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## The Three Figures of Geontology

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### THE FIGURES AND THE TACTICS

For a long time, and perhaps still now, many have believed that Western Europe spawned and then spread globally a regime of power best described as biopolitics. Biopolitics was thought to consist of a “set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power.”<sup>1</sup> Many believe that this regime was inaugurated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and consolidated in the 1970s. Prior to this, in the age of European kings, a very different formation of power reigned. Sovereign power was defined by the spectacular, public performance of the right to kill, to subtract life, and, in moments of regal generosity, to let live. It was a regime of sovereign thumbs, up or down, and enacted over the tortured, disemboweled, charred, and hacked human body.<sup>2</sup> Royal power was not merely the claim of an absolute power over life. It was a carnival of death. The crowds gathered, not in reverent silence around the sanctity of the life, but in a boisterous jamboree of killing—hawking wares, playing dice. Its figure, lavishly described at the opening of Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, was the drawn-and-quartered regicide. How different that formation of power seems to how we legitimate power now; what we ask of it; and, in asking, what it creates. And how different seem the figures through which the contemporary formation entails its power. Not kings and their subjects, not bodies hacked into pieces, but states

and their populations, the Malthusian couple, the hysterical woman, the perverse adult, and the masturbating child. Is it such a wonder that some believe a great divide separates the current regime of biopolitics from the ancient order of sovereignty? Or that some think disciplinary power, with its figure of the camps and barracks, and its regularization of life, and biopolitics, with its four figures of sexuality and its normation of life, arch their backs against this savage sovereign *dispositif*? But is this the condition of power that we face today? Do the biopolitical and its figures provide us with the concepts that we need to make sense of what is now all around us but outside our field of vision?

Foucault was hardly the first to notice the transformation of the form and rationale of power in the long history of Western Europe—and, insofar as it shaped the destinies of its imperial and colonial reach, power writ globally. Perhaps most famously, Hannah Arendt, writing nearly twenty years before Foucault would begin his lectures on the biopolitical, bewailed the emergence of the “Social” as the referent and purpose of political activity.<sup>3</sup> Arendt contrasted not the era of European kings and courts to the modern focus on the social body but the latter to the classical Greek division between public and private realms. For Arendt the public was the space of political deliberation and action carved out of and defined by its freedom from and antagonism to the realm of necessity, the private realm, everything having to do with the physical life of the body (labor, reproduction, food, and health)—the so-called animal part of the human, the human as *animal laborans*. Rather than excluding bodily needs, wants, and desires from political thought, the liberal state embraced them; it opened the door and let *Homo economicus* out into the bright light of the public forum. Once the concern for physical life broke free from its enclosure in the dark obscurity of the private realm, the realm of necessity came to be known as the Social, and the Social became the *raison d'être* of the political. The politics of the liberal state gained its legitimacy insofar as it could demonstrate that it anticipated, protected, and enhanced the biological needs, wants, and desires of its citizens.

But if Foucault was not the first word on the subject of biopolitics, he was also not the last. Jacques Derrida would explore the concept of autoimmunity within the force of liberal law—and Donna Haraway and Roberto Esposito would place the discourse of immunology explicitly within the biopolitics of postmodern bodies.<sup>4</sup> Giorgio Agamben would

put Arendt and Foucault in conversation to stretch the emergence of biopower in Greek and Roman law, thus trapping modern politics ever more completely within.<sup>5</sup> And Esposito would counter Agamben's negative reading of the biopolitical by arguing that a positive form of biopower could be found in innovative readings of Heidegger, Canguilhem, and Spinoza.<sup>6</sup> Throughout these debates, other authors have challenged the idea that it is possible to write a history of the biopolitical that starts and ends in European history, *even if* Western Europe was the frame of reference. Achille Mbembe, for instance, argued that the sadistic expressions of German Nazism were genealogically related to the sadisms of European colonialism. And before Mbembe, W. E. B. Du Bois argued that the material and discursive origins of European monumentalism, such as the gleaming boulevards of Brussels, were in the brutal colonial regimes of the Congo. Thus as light-hearted as was Foucault's famous quip that this century would bear the name "Deleuze," he would no doubt have been pleased to see the good race that his concept of the biopolitical has run. Biopower, biopolitics, thanatopolitics, necropolitics, positive and negative forms of biopower, neuropolitics; Foucault, Agamben, Negri, Esposito, Rose, Mbembe, Connolly; anthropology, cultural and literary studies, political theory, critical philosophy, history: Foucault's understanding of biopower has gone viral.<sup>7</sup>

