

INTERVENTION

Worlding in the Anthropocene: Opacity and the Groundless Ground of Geography After the God's-Eye View

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In the Anthropocene, the stakes of critique increasingly shift from mastery to opacity. The planet can no longer be approached as an object to be known, mapped, or repaired from above, but this collapse of the God's-eye view does not end worlding. It changes how worlding works. This intervention argues that opacity is the form taken by Geography when the authority of external ground can no longer secure worlding. "Geography" is understood here not primarily as discipline or mapping but as the demand that the earth continue to hold together as world. The *Matrix Resurrections* and *Fear of a Dead White Planet* are used to clarify this condition. In different registers, both show that exposure and refusal no longer open an outside. Instead, memory, relation, care, study, disclosure, and repair become ways through which a world without ground continues to hold.

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The *Matrix Resurrections* (Wachowski 2021) and calls to "world the world otherwise", exemplified in recent texts like *Fear of a Dead White Planet* (FDWP) (More Worlds Collective et al. 2025), would seem to have little to do with one another. One is a late franchise film about simulation, memory, therapy, desire, and corporate repetition. The other is a critical intervention into the white planetary imagination, technoscientific repair, and the violence of universalising world-claims. Yet, read together, they make starkly visible a condition central to Anthropocene critique: the collapse of the God's-eye view does not produce an outside. It produces opacity.

This intervention argues that opacity is not where worlding fails. It is one of the main ways worlding continues after the authority of external ground has collapsed. Much Anthropocene thought begins by refusing the view from above. The planet can no longer be treated as a stable object of human mastery, technoscientific knowledge, universal emergency, or managerial repair. Yet the refusal of that view does not end the demand for world. The world must still be inhabited, contested, repaired, refused, and remade, but it can no longer credibly be presented as secured from beyond itself. This is the shared terrain on which *Resurrections* and *FDWP* become useful.

Resurrections clarifies the problem because it does not repeat the original film's opposition between simulation and awakening. In the first *Matrix*, critique still has the

form of exposure: the Matrix is false, the red pill discloses its falsity, and awakening opens onto another order of reality from which the Matrix can be fought. However complex the trilogy becomes, the first film preserves the hope that exposure changes the status of the world. *Resurrections* begins after that hope has already been staged. Neo has awakened. The Matrix has been exposed. The story of exposure already exists inside the Matrix itself.

This is the film's decisive shift. Thomas Anderson, the main protagonist of the film, is not simply ignorant of his past. His past has returned in forms that cannot ground themselves. It has become a video game trilogy, a source of professional success, a set of disturbing memories, a possible mental illness, an object of therapy, a pharmaceutical problem, and corporate property to be extended through a sequel. The old revelation is not erased. It is rendered opaque. It is present everywhere, but never in a form that can secure the distinction between truth and delusion, history and fiction, memory and design, care and control. Neo's problem is the return of disclosure as world.

Simulation therefore takes on a different function. It is no longer only the concealment of reality behind an artificial surface. It becomes the condition in which exposure itself cannot ground an outside. The Matrix can allow fragments, repetitions, memories, recognitions, doubts, and desires to circulate precisely because none of them secures a position beyond the system. Truth operates without ground: unstable, therapeutic, commodified, narratable, affective, and repeatable.

The role of the Analyst in *Resurrections* sharpens this further. His power does not rest simply on logical control or representational deception. It works through affective tension. Neo and Trinity are kept close enough to generate longing, recognition, and intensity, but far enough apart for that intensity to remain unresolved. Their relation becomes productive because it cannot settle. The system feeds on suspended attachment: proximity without completion, memory without ground, desire without possession. Simulation becomes an affective economy of opacity.

Resurrections therefore matters for Anthropocene critique because it asks what happens when exposure no longer secures a coherent outside. The world becomes opaque because disclosure no longer settles the position from which the world can be judged, exited, or secured. What has been revealed returns as part of the world's own operation: memory, therapy, corporate demand, repetition, and desire become elements of the same immanent field. Disclosure no longer ends worlding. It drives the subject further into the operations of the world it has exposed.

FDWP raises the same problem in a different register. Its target is the white planetary imagination: the planet as object of technoscientific knowledge, universal emergency, managerial repair, and supposedly shared crisis. The planet cannot be approached innocently as a single object to be known, saved, or repaired from above, because that view carries the history of whiteness, extraction, settler reason, and technoscientific command. The God's-eye planet is not neutral. It is organised through the violence of the position from which it is claimed.

