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Scenes from the Climate Theatre

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Abstract: Scenes from the Climate Theatre slices conventional climate discourse with surgical precision. Rejecting Aristotelian catharsis as an ideological sedative that does not respond to our problems today, we establish climate theatre not as an interpretative schema but as an epistemological operational framework where crisis cannot be neatly contained or resolved. The scenic method derived from the Greek "skene" (shadow space)—positions climate reality not as a spectacle but as a Levinasian shadow where ethical engagement occurs without totalizing. Through deliberately constructed scenes—a 46,000-year-old revived nematode performing "pure waiting" across millennia; The novelist Martin Walser's critique of environmental spectatorship masking social amnesia; The filmmaker Kelly Reichardt's strategic darkness in "Night Moves" generating ecological violence through calculated absence and climate activists attacking old Master paintings as well as AI advancement's paradoxical nuclear energy dependence— this chapter maps climate theatre's performative-metabolic terrain. The essay dissects our *narrative steady-state, preserving addiction* to the final happy end or ending in absolute clash and armageddon: "How convenient that environmental collapse comes packaged in the same structure used to sell action films!" Climate crisis becomes "simultaneously urgent enough to suspend politics, yet perpetually deferred to avoid structural change," allowing business-as-usual between emergency declarations; let us rehearse this again. Our position is an alternative to the collective theatre response absence. It is neither about technological salvation nor apocalyptic resignation but a performance and a theatre requiring audience and climate theatre dramaturgies transformation.

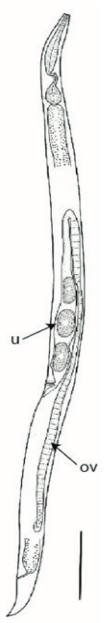
Keywords: climate theatre; anti-catharsis; scenic method; metabolic politics; environmental collective performativity.

Figure 1: Visualization Make ice great water again AI generated with Diffusion Bee Seed : 93157 | Steps : 70 | Guidance Scale : 11.7 | Img Width : 768 | Img Height : 768 | Model : 1.5fp16 | Mode : txt2img, Climate theatre no color, 80mm lense of a woman at lake Constance, in the autmn storm, interior of thermal bath in the style of the arquitect Zumthor with light entering, Detailed and Intricate, cloud or fog, Cinematic, natural materials"

Climate Theatre_ Setting the Stage: NEMATODE

In the theater of climate change old agents emerge anew: "super" worms biotechnologically altered to eat plastic – or: "plastic-associ-

ated microbial community from superworm gut microbiome" (Liu et al.), and even worms that emerge from the permafrost depth of time. A specific worm enters, a MEGA *nematode,* frozen for 46,000 years, awakened in the scene from its cryobiotic slumber to perform a brief but profound role on our warming stage: named *Panagrolaimus kolymaensis,* it becomes both witness and harbinger. Its extraction from 40 meters deep at Duvanny Yar (radiocarbon dated 44,315±405 BP) coincides with permafrost degradation, releasing greenhouse gases from identical substrates. This microbial revenant collapses temporal categories—neither living present nor dead past, but a biological anachronism, a temporal refugee.



P. kolymaensis performs survival without consciousness, and endurance without intention in climate theater. Its microscopic body demonstrates that biological persistence requires neither technological alterations nor awareness—only metabolic adaptation. Thus, this organism becomes an existential counterpoint to an evolutionary predecessor of human climate anxiety. Shatilovich et al. observe that this "novel nematode species from the Siberian permafrost shares adaptive mechanisms for cryptobiotic survival with *C. elegans* dauer larva" (1). The worm collapses millennia into the future, bridging the Pleistocene and the present in a single cellular body, the ice its temporal awaiting stage. This microscopic drama encapsulates our entire climate crisis. After being unfrozen, the nematode eats, reproduces, defecates, and dies - all in a few weeks, what a life!

