Heathen Earth: Trumpism and Political Ecology

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“The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive,” Trump tweeted on November 6, 2012. This is only Trump’s most famous climate hoax tweet; a web archive records over 100 tweets issued between November 2012 and October 2015 that outright deny that global warming exists, claim that the climate data has been “manipulated,” and curiously accuse environmentalist “con artists” of backing off of the term “global warming” in favor of “climate change” due to cold weather, among a battery of other sneering dismissals. In a bit of poetic (in)justice, on the very day Trump was elected, the World Meteorological Organization issued its Global Climate in 2011–2015 report. The WMO report confirms that this five-year period was the warmest on record globally (the five-year period of 2010–2014 having set the previous record), with 2015 being the warmest year to date and 2016 on course to exceed 2015. The report states that, “[t]he year

1 See http://www.trumptwitterarchive.com/#!/archive/global%20warming.
3 Ibid., 6. The same is true of ocean temperatures; see ibid., 7–8. In this connection, climate negationists have already begun to position their messaging in opposition: although 2016 will in all likelihood show still greater warming than 2015 (and indeed, on January 18, 2017, NASA/NOAA data confirmed that 2016 was the hottest year on record to date), negationists claim this is due exclusively to the super El Niño warming effect recorded over the 2014–2016 period, which has begun tapering off in the third quarter 2016. 2017 is not expected to show El Niño-related warming effects and
2015 was also the first year in which global temperatures were more than 1°C above the pre-industrial average [using either the 1850–1900 or the 1880–1900 average].”⁴ (Note that researchers, the IPCC, and other organizations have called for coordinated efforts to contain the increase in global temperatures to 1.5–2°C above the pre-industrial average, a prospect that now seems out of reach.)⁵ The WMO report also affirms that the annual mean concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide in 2015 was 400.0 parts per million.⁶ (A day in May 2013 showed the first daily global concentration of CO₂ at 400 ppm, and March 2016 showed so, in the event that any 2017 temperature measurements are cooler than 2016, negationists will argue that this demonstrates that global warming is non-anthropogenic. There are too many ways for this argument to fail to anticipatorily deflate it; I simply mention it because the line of reasoning it depends upon is likely to be advanced by negationists and amplified in the news media over the duration of Trump's term.

⁴ Ibid.
⁵ See Carl-Friedrich Schleussner et al., “Differential Climate Impacts for Policy-Relevant Limits to Global Warming: The Case of 1.5°C and 2°C,” Earth System Dynamics 7 (2016): 327–51, which assesses the likely impact on ecological and human systems (extreme weather events, water availability, agricultural yield for various crops, sea rise, coral reef systems) assuming the global temperature increases by 1.5–2°C over pre-industrial averages. The paper finds, among other things, that “the difference between 1.5°C and 2°C marks the transition between an upper limit of present-day natural variability and a new climate regime in terms of heat extremes globally …. Our assessment based on this limited set of indicators implies that differences in climate impacts between 1.5°C and 2°C are most pronounced for particularly vulnerable regions and societal groupings with limited adaptive capacity. Under a 2°C warming, coastal tropical regions and islands may face the combined effects of a near-complete loss of tropical coral reefs, which provide coastal protection and are a main source of ecosystem services, on-going sea-level rise above present-day rates over the 21st century and increased threats by coastal flooding and inundation. The risks posed by extreme heat and potential crop yield reductions in tropical regions in Africa and South-East Asia under a 2°C warming are particularly critical given the projected trends in population growth and urbanization in these regions. In conjunction with other development challenges, the impacts of climate change represent a fundamental challenge for regional food security and may trigger new poverty traps for several countries or populations within countries.”

⁶ WMO, 8–9.
the first month-long global concentration of CO₂ at 400 ppm.) According to the 2015 Greenhouse Gas Bulletin, 44% of all CO₂ emitted by human activity from 2004 to 2015 remained trapped in the atmosphere, while the remaining 56% was removed by oceans and other carbon sinks. The WMO report provides updated data on other greenhouse gases as well as Arctic ice melting rates (the ice extent was the lowest on record, meaning the melting rate has increased), rates of sea level rising (record high in 2015, with 2011–2015 showing consistent rising levels, particularly in the western Pacific), and precipitation anomalies and heatwaves, cold waves, tropical cyclones, floods, droughts, and severe storms, some of which can be traced to anthropogenic climate change.7

This book is not meant to reproduce climate science; I draw on the WMO report only because of its coincidence with Trump’s election. In a post-election interview with the New York Times, Trump addressed climate change in more detail than he did during the campaign. In a room full of “liberal” journalists, Trump the dealmaker spoke much more than Trump the demagogue. His comments — as desultory and ambiguous as they are — are reproduced here in pertinent part (ellipses in original):

TRUMP: … But a lot of smart people disagree with you. I have a very open mind. And I’m going to study a lot of the things that happened on it [i.e., climate change] and we’re going to look at it very carefully. But I have an open mind.

ARTHUR SULZBERGER: Well, since we’re living on an island, sir, I want to thank you for having an open mind. We saw what these storms are now doing, right? We’ve seen it personally. Straight up.

THOMAS FRIEDMAN: But you have an open mind on this?

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7 Ibid., 25–26.
TRUMP: I do have an open mind. And we’ve always had storms, Arthur.

SULZBERGER: Not like this.

TRUMP: You know the hottest day ever was in 1890-something, 98. You know, you can make lots of cases for different views. I have a totally open mind.

My uncle was for 35 years a professor at MIT. He was a great engineer, scientist. He was a great guy. And he was … a long time ago, he had feelings — this was a long time ago — he had feelings on this subject. It’s a very complex subject. I’m not sure anybody is ever going to really know. I know we have, they say they have science on one side but then they also have those horrible emails that were sent between the scientists. Where was that, in Geneva or wherever five years ago? Terrible. Where they got caught, you know, so you see that and you say, what’s this all about. I will tell you this: Clean air is vitally important. Clean water, crystal clean water is vitally important. Safety is vitally important.

And you know, you mentioned a lot of the [golf] courses. I have some great, great, very successful golf courses. I’ve received so many environmental awards for the way I’ve done, you know. I’ve done a tremendous amount of work where I’ve received tremendous numbers. Sometimes I’ll say I’m actually an environmentalist and people will smile in some cases and the other people that know me understand that’s true. Open mind.

JAMES BENNET: When you say an open mind, you mean you’re just not sure whether human activity causes climate change? Do you think human activity is or isn’t connected?

TRUMP: I think right now … well, I think there is some connectivity. There is some, something. It depends on how much. It also depends on how much it’s going to cost our
companies. You have to understand, our companies are non-competitive right now.

They’re really largely noncompetitive. About four weeks ago, I started adding a certain little sentence into a lot of my speeches, that we’ve lost 70,000 factories since [George] W. Bush. 70,000. When I first looked at the number, I said: “That must be a typo. It can’t be 70, you can’t have 70,000, you wouldn’t think you have 70,000 factories here.” And it wasn’t a typo, it’s right. We’ve lost 70,000 factories.

We’re not a competitive nation with other nations anymore. We have to make ourselves competitive. We’re not competitive for a lot of reasons.

That’s becoming more and more of the reason. Because a lot of these countries that we do business with, they make deals with our president, or whoever, and then they don’t adhere to the deals, you know that. And it’s much less expensive for their companies to produce products. So I’m going to be studying that very hard, and I think I have a very big voice in it. And I think my voice is listened to, especially by people that don’t believe in it. And we’ll let you know.8

“There is some connectivity,” but “our companies are noncompetitive right now,” so “we’ll let you know” whether the United States will do anything to avert planetary ecological collapse or, on the contrary, do a series of things to exacerbate and accelerate the process. There is no question of cutting carbon, methane, and other deleterious emissions, of placing strict limits on extraction efforts, pipelines, etc.; there is only a slim possibility that emissions will not be raised to downright suicidal levels. Post-election Trump — the same Trump who met with Al Gore in a designed-for-media-consumption bid to find “common ground” on environmental issues, in Gore’s words — was willing to at least give the appearance of walking away from a long-term

denialism campaign with minimal prodding, immediately acknowledging that the issue, for him, has always been economic, not ecological. But the issues bundled together under the climate change or global warming labels are irreducibly ecological and economic — and political, legal, moral, epistemological, historical, and a host of other things, since they call into doubt all dogmatic disciplinary enclosures and boundaries. Trump’s pre-election denialist statements and post-election “open mind” statements are superficially inconsistent, but in a deeper sense, they are one and the same.

First, the conciliatory tone struck with NYT reporters and Al Gore is merely yet another example of Trump’s legendary inconsistency and duplicity; if the “connectivity” he admits is so minor, so unthreatening as to amount to a mere bargaining chip that can be gambled away with a broad environmental deregulatory strategy designed to boost domestic productivity and line the pockets of fossil capitalists, including several Trump Cabinet appointees, there is no “common ground” whatsoever between his agenda and any ecological reform worthy of the name. But second, and more importantly, both sets of claims — the pre-electoral denialism and the post-electoral agnosticism — presuppose a deanimated world in which Nature cannot react, in which passive, mechanical Nature stands ontologically apart from active, intentional Humanity, and in which, at worst, it will be possible to balance the Nation’s economic interests against the natural processes that encroach on them. As we will see in the next section, metaphysically, these statements presuppose a world in which History has decisively ended, such that the climate catastrophe threatening the capitalist order of infinite growth cannot possibly occur. That an unprincipled nihilist for whom everything is on the negotiating table is ascending to the highest ranks of government, hand in hand with the world’s most destructive corporate blackguards, is the best evidence yet that this is the case. Such a development is only possible with a maximal dose of certainty that the apocalypse has already passed.
It may seem that my criticisms of Nature are excessive; that no one could hold such a view and my remarks are directed only at straw men. I do hope this seems to be the case, because Nature is a preposterous, poorly made construction. But unfortunately, I am not being excessive or abusive. Nature is rarely defended in the form I’ve given it, as an ontological or cosmological foundation, articulable in theses or claims. For some, it is hoped, my merely stating the claims of Nature expressly is sufficient to refute them. But however mistaken, however unrealistic, it is not an unusual or uncommon ontological or cosmological foundation. We find it, to take only a recent example, even in what I imagine will soon be called “critical climate studies,” the broadly anti-capitalist critical-theoretical discourse on climate change. This is the last place we should expect to find Nature, and yet there it circulates rather freely.

