

Performing Geopower: Eile and Border-Fictioning

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Abstract

Since 2016 we have developed the Eile Project (EP), a transdisciplinary investigation of the border in Ireland which centres around site-responsive performance and audio-visual films in a process and praxis that we call *border-fictioning*. Through this practice we ask how the border might be differently understood, experienced, critiqued and altered through affective encounters in the artworks produced between bodies, the earth and sovereign power.

In this paper we explore (somewhat experimentally) our notion of border-fictioning in the EP, specifically through one of the piece's 'experiments' (#3 Territories of Eile). We draw on a specific concept, that of geopower, and a specific *diffractive* method. Geopower, or the forces of the earth itself (Grosz, 2008, 1999, 2011; 2017), allows us to comprehend and conceptualise the geo (earthly, material, affect, power) and the human (bio, anthropic, biopolitics, body, power) together in specific ways. A 'diffractive' methodology (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1992; Trinh, 1986) sees the production of knowledge and meaning as inextricably connected to (entangled with) the social and material practices of the world.

The paper offers a discussion of that which emerges from a 'diffractive' approach to border-fictioning in light of the concept of geopower. We show that geopower enables us to see the ways in which the EP's border-fictioning through performance and audio-visual film constitutes a particular kind of capitalisation of the earth's forces - radically different from those of capitalism and sovereign power, and potentially resistant to colonial histories, and suggests new alliances and imaginaries that allow us to work-through the complex condition of the border and partition in Ireland through the entanglement of human (anthropic) and earthly (non-human) concerns within the tensions of the Anthropocene.

Keywords

The Eile Project

Border-fictioning

Geopower

Site-responsive Performance

Ireland

1. Introduction

The Eile Project

The Eile Project (EP)ⁱ is an ongoing transdisciplinary art research inquiry across the UK/Irish border which, since 2016, has produced site-responsive performances and digital films to create resistant mythopoetic border-fictions of the colonial border. The EP scratches at thresholds where art meets research, where bodies meet the earth, and where the social meets the geologic, the inorganic and the non/inhuman, through a critical and speculative exploration of borders. Through our practice we ask how the border might be differently understood, experienced, critiqued and altered through affective encounters in the artworks produced between bodies, the earth and sovereign power. This is a complex area that demands disciplinary innovations and methodological elasticity; the work therefore engages with various discourses of critical theory and art that question the contemporary moment of the Anthropocene and climate crisis, and the entanglements of human and non- or in-human (or more-than-human) forces.

The EP has involved, since 2011, a series of 5 experiments along the border, each incorporating elements of performance, mapping, walking, and the production of images and audio-visual art works. The site-responsive performances are experimental, working to create encounters with a fictional character, 'Eile' (meaning 'other' in Irish) who touches, walks, lies, makes structures, sings or keeps vigil at the border sites; the performances are recorded and edited into short films. The character Eile takes on a bold aesthetic that is fantastical, alien, cosmic and witchy, with long white hair and metallic silver clothes casting an otherworldly presence on the Irish landscape. Eile's 'look' speaks of the desire to create feminist Irish performance art that is open to otherness, the actualisation of a radical new conceptualisation of the spaces of feminist thought that performance affords.

The EP is constituted as an ethical-political praxis of live performance encounters and films working together. The films are like poems; experiments that transform the affective site-responsive performances into a different experimental/perceptual realm of the audio-visual. They are not driven by plot or narrative, but take the audio and visual recordings of the performance experience-encounters, and distort them, as we splice Eile's performed actions with other footage (archive, animal, alien), and sound from the border-site with other sonics (archive, animal, alien). Performances and films are entangled in the process of fictioning, or in a mythopoesis of the border, which we introduce below.

Experiment #5 *Becoming Bog* (2019, film forthcoming 2020) charts a process of becoming with the important Irish landscape of the peat bog, at Slieve Rushen.

Experiment #4 Eile/Lobster (2019) explores multispecies entanglements through the figure of the Lobster. Experiment #3 Territories of Eile (2018) is explored in more depth across this paper. Experiment #2 Co-Fictioning (2017) was a collective fictioning experiment with our children at a border river bridge near Kiltyclogher. Experiment #1 – 24-hour Border (2011) was a journey, again as a collective, along the border from Muff on the northern coast of Ireland to Strabane in County Tyrone.

Figure 1: ; a place, of their own., *Territories of Eile* 2018. Digital Film, 3'43" © ; a place, of their own.