Figure 2: screenshot from Wikipedia entry "Panagrolaimus Kolymaensis" (Wikipedia Contributors)

Vida breve, awaiting in ice, then unfrozen! Its brief but extended life cycle becomes a perfect allegory for our anthropomorphized "Anthropocene" epoch. We have been paralyzed by overthinking and excess, which limits our ability to *act*. While this tiny creature carries survival

secrets in its DNA that we have forgotten in our climate change denial, our human lifespans are shorter than the worm's time waiting for warmth. *P. kolymaensis* represents patience on a geological scale—like a Beckett play's suspended moment stretched beyond recognition. Unlike Vladimir and Estragon, who await consciously and suffer from time's passage, this nematode achieves what Beckett's Godot´s characters cannot: pure waiting without anticipation, expectation, or disappointment. As the stoic organism of a worm completes its life cycle, we witness a steep temporal disjunction: biology seems nothing against arsonist humanity (Sloterdijk) and its military power to blow up and burn all up in flames. This confusing juxtaposition of ancient life and modern industrial geopolitics underscores the complex interplay between biological resilience and anthropogenic bullying against climate change actions. The protagonist of the climate stage, our hero *nematode* leaves behind only its *offspring and waste*—a fitting obituary for our time. It teaches us that survival is possible, but at what cost? The stage becomes fluid as the ice is melting, and countless other frozen players await their cue to enter this defrost ecological drama. *"Peace to biological patience! War on extractive acceleration!"*

May the show begin! (Opening Curtain)

The scenic method, discussed by Jacques Rancière and Adnen Jdey—and which I develop further—requires specific theatrical elements: a physical setting, positioned viewpoints (theorem), audience presence, and dramatic structure. This approach presupposes the presence of an audience, or a dramaturgy of play (Hogrebe 22) derived from the Greek word skene (σκηνή), related to skia (σκιά, shadow), originally meaning tent or hut as "shadow space". The "shadow space" localizes where Climate Theatre manifestation occurs, in a sense first described in aesthetics by Emmanuel Levinas in his tantamount work "Reality and its Shadow" (Levinas). Levinas's conception of the "shadow" clarifies our idea of theatrical manifestation in climate theatre. For Levinas, art creates not just imitations but shadows of reality—an *in-between* state of the imagined and the real. The scenic method functions precisely this

way, offering no direct access to the climate crisis, political solutions, or legal actions but a shadow realm where its contours can be traced, its implications sensed. This shadow quality allows climate theatre to engage with climate reality not through scientific replication but through endless aesthetic doubling (cf. Winfried Menninghaus) that makes visible what might otherwise remain hidden and vague.

The scenic method thus establishes a Levinasian space where climate change can manifest not as raw data but as a sensible shadow that invites ethical engagement without claiming to capture reality in its totality. Unlike the Aristotelian concepts of "crisis" or "catastrophe[37]," which Guillaume Paoli rejects for their implications of restorable order, the scenic method offers more operational flexibility. Paoli argues that traditional dramatic structures suggest containable disruptions with potential resolution—an inappropriate framework for climate change, which represents an irreversible transformation without guaranteeing restored order.

The scenic method allows climate performances to engage with ongoing environmental change without forcing it into conventional narrative arcs that falsely promise resolution:

(...) I am looking for a term that does not exclude three affects: appalled horror at the gigantic failure of an entire civilization, anger at the devastating consequences, and the stubbornness not to succumb to it. (Paoli 18, my translation from the German original).

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[37] Paoli refuses to use the concepts of *crisis* and *catastrophe* because they stem from the ideal unity of time, space and dramatic action within Aristotelian dramaturgy, thus representing a crisis or catastrophe with a possibly restorable order, which is not the case of our climate change: "First of all, crisis and catastrophe are decisively rejected. Since both terms come from the theater, they are subject to the Aristotelian principle of the three units: as on stage, time, space and action must be clearly defined. However, an oil crisis or a financial crisis are merely acute manifestations of structural contradictions (of dependence on oil, of the movement of fictitious capital), about which they provide little information. Thus, crises can be treated as merely reparable disruptions of an otherwise functioning system. It is the same with catastrophes. A flood or a forest fire is a catastrophe. When they occur, there is no time to look for causes; rescue operations come first, but as soon as the damage has been repaired, everyday life returns as usual. To speak of crises or catastrophes in relation to global, long-term processes is therefore already a trivialization according to the well-known principle: war on the symptoms, peace on the causes! Although less reassuring, vocabulary such as collapse or doom is all too deterministic" (Paoli, 18).

