

*Extraction**Jeffrey Insko*

Among the many striking features – its historical breadth, its sustained anger, its exuberant typography – of the Black radical David Walker’s scathing pamphlet *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829), one has gone virtually unremarked: the frequency with which Walker speaks of “the inhuman system of slavery” in terms of resource extraction. The descendants of the peoples of Africa, Walker states repeatedly, “have enriched” the United States “with our blood and tears – have dug up gold and silver for them and their children, from generation to generation.”<sup>1</sup> Walker’s assertion here might easily be mistaken for a figurative description of the wealth gained by enslavers through the forced labor of the enslaved. After all, there were no significant gold or silver mines in the United States during Walker’s lifetime; in fact, it would be two full decades after the appearance of the *Appeal* before large-scale gold and silver mining would commence in the United States, first with the gold rush in California in 1848, followed a decade later by the discovery of the Comstock Lode of silver ore in Nevada. On the other hand, some of the earliest discoveries of gold in the United States took place, coincidentally, about the time of Walker’s birth on farmland in his native North Carolina. And indeed, the first small-scale placer mining operations to extract that gold *did* rely upon the labor of the enslaved – facts Walker must have known.<sup>2</sup>

But Walker also has in mind the mineral extraction of precious metals in South America and of coal and iron in the United States, both of which, he understood, were central to the history of slavery in the New World. Walker rehearses this history at the beginning of Article 3. Early in the sixteenth century, he explains, “the notoriously avaricious” Spanish colonist Bartholomew de Las Casas proposed “to import Africans from the Portuguese settlement in Africa to dig up gold and silver and work their plantations for them” – a practice, Walker says, that “has been continued,” in one form or another, “from 1503 to this day, 1829.”

Walker's astute account of the history of colonization and enslavement as a matrix of dehumanization, violence, resource extraction, and capital accumulation prefigures what theorists and scholars of the Environmental Humanities have come to describe in terms of various "-cenes," all of which seek to explain the history and conditions of our current planetary emergency: Anthropocene, capitalocene, plantationocene. By now, the debates that have spawned these terms, as well as others, have been well rehearsed. Capitalocene and plantationocene, for example, aim to restore important missing contexts occluded by the universalizing sweep of the "Anthropos," which distributes responsibility for ecological violence evenly across an abstract humanity rather than identifying the particular agents and systems, like extractive capitalism, that have (and have not) caused it.<sup>3</sup> Walker's dates – 1503 and 1829 – resonate with these corrective accounts insofar as they help draw attention to the competing points of origin (give or take a decade or so) of the present ecological crisis identified by "-cene" discourse: the mass combustion of fossil fuels beginning in the Industrial Revolutions of the late-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, on the one hand, and European arrival in the New World, on the other.

I begin with Walker's preoccupation with resource extraction and the history of New World slavery in order to highlight the importance of understanding the long history of extraction as more than just an effect and driver of capitalist appropriation, expropriation, and accumulation. This is not to say, of course, that capitalism is not a critical part of the story of extraction. Capitalism's insatiable drive toward expansion and growth, its exploitation of material resources, and its need for "cheap things," to borrow a phrase from Jason W. Moore and Raj Patel, have created a world so deeply dependent upon resource extraction that it seems almost impossible to disentangle ourselves from it.<sup>4</sup> Our built infrastructures (roads, pipelines, electrical grids), transportation systems (planes, trains, and automobiles), quotidian comforts (air conditioning, warm showers, moisture-wicking fabrics), and so many of our affective experiences (speed, recorded music, lubrication) depend upon and, in turn, necessitate the continuation of extractive practices.

David Walker helps provide a different framework for understanding the history of extraction, one that I want to suggest more readily allows us to perceive the global and racialized dimensions of that history, which disrupt the standard teleology of capitalism's appropriation of resources. The history he helps bring into focus also foregrounds activists and theorists on the ground like Walker himself: critical thinkers who, from the beginning, named and resisted the violence inflicted upon both humans

and the nonhuman world by extractive practices. In Walker's case, that resistance took literary form. For that reason, Walker also provides an opportunity to reveal how scholars in disciplines like literary studies might think about extraction as both metaphor and material process. To this point, among scholars working in the Environmental Humanities, it has been mainly political ecologists, cultural geographers, and anthropologists and historians studying resource-rich nations such as Nigeria and Ecuador who have taken interest in the subject of extraction. But recently, literary scholars have begun to reveal the affordances of examining the intersections between extractive practices and literary production.<sup>5</sup> This chapter joins that project.

