

GEONTOLOGIES

A REQUIEM
TO LATE
LIBERALISM

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To *all* of us,
karrabing or karrakal,
gagathenibarru

THE FOG OF MEANING
AND THE
VOICELESS DEMOS

Might Be Something

In 2006, while working with Karrabing at Belyuen on a potential but as-of-yet incomplete GPS/GIS-based virtual library, I remembered an event that had happened maybe ten years earlier. I was camping at the coastal outstation Bulgul with five or six of our aunts and mothers, Yilngi, Nuki, Binbin, Bilawag, and Alanga. We had gone there to hunt for freshwater turtles, visit relatives living nearby, and add texture to the long run of our days. Everyone agreed that we had been “locked up” at Belyuen for too long and needed to stretch our legs. Of course, no one had been locked up on the Belyuen Community in the sense that they had been legally imprisoned. Since the 1970s, but only since the 1970s, Aboriginal men and women were free to move around the nation and consume within the nation on the same legal if not actual footing as other Australian citizens. Indeed, very little formal

state policing intruded on their lives. Some Indigenous communities had permanent police stations, such as Wadeye, then called Port Keats, some four hundred kilometers to the south of Belyuen as the crow flies. But at Belyuen, for the most part, day-to-day, week-to-week policing occurred within local modes of getting, taking, and distributing from various kinds of environments, something I outlined in *Labor's Lot*.

And as for stretching our legs—we hardly walked to Bulgul. After a four-hour drive on a rough, gutted dirt road in a flatbed truck, our legs and backs were in much worse shape than they had been when we started. In 1996 Bulgul was much further away from Belyuen in an experiential sense than it was in 2006; ditto Belyuen from Darwin. In abstract kilometers the distances are about the same, but infrastructural changes have made the trip faster and smoother. Roads connecting the Belyuen Community to Darwin are now sealed, as are long stretches of the road between Belyuen and Bulgul. The ferry to Darwin, which once took an exhaust-choked hour, now takes only fifteen minutes. Other infrastructural changes have lessened other kinds of distances. In the mid-1980s when I first arrived at Belyuen, the community's electricity came from a local power plant that provided free if sometimes flickering power. Television reception was bad at best. And there was only one phone for the Community, located in the community office. Radios and tape decks were de rigueur. I never saw a newspaper. And the food was canned, powdered, or rotten. People hemorrhaged out of the Community into nearby beaches during the weekends to camp, drink, and hunt. Now food selection at the community store is quite expensive but healthier. Many homes have satellite televisions. The power plant is switched off and abandoned. People pay for their electricity off the grid by purchasing disposable swipe cards: a hugely expensive endeavor, though supplemented by solar panels. This supplement has grown more expensive too as state and territory governments, squeezed in peak rates by wind and solar, demand ever more charges for grid use.¹

We also did not use cheap disposable tents in the 1980s and 1990s—that started in the mid-2000s. And it was this memory—camping and living at outstations before tents—that prompted the memory of a conversation ten years before. It was morning, thus time to make a fire for breakfast and tea. Being August and this being Bulgul, the morning fog, or *tjelbak*, was heavy and thick. Still the mosquitoes were out in numbers, which at Bulgul has an otherworldly feel about it. Mosquitoes breed in the vast

swamps surrounding the coastline, reinforced by a Mosquito Dreaming in the mouth of the large estuarine creek that defines the coastal ecosystem. They are huge in body size and swarm in such thick numbers that even with industrial repellent they form vibrating exoskeletons around any breathing mammal. Back then you were lucky if you had a decent mosquito net. Many people just wrapped themselves in thick blankets and slept as close to a smoking fire as possible, no matter the heat. I was told by the oldest men and women I first met in 1984, who had been born at the turn of the century just fifteen-plus years after the first substantial settlement in Darwin, that this mode of sleeping through mosquito season was much preferable to sleeping within paperbark huts. Once the older women and I made such a hut, and they pushed me into it for a little while just so that I would have some small sense of what it was like.

In any case, on that morning, I was tasked with emerging from my mosquito net to make the morning fire. The firewood we had collected on the way down to Bulgul was drenched from the *tjelbak*. So I had to strip away the bark to get to the dry wood underneath. Two of my moms, Yilngi and Nuki, having awoken early, sat under their respective nets, watching the mosquitoes eat me alive. As I danced around, I insisted that I be allowed to crack the casing of a plastic Bic lighter and use the petrol inside as a quick lighting fluid. But Yilngi and Nuki insisted I do it the right way, making a small fire from the dry parts of the bark and then building it into a larger fire that dried as it burned the wood. They insisted partly to punish me because that's what older people did with younger people back then for fun, partly to encourage my education, partly from the enjoyment of watching a young white woman be saddled with a nasty chore, and partly because they were thinking about the cigarettes they'd want to light later in the day with that Bic lighter.

Maybe to make the task seem something other than a heinous chore—and certainly because she always supplemented tasks with such information—Yilngi pointed to a thick tubular layer of fog moving around a nearby hill and said, “You know, that thing im live.” What thing? I asked. “That thing where im look snake, im live. You go there, im smellbet you, kingmenena ninega, im come le you. Must be im smellimbet you now.” The part of the *tjelbak* that Yilngi was pointing to was moving in the form and manner of a huge snake, leaving in its wake the flat striated layers of fog soaking our mosquito nets, blankets, and bodies and making my life a misery. I had seen

this form of *tjelbak* many times before, cylindrical and undulating, moving along the edges of hills and on top of riverbanks. And I was hardly surprised that the primary sense apparatus Yilngi ascribed to the *tjelbak* snake was smell or that she said the *tjelbak* snake was very sensitive and reactive to differences between human smells. Smell was the primary sensory system of most forms of existence that she and her cohort discussed. And most forms of existence used smell to discern what people were proper to what country—reacted positively to those whose smell was correct and negatively to those whose smell wasn't. Logos was also involved—these forms of existence responded when they were addressed in the correct language. But human language was one of a multiplicity of semiotically mediated sensoria. (Again, I had outlined this in a book ten years before making this trip.²)

I had no intention of testing out what this *tjelbak* snake thought about my smell or of getting eaten alive by mosquitoes any longer than I had to, so I hurried to finish the fire and stand inside its smoke. Having a good laugh at my expense, Yilngi reassured me that the wind would pick up soon and drive the *tjelbak* snake away and with it the mosquitos. She didn't have to say which wind, because by then I knew that there are three winds: *medawak*, *perk*, and *kunaberruk*, each reflecting the different directions and intensities of wind and each evoking different forms of activity and affect. It was August so the *medawak* were shifting to *perk*. We were leaving behind *medawak*'s powerful southeasterly winds, which drive the fires that scorch the grasslands and signal the beginning of the dry season. We were entering *perk*'s northwesterly breezes, foreboding the coming of the hot build-up and the cyclone *kunaberruk*. I also knew that these winds have a cousin, *thimbilirr*, or whirly wind (also whirlpool). And all these kinds of winds were also extremely sensitive to olfactory stimuli. These things I knew and most adults living at Belyuen then also knew.