But again, are biopolitics or necropolitics the formation of power in which Late Liberalism now operates? Have we been so entranced by the image of power working through life that we haven't noticed the new problems, figures, strategies, and concepts all around us, suggesting that the emergence of another formation of Late Liberal power is under way? In other words, have we been so focused on exploring each and every wrinkle in the biopolitical fold—biosecurity, biospectrality, thanatopoliticality—that we forgot to notice that the figures of biopower—the hysterical woman, the Malthusian couple, the perverse adult, and the masturbating child; the camps and barracks, the panopticon and solitary confinement—once so central to our understanding of contemporary power, now seem quaint, if not antiquated? How is our allegiance to the concept of biopower hiding and revealing this other problematic—a formation, for want of a better term, I am calling *geontological* power?

## LIFE, DEATH, NONLIFE

To begin to see what the biopolitical strains to confine, let me return to Foucault's three formations of power and ask two simple questions, the answers to which might seem long settled: first, are the relations among sovereign power, disciplinary power, and biopower ones of implication, distinction, determination, or set membership? And second, are they intended as a mode of historical periodization, a quasi-transcendent metaphysics of power, or variations within a more encompassing historical and social framework? For all our contemporary certainty that a gulf separates sovereignty from discipline and biopower, Foucault seems unsure of whether he is seeing a concept traversing all three formations or three specific formations each with its own specific conceptual unity. On one hand, he writes that the eighteenth century witnessed "the appearance—one might say the invention—of a new mechanism of power which had very specific procedures, completely new instruments, and very different equipment."<sup>8</sup> And yet Foucault also states that the formations of power do not follow each other like beads on a string. Nor do they conform to a model of Hegelian *Aufhebung*—sovereignty dialectically unfolding into discipline, discipline into biopolitics. Rather, all three formations are always copresent—although they are arranged differently, with different aspects of each emphasized at different points of history.<sup>9</sup> Thus German fascism deployed all three formations of power in its Holocaust: the figure of Hitler exemplifying the right of the sovereign to decide who was enemy or friend and thus could be killed or let live; the gas chambers exemplifying the regularity of discipline power; and the Aryan exemplifying governance through the imaginary of hygiene and population. In the more recent past, Bush–Cheney steadfastly and publicly claimed the right to extrajudicial killing (a right Obama also claims), even though they did not enact their authority in public jamborees where victims were drawn and quartered but rather through secret human- and drone-based special operations or hidden rendition centers. These modern tactics and aesthetics of sovereign power exist alongside what Henry Giroux, building on Angela Davis's crucial work on the prison–industrial complex, has argued are the central features of contemporary U.S. power: biosecurity, with its panoply of ordinary incarceration blocks and severe forms of isolation.<sup>10</sup> Within

the disciplinary and biopolitical form of prisons, even explicit sovereign killing—the U.S. death penalty—is heavily orchestrated and of a very different aesthetic and affective order than in the days of kings. This form of state killing has witnesses, but they usually sit behind a glass wall, across which a curtain is drawn while the victim is being prepared to be killed or if “complications” arise. Other evidence floats up in less obvious places—such as in the changing language of Qantas Airways as its planes approach Australia, from a previous announcement that passengers should be aware of the country’s strict animal and plant quarantine to the current announcement about the country’s strict “biosecurity laws.”

