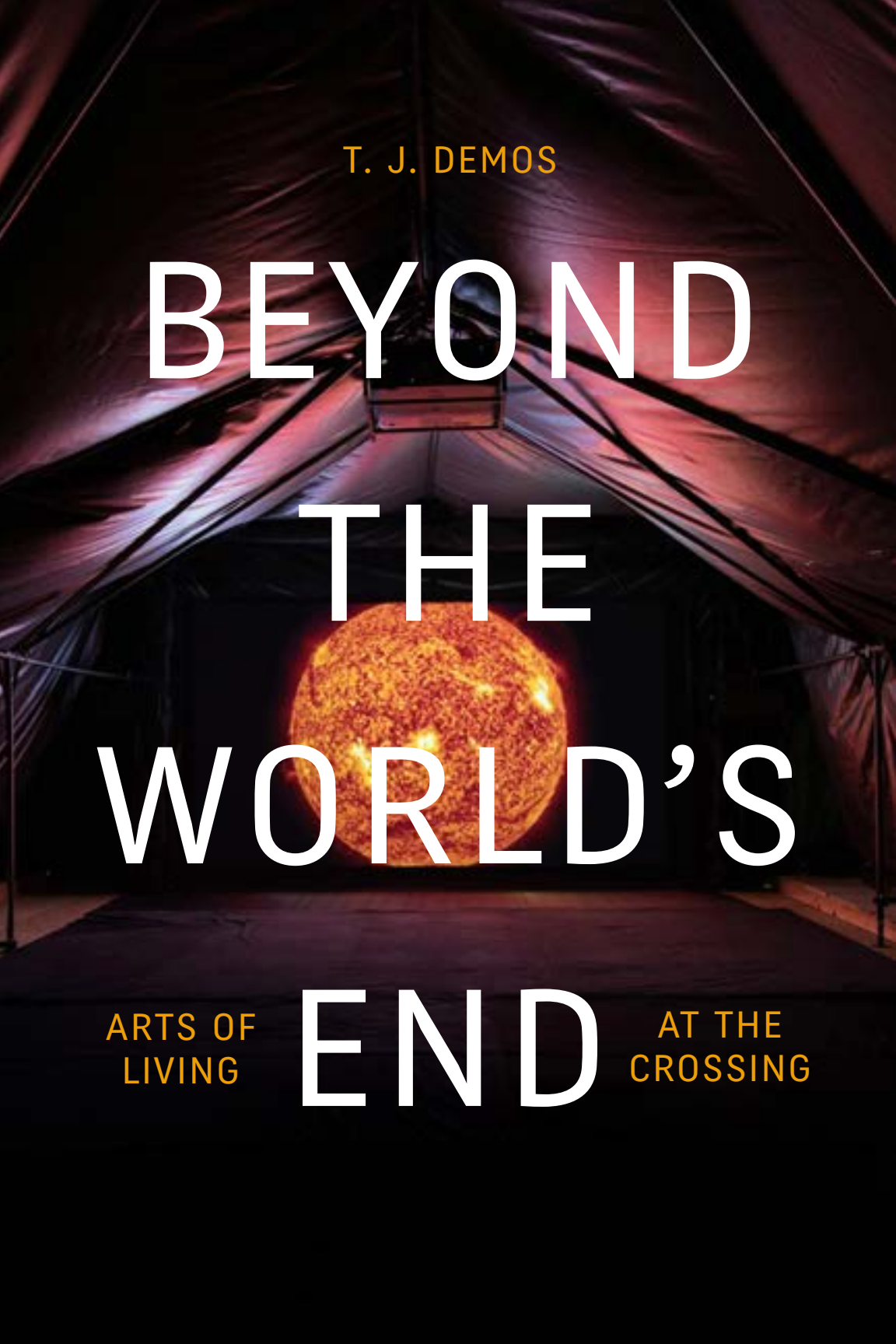
T. J. DEMOS
BEYOND THE WORLD'S END
ARTS OF LIVING AT THE CROSSING

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INTRODUCTION

THE WORLD'S END, AND BEYOND

We are entering the endgame—the terminal point of democracy, of liberalism, of capitalism, of a cool planet, of the Anthropocene, of the world as we know it. Catastrophic environmental breakdown, global pandemic, neocolonial extractivism, algorithmic governance, disaster and racial capitalism, antimigration populism, and endless war comprise some of the forces structuring this conjuncture. Given this socioecological crisis—informed by past colonial genocides, ongoing corporate ecocides, and transatlantic slavery—how do we conceptualize the aftermath? What of the many worlds that have already ended? Equally urgent, how do we represent the radical potentiality of the not-yet? How do we cultivate and bring into being emancipated futures? Addressing this urgent, multifarious, and world-historical subject, this book centers interlinked sociopolitical, economic, and environmental crises—a copious and rousing intersection capable of motivating and engaging interdisciplinary, comparative research and civic attention alike. Doing so, it focuses specifically on models of aesthetic practice where life is being reinvented in ways that not only critically identify the manifold problems that threaten existence as we know it; they also

offer diverse approaches to a hopeful futurity, where hope joins speculative imagination to the material practice of living otherwise, capable of carrying us beyond the end of the world.

While the world of the world's end is multiply configured, just as its supposed end has been variously conceived and historically encountered in many ways, the aftermath has less frequently been addressed.[1] The task remains to investigate not simply the structural causes and violent effects of the end times, including what its symptomatic if superficial imaginary looks like, whether zombie apocalypse, alien invasion, planetary collision, or Hobbesian war of all against all—which Hollywood is so good at envisioning, even while it consistently fails to ponder any kind of emancipatory life beyond the current death spiral of advanced capital. But more, where are the forms of life, the creative visions and stories of substance, that will aid us in moving beyond the various terminal points, past, present, and future? Where are the rift zones between destructive and wholly unjust if not quite outmoded ways of organizing existence—within petrocapitalism, colonialism, anthropocentrism, sexism, and white supremacy—and alternative practices, narratives, and visions founded on social justice and radical multispecies flourishing, glimpsing decolonized futures of environmental sustainability?

Seeking answers to these questions, this book explores a range of artistic and cultural practices that, for me, provide compelling and radical propositions and actionable modelings worth considering at length, even while it acknowledges the provisional and necessarily incomplete purview of its investigation and the fact that there is always more to consider. Extending over seven interlinked chapters, my inquiry addresses the visionary video projects of John Akomfrah (in particular *Vertigo Sea*) and Arthur Jafa (*Love Is the Message, the Message Is Death*), each of which, but in different singular ways, expansively reconceives what climate means, drawing the term into inextricable relation with sociocultural ecologies of racial capitalism, slavery and its legacy, as well as current migration politics and mass species extinction narratives. Both experiment with the visuality of world-ending disasters in racial and more-than-human terms, conjoining biopolitics to geopower. In chapter 1, I consider Akomfrah's in relation to the sea's industrialization and militarization, threatening its sublime nonhuman alterity, as well as its Black liquidity, graveyard of slavery's wake, and present migration's mass grave. Jafa's comes up in chapter 6, discussed in terms of solar apocalypse, Afrofuturism 2.0, and the monstrosity of racialized violence, all posed against the dangerous white futurisms of geoengineering

and the neoliberal Anthropocene. Jafa and Akomfrah each also glimpse emancipatory futures beyond the catastrophe of capitalism's ecology and its deathly in/human and racial objectifications, and proposing sites of necessary solidarity. My second chapter relatedly builds on that basis, addressing extraction as a fundamental logic of our ruling economic order—connecting resource mining to the governmentality of debt, unequal trade agreements to neocolonial financial domination—as diversely plotted in the video-based and sculptural projects of Angela Melitopoulos, Allora & Calzadilla, and Ursula Biemann. These variously investigate conflict geographies in such places as Greece, Puerto Rico, Canada's Tar Sands, and Bangladesh's Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta, revealing what Achille Mbembe terms the "becoming-black of the world," a complex proposition of precarious globalization, or the globalization of precarity, on which I elaborate as, alternately, a newly racializing logic of climate injustice, and a crepuscular aesthetics of postcolonial liberation.[2]