The scenic method is an epistemological system for understanding how performance operates in the age of digital mediation, especially in the digital realm, which redistributes the attention economy, and poses anew the question of witnessing and spectatorship (cf. Claire Bishop). Moreover, it entails the emergence of scenic intelligence, a form of collective knowledge production—'We are the weather' (Jonathan Safran Foer)—that transcends individual capabilities, human or machine. Third, it involves Paoli´s call to sobriety: "Before the rampant disaster, at least save the ability to think. And the laughter of Franz Kafka to go with it." (Paoli 44).

For Paoli, it is clear that the revolutionary call to arms is "War to the causes!" of climate change. As in the adaptation of Georg Büchner´s "Friede den Hütten, Krieg den Palästen!" (**"Peace to the cottages! War on the palaces!"**, 1834), we need to heed to the refusal of Aristotelian catharsis in Paoli's thought and reflect upon the consequences of the refusal of a crisis mode and catastrophe designation. With its pseudo third-act technological salvation or alternative apocalyptic finale, the *climate drama* offers precisely what Aristotle prescribed: catharsis. How convenient that environmental collapse comes packaged in the same narrative structure used to sell action films! The dramatic unity that promises resolution—whether through carbon capture or civilizational collapse—is an ideological sedative: *What if climate change and climate theatre is not a story with an ending but a permanent condition of modernity?* The "climate crisis" becomes the perfect ideological object—simultaneously urgent enough to suspend politics, yet perpetually deferred to avoid structural change. The very framing of catastrophe allows business as usual to continue between emergency declarations. We need to rethink how to tackle climate change.

Climate Theater_ Scene 2
Ritardando

Figure 3: Climate Theatre; AI generated with Diffusion Bee Seed : 413462 | Steps : 75 | Guidance Scale : 13.06 | Img Width : 1024 | Img Height : 1024 | Sampler : ddim | Model : RealVisXL30 | Mode : txt2img | ControlNet Importance : 1 | Selected Style : none

> "In the ten years in which I live vis a vis of nature, a premonition has formed that to turn all the residential sides to the south, the sun to the lake, could have undesirable consequences. We turned away from the village square and from the market place and from the street that connected us. **We lost sight of each other**. **Do the trees and the *climate theater* and the water colors**

> **make up for it?** I grew up on a street and square when such amenities were not sacrificed to cars. The nature I face now, as often as I take it in, seems to me like a bandage, like a healing event, like something against something. (…) Of course, since I have been confronted with nature for only ten years, I do not want to say anything far-reaching about this relationship. One would have to ask the children in 30 years, whether in you the seven oaks and the incessantly parading weather fronts reached a rank of appearance like in me the master shoemaker, Mr. Gierer, and the master carpenter's wife, Mrs. Ott. Should the results not be quite satisfactory, one could think of chasing the cars away and turning to each other again."" (Walser 51, my emphasis and translation from the German original)"

Climate THEATRE can only be PLAYED together – but what this "together" means is still unclear. In "Heimatlob" ("Eulogy of Home", 1984), the eulogy of Martin Walser of my home region of lake Constance (Bodensee), and subtitled as "Ein Bodensee-Buch" (A Lake-of-Constance Book), the idea and literal designation of "climate theater" emerge as a compensatory spectacle that masks fundamental social erosion through excessive rich people´s romantic >land-escapism< and rich people´s environmental preoccupation, especially in the 1980s. Walser´s critique reveals climate theater not as a mere meteorological performance, but as a problematic substitution of natural phenomena (trees in the wind, weather fronts, watercolors), replacing human encounters and social memory. Instead of building towards the economic and social center, the public square, the isolated south-facing architecture of towns that are becoming wealthy, turns into social isolation toward the sun and lakeside, privatizing lake access and providing a view of the weather as in a private weather channel of permanent spectacular change: a climate theatre spectacle established as a "bandage"—a therapeutic illusion that fails to achieve the memory density of simple street encounters. Climate theater operates as temporal *deceleration of war against the social*, against the attention to each other's stories, where spectacular natural processes, despite their constant presence, generate fewer persistent memories than brief social encounters of the other. The crucial paradox lies in how this environmental reorientation, while promising healing through

natural spectacle, contributes to social amnesia: trees cannot become Mr. Gierer, and clouds cannot achieve the memorial persistence of Mrs. Ott—figures who stand in Walser's memory "like St. George and Mary in the church of Wasserburg". These village artisans, representatives of a social fabric woven through handcraft and daily social encounters, achieve a memorial density that no natural spectacle can match, and we better be aware that no one is actually able to amend or heal "nature." Walser's Bürgerliches "Klimatheater" reveals itself as a sophisticated escape mechanism of the green-wealthy attitude of forgetting, disguised as environmental awareness—a slowing down of social-memory through the natural spectacle that leaves future generations potentially impoverished of the very memories that constitute communal existence. In Walser's small book, which comes across as a harmless tourist souvenir with aquarelle paintings by the artist André Ficus, climate theater is no simple environmental enlightenment—or a political stance towards changing the anthropomorphized carbon "footprint" in individual lifestyles—but a seed of dead ends to revolutionary thinking of inequality.

