



Cover image: Eco-genocide on the Great Plains. A mountain of bison skulls to be used as fertilizer, Rougeville, Michigan, ca. 1890. Photo: Public domain, photographer unknown

Diasporas of the So-Called Anthropocene

Notes in the Margins of "The Anthropocene Atlas of Geneva" - An essay by Gene Ray

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The ancients' intercourse with the cosmos had been different: the ecstatic trance (*im Rausche*). For it is in this experience alone that we gain assurance about what is nearest to us and what is remotest to us, and never of one without the other. This means, however, that mankind can be in ecstatic contact with the cosmos only communally. It is the dangerous error of moderns to regard this experience as unimportant and avoidable, and to consign it to the individual as rapturous effusing (*Schwärmerei*) over fine starry nights.

– Walter Benjamin, "To the Planetarium" (1928)

Allegory for Fossil Collectors

In Baroque allegory, Walter Benjamin asserts, "the gaze of melancholy" turns history into "a petrified, primordial landscape." The melancholic allegorist reduces or mortifies nature to history. "Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful,

unsuccessful, is expressed in a face – or rather in a death’s head.” All “nature-history” takes the form of the ruin: “In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting.” In German Baroque tragedy (*Trauerspiel*: literally, “mourning-play”), history comes on stage “as script,” as the writing on the wall that speaks incessantly of transience: the ruin, the relic, the mark or graffito, the material wreckage and aftermath of disaster. As stage property, the death’s head condenses the point at which nature as decay crosses history as catastrophe.¹

These ideas resonate today with emerging “structures of feeling” of the so-called Anthropocene, including new forms of that old malady, “left-wing melancholy.”² In what is evidently a widely shared shift of perception and affect in the wealthiest nations, the planet comes to be seen as “ruins,” a scene of destruction and loss in which the survival of “civilization” is suddenly at stake.³ Even more unnerving is what Elizabeth Povinelli calls “Nonlife”: the necessity now to face, think, and feel a possible return to a planetary state of no life at all.⁴ Anxieties about planetary meltdown and extinction are now entering mainstream politics in many countries, mixing with fury over decades of neo-liberal plunder, austerity, and impunity. In this volatile politics, divergent and antagonistic tendencies abound. In France, the ZAD and *Gilets Jaunes*; in the UK, Extinction Rebellion; across Europe, school strikes for climate justice; in the USA, Standing Rock and Sunrise. But also: Charleston, Charlottesville, Pittsburgh, Christchurch, the terror of resurgent white supremacism, neofascisms, eco-fascism. The mimetic reverberations produce effects and impact lives in San Juan, Port-au-Prince, São Paulo, Manila, New Delhi, Lagos, and everywhere else. Below, I discuss aspects of these antagonisms, and some prospects for art and politics in planetary meltdown.

Geneva, End of the Holocene

As 2018 came to an end, *The Anthropocene Atlas of Geneva* completed its work.⁵ A hybrid of art, critical theory, and methods borrowed from anthropology, science studies, and the critical humanities, this research project studied responses to planetary meltdown through video interviews and artistic and theoretical reflection. I forego here any attempt to rehearse the history of the project or to extract some kind of “executive summary” of the research findings. Even less do I try to update the differentiated representations of the so-called Anthropocene to be found in the online *Atlas*; the dismal conclusions of the many scientific reports that have appeared already in 2019 will not be surveyed here. I try, rather, to draw out from the experience of the research some questions and reflections about what the practice of art-based research can be, under conditions of planetary meltdown. I do this by responding to and interpreting the energies condensed in one short video work made by Janis Schroeder at the end of the research project. I allow these reflections to interact with some more directly political propositions about our end-Holocene predicaments.



Armin Linke, *Nayakrishi Andalon, ecological farm rice-seed vault, Tangail, Bangladesh, 2014*. From *The Anthropocene Atlas of Geneva*, glossary, courtesy of the artist.

Allegory for Anticolonials

If Benjamin's *Trauerspiel* text is read together with his crucial last essay, "On the Concept of History" (1940), allegory begins to look like a cultural code that can be operated in either direction. The terror of history can be coagulated into images of still life, in which every part and fragment can be interpreted as the irreparable ruination of the whole.⁶ But Marx had posed a revolutionary solvent to liberate and transform the labor, energies, and relations congealed in the commodity form.⁷ By 1940, Benjamin had worked out a heretical variation on historical materialism that salvages allegory for the struggle against fascism.

The famous angel of history – who, wings pinned to the winds in the storm called progress, gazes back on the growing wreckage – is an allegory of "homogeneous, empty time," in which the victors of history continuously step on and over the oppressed and defeated. The culture and traditions of the defeated are plundered by the victors, and displayed as cultural trophies. But the heretical materialist critic, brushing history against the grain and refusing identification with the victors, can interpret the fragments from the class position of the oppressed in struggle. Each fragment of ruin rescued from "becoming a tool of the ruling classes" in this way wrests a bit of "tradition from the conformism that is working to overpower it."⁸

In the "true image of the past," which flares up or flits by in danger, those struggling for justice today can recognize an energizing affinity or kinship with particular struggles of the past. Charged with "Now-time," such images bring tradition and contemporary urgency into articulation and alliance, breaking the hold of "homogeneous, empty time." As "Now-time," history is vibrant with transformative possibility for the present.⁹ Under the gaze of a radical interpretation, then, each fragment can unfold an allegory of resistance to domination, and all the fragments are scanned and

sifted in search of those few that, just now, will look back with the energy of “an alarm clock that in each minute rings for sixty seconds.”¹⁰

Allegory, then, can either petrify the living or vivify the dead. Melancholy can paralyze or, transformed, can stimulate an urgent “organization of pessimism.”¹¹ Allegory represents, but it also does, performs, connects coherently to practice and becomes practice. Allegory would seem to be a modernist method for investigating the ruins of modernity, or better, the social and ecological force fields that, interacting, generate the continuum of catastrophe. The allegorist can move around in the ruins and force fields without resisting the continuum, showing merely that anything can be made to mean anything. Or she or he can seek encounters – true images of the past, in Benjamin’s sense – that expose the dominant flows of force and at the same time interrupt them. As a procedure of writing, reading, or making art, allegory opens passages between the visible and the invisible, the nearest and the remotest, the now of the living and the then of the dead. As can be seen in contemporary monetization no less than in traditional magic, similarity (affinities, correspondences) and metamorphosis would seem to be the mimetic common denominators of all allegorical operations.