Over several chapters I consider the visual politics of climate refugees, a controversial and potentially objectionable term (especially for those who fall unwittingly into its embrace, as depoliticized objects of humanitarian rescue). As appearing in the anthropological work of the Collectif Argos (Argos Collective) and popular photojournalism, these migrant images often cloak the structural forces behind dislocating inequalities that would indict Western complicity, doing so by disguising them with media spectacle's familiar photography of faces and empathic personal-interest narratives. Against those tendencies, my third chapter highlights an experimental media visuality of causes and of creative beyonds, as materialized in the work of Audrey Quinn and Jackie Roche, Forensic Oceanography, and Teddy Cruz and Fonna Forman. While the technofixes of green capitalism, an increasingly dominant force and rising target of climate-justice activism, come under attack throughout the book, especially in the form of neoliberal climate engineering as considered in chapter 6, my analysis resists any flattening dissolve into a regressive antitechnological green, while it equally rejects any simplistic futurist accelerationism. It does so both by inquiring how justice itself defines a social technology of sorts and by opening my case studies in chapter 4 to the considerations of ecomedia and computer games as virtual sites of the progressive practice of political ecology, namely those of Public Studio (a Toronto-based collaboration of Elle Flanders and Tamira Sawatzky).

Midway through the book, in chapter 5, I address the animal cosmopolitics conceptualized in the experimental artwork of Laura Gustafsson and

Terike Haapoja, which integrates postanthropocentric politics and aesthetics in their proposed rebuilding of legal and cultural institutions, offering a radical sociopolitical composition for a world-to-come. This discussion extends the book's earlier material insofar as it builds upon its focus on racial exclusions and social violence by exploring ecologies of the more-than-human within an intersectionalist frame, which importantly links intrahuman exploitation and dehumanization with environmental destruction and nonhuman animal objectifications.

After considering Jafa's video ecologies of what he terms the "abject sublime"—an explosive mix of beauty and horror, justice and violence, as found in historical and ongoing state violence and resistant social movements—and placing these in relation to white environmentalism (what some might term ecologies of affluence that decline to address social injustice and inequality), in chapter 7, my last chapter, I attend to the sociocultural modes of nonextractive living, where organic agriculture merges with radical politics as an artistic form of life, as well as a life of creative forms, human and non. Here I also extend the discussion of cosmopolitics to creative areas of socioecological transition in actually existing artistic-activist mobilizations, including Standing Rock's #NoDAPL struggle, the international movement for institutional liberation (from petrocapitalism as much as more generally privatized toxic philanthropy), and Europe's largest autonomous zone and postcapitalist ecological experiment known as the Zad—emergent worlds all, each embedded in the depredations of the current dominant spread of global capital, every one growing out of traditions of the oppressed.

WORLDS AND ENDS

What is a world, given this preliminary overview of the book? While no simple (or even complex) answer suffices, my understanding begins by calling up an infinite assemblage of discursive representations and deep genealogies of meaning-making practices. Audiovisual narrations and literary constructions embedded in and shaping cultures supplement all manners of knowing and being, forming lifeways established over generations. These surely contribute to and emerge out of violent conflicts with other competitive worldings, some systematizing and domineering, each comprising geopolitical cosmologies, heterogeneous modes of habitation, collective forms of belonging, and structuring forces of temporalization. All imbue the world—however great or small, ultimately uncapturable in totality—with formative

values and expansive significance. "Global capitalism," for instance, names one such modeling, according to Pheng Cheah's recent analysis, designating "a politico-economic modality that incorporates peoples and populations into the world-system by tethering them to Western modernity's unrelenting march of progress and capitalist time and violently destroying other worlds and their temporalities."[3] For Terry Smith, worlds mix intimate settings with distant powers, where existential meanings, embedded in everyday routines, resonate and conflict with supraspecific logics (neoliberalism, globalism, nationalism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam), while connectivity occurs, increasingly so within advanced technological modernity and contemporaneity, in multiple ways with varying intensities. In relation to all this, contemporary art becomes an intense site of assorted world-making activities, which implies the ambitious opening up of what art or—more broadly conceived and beyond the legitimating functions of dominant cultural institutions—aesthetic practice can be.[4] So too can it operate as a central site of world destruction and imperial violence, where domination is extended into and through visual practices operating at the convergence of knowledge and power, instituting and enforcing one group's rights over others, according to Ariella Azoulay. She proposes to move the date of the invention of photography back to 1492 for just this reason, to tie its development to the universalization of a new world order: "Among these rights are the right to destroy existing worlds, the right to manufacture a new world in their place, the rights over others whose worlds are destroyed together with the rights they enjoyed in their communities and the right to declare what is new and consequently what is obsolete."[5]

Still other theorizations emphasize worlds within worlds (to borrow the Zapatista demand for *un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos*, a world in which many worlds fit), including more-than-human ones, those forming across multinatural onto-epistemological divergences, liberating us all from the oppressions of one-world domination.[6] Postanthropocentric conceptions have even achieved geological nomenclature with, for instance, the Chthulucene, Donna Haraway's proposal for the tentacular down-to-earth world of interconnected multispecies being.[7] While its existence has always been there, if buried beneath the surface and generally disregarded by Western humanism and head-in-the-clouds idealism, that infinitely biodiverse, mutually constitutive, and increasingly threatened world, bearing its own life forms, cultures, and materializations, has increasingly been highlighted in the innovative social sciences of anthropology, ethnography, and animal

studies. In doing so, it has been catching up with Indigenous traditional wisdom that has long emphasized humans' life-sustaining synergies with nature's web of life.[8] It is only tragic that this reworlding, this coming-into-prominence of the Chthulucene—itself a world of many worlds—is occurring at the very time of global crisis, given the ongoing current mass species extinction event, the biological annihilation driven by habitat destructions, petrocapitalist environmental destruction, and resulting climate breakdown, all of which contributes to the world-historical existential crisis we are now facing, putting life as we know it—including our own—at grave risk. "Climate change is now reaching the end-game," concludes Joachim Schellnhuber, head of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. "The issue is the very survival of our civilization."[9]

Consequently, at the time of proliferating worlds, where the failure of global modernity's one-world domination—the world of "no alternative," of military neoliberalism, of posthistorical life beyond capital, and of Western science and technology—is everywhere apparent, we gaze upon an unstoppable cascade of unimaginable tipping points, leading to visions of an "uninhabitable Earth," the end of civilization as we know it, even a world without us, arriving as early as 2100, according to some researched views. That future is marked by heat death, with average temperatures raised five to ten degrees Celsius above present levels; the end of widely available food following massive agricultural failure; climate plagues emerging from melting ice, threatening biological collapse; unbreathable polluted air; endless war, with geopolitical conflicts exacerbated by these very environmental stresses and resulting resource scarcity; global economic collapse; and poisoned oceans.[10] The closest analogue for our forlorn situation—although the current circumstances are truly unprecedented—is the Permian-Triassic mass extinction event that occurred 252 million years ago, known as the Great Dying, a world-ending event that saw 97 percent of all life on Earth expire owing to a carbon-warmed environment. Compared to that, journalist David Wallace-Wells notes, "We are currently adding carbon to the atmosphere at a considerably faster rate; by most estimates, at least ten times faster. The rate is accelerating."[11] While Wallace-Wells' science reporting was accused of irresponsible alarmism—indeed one wonders, is such unblinking assessment politically helpful, or is it debilitating and counterproductive?—he has since doubled down, providing an annotated version with interviews with diverse climate scientists and links to further scholarly research in order to support his claims. For Christian Parenti,

these observations contribute to what he terms a world-ending "catastrophic convergence" of climate transformation, expansive militarism, and growing impoverishment, making for a socioecological cataclysm.[12] Isabelle Stengers too reads a "coming barbarism" in our cards, where dominant capitalist political forces, at a time of threatening postdemocracy and fascist creep, instrumentalize the very threat of the end of the world to support their own financial interests, including technofixes that do nothing to address, and even worsen, socioeconomic inequalities, antimigrant xenophobia, and indeed demand further military interventions from the sector that is in fact the largest emitter of greenhouse gases.[13]

