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New geographies of story and storytelling

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Abstract

The concept of story draws attention to the relationship between personal experience and expression, and the broader contexts within which such experiences are ordered, performed, interpreted, and disciplined. In the past, particularly through the 'cultural turn', geographers were predominantly concerned with the ways in which story and storytelling were implicated in the production of cultural, economic, political, and social power. Today, this approach to story is being re-examined and new approaches to story are being explored. Geographers have been re-imagining the concept of story as part of a relational and material turn within the discipline, as part of a renewed focus on the political possibilities afforded by storytelling, and as a mode of expressing non-representational, (post)phenomenological geographies. This paper contextualizes recent work within broader disciplinary trends and critically evaluates the intellectual and political stakes of these new geographies of story and storytelling. It questions whether a shift away from understanding stories and storytelling in terms of power, knowledge, and difference (as was emphasized through the cultural turn) has opened new understandings of political, social, and cultural life, or risks abandoning crucial insights into the role of stories in geographical formations.

Keywords

affect, discourse, emergence, narrative, story

I Introduction

There was a time, not too long ago, when few geographers were interested in telling stories. Stories, it seemed, were at best a quaintly humanistic preoccupation and at worst understood as the building blocks of oppression and inequality: however much stories might seem 'small' and 'innocent', geographic engagement with theories of discourse, power, and knowledge led geographers to understand stories as fundamentally implicated in the production of cultural, economic, political, and social power (e.g. Barnes and Duncan, 1992; Blunt and Rose, 1994; Gregory, 1994). Today, such lines of research seem to themselves have become almost quaint, as geographers aim to overcome some of the limitations of the so-called 'cultural turn' and attend to the material, emergent, ontological, affective, non-representational, and non-human. But far from eschewing narrative altogether, it seems that interest in metanarratives and cultural texts has been replaced with interest in a different kind of 'story' and storytelling than that which geographers deconstructed through the 1990s – or so it would seem. In fact, as Braun (2008) recently observed, the ways in which

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narrative and story weave their way through recent geographic scholarship remains largely unproblematized and often unclear (see also Price, 2010). Geographers have become enthusiastic storytellers over the past decade or so, and often in an explicitly different register than the ‘discursive’, but the implications of this shift have not been thoroughly assessed or clarified. In this paper I aim to make a contribution to such an assessment.

Interest in story and narrative can be discerned across a broad spectrum of human geographical writing. Geographers working within feminist, cultural, historical, economic, and environmental traditions, and drawing on actor-network, posthumanist, phenomenological, non-representational, political-economic, feminist, and postcolonial theories have all taken an interest in ‘story’ in recent years (e.g. Bridge, 2001; Gibson-Graham, 2002, 2006, 2008; Hoskins, 2010; Jackson, 2010; Kosek, 2006; Lorimer, 2003, 2008a, 2008b; Pratt, 2009; Price, 2010). Understandings of story, narrative, and the relations between these concepts vary widely, and formal definitions are scarce. However much recent geographic approaches to story differ (and however rarely the understanding of story and storytelling mobilized in each of these approaches is made explicit), what they share, most broadly, is a longstanding concern with the ways in which personal experience and expression interweave with the social, structural, or ideological. Stories express something irreducibly particular and personal, and yet they can be received as expressions of broader social and political context, and their telling can move, affect, and produce collectivities. Stories are both singular, ‘true’, and felt, *and* crafted, disciplined, and generic. As storytelling sociologist Francesca Polletta (2006) observes, stories embody a series of contradictions: they are understood as both authentic and subject to manipulation, idiosyncratic and signs of more general processes, disciplined by and exemplary of dominant narratives and yet capable of transgressing and transforming dominant narratives. Stories also demand interpretation; their normative, emotional, or moral effects are derived relationally, through interpretation, not directly conveyed. The concept of ‘story’ thus focuses attention on the problem of personal and collective experience and expression, and the ways in which modes of organizing, assembling, performing, and interpreting those experiences and expressions exceed the personal and particular.

For geographers working throughout the 1990s within the theoretical and methodological context of the ‘cultural turn’, broadly conceived, the structural, discursive, and ideological dimensions of storytelling were of primary interest. Prior emphasis on story as personal, authentic expression was challenged as naive and insufficiently attentive to relations of power. As Stone-Mediatore (2003) observes, scholars informed by feminist and poststructuralist theories began to argue that they could:

> no longer trust stories of experience to challenge ruling worldviews, for such stories are themselves constituted through ideological lenses ... stories risk reinforcing the ideologically given categories of identity, difference, and separate spheres of life that structure narrative discourse as well as our own ‘experience’. (Stone-Mediatore, 2003: 1)

Story, through the cultural turn, became a site for thinking through the workings of power, knowledge, and geographical formations at the most intimate scales. From assessments of the role of specific literary texts in the formation of colonial geographies to critiques of the ways in which human experience is disciplined along particular cultural ‘storylines’, the capacity for stories to perpetuate unjust social, economic, and political relations was of paramount concern.

Today, that mode of understanding story and storytelling has reached a kind of limit. While the capacity for personal experience and expression to reinforce structural and systemic forms of oppression and differentiation remains a compelling focus of geographic inquiry, a number of geographers have been chafing against this line of thought. Here, I profile three broad strands of research that both inherit and aim to trouble prior emphasis on story as an index of power and discursive formations. However much they differ, what these varied approaches to story have in common is a shared history: all have emerged as part of a project to reclaim what has been lost, overlooked, or otherwise poorly served by geography's cultural turn and particularly the ways in which geographers conceptualized narrative, power, knowledge, and discourse through the 1990s. Certainly the intellectual, political, and empirical contexts within which these projects have emerged are much more varied and complex than such a claim implies, but I will argue that the preponderance of notions like practice, materiality, embodiment, affect, ontology and the emergent in recent contemplations of story can be understood, at least in part, as an effort to prise 'story' away from its earlier association with notions of ideology, epistemology, representation, power, and knowledge. What, these scholars seem to ask, might 'story' do for geographers if we loosen our grip on these earlier associations? I consider different responses to this question in the three sections that follow.