I will proceed in three parts. In the first, I situate Walker among a host of decolonial activists and thinkers engaged in what Walter D. Mignolo describes as “a relentless analytic effort to understand, in order to overcome, the logic of coloniality underneath the rhetoric of modernity.”<sup>6</sup> Walker's history of what he calls “avarice” in the New World helps reveal the extent to which extractive economies are both immanently racialized and intimately entangled with justice claims. In the second section, I look to Walker not just as a diagnostician of extractive capitalism's violence and destruction, but also as a literary exemplar of an alternative perspective “within the extractive zone” who articulates what Macarena Gomez-Barris describes as the “potential for forms of life that cannot be easily reduced, divided, or representationally conquered or evacuated.”<sup>7</sup> The chapter concludes by looking toward a more recent example of anti-extractivist activism – one that, like Walker's *Appeal*, illustrates that bringing about the end of extractive violence is as much a conceptual as it is a practical problem.

### Coloniality

Best known as an early black nationalist and radical abolitionist, David Walker might also be understood as an early diagnostician of coloniality. “Coloniality” is Mignolo's term for the “hidden agenda (and darker side)” of modernity's promises of progress and freedom, one in which “Western Christians asserted . . . control over knowledge about nature” and “engaged in an economy of brutal resource extraction (gold and silver and other metals) for a new type of economy.”<sup>8</sup> Coloniality thus designates both an epistemological and a material enterprise, in which, to borrow Kathryn Yusoff's description, the “categorization of the division of matter (corporeal and mineralogical) into active and inert” transforms both the earth and

(some) humans into “units of economic extraction.”<sup>9</sup> In its *longue durée*, this “extractive geo-logic” underpins indigenous land dispossession – it’s no coincidence, in this context, that Walker’s *Appeal* was published almost simultaneously with the Indian Removal Act of 1830 – as well as slavery, environmental degradation, and the myriad, multi-scalar crises, both social and geophysical, resulting from a rapidly warming planet: intensified weather events, desertification, ocean acidification, mass migration, and mass extinction, to name only a few.

As a material practice, to extract is to draw out – of a cavity or a body – “by force, effort, or contrivance” (OED). This form of extraction has a long history, from the harvesting of salt and stone to fishing; logging; the mining of precious metals like silver and gold; the extraction of hydrocarbons like coal, oil, and natural gas through a variety of techniques; and, more recently, the removal of rare earth and other elements like lithium for use in smartphones and so-called “green” technologies, like the batteries that power electric vehicles and store solar energy. Whatever the source and method, however, extraction always entails a degree of violence: cutting, pulling, plowing, digging, stripping, blasting, drilling, fracturing. Modern technological advancements – from hand-held shovels to massive hydraulic excavators, from gunpowder to steam injection – have facilitated the extraction of the earth’s minerals on scales, such as the Athabasca oil sands mines in Alberta, Canada, covering thousands of miles, and in places, like offshore ocean wells thousands of feet deep, that are hard to fathom.

This kind of extraction might be described as a form of taking without giving in return. As an act of withdrawal without a corresponding deposit, extraction represents, in Naomi Klein’s formulation, “a nonreciprocal, dominance-based relationship with the earth.”<sup>10</sup> In describing this relationship, Klein employs the term “extractivism,” which identifies not the material practice but the underlying logic of extraction, an instrumentalizing logic predicated upon “the reduction of life into objects for the use of others.”<sup>11</sup> Here, the logic of extraction mirrors the material/epistemological logic of coloniality: *extraction* (or *extractivism*) is coterminous with *abstraction*. That is, just as geophysical extraction literally removes minerals, metals, elements, and some humans from the geological strata or geographical locations in which they’re embedded, so does extractivism remove them, conceptually, from what the political ecologist Jason W. Moore calls the “web of life”: the interconnected geological histories and the social and ecological networks in which they are embedded. Extractivism alienates them from their contexts, transforming them

