Cultural Geography 2: The Force of Representations

Abstract

Cultural geography is once again concerned with representations. In this report I focus on how, in the wake of various non-representational theories, recent work stays with what texts, images, words, and other representations do. I argue that this work is animated by a concern with the force of representations; their capacities to affect and effect, to make a difference. Accompanying this orientation to questions of force, is a shift in the unit of analysis to 'representations-in-relation' and a multiplication of the modes of analysis through which cultural geography is performed, including the emergence of reparative and descriptive modes.

Keywords: Representation, Cultural Geography, Texts, Images, Non-Representational Theory

Cultural Geography 2: The Force of Representations

Introduction

Cultural geography is once again concerned with representations. Over twenty years since the emergence of non-representational theories, the sub-discipline is in the midst of a renewed attention to the work that representations do; to the material-affective liveliness of images, words, and art works as things in the world which incite, move, anger, transform, delight, enchant or otherwise affect. In the second of my progress reports I explore the status of representations in contemporary cultural geography. I argue that a range of substantive and theoretical research trajectories coalesce around the proposition that representations do things, they are activities that enable, sustain, interrupt, consolidate or otherwise (re)make forms or ways of life. Whether in relation to how new genres of climate art might spark response to anthropogenic climate change (Hawkins et al 2015), the role of digital images in the ongoing (re/de)composition of urban life (Rose 2017), or the functions of talk and text in 'fixes' to mobility infrastructure crises (Bissell & Fuller 2017), there is a concerted effort to understand the force[i] of representations as they make, remake and unmake worlds.

The current concern with what representations do returns to a problematic at the heart of the political and ethical promise of cultural geography, and what became the key point of contact and exchange between the subdiscipline and other areas of radical and critical geography. Whilst by no means internally homogenous, from its emergence in the mid-late 1980s (see Jackson & Daniels 1987) the 'new cultural geography' was organised around a concern with the intersecting symbolic and material violences of representations; their often hidden but always powerful capacity to harm and damage (e.g. Barnes & Duncan 1992; Cosgrove 1986; Cosgrove & Daniels 1988; Jackson 1989; Rose 1993). Amid an interrogation of 'who speaks' a wider crisis of representation was sparked by feminist, postcolonial and anti-racist movements (a crisis of representation that exceeded cultural geography as either subdiscipline or political/intellectual project). Much theoretical and ethical/political

labour and energy was devoted to understanding how the content (and occasionally the form) of representations expressed and reproduced social structures. Whilst there were always murmurs of dissent (see Thrift's (1991) caution about 'over-wordy worlds' or Gregson's (1995) concern with the evacuation of the social), the 'new cultural geography' was inseperable from the ethical and political imperative of understanding how power operated through representations. And at least in its Anglo-American variants, this imperative was part of attempts to understand a political-economic conjuncture from the mid-1980s onwards marked by the changing forms of representations associated with global commodity culture, amidst political movements concerned with critiquing and transforming harmful and damaging representational systems. From Blunt's (1994) incisive analysis of women's travel in the colonial period, to Cresswell's (2001) focus on the invention of the 'tramp' as social type in America or Jackson's (1994; Jackson & Taylor 1996) critique of the cultural politics of advertising, the 'new cultural geography' demonstrated how particular representations (re)produced unequal classed, gendered, and racialised power relations.

The analysis of representation became equivalent to the analysis of power and intimately attached to both the promise of cultural geography and its hard won place in a sometimes hostile intellectual climate. It was unsurprising, then, that a set of theories loosely gathered around the ambivalent prefix 'non' would, in part, be encountered as advocating the forgetting of something politically and ethically necessary. What appeared by critics to be advocated by 'non-representational theory'[ii] was a movement away from what was for many the central task and promise of cultural geography: to analyse how representations mediate access to the world. Never fully elaborated beyond a series of suggestive statements (see Thrift 1996), the critique was not, however, that texts, images, words and other representations somehow did not matter. Rather, it was that the 'new' cultural geography had over-extended a form of representational analysis of representations (hence the name 'non-*representational* theory'), or more precisely a type of 'discursive idealism' (Dewsbury et al 2002: 438) that rested on a Euro-modern version of culture (on which see Grossberg 2010). Symptomatic of this form of 'discursive idealism'

was the presumption that people's access to the world was primarily an interpretive one always-already mediated by 'signifying systems'. As a consequence, anything and everything was related to as text to be interpreted for how it expressed the hidden, but somehow intelligible to the critic, logics of a system, or so the critique went.