I begin by examining the increased attention being paid to what Lorimer (2003) describes as 'small stories': stories that attend to the small, the personal, the mundane, and the local. I consider the ways in which this shift relates to geographic understandings of discourse as well as recent contemplations of materiality, relationality, and scale. Story, for these scholars, is about the expression of experience; it is about lives in all their particularly and mundanity, and about finding ways of accounting for lives and experiences without immediately or unproblematically tethering them to concepts of power, discourse, or ideology. This set of work, I argue, works against the notion that stories wholly *exemplify* discursive processes, and seeks to understand personal and life stories in all their particularity. Second, I consider the political and ethical dimensions of storytelling, paying particular attention to the use of story as a 'performative ontological politics' (see especially Gibson-Graham, 2008) and as a component of political mobilization. Here, the role of story in transforming social, political, and economic worlds is at stake. The capacity for stories to trace relations between people, places, and things, as part of a situated practice of transformative change, is of interest to these scholars. Scholars working in this vein challenge the notion that storytelling is wholly *disciplined* by power relations and are concerned with the performance of alternative subjectivities through storytelling. Third, I examine the recent resurgence of (post)phenomenological storytelling, wherein personal, experiential geographies are conveyed in narrative form. Story seems to be a particularly appealing and appropriate means for expressing the affective, experiential, non-representational geographies that have come to interest geographers in recent years, but the use of narrative to express these geographies has not been explicitly addressed or evaluated. Story, for these scholars, is an expressive method and an affective tool, designed both to demonstrate affective and emergent geographies and to move audiences toward new realms of thought and practice. For these scholars, notions of story as a wholly *representational* form are challenged. I conclude by highlighting lines of critical intervention appropriate to each of these mobilizations of story and storytelling, and by highlighting further points of affiliation and difference between these realms of geographic work.

The focus of this essay, then, is on a range of recent work in geography that explicitly engages in some way with the concept of story, but it is worth noting that understandings of exactly what 'story' *is* vary tremendously within the work surveyed. For some story is an object of knowledge, for others a form of practice, and for others it is a mode of academic expression. Some engage story as literary, fictional, or oral expression; others engage story more broadly as any tracing of relations between personal experience and a broader world. Some attend to the stories of research subjects or objects; others weave their own stories. Some use discourse, narrative, and story almost interchangeably; others tease apart the distinctions between these terms. The term ‘story’ itself, however, has become increasingly common in geographic writing over the past decade, and some possible reasons for that increase – however much the term’s meaning may remain quite varied – are explored here.

II Small stories

The past several years have seen a profusion of interest among cultural and historical geographers in the small, the local, the specific, the particular, the intimate, and the mundane (Mayhew, 2009; Naylor, 2008; Powell, 2007). In a review of recent historical geographic scholarship, for example, Naylor (2008: 265, 266) documents ‘a growing number of studies in historical geography that take individual lives as their centre-point’ and an ‘increasingly common approach in historical geography to prioritize the local and the particular at the expense of larger-scale and more general studies’. Studies of ‘microhistory’, ‘oral history’, and ‘local stories’ have become increasingly common, and many frame these studies as responses to the perceived limitations of emphasizing large-scale, systemic, and discursive processes.[1] Indeed, it would seem that, for many scholars, both ‘Foucault’ and ‘discourse’ have come to stand in for interest in the large-scale, systemic, and pervasive (see Mayhew, 2009), and efforts to ‘move beyond Foucault’s ambit’ (Mayhew, 2009: 393) and to ‘find non-Foucauldian ways of practicing’ (p. 392) have tended to cluster around ‘local practices and knowledges’ (p. 393), ‘telling different stories’ (p. 393), and ‘an attendance to the affective and the material’ (p. 393). However much the association of Foucault’s work with the large-scale, structural, and systemic may rest on a simplification and misrepresentation of his writings (discourse is not equivalent to ‘metanarrative’, for example, nor does it preclude a focus on the specificity of the small and local), recent work in cultural and historical geography has been substantially informed by an interest in coming to terms with the ‘“big questions” surrounding processes and structures’ (Short and Godfrey, 2007: 47) in different ways than Foucault’s writings have tended to encourage.

If the ‘larger-scale’ (Naylor, 2008: 266) interests of geographers tended to be explored through metanarratives, discourses, and disciplinary storylines, recent turns to the small, minor, fragmentary, and banal involve an explicit focus on ‘small stories’ (Lorimer, 2003). Lorimer positions the small stories that interest him in relation to ‘greater intellectual histories of geography’ (p. 199) and ‘grand, scholarly stories’ (p. 200). In a detailed study of the experiences of two individuals (Margaret Jack and Robin Murray) during a 1951 summer field school in the Cairngorms, Lorimer thinks through the ways in which personal recollection and various material traces (especially notebooks, letters, diaries, and photographs) might help ‘authorise thicker versions’ (p. 199) of geographical history, and how general understandings of, in this case, the ‘regional moment’ in disciplinary history might be fleshed out through examination of their localized enactments. Of interest is not so much the ways in which Margaret Jack and Robin Murray’s experiences *typify* a more general disciplinary history (even while Lorimer is keen to understand how their experiences relate to broader geographical thought and practice), but rather that which is *particular* about their stories, and that which exceeds easy allocation into a more general moment. ‘Particularity and mundanity’, Lorimer argues, ‘are, I contend, the qualities that matter most’ (p. 200) when making sense of the significance of Jack’s and Murray’s ‘archive’ and its place in the history of the discipline.

While there is a risk that in turning to the small geographers are simply examining the other side of a problematic coin (the contrasts drawn between large and small, global and local stories shore up dualistic and hierarchical understandings of scale, knowledge, and practice that have been widely critiqued in recent years; see, for example, Marston et al., 2005), geographers who have taken an interest in small and local *stories* are not necessarily mobilizing a bluntly dualistic imaginary (in which small stories are understood as wholly opposed to larger-scale narratives or discourses), although one can identify such a sentiment in the literature. For Lorimer (2003), 'story' seems to name a heterogeneous assemblage of memories, practices, and materials within which one can identify particular 'narratives', but which cannot be wholly reduced to the concept of narrative. Of particular interest to Lorimer, for example, are the embodied, emotional, and affective dimensions of Jack's and Murray's experiences, and these, he implies, can be evoked through the 'small story' he weaves but not through a conventional narrative. Lorimer does not explicitly define his understanding of the terms story and narrative, but his usage suggests that 'story' offers a kind of heterogeneity, materiality, sensuousness, and openness that narrative does not. Furthermore, in stories Lorimer locates the capacity to shuttle *between* 'different scales of enquiry – here, the institutional and the intimate – and between previously disparate practices – here, the academic debate and the embodied experience' (p. 200). His interest in the small, in that sense, is not solely anchored in a recuperative politics of attending to the marginal and the forgotten for their own sake (as in some feminist traditions – see below), nor in identifying localized exemplars of broader processes, but rather in complementing, supplementing, and in some sense troubling 'grand, scholarly stories' with their particular, specific articulations. He thus cautions against 'conscripting the likes of Margaret Jack and Robin Murray into a pre-determined disciplinary orthodoxy or genealogy' (p. 200), and insists that there is something of value in the small details of their lives. For Lorimer, then, 'story' acts as a signal of a different kind of inquiry, a pausing to account for particularity, not in opposition to the general, but as a way of chafing against the ways in which the particular tends to figure in 'grand, scholarly stories'. Elsewhere he characterizes geographic interest in 'personalized, micro-scale inquiry' as a means of 'disclosing how in minutia it is possible to find small kingdoms of worldliness, and to craft short stories as outcrops of global history' (Lorimer, 2009: 269). It would seem that recent interest in 'small stories' signals not so much a turn away from the large-scale and the global, then, but rather a turn toward thicker descriptions and understandings of the small. The ways in which these small 'outcrops' articulate with larger processes is neither anticipated in advance nor the primary purpose of inquiry, even if such articulations are evoked through the writing itself.

