A geography of preposition

Book review essay inspired by Christian Abrahamsson (2018) *Topoi/Graphein: Mapping the Middle in Spatial Thought*

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ABSTRACT: This is an extended book review essay considering Christian Abrahamsson's impressive 2018 monograph *Topo/Graphein: Mapping the Middle in Spatial Thought*. It argues that, rather than addressing 'a geography of position', this work explores 'a geography of preposition', showing how topographies of position (of identities, peoples and places in the world) is always inextricably shaped by topologies of preposition, elsewhere termed 'the shapes of thought'. The essay inquires into the intellectual framings of this 'prepositional geophilosophy', noting what it owes to Gunnar Olsson, the Swedish geographer, but also suggesting that its most distinctive moves are prompted by Michel Serres, the French philosopher. The abstract geometries of Olsson and the patchwork topologies of Serres mark complementary, if occasionally tensioned, 'passages' into the prepositional landscapes that Abrahamsson navigates through *topoi* ('topics') subjected to his *graphein* ('writing'). The essay emphasises the scholarly and ethico-political significance of this compelling new addition to the literature of human geography and related fields.

KEYWORDS: topology, topography, topoi, graphein, prepositions, positions, geographical thought

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Introduction: from positions to prepositions

In 1993 Peter Jackson authored a chapter with the subtitle 'a geography of position', arguing for a reorientation of academic geography around 'an alternative geographical vocabulary, where words like 'margin' and 'position' take on a new significance' (Jackson 1993, 200). Disputing conventional scientific models of 'authority' in academic inquiry from feminist and anti-racist 'standpoints', Jackson called for 'the recognition of how 'we', as geographers, are ourselves 'placed' in terms of the ever-changing social relations of power,' prompting 'us' to 'recognis[e] our own *positionality* with respect to the fundamental inequalities of gender, 'race' and class" (Jackson 1993, 200, 201; original emphasis). While the emphasis here was indeed on geographers attuning to their own position(alitie)s, potentially 'changing ourselves' in the process, a broader alertness to the position(alitie)s of all humans, individually held and collectively negotiated, was also announced (Philo *et al*, 2020). Such an emphasis had been emerging for some time, as the subdisciplines of social and cultural geography increasingly tackled questions of identity (and identity politics), discourse, power and the spatial articulations of class, gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, (dis)ability, (ill)health and myriad other possible 'positions' in the pantheon of human difference (eg. England 1994; McDowell 1992; Rose 1997). A vocabulary of positionality, jam-packed with spatial metaphors (centres, margins, core, peripheries, zones, borders, boundaries, flows, circuits, relays, and more) understood as at least partially grounded in 'real' material-spatial settings (Reynolds 2004; Smith and Katz 1993), became the staple of the 'cultural turn' across human geography and into the wider social sciences and arts/humanities (Cook *et al* 2000). Such a vocabulary has recently been augmented by the addition of ideas and words capturing 'intersectionalities' between positionalities, extending

Jackson's vision for a geography of position in ways still more dizzyingly relational, complicated and complicating (eg. Hopkins 2019; Mitchell 2014; Silvey and Bissonnette 2014; Valentine 2007).

In 2018 Christian Abrahamsson published his pioneering monograph, *Topoi/Graphein: Mapping the Middle in Spatial Thought* (henceforth *T/G*: **Figure 1**), which I suggest could also have been subtitled 'a geography of preposition'. In this major work, Abrahamsson pushes attention back from the immediacy of how positionalities are known, represented, defended, asserted and otherwise manifested in the everyday fuss-and-bother of the human world, stalking it instead into the foggy pre-regions — some might term it the 'unconscious' — of (Western) thought wherein the very grounds for positioning — for things acquiring substance, form and hence positions relative to other things — may hesitatingly, fleetingly, be spied, surveyed and 'mapped'. It is not that positionalities after Jackson cease to matter, far from it, and, notably in its engagement with films, *T/G* contains much that speaks to identity-riven socio-cultural geographies of migration, ethnicity, urbanism, childhoods, colonialism, imperialism, warfare, violence and more. In that sense, *T/G* is very much *in* the world, concerned *for* the world and agitating for a critical stance *on* this world and its iniquitous, damaging ways. That said, its intellectual searchlight chiefly scans for what might be christened *prepositionalities*: for the shadowlands out of which positionalities both emerge — where the preconditions for positionings reside, set by the obscure logics of how things and their identities gradually become ascribed — and back into which, under certain extreme worldly circumstances, such positionalities may sometimes submerge — deforming, distorting, disintegrating back into nothingness. This is a rather different register of geography to that specified by Jackson: it might be deemed a 'philosophical geography' (Bingham and Thrift 2000, 289, 290) whose task is to excavate the spaces of thought as much as to take seriously the thinking of space, in the spirit of which it is prepositions, not the positions that they enable and nourish, coming to take centre-stage. The book's most immediate intellectual muse is the body of work by Gunnar Olsson, the spatial-scientist-turned-poet-and-jester, Abrahamsson's mentor and preface-writer for *T/G*, and an aspect of my essay will necessarily entail situating *T/G* in relation to Olsson's accomplishments. Arguably, though, a second muse, in small ways perhaps undercutting the first, is Michel Serres, the French philosopher of science, arts, history, fable and myth. The purpose of what follows is hence to explore aspects of Abrahamsson's book, particularly its concern for prepositionalities, and thereby to establish its special place within a wider critical-intellectual universe.

***Topoi/Graphein*: challenges, concerns, contents**

T/G is indeed a philosophical geography[1] of prepositions, wrestling — intellectually, ethically, affectively — with how the 'stuff' of the world is 'named': how it is disclosed, distinguished, delimited and described by those occupants of planet Earth, human beings, with their peculiar propensity to notice and to name the things amongst which they dwell. They — or, rather, 'we' — seemingly do differ from our earthly co-dwellers in being, as Olsson frequently characterises us, 'semiotic animals' who cannot but strive to make sense of the world around us, thereby performing the deceptively simple act of naming: of translating 'things' into 'words' or, better, of ascertaining that there *are* things whose differences from one another can be acknowledged with words (through the human capacity for thought, speech and, at some later-evolutionary stage, writing). Although Abrahamsson does not stress this point — his pursuit of 'origin stories' is less marked than is true of the

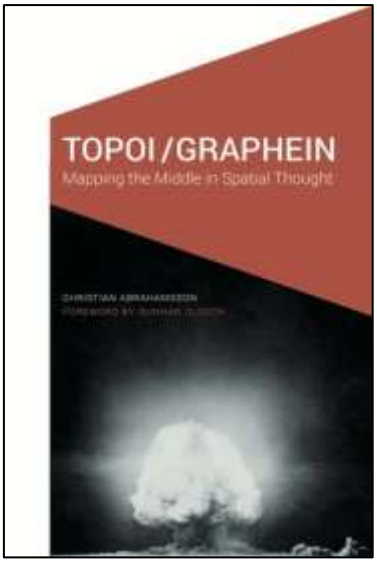

Figure 1: Front Cover of Abrahamsson (2018)

later Olsson (2007, 2020) — at issue here is how a prior formless chaos of shapes, textures, colours, flesh, bone, rock, fire, water, cloud, stars, moon, sun and more begins to be tamed, ordered and captured by the vocalisations (the sounds) and then inscriptions (the marks-on-parchment-or-paper) that progressively isolate and define the components of this chaos. In Olssonian terms, what matters is the difference that starts to make a difference; the forms that can be re-formed in another 'substance': from things to words, from flesh to names, from materials to discourses, and so on — there are many possible constructions of what occurs in this respect — all as the starting-point in the great game of 'ontological transformations', to deploy a favourite Olssonian term, whereby something magical keeps happening, the mysterious alchemy through which sizeable groupings of humans agree to apply the same uttered names ('subsistence') to the same phenomena ('existence'). At the heart of this alchemy there are the above-mentioned logics of how things are identified, the logics of how things acquire identities in order to differentiate them from — and at the same time to relate them back to — apparently quite other things: in short, the logics of prepositioning. Such are the logics, at least as they have sedimented themselves in the 'unsaid' of Western thought influenced by such world-historical forces as Judeo-Christianity, Ancient Greek learning, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, capitalism and globalisation.

