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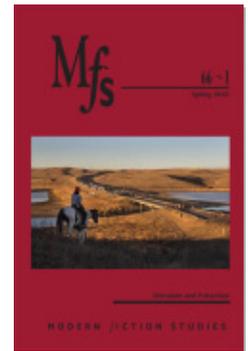
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Literature in an Age of Extraction: An Introduction

Alok Amatya and Ashley Dawson

The world is on fire. The fires raging in the Brazilian Amazon at present are perhaps the most well known, having made headlines around the world during the country's dry season, but they are far from unique. As we write these lines, 16,653 fires are burning across the planet in countries from Bolivia to Indonesia, Mozambique to Australia.¹ We are witnessing a global epidemic of deforestation sparked by an intense wave of resource extraction. Take the fires spreading throughout the Amazon Basin: according to Brazil's National Institute for Space Research, "deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon surged 88.4 percent" in the past year, while the number of fires has reached "an increase of 84 percent compared to the same time" in 2018 (Irfan, "The Amazon Rainforest"). In some cases, fires are started by small-scale farmers using slash-and-burn techniques to put nutrients back in the soil for crops. But the vast majority of the fires that have burned in the last year, reversing years of successful efforts to stem deforestation, are caused by people working for powerful mining, logging, and agriculture interests. Indeed, one of the biggest factors driving deforestation in Brazil is cattle ranching. As Umair Irfan writes, "Brazil is now the world's largest beef exporter. In 2018, these exports generated \$6.7 billion for the country's economy" ("Why It's Been So Lucrative"). It is no coincidence that Brazil is also the world's second-largest producer of soybeans: 80 percent of the country's soy crop is used in animal feed (Yale). And there are also

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gold, aluminum, and oil deposits in the rainforest. Illegal mining has increased to unprecedented levels in the Amazon in recent years, as has illegal logging.² Fires are often used by miners and loggers as ways to drive Indigenous people off their land. Brazil's hard-right president Jair Bolsonaro campaigned on promises to roll back protections of the rainforest and Indigenous rights; only hours after taking office, he began to fulfil these promises by "transferring the regulation and creation of new Indigenous reserves to the agriculture ministry—which is controlled by the powerful agribusiness lobby" that helped elect him (Phillips). The attacks on Indigenous people in the Amazon are part of a global trend linked to extreme extraction and the persecution of frontline communities: "while Indigenous peoples are only 5% of the world population, . . . they are involved in 40% of all environmental conflicts globally" (Alier and Meynen). The current epidemic of deforestation on the resource extraction frontier is thus also—and inescapably—a wave of genocidal violence.

What happens in the Amazon has global implications and is driven by global forces. In one of its recent shocking reports, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that deforestation and other destructive land use practices are responsible for 23 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions ("Climate Change and Land"). The severity of the crisis in the Amazon is extreme: about 17 percent of the Amazon rainforest has been lost. Some scientists have begun warning that if the forest loses between three and eight percent more trees, it will cross a critical tipping point and enter a dieback scenario. This would mean that "there won't be enough vegetation to move moisture through the system, causing it to degrade into savanna" and begin releasing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere rather than absorbing them (Irfan, "Why It's Been So Lucrative"). While Bolsonaro and his cronies certainly benefit from his campaign against the rainforest and its Indigenous inhabitants and stewards, the liquidation of the rainforest is not a purely Brazilian affair. Bolsonaro's government receives backing from behemoths of global finance such as US-based investment fund BlackRock.³ The world's largest institutional investor, BlackRock is "among the top three shareholders in 25 of the world's largest publicly listed deforestation-risk companies" (Conant), including companies producing and trading soy, beef, palm oil, pulp and paper, rubber, and timber. Moreover, while the Brazilian government sought in previous years to curb deforestation, BlackRock increased its investments in these sectors by more than half a billion dollars. And BlackRock is not alone: "global agribusiness giants like Archer

Daniels Midland (ADM) and Bunge dominate Brazil's soy trading market," with backing from major shareholders like Vanguard, State Farm, and T. Rowe Price (Lappé).