Recent geographic work on (auto)biography and life stories also aims to weave between the details of a single life and broader social, cultural, and institutional processes in new ways. Thus, Barnes examines the lives of economic geographers and uses their stories as a way into a different sort of disciplinary history, one emphasizing 'social and biographical processes (lives told) rather than a set of final accomplishments' (Barnes, 2001: 410; see also Barnes, 2008, 2009). Personal stories, Barnes argues, not only enrich our understanding of disciplinary movements and shifts, but can change them:

> the seemingly disembodied numbers, calculations, and precisely drawn figures and graphs that were the mainstay of the quantitative revolution should be treated not as the product of a universal rationality, but of specific lives and times that infuse the very substance of the works produced. (Barnes, 2001: 410)

And it is life stories that reveal this texture and specificity. In reference to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*'s emphasis on particularly 'notable' geographers, Driver and Baigent (2007:

102) argue that it is also 'important to tell the life stories of the apparently more conventional and indeed low profile men and women who contributed to the making of a university discipline over the last century' as part of a broader project in institutional and disciplinary history. Similarly, Avril Maddrell (2008: 127) recently argued that 'bringing to light the little-known war work of women' geographers adds important 'stories . . . [to] the narratives within the historiography of geography' (pp. 144–145). It is not only the exemplary life, then, that fleshes out disciplinary histories, but also the stories of the perhaps more banal and conventional lives that demand our attention.

Recent interest in storying 'things' and the relations between humans and non-humans follows a related path. Thus DeSilvey (2006) considers the possibilities of engaging with decaying objects on a Montana homestead and the stories these 'mutable things' might allow us to tell. Cameron (2011) engages 'copper stories' in order to trace geographies of colonization and decolonization in the Canadian Arctic. Jackson (2010: 161) documents 'food stories' as a way into 'the complex interweaving of the public and the private, the personal and the professional', a practice that takes its cue from a broader literature aiming to follow things and their stories (Cook et al., 2004; Jackson, 1999; Miller, 1998). Ogborn (2002: 167–168) considers the materiality of books themselves, approaching texts not only in terms of their 'discursive representation of "other" peoples and places' but also 'in terms of their materiality' and 'the people, objects and practices that are required to make them work'. At stake here is not so much the biography of things themselves (as in commodity chain research, for example), but rather the material practices and relations through which 'things' come to matter. These relations are explicitly traced through *stories*, not through 'narrative' or 'discourse', a nod to the relational, material, and performative theories underpinning these studies.[2]

Indeed, it is worth clarifying the status of the concept of discourse in this context. While recent work on 'small stories', life stories, and 'thing' stories is informed by Foucauldian writings, and in fact shares Foucault's interest in historical-geographical specificity, geographers interested in such stories aim to take the small, local, and particular in a different direction than Foucault's writings tend to encourage (or, at least, in a different direction than geographers have tended to take them). As geographers took up Foucault's understanding of discourse through the 1990s, many began to assert a meaningful link between specific stories and discursive formations. This is part of what was so intriguing and empowering about the concept of discourse: it allowed geographers and others to make connections between the seemingly small and insignificant – a single story, a novel, a poem – and the broader social and cultural processes with which that story articulated (e.g. Said, 1993). In many of these understandings, stories were *located in* discourses (e.g. Crush, 1994: 302) and geographers were most interested in how broader, systemic processes might be revealed through attention to their smaller, heterogeneous iterations. The small and the local mattered, in these formulations, insofar as they illuminated the broad, general, and systemic. It is precisely the habit of 'scaling up' from small stories to broader discourses that has undergone critique in recent years. Geographers appear to be more and more interested in how we might apprehend the small without immediate recourse to larger explanatory frames, and in how the particular might reveal geographies that are simply not apparent when our attention is trained on the institutional, the epistemic, and the discursive. As Naylor (2008: 271) notes, the challenge in recent turns to the small, local, and particular is to conceptualize these as 'not just local and particular, but not easily universal and generalizable either'. There is, then, not so much a turn from the 'large' to the 'small', from the general to the particular operative in cultural and historical geography today, but rather an effort to rethink the ways in which the small and particular relate to more general processes, and to challenge a perceived *over*-emphasis on the hegemonic, universal, and systemic. ‘Story’ has become a privileged site for such an undertaking. Attending to ‘story’ does not *preclude* an interest in discursive formations, but neither does it necessarily *require* it.

This appeal to small stories takes place, of course, amid renewed debates about scale in geography. While feminist geographers have long appealed to the importance of the local, the specific, and the personal in and of themselves (e.g. England, 1994) and have challenged the impulse to ‘scale up’ from specific geographies to more general processes and claims, vigorous debates about the scalar dimensions of geographical knowledge formation and geographical processes have been taking place across human geography for the past several years (Chapura, 2009; Gibson-Graham, 2002; Herod and Wright, 2002; Howitt, 2002; Jonas, 2006; Legg, 2009; Marston, 2000; Marston et al., 2005; Sheppard and McMaster, 2004). Turns to a more relational, flattened topology are clearly informing geographic understandings of ‘story’: rather than conceptualize small stories as micro-iterations of larger-scale narratives and processes (to locate the importance of the particular, in other words, in its capacity to be scaled up, however messily), emphasis is placed on all that is unique, revelatory, and traceable in the small. Attending to ‘small stories’ signals, in this context, an interest in rethinking not only the relationship between the particular and the general, then (indeed, these concepts lose some of their meaning in a lateral, relational imaginary), but also the ways in which scale itself structures geographic inquiry. If the concept of story focuses attention on the relations between personal experience and expression and its broader context, and upon the *interpretation* of those relations, then this trend in geographical scholarship works to recuperate an intellectual context within which stories can be apprehended *as* particular and specific, and not immediately and necessarily exemplary of structural, ideological, or general processes.

