

BOOK REVIEW SYMPOSIUM

GEOPIRACY: OAXACA, MILITANT EMPIRICISM, AND GEOGRAPHICAL THOUGHT

Book by

Joel Wainwright

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Introduction to Symposium by

John C. Finn

Reviews by

*Trevor Barnes, Joe Bryan, Emily Gilbert, Don Mitchell,
Sharlene Mollett, Eric Sheppard, and Denis Wood*

Response by

Joel Wainwright

Abstract:

This book review symposium interrogates Joel Wainwright's recent text *Geopiracy: Oaxaca, Militant Empiricism, and Geographical Thought* (Palgrave Macmillan 2013). Overtly, this text is a scathing critique of the Bowman Expeditions, launched in 2006 with several million dollars of funding from the Foreign Military Study Office (FMSO) of the US Army. Two years later, and well into the first expedition in Oaxaca, Mexico, several groups from Oaxaca responded, accusing the Bowman Expedition of "Geopiracy" and of tricking the indigenous commu-

nities involved. In mounting a robust critique of the Bowman Expeditions, in this text Wainwright simultaneously takes on several other pressing issues in the discipline of geography, among them the militarization of geography, power, ethics, transparency and consent in fieldwork, the supposed objectivity and value-less-ness of mapping, and the tepid response to the Bowman controversy mustered by the AAG. In this review symposium a diverse group of geographers respond both to the controversy as a whole, and to Wainwright's reading and critique of it. Finally, Wainwright concludes this symposium with his response to these reviews.

Keywords: Geopiracy, Militarization, Oaxaca, Bowman Expeditions

Simposio de reseñas

Geopiratería: Oaxaca, Empiricismo Militante y Pensamiento Geográfico

Libro de Joel Wainwright

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Introducción de John C. Finn

Reseñas escritas por Trevor Barnes, Joe Bryan, Emily Gilbert, Don Mitchell, Sharlene Mollett, Eric Sheppard, Denis Wood y Joel Wainwright

Resumen

Este simposio de reseñas analiza el reciente texto de Joel Wainwright ‘Geopiratería: Oaxaca, Empiricismo Militante y Pensamiento Geográfico’ (Palgrave MacMillan, 2013). Este texto es una crítica incisiva a las Expediciones Bowman, lanzadas en 2006 con un financiamiento de varios millones de dólares provenientes de la Oficina de Estudios Militares Extranjeros de la armada estadounidense. Dos años después, cuando ya se había iniciado la primera expedición a Oaxaca, varios grupos de Oaxaca respondieron acusando a las Expediciones Bowman de “Geopiratería” y de traicionar a las comunidades indígenas. Haciendo una fuerte crítica a las Expediciones Bowman, Wainwright también se involucra con otros temas candentes para la disciplina geográfica: militarización de la Geografía, poder, ética, transparencia y consenso en el trabajo de campo, la supuesta objetividad y falta de valores del mapeo y la tibia respuesta de la Asociación de Geógrafos Americanos a la controversia sobre las Expediciones. En este simposio de reseñas un grupo diverso de geógrafos responden tanto a la controversia en general como a la crítica y la lectura de Wainwright sobre el tema. Finalmente, Wainwright cierra el simposio con su respuesta a las reseñas.

Palabras clave: Geopiratería, militarización, Oaxaca, Expediciones Bowman

Introduction

Geopiracy: Oaxaca, Militant Empiricism, and Geographical Thought

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This book review symposium interrogates Joel Wainwright’s recent text *Geopiracy: Oaxaca, Militant Empiricism, and Geographical Thought* (Palgrave Macmillan 2013). In this book, Wainwright uses the Bowman Expeditions, which sparked significant controversy after launching its “prototype project” mapping indigenous lands in southern Mexico in 2006 with several million dollars of US Army funding, as an entry point for a much broader discussion of several pressing issues in geography. In this symposium, seven renowned geographers—Trevor Barnes, Joe Bryan, Emily Gilbert, Don Mitchell, Sharlene Mollett, Eric Sheppard, and Denis Wood—respond to both the controversy as a whole, and to Wainwright’s reading and critique of it. Following these seven wide-ranging, insightful, and at times challenging reviews, Wainwright concludes this symposium, responding to the reviewers, and expanding and clarifying several arguments from the text. First, though, I offer this brief introduction, not so much to the book—I’ll leave discussion of the book to the reviews and the author—but to the controversy surrounding the Bowman Expeditions in general, and the *México Indígena* project in particular.

In 2005, Jerome Dobson, former Oak Ridge National Laboratory geographer and then Professor of Geography at the University of Kansas and President of the American Geographical Society (AGS) opined the following in a presidential column entitled “Foreign Intelligence is Geography” (Dobson 2005) in *Ubique*, that society’s newsletter:

Geography is more productive and more important than ever. Yet, the silly notion of geography as just “learning your states and

capitals” continues to hinder public support. Foreign intelligence is geography, and geographers will be essential to intelligence reform. If the nation calls on us, we’ll repeat what we did for Wilson and Roosevelt. If those in power will restore the discipline to what it was in Wilson’s and Roosevelt’s day, we’ll help prepare the next generation to meet America’s global responsibilities (Dobson 2005: 2).

One year later, in the same newsletter, Dobson expanded this line of thinking, writing that “in America [i.e. the United States], geography has been out of public favor so long that we cannot produce enough graduates to fill even the most essential posts where geographers are sorely needed in government” (Dobson 2006: 1). He goes on to state that in this regard, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq offer a “glimmer of hope” in that the “powers that be” have realized that they themselves “do not know enough about foreign lands” (Dobson 2006: 1). He continued that the Bowman Expeditions came about:

Because I, like so many others, am troubled over intelligence failures and bipartisan blunders that lead to conflict. Most of the missing knowledge is not secret, insider information that should be classified. What’s missing is open source geography of the type we teach routinely in regional geography courses, and it’s based on the type of fieldwork and data analyses that geographers do routinely in every region on earth...

I wrote a proposal suggesting that the AGS send a geography professor and two or three graduate students to every country in the world for a full semester each year, with teams rotating on a five-year cycle so that each country is understood by five separate teams. I calculated a budget and was shocked myself to realize that the entire program would cost only \$125,000,000 per year, a pittance compared to what the intelligence community typically pays for far less effective information. I circulated the proposal and found allies at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. They marketed the concept

and funded a prototype for the larger concept that, ideally, would reach every country in the world (Dobson 2006: 2).

I don’t have time to untangle the dense web of connections among the AGS, the University of Kansas, and the Bowman Expeditions (these ties are addressed directly in Wainwright’s text). Suffice here to say that the AGS secured funding for the Bowman Expeditions, at least partially from the Foreign Military Study Office (FMSO) of the US Army and a research team from the University of Kansas was soon on the ground in Oaxaca, Mexico under the project titled *México Indígena*.

While none of us are privy to the details of how this project unfolded in Oaxaca (though Wainwright certainly attempts to piece together those details), about two years after the program began, several groups from Oaxaca responded. These responses are enlightening. The first, an open letter from the Union of Organizations of the Sierra Juárez of Oaxaca (UNOSJO), stated that the leaders of the *México Indígena* project had not disclosed to the indigenous communities that the research was funded by the US Army, and thus asserted that the *México Indígena* project constituted “geopiracy.” Specifically, they wrote:

Towards the end of 2008, the results of the research project *México Indígena* were handed over to two Zapotec communities in the Sierra Juárez... Research had been undertaken two years earlier by a team of geographers from the University of Kansas. What initially seemed to be a beneficial project for the communities now leaves many of the participants feeling like victims of geopiracy... (quoted in Wainwright 2013: 3).

Two months later, the community of San Miguel Tiltepec in Oaxaca released a similar statement, writing:

The citizens of the community of San Miguel Tiltepec, through our Municipal Authority and the Authority of Communal Lands, wish to present to the public our position regarding the research project called

México Indígena, begun in the year 2006 and ended in July 2008, which made a map that contains names of places and other cultural and geographical information provided by people from our community.

The researchers...presented themselves to the General Assembly of our community. They only informed us that the goal of their research was to find out the impacts of the government program PROCEDE on indigenous communities. They never informed us that the data they collected in our community would be given to the Foreign Military Study Office (FMSO) of the Army of the United States, nor did they inform us that this institution was one of the sources of financing for the project. Because of this, we consider that our General Assembly was tricked by the researchers, in order to draw out the information the[y] wanted.

The community did not request the research[;] it was the researches who convinced the community to carry it out. Thus, the research was not carried out due to the community's need, it was the researchers who designed the research method in order to collect the type of information that interested them...

[W]e wish to express to the public... our complete disagreement with the research carried out in our community, since we were not properly informed of the true goals of the research, the use of the information obtained, and the sources of financing.

Our demand is to those responsible for the project, the American [Geographical] Society, the Foreign Military Study Office of the Army of the United States, the Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí and University of Kansas, as well as all the other institutions involved, about whose participation we do not have information. We demand that:

- they refrain from using in any way the information they collected in our community.
- they return all the information they obtained from our community.
- they immediately destroy all the information they have on our community, and that they provide proof of having done so.
- they immediately eliminate from the internet all the information they published regarding the research carried out in our community.
- they offer us a public apology for having violated our rights as indigenous peoples, and for having violated their own norms, set out in the ethics code of the American Geographic[al] Society, which they claim to respect.

Finally, we call out to the communities and indigenous peoples of Mexico and the world, for them not to be taken unawares by researchers of the Bowman Expeditions, or by other researchers who only follow their interests or those of the people they represent. It is the communities and peoples themselves who should decide what they want to have researched about themselves, and who should carry it out (cited in Wainwright 2013: 4).

As Wainwright notes in his book, these letters constitute “extremely rare statements concerning how research should and should not be conducted *from the point of view of the research subject*” (Wainwright 2013: 5, italics in original).

Jerry Dobson responded with a full-throated defense of the *México Indígena* project in general, and its funding, methods, and disclosure in particular, in another *Ubique* presidential column entitled “Let the Indigenous People of Oaxaca Speak for Themselves” (Dobson 2009). He wrote: “My whole rationale for Bowman Expeditions is based on my firm belief that geographic ignorance is the principal cause of the

blunders that have characterized American foreign policy since the end of World War II. I believe it is essential that geographers re-engage in foreign policy” (Dobson 2009: 2). He continued:

In a very real sense, Bowman Expeditions are the modern incarnation of a long-standing AGS mission to serve Latin America. From 1925 to 1945 we mapped all of Latin America from the US border to Tierra del Fuego at 1:1,000,000 scale... Those maps were essential to the beneficial development of the region, and no one ever called it Geopiracy... We had on average seven cartographers working continuously for twenty years. Almost every penny came from private donors. We’d love to fund Bowman Expeditions the same way, but private philanthropy is not what it used to be... (Dobson 2009: 7).

Dobson goes on to reiterate the origin of the idea for the Bowman Expeditions, stating that for the surprisingly low price of \$125 million it would be possible to send one professor and several grad students to every country in the world to spend a full semester every year, and that so far they’d received about \$2.5 million in funding, “a good ‘down payment,’ but far less than what’s needed to make a sizable dent in the American scourge of geographical ignorance” (Dobson 2009: 10). In the very next paragraph he calls this a “noble effort” (Dobson 2009: 10).

The Bowman Expeditions have expanded significantly since the “prototype” *México Indígena* project of 2006–2008. According to the AGS website, in addition to the project in Oaxaca, expeditions have taken place or are currently ongoing in the Antilles, Colombia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, the “Borderlands” (defined as all Latin American countries bordering the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea), and Central America. The line “funded by the Army Research Office of the U. S. Department of Defense” is dutifully printed at the bottom of each webpage describing these expeditions.

This whole discussion could easily descend into some sort of *he-said-she-said* exchange of accusations and dueling narratives; indeed, to a certain extent this has already happened. If we place all of our focus on

trying to sort through these accusations, however, we run the risk of losing sight of several much broader issues that are rooted in this controversy—issues of the militarization of the discipline of geography, of power, ethics, and consent in fieldwork, of the supposed objectivity and value-less-ness of mapping. To be sure, none of these issues are specific to the Bowman Expeditions. Indeed, as is made abundantly clear in Wainwright’s book, and as Joel pointed out in our panel discussion at the 2014 AAG meeting in Tampa, the militarization of geography is neither new nor it is limited in scope. While geography has, for thousands of years, been tightly tied to military interests, it has been argued that the modern digital revolution and the advent of digital geospatial technology have led to some kind of renaissance in the relationship between geography and the military. This is plainly evident in, for example, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), which “delivers world-class geospatial intelligence that provides a decisive advantage to policymakers, warfighters, intelligence professionals and first responders (NGA 2014). Or in that agency’s public relations magazine, *Pathfinder*, which recently had a cover story on the importance of human geography within geospatial intelligence (Ghannam 2012); the cover photo of that issue was a US service member in full, combat-ready desert fatigues reaching down to a small child in a desert landscape reminiscent of Iraq or Afghanistan, all under the title: “Right Place/Right Time: Human Geography tells ‘when’ and ‘where’ to put boots on the ground.” Or in the Institute for Defense and Government Advancement’s annual summit on human geography, billed as “The One and Only Human Geography Event in the Nation” (see Gregory 2013; Wainwright 2014), with talks on topics such as “*Understanding Human Geography Research in the Field: Understanding a target population based on geographical engineering,*” and “*Ensuring Boots on the Ground are Combat Effective: Future of Human Terrain analysts and their role in preparing the Army for future combat*” (in Wainwright 2014).

Clearly these issues are much larger than simply the Bowman Expeditions. That said, the Bowman Expeditions provide an *apropos* entry-point for our current discussion. That is precisely the goal of this symposium.

Finally, it is important to note that I invited several of the individuals at the center of the Bowman Expeditions to participate in this symposium, including Peter Herlihy and Jerry Dobson. My emails to Herlihy went unanswered. Dobson did respond and we had an interesting email exchange over several weeks in which he pointed me to yet another *Ubique* column that he had recently published entitled “Critical Thoughts on Critical Thinking” (Dobson 2013). This article is revealing on many levels, especially in laying bare his open contempt for much of what we call “critical geography,” referring to its “shoddy scholarship, overt bias, slander, and libel [as] unacceptable” and barely meeting “low standards of tabloid journalism” (Dobson 2013: 2). However, in calling his readers to take a stand against such critical geography, he warns that “responsible scholars must be careful how they do it. Early in my career I learned a valuable lesson and developed a personal rule that I’ve broken only twice in the past five years: *Never argue with a fool in public for many otherwise intelligent observers cannot tell the difference*” (Dobson 2013: 2, italics in original). Needless to say, he declined the invitation to participate.

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After Joel Wainwright’s new book, it is clear that “we’re not in Kansas anymore.” Combining chiselled analysis, etymological scrupulousness, and sometimes seething moral and political indignation, Wainwright’s book undoes, does up and does over any justification for the Bowman Expedition undertaken in Mexico by a group of University of Kansas geographers that began in 2005. The Expedition was to collect information about two indigenous rural areas, and sponsored by the American Geographi-

cal Society (AGS). But as it turned out, it was also sponsored by the US Department of Defense (DoD), the State Department, and the Mexican Government. The amount of money involved was not just loose change (although maybe loose change for the DoD). For the period 2005-09, it totalled \$2.5m, with a significant chunk coming from the US Army’s Foreign Military Services Office at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas (Wainwright 2013: 16-17, fn 6). The central issue, the provocation for Wainwright’s book, was that the in-

digenous people surveyed in Mexico, particularly the Zapotec in Oaxaca, were never told of the project's military funding, nor were they given access to the information about them after it was collected. It is this that Wainwright dubs "geopiracy."

