Critical political geographies of slow violence and resistance

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Abstract

Engaging Rob Nixon's conceptualization of slow violence, this special issue provides a critical framework for how we understand violence relevant to political geography. In this introduction, we highlight three key contributions of the collection that build upon and extend Nixon's framing of slow violence. First, we attend to the spatialities of slow violence, revealing how the politics of disposability and racialized dispossession target particular people and places. Next, we foreground critical feminist and anti-racist perspectives that are largely absent in Nixon's original account. And third, through engaging these approaches, the papers together employ an epistemological shift, uncovering hidden and multi-sited violences that prioritise the accounts of those who experience and are most affected by slow violence.

Keywords

Slow violence, disposability, spatiality, white supremacy, antiracism, critical feminist approaches

Introduction

> While place annihilation certainly differs according to time and place, the devastation, so clearly pointed to in the term urbicide—the deliberate killing of the city— brings into sharp focus how violence functions to render specific human lives, and thus their communities, as waste. (McKittrick, 2011: 952)

The few streets in Witton Park in North East England belie the village's previous size and economic and social vitality. Its ironworks and coalmines had closed by the early 20th

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Figures 1. Coalminer with heart torn out: statue 'Marra (I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more)' by Ray Lonsdale. Horden, County Durham (images c. Carl Joyce www.carljoyce.com).

century, and the village became symbolic both of County Durham's thriving industrial prime and the destructive policies that managed its decline. In 1951, Witton Park became the largest 'Category D' village, a classification given to 121 settlements that had grown up around the county's coal industry. Economic assistance to these villages was withdrawn, thousands of homes demolished and residents displaced, understood as a further violence to these working class communities' way of life (Pattison, 2004). However, in Witton Park, local residents resisted, overturning the designation. It became known as 'the village that refused to die...kicked when it was down, allowed remission only when its aggressors hurried to find bigger boots' (North, 2002: np). And yet, the representational and material consequences of disposability have long lasting consequences, raising questions about the spatialities of slow violence (Nixon, 2011) and how it takes shape in people's everyday lives and the places they inhabit (Ribbon Road, 2019).

A glance at the historic context of Witton Park and its legacies reveals how austerity politics are mobilized and racialized for political ends, raising questions that, we suggest, are relevant to understanding the political economy of the contemporary Covid-19 crisis and global uprisings for racial justice in summer 2020. Just as, historically, many of the North East's wealthy industrialist families had strong connections to the transatlantic slave trade (Charlton, 2008), white supremacy is still central to the political landscape of North East England. Racism and Islamophobia were mobilized in pro-Brexit campaigns ahead of the 2016 UK referendum on European Union membership (Bhambra, 2017; Nayak, 2017). After 84 years of Labour control, the Conservative Party won the constituency containing Witton Park in December 2019, making it emblematic of areas that had voted for Brexit. While the reasons behind these political changes are complex, they are closely intersected by the politics of nationalism and race (Bromley-Davenport et al., 2018; Burrell and Hopkins, 2019). The disposal of entire communities over many decades, from mass job losses, welfare reform and the dismantling of place (Beatty et al., 2019; Pain, 2019) reflects on the one hand, the interweaving slow violences of neoliberal global capitalism familiar across the world, but on the other, the ways that race was and continues to be mobilized to shift blame onto immigrant and Black communities, while erasing the state's role in facilitating structural inequality. For Shilliam (2018), systems of race and class are not opposed but mutually implicated. He argues that racialized divisions of labour had seemed to be becoming less distinct in the UK before Brexit campaigns marshalled the figure of the 'deserving' left-behind poor, offering further benefits to whiteness. As a consequence, anti-Black, anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant racism has amplified since 2016, though its entrenchment is

historic (cf. Hall et al., 1978). For many Muslim respondents in Hopkins et al.'s study of North East England (2020), the increase is understood as a product of Brexit, the rise of the far Right, and the media's complicity in normalizing Islamophobia. Understanding this within the framework of slow violence calls attention to the production of violence within a particular political historical and global context that is intimately intertwined with coloniality, white supremacy, and extraction in the 'global South' (Daley, 2008).