With Walser we heed an important wake-up call: in its urge to focus on environmental spectacle and crisis—melting glaciers, rising seas, extreme weather events—climate change activism (including the oficial COPs - the United Nations supreme decision-making body of Climate Change Conventions, and its counter-COPs) risks replicating this social erosion, potentially sacrificing the commonality necessary for effective collective action on the matter of climate tragedy. When we turn all attention toward the climate crisis, do we, like Walser's south-facing houses, risk turning away from each other? The three questions that arise—a. the loss of the social, the importance of the encounter and how we live as a community; b. climate theater; and c. soil justice (Hans-Jochen Vogel)--can only be answered together!

The War of landscapes
Heiner Müller: Der Auftrag (The Mission)

> DEBUISSON
> (...) That was our mission. It now only tastes of paper. Tomorrow it will have gone the way of all flesh. Every ascent has a direction. And maybe the star is already on its way out of the coldness of space. A lump of ice or metal? Which strikes the final hole in the ground of the facts. On which we plant ever anew our frail hopes. Or the cold itself? That freezes our yesterday and today to the eternal today. Why are we not born as trees, Sassportas, to whom all this is none of their business. Or would you rather be a mountain? Or a desert? What do you say Galloudec? Why are you staring at me like two stones? Why aren't we just there watching the war of the landscapes? What do you want from me? Die your own death if you don't like life? I won't help you to your grave, I don't like it either. Yesterday I dreamed that I was walking through New York. (...) (Müller 72)

The "war of landscapes" in Heiner Müller's dramatic topology is not merely a metaphorical construction but a radical ontological process of historical dismemberment and recompositing. Here, *landscape* emerges as a performative archive—a contested medium where political memory is simultaneously erased and inscribed, where the geographical becomes a platform of violent transformations. As in Müller's characters stumbling upon the realization that they might merely be incidental observers to the "war of landscapes", our climate politics constantly encounters the vertigo of discovering that carbon cycles, ocean acidification, and atmospheric physics proceed with magnificent indifference to our dramatic narratives. The coldness of space that "freezes our yesterday and today to the eternal today" (Müller) materializes literally in the permafrost that preserves the nematode and releases methane that accelerates its thawing. Müller's conceptualization operates at the interstices of materialist dialectics and aesthetic theory, where landscape is neither a passive background nor a simple representational surface, but an active agent of historical mutation. The "war" is not about conflict between territories but on the epistemological violence of representation itself. But can we even ask if landscapes

are probing and rehearsing war? We're extending Müller's dramaturgy and the drama of the anthropocene (cf. Raddatz) into climate theatre.

This suggests that landscapes possess "agency"—they're not merely suffering climate change but actively responding to and processing human violence against them. By this assumption the "post-anthropo-*scenic*" question fundamentally shifts the theatrical perspective from humans acting upon landscape to landscape acting upon (or beyond) humans. Climate theatre, in this framework, doesn't just represent environmental crisis; it stages the landscape's own dramaturgy of response. Bordered national landscapes operate as planetary vectors that work in community with each other and yet cause disturbance by making each other reciprocal materials in the sense of Heiner Müller's idea that we are both the virus bar and the bartender of the virus:

> On the other hand, there is no evidence that humans are the dominant life form on Earth. Maybe viruses are, and we are just a kind of tavern, the virus bar. The bartender - this too is just a matter of optics. (Heiner Müller, "Da trinke ich lieber Benzin zum Frühstück" (1989) / "In this case I still prefer to drink gasoline for breakfast". Interview with Frank M. Raddatz. *Gespräche* 2, 438-439)