The fetish-screens of modernity deliver their compulsive enjoyments, but also reflect – the eyes and parts of captured users and, in the background, the violent transformation of planet into necrosapes. Sorcery, spells, conjurations, and shape-shifting abound. The need becomes urgent, to analyze the ambiguous power and play of mimetic enactment in the politics of late modernity: a decolonizing anthropology holds up a mirror full of implications. Reading Benjamin, Michael Taussig suggests that practices of mimesis permeate social relations and violence on the “colonial frontier,” where moderns meet their others. Magical effects, he suggests, saturate economy and the state: thinking about commodity fetishism, Taussig notes that Marx “could just as well have used the term ‘animism’.”¹² Trained to take on the bodies and points of view of animals or the dead, shamans, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro asserts, must be acknowledged as political artists.¹³ In the so-called Anthropocene, the academic critique of modernity has produced a deepening questioning of the borders between human and non-human, and new forms of “vital materialism” are compelled to re-approach the knowledge and cosmologies of contemporary Indigenous peoples with a new respect.

But if mimetic energies are everywhere, what are the political implications? In Benjamin’s allegorical aphorism “To the Planetarium,” from *One-Way Street* (1928), we can perhaps begin to see divergent qualities of mimesis in political terms. One crux of this short but wildly suggestive text, highlighted in the epigraph above, is in the difference between ecstatic trance or intoxication (*Rausch*) and the pseudo-rapture of effusing and swooning (*Schwärmerei*) before clichés of sublimity (starry skies, but also the “nation,” its flag, its song, its bloody shirt). Benjamin may be thinking of Nietzsche’s association of *Rausch* with the Dionysiac drive, or of its articulation with the Apolline performed in ancient Greek tragedy. *Rausch* is communal, a sharable grounding experience of bonding and mutuality: “Freely the earth offers up her gifts, and the beasts of prey from mountain and desert approach in peace.”¹⁴ By contrast *Schwärmerei* would seem to be a botched mimesis that isolates the modern subject from cosmos, planet, and commons, connecting her or him instead to destructive and self-destructive forms of sociability. The social nexus of relations and forces, rather than the subjective intention, would be the materialist difference, but it must be said that no border here seems very assured, least of all that between any individual body and everything else.

In “Surrealism” (1929), Benjamin interprets the Surrealist project as an attempt “to win the energies of intoxication (*Rausch*) for the revolution.”¹⁵ He sees the possibilities of this conjunction of art, technics, and class struggle, but he also sees the risk that such a project could lapse into an aestheticizing of politics that aligns with fascism. Esther Leslie argues that Benjamin’s analysis took a sobering turn with “Theories of German Fascism” (1930); six years later, in the famous Artwork essay, he tried to introduce new concepts for a theory of art that would be “completely useless for the purposes of fascism.”¹⁶ Yet, a persistent, if qualified, openness to energies that cannot be reduced to modernist epistemologies is the very wildness of his heretical materialism. These and other unresolved tensions among the moments of Benjamin’s writings remain as a stimulus to critical reading.

Today it is crucial to remember the modernity of fascism: far from a regression to pre-modern social relations, twentieth-century fascisms merely re-energized, in the context of a ruling class emergency, the violence already institutionalized in the modernist nexus of nation-state, capital,

science, technics, and bureaucracy. At this moment, when proto- and neo-fascisms are re-emerging, and as many moderns seek to learn from Indigenous land and water struggles how a non-dominating relation to nature may be socially organized and politically supported, the imperative is to fight for a plurality of post-capitalist, “post-modernist” worlds. The differences between emerging forms of mutuality and emerging forms of neo-fascist “blood and soil” are, I contend, readily recognizable.

The social core of reparative justice would be “more-than-human” mutuality.¹⁷ The embarrassment or derision such traditional “beliefs” provoke among moderns – an effect of epistemicide – has become untimely.¹⁸ The pressure of events will teach many who are already alive today to commune with non-human kindred, including the dead, just as surely as many will relearn how to read sky and water, graft fruit trees and vines, weave on looms, throw clay pots on wheels, pulp rag for paper, and bind their own books. Such post-digital re-skilling, rebuilding local knowledge commons, is already political intervention. The condescending dismissal of today’s spreading movements of craft revivals and small, slow, needs-oriented production is mistaken. An interest in making things that are durable and repairable, preferably by repurposing some of the material refuse that modernity has over-produced, is an eminently sensible reach for self-rescue – and one that is readily shared and collectivized. Practical critiques of commodity obsolescence are demands from below for a reordering of needs and production in relation to mutuality and “livability.”¹⁹ Jason Hickel’s case for “radical abundance” is a promising contribution to the liberation of degrowth from hostile images of scarcity.²⁰



Pro Specie Rara’s living seed library planting beds at the Geneva Botanical Gardens. Photo: TAAG

Aphorisms for Gardeners

We have reached the moment in which the risks of hanging on to modernity outweigh the risks of letting modernity go.

Not everyone sees it that way, of course. For the globalized ruling classes, the end of modernity, entailing as it does the end of capitalism and the extinction of their own social order, can only be imagined as the end of the world, *tout court*.

For many Indigenous peoples, for whom modernity is an ongoing apocalypse that arrived by invasion 500 years ago, the end of modernity could appear as an opening to reparation, the reactivation of sacred time and mutuality prophesied by ancestors.

Modernity once promised that donning the point of view of the ruling classes would be rewarded with a share of the material plunder. Its ideological achievement was to have demoralized and corrupted a great part of humanity into accepting this fraudulent claim.

In late modernity, these promises were abandoned as no longer credible: precariousness, austerity, and debtors' prisons are the beating sticks left over, after all the carrot cake was privatized.

Yesterday the banks were "too big to fail" – the claim was not, note, that they deserved to be rescued. Tomorrow, if all goes according to plan, it will be the oil and gas conglomerates; the bill will again be aimed at the poor.²¹

The more profound question is: who will accept and who will reject the apology that modernity is too big to fail, now that melting ice has exposed its political bankruptcy?

There is no ethically correct living in the socially false, a critic of the untrue totality wrote in the wake of World War 2, as he resigned himself to writing refined messages in bottles.²² Planetary meltdown imposes different urgencies and favors different wagers.

The social tipping points are arriving a few beats behind the ecological ones.