The global epidemic of deforestation is just one facet of extreme extraction. Global extraction and consumption of raw materials in general, including fossil fuels, increased eightfold during the period from 1900 to 2005 (Krausmann 2703). Consumption rates averaged between one and four percent during the last century, culminating in extraction rates of 59 billion tons per year by the end of the twentieth century (Krausmann 2697). The increasing rate of extraction is particularly pronounced toward the end of this period, with global consumption growing by 93.4 percent between 1980 and 2009 (Giljum 323). But this consumption is hardly evenly distributed around the world: the current environmental crises are almost entirely due to overconsumption in rich nations and rapidly developing middle-income countries.⁴ This should not be surprising: the last 50 years should be known as the Great Divergence since, as anthropologist Jason Hickel has shown, while global gross domestic product (GDP) has grown steadily, "only a very small share of it (about 5%) goes to the poorest 60% of humanity." This followed a brief interregnum from 1950 to 1980, during which decolonization and the efforts of the Non-Aligned Movement and the New International Economic Order increased economic sovereignty for postcolonial nations and narrowed the economic gap between rich nations and their former colonies, generating higher wages, improved access to land for peasant farmers, and a greater share of national income for workers and the poor across the Global South. Today, 50 percent of the resources that high-income nations consume are appropriated from the Global South, suggesting that imperialist extractivism has intensified markedly during the era of unbridled neoliberalism from 1980 to the present. While the unfettered, brutal extraction of so-called natural resources is as old as colonialism, today's global system of hyper-capitalism is transgressing key planetary ecological boundaries. At current levels of average global consumption, we're exceeding the planet's bio-capacity by more than 50 percent each year (*Earth Overshoot Day*). From the wholesale massacre of plant and animal life that scientists are calling the Sixth Extinction to ocean acidification, lesser-known crises such as the large-scale nitrogen and phosphorus flows that are causing dead zones in the world's oceans, and the climate emergency caused by carbon emissions, capital's feckless pursuit of compound growth is generating plunder and pollution on a global scale that is barreling remorselessly toward planetary ecocide.

This massive wave of extraction flies in the face of rosy pronouncements from some of the dominant institutions of global governance about green growth. Arguments about green growth have been circulating in latent form since the notion of sustainable development was articulated by the 1987 publication of *Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development (now known as the Brundtland Commission). These ideas were also prominent at the United Nation's Rio Earth Summit in 1992. Despite stinging criticism from feminist intellectuals and decolonial thinkers like Vandana Shiva, Gayatri Spivak, and Arturo Escobar, the discourse of development only became more dominant, achieving clear hegemony on an international plane by the time of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, with a series of important international organizations issuing reports explicitly embracing green growth (Hickel and Kallis, 2019).⁵ What exactly do these powerful institutions mean by green growth? For the OECD, green growth signifies "fostering economic growth and development while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies" (*Towards Green Growth*). These ideas tend to juxtapose a commitment to continued economic growth with calculatedly fuzzy ideas of minimizing—but not reducing—the environmental impact of such expansion. Far from having been flung into the dustbin of history as a result of the worsening climate emergency, the notion of green growth continues to orient the global economy for the foreseeable future in the form of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The most ambitious declaration of a global effort to ameliorate a variety of social and environmental crises, the SDGs include an intention to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" ("Sustainable Development Goal 8"). This goal is profoundly incompatible with most of the other SDGs, including, most obviously, SDG number 13, which aims to "combat climate change" (Alier and Meynen).

At bottom, these pronouncements in favor of green growth are an attempt by global elites to provide ideological cover for a capitalist system that is constitutionally driven toward ceaseless growth on a finite planetary resource base. The hope behind this apparently contradictory enterprise is that resource intensity will diminish as economies grow more efficient and shift from manufacturing to services. But, as we have seen, the exploitation of global resources has accelerated over the last two decades, during the exact era when

wealthy nations have shifted toward a service economy. Moreover, it is worth remembering that this is precisely the period when rich nations have outsourced much of their production to poorer nations, allowing them to shift much of the resulting material consumption and carbon emissions off their domestic balance sheets. While countries like the US, Japan, and the nations of the European Union have achieved relative decoupling of their gross domestic product from resource impacts in this period, the “material footprint” or total resource impact of these nations “has been rising at a rate equal to or greater than GDP” (Hickel and Kallis 4). There has thus been no decoupling of economic growth and resource impacts at all, despite all the hoopla about green growth.

