

# Shela Sheikh

## TRANSLATING GEONTOLOGIES

November 8, 2016: Donald Trump wins the US presidential election.  
December 4, 2016: The US Army Corps of Engineers announced that it would temporarily halt the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline at the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota to allow for an environmental impact review.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, these two dates mark *events*, the effects of which have resonated globally. In contrast to the former, the latter provided a moment of hope, a glimpse of effective alliance-building on a national and international scale that will need to be carried forward in the coming months and beyond—a moment of effective, indigenous-led environmental protest. This protest did more than simply reject the Dakota Access Pipeline. Rather, in its rhetoric of “protection,” it sought to lay the groundwork for a future that has been precipitously threatened by Trump’s open support for the pipeline and drilling for oil across US national parks, not to mention his private investments in the project and his public denial of the scientific facts of environmental violence and climate change.<sup>2</sup>

But neither of these events came out of nowhere and as such are to be distinguished from a more philosophical definition of “event,”

as marking an unprecedented rupture. Behind each is a long accumulation of grievances that allowed them to unfold. In the former case, speculation is rife regarding the persuasion of the electorate; behind the latter lies decades of what the anthropologist Elizabeth A. Povinelli names “quasi-events,” which often elude our apprehension as ethical and political demands but which at times achieve the status of “events” through their amplification by the media.<sup>3</sup> As we have seen in the case of Standing Rock, despite the initial lack of coverage by mainstream media, the campaign was exemplary in its garnering of both national and international support. These quasi-events take the form of dispersed violence, patterns of “uneventful” dispossession, or what Rob Nixon names “slow violence”—typically not even perceived as violence, attritional and of delayed effects, an insidious violence that is more often than not environmental and affecting the bodies of racialized subjects.<sup>4</sup>

For many, the present moment calls for a new language: a new political praxis that entails effective communication on a municipal, national, and international level, through forums that would involve speaking with one another through antagonism and about uncomfortable matters.<sup>5</sup> What, then, of our critical lexicon? What new terms are needed? What currency do the academic terms currently at our disposal, above all in the Euro-Western academy, hold? What formations of power and governmentality might we be overlooking?

If alliances across national borders between seemingly independent struggles—exemplified in the support for the water protectors at Standing Rock—are necessary not only for the achievement of short-term goals but also for the building of public consciousness regarding those struggles’ interconnectedness, then so, too, are alliances across disciplinary borders. For a start, as is applicable to mobilizations like the one at Standing Rock, as Rob Nixon and others have suggested, North American environmentalism and post/decolonial/indigenous studies must join forces, making way for what has been termed “postcolonial ecologies.”<sup>6</sup> In their accounting for the manners in which certain bodies are culturally and politically constructed as “disposable” or “sacrificeable,” above all in the context of climate and environmental violence, scholars of postcolonial studies teach us valuable lessons.<sup>7</sup> These lessons are all the more urgent in the context of the unabashedly racist, xenophobic, and misogynist rhetoric unleashed during the entirety of the Trump presidential campaign.

Likewise, key figures in indigenous studies and anthropology (notably Povinelli and Glen Sean Coulthard) have made use of postcolonial theory to expose the “cunning” of state-sanctioned, late liberal “politics of recognition” and multiculturalism in governing difference and maintaining structures of subjugation beneath the veneer of rights

Notes as endnotes.

and reconciliation.<sup>8</sup> This work also points to an imperative to examine not simply primitive accumulation but also *original* accumulation—the dispossession of indigenous or Aboriginal land. Here, the resulting extermination of life and lifeworlds functions, once again, through the mechanisms that render certain bodies and forms of life sacrifice-able—exposed to the abovementioned “quasi-events” at best, genocide at worst. And it is precisely this “eventfulness” and legal categorization of various intensities of violence—their visibility and assignability, as well as their extricability from environmental violence—that is at stake here.<sup>9</sup>

