

What the Fuck is Going on?

It's after the end of the world, don't you know that yet?

6/11/25

Let's talk about the end of the world

And what comes next

- Sun Ra and the end of the world
- What is a world + Sustainability?
- What happens after they end, and what can we learn about that from Blackness?
- This is very much a work in progress.



Atlanta Season 3 teaser featuring Sun Ra's "It's After the End of the World"

Sun Ra

It's after the end of the word, don't you know that yet?

- Mid 20th Century Poet, Composer and Pharoh from space
- Created a myth around himself and the black diaspora that he had come to return them to their kingdom in outer space, because this world was already over.
- It had been ending since the transatlantic slave trade had displaced them, and never started again

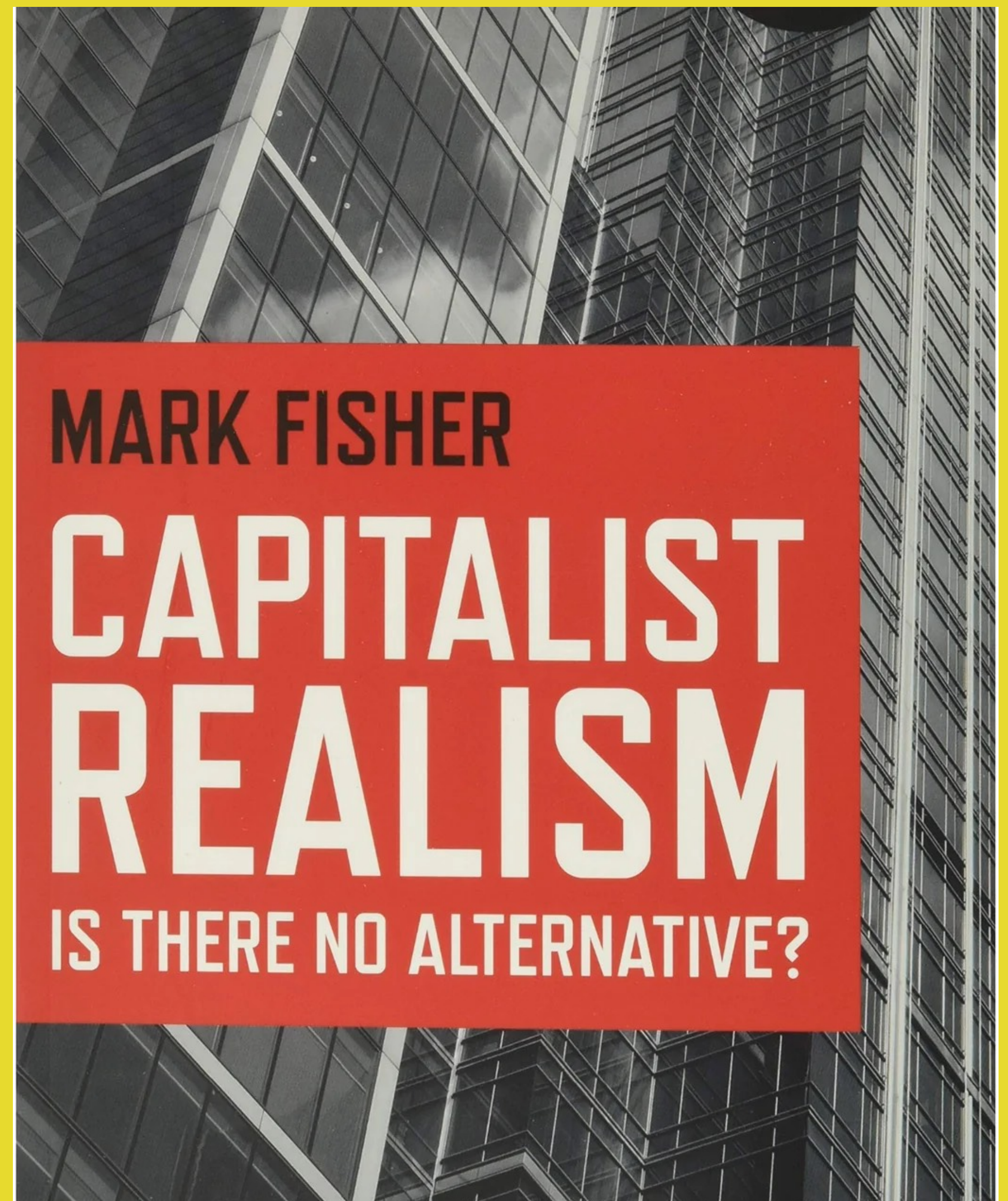


What is a world

Capitalist Realism and the world

Is there no alternative

- Political-affective atmosphere after the end of the Cold War/ The end of history (Fukuyama 1989).
- “There is no alternative” TINA.
- “It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.”