Here is how Abrahamsson explains his understanding of prepositions:

> We have already noted the importance of the preposition for our ability to fix and comprehend the relations expressed in the image.[2] Their primary importance is evident in the word *pre*position itself. Without prepositions it would be impossible to find one's way in the world. It is through this part of speech that language and thought become structured like a map of the human terrain. At the same time, it is in the nature of the preposition that it occurs prior to any fixation of words into subject and object, in-between uncertainty and certainty, difference and identity. This function gives the preposition a paradoxical standing; it becomes a pendulum that simultaneously hovers between two extremes. (*T/G* xxiii, original emphasis)

The claim here is that prepositions are crucial for orientating *where* people understand themselves to be and how they might find their 'way in the world', but what also becomes apparent is how Abrahamsson wishes constantly to be shifting between what might, with

caveats, be cast as the topologies of preposition and the topographies of position: between the abstract spaces in/of thought that *logically* preposition the 'image' of X in relation to that of Y, on the one hand, and the concrete spaces in/of the world that *materially* position the 'object' X in relation to that of Y, on the other. Initially, I supposed that precisely this shift was indexed in the book's title, *Topoi/Graphein*,[3] as a play on the distinction between, on the one hand, 'topo' (dropping the crucial 'i') indexing 'topology' and, on the other, *graphein*, as in the Greek verb 'to write', the latter suggesting the act of writing — identifying, locating, re-presenting — the 'topo' into the world (so topology becomes topography). Looking more carefully, however, I realise that, insofar as the logic here for Abrahamsson obtains in anything like the manner of my initial depiction, it works in reverse between the two terms of *T/G*, as I will explain shortly. Moreover, I also realise that the bottom-line distinctions being discerned by Abrahamsson might alternatively be cast as between the geometries (not topologies) of preposition and the geographies (not topographies) of position, a distinction that I used previously in discussing and critiquing Olsson's work (Philo 1994, 2009) *and* had initially envisaged reworking here with respect to *T/G*. But, again, looking more carefully at Abrahamsson's approach to topology — notably when appreciating what *T/G* owes to the 'topologies' of Serres, themselves distanced from geometry (see below) — I now detect crucial differences between the perspectives held respectively by Abrahamsson and Olsson. I have deliberately not edited out the sense — above and at points below — of my own confused unravelling and then hesitant re-ravelling of *T/G*, since it stages key questions for how the book should be read and its significance judged.

Abrahamsson is clear that prepositions 'occur', or perhaps better do their operational work, antecedent to the 'fixation' of words, the ascribing of names, that delimits subjects and/from objects in the great play of identity and difference: they are the prime labourers in the realm of the topological. Yet their labours here are not inoculated from more worldly influences, given that thought — Western thought, as caveated by both Abrahamsson and Olsson — cannot but itself be a thoroughly human construct, shaped by the *longue durée* of human history, as already noted. That said, tracking this longer-term sedimentation of world into thought, even into the most abstract lineaments of how thought *is* thought, is much more Olsson's project than Abrahamsson's.[4] For the latter, though, there remains a strong Olssonian emphasis on the 'paradox' arising because prepositional fixings are always, inevitably, accompanied by, or hedged around, with uncertainties, instabilities and failures. They are constantly mocked by the messiness of worldly positions, ever in flux and dispute, so that the originating fixes are always liable to become unfixed, causing prepositional projections to be repositioned, likely in ways unappreciated and unacknowledged by the peoples involved. Thus, the prepositions with which *T/G* is concerned must not be taken as iron grids, forever dictating the geography of position on the ground between people, classes, ethnicities, genders, sexualities and more, but instead seen as mutable girders that can bend, deform and reform, or scaffolding that can be taken down and then re-erected. Much of the substantive case study material covered in *T/G* is indeed precisely about such re-(pre)-positioning, as migrants, children and military officers enter into 'transpositions' (*T/G* xxv) that subtly, but sometimes devastatingly, reconvene both their abstract prepositions and their worldly positions. The topologies of preposition probably mutate more slowly than do the topographies of position, however, in that prepositionally X cannot so easily — in logic — become Y (eg. 'child' transposes into 'adult') as positionally *x* can become *y* (eg. a particular child can dress up and act as a particular

adult, and be received as such, in certain situations).[5] In the latter scenario, the widely accepted presuppositional differentiation between X ('child') and Y ('adult') — the latter standing 'higher' in the accepted order of power and influence — would likely be re-imposed, as it were, if the particular child's positional impersonation of an adult was uncovered, a simple instance of how the presuppositional 'angle of power' (*T/G* xvii) functions.

To this end, as stated at the outset, Abrahamsson indeed sets his account at least partially *in* the clamour of the world, which is where the intended meaning of the book's title, rather than my initially inferred meaning, slips into sharper focus. Here, then, *topoi* (retrieving the crucial 'i') indicate, from Greek origins, specific themes, often found crossing disparate works of art and literature, suggesting them to have substantive, worldly qualities that can readily be *placed* in the world and, indeed, are best discussed in, from and with reference to those places: 'The term *topoi* (from the Greek for 'place' or 'turn') is a metaphor introduced by Aristotle to characterise the 'places' where a speaker or writer may 'locate' arguments that are appropriate to a given subject' (Nordquist, 2020, no pagination; original emphasis). Abrahamsson's construction of *topoi/graphein* thus alludes to both 'placed' subject-matters being written through — arguments being grounded, abstractions concretised — and 'places' from which substantive materials potentially rebound back into how what is written gets written. This movement between themes and arguments, ground and ideas, is sedimented into the structure of *T/G*, wherein each of the three Parts forming the heart of the book conjoins an investigation of *topoi*, or 'themes' soaked in worldly 'stuff' (bodies, passions, events, conversations, violence and the bumpy geographies of cities, islands and jungles) with what Abrahamsson describes as 'the *graphein* of my own interpretations' (*T/G* xxiv), meaning his reflections on how prior codings (more-or-less shared by human participants in the worldly 'stuff') of space, time, form and content are progressively made and unmade. In the terms suggested above, the *topoi* of each Part deal in topographical positions while the *graphein* explores topological presuppositions, albeit always with the two entangling together, but the reverse of my initial understanding of the book's title.

