each scenario's inhabitants would look back on the choices of today, if their future came to pass. How would the 2020s be seen through the retrospective spatial justice lens applied in each scenario?

Precisely because IMAJINE's scenarios were non-normative, they could investigate troubling or ambivalent aspects of each European future. External respondents provided commentary on topics such as the future of corruption, dark design and behavioural policy interventions which could intentionally or unintentionally promote inequality or cause harm in each scenario. A response from the European Trade Union Institute (IMAJINE Project, 2023) created space to consider the perspective of the worker, and the impact of each future on the labouring body.

A polyphonic approach to scenario planning, with 14 external respondents included in the main scenarios document, 11 more published on the IMAJINE website and other informal and private responses shaping the project, allowed for the incorporation of diverse and critical perspectives. As Ramírez and Wilkinson argue, this

> can help learners to avoid what might be considered the 'colonization of the future' by dominant powers or vested interests. Such colonization can occur when 'the strategic agenda' is imposed from the outside or unilaterally by the powerful[.]
>
> (2018: 47)

As Ramírez and Ravetz (2011) have pointed out, such "colonization" can have profound consequences. TUNA conditions do not merely arise because of forces which appear to be "natural" or "wild": corruption, greed, technocratic hubris, and the unwise exercise of power can all lead to "feral" conditions in which "human intervention create[s] an unwanted unfolding situation that could not have occurred in the wild" (479). By resisting the imposition of a singular perspective and challenging existing assumptions, scenario planning

> usefully complicates the notion of 'preferred' or normative futures, design fictions, and other utopian projects through which communities and organisations imagine and advocate for whatever they consider to be a better world . . . [restoring] both our humility with regard to

external forces that may seem almost unbearable to face, and the troubling sense that our own desires may not be pure or uncomplicated[.]

(Finch and Mahon, 2022)

For Ramírez and Drevon (2005), scenarios provide spaces where "the status quo can be suspended or temporarily bracketed, freeing thinking from established here and now constraints and allowing one to look at one's current situation from an alternative point of view" (197). This space consists not just of the meetings at which scenarios are built, but "the scenarios produced . . . are themselves also objects that can be used transitionally to enhance change" (211).

Such change comes about through the opportunity for "strategic reframing"; Ramírez and Wilkinson (2018) argue that a scenario set can "look back at the current context and its possible unfolding with 'new' eyes, unhampered by past and current conditioning and opening new possibilities" (127).

As Wack (1985a) put it, the effect is like looking at rain on a mountaintop and understanding that this could mean future floods in the valley below – not anticipation or prediction, but an unlearning of assumptions (Burt and Nair, 2020) which could lead people to "to change and reorganize their inner models of reality" (Wack, 1985b).

In IMAJINE, this process led researchers to question the project's original mandate to explore how policy should help achieve more spatial justice as currently construed within the European Commission.

One IMAJINE output with special relevance for our concern with the territorial body was "Instructions for Inhabiting Imagined Futures" (Finch, 2021), a collection of second-person fictions designed to put the reader in the body of inhabitants of each scenario. An excerpt from this piece opens the present chapter. Marginalised or privileged, the figures provide examples of the territorial body in each scenario.

The Witch's Wake: Scenarios and the Spectral Metaphor

By envisaging figures which might occupy each scenario, and thereby offering a glimpse of potential future territorial bodies, scenarios can help identify emerging vulnerabilities or marginalisations. In making this move, we draw on Peeren (2014)'s notion of "the spectral metaphor".

Peeren proposes that certain subjects, such as "undocumented migrants, servants or domestic workers, mediums and missing persons", can be "likened to ghosts or related figures, on the basis of their lack of social visibility, unobtrusiveness, enigmatic abilities or uncertain status between life and death". (5)

Peeren argues that such groups, though suffering "varying degrees of dispossession", are not incapable of finding ways "individually or collectively, to acquire (a greater measure of) agency, so that they, too, may *live*

on" (16); these ways may not even require full renunciation of ghostly status. Peeren's notion of spectrality arises from "conditions that are imposed in real-life encounters, especially with vulnerable subjects" (16): their very invisibility and exile from the domain of the fully living and fully recognised occurs, like justice, within a specific historical and social context. This means that, as with the different notions of spatial justice brought to light by IMAJINE's scenarios, each future context can also potentially shed light on the presence of spectral figures who are marginalised or rendered wholly or partly invisible through the frame of present conditions.

In the worlds of GREEN GUARDIAN, SILICON SCAFFOLD, SILVER CITADEL, or PATCHWORK RAINBOW, which territorial bodies would experience marginalisation, exclusion, dispossession, and disadvantage? These might range from those digitally excluded from privatised virtual life to those whose very sense of identity is unrecognised, even unnamed, within the territories they inhabit.

Having visited these scenarios in 2048, can we see "weak signals" (Ansoff, 1975; Holopainen and Toivonen 2012) of those marginalisations coming into being in the present?

We noted earlier that Wack had used the metaphor of a scenario planner observing rain on a mountaintop and reflecting on the potential consequences for the valley below. Extending Wack's metaphor, it might also be possible to use scenarios to gain a fresh vantage point on questions of spatial justice and the territorial body. Surveying a territory from the perspective of multiple imagined futures, taking advantage of manufactured hindsight, might reveal figures who had previously been spectral and elusive: the ghosts we see from Wack's mountains.

Each scenario, by revealing different injustices, systemic failures and exclusions, provides opportunity for users to intervene against potential and emergent vulnerabilities today. The fresh perspectives offered can challenge the acceptance of harms and injustices – *what would people make, in retrospect, of our attitudes to Long COVID in SILVER CITADEL or SILICON SCAFFOLD?* – as well as highlighting other ways in which "spectral" injustices, exclusions and oppressions are currently "accepted into people's daily lives and routines".

Encountering ghosts, however, can be disquieting. Successfully challenging the microcosm of a scenario user leads to reperception, a cognitive shift in which the mental model is altered – sometimes called the "'aha' moment" (Ramírez and Wilkinson: 22). While Wack called scenarios work "the *gentle* art of reperceiving" (1985b; our emphasis), that "aha" moment is not necessarily comfortable. When it leads to the recognition of a figure, community, class or identity, which was previously "ghostly", and an understanding of their oppression, marginalisation or disadvantage, then waking up to this recognition can be challenging.

A parallel might be drawn between recognition of spectral status in a scenario and the experience of systemic racial injustice. Venita Blackburn, in the essay which gives this section its title (2019), writes of sleep paralysis, also known as "the witch's wake", where the dreamer returns to consciousness and finds themselves in an unresponsive body:

> The whole body becomes a tomb and the mind is a ghost, skimming the space between the living and everything else. I remember screaming when it happened, hard, loud, in tears, and yet I was silent. I say this because it is the nearest analogy for explaining not just the black experience in America, but the white experience as well. There is a seam between consciousness and sleep, between the wreckage of the body and being able to see the forces that attack it. The black American is born on that seam, that fragile space of knowing your physical self is in peril and being unable to act. We watch our bodies wrecked for the economic and sadistic benefit of whiteness and our screams are silenced through disbelief.