As Andreas Malm likes to remind us, in his well-written social history of labor and fossil fuels, no lump of coal has ever crushed, bowled over, or carried off anyone on its own; coal, petroleum, and gas became forms of power, in both physico-chemical and socio-political senses, through specific human actions.9 Despite the appeal, owing to its stark simplicity, of this irrefutable observation from which Malm goes on to draw significant insights, it is misleading precisely because coal, petroleum, and gas are not ever socially disconnected. There is no case in which those entities are untethered from associative bonds. Even while buried deep in the earth’s crust, even while unknown to surface-dwellers above, geological processes (burial and sedimentation, plate tectonic heating) and selective decomposition processes (breakdown of chemical relations driving out elements other than carbon, absorption of other chemicals like mercury) create and alter the associations that define the frontiers and the form of the coal as well as the subterranean water and chemical cycles that surround and pass through it. These processes help to con-

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centrate and preserve the solar energy that the coal seam crystallizes, to sequester vast amounts of carbon and thus to sustain the coal in subsurface existence, as well as to subtract potent and often hazardous chemicals like uranium from groundwater flows. If it were necessary to say what coal is, we should have to take account not only of geological and geochemical processes like these, but also microbial and solar agencies involved in its production and stabilization. Like the geological and geochemical processes, these too demand the work of the sciences; sedimentologists, bacteriologists, materials scientists, and plenty of others are required to discipline these agencies, to enroll them by force or fraud, through the intervention of sensors and instruments, theories and ample funding, to stabilize the material processes.\(^{10}\) All of these processes together produce an energy trap, a collective nonhuman being defined by a different, much slower velocity than its ingredient agencies. Attending to the materiality of coal means capturing its coalition of forces, the heterogeneous forces, spaces, and times it binds together, which constitute it as such, which define its environing world, and which are unlocked in combustion. The historicity of coal cannot be narrated without attending to the mediations of labor power, technologies, and industrial economics, but it is a facile anthropocentrism that mistakes all these processual acts for unsocial ones. Coal is a carbon society.

If we insist on this point, which is easily dismissed by so-called materialist historians, it is because everything is missed if the convolutions of agency, whether human or nonhuman, are compressed into the black box (or black stone) of Nature. Malm is acutely, unusually sensitive to the articulation of “natural history” with “social history”; why, then, does he reproduce this rigid dichotomy? In my view, it’s because in his account — but not only his account — materiality has been idealized. It is, in effect, transparent, just there — until human labor moves it, at

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\(^{10}\) These remarks may bring to mind Ian Hacking’s memorable discussion of rocks; see Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 186–206.
which time it takes on human dimensions. Instead, however, nothing is ever transparent or inert (except when other actors conspire to make it so, which itself demands an accounting) and it is just as often human labor that is stamped with nonhuman qualities as nonhumans that are stamped with anthropomorphic attributes. By extending instead of diminishing the range of beings through which another being passes to sustain its existence, materiality loses its ideality, which is to say that it becomes materialist. But materialism and Nature are incompatible.

In a digression that is not unrelated, it’s worth noting Malm’s impatience with discourses, Marxist and non-Marxist, that are often characterized as “technological determinism”; this label is problematic — conclusory and often overblown, especially since these theories are not typically credited for admirably doing the necessary work, and running the risks, of taking technological agencies into account — but Malm seems prepared to adopt it wholesale, on the view that it constitutes a self-evident refutation of the theory it is applied to. But things are more complicated than that; it is even quite possible to be a “technological determinist” as well as, for instance, a “political determinist,” a “theological determinist,” and a “libidinal determinist” all at once, since the devil is in the detail of what exactly is determined by which actors, under which conditions, at which locations and according to whose standards, whose contextualization, whose temporalities, etc. Determinisms of the world, unite! But be prepared to give up any pretense to universal providence.

What difference might this redoubled attention to materiality make? To be perfectly clear, I rely on Malm’s account because I admire it: I do not argue that Malm’s idealization of matter necessarily undercuts or calls into question his arguments about the historical causalities in nineteenth century Britain that he traces. But I am certain that this dematerialization made Malm’s story easier to tell, and far easier to focus with the purpose of stabilizing a linear historical narrative. The cost is a kind of lost opportunity to follow multiple historical lineages cutting across the one actually extracted in the text. One of the advantages accruing to Malm’s narrative is that it can claim that it is due sim-
ply to the nature of coal—its “spatiotemporal profile,” as Malm says by way of approximating its materiality—that it was “more appropriate for capital” than water power: “Having been brought into the marketplace by means of human labor, pieces of the stock circulated in physical freedom, available for combustion in absolute, indeed necessary detachment from other burners. Here the private property of cotton manufactures found a source of energy congenial to its logic: piecemeal, splintered, amenable to concentration and accumulation, divisible.”11 Fortuitously for capital, coal is in itself commodifiable according to the pregiven parameters of the capitalist mode of production; there is no need to ask the inverse question of whether and how coal, and the coalition of material forces that it concentrates, may itself have helped to shape or refine that logic. But this is a question Marxist and non-Marxist economic historians alike should be asking: not only how does thick materiality undergo reduction into a thin object or commodity, but how do these reductions transform the “logic” of the “mode of production” itself? (The dogmatic idealist answer—“they don’t, not at all!”—is insufficient. The mode of production would be nothing without the transactions it purports to collect.) It seems that before these questions can be posed, the proliferation of beings sustaining a being in existence—whether coal or capitalism—would first need to have been grasped. Such inquiries would not necessarily undercut but seem rather to have the potential of strengthening Malm’s account of capitalism as a contingent organization of power (rather than a logic of economic necessity), inasmuch as they show that the materiality of coal had a formative influence on how capitalism as we know it has come to be fused with the fossil: coal is one of the beings through which capitalism had to continually pass in order to have taken the shape that it did in the nineteenth century and to sustain itself today. It is not, or not only, capital’s expansionary movement that accounts for its attraction to portable, commodified energy sources like coal; it is also the material affordances of coal that account for capital’s expansionary

11 Malm, *Fossil Capital*, 150 (emphasis mine).
movement. Instead of, or in addition to, steam “created by capital in its own image,” there is capital created by coal in its image. This difference in the direction of the historical vector is not inconsequential: it is the difference between an unassailable, truly autonomous self-reproducing economic system and a fragile, materially heteronomous, reactive economic system.

How, then, might we take account of the undeniable voracity of capital — its apparent self-expanding, self-valorizing movement, together with its quasi-mystical ability to make itself (no doubt, with the assistance of critical theorists) into a universal cause? The canonical resolution is to inscribe within the logic or the structure of capital itself an endless expansionary tendency: this is its nature. But if capital’s material heteronomy is respected, if the materiality of what Malm calls its material substratum (coal, for example) is respected, then a different picture emerges. Rather than an innate tendency or a transcendental structure, the voracity of capital would be a marker of the finitude of the very process that capital exemplifies, namely economization. Instead of positing a natural necessity, we need to follow the material transformations, the limited and always interrupted, always finite economizations, constitutive of capital as such, in order to grasp its infinity. In this regard, the fossil does not merely allow capital to fulfill its predetermined historical destiny but rather makes what Marxists call real subsum-

12 Ibid., 265.
13 As Marx has it: “The value-sustaining power of labor appears as the self-supporting power of capital; the value creating power of labor as the self-valorizing power of capital and, in general, in accordance with its concept, living labor appears to be put to work by objectified labor”; and, when production expands in scope (more workers, more organization, more machinery) and the application of science and technology is added to production, this impression greatly “intensifie[s],” producing the “productive power of capital” (Karl Marx, “Results of the Immediate Process of Production,” in Capital, Vol. 1: A Critique of Political Economy, trans. Ben Fowkes [New York: Vintage Books, 1977], 1020–21, 1024).
tion (revolutionizing of the means of production) possible; it *destines* capital.

It remains the case, in any event, that portable, accumulable fossil fuels allowed British factory owners to strategically position their factories in densely populated regions, to take maximal advantage of the labor pool and avoid being hamstrung by the mostly non-negotiable geographies of flowing water or moving air. In that sense, too, it remains the case that the climate crisis has an origin in a labor crisis: I am convinced that Malm has correctly targeted a key historical source of the unholy alliance of coal and capital in nineteenth century British labor relations. But what also comes into relief, if materiality is not idealized, is that the mode of production is not nearly as rigidly mechanistic as it purports to be. This isn’t a statement on how simple it ought to be to turn it off and find an alternative, as some allege in responding to related arguments.15 It’s a statement about the attributes with which anti-capitalists of any stripe have to contend.

But now we come to the crux of the matter. In the very same stroke by which the efficacy and autonomy of capital is overvalued, the agency and responsiveness of the earth is undervalued. The fossilization of capital amounts, as we have seen, to an exchange of properties between coal and capital whereby capital acquires extraordinary mobility. Freed from the relative fixity of sources like water and wind, it can relocate with ease to take maximal advantage of international labor conditions, minimizing costs (depressing wages) by abandoning resistant or organized labor. But what is easily overlooked is that this very mobility, which is indissociably related to the expansion of global markets and the manufacture of goods for export rather than local consumption, gives rise to the territorial–spatial configuration that obscures the earth’s own mobility. This configuration is precisely the *res extensa*, the empty, uniform geometrical space

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of extension that globalization presupposes and which critics of
globalization tend to swallow whole.\textsuperscript{16} Crisscrossed by land, sea,
and air trade routes that annul the reality of distance (and ignore
the enormous levels of emission required to shuttle ceaselessly
to and fro), acknowledging no terrestrial border or boundary,
punctuated only by differences in production and consumption
sites, this Globe reflects no sensitivity to any atmospheric or
material conditions that may nevertheless sustain it, nor to the
varieties of ecological experience that it may foreclose.