The *topoi* ensure that the press of the world, its proliferating beings, things and places, is foregrounded and detailed throughout *T/G*, not left dangling as an afterthought once the book's philosophical labours have been largely completed. These *topoi* emerge chiefly through excerpts (scripts and images) from three films, *Code inconnu*, *Lord of the Flies* and *Apocalypse Now*, portraying multiple, vexed and sometimes contradictory ways in which human characters — clearly distinguishable persons inhabiting and chaffing against socially allotted positions (father, director, leader, actor, refugee, fugitive, and more) — trace and track their ways through the 'spaces' of the world. Each of the three central Parts of the book majors on one of these *topoi*-threads, while Abrahamsson's *graphein* operate between the substantive excerpts, confronting their mucky topographies with philosophically-charged topological excursions orientated around the three spatial figures of 'Point', 'Line' and 'Plane'. Tellingly, in the Part titles these spatial figures are represented as 'Crossroads', 'Passages' and 'The Event', coupled respectively with the three film titles, immediately contouring the abstract spatial figures ('Point', etc.) with worldly content, creating what might even be cast as topological-topographical hybrids.[6] Similar moves are signalled by individual chapter titles — each part contains five chapters — that suggest, among other allusions, both tangible spatial states or forms (eg. 'wall/stone', '*terra firma*',

'desert', 'fire/*terra nullis*', 'river/cloud', 'darkness', 'abyss') and more abstracted spatial moves or relations (eg. 'when above', 'limits', 'swerve', 'through', 'division', 'in-between'). The references here might *all* be framed as spatial prepositions, as in *pre*-positions that (chrono)logically precede concrete positions as 'worlded', but my reading is that Abrahamsson intends for them all to be taken, individually or in their couplets,[7] as unavoidably co-mingling the topological and the topographical. Nonetheless, to reiterate, each of the three central Parts of the book does major on one overarching abstract spatiality: the first is 'Point', meaning the Euclidian, often couched as geometrical, 'fixed point' that serves or strives to fix, to stabilise, everything 'in the taken-for-granted space of identity thinking' (*T/G* xxv); the second is 'Line', the connector or indeed relation between points that offers another, if more uncertain, changeable and challengeable, way of stabilising the play of identities '*through* a social world in which the spatiotemporal transformations are neither fixed nor taken-for-granted' (*T/G* xxv: original emphasis); and the third is 'Plane', where 'there is the horror of neither fixed-points nor relations', presented here as 'a pure temporality [but I might add also spatiality] that lies beyond the maps of fixed points and social relations' (*T/G* xxv).

Unleashing the dash: a new 'linear operator'?

With these opening remarks, I am claiming — if over-simplifying matters — that *T/G* swivels continually between the prepositional and the positional, between the topological and the topographical. My grasp of *T/G* is that, in effect, Abrahamsson's ambition is to situate his analyses within the 'space' in-between these respective pairings, even as a journey of sorts occurs through the book from the relative comfort of topology grounded, however messily, in topography ('Point') to the extreme horrors of topology all but entirely unanchored from topography ('Plane'). It is in this sense that I receive the book's subtitle, *Mapping the Middle in Spatial Thought*, and most obviously detect the echoes of Olsson's own sustained expeditions into the strange lands of the 'excluded middle'. Recalling but reworking Olsson's efforts to inhabit what might be termed the various 'linear operators'[8] of Western thought — the equals sign (=), the dialectical slash (/), the Saussurian bar (—) — Abrahamsson probes the mysteries of 'the pendulum' that swings from the prepositional to the positional (and, at the same time, from certainty to uncertainty and back again). For Olsson (1980, 1991, 2007; Philo 2007), probably *the* most telling transformation occurs when X = Y, when 'we' are persuaded that idea or object X is essentially the same as idea or object Y, which in strict logical terms is of course an informative 'lie' (X cannot logically *be* Y) unlike the uninformative 'truth' that either X = X (X logically *is* X) or X ≠ Y (X logically is *not* Y). The 'middle' that gets excluded here is everything that is lost by the actions of = and indeed of ≠: all that may be specific or peculiar to X and to Y, but which is thrown away, abandoned, when X is presented as the same as Y; or, as a corollary, all that may be held in common by both X and Y, a little fraction of each hiding in the other, but which is forgotten about, ignored, when X is presented as wholly different from Y.[9] This is the middle that is 'silenced', wherein Olsson frequently detects the sinister doings of power, the 'social space of silence' (Olsson 1991, 108-123).

Abrahamsson cleaves to a not dissimilar perspective, but he arguably remains less abstract(ed) than Olsson, less attached to the 'high modernism' (Philo 1994) of philosophising about Western logic and its prepositional absurdities, displaying instead a more concret(ised) attention to what becomes both obscured and (often problematically) enabled during the shuttling in-between prepositions and positions. The 'middle' here is

the condensed, cluttered, confused realm where X's (and x's) and Y's (and y's) become crazily admixed: the shadowy middling realm where so many subterranean, power-laden pendulum-swings of identity and difference normally stay unknown, unnoticed, unexamined. Much hinges on how, early in his book, Abrahamsson considers one of the infamous Abu Graib prison-complex[10] images emerging from Iraq under the US-led 'occupation' of the mid-2000s:

> A rope, a woman, a man, a camera — a leash, a soldier, a prisoner, a camera — a noose, a torturer, a tortured, a camera. How can we make sense of these words? What is it that makes possible the transformations expressed in the image? How can we make sense of the spaces that, at the same time, connect and disconnect the forms of the image — from human *to* thing, from thing *to* dog, from dog *to* torturer, from torturer *to* human? What does the image show us? Levi's question returns, form unaltered, its meaning shifted: If this is a man? The series of nouns cannot make sense of the relations taking place in the image. Separated, there is nothing in these significations that can help us to make sense of the relations. Missing from the series of distinct and delimited nouns are the prepositions that connect them — in between, in front of, behind, under, above. (*T/G* xviii)

There is mention here of Primo Levi's haunting question, asked from the depths of Auschwitz, about how, 'if this,' a Jewish death camp inmate, 'is a human,' such atrocities can still be committed on their body and being (Levi 1991)? Or, conversely, the question becomes how the human in this context, placed in this assemblage of injurious spaces (Kearns, 2014; also Carter-Wight, 2012), becomes in effect the non-human or Giorgio Agamben's *homo sacer* or 'bare life' (Agamben 1998; Ek 2006; Minca 2005, 2006[11])? What terrible alchemy — and remember that Levi, as a chemist, was well aware of alchemy (Levi 1984) — could enable the human to become the non-human, for X indeed to become Y (and at the same time for the particular named human x to become the particular y now unnamed or, rather, for whom the singular name [Primo, maybe] ceases to be of any account: see also Endnote 5).

For Abrahamsson, the answer lies in the 'series' — a revealing term for him to deploy, as we will see — of nouns that are bound, I might say 'leashed', together in the passage just quoted. It lies in the 'transformations' occurring 'from human *to* thing' and more: in how one thing, denoted by a noun, mashes, moulds or melts into another thing, denoted by another noun, so that X's/x's become (are prepositioned 'as if' they are) Y's/y's. In Olsson's notations, at issue is that logical impossibility where X become Y, the alchemical switch critically investigated through his linear operators referenced earlier. Arguably, however, Abrahamsson probes such transformations using a rather *different* kind of linear operator: one given by the hyphen or, better, the dash as less formal, or at least less geometrically or semiotically formalised, punctuation marks within textual (not mathematical or logical) languages. A hyphen (-) connects words or parts of words to make new compounds, hybrids perhaps, while a dash (—), a longer line, separates words or clauses while at the same time flagging the continuities between these words or clauses.[12] One source 'says the word *dash* comes from the Middle English word *dasshen*, which probably derives from the Middle French term *dachier,* meaning 'to impel forward'' (Nordquist 2019, no pagination), nicely indicating both separation and a variety of connection that might be cast as a flowing of the thing 'behind' into the thing 'in-front' (and note the prepositions here). It is hence the dash that most intrigues me, and, while he never explicitly frames his approach as one wedded to the dash, I sense that, whereas Olsson particularly seeks to inhabit the 'limits'

within equals sign, Abrahamsson is instead (or also) engaging with the 'limits' within — or, perhaps better, with the limits continually transgressed by — the operations of the dash. Returning later in his book to the Abu Ghraib image, for instance, he initially suggests that the 'leash' here exposes the problematic of the equals sign — it 'first presented itself as 'is', but in reality is an 'as if'' — and so here, rather than equality, 'the leash … chains together incommensurable identities in a perverse instance of togetherness' (*T/G* 14). Dash and leash, therefore: reading 'between the lines', perhaps the key monstrous coupling for what follows in *T/G*.