Wainwright's critique is withering. Although he describes himself as a "committed amateur" (2013: 19), his critique is exactly professional. After his criticism, not only is the Bowman Expedition left without an argument, it is left without the grounds to make an argument. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein reportedly said following systematic criticism of his work by the economist Piero Sraffa that he felt like a "a tree from which all branches had been cut" (Malcolm 1958: 15). That's the Bowman expedition once Wainwright has gotten done, and explaining why "we're not in Kansas anymore."

The book is unusual in all kinds of ways. It's really a novella of an academic text, printed on small sheets of paper, just cracking the hundred page mark. But, and also rare for geographical works, its footnotes are voluminous, occupying in my rough calculation about a quarter of the volume's text. The footnotes for the Preface—that there are footnotes for the Preface is a tad surprising—are one-and-a-half times the length of the Preface's main text. At first I thought it was a misprint, a naff first edition printer's error. It was right, however. A number of footnotes are about matters etymological, again not typical fodder for present-day geographical works. I learned a lot including several foreign words written in non-Romanic alphabets including Hellenistic Greek, Ancient Greek, and Greek that was even "more ancient" than Ancient Greek (6). It was as if by his etymological plumbing Wainwright was trying to touch rock bottom, to define definitively key words, to use the dictionary as a foundation.

And something else you don't often see in texts in contemporary geography is Wainwright's unflinching willingness to name names, and which included those Kanas geographers, Geoff Demarest, Jerry Dobson and Peter Herlihy, and two former Presidents of the Association of American Geographers (AAG), John Agnew and Alex Murphy. I admired Wainwright's courage and backbone. One last thing, also admirable,

also unusual, was Wainwright's ability to keep a number of different topics in the air within his text at the same time, giving depth and texture. While talking about one thing, Wainwright was also talking about another, and achieved partly by all his footnotes that functioned as a kind of hypertext, and also by looping prose that came with "trailing and's" in William James' (1912: 321) felicitous phrase. Wainwright's book was about the Bowman expedition, *and* also about the relation of US military to the history of geographical thought, *and* also about epistemology, militant empiricism in his lexicon, *and* also about post-colonialism. In a discussion about his book at the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Tampa, FL, from which this set of commentaries is derived, Wainwright implied that the Bowman Expedition was the "trailing and," and what was central for him were these other concerns. However it is framed, it is with these other concerns that I have some issues.

The first is the military and the history of geographical thought. The two have long been yoked. Yves Lacoste (1976), in fact, reckons that the first involvement of geographers with the military was with the ancient Greek geographer, Strabo, who gave advice on the importance of geographical terrain and position for military advantage two thousand years ago. As Lacoste (1976) puts it, "*La géographie, ça sert d'abord à faire la guerre*" [geography has served firstly to wage war]. It was recognition of the importance of geographical knowledge for the practice of warfare that led to the first flush of university chairs in geography in Western Europe during the late 19th century (following the Franco-Prussian war).

Wainwright provides a five-fold periodization of geography's relation to the military for the last hundred years or so (58). In his scheme, we are currently in the era of "geography counterinsurgent" defined by a declining US Empire, a fraying American hegemony, and battles with insurgents across numerous regional fronts (58). One of the US's weapons is its geographical knowledge of insurgents, and represented by maps of human terrain, the product of old-fashioned geographical expeditions now integrated with GIS. It is precisely that end that defined the Bowman expedition. But there is another claim that Wainwright makes

about the larger connection between the military and geographical knowledge that is less persuasive. He avers that “the intellectual results of th[e] project are weak ... because of the involvement of the military in its creation,” (54). That is, “military interests ... seriously hamper ... producing original findings” (54). Furthermore, he argues that because “intellectual labour” is “utterly dependent upon sharing and criticizing ideas openly” (54), while the military as an institution can do neither because of its concern with secrecy and command, what is produced by it, and exemplified by the Bowman Expedition, is “barely presentable ... scholarly work” (54).

The fingerprints of the military have been all over the discipline of geography from its beginning, however, if not, as Lacoste suggests, before its beginning. Wainwright implies there can be geographical knowledge untainted by military interests; knowledge that is unhampered, original not derivative, strong rather than weak. The history of geography and its entanglements with war, empire and imperial commerce suggests something different, though. I am also sceptical of Wainwright’s seemingly blanket statement about military interests necessarily undermining intellectual labour. Scholars working for the military, even under conditions of extreme secrecy, have produced world-changing knowledge such as the scientists who worked on the Manhattan Project (Goueff 1967) or at MIT’s RadLab (Buderi 1996) during the Second World War. Or again for the social sciences, Rebecca Lemov (2005) shows that the project of Behavioural Science originated exactly from military interests during World War II. You might disagree with the knowledge that was created, but it is uncontested that it was significant knowledge. Wainwright seems to want to believe in a method that can produce an unsullied form of geographical knowledge. It goes to his identification of correct conditions for intellectual labour involving “open, public, fair-but-critical debate” (55). But such conditions as feminist critics such as Mouffe (1993) argue can never exist; the odds are stacked right from the beginning. There is no such thing as unsullied geographical knowledge, but sullied knowledge might still be knowledge.

Wainwright’s second “trailing and” is epistemology, and represented by his term “militant empiricism.” It is a clever phrase, punning the aggressiveness of both the empiricist position that is held, as well as the particular institutional client that is so keen to practice it, the military. It’s true that the military in waging war, as well as imperial ventures, has drawn on the field tradition of geography to satisfy its strategic end of knowing facts about a place, or a terrain, or a region. The military has relied on the discipline’s tradition of field work to collect, catalogue, marshal, and present empirical data; that is, data based on sense experience, thus satisfying the requirements of empiricism. That is what the Bowman expedition seemingly was all about. Going to the field, in this case, Mexico, gathering data, recording it, integrating the information through GIS to allow a global analysis.

That said, “militant empiricism” oversimplifies the relation among the military, the discipline of geography and epistemology, making it flat and one-dimensional. For example, historically even regional geography was never about only collecting raw empirical facts from the field. It was also about integrating them, synthesizing, telling a story whether that was couched in terms of A. J. Herbertson’s (1916: 153) “spirit of a place,” or Vidal de la Blache’s (1924) “personality of place,” or even Richard Hartshorne’s (1939) clinically defined “element complex.” Moreover, human geography has never been defined by its field methods. Compared, say, to those of anthropology and even sociology, geography’s field methods are scattered, unsystematic, and frequently practised with little rigour. From my work on the history of US military intelligence during World War II and the Cold War, the contribution of American geographers was never going out into the field to collect field data. They used maps and secondary sources, later deploying analytical techniques and spatial theory (Barnes 2008). To meet his definition of “militant empiricism” Wainwright makes geography too narrow, neglecting the variegated forms it has taken, and the uses to which it has been put, even by the US military. My suspicion is that given his training as a geographer even Jerry Dobson in his work in Bowman Expedition did more than “militant empiricism.” He couldn’t help himself given the un-

disciplined discipline in which he was trained and became a member.

The last “trailing and” is postcolonialism. Wainwright draws here especially on Gayatri Spivak and Qadri Ismail in order to confront explicitly “militant empiricism.” The latter represents a colonial impulse. It uses the expeditionary experience of fieldwork, that is, going to Other places, taking facts from them, and returning, to represent the world. It is imperial knowledge, and consequently requiring post-colonial critique. That is what Spivak and Ismail provide. “Spivak,” Wainwright writes, “offers a powerful corrective to militant empiricism” (69). She does so by her emphasis on “planetarity” as opposed to globalization. Planetarity, says Wainwright (70) is “an aporetic ethics: a guide to practical being and doing *as if* one could be ethical towards the other, all the while knowing this is impossible.” From Ismail Wainwright takes “postempiricism” and “Abiding.” Postempiricism offers the possibility of creating alternative objects, including geographical objects, untainted by colonial premises (73). While “Abiding” holds out the prospect of dissolving the very distinction between “here” and “there” fundamental to all imperial projects (79).

I find this last “trailing and” the least satisfactory. It is the equivalent to “and they all lived happily ever after.” I feel it represents a utopian longing, a belief that it will work out in the end. I wish I could be as sanguine. Even on their own terms I am unclear how the objectives of Spivak (“planetarity”) and Ismail (“Abiding”) would be realised; that is, the kinds of practices that would make them come about. Spivak seems to suggest that a different kind of field work might lead to planetarity involving, for example, hanging-out, being playful, and “suspending previous training to train yourself” (75). But those kinds of descriptors seem to be what a lot of geographers do now anyway, but I have little sense that Spivak’s larger end is being achieved. Whereas for Ismail there is not even fieldwork. Only the text is important, and seemingly for him that can be researched and written anywhere, not requiring that we physically abide when Abiding. My fear is that planetarity and Abiding are empty aspirations, catchwords, means, as Stuart Hall (1997:

290) once put it, to “make you sleep well at night,” but which do not change anything.

Joel Wainwright has written a terrific book. His critique of the Bowman expedition is unanswerable. However, and to return to the point I raised earlier, he said at the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers where his book was discussed that “the book is not about the Bowman expedition,” but rather about what I’ve called the “trailing ands.” I think him putting it like this is a mistake. The strength of, and continuing interest in his important book comes precisely from the details of what he has written about the Bowman Expedition, and its relation to military funding, the AGS and the AAG. That will endure and be an exemplar, whereas I strongly suspect that the “trailing ands” will trail away.

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It has been a pleasure to re-read this manuscript in its published form (Background: I read it prior to publication as part of a spirited discussion in Minneapolis in spring 2012; I was unable to participate in the AAG session in Tampa). It is a stimulating intervention, on a topic that is vital to us all: Passionate, pithy, painstaking and philosophical. (I was fascinated to see how Palgrave/Macmillan has commodified the final product, with Victorian-style abstracts and DOI numbers for each chapter, consenting to ISI-Thomson's article-oriented citation hegemony).

The Kansas/US Army/Oaxaca controversy motivating Joel's passion remains an awkward moment for Geography, and for the AAG in its role as US academic Geography's formal representative: one that the Association has yet to—and perhaps cannot—adequately address. Although we have moved beyond this particular moment, the awkwardness persists. The US Department of Defense Minerva Initiative has funded a new University of Kansas/American Geographical Society research project (stated [aim](#): “university-based social science research initiative...to improve DoD's basic understanding of the social, cultural, behavioral, and political forces that shape regions of the world of strategic importance to the U.S.”). The project title, *The Human Geography of Resilience and Change: Land rights and political stability in Latin American indigenous societies*, reveals its intimate relation with the

past project. Within the AAG, a motion to create a committee to examine the relationship between Geography and militarism failed to pass at the Spring 2013 AAG Council meeting (on a tied vote). The best I was able to do was secure AAG sponsorship for two sessions on this theme at the Tampa meeting, to be published in part in *the Annals*, but this falls far short of the AAA activities that Joel describes (perhaps because US Geography's institutional relationship with the US military and surveillance community is that much more entangled). Geographers must and should do better, and Joel seeks to offer guideposts along this path.

In my reading, the book forwards four principal arguments. First, the Oaxaca controversy has brought to the surface an aspect of geography that we all are aware of but nevertheless repress: Consider how little attention has been devoted, also by radical geographers, to geography, war and military violence (Chapters 1-3). This highlights militarism's embarrassing absent presence in the discipline, the drunken uncle in the corner at Thanksgiving dinner who everyone tries to ignore. Joel dates thus back to the discipline's emergence alongside European colonialism, but arguably it is of much more general remit. Second, empirical fieldwork is empiricist, marking the discipline of Geography as latently empiricist (fourth thesis). Importantly, he distinguishes between geo-

graphic thought, which ‘always emerges out of the condition of being in the world’ (ix), and Geography, disciplined on this account by its latently empiricism. It follows (Chapter 5) that Geography, as a discipline, fails to achieve the potential of geographic thought—to acknowledge planetarity as always exceeding human attempts to bring order to the world, and to make ourselves “accountable and responsible to” (75) the residents of San Miguel Tiltapac in Oaxaca, *inter alia*. These first two arguments create the conditions of possibility for geopiracy. Third, and consequentially, (US?) Geography is indelibly marked by a militant empiricism, currently taking the form of Geography counterinsurgent, that must be relentlessly criticized (Chapter 4). Fourth (Chapter 6), we must aspire to a critical geography that enables “geographical thinkers who desire a world without geopiracy” (91).

I find myself in broad agreement with Joel’s first argument, but would note that the close relationship between Geography’s traditional practices and militarism cannot be restricted to its relationship to European/Japanese colonialism and US imperialism. Indeed, *avant la lettre géographique*, these practices (including geographical technologies) have always been closely bound up with militarized violence *tout court* (including, of course, surveillance and espionage, such as the CIA and NSA). Consider the use of stick charts during inter-island warfare in the pre-colonial Marshall Islands, or the Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham presumably using GPS navigators of some kind. Of course, different articulations between geography and militarism have very different modalities and consequences, but this breadth matters to broader disciplinary questions that I will raise with respect to his third argument.

With respect to Joel’s second argument, I completely agree that geographical thinking (as I would call it) must be separated/liberated conceptually and practically from the discipline of Geography. Yet I have difficulties with his charge of Geography qua empiricism—rooted here in Ismail’s critique of Anthropology. As I read it, Joel equates fieldwork, an empirical practice, with empiricism in its extreme and naïve form—the empiricism that the idealist Kant (but also, influentially, a logical empiricist like Karl

Popper) castigates for ignoring the theory-laden nature of observation and data. GIS/GPS functions as a *bête noire* in his account, and military involvement in its co-production and deployment has irrefutably shaped its nature. But is GIS necessarily empiricist in this extreme sense? I would argue certainly not. Within Geography, as Joel well knows, critical and radical geographers have pioneered critiques of naïve empiricism, developing a variety of feminist and participatory fieldwork strategies that challenge and break down tendencies to separate subject from object, in order to become responsible to those residing in the places where fieldwork is practiced. This kind of fieldwork cannot be equated with Joel’s definition of empiricism, yet it has become influential within Geography. It follows, then, that we cannot define Geography, *tout court*, as empiricism, unless we are willing to exclude such critical geographical practices from Geography.

Joel mobilizes a particular definition of Geography (neogeography?) as naïve empiricism, and there is plenty of it about: Its ‘just the facts’ attitude has functioned to produce geopiracy in Oaxaca (and elsewhere) exactly as Joel describes. Yet by reducing Geography to this homogeneous object Joel risks the kind of epistemological violence that he critiques fieldwork for. This reduction creates a double bind for Joel, if not his aporia. He travels to Geography from a constitutive outside (radical geography), to definitively categorize and thus undermine it. Yet that outside is inside, occupied by fellow radical geographers many of whom developed their radical critiques through non-empiricist (in his sense) fieldwork. Does his critique enable him to abide with these co-residents? Does his separation of Geography from geographical thought suffice to work around/through the double bind?

While rejecting pure empiricism, on the good grounds that its aspirations to foundational knowledge about the world are unsustainable, at times it seems that Joel himself seeks foundational knowledge (albeit on very different grounds). Arguing (with Ismail) that abiding in places (fieldwork) necessarily does violence to abiding by the residents of those places, a violence that textual readings can avoid (71-73), illumination is sought in discourse analysis, instead of observation. But his readings, in turn, are legitimated by reference

to what are presented as foundational definitions (from the Oxford English Dictionary, e.g., ‘piracy’ on p. 5) with no hint of the socially constructed Anglophone etymologies behind the OED and the spaces for critique these lay bare. Are textual readings capable of avoiding the epistemological violence that he associates with empirical observation? This glosses over the politics of translation, of the voices not articulated in or overlooked in unreflexive readings texts (of all kinds), and I miss reflexivity in Joel’s meticulously careful readings. Beneath such readings I discern a further foundational turn: erudite readings of selected great white men of European philosophy (Kant, Gramsci, Althusser, Derrida). I question whether knowledge can be foundational, but also the capacity of European knowledge (foundational or not) to create the conditions of possibility for abiding by those elsewhere.