Eile's performances join an important lineage of Irish site-specific/responsive performance art in which the body engages with the earth and themes of historical, political and cultural significance (see Phillips, 2015), as well as works that specifically engage with the border e.g. John Byrne's playfully satirical *Border Interpretative Centre* performance (2000) which included selling lumps of the border in a souvenir shop and Suzanne Lacy's *Across and In-Between*, 2018 which worked with a mass of people from across the border using words, imagery, sound and performance.

Our aim in this paper is to explore (somewhat experimentally) how our notion of *border-fictioning* in the EP (specifically through one of the experiments, #3 Territories of Eileⁱⁱ), allows us to work-through this complex condition of the border and partition through the entanglement of human (anthropic) and earthly (non-human) concerns - i.e. within the tensions of the Anthropocene. To help us do this, we draw on a specific concept (geopower) and a specific method (a diffractive one).

Elizabeth Grosz (2008, 1999, 2011; 2017)ⁱⁱⁱ most fully engages with the notion of geopower, which we summarize further in section 4, as the forces of the earth itself. The notion is paradoxically simple yet complex, but allows us to comprehend and conceptualize the geo (earthly, material, affect, power) and the human (bio, anthropic, biopolitics, body, power) together in specific ways. We approach both the practice of Eile and the writing here through a 'diffractive' methodology (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1992; Trinh, 1986 and introduced further below) which sees the production of knowledge and meaning as inextricably connected to (entangled with) the social and material practices of the world. Diffraction, as counter to the dominant analytical mode of reflection, allows issues, conditions and thought to be worked through without recourse to dichotomies, binaries, and fixed identities. With this in mind, what ensues is not a neat description of the Eile Project, or an explanation of what it is about, but instead a discussion of that which emerges from such a 'diffractive' approach to border-fictioning in light of the concept of geopower.

Borderlands

I (Paula) bring a particular 'situated knowledge' (Haraway, 1988) to the work. I am a white, Irish woman from a small border town in the Irish Republic. My father is Irish Catholic and my mother Irish Protestant and I was born in Ireland in the mid 1970s, at the height of the so-called 'Troubles'. We emigrated to England in the early late 1970s, but returned to the island of Ireland in 1989; to the north of the border, Enniskillen, just two years after the Remembrance Day bombing.^{iv}

The border in Ireland is 499 km long with over 200 formal crossing points and probably the same number again of informal crossing points (Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, House of Commons, 2018, paras 5–7). Farming land and villages (such as Pettigo and Belleek) straddle the invisible border line with houses on both sides. The border is a powerful geopolitical, historical, cultural and spatial phenomena and manifestation of the complex and long history of partition of Ireland, which began in the early 1920s, and was intended to be a temporary solution to the issue of sovereignty in Ireland. The border was bitterly contested at the time, representing years of British intrusion on the island. The question of sovereignty in Ireland and its relationship to Britain stems back to the Norman invasion of Ireland in the late 12th Century and have since been marked by invasion, insurrection and conflict. The English Crown took control of Ireland in 1541, when the Irish Parliament bestowed the title of King of Ireland on Henry VIII after an uprising by the Earl of Kildare, an act which ushered in thousands of Protestant settlers from England and Scotland displacing existing Catholic landholders which precipitated centuries of insurgence and conflict. Agrarian unrest persisted as did the conquests of Ireland by the forces of the English Parliament, such as those led by Oliver Cromwell, (1649–53). The 17th Century also saw the victory over James II by Protestant William of Orange in 1690 marking a period of Protestant ascendancy. In 1801 the Irish Parliament was abolished, with Ireland becoming a part of the new United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland under the Act of Union (Cowling, 2004, p.120; Smyth, 2011).

There were further centuries of uprising and violence between 1801 and the Home Rule Act (intended to provide home rule in Ireland) enacted into law in 1914, which provoked armed insurrection for Irish independence by Irish republicans, with the Easter Rising 1916 and the Irish War of Independence (1919-21). The aftermath of which resulted in a greater degree of independence for the 26 counties to the south of a newly formed border, originally intended as an internal boundary brought in by the UK Parliament's Government of Ireland Act 1920, and the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. While there have been debates as to whether Ireland was ever a colony, or a more 'diluted form' of British colonialism, this is refuted by many: 'After centuries of

conquest, plantation and anti-colonial resistance, the ‘never colonized’ position seems both ideological and plainly counterfactual.’ (Mcveigh, 2008, p.542)

