

Politics of the Anthropocene: Formation of the Commons as a Geologic Process

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Abstract: In the Anthropocene humanity acquires a new collective geologic identity. There are two contradictory movements in this Anthropocenic thought; first, the Anthropocenic trace in the geologic record names a commons from below inasmuch as humanity is named as an undifferentiated “event” of geology; second, the Anthropocene highlights the material diversities of geologic bodies formed through historical material processes. This paper addresses the consequences of this geologic subjectivity for political thought beyond a conceptualization of the commons as a set of standing reserves. Discourses of limits and planetary boundaries are contrasted with the exuberance and surplus of fossil-fuelled energy. Drawing on the political economy of Georges Bataille and the material communism of Maurice Blanchot, I argue for the necessity of a political aesthetics that can traverse the difference between common and uncommon experience in the formation of an Anthropocene commons.

Keywords: Anthropocene, political thought, commons, Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, planetary thought

Supposing there is no longer any growth possible, what is to be done with the seething energy that remains? (Bataille 1991:31)

Communism is the process of the material search for communication.
(Dionys Mascolo quoted in Blanchot 1993:3)

Anthropocene Politics

The Anthropocene, as the geologic age of humans, proclaims a common planetary platform for the material conditions of species life and a productive plane of social relations constituted by geologic forces. Much has been said about the geologic qualities of the Anthropocene, particularly in reference to how the figure of “Man” has been re-inscribed as universal signifier to claim the geologic flows and processes of the Earth. Much less has been said about geology as a quality of social formations and political subjectivity, its modes of differentiation, and the political uncertainty of communing with an indifferent cosmos. If mineralogical corporeality (subjectivity as geologically constituted) has allegiances with the geologic¹ forces of the planet (i.e. humanity is now recognized as a subject *of* rather than subjected *to* a geologic planet), those allegiances have consequences for how politics is thought and practiced beyond the usual sites of political economy. If politics is no longer solely the purview of

sovereign states or sovereign subjects, but involves insurgency at the level of planetary states and cosmic materialisms, then politics as we have known it has shifted.

Politics henceforth needs to concern itself not just with questions of political will but also with questions of geologic force, and how to hold these forces in common with a dynamic Earth. Michael Hardt (2010:144) makes the point that “capitalist production increasing relies on the common and that the autonomy of the commons is the essence of communism”. In this mode the commons and communism are conceptualized through their incorporation in forces of production, bringing the material commons of the Earth into being as a standing reserve for the stockpiling activities of capitalism. In contrast, the conceptual frame of the Anthropocene brings the commons into view as a dynamic space of curating planetary forces that exceed economic and social modes of production and require a sovereignly attitude in the context of the seething energy of the cosmos.

This paper addresses the idea of a planetary commons and its implications for political thought, staged through a conversation between Georges Bataille and Maurice Blanchot. Bataille and Blanchot are writers “between the wars”, engaged in “Thinking the Apocalypse” between the ruptures of violence and revolution (Blanchot 2010:119). Between subjective and solar sovereignty, Blanchot and Bataille are vigilant to how both the planet and the *unity* of communication depose with “I” as the centre of experience. Rather than see this displacement as the removal of the subjective-political context for acting usefully, it is the very precondition of intimacy that allows existence to regain itself (without being in servitude to ends that make existence a means) to give experience a new quality of resistance. Both thinkers were interested in forces of energy that mobilise material relations and surges in communication. These material forms of communication were conceived as the *advent* of communism; understood not as political dogma but as an exuberant call of unity towards forms difference. Communism was understood as navigating between forms of communication and modes of material exchange, but not in the Marxist sense of creating equivalences between subjects. Bataille says that Marxism creates an incomplete truth because it creates an outside of non-relevance through its focus on goals. In this classification of unintelligible forces Marxism dispenses with modes of existence that are beyond utility. Limits are introduced and the revolutionary subject “never *admits* to not ‘being sovereignly’” (Bataille 1978:116). For Bataille it is the very struggle to be sovereignly, against an indifferent cosmos and in excess of a geocentric materialism, which conditions the possible. He says:

Communism has ever carried neglect of the sovereign part of man to such a point that its negligent attitude has permitted the clear definition of the problem. By opposing itself radically to serving any useless existence, whether it is human or non-human, in a word, any *sovereign* or *sacred* existence, it tends, provisionally, to reduce man not so much to the animal state as to the state of a *means to a means* (Bataille 1978:119).

Writing in the shadow of fascism and ecocide (realised through colonialism, nuclear warfare and genocide), both authors attempt to make sense of planetary politics as an aesthetic sensibility—a mode of communication and form of “cosmic terror” (see Last 2013)—that has an exorbitant and asymmetrical relation that Marxism could not accommodate. Reading Blanchot and Bataille’s engagement

with communism now is a means to engage with a specific political sensibility that has emerged in the material politics of the Anthropocene, which inscribes the planet as a commons constituted by shared dynamic (geologic) forces. In Bataille's (1978) writing on communism, particularly his essay "Nietzsche in light of Marxism", and Blanchot's (2010) recently published political writings, "An approach to communism (needs, values)", "Communism without heirs" and "Reading Marx", both thinkers apprehend communism as an obligation where the "responsibility was common" (Blanchot 2010:138) in the absence of horizon (i.e. in light of an uncertain future in the context of fascism). Bataille insists on a cosmic surplus of energy, rather than its scarcity, so speaks to questions of energy expenditure that constitute the material politics of the Anthropocene and Blanchot argues for an *uncommon* experience that communication must negotiate to overcome the assumption of unity that is evident in the conceptual charge of the Anthropocene (and its overdetermined and under-differentiated concepts of a common humanity).

This paper brings Bataille and Blanchot together to probe how the formation of the commons as a geologic process might be thought of in terms of geophysical economies and political subjectivity. This discussion is set against Anthropocene discourses that promote particularism as universality in the formation of the geologic commons, but nonetheless inadvertently open political questions about a change of times or epoch (Chakrabarty 2009; Steffen et al. 2011; Zalasiewicz et al. 2011).