What I could not remember as we sat around talking about the GIS/GPS library was whether I had asked Yilngi if this *tjelbak* snake had a specific place nearby (*theme-tjelbak-therrawin-nene*, “where-Tjelbak-Dreaming-at”). I knew that the *tjelbak* was generally found around hills and where water brokers the barrier of earth and air. And I also knew that this type of fog was more prevalent in August and September as the southeasterly *medawak* gives way to the northwesterly *perk*. But I couldn't remember for certain if I asked whether there was a specific local place, say, a waterhole or a tree or a cave, out of which this particular *tjelbak* snake emerged. As a rule of

thumb, when a certain kind of existent is found with a certain degree of regularity or density somewhere, the possibilities of a site-specific *durlg* (Dreaming, *therrawin*) nearby increase. If this *tjelbak* snake had such a place, we would want to know about it—not merely so we could put it in our GPS/GIS library but so that we could treat it in the right way when we physically encountered it and they could make use of it socially, such as reinforcing a claim to the area based on knowledge of it. Since the 1976 passage of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, Indigenous territorial rights were based on an inert form of descent from and responsibility for Dreamings, totemic sites like the *tjelbak*, if the Dreaming manifested as a permanent unchanging place or thing in the country, say, a rock, a creek, a waterhole, a tree, a sandbar. Indigenous people became traditional owners if they could demonstrate a common spiritual affiliation to such sites within specific, bounded territories. All the adults working on the GPS/GIS project had participated in one way or another in various land claims, so we put our individual heads together, collectively remembering everything everyone had been told about the *tjelbak*.

But not all of the entities that one encounters have a spot nearby that one can point to and say, “This is *tjelbaktherrawinnena*” (This is the dreaming place of fog). For instance, two cousins of *tjelbak*, the two rainbow types *therrawin* (a different kind of existence than a sea monster *therrawin*) and *balaibalai*, were associated with regions rather than a specific place in or near it. When her kids and I had asked Yilngi where the saltwater *therrawin* place was, the answer she gave was “Everywhere le Banagula.” And ditto for freshwater rainbows, *balaibalai*, which marked the ground after they emerged from it but didn’t seem to have a specific place. But as Yilngi made clear to me that morning at Bulgul and to her family over the course of their lives, existents like the *tjelbak* snake govern people and places not merely through inert location but also by dynamic reaction. They are not primarily markers in the ground but interlocutors in the world. In other words, we fundamentally misunderstand the shadow that *tjelbak* snakes cast on our political thought if we think that they are sites where the settler state and Indigenous people fight over land and goods. The problem these other existents present to the late liberal demos is not a problem that *cultural recognition* will solve—indeed, cultural recognition is designed to dissolve the problem by translating the dynamic order of human-land relations into the given political order. If the Indigenous people who look after Two Women

Sitting Down, *tjelbak* snakes, and other forms of existents are anything like the Indigenous people whom I know, they are not conveying a cultural narrative when they testify about the importance of existences like *tjelbak*. They are rather engaged in an “analytics of entities”: namely, a detailed examination of existences like *tjelbak* so as to determine their nature, structure, or essential features and, by extension, the features of the world in which they emerge as such. The way these existents *are* is what they seek to know. *Tjelbak* snakes were active and reactive—they didn’t seek to do harm but, when pricked by a nasty smell, they bit. And so it was also with the wind and rainbows. A person needed, therefore, to watch and smell and listen to how one was being watched and smelled and heard. Everything could be a sign pointing to something else, which interpreted the other thing. All things, actions, and qualities meant something relative to all other things, actions, and qualities: they were indicative manifestations and what they meant as a sign was discerned by placing them in the complex field of previously agreed-upon signs. It was within the field of interpretation that any one sign could reveal that all the previously understood signs, and thus the foundation of interpretation itself, had to be rethought.³

Tjelbak snakes and all the other geological and ecological existences this book has discussed so far (Two Women Sitting Down, Old Man Rock, *durlgmö*, and Tjipel) are particularly good examples of the general problem that late liberal geontopower is facing as these existents are allowed into the “conversation” about the destiny of other planetary existents—and the planet as an existent. It might be seductive to translate Yilngi’s caution for me to watch out for that *tjelbak* as “listen to what the country is saying.” Or to say that meteorological existents in the country, like the *tjelbak*, ecological existents like Tjipel, or geological existents, like Two Women Sitting Down and Old Man Rock, should have an equal say in legal, political, and ethical debates in late liberalism. Of course, it is not just Two Women Sitting Down, Old Man Rock, *durlgmö*, Tjipel, *tjelbak*, and *thimbilirr*: a multitude of geological and meteorological modes of existence have prompted people to demand an ethical and political reconsideration of who and what should have a voice in local, national, and planetary governance. The dissensus of nonhuman existence seems to be intensifying globally as states and capital become ever more focused on the quest to secure minerals, oil, and gas in the shadow of climate change. Take for example the Bolivian Law of the Rights of Mother Earth (Ley de Derechos de la Madre Tierra)

and the [relational ontologies that Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Eduardo Kohn describe in greater Amazonia.] Can a set of literatures seemingly oriented to disruptions of the consensual background support entities such as *tjelbak* snakes as they enter and confront late liberal geontopower? Put another way, is the nature of the dissensus of Two Women Sitting Down, *durlgmö*, Tjipel, and *tjelbak* snakes apprehendable through the dialectic of *phonos* and Logos, noise and linguistic sense, muteness and voice? Are other semiotically mediated and unmediated sensoria able to disturb the policing of the political order? Or are we hearing something other than Logos as the disorganizing principle of a postclimate politics: something more like “I can’t breathe” than “Listen to me.”