instead into fungible commodities, converting “nature” into “natural resources” and human beings into “human capital stock” by severing each from the interrelationships that might otherwise be seen to define them.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, extraction/extractivism has produced the modern world. It has yielded remarkable wealth (for some) and provided the material foundation for the industrial and technological processes that have transformed, to take just two key examples, food and transportation systems in many parts of the globe thanks to nitrogen fertilizers and cheap fuel. Yet the benefits of extractive practices have not been distributed evenly. Resource extraction has also produced massive amounts of toxic waste, destroyed local ecosystems, degraded landscapes, concentrated wealth in the hands of the few, exacerbated other structural inequalities like the effects of pollution along racial and ethnic lines, and, of course, driven the greenhouse gas emissions that have created the climate crisis. In turn, global warming produces weather patterns and extreme events that, in a vicious feedback loop, only intensify these problems. Often, these externalities converge, as in the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, where the populations hit hardest were those already suffering the effects – poverty, pollution, systemic racism – of living in an extractive sacrifice zone of oil and petrochemical production.

In 1829, David Walker warned of all this. He couldn't have foreseen, of course, the precise contours of the crisis; scientists wouldn't identify the greenhouse effect for another 67 years. But Walker nevertheless perceived the scale of the crisis produced by coloniality, describing it, to borrow the environmental philosopher Timothy Morton's term, as a kind of “hyperobject”: something so “massively distributed in time and space” that it can't be seen or grasped in its totality.<sup>13</sup> Walker prefaces the *Appeal*, for example, by noting his inability to “enumerate and explain” upon “subjects . . . of such incomprehensible magnitude, so impenetrable and so notorious” that he can only approach them by way of a few specific instances that “do indeed rage to such an alarming pitch that they cannot but be a perpetual source of terror and dismay to every reflecting mind” (4). Similarly, while Walker couldn't have known that the kind of scientific racism ascendant in his early-nineteenth-century world would mutate into the environmental racism of our twenty-first century one, he did recognize how coloniality sought to project itself into the future – or, as he put it, that “tyrants are in hopes to perpetuate our miseries under them and their children until the final consummation of all things” (38).

All of which is to say that Walker understood that extraction and extractive logic were, to use another modern term, unsustainable. Nor were they just. His *Appeal* therefore promises a reckoning that strikingly echoes the kind of apocalyptic rhetoric that has become nearly ubiquitous in climate change discourse, from the dire predictions in reports issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, to pressing calls for political action, op-eds exhorting the costs of inaction, and the dystopian scenarios that typify so much climate fiction. “I tell you, Americans! that unless you speedily alter your course,” Walker exhorts, “*you and your Country are gone!!!!!!*” (42; emphasis original). And later, “O! Americans! Americans!! I call God – I call angels – I call men, to witness, that your destruction is at hand, and will be speedily consummated, unless you repent” (45). Unlike climate scientists and activists, Walker speaks a religious, rather than a secular, idiom; he foresees divine wrath as retribution for white Americans’ sins. Yet, like those scientists and activists, Walker gives expression to a palpable certainty that time is running out. “As true as the Sun ever shone in its meridian splendor,” he says at one point, playfully metaphorizing on the extractive practices he denounces, “my colour will root some of [the whites] out of the very face of the earth” (21).

Walker’s vision of a nation headed toward almost-certain catastrophe contrasts sharply with hegemonic (capitalist) narratives of historical progress. In another context, John Levi Barnard has placed Walker in a line of “African American writers and orators” who “linked greed, corruption, empire, and slavery into a coherent theory of Western history as a pattern of unbridled accumulation resulting only in the proliferation of ruin” – a critique that has certainly not worn with age.<sup>14</sup> Extraction was the engine of that “unbridled accumulation,” the pursuit of which Walker cites as evidence of white Europeans’ decline. “The whites have always,” Walker writes, “been an unjust, unmerciful, avaricious and blood-thirsty set of beings, always seeking after power and authority” (18). Yet the manifestation of these traits in the ancient world, Walker argues, was benign compared to Christianized Europeans, whose extractive practices of taking and destructive waste extend even to human lives. “Take them as a body,” Walker writes,

they are ten times more cruel, avaricious and unmerciful than ever they were; for while they were heathens, they were bad enough, it is true, but it is positively a fact, that they were not quite so audacious as to go and take vessel loads of men, women, and children, and in cold blood, and through devilishness – throw them into the sea, and murder them in all kind of ways. (19)