It is clear: we are in the midst of a world-historical, cosmological event, an event that is quickly making the world we once knew historical. I consider it as a great politico-ontological unraveling that challenges the limits of knowledge itself, my thinking aided by Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's recent study, *The Ends of the World*. In it they observe how geology is converging with planetary mortality, such that "we are about to enter—or have already entered, the uncertainty itself being an evidence of runaway temporality—a regime of the Earth System that is quite unlike anything we have ever known. The near future becomes unpredictable, if not indeed unimaginable outside the framework of science-fiction or messianic eschatologies."[14] Time itself is endangered, as much as imagination. Their point recalls Amitav Ghosh's notion of *The Great Derangement*, his title referring not only to the current disruptions of Earth's natural systems and their temporalities regulated by seasons but also to the systemic inability of still-dominant Holocene modes of cultural production to represent those disruptions. These latter owe to now-outmoded stylistic conventions reliant on stable environments playing the role of secure backgrounds to human-focused storytelling. Modern fiction has thus failed to capture the extreme events and climate weirding of the Anthropocene emergence. Just why that is so, Ghosh suggests, "is perhaps the most important question ever to confront culture in the broadest sense—for let us make no mistake: the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture, and thus of the imagination."[15]

While I agree that this question is indeed urgent, this book takes a different tack. If we look more closely, and more specifically at experimental forms of contemporary art and visual culture—rather than limit our gaze to what Ghosh calls "serious fiction"—then we can see that cultural practices are indeed dealing with climate breakdown, including the endings of worlds and the inauguration of new ones, in all sorts of imaginative and

inspiring ways.[16] Those practices are also undergoing radical transformation in doing so, which have possibly rendered them somewhat illegible, at least to conventional institutions of exhibition and art-historical analysis. But if we look closely, we can observe that in fact the most compelling examples of contemporary cultural production offer an acute lens on this expansive cosmopolitical event, as well as a creative laboratory of world-making, not the least of which involves reconfiguring the ultimate end—as both termination and emancipatory goal—of art at this critical stage of history.[17] At least that is what I will argue in the pages below.

APOCALYPSE NOW . . . AND THEN

Invoking the Anthropocene narrative—or rather particular understandings of that charismatic megaconcept—some have suggested that the source of the present climate event reaches deeply into geological time and *Homo sapiens*' evolutionary origins. As such, it both transcends modern economics and destabilizes anthropocentric juridico-political norms. These arguments recall, if at an oblique angle, Fredric Jameson's oft-quoted remark: "Someone once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism."[18] That indeed seems true of much Anthropocene reasoning, in terms of not only the concept's increasingly dominant neoliberal framework, geologizing ethics, and naturalizing conceptions of humanity's "species being" but also its ideological mission where it works in tandem with green capitalism to support climate solutions based on technofixes—anything to avoid messing with our dominant economic system, even if it means placing the earth's life-support systems in jeopardy.[19] But given the globalization of disaster capitalism in recent years, Jameson's subsequent caveat seems all the more imperative to recognize as well: "We can now reverse that and witness the attempt to imagine capitalism by way of imagining the end of the world."[20] With the globalization of neoliberalism's shock doctrine taking form increasingly around sites of climate breakdown and its super hurricanes, massive flooding, wildfires, and rising seas, our policy makers, politicians, and corporations are indeed exploiting speculative economic opportunities in the ruins of catastrophe by forcing through further privatization mandates, "free"-trade deals, and the cancellation of social welfare systems.[21] If the end of the world proves profitable for some, then environmental humanities discourse invoking depoliticized geology only aids in further distraction.[22]

Against this trend, dating the Anthropocene's emergence otherwise—specifically *within* capitalist, colonial history—is politically enabling and provides an important perspective on end-of-world conceptions. Climate scientists Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin, for instance, propose 1610 as the epoch's boundary event initiating the Holocene's conclusion, when the geological implications of the European conquest of the Americas begun in 1492 culminated in a marked drop in atmospheric carbon.[23] In those hundred-plus years following first contact, some fifty million Indigenous peoples lost their lives owing to warfare, mass murder, communicable diseases, and forced labor, with colonization disrupting native agriculture and forest management to such a degree that there was a massive regrowth of vegetation, enough to impact the stratigraphic record and produce what geologists call the early seventeenth-century Orbis Spike. The new geological epoch, in other words, represents the genocidal ending of an earlier one, with the Anthropocene's origins being inextricable from early modern globalization, practiced through resource extraction, military conquest, and culture-erasing colonialism. One can rightly argue that the world's currently threatened end—that of catastrophic climate breakdown—has been rehearsed many times before, prepared through the long unfolding of capitalism's five-hundred-year-old history, that is, since the time of what Jason Moore calls the "long sixteenth century" and the formation of our current world economy. One might even propose it extends back further, into deeper premodern European traditions, and equally continual contestations—defined by all forms of sociopolitical oppression, far predating but equally preparing the ground for the last few centuries of economic globalization.[24] Nonetheless, countless worlds in the Americas were annihilated in the years after 1492, which defines the inauguration of the Anthropocene's political ecology, with which we must now contend.

Current fears of the world's end are thus importantly contextualized by Indigenous voices that view them as a mode of settler anxiety, haunted by those centuries-old histories of colonial violence, climate-changing brutality, and genocide-directed militarism—forces that have long disrupted fragile ecologies integral to native lifeworlds and continue to do so in the present. Indeed, Indigenous peoples have already lived through many such apocalypses, the term defining, for Lawrence Gross (Anishinaabe), what happens when "the lifeway of a culture has come to an end."[25] Surviving the genocide of conquest with tremendous cost, Native Americans have seen "the end of their respective worlds" and now suffer from "postapocalypse

stress syndrome," entailing intergenerational shock waves on individual and socio-institutional levels requiring hundreds of years of recovery—that is, if recovery is even possible.[26] Kyle Whyte (Potawatomi) argues relatedly that the Anthropocene represents nothing less than the unfolding of his Indigenous ancestors' dystopian fears, the worst of past potential futures, in which their descendants are now living.[27] For multitudes, the world's end—measured in the radical rupture of transgenerational cultural traditions, the termination of secure relations to the land, the overturning of stable systems of sovereignty, and the cancellation of self-determination—has occurred repeatedly over the centuries.[28] Much the same could be said of the world-ending, and equally world-transforming, event of the centuries-long transatlantic slave trade for those of African descent.[29]

About these complex historical entwinements of worlds and ends, including the Anthropocene's, Zoe Todd (Métis) importantly asks: "What does it mean to have a reciprocal discourse on catastrophic end times and apocalyptic environmental change in a place where, over the last 500 years, Indigenous peoples faced (and face) the end of worlds with the violent incursion of colonial ideologies and actions? What does it mean to hold, in simultaneous tension, stories of the Anthropocene in the past, present, and future?"[30] Her answer—with which I agree—is to insist on seeing Anthropocene stories of multiple temporalities and geographies, of sequential world-ending events, as a progression of ruins that informs present anxieties and realities, a progression indissociable from current climate breakdown: "If Lewis and Maslin's Orbis Spike hypothesis is correct, then this compels humanity to tend to the interconnections between, first, Indigenous genocide and the violent enslavement of peoples from across Africa, the Pacific, Asia, and the Americas throughout the colonial period, and second, the contemporary economic, political, social, and cultural forces shaping current environmental and power relations."[31] In other words, it is imperative to reframe "climate change and environmental degradation through an anti-colonial lens," as Jaskiran Dhillon (Cree) adds.[32] We must think the multiple ends of multiple worlds somehow together in a comprehensive analysis that will best enable us to address current and future challenges.