A Part of It

In a recent working paper, the British anthropologist Martin Holbraad asks two beguilingly simple questions: first, might there be “a sense in which things could speak for themselves?” and if so, “what might their voices sound like?”⁴ His questions emerge out of a broader shift in critical theory from epistemological to ontological concerns, or, as Graham Harman and others in the object-oriented ontology school put it, from the question of [how humans perceive things to a return to the object itself.] This return to the object seeks, among other things, to level radically the distinction between all forms of existence. In such a world what political role will non-human, nonliving things play? And how will they govern and be governed? Holbraad’s call for us to listen to what things say is one answer.

When viewed from a certain angle, a political theory of voice seems exactly what is needed to understand the challenge that these geological and meteorological existents and the Indigenous men and women supporting them pose to geontopower in late liberalism. If this is the question there seems no better theorist to help us answer it than Jacques Rancière. After all, Rancière defines politics as the emergence of a dissensus within the given distribution of the sensible (“the common”) that will produce a new form of consensus (the coming common). Politics is the moment when what we had in common is no longer common but no new consensus has of yet been established. It is the moment when “all of us” become “only some of us.” The part *within the actual arrangement of any given common* rises up and says, “This common is your common, not mine.” What *ours* will be

when *mine* becomes the basis of a new form of collective belonging—a new “us,” a new “we, the people”—is not yet known. In other words, for Rancière, in the beginning there is one word that constitutes the core political subjectivity of the demos, the governance of and by the people, and that word is “not” (us). Politics is the acknowledgment of the coexistence of “we who are” (“P”) and “we who are not” (“p”). And, crucially, this political consciousness is defined by language: a movement from the attribution of noise to an entity’s way of speaking, and thus its exclusion from the Logos of the demos, to a comprehension of the excluded entity as being capable of articulate language and thus its inclusion within the Logos of the demos. It is useful to quote Rancière at length.

Apparently nothing could be clearer than the distinction made by Aristotle in Book I of the Politics: the sign of the political nature of humans is constituted by their possession of the logos, the articulate language appropriate for manifesting a community in the aisthesis of the just and the unjust, as opposed to the animal *phone*, appropriate only for expressing the feelings of pleasure and displeasure. If you are in the presence of an animal possessing the ability of the articulate language and its power of manifestation, you know you are dealing with a human and therefore with a political animal. The only practical difficulty is in knowing which sign is required to recognize the sign; that is, how one can be sure that the human animal mouthing a noise in front of you is actually voicing an utterance rather than merely expressing a state of being? If there is someone you do not wish to recognize as a political being, you begin by not seeing them as the bearers of politicalness, by not understanding what they say, by not hearing that it is an utterance coming out of their mouths. And the same goes for the opposition so readily invoked between the obscurity of domestic and private life, and the radiant luminosity of the public life of equals. In order to refuse the title of political subjects to a category—workers, women, etc . . . —it has traditionally been sufficient to assert that they belong to a ‘domestic’ space, to a space separated from public life; one from which only groans or cries expressing suffering, hunger, or anger could emerge, but not actual speeches demonstrating a shared aisthesis. And the politics of these categories has always consisted in re-qualifying these places,

in getting them to be seen as the spaces of a community, of getting themselves to be seen or heard as speaking subjects (if only in the form of litigation); in short, [participants in a common aisthesis.] It has consisted in making what was unseen visible; in getting what was only audible as noise to be heard as speech; in demonstrating to be a feeling of shared “good” or “evil” what had appeared merely as an expression of pleasure or pain.⁵

Wouldn't it be simple enough to place *tjelbak* snakes within the list of those who are a vital part of the demos but play no part in its governance because they are thought to lack linguistic reason: “one from which only groans or cries expressing suffering, hunger, or anger could emerge”? There is little doubt about the part geological and meteorological existents play in late liberalism. Take Two Women Sitting Down, discussed in chapter 2 of this book. Two Women Sitting Down is composed of manganese, and manganese is crucial to the production of iron and steel, dry cells, aluminum, copper, et cetera. In playing a part in global steel manufacturing, Two Women Sitting Down also plays a part in what is causing *tjelbak* to turn into smog and choke off some forms of existence over Beijing and what is causing *thimbilirr* to turn into super tornados and wreck other forms in the US Midwest. And all of these phenomena—Two Women Sitting Down, *tjelbak*, and *thimbilirr*—are part of the emergent state and international security order. For instance, the Australian Parliament has commissioned reports and issued papers about the security risks of climate change and mineral resources. One such paper argues that Australia is particularly vulnerable to population displacements and conflicts from its immediate northern Asian neighbors, who have limited resources to adapt to climate change.

Of course, the need to secure resources in order to profit from and respond to climate change isn't simply an Australian matter. The link between minerals and economic and political security has a much longer history. As far back as 1947, political scientists discussed minerals in strategic terms, including the manganese that composes Two Women Sitting Down.⁶ More recently, the US Department of Defense noted that “while climate change alone does not cause conflict, it may act as an accelerant of instability or conflict, placing a burden to respond on civilian institutions and militaries around the world. In addition, extreme weather events may lead to increased

demands for defense support to civil authorities for humanitarian assistance or disaster response both within the United States and overseas.”⁷ New political alliances are emerging as states and emerging states strategize about how they will secure access to various commodity chains in order to capture profit at as many junctures as possible.⁸ The US Department of Defense's radar is currently centered on China.⁹ As a result, the Northern Territory of Australia, and especially the Top End around Darwin to Katherine, is playing a crucial role in the US Department of Defense's shift from Europe and the Middle East to the Asian Pacific. Today as one drives from Belyuen to Bulgul, one often passes US and Australian troops engaged in war games. We have parked on the side of a dirt road to watch the Apache helicopters swoop up and down across the landscape.