A General (Planetary) Economy

In Bataille's terms, the Anthropocene is a question that poses "general problems that are linked to the movement of energy on the globe" (1991:20). Human societies are to Bataille, nothing more than a protuberance in the flows of energy. Energy, like communism, is also posed as a general problem of the planet (Bataille 1978:115). His proposal to "study the system of human production and consumption in a much larger framework" (Bataille 1991:20) of the planet, directly addresses how geologic forces and planetary limits might be understood within the geosocial formations of the Anthropocene (Clark and Yusoff 2017). The larger framework that Bataille has in mind does not refer to global-scale analysis of economic processes in a Marxist sense. Rather, Bataille refutes Marxism for its adherence to the "utility" of economic relations and the inability of Marxist schema to accommodate sacrificial and non-utilitarian relations (Bataille 1978:118). The seething surplus of energy that Bataille sees as characterizing planetary flows has no such ends. He says of the constitutive exclusions of utility:

Every time the meaning of a discussion depends on the fundamental value of the word *useful*—in other words, every time the essential question touching on the life of human societies is raised, no matter who intervenes and what opinions are expressed—it is possible to affirm that the debate is necessarily warped and the fundamental question is eluded (Bataille 1985:116).

Accommodating this excess energy that characterizes both material conditions and human experience challenges the recursive call issued in planetary limits thinking

towards conservation and limits as *the* crucial factor in the “normalization” of states and flows. Bataille observes, “humanity recognizes the right to acquire, to conserve, and to consume rationally, but it excludes in principle *nonproductive expenditure*” (Bataille 1985:117).

Instead of a restricted political economy, Bataille suggests the formulation of a general economy that accommodates the flows of energy in relations of force through thoughtful expenditure (rather than expenditure as an *unthought* byproduct of energy consumption within an economic system). Such Earth forces exceed utility and have undetermined ends yet these forces inhabit the intimate actualizations of power and are a subject for politics and part of the politics of subjectification. While Bataille’s planetary energetic thinking gives politics a planetary scale, Maurice Blanchot’s notion of communism as an excessive material communication (a form of intimacy that is bound by exposure) offers a way to furnish the subjective qualities of these political powers. In commune, Bataille’s economies of energy and Blanchot’s (2010:5–6) aesthetics of “communist generosity” suggest an alternative locus for thinking earthly material politics than that which is currently on offer in the various instantiations of Earth Systems Governance (Biermann 2007). Contrasting the discourses of limits that are invested with ideas of material shrinkage of the planetary commons with concepts of exposure and abundance in Bataille and Blanchot’s thought is a departure point for highlighting the role of energy, affection and communication within the material politics of the Anthropocene.

Anthropocene Agency

Given the proliferating debate and institutionalization of the concept in so many disciplines, the Anthropocene cannot be considered a monolithic or even resolute concept; however, there is a common fundamental adherence to a statement of geologic agency (Crutzen 2002; Steffen et al. 2007). How this geologic agency and its subjective modes are thought is the basis of political subjectivity in the Anthropocene.

These statements of geologic agency inhere in two contradictory movements: On the one hand, the search for and identification of the Anthropocenic trace in the geologic record names a *commons from below*. Humanity is named as an *event* and species of geologic time; understood as an undifferentiated stratification to be represented by a yet-to-be-decided “golden spike” that proclaims the univocity of the “we” (we, the stratigrapher of the Anthropocene, collectively laying down plastics, nuclear waste, agriculture, ecologies, atmospheric traces, oceanic currents, bacterial colonies—a subterranean commons of diverse material recombinations).

On the other hand, the Anthropocene highlights the material diversities of geologic bodies (human and inhuman) that constitute a *differentiated commons of energy* as a material-historical process; Anthropocenic bodies that are the product of—and participate in—Anthropocene-making practices (including the various differentiated collectives that are an expression of fossil fuels; the fossilization practices of urban strata and extraction; bodies that consume vast quantities of fossil fuels and those that incorporate none).²

Both these corporeal commons open up a consideration of social processes as geologic processes, which in turn forces both a rethinking of the formation of the material commons and the processes of sociality that bring it into being. This prompts a need to conceptualise the materiality of the commons as a domain of political subjecthood rather than just a set of standing reserves that should be governed solely by an ethics and equality of extraction (the availability, equity and geopolitics of resource extraction).

Why this call for a consideration of a geologic commons in the Anthropocene? Why the *desire* to suddenly understand humanity as a totality of social forces shaping and being shaped by geologic processes? This framing might be seen either as a counter cry to the individuation that characterises capitalism (and its rapacious and unequal proliferation of resources), or as another moment in the quantification and reorganization of material resources in bean counter Earth (the neoliberalisation of geophysical forces). Certainly, there is the cry for a radical interrogation of social processes of consumption alongside the suggestion of neoliberal modes of governance of these issues (in the form of geoengineering, management of resource “scarcity” and technological innovation as the solution; Crutzen and Schwagerl 2011; Rockstrom 2015). What is given by one hand as a generous call for the need for social change (seemingly engineered by a prophetic planet) is taken away by the other in the reassertion of neoliberal modes of valuation and management (a political science that in its analysis occludes the very violences it appears to take aim at). Such Janus-faced proclamations can only arise from the omission of the historical geosocial processes that have brought us to this threshold: that is, what properly constitutes Anthropocene politics—capitalism, inequality, racism, colonialism and uneven energy geographies. In contrast to the neoliberal solutions of planetary management, Bataille’s “ethos of political engagement” is crucially not founded on the “illusion that we have not produced the violence which we struggle” (quoted in Irwin 2002:122).

The “we” of the Anthropocene is invoked to somehow respond to the tears that rent across social bodies *because of* environmental and political injustices, in the hope that such rents might be healed. Instead, such injustices are elided and their structural continuance remains unexamined. As Blanchot suggests:

Whenever the “we” is a kind of fusional community where responsibility is swamped, I can see danger ... But on the other hand I would term “we” acceptable when it is made of interruptions, where those who say “we” know that they are singularities with an interrupted connection (quoted in Stoekl 2006:50).

This false unity from below shares all parts equally across the “bodies politics” (Protevi 2013:41) of humanity, but fails to address the very ground conditions of causation to which it speaks; namely, the excess of capitalist accumulation in the perturbation of environments. In its claim to the neutrality of a geologic temporality, the Anthropocene obscures climate racism and the Western-centrism of climate science in the production of “cures” (see Baldwin 2013). The parochial claims to universalism are made in the name of sharing an environmental condition, when time and again this is a condition that is never shared equally and targets communities as recipients, but not necessarily agents of change. Regardless of the “why” of

Anthropocenic thought and its motivations in terms of social and political power, in the “where” of the Anthropocene—as geology becomes a territory of the human it also becomes a quality of the population—a mode of subjectivisation is mobilised. The Anthropocenic subjectivity simultaneously enacts both social exclusion and a form of common-ing in the figure of Humanity as a planetary (political) subject.