In countering white European narratives of historical progress, Walker performs the kind of decolonial intellectual work that Mignolo describes in terms of “epistemic struggles.” According to Mignolo, such struggles “take place in the spheres of epistemic mediations and geopolitics of knowledge – for example, the cosmology upon which corporations justify the expropriation of lands, and the cosmology upon which Indigenous projects of resistance and re-existence build their arguments” (68). Arguments “delinking” from those that justify such expropriations mediate violent responses to violence. Thus, in Walker’s case, while he quite explicitly threatens physical violence in response to the brutalities of slavery – “my colour will root some of them out of the very face of the earth” – he also advances an equally explicit argument against the logic that justifies extractive violence.

### Literary Extraction

It may be more precise to say that Walker *performs* an argument against the logic of coloniality. And he does so, ironically, through an alternative form of extraction that does not depend upon the appropriation and exploitation of material resources. As a noun, an extract is a passage copied out of a book or manuscript, an excerpt. In this sense, to extract is to copy out of or to make extracts – a longstanding literary practice whose apogee, perhaps, is Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*. Famously, Melville begins that book with a long compendium of “Extracts” – a seemingly comprehensive series of statements about whales drawn from books, songs, and other verbal texts, from the Bible to his present, that Melville assembles and presents as preface to his own text without commentary. This kind of extractive practice, of course, is distinct from the kind of physical earth-rending (and the consequences of it) that typically commands the interest of environmental humanists. Yet the practice of literary extraction – as in quotations, epigraphs, and the widespread practice of commonplaceing – occupied a critical position in the print culture of Walker’s nineteenth century. Commonplace books, for example, where readers copied out passages from their readings into notebooks, were often, as Claudia Stokes explains, thought of as “treasuries” or “storehouses,” metaphors that “contributed to the perception of extracted wisdom as a precious, rare commodity.” The ability to draw upon and deploy such extracts helped attest to one’s fitness “to enter into public discourse and to achieve status.”<sup>15</sup>

A similar type of extractive practice proves critical to Walker's analytic effort. One of the rhetorical strategies of the *Appeal* is to present "extracts" from the writings and speeches of others, particularly from those who promoted the logic of coloniality. Most notable among those whom Walker extracts is Thomas Jefferson, whose most expansive written work, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), figures as a primary target of Walker's decolonial argument. In his *Notes*, Jefferson advances both the epistemological *and* the material dimensions of coloniality. The former is by now notorious, so much so that even by the time of Walker's *Appeal* he could note that Jefferson's ruminations on the intellectual abilities of the descendants of Africa have been "extensively argued upon" (16). Walker here refers to, and extracts liberally from, Jefferson's ruminations in Query XIV, in which, in the cool rational language of the Enlightenment – or as Jefferson puts it, as one who "views the gradations in all the races of animals with the eye of philosophy" – "advance[s]" his "suspicion" that "blacks . . . are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind."<sup>16</sup> Jefferson's remarks contributed significantly to the centuries-long colonial project of dehumanizing black people in America, a fact Walker acknowledges by reminding his brethren that Jefferson's remark has "in truth injured us more, and has been as great a barrier to our emancipation as any thing that has ever been advanced against us" (29). Much of Walker's *Appeal*, therefore, is devoted to providing a counterargument against Jefferson – one that, as Robert S. Levine has shown, takes the form of exposing race as devoid of "stable or essential meaning" and turns Jefferson's own phrasing against him in a clever reverse-racializing move: Immediately after the passage on white European declension cited above, Walker concludes, "I therefore . . . advance my suspicion of them whether they are as good by nature as we are or not" (19).<sup>17</sup>

Less remarked upon in *Notes on the State of Virginia* than Jefferson's reiteration of colonial racial logic, yet working in tandem with it, are the earlier sections of the *Notes*, in which Jefferson attempts a thorough accounting of the state's natural resources, including its "subterraneous riches" (24). In Query VI, he remarks upon the "single instance of gold found in this state," the state's mines of lead, copper, and iron; finds of emerald and amethyst; its troves of marble, limestone, and salt. He notes extensive "mineral coal," much of it "of very superior quality," including a "coal-hill on the Pike run of Monongahela" that "has been a-fire ten years" (27). Jefferson's catalogue also includes extensive lists of both flora and fauna, which include, in the latter case, conjectures on the effects of the state's climate on the size of the animals and comparative analyses of

American and European species. These lists and charts slide effortlessly into reflections upon the customs and intellectual abilities of indigenous peoples in North America, who Jefferson casts as “barbarous people” (64), insufficiently exposed to the benefits of civilization, stuck in an earlier stage of historical development.