To return to the passage above, it contains dashes and, by my account, both the commas between many of the nouns recited therein (eg. between 'a rope, a woman') or the 'from and to' constructions (eg. 'from human *to* thing') might be replaced with dashes: with this punctuation mark 'impelling' the reader, or maybe in their own thought-chains the human participants in the situations concerned, from one noun-object to the next, with all the consequences that might follow (the prisoner gets treated as a thing, a dog, a non-human; the soldier slips into being a torturer, an executioner, a voyeur). The nouns themselves cannot disclose the relations in which they become embroiled: separated, they tell nothing, but once arranged in a series, linked prepositionally in the series akin to how they are spatially arrayed around the image (the photograph) and in a manner allowing one to bleed into another, then relations, consequences, dangerous knowledge and hurtful power all become apparent.[13] I feel that 'the leash' is vital, expressing and even, for some, reinforcing and maybe encouraging a certain relation between the two human bodies in the original image:

> Is it as one or two bodies that they appear in the image? Is it an assemblage of bodies consisting of prisonsoldier or victimperpetrator? … An answer can, I argue, be located in the in-between: in the violent relation that the image captures, an immaterial relation momentarily materialised *in* the leash. It follows that what is of interest is neither the guard in herself nor the prisoner in himself but the relation that unfolds between them, simultaneously drawing them together and holding them apart. (*T/G* xx)

Without wishing to lose the lived (in)humanity frozen in the image itself, I argue that the leash in the image is a visualisation of the dash, a materialisation of the work done by this particular linear operator as it performs its dubious magic of bringing together and keeping apart, with the added prepositional charge that the leash/dash 'leads down' *from* the woman — soldier — perpetrator *to* the man — dog — victim (from 'high' to 'low').[14] Alternatively, the dash might be construed as a form of 'and', X *and* Y, in which regard Abrahamsson does wonder '[w]hat is expressed in the conjunctive *and* that cannot be captured by the copula *is*?' (*T/G* xxii).[15] Debates about the work of 'and', as opposed to 'is' or 'or' (= or ≠) are relatively well-known in the poststructuralist literature, as well as being addressed by Olsson, who might regard + as the duplicitous way out past either = or ≠. Rather, Abrahamsson is doing something else again, always wanting to show how the 'stuff' bordering either side of an 'and' cannot but flake off into each other, with the further sense of what pushes forward from the one item in a series to the next, momentarily part-fixing the latter, quite possibly with abusive results. Emblematised by how dash and leash (one topological, the other topographical) align, Abrahamsson is also constantly alert to how the prepositional and the positional meet, fuse and infuse (or even refuse) one another. Such is the substance, rather than the abstraction, of Abrahamsson's critical geography of preposition.

A further approach to these matters surfaces in the arguments made by Abrahamsson about 'lines' throughout Part 2 of *T/G*, the title of which declares a concern for 'Passages', and more narrowly in Chapter 6 for 'Desert/Line'.[16] If what was taken in Part 1 as a fixed point, stabilising identity, is itself 'in reality a line,' prepositionally establishing a more slippery gathering of possible identities 'below the threshold of language and cognitive thought' (*T/G* 47), then what follows for our philosophical geographer? Abrahamsson answers with more questions:

> What is movement? Is it a series of consecutive and discrete points, · · · · · · , or is a line that connects the points and maps the trajectory marked by their positions, ———— ? Is movement a series of disjointed and noncoherent fragments? Or a continuous flow impossible to block or reverse? What comes first? Is it the points that map the line or the line that maps the points? Does the line connect or hold apart? (*T/G* 47)

Here Abrahamsson explicitly introduces, if in exaggerated form, the dash (————), but in the process of exploring its tangled relationship with a series of points through which a 'line' of movement may be partially determined; and, in essence, he concludes that both dimensions play their role, but in such a manner that a prepositional landscape is established, if forever shifting, wherein lines 'map points' but also can then realign (re-a-line) those points. It is true that a few pages later Abrahamsson casts his line here as the slant line of dialectical transformation (/) (especially *T/G* 50),[17] but I retain the conviction that there are also moments throughout *T/G* when, as it were, he wants to let the slant lie down and become the dash (—) in which a different sensibility of line, movement, separation and connection insinuates itself. Indeed, subsequently in Part 2 he interprets emerging formations of group and territory among the stranded *Lord of the Flies* boys through the optic of the slant, but then qualifies this 'geometry' with what strikes as a Serresian muddle and swarm: 'What at first appeared as straight lines is, when closer examined, actually a swerving entanglement of lines' (*T/G* 55). The curious figure of 'the Beast' is pertinent here: this is the 'creature' that the boys half-name, often more by allusion that by explicitly naming, as the terror creeps over the island: 'It exists as a phenomenon, but a phenomenon without spatial form that eludes every perception: it is a creaking tree, a breeze, an animal in the undergrowth' (*T/G* 69); 'First a snake, then a winged creature, sometimes it emerges from the sea, at other times from the air, a continuously non-localisable, present-absence' (*T/G* 69-70). The Beast 'threatens to disintegrate the fixed points the boys have established on the island,' arising as 'a pure relation, a relation that is not fixed in distinct relata, hence a relation that exists prior to the point' (*T/G* 69). Nonetheless, I wonder if the spatiality here is at once *both* alchemical transformations (as snake becomes bird becomes fish) *and* that forward propulsion as the boys' senses snag first on one thing, then another, then another (creaking tree, swaying branches, a flash of fur): the former suggestive of the slant, the latter of the dash, as different (if here co-conspiring) presuppositional operators. These pages, maybe more than any elsewhere in the book, possess a Serresian undertext, and so there is indeed warrant for now turning more directly to Serres and to what Abrahamsson borrows, so generatively, from Serres's prepositionalities.