Turning, finally, to Joel’s third argument, again I find it oversimplified. It is not just a question of whether Geography is militantly empiricist, raised above. On my reading, he tendentially equates Geography with US Geography, meaning the latter when writing the former. Thus (certain strains of) US Geography, and likely national Geographies of US allies and fellow-travellers, are complicit with US imperialism, a militant empiricism in the name of counterinsurgency (NB: relative to US goals). We need to remember, however, that Geography as a discipline

cannot be reduced to its US variant, notwithstanding its global influence (not least through the AAG). Nor should we presume that the norms of (these strains of) US Geography, to the extent that they can be generalized (see above), are those of Geography in general—if they are, radical geography becomes a waste of time. This raises questions of what we mean by a discipline. Can Geography be abstracted from the national contexts through which it becomes defined, through its relation to nation-states? Do Joel’s arguments hold, if we problematize the implicitly US-nature of his discussion of Geography? Geography finds itself entangled with militarism everywhere, as I argued earlier, but those multifaceted entanglements need not be reducible to Geography counterinsurgent.

These critiques, offered in the spirit of constructive critical engagement, should not be read as seeking to undermine the power and importance of this book. These lie in Joel’s first and fourth arguments, which I broadly endorse. Yet, as I hope is clear by now, I do not see his second and third arguments as necessary to prosecuting his first and fourth; these pairs sit awkwardly side by side. I fully agree that any radical geography needs to separate thinking geographically from Geography. But if one goal of such separation is to transform the latter, we need to be wary of essentialist readings of Geography, notwithstanding its inevitably disciplinary nature.

Reviewed by

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Unpacking our privilege to plunder

In his newest book *Geopiracy: Oaxaca, Militant Empiricism and Geographical Thought*, Wainwright is creative and brave and does what most critical geographers seek to do. Through a detailed illustration of the controversy over the *México Indígena* project and the concomitant accusations of geopiracy, Wainwright cogently problematizes a growing militarization in the discipline of geography. This book is an

important contribution to the sub-fields of political geography, political ecology and to critical geography more broadly. Geopiracy “brings the undiscussed into discussion, strays beyond established perimeters of opinion, renders the familiar not only strange but, oftentimes unacceptable, and exposes the depths of the meaning ‘radical’ itself as a conceptual rubric” (Castree and Wright 2005: 2). One of the many strengths of this book is the way Wainwright makes visible our collective responsibility to uphold profes-

sional ethics and respect for our research participants. For Wainwright, such responsibility accompanies our various privileges. Unfortunately, how we honor such responsibility is, in part, menaced by the “U.S. military’s involvement and financing” of *México Indígenal* Bowman Expeditions and signals a growing entanglement among geographers and the military in a myriad of forms. In this brief commentary, I focus on the way *Geopiracy*, as a significant and critical contribution to geographical thought pushes us to confirm our collective *political* responsibility to our research participants.

Geopiracy unfolds through a cogent critique of the militarization of our discipline. Wainwright joins other scholars in interrogating Peter Herlihy and Jerry Dobson as leaders and protagonists of the *México Indígenal*/Bowman Expeditions project and the collection of geodata with U. S. Military financing in Oaxaca, Mexico. This explicit critique of Herlihy and Dobson, both tenured full professors at the University of Kansas, is refreshing, at times intimidating, extremely necessary and wonderfully executed.

In this work, Wainwright challenges ALL geographers, regardless of their funding sources (military, corporate and/or the state) to re-think our “love of empiricism” and “romance with fieldwork.” For Wainwright we can no longer explain away questionable funding sources by claiming that our fieldwork will be “usefulness to public policy” (Wainwright 2013: 87). He challenges the discipline to “deepen our commitment to questioning the conditions of possibility for responsibility” (Wainwright 2013: 90). In short, it is not enough that we *intend* to do right or rather “do no harm.” In Geo-piracy, good intentions are irrelevant.

A focus on informed consent fuels much of the debate over *México Indígenal*. The collective and very public denouncement of *México Indígenal* by communities within the Union of Organizations of the Sierra Juarez of Oaxaca and the community of San Miguel Tiltepec also teaches us the ways in which EVERY geographer, through the actions of a few, can become implicated in unethical practice. For instance, as *Geopiracy* illustrates, leaders from San Miguel Tiltepec called upon “communities [around] the world [to avoid being] taken unaware by researchers who only

follow their [own] interests”... “what initially seemed to be a beneficial project for the communities now leaves many of the participants feeling like victims of geopiracy” [*geopirateria*] (Wainwright 2013: 5). If there was ever any doubt, *Geopiracy* is convincing: Had the communities known the US Military backed *México Indígenal*, they may have never consented. Furthermore *Geopiracy* exposes the ways in which Herlihy and Dobson are not concerned with the possible negative impact on neither geography nor indigenous peoples of Mexico and Central America, given that they remain defiant in the face of transnational critique, have continued the project in Honduras as of summer 2014, and seem fully committed to maligning their critics (Herlihy 2010; Dobson 2009; cited in Wainwright 2013).

México Indígenal/Bowman Expeditions provokes endless questions for the discipline of geography. Oftentimes such questions debate the merits of military funding in a shrinking landscape of resources for scholars. But in *Geopiracy*, Wainwright sees an even bigger picture and asks three salient questions: “Just who is sanctioned to plunder today?”; “What justifies the power to seize the earth?” and, “How should we [geographers] respond to geopiracy?” Rather than quibble over some of the lofty claims of the book...i.e. ending our “romance with fieldwork” and our “empiricist addictions” to which I plead guilty, I celebrate *Geopiracy*. This important contribution opens the space for those of us (geographers) *who dare not just to call ourselves critical but to be critical*, and without prejudice, challenges us to respond to an even larger question: “why we geographers have such difficulties facing up to the myriad ways that our discipline remains implicated in the work of empire?” (Wainwright 2013: 6)

“Who is sanctioned to plunder?”

Wainwright weaves a review of the controversy through the texts of other geographers whose insights are integral to this debate, such as Bryan, Grossman, Mutersbaugh and members of the IPSG collective. In the chapter, Geographers Respond: II, Wainwright partly frames the controversy in three ways “as a dispute about indigenous people as consenting

subjects” (21), as the challenges to “collecting geodata and mapping” and the interrogation of “military involvement in, and funding of, geographical research” (21-22). Early critiques of *México Indígena* tended to highlight the absence of professional ethics with regards to the conduct of the *México Indígena* team. Indeed, Bryan and Wainwright insist that “professional ethics and common sense dictate that a geographer who accepts funding from the U.S. military to collect sensitive information from indigenous communities in Latin America must share the information about funding sources with the community at the time of requesting consent” (Bryan and Wainwright 2009).¹ Indeed, much of the focus of *Geopiracy* is the problematic wedding of geography with the military. However, the most salient point in this analysis, which through its brevity risks being missed, is “Thesis Five/Chapter 8” and the notion that a critique of *México Indígena* is not simply to question the “political-economic-military” entanglement, but rather “geopiracy names a *process of imperial extraction* that is not temporarily limited to the present, not ethically limited to the acts of discrete individuals, nor a simple matter of winning the consent of subjects. Rather it reflects the afterlife of the Colombian encounter and its production of a divided world—the same world that empirical geographers take unproblematically as the object of analysis” (Wainwright 2013: 89). For me this is the common sense with which we should be most familiar. And as a legacy of such an encounter our work cannot be extracted from a history of military-led violence against indigenous people and Afro-descendants in Latin America.

Furthermore, knowledge of “professional ethics” and “common sense” would expect that the learned peoples of geography know about the *history* of state-sponsored genocide targeting indigenous spaces. Violent military repression and U.S. interference (and funding of repressive military regimes) have scorched the indigenous lands in places like Guatemala, El Salvador, Peru, Nicaragua, Chile, Paraguay and

1 We may never really know if the local participant communities of the *México Indígena* project were actually informed of the project’s funding sources. But what *Geopiracy* makes clear is that the fact that *México Indígena* project and Bowman Expeditions was and is funded by US Army-FMSO.

Argentina (to name a few). It is also expected that geographers working in Latin America have some idea of the *contemporary* violence against indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in Colombia, Honduras, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Mexico, again, just to name a few. It cannot be overstated that indigenous and Afro-descendant populations in Latin America, historically and contemporaneously, suffer material and symbolic consequences from extreme inequalities *at the hands of the military*.

Such scholarly “common sense” would seemingly be aware of the continuity of colonial relations, where whiteness is dignified and indigeneity and blackness denigrated, no matter how many “multicultural” reforms are passed in Latin America. In a world where whiteness, marked both by skin color, Spanish, Portuguese and English languages, profitmaking and property rights (please remember the end result of *México Indígena* and many other land titling projects in Latin America was/is neoliberal land privatization) reign as the markers by which indigenous and Afro-descendants are deemed deserving of not just land rights, but basic rights required for social reproduction. What I interpret from *Geopiracy* is that for anyone who calls themselves a “Latin Americanist,” has a Ph.D. in geography and who was hmmm... born before 1994 (and conscious for the Zapatista rebellion) such common sense, as I laid out above, should not be novel information. Thus who has the right to plunder? While I cannot seem to quite put my finger on the exact words or phrase, the answer lies somewhere in the shared privileges, arrogance, and willful ability to dehumanize the “other” among men like Columbus, Cook, Bowman, Demerest, Petraeus, Herlihy and Dobson, again, to simply name a few.

“What justifies the power to seize the whole earth?”

This question of course extends from the first. While it is tempting to go on and on about the naiveté/arrogance/ignorance underpinning the *México Indígena* project, *Geopiracy* makes clear there are serious material consequences at stake. *México Indígena* is a “prototype expedition” to be replicated throughout the world (Wainwright 2013: 52). This

is at once depressing and instructive. While typical funding sources dry up or are diverted with “bad press,” not so with *México Indígena*. Undoubtedly, the logics behind Bowman Expeditions, much like mercantile expansion, are not simply fueled by economic logic, nor is the power that is sought after only financial. This is an ideological project. More specifically, racial ideologies fuel Bowman logics. This is a central reason, in response to Wainwright, “why we geographers have such difficulties facing up to the myriad ways that our discipline remains implicated in the work of empire?”

While many geographers will respond differently to such a challenge wielded in the book, I wrestle with the questions in my own work (see Mollett 2013). As geographers, we are notoriously silent on how race and racial thinking are embroiled in our maps, counter-mapping processes, and our fieldwork in the global south (with few exceptions and even fewer if we do not count reflections of white guilt in fieldwork). While geographic research is employed by new actors and through new mechanisms, we cannot overstate the similarities between 21st century fieldwork and mapping with that of the early 20th century Bowman expeditions in Latin America. While *Geopiracy* resists labelling today’s geographic practices in Latin America a “Bowman redux.” (Wainwright 2013: 43), the *México Indígena* project is potentially really close. As I explain more fully elsewhere, (Mollett 2013), within the debates around *México Indígena*, there is an absence of explicit discussion of race and the Latin American racial terrain as a landscape for “participatory,” “counter,” and/or “indigenous” mapping. Racial ideology shapes the logics of such mapping projects. Bowman expeditions and the like are predominantly made operational and modelled after white male geographers from Europe and North America, and in the case of Bowman Expeditions/*México Indígena* continued “in the name of another white male geographer well known for the most racist kind of environmental determinism in the shaping and ‘mapping’ of Latin America” (Mollett 2013: 1236). As the late Neil Smith (2003) reminded us, Isiah Bowman repeatedly beat, kidnapped, exploited and enslaved indigenous peoples as a way to control their labor in the name of geographic exploration throughout the 20th century (cited in Mollett 2013). Such dehuman-

ization continues in the way Herlihy and Dobson conflate human and physical environments, and as Wainwright notes “to equate human beings with this material surface (terrain) implies flattening, simplifying, and dehumanizing” (47).

Therefore, whether leaders of the *México Indígena* Project did or did not disclose funding information is less pertinent than the prevailing debate suggests. The racialized assumptions and presuppositions about indigenous and Afro-descendant populations written into mapping projects, the logics of Bowman expeditions, and some of our fieldwork projects (and the public defenses of these projects) remain stubbornly fixed. In fact, the assumptions made by Bowman in the early 20th century continue. Namely, “the differential geographies, social conditions, work and prospects for landownership that are appropriate for whites and for Indians continue undisturbed [from] the ‘scientific’ racism of his fieldwork in the Andes...” decades ago (Smith 2003: 308; c.f. Mollett 2013). Thus, to respond to Wainwright’s second question, it’s the geographic legacy, produced through the coupling of imperialism and racism that serves as the privilege to map the world. Our insistence on mapping “foreign lands” or rather the militant empiricism that *Geopiracy* problematizes, is fueled by a heritage of whiteness and Bowman’s foundational path. Imperialism is more than economic exploration of the financing of “discovery.” The story of imperialism is a story of the dehumanization of indigenous and Afro-descendant populations, imbued in Enlightenment, advanced through the modern state, of science, ideas and the making of so-called “modern” and “civilized” human beings.

“How do we respond to geopiracy?”

Once we move beyond the rightful dismay, we must attend to the histories and contingencies of our fieldwork sites and ask ourselves whether our proposed projects contribute to the continuity of, or a rupture to, the dehumanization of our research participants and their communities. Then, we must “deepen our commitment to questioning the conditions of possibility for responsibility,” as Wainwright urges. This is the only way forward because now we know, our

ignorance does not let us off the hook, and in the words of Marion Iris Young “all those who participate by their actions in the structural processes that produce unjust outcomes *share responsibility* for working to alter those processes” (Young 2003: 42). *Geopiracy* lays an intractable path forward for deepened responsibility and commitment to our research participants and their life chances; a commitment that critical geographers are well positioned to, and must pursue.

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Reviewed by

Joe Bryan

Abiding Geography

“Can we abide by the world?” The question concludes one of the theses near the conclusion of Joel Wainwright’s extended essay, *Geopiracy* (Wainwright 2013: 87). It’s a question that will no doubt strike many as running at a diagonal to the text’s critique of the American Geographical Society’s (AGS) Bowman Expedition to Mexico, otherwise known as *México Indígena*. As the text argues, the Expedition’s mapping of communities in the Sierra Juárez of Oaxaca with funding from the US Army constitutes an exemplary act of “geopiracy” through the unjust seizure of another’s world. As exceptional as the facts surrounding the *México Indígena* controversy may be, the text argues that they in fact only confirm Geography’s disciplinary approach to thinking about and being in the world. As such, the text calls for geog-

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raphers to “unlearn or destroy the implicit empiricism of [Geography]” (86), undoing the field’s ways of disciplining understandings of the world that make efforts like the Bowman Expedition not only possible but entirely consistent with what it means to carry out geographical research. To that end Geographers do not need to know more facts about what the Bowman Expedition did or did not do in the Sierra Juárez of Oaxaca between 2006 and 2009. To the contrary, what is needed is to recognize how the controversy exposes the persistent coloniality of Geography, a discipline that remains every bit as much in the thrall of the military as it ever has been. Only through undisciplining Geography can the possibility of abiding by the world be gained.

The argument is a provocative one, its force aided by its polemical form. It is also a puzzling piece of

writing. Its effort to assert its place as a piece of scholarship is repeatedly disciplined by a theoretical consistency at times runs counter to its anti-disciplinary aims, rehashing philosophical debates counterposing rationalism with empiricism via engagements with Gayatri Spivak and Qadri Ismail. While that argument will no doubt be of interest to some, the real strength of the book lies with the questions it raises. Can we abide by Oaxaca? What would be accomplished by destroying empiricism? And, can Oaxaca abide by us?