As Katherine McKittrick argues in the opening quote, the racialized politics of disposability target people and place inextricably. Rob Nixon (2011: 4), in his book *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, explains: 'Our media bias toward spectacular violence exacerbates the vulnerability of ecosystems treated as disposable by turbo-capitalism, while simultaneously intensifying the vulnerability of those whom Kevin Bales...has called "disposable people"' (cf. Gilmore, 2007; Katz, 2011; McKittrick, 2011; Sundberg, 2008; Tagle, 2019; Wright, 2011). For Nixon (2011: 2), slow violence is 'a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales'. He cautions against the study of violence being led by the spectacle-hungry media, instead drawing attention to the 'attritional lethality' of globalisation that is marked by invisibility, long term malaise and staggered harm from war, climate change, pollution and other industrial violences, and the unfolding nature of large-scale human-created crises (Coleman, 2007; Daley, 2013; Peluso and Watts, 2000).

Of particular significance to our special issue is the insistence that slow violence is first, not a depersonalized process, but 'a very human and therefore specifically racialized activity' (McKittrick, 2011: 952). And second, that historicized analyses are needed that challenge 'social scientific "presentism"' (Bhambra, 2017: 91) to expose this in sharp relief (De Heredia, 2019; Gilmore, 2009). Our analysis above of one tiny place, Witton Park in North East England reveals how slow violence is always political, and suggests how 'ordinary' and ongoing processes of colonial and racial capitalism take shape through concurrent structural and everyday violence, as continual, incremental and ongoing discriminatory dispossessions of the state and capital (De Heredia, 2019; Federici, 2019).

Now, too, as we grapple with the devastating impacts of Covid-19 in the same region and worldwide, we see how 'the pandemic is a portal' (Roy, 2020), laying bare the existing fractures of various forms of inequality; some of which are documented in this special issue. It is not a coincidence that those disproportionately affected by Covid are not only poor, but Black, Brown, and immigrant communities; both in its local and global patterning. In the UK, Covid-19 mortality rates in 2020 were more than double the average in economically deprived areas, and up to twice as high among Black and ethnic minority communities (Public Health England, 2020). Disproportionate mortality rates amongst the general population and healthcare workers, as well as government interventions in the pandemic, have compounded the mental health effects of the virus for UK Black, Brown and immigrant communities (Phiri et al., 2021). In the US, as Tan et al. (2021) demonstrate, there are strong connections between structural racism and higher rates of Covid cases and deaths. These tragic and fast-occurring impacts also require an historical and global frame of understanding that centers on the slow violences of white supremacy. Around the world, the public health crisis of Covid-19 maps onto ongoing crises of racialized structural disinvestments, underlying health disparities, state-sanctioned violence, the marketisation of healthcare systems, and populist governance.

Extending these discussions, this special issue comprises six papers that critically engage Nixon's concept of slow violence. These focus on and account for various forms of incremental structural violence, highlighting both their spatial and their temporal nature. In this

introduction, we highlight three key contributions of the collection as a whole, outlining how these build upon and extend Nixon's framing. First, the special issue contributes to understanding the workings of slow violence by drawing out its spatialities. Next, it forefronts critical feminist and anti-racist perspectives that are largely absent in Nixon's original account. And third, through engaging these approaches, the papers together employ an epistemological shift, uncovering hidden and multi-sited violences, that prioritises the accounts of those who experience and are most affected by slow violence.

The spatialities of slow violence

As signaled by our opening questions that focus on the intersectional politics of disposability, processes of dispossession frequently target both people and places. While Nixon doesn't have much to say about place, the authors here show from their work in various national settings that slow violence is always situated in historical and geographical contexts that affect and enable it (Coleman, 2007; Daley, 2008; Murrey, 2015; Peluso and Watts, 2000; Watts, 2013). The same is true of resistance to slow violence (see De Heredia, 2017; Federici, 2019; Mama, 2014; Piedalue, 2019). In Murrey's (2016) work on structural violence connected to the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, for example, she describes protracted and subvisible processes of 'slow dissent': the ways that collective emotional practices of survival and resistance persist in the face of multi-faceted power.