What we see, then, are formations of power that seem neither fully genealogically distinct nor fully metaphysically related. They express distinct relations, aesthetics, and tactics toward life and death, but they never fully separate from each other; nor are they simply expressions of a shared transcendental concept. What accounts for this nagging sensation that some common transversal crosses these forms of separation? I am hardly the first to ask this. Alain Badiou has observed that although Foucault was “neither a philosopher nor a historian nor a bastardized combination of the two,” nevertheless, according to Badiou, as Foucault moved from an archaeological approach to a genealogical one, “a doctrine of ‘fields’ substitutes that of sequences (or of epistemical singularities)” in such a way that Foucault was brought back “to the concept and to philosophy.”<sup>11</sup> Badiou believes that the concept of power sits at the intersection of his ambivalent philosophy. But if the purpose of philosophy is, to paraphrase Deleuze, to produce concepts that open understanding to what is all around us but not in our field of vision, what concept do we need in order to understand how the awkward relationship between these forms of power reveals the current problem we face? Three observations help provide a backdrop for why I think geontology, geontological power, is an answer.

*First*, the once unremarkable observation that all three formations of power (sovereign power, disciplinary power, and biopower) work only “insofar as man is a living being” today trips over the *tant que*, the “insofar,” the “as long as.”<sup>12</sup> This once, perhaps not terribly labored phrasing is now hard to avoid hearing as an epistemological and ontological conditional: as long as we continue to conceptualize humans as *living* things and as long as humans *continue to exist*. Yes, sovereignty,

discipline, and biopolitics stage, aestheticize, and publicize the dramas of life and death differently. And, yes, starting from the eighteenth century, the anthropological and physical sciences came to conceptualize humans as a single species subject to a natural law governing life and death. And, yes, these new discourses opened a new relationship between the way that sovereign law organized its powers around life and death and the way biopolitics did. And, yes, Foucault's quick summary of this transformation as a kind of inversion from the right to kill and let live to the power of making live and letting die must be modified by the fact that contemporary states make live, let die, *and* kill. And, yes, all sorts of liberalism seem to evidence a biopolitical strain from settler colonialism to developmental liberalism.<sup>13</sup> But these transformations and variations can now seem like a sideshow to a much larger drama. The modifying phrase "insofar as" now foregrounds the human, the *Anthropos*, as just one element in the larger set of "life" subject to the conditions within and of this set—birth, growth, and death, and thus vulnerability and precariousness, as good and bad, normal and disfigured, an expected death and preempted life—and, as Claire Colebrook has noted, subject to a much larger form of death, namely, extinction.<sup>14</sup> It may well be that the concept of mass extinction—the extinction not merely of the human species but of all forms of life—depends on the biopolitical concept of population. But its intensification of the problematic of death has intensified not merely DEATH/EXTINCTION but NONLIFE or *geos*, the inorganic, the inanimate. It is now increasingly clear that the *Anthropos* remains an element in this set of life only insofar as "life" maintains its distinction from DEATH/EXTINCTION *and* NONLIFE. What presents itself to us now is exactly the awkwardness of these nested epistemological brackets [LIFE(Life{birth, growth, reproduction}Death)NONLIFE]. Certain tokens (human animals, nonhuman animals, plants, rocks and minerals . . .) of certain types (life, nonlife) no longer seem as self-evidently distinct as they once did. Following the early work of Ian Hacking, we might say that the disclosure of this ontological world is being rediscovered by the emergence of a new condition of knowledge.<sup>15</sup>

This leads to my *second* point, namely, that the disclosure of the artificiality of the double enclosure of life and death and life and non-life is occurring within, if not strictly because of, contemporary Late Liberal debates about human and planetary extinction. The possibility

that humans are responsible for the death of all life *on the planet*, often figured as the death *of the planet*, rather than the letting die or killing of specific human populations, has pulled to the forefront three incommensurate stances on the relationship between *bios* and *geos*: (1) *geos* as a living planetary organism (Gaia), (2) *geos* as that part of the planet defined as nonliving (geology), and (3) *geos* as that part which has but plays no part in contemporary Late Liberal governance.

