
12. The Anthropocene and geographies of geopower

Kathryn Yusoff

INTRODUCTION: GEOPOWER, BIOPOLITICS AND THE EARTH

It is because local and global forms of power are elaborated on a plane of forces that they can generate their very real effects on particular categories of bodies. But we must be careful to distinguish these different orders of force, or violence, that structure life at its very eruption and its subsequent elaboration: geopower, the relations between the earth and its life forms, runs underneath and through power relations, immanent in them, as their conditions of existence. Power – the relations between humans, or perhaps even between living things – is a certain, historically locatable capitalization on the forces of geopower. (Grosz in Yusoff et al. 2012, 975)

The Anthropocene identifies geologic force as a new regime of power within and beyond social formations. The imaginary of a social field crisscrossed by geologic forces puts into question the structures of exchange between geologic strata and social worlds, forcing a consideration of both productive of and produced by geologic relations of power. Geologic forces considered as a constitutive social(-ized) materiality introduce intricate and often contradictory spatial relations into the mix, problematizing the very foundation of long-held spatial propositions about social relations and the organization of power. This chapter investigates the *prepolitical* formations of geopower (Grosz in Yusoff et al. 2012) and the stratigraphic arrangements of social (re)production through geontopower (Povinelli 2016). I conclude with a theory of ‘*Geologic Life*’ (Yusoff 2013), positing stratification as a confrontation with the spatial arrangements of the social divisions of materiality; an arrangement of power that is both exceeded and complicated by geologic elements.

Geopower is a concept that was delineated by Michel Foucault in his writings about geography and historical formations but never fully elaborated on. At the time of Foucault’s writing, the idea of nonhuman power was also discussed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their accounts of the ‘outside’ of inhuman forces, specifically in their conceptualization of the process of stratification. In conversation with Foucault’s use of the concept of ‘formations’ as a process of historical and discursive organization of political milieus, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that social and historical apparatus are the ‘machines’ of capture that form strata, encoding the intensities and flows of the earth into stratifications (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 40; Yusoff 2017, 110–114). Strata both capture and institutionalize inhuman forces in social machines, but they can only do so because the modes of capture have a ‘resonance or redundancy’ with the forces of the earth that are being encoded (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 40). More recently, in conversation with the aforementioned philosopher’s engagements with the inhuman as the concept of, geopower was given substantial attention by Elizabeth Grosz in the context of her engagement with geographers and questions of territoriality (Grosz 2008; Grosz in Yusoff et al. 2012; Grosz, Yusoff and Clark 2017). A parallel to the concept of geopower is developed by Elizabeth Povinelli in her analytic of geontopower, which signals the

ontological and strategic deployment of the categorizations of Life and Nonlife in the governance of late liberalism (Povinelli 2016; Povinelli, Coleman and Yusoff 2017).

In this chapter, I begin by situating the relationship between geopower and biopower, in relation to the 'outside of thought', as discussed in the work of Foucault, Maurice Blanchot, and Deleuze and Guattari. These thinkers enable a conceptualization of geopower that suggests a constitutive exclusion within biopolitical thinking to denote a wider field of material production and power relations in social formations. From these explorations in lithic imaginaries and cosmological materiality, I will discuss Grosz's take on geopower and Povinelli's analytic of geontopower as feminist interventions in the field of biopolitics and its territorial implications. In the context of the geosocial formations of the Anthropocene, geopower can be understood as both the inhuman context in which biopolitical life is organized and as a concept that opens thinking towards cosmic forces. As the Anthropocene thesis contains within it a notion of geologic planetary agency and a new mode of subjectivity that is constituted by, and constituting of, geologic forces, geopower provides a powerful concept/analytic with which to grapple with the uneven forces of inhuman materialities and their particular manifestations on/in specific bodies. While the Anthropocene may claim a geologic epoch as its own, such a claim is a temporally insignificant moment in comparison to the earth's own forces, which for much of the earth's geohistory have not supported life, *at all*. In the context of earth forces, geopower can be understood as a force of deformation and provocation.

In the larger material context of the earth and the more recent iteration of a geophysics of the present in the Anthropocene, it can be observed that mineralogical evolution and geophysical events have been in constant material communication with life, in which the field of life is shaped and subtended by geology. For, as Grosz suggests in her formation of geopower:

Life partakes of the earth, requiring its forces to survive; but in turn, life elaborates the forces of the earth in ways that would and could not occur otherwise, developing certain potentialities in one direction or another, converting the qualities of the earth and its products into other qualities useful to or enhancing life. It is a temporary detour of the forces of the earth through the forces of a body, making them an endless openness. (Grosz in Yusoff et al. 2012, 975)