III Storying (for) change

It has been almost two decades since William Cronon’s eloquent plea to defend storytelling from ‘the postmodernists’ and preserve its role in academic writing. In a widely cited article articulating a ‘place for stories’, Cronon defended not only the importance of narrative as a mode of academic knowledge production, but also the broader social value of stories, stating that ‘narratives remain our chief moral compass in the world’ (Cronon, 1992: 1375). Cronon acknowledged the narrative construction of knowledge and the fact that scholars – historians in particular – tend to marshal the ‘facts’ of history into narrative arcs, a process that influences their selection, translation, and representation of historical materials. But these stories, he insisted, are not wholly invented or arbitrary; they ‘cannot contravene known facts about the past’ (p. 1372) and they are ‘bounded at every turn by the evidence they can and cannot muster in their own support’ (p. 1372). The fact that such stories are constructed, Cronon insisted, need not lead us to reject the important social, moral, and intellectual work stories perform. In the context of environmental history in particular, Cronon argued, crafting a story that ‘makes us *care*’ (p. 1374, emphasis in original) and presumably leads to shifts in human-environment relations is a significant goal, and one he was not willing to abandon. Narrative, Cronon argued, is ‘our best and most compelling tool for searching out meaning in a conflicted and contradictory world’ (p. 1374).

If Cronon appealed to a ‘moral compass’ that seemed more humanist and transcendent than geographers were willing to countenance at the time (see Demeritt, 1994), today geographers seem more inclined to explore the moral and ethical possibilities afforded by their work, and particularly the work performed by stories. This is not the same moral field, however, that Cronon conjured, and neither is the 'work' performed by stories precisely the same. If Cronon envisioned the work of stories to be primarily moral and emotional (stories make us care, but the mechanism by which such caring might lead to change was left unspecified), a number of geographers today are more acutely concerned with how stories might change the world in a structural, systemic sense. Their understanding of precisely how stories might effect such change has also become more sophisticated and explicit, although, like Cronon, contemporary scholars are open to the critique that the role played by stories in social change is asserted rather than demonstrated.

Geographers have a relatively longstanding interest in the capacity for stories to create social, political, and intellectual change. Feminist geographers, for example, have long accorded value to individual narratives as part of a wider project to challenge patriarchal and masculinist systems of knowledge and power (e.g. Domosh, 1997; Moss, 2001; Valentine, 1998). These scholars emphasize the political and epistemological importance of heeding individual experience, in part as a counterpoint to totalizing 'grand' narratives, but also as a part of a politics of valuing the local, the situated, and the specific. The importance of personal storytelling for these scholars lies not only in its ability to challenge larger discourses, then, but also in its ability to build an oppositional politics among marginalized groups.[3] Here, feminist geographers have drawn substantially on broader feminist, antiracist and postcolonial literatures, particularly the writings of hooks (1989), Mohanty (2003), Razack (1993, 1998), Smith (1999), and Spivak (1988).

Gibson-Graham's longstanding interest in the transformative capacity of stories emerges, in part, from this tradition, but in recent years has been more and more informed by what they describe as a 'performative ontological politics' (Gibson-Graham, 2008), a practice that involves writing about, engaging with, performing, and taking seriously the alternatives they wish to see in the world as an act of conscious, political, and creative (re)production. One can read their project as an attempt to develop a clearer practical and theoretical vocabulary for *how* stories transform and (re)create the world. Drawing on thinkers like Haraway (1988, 1991, 2008) and Sedgwick (2003), who have articulated a material, ontological politics of social change, Gibson-Graham (2006, 2008) develop an emphasis on stories as productive, participatory, ontological interventions that might call into being alternative worlds. They blend feminist and poststructuralist deconstruction with something they call 'resubjectification', a process that involves the creation of alternative discourses and a 'micropolitics of enabling subjects to inhabit that [alternative discursive] terrain' (Gibson-Graham, 2002: 36). Storytelling is central to this project. Within this perspective, stories provide compasses of a distinctly different sort than Cronon had in mind: they anchor and orient, to be sure, but not through reference to a collective or transcendental morality. Instead, such storytelling orients itself toward the emergent, the not-yet-here, and participates in the materialization of new realities. It is an approach that resonates with Donna Haraway's (1994) longstanding interest in narrative, materiality, and social change:

> the point is to get at how worlds are made and unmade, in order to participate in the processes, in order to foster some forms of life and not others ... The point is not just to read the webs of knowledge production; the point is to reconfigure what counts as knowledge ... I am calling this practice *materialized refiguration*; both words matter. The point is, in short, to make a difference – however modestly, however partially, however much without either narrative or scientific guarantees. (Haraway, 1994: 62)

If processes like 'materialized refiguration' or 'resubjectification' were initially mobilized in somewhat vague terms, Gibson-Graham elaborate on their vision in *A Postcapitalist Politics* (2006), and particularly the ways in which stories contribute to social change. Their primary interest is in the 'cultivation of alternative subjectivities' in relation to the economic, and particularly to dominant economic discourses. For Gibson-Graham, stories can be understood both as *symptoms* of subjectification to dominant discourses (thus, the stories told by research subjects about their experiences of the economy are described as 'couched within the anxiety-ridden discourse of development in which every region is found wanting' – p. 135) and as *interventions* into alternative discursive and subject formation (thus, when research participants begin to share stories about the alternative forms of work they engage in, such practices are conceptualized as explicit contributions to the creation of alternative economies and economic subjects – see pp. 144–152). The interplay of discourse and story is thus of great interest to them and, although this relationship is not explicitly defined, their exploration of the emergence (however fleeting) of alternative discourses and accompanying subjectivities through storytelling goes a great distance toward teasing out the nuances of storying change.

Of particular interest is Gibson-Graham's consideration of the affective, embodied, emotional dimensions of storytelling and the capacity for stories to create 'emotional opening[s]' (p. 136) and literally 'move' people 'from an emotionally draining narrative [of regional destruction] ... to open, even exuberant responses to our questions about counterstories and alternative activities' (p. 137). Stories do not simply *represent*, in that sense, they *affect*, they move. Thus Gibson-Graham pay attention to the ways in which stories translate the felt, personal, and known into a more collective realm, how stories make legible the 'tacit' and the 'bodily', that which 'exist[s] in the shadows of social and economic valuation, to be accepted into the symbolic language of economy' (p. 151). Practice is central to this understanding of story: it is not simply the content of a given story that interests them, but the capacity for stories to be practiced in place and to generate (intersubjective) change.