A Serresian prepositional geography

While Olsson, in his wonderfully warm foreword, proposes that Abrahamsson's 'approach is more akin to Saussure's semiotics, mine to Lacanian psychoanalysis' (Olsson 2018, xiv), I might venture that the most notable intellectual — and phenomenological — spirit-guide for Abrahamsson, other than Olsson himself, is the French philosopher, Serres, who died in

2019. Serres has received little direct attention in academic geography,[18] although one author proposes that 'he represents an important source of inspiration to those who started the 'performative turn' in geography' (de Reymaeker 2013, 413).[19] An excellent introduction to him as a 'thinker of space', paired with Bruno Latour of Actor Network Theory (ANT) fame,[20] is offered in an essay from 2000 by Nick Bingham and Nigel Thrift.[21] Proposing that both these French writers have 'sought to repopulate space and time with all the figures stripped away by an idea of abstract division, … concentrating instead on movement, on process, on the constant hum of the world' (Bingham and Thrift 2000, 281), the claim is that they enact 'moves … best described as topological: the 'dangerous flock of chaotic morphologies' (Serres 1982, 53)' (Bingham and Thrift 2000, 289). As they continue:

> Topological, then, because, in contrast to 'metric theory' (Serres and Latour 1995, 102) primacy in the sort of 'philosophical geography' that Serres and Latour are seeking to construct is granted not to substance-nouns or even process-verbs, but what they call prepositions or relations. It is relations-prepositions, according to Serres, that 'spawn objects, beings and acts, not *vice versa*' (Serres with Latour 1995, 103, 107), a situation … that topology — as 'the science of proximities and ongoing or interrupted transformations' (Serres with Latour 1995, 105) — is uniquely well-placed to articulate.' (Bingham and Thrift 2000, 290)

Prepositions duly swim into view that address spatial states such as 'the closed (*within*), the open (*out of*), intervals (*between*), orientation and directionality (*toward*, *in front of*, *behind*), proximity and adherence (*near*, *on*, *against*, *following*, *touching*), immersion (*among*) … all realities outside of measurement but within relations' (Serres 1994, 71, in Boisvert 1996, 64; original emphases). These prepositions — in and of the world — have spiralling effects: 'that's prepositions for you. They don't change in themselves, but they change everything around them: words, things and people …' (Serres 1995, 139-146; in Rendell with Wells 2001, no pagination).

The story can be picked up through a wonderful essay by Steven Connor on Serres, topologies and 'the shapes of thought' (Connor 2002), which pursues Serres's understanding of topology, and shifting deployment of topological constructs, throughout his sizeable *oeuvre* of writings. 'I suggest that Serres's topologies are complexes of space and time, matter and process, rather than merely metrical forms,'[22] proposes Connor (2002 2), before elaborating that '[t]opology is not concerned with exact measurement, which is the domain of geometry, whether Euclidean or non-Euclidean, but rather with spatial relations, such as continuity, neighbourhood, insideness and outsideness, disjunction and connection' (Connor 2002, 4). The distinction remarked here between topology and geometry is decisive, I believe, and — returning to my own initial confusions noted earlier — it does underscore a gap of sorts between Olsson's stricter, often quite formal-logical, even technical-metrical, forays into the abstract geometries of thought (counterposed to the paradox-ridden geographies of action) and Abrahamsson's looser, more evocative, mixed-up and messed-up forays into the at once abstract-and-concrete topologies of thought (already, unavoidably, tainted by the tumbling topographies of being). His topologies are akin to Serres's topologies, as described by Connor: 'complexes' of space-time, filled with 'matter and process', and not necessarily 'metrical' (as in involving measurement).

Moreover, as Connor's further comment clarifies, these topologies arise within a realm of prepositions, usually 'positioned' with respect to the 'pre' of the body — 'no matter how abstract it may become, topology remains fundamentally bodily' (Connor 2002, 4) — in that

nearness, distance, above, below, inside, outside and much more are all locations relative to *a* body: an identifiable 'something', often conceived as the human body, including its 'right and left', but it could potentially be *any* body. Serres's 1985 book, *Les cinq sens*, has been translated as *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies* (Serres, 2016), introduced by Connor, who writes as follows:

> Serres represents his own writing as a geography, an earth-writing, a writing that mimics the autography [biography 'in one's own hand'] of the earth, for, though the name 'geographer' is given to one who puts the earth into writing, 'it would be better to call geography the writing of the earth about itself. For things — resistant, hard, sharp, elastic, loose — mark, hollow each other out and wear each other away. …'. This surely is the ultimate consensus of a book that teems with every kind of mixed body — the intermingling of subject and substance, of the intelligible and the sensible, of book, body and world. (Connor 2016, 15-16)

The opening chapter of this book calls for 'the observation of things' (Serres 2016, 39) and how they resonate one with another, one enlivening and allowing a different sense of the other. Countless metaphors of geography, earth and landscape — metaphors, yes, but smuggling with them their materialities: their riotous textures, colours, smells and sounds — are splattered across the page in concert with descriptions of mingled bodies and, especially, skin, inviting the most sideways of disquisitions about philosophy, science, art and love. As one small example: 'The variety of colours, forms and tones, of folds, flounces, furrows, contacts, mountains, passes and peneplains, the peculiar topological variety of the skin is most economically described as a developing, amorphous, composite mixture of body and soul' (Serres 2016, 27).

Ideally, I would say more here to elaborate on Serres's topologies or prepositional geographies, following his fascination for figures such as angels, mythic figures such as Hermes and unlovable creatures furtively snuffling between places where they ought not be: beings that carry messages, embody associations or spread differences, that multiply and gather, and who repeatedly co-mingle — and force other things into relation — in a whirl of chaotic geographies (real and imagined). Such figures or beings are Serres's 'operators' (Brown 2002, 3) that make and shift relations, that constantly rescript the prepositional landscape, even if there are root topological prepositions — right, left, above, below, before, next, and many more — that retain some, if not complete, invariance. The angels and their oddkin shape the things of the world, changing their 'angles' as Serres sometimes explains, and 'the shapes of thought' then get reshaped in turn. In one of his foundational works, *The Parasite*, Serres reflects that '[y]ou don't live in language and words for very long before the object comes back …, before a foot is suddenly missing' (Serres 1982, 32), implying that the work done in language — the wording, naming, positioning — is always returned to, contaminated by, the confoundments of the world. These 'interferences' or 'interruptions',[23] enacted joyfully, perhaps by the angels, or mischievously, perhaps by the parasite, can be the source of new (human) epistemologies and ontologies: new ways of knowing that ever-confounded world and maybe building it anew (locally or globally). To address the 'parasite'[24] more directly, it *is* what confounds, sometimes in a series[25] that includes many parasites, as in the fable that Serres repeats about the tax farmer, the town rat and its country cousin: 'So we have a … chain of parasites, which forms a clear sequence where each in turn takes from the former' (Brown 2002, 15). Vitally, '[t]he parasite invents something new. Since he [*sic*] does not eat like anyone else, he builds a new logic. He crosses the exchange, makes it into a diagonal.[26] …

He wants to give his voice for matter, (hot) air for solid, superstructure for infrastructure' (Serres 1982, 35).[27] The parasite is set against a further figure, 'the producer' (including the artisan and the scientist) who deals in objects and their contents, but '[t]he parasite always beats the producer' (Serres 1982, 38) precisely because it 'plays' the 'position' of these objects, also called here 'stations':

> 'And that is the meaning of the prefix *para-* in the word *parasite*: it is on the side, next to, shifted; it is not the thing, but on its relations. It has relations, as they say, and makes a system of them. It is always mediate and never immediate. It has a relation to the relation, a tie to the tie, it branches on to the canal.' (Serres 1982, 38-39)

Here, in another thoroughly spatial passage, Serres confirms the role of the parasite, one of his great transformers, in doing its prepositional labour, relating to relations, mediating them, slanting them, operating on them, and as it does so simultaneously and recursively reshaping words and worlds.

