# the big dam

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NEIL ENGGIST

## The Big Dam

Narmada
The river
silt and divine
bed full of Shivalingas
all roundstones
waiting for a mourner
to carry them away
one day
Narmada
She flows through thick
jungles and narrow gorges
Her chaste waters cut through
800 miles of marble rocks
sandstone hills and coal deposits
dutiful through the hostile land
emptying her holy stones
into the Arabian Sea
Famous-India the site says
Narmada is the 'mother and

#### giver of peace'

No mention of her 3 thousand dams the 25 million people standing in the river against the name of her age waking out of the village India lost in the dream But whose dream is India? Whose idea is country? Who is allowed to have an idea? Whose idea is allowed to hang in the judge's frame? They'll give you a loan if you grow Monsanto cotton so you can starve and still sell their product That's the idea They'll give you a job serving tea to the Dam company men And building their mobile dwellings after your home is underwater They'll provide the pesticide to kill all except what they have modified to grow That's the idea



50 million are landless from the dam

denied their mother-

'the giver of peace'

Narmada 'most feminine

in her movements'

like a haldi rubbed bride

gifted to the World Bank the bridegroom of the khakis funding the arteries without the veins The Dam men selling their smokes abroad when they can't back home The sugarcane lobby flooding the drought and getting out

so many farmers drink the pesticides when the water is gone

The river becomes the line in the sand

or is it where the river once was

and now is forced to run out

before it sees the sea?

What does it mean to dam?

Who disappears?

Whose stories are swallowed?

Who drifts to the superslum to learn about what he has none?

'How you can snatch a river away from one and gift it to another. How you can green a desert, or fell a forest and plant one somewhere else. You use caprice to fracture a peoples' faith in ancient things—earth, forest, water, air. Once that's done, what do they have left? Only you. They'll turn to you, because you're all they have....They'll vote for you even as you squeeze the very breath from their bodies. They'll drink what you give them to drink. They'll breathe what you give them to breathe. They'll live where you dump their belongings. They have to. What else can they do? There's no higher court of redress. You're their mother and their father. You're the judge and the jury. You're the World. You're God.'

#### -Arudhati Roy



To let the river run if it just rolls for the kingfishers and the thin river children to jump in and swim against the name of her age They name it a waste No one knows our name Our age is a ghost town Home is no longer the meeting place of the family and the fire that collects circles Home is only a measurement of what we keep out Who is given the power to name our time? In one morning all the animals are all unnamed soldiers march us to the boom slum We become black tigers and disappear our souls stay in our river land

as our bodies move into darkness Black tigers never leave their homes when all else are zombie santacons wobbling drunk down genocide sailor street the tigers leap through the spirit world in the red glitter devouring wave Rat corpses awaken in new worlds Cat eyes fall through the water Scarecrows whip the green horses Locusts on Locusts bury the sky underground We sense all the death in new water but we are not even allowed to drown on our land All the big dams will fall and the tigers disappear into the monsoon



Man the manager of nature has named his age

after himself

Anthropocene

It sounds both proud and ashamed

Man named as an undifferentiated whole

with the power now to create to destroy

to preserve and reproduce

But which Man?

The 'Project Affected Person'

whose land has been flooded, whose forest has been taken

and now forced to find wage labor on the edge of a wild highway

or in the center of roads of Delhi with Audis of new money rushing by?

(Ghost laughing)

Nature becomes the resource that allows certain economic reproduction to subjugate nature

(Silent following)

Only a few voices could name the age

But it is still unnamed

Perhaps now is the only time in human history that we are aware that our age's name is changing that the choices we make collectively will determine what that name means

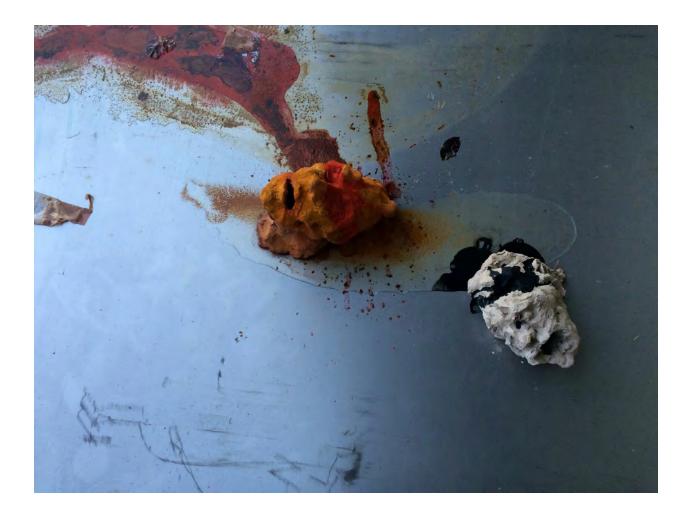
What strange and wondrous rings we have made in the old trees

Who will sense these rings

and finally disown them?

it reaches the ocean?