Nor do economic models suggest that such decoupling will be possible in the future. The IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), for example, includes 116 mitigation scenarios for keeping global warming below two degrees Celsius. All of these scenarios attempt to “stabilise global temperatures while global GDP continues to rise” (Hickel and Kallis 15). The vast majority of these scenarios are based on a “temporary overshoot” of atmospheric concentrations of carbon, a calamitous situation to be rectified with “negative-emissions technologies” whose capacity to suck carbon out of the air remains hypothetical in both technical and economic terms (Anderson and Peters 183). Only six of the scenarios in AR5 exclude such negative emissions technologies, and none of these provide any empirical evidence that their proposed structural transformation of the global economy—which includes investing in renewable energy, widespread natural carbon absorption measures such as afforestation and soil regeneration, and a full-scale shift to alternative industrial processes to eliminate emissions from cement, steel, and plastic—will be successful in reducing emissions to net zero by 2050, after which it will be impossible to remain below the 1.5 degree threshold. The only mitigation scenario in AR5 that offers a convincing model for reducing emissions consistent with the Paris Agreement without relying on negative emissions technologies does so through “low energy demand” (Grubler 515): a reduction of global energy demand by 40 percent by 2050. The authors of this scenario propose to achieve this goal not simply through decarbonization and afforestation but also through a significant cut in global material production and consumption. The Low Energy Demand scenario proposes a differentiated process of dematerialization, with a decline of industrial activity of 42 percent in the Global North and 12 percent in the Global South and with a shift away from private

ownership of key commodities like cars toward sharing-based models. The greater the cuts in economic growth and resulting material consumption, in other words, the greater the chances of avoiding climate catastrophe. We're talking here about deep cuts. Indeed, the only scenario that makes it empirically possible to stay below the 1.5 degree threshold is one of de-growth, as Hickel and Kallis suggest. In sum, clean and efficient energy technologies will not be enough to avoid planetary ecocide: our only credible hope of salvation lies in planned contraction and recomposition of consumption, with a shift from today's carbon-intensive sectors to low- or no-carbon ones.

While such a shift away from extractivism might be empirically possible, the political challenge of winning such an ecological reconstruction is undeniably steep. Let us return to Brazil to gauge the odds. As we have seen, the country's current president won power in part by promising to increase national prosperity through intensification of resource extraction. He is only one of the many populist demagogues around the planet who have embraced intensified extractivism as a road to power. Like that of Donald Trump, whose lavish promises to bring back coal and promote American energy dominance have resonated with some sectors of US labor, Bolsonaro's brazen authoritarian populist stance combines what could be called an extractivist populism with sweeping criminalization of environmental protest and public vilification of any groups perceived as adversaries. Like previous figures such as Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, and the fascist dictators of the 1930s, contemporary demagogues like Trump and Bolsonaro respond to what the Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci called an organic crisis of capitalism—a crisis that is at once economic, political, and ideological—by scapegoating socially marginal groups, pinning broader social crises on their backs. If Thatcher and Reagan were responding to the crisis of the postwar Keynesian welfare state, Trump, Bolsonaro, and others of their ilk today have seized on the breakdown of neoliberal hegemony following the Great Recession of 2008 and after. Their solution to this crisis is an intensified rhetorical scapegoating of oppressed groups combined with a new round of enclosures on resource extraction frontiers. In the case of Bolsonaro, this authoritarian populism, which includes virulent misogyny, homophobia, and racism, as well as explicit neo-fascist “fondness for the country's past military dictatorship” (Kirby), is tied to a resource nationalism in which this tool of transnational capital ironically poses as the “defender of Brazilian sovereignty over the Amazon” (Hunt). Given the long history and enduring reality of foreign efforts

to control the riches of the rainforest, this ersatz pose has gained Bolsonaro some political traction in Brazil. The conjoined stances of resource nationalism and extractivist populism resonate in many other countries in the Global South, where wealthy industrialized nations now demand that countries like Brazil save them by not exploiting their own internal resources. The hypocrisy of these nations, with centuries-long histories of polluting the atmosphere themselves, rankles bitterly.