.gif from *Deep Impact* (1998)

World \neq Planet

And: Phenomeology of the End

Franco “Bifo” Berardi

- A world is a set of relationships between a community and their environment that it understands as meaningful
- When they sign that transfer, this meaning no longer works; they are scrabbled or destroyed, or no one is there to derive meaning from them, a world ends
- This is what happened when Christianity conquered Europe, when Europe decimated the indigenous people of America and when slaves were kidnapped from Africa – Although destruction leaves traces.

La Malinche

Invoking La Malinche is the best way to speak of the end.

Humans have already experienced an end of the world, or the end of a world. A world ends when signs proceeding from the semiotic meta-machine grow undecipherable for a cultural community that perceived itself as a world.

A world is the projection of meaningful patterns on the surrounding space of lived experience. It is the sharing of a common code whose key lies in the forms of life of the community itself.

When flows of incomprehensible enunciations proceeding from the meta-machine invade the space of symbolic exchange, a world collapses because its inhabitants are unable to say anything effective about the events and things that surround them.

When signs proceeding from the environment are no longer consistent and understandable within the frame of the shared code, when the signs that convey effectiveness and potency escape the shared cultural code, a civilization ceases to be vital. It enters a tunnel of despair, quickly decays, and then dissolves. Its members die, or lose the ability to feel that they are part of a common, evolving reality, and those who survive undergo a process of integration into

Pluralism and modernity

The Politics of the Pluriverse

- Ontological pluralists answer the question of what reality is by saying it is a continuous process of world-making and unmaking.
- Many worlds make sense of a work with reality all the time.
- One such world is the modern world, characterised by a particular form of science and rationality and a desire to make its world the only one, often through force.
- Savransky calls this a project of world monification. A project that paradoxically would not be necessary if it actually reflected reality



Extractive Capitalist Realism

The end of the modern world

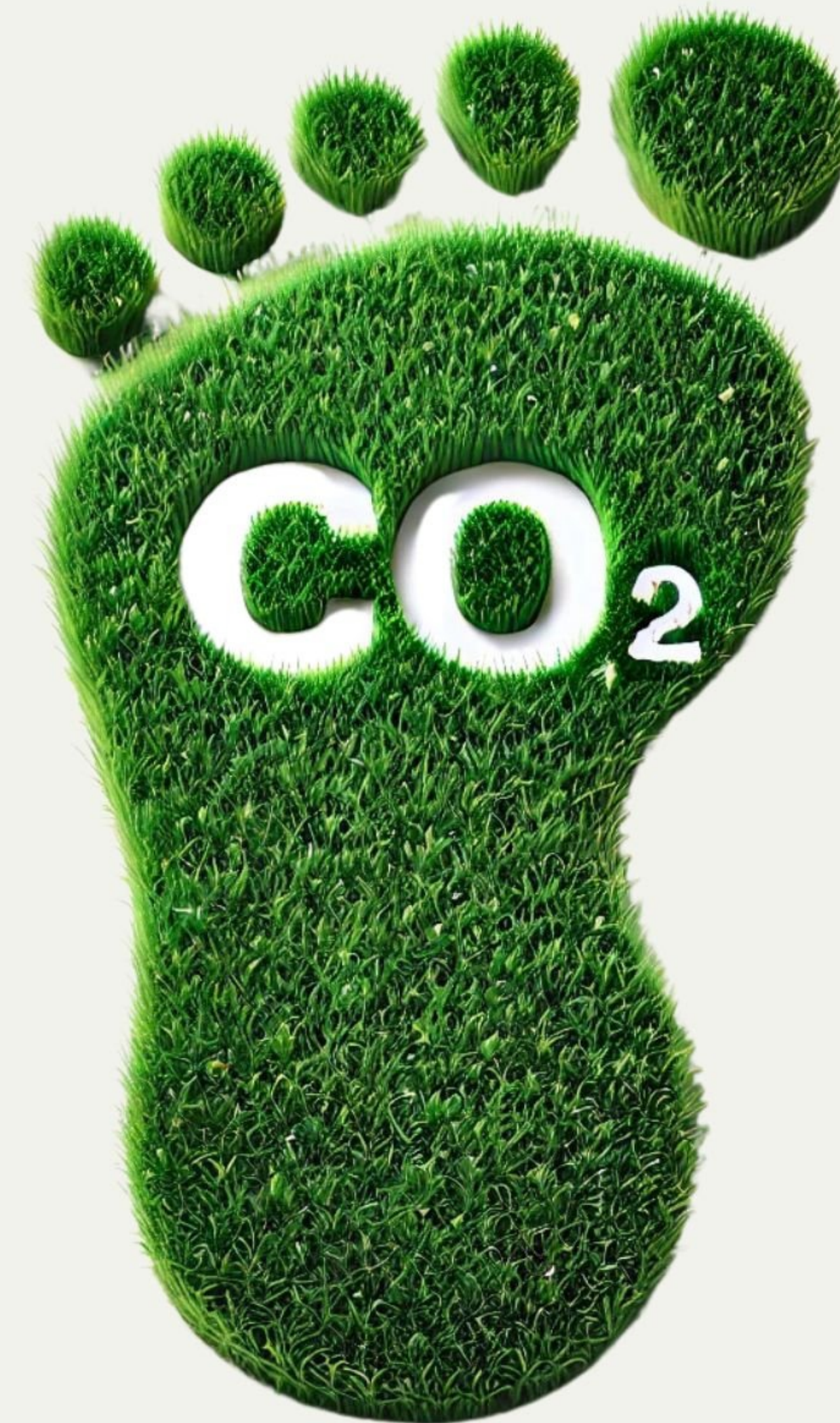
- Capitalist realism is a political-cultural atmosphere that facilitates material practices like resource extraction and overproduction to generate capital.
- Capitalist realism tells you the problem is overconsumption, so the real problem of overproduction can continue.
- CR also facilitates modern world monifiction by making other systems of meaning that don't support extraction appear crazy, outdated, superstitious, primitive, and unreasonable.
- Value is quantified (you can't pay rent with exposure)