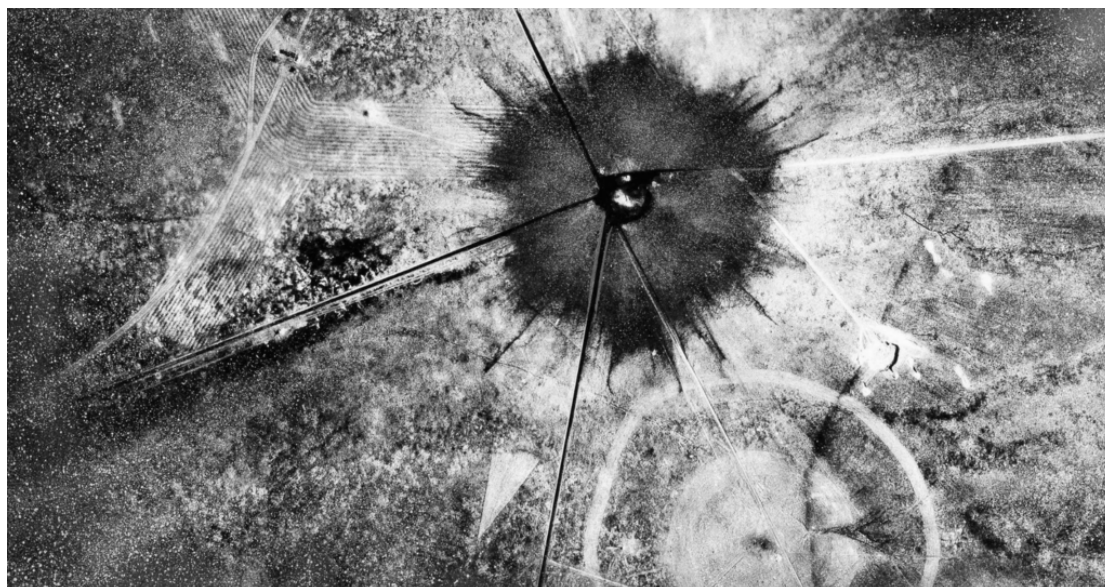
What Blows in, What Flows in

In December 2018, Janis Schroeder made a short video "trailer," the first of four intended to serve as introductions to the *Atlas*.²³ I focus on the first, *The Anthropocene Atlas of Geneva: Trailer 01*. This work begins with the map of the Geneva region from the *Atlas* website homepage, then locates and zooms-in on the location dot accessing a video interview with Jacques Grinevald, a well-known Geneva historian of natural science and technology who serves on the Anthropocene Working Group of the International Commission on Stratigraphy. Instead of going directly to this interview, however, Schroeder's work makes a detour through a short passage of video made on the shore of Lake Geneva. This prelude invites dialogue between an audio-visual fragment of lakescape and the interview excerpt that follows it. A similar video passage then follows the interview excerpt, in a kind of "return" that rolls back and slows down the linear structure and temporality of the short video form.

Schroeder's structured combinatory method can indicate what the "art" in "art-based research" may consist in. The conception, selection, and editing process mimetically condenses the research process of the project as a whole, while giving delicate expression to one artist-researcher's experience of it. Sensuous, critical, and reflective, the resulting video document rehearses the research process and reflects six years of thinking and feeling about planetary meltdown – a research object that intrinsically carries and transmits a complex load of intense emotional charges. A new representation of planetary disturbance emerges from the interactions of these elements, in both form and content.

I dwell on these interactions, because the subtlety and sensitivity by which this montage produces its effects and resonance should be appreciated. Schroeder has selected an interview excerpt in which Jacques Grinevald comments on Geneva's place in the international commodities trade, a topic that has probably generated more discussions within the *Atlas* project (among both researchers and advisors) than any other. This profitable economic process, commodities trading,

produces a substantial part of the wealth and power of Geneva. At the same time, it implicates the city in the far-flung industrial processes and effects that have pushed the planet out of its Holocene climate. The enclosure, extraction, refinement, monocultural production, and global shipping of commodities belong integrally to the social processes that cause climate chaos, toxification, and species extinction, as well as associated social conflicts and displacements. Caught in ever-accelerating flows dense with digital transactions, every commodity is a shattered fragment of planet, a relic of violence that writes modernity's immanent drift across land, sky, and waters. As of 2016, one-third of all the oil traded globally was bought and sold from Geneva; the links to carbon-dioxide emissions, rising global temperatures and sea levels, and ocean acidification are clear.²⁴



Aerial photo of "ground zero" at the Trinity test site, in the desert near Alamogordo, New Mexico, taken 28 hours after the first atomic explosion on July 16, 1945. Public domain.

Aphorisms for Antifascists

Calls to power-down and disarm modernity appear, in the discursive and imaginary refractions of dominant spectacle, as utopian folly, or as masochistic return to the miseries of the stone age.

Such insistent dismissals should be answered back with sharp questions: who profits from modernity and its progress, now that planetary meltdown is underway? Who loses, given the social intransigence of business as usual?

And the non-humans whose existence is also at stake in any violent continuation of modernity: who dared to exclude them from the deliberations of justice and decisions of politics?

Power up, then, and accelerate the acceleration? AI to the rescue? An end to work, in capitalism? Really, and what energy will all the robots and cyborgs run on? Who is the utopian and who is the realist? Confusions abound, among them left-wing technophilia.²⁵

Twentieth-century fascism: an emergency state and para-state formation set loose by the ruling classes of some nation-states on the revolutionary desires and reaches of their working class antagonist.

In Germany, the Nazis began by destroying the working class parties and unions, then pursued white supremacist fantasies to the end of the line – to Auschwitz, national defeat, and common ruin.

After that came the economic miracles of reconstruction and halted de-Nazification: the rehabilitation and reentry of Germany into “Europe” facilitated by the Cold War, debt erasure, and massive external assistance.

Today’s emerging neo-fascisms, including eco-fascism, displace class rage over austerity and programmatic precarity into racist scapegoating of refugees and immigrants: class war converted to race war, as on the old plantations, where the “white race” was invented and codified as a system of social control.²⁶

Contemporary neo-fascisms will aim to defend established power structures in conditions of planetary meltdown: they will begin with hate crimes but will end by aiming terror at all those who question or resist the logics and frameworks of capitalist modernity.

The real trial and reckoning, which has been preparing and perhaps has begun, will be between late modernity’s ruling classes and all those who oppose modernity’s organized impunity.

In his 1940 essay, Benjamin makes a point that today should be underscored boldly in red: empathy for the victors of history, what we would call identification, “invariably benefits the current rulers.”²⁷

In *Fire Alarm*, his meticulous reading of Benjamin’s essay, Michael Löwy publishes a photograph, which he glosses: “During popular protest demonstrations – mounted by the workers’ and peasants’ trade union organizations and by black and indigenous movements – against the official (governmental) celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the ‘discovery’ of Brazil by the Portuguese navigators in 1500, a group of natives shot arrows at the clock (sponsored by the *Globo* television network) counting down the days and hours to the centenary.”²⁸

The fierce and necessary struggles that have opened up in the so-called Americas around public memorials to Columbus, Spanish conquistadors, Confederate generals, and slave-owning, land-grabbing “Founding Fathers,” are evidence that empathy for the victors is being challenged from below.