Wainwright takes the “abide” from literary theorist Qadri Ismail’s previous work in Sri Lanka (Ismail 2005). It’s a curious choice of words, its connotations of waiting indefinitely and Christian metaphysics unaccounted for in the text (Wainwright 2013: 74). It is further burdened by its etymological link to “abode,” as in a place of waiting, that lends itself to a certain Heideggerian reading not inconsistent with the argument presented. In the text, however, it is meant to describe an act of waiting that comes in the wake of admission of the failure of all previously understandings to make sense of a situation. In the stillness created by that failure lies the possibility to open oneself to new ideas and forms of knowledge, to take Oaxaca on its own terms rather than as an example or instance of something else. Wainwright advances this task through presentation of series of texts within the text written by communities and organizations from the Sierra Juárez denouncing the *México Indígena* project, insisting that the full weight of their charges to sink in and unsettle.

This is of course what critique does. It is aimed at unsettling. But in order for its effect to be felt, it requires more than forceful delivery. It requires a certain disposition on the part of those who would hear its charges. This is the work that abiding is meant to do, describing that state of openness to critique coupled with a suspension of interpretation. It is also the task that responses to the Bowman Expedition controversy have failed to achieve thus far. As Wainwright asserts, neither the AAG’s efforts to revise its Statement of Ethics nor the Indigenous Peoples’ Specialty Group’s guidance on the matter constituted a sufficient response on their own. Rather than allowing the discipline to become undone by the letters from

Oaxaca, both efforts restored the authority of the AAG and thus the reputation of the discipline in the face of otherwise withering attacks. This is not to say that their efforts were failures. The Indigenous Peoples’ Specialty Group statement, discussed only in passing in the text (20-21), attempted to try to educate internal review boards more generally about the challenges of ethical research in and with indigenous communities. Indeed their efforts seem to be the only ones that AAG officially acknowledged in their subsequent review of the Statement of Ethics. Those efforts, Wainwright contends, have only further helped make the controversy surrounding the *México Indígena* project into an exceptional case of ethical controversy not worthy of a formal response, much less an inquiry into the charges raised. In doing so those responses limited debate about geopiracy itself, sidestepping the question of how geographical research *not* about the seizure and plundering of the worlds of others (5).

If that point seems obtuse in any way, consider, as Wainwright’s text instructs us to do, the reply of John Agnew (2010), the President of the AAG at the time that that the letters arrived, to the critiques. Instead of addressing the questions of militarism and ethical conduct raised by the letters from Oaxaca and subsequent commentaries from geographers, myself included, Agnew’s reply was a highly personalized attack at me. His words, as Wainwright rightly surmises, mark an effort to encapsulate the entire debate within Geography as a discipline and academia more generally. Instead of the AAG responding to the questions of accountability raised by the letters from Oaxaca, the discussion becomes about the individual responsibility of those geographers who voiced support for discussion of their claims. Waiting for the AAG to respond reveals the real limitations of its authority to do anything that would approximate the justice demanded in the letters, much less make the discipline to anything other than its own internal concerns. Abiding only confirms this failure.

This last point is critical to the book’s argument, to say nothing of its implications for geographers more generally. If critique’s power lies with its ability to unsettle taken-for-granted concepts and ideas, accountability to it requires a certain openness, an ability

to see the intellectual stakes of a controversy like the Bowman Expeditions beyond the names of the individuals involved. Rather than run to the quasi-sovereign authority of the AAG or any other professional society as the ultimate arbiter of justice, it is in this quality of openness where any true sense of accountability resides. If we can have no way of experiencing justice, of conceiving of what it might look like beyond the structure of the discipline, then justice is impossible. But if by reading, by listening, by opening oneself to critique, we might hear, see, and think differently, then justice can once again become something attainable. If that is the case, then abiding's risk of indifference needs acknowledging. Clearly it's not a matter of simply waiting for critiques to arrive. They abound, if only we can learn to see them as such. But how are we as geographers to abide by "Oaxaca," much less the "world," if both terms are at some level empty placeholders, signs of geographical practice that the text is at pains to undo? More importantly, can those who might otherwise identify with "Oaxaca" abide by us?

Not that they—whoever "Oaxaca" might be—need to. Read the letters closely or better yet survey the range of materials put forth on the Bowman controversy, such as Mequiades Cruz's (2010) essay, "A Living Space," or Simon Sedillo's 2010 documentary, *The Demarest Factor*. Both convey a certain self-contained confidence that makes clear that the communities of the Sierra Juarez have very little need for the kind of geography Herlihy and his colleagues practice. They cannot abide that kind of geography, but that's not the same as wanting nothing to do with geographers more generally. The text's avoidance of any engagement with that chorus of voices that might be Oaxaca thus raises a more serious question of whether Oaxaca can abide by geographers, much less the kind of debate presented here in the text. Rather than opening that possibility, the text's literary approach demands that the reader take the collection of texts it presents, including the letters, on their own terms. The insertion of those texts within the broader argument of the essay instead instructs a more narrow reading of their implications for Geography. This is appropriate enough. The critique presented in the essay is aimed at geographers after all. In contrast with their contribution to that polemic, it's hard not to be left with the

impression that Oaxacans are peripheral audience for the critique. If there's a virtue in this, it lies with the possibility it opens for charges of geopolitics coming from *any* of the places visited by the AGS Expeditions with military financing. That list expands beyond Mexico to now include Colombia, Jordan, and Kazakhstan, along with the "The Antilles" and the "[US] Borderlands." And even those cases are, as the text reminds, are nothing more (or less) than demonstrations of disciplinary norms rather than exceptions.

As generative as this is for seeing the scope of what's at stake in what Wainwright describes as "Geography counterinsurgent," its reluctance to consider anything more specific conceals an important point about justice. It is not something that we need to abide in the sense of waiting for, so much as it is something that our abidance might help us to see as an already existing potential. To say that, however, risks teetering back into empiricism that makes experience the basis for knowledge. The essay urges the reader to do otherwise at every opportunity, insisting on a more narrow, literary approach. Literary critique is not free from empiricism, as the text points out, but it is equally adamant on the point that empiricism must go in order to clear the way for a more thoroughly decolonized approach to geography. This carries with it a certain presumption that only those ideas that find their way into text are capable of effecting the desired critique. Wainwright is careful here to point out that such texts must be complemented by forms of "fieldwork" that involve a practiced "hanging out" that leaves one open to encounters that surpass existing categories of thought: "an opportunity to 'suspend previous training in order to train yourself'" (75, quoting Spivak). Beyond encountering the kinds of texts like the declarations from Oaxaca, its not entirely clear about how that hanging out informs not just new ways of reading the discipline but also of new approaches to research beyond an emphasis on texts.

As I write this line, in Oaxaca, a brass band marching in the street has forced me to pause. Empirics like that still seem to matter quite a bit when it comes to holding oneself accountable to the world in all its complex multiplicity. Part of what experience does is open up the possibility to the non-

rational and inchoate, to those concepts that can't be entirely grasped through reasoning alone. It's that kind of experience, running diagonal to whatever one was intending to do, that provides an opening. Abiding *Geopiracy* achieves a similar effect. Reading it opens up the space to consider its claims against empiricism at their full force. Whether or not that amounts to abiding by Oaxaca (or the world) seems to be an entirely different matter, however, since time and again it's the text's philosophical arguments that take center stage. That does not make the book any less worthy of reading. To the contrary, it imposes its own form of abidance. It's up to geographers to figure out how they might listen and respond, even if that leads in directions that run counter to its intended effect. For that, we can be thankful that Wainwright,

for one, abides. We could do far worse by joining him by reading and engaging with his text.

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Geopiracy is an important book. It raises pressing questions about the discipline of Geography, its premises, conceptual frameworks and methodologies. It also forces geographers to address the problems of military funding for research, at a time when academics are increasingly taking up work for the military, as well as seeking out funding from other resources from across the public and private sector. The book is also refreshingly polemical. But, for this reason, it also raises many issues for discussion. In what follows I want to reflect on the following: the problems that the book identifies regarding military funding, the problems of empiricism as a form of research practice, and the particular troubles that arise when empiricism and the military intersect, as they do in the case of the Bowman Expeditions in Oaxaca, which are the starting point for this book.

Geopiracy begins with a critique of the *México Indígena* project, which involved gathering data on indigenous peoples in Oaxaca. This research was undertaken as part of the Bowman Expeditions, which

were launched under the auspices of the American Geographical Society, with the intent to gather information useful for US foreign policy. Funding was provided by the US Army's Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO), and was undertaken with participation by Radiance Technologies (a company that provides operational support to the Department of Defense, among other things).

Wainwright denounces the collusion between the military and geographers in the Bowman Expeditions, which provides him with a launching point for his scathing attacks on the discipline. Drawing upon this one case study, he argues that in the 21st century, the collusion between Geography and the military is pervasive, not simply in terms of funding, but with respect to empiricist epistemology. This critique of what he calls Geography's "militant empiricism" is forceful and compelling, but while Wainwright suggests that the military and empiricism cannot be uncoupled, I want to do so in what follows. For while militaries and empiricism exert an undeniable power

when they come together, they do not always coexist. Militaries certainly extend their power through empiricism, but this is not the only kind of data collection or dissemination that they employ (e.g. the military has sought to shape behavior and emotions through psychological operations, or PSYOPS). Nor is it the case that empiricism is a framework only used by the military and geographers—as Wainwright himself notes. Thus in what follows, I want to address each of these issues in turn, before drawing them together again in the conclusion.

Geography Militant

Geopiracy draws on the example of the Bowman Expeditions to argue that military funding of academic research is unethical (Wainwright 2013: 54). He provides two reasons why this is so. First, when research is funded by the military, the problematic and methodology are shaped by and are invested in military interests. Second, the social capacity of this research is limited in that the military prefers secrecy to transparency, and collaboration is made difficult with other researchers and informants when the military is on board. I am deeply sympathetic with the broader argument, but question whether these are the reasons for discrediting this funding.

Similar kinds of critiques could be used to denounce all kinds of collaborative research, with activist organizations, for example, where non-academics help shape research projects, and where other kinds of alliances might also be foreclosed. If research supported by an environmental organization means that state or private sector actors won't participate, or if the research program is designed in consultation with them, does this make this research unethical or lacking in originality? Surely, these are very different kinds of collaborations.

A second but different problem with Wainwright's targeting of military funding is that he aligns the military with the state, or "state/military." This is an important point: all too often the military's place as an extension of the state goes unremarked, as if the state and the military were separate institutions, when they are not, and never have been. Indeed, the lines

between military and civilian affairs are becoming more and more blurred, and whatever conceit we have sought to sustain that these are separate spheres is quickly unravelling. The problem is not that the interconnections are foregrounded, but rather that it leads to a wholesale dismissal of all state-funded research which is deemed to be *ipso facto* suspect. This is articulated especially clearly in the book's conclusion where he states that the "underlying limitation" of Geography "comes from a traditional commitment to empiricism in service to the state/military" (87). He further indicts all Geography research for "Even that research which is not directly funded by the state typically relies on state institutions, emulates the expeditionary model, and seeks to be justified by promises of usefulness to public policy" (87).

These are powerful statements. But I am reticent to impute every bit of research that has had some state support. Surely, there are very few—if any—academics whose work would not be suspect under these terms. Where, then, lies the problem with military funding of research? Rather than make blanket statements about all military/state funding being necessarily shady, perhaps a more effective critique is one that focuses on how power plays out in the research. Such a critique would focus on the ethics of research based on whether it sustains or exploits social, cultural, political and economic relations of power and participates in the dispossession of populations of their rights. Research that abuses power relations or dispossesses, no matter what the source of funding (military, state, private sector, non-governmental organization, etc.), would be considered unethical.

Reorienting the critique to focus on this aspect of the problems with military funding would help to make it more clear what is at fault and what is at stake, while also opening up all kinds of research to critique, not simply that by the military. It also avoids blanket accusations that all state/military research is *a priori* unethical and unoriginal—an accusation so all-encompassing in its scope that it becomes unhelpful as a tool for critique. Military-funded research is not left off the hook. The fundamental role of militaries is to wield force over others in the name of the nation-state. Militaries encounter non-nationals (and increasingly

domestic populations) through the lens of the target: people are sorted into friends or enemies, as with us or against us. Those who are deemed to be a threat are dispossessed of their land, resources, and livelihoods. Hence any research put to these ends would be considered unethical. This would clearly apply to the Bowman Expeditions, as Wainwright forcefully illustrates in the introductory chapters of his book, which set out the many ways that the local peoples have opposed the research in Oaxaca (see also Bryan 2010; Cruz 2010).

Moreover, this reorientation avoids the presumption embedded in a wholesale denunciation of state/military research that there is some kind of ideal research that exists outside of these social and political relations. Not only is this myth of purity implausible, it also sustains a romanticized notion of an autonomous and objective researcher whose very authority is measured by his or her removal from the research at hand. As noted above, this critique could just as easily be used to undermine the other kinds of “militant” research that is underway, which is radical, socially-embedded, and engaged—which is not the kind of research that I believe that Wainwright wants to target. And yet, the slippage between military and “militant” in *Geopiracy* is a bit troubling, for it seems to preclude all forms of militancy in the university, whether activist and revolutionary, or regressive and reactionary. This is yet another reason for reframing the terms that make military-funded research problematic.

Empiricism

The second prong of Wainwright’s criticism is directed at the empiricism that lies at the heart of Geography, whereby geographers venture forth to gather knowledge about other parts of the world to report back to one’s home base. This has been the discipline’s lifeblood. But it is also a tool of imperialism, which has been taken up contemporary counterinsurgency strategy (and in projects such as the Bowman Expeditions), which rely on the acquisition of detailed knowledge of local cultures and landscapes around the world in order to win the “hearts and minds” of the local population (44).

A central problem that Wainwright identifies is that an empiricist mapping of the world inscribes a model of subject (researcher) and object (researched), and includes no self-reflexivity about the production of knowledge. A different model of research, he argues, is opened up by postcolonial critique, particularly through the works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Qadri Ismail. Spivak’s model of planetarity is invoked as a way to overwrite the globe, which models a world that can be mapped and measured, and a (Western) globalization that can be rolled out across the world. Planetarity, in contrast, in its ungraspability, opens us up to “alterity [and] belonging to another system,” and lends itself to “being-with” in the world (70). This encourages more ethical forms of relations, even as we recognize the unknowability of life’s experiences. Ismail brings to Spivak’s work the concept of “abiding” as a way to relate to space and place that is explicitly postempiricist. Abiding in place means to dwell in such a way that a place is encountered “as a debate” that is unfolding (73). In so engaging with place, the author works toward “the transcendence or destruction of the very distinction between subject and object” (72).

Spivak and Ismail offer important challenges to empiricism. But I am less convinced that their models are exactly what is needed. For, notably, the strategies of both planetarity and abiding are grounded in textual analysis, from Spivak’s “*experiment in reading the world*” (69) to Ismail’s understanding of place “as a *text*, or a group of texts” (73). I find this prioritization of the textual and the representational, while minimizing an embodied engagement with others—whether participants, collaborators or interlocutors—is misguided. It reinscribes the word over non-representational forms of knowing. It privileges the discursive over material relations. Its focus is anthropocentric and obscures the more-than-human or the posthuman. And thus, a (re)turn to the textual ignores significant faultlines that have been opened up in Geography over the past decade that are leading to alternative ways of being and knowing in the world.

But perhaps the more difficult problem is that the emphasis on the textual also speaks to a lingering critique of *all* kinds of fieldwork—of going into the

field—that runs through *Geopiracy*. For Wainwright, fieldwork entails obtaining data from elsewhere which creates “a space between the *field* (data source/periphery) and the *university* (center of calculation/center)” (75, emphasis in the original). As a result, as Ismail puts it more forcefully, fieldwork is not accountable to the epistemologies of both these spaces. The criticism is valid, but as Wainwright remarks, it does leave a double-bind, in that he also acknowledges that travelling outside of one’s comfort zone can lead to a “rearrangement of desire” that could question Western privilege (75). So while formal fieldwork is disapproved, he suggests that Spivak’s more playful model of “hanging out” or of “being there” offers an alternative epistemological framing.