The resulting movement away from a specific kind of analysis of representations has, in part, been met by a forceful insistence by some of those connected to the diverse roots and routes of the 'new cultural geography' that signifying systems matter, together with principled efforts to combine an emphasis on non or more-than representational modalities with a representational analysis, as expressed in couplets such as 'discourse and practice' or 'representation and materiality' (see Cresswell 2012). In this report I pay attention to recent work in the wake of the emergence of non-representational theories that has responded differently: by attempting to stay with what representations do, how they make a difference, within specific circumstances and situations. Resonating with a multiplication of modes of inquiry throughout the social sciences and humanities, this research is orientated around a shift to considering representations (in all their diverse forms) as only ever part of and becoming with a host of other processes, events and things. What it does, and why I focus on it in this report, is combine an insistence that representations matter with a movement away from forms of discursive idealism. How, then, are representations being conceptualised? What kinds of things are they? And what new modes of inquiry accompany this shift to a pragmatics of what something does? The review explores how these questions are being posed and answered in two sections that cut across recent work on digital and other types of visual images, literary fiction, and spoken and heard words. In the first section – representations-in-relation – I explore how cultural geographers have shifted attention from what a text represents to the relational configuration of which the representation is but one part. In the following section I connect this unsettling of the object of inquiry and the accompanying emphasis on the force of representations to a multiplication of modes of inquiry, focusing on reparative and descriptive ways of encountering and engaging with representations. In conclusion I look forward to

my third report by connecting this emphasis on the force of representations-in-relation to transformations in the concept of culture.

Section One: Representations-In-Relation

Recent work has moved beyond an impasse created by the reduction of the question of representations to a particular problem: whether or not there is an irreducible difference and separation between the representational (most commonly named as 'discourse') and the lived (or various synonyms for the lived, including the affective). Underpinned by what Barnett (2008: 189) judges to be a reductive "representationalist view of representational practices", much of this debate turned on whether, how and to what extent representational systems mediated people's access to the world and so conditioned or even determined lived experience (thus echoing longstanding disagreements in cultural studies about the status of the category of 'lived experience' (see the interviews with Williams 1981)). In the immediate wake of the emergence of non-representational theories in the early-mid 2000s, this led to an impasse. The variety of ways of analysing representational practices were conflated by critics and advocates alike with a geo-historically specific mode of inquiry based on destabilising, demystifying and/or denaturalizing existing "representational-referential systems" (Shotter 1993). What characterises the current work on representations that I'll focus on in this report is a shared orientation to representations as they are practised, to how they are lived with in the midst of other events, processes and objects, rather than to how they express a representational-referential system. As part of this shift to the question of what representations *do* rather than what they *stand in for*, cultural geographers are experimenting with vocabularies for understanding how representational practices are part of and constitute worlds (in ways that connect with similar moves across the social sciences and humanities see Felski 2015; Fraser 2015; Coleman 2016). The first step in this move is to re-orientate the object of analysis from the representation and the system it expresses, to how a representation operates and makes a difference as one part of a relational configuration.

Consider, for example, the shift to what Hones (2010; 2014) calls 'text-as-it-happens' or the 'textual event' in some of the work that focuses on fiction, poetry, and other literary geographies. Central to this shift is Hones' (2014) experimental study of Colum McCann's (2009) *Let the Great World Spin*. Through the case of McCann's story of Philippe Petit's wire walk between the twin towers of the World Trade Centre, Hones expands on her influential earlier call for concepts and methods that attune to 'text-as-it-happens' and, therefore, the 'collaborations' between author, text and reader (for example Hones 2008; 2011). For Hones, a novel is not a thing but a spatial event. It "emerges out of highly complex spatial interrelations that connect writer, text and reader" (33). Moving beyond an emphasis on either the text as a repository of attitudes and beliefs or readers' interpretations of texts, Hones attunes to fiction as a situated "dynamic, unfolding collaboration" (ibid. 32). As she explains, this shifts attention from the work in itself or readers' interpretation of texts since:

"… a work happens in the course of intermingled processes of writing, publishing, and reading and that as a result, because this intermingling is inevitably spatial, the work as it emerges can be understood as geographical event, or a series of connected events, which have been unfolding (or continue to unfold) in space and time."
(Hones, 2014: 18)