In other words, entire networks of wealth and power are implicated when states weigh the choice between insisting that existents like Two Women Sitting Down, Tjipel, and *tjelbak* snakes are either mere things that fuel contemporary capital or subjects that inhabit a shared Logos in the global demos of climate change. The conservative prime minister of Australia, Tony Abbott, made clear his opinion about what choice needs to be made during a trip to Canada and the United States in 2014. In the shadow of Barack Obama's announced plan to cut carbon emissions by 30 percent by 2030, Abbott told reporters, “It doesn't make much sense, though, to impose certain and substantial costs on the economy now in order to avoid unknown and perhaps even benign changes in the future.”¹⁰ What the future will be, of course, depends on what the present does. And the Abbott government and his political and business allies are making certain forms of environmental protest criminal. In June 2014 a conservative pro-development Tasmanian government guillotined parliamentary debate so that a vote could be had in the Lower House to pass legislation fining the protesting of old growth logging, up to \$10,000 with a three-month mandatory jail sentence for repeat offenders.¹¹ This was within the same month that the UNESCO World Heritage Committee expressed alarm over the Australian federal government's plan to dredge parts of the Great Barrier Reef in order to build the Abbot Point deepwater coal port.¹²

Even when state and capital lock horns over the ownership and use of these geological resources and over the likelihood of serious meteorological consequences—say, when the former Australian prime minister Julia Gillard battled the mining tycoon Gina Rinehart over the relationship between

land, capital, and the state—not many politicians or capitalists are likely to consider Two Women Sitting Down, *tjelbak* snakes, or any of the other Nonlife existents that this book discusses capable of smelling humans, of having intentionally based actions, or of actively interpreting their environments. I would wager that for most non-Indigenous people manganese is not thought capable of uttering “groans or cries expressing suffering, hunger, or anger” in a factual sense. When pushed they would probably admit that they thought Two Women Sitting Down, *durlgmö*, Old Man Rock, Tjipel, and *tjelbak* are fictional existences, narrative overlays to underlying real phenomena. Non-Indigenous people may appreciate these narratives as rhetorically provocative ways of conceiving the world but they are unlikely to consider them to carry the weight of truth, let alone compel states to treat these existents in an ethically and politically equivalent way to how they treat humans. These entities are considered either inert or incapable of actualizing their internal possibilities. They are not subjects. They are subject to the dynamic nature of *human* subjectivity. Sure, human actions can have unintended consequences. For example, climate change may be the unintentional result of humans mobilizing carbon-based fuels to drive capital expansion. But the shape of the climate depends on the consequences of the coming decisions about climate control treaties and carbon emissions schemes and their unintended consequences, which are being made by humans in cities around the world beginning with Berlin in 1996 (the year we drove to Bulgul). Abbott and Gillard played a part in these conservations. They took input from various sectors of the national public, weighed the various pros and cons of acting on climate change, given the nature of current knowledge and the impact of acting on this knowledge when it comes to the wealth, health, and livelihood of various parts of the citizenry.

And yet, in contrast to Gillard and Abbott, Rancière does not view the common as referring to a set of shared material goods, territorial attachments, or populations—the common is not the inert territory defined by *tjelbak* snakes or Two Women Sitting Down, if we understand them as static territorial markers; or by the land and sea borders that Australia invokes when turning economic and political refugees away; or by whether carbon taxes or cap and trade schemes lead to better or worse population vitality. For him the unremitting pressure on my friends to define themselves and other existents vis-à-vis the state-backed anthropological notion

of clan (a descent group and its territory defined by reference to a group totem) is not what defines the common any more than the current federal policy regarding boat-based refugees would define the Australian common. Instead the common is the aesthetic, rhetorical, and reasoned “system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions in [the common].”¹³ It is defined by who moves toward the fire’s smoke to avoid the *tjelbak*’s nose; who knows one *should* move toward the smoke whether they do or do not; and those who don’t move at all because they have no idea what is about to hit them.

We could easily give an account of this distribution of the common at Bulgul in 1996. For the women with whom I made the trip to Bulgul, non-living existents had to be approached like any other existent. The more you encountered them, the deeper your sense of both the range of behavior they were capable of expressing and their tendencies to do one thing rather than another in any given context. When asking about the meaning or significance of something, their children and I were constantly “urged to turn” our “queries to experience” and to be open to the quirky nature of nonhuman existents. We were not to treat these existents as stochastic aggregates or processes in which random phenomena evolve over time.¹⁴ Rather we were to consider them dynamic personalities like any person or nonperson has a personality—they have a tendency to behave in certain ways but can also surprise a person. And so people sought out others they knew who had long experience with specific forms of existents like *tjelbak* or Bulgul; put their heads together in often competitive, status-enhancing, or diminishing conversations; and added up all the potential variables for why something might be doing something. This was then called a “joinimup story” in the local creole. This way of making sense also made the makers of this way of making sense into a common form of existence: it created a social interiority and exteriority as women commented on the strange alternative ways in which others made sense of human and nonhuman differences inside and outside their Indigenous worlds. And insofar as those of us working on the GPS/GIS library were competitively sharing, we iterated this mode of making and holding onto a common in the world in which we now found ourselves. We were not simply adding content to our virtual library, we were making ourselves into a form of library making—moving a potential way of being into an actual experience.

For Rancière, the distribution of the sensible so apparent in this account of the world of the women sitting at Bulgul does two things at once. First, it constitutes what the people share in common—that is, it establishes the “we, the people” vis-à-vis this common shared element. And, second, it establishes the divisions of space, time, and forms of activities within this common simultaneously establishing the mandatory and exhaustive modes and relations of participating within it and being excluded from it. The common, in other words, consists of the parts that various people are assigned to play in any given division of the sensible: my role in the heinous chore of making the fire in a mosquito windstorm; Ruby’s in teaching me; hers in being the exemplary Indigenous subject during the years of state-based self-determination, mine the anthropologist; my Karrabing colleagues as subject to a flood of behaviorally based fines (like drinking or driving when Indigenous), my passing freely. But, again, and this is important, every assignment of parts, roles, and modes of sense excludes other parts, roles, and modes. In other words, for Rancière, consensus creates an immanent—or virtual—dissensus; every common has a coming common, or the dissensus created by the consensus, the disruptive irruption of a part within this distribution of parts that has, of yet, played no part in its governance. The making common makes simultaneously a police and a potential politics. The police “structures perceptual space in terms of places, functions, aptitudes, etc. to the exclusion of any supplement.”¹⁵ But politics is always within the police, consisting of “the set of acts that effectuate a supplementary ‘property,’ a property that is biologically and anthropologically unlocatable, the equality of speaking beings.”¹⁶

If we view politics and policing in this way, how is the invitation for nonhuman meteorological, biological, and geological worlds to have a say in the governance of the earth a policing rather than a political act—or vice versa? Is the welcome mat we are extending already defined in such a way that any deep disturbance of geontopower has already been disallowed? In other words are we witnessing, and contributing to, a repetition of the cunning of late liberal recognition in which the modes, qualities, forms, and relations that already exist are merely, or primarily, extended to others? Is the call to recognize the liveliness of the (in)animate other another version of the call in liberal recognition to recognize the essential humanity of the other, as long as the other can express this otherness in a language that does not shatter the framework of the liberal common?