The name that geologists have given to this new form of thought is the *Anthropocene*, and meteorologists, *climate change*. Since Eugene Stoermer first coined the term *Anthropocene* and Paul Crutzen popularized it, the Anthropocene has meant to mark a geologically defined moment when the forces of human existence began to overwhelm all other biological, geological, and meteorological forms and forces. That is, the Anthropocene marks the moment when human existence became the determinate form of planetary existence—and a malignant form relative to all other forms—rather than merely the fact that humans affect their environment. Geologists have not agreed what criteria will be used to date the start of the Anthropocene. Many criteria and thus many dates have been proposed. Some place it at the beginning of the Neolithic Revolution, when agriculture was invented and the human population exploded. Others date it to the detonation of the atomic bomb that left radioactive sediments in the stratigraphy and helped consolidate a notion of *the Earth* (Gaia) as something that could be destroyed by human action.<sup>16</sup> Hannah Arendt's 1963 reflections on the launching of the Sputnik and the lost contact "between the world of the senses and the appearances and the physical worldview" would be important here, as would be James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis published two years later.<sup>17</sup> Still others situate the beginning of the Anthropocene in the coal-fueled Industrial Revolution. While the British phrase, "like selling coal to Newcastle," was first recorded in 1538, reminding us of the long history of coal use in Europe, proponents of the Industrial Revolution as the beginning of the Anthropocene point to the eighteenth-century expansion of the Lancashire, Somerset, and Northumberland coalfields as doing three things simultaneously: it uncovered large stratified fossil beds that helped spur the foundation of modern geologic chronology, it created a massive increase in resource extraction, and it released unheard of tons of hydrocarbons into the atmosphere. Karen Pinkus, Alison Bashford, and Rosanne Kennedy have shown the deep entanglements

of knowledge, capital, and biological processes that provide conditions for the very idea of the Anthropocene: the concept of the Anthropocene depended on the establishment of a form of knowledge, the geology of fossils and rock stratification, that depended on a form of material production, carbon-fueled capital, that depended on the biogeological possibilities of fossil fuel deposits.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, in a series of essays, Jason Moore has suggested that what we are calling the Anthropocene might be more accurately called the Capitalocene—the last five hundred years of capital’s transformation.<sup>19</sup> Dennis Dimick has poetically rephrased the Anthropocene and climate change as Industrial Capitalism’s dependence on “ancient sunshine.”<sup>20</sup>

However the geologists end up dating the break between the Holocene and the Anthropocene, the idea of the Anthropocene has already had a dramatic impact on the organization of dominant forms of knowledge. The possibility that humans are such an overwhelming malignant force on all other biological forms that life itself faces a planetary extinction has upset a number of traditional human disciplines. We can see the symptoms of the collapse of this practical and conceptual tripartite everywhere, including in the emergent disciplines of the Anthropocene, posthumanism, nonhumanism, and geobiochemistry. Dipesh Chakrabarty has explored, for instance, how the concept of the Anthropocene radically changes the discipline of history insofar as humans, and not merely Europeans, are provincialized.<sup>21</sup> Anthropology’s turn toward the Anthropocene has seen a similar seeming disruption: the reappearance of animism and ontology as a mode of destabilizing the dominance of culture and the Anthropos.<sup>22</sup> And Claire Colebrook has argued that the concept of extinction, implicit in the Anthropocene, demands a radical rethinking of the tropes and attachments of sexuality in critical theory—a point made also by Liz Grosz in her explorations of geopower and exemplified by the radical sex advocate TK now performing mountaintop weddings.<sup>23</sup> And of course, the emergence of *geos*, as factor and actor independent of human being, has begun to rattle basic ontology itself. For instance, Eugene Thacker has recently asked why “every ontology of ‘life,’” beginning with Aristotle, thinks “of life in terms of something-other-than-life.”<sup>24</sup> And Quentin Meillassoux has argued that *arche-fossils* are “not just materials indicating the traces of past life, according to the familiar sense of the term ‘fossil,’ but materials



indicating the existence of an ancestral reality or event; one that is anterior to terrestrial life.”<sup>25</sup> For Meillassoux, arche-fossils displace the problematic not merely of life but that of the philosophical concept of *givenness* (consciousness, language, representational life) as such. But perhaps these disciplines are only catching up to a conversation begun elsewhere: with Don DeLillo’s *White Noise*, and certainly in the literary output of Margaret Atwood, starting with *The Handmaid’s Tale* and continuing through her MaddAddam trilogy.