Methane's Performative Landscapes: A Spectral Topology

Satellite observations reveal a more urgent narrative of planetary transformation. According to data, Turkmenistan's two main fossil fuel fields leaked 2.6 million and 1.8 million tonnes of methane in 2022—equivalent to 366 million tonnes of CO2, surpassing the United Kingdom's annual emissions (Carrington). This makes "Why aren't we just there watching the war of the landscapes?" (Müller, 1979) almost a cynical observation from a neutral spectating point of view. Hereby, the landscape speaks through invisible molecular migrations, a performance of technological and geological violence. The methane becomes a spectral actor in Climate Theatre, tracing what is completely an "out of control" planetary process. A scientific study (Irakulis-Loitxate et al.) reveals 29 super-emitter events between 2017-2020, with 24 from extinguished

flare stacks now directly venting methane. The methane molecules breach infrastructure, revealing the porosity of human technological systems (Carrington, *The Guardian* 9 May 2023). The *Guardian*'s reporting adds a geopolitical layer to this performance: Turkmenistan, China's second-largest gas supplier, inhabits a complex landscape where technological infrastructure meets planetary metabolism. The Soviet-era equipment becomes a joke of historical transformations, leaking not just gas but memories of technological obsolescence. In Müller's topology, these methane emissions are not a problem to be solved but a continuous transformation to be witnessed—a war of landscapes where technological observation becomes questless planetary panic.

Figure 4 "THE BURNING TABLE OF ARTHUR" AI generated with Diffusion Bee Seed : 845610 | Steps : 75 | Guidance Scale : 13.06 | Img Width : 1024 | Img Height : 1024 | Sampler : ddim | Model : RealVisXL30 | Mode : txt2img | ControlNet Importance : 1 | Selected Style : none. Prompt: climate theatre, inside outside Leica M look, 25mm wide-angle perspective, natural lighting, rich contrast, detailed textures, photorealistic, interior and outdoor

Scene 3_"Why don't we all go blow stuff up? Night Moves as Climate Cinema

Figure 5 "How to blow up a Pipeline"; Tintoretto style; DiffusionBee Seed : 840224 | Steps : 67 | Guidance Scale : 13.06 | Img Width : 1024 | Img Height : 1024 | Sampler : ddim | Model : Default_SDB_0.1 | Mode : txt2img | ControlNet Importance : 1 | Selected Style : none Upscaler: Real-ERSGan, AI [Diffusion Bee/ Mac M2 Prompt: "Climate Theatre photorealistic style mix "How to blow up a Pipeline"] DifussionBee (AI) & Gerner

In "How to blow up a pipeline"—a report on an interview with pipeline bombing proponent Andreas Malm (Paloma Media)—the extremist[38] climate-activist and targeted "intelligent sabotage" author argues for "stepping up", including "real anger on the streets", so as to radicalize peaceful resistance/rebellion of climate change movements such as *Extinction Rebellion* or 350.org, which should no longer accept excuses for passivity, but on the contrary act violently against climate change despite commonly agreed strategies of non-violent response. This seems like the most extreme solution: fostering reasonless violent and destructive uprising, heading forward by (revolutionary) escalation as a strategic goal, hand in hand with militant minority groups that push the ideas of peaceful majorities forward.

In this respect, I will now examine Kelly Reichardt's *Night Moves* (2014), which explores environmental activism's radicalization and self-destructive elements. The film shows how resistance against climate change opponents, polluting industries, and structural systems that accelerate climate change can have devastating consequences. Thinking back on Heiner Müller's "Mission", this perspective transforms our understanding from a conventional directed war zone to something more profound: a war of landscapes themselves. In the director's own words,

> **Reichardt:** Firstly for me, it's a character film, and that's how we approached it when we were writing. I hope all the films, at the end of the day, ask a question. They're certainly not there to reinforce anything that anybody already thinks. I think that there is a question, and the question is, are any of these good solutions? Do any of them add up to anything? And if blowing shit up is not the thing to do, what should anybody be doing right now? If we're gonna be driven over the cliff, and our government's obviously not going to help us because they're in the petroleum business, and things are as dire as they seem to be, why don't we all go blow stuff up? (cited in Vadim Rizov)

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[38] In Richman's introduction to the report on David Remnik' s interview with Andreas Malm (2021), Malm is called an "eco-terrorist", as he motivates climate activists to leave peaceful protest behind and start to deflate tires of SUVs in Sweden (an illegal action that is said to have decreased the sales on SUVs in Sweden).