Having become an international frontier in 1922, the border in Ireland has remained. Northern Ireland is part of the UK and to the south of the border, (since 1949) the Republic of Ireland. Between 1922 and 1968, the border hardened amidst growing sectarian unrest, which became the immediate antecedents to the understatedly named ‘Troubles’ (1968-1998). Steeped in the complex histories hinted at here, the Troubles was a bitter conflict between ‘unionists’ or ‘loyalists’ (who tend to identify as Protestant and as British) who want to remain part of the UK and ‘nationalists’ or ‘republicans’ (who tend to identify as Catholic and Irish) who want a borderless united Ireland. The infrastructure of border security and surveillance was dismantled after the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement 1998, but for those affected by the Troubles the border continues to represent a site of trauma. Old wounds that never really healed have been dehisced with the UK's European Union (EU) referendum result in 2016. As the UK leaves the EU, the border in Ireland has become the UK's only land border with EU, as the Irish Republic remains in the EU as Northern Ireland has left. Going forward, the delicate and complex border condition is once again in the hands of the UK government.

2. Mythopoesis and Border-Fictioning / A Diffractive Research Practice

A central method of the EP is the production of fictions, or what we have named ‘border-fictioning’, which are used in the performances and films as a tactic to subvert and transform the social, cultural, political discourses of the UK/Irish borders. Border-fictioning as method has been influenced by the research of Simon O’Sullivan and David Burrows (Burrows and O’Sullivan, 2019) on myth and fiction in contemporary art, who explore the potential of fiction as a verb, as a practice that might be used to disrupt and impact on the real.

We are aware of the privilege inherent in the notion of fictioning; for many the lived experiences past and present of borders and border-imperialism (Walia, 2014) is one of violence and trauma. As well as being situated within personal experience of this specific border, we also locate the use of fiction within a history of telling stories, and making myths, as both a resistant practice and one of opening up new imaginaries and worlds:

It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories. (Haraway, 2016)

Fictioning here is thus conceived as a political tactic of art, that can open up the possibilities for imagining different ways of being, and of becoming entangled in human and non/inhuman collectivities beyond the tyranny of nation-state borders.

The border-fictioning in the EP constitutes a form of mythopoesis in (and of) the border, intentionally 'productive of worlds, people and communities to come...drawing upon residual and emergent cultures' (Burrows and O'Sullivan, 2019, p.1). The practice seeks to disrupt both the border itself and discourses of nation-state borders globally, and the histories of domination, oppression and colonialism that depend on them. Our specific form of site-responsive, performance-based border-fictioning exploits art's potential to engage with both the affective *and* the intentional, i.e. to generate affect, sensation and intensifications but at the same time to intervene in discourses *about* various concerns (Ingram, Forsyth and Gauld, 2016). As such, the EP should be experienced as an encounter that generates different affects, sensations, rhythms, durations but also intervenes in discourses about this border and global borders.

The practice approaches art from a Deleuze and Guattarian perspective (following Spinoza), one that does not attempt to represent the world 'out there', but understands it as a creative force of difference (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). Affect in this context is unformed, unstructured, intangible, virtual but sometimes tangible presence and non-presence, is non-structured as such but might be thought of as a force and a potentiality (see Gregg and Seigworth, 2010). This is particularly important for the EP in the use of fictioning and its central approach of moving between site-responsive performance and the audio-visual.

This border-fictioning is developed through a *diffractive* methodology, an ontological approach that radically reframes relations between disciplines, knowledges, subject and object, to see them as always entangled and holding onto difference and heterogeneity. This approach to the production of knowledge, meaning, and the relations and differences between anthropic or social issues (such as geopolitics, borders etc.) and the 'world out there' (as matter, earth, forces, others etc.) is crucial to the way that the EP is conceived and received. Donna Haraway, following in the footsteps of literary theorist Trinh Minh-ha, mentions diffraction for the first time in 1992 (Haraway, 1992). She posits the notion of diffraction as a counter to reflection,

and the binary oppositions it suggests. This in turn was picked up and extended in Karen Barad's quantum reading which highlights that 'practices of knowing are specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world' (Barad, 2007, p.91). Barad uses the neologism *intra*-act (as opposed to *inter*-act) to conjure these mutually constitutive agencies of entangling forces: 'The world is intra-activity in its differential mattering. It is through specific intra-actions that a differential sense of being is enacted in the ongoing ebb and flow of agency.' (2007, p.135). This leads to a folding together of what we know and how we come to know it that is suited to the practice of myth-making and border-fictioning, since as Barad notes,