This raises some questions about what an event is, its spatial and temporal boundaries and how events (re)make space-times rather than only happen 'in' space and time. Nevertheless, Hones emphasis on novel/fiction/text as event and the vocabulary of 'intermingling', 'unfolding', 'collaboration' and so on enables her to disrupt and undermine an ontological distinction between literary and non-literary spaces. Echoing Hones work on the event and building on Saunders' (2010) earlier call for literary geographies to supplement emphasis on the 'artefacts of writing', Bratt (2016) likewise challenges an emphasis on authors and readers as actors in and synthesizers of the worlds through interpretation. He attempts to understand the ongoing compositions and decompositions that mean a literary work "[d]oes not

remain still as an endpoint of literary production, but rather takes on its own life and motion" (ibid. 193). For example, discussing writing and reading, he argues that: "The configuration of works becomes a process whereby authors conduce to written texts that channel the atemporal flow of a world. The refiguration of works becomes a process of texts making readers through rhythmic imbrications." (ibid. 196). Bratt's expansion of participants and detailed consideration of partially connected processes resonates with other work that places the literary text in an 'extra textual' network or assemblage of associations and interactions (see Anderson & Saunders 2015). Jon Anderson (2015: 126) summarises this approach as a shift to following the 'compositions' through which "a novel is an encounter between writer and reader … it is also a coming together of the people and places of creation and the people and places of consumption – the transitory amalgams which constitute the 'wheres' of writing and the 'wheres' of reading".

What this change in orientation does is shift the emphasis in work on literary geographies from what a text represents to how relations between text, reader, writer and the world are made and remade through acts of writing and reading. We find a similar shift in the unit of analysis – from the text to some kind of dynamic more than textual configuration – in recent work on other types of representations that also draws on a vocabulary of relations and relationality. Compare, for example, the resemblances between Hones' neologism 'text-as-it-happens' and Rose's (2016) emphasis on 'digital-not-objects'. In an important intervention, Rose (2016) argues that the 'mutable, multimodal and mass' characteristics of digital things requires cultural geographers to shift orientation from the 'stable cultural objects' that some strands of the 'new cultural geography' were organized around. To understand how the digital not-object 'disperses and dissolves' involves a shift not only to the analysis of the digital 'interfaces' through which content is embedded and comes to form but also the 'networks' (and associated 'frictions') through which visual contents circulate (see also Rose, Degen and Melhuish (2014) on CGI images of city development as interfaces that circulate within networks). Likewise, Ash's (2015) rigorous and inventive experimentation with the concept of 'interface' (through a

case of video games) is designed to understand the spatial-temporal 'envelopes' that digital images are embedded in and encountered through.

What is striking about Rose's argument, and makes it a little different to the work reviewed on literary geographies, is that a change in the concepts and practice of cultural geography is justified as a response to changes in the current conjuncture. However, we see a comparable shift away from the analysis of 'stable cultural objects' throughout work on other representations and representational practices. For example, research on the geographies of language has increasingly focused on what words do as part of situated and relational acts of speaking and hearing and listening (rather than an emphasis on what already spoken words express and mean). In part, this work is animated by attempts to notice and bear witness to the material and affective violences of spoken words, and stays with the ethical and political importance of relearning language acquisition and use, including in indigenous rights contexts (Coombes, Johnson & Howit 2014; Hunt 2014), anti-racists struggles and agendas (Ahmed 2012), and around the politics of (dis)ability, debility and capacity (Puar 2017). Much of this work is orientated around an effort to understand what McGeachan & Philo (2014) term 'words-in-the world'. As with Hones' hyphenated 'text-as-it-happens' and Rose's 'digital not-objects', the phrase 'words-in-the-world' shifts the unit of analysis to how words are part of always ongoing processes. To how:

> "Words are crucially *reflexive* of the goings-on in the human world, but also unavoidably *generative* of that world in all kinds of ways. Words can shape, wound, fracture and direct how lives, and the material landscapes housing those lives, are planned, enacted, altered and obliterated" (McGeachan & Philo 2014: 546, emphasis in original)

Note the same emphasis on the generative or emergent that we find in work on both fictional texts and images and the move away from seeing spoken and heard words as solely mirroring, or expressing, an already constituted signifying system. There are resonances here with work outside of geography on words that similarly invents

neologisms to disclose a changed unit of analysis. Working in the interstices between various new materialisms, Miriam Fraser (2015: X), for example, emphasises "non-linguistic word-relations" rather than word-word relations - sensing words as 'participants' in "assemblages that are complexly nondiscursive" and involve words in "multi-dimensional collaborations with other sorts of creatures". For her, words have a force as material things on and through bodies amongst other material things.