The startling appearance of white supremacists mimicking Nazis with a nocturnal torchlight procession and bellowed anti-Semitic slogans in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017, and even more the violent attacks, mobbing, and murder perpetrated on the following day, reveal the intensity with which identification with victors and rulers must repress the actual share of powerlessness of a dominated class position – and what happens when these repressions have their chance to explode.²⁹

The “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville was an organized attack on the critical, decolonizing attention directed against a monument honoring the Confederate general, Robert E. Lee. The choice of the battleground should remind everyone how the victors of history can shape-shift into current rulers even when they lose.

The Confederate slave plantocracy, as is well known, lost the US Civil War but by terror won the postwar Reconstruction. The Democratic Party presidential candidate in the election of 1868 ran on the motto: “This is a White Man’s Country; Let White Men Rule.” He lost, but Jim Crow won. The monumental equestrian bronze of Lee in Charlottesville was dedicated in 1924, following a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and lynchings in the wake of World War I.³⁰

The Third Reich, meanwhile, was defeated, but it too survived the Nuremberg Trials and won the reconstruction. Its supremacist and exterminationist fantasies and symbols enjoy multiple afterlives, not least vile of which is the new myth of “white genocide” that relays and amplifies white supremacist demographic panic.

Such afterlives may be “mimesis of mimesis,” but are not the simple returns they appear to be: they belong rather to the unbroken continuum of domination, in which social justice is always deferred, with appropriate excuses.³¹

Premodern experiences of ecstatic mimetic connection are not recoverable; modern experiences of mimetic intoxication are diverse, but do not automatically serve the cause of justice. Identification with victors and ruling class power deflects the mimetic faculty into the perpetration of terror and atrocity in the service of social control.³²

What, in a different but connected context, Patricio Guzmán called “centuries of accumulated impunity” will not die an easy or painless death.³³ This intransigence imposes the class politics of planetary meltdown. Climate justice entails social justice; both entail an end to impunity.

Quite obviously, the ruling classes of late modernity cannot be expected to abolish themselves.

Those who identify with and hold to the point of view of the ruling classes, as climate chaos intensifies and the coasts slip underwater, will find their political home in new forms of fascism.

In settler colonial states such as the USA, Australia, and New Zealand, but also in less belligerent nations such as Norway, parts of this emergent neo-fascist base are armed to the teeth – a social fact that has as much to do with the spreading militarization of everyday life and its imaginaries as with gun control policies per se.

On the far-right, “lone wolves” are a covering fiction: from Atomwaffen Division to Identity Evropa, the capacity aimed at terror and open incitation to race war is organized, supported, and whistled up.³⁴ White supremacy is emphatically structural.

“Full-spectrum dominance,” armed lifeboats, and desperate schemes of geo-engineering: attempts to hold on to modernity will require the continued imposition and enforcement of scarcity and the sacrifice of species and human communities.

Climate chaos kills, and the security forces well understand who it kills, and to which ethnicities they likely belong: the most exposed are mostly people of color, the precarious poor of the coasts and the margins, and the displaced, the climate refugees who are already becoming indistinguishable from conflict refugees.³⁵

And the homeland security agencies also know where this killing happens: mostly far away, to the south, or anyway far enough.

In the pan-optics of state surveillance, the non-human victims of progress go unseen and count for nothing: modernity does not mourn, has never mourned, its collateral damage.

Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: “Fascism is also totalitarian in seeking to place oppressed nature’s rebellion against domination directly in the service of domination.”³⁶

High-level dithering, the show and spectacle of nation-state foot-dragging, back-sliding, and wall-building, leads as certainly to genocide and ecocide as the railway led to Auschwitz.

The Inconvenient Matter of Commodities

For a city that brands itself “green,” Geneva’s involvement in commodities trading is a contradiction potentially generative of significant discomfort. The cognitive, ethical, and political dissonance (when not outright performative contradiction) is acutely present for researchers who are also employees connected, through their host school and funding institution, to the tax revenues produced by commodities trading. On the *Atlas*, these contradictions are registered in an interview with filmmaker Oliver Ressler, and discussed in several glossary entries (“commodities trading,” “biophilic cities,” and “divestment”). Schroeder’s own embodiment of the tensions and emotional charges attached to this topic, I suggest, are fully in play and reflected in the poetics of this video trailer – a “self-reflexivity” that can be expressed artistically by indirection. If his choice to present Grinevald’s discussion of commodities trading is deliberate, so also is his choice to juxtapose this interview excerpt with two video lakescapes, the energies of which he allows to overflow their image frames and wash into Jacques Grinevald’s study.

Beginning, then, with the moving image that appears after the opening sequence of the *Atlas* website homepage: what goes on, what takes place in this passage of eleven seconds (00:13 – 00:24), and with what energetics? A scene on a shore, presumably that of Lake Geneva. The tightly framed and finely composed image is without any orienting horizon. What is this liveliness, this surprising energy, and where does it come from? Until its motion can be worked out, the water seems confused, chaotic, approaching from various directions at once. Watching it allows the patterns to appear. Wavelets of grey water approach continuously from upper left, rolling in lines that spill over and bend around a finger of wet black stones extending to meet them.

Redirected by this refraction curve, the wavelets now roll in from upper right, continuing past the stone promontory and in to shore. Curling and foaming across a bit of sandy beach, they inundate a line of twiggy flotsam built up on a shore of pebbles, before slipping back under the next incoming wavelet. A shaggy, green head of diverse plant-life growing among the rocks and pebbles at the upper left of the image seems to observe and receive the energies of the incoming breeze and wavelets. The point of view established by the camera, too, suggests a place or location of reception, indeed a *stance* of receiving and sensing what arrives, of waiting for what comes from beyond the visual limits of the image.

The extraordinary liveliness of the assemblage is emphasized by the patterns that emerge from the composition. The rock promontory forms a wedge that points to the left of the camera position. Where the point of this wedge joins the line of flotsam, it forms a Z. The wavelets first make landfall on the rocks at the top of the Z, then make their turn, or rather rotation around the sharp upper right corner of the Z, before driving down the vertical diagonal and in to shore, forming a wedge of rhythmically undulating grey water that is the perfect negative of the immobile wedge of stone. A banal lakeside scene, then, but also a vivid fragment of landscape pulsing with energy, one that projects the senses back out beyond the visual limits of framing, into what I daresay becomes an allegory of the “Anthropocene” position: a partial and limited point of view within a locality, a social situatedness itself embedded in larger planetary energies and movements the traces of which evince the long durations of geological and evolutionary time. The point of view is localized as the point of interaction – anywhere, everywhere – where social and planetary forces and relations cross.