Reichardt's film objects both to eco-romanticism and to more recent forms of big data strategies of observation of the environment through Eco-surveillance (Young et al.),[39] through forensic precisional visual strategies and narrative configurations. The ecological crisis can only be overcome together, but what should we do? If no one cares, "why don't we all go blow stuff up?"

At the heart of *Night Moves* is the violence that the main character, Josh, holds within, although later his nature finds a way through environmental fundamentalism, not on the surface of immediate activism or climate protest, but as a specific kind of seeing—whereby each suburban backyard waterfall and each televised golf game becomes evidence in an ongoing ecological crime scene. Within Reichardt's considerable filmography, *Night Moves* is crucial in her ongoing examination of human-nature power dynamics, connecting the resource scarcity narratives of *Wendy and Lucy* (2008), the wilderness retreat dynamics of *Old Joy* (2006), and the decolonial environmental critique of *Meek's Cutoff* (2010) into a climate cinema work on ecological resistance from "the perspective of those 'on the perimeter of society'" (Wiliams). *Night Moves* confronts contemporary environmental violence through direct action paradoxes. The film's central void—the moment where spectacle disappears into pure darkness—connects Reichardt's persistent preoccupation with invisible environmental processes to more significant questions of resistance efficacy and witness responsibility. Jesse Eisenberg's performance manifests this vision through micro-gestures: twitchy fragmentary surveillance, contained rage, whilst carefully calibrating a bomb timer. His char-

[39] "Ecosurveillance is the technology-assisted collection and analysis of data about wildlife, ecosystems, and/or people for the purposes of tracking or monitoring environmental distributions, behaviours, or indicators. Eco-surveillance is becoming increasingly important in environmental research and policy. Thousands of camera traps, continuous video streams, audio recorders, remote sensors, apps, drones, satellites and biotelemetry/biologging devices are deployed around the world to monitor territories and track the individual and group behaviour of animals and their habitats" (Young et al.). In this context we might want to heed Jonathan Crary´s *Scorched Earth* manifesto declaring the necessity of a post-internet age: "[i]f there is to be a liveable and shared future on our planet it will be a future offline, uncoupled from the world-destroying systems and operations of 24/7 capitalism" (Crary,1)

acter seems a perpetual understated witness to the environmental big picture degradation, transforming mundane objects into accusations.

Night Moves' defining sequence—when the dam bombing vanishes into complete darkness—was not planned. Reichardt could not light the forest scene properly during their off-grid filming, mirroring the narrative's remote setting where cell service does not reach. This technical limitation becomes the film's conceptual center: the impossibility of witnessing our most radical environmental actions. As Jonathan Crary notes, "electroluminescence has crippled our ability to see the colors of physical reality" (123). Reichardt's darkness rejects spectacle and preserves a fragile courage that would dissolve in digital representation.

The farm where Josh works exists in a middle ground—practicing sustainable agriculture while painfully aware of its inadequacy. As Reichardt notes in an interview, this is not a world of climate change deniers but a world of competing responses to acknowledged crises. The libertarian family next door, homeschooling their kids, represents not opposition but a mirror image of radical response. Dena and Harmon complete the triangle of intervention - the ex-Marine bringing tactical precision, the young woman providing both financial means and moral complexity. Their interaction with mundane systems (buying fertilizer, purchasing a boat) creates moments of tension where everyday commerce brushes against potential catastrophe. The fertilizer store scene particularly reveals these friction points—Reichardt experienced this when she was scouting for locations, having had her license plate reported to the FBI.

"Why don't we all go blow stuff up?"—This performative provocation by Reichardt crystallizes precisely where Walter Benjamin's *Gewalt* theory encounters contemporary ecological resistance in its operative dynamics: a law-preserving power (the dam) confronts a lawmaking force (the bomb), yet their collision disappears into strategic darkness. This void—neither silence nor spectacle—transforms into something more theoretically urgent. **Picture the scene:** Josh (Jesse Eisenberg) plants explosives in the darkness. The dam looms—a concrete manifestation of what Benjamin terms Macht (institutional power). However, Reichardt's camera refuses to show us the moment of ferti-

lizer-based bomb detonation impact. Instead, we get pure darkness. This visual strategy does not just represent violence—it performs it through calculated absence. Benjamin's framework cracks open here: when he writes, "all violence as means is either lawmaking or law-preserving" (243), he could not have anticipated how the climate theatre of ecological crisis would collapse this distinction.