“Hanging out” sounds like fun, but it lacks the theoretical rigour and self-reflexivity that Wainwright so ardently (and rightly!) advocates for research practices elsewhere in the book. The ease of “hanging out” could just as easily replicate imperial desires, and elude questions regarding who gets to hang and where. More problematically, this foregrounding of the textual and a lack of self-reflexivity about being elsewhere does have a certain resonance with how evidence is wielded in *Geopiracy*. In the introductory chapter, where the problems with the Bowman Expeditions are detailed, the evidence is mounted through a close reading of the many texts that have emerged on the issue, including open letters, reports, petitions, papers, etc. The documentary archive is gleaned carefully for the truths that it offers. The reader gets little sense of the people or the place of the encounters, even except through their own documents. This is despite Wainwright’s numerous trips to Oaxaca. As he notes cursorily in a footnote in Chapter 5: “Although I have been to Oaxaca four times and have met with some of the leaders from these indigenous communities, I emphasize that my critique is legitimated neither by expertise nor by empiricism. Of course, my travel to Oaxaca enabled and informs my analysis” (84).

This is one of the most troubling passages in the book. How have these travels enabled and informed the analysis? We never find out. The impact of his trips, and of his encounters with indigenous peoples, is ambivalent. The people—the dispossessed—have

drifted out of view and all that is left is the authorial and authoritative author. While Wainwright seeks to dodge allegations of empiricism and expertise by affirming that this is the case, no explanation is given as to how. If this is how the modes of planetarity and abiding are to unfold, if this is the future of engaging with others and being elsewhere, then it is hugely unsatisfying.

For alternative models of empiricist fieldwork, Wainwright could easily have turned to the long literature in Geography and other disciplines by feminists. Spivak is referred to as a feminist, but only in a footnote. Some feminist critiques of masculinist fieldwork are mentioned, but again, only in a footnote; their contributions are not elaborated. Yet feminists have provided ample critiques of power and the production of knowledge that not only seek to destabilize masculinist Western narratives, but do so by attending to the power relations of the research process through reflexivity, positionality, and intersectionality (among others). Moreover, these critiques unfold in ways that are embodied and corporeal, unlike the strands of postcolonial theory that are invoked in *Geopiracy*. A large number of examples could be drawn upon here to exemplify this, but I will mention just one that resonates clearly with Wainwright’s project. Cindi Katz proposes a model of “counter-topography” which is important here for its recognition of the three-dimensional character of experience (the topography) that moves beyond the singular dimension of the text (Katz 2001). Through this model, she proposes that researchers engage in global politics in ways that are embodied, and which knit together global sites through both their opportunities and oppression. Counter-topography is thus closely attuned to relations of power and knowledge-formation, but it also, explicitly, foregrounds working *counter* to dominant narratives—to research against the grain.

Countering offers a potent model of academic engagement, especially if we are, as discussed above, to move against research that sustains or exploits social, cultural, political and economic relations of power that dispossess populations of their rights. This resonates with postcolonial theory, which has also been highly

attuned to power and dispossession, but also emphasizes embodiment, both of the researcher and the researched. These characteristics are not foregrounded in Wainwright's reading of the works of Spivak and Ismail (although these may appear in their works). Moreover, Katz's model of countering draws out the importance of thinking through place in ways that "intervene" in those places, a point that Ismail makes, but which is not highlighted in *Geopiracy*.

Ultimately, however, while *Geopiracy* does not theorize intervention as much as it might, the book nevertheless makes a significant contribution. It builds upon a significant body of work on the history of the discipline and its collusion with militaries, imperialism, and dispossession, including the writings of Trevor Barnes, Felix Driver, Matt Farish, Karen Morin and Neil Smith. But it also brings this work into the present, much as has been done in other disciplines, such as Anthropology, but has been less forthcoming in Geography (but see Woodward 2005; Crampton et al 2014). This is all the more necessary if we concur with Wainwright that there is an "anxious silence" about the rise of militant empiricism in the discipline. Despite my quibbles, *Geopiracy* succeeds in that it raises the alarm against this silence, and in so doing

makes an important intervention in the present. Let's hope that others add to the noise.

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Reviewed by

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I don't give two fucks about geography.

Whatever geography *is*.

Which has never been plain to me. Like everything else in my life I fell into it. Because I needed a lab science and the introductory geography course *was* one. I'd started college thinking I'd become a medieval historian, because I liked T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*; and the armor court at the Cleveland Museum of Art; and stained glass windows. But when I'd completed the requirements

for a history degree with a couple of years left to go, I entered an honors program in English, where I wrote a thesis around my favorite detective stories. En route I accumulated enough geography credits to major in that too. I applied to graduate programs in all three areas. I ended up in geography because Clark University offered me far and away the most lavish support. Well, it paid for everything. *Everything*.

I *never* figured out what geography *was* but I soon discovered I could do whatever I wanted, so I stayed. I wrote about dime novels and the paper routes I'd had in Cleveland and the highlands of Chiapas.

I *loved* the highlands of Chiapas, well, San Cristobal and Mitontic and Zinacantan. And I loved Oaxaca, not like my brother, Pete, who soon settled there, but in my own way. I went there for the first time in 1946, in my mother's arms I like to say, though I'm sitting on my father's lap in the passport photo. We were on our way to Pinotepa Nacional where he was going to write the great American novel. We didn't stay there long, settling instead in Cuernavaca, but we returned to Oaxaca in 1963. And 1965. And 1966. And 1967, and so on, until 1976; after which I didn't go back until 2012 when Joe Bryan and I went up into the Sierra Juarez to talk to folks in Gelatao, Ixtlan, Tltepec, Yagila, and Yagavila.

Let me say that I can't stand Kant, Hegel, or Heidegger—I can't *read* them—and though undoubtedly “abiding” carries its share of Heideggerian freight, I guess Joel gets *his* sense of *abiding* from Qadri Ismail anyway, so I'm puzzled about whether I want to use “abide” to describe my relationship to Oaxaca or San Cristobal, or for that matter Cleveland, Worcester, or Raleigh. The word rings false to me in that sense. I tend to use “abide” to mean “bear patiently,” usually preceded by “can't”, as in, “I can't abide these kinds of sessions,” with that weird emphasis on “abide” that you give it when you use it that way.

I guess I could use it *this* way to say, “I can't abide the preface and fifth, and sixth chapters of Joel's book,” though ordinarily I'd use “stand” instead of “abide”—“I can't stand them,” I'd say—since they're about geography, a subject I neither understand nor care for, from philosophical perspectives that mean nothing to me. Jeremy Crampton thinks about this as me refusing to do the “intellectual heavy-lifting” he thinks I'm obligated to, but somehow I've never let *that* bother me either.

This is to say nothing about Joel's text. It's to say something about *my* relationship to it. I approached it warily, like a mouse a baited trap. But even approached this guardedly, I kept surprising myself by breaking out in laughter. The book's very funny, especially the notes, though perhaps I might better put this by saying that the text is very straight-*forward*

while the notes are very straight-*facéd*. I love the way Joel writes, saying of Dobson and Herlihy's receipt of \$2.5 million from the Department of Defense that, “These are not insignificant figures for our discipline,” or “Each of the panelists was asked to speak for 10 minutes, but Herlihy spoke for more than 34. A trivial point, perhaps ... ,” or “Measured by the standard metric, *JLAG* is not an influential journal,” or “Herlihy's earlier work in indigenous mapping has proven, to put it lightly, deeply controversial,” or:

With all due respect to Professor Murphy (whose professional credentials are beyond question), I cannot help but wonder if it was a good idea for the AAG to appoint someone who was involved in the Bowman expeditions – even at “arm's length” – as chair of a committee created in response to a controversy caused by these very expeditions.

There's something delicious, to my ear, in all the “with due respect's”, the “I cannot help but wonder's”, the “not insignificant's”, the “to put it lightly's”, the “perhaps'es ... in a text that's a virulent polemic.

The contrast ... it's funny.

But that's what *Geopiracy* is, from the get-go, a polemic. That is, the book's a *blow*, in what Joel prefers to think about as a *polemos*. This is to say, the book's a blow in a war, a fight, a battle, a dispute, a strife, a quarrel ... *within the profession*. I hope this narrowing of focus was a tactical move, because otherwise I don't get it. I see what happened in Oaxaca as a battle ... *in the world*. The way I read it, the US Army suborned an American geographer to sneak into a foreign country about whose property relations it was ill-informed to get more information. *My* feeling is that at the very least anyone who pays US taxes should be concerned about it; certainly they legitimately *could* be. Mexicans could certainly be pissed off too. So could others. Geography, that is, the *profession* of geography, is involved in this largely by happenstance. Though I admit “geography” *was* advantageously situated.

Joe Bryan and I have spent the last few years tracing the genealogy of this event, and our story differs from Joel's. I guess I could say that it's ... *less disciplinary*. Our story, more focused on indigenous peoples and the military, *does* concern itself with geography, that is, with the *profession*, but largely because the descent of the American Geographical Society from the pre-eminent position it held during the First World War to the squalid condition it was in during the inauguration of the Bowman Expeditions—three rooms on a linoleum-tiled corridor on the second floor of a building on Court Street in Brooklyn—made it easy picking for the Foreign Military Studies Office.

In the book, *Weaponizing Maps*, that Joe and I are publishing about this, we spend a chapter on the AGS. We paint it as a New York social club that managed to parley its access to wealth and power into an institution with deep and important connections to the US state department and military—especially under Isaiah Bowman—that after the Second World War allowed its prestige and influence to dwindle to less than that of even ... *JLAG*. Under the presidency of Jerry Dobson, a retired Oak Ridge employee who got a job teaching geography at the University of Kansas, the AGS attracted the attention of Geoff Demarest, a lieutenant colonel with the Foreign Military Studies Office at nearby Fort Leavenworth. He had a deep interest in private property and he had money to toss around. Dobson and Demarest talked Peter Herlihy, likewise at Kansas, into converting his previously-Fulbright-funded year in San Luis Potosí, and Mexican-government-funded mapping projects, into the inaugural Bowman Expedition, México Indígena, an FMSO-funded, AGS-fronted mapping project originally focused exclusively on the Huasteca Potosina. Its involvement in Oaxaca emerged from a series of coincidences that resulted in Gustavo Ramírez inviting Herlihy to pitch his project to the Union of Organizations of the Sierra Juárez of Oaxaca, where, in the end, Herlihy was able only to map Yagila and Tiltepec, both of which subsequently published declarations condemning Dobson, Herlihy, and the American Geographical Society.

Does this have *anything* to do with geography? Maybe. In an *institutional* sense. But it's got more to do with the academy and social status, with influence and prestige. The FMSO was also involved in the creation of the Human Terrain System, a program the Army cooked up for integrating social scientists into battlefield command structures. Anthropologists in particular were recruited, though the program welcomed sociologists, political scientists, linguists, and others. Anthropologists who raised the alarm found *willing* ears among their colleagues, and the American Anthropological Association *condemned* the Human Terrain System as an “unacceptable application of anthropological expertise” that conflicted with its Code of Ethics. Why hasn't the AAG condemned the Bowman Expeditions? Because the AAG is dominated, as it always has been, by politically conservative, largely Midwestern university departments who think science needs to steer clear of politics, usually as a way of supporting politically conservative positions. Does this reflect an empiricist bent? I doubt it. I'm not sure many would have much of an idea what that would mean. I think it reflects their position in the “dominated fraction of the dominant class,” a relationship, for geographers, as true *within* the university as outside it.

As for the silence of the AGS, if it admits it's no longer anything more than a conduit and administrator of Army money, it will lose every remaining shred of academic respectability, and, along with it, its sole utility to the Army, which is precisely to cloak in respectability the intelligence that it gathers through its Bowman Expeditions. I mean, to be straightforward about it, the Army's turned the AGS into an intelligence agency, perhaps not a *secret* intelligence agency—it's “all” open source after all—but an intelligence agency nonetheless.

Does this need to be condemned? At the very least. I think it needs to be condemned vehemently. I think it needs to be *stopped*, stopped now. But not because I'm a geographer. Because I *hate* the Army and I *love* Oaxaca.

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Joel Wainwright is absolutely right to argue that it is insufficient to understand any malfeasance by researchers associated with the US Military/American Geographical Society-sponsored research project, *México Indígena*, as only a problem of ethics. There is little doubt, that by not fully disclosing their sources of funding, the use of their research, and, perhaps, the real aims of their project, researchers transgressed commonly-accepted ethical norms. But as Wainwright says, to note that is only to indicate the symptom, not the cause of the problem. So Joel Wainwright is also right to go in search of the cause, which he locates in the epistemology of a certain kind of geography. There's little doubt in my mind that Wainwright has made a correct diagnosis.¹ The epistemological disease Wainwright identifies is "empiricism," and he makes a good case for its deleterious effects. The problem is his cure.

Here are the roots of the disease. In the wake of the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, we learn, Jerome Dobson, president of the American Geographical Society, sought a way to combat "geographic ignorance," which Dobson asserts is "the principal cause of the blunders that have characterized American foreign policy" since the end of the Second World War (11, quoting an unpaginated defense by Dobson [2009]).² Dobson wanted to correct that and he had an idea:

1 This despite the fact that his attention keeps getting distracted by baseless speculation about researchers' genitals and their thoughts about them (Wainwright 2013: 69) as well as their sexual practices (63, fn 17) which undermines the diagnosis he is seeking to make—and (to discard the metaphor) gives his opponents all the ammunition they need to simply dismiss his charges against the Bowman Expeditions and *México Indígena*.

2 While Wainwright quotes from this document accurately, he also places in one long block quotation passages that appear pages apart in the original; the impression Wainwright thus gives is of giving Dobson his due at length, when, of course, he has carefully excised and edited Dobson's comments. The problem is not that Wainwright has reworked and edited Dobson's arguments; that's what both scholarship in particular and writing more generally is on part about. Nor is the problem that Wainwright twists Dobson's words. He does not. The problem is that Wainwright the writer—the necessary ventriloquist—dis-

convinced that geographic ignorance has been the cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy since the end of World War II, I asked myself what the American Geographical Society could do about it. I conceived of sending a team of geographers to every country in the world to improve geographic understanding, connect with scholars, and bring back knowledge to the American people. I did a calculation and was astounded to realize that it would cost only \$125,000,000 to send a professor and two or three graduate students to every country in the world to spend a full semester every year. This may sound like a lot of money by university standards but it's not much at all compared to the enormous budgets spent on far less useful information. So far, we've received about \$2,500,000, a good "down payment," but far less than is needed to make a sizeable dent in the America[n] scourge of geographic ignorance (in Wainwright 2013: 11).³

That \$2.5 million "down payment" has largely come from the U.S. Army's Foreign Military Studies Office, and its origin is at the heart of the ethical questions facing *México Indígena*.

But for Wainwright the important issue is less the source of the money, or even the use of the information gathered, but especially the vision for the "Bowman Expeditions," the name Dobson gave his dream of sending geographers into every country in order to "bring back ... knowledge to the American People." "In a very real sense," Dobson (2009: np) has argued in a passage Wainwright does not quote:

Bowman Expeditions are the modern incarnation of a long-standing AGS mission to serve Latin America. From 1925 to 1945 we mapped all of Latin America from the U.S. border to Tierra del Fuego at

appears through his technique of cobbled-together block quotation.

3 I have here restored a sentence Wainwright cut—the one beginning "That may sound like a lot...." I have restored it because it actually helps make Wainwright's case about empiricism.

1:1,000,000 scale. “The Millionth Map of Hispanic America” was to be the most precise map series available for the entire region until well after World War II. And no one ever called it geopiracy. Those maps were essential to the beneficial development of the region. We had on average seven cartographers working continuously for twenty years. Almost every penny came from private donors, but private philanthropy is not what it used to be.