Foregrounding these aspects calls for deep exploration of people's lived experiences and narrations of slow violence, as active in contesting and reworking violence, rather than passive subjects of its force and impacts (Cahill and Pain, 2019). Such a framing raises questions of scale, where violence is co-constituted at sites of body, city, region, global simultaneously. Marston et al.'s (2005) proposal of a flat ontology of scale cautions against 'globe talk' - what Katz (2021) names as 'splanetary urbanization'- of the broad brushstroke analysis privileging spectacular violence that was predominant in political geography until quite recently (Christian and Dowler, 2019; Hyndman, 2003). Instead, the papers gathered in our social issue foreground an intimacy-geopolitics (Pain and Staeheli, 2014; Pratt and Rosner, 2006), as commensurate spheres and forces rather than in uneven relation. Calling attention to the hyphen of intimacy-geopolitics, Pain and Staeheli (2014) signal the supposed divide and the actual inseparability between violences. Violences that are made hidden and invisible, the harm these do, how and what they allow to go unnoticed or unaddressed, are at the heart of Nixon's slow violence thesis. But Nixon does not draw on the wealth of feminist and anti-racist scholarship that has been making these points for decades (Anzaldúa and Moraga, 1981; Christian and Dowler, 2019; Crenshaw, 1990; Daley, 2013; Davis, 1983; Gilmore, 2009; Hyndman, 2003; McKittrick, 2006; Mama, 2014; Pulido, 2000; Roberts, 1997; Smith, 1999).

The spatialities of slow violence, then, are multi-scalar and multi-sited, part and parcel of daily life, social relations, culture, and institutions. Perhaps we might imagine slow violence creeping, or even bleeding through spaces, through families, through soils and land, through urban fabrics, through economic decline, through austerity and disinvestments, impacting those communities the most who are already experiencing long histories of structural inequality. And where it occurs matters. Just as geography reveals it also conceals the dispossessions of uneven development of racial capitalism (Coleman, 2007; Harvey, 2006; Marable, 1983; Melamed, 2015; Pulido, 2017; Robinson, 2000; Rodney, 1972; Watts, 2013). Nixon (2011: 32) argues that the invisibility of slow violence facilitates the challenges of counter-mobilization, raising questions such as 'How do we both make slow violence visible yet also challenge the privileging of the visible?... Who gets to see, and from where? When

and how does such empowered seeing become normative? And what perspectives—not least those of the poor or women or the colonized—do hegemonic sight conventions of visuality obscure?' It is this last question that the papers collected here engage, complicating Nixon's thesis of invisibility, and centering the insights of those whose knowledge and visions are erased or otherwise marginalized (cf Cahill and Pain, 2019; Jones, 2019).

Perhaps we might understand slow violence not as invisible, but instead attend to how it is embedded and entrenched in place, lingering, extending the timeframe of targeted harm. Structural violences, intimate and institutional, layer up in particular places (Daley, 2008; Murrey, 2015). In her work on island detention centres, Alison Mountz (2017) uses the phrase 'affective eruptions' to describe how the impacts of past violence resurface, becoming visible and causing more harm at certain points, lying quietly meanwhile within the material fabric of place. Think too of the example of domestic abuse, a chronic and often escalating form of violence over many years, periodically erupting but whose presence is unremitting with stifling, controlling effect. The political geographies of home enable domestic violence to flourish (Brickell, 2020), to disappear it from public view while it dispossesses, making its targets homeless, metaphorically and literally.

