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INTRODUCTION



Introduction: beyond the sacrifice zone

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ABSTRACT

To frame this collection of essays, this introduction reviews existing research on sacrifice zones and related concepts, extractivist thinking and regenerative mindsets, and the presence of damaged settings in contemporary literature and literary history. To be more precise, it considers the affordances and limitations of notions such as the extractive zone, the contact zone, and the critical zone alongside attempts to articulate hopeful strategies of counter-extractivist reading and writing before identifying precursors of the sacrifice zone in the literary archive and briefly sketching recent shifts in mining and extraction technologies. To illustrate these points, the paper then turns to Lucy Ellmann's *Ducks, Newburyport* and explains how this angry novel represents violated sites as well as settings of hope and resists the easy solutions of compromise aesthetics by summoning an indignant and anti-extractivist public.

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In recent years, literary scholars and environmental thinkers have traced the structural ties between the climate crisis and the ongoing violence inflicted by colonialism and capitalism. Because we do not inhabit an undifferentiated Anthropocene, as Jason W. Moore, Donna Haraway, Amitav Ghosh, and others have underlined, but the unjust conditions of the so-called Capitalocene and Plantationocene. Such scholars have also urged us to be wary of purity and to stay with the trouble, so we can ‘make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present,’ as Haraway puts it.¹ What is more, this body of research has invited us to consider complex articulations of environmental grief and hope, via conceptual work on solastalgia and literary examples of so-called solarpunk, for instance. In line with influential arguments by Jane Bennett and Bruno Latour, we have likewise been asked to attend to the vibrant, multi-actor networks of our social worlds and literary settings. At present,

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many critics surely agree that literary texts do not exhibit settings in the sense of 'a fixed container for the characters that are presumed to define the social world of a given [literary text]' but rather feature active 'sites ... as determinants of sociality,' 'dynamic networks of *actants* ... exercising a kind of agency with and through their human and nonhuman constituents.'² Each of these arguments, as the contributions to this special issue show, can be productively extended by returning to the notion of the sacrifice zone and the multifaceted extractivist imagination of contemporary literature.

The notion of the sacrifice zone might initially appear an unpromising starting point for fresh analyses of literary texts and spaces. It is neither new nor unproblematic. Yet even as other concepts and concerns have emerged in recent years, these depleted and abandoned zones have not disappeared but continue to proliferate at an alarming pace. One reason why the term is problematic, in fact, is precisely because the distinction between zones that can be abandoned in the name of progress and other, protected regions that will benefit from these apparently acceptable losses has become increasingly porous and tenuous. This development might be taken to imply that we should trade in this concept for new critical tools – and some of these alternatives are helpful, as we will see – but it also means that the logic of the sacrifice zone continues to spread. In reflecting on capitalist violence and brutal forms of extractivism, moreover, we may want to pause and interrogate the assumption that critical terms have a limited shelf life and should be abandoned as soon as we appear to have extracted all of their immediate value. Bearing in mind such insights, the contributions to this special issue return to the notions of sacrifice and the sacrifice zone, and reflect on their 'generative polysemy' by exploring productive contradictions and connections to related concepts.³ Furthermore, they examine the spread and mutation of such zones in the worlds of contemporary fiction and the contested, compromised environments of the early twenty-first century – the age, to use Martín Arboleda's terminology, of the 'planetary mine.' In general terms, this set of articles encourages us to think and move 'beyond the sacrifice zone' in three interconnected ways. First, they interrogate the limits of this concept and draw on related notions such as the extractive zone, the critical zone, and the contact zone to enrich our understanding of environmentally harmful practices and mindsets. Second, they draw attention to sites and practices that do not fit the standard definition of the sacrifice zone but nonetheless exhibit parallel trade-offs and difficult as well as unjust, unacceptable compromises. Finally, they do not simply identify damage and violence but delineate pockets of utopian energy and resistance that gesture, cautiously, beyond the ruins and towards repair.