Compared to Jefferson’s troubling reflections on race, Query VI might appear relatively benign, dull even, in its recitation of metals and minerals, its long lists and charts. Yet it is this very claim to – or performance of – knowledge that helps reveal the pernicious operation of colonial “geo-logic” (to recall Kathryn Yussof’s term). Jefferson practices two interrelated forms of extraction (or abstraction) that reveal what Jeffrey Myers calls “the baldly commercial undertone” of the book “that sanctions industrial overexploitation of natural resources.”<sup>18</sup> The first is the assumption of a separation between the human and the nonhuman, man and nature. Minerals, fish, birds, and flowers are all available to Jefferson as discrete objects of knowledge, subject to the systems of classification devised by naturalists such as de Buffon, Jefferson’s European foil. The second abstraction Jefferson performs is visible in the lists and charts themselves, which, however much they may allow, say, for trans-Atlantic comparisons among species, likewise treat types of flowers or birds or mammals as discrete, disembedded from any and all ecological relations, whether human or nonhuman, that might give them meaning beyond the strictly instrumental. Together, these two forms of abstracting reveal Jefferson’s essentially colonialist assumptions, what Myers describes as a “mentality that brings together ecological and racial hegemony,” in which “Jefferson posits people of color and the land, together, as one Other over and against which he as a white subject constructs his identity and ultimately mastery” (24).

The power of Walker’s challenge to Jefferson’s “mentality” resides in the values of reciprocity and preservation, rather than expropriation and exhaustion, expressed by Walker’s literary form of extractivism. That is, in contrast to Jefferson, who in the *Notes* treats the descendants of Africa as mere objects of inquiry whose intellectual productions are “below the dignity of criticism” (234), Walker is at pains to position himself as Jefferson’s interlocutor. Rather than dismissing or simply rejecting Jefferson’s assertions, Walker quotes him at length, and even queries him directly (knowing, of course, that Jefferson “is gone to answer at the bar of God, for the deeds done in his body while living” [16]). In addition to presenting extracts from Jefferson’s writings and speaking back to him, Walker also urges his audience to recognize the authority accorded to “the very learned and penetrating” Jefferson. In fact, “a much greater philosopher,” Walker says, “the world never afforded.” For

that reason, Walker insists upon the importance of reading Jefferson, going so far as “to solicit each of my brethren, who has the spirit of a man, to buy a copy of Mr. Jefferson’s Notes on Virginia.” Similarly, Walker urges his black readers to give the extracts he presents careful attention: “See this, my brethren!” Walker exhorts (17); “Here my brethren, listen to him,” he says (29); “I hope you will not let [his remarks] pass unnoticed” (29).

Walker’s strategy of reciprocal and preservationist literary extraction disrupts Jefferson’s colonial logic in two ways. First, Walker inserts himself in and participates in an Enlightenment discourse that otherwise, by definition, excludes him (as a racialized Other). In fact, Walker recognizes and is explicit about the importance of meeting Jefferson on his own ground, so to speak. “Unless we try to refute Mr. Jefferson’s arguments respecting us,” Walker reminds his readers, “we will only establish them”; and again, “let no one of us suppose that the refutations which have been written by our white friends are enough – they are whites, we are blacks. We, and the world wish to see the charges of Mr. Jefferson refuted by the blacks themselves, according to their chance.” Second, even while insisting upon the need for black writers and thinkers to challenge Jefferson’s assertions on their own terms, Walker does not accede to those terms. To the contrary, he explicitly lays bare the racialized epistemology that underpins Jefferson’s queries:

Do you know that Mr. Jefferson was one of as great characters as ever lived among the whites? See his writings for the world, and public labors for the U. S. of America. Do you believe that the assertions of such a man, will pass away into oblivion unobserved by this people and the world? If you do you are much mistaken (17).