Making knowledge is not simply about making facts but about making worlds, or rather, it is about making specific worldly configurations-not in the sense of making them up ex nihilo, or out of language, beliefs, or ideas, but in the sense of materially engaging as part of the world in giving it specific material form. (Barad, 2007, p.91)

Barad names her broader onto-epistemology *agential realism*, a position in which thought, knowledge, observation and creation/production are connected (entangled) practices that are part of the ongoing intra-actions of the world. It offers an 'understanding of how discursive practices are related to the material world' (Barad, 2007, p.34) as it 'takes account of the fact that the forces at work in the materialization of bodies are not only social, and the bodies produced are not all human.' (2007, pp.33–34). It is thus an appropriate framework given our desire in the EP to prise open the hegemony of nation-state borders through immersion in, and the harnessing of, geopower; of more-than-human forces.

Our development of border-fictions through performance and audio-visual films can thus be seen as experiments in making specific worldly configurations engaging materially and discursively in/with the border, as both a specific (historical) localisation of forces and as a global (historical) geopolitical condition. Fictioning intervenes in the world, and makes new worlds, in particular ways that are experimental and exploratory rather than seeking new models or concrete propositions, what O'Sullivan calls 'germinal' - they are 'experimental probes, affective scenes, proto-subjectivities.' (O'Sullivan, 2016, p.82) The EP experiments hence work to evoke difference by intentionally engaging with the more-than-human to co-negotiate the critical thresholds of the border - thresholds of subjectivities, times, bodies and the earth.

3. Troubling Territory: Colonial Biopolitics of Partition - Plantations and the Famine

Before engaging with the notion of geopower and the EP, it is important to situate the work and argument in the colonial histories of partition.^v We offer here a partial, selective 'locating' of settler colonial practices in Ireland, and what is known as the Great Famine of the 19th, as fundamentally biopolitical in their regulation and control of both bodies and the earth. Biopower, as introduced by Foucault (2004, 1998), speaks of the shift towards life, and the body, becoming the central figure of governance; that bodies are regulated and controlled from the 'outside', and '[s]ettler colonialism performs biopower in deeply historical and fully contemporary ways' (Morgensen, 2011, p.52). In the paper we do not posit geopower in a simple, dichotomous relation to biopower, but suggest rather that geopower constitutes an altogether alternate way to comprehend forms of power that operates on a different plane to any (human) political regulation of life.

To be clear, our focus here on Ireland's colonial histories of British intrusion should not detract from or elude further debate into the complex nexus of imperialism, race and borders in contemporary Ireland, its histories and futures, an issue which requires further debate and research (see for example: Hellenier (2000) in relation to travelers; Lentin and McVeigh (2008), Michael (2015), Sweeney, Dillane and Stuart (2019) on racism, globalization, immigration and slavery; Luibhéid (2013) on immigration and pregnancy; and Mulhall (2020) and Stratton (2004) on whiteness.) As Eburn Joseph (2019) writes: 'While Ireland might not have openly enslaved whole nations, its complicity through benefiting from whiteness is undeniable. It's not solely about Ireland's racialization in diaspora settings, but about how Ireland creates and responds to its racial others.'

The histories that led to partition are long, complex, contested, and violent. During the Elizabethan state's expansion Irish land was confiscated by the English and after the 1641 rebellion many Catholic gentry lost their lands to the incoming Protestant settlers' from England and Scotland (Tuathail, 1996). This process of colonization required and instilled an agenda towards the claiming of, and control over, Irish land via 'the conquest, delimitation, and mastery of space' (Tuathail, 1996, p.3). The intrusion of Ireland and the 'taming' of the land continued during the English Reformation with Cromwell's campaign, which included sending surveyors and cartographers to explore the island's topographical secrets, and then to scale it and record them on paper, and 'a detailed cartography was essential in subjugating what were held to be the 'wild and untamed' territories of the island' (Tuathail, 1996, p.3).

Over the centuries this unremitting violent colonial intrusion saw resistance from agrarian solidarity groups, in the form of violent uprisings.