Gibson-Graham's insights into story and storytelling do not necessarily jar against prior understandings of storytelling in political movements or understandings of the ways in which specific stories articulate with subjectivity and the discursive. What they do is flesh out the processes by which stories might lead to social change (including the barriers, dilemmas, and disappointments of such undertakings), and account for subjects as more than mental or rational beings, as also embodied, placed, felt, and intertwined with others. They even go so far as to imagine a 'daily' (p. 155) storytelling practice that might assist in the cultivation of alternative subjects by 'translat[ing] momentary swerves from negative to positive affect into a more permanent state of being' (p. 155). This examination of storytelling as practice thus makes a significant contribution to what can otherwise be rather vague appeals to the importance of 'telling stories' as part of a politics of change. If the scholars profiled in the previous section aim to account for stories as personal, specific, and particular, and not immediately relate stories to discursive formations, Gibson-Graham aim, instead, to consciously harness the articulation of stories and storytelling with discursive processes and transform the discursive terrain itself.

Such an approach is willfully optimistic; indeed, there is an explicit and self-conscious politics of hope and optimism underpinning Gibson-Graham's treatment of stories. Unless we begin to believe in the possibility of change and begin to encourage the marginal (and even that which does not yet exist, but could) by actively storying these margins, Gibson-Graham argue that change will not occur. They are attentive to our 'psychic investment in remaining a victim ... of an immoral capitalist order' (2006: 140) and the immense barriers to alternative subject formation, but remain committed to a transformative politics fuelled by hope. This commitment to hope has become both a point of affiliation and a point of unease for the range of scholars engaging storytelling and social change. If the increasing prominence of the ontological and the emergent in geographical writing has made some scholars more amenable to their vision (see, for example, recent work on the political potential of 'hope': Anderson, 2004, 2006; Blomley, 2007; Sparke, 2007; and on the capacity for publics to emerge around 'matters of concern': Hinchliffe, 2008; Whatmore, 2009), others cast them as 'the Pollyannas of the profession' (Gibson-Graham, 2002: 25), willfully overlooking the persistence of systemic, structural injustice. Certainly, as Dempsey and Rowe (2004: 49) observe, 'hopelessness can be as naive as hope' and critical scholars are generally 'more comfortable with critique – explaining what is wrong – than with formulating a vision of how to put things right' (S. Smith, 2009: 206). To believe in and encourage that which is marginal and even non-existent is not necessarily to be a Pollyanna, argue Gibson-Graham, but rather to engage in conscious politics of emergence and possibility.

Yet recent enthusiasm for the radical potential of such storytelling merits even sympathetic critique. Between dismissive rejection of Gibson-Graham's project and enthusiastic uptake of their vision, a certain hesitancy can be discerned about the political contours of hopeful storytelling. Sarah Ahmed (2004: 184) observes, for example, that 'politics without hope is impossible', but that 'hope without politics is a reification of possibility'. Is geographic interest in storying matters of becoming and emergence a form of politics fueled by hope, or is it political in a wholly different way: a practice of reifying possibility itself such that the political work required to achieve the hoped-for state is deferred? Does storying a hoped-for future represent a radical intervention into the constitution of social and political life, or an abandonment of the 'real' work involved in transformative politics? As Neil Smith observes, clearly siding with the latter sentiment, 'the implication of much post-structuralist work would seem to be that one changes the world first and foremost by changing how we think and talk about it' (N. Smith, 2009: 53), and this is precisely Gibson-Graham's point.

Pratt's (2009) more tempered and uneasy exploration of storying social and political change intervenes here. Like Gibson-Graham, Pratt is interested in the capacity for stories to effect social change, but she is less concerned with building community through story than with using stories to challenge and disrupt conventional lines of affiliation and identification. Where Gibson-Graham attend to the ways in which stories move a group toward cohesion and alternative forms of communal identification, Pratt asks what happens when one takes stories into realms that are precisely *not* defined by affiliation, equality, or a shared sense of community. Describing a collaborative oral testimony project undertaken with the Kalayaan Centre in Vancouver (an organization advocating for Filipino rights, welfare, and social justice), Pratt states:

> we are collecting stories of family separation, loss, grief and traumatic returns to trace yet more impacts of [the Live-In-Caregiver program, LCP], but also with the hope that these stories will – finally – find an audience and evoke an affective response from policy makers and Canadians ... We aim to circulate these stories to *create* a wider public concerned about the marginalizing and dehumanizing outcomes of the LCP. (Pratt, 2009: 6, emphasis added)

Like Gibson-Graham, then, Pratt is concerned with the ways in which stories might produce subjects and produce publics, but she is less concerned with building subjects *within* the Filipino community than with:

> tell[ing] stories about [their] grief in such a way that a wider witnessing public cannot keep its distance, and is neither numb to nor able to voyeuristically gaze upon the spectacle of suffering and shame in ways that further objectify and dehumanize ...

> We hope that the narratives that we present produce contradictory and ambivalent emotions – emotions that provoke analysis and critique, rather than replace it. (Pratt, 2009: 17)

The capacity for stories to produce ethical relations between otherwise distant and unequally positioned subjects is of concern here, and Pratt is acutely concerned with the barriers to such circulation. Efforts to ensure 'the testimony [is] heard' by 'a wider witnessing public', she notes, are formidable in and of themselves and carry with them additional concerns about 'what dangers attend' the successful circulation of such stories (pp. 6, 17). There is always the risk that the story of an 'other' 'preserves rather than disrupts the status quo' (p. 6). Pratt's efforts to think carefully and strategically about how, where, and on what terms stories are told (and heard) is thus an important check on the sense of radical possibility and contingency cultivated in more 'hopeful' studies of storytelling. The capacity to connect, affect, and relate, Pratt reminds us, is shaped by an already structured political and ethical field that is not as malleable and open to possibility as we might hope (see also Castree, 2002).

Similar cautions are developed by Gillian Whitlock (2006), Judith Butler (2004), and Sidonie Smith (2006), who examine the ways in which stories become legible, durable, and politically consequential from within feminist, postcolonial, and antiracist rubrics. Thus Butler (2004: 129) calls for 'a consideration of the structure of address itself' and investigation of a 'mode of response that follows upon having been addressed'. She is concerned with the ways in which stories of, about, and from the Other come to demand responses in an already structured discursive field, in which one is already constituted in relation to others. These cautions highlight a tension running through recent work engaging the performative and transformative possibilities of storytelling: to paraphrase Ahmed, at what point does a politics of hopeful storytelling, an effort to perform into being the alternatives we wish to see in the world, reify the conditions under which such transformation might be effective?