So we see a common orientation to the force of representations emerging across work on different forms of representation; sometimes justified by reference to transformations in the contemporary conjuncture (most commonly the emergence of digitally mediated worlds), but more frequently as part of a general loosening of the hold that a representational analysis of representations has had over cultural geography and linked disciplines. The questions that animate this work are pragmatic ones of effect and affect: what does something do? How are people moved, changed, or otherwise affected by a word spoken, a seen image, a text as its read? Inseperable from this turn to questions of force is a movement in the unit of analysis away from the representation in-itself (often discussed as a text) and the wider signifying system it expresses (often framed in terms of 'wider discourses'). Instead, the unit of analysis becomes the immanent, relational configuration that the representation is entangled with, becomes inseperable from, and acts through (a configuration that may itself come to act and take on a force). This leads to a constant movement or even tension in analysis as any actual representation, whether word, image or text, is simultaneously centred and dispersed. On the one hand, work focuses on what representations do; their particular modes of action and efficacy. On the other hand, representations only ever act and effect in and through relations. They do not stand alone or apart. The various neologisms introduced in this section – 'text-as-it-happens', 'digital not-objects', 'word-assemblages' and so on – are all attempts to find a vocabulary that stays with the oscillation between a relational configuration of some form *and* the force of actual representations. Perhaps what is most important in each neologism is, then, the hyphen (or hyphens) that connect, whilst indicating that a gap remains between the terms being drawn together.

Section Two: The Force of Representations and Multiple Modes of Inquiry

Entangled with this shift in the object of inquiry to representations-in-relation is a loosening of the hold that a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Felski 2015) has had on how representations were encountered in parts of the 'new' cultural geography. What are hesitantly emerging are modes of inquiry that supplement approaches that equate being critical with uncovering, or revealing, how a representation expresses some form of signifying system. What they explore, instead, is the actual or potential force of representations-in-relation.

Consider, for example, what we might call, after Sedgwick (2003), reparative modes of inquiry that encounter representations as forces with the potential to disclose other ways of living or other forms of social-spatial organisation. Here the emphasis is, in part, on how representations may interrupt or disrupt existing orders. Following from traditions of Feminist and anti-racist work in the 'new' cultural geography (see, for example, Nash's (1996) classic engagement with art to argue for the radical potential of visual pleasure and visual representation), literary texts and art works are encountered for the alternatives they harbour or herald. Patricia Noxolo's work with postcolonial literatures is exemplary of this style of work and its political import. As part of Noxolo's sustained engagement with the implications of postcolonial literature for theory, method and practice in the discipline (see Noxolo 2014; Noxolo 2016a), Noxolo and Preziuso (2013) develop the concept of the "text event" by tracing the "geographies of disorientation" in novels by Maryse Condé and Wilson Harris. 'La Colonie du Nouveau Monde' by Condé and 'Jonestown' by Harris are not read by Noxolo and Preziuso as expressions of a signifying system. Rather, they are encountered for how they re-envision the world as 'fictionable': literature becomes an opening to sometimes disturbing, perhaps disorientating, differences that make present multiple interpretations and perspectives. Similarly, Ingram, Forsyth and Gauld (2017) explore how art – in their case *The Great Game* by War Boutique – can serve as a form of "onto-epistemological inquiry", as well as an intervention into contemporary geopolitics. By which they mean that that *The Great Game* raises questions about what geopolitics is

ontologically (its materiality, technicity, the relation between earthly and anthropic powers and so on) *and* how we can know it (aesthetically, or through other modes of inquiry). Also conceptualising art works as events of future making, Hawkins et al (2015) stay with how art may offer 'anticipatory interventions and active experiments' in the midst of the uncertainties associated with environmental change in the Anthropocene. Last (2017), likewise animated by the relation between the geophysical and cultural-political in the Anthropocene, explores how artistic experiments with the idea-affect of the 'cosmic' might incite changes in people's participation in planetary politics. Whilst there are differences in modes of inquiry across these examples, they share a reparative disposition in that they aim to encounter the "fragments and part-objects" (Sedgwick 2003; 149) of literature and art with hope, in the sense of being open to "good surprises" (149) (although Sedgwick's (2003: 129) subtle piece is alive to the imbrication of the reparative in the self-avowedly critical and the paranoid exigencies that are necessary for some non-paranoid ways of knowing in a way that has been a little downplayed in recent geographical reflections on critique – see Woodyer & Geoghegan 2013).