Serres in *Topoi/Graphein*

In opening his 2002 essay, Connor states that Serres' 'work is concerned with connections, mediations and passages. His tutelary spirit is Hermes, the good of messages and crossroads' (Connor 2002, 1). 'Passages' and 'crossroads'[28] are terms that Abrahamsson includes in the titles of parts one and two of *T/G*, hinting the extent to which his book is influenced by Serres, while Hermes the messenger, refracted through Serresian lenses, makes several appearances, notably in the couplet 'Division/Hermes' for the title of Chapter 9, in quotes from Serres's *Hermes* series (eg. Serres, 1983) (eg. *T/G* 24, 69) and inflecting the text considered above about the status of 'the Beast' for the shipwrecked boys (*T/G* 69-70). The lengthy passage from the opening chapter of *T/G* quoted above — about the Abu Ghraib image — includes a reference mark that takes the reader to an endnote citing Latour with Serres (1995) and a subsequent comment that 'Serres's philosophical project circulates around these questions and unresolved problems in the Western philosophical canon' (*T/G* 141[n4]). Further on, this chapter asserts that the core questions to be asked, 'in words of Michel Serres: 'What is closed? What is open? What is a connective path? What is a tear? What is the continuous and the discontinuous? What is a threshold, a limit?' (*T/G* xxii-xxiii); and the structuration of the presuppositional landscape for Western thought is thereby centralised.

Serres's particular take on 'the geometry of the origin' permeates several passages in *T/G*'s Part 1, imagining ancient or peasant times and places when and where certain identities might initially have become fixed — the resonances are legion with Olsson's big-picture historical geography of identity formation — with Serres noting key questions about the 'decisions' originally taken (by who? for what purposes? with what sacrifices?) to 'divide' or 'cut' the world up in this way rather than that (*T/G* 24-25). Like Olsson, Serres sees here not only the origins of geometry – to envisage delimited and delimitable 'spaces' occupied by differently-named objects – but also the origins of identity (and, by projective extension, identity politics, struggles and wars). Abrahamsson adds that what renders Serres on geometry (also Serres 2012) so interesting is not just the link to 'the decision', but the inference that it took place *in* the midst of worldly geographies (or we might also say topographies): 'the question of the decision is related to the earth itself, to an inscription as we find in *geo-graphein*' (*T/G* 25).[29] Relating back to claims made earlier, the outcome of the decision must have been shaped by topography, so that the divisions,

cuts, delimitations and more would surely have been compounds of topography and topology (the bird is above the snake; the rabbit runs before the mole; the sun shines down on the village; the dead rot into the soil) — and only latterly geometrical. Thus, if Serres is to be invoked here in *T/G*, the apparent (ultimately Olssonian?) priority lent to a geometry of origins gets ensnared in a Serresian prepositional topology of origins. On exactly this score, Part 1 of *T/G* finishes with a brief interfacing of Olsson and Serres:

> The philosopher-geographer and the geographer-philosopher are both obsessed. Not with the hidden hyphen of philo-sophy but with the hidden hyphen of geo-graphein. The differences in their expression are many. Visible in, for example, Serres's recurring references to Hermes the messenger and in Olsson's heretic attempts to dissect the brains of Janus, the gatekeeper. Yet they share a desire to map the hidden hyphen and to grasp the continuous vibrations and variations of the line … . (*T/G* 37-38)

Much is packed into the cross-currents of this quote, but what I might propose — and an emerging theme should be detected here, building from some of my claims previously — is that there *are* differences between Olsson's geometrical and Serres's topological 'mapping' of 'the line', ones inferred in but perhaps on occasion also obscured by Abrahamsson's account.

There are further Serresian borrowings on the strand of prepositions that can be traced through Part 2 of *T/G*. Indeed, starting the 'Line' couplet of Chapter 6, Abrahamsson quotes from *The Parasite* on atoms and parasites (*T/G* 47) before, after introducing the complexity of the line as both connector and separator, stating that lines — or, perhaps better, passages as lines-full-of-stuff — arise in the 'in-between' of 'the conjunction *and* and the preposition *in*' (*T/G* 48). This material then segues into a reframing of the issues here via another quote from *The Parasite* that provides 'propositions' about 'prepositions', one clarifying how prepositional relations pre-exist what they relate, the deceptively simple recurring Serresian motif that Abrahamsson later concretises with respect to the troubled relation that 'exists in its elemental form in the very first encounter on the beach between Piggy and Ralph' (*T/G* 55). A further quote from *The Parasite* heads the 'Swerve' couplet of Chapter 7, one discussing 'The chain of parasitism' as 'a simple relation of order, irreversible like the flow of the river' (Serres 1982, 43; in *T/G* 54: see also Endnote 25), thereby once more invoking simple-organic worldly geography as a device for capturing prepositional orderings. The 'Through' couplet of Chapter 8 expressly voices 'Michel Serres's attempt to formulate a philosophy of the preposition,' before avowing that '[t]raditional philosophy is, according to Serres, characterised by an inability to think relations as such' (*T/G* 61). The next step is to underline how Serres strives to induce a new 'creativity' into Western thought by following 'the passage in-between,' by being impelled forward (by the dash, as I might now say) into domains as yet 'unknown': 'It is in this in-between or passage that the creative act takes place. Creativity takes place when we leave behind what we know and move towards something not yet known' (*T/G* 61-62). Substantively, Abrahamsson here cracks open what happens in the fearful efforts of the ship-wrecked boys to leave their prior 'socius' when finding new ways to know and act in their unfamiliar island-environment-community; but philosophically, he is confronting the conundrum of encountering, recognising, making and maybe thriving in 'the new'.[30] Once more a Serres quote obliges, this time from Serres (1997) about the swimmer who only really knows how to swim once having swum alone across a raging river, estuary or stretch of open sea (*T/G* 62-63).

Tellingly, Abrahamsson soon after provides one more lengthy Serres quote, returning to the arguably key passage from *The Parasite* where the parasite's 'playing' of 'the position' shades into thoroughly geographical musings on the *para*-site — already quoted above[31] — specifying its too-the-sideness, its relation to the relation, its 'branching into the canal' (in *T/G* 64).

Part 3 of *T/G* covers little Serresian ground, but the brief text-based introduction to the book's Epilogue then centralises Serres again, almost as if Abrahamsson, taking stock, has come to appreciate the depth and profundity of its debt to Serres:

> In my ambition to understand I have followed a path opened by Michel Serres. … For Serres [the task is to ask] a set of questions that signify a radical break with the philosophies of the fixed and eternal. Questions that carry thought in another direction, toward a paradoxical or prepositional philosophy. A philosophy that takes its point of departure not in the fixed nouns and definite descriptions of the taken-for-granted but instead in the *pre*positional, by necessity a condition that precedes any, and every, fixed position. (*T/G* 119-120; original emphasis)

Arguably, this remark returns the book to its opening pages, and indeed to my own opening recital of the connective sinews between philosophies and geographies of position and preposition, but what finally becomes crystal-clear is the extent to which Serres, perhaps even more than Olsson, has been the guiding hand for much of the heavy-lifting throughout *T/G*. Abrahamsson then acknowledges '[t]he strict formalism' to which he has adhered in his text, as well as introducing the 'nine minimalist figures' (*T/G* 120) with which the Epilogue (and the book) concludes.[32] Those nine figures pair one image (six simple topological diagrams, two photographs and then just 'nothing') with short aphoristic phrases, condensing what the author reckons to have been the prime 'moves' made across the preceding pages. Five of the images are (or include) lines of different kinds, two being the Saussurian bar (—) and the dialectical slant (/), one being a 'clinamen',[33] the next being a curly ('swervy') line and the final one being a (horizontal) smudgy, indistinct and slightly broken line. Given my own reading, I am tempted to interpret the three middle lines as variants on the dash and, more broadly, to depict (one aspect) of what is occurring here as the prepositional landscape becoming less sharply geometric and more raggedly topological: as an Olssonian blueprint becomes interrupted by a Serresian 'mingled patchwork' (Sankey and Cowley 2016, ix). These Epilogue figures are evocative and the two photographs, of human death close-up and nuclear apocalypse, deeply unsettling, conveying the stakes woven into the heart of Abrahamsson's prepositional geophilosophy. I have hesitations about the press to formalise, to minimalise, to be ever more abstract, a reservation previously expressed in my otherwise sympathetic critique of Olsson's *oeuvre* (Philo 1994, 2007), and so I might prefer instead the wordy, sprawling, dizzyingly multiplicative ill-discipline of a typical Serres text, as the topographical assaults the topological almost to the point that the 'logical' disappears entirely. Maybe, though, the affective endpoint remains the same.