IV Telling stories

> Maybe it was always so, but these days it seems an increased premium is being placed on the creative *performance*, *presentation* and *writing* of geographical studies of place, and of 'landscape' ... Various creative writing enterprises ... demonstrate a growing willingness to experiment with the character and form of writing, and a preparedness to consider style as a pressing issue rather than a supplementary concern. (Lorimer, 2008b: 182, emphasis in original)

While scholars like Pratt, Butler, and Whitlock expose some of the political pitfalls of storytelling, others take up the role of storyteller and call for greater fertilization between geography and the literary and creative arts (Brace and Johns-Putra, 2010; Saunders, 2010; Wylie, 2007). Thus Lorimer (2006) narrates herds and herders, McCormack narrates therapeutic dance (2003) and affective relations with the remains of an Arctic expedition (2010), and Wylie narrates a walk along the South West Coast Path (2005a) and up Glastonbury Tor (2002). The political and theoretical purpose of this storytelling is different: while Pratt wonders how the stories told by Filipina women will 'affect a wider witnessing public', and what the consequences of this 'affecting' might be, scholars working within non-representational and (post)phenomenological contexts aim to attend to – indeed, *represent* – affect through story (see also Lingis, 1994; Stewart, 2007).

There is an interesting divergence here. Pratt is keenly attentive to the capacity for stories *not* to be heard, *not* to affect, but also for stories to *add* to existing capacities in ways that might undermine the political intentions motivating the storytellings she describes. Personal capacities for disregard, institutional and systemic capacities to maintain racialized labour and immigration policies can, Pratt observes, be *heightened* by these stories, not diminished. Indeed, it is the unpredictability of emergent becoming though story that concerns her, even while she insists on the continuities and tendencies for stories to be received in the usual ways. Those scholars who have taken up narrative styles of representation to convey non-representational, (post)phenomenological, and affective geographies, on the other hand, have paid less attention to the political and intellectual consequences of narration and the ways in which storying shapes the contours of the knowledges they produce (although see Carter-White, 2009; Harrison, 2007; Rose, 2006). Stories are not their external 'research objects' (as in studies of the role of a particular piece of literature in broader discursive formations) but rather a mode of producing and expressing knowledges gleaned through embodied and intersubjective experience. These scholars *tell* stories; they do not study others' stories.

To the extent that this realm of inquiry involves explorations of the authors' own bodies and experiences (e.g. McCormack, 2003; Wylie, 2002, 2005a), narrative is perhaps an obvious choice: as Butz and Besio (2009) recently observed, authoethnographic inquiry that takes the researcher as its primary object of knowledge is most often and most effectively conveyed in narrative form. As geographers grow increasingly interested in emotion, embodiment, and affect, they argue, 'personal experience narrative with its fine-grained focus on the researcher-self, and its method of blurring the distinctions among emotion, experience, representation, and performance, may be a good way to develop [themes of emotion, embodied, and affective experience]' (p. 1666). But some dilemmas remain. As Braun recently asked, 'on what basis does one make more general claims from personal experience? And how do we evaluate and reflect upon our *narration* of such bodily affects?' (Braun, 2008: 674, emphasis in original). Indeed, what is one to make of these stories?

Herbert's (2000) analysis of ethnographic inquiry provides some useful interventions here. He notes that the localized specificity of ethnographically produced knowledge does not necessarily lend itself to generalization, but that generalization can be very effectively made. Herbert presents a series of means by which one might make more general claims from ethnographic inquiry, among them the selection of a 'site that can plausibly stand in for other cases' (p. 560). Here, Price's (2010: 208) observation that non-representational storytelling tends to be carried out from 'notably British and male subject positions' becomes relevant, for if the 'site' selected in autoethnographic investigations is the British, male body, then the generalizations one might make from this site are limited. The critique leveled against earlier phenomenological inquiry that understandings of the human were derived from particular bodies resonates here (see also Ahmed, 2006).

But it is questionable whether those who have been storying bodily emergences and affect aim to generalize in the ways outlined above. As Kathleen Stewart notes, her aim in assembling a series of stories, anecdotes, and reflections in *Ordinary Affects* is not so much to 'know' through story but to 'fashion some form of address', to 'slow the quick jump to representational thinking and evaluative critique long enough to find ways of approaching the complex and uncertain objects that fascinate because they literally hit us or exert a pull on us' (Stewart, 2007: 4). It is, in other words, to *affect* the reader in a different way than conventional forms of argumentation, description, or analysis aim to do, and in that sense generalization is a distinctly inappropriate form of engagement with these stories. Drawing on Stewart's earlier work (e.g. Stewart, 1996), Mitch Rose (2006) argues that we might better think of stories as *orientations* and *inclinations* that draw us places, not as representations, and this insight is crucial for coming to terms with the mobilization of story in recent non-representational and (post)phenomenological writing. It suggests that part of the project of those scholars who have embraced narrative as a writing style is to gesture, orient, and to *move*; this storytelling is not so much about representing a stable, outside reality or developing an argument in a conventional sense, but rather a form of play with possibilities and a practice of moving geographic thought in new directions.

But if this is so, then Braun's question remains important: how *do* we evaluate and reflect upon these narrations? The more expository styles of argumentation and critique are well established in human geography: we know how to read, evaluate, and critique writing that follows these conventions. Geographers as a whole are far less attuned to the ways in which one might engage the narration of affect, however, and the more established modes of engagement and critique prove awkward when applied to a 'storied' paper. Consider, for example, a recent exchange between John Wylie and Mark Blacksell regarding Wylie's (2005a) narration of a walk along Britain's South West Coast Path. Wylie's intention in the paper was 'to describe some of the differential configurations of self and landscape emergent within the performative milieu of coastal walking' (p. 236) and the paper presents 'a mosaic of moods, incidents, introspections, speculations about landscapes and bodies' (p. 237) drawn from Wylie's experiences along the trail. Blacksell (2005: 519) critiques the paper for failing to provide a comprehensive literature review, attend to social and historical context, and do more than simply explore 'the immediate impact of the landscape on the self'. Telling stories about one's personal experience, he argues, is 'overly self-centered and introspective' (p. 518). Together, Blacksell's commentary and Wylie's response (Wylie, 2005b) index a profound gulf between the story Wylie intended to convey and its reception by some readers. As Tim Cresswell asks in relation to the rise of 'beautifully written stories' in cultural geography, such writing 'can be almost hermetically sealed . . . how do you intervene?' (Cresswell in Merriman et al., 2008: 196).