With this view in mind, looking back on the fifteenth-century Anthropocene emergence not only is historically informative and offers a crucial explanatory diagnostics on our present circumstances but also helps predict likely near-future unfoldings of environmental transformation, which, in turn, must become sites of ongoing intervention and political mobilization.

Otherwise, our future stands colonized by the same forces that have exacted such a toll in eras past. The stakes, in their gravest sense, concern not only the character of analyses of the long unfolding of the world's end/s but present decisions about how we wish to confront and hopefully survive it/them. To geologize ethics otherwise—framing it within deep time and beyond the dominant economic regimes of the present—risks a false liberal universality, a speciesist neohumanism, which not only disregards the Anthropocene's historical coincidence with and integral relation to conquest, genocide, and slavery but also all too easily surrenders critical traction against current threats of authoritarian, and, at their most extreme, fascist modes of capitalist-corporate governance, ethnonationalism, and white environmentalism.[33] We can confront these interlinked crises, I am convinced, only from within the situated knowledge of our current political economy—as do the activist-artists whose work forms the case studies represented in this book—where it is not human nature that is the culprit but most immediately the greedy interests of racially defined, patriarchally encoded, and extraction-motivated petrocapitalism.[34]

MODELING METHOD

My approach rethinks political ecology as much as aesthetic practice in light of the great rift of climate breakdown and its world-ending event/s. The first step is to develop what I term ecology-as-intersectionality, necessary to overcome the various iterations of nature/culture binaries and oftentimes reductive framings of ecology as present in the diverse articulations of green capitalism, technoscientific rationality, and environmental art history.[35] I adopt it as well to challenge the anthropocentrism that often curtails social justice and antiracist politics and theory. Emerging out of Black feminism and African American jurisprudence, and their rejection of the artificial but institutionalized segregation of racism and sexism, intersectionality has brought focus to what Patricia Hill Collins terms a "matrix of oppressions," which equally demands interlinking comprehensive redress via entanglements of justice demands.[36] While theorized across a long history of writings by such authors as Sojourner Truth, Anna Julia Cooper, Alexandra Kolantai, bell hooks, Claudia Jones, the Combahee River Collective, and Angela Davis, Kimberlé Crenshaw's analysis formalized the term in pointing out the structural incompatibility of double discrimination claims for General Motors (GM) workers before the law, where Black women

workers were unable to gain legal recourse in response to the simultaneity of gender and racial oppressions.[37] Yet whereas intersectional critique now extends to virtually all forms of oppression—including homophobia, transphobia, ablism, religious bigotry, and class exploitation—it seldom if ever incorporates discussion of environmental discrimination or climatological violence, that is, even while environmental racism has become a more or less common term within grassroots struggle and justice-oriented political ecology, where ecology's science of relations necessarily expands to include sociopolitical dimensions.[38]

Still, while Marxist critiques of capitalism have importantly integrated ecological considerations within their methodologies (for instance, in their dialectical materialist approaches to past and present understandings of the metabolic rift between Earth systems and social reproduction), there is little sustained discussion therein of the formations of racial and colonial oppressions, even while Black and Indigenous decolonial studies have pointed out substantial limitations in the former's class-centered priorities.[39] At the same time, while mainstream environmentalism—for example, that of 350.org, MoveOn.org, Greenpeace, and Sierra Club—does important work addressing environmental justice concerns (related to climate breakdown's disproportionate impacts on, and exacerbating vulnerabilities particularly within, communities of color), there is often minimal intersectionalist thinking in their relentless focus on greenhouse gas emissions and atmospheric carbon. These tendencies operate to narrow the horizon of activism as well as the composition of stakeholder communities, create competitive factions, and weaken alliance-building efforts (partly by failing to overcome identitarian divisions). Against this tide, Kyle Whyte argues that decolonization and anticolonialism "cannot be disaggregated from climate justice for Indigenous peoples"—and, I would add, for all frontline stakeholders—who place "resistance to the nexus of colonialism, capitalism and industrialization at the vanguard of their work."[40] Delinking such concerns, in other words, is how "mainstream environmental justice politics are inherently preoccupied with the maintenance of settler state sovereignty and settler futurity," Jaskiran Dhillon concludes.[41] Lest we succumb to such risks—and at their worst, they include eco-fascism's blending of organic purity with ethnonationalism—we must take these concerns seriously and form solidarity across difference.

If, as the Combahee River Collective, based in Boston and working in the 1970s, once wrote, "we are not convinced . . . that a socialist revolution

that is not also a feminist and anti-racist revolution will guarantee our liberation," then today, we could equally say, it is impossible to imagine any revolution that will not also be a socioecological one.[42] Not surprisingly, the Movement for Black Lives' 2016 "Vision for Black Lives: Policy Demands for Black Power, Freedom, and Justice" includes exactly this addition: "While this platform is focused on domestic policies, we know that patriarchy, exploitative capitalism, militarism, and white supremacy know no borders. We stand in solidarity with our international family against the ravages of global capitalism and anti-Black racism, human-made climate change, war, and exploitation."[43] If current emancipation politics do not center climate considerations, then structural discrimination will continue to determine how governments and policy makers respond to this existential crisis, circumscribing all possible worlds to come. With such a scenario, we face the continuation of international environmental racism in the developed world's refusal to share technologies and resources and assist poorer countries suffering years of neocolonial financial domination in protecting themselves from extreme weather, thereby worsening inequalities, and fortressing the wealthy against the pressures of climate migration, as life is made increasingly unlivable for (nearly) all.[44] For those of us, myself included, who are white, non-Indigenous citizens of the US, opposing white supremacy includes opposing eco-fascism and green capitalism, acting in solidarity with those who have experienced the oppressions and violence on which this country has been built, and working with all towards a just future.[45] In this regard, it is worth recalling the ethically unassailable words of Alicia Garza of #BlackLivesMatter, who argues that Black lives "are important to your liberation . . . [and] when Black people in this country get free, the benefits will be wide reaching and transformative for society as a whole."[46]

In regard to the above implied refusal to limit the significance of climate to the biogeophysical realm, my second methodological intervention is to expand the reach of "climate" and "environment" to sociopolitical and economic fields.[47] In this move I draw inspiration from such analyses as Christina Sharpe's, where, attentive to the wake of transatlantic slavery, she discusses "antiblackness as total climate," highlighting the "atmospheric density" of racism after the time when "slavery undeniably became the total environment."[48] Such a conceptualization resonates as well with Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's poignant response to the 2015 killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, shot twelve times by white police officer Darren Wilson, his dead body then simply left on the street for four hours:

"Michael Brown is the latest name of the ongoing event of resistance to, and resistance before, socioecological disaster," they write. "Modernity's constitution in the transatlantic slave trade, settler colonialism and capital's emergence in and with the state, is *The Socioecological Disaster*."[49]

To conceive of climate as antiblackness, or socioecology as antiracist resistance, is to make a major intervention within mainstream environmental discourses, refusing ecologies of affluence and its disciplinary specialization and rejecting the perpetuation of color-blind environmentalism, as when its definition is institutionally and conceptually restricted to nonhuman natures. I find these insights crucial on several counts, especially if we are to avoid perpetuating the false idealism of locating nature beyond, instead of firmly within, culture, politics, and technology (and certainly some Anthropocene conceptualizations do important work here in avoiding such binaries). It is not just that Black and Brown communities have been and still are disproportionately situated near toxic waste sites, landfills, and incinerators—as African American environmental justice advocates have pointed out since the 1960s.[50] It is not simply that US environmentalism has historically been a privileged affair of racial exclusion, dedicated to wilderness protection, with its conservationist modernity colluding with settler colonial policies of Indigenous displacement and occupation of Native lands, whether to secure them as national parks or to develop them for environmentally destructive extractive projects, as social justice critics have stressed.[51] And it is not only the associations of environmentalism with white leisure, ethical consumerism, and liberal elite morality that is the problem.[52] In addition to all these factors, I find that the theoretico-political insights of Sharpe, Harney, and Moten are essential in mobilizing an intersectionalist language in order to resist nature/culture divisions; to insist on structural critiques that link intrahuman racial/sexual/ethnic/discriminatory violence with wider environmental destruction; and to expand climatological conditions to such factors as psycho-affective weather, jurisgenerative atmospheres, and aesthetic-environmental materializations, some of which have been naturalized over time, and which all require sensitive analysis and critical scrutiny.