The work of “postcolonial ecology” is already well under way, and it is becoming all too clear that this must be supplemented by decolonial, indigenous, and feminist critiques of Anthropocene discourse, as well as of the attendant posthumanism that seeks to counter the Anthropocene industry’s prevailing anthropocentrism.<sup>10</sup> But even beyond this, as William E. Connolly articulates in his forthcoming *Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming*, additional borders require dismantling: the aggregate of “postcolonial ecology” in and of itself is not enough. Rather, this must dialogue more forcefully than ever before with eco-movements and with new practitioners of earth sciences.<sup>11</sup> In other words, the lessons learned from the anti-colonial or anti-imperial ecological struggles that have taken place outside the old capitalist centers and in depressed urban areas within them demand to be translated into what Connolly names “a cross-regional pluralist assemblage,” one that “presses states, corporations, churches, universities, and the like from inside and outside simultaneously.”<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, for such lessons to be effective in our contemporary climate, attention must be paid to the geological. While a partial response to this can be located in something like geographer Kathryn Yusoff’s theorizations of “geologic life” within the geological epoch of the Anthropocene, the recent work of anthropologist Elizabeth A. Povinelli is particularly useful here.<sup>13</sup> Though she may not explicitly use the term *postcolonial ecology*, Povinelli implicitly offers much for a necessarily postcolonial conceptualization of eco-movements and eco-activism (above all where each is concerned with aesthetic strategies and creative practices), precisely in her foregrounding of the relationship between Life and Nonlife, the biological and the geological, biopower and geontopower, under the conditions of settler late liberalism.<sup>14</sup>

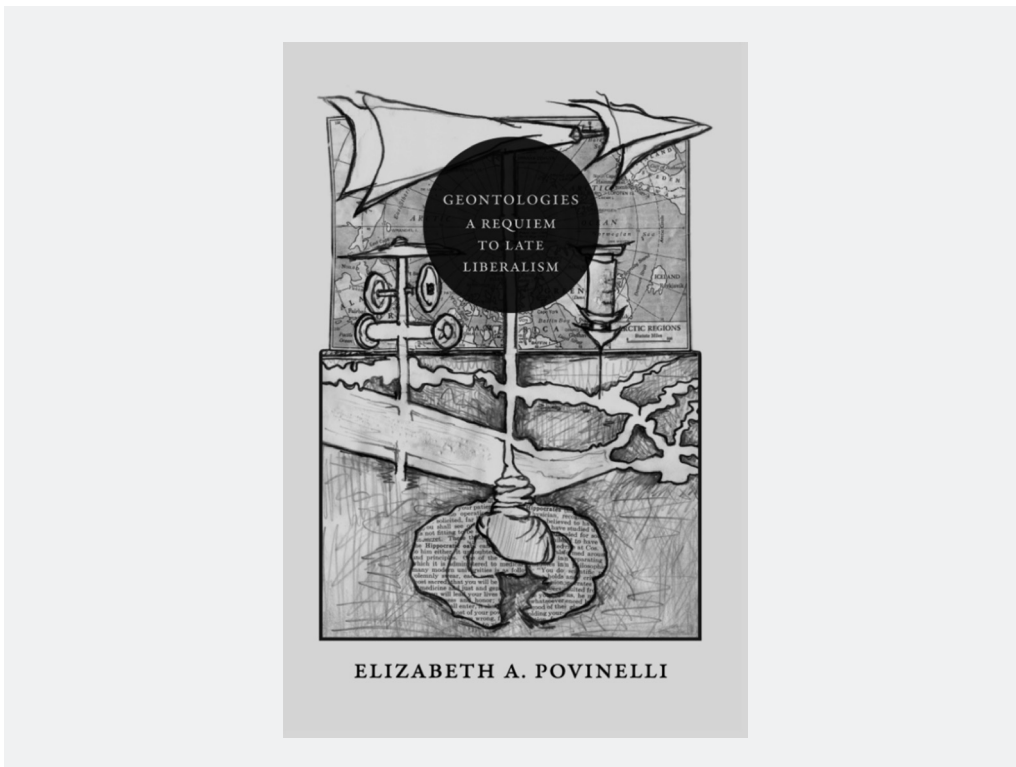
Povinelli’s latest book, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*, was published in September 2016, simultaneous to the growing mobilization against the Dakota Access Pipeline.<sup>15</sup> Recapitulating earlier presentations on the same topic, *Geontologies* at once forms the third part of Povinelli’s trilogy on late liberalism (which in-