1845 marks the beginning of what would become popularly known as the 'Great Potato Famine'. The Famine has been understood by some as an ecological accident, since potato crops failed due to the fungus-like organism *Phytophthora Infestans* which spread rapidly throughout Ireland (Yoshida et al., 2013). At the time, the now mostly Catholic tenant farmers of Ireland relied heavily on the potato as a food source, after 7 years of crop failure roughly one million Irish people died from starvation and related causes, with at least another million forced to leave their homeland as refugees (Nally, 2008). Rather than being seen as a 'natural disaster', alternative analyses suggest that the Famine was the result of colonial practices and biopolitical forces. Nally (2008) explores the different regimes of power that produced the Famine, and connects these arguments to the theory and practice of colonialism, especially its investments in the liberal goals of development and social improvement. He argues that the Famine was shaped biopolitically, through regulatory orders willing to exploit catastrophe to further the aims of population reform and other political agendas. McVeigh puts it bluntly:

The starvation (and genocide) occurred as the British carried on their historical exploitation of the Irish people, failed to take appropriate action in the face of the failure of the potato crop, and maintained their racist attitude toward the Irish... (McVeigh, 2008, p.349)

The earlier claiming and taming of Ireland through centuries of plantation and 'naturalizing' of the Famine, and the subsequent rationalization of the Irish Poor Law and other legislation, served to indoctrinate the justification of policies and practices to achieve Irish 'biological improvement' (Nally, 2008, p.728) and the extension of colonial power through the subjugation of Ireland. British government response to the Famine exposed the growing perception that agricultural rationalization, fiscal restructuring, and population clearances were necessary to ameliorate and 'improve' Irish society, which was seen as wild and overpopulated (recalling the attitudes of the Elizabethan colonizers) (Nally, 2008). The Malthusian perspective, the view which placed blame on the Irish for the conditions leading to the Famine, and which lay behind Westminster's response to the Famine, prefigured programs of brutal social reform of the Irish people and more land being taken. Such responses to the Famine, and the intertwined management, control and regulation of land, bodies, and life, was biopolitics at work.

4. Geopower and Border-Fictioning

The notion of geopower offers an alternative conceptualization of the relations between the earth and the life that it hosts (and the various forms of power that are exerted between them) in response to the increasingly dominant, yet reductive, figure of the Anthropocene. Geopower, as offered by Foucault across his writings on geography (but never fully elaborated), underlying Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophy (Deleuze and Guattari, 2008), and elaborated by Elizabeth Grosz (2008, 1999, 2011), speaks of 'the forces of the earth itself' (Grosz in Grosz, Yusoff and Clark, 2017, pp.134–5), and the relations between the earth and its life forms (Yusoff et al., 2012, p.975). For Grosz, the geo is neither surface nor material, but the very thing that precedes them both, it is difference; potential; a generative force (Grosz, 2008), enlarging how we can comprehend life and nonlife, human and non/inhuman, human agency, power relations and politics, since it enables and provides the conditions in which other forms of power emerge. Grosz suggests that particular human political conditions (such as borders) can be understood as specific and localized forms of capitalization of the forces of the earth; of geopower, and that, following this, *other forms of capitalization are possible*.

Grosz specifically names art as harnessing geopower through such alternative capitalization of the earth's forces, arguing that 'art taps into the substrata of the earth, its geography and its time, to unearth and repurpose its forces' (Yusoff et al., 2012, p.972) We approach the EP in these terms, as a process of art-working that seeks to be an articulation of the excess, of the inhuman, immaterial and incorporeal and virtual quality of forces and their material expression through the earth.

Through the EP we aim to diffractively work with the notion of geopower in the practice of border-fictioning, employing performance with audio-visual mythopoesis to enact and enable different understandings and experiences of the border. In so doing, an expanded range of agencies are permitted to play a part in the construction and maintenance of border-thinking - that are intentionally more open to different forces, both geologic *and* anthropic. Eile thus manifests as an engine of difference through her performances; a medium through which bodies (those channeled through the character Eile, as well as non/inhuman bodies) join forces with the earth to enter into new intensities and durations.

Below, we diffractively explore how Eile encounters geopower, and how such encounters between forms of life and the earth are generated, lived and transformed in a specific work from the EP - Experiment #3 Territories of Eile (2018). This consists of a series of site-responsive performances and a digital film triptych (3m 56 sec,

played on a loop). Performances were enacted at Lough Melvin and the River Erne, both through which the border runs, a derelict former Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) barracks on the border, and the roads, fields and hedgerows of the borderlands, across counties Leitrim and Cavan in the Irish Republic and County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland. The performance involves Paula performing as Eile, spending 3 days at the barracks using movement of different speeds, touch, and voice; ritualistically sprinkling purple glitter across the entire site, holding vigil across the waters; listening and whispering to the hedgerows. The film's three-parts juxtapose manipulated and abstracted versions of the performances with a loop of the mating ritual of a White Cryptic butterfly, and archive footage from the town of Belleek where some of the performances took place.