However, if the Anthropocene is issued as an anticipatory sentence on the future with the express hope that this is a future that can be forestalled, then its operative hold is established through a teleology of species-life that is able to collectively conceptualise life as such, and make material interventions in its (social and biological) reproduction (Haraway 2015; Steffan et al. 2007). To put it another way, there is an implicit assumption in Anthropocenic thought that raises the category of the species-life in order to *assume* a collective consciousness (Crutzen and Schwagerl 2011) that will arrive at some shared sense of the world; a consciousness that senses and experiences the world as a singular totality. That is a consciousness with a singular aesthetics or language for the world (see DeLoughrey et al. 2015:12–13). Such a species-based sharing of the consciousness of the world, as a universal condition, which is *given* by the fact of world (i.e. as self-evident) replicates colonial imaginaries that universalised a transcendental man from the position of colonial power. Such a Man was a racist fantasy of Western discourses, but it was also actualised to materially subjugate others through signifiers of differentiation; of race, economic class, gender, sexuality. As Denise Ferreira da Silva argues, such naturalisation of the post-Enlightenment subject, “would position Man in such a way as to disavow other, coexisting modes of being human” (2015:91). That is, the Man of species-life is bound to a singular teleological trajectory from a very particular locus of power, and he is intent on reproduction of the self-same. Against this singular vision from below that reproduces the classical geopolitical “view from above”, Harney and Morton suggest we think about a different kind of *Undercommons*; conceived as a space below the political where we remain “in the hold, in the break, as if entering again and again the broken world” (Harney and Morton 2013:12). The commons they imagine is already subtended below by the breaks of violence that constitute it.

Adding the geologic to the understanding of the commons, in both its material and subjective instantiations, is not about fixing a condition or bringing to light some new understanding about Anthropocene conditions *as such*. Rather, it is about acknowledging a material substratum (or subterranean geologic debt) that underpins the politics of subject formation and organises the conditions of freedom (Bebbington and Bury 2013; Yusoff 2013). Such a subsidy from geology (as fossil fuels, mining bodies or mineralogical instantiation) is a debt in the conventional sense of subjectivisation being indebted to the material conditions of emergence (as labour and mineral), but it is also a more intimate debt; a debt that acknowledges and actually binds us to the planet, connecting “our” force with those of the Earth and cosmos. This summoning of a geologic commons on the threshold of planetary change is offering an epochal redescription of not just geology but of the bounds and materiality of subjectivity. Reconceptualisations of the planet not only offer a new description of the Earth, but also enclose subjectivity within new limits and concepts of powers (Crutzen and Schwagerl 2011; Yusoff 2016).

Planetary Limits

Historically, it can be said that two things happen when planetary limits are proclaimed as being approached; there is a renewed focus on growth and the commons becomes organised as a space of judgement and enclosure. The aesthetics of these limits are doubly political. First, limits present and frame a biopolitical decision about: populations (or what Butler calls “iconic versions of populations who are eminently grievable, and others whose loss is no loss, and who remain ungrievable” [2009:24]); carrying capacities (which construct notions of scarcity and growth); and the economic enclosures of common environmental zones (carbon sinks, atmosphere, biodiversity, subsurface etc.). Second, aesthetics are a form of recruitment to the legitimacy of a political scene, which simultaneously designates agency and infrastructures of governance to adjudicate on those limits.

In the context of population anxiety the first wave of planetary limits thinking (Meadows et al. 1972 [1961], 2006), the environmentalist Garret Hardin proposed that the planet was not a “spaceship Earth” (a popular political aesthetic), as this proposed governance would be in the form of a captain or rational actor, rather it should be about the common good. Hardin (1974) suggested each rich nation could be seen as a lifeboat full of comparatively rich people. In the ocean outside each lifeboat swam the poor of the world who wanted to get in to share the wealth (and presumably have a right to life). Hardin suggested that if poor countries received no food from the outside, the rate of their population growth would be periodically checked by crop failures and famines. But if they were allowed to draw on a world food bank—a “commons in disguise”—their population would continue to grow unchecked, and while it may diminish the need of their hunger it actually increased their need “without limit” (Hardin 1974). According to Hardin, this was the “Tragedy of the Commons”.

The parallels between Hardin’s Lifeboat Ethics and contemporary Planetary Limits (not to mention the disaster of migrants forced into the open seas) are stark in terms of how an imaginary of limits returns with a set of controls to growth (or organisation of letting die). While planetary limits are conceived as a foil to the limitless horizon of late capitalism, they perversely extend capitalism’s reach, restructuring relations and opening up new markets (e.g. carbon trading). This misses the quality of the relation with capitalism. By setting up a dialectical relation, there is no release from the structuring logics of capitalism and no practicing of an alternative sense relation to reconstitute the politics of the scene. The failure of carbon trading, REDD+, personal and corporate responsibility and the market enclosure of environmental commons makes this point apparent. The political aesthetics of this lifeboat scene campaigns on our senses to make “rational” decisions about letting live and die, framing this as a question nested within a supposedly higher moral and ethical purpose. But if we pause a moment on that image of a boat at sea—a proxy for the planet in the 1970s—where speculative biopolitical decisions are being made for the greater good, we soon find ourselves within the ethico-political imaginary of Fortress Europe and its racialised policies of “letting die” in the Mediterranean.

While much critique has rightly been levelled at the scene in which Hardin raises his ethical question, it is the asymmetrical material legacy of colonialism that allows him to construct such a political scene in the first place. The interdict of limits structures a space of “rational” decision-making about the commons that is already sadistic, inasmuch as the swimmers have already been made killable in Judith Butler’s (2009:23–24) terms. Writing during the same period, Bataille argues that the primary political relation in the biosphere is predicated on the asymmetrical generosity of the sun (Bataille 1985), not on the accumulative logic of private property or enclosure. The problem according to Bataille is not scarcity, but what to do with the accumulated excess when growth is no longer biophysically possible. What he suggests is food programs to India as a mode of reparation and dissipation of American wealth (Bataille 1991:39).

The “problem” of fossil fuels is not so much their scarcity but their abundance. Vaclav Smil (2006:156) argues that no indicator of high quality of life shows a substantial gain once the average per caput energy consumption goes above about 2.5 ton/year, and consequently affluent nations have no need to increase their already high averages. And yet, the assent of unconventional fossil fuels (tight oil and gas, deep sea drilling, mountain top removal, tar sands) is in pursuit of a superfluous wealth. Far from a depleted planet that critics of fossil fuels warned us about in the discourse of peak oil, it seems that the planet keeps on giving; its reserves seemingly an endless gift of compressed sunlight from the Carboniferous (the subterranean solar commons). The conditions of extraction may have become ever more challenging and depraved in their equations of energy conversion—the “net energy cliff” where energy return on investment (EROI) is increasingly diminished—but there is no end point. There is just an increasing wastage of other material commons and toxicification in the process of extraction.