Life is a *détournement*, an elaboration *with* inhuman matter that is always in asymmetrical relation to that matter, but it is from that matter that life draws and so it is no different from that matter in kind (i.e. life is an expression of mineralogy, but it is not necessarily a 'vital' expression for the planet). Or, to put it another way, what I call '*Geologic Life*' is both a confrontation with the modes of classification that silo life and inhuman mineralogy and a skirmish with cosmic possibility inherent in life that can make a planetary otherwise (or a new earth). Geologic life, then, is not a self-evident category of description for the Anthropocene but a confrontation and challenge to understand the traffic between different orders of the inhuman (Yusoff 2015b, 204). Grosz suggests that,

[i]f and when life emerges from the forces of the earth, forces that cannot be separated into different categories, life carries with it this excess over corporeality that the material has always contained, a virtuality that enables it to transform itself or to emerge as life. Life capitalizes on the two-faced orientation of the earth and its forces, erupting into materiality as a bounded and self-producing cohesion that is also always 'thinking', that is to say, is always oriented by the senses of the earth inherent in its materiality (Grosz in Yusoff et al. 2012, 974).

This means that inhuman materials already contain the virtual qualities that make life possible, so it is not life that does life's work *as such*, but the already existing capacities of the earth and minerals that give rise to a whole range of variations of forms and conditions that engender life, political, cosmological and otherwise.

GEOPOLITICS AFTER LIFE

After a century of biologic thought, a sharp 'turn' is being enacted towards futures governed through and by geophysics. Given the centralization of life as an organizing concept within biopolitical thought, the consideration of political subjectivity in the Anthropocene could be pushed (if we were to take that geologic subjectivity seriously as expressive of political forms) to question what *geopolitics after life* might look like. An analytic of a *geopolitics after life* is also a political strategy to question the exclusivity with which accounts of life have been rendered as partial, historically based on a foundational biologism secured in racist propositions, sutured to normative assumptions and enacted by violent exclusions or necropolitics. Life as a biocentric proposition and the dominance of life as an organizing concept, or a politics secured in the imaginaries of life, has consistently produced not so much understandings of what life is, but ways of organizing hierarchies of life and its 'others' (i.e. racialized, sexualized and gendered modes of ordering life). As Povinelli comments: 'Biontology is the true name of western ontology. And the carbon imaginary is the homologous space created when the concepts of birth, growth-reproduction, and death are laminated onto the concepts of event, conatus-affectus, and finitude' (Povinelli, Coleman and Yusoff 2017, 174; see also Povinelli 2016). Whereas life may be the central production of Western ontology (and a particular exclusionary version of life at that), it is not the central concern of the cosmos, where forces more powerful than it organize and contextualize its appearance, and thus put pressure on the politics of life, as well as on its imagined arrangements. As Grosz comments: 'Life is the provisional binding of an order of conceptuality with an order of organic cohesion, the temporary protraction and delaying of the forces of the universe itself' (Grosz in Yusoff et al. 2012, 974). At the very least then, the Anthropocene as a political geological concept requires analysis of the relations between geologic forces and social practices in the context of the earth and its inhuman forces.

Awareness of how social worlds are an effect of and affect geology, rather than a world that is constituted through 'our' making (i.e. purely social, and we might add, biological, as the social has been primarily conceived through particular versions of biological subjects and events), suggests an arrangement of power that is complicated by geologic elements. Identifying geologic force as a new regime of power brings the structures of exchange between geologic forces and social worlds into view. If power, according to Foucault, is a relation between forces, geopower is a way to conceptualize how stratifications organize and capture geologic forces in political geology. As Nigel Clark comments,

[w]hereas conventional geopolitics tends to restrict itself to human inscriptions on the earth's surface, Grosz's notion of geopower permits the dynamics of the earth to leave their mark on human and other bodies. Her work has always been characterised by its boldness in evoking difference – within and beyond that which we designate as our own species . . . Her developing fusion of Darwin and feminism has deepened conceptions of corporeal difference to encompass

not only the differential forces of the sociocultural and the biological but also the enduring impression of earth processes on living flesh, which includes both incremental and more rapid impacts. (Clark in Yusoff et al. 2012, 976)

As Clark argues, it is the differential forces of the earth, which Grosz addresses, that have been left out of accounts of all kinds of social difference and political geography. To put it another way, in order to construct a fully operative sphere for political thought and social action, the intransient forces of the earth have often become marginalized as a non-operative space for politics, and thereby excluded.