Blackburn goes on to address the equivalent experience of white Americans who wake up to the racial injustice of US society:

> To give up whiteness is to become vulnerable, to confront the deep tears in the psyche gouged over generations, to see hate in the face of a loved one and name it and therefore open yourself up to being seen and ultimately touched. . . . It is not the marginalized people, the black and brown bodies under assault, who carry the burden of saving this nation; they carry only the burden of seeing the flames first.

With exclusions and oppressions which are only potential or incipient, it may be possible for scenarios to reveal the first sparks of future flames before the burden is imposed upon the bodies of the marginalised. The contrasting vantage points of imagined futures, built to explore the plausibility of different kinds of spatial justice, might facilitate the painful but necessary work of awakening described in Blackburn's essay and in Jeffrey Boakye's poem, "Why they won't be woke" (2021):

> But you only realise you have a disease
> When you are awake enough to feel the symptoms.
> [. . .]
> So people don't know they are unwell.
> Then the disease becomes easy.
> Like how a coma is easy.
> And being awake becomes hard.
> Uneasy.
> And waking up, becomes traumatic.

It is worth issuing a caveat here: we do not equate the actual suffering, marginalisation, and lived experience of those existing in the past and present with the imagined inhabitants of plausible futures, who are not even *predicted* to exist. Such an attitude would risk a double exclusion on the part of the powerful – "we don't need to take the suffering of today seriously, because our eyes are on the sufferings of tomorrow, as depicted in scenarios". Rather, the intention of this chapter is to highlight commonalities in the discomfort of recognition, whether through the frame of the past, present or plausible future.

Such work includes carefully exploring the impact of different future contexts on the bodies of the privileged as well as the marginalised and recognising that scenario-based strategy work does not solely awaken the privileged to that which has been overlooked or suppressed in the frames through which they make sense of the world. It may also provide fresh perspectives for those who already occupy marginalised positions. The scenario planner Adam Kahane's experience in South Africa as it emerged from apartheid (2012, 2017, 2021) highlights how scenario planning may require every participant to "open up to the possibility that they might not have the right answer" (2021: 69), another discomforting variant on Wack's "aha moment".

IMAJINE's experiment with second-person accounts of different future bodies in each scenario highlighted issues such as the potential for medical technology to sustain a complacent gerontocracy in the SILVER CITADEL scenario; the pressures on sporting and cultural figures in the new sustainability-focused cultural hegemony of GREEN GUARDIAN; the demands and delights of a digitally augmented sensorium in SILICON SCAFFOLD; and the near-complete alienation of an inhabitant of PATCHWORK RAINBOW whose sense of identity was deeply at odds with those recognised within their territory.

More broadly, the scenarios raised other questions relevant to the territorial body:

> In SILVER CITADEL, which bodies and behaviours would be penalized in a European Union whose prosperity was dependent on the social conformity of a "New European Social Model", supported by artificial intelligence and pervasive digital surveillance?

How might Europeans' attitude to immigration shift in GREEN GUARDIAN's world, where the Netherlands had succumbed to sea-level rises and every Dutch citizen was a climate refugee?

What new disparities would develop in the world of SILICON SCAFFOLD, where citizenship was digital and "remixable", no longer tied to

physical geography and with the potential for healthcare rights (for example) to be disaggregated and shared or traded? Taking Gago's (2020) perspective on the *body-territory*, how would extractive forces configure themselves and deploy in data-driven online spaces? What would domesticity look like in a virtualised world?

How might European identity evolve in the PATCHWORK RAINBOW future where Europe's poorest residents were migrating south across the Mediterranean to thriving African nations under Chinese patronage?

IMAJINE did not presume to answer these questions, but rather raise them for discussion by a wide range of users. Issues encountered in each version of 2048 could then be considered with reference to situations which might already be developing in the present.

In each of these cases, we can also ask how the territorial body affects and is affected by the features and dynamics of each scenario. Where can community be built in each future? Where will extractive forces be at play, what will they seek to extract, from whom or what, and at what cost? And: how do the answers to such speculative questions enhance our perception of the situation unfolding around us today?

In this way, rather than force the marginalised to "carry . . . the burden of seeing the flames first", might foresightful efforts be made to identify new marginalisations and their attendant harms before they fully emerge?

The Territorial Body in Time

In the latter part of this chapter, we consider how the concepts of the territorial body and the scenario might usefully nourish one another. First of all, what does Gago's radical, activist, feminist territorial lens bring to scenarios work?

There is a geographical metaphor at the heart of the Oxford scenario process, with a sea of perceived uncertainty surrounding an island of relationships which we believe we can influence. As the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan notes, "[h]ow time and place are related is an intricate problem that invites different approaches" (1977: 179). Time may be spatialised when we think of it as an arrow, or imagine the future as a place where we will one day reside; spaces, too, have their temporal aspect as geographical and geological processes see them form, transform, and disappear over time.

Selkirk et al. (2019: 2) note that the future

is too often constructed as linear continuation of past and present, a trajectory that clearly leads from now to then, thus partially stripping it of its complex and unexpected nature. Time, however, and our ability to

know the future, is much more complex than any trajectorial framing or linear model can account for . . . Humans interact with time in multiple ways – in future horizons or geometries that reference different patterns of temporal movement.

(3).

The notion of the territorial body may demand that scenario planning pay closer attention to the ways in which scenarios discipline time through territorial metaphors, and in which that discipline is shaped by scenarios' own origins and entanglement with the military and with extractive industries.

Engagement with the idea of the territorial body is one example. In turn, the foresightful aspect of scenario work can help us to think about the diagnosis of the territorial body in time.

As Simondon writes (1992: 300), "becoming exists as one of the dimensions of the being, that it corresponds to a capacity beings possess of falling out of step with themselves" (300). Taking a scenario planner's perspective on Gago's *body-territory* challenges us to recognise that the territorial body is always in a state of becoming, and that it has the capacity to "fall out of step with itself".

The territorial body is to be understood not solely in terms of the conditions which have made its existence possible, but the ways in which it continues to become, and its capacity to move beyond its current form. This approach helps us to address questions of justice as they apply to the territorial body, oriented not solely to the current state of affairs or their historical constitution, but also potential future contexts in which the dynamics of the *body-territory* might play out.

What would it look like to explore a speculative territorial body? One example is simulated Mars expeditions conducted on Earth, recounted by Messeri (2016). At locations like the Mars Desert Research Station (MDRS) in Utah, volunteers, some closely affiliated with NASA, explore what it might be like to experience life on a future Martian colony.