Diachronies of Border-Fictioning

In its retuning to the forces of the earth, geopower unlocks alternative intensities and temporalities, opening up the deep-time of geologic history as well as complex contemporary durational political dynamics. The colonisation of space is entwined with the 'colonization of time' (Nanni, 2013; Phillips, 2018) and within the din of anthropogenic crises and contemporary geopolitics. Clark suggests that Grosz' work reminds us that questions of belonging and subjectivation are temporal as well as spatial; '[r]ather than evoking an uniform 'I' or 'we', her inquiries suggest the possibility that interhuman—or interspecies—encounters are also, inevitably, diachronic: meetings across radically different durations or time zones' (Clark in Yusoff et al., 2012, p.977). This diachronic quality is fundamental to our approach.

It is not too far to state that time itself is a material in the EP, as a core part of the process and practice of border-fictioning. The 5 experiments (so far) of the wider project span approximately a decade, each with their own, intentionally multiple temporalities. We imagine the character Eile as a creature that weaves the time of ancestors from before the conquests, plantations, and partition that would eventually push Paula's parents to take their young family and leave their home. We imbue into the myth of Eile the ability to create a world-yet-to-come, holding together, somehow, histories of long-forgotten myths, histories of violence, continuing traumas, with dynamic shifts of people and spirits; the deep time of the bogs (*Becoming Bog*, film forthcoming 2020) and the short lives of the butterflies (in the film 'Territories of Eile', 2018).

In the 'Territories' experiment Eile moves, physically and virtually, through different times and at different speeds. During the live performance, Eile's actions, her touch, and the scattering of the particles connects her to the ghosts and traces of violence and the trauma of the border barracks as she undertakes her painstaking ritual

over several days. The performative touch of Eile on the abandoned barracks acts as a portal to the troubled history of the site. This is referenced explicitly in the triptych's intentional affective temporalities through the inclusion of archive footage of young Irish Free State soldiers from 1924 shortly after British troops left the border-town. In the central film of the triptych the film footage of Eile is saturated with intense oleander pink tones which transforms, through distortion and disorientation, the performance of sprinkling psychedelic phlox reflective particles across the concrete shell of the barracks and its discarded debris. There is a dreamlike, other-worldly rendering in the film, which exaggerates and transmutes the other-worldly spectacle of Eile during the actual live encounter where she cuts an alien presence against the different monuments (not as memorials but as affective places and spaces of encounter) of border trauma. The triptych collectively creates a world (as a border-fiction) from the live performance of Eile, that is out-of-time, bearing witness to the barracks histories, whilst summoning the human/inhuman of the border through space.

This practice of the EP involves the slow, incremental production of what O'Sullivan calls an 'aesthetic ecology' with its own, multiple, durations, 'which means the practice has more in common with a series, ... a scene, than with an object *per se*.' (O'Sullivan, 2016, p.84 emphasis in original). Across this ecology, fictions are, as O'Sullivan notes, nested within themselves (2016, pp.83–84). Time might be 'imperceptible', only to be traced by the recurrence of the motifs, 'each with their own operating logics, their own speeds (and slownesses)' (2016, p.84) With this in mind, an aim of Eile's performances, and their sister films, is to hold space for the border-complex histories, but to also work with the excess, to offer different and other histories, whilst making something in the present, to open the possibility of new forms of differentiation. Through both the times of the performance (as multiple durations) and the times carved out in the film, other human and inhuman worlds are woven together, nested within the world we already know, folding in past traumas and events. It is the mutual aspect of diachronicity then that intensifies our understanding of border-fictioning within the ontological and artistic context of geopolitics at this particular moment.