Rather than highlighting scarcity as so much of our current Anthropocene-inflected environmental policy does, Bataille reminds us that the problem with “limits to growth” may not actually reside in those limits per se, but in the question of what to do with the abundance of energy that remains when no more growth is possible. For Bataille, the economy of energy that binds life to the Earth is always excessive; at any point, it is producing more than is strictly necessary for survival, and always in excess of the circuits of production (producing a surplus of waste). He says: “[t]he history of life on earth is mainly the effect of a wild exuberance; the dominant event is the development of luxury, the production of increasingly burdensome forms of life” (Bataille 1991:33). Crucial to a general economy of energy was the need for its dissipation and distribution, such as the transfer of wealth without reciprocation and asymmetrical models of sharing without debt, which addressed how “the *general* situation proceeds from a *particular* point of view”. The transfer of American wealth to India addressed the general production of resources in excess that produces particular problems of extreme poverty (Bataille 1991:39). In contrast to a restricted economy, predicted on growth and homeostasis, and preoccupied with accumulation, in Bataille’s account, a general economy is “economy writ large” (Hill 2001:49) and predicated on excess and wastage (Yusoff 2010).

Solar Sovereignty

Bataille recognised that while equilibrium may be achieved in specific, limited situations, at the scale of the planet it was lacking (Bataille 1991:33). A closed or rational economy of utility ignored how energy circulates and opens possibilities for accumulation, but can never be reduced to the things it generates. Accordingly, planetary energy makes man a roundabout, a subsidiary response to the problem of growth (Bataille 1991:37). Suggesting that energy resources—fossil fuels—can serve as the basis of demographic growth, he is keen to point out that this energetic excursion of human life is only itself an excess of the solar origins of the movement of energy itself. If solar politics is located in the universe, it is not a politics based in universality. The asymmetry of solar sovereignty is a mode of differentiating power relations between forces, social and geophysical, but it is also a provocation for imagining freedom against a scene of unconditional expenditure.

As Samuel Beckett (2009:3) begins: “The sun shone, having no alternative, on the nothing new. Murphy sat out of it, as though he were free ...”. The role of this solar sovereign in Beckett’s play introduces a new economy that counters the utility that is at the heart of the capitalisation on all forms of human, nonhuman and inhuman labour. In this solar politics, utility must be disarmed by something other than itself. Bataille argued that while technology and human labour extend limits and transform inert matter into reproductive and supplementary apparatus, it is already a space that is populated by the excessive qualities of energy. While energy resources might be directed to certain ends, these cannot delimit an economy animated by terrestrial energy. The question for Bataille is always posed in terms of extravagance. He suggests that there are two rival definitions of necessity: “necessity as need, subsistence, survival growth, utility” and “necessity as ineluctable excess, appetite, prodigality, dilapidation” (Hill 2001:49). The necessity of excess is valuable precisely because it moves away from a profit and loss relation to the Earth, and from the morality tale of a “good” or bad Anthropocene and its Judea-Christian origins (Rockstrom 2015).

A general economy was “able to take account of unproductive expenditure, wastage, excess, and symbolic exchange, and its boundaries are as vast as those of the Earth’s crusts, or more precisely, the biosphere” (Hill 2001:49). What we see 50 years later in planetary management (Rockstrom et al. 2009) is the sublimation of a general economy by a restricted economy; an attempt to tie geophysics to the particular and limited ends of neoliberal economies. Yet, it is the very same energy that has been excluded by a restricted economy and returns as the Anthropocene that becomes the new subject of governance. We might see Bataille as one of the first thinkers to propose an economy of the planet—“from geophysics to political economy” (Bataille 1991:10)—that took into account solar, bio-geo forces, and tried to understand this excess of energy alongside restricted or capitalist economies. In the context of this geophysics, Bataille saw Marxism as insufficient in its analysis of political economy, both in terms of its exclusions in economic analysis and in the aesthetical nature of oppression. For Bataille the experience of nonutility was the very basis of being open to the universe and of revolutionary struggle.

Im/material Communication

While Bataille was concerned with the material and affective excess of energy in the commons, Blanchot was interested in the intimate forms of social production that constitute communism. Taking up Mascolo's notion of communism as a material search for the possibilities of communication, Blanchot (1997:93) explored communism as space of subjective political freedom. Like Bataille, Blanchot saw that human life cannot be limited to a closed system of utility assigned to it by "reasonable" conceptions (Bataille 1985:128). Blanchot's communism was not allied to a political party or conventional movement, it was the idea of the "advent of communism", as an exteriority that decolonises certain occupations of language and economies of thought (see Iyer 2002:46). Blanchot's political aesthetics is located in the tension between, what John Roberts calls, the two names of communism—"communism as a name in politics and communism as a name in philosophy" (Roberts 2013:9). Blanchot suggests that the satisfaction of needs is essential to revolutionary movement, but those needs come up very quickly against the existence of utility in the detours of economic relations, which breaks off communication through an inference of values (thing-value, use-value, labour-value), so:

this person treats himself as a thing, accepts belonging to a world where men are things, gives himself the reality and figure of a thing, not only breaks off communication with the one who is similar or dissimilar to him, but breaks off communication with himself (Blanchot 2010:3).

This is Marx's maxim, "the reign of freedom begins with the end of the reign of needs and external ends", but what Blanchot suggests is that collective relations are reduced in this model to the search for a common world of needs (and their ends). And this common world excludes the private world that struggles to be outside such values—or, what he calls the burning of a "communist generosity"—that rejects and obscures all valuation and points us in the direction of something that is entirely other (a task, Blanchot [1997:97] says, that "artistic experience" recalls us to). This is also what Bataille means when he talks of "nonutility" as an insurrection against the principles of utility that constitute oppression. Both involve sacrificial modes of engagement. The private world that is at stake for Blanchot is not predicated on a simplistic division of private and collective relations, but a relation "where *the other*—the impossible—would be welcomed" and this "constitutes, in the strongest sense, an essential mode of political decision and affirmation" (2010:5). Here the other is not a singular figure but a vector of relation in the world in which there is solidarity with the seemingly impossible. Such "acts of impossibility" burn with generosity inasmuch as they defy the current conditions of possibility.