“Biologically and anthropologically unlocatable . . . speaking beings.” It seems simple enough to insert *tjelbak* snakes in the long list of existents whose voice is finally recognized in the governance of difference within the late liberal demos. They have a part so give them a part. Let them speak! The nonhuman animal, the rock, the river, the beach, the wind, and soil: let them be heard, be represented and representable in the governance of the earth. They have language too. They are agents too. We need a parliament of things so that the full range of actant Logos can make its part be heard.¹⁷ But if we are to understand the significance of the dissensus of existents such as *tjelbak* snakes and Two Women Sitting Down, then we will need to begin with what we mean by voice, by speech (*parole*), and by language (*langue*), thus the governance of the gift of speech that we are extending to them. And we need to understand how we are affecting these forms of existence by demanding that they be given a voice in the current *consensus* of late liberalism. How blithely should we extend the features of human subjectivity in language to all other existents? What covert categories of human language models the call to let the inanimate speak, to having their voices heard? We can begin with how Rancière articulates speech and politics.

For Rancière, the movement between policing and politics is made possible by the movement in enunciation of elements within a given political arrangement from object designation to subject designation: the movement in speech (*parole*) from the linguistic category (*langue*) of the demonstrative object (*that; det; tha*) or third-nonperson pronoun (*he, she, it, they; im; nga, na*) to the linguistic category of first- and second-person pronouns (I, you; we). Those who have previously been referred to only through demonstrative and third-person pronouns insist that they have a claim on the play of subjectivity. In other words, the dynamic political topology of the demos (governance based on the “we” of “we, the people”) is inextricably related to the dynamic movement of subjectivity in language.¹⁸ And this is why Rancière writes that there is “no democratic politics outside of the constant struggle to define the subject” (*le sujet politique*).

Some might balk at the linguistically reductive nature of this reading, pointing to the broader nature of Rancière’s common. After all, Rancière defines the common as the distribution of the sensible rather than simply

the distribution of the *linguistic*. Doesn't Rancière open the common to the full range of sensory experience that is pulled into the distribution of subjectivity and truth? Yes and no. Yes, the entire range of experiencing the truth of included and excluded elements supports the policing of the common. But the coming into Logos—the movement of the experience of noise (*phonos*) into the experience of sense (Logos)—has a clear linguistic basis. It is the movement from considering the excluded element as a third nonperson or demonstrative (it, that) to considering the excluded element as included in the subjective exchange of me and you.

From a superficial vantage it might seem that Rancière shares with Michel Foucault an interest in immanent subjectivity and *paraseia* (*vrai dire*, speaking truth) and with Gilles Deleuze an interest in the dynamic between the virtual (dissensus) and actual (consensus). But not only does Rancière refuse Foucault's understanding of the contemporary demos as a biopolitical order, but he recognizes that Foucault and Deleuze seek to invert the relationship of Logos and *phone* or displace it altogether. Indeed, it is exactly the grounding of politics in the Logos of subjectivity that causes Rancière to resist the conflation of his understanding of the political with those of Foucault and Deleuze. In providing an alternative to Rancière's Logos-based political theory, might Foucault or Deleuze help us support *tjelbak*, *Tjipel*, *durlgmö*, or Old Man Rock?

As we know, beginning with his Collège de France lecture, *Abnormal*, Foucault attempted to understand, on the one hand, the formations and figures outside the dominant image of sovereign power and, on the other hand, the emergence of subjugated knowledges, figures, and forces from within any given formation of power. This conceptual distinction between population and people is absolutely crucial to understanding the *topos* of Foucault's political imaginary. The population, *not* the people (demos), is the collective political subject of Western liberal democracies. The population is the living vitality that biopower conjured and then governed. Thus, in celebrating the emergence of "we, the people" in eighteenth-century Europe, political theorists made a fundamental category mistake. For Foucault, the US and French constitutions would have been more accurate if they were penned in the name of "we, the population" rather than "we, the people." And if political theory had focused on governance through the population, Europe might have avoided the genocidal

time bomb of the Nazi Holocaust described at the end of *Society Must Be Defended*.

Even though he refused the people as the basis of the demos, Foucault nevertheless kept the people in his thought. Initially the people are for him a particular kind of event that might break the consensus of modern biopower. The people are "those who conduct themselves in relation to the management of the population, at the level of the population, as if they were not part of the population."¹⁹ As Rancière took issue with this biopolitical rendering of the demos, Foucault himself became less interested in the difference between the population and the people than in understanding how something came to know itself as someone who must speak truth. Sometimes Foucault focused more on speech, sometimes more on conduct. Sometimes Foucault seemed to be saying that some people exit the common (Logos) to become noise (*phonos*). Sometimes he seemed to be saying that some people are structured as noise within the common. Sometimes activity and speech seemed to coincide. For example, across *Government of Self and Others* and *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault explored the sources and governance of the people as a political otherwise existing within the population.

In other words, Foucault seems to have been less interested in the categorical distinctions between population and people than in re-describing freedom as a form of critique that demands a new formation of self (*sapere aude*) through a specific kind of speech act (speaking truth, *dire vrai*). His concern was not to find some position that was freed from governance entirely but that asked to be governed differently. Foucault's answer may appear tautological: the transition from being a residual within the population to an instance of a people depends on a sort of person who is capable of hearing, feeling addressed, and acting on the command to exit this inert position and actively differ. This differing transformed their Logos into Phonos. The sort of person he imagined as exiting (*sortie*) her inertia is not generated from within but is produced and capacitated in a stranger form of looping, from outside to in and inside to out.²⁰ But even if this person has been so capacitated, she must still be willing to put herself in danger and at risk, no matter that no one else seems willing to do so. And this risk is not simply her injury or death. It is a broader disruption of a given intersection of subject, referent, and world, as these three are the artifacts

of existing social institutions and relations.²¹ In short, the point of (becom- ing) critique was not to become Logos but to maintain oneself as *noise*, as an irritant, as a buzzing swarm of mosquitos just outside the range of a swatting hand or a spray can filled with DDT.