cludes the *Empire of Love* [2006] and *Economies of Abandonment* [2011]) and also revisits her reflections on governance in settler late liberalism begun in her 1993 book *Labor's Lot*.<sup>16</sup> *Geontologies* is a dense work that resists being described in telegraphic terms, based as it is in dazzling and far-reaching theoretical and philosophical readings. But Povinelli's key concepts of "geontology" and "geontopower" are an invaluable contribution to our much-needed critical lexicon, evoked above, and reading her work from this perspective suggests that the concepts and modes of engagement presented in *Geontologies*, though firmly rooted in the experience and particular governance of Australian late-settler liberalism, demand to be taken up and *translated* in other contexts. When Povinelli speaks of "late liberalism" in *Geontologies*, she is specifically referring to the strategies of power that took shape in the late 1960s and early 1970s that exposed the emerging "politics of recognition" and open markets as methods of conserving liberal governance and "the accumulation of value for dominant classes and social groups" rather than as means to ameliorate social and economic injustices (169).<sup>17</sup> In her earlier *Economies of Abandonment*, she elucidates the way that late liberalism refers to a strategy for "governing the challenge of postcolonial and new social movements," with *Geontologies* demonstrating how this governing takes place precisely through the management of the perceived relationship between the biological and the geological.<sup>18</sup> Despite this specificity, the offerings of *Geontologies* call to be translated, both geographically and conceptually, and provide a lens through which to read the protests surrounding the Dakota Access Pipeline or other instances in North America, where the residues of settler colonialism persist, even if—crucially—this persistence is often denied.<sup>19</sup>

As a consequence of attempts to grapple with the reality and concept of the Anthropocene in recent years, ontology, as Povinelli notes, has reemerged as a central problem across disciplines: philosophy, anthropology, literary and cultural studies, as well as science and technology studies, for a start (14). Hence the rise of posthumanist—and, we might add, "more-than-human" or "multispecies"—politics and theory. But critical theorists struggle to maintain a difference between all forms of Life and the category of Nonlife, with the crumbling ontological distinctions between biological, geological, and meteorological existents opening up onto the proliferation of new object ontologies (new materialisms, speculative realisms, and object-oriented ontologies) (14). "A posthuman critique is giving way to a post-life critique, being to assemblage, and biopower to geontopower" (14). This might not sound like news to readers who follow these theoretical debates, but what is novel about Povinelli's analysis—and indeed what makes it so prescient for the United States context with which we began—is the



Sitting Bull with protectors in Canon Ball, ND. Photograph by Joe Brusky.



Elizabeth A. Povinelli's *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Published by Duke University Press, 2016.

mode through which geontopower is analyzed, or, rather, the manner through which the experience of geontopower is framed and narrated, made visible.

Let us rewind a little...