In the context of what the rejection of "ends" might mean for the sociality of political subjectivity, Bataille's (1993:365) discussion on "Nietzsche and Communism" is illuminating. Bataille suggests the "disproportion" between Nietzsche and the general question raised by communism is Nietzsche's insistence on sovereignty. "With respect to traditional sovereignty, he had the same attitude as the communists. But he could not accept a world in which man—in which *each man*—would be a means and not the end of some common endeavour" (Bataille 1993:367). Nietzschean sovereignty asserts itself not as an individualising force,

levelled at the cost of a common experience, but as a “refusal to serve (to be useful)” (Bataille 1993:368); the rejection of a subjective life that is enslaved to the order of things and tied towards the ends of reason. That is, freedom is also the freedom from the imposition of ends (political or otherwise) and the over-determination of the future. For Blanchot, both these positions (of sovereign and common struggle) are brought together in his concept of communism; a sovereign subject is opened in their exposure to others, where communication is a moment of both generosity and sovereignty because it is without expectation. Such communication “cannot be isolated from the movement that tried to promote a resumption of life in the moment, in opposition to the bourgeoisie, which accumulates” (Bataille 1993:371). This is why there can be no immediate political ends, and it is precisely this lack of a calculative logic that marks the awakening of a private life that is organised around the depths of an emotional experience. It is a space of friendship, not capitalisation. Blanchot’s thought suggests that the commons in communism is the welcoming of that experience that breaks with accumulative logics.

Blanchot, discussing Mascolo’s ideas of communism, follows Marx part of the way: material relations turn man into a thing; thus, communism is the search for forms of communication that overcome this alienation and instrumentalisation of both self and other; instrumentalisation is a relation of unity that is achieved through material relations, insomuch as material relations and the satisfying of needs sustain the conversion of people into things, giving men the value of “instruments and tools” (Blanchot 2010:3). While the task of Marxist analysis would be to realise, by order of collective relations, the liberation of man from his thing-tool-dom by taking the side of things:

by somehow giving power to things, that is to say, to that which reduces man to being nothing but useful, active, productive, that is, by excluding any moral alibi, any phantom of value. The essential task of Marxism (at least understood as such and restrictively) is to give man mastery over nature in him, by means of things (Blanchot 2010:3–4).

What Blanchot is suggesting is that, in Marxist analysis, a “man-tool” is the clearest expression of the material-economic relation, but Mascolo refused this final reduction as the moment of consciousness or the end that man needs to become in order to supersede it.

Instead, Blanchot argues for the importance of intimacy of desire and how this affirms the possibilities of departure; “a movement without fixity” in the “quest for a *just* direction and the *determination* of a possible future” (Blanchot 2010:5, emphasis added). The importance is to depart and not to rely on beginning again, not to rely on beginning at all. Blanchot says: “The true communist dissident is someone who leaves communism not in order to find common ground with capitalism but in order to define the true conditions of the struggle against capitalism” (2010:xv). This is Blanchot’s refusal of not just the worst of capitalist production but of what seems the reasonable (or rational semblance) of political accord; this “friendship of the No” (Hart quoted in Blanchot 2010) means the rejection of new origin stories in the Anthropocene and a burning embrace of the epochal moment as an opening into sensibility, rather than as more of the same.

If a rejection of capitalist modes of valuation and their enclosures within a restricted economy is deemed necessary to dismantle the Anthropocene-in-the-making and to rethink the relation with Earth forces, then an epochal claim needs to move into another lexicon of thought. The insistence on a proper language for the Anthropocene is a political-aesthetic formulation of a *quality* of power—and thus it participates in, and prolongs, the forms of oppression that have accompanied and continue to be reproduced in Anthropocene practices (the disproportionate exposure of racialised communities to the environmental effects of extraction, the dispossession of indigenous communities, the distribution of power, etc.). The obfuscation of violence through naming the Anthropocene as a collective condition perpetuates the existence of violence while rendering it invisible. Such violence is not just out of sight, but traction-less, because it does not even belong to the terms of engagement. It is without language in the Anthropocene discourse. And so structural violence inherent in Anthropocene practices become simply posited at the level of invisibility but with the promise of revelation (an heir of Enlightenment practices), akin to Rancière’s concept of the distribution of the sensible. Where the distribution of politics obscures—through the promise of possibility—the social reproduction of a political justice just “out of reach”. This aesthetics of divisive continuance (what Lauren Berlant [2011] calls *Cruel Optimism*) is a very quality of powers’ continued oppression. By making the sphere of work seem as if it only requires an articulation on the same plane of distribution, neoliberal structures are not challenged, and their languages of distribution remain the only language available to political articulations within this sphere. By failing to commit to specific bodies of exposure and the conditions of location from which the Anthropocene is made (i.e. its particularism), the indistinction of bodies and materials solidifies power into a single plane (universality). And it is a plane of oppression defined by racism, inequality and violence.

Unlike the conceptualisation of planetary limits as boundaries under which the plane of governance is homogenised and then extended into the future (or in Rancière’s political aesthetics it becomes extended into the see-able, say-able and hear-able in the redistribution of sense), the limit in Blanchot and Bataille’s writing is disruptive, an intervention in sense and its meaning in order to affirm radical difference. As Hill (2012:433) puts it:

... the tracing of every limit, in other words, responds or corresponds that which, unspoken or unsaid, extends beyond the limit—a limit which, while remaining impossible to cross, is nevertheless interrupted, effaced, and overwritten, so to speak, with the otherness, fragile, precarious, and ghostly, upon which every limit depends.

If “our” Anthropogenic climate change overwrites the planet’s own, the epochal claim is not simply about reaching and prescribing the limits of Earth systems, but interrupting and overwriting those limits with signatures that incite the planet’s own capacity towards epoch-like geologic convulsions—this is the precarious political scene of planetary communism.

For Blanchot, communism is the process of being drawn outside, towards exposure. Exposure is sacrificial in the first instance, by abandoning political goals in order to be vulnerable to the possibility of a new language and organisation of

political life. Political achievement is avoided in order to inadvertently secure it. In this elliptical relation to politics, exposure is an anticipatory practice of signalling what is at stake in those politics (in the same way that coming up against the police in the context of a protest signals what is at stake for the state). The inevitable failure of political events to establish a comprehensive political program in the moment of their irruption is second to the “instant in which its participants were *drawn outside* in response to a nameless demand that opens up the social space” (Iyer 2004:9). Communism then is the opening of community and the political beyond the existing determinations, institutions and historical instantiations of oppression into something new. Such openings made because of solidarity inadvertently open politics to the excluded and have the potential to transform what constitutes the political. Such political friendship attests to the differentiation at the heart of community as a traversal of that which is *uncommon*. As Iyer comments:

Blanchot’s critical practice cannot thus be regarded as indicating a marginal experience. Even if its relation to what is traditionally called politics is indirect and elliptical, the notion of community calls for a new elaboration of the political insofar as it calls for a reframing of the political as such (2004:3).