The concept of geopower can be used to examine the expression of social forms as a product of geologic forces that run through social and subjective formation, but are not contained by those forms, however they are understood to be constituted. Geopower, it could be argued, is a plane of social reproduction that both constrains and is expressive of possible modes of expression and thus of political freedom. That is, the social plane and the formation of subjectivity are constituted by more than social forces, and constrained (as much as enabled) by the geologic formations that underpin them. Before there can be an Anthropocene geopolitics as such, there must first be a conceptualization of geopower as a force that is implicated in the constitution of planetary (and cosmological) scale. Such a conception of geopower that extends beyond the boundaries of life would challenge the various formations of subjectivity in which 'life' is construed as the organizing locus of power and agency (and thus exclusion and subjugation). Such a *geopolitics after life* would present a challenge to the formation of planetary scale, where the 'geo' does not just act as a descriptive material mode or spatial expander appended to politics, which allows geopolitics to look beneath the surface into the subterranean or up into the sky at the atmospheric (i.e. to mobilize the vertical or volumetric in geopolitics rather than the default horizontal of a flat planet or political stage) (Yusoff et al. 2012, 981). Nor can a politics of geology be understood as simply a new modifier to geopolitics that extends its purview and practice to encounter material difference (as the current elemental turn in geopolitics attests to) without changing its conception of politics. In these aforementioned formulations of geopolitics, geopower is taken as a self-evident descriptor of geologic forces (as opposed to traditionally conceived political or social forces) rather than as a question about the asymmetric organization, the capitalization, the temporal conversions and contraction of, and damn right radically impolitic nature of, inhuman matter and force.

POLITICAL GEOLOGY AND THE 'OUTSIDE'

The turn towards political geology still contains those impolitic forces of the inhuman in the same formations of politics and power as all the other forces it has hitherto paid attention to, but often fails to notice the change of register required. As Clark adroitly comments,

When geography, along with other 'progressive' fields, regrouped around the imperative of the 'political', it tended to imagine the contents of politics in predominantly agonistic or adversarial terms (see Barnett 2004). From here on in spatial forms and processes were reimagined as being constitutively open to struggles of collective making and remaking. But one of the consequences

of this manner of politicisation has been a gently descending silence around domains of existence that are not so amenable to contestation. In order to gain an intrinsically negotiable spatiality, it might be said, we traded in the more intractable forces of the earth and cosmos. (Clark quoted in Yusoff et al. 2012, 976)

If politics involves not just sovereign, governmental or juridical states to be contested but also includes planetary states, then politics must shift in its definition and delineation of concerns. That is, geopower is not biopower at a bigger scale, for a planetary body rather than a human one. And there is no ground zero for the earth, as there is for the human (apart from sun death or fragmentation from massive asteroid strike). Grosz is explicit in her refutation of this understanding of geopower as simply a correlative to the operation of biopower. 'Rather than concede geopower as the power that humans can extract from or hold over the geological, he [Foucault] sees geopower as the forces of the earth' (Grosz, Yusoff and Clark 2017, 135). Rather than understand geopower as earth extraction or a reinvention of the political economy of geology, Grosz urges us to be more expansive in our thinking even if it does compromise our sense of political gratification.

Unlike the major and minor expositions on biopower that seek an ever-tighter account of power's penetrative force into the forms and formation of life, Foucault always (via his engagement with Blanchot's limit writings) engaged with the outside as an internal and anterior state that deforms the possibility of any totality of control (Foucault 1990; Blanchot 2010). The recognition of internal and anterior resistance is a recognition of the possibility of *freedom from*, as much as accounts of biopolitics often render it as *coercion to*. In Foucault's engagement with Blanchot's concept of the outside of thought and Georges Bataille's limit-experience, there is an explicit acknowledgement of how life is not, in his conception, entirely framed by a Life/Death dynamic as the constitutive organization of what life is and can become. Akin to Povinelli's focus on the cruddy 'quasi events' of life that are as much about extinguishment as they are about extinction (Povinelli, Coleman and Yusoff 2017, 170), Foucault imagined the outside as an open that politics was always in communication with (see Foucault 1980; 1989). That is, the geologic and geography (in its broadest sense) is there in Foucault's project as the context in which biopolitics makes and takes bodies, as well as engaging with their libidinal and other economies that reshape bodily life, flesh and possibility. As Foucault comments about sexuality and its delineation of limits, it is,

intrinsic finitude, the limitless reign of the Limit, and the emptiness of those excesses in which it spends itself and where it is found wanting. In this sense, the inner experience is throughout an experience of the impossible (the impossible being both that which we experience and that which constitutes the experience) . . . a world exposed by the experience of its limits, made and unmade by that excess which transgresses it. (Foucault 1977, 32)

That is, any presumed totality or the forms of hypersecuritization that so excite geographers, is already constituted by an engagement with the limit and its transgression, but these are not life/death limits, they are limits of possibility, of the freedom, of sexuality, of thought, 'interior and sovereign' experience (Foucault 1977, 32). Transgression is the action which involves the limit, not containment;

that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage, but perhaps also its entire trajectory, even its origin; it is likely that transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses

... The limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows. But can the limit have a life of its own outside of the act that gloriously passes through it and negates it? (Foucault 1977, 34)

Limits for Foucault are ontological decisions to achieve certain ends; to contest this, he argues, is to proceed until the limit defines being (Foucault 1977, 36) and that affirmation of deformation is the play of transgressions (Foucault 1977, 48). What is important about this discussion to a biopolitics of life is to notice how the communication with limits (that is transgression) is always in conversation with questions of sovereignty and its breach. It is precisely through these 'other' economies that engage with the outside that biopolitical control is undermined. Pleasure becomes a way to unpick politics, and forces contain their own excess. This scene of transgression is apprehended in the context of the cosmos, not just creaturely life.