Reparative ways of encountering representations are part of a multiplication of modes of inquiry across the social sciences and humanities, including experimentation and invention (Back & Puwar 2013; Enigbokan & Patchett 2012), utopianism as method (Levitas 2013), storying (Cameron 2012; Lorimer & Parr 2014; Raynor 2017a; Rose 2015), curation (Hawkins 2013), and geopoetics (Cresswell 2013; Magrane 2015)[iii]. Much of the work concerned with the force of representations is animated by what is best characterised as a descriptive ethos and practice orientated to what something does in the midst of relations and other objects. Work on the force of representations therefore connects to a broader revalorisation of description as mode of inquiry within cultural geography. Consider, for example, the importance of attentive description in recent experiments with 'place' or 'geo' writing that attempt to evoke place without reducing any actual place to a cypher for generic wider forces or romantising it as an idiosyncratic exception (for example Lorimer 2014). Exemplary of how such descriptive practices disclose the singularity of place or region is Matless' (2014) cultural geography of Norfolk Broads, a wetland region

in eastern England. For example, Part 1 - *Broadland Scene* - juxtaposes visual materials in the form of found and elicited photographs with passages of description and a montage of voices. As practiced by Matless, description is a practice of attention and evocation that brings details into relation through artful composition and careful juxtaposition. Slightly differently, description in work on the force of representations-in-relation is a means of following what something does – how images transform, how fiction moves, how words hurt, for example – in and through an emergent context formed from other immanent processes, events and things (with the revitalisation of multiple forms of description connecting to debates in literary studies and cultural studies around differences between 'surface' and symptomatic' readings (Anker & Felski 2017)).

Let's return to work on images to illustrate this type of descriptive practice. Remaining aware of the risks of re-inscribing a simple, linear cause-effect model, work on images stays with the problem of understanding what people do with images and, conversely, how images do things with people – move, inspire, leave them cold, and so on (see Coleman 2015). Gilge (2016), for example, argues that by connecting mapping and photography Google Maps constitutes a form of "spatialized image" that shifts the experience of place. For Gilge, the image is experienced as it alters existing daily practices of navigation and exploration. Likewise, Pritchard and Gabrys (2016) draw attention to how images of environmental pollution produced through low-cost and do-it-yourself digital technologies are enabling new collective sites and distributions of environmental monitoring. Citizen generated images of the on-going event of air pollution helps generate collectives for feeling and responding to the event. Focusing on the use of Computer Generated Images (CGI) in the Msheireb development in Qatar, Degen, Melhuish and Rose (2017) trace the varied 'aesthetic impacts' of images of development as they are developed, revised and presented in urban development projects. Across these three examples we see an emphasis on what an image does, what it actualises and makes possible (see also Rose (2010) on what people do with images). What underpins this work is attentiveness to what happens with images; to the more or less subtle, more or less intense, changes they may engender. As

Coleman (2015: 39) puts it drawing on a range of Feminist new materialisms, the question is how images are "involved in the creation and organisation of experience" (see also Latham & McCormack (2009) on thinking with images as an 'ethico-aesthetic practice' and the methodological implications for the practice of fieldwork).