Critical feminist and anti-racist perspectives on slow violence

Nixon's engagement with majority world postcolonial writer-activists to evidence slow violence distinguishes him from the myopic ethnocentrism of 'global' environmental critiques that privilege western, white perspectives. And yet, his neglect of Black, antiracist, decolonial and feminist theoretical work in his conceptualization of slow violence is a significant erasure (Cahill and Pain, 2019; Christian and Dowler, 2019). In political geography, the longstanding feminist and antiracist corrective to divert the gaze from singular spectacular violences is beginning to be heard, even if not always acknowledged. Feminist, decolonizing and antiracist critiques attend to the blatant disregard of violence in intimate and domestic domains, the way these intersect with other political violences, and the whiteness of analysis (Cuomo, 2013; Daley, 2008; Federici, 2019; Fluri and Piedalue, 2017; Gilmore, 2009; Holmes, 2009). The significant insights of Black and Indigenous geographies in producing historically-rooted intersectional accounts of political violence and structural inequalities as a condition of life still too often go unacknowledged (Eaves, 2020; Gilmore, 2017; McKittrick, 2011; McKittrick and Woods, 2007; Smith, 1999; Woods and Gilmore, 2017). More recently, feminist and BIPOC geographers have engaged critically with slow violence, extending analysis to new fields of inquiry, deploying it as a tool for identifying violent racializing processes (Cahill et al., 2019a; Hyndman, 2019; Jones, 2019, Tagle, 2019) as well as gendered violence (Christian and Dowler, 2019).

An epistemological shift

What counts as violence? How do we narrate and theorize formations of slow violence? And, significantly, who narrates accounts of violence? Related to this, whose accounts are silenced, and who speaks on behalf of whom? If we want to uncover hidden and multi-sited violences, and uplift those forms of resistance that may also be concealed, an epistemological shift is required. Centering the stories of those directly affected by slow violence raises significant questions of representation and positionality. As Naya Jones argues:

> By assuming slow violence is invisible or unfolds 'out of sight', Nixon suggests. . .'a stable (white, patriarchal, heterosexual, classed) vantage point' (McKittrick, 2006, xiv). From this dominant

perspective, Black geographies are rendered hidden and invisibilized; they are rendered 'out of sight' and out of place.
(Jones, 2019, 1081)

If then, we are to challenge the invisibility and extended temporality that defines slow violence (according to Nixon), we need an epistemological approach that shifts the gaze, considering *where* we see from. Centering questions of positionality and location, we draw upon feminist standpoint theories and theories of intersectionality (Harding, 2004; McKittrick, 2006; Sundberg, 2014). Who is seeing and who is unseen (cf. Cahill and Pain, 2019)?

Privileging the vantage point of those who are most affected by slow violence represents an epistemological commitment to situated knowledge, and honoring of insights into the relationships between the complex interleaving of everyday lived experiences with broader structures (see Murrey, 2015; Wright, 2011). Fluri and Piedalue (2017, 536) made a similar call for interrogation of how 'embodied experiences reveal the relational production of geopolitical and geo-economic violence through systematic and institutional forms of oppression'.

Challenging the inevitability or immutability of violence, how might we articulate slow violence in ways that uplift and make visible forms of resistance as lived, contested and disruptive? Heeding Eve Tuck's (2009) call to 'suspend damage', an epistemological shift calls upon political geographies of violence that go beyond fetishizing and objectifying victimization. Refusing an epistemological bystanding that further stigmatizes, this approach focuses upon how resistance is informed and produced on the ground by those who are most impacted by slow violence (McKittrick, 2011; Nagar, 2014; Tuck, 2009). This has methodological implications. How might research document not only slow violence but also the potential for alternative futures? Grounded methodologies, located in the places of violence and across the networks of its gradual dispersal, provide a means for those experiencing it to articulate how they endure, navigate, and respond. Most contributors to this collection have engaged qualitative methods and historical methods in their research, whether biographical interviews or tracing crises back in time to expose their hidden roots. We are inspired by methods that counter Eurocentric perspectives on violence and decenter whiteness (Johnson, 2020; Sundberg, 2014; Sweet and Escalante, 2017 and encouraged by creative methods that address the challenge of representing Nixon's 'vigorously unimagined' populations (Olson, 2019). Elsewhere, we have argued for arts-based approaches that produce representations of violence that go beyond language, capable of a deeper articulation and alerting audiences through emotional and embodied registers (Cahill and Pain, 2019; Cahill et al., 2019b; Nagar, 2019). In addition, participatory epistemologies and community-based research attend to the urgent questions as defined by those most impacted by slow violence, and take action towards responding, resisting, and repairing (Cahill and Pain, 2019; Jones, 2019; Murrey, 2015; Nagar, 2014, 2019; Ritterbusch, 2019; Sandwick et al., 2018; Stoudt et al., 2019; Torre et al., 2017).