In the wake of the events of 9/11, the crash of financial markets, and the ongoing, spectacular manifestations of Anthropogenic climate change (all visible crises), much of critical thought has, understandably, focused on sovereignty and the relationship between biopolitics and biosecurity—a manner of thought that includes variations such as necropolitics, thanatopolitics, neuropolitics, and so on. But as Povinelli argues, “this focus has obscured the systematic re-orientation of biosecurity around geo-security and meteorology: the social and ecological effects of climate change” (19). This is not to say that biopolitics should be entirely replaced by geontopower but rather that biopolitics, as Kathryn Yusoff has shown, is “increasingly ‘subtended by geology’” (14) and geontopower. Thus, our preoccupation with the image of power working through life—a preoccupation that perhaps doubles as a typical definition of biopolitics—has, in fact, obscured “the revelation of formation that is fundamental to but hidden by the concept of biopower” (4). This newly revealed formation is what Povinelli terms *geontological power* or *geontopower*. Unlike biopower, geontopower “does not operate through the governance of life and the tactics of death but is rather a set of discourses, affects, and tactics used in late liberalism to maintain or shape the coming relationship of the distinction between Life and Nonlife” (4). The terms *geontology* and *geontopower* thus “intensify the contrasting components of nonlife (*geos*) and being (*ontology*) currently at play in the late liberal governance of difference and markets” (5).

To return to my evocation of translatability: central to *Geontologies*, and indeed to Povinelli’s broader practice as an anthropologist, is the specific rootedness of her work in the fragile coastal ecosystem of Northern Territory of Australia and the allegiances staked with “my Indigenous friends and colleagues” (13). The concept of geontopower presented in Povinelli’s text arises first and foremost from the perspective of the Karrabing Collective, a grassroots, supermajority indigenous alternative media collective and social project of which Povinelli is a member.<sup>20</sup> The work of the Karrabing Collective emerges from and elucidates the experience of “the massive neoliberal reorganization of the Australian governance of Indigenous life” (24) and “the slow, dispersed accumulations of toxic sovereignties” (27) against the backdrop of, among other things, indigenous land rights claims over mining leases. *Geontologies* is structured around the Karrabing’s engagement with various modes of existence, often referred to as Dreaming or totemic formations—a rock and mineral

formation; a set of bones and fossils; an estuarine creek; a fog formation; and a set of rock weirs and sea reefs—as well as their desire to maintain them, and their challenges to the state’s violation, desecration, or misrecognition of each respective formation.

Here, it is not humans *per se* that have “exerted such a malignant force on the meteorological, geological, and biological dimension of the earth but only some forms of human sociality” (13)—just as it is not humans *per se* who bear the brunt of this or of Anthropocenic climate change. Hence the critiques of Anthropocene discourse and the inadequacy of the Anthropos as a universalizing species paradigm: taking the general category of the human as a framing device conceals the distinctions between those people who drive the fossil-fuel economy and those who don’t, between those populations engaged in colonial-slash-imperial agendas and those on the receiving end.<sup>21</sup> But just when we attempt to distinguish between different modes of inhabiting the planet in order to identify those culpable, we find that our gaze cannot remain localized. From the Northern Territory or Dakota, we must look further afield (Povinelli’s metaphor moves between the telescope and binoculars): following the flows of toxic industries and their by-products means stretching the local across “seeping transits,” suspended between the local and the global—“*hereish*,” to use Povinelli’s term (13).

If the task, as articulated by Nixon, is to render the grievances of “slow violence” legible—to find forms through which to aestheticize and narrate the “quasi-events” of, for instance, environmental dispossession—then in the case of geontopower, it is precisely *through* the late liberal governance of difference and markets that geontology can be best revealed. This late liberal model of governance works only insofar as the distinctions between the vital and inert, Life and Death/Extinction or Nonlife are maintained (9). And here, the lessons offered by the settler colonial Australian context are in many ways applicable to the United States. Geontology and geontopower, for Povinelli, “are concepts *meant to help make visible* the figural tactics of late liberalism as a long-standing biontological orientation and distribution of power crumbles, losing its efficacy as a self-evident backdrop to reason” (5–6, emphasis modified). More specifically, just as necropolitics, openly operating in colonial Africa, subsequently *revealed its shape* in Europe, “so geontopower has long operated openly in settler late liberalism and been insinuated in the ordinary operations of its governance of difference and markets” (5).<sup>22</sup> To quote Povinelli at length:

All sorts of liberalisms seem to evidence a biopolitical stain, from settler colonialism to developmental liberalism to full-on neoliberalism. But something is causing these statements to be irrevocably read and experienced through a new drama, not the drama of life and

death, but a form of death that begins and ends in Nonlife—namely the extinction of humans, biological life, and, as it is often put, the planet itself—which takes us to a time before the life and death of individuals and species, a time of the *geos*, of soullessness. (8–9)

Recalling the question of lexicon that we began with, for Povinelli, the terms *geontology* and *geontopower* are “intended to highlight *the difficulty in finding a critical language* to account for the moment in which a form of power long self-evident in certain regimes of settler late liberalism *is becoming visible globally*” (5, my emphasis).

Let me be clear: it is neither my intention here either to carelessly reduce the specificity of the Australian settler late liberalism from which Povinelli writes to the system of governance of the United States, nor to make such a crude move as to put forward a blanket, global conception of indigeneity and indigenous lifeworlds, and thus to betray the very specificity of Povinelli’s work that I am here celebrating, even if my gesture is to stress its partial translatability.<sup>23</sup> Rather, my point is to emphasize the potential usefulness of Povinelli’s analytics and vocabulary in the context of the impending populism and even nativism of the United States and to stress that the still all-too-tangible residues of North American settler colonialism (as well as what decolonial thinkers would term “coloniality”) not be left out of our myriad political conversation.<sup>24</sup> As Povinelli herself stresses in a recent discussion about settler colonialism in Palestine, the identity of settler indigenous populations is a conscious, visible part of everyday national politics in Canada and Australia, while in the United States this is far from the case.<sup>25</sup>

To clarify yet another aspect of translatability (and in allusion to the postcolonial or indigenous ecology signaled earlier), it is precisely through a colonial mind-set that late liberalism—and indeed liberalism of all sorts across the globe, not to mention capitalism more generally and the impending Republican administration—reacts so violently to maintain the distinction between Life and Nonlife and to police and to manage those whose lifeworlds presume otherwise. Industrial capital—though one could also refer to something like the Dakota Access Pipeline more specifically—depends upon the separation between forms of existence in order to implement certain forms of extraction (20). In the context of settler liberalism, the belief that Nonlife acts in ways only available to Life must be contained “in the brackets of the impossible if not the absurd” (21) and “the attribution of an *inability* of various colonized people to differentiate the kinds of things that have agency, subjectivity, and intentionality of the sort that emerges with life has been the grounds for casting them into a premodern mentality and a postrecognition difference” (5).

Povinelli’s concept of “geontologies” provides a timely addition to current theorizations and diagnoses of power and governance,



between human and nonhuman, Life and Nonlife, in the settler colonial context of both Australia and the United States. But it is Povinelli's book, in its architectural framework (each chapter derives from a vignette, a narrative of the Karrabing's analytics and engagement with respective forms of Dreaming), itself derivative of her "anthropology of the otherwise," that provides most currency for the political tasks that lie ahead—above all where this concerns the move from academia to (postcolonially informed) socially engaged praxis and back again. For while the mobilizations at Standing Rock drew a staggering number of gestures of solidarity (in situ or otherwise), from an academic perspective, the warnings posed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her seminal 1988 essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" prove as prescient as ever, albeit relating to different forms of "subaltern."<sup>26</sup> Beyond the Indian subaltern woman who is at the center of Spivak's original essay, we now see the dangers of mis-representing and "speaking for" not only indigenous subjects, whose worldviews/lifeworlds often remain stubbornly (and productively, one might add) untranslatable or incommensurable with the prevailing mind-set of both late liberalism and neoliberalism but also nature itself, or the nonhuman more generally. In other words, the conundrum remains as to whether any form of representation, however well-intentioned, necessarily involves at least some form of colonization: a rendering passive or mute.<sup>27</sup> Hence the necessity of vigilance when faced with the "impossible necessity," to use Astrida Neimanis's term, of *engaging with* those who more often than not bear the brunt of the slow violence and quasi-events with which we began.