And this leads to my *third* point. We are witnessing a wild proliferation of new conceptual–theoretical models, figures, and tactics of geontology that are displacing the figures and tactics of the biopolitical. For clarity, I am clustering this proliferation around three figures: THE DESERT, THE ANIMIST, and THE TERRORIST. But to understand the nature of these figures, two points must be kept firmly in mind. First, as the *geontological* comes to play a part in the governance of our thought, it will not merely need to be included in how we have understood life; it will need to be allowed to displace the division of life and nonlife itself. Second, the figures of geontopower are symptomatic *and diagnostic* of the present. Geontology cannot simply be a crisis of life (*bios*) and death (*thanatos*) at a species level (extinction), nor merely between life (*bios*) and nonlife (*geos*). It must be the door that serves as an exit from both sets of oppositions.

In this way the three figures of geontology are no different than Foucault’s four figures of biopower. The hysterical woman (a hystericalization of women’s bodies), the masturbating child (a pedagogization of children’s sex), the perverse adult (a psychiatrization of perverse pleasure), and the Malthusian couple (a socialization of procreative behavior): Foucault cared about these figures of sexuality and gender not because he thought they were the repressed truth of human being but because he thought they were symptomatic and diagnostic of a modern formation of power. In other words, these four figures were expressions of biopower and windows into its operation. Although when presenting his lectures, *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault discussed the insurrection of subjugated knowledges, understanding these figures as subjugated in the liberal sense of oppressed subjects would, I think, be wrongheaded. The problem was not how these figures and forms of life could be liberated from subjugation but how to understand them as

indicating a possible world beyond or otherwise to their own forms—to understand them as a stand-in for something else. How might they become something other than the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple, the perverse adult? And how could they survive their own emergence, and come to be invested with qualities and characteristics deemed sensible and compelling, before being extinguished as a monstrosity?<sup>26</sup>

The same can be said of the following figures of geontological power:

THE DESERT and its CENTRAL IMAGINARY, CARBON. THE DESERT is the figure that stands in for all things denuded of life—or, with the application of technological expertise, something that could be made hospitable to life. THE DESERT is, in other words, the space where life was, is not now, or could be. Thus THE DESERT is found in the astronomical search for evidence of previous or existing life on other planets, in the contemporary imaginary of North African oil fields, and in the fear that all places where fossil fuels are found will be turned into THE DESERT. THE DESERT is also the geological category of fossils insofar as we consider these fossils to have once been charged with life and as providing the condition of life, or at least our contemporary hypermodern form of life. As Kathryn Yusoff has argued, fossils create a strange kinship between the living and the nonliving, traversing their differences even as they threaten the living with a radical finitude.<sup>27</sup> The specific ways that THE DESERT is relaying life and nonlife are providing new theoretical movement, such as in the work of Claire Colebrook on extinction and Eugene Thacker on nonliving ontologies.<sup>28</sup> And a host of literary, artistic, and media re-imaginings join them. These cultural texts and objects have a deep history stretching back at least to Edgar Rice Burroughs, through the Mad Max films, and from the science fiction of Philip K. Dick's *Martian Time-Slip* to the poetics of Juliana Spahr's *Well Then There Now*.

THE CARBON IMAGINARY lies at the heart of the figure of THE DESERT. By *carbon imaginary*, I mean the synthetic space between the biological thought of metabolic processes and their key events (birth, growth—reproduction, death) and the ontological thought of event, conatus, finitude. Indeed, THE CARBON IMAGINARY is the

key to the geontology of Late Liberalism, emphasizing a point that I don't want to be lost as this chapter proceeds, namely, that geontology is not the Other to biontology but a new set of divergences and possibilities being revealed across the terrain of Late Liberalism as biontology is rediscovered.