Sonically, this image is preceded and accompanied by the sibilant hissing, lipping, and lapping of wavelets spilling on stone, sand, and flotsam. The liveliness of the water is fully audible. Three seconds after the image of the lakeshore appears, we hear the voice of Jacques Grinevald: “C’est un micro-ville global.” (“It [Geneva] is a global micro-city.”) (00:16). The rhythmic sounds of water reaching shore continue for another six seconds, backing the voice-over as the image cuts to Grinevald (00:24), charmingly installed among the loaded shelves and stacks of his library. Geneva, he goes on to explain, is entangled in the planetary disturbances of the so-called Anthropocene, by its high standard of living and proclivity for air travel, but especially through its leading place in international commodities trading. For Grinevald, the Anthropocene is “directly linked” to the question of commodities: “Why? Because commodities mean mining activities; that is, the transformation of raw materials and their distribution on a planetary scale.” Grinevald’s voice carries special weight and authority here, as he belongs to the scientific working group charged with evaluating current planetary disturbances for placement on the Geological Time Scale.

But in through this opening, this suggestive snippet, the rest of the picture comes pouring. The highly profitable “transit trading” of commodities practiced from the discrete offices of Vitol, Trafigura, Gunvor, Mercuria, Glencore and other trading firms – with the support of algorithms and some 400 associated banks, insurance companies, law and accounting firms, and forwarding agents – generates that invisible social power which *Atlas* advisor Iain Boal, a historian of science, technics, and the commons, has dubbed “the money that flows into Geneva by night.” These invisible financial flows, these arrivals of monetized labor, energy, and matter in the form of profits taken, numbers added to accounts, provide sizable tax revenues for the city and canton. However, the costs of these benefits is devastating for people and the ecological assemblages they depend on at the far-away points of extraction, as Oliver Ressler’s 2014 film, *The Visible and the Invisible*, and interview on the *Atlas* explore.³⁷ It is a random irony not to be missed, that as Grinevald discusses the meaning of commodities trading in the long waves of geological time from his library, in Schroeder’s short video, a passing siren can be heard in the background. Random ironies: messages from the cosmos?

Whether by day or by night and fog, the profits flowing into Geneva are far from harmless. They structure Geneva’s contradictory double-character and place in late modernity today – a “green” city

deeply involved in, indeed at this time dependent on, the very social processes that cause and drive planetary meltdown. Critical theory, prominent in the mix of methods deployed in the *Atlas*, is compelled to see this contradiction in its full connection to the accumulative logics of modernity. From a critical vantage, averting the eyes (and ears) here would be impermissible.

Issues of climate justice also “arrive” to unsettle the ground of Geneva’s self-image, and the meanings of the allegory begin to multiply and spread. A delegation of water protectors from Standing Rock, North Dakota, arrived in Geneva in 2017, to call on Credit Suisse to divest its stake in the Dakota Access Pipeline (and in fact were interviewed for the *Atlas*).³⁸ Swiss banking: another brand in the global financial and extractive infrastructure of late modernity. Denied the fiction of a unified, equalized human species and confronted with actual social agencies and material effects, the “Anthropocene” flips into the “Capitalocene” – or even more politically challenging, the “capitalist-modernocene,” the epoch of a capitalist modernity founded in terror and genocide and now galloping toward social and ecological reckonings.

The Dead and Other Allies

Historical materialism, thoroughly modernist in formation and outlook, conceives history from the point of view of the oppressed and defeated, those whose life possibilities have been sacrificed to the dominant social logics and the power of ruling classes. This “modernist” outlook marks a problem that only gets worse.

Benjamin criticized the progressivism of the orthodox Social Democratic and Communist parties of his day, and indicted their covert adoption of capitalist conceptions of work, repressive discipline, and the domination of nature. Today’s Left still has not disentangled itself from these restricting modernist legacies.

Against the fraud of progress, Benjamin allegorizes the catastrophic continuum. Against modernist time, capitalist time, the clock-time of industrial work and coercive accelerations, he retrieves a true image of the past: insurgent-poets in Paris who, “incensed at the hour,” did not miss the opportunity to snipe at the faces of clock-towers.³⁹

The counter-temporality of Benjamin’s “Now-time” bears a strong kinship relation to the sacred time that animates Indigenous land and water struggles, which strive to defend the life and energy of places against the killing enclosures and extractions of modernity.

In her fierce and prophetic 1991 masterpiece, *Almanac of the Dead*, Leslie Marmon Silko depicts the death’s head of modernity and the forces allied against it. Among those allies are the dead kindred and ancestors, who insistently call for justice from the tales, songs, and hieroglyphs – and from every stone and raindrop.

“History was the sacred text.”⁴⁰ As always, the dead are summoned to both sides in every struggle for justice. Today, as planetary meltdown looses generalized diaspora, the struggle for justice seeks the commons of “refuge,” “survance,” and “livability” – names for fugitive energies of mutuality, reparation, and resurgence on a “planet of slums” and ruins.⁴¹

Silko’s “magical assembly” of communal stories configure true images of the past. The dead in Benjamin’s 1940 essay and Silko’s *Almanac* fight on the same side, the side of all those who will not choose neo-fascism.



Reed beds, Lake Geneva. Still from TAAG interview with Delia Fontaine, Pro Natura Genève

General Diaspora

In Schroeder's short video, as Grinevald finishes his brief explication of Geneva's entanglement with the planet, the audio of wavelets coming ashore returns in the background (01:12), and the image cuts again to the shore of Lake Geneva for twelve seconds (01:17-01:29). This time, the camera position and framing are different; a horizon is visible, and the layered shadows of hills rising to mountains, from right to left, across the lake. Moving water fills most of the image; the near shore, churned grey-brown, is sharply delineated from the dark greens and deep blues of the lake beyond. The shoreline itself is confined to the lower left, the action of the waves scalloping out the pebbled beach. The vegetation and rocks at the center of the new image might be those from the earlier passage of video, now seen from a different angle and at greater distance. But if so, then the water has advanced well up the shore. Time has elapsed. A pink-orange blush low in the sky signals it is late in the day.

A marked change in energetics can be sensed. The wind arriving from upper right and driving the waves to shore from right to left, can now be perceived as coming from a far beyond. Paradoxically, this visual change in range and scale, from a tightly framed fragment of shoreline to a more open and expansive view of lake and far terrain, produces an effect of intensification. "Zooming out" heightens the feeling of exposure to wind and renders sensible just how much energy is arriving, right there, just then. The wind that crosses the image and drives the wavelets now feels much stronger. Sonically, it even sounds louder.

The wind it seems is picking up. It may have changed direction, swung around. Is a storm approaching – gathering its energies? Premonition of the storm called "progress?" In this second image of the lake, traces of the human are visible. One can make out houses and buildings on a jut of shore at upper left and on the far shore across the lake. The dark silhouette of a bird, perhaps a coot or cormorant, rides the wind above the wavelets from right to left, crossing below the white sail of a windsurfer beating in the opposite direction, before landing in the water with a splash (01:20-01:26). A missed encounter, perhaps, suggesting the current non-alignment of human and non-human interests? An accident or bit of chance that calls mutely for a still missing solidarity across species? And is that swift-moving sail, which as a class marker could unfold a whole sociology of sport, not a reminder that exposures to climate chaos are differential in the extreme, that accumulated wealth (and impunity) have bought opportunities for recreation, but also, so far,

advantages in security and adaptability? The calculations of risk assessment, however, have nothing to do with justice (social or climate).