In the realm of earth forces, understanding geopolitics in a way that takes the 'geo' seriously as materiality and force, would need one to reconstitute the very understanding of the arrangements of relation and the location of agency. Such a 'new' geopolitics or political geology would require an adequate conceptualization of geopower in the first instance, and then it would need to look at the uneven traversals from geopower to political subjectivity. Both these movements need to be accomplished with the understanding that politics takes place in relation to an inhuman 'outside' (the 'cosmic storm', as Deleuze had it) and that there are no such things as geological ends (there is mineralogical evolution, there are ends of species and geologic epochs, but there is no teleology or preferred forms of accomplishment for the planet). Thus, geopower is political in a very particular way, as a politics that organizes social life from the 'outside' of the plane of production that institutionalizes or operationalizes those geopowers for its own ends. It is the conversions, contractions and enclosures of that geopower that form the traditional modes of political attention on institutions, actors, borders, states and so on. But geopower is already active before these bodies of capture *give* these forces agency. 'This is why geopower is not the critical equivalent of biopower for the geologic age (or life after biologism)' (Yusoff 2017, 125). The difference in quality between biopower and geopower is because geopower operates in a broader plane of production and is not reducible to life, nor as biddable as biopower towards particular ends.

While Foucault conceived of biopolitics in relation to outsides or the limit, in ways that are often overlooked in accounts of the regulatory inside of biopolitical life, geopower is an express acknowledgement of the intrusion of those inhuman forces that press on biopolitical arrangements. That is not to say that deeply biopolitical concerns do not reside in geologic forces (the historic and present connections between mining and unfree labour tell us otherwise), but those forces, in their fullest expression, exceed a biopolitical critique (i.e. they do not have biopolitical ends – i.e. the preservation or extinguishment of human life). Geological forces don't just exceed life forces, they are a conceptual open that is not organized through or as an organism, Gaia or otherwise (Deleuze 1988, 131; Yusoff 2017, 108). The organism is just an effect of those inhuman forces and has many variations and iterations. This is important in the context of human politics, because understanding how life is organized within the shadow of these forces through its various modes of capitalization on earth forces is the very basis of the possibility of social change. That is, the *pre*political condition of geopower (understood in its disruptive state as a force

of the open), can be a basis for an understanding of genealogy ‘after life’; forces that do not begin and end in the organism. Eschewing false ends and embracing geologic realism (Yusoff forthcoming) might turn out to be a means by which to encounter the geologic forces of Anthropocene in a more exacting relation with the earth, and how that relation tethers geology to different experiences and exclusion in subjective life. If, according to Grosz, geopower is the potentiality of matter to be capitalized upon, then geopolitics must take account of the political formations of those modes of capitalization, but also the desire that motivates and reciprocates with those forces. So, political questions are shot through with geologic forces and their mineralizations, far below the surface in the substratum of the earth, and tied to the force of those flows as much as they are to the forms of their expression ‘on the surface’ of the earth or the political stage.

As Grosz suggests in her conceptualization of geopower:

What we understand as the history of politics – the regulations, actions and movements of individuals and collectives relative to other individuals and collectives – is possible only because geopower has already elaborated an encounter between forms of life and forms of the earth. Our everyday understanding of power both draws on and yet brackets out this primordial interface that sustains it in its ever-changing forms. (Grosz in Yusoff et al. 2012, 975)

Grosz’s formation of geopower came out of her intense and continued engagement with cosmic forces as the basis of art (or intensification), difference and sexual selections. Art, for Grosz, is a way of naming both the capture of and communication with inhuman forces, and where she says, ‘intensity is most at home, where matter is most attenuated without being nullified . . . matter as most dilated’ (Grosz 2008, 76). The dilation of matter into art (understood in its broadest terms as a sensibility of intensification) is a mode of concentrating experience by drawing on the forces of the cosmos, and the experience of nonorganic matter from which it is made (Grosz 2008, 9). Sensation is ‘that which subject and object share, but not reducible to either subject/object nor their relation. Sensation is the extraction of qualities – how art maintains a connection with the infinite/inhuman origins of the earth’ (Grosz 2008, 8). The contraction and elaboration of cosmic forces emerge in the labour of art as an achievement that stretches organic life across human and nonhuman worlds in forms of recognition of the inhuman forces within and outside. As a form of communication with the material world and a transformation of immaterial forces, this nonhuman power is the basis for Grosz of her feminist ethic of making the world otherwise (or change from patriarchal and other orders of subjugation). In this way, Grosz ties art to Deleuze’s ideas of nonhuman power of the animal and importantly to the geopower of the earth and its modes of territorialization (that far exceed yet organize hominid life and its material political divisions). Thus, an engagement with nonhuman power is an opening up of material and immaterial forces of the universe to the practices of expansion and experimentation. ‘In this way art taps into the substrata of the earth, its geography and its time, to unearth and repurpose its forces’ (Yusoff et al. 2012, 972). Thinking of art in its manifestation as an art of politics or political aesthetics is a way to bring this affiliation to and with geopowers into the geopolitical sphere and to recognize its importance to the constitution of political sensibilities.