Against this Globe-In-Extensity there rises an Earth-In-Inten-
tivity. We shall soon learn how better to recognize both.

§2 Reprising the “Ends”

But what about the Nation? In the first essay, we glimpsed the
political transformation of the “end of neoliberalism,” the sub-
mission of its market ontology to the regime of despotic repres-
sentation, but a deeper tectonic shift should not be overlooked.
Trumpism — and, again, by this term we refer especially but not
exclusively to the politics of the incoming Trump administra-
tion: the full wave of nationalist politics currently reproducing
itself in Europe and elsewhere, of which Trump is merely one
aspect, belongs to its semantic horizon — is in an important re-
spect a phase in a far more complex metaphysical and escha-
tological movement. Despite the self-understanding articulated
by supporters in rural America,\textsuperscript{17} this movement is not a simple
yearning for bygone times; it is a fervent commitment to the end
of time. More than a commitment, it is an \textit{absolute certainty} that
the end times have come and gone, that the final frontier has
been reached, that History is over. The retrieval of the Nation
from the ashes of History does not discard but fuses the ontol-

\textsuperscript{16} To be clear, I don’t think Malm, my primary interlocutor in this discussion,
is guilty of this error. Indeed, Malm addresses the abstract space of capital
at some length.

\textsuperscript{17} See, for example, Alexander Zaitchik, \textit{The Gilded Rage: A Wild Ride through
Donald Trump’s America} (New York: Hot Books, 2016), which provides a
quasi-ethnographic window into local Trumpisms.
ogy of the market with that of modern political sovereignty in a new configuration: the Globe is deterritorialized, only to be reterritorialized on the Nation. We have already seen that this entails not the dismantling of an international regime of exchange but rather its overcoding, its rewiring to pass always through the body of the despot. None of this amounts to an awakening to ongoingness, in Haraway’s terms,\textsuperscript{18} to the multiple temporalities and terrestrial historicities in which we are entangled, as though the modern commitment to the end of History had been belatedly overturned, as though History itself had awoken from its slumber. Quite the contrary, since the rise of the Nation is a reaction to the Globe, to the vertigo of placelessness and of landlessness, it concentrates political energies on the tensions among those bodies and subtracts concern from the Earth. In a sense, then, the Trumpist investment of the Nation is the most potent assault on the Earth imaginable, since in this way, it is decisively silenced, literally negated.

But whatever tensions between Nation and Globe unfold over the next four years, they are sure to represent little more than a distracting spectacle from the viewpoint of political ecology. Trump’s nationalism (like all the other misshapen, incoherent fragments of ideology that somehow held together long enough to win the election) provided a rallying point, a node collecting a scattered crowd, an imaginary protective barrier; but it was, in key respects, merely a smokescreen for the Globe, a covert means of empowering the global markets that Trump’s supporters adamantly rejected. Trumpism is radically nationalist; Trump belongs with every fiber of his being to the markets. A legitimate concern for progressives, including Democrats, is that once Trump’s supporters figure out they have been duped on a massive scale, they will cast about for a truly revolutionary nationalist, more Trump than Trump, concluding that, had this administration only listened to the people, those jobs would’ve returned, those immigrants would’ve been arrested, those Muslims would’ve been put in camps. (As of the time of writing,

\textsuperscript{18} Haraway, \textit{Staying with the Trouble}.}
the Democrats don’t seem to have any credible plan to avoid this scenario.) All of this serves to snuff out the politics of the Earth, amplifying the already grotesque levels of planetary dependence on fossil capital, pushing normal political discourse further and further to the right. The next political messiah will come cleansed in oil.

Bruno Latour’s classic *We Have Never Been Modern* develops the argument that the Moderns’ self-understanding is rooted in a religious phenomenon. The Moderns are the people of enlightenments and epistemological ruptures, of scientific, industrial, and political revolutions, of the irreversible arrow of time, above all, of progress; in a word, modernization. The modern conviction that the past is definitively overcome, behind us, moot, and that we—Moderns—have definitively separated ourselves from those others, those primitives, savages, *pre-moderns* who endlessly mingle natural and social entities, facts and values, *is* and *ought*, having differentiated our politics from our sciences and landed, finally, on the one true path, finds its most cogent foundation in religion. One of Modernity’s signature gestures is to confine religion to personal spirituality, and in the same purifying move, to instrumentalize religion by inserting infinite distance between Man and God.19 This dual gesture Latour calls “the crossed-out God.” God is absent, removed, dead, but intimate and eternal. What is “crossed out” is really the temporality of the present, for this God has been ushered off stage but remains always at the origin and still yet to come. That is to say, it is precisely the Moderns themselves who have taken the old place of God, positioning themselves and their present after a premodern past, which they reject as a hopelessly confused

19 See, for example, Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 38: “You are indignant that the world is being mechanized? The modern critique will tell you about the creator God to whom everything belongs and who gave man everything. You are indignant that society is secular? The modern critique will show you that spirituality is thereby liberated, and that a wholly spiritual religion is far superior. You call yourself religious? The modern critique will have a hearty laugh at your expense!”
muddle of irrationality, and before a rational, purified future, which they enthusiastically embrace without ever reaching: “The past was the confusion of things and men; the future is what will no longer confuse them. Modernization consists in continually exiting from an obscure age that mingled the needs of society with scientific truth, in order to enter into a new age that will finally distinguish clearly what belongs to atemporal nature and what comes from humans, what depends on things and what belongs to signs.”

Lecture six of Latour’s *Facing Gaia* revisits this theme. Following Eric Voegelin on the history of political religions, Latour roots what becomes the modernist drive to realize Paradise on Earth in the work of Joachim de Fiore, a twelfth century monk, who introduced a third Kingdom to that of the Father and the Son: the Kingdom of the Spirit. The imperceptible mutation Joachim introduced was not perceived by the ecclesiastical authorities: “waiting for the Kingdom of the Spirit seems to be a perfect interpretation of the dogma of the Incarnation, which is after all defined by eternity *in time*.” But Joachim makes this Kingdom, brought about by an angel with a sword, “the realization *within* history of the *end* of history.” Awaiting “eternity in time” and “realizing within history the end of history” are not identical formulations. The former marks a timid, hesitant, humble, uncertain, religious manner of being in the world, of “fear and trembling” before the radical incompleteness of the world. But the latter, on the contrary, marks “a new possibility that would be the completion, the achievement, of the world here below by the intrusion of the Spirit—and it successors. *Living in the expectation* of the Apocalypse is one thing; living *after* its realization is something else again.”

What Joachim enabled, then, is the ability and indeed the necessity of making historical forecasts about the coming of the

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20 Ibid., 71.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
end, and of militantly, violently putting these forecasts into ac-
tion. The religious uncertainty and anticipation of the Second
Coming — the tenuous bond of immanence and transcendence
that registers as faith — turns into the political certainty that the
Kingdom of the Spirit will be realized here below — a superposi-
tion of Matter and Spirit that, in one stroke, creates a two-world
structure wholly foreign to the ontology of religion.25 The re-
alization within history of the end of history, through religious
wars, reformations, and utopian campaigns, or techno-scientific
and political revolutions, fails repeatedly; the sublunar world,
with its inert matter and its passing time, proves itself incapable
of accommodating the transcendence of the Spirit. But in find-
ing only the signs of imperfect, abortive, stalled transcendence
in the terrestrial world, that world, too, is lost to the Moderns.

Living in “the time of the end” is living with uncertainty, with
present uncertainty, and is what is properly religious about liv-
ing in the face of ecological catastrophe. The Moderns do not
live in the time of the end; they live, with absolute certainty,
following the end times, after the catastrophe. “If modernity
were not so deeply religious,” Latour even suggests, “the call to
adjust oneself to the Earth would be easily heard. But because
modernity has inherited the Apocalypse,”26 nothing is done, or
climate science is recklessly debunked, or emissions are multi-
plied in an impotent pseudo-heretical gesture. This inheritance,
together with the historical failure to realize the end of history,
leads to deep frustration with the things of the world, indeed to
contempt for this world and utter insensitivity to its historicity,
materiality, reactivity, terrestriality. It falls short, constantly, of
an Ideal, and so it is itself denied sensitivity, agency, immanence.
Recovering the thread of terrestriality, struggling to defend and
to become worthy of the Earth and its active/reactive material-
ity, is the prospect of what may be called geodicy. As Leibniz
sought to defend the justice of God in his Theodicy, so geodicists
advocate for the justice of the Earth.

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
For those who live after the end times, however, the Earth — the terrestrial Earth — is already dead. They see the signals, they understand the data, and still they do not act, or on the contrary, they act far too much, calling for the revitalization of coal mining facilities and coal-fired power plants (“clean coal,” to appease those with doubts) and the wholesale deregulation of the fossil fuel industry. They are disinhibited precisely because they know, for certain, that the end has come: instead of geodicy, they advocate geocide. You cannot convince them — not with argument, not with science, not with colorful graphs, not with physical demonstrations of rising sea levels, melting ice, disappearing species, or atmospheric readings — that they are enduring the Apocalypse, since they have already left it behind them.