If conventional forms of critique are awkwardly applied to recent non-representational and (post)phenomenological storytelling, then what forms of critique or analysis does this work demand? Lorimer (2008a: 557) observes that 'the code' of non-representational scholarship 'can prove tough to crack', but he urges '(human) geographers of all stripes [to] feel comfortable enough to chip in' (p. 556). Cracking tough codes suggests that these stories require what Latour (2004: 206) describes as 'learning to be affected', an acquired and practiced capacity to affect and be affected by a given set of circumstances, expressions, or relations. In other words, it may be that one must cultivate the capacity to understand and be affected by papers like Wylie's through immersion in the vocabularies, ideas, and texts inspiring his work.[4] But while an engaged and informed reading of any literature requires a certain immersion in its 'codes', one can also, as Blacksell does, raise questions about the contributions and implications of this line of scholarship from other locations. If stories orient and activate in the ways Rose (2006), Stewart (1996, 2007) and others suggest, then one might argue that concerns about non-representational storytelling reflect not simply a failure to learn *how* to be affected, but an acute concern with *where* that affecting might lead and a rejection of the undertaking itself. If, as Haraway argues, when we 'touch and are touched' by a story we 'inherit' different relations and begin to 'live' different 'histories' (Haraway, 2008: 37), histories that come to demand responses of us, then we must be very careful about where we direct our attention and what stories we come to be touched by. The imagined modesty and innocence of stories, the notion that something is '*just* a story', serves, perhaps, to disarm our senses and promote the openness necessary to be drawn in. But many resist this drawing in, perhaps aware of the capacity for stories to affect our thoughts and inclinations in ways we might not accept didactically. For some, storying the emergent self and landscape is neither politically, intellectually, nor aesthetically compelling.

Regardless of whether geographers find merit in the project of storying non-representational, postphenomenological, and affective geographies, this tension around being drawn in, and where that drawing in might lead, teaches us something very important about storytelling. Geographers have become attuned to the dangers of story as a representational form, to the ways in which narrative tracings of relations between people, places, and things serve to naturalize, make legible, and make sensible those relations in a very material sense; we know that stories *matter*, that they materialize. But the precise ways in which this works, as one reads or listens to a story, the experiential, phenomenological dimensions of being drawn into a story and carried toward its views and conclusions, this we have seemed not to want to approach. Perhaps it would involve acknowledging the passions and hopes and pleasures of story, perhaps our 'critical' stance inoculates us against the dangers of being drawn in to narratives. What Wylie's and others' experiments in narration draw our attention to is the becoming made possible by stories, their capacity to cultivate perceptions and inclinations that are not provoked through didactic or expository prose. This is far from innocent, though, and geographers would do well to sharpen their abilities to critique each others' stories, not just on the grounds of what those stories represent (and distort), but also for the becomings such stories might nourish, and those which they might undermine. To the extent that recent non-representational and (post)phenomenological storytelling claims to be politically and theoretically transformative, we need a better vocabulary and critical framework within which to assess such stories, and to determine whether they deliver on their political and theoretical promises.

V Conclusion

What, then, is the connection between these different kinds of stories and storytellings? Do they share more than a generic or terminological similarity? Is there something greater at work in geographic thought and practice that can be discerned through analysis of these varied approaches to 'story'? If we return to the proposition that story directs attention to the interweaving of the personal and the social, the particular and the general, and that storytelling raises questions about the performance, practice, circulation, and reception of both personal and collective expression, what do these recent shifts in the geographies of story and storytelling reveal?

First, the very fact that 'story' has become a conscious and explicit object of knowledge and mode of knowledge production among cultural, historical, political-economic, and feminist scholars is notable. From a poststructuralist perspective, geographers have always 'told stories'; if one accepts the proposition that knowledge is narratively constructed then all geographic writing must be understood as a form of storytelling. But until relatively recently, that storytelling was understood as a much more disciplined and discursive act: the ways in which geographic knowledge was implicated in processes of colonization, racialization, visualization, and categorization was an important focus of work through the 1990s, and remains so today. The stories and storytelling that concern the geographers discussed here are different. Recent work is less invested in connecting acts of knowing, writing, and telling with processes of domination and control, and less concerned with understanding how specific experiences, expressions, or relations exemplify broader processes. 'Story' has become an explicit signifier of this shift in orientation. It is a shift that involves not so much an abandonment of conceptualizations of knowledge, speech, and text as discursively structured, but rather a problematization of the ways in which geographers have conceptualized the relations between specific practices and broader contexts. I have argued that the conscious use of the word 'story' among scholars well-versed in Foucauldian understandings of power, knowledge, and discourse, for projects that aim to rethink the ways in which we understand the specific, the local, and the political, is not accidental. It is an effort to trouble the tendency among geographers to position the small and particular as micro-iterations of broader discourses, and to flesh out the heterogeneity of discursive formations that Foucault himself emphasized. Such a project is not incompatible with the concept of discourse; it deepens and enhances prior understandings and redresses the conflation of discourse with metanarrative. Geographers working through the relations between story, narrative, and discourse would do well, however, to make their understandings of these concepts and their interrelationships more explicit.

Second, one can detect a return to the living, feeling, experiential, and relational dimensions of being in recent turns to story and storytelling, and an effort to recuperate these aspects of social, cultural, and emotional life from their politicization as components of nationalist, patriarchal, racist, and imperial practice. While Sara Ahmed (2004), Benedict Anderson (1991), Judith Butler (1993; 2004), Edward Said (1978; 1993), and Raymond Williams (1973), among others, have made clear the structural, ideological, and political dimensions of feeling and being, work in their wake has been ill-equipped to conceptualize feeling and experience as anything *other* than structurally or ideologically determined. The capacity for stories to move, inspire, and evoke embodied experience is at play in recent geographic writing, both as part of a politics of possibility, and as a style of geographic expression. While the political intent is clear and explicit in the former, it remains underdeveloped in the latter.