THE ANIMIST and its CENTRAL IMAGINARY, the INDIGENE. Whereas THE DESERT emphasizes that which is denuded of life or could be made into (the fuel of) life, THE ANIMIST insists that there is no absence of life because everything has a vital force—there is no nonlife because all is life. Certain social and historical populations are charged with long having had this core biontological knowledge and attitude—indigenous and native peoples certainly, but pre-Christian Europeans as well. But THE ANIMIST is also within the contemporary idea that we should all be stewards of the earth. Thus THE ANIMIST includes the recycling contemporary subject and certain ways of portraying and perceiving in a variety of new cognitive subjects. The psychocognitive diagnoses of certain forms of autism and Asperger's are liable to fall within THE ANIMIST. Temple Grandin is an exemplary figure here, not merely for her orientation to cows but also for her defense of alternative cognitions that allow for an orientation to nonhuman and nonlife forms of existence and an understanding of these orientations as the drivers of the high-water marks of human society. THE ANIMIST is, in other words, all those who see an equivalence between all forms of life or who can see life where others would see the lack of life.

The theoretical and political expression of THE ANIMIST is seen in the recent turn toward rethinking the philosophies of vitalism. Some new vitalists have mined Spinoza's principle of *conatus* (that which exists, whether living or nonliving, strives to persevere in being) to shatter the division of life and nonlife—although others, such as John Carriero, have insisted that Spinoza uncritically accepted that living things are “more advanced” than nonliving things, “that there is more to a cat than to a rock.”<sup>29</sup> A similar field of interest and dispute has emerged in the interpretation of the late-nineteenth-century writings of the American pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce. Can, for instance, Peirce's semiotics of the interpretant be understood

as extending into nonliving existents?<sup>30</sup> Whatever Spinoza or Peirce thought, the new vitalism, as Jane Bennett notes, skews forms of vitalism that grounded life in a philosophy of essence. They seek instead to create forms of “ontosympathy” by foregrounding the nature of all existence/existents as precarious assemblages.<sup>31</sup> A touchstone image comes from Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the body-without-organs and, more specifically, the orchid and the wasp as a prototype of existence as assemblage: a way of thinking about existents as coemergent strata within a common assemblage, each dependent in terms of its substantive form, quality, and mode on its relation to the Other. Another touchstone image comes from Donna Haraway’s concept of the cyborg. Mel Chen, for instance, understands the intercorporeal as a capital assemblage that constitutes a type of contemporary toxic subjectivity.

Chen’s work underlines that this turn to *THE ANIMIST* is not a mere philosophical rethinking but a political and ethical orientation. And here we come to the second way *THE ANIMIST* can differ from *THE DESERT*. The political tactic of *THE ANIMIST* tends to result in a call for the recognition of the liveliness of the radical Other. In other words, as *THE ANIMIST* supplants the human as the groundwork of the political and ethical, it maintains a humanist orientation. Take Temple Grandin’s claim that “the really social people did not invent the first stone spear. It was probably an Aspie who chipped away at rocks while the other people socialized around the campfire.”<sup>32</sup> Is she merely instrumentalizing the human subject’s relationship to the rock, or is she substantially leveling the human and nonhuman, life and nonlife, to equal coparticipants in world-making? In other words, *THE ANIMIST* can result in a more effective engineer of modernity, an existence that does not differentiate among other forms of existence, and a radical antihumanism. All three are currently being explored in literary and cultural expressions of *THE ANIMIST*. *THE ANIMIST* isn’t merely the exploration of subjectivity of other forms of life, as with the novel *The Hive Mentality*, but is a more open-ended exploration of the transpositional nature of forms of existence, as with the Italian film *Le Quattro Volte* (2010), which moves from human to animal to vegetable to mineral realms as an old goatherd and then a young goat dies, as a fir tree grows, is chopped down to serve as a ritual pole, and then is made into charcoal to light the

townspeople's fires. The question *THE ANIMIST* poses is what happens when we extend one mode of being to all modes of existence.