Messeri notes how this scenario of Martian colonisation resonates with the colonisation of North America and the iconography of the Wild West, the "American frontier, though long settled, frames the training [of the] astronauts as they prepare to journey to the extraterrestrial frontier" (2016: 43).

She also considers how a territorial "double exposure" (30–32) comes into being, with the landscapes of future-Mars and present-Utah overlaid upon one another.

Messeri cites a visitor to the Utah station:

Stepping out of my dark cabin, I immediately found myself face-to-face with the main porthole of the upper deck, and a red-tinted brown

landscape of rock and sand stretching out onto the horizon. That's when it really sank in: for all intents and purposes, we were on Mars.

(Messeri, 2016: 30)

As volunteers conduct real geological research alongside science-fictional playacting, they understand the Martian future through the lens of Earthly landscapes, while Earth's present is in turn interpreted with reference to the landscape of Mars. The privations as well as the wonder of speculative "Martian" living form part of this experience:

Each crew decides to what extent they want to enhance the feeling of MDRS being a no place. Cell phone reception was spotty, so most of us volunteered to leave our phones off for the mission to simulate a remove between MDRS and elsewhere. Though we had Internet access, the bandwidth was limited and forced us to adopt different usage habits. Crews are told that water is scarce and to shower conservatively at the hab [habitation unit].

(Messeri, 2016: 67).

The interplay of the "astrogeological narrative", by which astronauts are trained in Earth geology to prepare for space exploration, and the "areological narrative", in which planetary scientists focus on the unique geology of Mars itself, offers a unique vantage point on our earthly conditions:

Regardless of the time or the reigning cosmology, then, speculating on the plurality of worlds provokes thinking not only about the universe but about Earth itself. . . . Ideas of what it means to be on Earth shape studies of other planets, and studying the habitability of other worlds refines how we define life on Earth.

(2016: 196)

This forms part of a wider discourse of what Messeri terms "planetarity":

Planetarity, perhaps because it appeals to a word associated with 'nature' (planet) rather than 'culture' (globe), serves to remind us that we are guests of Earth. . . . Whereas 'globalization' suggests an expansive flattening, 'the planetary' resurrects a sense of finitude accompanied by the reality of unequally distributed wealth and resources.

(2016: 10)

In the final part of this chapter, we explore how this fresh perspective can lead us to action on the pressing issues of our own immediate time and space.

Re-Weaving the Transactional Island: Moving from Foresight to Collective Action

Ramírez's elaboration of the Oxford Scenario Planning Approach with Mannervik in *Strategy for a Networked World* (2016) seeks to better understand the dynamics of value co-creation on the "island" of the OSPA's "transactional environment". This understanding enables actors to orchestrate transactional relationships that co-create new value – including "reclaiming territory from the sea" by developing new connections which bring contextual uncertainties under control.

Drawing on actor–network theory, this approach is resonant with Latour's (1996: 370) insight that "Strength does not come from concentration, purity and unity, but from dissemination, heterogeneity and the careful plaiting of weak ties" and "that resistance, obduracy and sturdiness is more easily achieved through netting, lacing, weaving, twisting, of ties that are weak by themselves".

These "value-creating systems" can serve a wide range of ends, including Gago's intersectional and activist "logic of connection that globally maps, against the grain, capital's landings based on the imbrication of different forms of oppression" (2020: 198). Wherever actors hold relationships that co-create value, strategic orchestration can take place – including systems of survival, care and resistance. Ramírez and Mannervik argue that value co-creation can be understood broadly in terms of the difference a given relationship makes in the world. They offer the example of a hunter who was infamously pilloried worldwide for killing a lion, asking whether the "value" of that incident lay merely in the cash paid by the hunter for his trip:

> The lion had previously been tagged for scientific research by Oxford University scientists and had been coaxed away from a reserve at night time to be killed. The interaction was discovered and shared widely across the web and social media, and this put the predator (dentist) who had tracked and killed the prey (lion) into another role – the dentist found himself in the role of prey (through the online campaign to vilify both him and his values). Unknown to him at the time of the hunt, the lion had been given an all too human name, Cecil, by the researchers. The resulting celebrity on its demise then radically transformed its value for the hapless dentist, whose values were also made public and questionable.
>
> (56)

Had the dentist been able to consider future contexts for the hunt beyond the triumph he presumably had in mind, he might have perceived that other

relations and values were potentially in play, ones that would shame him, denigrate the economic transaction underpinning his kill, and emphasise the lion's right to exist as a fellow being on the face of the Earth, as well as its affectionate treatment by the researchers to whom it was a source of scientific value.

Ray Charles, who sang the most famous version of Percy Mayfield's song "The Danger Zone" articulates the sense that "the world is in an uproar/the danger zone is everywhere": TUNA conditions of turbulence, uncertainty, novelty and ambiguity do not happen only in faraway places but at any point on the planet, and digital technology has expanded and developed the global spaces in which immediate conversations about these conditions can take place.

But Charles also sings that "my love for the world is like always/for the world is a part of me". The remedy to widespread TUNA is closer attention to, and cultivation of, our interconnectedness in the present. Doing so from the viewpoint of multiple future scenarios enriches our understanding of the present. It also avoids privileging any hegemonic vision of how the future will or ought to be, taking a broad view of uncertainty rather than a long view of times to come (Lang and Whittington, 2022). As Sandford argues in his discussion of the "thick present",

> Lived futures, produced through the relations of care and concern between people and communities are considered, along with pasts and presents, as part of the work of exercising practical wisdom: since these are produced through really existing relations, they are not vulnerable to differences between expectations and reality.
>
> (17)

We may extend this work through Ramírez and Mannervik's value-creating systems; through Latour's "careful plaiting" of ties; through Gago's *body-territory* which re-entangles body, collective and place; or Haraway's call for "learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings" (2016: 1). Here, Chermack's (2022) argument that Oxford-style scenarios are procedurally agnostic is useful, as is the quality of *bricolage*. Neither scenarios nor concepts of the territorial body must align to one rigid approach, but can serve as boundary objects (Kynigos et al., 2013) enabling "discourse across difference" (Finch et al., 2024): a rhetorical space where distinct perspectives might productively play together.

Perceiving and acting systemically become key to surviving and thriving in turbulent times. For territorial bodies, "staying with the trouble" and dealing with uncertainty means attending with care to the relational nature

of existence. This brings us back to the question of what type of spatial justice we want, and how it can reflect an evolving notion of the territorial body in uncertain futures that we can only speculate on, a notion which may be in dialogue with what we have termed our capabilities and liberties within a given future context. This is where the potential of the scenario comes into its own, allowing us to reframe our ideas on the potential dynamic between individual bodies and the territories they inhabit, and how power might play out in such new and challenging contexts.