A GEOPHYSICS OF POWER

Part of the impetus for engaging with an analytic of geopower is to think about the pre-operative conditions in the realization of power (and 'its' others, i.e. pleasure, intensification, excess, abjection, violence), and to address the forces that maintain, feed and transform this biopolitical life in the full arena of its constitution. In other words, to understand that there is not just a geography of power, but a *geophysics of power*. And, in apprehending a geophysics of power there is a need to ask the question about what forms of geopower or arrangements of earth forces make territorialization possible in the first instance? That is, what are the conditions that *take place*? This is to suggest that political geography has a missing terrain (Clark 2012) that has an agency and volatility all of its own, that is not so easily marshalled into the decisive acts of capture performed by classical (or even critical) geopolitical actors. If the story of politics starts with the earth and the forces underpinning the very possibility of life forms and forms of life, then this is not to institute some form of geological determinism, but to recognize the *prepolitical* conditions of territorialization as a harnessing of nonhuman powers of the earth that have a *determining force* in politics. These questions are not mute in the face of political struggle, because they frame political geography in the specificity of its actualization as a material practice enacted within geosocial formations. What are often considered as spatial divisions in the conceptualization of political geography, and in particular the formation of planetary politics or planetary scale, are actually a question of material ontological division or '*matter fix*' that designates the location of agency on the side of biocentric life (which cleaves to a particular political formations of life).

It is the spatial arrangements of the divisions of materiality agency that organize an understanding of the arrangement of power. As Povinelli argues through her analytic of geontopower, it is precisely the Life/Nonlife arrangement that organizes certain modes of acceptable social death and not others within policies of the state; as well as the more finely gained decisions about what gets to survive or gets extinguished. It is the very ontological formulation of materiality as matter in all its incarnations (as lively, inert, dead, brute, inert, lacking in agency) and the connections of that matter (as Life or Nonlife) with perceptions of the earth (as territory or earth) that produces forms of political subjectivity (as possessed or disposed by the matter fix). We only need to think of the scenes of subjectification in slavery to understand how bodily matter rendered as flesh is used to obfuscate the responsibilities to recognize subjecthood, and instead transforms that non-recognition of life (or production of life as nonlife) into a commodity (Hartman 2007). Similarly, it is the recognition of the energetic power of this 'nonlife' in the plantation (this is where the term 'factory' derives from) as a unit of energy that inspired and transformed the modes of subjectivity in the industrial revolution, as both dependent on those earlier forms of precapitalist modes of production and underwritten by the energy of that labour (developed through the infrastructures of modernity that are financialized by abolition compensation and working-class labourers energized through sugar plantation and enslaved labor). While much attention is given to the physics and biopolitics of Blackness, understanding how race became a production that was proceeded, in the first instance, by the extraction of mineral wealth from Brazilian mines along the Atlantic coast in 1518 is crucial to understanding contemporary forms of racialized geology. The fact that the Gold Coast of Ghana was called 'The Mine' during the slavery boom extrapolates on the

material bond between geological and human extraction (Hartman 2007, 51, 111). There was the gold of Africa, and then there was the black gold of slaves (Hartman 2007, 44). Mineral and subjects changed place at alarming rates because of how the classifications of inhuman matter were enacted as a 'matter fix' of subjects into objects.

As Grosz elaborates,

the relations between the earth and its various forces, and living beings and their not always distinguishable forces, are forms of geopower, if power is to be conceived as the engagement of clashing, competing forces. This means that before there can be relations of oppression, that is relations between humans categorised according to the criteria that privilege particular groups, there must be relations of force that exist in an impersonal, preindividual form that are sometimes transformed into modes of ordering the human. (Grosz in Yusoff et al. 2012, 975)

The organization, extraction and capitalization of the material geopowers of the earth arrange particular and historically enduring forms of oppression in both the extraction of those forces and how the quality of those forces are deployed and understood as relations of wealth and productions of subjectivity. That a slave and a piece of gold was established as materially equivalent entities to the Crown was testament to how the coding of matter arranged political geographies and how geology became part of the spatial and subjective expression of colonialism.