The last line, one assumes, is meant to justify seeking funding from the U.S. military. The line about geopiracy is inserted to make a larger claim: that the work of the México Indígena project, which some people in Oaxaca accused of “geopiracy”—the geographical equivalent of “biopiracy”—was in fact benign. This is the ethical issue again. For Wainwright, however, the project is not benign not for ethical reasons but because of the way it understood knowledge and knowledge production.

This quotation (and other bits of Dobson’s defense, such as his use of a satellite image of his own plot of land in Kansas to illustrate the innocence of mapping) gives a good sense of how the Bowman Expeditions understand geographical knowledge: it is something just there, waiting to be discovered, to be plucked out of the earth, put to use for development or “brought back” to “the American people.” Wainwright lays out what he sees as being at stake:

Either geography is something that emerges out of confronting being in the world, i.e., through critically encountering worldliness, or it is something that takes the world for granted and proceeds by exploring, measuring and mapping it. The former position ... we might call “critical,” “hermeneutical,” or “ontological” The latter position, represented by Bowman, could be called empiricism. It is the object of my critique (x).

Whatever its ethical sins, México Indígena (and potentially the Bowman Expeditions more generally), its cardinal sin is empiricism; an approach to knowledge that Wainwright calls (in part because of its epistemology and in part because of its links to the U.S. military), “militant empiricism” (14). That’s the real sin; that’s the real disease confronting geography.

But what then becomes the cure? What’s the alternative? For Wainwright, whatever his insistence that we be “worldly,” it’s the untenable idealism of a certain brand of “postcolonialism” (x, *passim*). In particular, Wainwright (70) informs us, we need to follow Spivak and conceive of worldliness as “planetarity:” “Let us no longer speak of globalization, the global scale, and the like; instead let us think of ourselves as living on a planet. ... ‘The planet,’ [Spivak] explains, ‘is in the species of alterity, belonging to another system’ (Spivak 2012: 338), one beyond our control and even representation.” (emphasis added). Wainwright develops the point: “As I follow Spivak, her conception of the world qua ‘planet’ differs from the common conception of the world qua ‘globe’ in that the planet is one of those things that can never be a thing, but a thing-in-itself, something that we know is there, though we can never directly grasp as an object with our senses” (70). As Wainwright helpfully indicates in a footnote, this is pure Kantianism. Or as Neil Smith (1989) would say, it is pure neo-Kantianism because it is a Kantianism that outdoes Kant. Wainwright lets Spivak do the talking for him: “But how,” Wainwright (70) asks, “if not as empiricists, are we to think planetarity? Spivak answers: “planet” is, here, as perhaps always, a catachresis for inscribing collective responsibility as right. Its alterity, determining experience, is mysterious and discontinuous—an experience of the impossible” (70, Wainwright’s emphasis). It’s hard to know exactly what Spivak means—especially since “catachresis” means misusing words or concepts⁴—but the sense is that what determines the world, what determines experience, what determines “worldliness,” is something “impossible,” which of course means “not able to occur, exist, or be done.” So what determines worldliness is, precisely, nothing! Which is to say: not just goodbye “empiricism,” but goodbye historical materialism too. Here is all we can hope for: “the task at hand is to understand places ‘not geographically, or through its ally, area studies, but as a debate, not as an object that exists empirically but as a text, or a group of texts’” (73, quoting Ismail 2005, Wainwright’s emphasis). In other words, just make things up.⁵ At best this is a Huffing-

4 So, translated, here is what Spivak is saying: “‘planet’ is misusing a concept for inscribing collective responsibility as right”—which, charitably, is gibberish.

5 Of course, Wainwright insists this is *not* his goal, but it is pretty much the logically unavoidable conclusion to be drawn from his position, especially since he makes no effort to show

ton Post model of knowledge dissemination. Produce nothing one's self, but "aggregate" other texts, maybe interpret them a bit, send them around, and—voilà!—"reality" comes into being.

Such a model is, of course, an entirely inadequate response to the Bowman Expeditions, their empiricism, and what seem to be their ultimate aims, as ably articulated by one of Wainwright's heroes, "Cruz, a young indigenous activist from the village of Yagavila," (77) whom he quotes at length:

Today we stand before a process of worldwide reorganization, where land is first measured then alienated, where its resources are first documented and then appropriated, to be used for a new cycle of investment and accumulation. Facing this situation, it is important to ask: what do these new processes of accumulation offer us and what good, if any, can come of them? What progress and development have we received from them? What are the cultural, social, technological and economic benefits for our people? These are some of the many questions we can ask in an attempt to understand the interests behind the México Indígena: Bowman Expeditions project that came to work in our community of Yagavila in 2006 (Cruz 2010: 420; as quoted in Wainwright 2013: 77).

Cruz has named the real disease here: the kind of empiricism that Wainwright bemoans is part of a project of the reorganization of space and livelihood to advance capital accumulation (and its associated forms of imperialism). Ignoring all this and just focusing on "texts"—refusing to acknowledge the existence of a world ("the so-called real world" Wainwright calls it, p. 73) within which we are dialectically, bodily, socially, entwined, and through which we then come to know (full stop)⁶—which is the very essence of idealism, is, in this sense, a form of malpractice. No amount of

any way to untie the idealist bind he has cinched up his analysis with *except* to endorse Spivak's call to "hang out" (Wainwright 2013: 75) which is to say, it is OK to do fieldwork as long as you do it haphazardly.

6 Is it really necessary to remind scholars like Wainwright, who claim to work from within Marxism, that it is not consciousness that determines our existence, but our existence that determines our consciousness, no matter how dialectically mediated that relationship may be?

"catachresis" will save the patient;⁷ no amount of intertextual "debate"—without more—will do anything to correct the injury caused, or to contest the violence that leads to that injury, by the ambitions of the Bowman Expeditions; no amount of "hanging out" (75), again without more, will allow for the production of a better—ethically, empirically, and politically better—knowledge.

What's that more? There's a whole long history, sitting under the name "historical materialism" that can give any number of answers. Those answers take as one of their objectives not a rehabilitation of Kantian idealism (whether in its conservative or postcolonial forms); instead, they take, as Neil Smith (2008: 250) put it in a slightly different context (but one in which Kant's empiricism was in fact at stake), as an objective, "the overthrow of Kant." The cant of Kantianism that animates Joel Wainwright's cure is just so much quackery.

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7 Trendy as it may be in some precincts of the academy, and despite the fact that it emanates from a superstar academic, imprecision in vocabulary (at best) or simply misusing words and concepts, is *not* a virtue.

GEOPIRACY AND THE EARTHLINESS OF THOUGHT: A REPLY TO THE CRITICS

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You cannot be a planetarist geographer.

G C Spivak (2014[2012])

It is a privilege to have acute readers with whom to think.¹ *Geopiracy* is a *cri de coeur* against the pathos of the post-9/11 American military-intellectual complex. It would be understandable if scholars dismissed the book as a polemic, since that is what it is. If everyone politely applauded *Geopiracy*, it would not have said enough: the issues are too visceral. So it is bracing (if not exactly comforting) to have cherished colleagues like Trevor Barnes and Sharlene Mollett call it a brave book. That means a lot to me. Who can deny that we scholars should be less concerned about being smart, cited, and well-funded, and rather should focus on having courage—especially the courage to be honest? But I don't feel brave, just angry.

It also takes a kind of courage to be candid about our differences. It would be easy to thank my critics and paint over our disagreements, but that does not really advance our understanding. We need to discern

1 This privilege requires space to think together. I thank Johnny Finn for his enthusiasm and his exemplary work in assembling the session at the 2014 AAG meeting in Tampa as well as this review forum. I also thank Dick Peet, who initially proposed the idea and who cofounded this excellent journal. Over his remarkable career, Dick has devoted an incalculable amount of labor to building two independent journals of radical geography. By any just standard, every minute of this time was socially necessary. For criticism of earlier drafts, I thank Johnny Finn, Marcus Green, Will Jones, and Kristin Mercer. The usual disclaimer applies.

where and why we part ways. This essay is offered toward this end, under the heading of the Latin “*pace*”: by leave of; in peace.

I

There is a clear pattern to the reviews of *Geopiracy*.² Apart from Dan Gade (2014), a former teacher of Peter Herlihy, all reviewers have expressed broad agreement with my analysis of the Bowman Expeditions, presented in *Geopiracy*'s first four chapters. For them, the book's problems start in chapter five and carry over to the conclusion: hence my response focuses here. To frame my response, let me first interpret this pattern. To generalize, my critics agree with my arguments about the Bowman expeditions but not those about our discipline; i.e. they embrace my critique of the geographers of the Bowman Expeditions, but not my critique of Geography. That is fair enough and, though we disagree, I respect their views. But this pattern is disappointing to me, because I did not write this book to criticize the geographers of the Bowman Expeditions. As the book's epigram from Jim Blaut (vi) says, “my condemnation of imperialism in geography is directed at no individual; the science as a whole is to blame.”

What is at stake in this debate is the question of how we geographers are “to blame”; how we are implicated in imperialism; and how, more narrowly, we are

2 See also Crampton (2013), Craib (2014), Mutersbaugh (2014), and Gade (2014); in reply, Wainwright (2014).

implicated in what the Oaxacans called “geopiracy.” Sharlene Mollett’s review, the one that most fired me up, clarifies the stakes brilliantly: the lesson of Oaxaca is that “EVERY geographer ... can become implicated in unethical practice.”³ Judging by the other reviews, it seems that my arguments on how we are implicated were not entirely compelling. So let us take them up again; they deserve further debate. And they cannot but be debated, whether we like it or not, because we are writing during wartime about a war that is being fought in our name with arms that we help to forge. Under such circumstances there is no way to be neutral or objective. In a world divided by massive inequalities of power and wealth, the refusal of the privileged intellectual to stake a position amounts to consent and conformity to *status quo*. Noam Chomsky makes this point beautifully:

Sometimes it’s argued that the universities should just be neutral... [T]here’s merit in that [position,] ... but in *this* universe what that position entails is conformity to the distribution of external power. ... Let’s take some distance so we can see things more clearly. Back in the 1960s, in my university, MIT, the political science department was carrying out studies with students and faculty on counterinsurgency in Vietnam [exactly as geographers are doing today via the Bowman Expeditions, the military’s MINERVA project, and other programs—JDW]. Okay, that reflected the distribution of power in the outside society. The U.S. is involved in counterinsurgency in Vietnam: it’s our patriotic duty to help. A free and independent university would have been carrying out studies on how poor peasants can resist the attack of a predatory superpower. Can you imagine how much support that would have gotten on campus? Well,

3 I further appreciate that Mollett underscores that racialized and racializing assumptions permeate the Bowman expeditions and the discipline generally (see also Mollett 2013). I wish that I had said more on this in *Geopiracy*, yet didn’t, in part because I felt it so obvious. This was an error. There are no obvious truths about the Bowman Expeditions: the facts remain stubbornly contested, their implications fiercely denied.

okay, that’s what neutrality turns into when it’s carried out—when the ideal [i.e. neutrality], which is a good ideal, is pursued unthinkingly. It ends up being conformity to power (Chomsky 2008: 24).⁴

Chomsky’s logic should inspire this thought experiment. Imagine that your geography department was a truly autonomous site for producing knowledge about the world, one organized with an objective concern for truthfulness, equal treatment of diverse people, and reducing harm. This scenario, of course, fulfills the ideals of the modern University. When the latest Bowman Expedition to Central America was funded by the Pentagon in 2013, what would the ideal, autonomous geographers have done? Would they not have thrown themselves into work to study how the “poor peasants”, the unwitting, indigenous subjects of study, could “resist the attack of a predatory superpower”?

4 Chomsky contends that his scholarship as a linguist has no great relevance to his work on international political-economic issues. In 1968 he wrote, e.g., “I do not ... see any way to make my work as a linguist relevant ... to the problems of domestic or international society. The only relevance is remote and indirect, through the insight that such work might provide into the nature of human intelligence. But to accept that connection as ‘relevance’ would be hypocrisy” (1968: 5). For Chomsky to absolve himself of the responsibility of speaking out against US power on the grounds that his linguistic work provides a robust contribution to relevant social issues would be ethically false. Thus: “The only solution I can see, in this case, is a schizophrenic existence,” a dual life as both scientist and citizen, “which seems to me morally obligatory and not at all impossible, in practice.” In contrast to linguists like himself, however, Chomsky claims that “[p]hilosophers, however, may be in a somewhat more fortunate position. There is no profession that can claim with greater authenticity that its concern is the intellectual culture of the society or that it possesses the tools for the analysis of ideology and the critique of social knowledge and its use. If it is correct to regard the American and world crisis as in part a cultural one, then philosophical analysis may have a definite contribution to make.” I agree with Chomsky but his logic could be challenged by noting that the linguist Chomsky is also a philosopher in every sense of the word. Regardless, his argument remains relevant for geographers and is worth contemplating today. I think we are obligated to embrace the “schizophrenic existence” where we produce scientific research of modest social relevance and also work against the injustices committed in our name. Given US military involvement in human geography, the two aspects may coincide.

So where are our studies into methods for fighting geopiracy?

Where, for that matter, are the statements by our professional organizations confronting the militarization of the discipline?

Why is it that the AAG, to cite Eric Sheppard, “in its role as US academic Geography’s formal representative [...] has yet to—and perhaps cannot—adequately address” these issues?⁵

“Perhaps cannot”?

Why not?

II

Let me posit the following. If we disagree about *how* we are implicated in a problem, then we are unlikely to agree on what to do about it. As these reviews amply demonstrate, apropos US military involvement in the discipline, geographers do not agree on either. We disagree about how we are implicated and what to do about it. Consider again the Bowman Expeditions, which, I stress, are only one element of a much broader panorama. To generalize, geographers seem to see the Bowman Expeditions as inconsistent with our professional norms and thus feel, to use Sheppard’s terms, that they are “awkward,” a “drunken uncle” at our disciplinary Thanksgiving. Yet the Expeditions continue, practically without criticism. As I write, the Bowman geographers are collecting data in indigenous communities in Honduras—a society frequently throttled by US interventions (the 2012 coup only the latest)—with funding from a US military Minerva grant. Their Minerva proposal’s one-page abstract promises that:

5 On the failure of the AAG to stake a position apropos militarism, see Sheppard (2013) and Wainwright (2013b). Inwood and Tyner (2013) contend that “we have clearly failed to persuade our colleagues and the [AAG] to confront, if not outright reject, militarism and violence. The decision of the AAG council to not examine Geography’s role in militarism is [only] one example of a spate of setbacks for those of us who have been advocating for the discipline to engage more forcefully with its role in creating the conditions for a killing-society to proliferate.”

[The US military] will gain new capabilities to conduct human geographic research, similar to but more advanced than those employed extensively in World Wars I and II. [The Department of Defense] will benefit directly and abundantly from the openly-reported research and the geographic information disseminated and from a greatly improved pool of regional experts, an improved labor pool, and a better informed public in times of future political debates and conflict (Dobson 2013).⁶

This proposal was submitted after *Geopiracy* went to press. So far as I am aware, there have been no formal statements, petitions, or any other signs of protest against the Bowman Expedition to Honduras—at least from the US.⁷ How do we explain this chasm between our convictions and actions?

My contention is that the Bowman expeditions are an extreme illustration of a more general quality which is prevalent, even hegemonic, in geography: militant empiricism. (*Pace* Sheppard, I never said that geography is entirely empiricist: of course it isn’t. Nor does my critique begin from an outside: it is a critique of a disciplinary formation written by one who writes from within the discipline.) In writing *Geopiracy* I sought to explain not only the Oaxaca controversy but also its enabling conditions. I wanted to understand how it was possible that so many geographers could be so furious at the Bowman Expeditions, yet passive as a disciplinary mass. Apropos *these* questions, only two of these critics offer an alternative theory. The first is Denis Wood, who offers a political-geography explanation:

Why hasn’t the AAG condemned the Bowman Expeditions? Because the AAG is

6 I was able to obtain a copy of the Minerva proposal via a records request at the Public Records Office at the University of Kansas; see Wainwright (2013a). Proposals for Minerva program funding are evaluated by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, i.e. the military.