Such an epochal shift cannot continue with the same language that constitutes its oppressions. To name the Anthropocene as an epochal break and then carry on as before with the same mechanisms of extraction (of environments, labour, life) is merely to engage in an elaborate marketing strategy of an “extraterritorial” community.

Epochal Shifts

In the postwar context of 1968 student uprisings and the Algerian colonial war, Blanchot suggests that if there is certainty about what this epochal turn *is* then it can hardly be called a turning. In our current dilemma about the epochal conditions of the Anthropocene, the proclamation of a geologic turn might be put to the same test. Without irony, Jan Zalasiewicz, Chair of the Stratigraphic Commission, refers to the “*New World of Anthropocene*” (Zalasiewicz et al. 2010, emphasis added). If language denotes reproductive acts, then a geologic turn must break with its colonial-hydrocarboned-political subjectivity *and* decolonise its geopolitics through geopoetics (Last 2015). Whether we adhere to the beginning of the Anthropocene in 1800 or 1610,³ colonialism and its communicative forms of capitalism underpin both these origins. The parallel between Blanchot’s claim for communism and the Anthropocene’s claim on the rocks is the status of the materiality of communication and how it writes a change of epoch. Blanchot’s communism is not an ideal for a political system in the first instance, but a communicative *event* that forms the basis of solidarity across uncommon ground (Blanchot 2010:5). As Iyer (2004:viii) comments:

communism names the voyage out, the unceasing response to a demand even as it tears us, each of us, from the security of any determined political system. One does not belong to communism, and communism does not let itself be designated by what names it.

What matters for Blanchot is the departure, from man as an end to the possibilities of communicative relation (Blanchot 2010:4), and this is what secures an altered notion of politics. If this material communication also entails social reproduction of other worlds,⁴ then to break this reproductive logic of utility, language *as relation* must be fractured and those breaks intensified.

This expression of aesthetics as a trial of language⁵ differs from Rancière's formulation of political aesthetics, as Blanchot privileges the interruption of language over its representational power. Unlike Rancière's (2006) depiction of social reality in the "division of the sensible" in which the sensible adjudicates politics on a level playing field of sense, where communication is a power that grants agency in the political sphere, Blanchot was writing in the wake of WWII collaboration in France and the penetration of the state into private lives through the exposure of affiliations. For Blanchot (2010:4), communication is a possible "relation" in the communism of being, not a vector of power in the first instance (and yet it is intimately concerned with the politics of power). Such communication is the precondition of politics. It is what calls politics into being—over the fence, on the road, in song, in shouts, spitting tender words of attachment. It is a commons that is bigger than single subjects, burrowing away in their relations, it is in writing, in organising, in showing up to release energy and anger, to dance together in differentiated exposure to each other and meet along those cuts. Aesthetic immanence (as the condition for politics) occurs in Rancière as a waiting for admission to the see-able and say-able, rather than as a caesura in thinking. While Rancière's aesthetic-political registers modify the field of possibility, they do not ultimately go beyond it into the un-sayable, yet (im-)perceptible registers of sense that Blanchot argues are crucial to epochal writing. It could be argued that this presumption of the efficacy of speech rather than silence and differentiated forms of speeches, is made apparent in Rancière's inability to engage with feminist and race literatures. Modification—the inclusion of the excluded—is pragmatic politics, but it is not revolutionary in its structural or sensible change.

Epochal Claims

If an epochal claim is, as Blanchot (2014) writes, the collapse of the signifying process itself, an epochal claim could not *pass* with the language (and hence institutions and structural forms of relation) that precedes it. Then language must speak beyond "beyond the horizon of the familiar, to that which is unpredictable, undecidable, and irreducibly multiple in its consequences and effects" (Hill 2012:433–434). The breach with that which has been must be resolutely foreign. As such, communism is a response to that which is *uncommon*. It must overcome, and be overcome by difference. Communism is an exposure that opens *as* friendship. We are already within communism when speech is asked to be something other than a response, when communication becomes "a question or a radical interrogation" (Blanchot 2010:53) rather than an affirmation. Such a question poses itself in uncertainty; in the uncertainty of geotrauma and in the uncertainty of a proper response that can address the question. Precisely because response is put into question or jeopardised (how can justice be sought through

a system whose foundation is unjust?), the question breaks with the certainty of language and relation. Such a question requires an affirmation of difference and instigates the demand for discontinuity. It is an exorbitant relation that must travel *outside of* common experience and be *drawn into* that which is uncommon.

This communism is a form of crisscrossing exposures *across* what is shared as exposure (as in a shared political event, a march, being on the street, being oppressed by the same forces) and what needs to be *learnt* as a means of becoming exposed to, in solidarity and friendship with the other (learning to be affected by an oppression that is not ours but within which we participate and perpetuate through our very nonexposure). In this communication with a contagion of the outside, a politics and friendship is possible that does not presume to know, nor proceeds from a point of knowing, but *unlearns* in order to be an ally to those that are differentially exposed. In this sense it is a precarious communication that is always liable to turn away from that exposure of sociality into a more secure position, and hide itself in the security of identity. Such friendship may be seen in the alliances between indigenous communities and environmentalists over the pipelines, but these are precarious friendships because they have to traverse colonial wounds and can be impeded by moralising stances against the right of indigenous communities to choose their own determination.

Expanding the Universe Not the Universal

Bataille and Blanchot both recognised the gain to be made in refusing to be systematic, or to offer universal solutions. Their location in the 20th century in pre- and post-war literature cautioned them against the fascism of seemingly transparent, rational or incontrovertible language. So Blanchot employed a fragmentary writing and Bataille systematically practiced an alternative economy of the excluded and repressed. Both writers were concerned with the eruption of the disunification of thought and the impossible political project of a unified human ideal. Blanchot's political writings address the crucial *pre-political step* that is not beyond, but often passed over in the rush to political gratification. Such a notion of communism is a crucial step that assures a respect to the difference that is unequally shared, and that very recognition becomes a point of exposure to the other. Often, taking up another's politics is learning about the exposures that they face, while simultaneously acknowledging how those exposures are not equally distributed in the commons. Stepping into a position of solidarity requires a submission to the indetermination of exposure and a refusing of the privilege that selectively shields us from this differentiation. This is why exposure is so difficult.