Finally, one can detect in recent approaches to story a desire to trouble established interpretive 'storylines' shaping geographical inquiry. Recent work suggests that the 'story' geographers have told about story, narrative, and discourse through the cultural turn has reached a kind of limit. Conceptualizing the stories we feel, tell, and practice in this world as micro-iterations of structural and ideological formations has become what Ann Laura Stoler calls (in the context of colonial studies) somewhat 'charmed'; 'charmed stories' of imperialism and colonialism, Stoler argues, work from the 'premise that we who study the colonial know both what imperial rule looks like and the dispositions of those it empowers' (Stoler, 2008: 238). Students of colonialism, she writes, too often advance accounts of colonialism wherein 'good and evil' are understood as transcendent rather than historical categories, and in which the colonizers ('with whom we do *not* sympathize') are necessarily attributed 'flat interiorities' while hazy subaltern figures are held up as heroic and resistant. Such storylines, Stoler argues, are analytically slack, historically inaccurate, and ultimately politically limiting to the extent that they blind us from understanding our own implication in ongoing racialized and colonial geographies.

Stoler's comments offer an important intervention into recent turns to 'story' among geographers. Stoler's point is emphatically *not* that imperial and colonial histories and geographies should not be subjected to critical scrutiny. On the contrary; she argues that current lines of analysis and critique are not doing what they aim to do. They are not analytically, historically, or politically sufficient. To the extent that geographers are attending to 'story' as part of an effort to deepen and sharpen their understandings of inequality, domination, and political change (as Gibson-Graham, Pratt, and others aim to do), challenging the 'charmed' notion that specific stories can be adequately understood as subjected to and disciplined by discursive formations represents an important line of inquiry. The point made by these scholars is not that the small and specific are *not* political; of course they are. It is, instead, that they may be political in ways that have not been sufficiently fleshed out. It may be that it is precisely in small, local storytelling that political transformation becomes possible, even if we cannot know in advance where our stories will lead.

Similarly, experiments in non-representational and phenomenological storytelling highlight the affective dimensions of storytelling and the capacity for stories to move. This line of scholarship aims to wrestle story from its 'charmed' framing as a representational and discursive act – a framing that (in the best examples of work in this vein) is not so much perceived as wrong but as insufficient and incomplete – and to attend to the ways in which stories move, emerge, and affect in the very act of their telling. Although critics are right to challenge claims that such storytelling is sufficiently 'political', and right to question its predilection for personal, experiential narratives in depoliticized settings, it may be that this work is attending to a dimension of the political that has been poorly served by a focus on the representational, disciplinary work performed by stories. Mitch Rose (2010: 341) argues that non-representational theory 'has endeavoured, from its earliest articulations, to open Human Geography's conception of what the political means – i.e. what counts as a properly political question – by supplementing the epistemological logic of traditional forms of social/political theory'. It is precisely the delimitation of the political to the representational, to notions of identity, difference, knowledge, and power, Rose argues, that a 'more-than-representational' approach can trouble. Power and the political are not only about what we say, know, and represent, Rose insists, but also emerge from the felt, embodied, and ontological. Put another way, as Gillian Rose recently observed, it may be that 'our tools for understanding how power works', developed in relation to notions of identity, subjectivity, and knowledge, are no longer adequate (G. Rose in Merriman et al., 2008: 208).

The critical question to pose of this form of storytelling, then, is whether orienting toward the personal, felt, and relational represents an effective engagement with contemporary forms of power and oppression, or instead represents a retreat from lines of critique that may be well-worn, but by no means inappropriate. The question, in other words, is whether understanding stories as indexes of power, knowledge, oppression, injustice, and difference is indeed 'charmed' in Stoler's sense – a framing that is ultimately insufficient and that has reached the limits of its ability to advance inquiry into these vexing and prevailing concerns. As geographers pursue new lines of inquiry into story and storytelling, then, it seems crucial that we scrutinize the political and intellectual implications of these new approaches. What is at stake when one turns one's attention to small and local stories, and asks what is expressed and revealed by such stories, beyond their exemplification of 'broader' processes? Does such an approach abandon a necessary concern with the structural and systemic? What is at stake when one places one's hopes in the capacity for stories to construct alternative discursive terrains and, by extension, to transform the conditions under which social, political, and economic life unfolds? Does such an approach willfully overlook the failure of so many stories to transform dominant discourses? And what is at stake when geographers aim not only to explain, describe, and analyze the worlds they live in, but also to move, to affect, and to create as storytellers? Does such an approach represent a depoliticized dabbling in creative writing, or a genuinely radical transformation of geographic understandings of the political? In effect, if the 'storyline' geographers developed through the cultural turn about the relations between personal experience and expression and its social, structural, and ideological context is indeed insufficient, do recent developments supplement this line of work effectively, or risk abandoning its most compelling and valuable insights into the geographical constitution of social, economic, political, and cultural life?

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Notes

1. I thank Trevor Barnes for the observation that this turn to the particular, the local, and the mundane is, of course, a return of sorts. Humanist geographers in the 1970s appealed to the personal, the experiential, and the local in the face of the perceived excesses and limitations of both quantitative and Marxian approaches to geographic inquiry (Ley and Samuels, 1978). Various subdisciplines have also gone through cycles of what Sayer (1989: 257) describes as 'the old idiographic-nomothetic debate'. In economic geography, for example, the so-called 'locality debates' of the 1980s and 90s unfolded around the relative merits of attending to the regional, particular, and local as opposed to the global, structural, or more general (see Sayer, 1989; Smith, 1987). Something similar is at work in cultural and historical geography today.
2. It is worth noting, for example, the tendency among actor-network scholars to use the word 'story' rather than 'narrative' to refer to the relations between humans and non-humans (particularly John Law – see Law, 1994, 2002; Law and Singleton, 2000). As Law (1994: 23) observes, 'I find that I can make little or no sense of any particular mode of ordering or its interaction with others unless I also tell stories about these materials' (p. 23).
3. Consider, for example, feminist geographic work on the capacity for stories to transform disciplinary histories (e.g. Domosh, 1991, 1997; Monk, 2004). These projects have been firmly located in a broader political intention to transform not only disciplinary historiography, but the discipline itself: as Domosh (1991: 95) observed of her effort to 'recover from our own history the stories that have gone unnoticed', 'it is worthwhile to reflect on what geography could have been and could be if it included women's experiences and women's ways of thinking into its own canon' (p. 102). Here, women's stories are not only recuperated for their own sake, but for their capacity to transform and contribute to a 'reconstruction' (p. 96) of a different kind of discipline. Similarly, Valentine's (1998) reflection on her experiences of harassment engages the constitution of the discipline of geography itself, as do other works exploring the personal as a distinctly political project (England, 1994; Kobayashi, 2001; McDowell, 1997; Nagar and Geiger, 2007; Rose, 1996).
4. Here, again, questions around which bodies, in which places, have the capacity to 'learn to be affected' by this literature must be raised.

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