Against this kind of colonization, Povinelli's intention is not to "represent" anyone, let alone "to allow the nonhuman modes of existence to speak" (26). Rather, we might say that she aims to "stand with" rather than "speak for," and she situates the genesis of her claims in the effects of late liberal forces moving through "that part of our lives that we [Povinelli and the Karrabing collective] have lived together" (23). Such an approach provides a useful point of orientation for those of us who find ourselves caught in the discomfiting space between, as Neimanis puts it, "a representationalist rock and a hard place of complicit silence."<sup>28</sup> *Geontologies*, written *with* Povinelli's indigenous "colleagues"-slash-"family," provides just one example of the vital work being done by scholars and activists across the globe, as the Métis scholar and artist Zoe Todd puts it, "to decolonize and Indigenize the non-Indigenous intellectual contexts that currently shape public intellectual discourse" (including, Todd adds, the discourse of the Anthropocene).<sup>29</sup>

How, then, might this project of "making visible" proceed? One possibility can be found in the films created by the Karrabing collective itself. As Povinelli notes, the various forms of critique that



Film stills from *Wutharr: Saltwater Dreams* by the Karrabing Film Collective, 2016.  
Courtesy of the Karrabing Film Collective.



Film stills from *Wutharr: Saltwater Dreams* by the Karrabing Film Collective, 2016.  
Courtesy of the Karrabing Film Collective.

have attempted to tackle the theoretical challenges inherent to this age of the Anthropocene—questions of multiple ontologies, the difference between Life and Nonlife, our coming post-extinction world—have tended to lag behind fiction (14). The “aesthetic objects” that are the Karrabing’s films operate through an “improvisational realism” or “improvisational realization.” As much an art of living as an artistic style, the “genre,” if we can call it this, seeks to manifest reality (“a realization”) through a mixture of fact and fiction, reality and realism (86) that makes visible or “illuminates” the “quasi-events” that occur within “the cramped space in which my indigenous colleagues are forced to maneuver as they attempt to keep relevant their critical analytics and practices of existence” (6). But this “making visible”—this “translation” or rendering legible across registers—operates precisely through a certain illegibility or incomprehensibility: a stubborn resistance that explicitly rejects the representations from without—the demand for a certain (global) (self-)image of indigeneity, or indeed the demand of the anthropological imaginary—through which “authentic” indigeneity is managed, marketed, and circulated.<sup>30</sup> As such, read through the polysemy of translation, the productive paradox here is that this film-making practice is “effective” in its revealing the functioning of geontopower precisely through its partial untranslatability and incommensurability<sup>31</sup> Rather than providing a representation of their lives, the films are intended as a means of self-organization and analysis, revealing new forms of collective indigenous agency precisely in relation to various Dreaming formations. Crucially, the films function as a constantly improvisational response to the suffocating state management of such relations.

Despite the increasing solidification of global borders, epitomized by the rhetoric of the Trump campaign, members of the Karrabing Collective have nonetheless recently been able to acquire passports in order to travel to participate in international screenings and discussions.<sup>32</sup> But beyond this, platforms running supplementary to mainstream media (evoking Nancy Fraser’s “subaltern counter-publics,” here digital) provide crucial means for the virtual translation of what, as evoked above, functions precisely through a certain level of stubborn opacity.<sup>33</sup> Explicitly rejecting state forms of land tenure and the politics of recognition, with membership that elides blood ties, the composition of the Karrabing Collective resonates with the gestures of solidarity from the diverse constituencies who traveled to Standing Rock—gestures made in the face of the United States mainstream media’s attempts to reduce the claims and representational practices of indigenous struggle (their attempts to communicate) to mere incommunicable “noise.”<sup>34</sup> While the Karrabing Collective’s practice elucidates and narrates the dispersed “quasi-events” brought about by toxic

sovereignty and geontopower, this elucidation is far from a straightforward translation. Nonetheless, there is an urgency to translate “geontology” across today’s multiple and overlapping crises, especially as these pertain to colonial or imperial debris: (settler-)colonialism’s ongoing effects of ruination.<sup>35</sup>