Successfully contesting the extractivist populist rhetoric of a figure like Bolsonaro will require challenging hegemonic ideas of growth and development. This is a Herculean task, one in which these pervasive ideas must be challenged in every country and in every sector of society, including the cultural sphere. It may even appear to be a fool's errand, were it not for a number of facts. First of all, if figures like Bolsonaro and Trump have risen to power as a result of the crisis of neoliberalism, their policies of pillaging the poor and the natural world will inevitably exacerbate rather than quell the popular discontent that anointed them in the first place. Second, the environmental crisis unavoidably dictates rapid and systemic change. According to a 2018 IPCC special report, preventing runaway global warming will require "far-reaching transitions in energy, land, . . . and industrial systems" for which there is "no documented historic precedent" ("Special Report"). Social movements in the US and in many other countries are fighting for domestic and global Green New Deals: every effort must be made to make sure that the sweeping infrastructural changes that these policies imply will be based on a massive, planned contraction of economic growth, with high-emissions sectors of the economy such as fossil fuels, petrochemicals, agribusiness, and aviation shut down rapidly and low-to zero-emissions sectors expanded in order to ensure a just transition. Finally, while the odds of winning such a de-growth-based Green New Deal might seem long (1 in 166, to be precise), we must ask ourselves what other alternative we have in the face of climate emergency. One way or another, economic contraction and ecological reconstruction are coming. The infrastructures of petroleum-fueled modernity are already creaking and buckling. There is not a society on the planet that is not already adapting to one extent or another to the present effects of the climate crisis. These transformations will only intensify in the coming years as the relatively stable planetary ecosystems of the last 12,000 years are swept away. Shifting the developmentalist structures of feeling on which petromodernity is grounded will be a crucial part of the struggle for ecological and social reconstruction.

What role will the literary (and representation more broadly) play in this, the biggest ideological fight of all time? At the moment of its inception as a genre, the novel was tightly focused on resource extraction and the narratives of personal growth and autonomy that were perceived to result from such acts of plunder. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) has long been seen as one of the first examples of a literary work with all of the features that would come to define the genre of the novel. It tells the tale of an Englishman-turned-settler in Portugal's Brazilian colony, where he becomes a plantation owner, who is washed ashore on an island in the Caribbean while on a voyage to buy slaves in Africa. Crusoe must learn to exploit and develop the land in order to survive. Crusoe's meticulously detailed narrative of his initial despair after his shipwreck, followed by his conversion to a belief in divine providence and his increasingly adept exploitation of the island's natural resources, establishes key tropes of the bildungsroman—all in a clearly colonial setting. The parallels between Defoe's narrative and the arguments advanced by John Locke in his *Second Treatise of Government* are striking.⁶ Locke, for instance, argues that it is God's will that the world not remain "common and uncultivated" (20), but rather that land should be "improved" (then a predominant term for development) through industrious labor. For Locke, the kind of industrious labor readers witness Robinson Crusoe engaging in was the key to establishing title to land. Locke, who owned plantations in English colonies in Ireland and Virginia, argues that this act was not one of theft but rather was a boon to humanity as a whole: "he who appropriates land to himself by his labour, does not lessen, but increase the common stock of mankind" (22). Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* reworks these arguments in narrative form, articulating some of the central tropes of the colonial imaginary: Crusoe's island is represented as terra nullius, an apparently depopulated landscape where Crusoe seems to have no competitors when he proclaims himself king and emperor. Of course, the appearance of the Indigenous man whom Crusoe calls Friday challenges the idea of vacant land, but by this point Crusoe's development of the land allows him to assume what is represented as unquestioned mastery over the island. Resource extraction, settler-colonial land grabbing, and narratives of personal, cultural, and material development are thus tightly entangled in Defoe's genre-defining work.

Allegories of personal development, which, as Benedict Anderson has argued, come to be a central mode of articulating national identity, remain crucial to subsequent iterations of the

novel. All too often, however, resource extraction and the colonial location of such extractions are rendered invisible in novels written during Britain's Age of Empire. Indeed, it might be said that, in the nineteenth century, the novel comes to be characterized by a constitutive absence that centers on empire and resource extraction. We might call this the novel's resource unconscious. Excavating this occluded but materially and politically central colonial context is, famously, one of the key interventions of Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*. Said's critical style decodes a "structure of attitude and reference" (62) in relation to colonial ideology in famous nineteenth-century English novels like *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Great Expectations* (1861), taking the erasure of the colonial other in these literary texts as the object matter of discussion. Today, Said's concern for the occluded other of colonial domination provides an enduring model of scholarship for texts in which the concerns of native others impacted by extractive regimes have been pushed to the margins, the intellectual labor of their authors and artists rendered correspondingly hard to appreciate fully. The need to unearth these otherwise invisible forms of extractivism has generic ramifications, pushing both prose and visual representation toward various forms of documentary realism, a pull that often (but not always) challenges the tendency toward magical realism identified by the Warwick Research Collective in their work on the narrative and temporal implications of combined and uneven development in global capitalism.