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10 Peasant Futurisms Rooted in Body-as-Territory

How Peasant Practices of Subsistence Farming and Food Sovereignty Challenge the Hegemony of Late Capitalism

Sanita Fejzić

Introduction

We live at the end of times, a claim repeated so frequently in certain academic circles, one almost feels desensitised to it. Yet much scientific evidence points to its alarming veracity. 2023 was the hottest year on record with average global temperatures reaching 1.46°C above pre-industrial levels while carbon dioxide (CO_2) levels skyrocketed above 420 parts per million (ppm) after being consistently at around 280 ppm for almost 6,000 years of human civilisation (Robinson, 2024). If there is scientific consensus about the link between burning fossil fuels for electricity production and transportation, the impacts of deforestation and industrial agriculture are compounding our entangled social, ecological and climate crisis (Robinson, 2024).

The Anthropocene – that epoch when humans exist and act as a geological force of disruption and destruction – is said by some to have begun in the later part of the eighteenth century, coinciding with the clouds of smoke released by coal-powered steam engines (Crutzen, 2002, cited in Chakrabarty, 2009, p. 209). Although the burning of fossil fuels is the usual suspect, I'd like to include another historical trigger to our eco-social crisis: the coerced exodus of European and other peasants from their lands and way of life into urban centres to become cheap factory labour, coinciding with, as Moore argues, the industrial revolution in 1850, and intensifying after the neoliberal tide post-1945 (2015, pp. 47–48). This is the story of my peasant family, a story with universal resonance.

This chapter is not merely discursive theorising; it is grounded in my heritage and lived experience as the child of Bosniak peasants. Following Donna Haraway's concept of "situated knowledges" (1988, p. 581) which responds to the challenge of a feminist politics of location in a way that anticipates the value of embodied perspectives as political gestures, this

author – the first in her family born in a modern city – suggests the specificity of Bosniak peasantry helps illuminate universal pillars of heterogeneous and non-localised peasant traditions. Dagmar Lorenz-Meyer argues that "the power relations and emotional investments of the researchers . . . yield more accountable outcomes" when the author embodies a politics of location (2005, p. 77), lending greater credibility to articulations of alternative futures.

In 1960s Yugoslavia, when my peasant parents were children, the lives of Bosniak peasants were rooted in local, land-based economies that depended on gifting, trade, barter and collaborative labour, intersubjectivity between neighbours, and a way of life grounded in subsistence farming and food sovereignty (Lockwood, 1971, pp. 80–183). Educated by a socialist state set on rapid industrialisation, my parents were lured into the big city, Sarajevo, where they were university educated and had two children. Their careers as young professionals had just taken off when the 1992–1995 war and genocide erupted and Yugoslavia's socialist republics splintered into independent, capitalist nation-states. My family fled West across three European countries as refugees, illegal immigrants and temporary guests before finally seeking permanent refuge in Canada. Whereas my grandparents were once productive peasants attuned to the needs of their ecological milieus and co-villagers, I grew up in (sub)urban cities made for cars and big commerce, raised to become a consumptive worker enmeshed in a global economy built around systemic exploitation, excessive extractivism and a politics of human exceptionalism responsible for the ecological and climate crisis.

Just as Hannah Arendt's political theories were influenced by her lived experience as a secular Jew from Germany and an intellectual who fled to America, my thinking is inseparable from my lived experience as a survivor of the genocide of my Bosniak people and the attempted land capture of our ancestral lands, and more specifically as the child of peasants coerced into abandoning their way of life. From this situated, embodied knowledge, this chapter theorises, through a peasant sensibility rooted in Body-as-Territory, alternative Peasant Futurisms that resist social and ecological violence. The chapter is divided into three sections: the first contextualises the crisis of the global food system and its "neo-extractivist projects and efforts to extend the frontiers of agribusiness" (Gago et al., 2018, p. 159); the second theorises peasant food sovereignty in relation to Body-as-Territory, challenging, as Gago asserts, the criminalisation of subsistence economies (Gago et al., 2018, p. 158); the last, and third section, offers peasant micro-ecotopian possibilities grounded in *body-territory* for responding to the crisis of the global food system, a system that feeds, and is fuelled by, the hegemony of late capitalism.

To loosely paraphrase the French futurist Gaston Berger (1954), the purpose of futurisms is to disturb the present. It is also an opportunity to

re-evaluate the past, or what has been mis-assigned as existing in the past, including peasant traditions from across the planet that are at the forefront of the battle against the agro-industrial complex which is, according to La Via Campesina, an organisation that represents peasants worldwide, one of the "most significant enablers of . . . capitalism and the neoliberal economic policies [that have] replaced nature with factory bricks, chimneys, and industrial greenhouses" (2020, p. 2–3).

Resisting future-oriented narratives of apocalyptic dystopias and hyper-techno-centric utopias, Peasant Futurisms draws on peasant practices, knowledges, and values to challenge the status quo by:

- "Resisting narratives of industrial progress, and creating abundant futures by living in self-sustainable edible and wilder ecocities;
- Refusing mythologies of scarcity and creating narratives of sufficiency through cyclical economies rooted in radically local, autonomous and food sovereign ecoregions;
- Revolting against a global machinery of war and profit against vulnerable human and nonhuman bodies and composting hope through eco-social values and practices rooted in [gifting], collaborative labour, mutual aid, and community" (Fejzić, 2023, p.6).

While distinct, these aims are mutually constitutive since to resist violence against vulnerable human and nonhuman bodies is to arrest narratives of industrial progress grounded in racist, gendered, and speciesist systems of exploitation and extraction. As Verónica Gago argues via Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, and Claudia von Werlhof, gendered and racialised bodies can be thought of as territories of conquest to be violently exploited: "capital exploits as 'free resources' from domestic labor, from peasant labor, and from the labor of the inhabitants of cities' slums", qualifying the exploitation as "simultaneously colonial and heteropatriarchal" (2020).

The global peasant struggle against industrial agriculture embedded in petro-capitalism, led internationally by La Via Campesina, is a fight for social and ecological healing. If industrial agriculture is at war with peasants, Indigenous growers, smallholder family farmers and the ecological milieus it exploits and pillages, Peasant Futurisms functions as an aesthetic, cultural and political world-building project grounded in feminist and womanist conceptualisations of 'Body-as-Territory', a way of life that foregrounds what the Kamëntšá Biyá call "reciprocal and synergistic relationship[s]" between humans and their local assemblages of land, water and other-than-human beings (Barnett and Vilchez, 2021).