Body / Geo

It is a temporary detour of the forces of the earth through the forces of a body, making them an endless openness. (Grosz in Yusoff et al., 2012, p.975)

Border-fictioning through performance in the EP utilises art's capacity for activating the perceptions and sensations of the lived body to draw on the forces of the earth, the cosmos - both biological and geologic - as they flow through, connect, materialize in and on the performance body, to suggest new alliances between bodies (bodies-as-phenomena, both human and non/inhuman). We follow agential realism's account of the 'human body' as unseparated from the nonhuman; where bodies are material-discursive phenomena constantly being produced through intra-actions in the world in its open-ended becoming. What constitutes any given body therefore involves intra-actions that entail particular *exclusions* and such 'intra-actions are constraining but not determining' since 'exclusions foreclose any possibility of determinism, providing the condition of an open future.' (Barad, 2007, p.177). We propose multiple bod(ies) in Eile through different agential cuts, to open up the possibility of different futures.

Eile emerges from Paula's body; a situated body of knowledge, partial, accountable and answerable. A body that might be characterized as an archive of trauma, an 'incipient memory' (Grosz, 2008, p.6) that holds stories and histories, and yet still desires to discover unexpected and surprising forms of other knowledge through new material-discursive intra-actions. When performing Eile, Paula shifts into another psychic state, still Paula, but something 'other' too. Through the intra-actions of the performance acts, the distinct historical layering of both body and the border sites are folded together.

The EP contingently establishes Eile's body in tension with the earth and its forces through intentional intra-action with the inhuman forces of the border (a deliberate component of all the performance experiments), to agitate relations between forces. Through walking, crouching, touching, sprinkling and listening, the body is immersed in new alliances and affiliations that open up the potential of novel sensations and affects (with rivers, soil, gravity, wind and so on). Using the medium of film, these intra-actions with non/inhuman are amplified in the virtual, such as with the inclusion of White Cryptic^{vi} butterfly bodies performing their mating ritual^{vii} overlaid with Eile's pouring particle rites. Eile's fictional hybrid, intentional body continually becomes-other (a witch, a transmuter, a gorgon) as she intra-acts with the earth, reconfiguring experience through embodied and virtual experiments. Many seemingly oppositional dualisms - human and non/inhuman, anthropic and geologic life and nonlife, fact and fiction, representation and affect - are disrupted, and rearticulated as processes of constant negotiation and (re)making.

Geopower brings the body and the earth into close, dynamic, entangled relations; opening us to the materiality and inhuman-ness (the geo) of the body and the social and life (bio) of the earth. We can draw correlations with the EP as it seeks

to challenge border imaginaries (specifically those of the colonial biopolitical border which produces or enacts the regulation and control of human bodies, as well as other bodies, marking this body as a complex referent) through performance border-fictioning that rearticulates 'the body' in relation to the earth and other bodies. With each performance encounter, throughout the 10-year EP, the lived, sensing, affective body is central to the engagement with the notion of geopower, which in turn raises new specific questions about the potentiality of the body. As Grosz suggests, thinking through geopower might demand and include an alternative, more aligned notion of *biopower* - that is the power *of* the body, of what the body can do (Grosz, Yusoff and Clark, 2017, p.134).

Geo-Social Alliances

If the colonial practices of the English in the 19th Century employed biopolitical strategies to control bodies, they were also embedded in attitudes to the land and earth that were equally grounded in control, ownership and management. This biopolitical manipulation and control of people and land constitutes a particular form of capitalization of the earth's geopowers, and through the EP we consider (like Grosz does more broadly of art) how the performances and the films of 'Territories' constitute enactments, encounters and intensities that offer alternative forms of capitalization.

By way of reminder, Ireland's earth itself has historically demonstrated its capacities for resistance within the Elizabethan land acquisitions:

The greatest difficulty facing the armies raised by the English Crown was mastering the difficult and disorientating terrain. The woods, bogs, lakes, and mountains of Ireland concealed and sustained resistance to the jurisdictional ambitions of the English Crown. (Tuathail, 1996, p.3)

The earth comes alive in such an account, not only by 'hosting' human embodied resistance but acting itself, resistant to colonial cartography, which continues across the complex and dynamic political context of partition and borders. Eile locates herself in and amongst these resistant terrains, in the caves, loughs, bogs and mountains, which constitute so much of the borderland, creating her own territories and worlds.

In 'Territories', Eile holds and spreads glittery specks across the former barracks site, rearranging matter with her body, tracing the hard concrete and the skin of the earth itself, leaving a strangely sluggish trail. In so doing, Eile, from a different time and place, (re)negotiates the relations and forces between her body, the materials

and spaces of this specific historical and social configuration, and the earth (not least with gravity, as she releases the particles from her hands for them to be pulled towards the earth, a micro-refrain of continuous falling).