As this special issue aims to highlight similarities between different types of sites and sacrifices, we should bear in mind the recent warning of Imre

Szeman and Jennifer Wenzel against the growing popularity of the notion of extractivism. While they agree that resource extraction is an urgent problem, these scholars assert that '[w]ith regard to extractivism as a critical framework, ... the potential gains of identifying congruences among various modes of (ab)using things (human, nonhuman, or inhuman ...) to make or get other things, in situations of unequal power, may be far outweighed by the loss of conceptual precision and force necessary to understand and intervene in the interwoven politics of nature, labour, and knowledge.'⁴ This is a salutary reminder of the fact that notions such as sacrifice and extraction should not be used to flatten and simplify but to reveal complexity and particularity, as the articles in this issue hope to do. At the same time, we believe that minimal interpretations of extractivism can be equally problematic as maximal ones; contexts and differences need to be taken into account, but so do structural parallels and historical connections. In expanding the notion of the sacrifice zone, in other words, we aim to pluralise rather than homogenise our understanding of environmental violence and its literary responses. The rest of this introduction will provide a more detailed summary of the individual articles, but it also frames their arguments by reviewing a cluster of concepts related to the blasted landscapes of capitalism, by examining associated strategies of resistance and revitalisation, and by sketching the literary prehistory of extractivist fears and fantasies. The introduction also offers a first example of how writers are responding to spatial sacrifices and hyper-capitalist mindsets via a brief analysis of Lucy Ellmann's prizewinning novel *Ducks, Newburyport* (2019). Because Ellmann is a good example of how writers working today highlight environmental harm and show that it is rooted in dubious sacrificial and resource logics.

In an essay from the related collection *Things Are Against Us* (2021), which rewrites Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* for the age of Trump, Ellmann offers a spirited critique of systemic sexual and ecological injustice. To her mind, '[h]uman attitudes toward ... the natural world are closely linked to male attitudes towards women: they spring from the same classist anti-nature ... assumption that ... all living things are there for the taking.'⁵ Though Ellmann's tone is not devoid of irony, the message remains crystal clear: such attitudes result in violence, sacrifice, *desecration*:

[I]n the last few centuries, men have managed to ruin the environment for everyone, leaving us with toxic waste, climate havoc, smog, sweatshops, suicidal workers, traumatised pigs, chickens, elephants, and whales, crazed gunmen, conspiracy theories, and a zillion t-shirts that say things. Men have disastrously assumed the right to mess with the air, the water, the land, and our heads. ... They like to desecrate things for desecration's sake. They obliterate beavers so they can build their own dams! ... Men insist, INSIST, on killing everything and using up every last resource. ... San Francisco Bay is still full of mercury from mining processes used during the Gold Rush, and

will remain poisoned for the next ten thousand years. ... Why should we let ANY of them get away with it?⁶

This excerpt reveals a thematic preoccupation with capitalist violence on land and in the sea, air, and mind, but it also illustrates the literary and formal dimensions of such anti-extractivist critique. As the tone of this passage indicates – notice the lists, capital letters, exclamation marks – this outburst articulates a form of feminist and environmental anger in the form of a critical rant. The genre of the rant, as Dina Al-Kassim has observed, can be found ‘[a]t the limit of what is legitimate and legible [and] materialises a speaking subject whose resistant speech emerges or, more aptly, irrupts to contest the public space that abjects it.’⁷ While this genre might lack nuance, its lack of equivocation is rhetorically appropriate in this context, as it helps to pinpoint environmental desecration and to resist attempts to silence or ignore the speaker and her concerns. ‘What riches there once were,’ Ellmann notes in another essay, in a wry variation on a famous song, ‘Now it’s just tear gas and water hoses, and Mexican children tied up with strings. *These* are a few of their favourite things. Quarry every mountain, wreck every stream.’⁸ The contributions to this issue spotlight similar texts, which reflect both on specific damaged sites and the broader extractivist logic of today’s world, and use poetic and narrative resources for both diagnostic and critical purposes – a form of resource use that does not simplify and diminish the world but rather unfurls its multidimensional vitality.