The papers

The concept of slow violence has received considerable attention and critique across the humanities and social sciences, including geographers who have subjected the idea to critical analysis in fields beyond Nixon's focus on environmental injustice (see Cahill and Pain, 2019; Cahill et al., 2019a; De Leuuw, 2016; Hyndman, 2019; Kern, 2016; O'Lear, 2016; Pain, 2019). The six papers here are brought together to demonstrate the contributions that slow

violence can make to political geographies. Highlighting and also expanding from Nixon's focus on the temporalities of violence, the papers begin to map out how the scales, spaces and places of slow violence are created and sustained. The papers bring into dialogue accounts of the slow violences of global restructuring, neoliberalism, racial capitalism and patriarchy, engaging and building upon critical perspectives including feminism, anti-racism, anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism to understand the politics of slow violence. The collection offers close analysis of the slow violences of pollution, online abuse, migrant border crossings, the opioid crisis, rural dispossession, and gender-based violence, in diverse sites from India to rural Russia to the southern USA to the Turkish/Greek maritime border. At the same time, the special issue places emphasis on resistance, interrogating how we might engage in political action to challenge slow violence in all of its manifestations. And, as we review the papers now, knee deep in the Covid 19 crisis, we consider how the insights of the papers might be valuable in understanding and challenging forms of slow violence that are only now being identified, as well as those that are more widely discussed.

First, Amy Piedalue's paper proposes the idea of 'slow nonviolence' as a means of resistance and transformation. She undertakes a transnational analysis of how grassroots women's organisations tackle interlocking and intersectional forms of violence, including gender-based, anti-Muslim and institutional violence. Through a comparison of organizations in India and the USA, Piedalue shows how space shapes experiences and perceptions of the visibility, embodiment and politics of violence. Piedalue proposes the notion of 'slow nonviolence', which is as long-term, layered, quiet and diffuse as the object that it resists. Piedalue explains: 'slow nonviolence shifts attention to less visible and somewhat quieter spaces of anti-violence struggle, thereby demanding critical engagement with the ideas and world-making authored by those working to undo violence and cultivate peace *with* justice.' Not an alternative to state action on violence through the criminal justice system, slow nonviolence is intended to sit alongside; effective resistance is both slow and fast, both large-scale and piecemeal. Furthermore, strategies of nonviolence are place-based, rooted in local experience and belonging. Piedalue argues that the differences between places are worthy of attention, and that focusing on 'the substance of collective, everyday life' helps us to discern entanglements of power. Her own work achieves this through ethnographies of strengths-based, place-based actions and practices.

Rachel Brydolf-Horwitz's paper grapples with Nixon's assertion that slow violence is invisible, arguing that it is 'spatial distinctions', *where* violence occurs, that hide it even when it is in plain sight (Cahill and Pain, 2019). Her research on online harassment and bullying highlights the hierarchical separation of the virtual and the real. Online violence experienced by young people who are positioned in particular ways (feminized, racialized, transgender, queer and indigenous youth) quickly gets labelled as 'unfounded, not serious, or typical adolescent behaviour'. Violences that appear to be similar may have uneven impacts, compounding bullying and structural marginalisation, experienced as slow violence for some and not others. Further, Brydolf-Horwitz considers that responses to online harassment are often ineffective, reproducing initial violence and even constituting further forms of slow violence. She argues that terms such as 'cyberbullying', for example, trivialize and downplay its violent effects. Recognition of these material effects is 'a critical step in generating accountability, as well as support and resources for those targeted'. Her paper also demonstrates the potential of more grounded methodologies that attend to the experience and embodiment of violence, and cautions that we exercise care when demonstrating violence to be violence, if we are not to risk reproducing it.