Body-as-Territory, a conceptual tool to address women+'s rights over their bodies-territories, is a recognition of sovereignty, co-belonging and

protest against various forms of violence that bodies have experienced across different geographic locations, contexts and histories (Leinius, 2021, pp. 112–116; Gago, 2020). Body-as-Territory simultaneously offers a common language for the liberation of vulnerable bodies[1] and for the defence of 'territorial bodies' against corporate and state-sanctioned extraction, pillaging, privatisation, pollution, erosion, desertification and other forms of territorial trauma and violence. When I speak of 'territorial bodies,' I mean assemblages of land, water, human and other-than-human bodies. To use Bruno Latour's language, I am referring to all materially entangled "earthbound" creatures who co-belong to shared ecological milieus (2017, p. 38).

Contextualising Industrial Agriculture and Its Global Food System

The United Nations has calculated that "31 percent of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), originate from the world's agri-food systems" (2021). Productivity and profit, as measured by yield per acre, have violated the natural limits of ecological milieus and the dignity of farm workers and farm animals alike. Rather than measuring farming success by "health, diversity, and nutrition per acre" (Shiva, 2016, p. 1), industrial practices and their use of synthetic fertilisers, chemical pesticides and high-yield hybrid GMO seeds have resulted in soil degradation and soil erosion, and in more extreme cases, soil desertification, not to mention water and air pollution. The risks and impacts of the consumption of these toxins to human health are astounding: the World Health Organization has warned that toxic pesticide residues found in industrial food products "may induce adverse health effects including cancer, effects on reproduction, immune or nervous systems" (2016). The cost of other diseases, including undernutrition and obesity, both linked to industrial agriculture, further put into question the system's integrity (World Health Organization, 2016).

While peasants feed the majority of people in the world (Todhunter, 2022, pp. 2–4), there remains a sticking power to the agri-food system's promise to reduce world hunger and stimulate economic prosperity (Lomax, 2020). Between 1960 and 2015, industrial modes of agricultural production more than tripled, yet the lower retail costs of its food commodities have obscured exorbitant negative social, ecological and climactic costs (Lomax, 2020). Embedded in practices that produce and reproduce human exceptionalism and speciesism, industrial farming of animals creates a market for the consumption of meat grown inhumanely while also acting as a colossal source of methane responsible for the depletion of the ozone layer. On average, every year over 92 billion land animals are bred, reared and slaughtered in factory farms accounting for 16.5% of human

caused GHG emissions. The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has calculated that by 2030, the industrial livestock sector is projected to account for almost half of the world's emissions budget for 1.5°C (Arneth et al., 2019, p. 17). At around 1.5°C of global warming, "the risks from dryland water scarcity, wildfire damage, permafrost degradation and food supply instabilities are projected to be high" (Arneth et al., 2019, p. 17).

The more we depend on global industrial farming practices that intensify the climate crisis, the more the food system is vulnerable to breadbasket failures, or the failure to produce the crop they grow. The corporations that manage the world's seed, food and grocery supply have intensified our dependence on a handful of grains, most notably GMO rice, wheat, corn and soy. Together, they make up almost half the calories of an average global diet. They have also geographically concentrated the production of these commodities; 60% of global food is produced in five countries: China, the Unites States, Brazil, India and Argentina. Within those countries, industrial food production is further concentrated in specific regions. Constant eco-climactic changes, including increasing temperatures and changes in precipitation levels, more acute and frequent episodes of drought, heat waves and other stresses, combine to increase the likelihood that these hot spots of industrial food production may experience crop and breadbasket failures, and create price hikes in fresh produce and food staples, adding to the hunger of the already vulnerable.

Peasants may still feed the majority of people on the planet, yet as social historian Patrick Joyce explains, the peasant way of life – a way of life centred around intergenerational survival and continuity, a weaving of past and future through the passing on of land stewardship – is fast disappearing (2024, pp. 9–18). With a particular emphasis on the disappearance of European peasantry, Joyce rings the alarm bells of a future without peasants, a prediction that is not improbable given current urbanisation trends. By 2050, the world population is projected to grow to just under 10 billion, a date by which the United Nations projects approximately 70% of humans will live in (sub)urban contexts (2017; 2018). How do we meet the eco-social demands of an ambiguous future on a planet that is dangerously heating up, in a context where 90% of Earth's topsoil will be "at risk" by 2050 (United Nations, 2022)? One answer might be to challenge capitalist cities made for cars and big commerce by planting the seeds of edible and wilder ecocities surrounded by regional peasant food belts. Such a change would require a major shift in our culture, in how we live and understand ourselves and our place in the world. A shift towards peasant practices of food sovereignty grounded in conceptualisations of Body-as-Territory that complicate the urban/rural and human/territorial divides, I suggest, functions as counterforce to the hegemony of late capitalism while

simultaneously opening horizons of possibilities for entangled human, other-than-human and territorial health and healing.

Peasant Practices of Subsistence Farming and Food Sovereignty as Resistance

La Via Campesina has defined "peasant" within the framework of *The United Nations Declaration on The Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas* as:

- any person who engages or who seeks to engage alone, or in association with others or as a community, in small-scale agricultural production for subsistence and/or for the market, and who relies significantly, though not necessarily exclusively, on family or household labour and other non-monetised ways of organising labour, and who has a special dependency on and attachment to the land.
- a peasant is also "[a]ny person engaged in artisanal or small-scale agriculture, crop planting, livestock raising, pastoralism, fishing, forestry, hunting or gathering, and handicrafts related to agriculture or a related occupation in a rural area", and their dependents.
- Indigenous peoples and local communities working on the land, transhumant, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities and the landless, engaged in the aforementioned activities.
- hired workers, including all migrant workers regardless of their migration status, and seasonal workers, on plantations, agricultural farms, forests and farms in aquaculture and in agro-industrial enterprises (2020, p. 7).

This inclusive definition firmly positions peasants as a people in and of the land, materially dependent upon and affectively bound to their unique territories. One might say the material and affective architecture of peasantry is rooted in a symbiotic relationship between humans and assemblages of land, forests, bodies of water and other-than-humans. Discourse on 'body-as-territory' emerging out of Latin America (and elsewhere) offers a productive framework through which to consider feminists' and womanists' emphasis on (individual yet *transcorporeal*[2]) bodily autonomy with the concerns of rural, peasant, and indigenous women's experiences of marginalisation. Grounded in concrete struggles of Latin American women's movements against mining and for food sovereignty, Body-as-Territory strategically connects feminists' and womanists' struggles against gendered violence and extractivism: "the body is the 'primer territorio' (first territory) that one avails oneself of, but one that is inextricably tied to one's 'territorio histórico, la tierra' (historical territory, the land)" (Cabnal,

2010, cited in Leinius, 2021, p. 112). La Via Campesina has stressed food sovereignty as an essential pillar of peasant-land relations, defining it as "the right to produce our own food in our own territory" (2021).