To be clear, global warming denialism has little to do with science. The controversy between those who credit anthropogenic global warming and register it as an existential threat to life on Earth and those who deny it — whether the climate science showing that warming is occurring or the anthropogenic origin of the warming phenomenon — is not a scientific dispute. At this point, after the wide circulation of data compilations and reader-friendly summaries, peer-reviewed analyses, graphs, photos, and uncharacteristic warnings from normally reserved scientific researchers and institutions, no amount of information, no scientific assembly, and no intergovernmental body will persuade denialists of their error; without a rational path to consensus among “believers” and “non-believers,” what is occurring cannot fairly be described as a dispute. Head of the EPA, Scott Pruitt, calls piously for “debate” rather than “governmental intimidation of those who disagree with” those who “believe” in anthropogenic global warming.27 And while we debate, the planet burns, the air chokes, the waters rise, and the Rex Tillelers of the world count their haul. Funny how, in light of

Pruitt’s call to eliminate “governmental intimidation,” the day of his nomination was also the day on which concerned Department of Energy staffers leaked a 74-item questionnaire promulgated by the incoming Trump administration, seeking detailed information about climate policy conferences and their attendees, and documents relating to those conferences and attendees, as well as identification of all personnel that had any role in working up the Obama administration’s Social Cost of Carbon metric. The inquiry looks to be a fishing expedition looking for the next Climategate (i.e., emails and memos that global warming denialists can willfully misinterpret to produce the next distracting headline) or a hunting expedition meant to single out those Energy staffers disposed to “believe” in global warming.

Instead, the “controversy” has become not merely superficial but non-communicative. It is now, and maybe to some degree has always been, a structural non-coincidence of two parallel morphologies of ecological experience: is it a massively distributed, interactive, nonlinear, unpredictable, volatile, circulating plurality, or a rigid, compact unity? Active materiality or dead matter? A series of interconnected, relational, recursive action–reaction loops by which human actions are returned to their source through the labyrinthine, viscous mediations of, e.g., nonhuman geochemical cycles and by which humans are sensitized, or a sturdy, knowable, mechanical totality that is utterly insensitive to human actions? Trumpism is a decision firmly in favor of totality. Its political ecology imputes to Nature the qualities of permanence, impenetrability, universality; its spatiality is mere extension, res extensa. Such a totalizing account of reality furnishes a necessary cosmological grounding for the xenophobic politics of identity on which Trump was driven into power. And yet it draws deeply on the mobile geography of fos-

28 The loop/totality constructs used here are developed in Bruno Latour, Facing Gaia, Lecture Four. Timothy Morton uses a similar construct to great effect (the “strange” or uncanny loop, where “two levels that appear utterly separate [such as geology and humanity] flip into one another”) in Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).
sil capital. Here, in the annihilation of the Earth, we locate the frightful mutual presupposition of Globe and Nation.

Despotic representation works by naturalizing power, by establishing in myth and popular narrative a direct line of descent between the universal and the despot, Nature and Nation. But where Nature has exchanged properties with fossil capital in the manner we have seen, such descent is not possible without passing through the filter of the market; rather, the market itself having been naturalized, the Nation must take root in it if despotism is to hold. Following Deleuze and Guattari on this point, the despot “gathers all the subjects into the new machine” by effecting a connective synthesis of the old alliances with the new (installing the despot as an obligatory passage point in the circuits of law, economy, sciences, etc.), and a disjunctive synthesis overflowing the old filiations (the descent of the modern Globe from universal Nature) into the new one (the descent of the Nation from modernized Nature).29 This is true only of post-global despotism: neoliberal political and legal power has long devoted itself to eliminating all obstacles to private enrichment, including public welfare, but Trumpism distinguishes itself by what we might call its political subsumption of neoliberal capitalism.

If that’s so, we should ask why, after all, geocide is their mandate: they too, and their heirs, must live on this planet their cosmology systematically undervalues. And as financial types, shouldn’t we expect them to hedge their bets and put a Plan B into place, just in case the science is trustworthy and fossil fuel emissions actually are raising global temperatures, producing monster storms, destroying crop yields, melting ice sheets, raising sea levels, and so on, depositing the planet on a hellish trajectory hurtling toward certain death? The reason this expectation is in many cases disappointed is not simply that the ruling class believes geoengineering solutions will save the day when the going gets tough, but, as Naomi Klein has powerfully shown, because they are certain the best way to avoid the worst consequences down the road is to pile up more wealth now:

29 Deleuze & Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 198.
In wealthier nations, we will protect our major cities with costly seawalls and storm barriers while leaving vast areas of coastline that are inhabited by poor and Indigenous people to the ravages of storms and rising seas. We may well do the same on the planetary scale, deploying techno-fixes to lower global temperatures that will pose far greater risks to those living in the tropics than in the Global North […]. And rather than recognizing that we owe a debt to migrants forced to flee their lands as a result of our actions (and inactions), our governments will build ever more high-tech fortresses and adopt even more draconian anti-immigration laws.

[…]

[M]any regional climate models do predict that wealthy countries—most of which are located at higher altitudes—may experience some economic benefits from a slightly warmer climate, from longer growing seasons to access to shorter trade routes through the melting Arctic ice. At the same time, the wealthy in these regions are already finding ever more elaborate ways to protect themselves from the coming weather extremes. Sparked by events like Superstorm Sandy, new luxury real estate developments are marketing their gold-plated private disaster infrastructure to would-be residents—everything from emergency lighting to natural-gas-powered pumps and generators to thirteen-foot floodgates and watertight rooms sealed “submarine-style,” in the case of a new Manhattan condominium.30

Clearly, preparing for the inevitable but unpredictable effects of warming is wise, but this is quite different than the creation of new private markets in disaster protection and abatement for the wealthiest few, by the wealthiest few. It amounts to a strategy of exploiting global warming as a business opportunity now, in order to accumulate more wealth before Westerners face the kinds of impacts now facing poorer populations. Fossil profiteering

30 Naomi Klein, This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 43, 44–45.
and the aggressive carbon release it entails meshes smoothly with a host of other industries, not only the renewable energy sector and the technology and engineering specialties needed to innovate in the “geoengineering space,” but also more traditional industries like real estate, construction, hospitality, security, insurance, and so on, not to mention agribusiness (multinationals like Monsanto are already developing genetically modified seeds designed to resist some of the effects of global warming). A hotter future doesn’t look so very bleak: drill, frack, extract, therefore, because as ever, the dangers only multiply the opportunities for growth. And on a personal level, the wealthy and their lineage will be just fine. As Andreas Malm explains, pointing to recent developments that have harmed the poor far more seriously than the wealthy (Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Sandy in Haiti and Manhattan, sea-level rise in Bangladesh and the Netherlands): “For the foreseeable future — indeed, as long as there are class societies on earth — there will be lifeboats for the rich and the privileged, and there will not be any shared sense of catastrophe.”

The wealthy can install generators and storm-resistant infrastructure, circumvent snarled traffic with private helicopters and airplanes, purchase private security personnel to combat rioters and looters and private fire personnel to combat wildfires and arsonists. Power doesn’t disappear in dystopia; on the contrary, we’ve seen this movie before.

§3 Geocide Is a Nationalist Project

In light of the above, global warming and the ecological collapse it portends is primarily a threat to the domestic and international poor. Its hazards threaten to most severely afflict low-lying countries, small island states, the South, as well as desert communities situated above the equator, like the Bedouin. Certain African and Middle Eastern states, already beset by interminable domestic conflicts, unstable political regimes, and endless foreign intervention, will suffer the plight of famine and

31 Malm, *Fossil Capital*, 475.
drought. All the hotbeds of terrorism will be parched, starved, burned away. The more carbon that is emitted, the greater is the likelihood that those populations will disperse, fragment, or die, suffering along the way through new climate-driven civil wars borne of the increasing scarcity of essential resources such as water. Famously, Donald Trump refused to disclose his strategy for combating the Islamic State: in light of his nationalist, anti-Islam policies and his serial appointments to the Cabinet of prominent pro-fossil climate change deniers as well as military strategists, we could be forgiven for concluding that intensifying global warming is, in fact, a key part of the neocolonial military strategy accompanying his resurgent economic nationalism. Not only does the prospect of collapse promise to increase the wealth of the wealthiest Americans, as we saw above, it promises to bake the resistant inhabitants of oil-producing states, physically tear their communities apart, and render their territories uninhabitable. By way of geoengineered global warming, the climate itself can become the principal American weapon in the endless war on terror.

This use of geoengineering—a term that is ordinarily understood to refer to often far-flung mitigation technologies that, both fossil capitalists and technophiles hope, can one day neutralize or reverse the impact of atmospheric carbon and other greenhouse gases, but which we use to refer to the purposeful warming of the planet—is deeply out of step with mainstream military policies. But it is quite in line with what is known about Trump’s military agenda, to say nothing of his growth-at-any-price economic policy and his divisive, nativist, belligerent rhetoric. He “knows more than all the generals,” who fail to understand the threat and have thus far failed to respond to it. He spoke outlandishly of carpet bombing Muslim territories and killing the families of terrorists. He promised strength on the international scene above all, a lawless, unbound, obscene rain of fire eradicating the terrorist threat permanently. Islam is “a cancer that has metastasized,” a violent cult masquerading as a religion, according to Lieutenant General Flynn. To Trump, knowing that global warming is a catastrophe for the
Middle East but a boon to wealthy Americans, this abhorrent fossil-driven geoengineering experiment is only too plausible.\textsuperscript{32} Geocide is a long-term project and of course Trump is limited to two four-year terms in office, but the policy positions and agreements his administration makes in that time will be more than sufficient to set a course that his successor, even if inclined to radically change course, will have difficulty undoing.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{32} Isn’t this, \textit{qua} military strategy, quite likely to backfire and spur the consolidation of anti-American sentiment across the world, supporting the very militant organizations it claims to undermine? Isn’t it likely to invite violence, possibly even to precipitate a “national security emergency”? The answer is obviously affirmative; it is not possible to rule out that this is part of the strategy as such, particularly in light of the prerogative state apparatus in place. If an emergency does not occur organically, the Trump administration will have to invent one.