It is important to note that only by introducing the earth as dead matter (Wynter 2003, 267) or inert force, that is of a matter ontologically different from that which defines the biologism of the colonial political subject, could colonialism make its political subjective moves to subjugate others as mobile, commodifiable units of flesh that had no geographical or kin relation. (This is precisely why Franz Fanon invokes *The Wretched of the Earth* and why Native Americans are interned on the poorest land in reservations, and why the legacy of slavery is to *Lose your Mother* (Hartman 2007), or the migrant has no possibility of ever going home.) It is only by inserting this chasm between the biopolitical and geopolitical basis of being that such coloniality of the world as a global territory of (exclusionary) Humanism can be achieved. While Povinelli draws our attention to the provinciality of Foucault's project in its conceptualization of a Western European genealogy (Povinelli 2016, 3), Sylvia Wynter, W. E. B. Du Bois and Achille Mbembe have all shown how that genealogy was underscored by the racial division of life and nonlife articulated as a material division. Arendt in a similar fashion argues that race 'is, politically speaking, not the beginning of humanity but its end . . . not the natural birth of man but his unnatural death' (Arendt quoted in Hartman 2007, 157). Race names the point of quarterization between the inside and outside of (Colonial) Life. This schism between inhuman matter and inhuman subjects cleaves apart the biological and the geological using the signifying practices of race as a discourse located within particular bodies, but not in the genealogy of the earth. This enables global geography to be claimed as Global-World-Space, an exclusive domain that does not have to admit those that are not represented by the preferred figure of biologism (the humanistic subject). So, the imperative to introduce a geopolitics that goes beyond a biologism divorced from the earth and its interrelation to forms of life must be a compelling project for any anti-racist, feminist practice that seeks a decolonization of the 'New World'. Part of this reoccupation of the relationship to the earth and its geopowers, or a move from a biocentric paradigm to a geocentric one, includes rethinking how the social and political configurations of subjectivity have been thought and experienced

in relation to the earth. This is why the future in Afrofuturism is cosmic. This is why Edouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* imagines possibility through the earth (2010) and why, according to Angela Last, Caribbean geopoetics can undo geopolitics (2015; 2017).

By thinking about the 'geo' as a power that both incites and generates particular historical forms, Grosz offers an alternative to the critical modes of geopolitics which either frame materialism as an inevitability within power relations (i.e. the resource curse) or entirely ascribe the production of power relations to the variously chosen agentic centres, whether individuals or structures (i.e. white privileged men, state forces, genocidal maniacs, juridical systems, etc.). Both these approaches partake of a restricted economy in the appreciation of the virtualities of material forces within and beyond political worlds that inform the very material basis of practices in the exercise of power through the classification of matter. Geophysics is a determining force in the realization of more 'local' forms of power on the surface, but equally there must be attention to and critical languages for how those forces and flows are arranged (as actuality and potentiality), and what they do in their own terms.

Extending her understanding of the engine of difference beyond social forms, Grosz recognizes the work of difference in opening up human identity, by way of the cosmos, to the outsides of the forces that both produce and constrain those identities, and importantly allow the possibility for them to be otherwise (Grosz 2011, 91). This is not about some thinly veiled return to determinism, but it is about recognizing the potentialities of the cosmos and its production of difference through all the life and nonlife forms that constitute the planet, and seeing that as a political resource to overcome the violence of present racist and patriarchal incarcerations. Destabilizing the ground of identity and agency, Grosz argues, is a means by which to destabilize the claims made on behalf of that agency and to open up that possibility to social transformation. As Grosz eruditely puts it 'The "geo" is an inversion of the "ego"!' (Grosz, Yusoff and Clark 2017, 132). Thus geopower (Grosz, Yusoff and Clark 2017, 134) in one sense, offers a way to go further than the ego and undo the exercising of biopower (understood as the social regulation and positionality of bodies from the outside).

To see life as coming from the earth and its forces – gravitational, magnetic, electrical and so on – is perhaps the most powerful and direct way to destabilize our concepts of identity and agency. If the earth is riven by agents, acts and events – if it is not inert and passive – then life cannot be understood to master itself; life must look outside itself to attain the possibility of continuing itself and knowing itself. (Grosz, Yusoff and Clark 2017, 132)

While biopower might be thought of as an enclosure (and sometimes as a disciplining and regulatory force), geopower has no such outside – according to Grosz it is the outside! But geology is also inside too, the materially communicative nonlife that makes life possible, an inclusionary exteriority that ties internal forces to the outside and offers a potential for resisting biopolitics (Grosz, Yusoff and Clark 2017, 135–136). At the same time this unregulatory force belongs to the earth, and it is this very unregulatory force that instigates biopolitical controls as a responsive enclosure of forces perceived to be politically unstable. As Grosz suggests,

the inhuman, as resistance, is always to some extent and in some way beyond biopolitics. It is important to seek out these sites of resistance at whatever level and manner they occur. These

sites are those that must be left aside in the rational and economic management of 'things'. But there is something left over that remains resistant, that wants what it wants, before and beyond biopower. (Grosz, Yusoff and Clark 2017, 137)

In the excess of geology and its cosmic instantiations within life, geopolitical and geopoetic potential resides for refusal and resistance.