7 Mexican scholars continue to debate the meaning of the events in Oaxaca (and their meaning for Honduras: see, e.g., López y Rivas 2014).

dominated, as it always has been, by political-ly conservative, largely Midwestern university departments who think science needs to steer clear of politics, usually as a way of supporting politically conservative positions.

Respectfully, Wood's theory can be dismissed. Thanks to its regional structure, AAG leadership is not dominated by "Midwestern university departments."⁸ At any rate geography departments of the Midwest are not more politically conservative than those of other regions. The most recent AAG President (2013-2014), Eric Sheppard, was at the University of Minnesota when elected. He is no conservative. He also has his own theory, and it is much stronger than Wood's.

Sheppard's analysis stems from his inability to do much about the military issue while President. Sheppard claims the limitation was because "US Geography's institutional relationship with the US military and surveillance community is ... entangled" ("much more" than Anthropology's, by contrast). I do not want to misconstrue or overstate Sheppard's argument, which is made in passing, framed by a "perhaps," and with which I agree. I would also like to reiterate my appreciation for his efforts to nudge the AAG on this issue.⁹ But, analytically speaking, his statement does not provide a particularly strong or complete explanation of our conjuncture or geography's passivity. Why, we must ask, does geography have such an "entangled" relationship with the military? Where does this "entanglement" come from and how could it be opposed? Moreover the very criticisms that Sheppard makes of *Geopiracy*—reminding us, rightly, of the historical and geographical diversity¹⁰ in the discipline and the complexities of its varied relationship with states and militaries—apply, *pari passu*, to his entanglement thesis.

8 The six-member AAG Executive Committee has two members from the Midwest; only one of six National Councilors are at Midwestern universities. In sum: 3/12 Midwesterners.

9 See Sheppard 2013, Wainwright 2013b.

10 It deserves reemphasis that the military-geography coupling is not only a story about the USA: but that's where I live and, at any rate, who can deny that the US state/military leads the drive to map our entire world as calculable battlespace?

In sum, if you accept my critics' answers to these questions, fair enough, but you are left with no substantive explanation for our conjuncture.

What do I mean by "our conjuncture"? On one hand, we see *revanchist* geography, rolling back gains from the critical wave of the 1970s; on the other, a rising tide of military-driven social science, including a raft a US state/military research programs in "human geography," "mapping human terrain," "geospatial phenomenology", and so on.¹¹ We urgently need a synoptic, critical study of these programs, but I doubt any one will produce it soon; the variegated works of the DOD, NSA, NGA, DOS, and so on, not to mention other states and private armies, is probably best approached by a network of committed scholars and—unless the NGA produces a Snowden—may require the patient accumulation of FOIA files. After all, human geographers are only now learning the depth and implications of US state/military involvement in human geography in the post-World War II era. Farther back things are murky but I think we can assume that Yves Lacoste was right, geography—understood as a discipline, not thought—is a product of the war machine. To be sure, I agree with Trevor Barnes that there has never "existed some purified geographical knowledge[,] untainted by military interest."¹² These historical generalizations notwithstanding, our conjuncture is ours and we must subject it to critical analysis. I am sure that Barnes would agree that simply saying "geography and militarism always mix" does not tell us much. In a word, we must *historicize* the geography-military relationship. This is why I admire Barnes' work¹³ on the history of geography during the Cold War and why *Geopiracy* features a historical graph (Wainwright 2013: 58, Table 1) that

11 On the social sciences, see Price 2011, Ahmed 2014; on human geography, Wainwright 2012b, 2013a, Under review.

12 Similarly, I am not sure what statements in *Geopiracy* led Gilbert to conclude that the book offers a "myth of purity." If we are all implicated, as I contend, then no one is "pure." But when we are implicated in something we do not agree with, shouldn't we work to change the situation? Such efforts should not be criticized for their refusal to accept life's undeniable compromises and persistent impurities.

13 See *Geopiracy*, pp. 42-3. (Barnes and I are coauthoring a study, with Seung-Ook Lee, on a particular chapter in the history of human terrain mapping.)

sketches the four distinct phases in geography-military engagement since the late 19th century. Table 1 shows that our current phase recapitulates elements we associate with the late-19th and early-20th century, albeit situated today against the rise of quotidian digital spatial analysis and the vagaries of US-led neo-liberal imperialism. So while there is broad historical continuity in the military-geography alliance, there is also change as social and intellectual life evolves under political and economic pressures. *Pace* Barnes, I am not suggesting that “a method exists to produce an unsullied form of geographical knowledge.” We are definitely all sullied. We need to know how.

III

Can we produce geographical thought on another basis? I answered no, not without radically changing the discipline. Chapter five of *Geopiracy*, which generated the most friction, is not intended to provide a formula or cure, but to make this argument. Thus it is an extension of the critique of the Bowman Expeditions, a critique of their epistemological-ontological conditions of possibility. To this end, I turned to Gayatri Spivak and Qadri Ismail to fend for a postcolonial critique of militant empiricism. To supersede militant empiricism, I argued, we would need a different conception of the world: rather than seeking to dominate the planet with geographical knowledge, we would need—to cite one of Spivak’s earliest formulations of the concept—to think and act as if “intended or interpellated by planetary alterity” (2000: 16). Thinking toward such an end would compel us to confront the problem of writing about places in a non-empiricist fashion, Ismail’s central concern in *Abiding by Sri Lanka*. Yet I now appreciate that my discussion of these concepts in chapter five was too compressed and that the connections were not properly soldered.

Let me try to make repairs by returning to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and planetarity, focusing on her 2012 *Antipode* lecture in New York City.¹⁴ By way of context, I was present at her lecture and had the privilege of talking with her about “planetarity” after-

¹⁴ Space does not permit me to discuss Qadri Ismail’s conception of abiding, but see Ismail (2005).

wards.¹⁵ Our exchange occurred while I was finishing *Geopiracy* and some of these ideas went into chapter five. At the time Spivak’s lecture was unpublished. In 2014 *Antipode* published a transcription, which allows me to quote its passages on planetarity here.

Spivak first invokes planetarity in her *Antipode* lecture to make a straightforward Kantian claim. There must be some element of our reason, she argues, that reminds us of the limitations of our reason, some family of concepts that name this incapacity to conceptualize. “What I really was talking about when I invoked the planet was that something should remind us of the limit to what we do. That is all it was. Something should remind us of the limit to what we do” (Spivak 2014: 2). One of those “somethings” is the planet. But why posit the *planet* to remind us of our limits? Why not God, death, or the unconscious? Spivak does not say, at least not straightforwardly. One obvious answer is that the planet is that material space that enables us to be what we are and do what we do, our lives’ “goodly frame”¹⁶; ergo, the planet is the ultimate symbol of our limits. Such a reading, I think, is justified by Spivak’s use of the concept, but we should also recognize that in all her writings on planetarity Spivak tries to ward off environmental determinism and liberal environmentalism (e.g. Spivak

¹⁵ Among other things, in her talk Spivak responded to a question that I had submitted to her beforehand: “Could you clarify the relationship in your thought between the concepts of ‘worlding’ and ‘planetarity’? Your use of ‘worlding’ seems to derive from your reading of Heidegger (via deconstruction). More recently in the third chapter of *Death of a Discipline* you argue for Comparative Literature and Area Studies—presumably Geography could fit here too—“as planetary rather than continental, global, or worldly” (72). In your subsequent clarifications and discussion of this argument ... you tend to contrast the possibilities inherent in planetarity against globalism and globalization. Would it be fair to say that this gesture (i.e. your critique of globalism and counter-proposal of thinking in terms of planetarity) repeat Heidegger’s critique of Descartes’ conception of spatiality in *Being and Time* §1.1? Or perhaps it repeats this gesture with a difference—a sober lack of nostalgia for a world ‘before’ globalization? And if so, could we say that this difference reflects a Marxist/feminist/leftist necessity of imagining a *good* globalization? Could we even say that planetarity names a spatial ontology for another globalization?” I thank the *Antipode* editorial collective for inviting Spivak and for the opportunity to discuss these ideas with her.

¹⁶ *Hamlet* 2:2.

2011). This is also implied in her *Antipode* lecture, where Spivak explains why she invoked the planet:

What I had invoked there, as a literary critic, was that the planet—that “word”—the planet is not available to us. We are on loan [to]¹⁷ the planet. The planet is not a natural undifferentiated space allowing for us to be resource saving. [...] I had written that the planet is in the species of alterity. This perhaps my complainant had found too hard to understand. I was rewriting or iterating an old Latin tag[, i]n the species of eternity—*sub specie aeternitatis*. If you are trying to discuss something and you are more or less tied to the topics and events and arguments of the situation itself, someone might ask you to think about this, not just tied to the current situation, but also “*sub specie aeternitatis*”. As if there is no time, right? So I had changed that one, species of eternity, to species of alterity. It is so other, that it cannot be a consolidating other for us. The planetary system is not over against us. The anthropocene is invaginated, an autoimmune part that has become larger than the whole. No human collectivity, no animate collectivity living on a planet can have planetarity as its self-consolidating other. This should give us pause—the fact that we are going to make ourselves extinct is part of the natural history of the planet. I say it that way because I cannot say it any other way. Everything we do or say, good or bad, thinking or not thinking, is to stay the horror of the randomness of planetarity (Spivak 2014: 4-5).

This is a dense and difficult passage. At the risk of oversimplifying, let me draw out a few key points.¹⁸

What does Spivak mean when she says “the planet is not available to us”? Obviously, one might simply say that she is wrong: we *can* sense the planet directly, which proves the existence of the real, external world.¹⁹

17 I changed “in” to “to”: see *Geopiracy*, p. 82, fn. 9.

18 For another geographer’s interpretation of planetarity, see Jazeel (2011).

19 Space does not permit a detailed reply to Mitchell, but see

And indeed, isn’t that what geographers do? Study the planet, explore and measure the planet, piece by piece. Spivak, however, clarifies that she is not speaking of the planet as an “undifferentiated space” of natural resources (i.e. as it is treated by capitalism). Rather she posits the planet—that “word”—as a sign of our *limits*, including of our capacity to represent our limits. This is what makes the concept planetarity tricky: it is employed as an instance of catachresis (which, *pace* Mitchell, does not imply “simply misusing words,” but working with texts without the illusion of mastery of language). It is catachrestic because the word that Spivak uses to express this thought—“planet”—is the same one that we commonly use to speak of our world. We might ask: why didn’t she pick another less confusing word, or just make something up? The answer is that it would be meaningless to make up a new word and, to be sure, with planetarity Spivak is also referring to the condition of being on this planet. Further complicating things, she is also playing with the agency of representation, the idea that “planet” is a concept that she can use or not use. Hence her scare-quotes around the word “word,” a gesture certain to vex those “generous” readers like Mitchell who find her writing mere “gibberish.”

Spivak’s central claim here is that “the planet is in the species of alterity.” The origins of this claim, she explains, lie in the Latin expression “*sub specie aeternitatis*,” “species of eternity,” an expression, she explains, from rhetoric to facilitate judging something by bracketing history (i.e., an anti-historicism). Her modified expression, “species of alterity,” offers a geographical counterpoint. The planet is necessary to us, it *is* us, and yet it remains wholly other *to* us. Indeed she claims that the planet is “so other, that it cannot be a consolidating other for us.”²⁰ We are all of this planet, but we are not subjects consolidated *as such*: we do not see ourselves as “Earthlings,” except in our fantasies about encountering aliens from another planet (who would be, I imagine, a “consolidating other”). Nor have we acted as Earthlings: perhaps

Gramsci’s note on “the so-called reality of the external world” (Q11§17; 1971: 440-448) which I have discussed elsewhere (Wainwright 2008: 18).

20 This phrase is intended, I surmise, as a clarification (because alterity means otherness).

we will learn to do so in this era of natural history, nicknamed “the Anthropocene,” that forces us to confront our destruction of the planetarity conditions of possibility for human reason. In facing up to this prospect, Spivak argues that we must reject the notion that we stand opposed to a “planetary system ... against us.” Rather, she says, “the anthropocene is invaginated”²¹: neither simply present nor absent, the Anthropocene is the enveloping or folding of human being into planetarity. As I read her, Spivak is trying to invoke our awareness of the Anthropocene as an ontological condition, without falling into a conception of the Anthropocene as a planetary system-time to be rationally known and mastered. This is not to deny natural history or the consequences of our transformation of nature. On the contrary, she claims, “the fact that we are going to make ourselves extinct is part of the natural history of the planet.” What can be said in the face of the question of being as we contemplate extinction? Answer: “Everything we do or say, good or bad, thinking or not thinking, is to stay the horror of the randomness of planetarity” (Spivak 2014: 4-5). Thus, “planetarity” is no humanist idyll; it is an experience, the confrontation—marked by “horror” no less—of the inexplicability of our being here, of our inability to adequately express our being on the planet, our being planetary: and also an insistence to think through our condition in the face of this aporia. This is why planetarity is a materialist concept, it seeks to do justice to our natural history. In this it resonates with Gramsci’s poetical description of Marxism as “the

21 On “invagination,” see Derrida (1980) and Derrida and McDonald (1982). The concept could be read as a feminist-deconstructive response to the phallogocentric conception of reason qua penetration of the unknown.

This may be the most prudent place to reply to Mitchell’s bizarre assertion that I am “distracted” by Dobson’s “genitals.” Mitchell may not accept the distinction between the phallus and the penis (on which see Butler 1993, chapter 2), but surely he should recognize the difference between an intellectual critique of a desire betrayed by a given text – which is not only valid, but essential for any sort of feminist literary criticism – and an embodied sexual practice. But put his views aside. *Geopiracy* is a work of ~41,000 words that includes one mention of the phallus (69) and no references to sexual practices. Does that seem obsessive? Upon reflection, I should have written more, not less, on the masculinism of the Bowman Expeditions. Perhaps this will be taken up by someone else; like Gilbert, I would like to read a specifically feminist critique of their work.

absolute secularisation and earthliness of thought” (Q11§27; 1971: 465). Yet again, the deconstructive complication is that Spivak also seeks to express our inability to do justice to our natural history. (This is not necessarily inconsistent with Gramsci’s thought, but I cannot elaborate here.)

At any rate, planetarity is clearly “not a very useful idea” for geographers, as Spivak herself conceded in the *Antipode* lecture. But “not useful” does not mean stupid, wrong, or meaningless. Things that are not useful may still be true (topology, e.g.) or profoundly meaningful (great art). I tried to say as much in *Geopiracy*:

[R]ecognizing one’s complicities and responsibilities – to thinking and abiding – is, in itself, an important accomplishment. Jerry Dobson is not wrong that the “‘War on Terror’ requires a [...] commitment to geographic fieldwork” (cited in Herlihy et al., 2006: 5). In the face of such requirements we should be open to the possibility that some apparently useless concepts are more worthy of our thought than is answering the call of counter-insurgency (Wainwright 2013a: 76).

Thus while I share Trevor Barnes’ sense “that planetarity and abiding are empty aspirations,” though I would put this positively: yes, they should be aspirations. We must have aspirations; without them we lose direction. The question is whether they must remain “empty”, as Barnes suggests, or if we could make them otherwise. The complication is that they are by no means isolated aspirations, nor immediately tractable. We cannot be planetarist geographers.