These speculative positions have only begun to be developed in relation to political ecology as a mode of entangled environmentalism and aesthetic practice. Forwarding such a project here, I am thinking alongside such like-minded cultural critics as Yates McKee, who, in "Climate Justice, Black Lives Matter, and the Arts of Decolonization," comes to a similar conclusion as my own: that such an intersectionalist grouping of practices

"spell[s] the dissolution of 'environmentalism' as a specialized realm of activism into a broader horizon of antiracist collective liberation."[53] I also take my lead from artistic practitioners included in the following chapters, who have compellingly modeled diverse forms of aesthetic construction that underscore just these commitments of ecology-as-intersectionality, founded on convictions of both social justice and climate science. Though these connections might not always be explicitly theorized or intended by the artists under discussion, I take it as one task in this book to connect the dots, articulating and analyzing the expansive implications of their practice in regards to these very concerns.

My third methodological approach, related to the two above, is to articulate and support the arts of political ecology and their justice-based framework, which, as we have seen, emerges from the history of environmental justice politics and more recent decolonial directions—challenging, in other words, the neohumanism and postpolitical Anthropocene positions arising out of select geology and environmental humanities research. Dipesh Chakrabarty, for instance, cites liberal humanist Yuval Noah Harari's *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (a favorite of the likes of tech giants Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Gates) in proposing a species-based etiology of climate change, originating in the evolutionary rift when *Homo sapiens* first adopted tools, jumping to the top of the food chain yet without the cultural preparedness, according to Harari, to assume the ecological responsibilities demanded of that role.[54] These speculations are predicated upon claims that the Anthropocene is somehow fundamental to humanity, which, if true, exceeds not only the bounds of current and historical economic systems but also "human-centered thinking about justice, and thus . . . our political thought as well."[55] The result, however, effectively naturalizes Anthropocene climate transformation. As Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg contend, "species-thinking on climate change is conducive to mystification and political paralysis," and, though Chakrabarty goes to length to defend against this criticism, I can only agree with the formers' charge.[56] Moreover, I find it untenable conceptually and politically to adopt any such perspective from outside our situated position within advanced racial capitalist and colonial modernity that would allow speculative thought beyond our socioeconomic system—which is why I read this kind of science-based geological thinking ultimately as postpolitical, carving out a privileged liberal preserve and dangerously encouraging the neoliberal Anthropocene's conceptualization of "human activities" as unavoidable, inevitably leading to profound climate injustices.[57]

Instead, a far better course is, in my view, to operate from within the framework of environmental and by extension climate justice, which stresses the differential impacts—racially and economically determined—of biogeophysical transformations. In addition, that framework locates causality in the long unfolding of capitalist reason, which turns everything into economic units, seeking to extract the last drop of value from the web of life, even to the point of placing short-term profits above life's very survival. In doing so, the conditions of the extractive present propel the transformation of biopolitics (which also flips into necropolitics) into what Elizabeth Povinelli has termed geontopower.

> As extractive, industrial, and informational capitalism continues to generate climate change and toxic hot spots, the governance of biopower is fraying and revealing a kind of governance that I call geontopower. Geontopower does not operate through the governance of life and the tactics of death but is rather a set of discourses, affects, and tactics used in late liberalism to maintain or shape the relationship between life and nonlife. I do not see geontopower as a power only now emerging to replace biopolitics. Instead, biopower (governance through life and death) has long depended on a subtending geontopower, a mode of power that polices and regulates the difference between the lively and the inert, and that has operated openly in settler colonialism and its related forms.[58]

I view Povinelli's geontopolitics as enabling important insights into the conflicts around Earth elements, such as water, soil and air, that increasingly inform struggles across the Americas—from those of the Tar Sands, Standing Rock, and the Bayou Bridge Pipeline to the contests over the Amazon's resources in Brazil, Ecuador, and Colombia—which pit the forces of petrocapitalism and its commodification of everything against those who defend the web of life and nonhuman elements on the basis of radically different values.[59] It remains crucial to strengthen these transnational alliances, to contribute further energies to this movement of movements, which begins not by limiting our understanding of climate to greenhouse gas emissions or by extending it to humanity as a whole, but by opening it to an intersectionalist politics of climate justice, one that also inevitably bridges, if never collapses, different conceptions of what the more-than-human world is (say, between Indigenous views of Earth's sacred being and environmentalists' secular notions of the ecological commons).[60]

The preceding examples beg the question: What is justice? It is a complex term for sure, far from coterminous with legality, as we learn from the discourses of Afro-pessimism, which variously observe how slavery was legal for hundreds of years in the West, its history dramatizing the structural disjunction between law and justice in the starkest of terms.[61] Indeed, justice proposes a triple bind, according to Jacques Derrida's analysis: once codified and instituted as law, it becomes inflexible, unfree, and a mere mechanistic calculation (its first aporia); if necessarily reinstituted, its singularity is haunted by the "ghost of the undecidable," by subjective and capricious reason detached from collective deliberation and democratic accountability (its second aporia); and if justice is nonetheless necessary, it always, to some degree, refers to a world to come, one never fully present and available in the now, its urgency never quite reaching finality (its ultimate aporia).[62] Against the risk of making emergency decisions in the "night of non-knowledge," it is all the more vital that choices be made not by individual morals or elite dictate but by wide consensus, which in the framework of climate justice necessarily includes the most vulnerable and disenfranchised frontline communities. Breaking through these poststructuralist aporias, Cornel West claims that "justice is what love looks like in public."[63] I find his poetic formulation moving, its atmosphere of collective affect precisely what is needed in expressing the intangible sense of justice's necessary embeddedness and ultimate defining role in collective struggles like the Black radical tradition, decolonial praxis, and climate justice activism. I am reliant on this formulation too in considering more expansive climates in relation to my own mapping of the ambitious claims of what the arts of political ecology mean in contemporary culture, what the arts of living beyond the end/s of the world might look like. "Transformative justice" offers another urgent category, distinct from the state's retributive forms, connecting to West's radical love: it acknowledges the realities of state and corporate violence; seeks alternative ways to address and interrupt cycles of harm without relying on privatized, individualized response; turns to organic and creative strategies that are community created and social-movement directed; and seeks to transform the root causes of violence and inequality rather than merely address their symptoms.[64] Contemporary aesthetic practices can aid in just these ambitions, as I will argue in this book.