Depicting the global span of extractive industries is no easy endeavour, as Amitav Ghosh notes in his landmark essay, "Petrofiction: The Oil Encounter and the Novel," which calls out the deficit of serious literary engagements with oil extraction. Ghosh points out that the scarcity of works that rigorously scrutinize America's oil encounter in the Middle East is programmatic rather than unexpected. He writes, "A great deal has been invested in ensuring the muteness of the Oil Encounter . . . through regimes of strict corporate secrecy . . . [and] by the physical and demographic separation of oil installations and their workers from the indigenous populations" (76). In other words, it is not by accident but by design that narratives of extraction by transnational agents were on the fringes of twentieth-century literary discourse. For too long, the extraction of petroleum in the Middle East was considered an obscure fact too far from the social and psychological realities of the American public. On the other hand, the concerns of the Indigenous peoples displaced by oil exploration in the Arabian Peninsula were too marginal to be adequately represented in the circuits of national

and world literatures. Given an apparent disconnect between the consumers of petroleum (in metropolitan centers) and the native populace displaced or employed by oil companies (in remote areas of the resource frontier), a critical intervention in the style of Said's contrapuntal reading is required to bring the context of extractivism to the fore.

Authors who take on the portrayal of extractive industries, often despite the deficit of industry-specific information, also face an uphill battle in translating those industries into culturally resonant narratives. As such, Abdelrahman Munif's novel *Cities of Salt* (1987) can be considered a genre-defining text that crystallizes the encroachment of American oil companies in the Gulf through an epic narrative focused on the small oasis town of Wadi al-Uyoun. Forced to vacate their ancestral town after the discovery of oil and to find work in the oil company as wage laborers, the characters of the fictive Wadi al-Uyoun give shape to the occluded other of an extractivist oil-regime in the age of neo-colonial expansion. As Ghosh outlines, Munif's novel not only humanizes the people displaced by oil extraction but puts them within a concrete framework of place and time. The way that Munif's narrative "luxuriat[es] in a 'sense of place'" (79) counteracts the apparent placelessness of extraction, which Ghosh ascribes to the perception that "experiences associated with oil are lived within a world that is intrinsically displaced." Nevertheless, the idyllic existence of a flesh-and-blood bedouin community in Wadi ul-Uyoun before the arrival of Americans should be viewed as a foundational trope, akin to the one identified by Lawrence Buell in the "toxic discourse" of environmental justice narratives (644).⁷ Further, literary narratives address the environmental consequences of extraction that extend across multiple generations of native inhabitants. Rob Nixon considers the work of conveying such temporally dispersed environmental impacts on Indigenous communities to be one of the main "representational challenges posed by slow violence" (2). Literary narratives bring to the fore those environmentally disastrous actions of extractive industries that are often hidden from the public view due to a number of global and social disparities. The violence of resource extraction often does not register when conducted under the guise of infrastructure development, natural resources management, or energy security. Indigenous communities of the Amazon River basin, as well as other resource-rich areas of the world, are thus vulnerable to extractive projects like logging, oil drilling, metal mining, or dam building, which enlist the power of the state to advance a neo-colonial ideology.

Besides putting in plain view the extractive relations that have flourished in the age of multinational corporations, literature and media introduce new interconnections among narrative form, transnational solidarities, and minority subjectivities that have emerged at the turn of the twenty-first century. Literary narratives incorporate the discourses of resistance, both activist and aesthetic, that garner transnational solidarities against geographically specific operations of extraction. Iconic examples of such works are Ken Saro-Wiwa's political memoir *A Month and A Day: A Detention Diary* (1995), which brought attention to the rampant crude oil leaks caused by Shell Oil Company's operations in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, and Arundhati Roy's essay "The Greater Common Good" (1999), which drew support for the subaltern masses displaced by the damming of the Narmada River in central India. Worth mentioning alongside these two texts is Glen Ellis's documentary film *The Drilling Fields* (1994), which helped to amplify Ken Saro-Wiwa's work as a political organizer of the Indigenous Ogoni people of the Niger Delta after its initial broadcast on England's Channel 4. These three influential texts indicate to us nonfiction narrative forms' growing contribution, at the cusp of the twenty-first century, in facing up to the burning issues of environmental harm and accountability that have proliferated alongside the expansion of extractive industries. Feature documentary films in the tradition of *cinéma vérité* continue to grow in prominence in the twenty-first century, fostering rich public discussions of the environmental impacts of oil drilling, dam building, and mining for metallic ores. The global networks of circulation for literature and media today introduce numerous avenues for solidarity-building in specific cases of extraction. Not only is reception in the Euro-American literary market anticipated in the very process of cultural creation, as Akin Adesokan argues in the case of "new African writing" (2), but South-South networks for production and translation exert a sizable influence on popular movements, as revealed by the reception of Roy's above-mentioned essay in the resistance to megadams in Brazil and China.⁸ What should interest us further are the opportunities for transnational solidarity-building in the present moment, which, as Laura Junka-Aikio and Catalina Cortes-Severino point out, is marked by the expansion of "the extractive frontier . . . increasingly close[r] to urban areas and the centres of knowledge production" (176). If the discursive resistance to extractivism is changing today due to the growing threat that hydraulic fracking and other extreme forms of extraction poses to the well-being of America's middle-class peoples, what possibilities does this present