\textsuperscript{33} Russia also plays a role in this strategy. To simplify greatly, this region hangs precariously in a balance of global powers (the US and its largely Western state allies; Russia and its less stable mélange of Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian, Chinese, and other state allies), the Islamic State, and local forces (pro-government forces and rebel forces in several countries, most notably Syria, each with ties to the US enclave or to the Russian enclave and possible or known links to the Islamic State as well, all of which varies by country). An even moderately pro-Putin White House could take steps allowing Russia to dominate the region. And Trump’s White House will be at least moderately pro-Putin: as Putin’s December 15, 2016 letter to Trump indicates, Russia expects “to restore the frame of bilateral cooperation in different areas as well as bring [the Russian and American] level of collaboration on the international scene to a qualitatively new level.” In late December 2016, Russian and Iranian diplomats met with representatives of Turkey — until very recently, a US ally opposing Assad’s regime in Syria — without US or UN involvement to begin working toward a resolution to the five-plus year Syrian civil war that arose out of the Arab Spring movement calling for Assad’s removal. The negotiation was reportedly productive and the resolution this troika contemplates is likely to leave Assad or other pro-Russian elements in power in Syria. UN-sponsored peace talks, to which the Trump administration would be invited, are set to begin in 2017, and there is speculation that a temporary transitional government will be installed in Syria, pending the outcome of those negotiations. Of course, after Syria is stabilized, Russia will move on to crush other pockets of resistance in the region and beyond: Syria is not the endgame, but the beginning, likely to be followed in quick succession by new interventions that promise to extend Russian influence. Once it secures dominance, lucrative deals between Russian and American interests can be struck for resources — oil above all — previously off lim-
Weaponizing the climate in this way is fully consistent with, and even promotes and flatters, the possessive individualism of conventional libertarian conservatives that are filling Trump’s Cabinet and the white nationalism/supremacism on which Trumpist identity politics plays so effectively. Consider what a devastating water shortage paired with increasing temperatures in the Nile Delta looks like to a fully-committed Trumpist ideologue. Without sufficient water (the large Middle East/Northern Africa region possesses only 2% of the world’s renewable water), and with even modest temperature increases, farming families must abandon large swathes of land because crops refuse to grow and the increasing heat stimulates pests that destroy what manages to grow. With already intolerable food and water shortages, they must migrate if only to survive, and face crippling unemployment in a war-torn city or struggle against the odds to find a path to a new country with an economy to speak of. Thousands of climate migrants are already fleeing these countries. Unmitigated global warming is sure to decimate Middle Eastern/Northern African agrarian economies, destroy communities, and upend lives. To an air-conditioned, well-fed, thirst-slaked American earning a six-figure annual income, deluding him/herself into thinking that s/he alone accounts for the privilege and prosperity s/he enjoys and which defines his or its, as the political power of Russian and American states and corporations greatly expands in the region. These remarks should not be interpreted as support for the still inadequately founded “election hacking” accusations promulgated loudly by the Democratic Party and circulating in the American media in the December 2016–January 2017 time frame. As Matt Taibbi explains, those accusations strongly resemble the incorrect claim that Saddam Hussein’s Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction in 2003, the pretext on which the Iraq War was launched: “we’ve been burned before in stories like this, to disastrous effect. Which makes it surprising we’re not trying harder to avoid getting fooled again” (Matt Taibbi, “Something about This Russia Story Stinks,” Rolling Stone [Dec. 30, 2016], http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/something-about-this-russia-story-stinks-w458439). Although Trump initially expressed a similar view, at his first post-election press conference, he allowed that Russia may, in fact, have been responsible for the DNC hacks, but facts sufficiently supporting that claim still remain unavailable.
her being (I insist on including male and female genders here to avoid the misconception that Trumpism is owned by males alone), the destruction of these Arab and African lives looks, at some level, like their fault, like a consequence flowing from Nature itself: these people have failed to make the most of their circumstances, and they must bear the cost of that failure. Why have they failed, while we, the well-fed, have succeeded even beyond our wildest imaginations? Because they suffer some natural deficit. No amount of foreign aid will help them, truly help them. Better that we stabilize our economies at home than try to improve their lot, for they have proven time and again that they cannot meaningfully except themselves from the State of Nature. They are, in short, not really Human at all.

We may hope that international law would present insurmountable obstacles to pursuing what amounts to a path of intentional planetary destruction. But international legal hurdles to this radically inhumane strategy are virtually non-existent. There is, unfortunately, no enforceable international legal obligation requiring the US to take steps to combat climate change. The 2015 Paris Agreement provides that the US, like the other parties to the Agreement, must develop “nationally determined contributions” or NDCs. The US’s NDC establishes a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 26–28% below 2005 levels, by 2025. But there is no enforcement mechanism. Trump has vowed the withdraw from the Paris Agreement, of course, and even if that attempt fails for technical reasons, the failure to show progress or even to report as required under the Agreement will generate only the weak legal consequence of informal admonitions. The Clean Power Plan, an executive order issued pursuant to the Clean Air Act by President Obama, is integral to achieving the NDC. The Plan would require reductions in carbon emissions from power plants. Scott Pruitt, Trump’s pick to lead the EPA, was at the time leading a coalition of attorneys general in a legal challenge to the constitutionality of the Plan. There are several ways for the Plan to fail, and virtually none for it to survive. Even putting aside the uncertainties associated with the constitutional challenge, the EPA must enforce the Plan, and
under Pruitt, it is extremely unlikely to do so. If the Plan survives the legal challenge, the Republican-controlled Congress can rapidly push through a bill that would undo it—a act that would have serious, lasting consequences for environmental law. And the Plan could be found to be unconstitutional and the EPA refuse to appeal that determination, leaving the burden of defending the law to the intervenor state and local governments that have taken a part in the litigation.

The best legal foundation for challenging the weaponization of global warming may be the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques, a treaty ratified by the US in 1980. It does not specifically take account of the possibility that anthropogenic global warming could be stimulated to attack other nations. But it prohibits the use of “environmental modification techniques” for military or other hostile purposes. The term is defined broadly: “any technique for changing—through the deliberate manipulation of natural processes—the dynamics, composition or structure of the Earth, including its biota, lithosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere, or of outer space.” Increasing fossil fuel emissions in full knowledge of the consequences for the climate arguably qualifies as an “environmental modification technique,” that is, as a technique for changing through deliberate manipulation of natural processes the composition of the atmosphere. The Convention supplies a non-exhaustive list of examples that are understood to be illustrative phenomena that may be caused by the use of environmental modification techniques, as the Convention uses the term: “earthquakes; tsunamis; an upset in the ecological balance of a region; changes in weather patterns (clouds, precipitation, cyclones of various types and tornadic storms); changes in climate patterns; changes in ocean currents; changes in the state of the ozone layer; and changes in the state of the ionosphere.” More than one of

35 Ibid., Understanding Relating to Article II.
these conditions is met by the proposed use of anthropogenic global warming. The next element would also appear to be met: the prohibited techniques are those which “have widespread, long-lasting or severe effects.”36 The Convention provides a series of Understandings interpreting the relevant terms. “Widespread” means “encompassing an area on the scale of several hundred square kilometers”; “long-lasting” means “lasting for a period of months, or approximately a season”; and “severe” means “involving serious or significant disruption or harm to human life, natural and economic resources or other assets.”37 All three of these seem to be satisfied where the environmental modification technique at issue is a weaponized climate. The next question is whether the proposed use of anthropogenic global warming constitutes “military or any other hostile use […] as the means of destruction, damage or injury to any other State Party.”38 Niger, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Algeria, and other Middle Eastern/Northern African states are parties to the Convention, and could conceivably seek to enforce it by lodging a complaint and supporting evidence with the United Nations Security Council. Showing that this use is demonstrably hostile, an intentional means of destruction, damage, or injury, is the most difficult element. The cynical denial that global warming is occurring at all, or that if it is occurring that it is causally related to human-controlled greenhouse gas emissions, is only a first layer of armor in the defense theory. The likelihood that a Security Council investigation would conclude that dismantling environmental regulations and encouraging or taking other steps to intensify carbon emissions constitutes proof of deliberate hostility against specific Middle Eastern/Northern African states is low. International law is not likely to serve as a meaningful restraint on geocide.

Even refugee law is of little assistance because traditionally, the United Nations recognizes the need for asylum and the ob-

36 Ibid., Art. I, para. 1.
37 Ibid., Understanding Relating to Article I, (a)–(c).
38 Ibid.
ligation of *non-refoulement* only in cases of traditional war or persecution, not climate war. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) even issued a statement in April 2011 explaining that, in connection with refugee law, “the terms ‘climate refugees’ and ‘environmental refugees’ are not accurate or useful nomenclatures and should, therefore, be avoided.”

The UNHCR points instead to international human rights law (noting, however, that “[i]t remains to be seen whether flight from the impacts of climate change could meet the threshold set in existing human rights jurisprudence” to trigger the obligation of *non-refoulement* and to informal national standards of decency and cooperation as grounds for handling forced eco-displacement.

This is not to say that the international community will be utterly helpless when the US adopts a policy of actively increasing carbon emissions, but it is difficult to see how it could be stopped in its tracks. Other states may impose sanctions or trade restrictions that can do significant damage to American interests. Locking American capital offshore, for example, or establishing embargoes, tariffs on American imports, or other trade barriers would all have enormous negative consequences for Trump’s credibility with the American public. With hair-trigger Trump in control of the country’s nuclear arsenal, however, and his comic-book villain calls for a new arms race, this would seem to be an unpalatable option. And it would tend to generate further instability and insecurity on the international scene, which can always be spun domestically as a powerful reason to maintain the status quo until the threat has passed — which is ironic because here, as in the case of the second Bush presidency, the administration itself is the source of instability. A perpetual state of insecurity at home and abroad — a lesson Trumpism learns

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40 Ibid., para. 10.
from the entanglement of neoliberalism and neoconservatism under Bush and Cheney.

This cursory analysis suggests an alternative, much more troubling account of the persistence of global warming denialism and its installation at the highest echelons of American government. On this account, denialism serves not merely the protection of already-accumulated wealth, or even the greater expansion of wealth among the wealthiest fraction of the population; it is not merely a defense mechanism to prevent wealth redistribution, avoid state intervention in economic affairs, and minimize industrial regulation. We have only to take Steve Bannon at his word when he explained, in his first post-election interview (curiously given to the Hollywood Reporter): “Darkness is good. Dick Cheney. Darth Vader. Satan. That’s power. It only helps us when they [the Democrats, the media] get it wrong. When they’re blind to who we are and what we’re doing.”