CREATIVE ECOLOGIES

These conceptual mutations of ecology, I argue, parallel contemporary transformations of art—as advanced by the practitioners considered here—into sites of expanded creativity, unbounded by commercial institutions that tend to discipline and manage its products as distinctive luxury commodities for wealthy clienteles (defining an increasingly outmoded form of cultural practice). Equally, my approach to aesthetic practice is distinct from models of ecocritical art history that inadvertently turn ecology into a thematic concern (often celebrating exclusively nonhuman realms), picturing and materializing ecology and thereby containing its radical relationality within the artistic frame. The result effectively discounts the transformative event of climate breakdown, contributing to institutional normalization, and disregards art's more ambitious interventions within socioecologies of racial capitalism and colonial extractivism. In my reading, art defines the experimental practice of world-making, generative of justice-based cultural values and creating thinking-feeling places of radical sensibility. Its practice includes speculative and critical knowledge creation, situated within or allied with communities of action and social movements, and always, most ambitiously, provoking and furthering an entanglement of insights, perceptions, affects.[65] In other words, these are what I have termed creative ecologies—practices that make new sensible materializations and connections (aesthetic, practical, jurisgenerative) between otherwise discrete realms of experience and knowledge, and that cultivate just worlds to come.[66]

In this regard, I am thinking alongside expansive theorizations of the intersection of aesthetics and politics, as with Jacques Rancière's conceptualizations where aesthetics proposes possible "framing[s] of the common world," "where the forms of collective life are produced and can be transformed."[67] These "forms of life," sensible ways of doing and making, intervene in and reconfigure worlds of shared experience, with commonality predicated upon political dissensus (really another kind of uncommons), materializing the terms of structural antagonisms that define the stakes of emergent collective composition and solidarity.[68] Building on this understanding, it is vital also to push beyond its anthropocentric limitations, drawing together its "forms of [human] life" with an expansive "life of forms," where semiosis and creativity are not enclosed within uniquely human cultures of commonality. How might the world-generating activity of aesthetics become multinatural, a multispecies affair, and not simply the

reserve of human exceptionalism (as it remains in Rancière's philosophy, and by extension, in much conventional art discourse)? In addition, how might life itself be conceived as a mode of material meaning-making? There are growing conceptual resources in this domain, including the work of multispecies ethnography, posthumanist anthropology, and feminist speculative science studies, which also collectively produce new and exciting postanthropocentric intersections to forward multispecies justice claims.[69] These have been taken up in contemporary artistic experimentation with the invention of new forms of life, sensitive also to the life of forms, in innovative configurations of political aesthetics. If some of the artworks considered in chapters below propose justice-based ecologies, then these expressions often re-align (non)human and more-than-human worlds in ways that do not reach an easy resolution. The possibilities of coexistence must ultimately reckon with incommensurate ontologies and multispecies perspectives as much as the ongoing destruction of biodiverse existence by extractive industry and anthropogenic climate breakdown. In this regard, my understanding of commonality is premised on what Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser call the "uncommons": "the heterogeneous grounds where negotiations take place toward a commons that would be a continuous achievement, an event whose vocation is not to be final because it remembers that the uncommons is its constant starting point."[70]

My present analysis traces, more precisely, three interlinked transformations occurring in artistic, or more broadly aesthetic, practice, as they diversely materialize ecologies of intersectionality. The first is the negation of conventional art's commodity function, targeting art's institutionalization and consequent depoliticization, its complicit participation in oppressive systems (even while acknowledging the impossibility of spaces of purity, contradiction being the overarching condition these days, even while some are more complicit than others). All the practices I write about in this book share in this project of institutional transgression on some level, challenging oppression in multiple ways. As the MTL Collective, whose work I discuss in chapter 7, asks:

> What if, as artists and cultural producers, when we speak of "art" and "activism," we put both under erasure? What if we strike art to liberate it from itself? Not to end art, but to free it from the circuits of capital, white supremacy, settler colonialism, and debt, and to unleash its powers to imagine that which is not immediately apparent. And, what if, as

> we reject the specialization of activism we choose a never ending process of experimentation and questioning, or, we choose, as the Zapatistas say, to "make the path by walking." Let art be training in the practice of decolonial freedom.[71]

This endeavor does not entail the complete abandonment of past aesthetic and critical approaches. Rather, it involves a strategic engagement with the radical resources of avant-garde practice (from speculative documentary aesthetics to creative participatory practice and institutional critique), as much as selectively drawing on the progressive politics of social movements and theories of anticapitalism and decolonization. One exemplary expression is the movement for institutional liberation, comprising those groups (including MTL) working internationally to strike against art's enclosure within petrocapitalism's political economy of operations, including its sponsorship, patronage, governance, and financial systems, according to which, striking against the Guggenheim, Whitney Museum, or Tate Modern, for instance, constitutes a socioecological act of decolonial liberation.[72] The emphasis here is not only placed on nonreformist reforms—immediately contesting cultural institutions' sponsorship agreements with fossil fuel corporations like BP (formerly British Petroleum) in order to revoke their "social licence to pollute" whereby industry "artwashes" its activities—but also on the practice of what MTL terms "collective liberation."[73] Additionally, for Not an Alternative (the formerly New York–based collective whose work I also discuss in my final chapter) "institutional liberation isn't about making institutions better, more inclusive, more participatory. It's about establishing politicized base camps from which ever more coordinated, elaborate, and effective campaigns against the capitalist state in all its racist, exploitative, extractivist and colonizing dimensions can be carried out."[74] Within such engagements I see a forceful expression of political ecology, which importantly strikes out as well against the institutional containment and insufficient political engagement of much conventional eco-art.

Second, I examine the transformations of aesthetic creativity in opening up new worldings of justice-based ecologies. While there is a substantial history of ecocritical art in the Euro-American context that has unfolded over the last few decades, examples of justice-based environmental arts, or aesthetic practices exploring entangled or intersectionalist socioecologies, have been few and far between.[75] In this regard, I am building on framings of artistic practice in my recent books, including *Decolonizing Nature* and *Against*

the Anthropocene, wherein I identified a range of experimental models that, in my view, have forcefully materialized formations of politico-ecological aesthetics and practice. The case studies given in the present volume build on those bases, including considering documentary's innovative complex forms in ways that are both representational (creatively portraying conflict geographies through innovative signifying systems) and affective (expressing emotional intensities and linking them to political ecologies through moving images), thereby working in tandem toward ambitious and collective interventions within forms of sensibility, critical thinking, and experimental modes of living otherwise. In this vein, I focus on complex aesthetic modalities that are relational, hinging cross-sectoral differences and multidisciplinary knowledge systems, in order to materialize connective intersections, with creative ecologies producing assemblages of new insights, embodied sensations, and transformative experience.[76] By foregrounding speculative imagination, these creative ecologies not only critically expose oppressive structures but also open up emancipatory futures, new worlds beyond catastrophic climate breakdown, colonial domination, and social injustice.

Lastly, I argue that the current and ongoing structural transformation of artistic practice—particularly in relation to climate justice politics—is happening most dramatically beyond art's conventional institutions, within social movements, where creativity is fueling the building of new worlds by using diverse and everyday materials and ideas couched in the struggles, images, and stories of collective liberation. This occurs, for example, when the Unist'ot'en camp in British Columbia constructs geontopolitical assemblages (including barricades) that reject Canadian sovereignty claims and assert political ecologies of decolonial land-based efforts committed to the protection of Earth elements; or when Standing Rock's #NoDAPL struggle forms collective choreographies of resistance to contest the expansion of petrocapitalist infrastructure on their sacred lands, placing bodies on the line against the settler atmospherics of state police gas attacks working for catastrophic oil extraction. With artists, media practitioners, musicians, and diverse accomplices contributing to these current world wars, we encounter some of the most meaningful rift zones in Anthropocene times. It is in these cosmopolitical rift zones that a future world of many worlds has already begun to emerge.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World*, trans. Rodrigo Nunes (Cambridge: Polity, 2017). While this book was researched and written before the coronavirus, with its final editing completed during the shelter-in-place orders of April and May 2020, its argument, sensitive to world-collapsing events, in many ways anticipated the outbreak, including the cruel biopolitics of pandemic governance, especially in the US, where economic priorities and corporate profits have largely eclipsed concerns for public health and social welfare. While whatever comes next is unknown, we cannot return to the old normal, for that world was already broken.

2. Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

3. See Pheng Cheah's useful overview in *What Is a World? On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 19.

4. See Terry Smith, "Currents of World-Making in Contemporary Art," *World Art* 1, no. 2 (September 2011): 171–88; Terry Smith, *Contemporary Art: World Currents* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011); and Sven Lütticken, *Cultural Revolution: Aesthetic Practice after Autonomy* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2017).