What happens when the dam breaks as old dams will or the big river dries before



Adaptation

by the global north

means waging the endless counterinsurgency

Adaptation

turns people on themselves

and tears away the fabric of community

Adaptation is the bomb

in the marketplace

rampant fear as control the ability to name strangers as enemies and this naming means the ending of life from a drone screen in a mall in Missouri It means life or death but the life had already been refused a body a family an idea of divine love The Climate and the Neoliberal regime like drought and flood all at once amplify and express themselves through each other through cold war proxy fallout World Bank lending elimination of the commons The deification of privatization erosion of borders and shorelines open ended repression the turn to technocrats permanently deployed mercenary drones roving guns and gunmen looking for the war the state as private world police unit the state collapse into ethnic war the boiling Tropic of Chaos and the politics of the armed lifeboat in catastrophic convergence



The Last Map

is a shadow

A 'Hologram of overlapping sediments of group and other identities

atop the markings of city-states and the remaining nations,

themselves confused in places by shadowy tentacles, hovering

overhead, indicating the power of drug cartels, mafias, and private

security agencies'

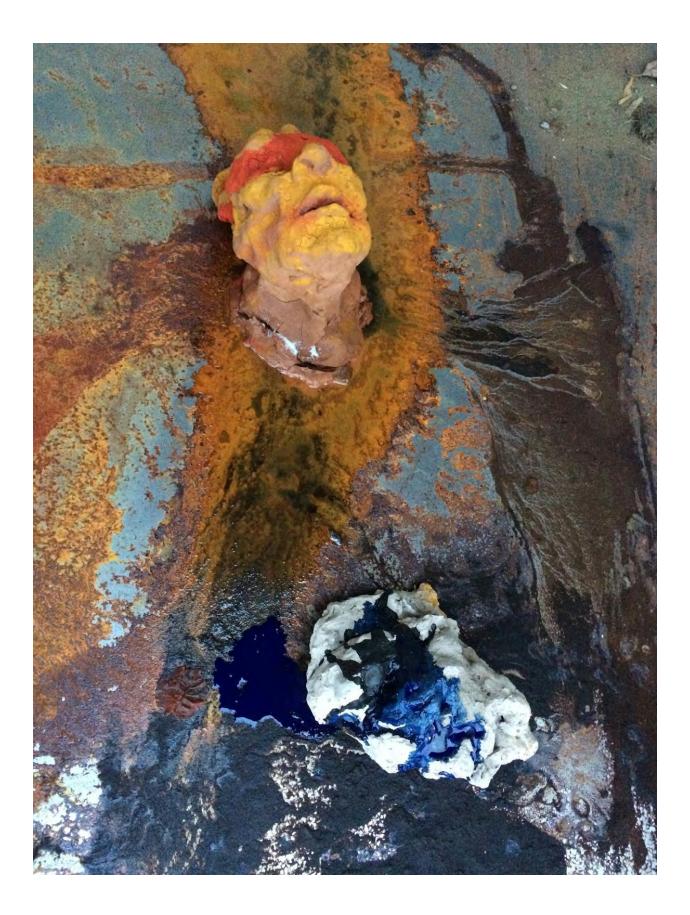
The Last Map

is borderless

and all border

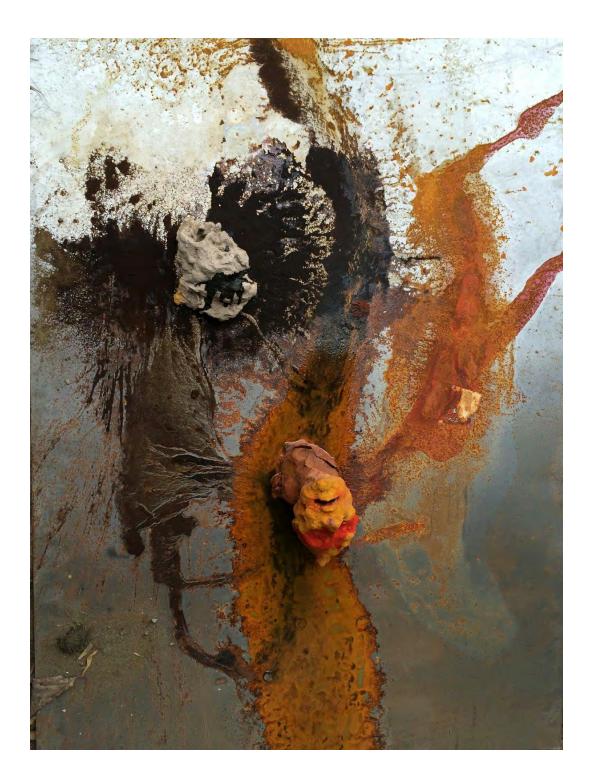
'the "Last Map"—will be an ever-

mutating representation of chaos'\*



Two Sisters India and Pakistan Two Sisters once one multiplicity They share the open wound of partition drawn with blood by the British Their dance of chilly war flaring up like burning silk both holding on with nuclear arms Their conjoined heart melting in the mountains is Kashmir Kashmir where the children at midnight are clear blue Kashmir the seething magisterial source of the Indus and the rivers that irrigate 90% of Pakistan's breadbasket With the Baglihar dam on the Chenab in 08 India begins to cut off water to the Indus Enter the Dam as climate weapon and here is The truest and most profound use of the dam Not to harness clean energy Not to provide drinking water to rural millions