In the shadow of Anthropogenic climate change, several critical theo- rists are putting explicit pressure on this exclusively (human) linguistic understanding of thought and social governance, even those engagements like Foucault's that move from articulate speech to rearticulating noise. In *How Forests Think*, a nod to Levi Bruhl's *How Natives Think* and Marshall Sahlins's *How "Natives" Think*, the anthropologist Eduardo Kohn moves from an anthropological account of the epistemological frames through which Ecuadorans view the forest, their mode of culture, to an anthropology of nonhuman living thought. Deploying ecosemiotic readings of the American pragmatist Charles S. Peirce, Kohn claims that thought—a semi- otic process of mutual and coconstituting interpretation—is a character- istic of all life and is, in fact, what differentiates Life from Nonlife. Because semiosis is not merely the provenance of the human (human *linguistics* is merely one form of semiotics) we can vote yes to semiosis and no to Log- os; we can vote to uncouple the commonsense binding of human forms of life and thought and see all life as a mode of thinking. All living things are like us, if we understand that our dominant mode of semiosis, language, is just one of many kinds of semiosis. Thus rather than merely allowing those whose speech has previously been understood only as noise into the demos of things, Kohn argues that those whose semiotic communication has been excluded, because it is not linguistically based, be allowed in. Rather than letting forms of existence speak, we must let them semiotize!

While Kohn aligns thought with the division of Life and Nonlife, Peirce's cosmological semiotics may have been much weirder and thus more open to considering something like *tjelkal* to think. For Peirce, mind (thought) is constituted by and evidenced in three modes of interpretation—the affect- ive, energetic, and logical. Rather than to understand the play of the signi- fier and signified, Logos and noise, Peirce pressed these modes of thought into his broader understanding of the fundamental semiotics of cosmology. Briefly, for Peirce a sign is some thing (sign) that stands to somebody (inter- preter) in some respect or capacity to something (object). In other words, the object and interpretant are merely two correlates of the sign, "the one being antecedent, the other consequent of the sign."²² But objects and in-

terpretants are themselves bundles of signs—and the bundles are the result of a phenomenologically specific history whereby signs and interpretants are associated (correlated) with objects or which prompt us to reevaluate the nature and status of an object. Perhaps what we thought was an object was merely a [mistaken habit of associating parts of other more pertinent entanglements.] (It is little wonder that Deleuze was increasingly drawn to Peirce's work when thinking through his concept of assemblage.²³) As Paul de Man noted, "The interpretation of the sign is not, for Peirce, a meaning but another sign; it is a reading, not a decodage, and this reading has, in its turn, to be interpreted into another sign, and so on ad infinitum."²⁴

Insofar as interpretation is the production of new forms to know an exist- ent like *tjelbak* demands constant attention to it, because correct interpre- tation depends on continued testing of how an interpretation of an existent correctly apprehends the existent: whether it remains the same or has altered itself in response to a change somewhere else (see also chapter 3). A sign is more or less correctly coordinated to an object if the sign is always present when the existent is present, is present only sometimes, with some people, some conditions. Thus, when I moved toward the smoke to hide my smell from the *tjelbak* and mosquitos, the action was an energetic interpretant in the sense that my movement linked an object (or a set of objects: the *tjelbak* snake; Yilngi; me) and a sign (or a set of concepts: danger, knowledge, con- sequences) through a reaction (or a set of reactions: the movement of my body toward the smoke; the movement of the smoke). But the *tjelbak* snake wending its way around the hill is also an energetic interpretant linking one object-sign and sign-object. For Peirce, the movement of my body and the *tjelbak* are energetic interpretants. Neither is equivalent to propositional logic of the sort seen in the proposition "one should move into the smoke." Propositional logics of this sort are, for Peirce, a kind of logical interpre- tant. Logical interpretants link an object (*tjelbak* snake) and a sign ("dan- ger") through a proposition ("one should move into the smoke"). Affective interpretants link an object and sign through what Peirce calls emotions, say, a blush of embarrassment. But however *tjelbak* snakes link (interpret) the sign and object, they could not be doing so through human linguistic forms.²⁵

Note that all these interpretants are doing something rather than merely representing something. All sign activity *does something*—this doing some- thing is what signs are, what interpretation is, whether this doing is producing

anxiety, shaping embodiment, or modifying consciousness.²⁶ And insofar as signs do rather than represent, they support the endurance of a given formation of existence or they weaken it.²⁷ In a crude sense this constant, multilevel interpretive re-formation can be seen in the way the *tjelbak* was becoming one thing and unbecoming another from the period I first encountered it and the present. From 1996 to 2006, for instance, the *tjelbak* was slowly becoming composed of things that it had not been composed of before. And this was causing *us* to interpret its world and intentionality in new ways. In 1996, the *tjelbak* was composed partly of the smoke from the fires that burned throughout the dry season—great vast bushfires that cleaned up the grass, allowed certain plants to germinate, and prompted animals to appear in full view—and partly of the incipient ozone hole emerging in the atmosphere. By 2006 a new form of *tjelbak* was emerging if one looked carefully or had a sensitive nose. It had new colors and a different olfactory flavor—it was greenish, sometimes yellowish, depending on where one encountered it. It was slightly astringent. Fog was becoming smog, a term Hadej Voeux coined in 1905 for the sulfur dioxide clouds covering European manufacturing cities, clouds responsible for the great smog of London in 1952 that caused about twelve thousand deaths. The skies over Europe are now often clear; the smog has moved elsewhere. But the major causes of smog remain coal burning and transportation emissions of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and hydrocarbons. And these emissions account for what one Chinese official in 2014 called Beijing's "nuclear winter."²⁸ The winds have also changed. The *medawak* and *kunaberruk* that would chase the *tjelbak* away have a new form and intensity—they are the sandstorms that engulfed Tehran on June 3, 2014, killing four and plunging the city into the dark, and that swept through Onslow Western Australia on January 11, 2014, stripping skins off trees and the flesh off bones. *Thimbilirr* are also growing and multiplying in the US Midwest.²⁹ But changes in fog and wind are not usually registered in catastrophic events. They accumulate in a series of condensed and coordinated quasi-events. Most of these accumulate below technologically unmediated human modes of perception. But other modes of existence register these changes even if we do not. And increasingly, in the wake of climate change, the natural sciences are seeking to hear and feel and smell these nonhuman sensoria—to jack into different bodies in order to see what is happening all around them but outside their unmediated field of vision.³⁰