Speaking of the centrality of peasant women in the fight against neoliberalism through practices of food sovereignty, Annette Aurelie Desmarais says, "Food sovereignty centres on the production of food and those who actually work the land" (2003, p. 141), a sentiment shared by other scholars who specifically position peasant women and their ancestral practices of food sovereignty as a political and on-the-ground counterforce to the neoliberalised, globalised and industrialised production of food (Martínez-Torres and Rosset, 2010, p. 150). The eco-social impacts of mining projects, including the erosion of village values and peasant relationships grounded in intersubjectivity, directly threaten the union between human bodies and territory woven into the web of life. My Bosniak peasant grandparents saw no material separation between the health of their bodies and the health of their soil, farm animals, gardens and crop. Through practices of subsistence farming and food sovereignty, they acted as stewards of their families' and ecological milieus' health. Working the land with their bodies, without the use of fossil fuels or toxic inputs, they enacted self-sufficiency within their homesteads and villages. This way of life was not merely a means of survival, but a source of collective pride and joy.

Nicolas Copeland (2019) speaks of "peasant environmentalisms" as "rural social movements in opposition to free market hegemony", a way for peasants to "propose radical alternatives to growth-based economies, unequal property regimes, and the absolute territorial sovereignty of nation states" (p. 21). For Copeland, the anchor to peasant environmentalism is food sovereignty through traditional polyculture farming that feed families and local communities, not monocultures that maximise profit and market control. Subsistence farming and food sovereignty as a way of life thus unites fragmented peasant communities to move together, to act as a movement against the hegemony of late capitalism.

The 2007 Nyéléni Declaration presented at The World Forum on Food Sovereignty understands food sovereignty as "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" (2007). As the Declaration suggests, food sovereignty is a political framework closely linked to food justice (and food decolonisation) that challenges the global industrial, colonial and capital-intensive food system by shifting power relations in favour of peasants, indigenous communities, small producers and local communities, re-orienting farming towards agroecology and peasant traditions, and providing autonomy and authority to peasants, smallholder-owned family farms, farm workers and other rural land workers engaged in growing food and stewarding their

ecological milieus (Nyéléni, 2007; Fejzić, 2023, pp. 24–25). Both La Via Campesina and the Nyéléni Declaration thus link living peasant traditions to food sovereignty and food justice, individual and community health, and ecological stewardship, and both consider food sovereignty as *a way of life* and a *political strategy* that challenges industrial agriculture under late capitalism. The peasant who cultivates her land responsibly thus plants the seeds for more liveable futures for herself, her family, community and territory (or land).

Peasant traditions in Bosnia and Herzegovina are deeply rooted in subsistence farming and the pastoral and agricultural cycles they depend on to meet the material needs of households. Subsistence agriculture creates farm output for household survival and to meet local needs, with little to no surplus. In William Lockwood's 1971 study on Bosniak peasant traditions in the 1960s, when my parents were young peasants, the anthropologist finds that unlike farmers, peasants who sell their surplus at the čaršija, or the local farmers' market, are more relationship-oriented, often making decisions that do not benefit them economically as compared to farmers who are more money-oriented and who consequently build relationships for economic benefit (p. 284). At the farmers' market, Lockwood observed "ego based, short term and profit oriented" relationships that departed from peasant village customs rooted in deep and long-term relationships sustained by visiting and gifting customs (Lockwood, 1971, p. 284). This suggests that subsistence farming, and the subsequent food sovereignty it offers peasants, re-orients the latter's attention to building relationships of reciprocity and mutual aid with neighbours, rather than instrumentalising them for profit. I can attest to my family's centrality of relationships over money, but it wasn't just their co-villagers or kin my peasant grandparents cared about – they were deeply attuned to and responsible for their lands which they understood as an extension of their own bodies. A Bosniak peasant's true wealth was measured by the strength of their relationships, fertility of their lands and vitality of their farm animals (Lockwood, 1971, pp. 181).

Yet in Bosnia and Herzegovina, like elsewhere in Europe, peasants are a vanishing people. Close to nature, peasants "exist at the bottom of the edifice of society while holding the whole thing up", says Patrick Joyce, alluding to how peasants attend to the health and harmony of human and territorial bodies through subsistence farming (2024, p. xii). Everyday life is impossible without food, and whether that's growing, buying, cooking or eating it, food is never politically neutral. Speaking of the racial, gender and class politics of growing and eating food in the United States, Leah Penniman, a Black farmer/peasant, food activist and owner of Soul Fire Farm, aims to connect racialised inner-city, low-income communities with high-quality, healthy food grown organically and ethically on her

farm. Her goal is to end what she calls "food apartheid", the organised system of unequal distribution of healthy organic food resulting from racialised peoples' deliberately severed connection to land and food sovereignty created "by centuries of trauma and oppression" (Penniman cited in Frisch, 2019). Penniman weaves in peasant traditions, including Ujamaa, Swahili for "cooperative economics" (Washington and Penniman, 2019), to strike a balance between Western agroecological models of growing food and peasant traditions oriented towards fostering relationships of care between people, and between people and nature. This type of resistance to industrial farming hybridises peasant traditions with agroecological farming practices in a Western context where peasantry is vanishing.

First introduced in the twentieth century by Sir Albert Howard, an English botanist who married modern science with Indian peasant traditions (Shiva, 2016, p. 15), agroecology assumes a *vibrant and lively* connection between soil fertility, plant and animal health, nutritional quality of food and human health, and the law of return through composting (Altieri and Toledo, 2011, pp. 591–593). Agroecology, rooted in peasant food growing practices, provides a material basis for conceptualisations of Body-as-Territory since it assumes physical continuity (or transcorporeality) between soil, land/territory and human bodies. As a method of growing food, agroecology works with, not against, local ecosystems by improving soil and plant quality through biomass and biodiversity, rather than harming local ecological milieus with the use of harsh chemical inputs.

Importantly, agroecology challenges the uniformity of monoculture and plantation enterprises by focusing on biodiversity, protecting peasant seeds, and diversifying revenue for smallholder farmers and peasants. One of the key pillars of agroecology is organic regenerative agriculture and permaculture gardening, holistic approaches to growing food that promote carbon sequestration, soil and watershed health, and biodiversity (Rhodes, 2012, pp. 367–369). Organic regenerative farming and permaculture gardening have the potential to sequester 100% or more of yearly CO_2 emissions, helping reverse industrial pollution. Thus, while industrial farming is vulnerable to the ecological and climate crisis it exacerbates, peasant practices and knowledges of food sovereignty embedded in agroecology and permaculture gardening, instead, heal entangled human and territorial bodies. Hence my insistence on Peasant Futurisms as a world-building project rooted in transforming capitalist cities made for cars and big commerce by planting the seeds of edible and wilder ecocities surrounded by peasant food belts – a future we might wish to start cultivating today, before tomorrow's avalanche of ecological and climactic disasters turn this possibility into a missed opportunity.