Here, Walker is at his most incisive; his caustically hyperbolic praise of Jefferson as a philosopher is qualified by the phrase “among the whites,” which exposes, archly, the globally racialized dimensions of Jefferson’s epistemological framework. Blacks would do well to pay attention to Jefferson, Walker argues, not because he is right, but because white people around the world listen to him and take him seriously, because his style of thought is what passes for “great” philosophy in the white Western world.

### Resistance

David Walker’s activist writing documents one instance of the kind of resistance, coloniality has always produced. “Decolonial projects,” Mignolo notes, “can be traced back to the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries . . . as responses to the oppressive and imperial bent of modern

European ideals projected to and enacted in, the non-European world.” They can also be traced forward to more recent resistance movements across the globe – from the Movement of the Ogoni People against Shell in Nigeria in the 1990s to twentieth-century actions like the Yasuni-ITT Initiative in Ecuador, coalmine blockades in India and Germany, and the #NoDAPL pipeline protests at Standing Rock – that have turned the infrastructures of extractive capitalism into sites of conflict. In this concluding section, I’d like to consider briefly just one example of these recent conflicts as a way of highlighting the prescience of the future-oriented historical formulation Walker uses to describe the long reach of extractivism’s expropriation of human and nonhuman resources: a practice that “has been continued . . . from 1503 to this day.”

As the examples above illustrate, direct action against ongoing extractivist projects have become, arguably, more visible than ever, given the grim realities of the climate crisis and the pressing need to cease or at least radically curb global combustion of fossil fuels. Notably, the pipelines that convey oil and gas from sites of extraction to refineries and then points of consumption have become a key focal point for these actions, so much so that some new pipeline projects in North America – like the Keystone XL pipeline that would bisect the United States on its route from northwestern Canada to the Gulf Coast, the 1,000-mile Northern Gateway pipeline in Canada, and the Dakota Access Pipeline originating in the Bakken region of North Dakota – have taken on the character of what might be called charismatic megaprojects: matters of national politics, theaters of mass demonstration, and topics of widespread media attention. This is fitting given both the role of pipeline infrastructure in facilitating the expansion of extractive capitalism in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries and the extent to which so many pipelines bear, almost menacingly, the symbolic weight of colonialist violence in their very names: Dakota Access, Colonial, Plantation, Dominion, Pilgrim, Seminole.

But rather than taking up one of these better-known manifestations of the long history of environmental and historical injustice, I’d like to turn to one closer to my own home.<sup>19</sup> Over the past decade, a grassroots movement in Michigan has formed, calling for the removal of a pair of pipelines that transport petroleum products beneath the Straits of Mackinac, the meeting place of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron between the state’s Upper and Lower Peninsulas. The twin pipelines, known collectively as Line 5, were constructed in 1953, at the beginning of the period sometimes called “The Great Acceleration,” when the rate of measurable human impacts upon the biosphere surged exponentially – and when feats of technological ingenuity

like installing dual oil pipelines beneath the world's largest source of freshwater seemed miraculous, rather than terrifying.<sup>20</sup> The company that operates Line 5, the Canadian multinational Enbridge, Inc., also happens to be the company responsible for one of the worst inland oil spills in US history. In 2010, another Enbridge pipeline, Line 6B, ruptured near Marshall, Michigan, spilling more than one million gallons of tar sands oil transported from the Athabasca region of Alberta, Canada, into Talmadge Creek, a tributary of the Kalamazoo River. The oil traveled nearly thirty miles down the river before sinking to the riverbed. It took seven years and more than a billion dollars to remediate the spill.

The Kalamazoo River spill, combined with the growing Keystone XL movement and the growth of a robust movement for action on climate change, brought new scrutiny to Enbridge's activities in the region. Line 5, more than fifteen years older than Line 6B, suddenly began to look like a looming disaster. As of this writing, the movement to decommission Line 5 has gained the support not just of environmentalists, but also of state elected officials, business leaders, the Governor, and a motivated Attorney General, making imaginable what would be one of the first efforts in the United States to commence the deliberate dismantling of the appurtenances of the extractive economy. What interests me here, however, is the pivotal role that regional indigenous groups have played in this movement and the variety of forms of their resistance to the continued operation of a pipeline that threatens their lifeways, treaty rights, and sovereignty.