The refusal of the white planetary world does not open a secure position from which another world can simply be named. This is why *FDWP*'s own language matters. It refuses the assumption that "worlds have cultures or natures or politics, as these are domainings of false universals, and thus are overreaching and epistemologically destructive" (More Worlds Collective et al. 2025: 122). Another world cannot therefore be gathered as an object with its own stable domains. The book makes this explicit: "[T]he goal is not to map relations, designate units, or add layers ... The goal is worlding" (More Worlds Collective et al. 2025: 39). Worlding names the refusal of external capture but also the difficulty that follows from that refusal: critique must proceed through the opacity it affirms.

Opacity is integral to the argument because relation cannot be grasped without being reduced. It must be lived as situated practice, affective attunement, study, refusal, collectivity, immersion, and becoming. Once the claim to external ground is refused, relation can only be pursued from within. Opacity becomes the condition under which the alternative to the white planetary world can be sustained at all.

The key trope of "terraforming" in *FDWP* makes this especially clear. The book refuses terraforming as off-earth engineering, planetary technofix, and white managerial fantasy, but it also reclaims the term for situated, collective, place-based study: a humbler practice of world-making

and world-breaking from within damaged conditions. "Terraformations are not things ... [but rather] Verbing all the way down" (More Worlds Collective et al. 2025: 120). Terraforming is not abandoned; it is redistributed. *FDWP* therefore reveals geography after the God's-eye view: terra must still be formed, but now through opacity, situatedness, and immanent practice rather than external mastery.

In both cases, opacity names the absence of a standpoint from which disclosure or relation could be completed and secured outside the field in which it operates. This is where the connection with *Resurrections* becomes precise. In *Resurrections*, disclosure does not ground an outside; it becomes opaque and generative within the world. In *FDWP*, refusal of the white planetary view does not ground an alternative; it returns as terraforming, study, relation, and worlding. The registers are different, but the operation is shared: opacity does not interrupt worlding. It becomes the condition through which worlding continues after the authority of external ground has collapsed.

This shared operation could be mistaken for a postmodern problem: foundations become unstable, representation fails, the real is mediated by simulation, and critique loses access to a secure standpoint. That diagnosis does not go far enough. Postmodern critique exposes the absence of final ground. But "Geography" is perhaps a better name for the operation that continues after such exposure. The world does not dissolve when its guarantees fail. It becomes the compulsory field within which failure itself must be registered, inhabited, repaired, and made productive. This is why *Resurrections* matters more than the first *Matrix* for the present argument: exposure no longer opens onto exteriority but returns as material for world-continuation. Neo and Trinity do not demolish the Matrix; they re-enter it as a field to be played with and remade. *FDWP* performs an analogous move in critique: the white planetary view is refused, but authority is reconstituted within situated relation, study, opacity, terraforming, and unfinished worlding.

Geography enters here because it names the condition this shared operation discloses. I use "Geography" in a specific sense: not first as the academic discipline, nor as mapping, cartography, navigation, spatial description, environmental knowledge, or territorial administration. These practices matter, but they are carriers of a deeper demand: earth must hold as world and continue as world without outside. This demand has a history. Under earlier theological orders, earth could be read as creation, sign, providence, or divine design; its differences did not need to cohere through their own internal consistency. In late medieval and early modern Europe, earth increasingly changes status. It is required to function as a single operational field: navigable, mappable, comparable, measurable, and internally consistent. Totality shifts from symbolic enclosure to internal consistency, and world must now be made to hold from within.

The globe as sphere clarifies the form of this demand. A spherical earth gives a powerful image of world without outside: whole, continuous, internally related, and without

external edge. Yet it also gives earth as an originless whole. No point on the surface is naturally authorised to organise the others. There is no given zero, no intrinsic meridian, no external vantage from which order can be secured. God could be invoked to guarantee wholeness from beyond; the globe gives wholeness from within while leaving orientation, reference, and continuation to be produced internally. Geography turns this originless wholeness into a demand: the world must be oriented, measured, navigated, governed, inhabited, repaired, related, and continued from within the same immanent field.