Should we take this, too, “seriously but not literally”? Perhaps it is too “literal” an interpretation to read Bannon as promising to develop a Death Star that will ensure planetary destruction. That would be nonsense, mere science fiction; the real Death Star is already here, in our abundant fossil fuel extraction technologies and processing facilities, in our coal-fired power plants, pipelines, the fossil-fed power grid, commercial and residential oil- and gas-powered heating systems, fossil-chugging airplanes, cargo ships, semis, cars. “Darkness is good”; while we are distracted by the artificial debate over the reality of global warming, busy being “blind to who [they] are and what [they’re] doing,” suddenly, ExxonMobil’s CEO becomes our Secretary of State, denialist Scott Pruitt becomes our EPA chief, and pro-coal climate skeptic Ryan Zinke takes over as Secretary of the Interior, opening the floodgates to drilling, mining, and fracking on federal lands and the devastating destruction of utterly necessary

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forests. And the beauty of this strategy is that very little needs to change in order to carry it forward: the emissions produced in a business-as-usual approach simply need to be intensified. Infrastructure projects designed to modernize and strengthen the energy, transport, and other flows sustaining American communities not normally subject to volatile weather are sensible protective measures, as are border security measures designed to stem the foreseeable tide of climate refugees fleeing lands that have been drowned, rendered arid, or otherwise become uninhabitable. Meanwhile, in Western and Northern Africa and the Middle East, inaccessible natural resources become available for extraction as residents flee (or die), and in polar regions drilling and fracking become far easier. And other vulnerable nations more useful to the flow of capital acquire new climate security needs to be met by Western technologies, financed by predatory loans issued by Western banks.

It was true enough, in the era of the Globe, that companies relocating production to China, India, and Bangladesh did not necessarily want to further destabilize the climate by increasing their carbon emissions in the process; intensified global warming was an unintended consequence of the moveable feast of global fossil capital. Now, it is an intended consequence. In this light, the southern border wall looks less like a deterrent to Mexican/Latinx immigrants and more like a national enclosure to insulate the wealthy from the global South and all other territories impacted, in the manner of collateral damage, by the weaponization of the climate in what cannot fail to resemble a phase of the “fourth turning” ardently sought by modern-day Fiorist Steve Bannon.

§4 War and Thanatopolitics

For decades, fossil fuel interests like ExxonMobil, Chevron, Shell, Peabody, Koch Industries, and BP, and industry groups and pro-fossil lobbyists and think-tanks like the API (American Petroleum Institute), Americans for Prosperity, the Heartland Institute, and ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council),
have waged a private war against climate science, developing nations, and future generations. But Trump’s election is an official, public declaration of war. We have to thank Trumpism for laying bare an essential truth about American, indeed Western, peoples and their modes of being: that “the people” are fractured not merely on surface-level policy questions or even on deeper political objectives about, e.g., “what the country should become,” as the presidential candidates intoned, but on foundational ontological or cosmological grounds: in short, that there is a war among collectives too hastily unified by national markers. My surprise at Trump’s election is an index of this. I knew all about the organized opposition to climate science, the conspiracy theories, the right-wing attempts to undermine even minimal climate-related public health and safety regulations in the name of growth and non-intervention. And yet I could not, until after the election, and after reading broadly about the composite figure of “the Trump voter,” grasp that tens of millions of Americans live in a world in which global warming really must be a hoax. And they do live in such a world — it is not a lack of nuance that leads to this conclusion, it is the action of voting, regardless of the rationalization applied. It must be a hoax because China and India are not scaling back production; it must be a hoax because only God controls the thermostat; it must be a hoax because it still snows; it must be a hoax because, otherwise, the existential vertigo of landlessness would be too much to bear.

Individual Trump voters may object that global warming was one among many “issues” they considered, and that they judged that it was not critical for them, and that they in fact hold that global warming is real and human-driven — but this is still negationism for several reasons. It mistakes ecology for a question of belief (it is, instead, a question of action, of responsibility, and of coexistence); it subordinates ecology not only to economic factors but to narrow self-interest; and it resulted in elevating avowed negationism to the highest political offices. So much the worse, then, if voters (intellectually) accept the reality of global warming while rejecting the possibility of responding
as it demands (whether on economic, moral, religious, or other grounds). If performance precedes competence, if doing determines being, no individualized post-hoc rationalization matters. Trump, Tillerson, and Bannon grasp that global warming is a serious threat to most of the world but have judged that it is an even bigger capitalist opportunity and a ground for consolidating global political power. But what interests me in this section is the political-ecological war of the worlds declared by Trumpism.

Heathen earth is the name we give to this condition of ecological war under Trumpism and other neoliberal-nationalist political regimes.42 “Heathen” is not simply a synonym for pagan; it carries both etymological and contemporary charges that render its use particularly appropriate here. Certainly, it means “pagan,” in the sense that a heathen does not recognize an authority common to both herself and the interlocutor accusing her of heathenism. Traditionally, the heathen does not recognize the authority of the Judeo-Christian God (which is not the same thing as failing to recognize that God), which causes her to become associated with the sins of idolatry and blasphemy. Heathenism primarily connotes, then, a state of godlessness, a lack of any common authority. And the connotation of rurality that “pagan” carries is equally applicable to the heathen—a heath is a field—although in this case, the field is not particularly fertile, with some sources drawing a connection to the Old English term for wasteland. Rusticity and rough, uncivil manners round out the ancient heathen. To these qualities the modern heathen—including but not limited to Norse neopagan religious revivals going under that name—adds an element of racial or ethnic identity and, in some cases, (Nordic) racial superiority, grounded not in cultural difference but in attachment to a land via natal filiation.

Heathen earth defines an existential condition, of a thanatopolitical entanglement utterly lacking in commonly recognized

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42 “Heathen Earth” is the title of a 1980 composition by British industrial music pioneers Throbbing Gristle.
Poignantly, Derrida remarks of Wotan/Odin, an important figure in the religious tradition of heathenry: “Sovereignty is his very essence.” The point is not that Trumpism or the European nationalist wave represents or approximates ancient or modern heathenism, or that Trump supporters count as heathens because they reject the authority of a secular deity that we, on the other hand, recognize. It is rather that, with the advent of Trumpism and the conflict between the political ecologies of geocide and geodicy, the multiple Earth itself, in its permanence, indifference, and universality as well as its fragility, sensitivity, and terrestriality, together with its peoples or *ethnē* (a term that by some accounts is the original Greek basis for “heathen”), is now locked in a struggle that stands to reduce it to a barren wasteland. Is this not the “essence of sovereignty”: laying waste?

Stated bluntly and without equivocation — that the Trump administration views global warming as an unqualified capitalist good, promising to further enrich the wealthiest Americans while simultaneously advancing the Nation’s political and economic interests and damaging or destroying its enemies with a kind of fossil fuel-driven climatic action-at-a-distance — the geocide thesis is bound to elicit suspicion. “Darkness is good,” as Bannon said, but this proposal is beyond dark, perhaps to the point of implausibility. There is, after all, scant direct evidence that global warming denialism is in fact a sham meant to conceal a darker motive and to provide grounds for defending against the claim that the climate is being deliberately weaponized. Taken to extremes, the thesis is difficult to differentiate from other dark causalities, such as the *immigrant/criminal* and

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43 Bruno Latour frames political ecology as a “war” between Humans attached to Nature and the Earthbound convoked by Gaia: “I know it is risky to state the problem so bluntly, but I am obliged to say that in the epoch of the Anthropocene the Human and the Earthbound would have to agree to go to war. To put it in the style of a geohistorical fiction, the Humans living in the epoch of the Holocene are in conflict with the Earthbound of the Anthropocene” (Latour, *Facing Gaia*, Lecture Seven).

Muslim/terrorist theories that Trumpism endorses. This is not necessarily company we want to keep.

On the contrary, however, I submit that the thesis is implausible only if we assume the transcendental structuring of a centrist organization of politics. As we saw in the first essay, the center cannot hold: Trumpism teaches that, even if neoliberal market devices remain very much alive, the neoliberal political center is dead. So we have no choice but to try to reflexively ground our own politics, since the compass we relied upon for stabilization no longer works. Understanding the political orientation of the geocide thesis is impossible within the centrist paradigm — under which it is not only implausible but strictly unthinkable. It must be situated within what we have called geodicic political ecology. In other words, the thesis presents us with a demanding metapolitical problem: what must the structure of politics look like after the center gives way, such that the geocide thesis can be articulated? Global warming, a complex socio-techno-natural disaster unfolding as though in slow motion, is utterly unprecedented and as such, its political interpretation cannot benefit from preexisting frames of reference.45 Geocide is one such interpretation; however, standing alone, it is incomprehensible. It attains its meaning in its connections with what it purports to foreclose in a cosmological, political, legal, and moral sense: geodicy.46 That the center cannot hold means, ultimately, that we must choose between geocide and geodicy, but we must first be prepared to say in what the political ecology of geodicy

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45 For an alternative view that situates the “climate apocalypse” alongside other apocalypses, emphasizing the cosmological instability each demonstrates, see Jairus Grove, “Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Everything: The Anthropocene or Peak Humanity?,” *Theory & Event* 18, no. 3 (2015).

46 Hopefully, this clarifies why we have elected to call it *geocide* in the first place, rather than use a term that the geocidal ones themselves could endorse. The understanding of its political ecology that this discussion conveys is necessarily partisan, and the terms chosen are meant in part to reflect this ineradicable, perspectival condition of political speech rather than conceal it.
consists, and how it reorients the political. Only in this way can geocide become politically intelligible.