The Paradox of Sustainability

Saving the world from the world

- The world of extractive capitalist realism is rife with discussions about sustainability.
- And while some initiatives do effectively reduce environmental harm, many others move problems around.
- The often unanswered question is what is being sustained.
- I argue that much of sustainability discourse is an attempt to sustain the world of ECR from the consequences of the world of ECR, to sustain the circumstances that make environmental destruction possible, as this destruction makes these circumstances increasingly impossible
- **Extractive capitalist realism is a world with its destruction built into its own system of meaning-making as it relates to reality**



It's after then end of the world

Worldquakes

Martin Savransky

- A worldquake is the insinuation of other worlds into another world, which disrupts and changes each other.
- We feel them in every extreme weather event, in the migration that follows from them, in all the political and social responses to this, in economic realignment to retreat into digital spaces to escape the friction of material worlds.
- Following Savransky, we should not try to save the world, but “consenting to join in the adventure” of trying to find out more about “what reality is capable of” with “no promise of salvation, and no guarantee of safety or peace”



Whiteness and Extractive Capitalist Realism

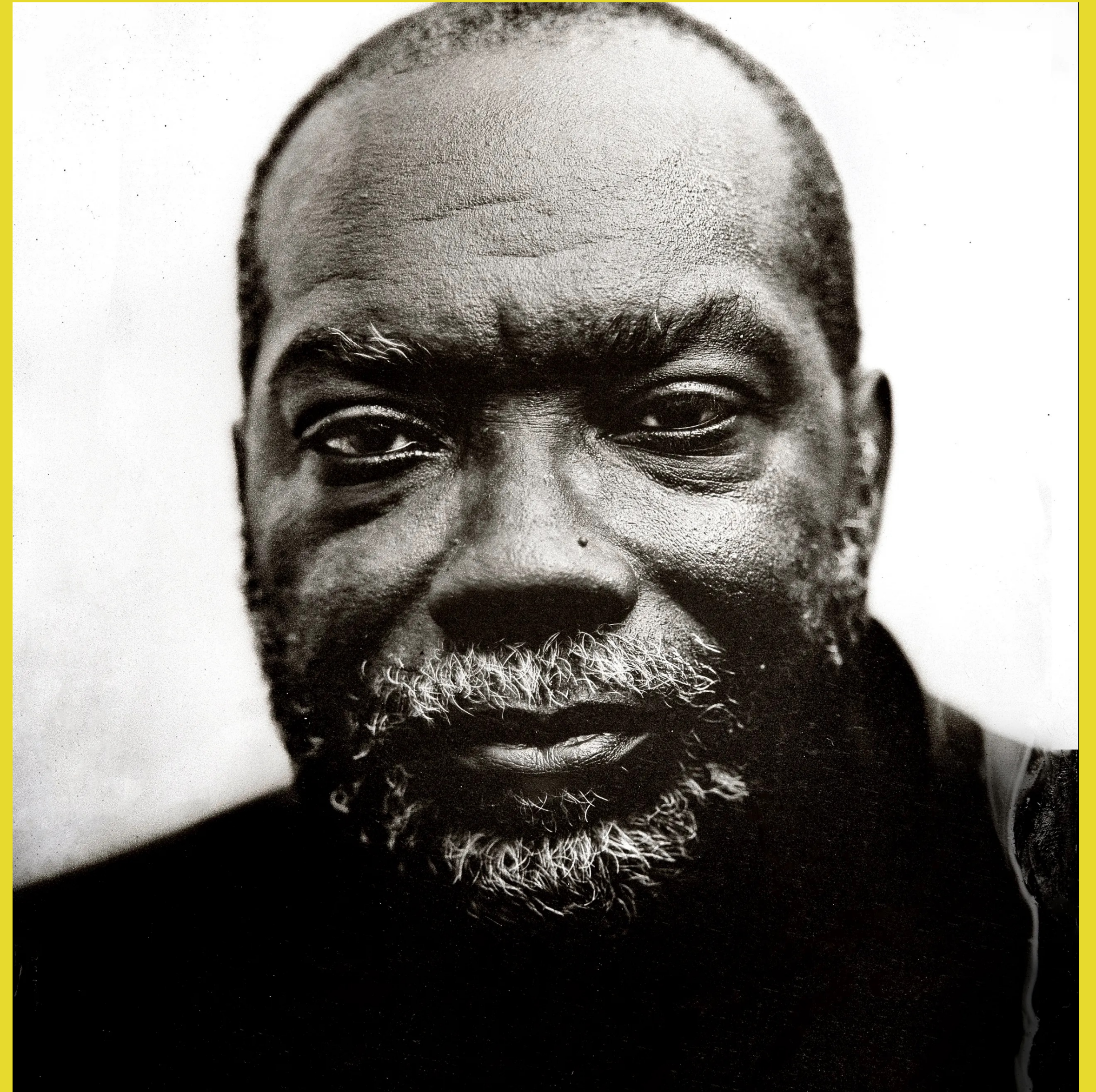
- Extractive Capitalist Realism allows a minority of people to think the world is *for* them
- Most people aren't granted this, and even that minority are likely to find out how precarious this allowance is.
- Savransky argues modernity made the promise that the future was "ours", but for most, this promise was cruel optimism.
- The desire to save this world comes from a misrecognition of your position in it. A belief that it is *for* you. In black studies, this is what happens if people think it is possible to be *white*, rather than simply being allowed some of the privileges associated with whiteness.



Fred Moten

Blackness

- Poet and theorist of blackness
- Working with the problem of anti-blackness as the organising principle of post-colonial society (particularly in the US but a lot of places)
- To live through blackness is to constantly have to deal with the violence of anti-blackness.
- This means recognising this world *is* not for you, and being driven to improvise to create worlds and ways of being that allow for beauty and joy in the gaps and the breaks that the ECR world can't quite close.