A GEOPOLITICS IN THE CAESURA BETWEEN LIFE AND NONLIFE

To understand the governance of late liberalism, Povinelli uses the analytic of geontopower to show how the governance over life, which has hitherto organized understandings of biopolitics, has shifted register into a governance between Life and Nonlife. She says:

The simplest way of sketching the difference between geontopower and biopower is that the former does not operate through the governance of life and the tactics of death but is rather a set of discourse, affects, and tactics used in late liberalism to maintain or shape the coming relationship of the distinction between Life and Nonlife. (Povinelli 2016, 4)

Povinelli argues that as the ordering between the divisions of Life and Nonlife shift, new figures emerge that define the discourses of power and their tactics, affects and tense: 'the term geontology and its cognates, such as geontopower . . . intensify the contrasting components of nonlife (geos) and being (ontology) currently in play in the late liberal governance of difference and markets' (Povinelli 2016, 4).

The 'onto' part of the equation signals the biontological enclosure of existence that is the basis of Western ontological claims in the genealogies of governance, formulated by Povinelli as Life (Life {birth, growth, reproduction} v. Death) v. Nonlife (Povinelli 2016, 9). She notes,

Geontopower is not a power that is only now emerging to replace biopolitics – biopower (the governance through life and death) has long depended on a subtending geontopower (the difference between the lively and the inert). And, similarly to how necropolitics operated openly in colonial Africa only later to reveal 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. 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 of casting them into a premodern mentality and a postrecognition difference. Thus the point of the concepts of geontology and geontopower is not to found a new ontology of objects, nor to establish a new metaphysics of power, nor to adjudicate the possibility or impossibility of the human ability to know the truth of the world of things. Rather they are concepts meant to help make visible the figural tactics of late liberalism as a long-standing biontological orientation . . . And, more specifically, they are meant to illuminate the cramped space in which my Indigenous colleagues are forced to manoeuvre as they attempt to keep relevant their critical analytics and practices of existence. (Povinelli 2016, 5)

Extending and redirecting biopolitics through practices of existence that exceed and differ from Western framings of biontolife (a particular version of the governance of life), Povinelli makes an argument through Life and Nonlife governance about how agency is conferred 'between that which supposedly arrives into existence inert and that which

arrives with an active potentiality' (Povinelli, Coleman and Yusoff 2017, 173). It is the very division between 'dead matter' and the privileged 'live subject' that constitutes the active politics of recognition in late liberalism. The matter fix of subjectivity organizes hierarchical categories of recognition of the human as privileged white liberal subject to the nonrecognition of black and indigenous subjects. This axial division of materiality into passive and active forms, which might or might not become subjects (depending on their status on the colour line), is the current bite of geopolitics.

CONCLUSION: TRANSGRESSING GEOPOLITICS

Where does this leave geopolitics? Perhaps, with a commitment to the radical re-description of the relation (that might become politics and might not) between modes of subjectivity and the earth, and its materialities and temporalities; modes of description that pay attention to how the ontological categorization of matter is used to do political work. Modes of subjectivity that are in fact released through the acknowledgement that identity (organic or otherwise) is never settled once and for all, that the earth is always a dynamic ground, and that power relations are historically situated but not immovable forces. But also, modes of re-description that go beyond the enclosures of subjectivity and do not extend out recognition from the Western centre of biontopolitical life, but understand that recognition is always partial and operates in a wider set of forces and imaginaries of those forces than those conceived upon within that centre of governance (Yusoff 2018). Geosocial understanding of bodies in the Anthropocene cannot be limited by biopolitical concerns and their focus on biology in the ordering of political power, because geology extends the body beyond itself into material forms and modes of expression that continue beyond the frame of 'life' and the imperative of its privileged perseverance, in a relationship with land, with territory and forms of expression that derive from those territories and forms of territorialization. These very forces stretch and incite life beyond itself, thereby giving life, as a category of experience, an excess that it cannot achieve on its own (Grosz 2008, 23; Yusoff 2015a; 2015b). And, life as a concept is changed by the intimacies of those experiences and transgressions. As Povinelli comments, '[w]e must de-dramatize human life as we squarely take responsibility for what we are doing. This simultaneous de-dramatization and responsabilization may allow for opening new questions. Rather than Life and Nonlife, we will ask what formations we are keeping in existence or extinguishing' (Povinelli 2016, 22). The excess of inhuman existence produces a horizon of experience and powers that are only partially confined by the limitations of what a body can do, in so much as the living body is already imbricated in the cosmos and its geological materials and is a differentially situated subject of those cosmic geoforces. Such forces push against the regulatory skin of biopolitics. Thus, the Anthropocene poses not just the question of how life is politicized, but how political thought is able to accommodate the flows of geology through bodies, agency and, ultimately, the earth (Clark and Yusoff 2017).