Peasant Futurisms Rooted in Body-as-Territory: Gestures Towards Micro-Ecotopian Possibilities

In the closing section of the chapter, I articulate transversal ecotopian Peasant Futurisms rooted in Body-as-Territory as potential tactics of resistance against the violence of agri-business, and as a way of life that attends to ecological healing and regeneration. If in Europe peasants are eulogised by their grandchildren, including with great care by Patrick Joyce, my intention is to enact a counterforce by cultivating the conditions of a potential peasant revival. In the next 25 years, the rest of the world risks losing what Europe has already almost lost – a healthy peasant core. Billions of peasants will leave their lands and way of life as they move to the city to become worker-consumers in a global neoliberal economy that is not only unsustainable and destructive, but one that also depends on constant states of entangled human-territorial exploitation and excessive extractivism. Who will feed the world, then, if billions of peasants move to capitalist cities and forget their way of life?

The implications for healthy, living soil could be devastating given that 90% of Earth's topsoil will be at risk of depletion by 2050, the same year the agro-industrial complex is set to monopolise global food production. The global food system, embedded in the hegemony of petro-capitalism, is invested in rural/urban and human/territorial divides; as everybody must eat to live, and as most urban worker-consumers depend on corporations to put food on their plates, a global exodus of peasants and smallholder family-farmers into (sub)urban cores means an expansion of markets for fossil fuels and toxic agrochemical inputs. What if, instead of gambling our futures, we planted the seeds of local and regional subsistence farming and food sovereignty? What if instead of cultivating dreams of constant economic growth we insisted upon cyclical economies that limit extraction and lean towards self-sufficiency?

What happens in and on land and territory is fused with, and imprinted upon, the human subject's body and psyche – the joy and radiance of cultivating better worlds – the grief of excessive extractivism, the pain of pollution and the deep sorrow of multi-species deaths and trauma. Conceptualisations of body and territory, of Body-as-Territory, offer us a "strategic" tool for alternative forms of solidarity against eco-social violence at various scales (Gago, 2020, p. 95). Beyond physical continuity between human bodies and bodies of land and water that are metabolised into human flesh, Allison Hayes-Conroy (2018) conceptualises the strategic alliance between human and territorial assemblages as "somatic sovereignty", alluding to the "ways in which body and territory have been merged" through feelings, sensations, and emotions (p. 1298). For my Bosniak peasant ancestors, as well as countless peasants worldwide, territory

represents more than home, self-sustainability and food security; it is embedded in our affective architectures: territory is love, joy and a spiritual feeling of wonder, interdependence and abundance. Body-as-Territory thus represents material, affective and spiritual entanglement. Body-as-Territory is, from my peasant perspective, also a particular sensibility and approach to futurity.

Chronicling a potential apocalyptic future in *Hospicing Modernity*, Vanessa Machado de Oliveira imagines what the years 2038–2047 will look like, when the Mars colony corporations have been vying for fails, and a massively devastating event makes humanity realise its mistakes: "Finally we could see that we were addicted to arrogance, consumption, and unaccountable autonomy" (p. 7). This provokes an epiphany in the three million surviving humans: "We recognized that planet Earth is alive and we are part of its metabolism, not the centre of the world or a special species" (p. 8). It can be very useful to imagine future dystopian catastrophes because they create the conditions of an imaginary blank state, giving us an opportunity to start from scratch. Imagining massive structural and eco-cultural shifts *now*, or in the *very near future*, before it's too late, is much harder work. Yet that's precisely the impetus behind Peasant Futurisms.

Peasant cultures, Bosniak and others, have historically existed, and persist, peripherally to late capitalism, acting as a counterforce to the neo-liberalism of agri-business. Peasant practices and traditions offer modes of decolonising our minds, plates and territorial bodies, challenging the entrepreneurial and enlightened self we have been conditioned into embodying. Planting the seeds of edible and wilder ecocities, I suggest, has the potential to heal our severed relationship to land and offer more grounded (and on-the-ground) encounters with the more-than-human world, food, time, and each other. According to the Centre of Ecocities at the British Columbia Institute of Technology, an ecocity is "a human settlement modelled on the self-sustaining resilient structure and function of natural ecosystems:

- [An ecocity] provides healthy abundance to its inhabitants without consuming more renewable resources than it produces.
- It functions without producing more waste than it can assimilate or recycle for new uses, or than nature can dilute and absorb harmlessly, and without being toxic to itself or neighbouring ecosystems.
- The impacts of residents' lifestyles are in balance with the Earth's ecology carrying capacity; its social order reflects fundamental principles of fairness, justice, reasonable equity and consensus, and allows for high levels of happiness".

This kind of organisation of (sub)urban lifeworlds creates abundance and health by putting limits on human consumption; whereas one model is wasteful and consumptive, the other is regenerative and responsible.

There are many theories and practices for how to shift towards, and build, ecocities; I dream of edible and wilder ones. Take Andernach as an example, one of the oldest cities in Germany and one of the most edible urban lifeworlds in Europe: with public urban gardens that grow fruits and vegetables, its residents sow, care for, and harvest produce in their city. Yet, as Artmann et al.'s research shows, most Andernachers are not involved in the production, and rarely consume, their city-grown food (2020, pp. 5–9). The Andernach example makes clear that without a peasant revival, without first transforming how we understand ourselves and our place in the world, even the most ambitious efforts towards cultivating better futures can fail to transform values and habits.

Edible ecocities, with their emphasis on plant and animal life, naturally lean towards wilder urban milieus. Whether domesticated or wild, other-than-human agents have always co-existed with humans in (sub)urban contexts; hence, my preference for a language of 'wilder' ecocities rather than 'rewilded' ones. In my view, urban lifeworlds are always already wild, a wilderness of which humans are a part of, not apart from, even if that wilderness is marginalised and violated. Urban ecologist Dieter Hochuli, whose work is based in urban milieus across Australia, questions the language of 'rewilding' because it suggests a return to the pre-colonial, the original and pristine forests of long ago (cited in Heathcote, 2020). A return to a wilderness before colonisation and industrialisation of Indigenous lands stagnates ecological milieus to an original "picture of nature" rather than seeing nature and natural capacity as "a process" (Kowarik and Körner, 2005, p. 19). Peasant Futurisms is a struggle against the ongoing impacts of colonialism and industrialisation and the genocide, inter-generational trauma, pillaging and land theft they produce and reproduce. Even if it may be impossible to return to a pre-colonial and pre-industrial landscape before (sub)urban sprawl, a peasant revival challenges anthropocentric, capitalist cities.