Political contestation through the medium of ecology, its beings and its categories, threatens to make of the ecological sciences a “new master story,” in Isabelle Stengers’s terms. This would be tantamount to falling into the kind of scientistic metaphysics we have criticized, elevating something like a principle of *a priori* uncertainty to a governing maxim. Without denying the importance of uncertainty in matters of politics and ecology, it is necessary to resist the temptation of sanctifying a new transcendence in the form of a destining Contingency. It is necessary, in other words, to insist on materiality as we have defined it, on the values of immanence, alliance, concrete ongoingness, grounded struggle, local dissent. The very term *geodicy* can be heard in the register of finality or universality, as though it claimed to reduce all differentiation and divergence under the auspices of ecological unity. Nothing could be further from the truth. It expresses on the contrary the intolerability of all monocultural leveling, of ontological purification of every kind. In place of any master story it proposes a pluralism of modes of existence and a multiplicity of arts of sensing and connecting, inventing and renewing: in short, new arts of demanding to exist.

The hidden motor of Leibniz’s *Theodicy* is the theorem: *omne possibile exigit existere,* everything possible demands to exist. There are many ways to misread the theorem, for instance as a proto-Darwinian doctrine about the survival of the fittest potentiality or as an economistic metaphor naturalizing the capitalist relations of production taking root in early eighteenth cen-

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tury Europe. These misreadings are not unproductive, but they miss the essential point. It must be read in conjunction with the *Theodicy’s* explicit accounting of the divine selection of the best possible world as the actual world. There is a crucial moment of economization in this argument, but it is a function of the divine selection theorem, not the *exigentia* theorem: according to the principle of the best, which the former theorem incorporates, the actual World is that which actualizes the greatest possible degree of harmony and perfection, which means the greatest possible worldly complexity, at the lowest possible cost or with the absolute minimum of necessary metaphysical laws; the greatest output from the smallest input. Scholars specializing in Leibniz’s thought have grappled with the inconsistency in these theorems: if God selects the best possible world, in what sense, exactly, can the beings of possibility struggle, strive, or block one another from coming into actuality? And, reversing the terms, if the beings of possibility struggle, strive, and block one another from attaining actuality, in what sense can God be said to have selected and actualized a world at all? How is the actual World created: by God, through His selection, or by the possibles, through their interrelations and negotiations? Economization or proliferation? Static or dynamic genesis? Leibniz seems to tell two stories, one about an infinitely wise transcendent operator fixated on the Whole (the best of all possible worlds includes disasters, calamities, injustice, and evil) and one about a multitude of demanding powers virtually orchestrating among themselves the compossibility of their paths to actual existence. I have always been skeptical of Bertrand Russell’s halfhearted argument that Leibniz’s thought should be understood to divide into a dogmatic “public” aspect and a radical “private” aspect, but if that scheme contains a grain of truth, it may be found in this particular discrepancy. What is clear, putting aside how to organize Leibniz’s thought, is that according to Leibniz, God creates a total World, but the “worldings” that define it, and
what happens in it, are local procedures, even if they must, in some fashion, pass through the virtual mind of God.50

Deleuze argues that Leibniz represents the “psychotic episode” preceding the neurotic loss of all principle realized in the destitution of theological Reason and its replacement by the rise of industrialization, as reflected in the writings of, e.g., Mallarmé and Nietzsche: how to salvage the theological ideal when it is under attack from all quarters? “The Baroque solution is the following: we shall multiply principles—we can always slip a new one out from under our cuffs—and in this way we will change their use. We will not have to ask what available object corresponds to a given luminous principle, but what hidden principle responds to whatever object is given, that is to say, to this or that ‘perplexing case’. Principles as such will be put to a reflective use. A case being given, we shall invent its principle. It is a transformation from Law to universal Jurisprudence.”51 Jurisprudence here is not to be heard in the sense of a preordained systematization or reconstruction of pure legal principles but just the opposite, an inventive practice of forging attachments from which new principles can emerge. Importantly, Deleuze goes on to explain that this art of universal jurisprudence, unlike law as ordinarily conceived, does not proceed on the model of a straightforward battle or contest, but is a kind of “nonbattle closer to guerrilla warfare than a war of extermination,” in which “[y]ou don’t catch your adversary in order to reduce him to absence, you encircle his presence to neutralize him, to make him incompossible, to impose divergence upon him.”52

This mad proliferation of situated principles, against all generality and explanation by abstraction, dramatizes exactly what it

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50 It is worth noting that Leibniz even proposes one of the most materialist definitions of existents in the history of philosophy: the existent is “that which is compatible with more things than any other which is incompatible with it.” See G.W. Leibniz, *Logical Papers: A Selection*, trans. and ed. G.H.R. Parkinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 51.


52 Ibid., 68.
means to demand to exist. Jurisprudence describes those local worldings that Leibniz consecrated in the formula, *omne possibile exigit existere*.

This formula tells us a great deal about our political ecology. First, it helps us account for the geocide thesis, which we can now understand as the hidden principle responding to the “perplexing case” of the Trumpist legitimation and exaltation of global warming denialism. How else can those of us who inhabit not mechanical, inert Nature but interactive, fragile Earth and who represent not sovereign, unitary Humanity but some inevitably local collective of entangled humans and nonhumans interpret the object given, that is, the domination of the Executive branch of government by racists, xenophobes, and fossil capitalists who publicly deny that global warming is occurring; who intend not only to eliminate the existing greenhouse gas emissions regulations but to deliberately *increase* carbon emissions; who are quite certain that the international poor, including especially those most likely to ally with fundamentalist and terrorist organizations, will bear the cost of warming; and who deeply despise Islam and view it as a cancer to be eradicated from the population? What is unthinkable within a centrist organization of politics becomes undeniable in this new configuration: all the threads come together *only* in the geocide thesis.

We may nevertheless balk at it, and quibble about a “strong” and a “weak” version of the thesis. The strong geocide thesis would claim that Trumpism is a program of action resulting in the intentional intensification of global warming for essentially military or other hostile purposes, while the weak geocide thesis would claim that Trumpism passively permits the intensification of global warming for essentially economic or other not overtly hostile purposes. Is the latter version, which sees geocide as the contingent, cumulative, irrational result of independent and individually rational policy decisions, not more compelling? Here, a contrast between geocide and the “mutually assured destruction” of nuclear warfare is instructive. E.P. Thompson rightly argued that the imputation of intent or “criminal foresight” to Cold War ruling elites could do little more than comfort the
powerless because, after all, those elites could not be expected to order their own annihilation; the belief that someone, somewhere, is pulling the strings is a way of denying the specificity of the political conjuncture, which is in actuality marked by the unplanned and uncontrolled collocation of fragmented forces. But geocide does not suffer from the same drawback. It is no doubt true that the long-term course of actions preparatory to the current historical moment — the invention of the steam engine, the transition to coal power for manufacturing operations, etc. — is rich in contingency and nonlinear interaction, like the fusion of political, military, and industrial alliances in the run-up to the nuclear arms race. But here, the ruling elites are — or believe themselves to be — relatively insulated from the worst effects of global warming and stand to benefit both economically and politically from its exacerbation. In this conjuncture, as distinguished from the Cold War, it is the belief in the radical contingency of unintended consequences that serves to comfort the powerless; it is far easier to accept geocide as historical accident than as strategy.

Moreover, from the standpoint of political ecology, the distinction between a strong and a weak geocide thesis is specious because intent can and should be inferred from the availability of extensive climatic data demonstrating hazardous warming trends, among other things — constructive intent is no less damning than actual intent. In any case, to return to the point, neither version of the thesis is compatible with the centrist organization of politics; both pull the structure of politics toward a black hole.

Second, the Leibnizian formula also helps us to decipher that new political configuration itself. Mainstream media endorse glib buzzwords in an attempt to characterize it — the “post-fact era,” the “alt-right,” etc. — but these only approximate the condition of godlessness (in the sense of lacking commonly recognized authorities) under which politics now proceeds. Public

opinion is fractured in unprecedented ways. Not only journalistic institutions—the mainstreams are becoming peripheral tributaries on quite the same level as formerly disreputable or non-credible sources of information—but also traditionally trustworthy governmental institutions, like the Central Intelligence Agency (which reported that Russian hackers deliberately aided Trump’s candidacy) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (which released perplexing letters pertaining to Clinton’s emails in the days leading up to the election), to say nothing of the agencies that reflect official recognition of the existence of global warming (the EPA, Department of Energy, NASA, NOAA, etc.), have been drawn actively into the fold of political contestation, and are much less able to claim an authoritative position than they had been even just a few months prior to the election. Call it a crisis of confidence in public institutions, in the media, in the government, in the sciences, in the establishment; whatever the diagnosis, the element that cannot be overlooked is the proliferation of dark causal chains in all domains, trading on the opacity of the new government. It is what happens, apparently, when incompossible series converge, in the absence of a central Regulator capable of prohibiting their coexistence. In the same key as the exigentia theorem, Leibniz wrote that “quic- quid existere potest, et aliis compatible est, id existere,” whatever can exist and is compatible with other things will exist, but one of those other things was an authority common to all the possible series, i.e., God; with the loss of any common authority able to guarantee consistency, the political world becomes a plane of inconsistency. It is not coincidental that, in his “direct,” putatively unfiltered communication with the public via Twitter (here, where the communications network is transformed by Trump into an ego-technical prosthetic, the medium really is the message); in his refusal to respond to unvetted, uncontrolled questions from the press; and in his repeated deceptions and his castigation of even remotely critical journalism as “fake news,” delegitimizing not only particular news outlets but the very structure of consensus-based meaning on which they rely, Trump is positioning himself to occupy the vacant space of the
common authority—a key dimension of the logic of despotic representation, addressed in the first chapter.

Third, the Leibnizian formula suggests a strategy of resistance: rather than expecting to land the decisive fatal blow sending denialism and the geocide thesis to their demise, find ways to compel them to pass imperceptibly into a new topology in which they are no longer compossible with any actual worldings. This strategy presupposes a measure of consistency or stability that seems to be lacking in the very structure of politics at the moment, for it assumes that there is a zone in which coexistences may be regulated, if not by a kind of divine Selector then by the embodied struggle of immanent exigencies. It would be necessary, then, to invent such a topology, to puncture the body of the despot and reclaim some portion of it. In short: be realistic; demand the incompossible.