Geopowers might be thought of as the *pre*political condition of geopolitics. To quote Grosz, 'this is about politics, but it's about politics three steps before we can really think about politics, so it's about the raw material, the forces, of politics and the ontological conditions under which politics can emerge, forces of the earth, forces of things, forces of living beings' (Grosz in Yusoff et al. 2012, 988). And, according to Povinelli, it is about

the politics of the ontological divisions of matter and how this conditions the possibility for various kinds of survival. Such a rethinking of geopolitics is not just a question of redirecting the spheres and spaces of operation in ever more mineralogical ways through the states and thresholds of resources, but requires an overhaul, a *going-under* as Nietzsche said, into the corporeal and planetary processes of the geologic and how it produces forms and categories of being (political). And beyond productions of the geopolitical, Povinelli's work bids us to pay attention to how being political is secured in various imaginaries of those relations. For Grosz, geopower is a 'first order' territorial interaction with the earth, for Povinelli, geontopower is a spacing between terms that conditions what both Life and NonLife get to be as operative categories. If geopower is a few steps before politics, the geophysical conditioning that creates the context in which a whole range of desiring politics gets to be made, geontopower gives us the analytic of that space between the earth and its political formations. To study the geosocial matrix as it pertains to both power and possibility is not to add the geologic (or inhuman) as a supplement to an already existing biopolitical conceptualization. Rather, it is to register that the geologic is a mode of material expression and an ontologically produced category that is already active within these formations, yet often bracketed out, and its political potential as a dynamic power within socialities, underplayed. If we are to speak of the Anthropocene and with it a notion of geologic subjectivity – that I am calling *Geologic Life* – there is a need to 1) substantiate the inhuman in political terms as constitutive of biopower; 2) examine modes of inhuman subjectification or the *intimacies of the radical impersonal* (not just as a category of differentiation but as differentiated category) that demand a conceptualization of geopower, which includes biopower, but is not confined to the category of life. The first task is a local task of decolonialization (of languages, categories, ontological determinism); the second task is nonlocal, as it extends beyond any formation of the human into a poetics of relation with the cosmos and the earth.

REFERENCES

- Barnett, C. 2004. Deconstructing radical democracy: Articulation, Representation, and Being with Others. *Political Geography* 23(5): 503-528.
- Blanchot, M. 2010. *Political Writings, 1953–1993*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Clark, N. 2012. Everything but the Earth? *Progress in Human Geography* 36(5): 685–687.
- Clark, N. and Yusoff, K. 2017. Geosocial Formations and the Anthropocene. *Theory, Culture and Society* 34(2/3): 3–23.
- Deleuze, G. 1988. *Foucault*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Foucault, M. 1977. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Foucault, M. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. 1989. *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961–1984*. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Foucault, M. 1990. *Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside*. New York: Zone Books.
- Glissant, E. 2010. *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor: University Press of Michigan.
- Grosz, E. A. 2008. *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Grosz, E. A. 2011. *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics and Art*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Grosz, E., Yusoff, K. and Clark, N. 2017. An Interview with Elizabeth Grosz: Geopower, Inhumanism and the Biopolitical. *Theory, Culture and Society* 34(2/3): 129–146.

- Hartman, S. 2007. *Lose your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Last, A. 2015. Fruit of the Cyclone: Undoing Geopolitics through Geopoetics. *Geoforum* 64(1): 56–64.
- Last, A. 2017. We Are the World? Anthropocene Cultural Production between Geopoetics and Geopolitics. *Theory, Culture and Society* 34(2/3): 147–168.
- Povinelli, E. A. 2016. *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Povinelli, E. A., Coleman, M. and Yusoff, K. 2017. An Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli: Geontopower, Biopolitics and the Anthropocene. *Theory, Culture and Society* 34(2/3): 169–185.
- Wynter, S. 2003. Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Toward the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument. *New Centennial Review* 3(3): 257–337.
- Yusoff, K. 2013. Geologic Life: Prehistory, Climate, Futures in the Anthropocene. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 31(5): 779–795.
- Yusoff, K. 2015a. Geologic Subjects: Nonhuman Origins, Geomorphic Aesthetics and the Art of Becoming Inhuman. *Cultural Geographies* 22(3): 383–407.
- Yusoff, K. 2015b. Queer Coal: Genealogies in/of the Blood. *PhiloSOPHIA: A Journal of Continental Feminism* 5(2): 203–230.
- Yusoff, K. 2017. Geosocial Strata. *Theory, Culture and Society* 34(2/3): 105–127.
- Yusoff, K. 2018. Politics of the Anthropocene: Formation of the Commons as a Geologic Process. *Antipode* 50(1): 255–276.
- Yusoff, K. forthcoming. Geologic Realism: Epochal Thoughts on the Terminal Beach of Geologic Time.
- Yusoff, K., Grosz, E. A., Clark, N., Saldanha, A., and Nash, C., 2012. Geopower: a Panel on Elizabeth Grosz's *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30(6): 971–988.