Thom Davies' work on the toxic geographies of pollution in 'Cancer Alley' in the southern USA extends Nixon's discussion of a globally inequitable distribution of labour, wherein

environmentally harmful industries are concentrated with marginalised communities. Harm is outsourced, and the consequences compound the uneven geographies of risk. Drawing on Laura Pulido's work on environmental racism and Katherine McKittrick's conception of the continuities of racial entanglement, Davies shares how today's petrochemical plants are often on the sites of plantations. The paper forefronts residents' analysis in which they connect pollution to historic racist violence. While Nixon views the 'downwinding' of dispersal as invisible, Davies finds (like Brydolf-Horwitz in her paper) that the effects of the toxic landscapes of Cancer Alley are not 'out of sight', as pollution has a material presence that is witnessed in everyday life. Even when stories of slow violence are told, they do not necessarily count; it depends upon who is doing the telling, who is witnessing. For Davies, long term ethnographic research provides a counterpoint to large scale quantitative studies of environmental injustice, offering the chance to unpack the 'toxic biographies' of residents 'living slowly with pollution' over time. Treading carefully, Davies suggests, we must 'find the right words to convey the lived experience of slow suffering, without falling into the representative traps set by our disciplines' collective colonial inheritance'.

Next, Paul Jackson and Caitlin Henry engage slow violence to analyse the deadly and escalating epidemic of opioid addiction in the United States. Drawing on Lauren Berlant's (2007) notions of slow death and crisis ordinariness, they argue that the problem is properly viewed as a long-term crisis rather than an epidemic once light is shed on 'invisible' processes. These include the daily struggles of those with chronic pain; they deploy the idea of 'crip time' from crip theory to describe 'the extra time and energy needed to move through daily life, especially when ableist barriers slow people down'. Further, the lack of investment and further destabilization of the US healthcare system by the current government are accelerating the crisis. Tracing its political ecologies, Jackson and Henry discuss the long history of the crisis going back to the 1990s that is obscured by contemporary media reporting. Further, the spatial and racial politics of opioid addiction frame the discourse of this crisis as one of health, rather than criminality. In this case, slow violence helps to frame the question as one of whose pain is visible and worthy of investment?

Estela Schindel's paper on forced migrants' experiences of crossing the Turkish-Greek border into the European Union examines the slow unfolding of violence through the border regime assemblage. Her interviews with migrants and 'micro-sociological observations' were originally focused on the border crossing, but what her participants describe are much longer, slower violent processes, changing the research framing. Expanding 'beyond geopolitical borders and reaches the huge surfaces of un-protection where persons in transit are exposed to the direct violence of abandonment in the open', her paper juxtaposes spectacular migrant deaths at the border with the long, visceral ordeals of migrants enroute to Europe. In the ways that this suffering is represented in popular media and policy discourses, blame is often displaced onto Nature; the physical environment, topography and weather are framed as pre-political and neutral, while at the same time being actively mobilized into the politics of the border. Understanding past journeys in order to comprehend migrants' present is thus an important methodological strategy in uncovering the complex of slow violence.

Finally, exploring related epistemological challenges, in his research on dispossession in rural Russia Alexander Vorbrugg also approaches slow violence as a problem to work through rather than to find. Arguing for more attention to the 'multi-temporalities' of knowledge, he asks how ethnographic method might rise to the challenge of drawn-out and complex timescapes of violence and loss. Dispossession becomes known gradually through his research, as a slow and piecemeal dispersal of effects that are at once mundane and deadly. Vorbrugg takes a lead from his participants, who theorize violence as ruins:

decaying buildings and infrastructure are used as heuristic devices to describe long processes of deprivation. Like the other papers in this collection, Vorbrugg's account of these processes brings to mind Nixon's discussion of ecologies of the aftermath, a framing of the dispersal of harm that is at once temporal and spatial, but Vorbrugg pushes further to question what he calls the 'representational landscape' of slow violence, acknowledging the conditions of normalisation and ambivalence that often prevail around it. Reflecting the epistemological concerns of other contributors to this issue, Vorbrugg argues for researchers and participants to forge alliances to confront violence, as 'the relative elusiveness of slow violence must not invite or legitimize the return of the epistemologically privileged academic subject studying and giving voice to the subjugated "other"'.