If the Anthropocene is already here and the Earth is on the cusp of shifting planetary states, the development of a relation to the Earth that is epochal must utilise a language that differs from that contained in the economies of Anthropocenic production. Thus a refusal of Anthropocenic futures cannot cleave to the normative economic framework that informs sustainability and Earth system governance. The search for a political aesthetics of the Anthropocene as an epochal condition must, in Blanchot's words, "lead us to a sense relation entirely other" (1993:73). So before it can *prescribe* (and respond to the inevitable raising of the

“what is to be done?” question), this thinking must *interrupt* to release another sensation of possibility; and of intimacy (a compassion for difference, or the “uncommon” experience that produces a friendship across that differentiation). And so, this interruptive thinking can only stutter into existence, because it is the speech of thoughts that are in the midst of restructuring political consciousness. Such stuttering is political in its disruption, but it must “attend to thought as discontinuity” (Iyer 2002:49), rather than reinstate the economy of relations that has produced such conditions in the first place. It is not new to say that we cannot answer biopolitical problems of ecologies with the very same mechanisms that are productive of them, such critique abounds in the examination of capitalism’s so called “green” economy, but it is difficult to undo the discourse in which these events are installed; and this is where questions of politics become questions of aesthetics, and where political forms become allied to aesthetic sensibilities. It is this affirmation of the difference between common and uncommon experience that is at stake in the formation of a geologic commons. This, for Blanchot, is the “advent of communism”; not what *ought to be*, but a structural implication that needs to be overcome so that experience can attempt to make this traverse across differentiated material and communicative geologic exposures.

The Anthropocene is already an *ex post facto* category. Although grandly named as the “Age of Man”, it actually names the problem of somehow coming after the Anthropocene and not even realising that such vast transformations of the Earth would initiate transformative effects in excess of those given in a restricted economy. It is an epoch deprived of its future. It is also an epoch that refuses to recognise its past as a field of destruction that has conditioned this arrival at a planetary threshold (the Anthropocene is not just bad planetary management that needs to make good on the promises of capitalism’s “freedoms”, but it is the systematic and historical destruction of forms of material communication—non/in/human—that have determined and diminished forms of life). However, this is not an excuse for naturalising any kind of complicity between Earth forces and social revolutions. The Earth may produce and incite capitalism or revolutionary thought, but it is not subject to its ends. Anthropocenic thought must embrace the fragment, if only to give itself a much-needed inconsistency that might disrupt its constitutive and systematic exclusions of responsibility in a restricted economy. In this sense, response must break with the expectations of what is proper convention. If the knowledge in question is indeed traumatic, or it stands as a marker of a traumatic passage over the void (a form of geotrauma)—or, if it marks a void in the passage of our becoming, then it should fragment, no, shatter, the language that carries it.

An engagement with materiality is for Blanchot a source of communion with the formation of a collective, in which materiality is a site of political struggle and solidarity, rather than a constraint or brake to the political possibilities of life. Here, we can see an engagement with geologic materials as an opening to communication or an opportunity to reconstitute our understanding of what subtends and sustains common geo-political/poetical forms of life. Such a search is about how to find less alienating forms of communication in terms of social and environmental relations—relations that pay proper heed to the violences that

have preceded them, particularly in the realm of indigenous relations to extractive economies. If the energy that is now under scrutiny is also the energy that has produced us, then it is a material corporeal history that must be owned (Yusoff 2013). Bataille draws this together when he says: “the ebullition I consider, which animates the globe, is also *my* ebullition. Thus, the object of my research cannot be distinguished *from the subject at its boiling point*” (Bataille 1991:10). In the consideration of this planetary energy, politics must lead two lives; one life is tied to future communication which:

engages us, profoundly, dangerously, in the world of things, of “useful” relations, of “efficacious” works, where we always come close to losing ourselves. The other welcomes communication, outside of the world and immediately, but on condition that communication be the upheaval of the “immediate”, the opening, the shattering violence, the fire that burns without waiting, for that is first of all, what communist generosity is (Blanchot 2010:5–6).

One direction moves towards the collective work of just and possible futures, the other engages with the future of communication and its specificities to produce freedom as an intimate sensibility of the world.

The consideration of the commons must head in two directions: to recognise planetary forces as the only real limits of any economy *and* to understand those limits are intimately bound to the production of political subjectivity. The Anthropocene is then both articulate and dissimulatory; it opens up geology as social substratum of life, but then subsumes the movement of that geologic energy into the figure of Man and his normative political economies etc.; this is the contradictory movement of the Anthropocene that simultaneously subjectivises and universalises geology. It does not matter what scientists intend in their nomination, nor the work they want such an epochal claim to do; rather, it matters what political aesthetics are configured in that nomination and how that denotes agentic positions. It matters how this claim of the “we” of humanity poses a self-possessed “I” (Anthropos) that refuses the injuncture for itself (in terms of fragmentation and *passing the limit*) that it at the same time proclaims for the planet (as a planet moving beyond safe operating spaces).

In the formulation of the Anthropocene, the subject/object remains intact (Yusoff 2015), while the planet changes state (Clark 2013). And it is this very Object/Subject collision in the Anthropocene (between the Anthropos and its geological-scene) that is the problem, because in this proximity between subject/object the possibility of interruption is foreclosed by prioritising auto-affectation for the privileged subject, rather than attending to the geologic forces that exceed and precede that subjectification.

A planetary sensibility necessarily involves the consideration of a scale relation between planetary life and subjective life, and it is in this site that the commons is both invoked and enacted as a commonality across forms of organic and inorganic life. But, as Rory Rowan comments:

While it seems clear that the Anthropocene calls for thinking through the relationship between politics and the planet, it is important not to assume that a certain *scale* of politics maps naturally against a certain *form* of politics ... How a planetary politics might

be understood depends not simply on questions of scale (itself a social constituted and politically contestable concept) but on how the political is conceived (Rowan 2014:448).

The concept of spatial homogeneity that characterises the new paradigm of “earth system governance” which Frank Biermann (2007:335) names explicitly as “a political programme”, should not discount the heterogeneity of political forms that are appropriate to thinking with the Earth (Jazeel 2011), and the political forms in which that life is animated (that which calls us to politics). What this Anthropocenic planetary call implicitly demands, because this is a political geology that names a changed geomorphicity, is the reframing of the political through geologic materialism.