*THE TERRORIST* and its *CENTRAL IMAGINARY*, the *VIRUS*. *THE TERRORIST* is the figure of *THE DESERT* and *THE ANIMIST* from the perspective of current forms of biontology and biosecurity. *THE TERRORIST* is all those who seek to disrupt the current biontological organization of state, market, and sociality by opening the political and social to the nonhuman animal, the vegetal, and the geotic. With the dual Late Liberalism crises of post-9/11 and the Great Recession, the terrorist has been associated primarily with fundamentalist Islam.<sup>33</sup> And much of critical thought has focused on the relationship between biopolitics and biosecurity in the wake of these two crises. But, once again, this focus on biosecurity has obscured the systemic reorientation of biosecurity around geosecurity and meteorosecurity: social and ecological effects of climate change.<sup>34</sup> *THE TERRORIST* is seen in those who insist that the size of the human population must be addressed in the wake of climate change, that a mountain is more important than air-conditioning, that humans are kudzu, that human extinction is desirable. But humans are not the only terrorists. But *THE TERRORIST* is also the virus and the waste dump, the drug-resistant bacterial infection, and the nuclear fallout. Perhaps most spectacularly, *THE TERRORIST* is the popular cultural figure of the Zombie—life turned to nonlife and transformed into species war. Thus the difference between *THE DESERT* and *THE TERRORIST* has to do with the agency and intentionality of nonhuman life and nonlife. Whereas *THE DESERT* is a factual assessment of an inert state opened to technological successes or failures, *THE TERRORIST* is an active antagonistic agent built out of the collective assemblage that is Late Liberalism. Thus *THE TERRORIST* is also recognition's internal political other operating through the tactics of camouflage and espionage with environmentalists inhabiting the borderlands between activists and terrorists across state borders and interstate surveillance.

Again, these figures and discourses are not the exit from or the answer to biopolitics or biontology. They are not subjugated subjects waiting to be liberated. As with the animist who might or might not

smuggle a core human drama back into the vitalized world, all these figures are condensed expressions of the simultaneous continuing grip of the *bios* and *thanatos* and the unraveling of their relevance. They are the strange dreams one has before fully waking. They are the ghosts who exist in between two worlds—the world in which the dependent oppositions of life (*bios*) and death (*thanatos*) and of life (*bios*) and nonlife (*geos*) are sensible and dramatic and the world in which these enclosures are no longer relevant, sensible, or practical.

## NOTES

1. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–78*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1.

2. But also sometimes of cats. Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 2009).

3. Hannah Arendt, *On the Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

4. Donna J. Haraway, “The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies: Determinations of Self in Immune System Discourse,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 1, no. 1 (1989): 3–43.

5. See also Andre de Macedo Duarte, “Hannah Arendt, Biopolitics, and the Problem of Violence: From *Animal Laborans* to *Homo sacer*,” in *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race, and Genocide*, ed. Richard H. King and Dan Stone, 21–37 (London: Berghahn Books, 2007). Claire Blencowe argues, “Whereas Arendt sees the normalizing force of modern society as being in total opposition to individuality, Foucault posits totalization and individuation as processes of normation, which casts a light upon the relative import they place upon politics and ethics.” Blencowe, “Foucault’s and Arendt’s ‘Insider View’ of Biopolitics: A Critique of Agamben,” *History of the Human Sciences* 23, no. 5 (2010): 113–30.

6. Roberto Esposito, *Bios*, trans. Timothy C. Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). See also Campbell, *Improper Life: Technology and Biopolitics from Heidegger to Agamben* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

7. Frederick Rosen, *Life Itself: A Comprehensive Inquiry into the Nature, Origin, and Fabrication of Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

8. Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, trans. David Macey (Paris: Éditions de Seuil/Gallimard, 1997), 35. *Apparition* appears as *l'apparition* in the French original.

9. See also Esposito, *Bios*, 57.
10. Henry A. Giroux, *Youth in a Suspect Society: Democracy or Disposability?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 83. See also Angela Davis, *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons, and Torture* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005).
11. Alain Badiou, *Adventures in French Philosophy* (London: Verso, 2012), 87, 93, 97.
12. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 239. “Insofar as man is a living being” appears as “une prise de pouvoir sur l’homme en tant qu’être vivant” in the French original.
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# **ANTHROPOCENE FEMINISM**

**Richard Grusin, Editor**

**CENTER FOR 21ST CENTURY STUDIES**



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