Like the protests at Standing Rock, indigenous groups have marched, organized rallies, generated petitions, staged flotillas of canoes and kayaks in the Straits, and organized other actions to call for the decommissioning of Line 5. In addition to these more visible, charismatic actions, local tribes have also taken part in the otherwise dull procedural matters where the Line 5 debate is playing out: asserting their legal rights, filing lawsuits and court briefs, and intervening in regulatory processes. It is in this arena that their efforts echo the strategies of Walker's *Appeal*. For in those filings and interventions, tribal groups perform the crucially important intellectual and conceptual work of confronting what Mignolo calls the "colonial matrix." Part of the work of decolonial thinking, as we have already seen in the case of David Walker, entails "engaging in epistemic disobedience and delinking from the colonial matrix in order to open up decolonial options."<sup>21</sup>

That work is visible not only in the tribes' legal filings, which, while they remind regulatory authorities, for example, of established treaty rights, nevertheless adhere to appropriate legal conventions – knowing full well that historically those same conventions have been deployed as

instruments of indigenous dispossession. It is visible, too, in the letters and comments that accompany those filings, where the tribal groups rehearse the deep history of their relationship to the Great Lakes – or what the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians refer to as their “pre-/historical ties to the Straits of Mackinac.”<sup>22</sup> In other instances, tribal comments document indigenous customs. At other times, they speak in their own language – many of the letters sign off with “miigwech,” which the writers translate for their audience as “thank you.” And some express explicitly both the values that guide their relationships with the nonhuman world and the historical injustices they’ve endured. As James Williams Jr, Tribal Chairman of the Lac Vieux Desert Band, puts it, “descendants of the Ojibwe [have] inhabited and maintained life from these lands for time immemorial. Our lives are tied to these lands and we have consistently been at the mercy of Enbridge and the State of Michigan as our lives are still tied to our historical waters.”<sup>23</sup> Taken together, these comments demonstrate epistemic disobedience in action. They comprise a powerful decolonial archive that reminds us, as does David Walker, that resistance and alternatives to extraction and extractivism have been with us all along.

### Further Reading

- Arboleda, Martín, *Planetary Mine: Territories of Extraction Under Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2020).
- Estes, Nick, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (New York: Verso, 2019).
- Johnson, Bob, *Mineral Rites: An Archaeology of the Fossil Economy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019).
- Malm, Andreas, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (New York: Verso, 2016).
- Wynter, Sylvia, “1492: A New World View,” in *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, Ed. Vera L. Hyatt and Rex Nettleford (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

### Notes

1. Walker, David, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (Boston: 1829), 15. Further references will be cited in text.
2. On the early history of gold mining in North Carolina, see Hines, Elizabeth and Michael S. Smith, “Gold Is Where You Find It: Placer Mining in North Carolina, 1799–1849,” *Earth Sciences History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2002), pp. 119–149.

- and Forret, Jeff, "Slave Labor in North Carolina's Antebellum Gold Mines," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (April 1999), pp. 135–62.
3. On "capitalocene," see, Moore, Jason W., *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (New York: Verso, 2015). On "plantationocene," see Haraway, Donna J., *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2016).
  4. Moore, Jason W. and Raj Patel, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017).
  5. For recent work on extraction by literary scholars, see Miller, Elizabeth, "Drill Baby Drill: Extraction Ecologies, Open Temporalities, and Reproductive Futurity in the Provincial Realist Novel," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 48 (March 2020): 29–56; Henry, Matthew S., "Extractive Fictions and Postextraction Futurisms: Energy and Environmental Justice in Appalachia," *Environmental Humanities* 11 (2019): 402–26; and the essays gathered in a recent special issue of *Modern Fiction Studies* on "Literature and Extraction" (Spring 2020).
  6. Mignolo, Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 9.
  7. Gomez-Barris, Macarena, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2016).
  8. Mignolo, 11
  9. Yusoff, Kathryn, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 2.
  10. Klein, Naomi, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism and the Climate* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 169.
  11. Klein, 169.
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20. See McNeill, J.R., *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene Since 1945* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2016).
21. Mignolo, 9.
22. Comments of Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians, Michigan Public Service Commission Case U-20763–0087.
23. Comments on behalf of Sokaogon Chippewa Community, Michigan Public Service Commission Case U-20763–0122.