5. Ariella Azoulay, "Unlearning the Origins of Photography," in the series *Unlearning Decisive Moments of Photography*, Fotomuseum Winterthur blog, September 6, 2018, https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/explore/still-searching/articles/155239_unlearning_the_origins_of_photography.

6. Mario Blaser and Marisol de la Cadena, "Introduction: Pluriverse; Proposals for a World of Many Worlds," in *A World of Many Worlds*, ed. Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 1–22; John Law, "What's Wrong with a One-World World?," *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 16, no. 1 (2015): 126–39.

7. Donna Haraway, "Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene," in *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016). See also Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime* (Boston: Polity, 2018).

8. See, for instance, Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt, eds., *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Eben Kirksey, Craig Schuetze, and Stefan Helmreich, eds., *The Multispecies Salon* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Robin Kimmerer, *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses* (Portland: Oregon State University Press, 2003); and "Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Water," ed. Melanie K. Yazzie and Cutcha Risling Baldy, special issue, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 7, no. 1 (2018).

9. Quoted in Darh Jamail, "The Global Extinction Rebellion Begins," *Truthout*, November 15, 2018, https://truthout.org/articles/the-global-extinction-rebellion-begins/.

10. Recent literature and reporting includes David Wallace-Wells, "The Uninhabitable Earth," *New York* magazine, July 9, 2017, http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans.html; Darh Jamail, "Scientists Warn of 'Biological Annihilation' as Warming Reaches Levels Unseen for 115,000 Years," *Truthout*, July 31, 2017, http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/41425-biological-annihilation-trillion-ton-icebergs-warming-levels-unseen-for-115-000-years; and Will Steffen et al., "Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene," PNAS 115, no. 33 (2018): 8252–59, https://www.pnas.org/content/115/33/8252.

11. Wallace-Wells, "The Uninhabitable Earth."

12. Christian Parenti, *Tropic of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence* (New York: Nation Books, 2011), 7.

13. Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism*, trans. Andrew Goffey (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015); Whitney Webb, "U.S. Military Is World's Biggest Polluter," *EcoWatch*, May 15, 2017, https://www.ecowatch.com/military-largest-polluter-2408760609.html.

14. Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World*, 12.

15. Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 9. For his own recent attempt to bring climate change into fiction, see Amitav Ghosh, *Gun Island* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019).

16. Ghosh, *The Great Derangement*, 11.

17. On the philosophy of the event, see Alain Badiou, *Logic of Worlds: Being and Event II*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2009). On Badiou's views of nature and ecology, see Erik Swyngedouw, "Depoliticized Environments: The End of Nature, Climate Change and the Post-Political Condition," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 69 (October 2011): 253–74. While Badiou

has evinced surprisingly little interest in mainstream environmentalism (even comparing it sneeringly to a postpolitical distraction as the contemporary "opium" of the people), his philosophy of the event nonetheless helps inform what I am implying here. The event—in its expanded theoretical sense—identifies the rupturing of the appearance of normality, opening a space of rethinking reality, producing new truths, subjects, and social systems, organized around a new naming regime in relation to what was once impossible, ultimately invoking, inaugurating, and describing the emergence of a new world. Beyond Badiou's own conceptions, we can call this event climate breakdown.

18. Fredric Jameson, "Future City," *New Left Review* 21 (May–June 2003): 76.

19. This is clear with the Breakthrough Institute, which I critically consider in chapter 6. For further consideration and examination of (anti-)Anthropocene discourse and visuality, see T. J. Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Environment and Visual Culture Today* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2017).

20. Jameson, "Future City," 76.

21. See Naomi Klein's recent publications, including *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2007); *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (New York: Allen Lane, 2014); and *The Battle for Paradise: Puerto Rico Takes on the Disaster Capitalists* (London: Haymarket, 2018).

22. For a repoliticization of Anthropocene discourse through a critique of "white geology," drawing on Black and Indigenous studies, see Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

23. Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, "Defining the Anthropocene," *Nature* 519 (2015): 171–80.

24. See, for instance, Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed, 1983).

25. Lawrence Gross, *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 33.

26. Gross, *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being*, 33–34. Symptoms of postapocalypse stress syndrome, as detailed by Gross, include the following: abandonment of productive employment; increase in substance abuse; uptick in violence and domestic abuse; increase in mental illness and suicide rates; abandonment of religious practice; loss of hope and growing sense of despair; weakening or collapse of family structures, government and educational institutions, and health care delivery systems; loss of economic structures and forms of organization; and the weakening or loss of confidence in previous cultural worldviews.

27. Kyle Whyte, "Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now: Indigenous Conservation and the Anthropocene," in *Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, ed. Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann (New York: Routledge, 2017), 206–16.

28. For a history of these many endings, see, for instance, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (New York: Beacon, 2015).

29. Saidiya Hartman theorizes the "afterlife of slavery" as the enduring presence of bondage's racialized violence still present in contemporary society. See Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

30. Zoe Todd, "Relationships," Theorizing the Contemporary, *Fieldsights*, January 21, 2016, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/relationships.

31. Todd, "Relationships."

32. Jaskiran Dhillon, "Introduction: Indigenous Resurgence, Decolonization, and Movements for Environmental Justice," *Environment and Society: Advances in Research* 9, no. 1 (September 2018): 3.

33. Jason Stanley, *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them* (New York: Random House, 2018). See also the special issue of *Third Text*, no. 158, dedicated to "Anti-Fascism/Art/Theory," ed. Angela Dimitrakaki and Harry Weeks, May 2019.

34. On related debates, see, for instance, Nathaniel Rich's much-discussed article and blaming of "human nature" for the failure of climate governance, "Losing Earth: The Decade We Almost Stopped Climate Change," *New York Times Magazine*, August 1, 2018; and the critical response of Naomi Klein, "Capitalism Killed Our Climate Momentum, Not 'Human Nature,'" *The Intercept*, August 3, 2018. On "situated knowledge," see Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (autumn 1988): 575–99.

35. See also T. J. Demos, "Ecology-as-Intrasectionality," *Bully Pulpit, Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* (spring 2019), https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.1699.

36. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

37. Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140 (January 1, 1989): 139–67.

38. Barbara Foley, "Intersectionality: A Marxist Critique," *Science and Society* 82, no. 2 (2018): 269–75; Sharon Smith, "A Marxist Case for Intersectionality," *Socialist Worker*, August 1, 2017; Mario Blaser and Arturo Escobar, "Political Ecology," in *Keywords for Environmental Studies*, ed. Joni Adamson, William A. Gleason, and David N. Pellow (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 164–67.

39. John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review, 2000); John Bellamy Foster and Paul Burkett, *Marx and the Earth: An Anti-Critique* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2017); Robinson, *Black Marxism*;

Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). Thanks to members of the Center for Creative Ecologies' reading group for critical discussions on this subject during the fall of 2018.

40. Kyle Powys Whyte, "Way beyond the Lifeboat: An Indigenous Allegory of Climate Justice," in *Climate Futures: Reimagining Global Climate Justice*, ed. Kum-Kum Bhavnani, John Foran, Priya A. Kurian, and Debashish Munshi (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2019).

41. Dhillon, "Introduction," 3.

42. Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement" (1977); quoted in *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*, ed. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 20.

43. Movement for Black Lives, *A Vision for Black Lives: Policy Demands for Black Power, Freedom, and Justice*," 2016, https://policy.m4bl.org/.

44. Naomi Klein, "Why #BlackLivesMatter Should Transform the Climate Debate," *The Nation*, December 12, 2014, http://www.thenation.com/article/what-does-blacklivesmatter-have-do-climate-change/.

45. Sarah Manavis, "Eco-fascism: The Ideology Marrying Environmentalism and White Supremacy Thriving Online," *New Statesman*, September 21, 2018, https://www.newstatesman.com/science-tech/social-media/2018/09/eco-fascism-ideology-marrying-environmentalism-and-white-supremacy; Skyler Simmons, "Why Environmentalists Must Be Antifascists," *Earth First! Newswire*, April 21, 2017, https://earthfirstjournal.org/newswire/2017/04/21/why-environmentalists-must-be-antifascists/.