To describe the force of images and other representations-in-relation is, therefore, to interrupt a once but perhaps no longer habitual mode of inquiry. One that treats a work of fiction, art, or another type representation as a "symptom, mirror, index, or antithesis of some larger social structure - as if there were an essential system of correspondences knotting a text into an overarching canopy of domination, akin to those medieval cosmologies in which everything is connected to everything else" (Felski 2015: 11). Whilst there is not space to go into detail here, we also find a similar descriptive ethos orientated to the pragmatics of what something does in the work on literary texts and spoken words introduced above. As part of research in the board field of 'relational literary geographers', work has begun to explore the affectivity and effectivity of texts as they are composed, circulate and read in ways that blur distinctions between the representational and non-representational (see, for example, Hsu (2017) on 'literary atmospherics' or Hones (2015) on the aural in literary geographies). Saunders (2015) pays attention to the relations between acts of literary composition and the materiality of intimate spaces of writing. Most of the work on speech begins with the ubiquity and diversity of practices of speaking, explores who or what exactly is speaking beyond the self-expression of an individual subject, and attempts to understand the performative and non-performative force of speech in the (dis)assembling of relations and the making of spaces (and the (re)enactment of material and affective hurt, damage and injury). Emphasis is placed on speaking as part of action and experience, since, as Bissell (2015: 148) puts it, "Different forms of speaking can crystallise a mood, provide relief, instruct, console, berate, organise or bring something inchoate into sharper focus" (see, for example, McCormack (2013) on commentary as a practice of 'semiconducting' affective atmospheres). As part of her work on home and house making in Vietnam, Brickell (2013), for example, traces how the use of particular 'domestic utterances' – in the form of proverbs – are used to reproduce Women's

responsibilities for maintaining the 'happiness', 'warmth' and 'harmony' that constitute home (217). Through this case, and in distinction from a focus on a discourse analysis of already spoken words, Brickell (2013: 217) advocates for an emphasis on "… what disposes people to speak in the way they do, how and when they do, and how their lived experiences and inherited knowledge are interwoven into these auditory moments" (see also Kanngieser (2012) on the ethico-political forces of speaking and the sonorous qualities of speech and Bissell (2015) on how practices of speaking modulate experience).

Beyond the scope of this review, there are also overlaps between this descriptive orientation to the force of representations and recent work on mapping practices that starts from the ontogenetic nature of maps (see Kitchin & Dodge 2007). Gerlatch (2014; 2015), for example, re-describes cartographic attributes such as line, contour and legend as affective processes in order to better understand the politics of quotidian cartographies in the midst of a proliferation of digitally enabled mapping practices. In the midst of this shared still emerging orientation to a pragmatics of what representations do it is necessary to sound some notes of caution. One is that meaning and signification are left surprisingly underdeveloped as categories. An exception is Hutta's (2015) theorisation of semiotics as a means of *conjuring* affective intensities (rather than the semiotic being a secondary 'capture' or 'arrest' of the dynamism of affective life). He theorises affective-semiotic relations or affective-expressive processes (note the hyphens) in order to offer a capacious account of the expression of affect and the affectivity of expressions. Drawing on a case of a poem written by a participant during his participatory video research with lesbian, gay and trans people in Rio de Janeiro, Hutto shows how, in his words, a "semiotic creation partakes in a series of affective dynamics" (ibid. 302). For Hutta, the poem became a means of exploring the multiple senses of *aconchego* (translated as 'a sense of cosiness', or a 'sense of comfort and feeling well in a place') amongst participants (for an early attempt to think the relation between signification and the non-representational see Rogers (2010) on scripted language).

Leaving the issue of signification to one side until my third report, what's striking is that the renewed attention to the force of representations has been

justified on the basis that representations are *also* lively. Instead of being passed over or dismissed as 'deadening', the claim is that representations also have agency, activity and energy (e.g. Bratt (2016) on 'kinetic forms', Hones (2014: 32) on fiction as a "dynamic, unfolding collaboration", or Hutta (2015: 307) on 'unfolding affective-expressive movements', for example). They do more than freeze or arrest or reduce the movement of life; they are part of the ceaseless movement of life and the ongoing composition of relations. As we have seen, there is much that is compelling about this disposition towards the world. But what it keeps intact is the distinction between the 'dead' and the 'lively' and what it (re)produces is an affirmative sense of a world permanently in motion, where potentiality is ever present (on what *may* be lost in these moves see Harrison 2015; Philo 2017). In particular, invocations of liveliness risk passing over questions of the specific kinds of affectivity and effectivity representations have, as well as the complicated (dis)connections between representations and the relational configurations they are part of but never wholly determined by. Two questions, then. First, how might the emphasis on liveliness account for how representations become part of how things disassemble and fall apart, for breaking, fracturing and other processes and forms of 'decomposition' (Raynor 2017b) or 'life-death' (Harrison 2015). Partly, this is a matter of considering questions of the material-affective violence of representations as connected to but different from types of symbolic violence, perhaps by connecting questions of force to differences between 'harm', 'hurt', 'damage', 'loss', 'suffering' and other material-affective processes that have a tendency to be collapsed together (after Ophir 2005). Second, and following on, aligning the question of effectivity with dramatic vocabularies of becoming, event, movement and so on risks passing over complicated questions of different modes of causality and types of force. If the emphasis is on what something does, how to describe representations that, to paraphrase Berlant (2011: 278), do little or nothing but are still constitutive of socio-spatial relations and forms - the forgettable, vague, boring, or subtle?