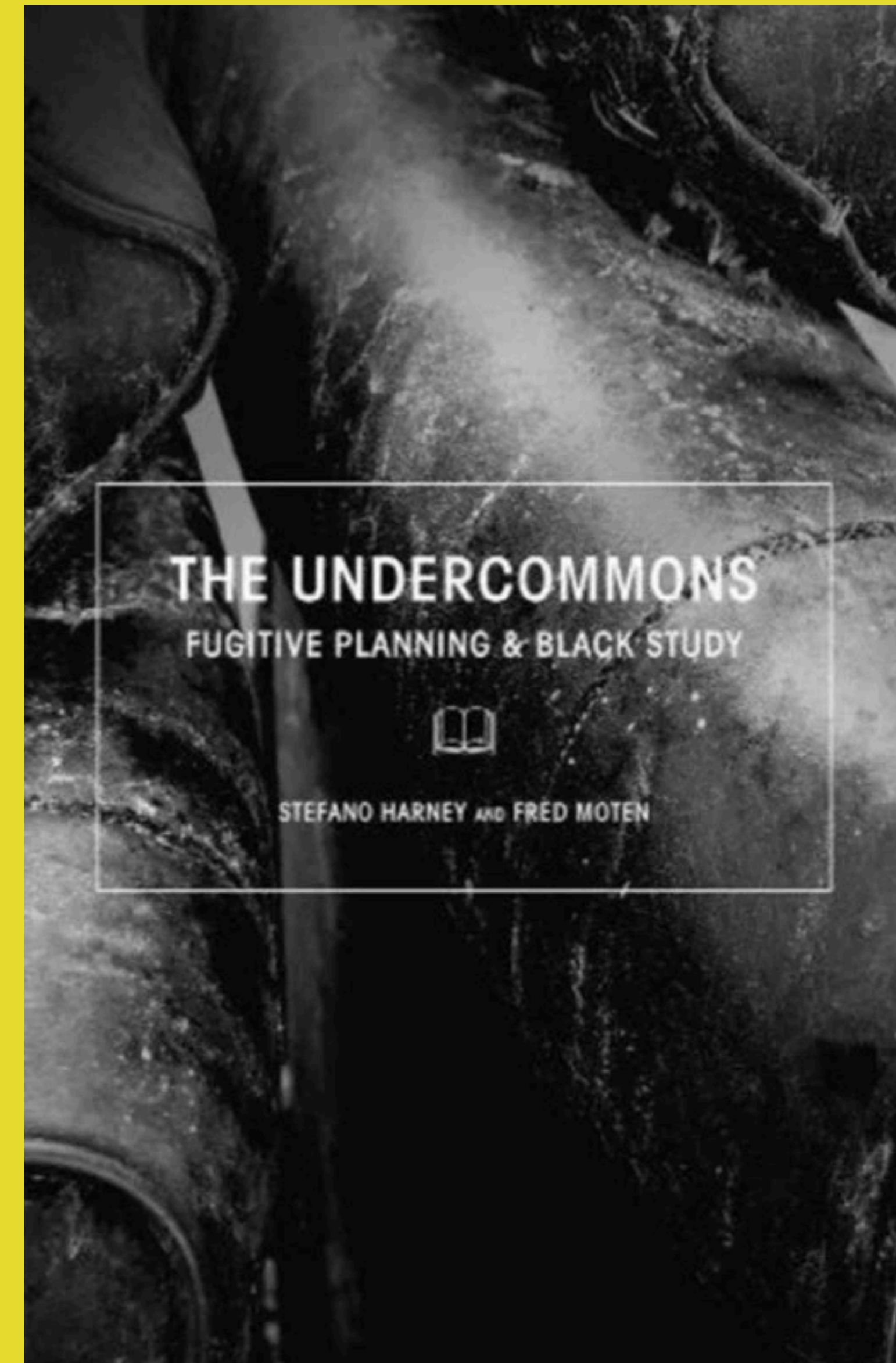
“Like Deleuze, I believe in the world and want to be in it. I want to be in it all the way to the end of it because I believe in another world in the world and I want to be in *that*. And I plan to stay a believer, like Curtis Mayfield. But that’s beyond me, and even beyond me and Stefano, and out into the world, the other thing, the other world, the joyful noise of the scattered, scatted eschaton, the undercommon refusal of the academy of misery.”

Moten quoted by Halbestram in the introduction to *The Undercommons* by Moten and Harney

To believe in the world

Letting go of the fucked-up whiteness

- For Moten, blackness is a real material practice of performance and meaning-making.
- Whiteness is the belief that you have escaped the violence of anti-blackness and casts blackness as little more than a “fucked-up whiteness”.
- Obsessed with management, recognition, and representation fucked-up whiteness makes itself subordinate to the violence of anti-blackness that acts through the world of ECR.



It is not about claiming blackness; it is about living a life that is insubordinate to the anti-blackness of extractive capitalist realism

“...an insubordinate life: at one and the same time a life without ground, without the hope or promise of another world or another life, and the active affirmation of the risk of living this life while one can— however fragile and improvised, however rugged and unstable, however, subject to the inextricable connections that bind one’s projects and aspirations to inhuman dynamics of chance, contingency, peripeteia and catastrophe no plan can account for and no amount of progress can overcome.”

–Savransky *“Irreverent Pessimism”* (Forthcoming)

It's after the end of the world

Now you know that

- A lot of what is already happening sucks, and it is probably going to get worse.
- It is time to recognise the cruelty of the attachments and hopes offered to us, and the blackmail of projects that try to save this world.
- There is so much to protect, so much to care for, and so to build and play with. And those of us who can move through the world spared from much of the violence of anti-blackness should use this safety and these resources to do this.
- There is no consolation in knowing the world has ended, but no need for it either, because it was never for us.
- But the future that was once “ours” is now again open, subject to circumstances beyond our control as they collide with what we do together.



Questions for after the end of the world

- What future did you feel was promised to you?
- What kind of world made that future meaningful?
- How does the future look now?
 - Do you still think it will happen, or will it be different in some way?
- How can you enjoy the world of the future you envision?
- What other worlds do you live in, other than ECR
 - What kind of future do these worlds have?
 - How can you protect and care for them?
- How can you live an insubordinate life?