This is where a notion of the “Geographical Subject” becomes useful. By Geographical Subject, I mean an internal carrier asked to orient, secure, and make intelligible a world whose order can no longer credibly be guaranteed from beyond itself. Descartes formalises such an internal point of orientation when the cogito orders extended space after inherited certainty has been suspended. Kant radicalises the structure by making space and time the forms through which experience must be organised. Longitude, the prime meridian, maps, observatories, mathematical systems, instruments, institutions, science, administration, and later metrics and data infrastructures act as further carriers. They do not ground Geography. They make its groundlessness appear governable by installing internal reference points that could still be experienced as if they carried external authority.

This does not mean that the world was once securely grounded and has only now become groundless. World, in the sense developed here, is constitutively without final ground and has therefore always required operations that make this condition liveable, governable, and consequential. Theological orders presented ground as transcendent; modern mastery relocated the work of grounding into internal carriers—the sovereign subject, the view from above, the grid, the globe, the map, and geographical science—which could nevertheless appear to carry external or quasi-external authority. What changes in the Anthropocene is not the arrival of groundlessness but the erosion of that authority. Once orientation can no longer present itself as transparent and external to the field it orders, groundlessness becomes explicit and operative as opacity.

This short history explains why the contemporary erosion of mastery’s authority does not end Geography. The subject, map, globe, survey, longitude, mathematics, and institution helped to make the world seem governable, navigable, and coherent. When those carriers weaken, the work once carried by orientation, calculation, and mastery is redistributed across opacity, relation, care, study, repair, participation, data, critique, and worlding otherwise. *FDWPs* claim that the world “repels their attempt to impose the line of their grid” (More Worlds Collective et al. 2025: 88) is instructive here: the older grid loses authority, but the loss of the grid redirects worlding into other forms of relation, opacity, study, and formation.

Opacity is the contemporary form of this groundlessness. Once the God’s-eye view, the sovereign subject, and the

fantasy of external mastery lose credibility, worlding can no longer be presented as transparent orientation from above. But the demand for world remains. The world must still be inhabited, contested, repaired, refused, and remade, but it can no longer credibly be presented as secured from beyond itself. Disclosure becomes opaque and generative; refusal becomes immanent and relational; terraforming becomes verbing all the way down. Opacity does not mark the failure of Geography. It is what Geography becomes when its internal operations can no longer present themselves as externally guaranteed.

Like *FDWP*, contemporary geographical work gives this redistribution a more ordinary register. Derickson et al.’s call for “consequential geography” (2025) roots authority in unlearning mastery: not-knowing, failure, humility, care, hesitation, slow practice, co-presence, and immersion all belong to the same grammar. What cannot be grasped must be engaged; productivism ensues. What resists mastery becomes a criterion of admissibility; limits become occasions for duration, reflexivity, participation, and further relation.

Read back through Geography as ontological demand rather than academic discipline, the opening examples no longer function only as illustrations. *Resurrections* shows the popular form of opacity as disclosure without ground: the truth of simulation returns as memory, therapy, game, corporate repetition, and desire, drawing the subject further into the world it has exposed. *FDWP* shows the critical form: the refusal of the white planetary view authorises relation precisely by refusing to obtain it from above. Its terraforming trope makes the geographical stakes explicit: the world after the God’s-eye view is not de-worlded. It is re-terraformed from within. In one case, exposure thickens simulation; in the other, refusal deepens immanent relation and world-making. The registers remain distinct, but the geographical operation is shared. After the God’s-eye view, neither exposure nor refusal opens an outside. Each becomes a carrier through which worlding continues.

In this sense, the Anthropocene is not only a historical period or planetary crisis but the contemporary scene in which Geography’s groundlessness becomes explicit. It names a condition in which the planet can no longer credibly be presented as masterable from above, while every response to crisis must still pass through world-continuation. The Anthropocene therefore does not move beyond Geography. It is Geography after the God’s-eye view.

The intervention, then, is that the collapse of the God’s-eye view does not end the demand that earth hold as world; it changes how that demand is sustained. Once external guarantees lose authority, groundlessness becomes operative as opacity. Opacity marks the shift from mastery to the compulsory conversion of relation, immersion, care, study, terraforming, failure, hesitation, refusal, and disclosure into the ongoing labour of world-continuation.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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