Having made passing reference to Dobson’s commitment to geographic fieldwork, this is perhaps the place to address Gilbert’s criticism of footnote 25 of chapter five of *Geopiracy*. The footnote says (84):

Although I have been to Oaxaca four times and have met with some of the leaders

from these indigenous communities, I emphasize that my critique is legitimated neither by expertise nor by empiricism. Of course, my travel to Oaxaca enabled and informs my analysis. I see this as an attempt, to repeat Spivak's formula, at the inscription of fieldwork without transcoding (see Spivak and Sharpe [2003]); compare Wainwright (2008, chapter 5).

Gilbert's contention is that that with this footnote I sought to "dodge allegations of empiricism and expertise," but offers no evidence that my work is so alleged. At any rate, the footnote is simply an attempt at transparency. Gilbert further suggests that I should have attended to feminist geography writings on fieldwork, but this footnote specifically concerns Gayatri Spivak's comments on fieldwork in an interview published in *Signs: a feminist counterpoint to the feminist geography literature on fieldwork*. Respecting the diversity of feminist views on fieldwork, I did not intervene in that debate. But for sake of clarity, let me say this. I admire Spivak's take on fieldwork. Whether or not I succeeded, *Geopiracy* was born partly from an attempt to enact at what she calls fieldwork without transcoding. It is possible to go to a place and learn things without writing about the experience in empiricist fashion; that was my aim (see also Wainwright 2014). And while I do not believe that everyone must cease with fieldwork, I do contend that the mandate, concept, and practice of fieldwork requires especially patient and thoughtful critique today. We know that the US state/military is drawing systematically upon social-science research to extend its imperial reach; *ergo* we must think extremely carefully about the potentially violent consequences of their use of our work.²²

IV

22 Consider this thought experiment. Assume that all your field data would be collected (without your knowledge) by the US state/military for permanent digital archiving. Under such circumstances elementary morality suggests that you would be exceptionally conservative about generating data about human subjects. This is a test we need to apply today for reasons made clear, in quite different ways, by Edward Snowden and Jerry Dobson.

For Don Mitchell all this reflects an "untenable idealism." For him the debate is postcolonial idealism versus historical materialism. These are not terms used in *Geopiracy* and I reject framing the debate in this way, but Marx's ideas are too important to allow them this sort of representation, so a few remarks are necessary. And here it is Marx's ideas, not *geopiracy*, that are at stake.

"Materialism" is a complex philosophical concept, used in different ways by different people. For sake of clarity, let me offer a brief working definition. Materialism has at least three distinct meanings. The oldest is essentially anti-religious and refers to the creed that denies belief in God, miracles, angels, and so on. Marx's critique of Hegel and Feuerbach consolidated a second meaning, the materialist critique of Hegel's idealist philosophical system. The third meaning is arguably most pertinent here: in examining any social or political issue, a materialist approach studies the historical processes that give rise to conflicting social groups and classes, thereby to explain the prevailing social relations. These definitions are contestable but serviceable, and by them, *pace* Mitchell, there is nothing un-materialist about *Geopiracy*. Chapters 2-4, which Mitchell says offer "a correct diagnosis," provide a resolutely materialist explanation of the Bowman Expeditions. Chapter three offers an account of the three main narratives on the Oaxaca controversy in Anglo-American geography, an account that coquettes with Foucaultian language but concludes that these narratives are influenced by "the US military's use of geographical thought" and therefore we must "resituate the entire debate over the Oaxaca controversy on the horizon of the US military counter-insurgency strategy since September 11, 2001" (34): those familiar with Foucault will recognize that these claims signal a departure from his premises. Chapter four elaborates upon the motivations from the Bowman Expeditions, showing that they were born from the US failure to win hegemony in Iraq and Afghanistan, thereby linking the Oaxaca controversy to US imperial strategy in Asia. This discussion is concise but, if nothing else, it connects the dots between US interests, military strategy, and specific organic intellectuals: a materialism most granular.

But my “diagnosis,” however “correct,” is insufficient for Mitchell, who insists on a materialism titrated pure, lacking the “quackery” of Kant. Perhaps his concern derives from my willingness to cite Gayatri Spivak favorably and closely study the texts of the Bowman Expeditions. If that constitutes “idealism,” I am happy to be so charged. Close reading is not idealism: it is rigorous scholarship. As for Spivak, a Marxist who has made many contributions to the critique of political economy: her work is resolutely materialist (e.g., as we saw, planetarity refers to the accident of our existence and our coming extinction as an event in natural history). The confusion here stems from Mitchell’s conflation of empiricism and materialism. *Geopiracy* was written not to fend for materialism, but to critique militant empiricism. At any rate, when we Marxists affirm materialism we should be try to be precise. Just as there are multiple meanings of materialism, there are competing conceptions of historical materialism, not to mention the dialectic. These terms are elided in Mitchell’s essay. There is a long and vigorous debate on them and their interrelation in Marxism, far beyond the scope of this essay to sort out. But let us briefly consider their common basis, i.e. Marx’s approach in *Capital*.

In his first preface to *Capital Volume One* (1867), Marx writes that in “the analysis of economic forms,” such as his analysis of capitalist social relations, “neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of use. The force of abstraction must replace both” (Marx 1867: 90). In chapter one, Marx contends that neither value nor exchange value can be found in the material body of the commodity, then offers this explanation of commodity fetishism:

Men do not therefore bring the products of their labour into relation with each other as values because they see these objects merely as the material integuments of homogeneous human labour. The reverse is true: by equating their different products to each other in exchange as values, they equate their different kinds of labour as human labour. They do this without being aware of it. Value, therefore, does not have its description branded on its

forehead; it rather transforms every product of labour into a social hieroglyphic (1867: 166-167).

I have only made a few references to the first chapter of *Capital*, but several points should be clear. The Marx of 1867 was emphatically no empiricist. Nor did he treat material things as self-evident: on the contrary, he emphasizes the inadequacy of a crude materialism for the analysis of social life (hence microscopes—and macroscopes—are useless). Not only this, his analysis of commodity fetishism shows that we reproduce social processes that conceal our ability to understand social life—and “without being aware of it.” This implies the existence of *ideology* and the necessity of *abstraction*: terms that are not easily squared with crude materialism. It took two generations of weaker minds to embalm Marx and create an ostensibly “Marxist” orthodoxy with “materialism” as its watchword and Kant as one of its “bourgeois” enemies. (The “overthrow” of Kant that Mitchell calls for occurred a century ago—with extraordinarily negative consequences for communism and for humanity.)

To be sure, Marx was no idealist. But my point is that he was neither an empiricist nor a materialist in the sense that Mitchell describes materialism. It would be fairest to say that Marx transcended the materialism/idealism division in *Capital*, and that this achievement owes much to Kant’s transcendence of empiricism and rationalism. Consider value theory. The empiricist position on value is well known, since it is common sense in capitalist society: value equals market price (exchange value in money form); market price is determined on the basis of movements in supply and demand; ergo, a thing is truly “worth” what it can be sold for and value is an effect of supply and demand. For Marx this thinking was true but essentially superficial—or, to put this otherwise, the truthfulness of this line of thinking reflects its specific historical provenance in bourgeois political economy, the discipline that *Capital* was written to criticize. In elaborating his critique, Marx’s approach emulates Kant’s (1787) critique of rationalism and empiricism. This is an argument that has been elaborated

most clearly by Kojin Karatani (2003), who notes that the nature of Kant's break with rationalism (brought on by his encounter with Hume, i.e., empiricism) is repeated in the development of Marx's value theory:

Kant wrote that he initially favored rationalism, or metaphysics, but was woken out of his 'dogmatic slumber' by Hume's skepticism. Dogmatism here means the rationalism of Descartes, Leibniz, and so on. Hume doubted all this. For instance, he doubted the law of physical causality, saying that such is only guesswork from observing the regular succession of events. ... Kant's 'critique' was directed at rationalism and at the same time to Hume, or rather empiricist premises. Rationalists disregard intuition, while empiricists start from sense-data. But according to Kant, this sense-data is the result constituted by the sensible form, that is, through active workings of the subject. But this 'movement of mediation' is concealed from consciousness. Empiricists take the sense-data which is the result for the cause. Kantian critique aims to disclose perspectival perversion (Karatani and Wainwright 2012: 32-33).

Karatani contends that the same is true for Marx:

Marx was stunned by his belated reading of Bailey's criticism of Ricardo. This parallels the shock Kant experienced by reading Hume. According to Ricardo, every commodity has intrinsic value, but Bailey insists that the value of a commodity is only relative—there is no absolute, intrinsic value of a commodity, only the relations of exchange-value between commodities. Bailey writes, "It is from this circumstance of constant reference to other commodities, or to money, ... that the notion of value, as something intrinsic and absolute, has arisen" (1825:8). This particular passage should remind us of Hume's skeptical critique of the law of causality as the inference from the constant succession of events (Karatani and Wainwright 2012: 32-33).

Thus characterizing Marx's thought as historical and dialectical materialism (as implied by Mitchell) is to oversimplify these philosophical issues. True, Marx used the expression "materialist conception of history" in the *German Ideology* (1846), an early work he coauthored with Engels, but his thought evolved. *Capital* bears little relation to the dogmatism of historical and dialectical materialism that came to define Marxism by the time of the Third international (1919–1943).²³

The greatest Marxist thinker of that era, Antonio Gramsci, understood these matters well. The extraordinary insights of his prison notebooks are born out of his visceral experience with the failure of communist ideas in Europe. Gramsci saw that to revitalize communism we must return to Marx's critique of political economy and continue the labor of producing more rigorous, critical, political thought. In form and content, this thought must break from the encrusted orthodoxy about dialectics and historical materialism. He elaborated this position in 1932, filling his crucial eleventh notebook with essential notes on Marxism and philosophy. In one of those notes, entitled "The concept of 'orthodoxy,'" Gramsci writes:

[I]t has been forgotten that in the case of a very common expression [i.e. historical materialism] one should put the accent on the first term—'historical'—and not on the second[

23 While Marx occasionally used the expression "materialist conception of history," he never used "dialectical materialism" and he always insisted he was not a Marxist. The reduction of Marx's thought into a system begins with Engels (1878, 1885), becomes vulgar with Plekhanov, and farcical with Stalin (1938). Although some Marxists distinguish dialectical materialism from historical materialism, in this discussion, I will occasionally run them together as per Mitchell, since I am responding to his criticism, and at any rate the two terms have overlapped at least since Stalin (for whom "[h]istorical materialism is the extension of the principles of dialectical materialism to the study of social life, an application of the principles of dialectical materialism to ... the study of society and of its history" (1938)). To Engels' credit, even when repackaging Marx's ideas in his ill-fated attempt to "make a science of socialism" (1878: 21), he provides a useful critique of empiricism (1885: 14-15). He also wrote a series of letters to attempt to correct the emerging orthodoxy around historical materialism (e.g., Engels 1893). On materialism, consider also Gramsci's (Q3§49) remarks on the "material structure of ideology" and Butler's (1993) analysis of "mattering."

materialism], which is of metaphysical origin. The philosophy of praxis [i.e. Marxism] is the absolute ‘historicism’, the absolute secularisation and earthliness of thought, an absolute humanism of history. It is along this line that one must trace the thread of the new conception of the world (Q11§27; 1971: 465).²⁴

A few pages earlier in notebook eleven, Gramsci, whose scholarly training was in philology, reminds us that it is crucial to reread and cite the original source-texts if we wish to debate such questions:

[I]t is always necessary to return to the cultural sources in order to identify the exact value of concepts to identify the exact value of concepts, since there may be different heads under the same hat. It is well known, moreover, that the originator of the philosophy of praxis [Marx] never called his own conception materialist and that when writing about French materialism he criticises it and affirms that the critique ought to be more exhaustive. Thus [Marx] never uses the formula ‘materialist dialectic’, but calls [the dialectic] ‘rational’ as opposed to ‘mystical’ (Q11§16; 1971: 456-7).

Following Gramsci’s reasoning, we can say that Mitchell’s conception of materialism owes little to Marx but more closely resembles the orthodoxy of the Third international, exemplified by Nikolai Bukharin’s works *The ABC of Communism* (1920) and *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology* (1921). Bukharin, editor of *Pravda* during the era of Stalin’s rise (1918-1929), argued that historical materialism = proletarian sociology.²⁵ For Gramsci, Bukharin’s popularization of Marxism qua historical materialism caused to a dramatic narrowing of Marx’s thought, one that

24 Thomas (2009) offers a brilliant commentary on Q11§27. On Gramsci’s expression “conception of the world,” see Wainwright (2010).

25 “The working class has its own proletarian sociology, known as *historical materialism*” (Bukharin 1921). Compare Mitchell’s conception of “people’s geography” as historical materialism. I hasten to add that I am not suggesting that Mitchell is a Stalinist. I am rather trying to clarify the provenance of our ideas.

de-politicized Marxism, reified it in disciplinary form, and freighted it with a materialism with roots in religious metaphysics. As noted, Marx abstracted from specific social relations in order to grasp their essence and relation to historical (i.e. socio-natural) processes. In a preface to *Capital*, Marx describes his standpoint as one in “which the development of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history” (1867: xx). This is a form of thinking that is poorly described by the metaphysical term “materialism.” After all, Marx did “not study a machine in order to know about and to establish the atomic structure of its materials” (Gramsci Q11§30; 1971: 466); such a materialism “is the business of the exact sciences and of technology.” Rather, Marxism is concerned with matter “only in so far as it is a moment of the material forces of production, is an object of property of particular social forces, and expresses a social relation which in turn corresponds to a particular historical period” (Gramsci Q11§30; 1971: 466). This is the basis for the third meaning of materialism noted above.

These differences notwithstanding, Mitchell’s critique clarifies one point: I should have given greater emphasis to capital and class dynamics in *Geopiracy*. In fairness to myself, I did follow the money flowing into the Bowman Expeditions and also cite Marx and other Marxists, including Kiado Cruz. Cruz’s argument that the Bowman Expeditions are but a symptom of a “worldwide process of reorganization” driven by the accumulation of capital (Cruz 2010) brings the contentious chapter six to a close.²⁶ What I failed to do (and cannot do here) is to rigorously specify links between the political economy of state/military surveillance and the multifarious practices that constitute geopiracy. For this task, as so often, Marx’s economic notebooks offer useful clues. In 1857, Marx noted that

26 Citing Cruz, Mitchell says: “the kind of empiricism that Wainwright bemoans [i.e. militant empiricism] is part of a project of the reorganization of space and livelihood to advance capital accumulation.” Naturally I agree. Yet Mitchell goes on to accuse me of “ignoring all this and just focusing on ‘texts.’” I find this claim bewildering. How can I ignore Cruz’s argument if I quote and discuss it? Mitchell wants us to explain capital accumulation without “focusing on texts,” but this is something that even Marx never dared to try.

war has proven to be a crucial stimulus for capitalist social relations, then remarks: “The relations between productive power and conditions of communication are likewise particularly obvious in the Army” (148). Indeed they are: the reason we are debating these issues in *Human Geography* today arises from this fact. What I have called “geography counterinsurgent” is not only a result of the failure of the US to win hegemony in Iraq and Afghanistan (a fact with important economic dimensions) but also an effect of what Foster and McChesney (2014) call “surveillance capitalism.” A defense-industry journalist recently observed that the US military “will be spending an increasing amount of the \$50 billion intelligence budget on private contractors to perform open-source intelligence gathering and analysis” (Tucker 2014). The Bowman Expeditions have never promised anything other than open-source geographical data gathering and analysis and could be seen as one small player in this large and growing industry. To put it formulaically, geopiracy is a product of human geography in an era of surveillance capitalism. Changing this equation will require serious thought—and an “earthliness of thought,” to repeat Gramsci. I am also convinced that we would need a new level and/or type of organization to achieve this, to produce geographical thought on another basis. Others may disagree. Fair enough; let the debate continue. To this end, I thank my interlocutors again.

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