1. For a timeline of US settler colonialism and the events leading up to December 4, see the #standingrocksyllabus, <https://nycstandwithstandingrock.wordpress.com/standing-rocksyllabus/>.
2. See, for instance, "Trump Supports Dakota Access Pipeline. Did We Mention He's Invested in It?" *Huffington Post*, December 2, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-dakota-access-pipeline-investment\\_us\\_5841d8f9e4b09e21702e8f58](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-dakota-access-pipeline-investment_us_5841d8f9e4b09e21702e8f58).
3. Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). See also Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth A. Povinelli, "Holding Up the World, Part III: In the Event of Precarity...A Conversation," *e-flux journal* 58 (October 2014), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/58/61149/holding-up-the-world-part-iii-in-the-event-of-precarity-a-conversation/>.
4. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2011).
5. See, for instance, Rosi Braidotti, "Don't Agonize: Organize!" *e-flux*, November 14, 2016, <http://conversations.e-flux.com/t/ro-si-braidotti-don-t-agonize-organize/5294>.
6. Rob Nixon, "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism" in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, ed. Ania Loomba et al (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 233–251; Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, eds., *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Jill Didur, Anthony Carrigan, eds., *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2015); Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Jennifer Wenzel, "Reading Fanon Reading Nature," in *What Postcolonial Theory Doesn't Say*, ed. Anna Bernard, Ziad Elmarsafy, and Stuart Murray (London: Routledge, 2015), 185–201; TJ Demos, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2016).
7. Regarding this "disposability" and "sacrificability," in each case interpreted through Orientalism, see Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2010); Naomi Klein, "Let Them Drown: The Violence of Othering in a Warming World," *London Review of Books*, vol. 38, no. 11 (June 2, 2016), <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n11/naomi-klein/let-them-drown>.
8. Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
9. On this last point, see especially the "Ecologies" section of Forensic Architecture, ed., *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014).
10. See, for instance, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); Zoe Todd, "An Indigenous Feminist's take on the Ontological Turn: 'ontology' is just another word for colonialism," October 24, 2014, <https://zoeandthecity.wordpress.com/2014/10/24/an-indigenous-feminists-take-on-the-ontological-turn-ontology-is-just-another-word-for-colonialism/>; Zoe Todd, "Indigenizing the Anthropocene," in *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, ed. Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), 341–354; Gene Ray, "Writing the Ecocide-Genocide Knot: Indigenous Knowledge and Critical Theory in the Endgame," *South*, issue 8 (documenta 14 #3), [http://www.documenta14.de/en/south/895\\_writing\\_the\\_ecocide\\_genocide\\_knot\\_indigenous\\_knowledge\\_and\\_critical\\_theory\\_in\\_the\\_endgame](http://www.documenta14.de/en/south/895_writing_the_ecocide_genocide_knot_indigenous_knowledge_and_critical_theory_in_the_endgame); and Kristina Lyons, "Decentering 'the human' at the interfaces of anthropology and science studies?" *Savage Minds*, December 12, 2016,
11. <http://savageminds.org/2016/12/12/decentering-the-human-at-the-interfaces-of-anthropology-and-science-studies/>.
12. William E. Connolly, *Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 12.