us for creating transnational coalitions against the excesses of fossil fuel extractivism?

Literature and media of the twenty-first century explore new subjective realities that derive from struggles against extractivist worldviews, which are imposed by the historical processes of colonial and neocolonial hegemony. The production of new minority subjectivities through active resistance is anticipated by the decolonizing philosophy of Frantz Fanon, who suggests that “exploding the former colonial reality . . . brings to light new meanings and contradictions which were camouflaged by this reality” (96). Fanon’s model of self-building through revolutionary struggle provides an important reminder of the need for complete liberation from colonial extractivism. At the same time, recent literary scholarship traces the presence of effaced, incomplete, and abject subjectivities that respond to the violence of extractivism in the course of day-to-day resistance. Our understanding of literary narratives that eschew the Enlightenment-era ideals of atomic self-agency and individual development, typically valorised by the *bildungsroman*, has been solidified by Saidiya Hartmann’s study of identities in subjection within accounts of slavery (in *Scenes of Subjection* [1997]) and Elizabeth Anker’s analysis of bodily suffering in human rights literature (in *Fictions of Dignity* [2012]). Rather than taking the individual as an atomic entity on the normative path to social development, aesthetic responses to extraction can reveal the social or psychological realities of those who cope with myriad forms of extractivist violence, both gradual and sudden.

The essays in this special issue show a concern with the subjective realities of characters who respond to the extreme political and environmental conditions of extractivist regimes in various parts of the world. Susan Comfort explores the literary narratives of women characters who defy the fearful day-to-day conditions of petrosexual imperialism in the aftermaths of the Biafran War (in Nigeria) and the First Gulf War (in Iraq), in her essay “Resource Wars and Resourceful Resistance: Gender Violence and Irreal Oil Environments in Two Global Novels by Women.” Comfort draws attention to the missing stories of women impacted by large-scale oil grabs, analyzing the heightened threat of sexual violence faced by Debbie, the protagonist of Buchi Emecheta’s novel *Destination Biafra* (1982), during the upheaval of the Nigerian Civil War of 1967. The underlying theme of petrosexual violence connects Comfort’s reading of *Destination Biafra* to Betoool Khedairi’s novel *Absent* (2005), in which the woman protagonist Dalal contends with the oppressive

tactics of the petrostate in Sanctions Era Baghdad. Positing that Dalal's growth as a character in *Absent* defies the conventions of the classic bildungsroman, Comfort argues that both novels culminate with the women protagonists developing a revolutionary subjectivity in the manner predicted by Fanon's decolonial philosophy. Comfort's scholarship reminds us that the violence wrought by resource wars should be seen in light of its corporeal and psychic toll on the native populace, not as a simplistic matter of resource accumulation.

If Khedairi's novel shines a brighter light on the toll of US petro-imperialism in the Middle East, the day-to-day realities imposed by extractivism have also moved closer to the lives of American citizens after a drastic shift toward domestic oil production in the mid-2000s. The introduction of plural environmental hazards into the psyche of middle America by new extractive technologies, such as hydraulic fracturing, is the subject of Jason Molesky's essay "Gothic Toxicity and the Mysteries of Nondisclosure in American Hydrofracking Literature." Molesky attends to Jennifer Haigh's use of gothic aesthetics in her novel *Heat and Light* (2012) in order to portray the ever-present threat of environmental toxicity that the fracking of the Marcellus Shale poses to small-town America. Molesky argues that the internal struggles of Shelby and other characters, in coming to grips with the toxification of their communal water table, distinguishes Haigh's novel as a second-wave shale narrative. Second-wave narratives cope with the psychological struggles of characters as they contend with new environmental realities, Molesky suggests, in contrast to the negotiations between landowners and industrialists usually featured in first-wave narratives of fracking.