Last words

As I flick through the heavily annotated pages of my hard copy of *T/G*, I see numerous other dimensions that might have featured in this essay. Connections could have been elaborated with geographical inquiries into substantive matters: from Part 1 — and the chaotic meetings and collisions of identity in *Code inconnu*, notably around ethnicity —to work on

the 'geographies of encounters' and 'encountering misrecognition' (eg. Wilson 2017; Hopkins *et al* 2017); from Part 2 — and the contestation of identity, authority, territory and nature by the children marooned on the desert island in *Lord of the Flies* — to work on both children's geographies (peppering the journal *Children's Geographies*; also Valentine 1996) and on island geographies (eg. Royle 2001; Stratford 2018); and from Part 3 — and the violent events and violated peoples and places of jungle warfare in *Apocalypse Now* – to work on the geographies of tropical warfare (eg. Clayton 2013; Gregory 2016; Shaw 2016). More could maybe have been said about other theoretical coordinates gathered in the book, such as Abrahamsson's claim, with which I agree, that 'the most interesting part' of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1976) is not the account of Bentham's Panopticon 'but rather the introduction of a state of exception and martial law in cities haunted by plague in seventeenth-century France' (*T/G* 20). Usefully, Abrahamsson charts a passage through from the urban scenes of Part 1 into 'the seeds of more recent biopolitical innovations' (*T/*G 21), as brought to the fore in Foucault's *Security, Territory, Population* lectures (Foucault 2007). One reviewer quibbles that Abrahamsson 'makes little effort to link his endeavours with current methodological and theoretical exploration in cultural geography of similar ilk' (Huijbens 2019, 541),[34] but the exceptional ambition and rigour of *T/G* is such that it would be wrong to expect more from Abrahamsson on these fronts. Such labour can perhaps be expected of his interlocutors, however, and I have tried to rise to that challenge — if imperfectly — by peering into what is entailed by turning attention from Jackson's 'geography of position' towards Abrahamsson's 'geography of preposition', asking about what the latter owes to Serres and how it extends, possibly even enters into creative tension with, its borrowings from Olsson. More expansively, despite not covering as much ground as I first anticipated when scribbling on my copy of *T/G*, I still hope that I have done sufficient to show how Abrahamsson's book meets Serres's plea that '[a] prosperous, productive philosophy would provide more than enough bread for all those who passed by' (Serres 2016, 41).

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Notes

1. It should be noted that, borrowing from Deleuze, Abrahamsson suggests that the 'image-of-thought' for which he is seeking is, 'by definition, prephilosophical' (*T/G* xxii), prior to 'thought', the origin-points *of* thought: thus, maybe a better description is a 'prephilosophical geography'.
2. The 'image' here is arguably both the Deleuzian 'image-of-thought' — how do we picture the processes of thought — and the well-known, horrific image from Abu Ghraib prison in the mid-2000s, suggesting US military personnel engaging in systematic torture of Iraqi inmates.
3. One (sympathetic) reviewer comments on the provocations occasioned by 'the strangeness of the title' and *T/G* as a 'weird-sounding phrase' (Doel 2019, 871).
4. Olsson (2007, 2020) has become increasingly concerned to track this *longue durée* of thought (logic, reason) from the most powerful of origin-legends, 'mapping' how the 'places' of Babylonian, Biblical and Ancient Greek times have shaped the spaces of thought through into the contours of European Modernism and Western (capitalist, political) ideology. (As an aside, various places integral to this story have lain outside the conventionally defined boundaries of the West.) Along the way, Olsson has also been concerned to identify what resists, as in ideas and practices — sometimes the 'madness' (Philo 2012; also Jansson 2012) — transgressing the hegemonic orderings comprising the otherwise 'unsaid' of Western thought.

5. Following standard mathematical notations, *x* or *y* (eg. an individual, nameable child or adult) would be specific instances (values or even representations) of X or Y (eg. the overall variables 'child' or 'adult'). It might be objected that precisely how the 'child' is understood, identified and measured is itself extremely variable historically and geographically, an underlying theme of scholarship in 'children's geographies' (Philo 2016). Nonetheless, the foundational sense of there being a group in a human population who are 'children' (however exactly known and specified) — in some ways distinguishable from, maybe prepositioned as 'lower' than, a group of people who are 'adults' — is likely one with near-universality. This example usefully captures a dimension of how the prepositional and the positional do indeed differ from, but still inescapably relate to, one another. The child-adult contrast is suggested by certain moves taken in Part 2 of *T/G* when discussing *Lord of the Flies*.
6. It is relatively easy to spy a path — a series of connections tugged out in the text itself (in Abrahamsson's *graphein*) — from 'Point' to 'Crossroads' and from 'Line' to 'Passage', less easy perhaps from 'Plane' to 'The Event'. The latter requires familiarity with certain poststructural debates about the 'undecidability' of 'the event', its happenstance-ness, its openness to any manner of consequences or interpretations, and hence its absence of stability, mooring and predictability: its wild, maybe dangerous, diffusion, profusion, slippage and vagrancy across a 'plane' without coordinates (or its sinking into an abyss, a vacuum, without light or logic).
7. The individual chapters are all titled in couplets, such as 'Encounter/Point', 'Wall/Stone', etc., but with no 'neat' pairing of what I am here distinguishing as spatial forms/states, on the one hand, with spatial moves or relations, on the other. Abrahamsson might well reject my distinctions anyway, and I have no doubt that other logics are guiding his pairings and associated ontological picturings (see his ninefold table of 'figures' addressed by the book: *T/G* xxv). Some chapter titles also herald sociological or mythological figures ('stranger', 'Oedipus', 'Hermes', 'Janus') while the first term in the third chapter from each Part is the title of the film excerpted for that Part.
8. Doel (2003, 2012) calls them Olsson's spatial' transformers'.
9. In practice, Olsson's claims are much more involved that this shorthand explication of = and ≠ implies: in Olsson (1991), for instance, the complexities of what is silenced, and how, by = / — are explored from many different directions, deploying a multiplicity of philosophical, psychoanalytical and social-theoretical arguments.
10. For commentary on the 'violent geographies' of Abu Ghraib and related 'spaces of exception', as in the Agamben construction, see Gregory (2007), where the specific images in question are also discussed. See also Butler (2004).
11. As an aside, it can be noted that Agamben *is* a significant presence throughout much of *T/G*, even if rarely referenced: indeed, Abrahamsson is particularly concerned about the unchecked 'sovereign power' that can reign, kill, torture, disfigure and sacrifice once prepositions and positions become dislocated from the 'normal' (if themselves often deeply problematic) conventions of everyday social worlds. Colonel Walter Kurtz, the quarry of Captain Benjamin Willard's mission in *Apocalypse Now*, embodies just such a state(lessness): see *T/G*, esp. Chapter 15 ('Abyss/*Horror Vacui*).
12. 'There are actually two types of dashes: the *em dash* — also called the 'long dash' … and the *en dash*, which … falls between the hyphen and em dash in terms of length. The en dash is so named because it is approximately the equivalent width of the uppercase letter N and the em dash is roughly the width of an uppercase M' (Nordquist 2019, no pagination). The en dash is normally used to denote a range, as in dates (1980–2000) or money (£15–20): typographically, it should be longer than a hyphen.
13. 'In all its naked brutality the image appears before us not just as a series of distinct forms measurable in topographical space but also, and much more disturbingly, as an immeasurable topological relation in which the inside and outside of the law has all but imploded in on itself' (*T/G* xix). This passage usefully indexes Abrahamsson's take on how the topological and the topographical interplay, as foregrounded in my main text, and, without explicit referencing, signals his borrowing from Agamben (2005).
14. I have deliberately deployed dashes rather than hyphens between the nouns in this series: in line with my adjoining remarks, hyphens here seem too small, too easy, too familiar, not forcing the more jarring, discordant, defamiliarising *critical* move that the dash, the 'long dash', can offer. For me, Abrahamsson's book is all about putting in the absent 'long dashes' *or* occasionally taking the opposite tack of *losing* a hyphen precisely when it might be expected and when, in its absence, 'we' are shocked into looking again at a non-hyphenated conjunction such as 'prisonersoldier' (as in the passage quoted).
15. 'Copula' means an 'equating verb' such as 'is' or 'be' or 'become', the textual equivalent of the equals sign (=), whereas the conjunctive 'and' is the textual equivalent of the plus sign (+).
16. Nicely, Abrahamsson explicitly draws here from a compelling geographical essay by Wallin (1982) on 'the realm of passages'.