13. Connolly, *Facing the Planetary*, 12.
14. Kathryn Yusoff, "Geologic Life: Prehistory, Climate, Futures in the Anthropocene," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 31, issue 5 (2013): 779–795. For a summary of Yusoff's use of the term *geontologies* in relation to Povinelli's, see 783, n. 4.
15. Regarding radical ecological movements in the United States, see Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*.
16. Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016). Page numbers are henceforth noted in brackets in the main text.
17. The earlier presentations of this work include Povinelli's keynote presentation, "Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism," at The Anthropocene Project, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, January 2013: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6TLIgtG3LQ>. See also Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Labor's Lot: The Power, History, and Culture of Aboriginal Action* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Povinelli, *Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*.
18. For Povinelli's attempt to diagram or make visible "what late liberalism 'is' and what it means to 'do,'" see the variations on the "symphony" of late liberalism in Chapter 7 (170–171).
19. Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*, 103.
20. For an analysis of the United States as a settler nation, see Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*.
21. The primary media expression of the Karrabing is a film collective and three major film projects, but Chapter 6 of *Geontologies* also discusses the collective's original media project, a GPS/GIS-based augmented reality project (23). *Karrabing*, in Emiyengal, refers to the point at which the tide has reached its lowest point, but, as Povinelli relates, "There it will stay until it turns, making its way back to shore. Karrabing does not have the negative connotations of the English phrase, low tide. There is nothing 'low' about the tide reaching Karrabing. All kinds of potentialities spring forward" (24). See <http://www.karrabing.com>.
22. See Todd, "Indigenizing the Anthropocene," 244.
23. See Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2003): 11–40.
24. Although, regarding this latter, Povinelli cautions against the typologizing (and hence management and disciplining) of the analytics of, for instance, Indigenous Australians and North American Inuits on the basis of animism or totemism—fraught concepts that for Povinelli originate in "a (post)colonial geography in which some humans were represented as unable to order the proper relations between objects and subjects, agencies and passivities, organic and inorganic life, and thus control language and experience through self-reflexive reason" (27). It is precisely alongside this rejection of such terms that Povinelli's ongoing project to find languages and practices for the analytics of existence of Indigenous lifeworlds takes place (27).
25. See Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
26. "The Symphony of Late Liberalism in Palestine: A Conversation between Raja Khalidi, Elizabeth A. Povinelli, and Vivian Zihari," December 15, 2016,
27. [http://interviews.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/25681/the-symphony-of-late-liberalism-in-palestine\\_a-con](http://interviews.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/25681/the-symphony-of-late-liberalism-in-palestine_a-con).
28. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313.
29. See Astrida Neimanis, "No Representation without Colonisation? (Or, Nature Represents Itself)," *Somatechnics*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2015): 135–153.
30. Neimanis, "No Representation without Colonisation?" 136. See Kim TallBear, "Standing With and Speaking as Faith: A

Feminist-Indigenous Approach to Inquiry,” *Journal of Research Practice*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2014), cited in Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, 24. See also Linda Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 20 (Winter 1991–92): 5–32.

31. Zoe Todd, “Indigenizing the Anthropocene,” 243.

32. See also Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition*.

33. See Elizabeth A. Povinelli, “Radical Worlds: The Anthropology of Incommensurability and Inconceivability,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 30 (2001): 319–334.

34. Ironically, the first time members were able to travel was to participate in the 2016 Jerusalem Show, curated by collaborator Vivian Zihel. During the trip, members, including Povinelli, visited Bethlehem and Ramallah.

35. In lieu—or in advance—of in-situ screenings, art/politics platforms such as *e-flux* have offered extracts of the Karring’s films for global viewing, accompanied by textual commentaries by Povinelli and others. See for instance, Karring Film Collective, “Holding Up the World, Part I,” *e-flux journal* #58 (October 2014), which features an extract from *Geontologies*, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/78/81514/geontologies-the-figures-and-the-tactics>. This particular issue was organized around the theme of “quasi-events,”

36. <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/58/61143/editorial-quasi-events/>.

37. I lift this formulation from a discussion of various forms of queerness in Kim Turct Di-Fruscia, “Shapes of Freedom: A Conversation with Elizabeth Povinelli,” *e-flux journal* #53 (March 2014), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/53/59889/shapes-of-freedom-a-conversation-with-elizabeth-a-povinelli/>.

38. See Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Imperial Debts: On Ruins and Ruination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

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