Critical zones

Alongside the notion of the sacrifice zone, critical thinkers have introduced related concepts such as the extractive zone, the critical zone, and an updated version of the contact zone to analyse the slow violence of global capitalism and its literary responses. As far as the term ‘sacrifice zone’ is concerned, this refers to areas that are considered to be beyond repair because of human economic activity and its fallout, harmful forms of extraction and irreversible types of pollution especially. Chris Hedges provides a succinct definition in *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* (2012), his collaboration with the acclaimed graphic novelist Joe Sacco: ‘those areas ... that have been offered up for exploitation in the name of profit, progress, and technological advancement ... where human beings and the natural world are used and then discarded to maximize profit.’⁹ While the term’s original meaning was more circumscribed, as Ryan Juskus’s critical overview details, ‘sacrifice zone’ nowadays functions as an expansive umbrella term for those spaces that have been abandoned to pollution and been stripped of legal protections, in a brutal capitalist arithmetic that reduces vital places to bare spaces and ignores the lethal impact of what Rob Nixon has famously designated ‘slow violence.’¹⁰ We can get a better handle on such sites and

their representations by reviewing existing work on four concepts – four critical zones.

Though the term ‘sacrifice zone’ can be traced back to debates on livestock management and coal strip-mining in the US in the 1970s, Naomi Klein gestures towards its broader applicability in *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs Climate Change* (2014). While analysing the causes of the planetary environmental crisis, she contends that the notion of the sacrifice zone refers both to damaged sites and unprotected workers who are likewise considered to be expendable: ‘power from fossil fuel always required sacrifice zones – whether in the black lungs of the coal miners or the poisoned waterways surrounding the mines.’¹¹ The idea that we can distinguish between valuable and non-valuable sites and lives is rooted in broader forms of injustice, she clarifies; the belief in such zones is a ‘toxic idea [that] has always been intimately tied to imperialism ... and racial superiority, because in order to have sacrifice zones, you need to have people and cultures who count so little that they are considered deserving of sacrifice.’¹² She notices a worrying trend, moreover: whereas sacrifice zones used to be ‘out-of-the-way places’ ‘where residents lacked political power, usually having to do with some combination of race, language, and class,’ in recent years ‘the sacrifice zones have gotten a great deal larger, swallowing ever more territory and putting many people who thought they were safe at risk.’¹³ This development, Klein drily observes, is ‘a rude surprise to a great many historically privileged people who suddenly find themselves feeling ... what so many frontline communities have felt for a very long time.’¹⁴ We should not conflate distinct forms of vulnerability and injustice, especially given the ongoing harm caused by what is known as environmental racism. Yet these reflections imply that, in today’s world, all of us live in some version of the sacrifice zone. That does not mean we should overlook differential forms of exposure but that we can and should attempt to build new coalitions of people willing to resist and address ecological damage and its disparities.

Such observations have been applied to contemporary literature and developed in a decolonial direction. In his study *Anthropocene Poetics* (2019), David Farrier has described the environmental imagination of contemporary poetry and art installations. The planetary crisis is a multifaceted problem, he remarks, and so we should confront relevant texts with three sets of concerns, namely materiality and deep time, extinction and multispecies kin-making, and extractive capitalism and sacrifice zones, ‘expendable places that can be forfeited for the sake of sustaining developed-world lifestyles.’¹⁵ In line with Klein’s observations, Farrier’s account demonstrates that, because the ‘logic of sacrifice zones’ is inherent to a capitalist view of nature, the structural ‘division of the world into inventory or surplus has led to an immense dispersal of sacrifice zones, on scales both large and small.’¹⁶ Once again, the brutal capitalist conceptualisation of more-than-