The darkness in *Night Moves* generates ecological *Gewalt*—a force operating through its invisibility. It is not just lawmaking (the bomb and its arsonist power) or law-preserving (the dam and its channeled metabolic power), but pure means manifesting as pure void of the people, the opposite of a stance on "people have the power" (Pattie Smith). This democratic void performs Benjamin's divine violence while simultaneously negating it. We cannot see the destructive explosion, yet this very invisibility of violence becomes the ground of its theoretical power. Watch how this operates: the void swallows dam and bomb, legitimate and illegitimate force, means and ends. What emerges is not just another kind of violence but a new way of seeing violence itself—through its strategic invisibility. Environmental resistance in the age of ecological collapse: not spectacular action but calculated absence, not revolutionary force but theoretical void, often substituted by digital big data and AI driven eco-surveillance.

Climate Theatre_Scene 4 Old master Hackers: activist re-performing the Art of bearded white old men or sunflowers

So, what about the climate theatre energy that attacks art in museums and galleries? Before we look into the National Gallery attack by *Just Stop Oil* activists Phoebe Plummer and Anna Holland, who smeared paint on the glass of Van Gogh's sunflower oil painting (1888) causing damage of up to 10.000 euros to the work, let us contemplate the novel "Old masters: A comedy" by Thomas Bernhard (1985). It unfolds within the precisely delineated space of Vienna's *Kunsthistorisches Museum*, specifically centred on the *Bordone Room*, both literal setting and metaphorical framework for the novel's exploration of art, cultural criticism, and human relationships in the face of loss and cultural decay

of a spectator bearing witness to the musealized artworks. Within this carefully constructed space, the main character Reger, an 82-year-old music critic, maintains a ritualistic presence, visiting every other day for thirty-five years, and sitting on the same bench before Tintoretto's "White-Bearded Man" (1545) —itself a manifestation of patriarchal authority— that becomes paradoxically both mirror and void, reflecting the observer's mechanisms of cultural consumption while simultaneously revealing the fundamental emptiness of the broader cultural context of Vienna and Western civilization as a whole. Bernhard's analysis and harsh criticism of art as commissioned art finds its radical acceleration in the tension between state preservation and ecological survival. Today the white-bearded man—the epitome of state-sanctioned artistic production—faces a double extinction: first through Reger's methodical dismantling of the Viennese cultural authority, then as a proxy for all attacked old masters through climate activists' material threats to high culture's physical substrate.

Climate theatre protesters that attack with Heinz Tomato Soup 8 (a reference to Warhol) or mashed potatoes, interrupt this dead-end situation by placing museums in an "uncomfortable position: engage with the protesters' perspectives, or turn away from the issues they raise?" (Landin). Landin shares my skeptical point of view as a missed opportunity to let the protesters have a forum in the museum. The actual response has amounted to strong court sentence: in the case of the *Just stop Oil* activists´ iconoclastic attack on Van Gogh´s paintings, Holland and Plummer were sentenced to 20 and 24 months respectively. Further, it resulted in undercover surveillance of the audience and increased security, a wider barrier between spectators and artworks, as expressed in a public letter from the National Museums directive council of the UK: "with each attack we are forced to consider putting more barriers between the people and their artworks to preserve these fragile objects for future generations´" (cited in Landin).

According to Theresa J. May, climate Theatre aims to address the causes, effects, and solutions of climate change, but its actual purpose is not merely to symbolically raise awareness, but rather to rehearse and inspire differing action, to foster dialogue among audiences and

society, to be part of the solution and not greenwash the problem, despite the focus of creating new or helpful (utilitarian) narratives (French). Climate theatre is not limited to conventional spaces, forms and materials, and can be performed in unconventional spaces such as *agoras* or public squares that heed the encounter with the other, in streets, parks, or online platforms, or even recreate these spaces. It involves various modes of participation, such as interactive, immersive, or collaborative, engaging less an audience and more a community. Climate theatre is interdisciplinary, incorporating elements from other fields such as science, history, politics, or ecology, to enrich its contents, context aesthetics and dramaturgies.