§5 *Ens Realissimum*

The object of geodicy is to compose the maximally real world, but it is not sufficient to refer to the inadequacies of Nature or the Globe to attain this world. Geodicy begins from the recognition that the real, the most real, the *ens realissimum*, remains to be invented. Oddly, in much the same way that philosophers had to argue for the existence of God, today, they have to argue for the existence of the Earth. But where the theological ideal was grounded in unshakeable certitude, the terrestrial real is encountered only with trepidation, disquietude, fear and trembling.

With Trump, Tillerson, Pruitt, Perry, Sessions, and Zinke—six figures that either expressly deny global warming or its anthropogenic origin, or stop short of denial while pushing nevertheless for aggressive expansion of fossil extraction and consumption—in critical government posts with authority to reshape environmental policy,\(^5^4\) climate researchers have finally

\(^{54}\) Trump has also nominated global warming deniers to Cabinet positions with no direct influence on environmental policy, including Tom Price.
begun acting as though they are embroiled in a war. In the wake of Trump’s election and his appointment of a remarkably anti-science Cabinet, not to mention the alarming questionnaire circulated in the Department of Energy, researchers began issuing open letters to Trump and the public, signing petitions, and staging demonstrations (complete with prop lab coats) calling for climate action, and to speak in hushed tones among themselves about how to organize a resistance. Lawyers have begun volunteering to offer pro bono services to climate researchers who may come under attack by the new regime or its emboldened corporate allies, and others have offered money as well as database expertise, server space, and other digital resources to fill the gap that will be created when federal resources are no longer available to them. They speak of “a call to arms” and even “guerrilla archiving” of vast amounts of federal climate data that, they fear, will be in jeopardy following the transition. How long will it be before a Perry-controlled Department of Energy or a Pruitt-controlled Environmental Protection Agency begins to officially denounce the science of global warming? How long before studying the climate becomes an “un-American” activity meriting counter-intelligence investigations on par with those in mid-century condemning the Communists and anything that paranoid bureaucrats thought might resemble or possibly lead to Communist sympathy? We can expect to begin hearing about those troublesome “climate sympathizers” in much the same sense. There is no point denying that researchers are now

(Health and Human Services), Ben Carson (Housing and Urban Development), and Mike Pompeo (Central Intelligence Agency). Others nominated—such as Elaine Chao (Transportation), Betsy DeVos (Education), and Wilbur Ross (Commerce)—have ties to the coal, oil, and gas industries but have not made clear public statements on the issue. Despite having no authority to influence environmental policies, each of these positions obviously entails authority to implement and interpret those policies within their own domains: for example, Carson’s HUD can be expected to deny requests for relocation funding from internally-displaced environmental migrants facing encroaching waters, such as that received by the Isle de Jean Charles band of the Biloxi–Chitimacha–Choctaw tribe, whose 22,000-acre island has been swallowed up by the Gulf of Mexico.
enemies of the state. The only option is to begin to prepare to respond to the inevitable sabotages, hacks, surveillance, espionage, funding cuts, data destruction, and other acts of war.

Both Latour and Stengers have written with surprising optimism about the new situation of climate scientists. Latour even explains that “the only tiny source of hope arriving to enlighten us in the current situation” is precisely that “researchers are now engaged in geopolitics.”55 For these researchers, “there is no shame in having allies,” because they recognize the gravity of the stakes and the complexity of the conflict into which they have been involuntarily drawn.56 For her part, Stengers argues in the same key that, “[w]e do not need ‘neutral’ climatologists, we need struggling climatologists, acutely aware of the need to enter into alliances against those who will refer to their knowledge in order to conclude ‘we have no choice but to….”57 But Latour and Stengers both had a somewhat different, pre-Trump scenography in mind. Certainly, their arguments register the decoupling of the sciences from one of their former sponsors — capital — insofar as the fossil fuel industry is the loudest opponent of ecology. But they could not fully register the extent of the decoupling of the sciences from an equally if not more important sponsor — the state — because the major Western powers prior to the advent of Trumpism at least acknowledged the reality of climate change and took measures, if largely symbolic or ineffectual ones, to combat it. The climatologists, the geopolitical geoscientists, have lost that crucial ally and must struggle against both their former sponsors. It is not a possible imperative, a “we have no choice but to…,” that demands vigilance today; it is a reduction of climate scientists to silence or, what amounts to the same thing, a state-sanctioned perversion of their voices and the climatological chains of reference they construct.

55 Latour, Facing Gaia, Lecture Seven.
56 Ibid.
57 Stengers, “Autonomy and the Intrusion of Gaia.”
Latour and Stengers are both quite right to stress the need for alliances, for connective syntheses gathering heterogeneous publics, in order to encounter the Earth and to voice its political being. To reclaim some portion of the body of the despot, it is not enough to refer to “the facts.” Researchers and scientists — as geopolitical actors — can represent new agencies that demand to be taken into account by those who would prefer to ignore or deny them, but as we have seen, the Trumpist reorganization of politics not only allows but actively promotes ignorance and denial. Climate and earth system sciences need non-scientific allies in literature and the arts, in law and politics, in economics and business, in journalism and media. The composition of the real requires the synthesis of these diverse practices.

Nor is it enough to represent the climate in installations, films, texts, manifestos, legal theories, economic formulas, technologies, feature stories, and so on. These are essential, but the alliances that call desperately to be forged are connections between these practices and the poor, who stand to lose the most under the political ecology of geocide. The question is first of all how to amplify the worldings of the domestic and international poor. They, too, demand to exist, and due to their proximity to cataclysm, their demands are intimately bound up with that of the Earth.

In this regard, the globalist left has failed badly by confusing a particular, self-serving image of progress with egalitarian politics. Obsessed with identity, celebrity, wealth, sleek new (especially green) technologies, and anything that promises to legitimize their sense of cultural superiority, American liberals at best feign a commitment to democratic politics. The values they actually cherish — accumulation of wealth, social status, etc. — derive not from any investment in egalitarianism or justice, but from an investment in global markets, as illustrated by the failure of dozens of outrageous exploitative corporate scandals to elicit a call to action or even a critical response from these quarters, or to put a dent in sales of affected products: for example, Apple devices after exposure of working conditions at the Foxconn megaplant; PepsiCo, Unilever, Nestle, and other
global brands’ products after exposure of working conditions, including child labor, at palm oil plantations; major chocolate manufacturers’ products after exposure of the existence of child slave labor used in production. The exploitative and destructive practices of major multinationals rarely make political waves for the simple reason that no political body—certainly not the Democratic Party—is willing to challenge them or speak for their victims. This bland center-liberalism, together with the neoliberal organization of politics that it presupposed, died with Clinton’s failed candidacy.

As Haraway says, it matters what stories we use to tell other stories. The stories urgently needing expression would repeatedly and forcefully draw the nexus between the interests of the poor, the volatility of carbon-saturated earth systems, and the material sources of emissions. Climate data aren’t sufficient; the heartbreaking narratives of tens of millions of climate refugees and other victims of fossil capitalism from the Maldives, Tuvalu, Papua New Guinea, Bangladesh, India, and delta regions and coastal zones across the planet, not to mention Louisiana, Florida, California, and New Jersey, must be prolonged, broadcasted, encountered. One technique for doing so is the cinematic or visual prolongation of these narratives—as in Michael Nash’s *Climate Refugees* (2010), which alights in turn on political talking heads, images of fragile lands under siege by erratic weather events, and interviews with displaced and soon-to-be displaced inhabitants of developing nations; or Jennifer Redfearn’s short film *Sun Come Up* (2011) exploring the loss of the low-lying Carteret Islands; or the Argos Collective’s ethnographic/photographic work, which visually and textually tells the stories of Nepalese, Alaskan, Bangladeshi and other imperiled populations and lands. These and other “awareness” projects work not only to put a “human face” on climate change, but to jointly articulate the increasing intensity of the climatico-politico-economic loops that define the Earth. The story of this intensive Earth has to be told through the stories of refugees and states lacking the

resources to create defensive infrastructures, as well as the political and commercial exploitation that has driven its intensity to geocidal levels. Such stories broadcast more than their contents; they broadcast also a network of ligatures, of collective obligations binding dispersed, heterogeneous publics together.

Just as the sciences alone are insufficient, however, so too are the arts. It is important to recognize their limitations and their need for supplementation. It is impossible to dispute Klein’s conclusion that nothing less than a sustained, massive, intersectional popular movement tying together “the broadest possible spectrum of allies”—public servants, consumers, veterans, unions, Indigenous communities, manufacturing workers, healthcare workers, researchers, academics, students, artists, engineers, and so on, activists engaged in environmental, anti-poverty, anti-racism, anti-sexi,sm, workers’ rights, Indigenous rights, human rights, and other projects and social movements—is required.59 There is no doubt that the stories with which the anti-fossil capitalism, anti-global warming story can be told, the stories that can adequately, if always partially, represent the Earth-In-Intensity, cover the whole range of oppositional political activism. If those currently fighting a losing climate battle in low-lying regions and arid, rain-starved wastelands remain largely abandoned by Western progressives, however, such a movement would threaten to spiral into disorder, or simply fail to emerge from its primeval chaos.

As lands disappear in the face of rising sea levels, overwhelming storms, crippling droughts, expanding desertification, and all-devouring mudslides, floods, dust storms, and cyclones, it becomes increasingly barbaric to maintain an image of this “disobedient planet,” in Clive Hamilton’s phrase, as an incarnated Globe defined by self-sustaining, abstract forms (contracts, commercial trade routes, etc.) detached from its conditions of production. But as shown by the volatility that the Globe tries to conceal, the ens realissimum is no savior. Indeed, the notion of a savior (whether a permanent, predictable Nature or a despotic

59 Klein, This Changes Everything, 134.
Nation or even a messianic vanguard) is precisely what must be discredited, cornered, encircled, and submitted to the existential demands of exigencies inconsistent with it. Between geocide, a self-sustaining Globe-In-Extensity, and a despotic reterritorialization of the political, and geodicy, a material Earth-In-Intensity, and collective obligation, we must choose.