Given that resistance to the crises of extractivism is currently growing in distant frontiers of extraction, as well as in metropolitan centers of knowledge, it is apropos to consider what strategic solidarities can be developed between North American activists and their counterparts in the Global South. If unity in purpose and political orientation derives from a shared struggle against the extremes of capitalist exploitation, then we should be optimistic about the work of solidarity-building across "the specificity of cultural difference" (Ahmad 10).⁹ At the same time, a literary studies approach to extraction asks us to investigate the absence of native voices in the cultural narratives of resource-rich commodity frontiers. In "Indigenous-Washing and the Petro-Hero in Genre Fictions of the North American Oil Boom," Sara L. Crosby and Anna J. Willow take a contrapuntal approach in analysing popular twenty-first-century narratives of the North American oil boom by examining the erasure

of Indigenous peoples. Crosby and Willow critique the hetero-imperial masculinity of what they describe as the strapping petro-heroes who are posited as the central characters of TV shows like *Blood and Oil* (2015) and *Corner Gas* (2004–09), highlighting the problematic alignment of popular entertainment and an extractivist ideology. The valorization of the typically white petro-hero frequently occurs at the expense of obscuring or trivializing Indigenous peoples who actually inhabit the land. Coining the term “Indigenous-washing”, Crosby and Willow expose the tendency of network TV shows to provide nominal roles to native characters only to reduce them to dominant stereotypes while refocusing attention on the petro-hero’s journey of oil-based entrepreneurship. The subaltern at the margins of petro-capitalism is also the concern of Joanna Allan’s study of Equatoguinean literature in “Light, Energy, and Oil Gluttony: Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel’s Challenge to Petrocapitalism.” Combining literary analysis with her own anthropological fieldwork, Allan shows that the global circulation of Ávila Laurel’s novel and poetry draws attention to the gross injustices committed by Teodoro Obiang’s regime in Equatorial Guinea. Ávila Laurel’s subversive poetics decries the Equatorial Guinean petrostate’s use of feminist propaganda to appease critics abroad even as it deprives the majority of its people of any benefit from oil revenues. As Allan argues, the motif of gluttony reveals the alignment of extractivism and gender oppression in the nation and the energy injustices that common people suffer.

Inasmuch as the circulation of cultural forms sheds light on the situations of injustice created by extractive regimes, documentary films do so effectively, transporting the viewers’ sensorium to the distant elsewhere of our cultural imaginary. Carmela Garritano’s essay “Waiting on the Past: Uranium Futures in *Arlit, Deuxième Paris*” examines Idrissou Mora-Kpai’s interviews with uranium mine workers in his 2005 feature documentary film. Set in the town of Arlit in northern Niger, Mora-Kpai’s film brings into view the enclave model of the uranium mine through interviews with migrant laborers, as well as Arlit’s native residents, Garritano explains. Connected to the industrial centers of the world through supply chains, yet culturally insulated from nearby towns through the use of migrant labor, the mining town of Arlit is deftly figured by Mora-Kpai as a spatiotemporal enclave. An enclave of extraction is also the primary concern of Delia Byrnes’s essay “Digital Deepwater Imagines in Brenda Longfellow’s *Offshore*,” which analyzes the innovative narrative form of the hybrid documentary. Released in 2015, Longfellow’s *Offshore* offers a digital interactive experience that places the user within an abandoned

drilling platform in the Gulf of Mexico, interweaving the fictive scenario of the user's presence on the oil rig with real footage from BP's 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. As Byrnes suggests, the modularity of the technology used by oil companies for deepwater drilling amplifies the sense of placelessness associated with offshore oil extraction. As such, Longfellow's use of a digital, interactive storytelling platform must be seen as an agile aesthetic response that enlists the modularity of media technology to orient the user spatially within the offshore enclave, while engaging them with the environmental crisis in the Gulf of Mexico.