17. One reviewer, taking seriously the / in the title *T/G*, suggests the slant to be the main prepositional condition under scrutiny, but intriguingly suggests that, '[b]y foregrounding and problematising the space 'in-between', the slash of the book's title and the plus sign of the series title make perfect bedfellows' (Doel 2019, 871 [*T/G* is the first book to appear in the University of Nebraska Press 'Cultural Geographies + Rewriting the Earth' series]). Above, I have rehearsed something of Abrahamsson's own thoughts on the status of the 'and' (+) in his text.
18. I wish to underline that I am a Serres 'novice', only starting to read some of his texts precisely because I sensed that they might offer insights into the workings of *T/G*.
19. This remark is taken from a review of Serres's 2011 book in French, *Habiter*, that appeared in the Spanish geographical journal *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*. Speaking of 'a labyrinthine and dreamy book,' the suggestion is that: 'With Serres, the sailor lives in the air and the astronaut in the sea! So we humans, mobiles like fauna but inhabitants like trees, are situated at the fertile intersection where the author encourages us to build our future way' (de Reymaeker 2013, 413). Thanks to Ana Santamarina Guerrero for translating this review for me.
20. There is a certain logic of pairing Serres and Latour given an influential dialogue that they conducted in 1991 and then published (Serres with Latour 1995), and which is drawn upon heavily by Bingham and Thrift as they characterise the work of both authors, if perhaps insufficiently noting the evident disagreements between the two. In certain respects, Serres is just too imprecise, anarchic, prepared to peddle in myths, fables and decontextualised fragments of sciences, arts and humanities, history and indeed geography for Latour's liking.
21. A few other students of spatial studies do draw on Serres (eg. Brown and Middleton 2005; Gabrys 2009; Lezaun 2011).
22. This point about Serres's topologies not being 'metrical' echoes what Bingham and Thrift take from Serres and Latour (1995) in the indented quote directly above.
23. One meaning of *le parasite* in French, but not in English, is 'static or noise, that is interference or interruption' (Brown 2002, 15).
24. 'What is a parasite? It is the one who lives and benefits at the expense of the other. In parasitology, this other is called the host. A parasite attaches to the body of the host, or digs inside it, and eats it' (Timofeeva 2016, 94). Timofeeva is discussing Serres's work and this definition neatly captures the sense of bodily changes, to the point of death, caused by the parasite. In an inquiry that might now be termed one of 'speculative' planetary geopoetics, she emphasises that 'Serres's human being is a universal parasite, hosted by nature' (Timofeeva 2016, 95). Serres on the parasite could become a vehicle for Anthropocenic critique, although such a move would arguably over-anthropomorphise the figure of the parasite and thereby deflate the remarkable 'pan-everythingism' of what may serve as his parasitic operators in diverse situations, times and spaces. Of course, what unnerves about Serres's *oeuvre* is the apparent attributing of 'agency' to non-human figures, even prepositional operators, creating a 'speculativism' that arguably far exceeds, say, Latour's more guarded constructions.
25. Brown (2002 2-3) identifies what Serres owes to certain mathematicians, the Bourbaki group, who work with the 'basic ordering relation' of points on a line — A, B, C — where 'a relationship of succession and precession thereby obtains.' More could indeed be said about Serres's concern for series, chains, cords, passages, forward motions, etc., all relatives of the dash as textual-linear operator.
26. The reference to 'diagonal' here — arguably, though, not the slant (/) — relates to a small piece of topological thinking a few pages earlier, when Serres questions the 'static' (geometric) logic of fixed points, lines, right-angles, 'crossroads', forms, etc., as well as emphasising that the parasite works not on the 'stations' (the 'stationary' points of nameable things) but more obliquely on relations between the stations: 'The parasite has a relation with the relation and not with the station' (Serres 1982, 33).
27. Such a move interdigitates '[t]wo positions and two orders: substances and solids here, and there air and sound,' two positions/orders that *cannot* exchange or mix because 'the heavy philosophers consecrate it' (Serres 1982, 35).
28. Abrahamsson explicitly borrows from Serres on the Oedipal 'crossroads' myth, also beloved of Olsson (*T/G* 29).
29. The inherent 'spatial connotation' of/in the word 'decision', as something agreed by Serres and others, is addressed by Abrahamsson (*T/G* 65, 147[n9]).
30. Wells emphasises the importance that she attaches to Serres's 'angels' and their opening to 'the new', adding, when asked 'so what about geography?', that, in this Serresian vein, it is all about 'the ability and desire to make connections with new things, [which] depends on position' (Rendell with Wells 2001, no pagination).
31. What I might add is that, when preparing this essay, I read and took notes from *The Parasite*, without at that point remembering in detail what Abrahamsson had chosen to quote from the same source: tellingly, I copied out this *para*-site quote in its full state.

32. The figures are called 'Fixed Point', 'Limitation', 'Relation', 'Clinamen', 'Swerve', 'Fluctuation', 'Limit Zone', 'Cloud' and 'Horror Vacui'.
33. The notion of the 'clinamen', never explicitly discussed by Abrahamsson, appears in Serres (2000) on *The Birth of Physics* derived from the thinking of Lucretius on 'laminar flow' of 'atoms': 'the sudden turbulent state ('*turba*') which arises by accident as a small change in direction of a given atom — the '*clinamen*' or minimal deviation — sets up a catastrophic chain of collisions; and the subsequent stabilisation of the movement of atoms into a vortex pattern ('*turbo*')' (Brown 2002, 10). For a use of this notion in the geographical literature, explicitly borrowing from Serres, see Cresswell and Martin (2012).
34. Another reviewer declares that '[r]eaders with an interest in spatial theory or cinematic geography should obviously appreciate this work' (Doel 2019, 872). The 'cinematic geography' reference suggests a quite specific bridge across to geographers concerned with the spatialities — lived, contested, representational, geopolitical and more — expressed within films (Clark 1997; Penz and Koeck 2017).

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