To be sure, others have emphasized those points in Peirce's writing where he seems committed to something like what Sandra Harding, elaborating the work of Donna Haraway, has called "strong objectivity": that a state of existence or truth exists independent of human observation. We find evidence of this belief when Peirce differentiates between the immediate object, "the idea which the sign is built upon," and the real object, "that real thing or circumstance upon which that idea is founded, as on bedrock."³¹ But this real thing, the bedrock of semiosis, is hardly real in a way most people would understand the real. If all things are signs in the sense that they are habits of material associations, these histories affect and are affected by the kinds of signs available in a person's mind (interpretants) at any given time. And while all sign activity does something, the logical interpretant (which Peirce makes equivalent to the intellectual concept) modifies consciousness.³² This modification of consciousness is critical for Peirce. Again: Thought does something; it assembles and correlates; it does not represent something. And it is right here that we confront the impossible heart of Peirce's reading of the logical interpretant: the height of semiotic reason is not the decoding of existents but the formation and coordination of the habits of beings, which are continually becoming otherwise in the act of formation and coordination. Peirce saw matter itself—such fundamental laws of nature like gravity—to be the result of a sort of conceptual habit he was describing. Brian Massumi calls them "habits of mass."³³ In short, all concepts, all truths, all acts of truth telling are radically immanent and radically material habits governed by the figural and metafigural formations at hand at any given time. Peirce saw the material world—human and otherwise—as unfinished not merely because our mind had not yet succeeded in categorizing it like scientists now sequence DNA but because in attending to it in a certain way we pull it into being in a way it was not before we did so.

Thus, where and what this future is remains an open question. The future depends on the kinds of connections that are made in, and made possible by, the world that exists and the differential forces that keep it in place or move it. That is, the future is not a place somewhere or sometime else. Nor have its truths already happened—they are not just there waiting for us to catch up to them. Intellectual concepts and the truths they support are a "tendency" to behave in a similar way under similar conditions, produced by the combination of muscular and nonmuscular effort on the fancies and the percepts not merely now but as an orientation—a

kind of future making unless serious effort is made to reorient the fancies and the percepts.³⁴ The object corresponding to the logical interpretant is the “would-acts” of “habitual behavior”—a tendency of the mind to link this and that—to think and say that one should move into the smoke to avoid being smelled by the *tjelbak* snake. They are “true” insofar as they continue to work. Here again we see that the *tjelbak* snake is also engaged in a mode of truth making—how it interprets is true as long as the way in which it constitutes itself and interprets (makes linkages) between various sign-objects works.

However much Peirce’s model of semiosis might help *tjelbak* enter, and disturb, the current organization of the demos, it is not in and of itself a political theory. There are no antagonisms that organize who the protagonists might be. It is here that William James rather than Peirce, Rancière, or Kohn might ultimately find a place next to us at Bulgul. James understood Mind, with a capital “M,” as well as particular minds and their mental contents, to be the result of an embodied history of effort and exhaustion, striving and succeeding, striving and failing, all occurring in a socially concrete and differentiated world, an “unfinished world” that “has a future, and is yet uncompleted.”³⁵ Human history, in other words, is an ongoing moral experiment in which the moral philosopher participates but cannot surmount and cannot even necessarily best represent or understand. The mind is not merely radically empirical and plural, so is the world—mind and world co-emerge in their mutual unfinished potentiality and thus also do new and subjugated knowledges. As a result mind, world, and truth are radically open questions whose answer takes us back into the world. If one wishes to know from where dominant and subjugated knowledge and truth emerge, one must turn away from “abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad a priori reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins” and turn toward “concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action, and towards power.”³⁶ Thus rather than doctrine, propositional truth, or certainty, James endlessly tried things out. Some seemed to make a difference in the world, such as the emergence of Alcoholics Anonymous from his metapsychology; some did not, such as spirit mediumship (at least not yet).³⁷

Effort was key. Thus in the condensed 1892 version of *Psychology (Briefer Course)*, James published a chapter, “Will,” in which he outlined the relationship between mind and effort.³⁸ He notes in the first sentence that

desire, wish, and will are usually considered states of mind. Mind is usually seen as a kind of substance that can be qualified with attributes, states, and qualities. To counter this dominant view, James zeroes in on will, noting that the end of willful intention seems to be action—a movement of the body or thought. And this, for James, is key: willful action, as opposed to automatic and reflex action, is the outcome of intentional thought. But if willful action is the outcome of intentional thought, thought (ideas) is the outcome of will understood as an “effort of attention.”³⁹ By effort of attention, he means the struggle to stay focused, to keep one idea at the front and center in a commodious field of actual and immanent ideas. It is through an effort of attention that thoughts emerge and come to be lodged stably in the mind. Indeed, effort and will become, for James, the preconditions of all mental phenomena and concepts. James hopes that what might appear to be a tautology will do something in our ways of thinking and thus our being in the world.

Sergio Franzese, who carried on the long Italian interest in James’s pragmatism, argued that to understand James, to move beyond apology for his inconsistencies and summary dismissals of his project, one must understand that at the heart of his project lay a philosophy of force as “the very texture of life.”⁴⁰ As Franzese puts it, James seeks an ethics of energy by which he means “an ethics that organizes energy, as well as an ethics that stems out of energy.” This ethics of energy is the basis for the achievement of personal and aesthetic ideals.⁴¹ What wonder then that an American reviewer of Franzese’s work notes the resonances between James’s thinking about effort and energy and Michel Foucault’s about asceticism.⁴² When mind is understood as an effect of an effort of attention, fundamental terms change their meaning (including the meaning of meaning), and some hoary distinctions become difficult to maintain. Even the distinction between intentional and unintentional thought loses its grip, as intention is itself an effect of a series of efforts of attention to cultivate a thought that will provide the background of thought and action. In other words, effort is the precondition of ideas, action, and subjectivity (mind, practice, and personhood) and thus provides the conditions for reflexive and instinctual action. And because mind and world are never finalized, this will/effort is a life work, a *travail éthique* in Foucault’s terms.