Concluding Comments: Representations and the Concept of Culture

The shared background to work on representations-in-relation is a loosening of the hold that a particular mode of inquiry had over how the 'new' cultural geography related to representations: critique based on a hermeneutics of suspicion that reduced any actual text, image or other representation to an expression of a signifying system. The multiplication of modes of inquiry to include the reparative and the descriptive, which we should note are not mutually exclusive and are not equivalent to the apolitical or acritical, has accompanied an emerging orientation to the force (or life or liveliness) of representations and representational practices. As such, inquiry is orientated to what something does (or promises to do) in the midst of some form of always-already emergent ensemble.

Attuning to the force of representations reanimates the link between the intellectual and political promise of cultural geography and the analysis of representational forms of mediation. What it does is separate that promise from one Euro-Modern version of culture that has continued to exert a gravitational pull over debates around the representational and non-representational – culture as 'signifying system'. In the background to the work reviewed here is, perhaps, a different version of what culture is and, consequently, a different articulation of the practice and politics of cultural geography. The question of the changing status of the concept of culture (and attendant form of cultural politics) gains further urgency if we place the emphasis on the force of representation in dialogue with recent experiments in representing otherwise (e.g. de Leeuw & Hawkins 2017; Eshun & Madge 2016) and the connected and continued importance of questions of who represents, how and with what consequences (e.g. Jazeel 2016; Friess & Jazeel 2017; Noxolo 2016). My final report will explore these debates to reflect on the practice, politics and promise of cultural geography in the midst of shifts in how 'culture' is conceptualised and researched. As others have noted (some a while ago now e.g. Wylie 2010), there have been surprisingly few reflections in cultural geography over the past fifteen years on the status of the concept of 'culture', even as 'culture' has retained a pull and allure as category of explanation for contemporary political-economic changes. What, then, are the versions of culture that animate cultural geography today and how do they connect to a wider politics of who represents and

how? Might the category of 'culture' be little more than a Euro-Modern inheritance that rests on an ontology of separate domains (the economic, the political and so on)? Or are new versions of what culture is emerging that rework or replace the two that Stuart Hall (1980) identified in relation to cultural studies – culture as 'whole way of life' or culture as 'signifying system'? My final report will explore these and other questions as it wonders about status of the concept of 'culture' in contemporary cultural geography.

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[i] Whilst some but by no means all of the work reviewed is influenced by Deleuze's (1983) and/or Foucault's (1977) and/or Grosz's (2008) employment of the term 'force' (as in 'active and passive forces', or 'force relations', or 'earthly forces'), I use the term 'force' throughout the report in a non-technical sense to signal an orientation to pragmatic questions of what something does - their capacities to affect and effect, to make a difference.

[ii] As Harrison (2017) details in an important reflection on the prefix 'non' and the politics of naming, the plural non-representational theories was originally used by Thrift (1996) and papers in influential special issues published in the early 2000s use a range of descriptors, including 'non-representational practice and performance' and 'non-representational way of sensing'. It is only later that the sometimes capitalised 'Non-Representational Theory' becomes a singular thing to be argued over by critics and advocates. In this report I use the singular in quote marks to designate this shared object of concern and the plural to designate a range of theories and modes of inquiry that, in different ways, offer alternatives to forms of 'discursive idealism'.

[iii] The proliferation of modes of inquiry is bound up with recent experiments in representing otherwise that have multiplied the forms of representation geographers use to include poems (Cresswell 2013), exhibitions (Tolia-Kelly 2011), stories (Lorimer & Parr 2014), fanzines (Bagelman & Bagelman 2016), plays (Raynor 2017a), and so on. Sometimes associated with the intellectual and institutional emergence of the 'geohumanities', I explore this work, and its connection with changing conceptions of culture and an expansion of what counts as the empirical (and thus method), in the third of my Cultural Geography reports.