Political energies, too, are stirred into motion and redistributed, as disturbances lead to displacements and planetary diasporas. Insects, plants, birds, lichens, animals, and people, as well as commodities, emissions, and toxins: a general stirring, a putting into motion. Climates move on to other places, putting pressure on the very meaning and experience of the local.⁴² The elements composing place pull apart; some disperse. Local knowledge commons, where these persist, will be hard pressed to adapt to new weather and climate; in many places, growing food when it counts will become a high art. And has not all end-Holocene waiting, weather-eyes out on stalks, become a form of political bracing? Does not the idyllic as such now take on subtle charges of anxiety, and the energetic echoes of extreme weather? New feelings, new shared structures of feeling, are emerging here, and as the multiple condensations of Schroeder's short video show, a long-term critical practice of art-based research is well equipped to perceive and evoke them. In a minute and half, resonance, meanings, and energetic charges multiply, as things "look back" at responsive attentions. How much returning energy, what Benjamin named aura, would belong in a scientific report, if such an unverifiable phenomenon would be admitted at all?

Not just data, then, but emotional charges and energies, the liveliness of things, beings, relations, phenomena, experience: this is the stuff of aesthetic assemblage, of art-making, of allegorical construction and interpretation, which are always ethically and politically entangled. In this direction one kind of difference of art-based research can be sought: in the poetics and critical inflections of a knowledge that is sensuous and not merely rational, that performs and not merely connotes, that operates the interactions between form and content, meaning and feeling in context. I have focused on the energetics of one short video, but there are dozens of works in the *Atlas* that could be explored in a similar way.

I have offered my skepticism that modernity, as an entrenched social nexus of supremacisms, can offer pathways out of the planetary meltdown it has initiated: livability will not be modernist. My provocations: to have articulated openly a leftist post-Holocene opposition to modernity, already hearing the reflexive dismissals ("romantic," "nostalgic," "regressive"); to have underscored the class dimension of climate justice struggles, recognizing degrowth on the side of the oppressed; and to have reviewed the old lesson that fascisms are a variant of state terror – modernist weapons produced by and allied with ruling class intransigence. In re-reading Benjamin, I have also suggested that allegory as representation performs the construction of meanings – but meanings riddled with openings that are emphatically political. Relations frozen into modernist still life melt back into living force fields, by interpretation but perhaps also by the actions of non-human actants. Mimetic reaches for reparative justice and mutuality cannot be excluded. More-than-human justice and mutuality are common notions, communal notions that modernity rejects but which nevertheless may orient survivance and livability in planetary meltdown. Art, for its part, need not harangue directly. But as social relations and entanglements are not evadable, art-making should push self-awareness of its own positions into stance. Whether as object magic, work on institutions, or "research," the places and bodies of art should know, as so many already do, which side they are on.

Coda: Aphorisms for Commoners

If, as the wise insist, a major "tiger's leap into the past" under the "open sky of history" is not presently in the stars, certainly minor tiger's and panther's leaps are taking place continuously, before our eyes.⁴³

Capitalist modernity can perhaps be hollowed out from within, by small evacuations that spread mutuality and reorient local productive relations: the wager of exit, exodus, organized subtractions or withdrawals, more or less constructive, more or less fugitive.⁴⁴

Underground railroads still need places to go to: rebuilding commons and more-than-human refugia everywhere possible remains a radical proposition for organizing pessimism in the near term.

Could such collective moves be attempted on the material ground of local metabolism, while simultaneously engaging and defending the remnants of liberal democracy, while that yet exists? Dual-power communing with the dead?

Omnia sunt communia: “everything for all the relatives.”⁴⁵

Fredric Jameson’s quip has been well answered by Wolfgang Streeck: how capitalism could end has now been imagined in detail. It will die, it seems, a “natural” death after all, for lack of a restraining revolutionary antagonist.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, planetary agencies and prerogatives will respond in their own ways and times to the storm of progress.

Handily refuting the strongest arguments so far leveled against degrowth, the co-authors of a recent defense conclude with a scrupulous honesty: “How degrowth might happen we don’t know. A fortuitous combination of popular struggle and collapse of the capitalist system is perhaps the only route.”⁴⁷

As always, trickster plays last.

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Notes

1. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* [1928], trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 183, 166, 175-179.
2. I borrow “structures of feeling” from Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977). On “left-wing melancholy,” see Benjamin, “Left-Wing Melancholy,” in Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, 1927-1934, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1999), pp. 423-427; Wendy Brown, “Resisting Left Melancholy,” *boundary 2*, 26.3 (1999): 19-27; Lieven De Cauter, “Small Anatomy of Political Melancholy,” *Crisis & Critique* 3.2 (2016): 94-113; and Enzo Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory* (New York: Columbia UP, 2016).
3. See for example: Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World*, trans. Rodrigo Nunes (Cambridge: Polity, 2017); Amitov Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: U Chicago Press, 2016); Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2016); Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future* (New York: Columbia UP, 2014); Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2015); Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt, eds., *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota Press, 2017); *Uncivilization: The Dark Mountain Manifesto* (2009), online: www.dark-mountain.net; and David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth: A Story of the Future* (New York: Allen Lane, 2019).