The opening scene of the central 'Territories' film loudly and brusquely immerses the viewer within the sound and heavy pressure of the wind as it blows across Lough Melvin, where Eile sits, in the original performance, upon an apparently human-made structure (as fictioning). The scene is dominated by material and immaterial (including aural) flux and earthly drifts; the ebb and flow of watery currents and waves, the wind as the localized intensification of planetary air pressure differentials, and cosmic, extra-terrestrial forces mutate across the bright, digitally manipulated sky. Eile's performed vigil enacts a connection to the (un)seen and (un)heard forces and communication between human and non/inhuman worlds.

The geologic forces of the earth might be thought of as other-than-human, the non/inhuman forces of the border - cosmic, incorporeal, nonliving that are interior and anterior to the human, and other forms of non-human life, but Grosz argues that 'it is the inhuman in the human that resists biopolitics'(Grosz, Yusoff and Clark, 2017, pp.135–6), since it is the inhuman in the human that biopower tries most of all to control. By focusing on these geo forces of the 'pre-' (material, politics, art) and inhuman in this context, the EP expresses the disavowal or indifference of the earth forces to (hu)man's borders, opening up the possibility of new geo-social relations and alliances.

5. Closing

Geopower, it could be argued, is a plane of social reproduction that both constrains and is expressive of possible modes of expression and thus of political freedom. (Yusoff, 2018, p.206)

In the context of the contemporary colonial border, and at this moment of ecological crisis of the earth, we are probing through the performances and films of EP something toward a sense of the geo within the bio, of the inhuman within the human, and of the human as earthly, as a way to resist and deterritorialize this border and global borders. As art fundamentally does for Grosz, border-fictioning enacts a different capitalization on the forces of the earth to capitalism, to extraction, to sovereign power and to the nation-state border, which capitalize in order to exert biopolitical control over the life that the earth hosts. The mythopoesis of the EP instead taps into the forces of the earth and becomes resistant because it produces

excess through the transformations and diffractions of the earth's forces to produce affects and sensations for their own sake, counter to commodification or use-value (despite not being insusceptible to them) to explore the possibilities of that sensation, to think otherwise. The EP intra-acts with affects and sensations generated by the performances and films, to harness the geopowers of the earth differently - an 'opening up of material and immaterial forces of the universe to elaboration and experimentation.' (Yusoff et al., 2012, p.972)

One of the characteristics of geopower for Grosz is dynamism - that by attending to the forces of the earth (gravitational, electric, magnetic and so on) and seeing life as coming from these forces, is to render the earth as fundamentally always shifting, as always 'potentially transforming ground' (Grosz, Yusoff and Clark, 2017, p.132). Not only does this serve to destabilize ideas of fixed identities and agency, space and location (as is Grosz's larger philosophical project), but it reveals the potential for political and imaginary difference, for the potential of the earth and the relations between it and the life it sustains to be thought otherwise.

Geopower is political in a different sense to biopower, it is not 'the critical equivalent of biopower for the geologic age' (Yusoff, 2018, p.208), because it precedes, and runs through, the moments of reduction and configuration of forces into established structures such as states and borders. The entangled processes of communication, temporal drifting, touching the earth and detecting and re-channeling different forces and intensities in the performances and audio-visual films of the EP are an experimental way to literally become immersed (materially and discursively) in the dynamic geopowers that swirl around at the precise point (this border) in alternative ways than to those in which they have been so powerfully and oppressively harnessed by capitalist and colonial histories, narratives and actions. In the EP, it is through the material and bodily intra-actions with the earth and its forces of the performances, and the immaterial, alien and virtual of the audio-visual films, that offers a particular way to inhabit and attend to the border. In so doing, the EP opens expanded and imminent possibilities of reframing or deterritorializing (what we have shown to be the complex and layered specific geo- and bio-political condition of) the border that geopower reveals.

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ⁱ Hereon in we refer to the Eile Project as EP, and to the performed fictional character as Eile

ⁱⁱ We will subsequently refer to this work as 'Territories'.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kathryn Yusoff, in her engagement with Grosz and in her own work has been a key figure developing the notion of geopower (Yusoff, 2018; Yusoff et al., 2012)

^{iv} For more background here see <https://performingborders.live/2019/03/14/a-place-of-their-own-march-2019/>

^v Although this is necessarily brief due to space limitations.

^{vi} Chosen, not only for its own transformative characteristic, but because it is a species that only occurs on the island of Ireland, across the borderline.