While our current environmental implosion named the Anthropocene is *plastic* in its inclusion of anthropogenic climate change, global environmental change and biodiversity loss or more affectively finitude (of the human), extinction (of human and nonhuman), depletion (of the material substratum that supports forms of life), precarity (of modes of existence and precarious subjects), pollution (toxicity of environments and weight of body loads) and forms of exhaustion (material and corporeal), it can be said that there are two basic political economies of the commons that cut across the political and material economies of the Anthropocene.

- (1) *Commons as Intensive Materialism or General Economy.* The geologic commons exists in a general economy that involves the dissipation of energy across the surface of the Earth, traversing all life and nonlife. This is the material politics of the Earth and the potentialities it gives rise to. To liberate vast quantities of fossil fuels is to expatiate certain intensities and reproductions of life, while hastening the demise of others. This form of material energetic commoning highlights a material substratum to life—that is geologic—that makes no distinction between life and nonlife, and accords no moral or hierarchical claim on the expenditure of that material substratum. A general material economy is a mode of recognition that the availability and conversion of energy is all that is at stake, and these intensities are what constitute the politics of geologic life. In this context fossil fuels are an *intensive materialism* that organise and differentiate bodies, in terms of life expectancies to the size and composition of populations and their forms of existence. Politically, this form of geologic commoning is the geopolitical substratum to the organisation and differentiation of life; or the biopolitical “ground” conditions that give rise to powers. Access to the flows of this geopolitical substratum delineates and differentiates populations, at sites of extraction, points and habits of use, through corporeal exposure and various incorporations and expulsions.
- (2) *Commons as Communion.* This is the communisation of the material and geologic forces that sustain and nourish collective life. This commons is anticipatory, it is a *striving* or communism that is in opposition to the individuation of life through the mobilisation of energy (the individuation that this model is pitted against would be understood as classical geopolitics practiced by the traditional geopolitical actors of the State and Capital around energy resources). Consequently, in the formulation

the Anthropocene as a biopolitical threat to the possibility of human life's continuance, there is a surreptitious statement being made about humanity as a means of annihilating humanity; what would be recognised in Freudian terms as a death drive, but could more precisely be seen as the attempt to annihilate the inherent or inherited communism of bodies politic that share in the geologic resources of the Earth; it is a withdrawal from the inherent and inherited geocommunionism of bodies across non/in/human spheres. Within this utility of the Anthropocene to nourish neoliberal modes of production, there is the sense that certain bodies will be invulnerable to climate change, and will escape the universalism of the geologic events that the Anthropocene narrativises. While it is true that the Earth can "deterritorialise on the spot" (Deleuze and Guattari 2009:101) and without discernment, the lessons of anthropogenic climate change and Hurricane Katrina, for example, demonstrate how catastrophe arrives on bodies in highly differentiated ways that reinforce rather than ameliorate social stratifications. So any "commons from below" must grapple with uncommon experience in its double sense—between a public and private life and between different strata of experience and exposure—to work against the assumptions sedimented into Anthropocenic thought that geology somehow brings us together towards a planetary "common ground".

An alternative to the annihilation of the commons as a shared material communication is the commons as a form of collective communion that imagines a world in which precarity and abundance is shared across the possibility and forms of life; and that this sharing enacts the possibilities of a common life between organisms (the human in this commons is a collective or corporation of various incorporations that are non/in/human); this is the *intrasubjective* experience of geology as geosocial formation (bodies subjected to and subjects of geology), but, importantly, it is an *intrasubjective* experience predicated on an *uncommon* experience of that geology, in which energy is a mode of differentiation and inequality. This recognition of a common mineralogical rather than metaphysical ground simultaneously comprehends how the excess of energy isolates and individuates as much as it gives rise to collective solidarities. Hence, the recognition of a communisation of geologic life is *fraught*: it must strive towards a just sharing, and work against the injustice of experience. In Blanchot's terms, it is a material form of communication precisely because it requires a communion with—or sensitivity to—that material differentiation and the aesthetical qualities of power. In this communism shared material conditions have an *anticipatory* dimension in terms of politics; they are a form of communication that unleash the possibility of political solidarity. This is to open the geologic as a space of freedom rather than as the anticipation of a corpse (i.e. humanity as an extinct geologic trace).

In both these two economies the commons is mobilised as a mode of intensification and differentiation of experience and forms of life that we might call politics. It is deeply biopolitical, but governed by geologic forces that exceed a biopolitical critique (i.e. they do not have biopolitical ends such as the preservation

of human life). Any proposition about the shrinkage of the commons would have to account not just for a material contraction of resources (i.e. the “geo”), but the loss of the forms of intensification that accompany and are immanent within it (i.e. its powers); that is the geological, affectual and social forces of energy intensification that derive from fossil fuels or mineralogical abundances.

Thus, it is not just the problem of scarcity that is at stake in a “shrinking commons”, but the problem as Bataille suggests is of abundance and what to do with the seething energy that remains. The planet wants to burn (Clark and Yusoff 2014); it has proclivities towards combustion, depletion and extinction, and epochal change, and only by recognising that general economy of energy can politics begin to communicate with the more difficult registers of Anthropocenic thought. And if, as Blanchot asserts, communism is the material search for communication, geocommunity must be the elaboration on those communicative possibilities of geologic materials; possibilities that require both a commitment to, and a flagrant resistance of, the utility of those forces; and this, I would argue, is the material politics of the Anthropocene; a political and aesthetic project that requires an opening to geologic life in ways that do not suture false ends to mineralogical possibilities. That the temporalities of geology may be used to “loosen” the concept of what politics is and what it might be in the redefinition of the political object does not mean that politics necessarily loses its focus on questions of justice and the labour of political struggle; simply, that it extends its purview into the minerality of power as a constitutive site of struggle, to consider what Grosz refers to as the geopower (Grosz et al. 2012) that subtends and incites political life.

Endnotes

¹ I use the term geologic as an expansive term that subtends organic and nonorganic life and incorporates geophysical forces and dynamics.

² Hydrocarbon fossil fuels have a determination force in most lives, but as Smil (2006:160) reminds us there are still hundreds of millions of people in the poorest countries who do not directly consume any fossil fuels.

³ The other main contender for the long Anthropocene is Ruddiman’s thesis of agricultural origins. As agriculture involved deforestation and thus stockpiling of wood, which according to Bataille’s logic needed to be spent as fuel or war, the same issues of abundance and colonial enterprise apply.

⁴ See Stoekl (2006:40) for a discussion of the paucity of language in the practical denotation of worlds.

⁵ This “trial of language” is in the historical context of collaboration in France during World War II.

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