While the expansion of extreme forms of extraction, such as offshore drilling, fracking, tar-sands mining, and open-pit mining, may be unique to the turn of the twenty-first century, our vision of carbon-fueled technological progress can be traced back at least a century earlier. Caleb Fridell's essay "The Extractive Logic of Fossil Capital in H. G. Wells's Scientific Prophecy" shows that H. G. Wells's body of speculative writing anticipates the rise of an industrial society reliant on an endless supply of fossil fuels, prefiguring the present moment of continued extractivist expansion. Given the considerable influence of Wells's writing on the Western world, Fridell's study offers a timely critique of the logic of perpetual extraction inherent in his futuristic novel *The Time Machine* (1895) and his historical speculation *Anticipations* (1901). If the exploitation of England's coal stock serves as a key to the future in Wells's nonfiction writing, the present-day crises of transnational extractivism are anticipated by Karen Tei Yamashita's novel *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* (1990), which dramatizes the discovery of a super rare mineral called the Matacão. What would happen, Yamashita's novel asks, if a mineral more profitable than crude oil were discovered in the Amazon rainforest in the age of multinational corporations? As Shouhei Tanaka states in his essay "The Great Arrangement: Planetary Petrofiction and Novel Futures," Yamashita's prescient fiction brings into stark relief the commodification of Brazil's rainforests by American resource imperialism, only thinly veiled as transnational commerce. Tanaka argues that Yamashita's unique style of narration, a hybrid mix of realist and speculative forms, adds literary depth to oil extractivism's planetary scale and its undergirding infrastructure. As the scholarship of Tanaka and Fridell suggests, exposing the structures and attitudes of colonial and neocolonial extractivism in our collective imagination uncovers new possibilities, both speculative and real, which spur us to rethink our contingent and precarious relationship to fossil fuels.

The essays in this issue of *MFS* bring together diverse scholarly engagements with contemporary literature and media under the common rubric of extraction, which attends to the planetary material relations imposed by resource-intensive industries. The literary study of extraction offers, first, a global methodology that consolidates aesthetic and activist movements around the world through a common concern with the impact of extractive industries, ranging from local environmental toxicity to planetary climate change. Second, by examining authors' agile negotiations with form, this approach fosters an important conversation on the affordances of literary and media genres in narrating the crises of extractivism. Third, but not least, the literary study of extraction serves as an overarching framework that foregrounds the contribution of diverse research networks, which specialize in planetary materialism, energy humanities, postcolonial studies, and ecological criticism. As Claire Westall indicates in her superlative synthesis of research initiatives in these areas, collective scholarly endeavor can itself serve to mitigate the atomizing tendencies of academic work in the humanities, while furthering an understanding of "the extractive culture of academic labor" (273). As such, collaborative work across disciplines may be seen as a building block for broad-based solidarities that ultimately connect site-specific struggles over resource grabs with collective leadership in tackling systemic challenges such as climate change and resource scarcity.

Notes

1. For updated satellite tracking of global forest fires, see the digital map on the *Global Forest Watch* website.
2. For more information on recent illegal mining and logging activities in the Amazon, see *Amazonia Socioambiental* as well as Ingraham's account of the outsize contribution of the beef industry to deforestation in the Amazon.
3. For more on BlackRock and its relationship to the Brazilian government and deforestation, see Conant.
4. For a visual example of such overconsumption, see the Global Footprint Network's "Ecological Deficit/Reserve" map.
5. See, for example, the pathbreaking criticism of the Green Revolution by Shiva, as well as subsequent critiques of the discourse of development by Spivak and Escobar. For examples of the embrace of green growth in the

lead up to the Paris Agreement by some of the most important global organizations, see the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report *Towards Green Growth* (2011); the following year, the World Bank published *Inclusive Green Growth: The Pathway to Sustainable Development*, and the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) published *Toward a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication*. These publications were crucial in defining the dominant outlook on and support for the ideology of green growth.

6. For a discussion of the parallels between *Robinson Crusoe* and John Locke's *Second Treatise*, see Watt.
7. In Munif's novel *Cities of Salt*, the people of the oasis town of Wadi al-Uyoun are depicted as a tightly-knit community, that is later displaced by the arrival of an American oil company. The notion that environmental literature constructs the community at harm is also explored by Buell, who notes that "a sense of the community of the disempowered" is created by works such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and Lois Gibbs' *Love Canal* (648). For Buell, "emphasis on community" is a hallmark of environmental justice writing that breaks from the rhetoric of environmental conservation (643).
8. For a discussion of how the cultural production of African literature in the twenty-first century anticipates reception in the North American and Western European literary markets, see Adesokan.
9. Arguing against an essential cultural difference between third world and first world nations, Ahmad points out the possibilities for solidarity on the basis of "the cultural similarities [that] exist among countries that occupy analogous positions in the global capitalist system" (11). See Ahmad.

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