James concludes “Will” with a section on the ethics of effort. There he juxtaposes the standards of strength, intelligence, and wealth that seem to

be “but externals which we carry” to “the sense of the amount of effort which we can put forth,” which “seems to belong to an altogether different realm, as if it were the substantive thing which we are.”⁴³ James is at his most dramatic here: “Some of the tests we meet by actions that are easy, and some of the questions we answer in articulated words. But the deepest question that is ever asked admits of no reply but the dumb turning of the will and tightening of our heart-strings as we say, ‘Yes, I will even have it so!’”⁴⁴ James’s command, like Kant’s, was politically formulated and addressed to a public. He lectured to and wrote for a variety of publics, foregrounding his deep political opposition to American imperialism and commitment to economic justice. For James, there was no separation between his philosophical psychology and these political and economic concerns. What wonder then that the first essay in *Pragmatism* culminates with an account of the corrosive effects of structural poverty on actually living human beings? The way in which these actually existing worlds exist makes a mockery of “a whole host of guileless thorough fed thinkers” who are busy explaining away “evil and pain”; the socially organized, enervating condition of millions of American workers is reality.⁴⁵

It was true in general that an effort in attention might bend the very material fabric of the world, but it was equally true that very few people were willing to do so. Instead most persons demanding a new self (*sapere aude*) through a specific kind of speaking truth (*dire vrai*) either find themselves different and will to become the same or never confront the effort it takes to re-coordinate the habits of mind and become different too exhausting or a *sign* that they are behaving, believing, and desiring wrongly. And lest we think at least James believed only philosophers like he and Charles Peirce could or would do so, James notes, “It is the personal experience of those most qualified in all our circle of knowledge to *have* experience, to tell us *what is*.”⁴⁶ These persons were not philosophers, but those who lived in the kinds of exhausted conditions Giorgio Agamben describes. And no wonder: James and Peirce also remind us of the risk that Foucault saw in this kind of truth telling—the kind that seeks to dislodge, to fortify doubt, to refuse given systematizations of logical interpretants (*savoir*). Everything is at stake—one should not change the tendencies of gravity and expect to remain the same. And if you wish to remain as an object affected by gravity, then what?

So what accounts for this differential between individuals who “may be equally capable of performing a task without being equally able to perform

it”?⁴⁷ James and Peirce were deeply influenced by post-Darwinian ideas about the diversification of life and so would believe that humans were by nature diverse in their capabilities and abilities. If some persons are strong willed and others are not, the conditions of this differential must come from the world of experience and the worlds as differentially structured experiences. But these differential capabilities and abilities did not reside in persons as essences. They lay within them as potentials that the actual world assessed and treated in different ways. Thus when James thought about endurance the first thing he noticed was that some forms endure while others did not. James had ample examples of each in his family. And yet, rather than trying to provide the final answer to why this particular person did or did not, James insists that thought has a profound limit in accounting for that world in its specificity. Why one person kills himself, his wife, and his children but another person starts a movement for social justice cannot be accounted for in the specific even though he claims this specificity is all most people really care about, really want a political theory to account for. They want to know why her, him, me, us: this specific world as it appears to me? One cannot answer this question. One can only do something about it. And so when thinking about thought James continually referred back to the world as it was materially organized and distributed as energizing and enervating specific social projects, social thoughts, and social experiments. Although many have the capability for obstinate curiosity, “few may be called to bear its burdens” and fewer are able to bear them because many people are crushed by the mere task of surviving, given organizations of power.⁴⁸ They can or cannot hear and bear the burden not because they have acquired the proper ontology of potentiality, but because they have somehow solved the difference between being in the space of radical potential where the actual and possible reach exhaustion and the practices of surviving the exhaustion of these spaces.⁴⁹

If we transpose James’s philosophy of effort and endurance onto the entanglement of existences at Bulgul (the *tjelbak*, the mosquitos, the Bic lighter, the human women), a strange spacing within the sensible arrangement of the demos appears. It is not *tjelbak*’s voice that must be allowed to play a part. It is that voice is a very minor player in the broader effort of events of figurating interpretation. The massive meteorological phenomena that tie Two Women Sitting Down to Beijing to the *tjelbak* snakes at Bulgul are not omens of a Last Wave, they are the culmination of all the little waves

that led to them—including the truck that drove us to Bulgul; the factory that made our cheap, disposable Bic lighters, mosquito nets, and tents; and our clicking of these lighters and stringing up these nylon homes with nylon rope. They are small events and quasi-events like the appearance of tar roads that allow our bones to hurt less when we hurtle down them, or the carbon dioxide-belching graders we salute when we see them smoothing the hard dirt ruts caused by the road trains hauling cattle, or the drops of diesel that miss our tanks when we stop to fuel. And it is not just the air and geology that have changed shape, smell, and sound. We have changed as well, little by little, and then a lot. As our diets have changed—the diet of the women (and of their ancestors) whom I was camping with changed perhaps most dramatically in the short time from 1890 to 1970, from fish, shellfish, and yam to canned and salted meat and sweets and, of course, the ubiquitous tobacco, smoked and dipped, that would give emphysema to two of the women sitting with us and oral cancer to another two. And the bodies of those of us working on the GPS/GIS library too—we began to smell differently, though differentially so, depending on whether our teeth or toes had rotted from too many Coca-Colas; on what forms of medications we were on for high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes; on whether we smoked dope or drank too much; whether we reeked of chlorine from swimming. Our stink stinks differently than our parents and their grandparents did—as does the *adjewa* (piss) and *wun* (shit) we circulate into our environment. The *tjelbak* snakes and we locked noses and wondered what smelled so funny. What was the *tjelbak* when it turned green, and how were people related to it if they turned rancid or pharmaceutically fit?

If critical theories of the Logos and the demos and the *phonos* and the event are to have any sway in the coming debates about geontopower, then their political topologies must allow existents that are not biologically and anthropologically legible or do not speak to disrupt the Logos of demos rather than simply to be allowed to enter into it. The generosity of *extending* our form of semiosis to them forecloses the possibility of them provincializing us. That is, Two Women Sitting Down, Tjipel, *tjelbak* snakes, *thimbilirr*, and *therrawin* must be allowed to challenge the very foundation of human, articulate language. After all the question is not *whether* these meteorological and geological forms of existence are playing a part in the current government of the demos. Clearly they already do, economically, politically, and socially. The question is what role has been assigned to them as they emerge

from a low background hum to making a demand on the political order. As the drama of climate change accelerates and the concept of the Anthropocene consolidates, will existents such as the *tjelbak* be absorbed into the policing of Life and Nonlife, markets and difference, Logos and phonos? Or will they disrupt the material and discursive orders that prop up these forms of governance? Do the concepts of Logos and subjectivity place a limit on the kind of noise that can enter the dialectic of the demos, who can speak and who can only be spoken for (Spivak, *darstellen* and *verstellen*)? Or will other sensory interpretants become the norm—the olfactory rather than linguistic, the ephemeral quasi-event rather than a concrete and enduring major explosion of change? Does noise need to go to Logos, or is it Logos that must first be decentered by noise in order to become something else?