It is to destroy and desertify the land and water of the opponent



Signs held by Pakistani farmers:

'If not water

then Blood'

When choosing between thirst and blood

They choose blood

They always choose blood

& 298 glaciers are

following the snow leopards



There are a slippery group of interchanging phantoms The ones that can afford to risk the Earth for accumulation The ones getting bailed out and barricading their summer homes blaming the fanatics zombifying the refugees capitalizing on catastrophe They will always have artesian water delivered to them from the melting glacier These are the voices arming the lifeboat These are the voices hailing the human genius The believers of the technofix Bill Gates or Bruce Willis will fix this Get back to business Plan B : the technofix Now the geoengineering wild west Imagine-The drones capture carbon while they watch us from a pale aerosol sky The deserts have been sheeted in white as they march through the suburbs The oil tankers now vaporize the ocean into the sky to scatter the sun

Enter the apocalypse sun management coalition Plan B-dim the sun a bit by spraying sulfates into the air through balloons and really long hoses to mimic the eruption of Mount Pinatubo which cooled the planet by a whole half a degree in 1991 That's the non-crazy Gates funded possible Plan B because plan A has too many enemies

Plan B-

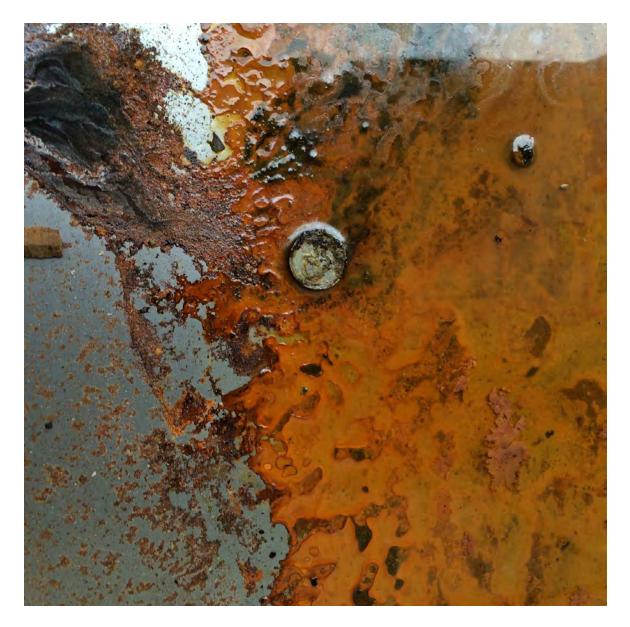
with too many plans

hook our earth up to life support The image of the terminal blue planet the beep of its heart in coma monitored by a colorful team of doctor engineer actors who with measured compassion fatalism and pride keep pumping its breath But when we stop pumping sulfate aerosols into the atmosphere we'll be hit with a tidal wave of heat so we'll just have to keep pumping forever until the next large volcano or the Snowpiercer circles the earth How will plan B play out? There can be no way to know and no way to reverse and recapture what will be released Computer scenarios suggest there will be great disruption to the Indian monsoons plant productivity in Africa and rains in the Amazon Curiously enough Europe and North America see minimal impact One can imagine a world where the techno-elites monitors of Frankenearth decide which areas to save and which to sacrifice who is to live and who is to die For the ones who live by the river

this way already is

Plan C is planetary exodus

(who gets a ticket onto this virgin ark?)



The Earth from space

Who is allowed to see it?

Who is allowed to leave it?

If I were chosen to see the Earth from space-

The world of rivers drying in our souls The ocean rising over our closing fences The world turning iron and red The ocean revolving in broken motion The cities of lost languages in held breath singing the requiem of the Iron Epoch like gods waking in the great fire a trillion entwined homes close within leaning out over the abyss with dancer's feathers holding our children from falling in

How much more ocean we are than we imagine-How we spill tarsand right into our arteries Tar right in the trees of our breath How our lights dissolve the shells in our bodies to shatter with a promised movement of snake under turtle shell Skulls of creatures we never met fill the dams like final dreams blowing from a dry second monsoon Up coming the baying of dogs before the drum of water through church walls waiting for the turtle to reemerge from the sea

The raven starts speaking in a language only known in the circle on the mountain where the first people have kept on a fire in enraged forgiveness around the circle and the fire each singer sings from a small growing eye of overlapping rings opening being with the earth too long to see it crazy and blue and far between oily fingers reaching for something round in the river round and somehow the shape of something within reaching in suffering with a river entwined in all other forms and freedoms of love of home within



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