Epilogue: The "Green" Atomic Energy of AI and infrastructural data-centers

Timnit Gebru (Syeda Maseeha Qumer), a former AI ethics researcher at Google, was forced out of her position after submitting a critical research manuscript (Bender et al.) that exposed fundamental vulnerabilities in large language model development. The controversy emerged in 2 December 2020, when Gebru refused to retract her co-written research that had officially been accepted after peer review for publication, which dealt with calculating the enormous energy costs and carbon footprint of NLP based applications like the ones used by Google (cf. Hao). Jeff Dean, head of Google AI, claimed that the manuscript did not meet the expected bar for publication, alleging insufficient literature review and suggesting Gebru's resignation unless specific conditions were met. The institutional response revealed a complex mechanism of technological power, where critical research challenging core computational narratives encounters systemic private companies inhouse suppression.

Hao's investigative report in *MIT Technology Review* uncovered the manuscript's core arguments: a sophisticated critique of large language model development that exposed four critical technological risks. The research, titled "On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots" (Gebru et al.), conducted with six collaborators, systematically dismantled the

contemporary narrative of computational progress. The highlighted how training a single language model could generate carbon emissions equivalent to the lifetime output of five average American cars. This metabolic perspective transformed computational development from a purely technological process into a complex ecological intervention with profound planetary consequences.

In the aftermath, over 1,400 Google staff members and 1,900 external supporters signed a protest letter and Emily M. Bender, a computational linguistics professor and co-author, emphasized the research's collaborative nature, noting its comprehensive 128-reference citation list. Nicolas Le Roux, a Google AI researcher, publicly questioned the unusual review process, noting that submissions were typically checked for sensitive material, not literature review quality. This strengthens the case of aiming "at broader protections for whistleblowing" as "a necessary component of systemic regulation of the tech sector" (Bloch-Wehba). Bender's subsequent commentary highlighted a critical concern: the potential "chilling effect" on future AI ethics research, where institutional economic imperatives potentially suppress critical technological scholarship.

But why is this AI ethics scandal relevant to Climate Theatre? The most obvious reason is the energy-hungry computing business and material supply, such as cooling water, that AI is demanding for its technological advancements based on big data centers. Technological systems' computational metabolism manifests through complex *energetic choreography* on the climate theatre stage. Computing and cooling processes constitute nearly 80 percent of data center electricity consumption. Google Search represents a critical point of metabolic intensification, with AI integration increasing electricity use tenfold, signaling a radical reconfiguration of technological energy interfaces.

The exponential growth of data center electricity consumption reveals another profound energy need: the transformation of technological infrastructure, where AI and cryptocurrency mining emerge as primary drivers of global energy metabolism (Wang). Cryptocurrency mining operates as a parallel metabolic system, having consumed 110 TWh in 2022, and projected to increase by 40 % by 2026 (Calma).

By 2026, data centers are projected to consume up to 1,050 TWh of electricity—the equivalent of adding an entire country's energy demand to the planetary grid. The United States hosts around 33 percent of approximately 8,000 global data centers. Besides optimizing energy storage, battery efficiency, and smart grid management, the growing energy consumption of energy-hungry data centers for training, as well as running AI's deep learning models, demands an increasing infrastructural supply and grid augmentation, in which an *atomic energy revival* (St. John, Jennifer McDermott) emerges as one of many critical performative apparatuses for sustaining the exponential computational demands of next-generation AI systems energy needs.

Trump's $500 billion *Stargate* AI infrastructure announcement includes investments from Oracle, Softbank, and OpenAI in collaboration with Microsoft, Nvidia, and Arm (Marshall, E&E News). This exemplifies Big Tech's approach to addressing datacenter demand (Walz), which has increased by 160% (GoldmanSachs). These developments are directly tied to energy production strategies, with next-generation nuclear energy increasingly viewed as a viable solution (Waltz). This signals a profound reconfiguration of our planetary energy metabolism.

Datacenter energy requirements are becoming the primary driver of technological sovereignty in the US-China AI competition. This race centers particularly on foundational multimodal models, with OpenAI's ChatGPT and Sora competing against Anthropic's Claude, while China's introduction of the streamlined DeepSeek AI model on January 10th 2025, has created a "Sputnik shock" in the industry.

The critical question remains unaddressed: how do we advance AI technology without exponentially increasing our energy consumption and creating unsustainable waste cycles? Will projects such as Stargate lead us to a sustainable future, or will it lock us into an era of escalating energy demand and ecological strain?

Let´s rehearse this again!

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