4. Elizabeth Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2016), pp. 8-9.
5. See Gene Ray, Aurélien Gamboni, Janis Schroeder, and Kate Stevenson, *The Anthropocene Atlas of Geneva*, online: <https://head.hesge.ch/taag/en/>. This project was carried out over two years (2016-18), with funding from the Swiss National Science Foundation. This followed four years of preparatory research and collaborations supported by the CCC Research-based Master Programme at HEAD. The results can be found on the project website, which includes an archive of 34 video interviews and a glossary of 58 entries by various authors, as well as visual art contributed by Denise Bertschi, Ursula Biemann, Giulia Bruno, Chris Jordan, Armin Linke, Oliver Ressler, Luc Schuiten, Paulo Tavares, and Marie Velardi. The TAAG Advisory Research Group members were: Iain Boal, Gabriella Calchi Novati, David Cross, Hannah Entwisle Chapuisat, Anna Grichting, Sacha Kagan, Armin Linke, Nils Norman, Catherine Quéloz, Grégory Quenet, Philippe Rekacewicz, Oliver Ressler, Liliane Schneider, Paulo Tavares, and the late Chris Wainwright. For an overview and history of the project and its methods, see "About" on the *Atlas* website: <https://head.hesge.ch/taag/en/about/>.
6. Or the irreparable ruination of philosophical systems and totalities, as Theodor W. Adorno would inflect Benjamin. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973).
7. Karl Marx, *Capital* [1867], vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1977), pp. 163-177.
8. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History" [1940], in *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, 1938-1940, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott, et al. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2003), pp. 392, 395, 391-2.
9. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," pp. 390-391, 395.
10. Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" [1929], in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, p. 218.
11. Benjamin, "Surrealism," p. 216.
12. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 59, 99. I thank Gabriella Calchi Novati for the gift of this book.
13. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics*, ed. and trans. Peter Skafish (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2014), p. 61. See also Taussig's account of his experience descending the iron steps of Dani Karavan's memorial to Benjamin in Port Bou, in Taussig, *Walter Benjamin's Grave* (Chicago: U Chicago Press, 2006).
14. The epigraph is from Benjamin, "To the Planetarium," in *One-Way Street* [1928], trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1979), p. 103 (translation modified). The quotation is from Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* [1872] and *Other Writings*, eds. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), p. 18. Nietzsche elaborates his interpretation of the function of *Rausch* for the ancient Greeks in "The Dionysiac World View" [written 1870, unpublished in Nietzsche's lifetime], in the same volume, p. 120: "Dionysiac art, by contrast, is based on play with intoxication, with the state of ecstasy. There are two principal forces which bring naïve, natural man to the self-oblivion of intense intoxication: the drive of spring and narcotic drink. Their effects are symbolized in the figure of Dionysos. In both states the *principium individuationis* is disrupted, subjectivity disappears entirely before the erupting force of the general element in human life, indeed of the general element in nature. Not only do the festivals of Dionysos forge a bond between human beings, they also reconcile human beings and nature. Freely the earth brings its gifts, the fiercest beasts approach one another; the flower-decked chariot of Dionysos is drawn by panthers and tigers."
15. Benjamin, "Surrealism," p. 215.
16. Esther Leslie, *Walter Benjamin: Overpowering Conformism* (London: Pluto, 2000), pp. 25-38. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," [Second Version, 1936], in *Selected Writings*, vol. 3, 1935-1938, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott, et al. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2002), p. 102.
17. I borrow "more-than-human" from David Abram, *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology* (New York: Vintage, 2010), p. 7.
18. I borrow the term "epistemicide" from Ramón Grosfoguel, who argues compellingly that modernity was constituted by four genocides perpetrated simultaneously between 1450 and 1650: the Spanish conquest and ethnic cleansing of Andalusia; the European invasion and genocide in the Americas; the enslaving European invasion of Africa; and the burning of the European witches. Each genocide was also an epistemicide, the destruction of a knowledge system and its culture: "And then they burned the libraries," as he puts it.

- [Online](#). The cases Grosfoguel cites are a combination of settler colonial invasion and early modern episodes of what Marx named “so-called original accumulation,” the violent separation of Indigenous and peasant communities from their means of production and the enclosure of their commons, including knowledge commons. See also Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia 2004); Marguerite Davenport, “The Purple Artichoke of Plainpalais: A Political History of Witch Hunts and the Enclosure of Medicinal Knowledge in Geneva,” Master’s Thesis, HEAD – Genève, 2018; and Davenport’s entries for the *Atlas* glossary, “enclosures,” <https://head.hesge.ch/taag/en/glossaire/enclosures/>; and “purple artichoke of Plainpalais,” <https://head.hesge.ch/taag/en/glossaire/purple-artichoke-of-plainpalais/>. Paul Gilroy long ago marked the complicity between (racializing) terror and (Enlightenment) reason in modernity. See Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993). The need to think the “Anthropocene” together with the histories of slavery and settler colonial genocide and ecocide has been registered strongly in critical Anthropocene studies, most recently by Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota Press, 2018). I thank Marisa Cornejo for altering me to the important work of Ramón Grosfoguel.
19. I borrow the notion of “livability” from Anna Tsing and Donna Haraway. Livability implies that “staying alive – for every species – requires livable collaborations.” Such collaborations are multispecies and work “across difference.” Anna Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, p. 28. See also Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*; and Anna Tsing, et al., *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*; as well as Katherine Gibson Deborah Bird Rose and Ruth Fincher, eds., *Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene* (Brooklyn: Punctum, 2015).
 20. Scarcity, Hickel shows, belongs to the paradigm of growth and must constantly be imposed and enforced. By contrast, degrowth, understood not as mere economic contraction but as a social and economic reorganization that de-encloses and expands the commons and redistributes private wealth into public forms, would release an abundance of qualitative relations and livabilities. Jason Hickel, “Degrowth: A Theory of Radical Abundance,” *Real-World Economics Review* 87 (19 March 2019): 54-68; online: https://www.academia.edu/38601467/Degrowth_A_theory_of_radical_abundance. See also Marshall Sahlins, “The Original Affluent Society” [1968] in *Stone Age Economics*, (London: Routledge Classics, 2017); Giacomo D’Alisa, Federico Demaria, and Giorgos Kallis, *Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era* (London: Routledge, 2015); and the glossary entry “buen vivir” in the *Atlas*: <https://head.hesge.ch/taag/en/glossaire/buen-vivir/>. I thank Guilherme Prado for the gift of *Stone Age Economics*.
 21. I thank David Cross for alerting me to this likelihood.
 22. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1974), pp. 39, 50.
 23. Janis Schroeder, *The Anthropocene Atlas of Geneva: Trailer 01*, digital video, 1:37 minutes, 2018, online: <https://vimeo.com/309496929>. All four trailers, as well as the complete video interviews excerpted, can also be accessed from the *Atlas* website: <https://head.hesge.ch/taag/en/project-outputs/>.
 24. See the entry “commodities trading” in the *Atlas* glossary, online: <https://head.hesge.ch/taag/en/glossaire/commodities-trading/>.
 25. For critical perspectives on accelerationism, transhumanism, and eco-modernism, see the essays in *Dark Mountain 8 Technê* (Autumn 2015).
 26. See Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race: Racial Oppression and Social Control*, vol. I (London: Verso 1994); and Gerald Horne, *The Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism: The Roots of Slavery, White Supremacy, and Capitalism in Seventeenth-Century North America and the Caribbean* (New York: Monthly Review, 2018). On violence on the new plantations, see Michael Taussig, *Palma Africana* (Chicago: U Chicago Press, 2018). See also the entry “Plantationocene” in the *Atlas* glossary: <https://head.hesge.ch/taag/en/glossaire/plantationocene/>.
 27. Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” p. 391.
 28. Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin’s “On the Concept of History,”* trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 92-93.
 29. *Documenting Hate: Charlottesville*, Frontline/PBS and ProPublica, August 7, 2018, [online](#).
 30. Stephen Budiansky, *The Bloody Shirt: Terror after the Civil War* (New York: Plume, 2009); W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Free Press, 1998); and Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (London: Greenwood, 1971).

31. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* [1944], ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002), p. 152: “The elaborate symbols proper to every counterrevolutionary movement, the death’s heads and masquerades, the barbaric [sic] drumming, the monotonous repetition of words and gestures, are so many organized imitations of magical practices, the mimesis of mimesis.” Cf. Taussig: “Modernity stimulated primitivism along with wiping out the primitive.” Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, p. 231.
32. Benjamin, “To the Planetarium,” p. 104 (translation modified): “This immense wooing of the cosmos was enacted for the first time on a planetary scale, that is, in the spirit of technics (*Technik*). But because the lust for profit of the ruling class sought satisfaction through it, technics betrayed mankind and turned the bridal bed into a bloodbath.” In modernity, Benjamin argues, echoing Marx, technics became a tool for the human domination of nature and a weapon for the domination of people; its revolutionary role with regard to reparative justice, however, is to enable mastery of *the relation* between nature and the human.
33. Patricio Guzmán, *El Botón de Nácar* [*The Pearl Button*], 2015. Guzmán uses the phrase in his powerful film, which links settler colonial genocide against Indigenous peoples in Chile to the torture and political murders perpetrated by the Pinochet dictatorship, following the US-supported coup against the elected government of Salvador Allende. I thank Anna Papaeti for introducing me to this film.
34. See Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2018); and *Documenting Hate: New American Nazis*, Frontline/PBS and ProPublica, November 20, 2018, online: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/documenting-hate-new-american-nazis/>.
35. See the interviews with Hannah Entwistle Chapuisat, Justin Ginnetti, and Nazhat Shameem Kahn, as well as the glossary entry “climate refugee” on the *Atlas* website: <https://head.hesge.ch/taag/en/glossaire/climate-refugee/>. For a trenchant discussion of the politics of borders, see Achille Mbembe, “Deglobalization,” *Eurozine*, 18 February 2019, online: <https://www.eurozine.com/deglobalization/>.
36. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 152.
37. See the interview with Oliver Ressler and the entry “commodities trading” in the *Atlas* glossary: <https://head.hesge.ch/taag/en/glossaire/commodities-trading/>.
38. See the interview with the Standing Rock Delegation, as well as the glossary entry “divestment”: <https://head.hesge.ch/taag/en/interview/standing-rock-delegation-in-geneva>.
39. Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” p. 395.
40. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (New York: Penguin, 1991), p. 316.
41. I borrow “survivance” from Gerald Vizenor, who distinguishes it from survival, or mere physical persistence; “survivance” points to Indigenous cultural strategies, including trickster irony, for coping and deflecting the catastrophic genocides and ecocides of modernity. See Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: U Nebraska Press, 1994); and Vizenor, ed., *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: U Nebraska Press, 2008). On mutuality, see Linda Hogan, *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World* (New York: Norton, 1995); Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants* (Minneapolis: milkweed Editions, 2013); and Vandana Shiva, *Making Peace with the Earth* (London: Pluto, 2013). “Planet of slums” is the phrase of Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2006). See also the glossary entries “cities of refuge,” “refuge,” “refugia,” and “resurgence” in the *Atlas*: <https://head.hesge.ch/taag/en/glossary/>.
42. See the interview with Martin Beniston, and the glossary entry “climate analogue” in the *Atlas*: <https://head.hesge.ch/taag/en/glossaire/climate-analogue/>.
43. Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” p. 395. Against the perennial message from above that the time is not yet ripe, Benjamin’s theses held that the “straight gate” or opening to revolutionary time was inherent in every moment.
44. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s notion of “line of flight” inspired a sustained reflection by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt on the possibilities of subtraction, exit, and exodus. See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: U Minnesota Press, 1987); and Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2009). A related constellation configures “temporary autonomous zones,” “pirate utopias,” and the “revolutionary Atlantic.” See Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z. The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (New York: Autonomedia, 1985); Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Pirate Utopias: Moorish Corsairs & European Renegades* (New York: Autonomedia, 1995); Peter Linebaugh, *Stop, Thief!: The Commons*,

Enclosures, and Resistance (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2014); and Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon, 2000). Meanwhile, the history of fugitive slave communities has been theorized by Neil Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage* (Chicago: U Chicago Press, 2015) and inflected into a new practice of institutional critique in Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013). On this last stream, see also Léa Thaïs Genoud, “RANO RANO: Naming, Listening to, Refusing the Coloniality of the Exhibitionary Complex,” Master’s Thesis, HEAD – Genève, 2019.

45. *Omnia sunt communia*, uttered by Thomas Müntzer, a rebel leader of Peasants’ War, in his confession under torture in 1525, is widely understood as a call to the common ownership of all property: “all things are in common” or “everything for everybody.” Müntzer and his phrase feature in the brilliant novel *Q*, written under the multiple name Luther Blissett, and is the title of a major work on commoning by Massimo De Angelis. I’ve merely pushed the idea in the direction of Indigenous multi-species kinship and mutuality. See Luther Blissett, *Q*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (London: Arrow, 2000); Massimo De Angelis: *Omnia Sunt Communia: On the Commons and the Transformation to Postcapitalism* (London: Zed, 2017); David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004); Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*; Winona Laduke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Chicago: Haymarket, 1999); Silko, *Almanac of the Dead*, p. 314. In this connection, Anna Tsing’s precautionary reflection is pertinent: “Latent commons are not exclusive human enclaves. Opening the commons to other beings shifts everything. Once we include pests and diseases, we can’t hope for harmony; the lion will not lie down with the lamb. And organisms don’t just eat each other; they also make divergent ecologies. *Latent commons are those mutualist and nonantagonistic entanglements found within the play of this confusion.*” Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, p. 255 (my italics). Think this caveat together with the conclusions of lichenologist Pilippe Clerc at Geneva Botanical Gardens: “Symbiosis is a really successful process on earth. It’s not competition that is important, but symbiosis, togetherness.” See the interview with Clerc and the glossary entry “lichens” in the *Atlas*: <https://head.hesge.ch/taag/en/glossaire/lichens/>.
46. In 2003, Fredric Jameson revised his famous 1994 remark about the difficulty of imagining the end of capitalism: “Someone once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism. We can now revise that and witness the attempt to imagine capitalism by way of imagining the end of the world.” Jameson, “Future City,” *New Left Review* 21 (May/June 2003): 76; and Wolfgang Streek, “How Will Capitalism End?,” *New Left Review* 87 (May/June 2014): 35-64.
47. Mark Burton and Peter Somerville, “Degrowth: A Defense,” *New Left Review* 115 (January/February 2019): 104.