46. Alicia Garza, "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement," *Feminist Wire*, October 7, 2014, http://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/; see also, relatedly, Nicholas Mirzoeff, "On Writing about Black Lives Matter while Not Being Black," in *The Appearance of Black Lives Matter* (Miami: NAME, 2017), 39–54.

47. This intervention resists, for instance, the natural-science-delimited definition of "ecology"—"the study of the functional interrelationships of living organisms, played out on the stage of their inanimate surroundings"—by environmental biologists Reinmar Seidler and Kamaljit S. Bawa, in "Ecology," in *Keywords for Environmental Studies*, ed. Joni Adamson, William A. Gleason, and David N. Pellow (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 71.

48. Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 21, 104. She explains: "I use the wake in all its meanings as a means of understanding how slavery's violences emerge within the contemporary conditions of spatial, legal, psychic, material, and other dimensions of Black non/being as well as in Black modes of resistance" (14).

49. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "Michael Brown," *boundary 2* 42, no. 2 (2015): 82 (emphasis mine).

50. See, for instance, the crucial work of Robert D. Bullard, including *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (Boulder. CO: Westview, 1990).

51. Traci Brynne Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

52. See Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism: A Global History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, "Ideologies of Environmentalism," in *Ecology and Equity: The Use and Abuse of Nature in Contemporary India* (London: Routledge, 1995); and Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

53. Yates McKee, "On Flooded Streets and Breathing-in-Common: Climate Justice, Black Lives Matter, and the Arts of Decolonization," in *Strike Art: Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition* (London: Verso, 2016), 187. The following authors on political ecology have also been inspirational: Nick Mirzoeff, Subhankar Banerjee, Emily Eliza Scott, Heather Davis, Anne McClintock, Ashley Dawson, Not an Alternative, MTL Collective, Ros Gray, and Shela Sheikh (particularly Gray and Sheikh's *Third Text* special issue, "The Wretched Earth," 2018).

54. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Politics of Climate Change Is More than the Politics of Capitalism," *Theory, Culture and Society* 34, nos. 2–3 (2017): 27, 32, citing Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2018), 9.

55. Chakrabarty, "The Politics of Climate Change," 32.

56. Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg, "The Geology of Mankind? A Critique of the Anthropocene Narrative," *Anthropocene Review* 1, no. 1 (2014): 67.

57. See Demos, *Against the Anthropocene*, for further related arguments.

58. Elizabeth Povinelli, "Acts of Life: Ecology and Power," *Artforum* 55, no. 10 (summer 2017): 131; see also Elizabeth Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

59. Particularly insightful here is Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); and recent special issues of *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* on "Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Water"; and *Environment and Society: Advances in Research* on "Indigenous Resurgence, Decolonization, and Movements for Environmental Justice."

60. On social movements of climate justice, see Bhavnani, Foran, Kurian, and Munshi, *Climate Futures*; and on nature as a site of onto-epistemological divergence and environmental alliance-building, see Marisol de la Cadena, "Uncommoning Nature," *e-flux*, 2015, http://supercommunity.e-flux.com/authors/marisol-de-la-cadena/.

61. See Frank B. Wilderson III, Saidya Hartman, Steve Martinot, Jared Sexton, and Hortenese J. Spillers, *Afro-Pessimism: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Racked and Dispatched, 2017).

62. Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law," trans. Mary Quaintance, in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michael Rosenfeld, and David Gray Carlson (New York: Routledge, 1992), 3–67. See also the helpful gloss on Derrida in Leonard Lawlor, "Jacques Derrida," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (summer 2018 ed.), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/derrida/.

63. Cornel West, *Brother West: Living and Loving Out Loud; A Memoir*, with Davi Ritz (New York: SmileyBooks, 2009), 232.

64. Adrienne Maree Brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017), 135.

65. My thoughts here are also indebted to Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton (London: Athlone Press, 2000), originally published as *Les trois écologies* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1989); and Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*. For a useful genealogy of political ecology, see Blaser and Escobar, "Political Ecology," 164–66.

66. For more on "creative ecologies," see the Center for Creative Ecologies, accessed November 29, 2019, https://creativeecologies.ucsc.edu/.

67. Jacques Rancière, "From Politics to Aesthetics?," *Paragraph* 28, no. 1 (summer 2005): 18.

68. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 26, 65.

69. See Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics*, ed. Peter Skafish (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2014); Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Eben Kirksey, ed., *The Multispecies Salon* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*; and Tsing et al., *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*.

70. Blaser and de la Cadena, "Introduction," 19. See also de la Cadena, "Uncommoning Nature."

71. MTL, "Questionnaire Response: Revolution at 100," *Center for Creative Ecologies Journal*, 2017, https://creativeecologies.ucsc.edu/mtl/.

72. See, for instance, the popular demand to remove Warren B. Kanders, owner and CEO of the tear gas and ballistic equipment manufacturer Safariland, from his position as vice chairman of the Whitney Museum's board of trustees, as reported in Hakim Bishara, "Over 120 Prominent Scholars and Critics Demand Removal of Whitney Museum Vice-Chair," *Hyperallergic*, April 4, 2019, https://hyperallergic.com/493611/over-120-prominent-scholars-and-critics-demand-removal-of-whitney-vice-chair/.

73. MTL Collective, "From Institutional Critique to Institutional Liberation? A Decolonial Perspective on the Crises of Contemporary Art," *October* 165 (summer 2018): 192–227.

74. Not an Alternative, "Institutional Liberation," *e-flux*, no. 77 (November 2016), http://www.e-flux.com/journal/77/76215/institutional-liberation/.

75. I consider additional examples in Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*.

76. Here the ambition of fictionalizing politics is crucial, as in the visionary writing of Octavia Butler, as well as the writers of subsequent generations associated with the collective Octavia's Brood. adrienne mare brown argues that such fiction is far from escapist imagination and instead germinates "strategies for organizers building movements for justice and liberation that leverage relatively simple interactions to create complex patterns, systems, and transformations—including adaptation, interdependence and decentralization, fractal awareness, resilience and transformative justice, nonlinear and iterative change, creating more possibilities." See Brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 24.

CHAPTER ONE: FEEDING THE GHOST

1. The piece was commissioned for the 2015 Venice Biennale, and also shown at the New Museum in New York, for which this chapter appeared in an earlier version as a catalog essay. See Thea Ballard and Dana Kopel, eds., *John Akomfrah: Signs of Empire* (New York: New Museum, 2018).

2. Akomfrah's implicit negation of Attenborough's voice, perhaps, by extension, also negates the latter's controversial neo-Malthusian environmentalist politics. A proponent of wilderness conservation, Attenborough, along with his colleagues at Population Matters, has been accused of running antimigration campaigns beyond his work on *Blue Planet*. For critical consideration of population in relation to climate justice, see Adele Clarke and Donna Haraway, eds., *Making Kin not Population: Reconceiving Generations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

3. Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, ed. Werner Sollors (1789; repr., New York: W. W. Norton, 2001).

4. See John Akomfrah in conversation with curator Rudolf Frieling at SFMoMA, 2018, https://www.sfmoma.org/watch/artist-salon-john-akomfrah/.

5. Akomfrah discusses his aesthetic approach to history in an online interview accompanying a 2015 exhibition at the Bildmuseet, Umeå University, bildmuseet.umu.se/en/exhibition/john-akomfrah-vertigo-sea/20548.

6. Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, 292.

7. *Vertigo Sea* thus creatively inhabits the condition of what Jacques Rancière terms "documentary fiction," which "invents new intrigues with historical documents, and thus it touches hands with the film fable that joins and disjoins—in the relationship between story and character, shot and sequence—the powers of the visible, of speech, and of movement." That said, "intrigue" may be the wrong term when it comes to Akomfrah's important excavations, historical dramatizations, and creative representations of historical