Accepting that colonisation and industrialisation have already transformed what was once forested and wild areas into (sub)urban asphalt-lands, the question we might ask ourselves now is not how do we return to the past, but rather what seeds are we planting towards more ecocentric and socially just futures? Urban areas have not only edged out wilderness, but they have created, and continue to exert, immense pressures on ecological milieus within and beyond (sub)urban borders. They create the cultural and material conditions of segregation between human and territorial bodies as we forget our peasant ancestors' way

of life grounded in material, affective, and spiritual embodiments of Body-as-Territory.

The bodies of water and land a city's infrastructure depends on, yet harms, cannot be mitigated by greening efforts like planting more trees – we cannot greenwash the problem of anthropocentric petro-capitalism – and yet, planting more trees creates the potential for wilder ecocities, re-orienting our attention to the more-than-human world we co-belong to and are materially entangled with. More trees also mean happier people with empirically proven better moods and lower urban temperatures during heat waves (Konijnendijk, 2021). More edible urban forests, public orchard parts and tiny forests instead of car-filled streets and parking lots mean less air pollution. Urban forests also promote climate change adaptation by sequestering CO_2. Trees are essential co-members of terrestrial ecosystems that support biodiversity; they provide food and habitat for birds, insects, other mammals, and plants (Konijnendijk, 2021); they create the oxygen we cannot live without.

A week after urban forester Cecil Konijnendijk posted a blog about his 3-30-300 rule, a protest by Greenpeace burst across the streets of Madrid, Spain, asking for its implementation. The 3-30-300 rule states you should see a minimum of three adult trees with green foliage out of your house window; cultivate at least 30% of tree canopy coverage in every neighbourhood of the city; and have access to high-quality green spaces and parks within 300 metres or 340 yards from one's house (Konijnendijk, 2021). Imagine living, breathing, edible and wilder ecocities surrounded by peasant food belts operating through cyclical economies that respect the natural limits of their ecological milieus. By growing food using peasant traditions, permaculture gardening and agroecological and organic regenerative farming methods, this alternative peasant future has the potential to heal terrestrial bodies, including human bodies, while protecting living soil and sequestering CO_2. If the end of the (capitalist) world as we know it is inevitable, ecological and climate catastrophe need not be.

Importantly, my take on Peasant Futurisms gives new energy and meaning to the figure of what Serbian anthropologist Andrei Simić calls the "peasant urbanite" (1973, p. 211). In addition to La Via Campesina's definition of peasant, I would like to add a fifth definition of peasantry:

> making space for those of us who – as the urban children and grand-children of rural peasants – deliberately attempt to resist late capitalism, food colonialism and big agri-business by reclaiming our peasant practices and knowledges each time we cultivate permaculture gardens in our backyards; . . . push city delegates to plant the roots of public orchard parks; . . . preferring and prioritising local organic farmer markets to chain stores. Not only do we cultivate relationships of

reciprocity between rural and urban food growers, but we challenge the urban-rural divide and demand greater food sovereignty through edible ecocities and practices of agroecology within radically local eco-regions.
(Fejzić, 2023, p. 35)

Situating a peasant revival in and around the city is, in my view, crucial. The battle against corporate agri-business must be waged everywhere, including in the streets that surround the urban towers where neoliberal power is concentrated and wielded. As Robyn Maynard reminds us, behind the barrier of securitised urban skyscrapers, CEOs and their colleagues are "unmaking Black and Indigenous lives and the ecosystems that have historically sustained our lives, spanning Turtle Island, the Caribbean, Africa, and South and Central America" (Maynard and Simpson, 2022, p. 11). They are also unmaking peasant lives everywhere. Corporate eco-social violence "can be traced right back here" to big Canadian cities like Tkaronto (Toronto) where the "contemporary architects of the warfare against human and nonhuman life work and live" (Maynard and Simpson, 2022, p. 11). The same can be said of other metropolitan centres of power across the planet, including the United States and countries in Western Europe, among others.

In James Joyce's masterpiece, *Ulysses*, the auric egg of Russell occultly warns, "the movements which work revolutions in the world are born out of the dreams and visions in a peasant's heart on the hillside. For them the earth is not an exploitable ground but living mother" (1925, p. 179). I invoke this revolution by dreaming of edible and wilder ecocities surrounded by peasant food belts within food sovereign and self-sufficient eco-regions. Instead of reproducing the ideal of the entrepreneurial, consumptive and enlightened human self supposedly separate and autonomous from her ecological milieu, I suggest we attune and attend to our intersubjectivity and Transcorpore-ality with the more-than-human world. Enacting peasant values of Body-as-Territory means becoming more natural rather than more digital, more productive than consumptive, more connected to our ecological milieus through land-based economies rather than surrendering to our almost absolute dependence on industrial capitalism – it is, in other words, a deliberate choice to identify with peasant values and practices of tending to land, soil fertility, subsistence farming and collaborative labour and mutual aid with family and neighbours; that is, a peasant revival requires a re-orientation towards our shared eco-social health and healing. While a peasant revival calls for a turn for the local, it does not foreclose what Gago calls "a new internationalism", insofar as geographically dispersed peasant eco-regions remain in solidarity against "machista violence and the political, economic, and social violence that results from the complex but fundamental logic of current forms of capitalist exploitation" (Gago et al., 2018, p. 158).

In conclusion, relatively autonomous ecoregions that are food sovereign and self-sustainable open a horizon of possibility for "micro eco-topias" only insofar as they intersect with racial, gender, sexuality, class, and crip liberation projects (Wallace and Carruthers, 2018). As Veronica Gago (2020) suggests, our power is situated at the intersection of individual and collective bodies, a reminder that we are stronger together if we can cultivate ways to foster plurality within our common struggles against the dramas of late capitalism and its machinery of systemic exploitation, excessive extractivism, and extinction-making. The radically local, food sovereign, peasant turn functions as protest and provocation against human exceptionalism and human centrism and firmly grounds our *transcorporeal* bodies in a material, affective and spiritual understanding of the human as entangled within her ecological milieu, her beloved territory; that is, a peasant revival signals a turn towards conceptualisations of Body-as-Territory not only as a strategic tool for arresting corporate (and state-sanctioned) violence against vulnerable and entangled human, other-than-human and territorial bodies but also as *a way of life*. Peasant Futurisms grounded in Body-as-Territory thus functions as an expression of the joys of cultivating better futures and gives us a language for articulating and enacting eco-social health and healing.

Notes

1 Foregrounding the rights of women and girls, but also 2SLGBTQ+ folx, as well as men in positions of vulnerability.
2 Transcorporeality, a term coined by Stacy Alaimo (2010), pertains to fluidity between bodies, assuming material entanglements and transits between human, other-than-human and territorial bodies (p. 7), thus challenging the category of "human" as autonomous and separate from her ecological milieu.

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