Conclusion: Spatializing resistance to slow violence

> It was like an electrical charge of power was running through me. My immediate thoughts were for the enslaved people who died at the hands of Colston and to give them power. I wanted to give George Floyd power, I wanted to give power to Black people like me who have suffered injustices and inequality. A surge of power out to them all.
> Jen Reid, July 15, 2020

In the context of current global events, especially the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and global resistance against racist and imperialist violence (Rodriguez, 2021; Taylor, 2020),
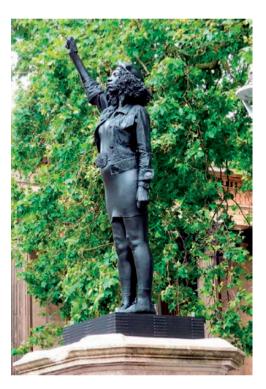

Figure 2. Black Lives Matter protestor: statue of Jen Reid by Marc Quinn Photo credit: Sam Saunders, Bristol - This Should Be Cast In Bronze, CC BY-SA 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=92294018

Nixon's conceptualization of slow violence feels relevant. This collection of papers reveals that the political geographies of slow violence require critical engagement surrounding not only which violent histories are variously erased or foregrounded, forgotten or memorialised; but how those histories and their ongoing legacies are witnessed, articulated, and recorded, and by whom.

To conclude, we circle back to the questions about the spatialities and temporalities of violence we raised at the start of this paper. Tracing a counter-topography of slow violence over time, we focused in on Witton Park, a tiny corner of the world, to understand the relationships between state violence, the politics of disposability, austerity, and whiteness in working class North East England. Attending to the spatialities of resistance and slow violence, we travel to the other end of England, and consider another statue that reflects the concerns of the global uprisings against racism and white supremacy. Figure 2 shows a statue of the Black Lives Matter protester Jen Reid by artist Marc Quinn, erected overnight as protest art at the site of the toppling of a statue of Edward Colston, a slave trader in Bristol, UK. Colston was a Member of Parliament in the early 18th Century, and a trafficker of enslaved Africans, profiting from the Royal African Company's sale of more than 80,000 African people into bondage. A monument to the brutality and violence of racial capitalism, Colston's statue was a testament to complicity past and present. Pulled down and dumped in the river by Black Lives Matter protestors in June 2020, the toppling of the statue was condemned by politicians from both ruling and opposition political parties, forcing a reckoning and public dialogue about not only the UK's racist past but also its present, and the structures of white supremacy that prevail across time and space.

We reflect on the historiographies that can be connected through the juxtaposition of 'Marra', the statue of the coalminer (Figure 1) whose heart broke at the death of Northern England's mining industry after the prolonged and bitter strikes of the 1980s, and the statue of Jen Reid, the Black Lives Matter protester (Figure 2). While perhaps 'Marra' speaks more of despair and 'Jen Reid' of hope, both stand as memories and markers of healing historic trauma, reimagining who is commemorated, and giving public recognition to survival and resistance against violence, slow and entrenched. The spatialities matter. 'Marra' is sited in a picturesque park, itself an amenity funded by community voluntarism to counter the health effects of the coal industry and the poor housing it provided. 'Jen Reid' was sited in Bristol city centre, a wealthy but segregated city built on the foundation of slavery. Both are strikingly unusual statues for the UK, where parks, squares and public buildings are punctuated with representations of the rich and powerful, often funded historically by their sponsors, friends or from their own wealth. While 'Marra' was erected in 2015 by the local Parish Council, 'Jen Reid' was placed on Colston's empty plinth without permission and taken down by Bristol City Council almost immediately, illuminating significant differences not only in state-sanctioned violence, but state-sanctioned - and state-censored - stories, reflecting the politics of (in)visibility and intersections of race and class that are at the heart of slow violence. Signaling the monumental reckoning and structural transformation necessary to address slow violence, the statues raise questions about context, spatiality and temporality that the authors in this special issue contend with: how do we create a critically-engaged political geography informed by the perspectives and experiences of those who are most affected by violence? And, how do we represent this? As McKittrick asks, how might we 'foster a commitment to acknowledging violence and undoing its persistent frame rather than simply analytically reprising violence?' (McKittrick, 2014, 18)? Grappling with these questions might, we hope, offer a role for scholars to consider how our work might contribute towards healing, and a more peaceful, less harmful future.

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