human spaces is shown to have spread beyond explicit sacrifice zones and to have leaked into other settings, as part of a generalised reduction of complex lifeworlds. Farrier also draws on Anna Tsing's observations about the colonial plantation system to explain how this profitable extractive blueprint was later generalised: 'The colonial sugar plantation was a sacrifice zone, in which the only valued life was that of the commodity. Plantations coupled a genetically isolated, cloneable planting stock with an equally isolated and replaceable source of enslaved labour and an ideology of *terra nullius* to design a way of organising nature that could be replicated in different environments.'¹⁷ Macarena Gómez-Barris similarly develops the idea of the sacrifice zone in a decolonial direction in *The Extractive Zone* (2017), her ethnographic account of artists and activists working in regions of South America that are characterised by high levels of biodiversity but are targeted by the state and corporations alike for extractive exploitation. Even sites that have been protected and been labelled 'intangible zones,' she notes, often prove vulnerable to the destructive logic of developmentalism.¹⁸ Her aim, Gómez-Barris continues, is 'to document geographies where coordinated forms of capitalist power advance, while also analysing the complexity of social ecologies and material alternatives proposed ... by artists, activists, movements' in an attempt to nurture 'the subtlety and complexity of the life worlds that lie within the extractive zone.'¹⁹ Like the other writers I have mentioned, moreover, Gómez-Barris is not just interested in obvious sites of extraction but also in the implicit, figurative sacrifice zones created by the extraction of 'people's affective and physical labour' via the 'expansion of spiritual tourism,' for instance.²⁰

Apart from the sacrifice and extractive zone, we should mention the critical zone and the contact zone here. In his most recent work, the late Bruno Latour utilised the scientific notion of the critical zone to refer to 'a spot on the envelope of the biosphere (Gaia's skin in Lovelock's parlance) which extends vertically from the top of the lower atmosphere down to the so-called sterile rocks and horizontally wherever it is possible to obtain reliable data on the various fluxes of ingredients flowing through the chosen site.'²¹ According to Latour, this conceptualisation of space has several advantages. In focusing on a specific site and the heterogeneous actants involved, the analysis of a critical zone avoids umbrella categories such as Nature and the Human. It also refuses to break down the interplay between the elements of that site into disconnected layers and to reintegrate them hastily into a unified system steered by a supposedly all-powerful human engineer. Because 'critical zonists' will narrate another type of 'geostory,' which mobilises heterogeneous disciplines and exposes 'the necessity of composing the common world because of the sheer difficulty of gathering the various ingredients that make up a critical zone.'²² Such stories further confirm the necessity of that work of composition, seeing that many such sites

today are ‘highly stressed zones,’ which can “‘become critical” (in engineering parlance) and be ruined.’²³ This notion is akin to the sacrifice zone in that it directs attention to vulnerability and it resonates with the earlier arguments too in that it suggests that many if not all sites today are exposed and in need of cross-disciplinary attention. In a recent reflection on the article that introduced her famous notion of the ‘contact zone,’ finally, Mary Louise Pratt has clarified her initial aim: ‘[t]o grasp how imperial power worked, it was necessary to move the position of analysis from the imperial centre to the places where exploration, invasion, and colonisation were unfolding, which I named the *contact zone*.’²⁴ Environmental geographers have since extrapolated her concept to the context of multispecies interactions, she adds, in a move she clearly considers productive: ‘no being is ever not in a multispecies contact zone; no human is ever not coexisting with more-than-human beings.’²⁵ As with the notion of the critical zone, Pratt’s updated contact zone encourages us to attend to the multiple actors at play in specific sites and to the challenging but necessary work of composing a common world in contexts of uneven power. While this inventory is not exhaustive, concepts such as these four versions of the zone help us to identify spatial violence and to think about worlds and settings that are located inside the extractive zone but that nevertheless gesture towards the other side of its destructive sacrifices.

Diffraction, regeneration, reading

While the concepts mentioned earlier have a critical, diagnostic function, thinkers like Klein, Farrier, and Gómez-Barris also identify constructive strategies for repair – some of which are related to reading. According to Klein, the designation of sacrifice zones is enabled by the ideology of extractivism, ‘a nonreciprocal, dominance-based relationship with the earth [that is] the opposite of stewardship, which involves taking but also taking care that regeneration and future life continue.’²⁶ The problem is not necessarily that resources are extracted and used for human purposes, as other commentators have pointed out, but that this happens in a way that exhibits a ‘fundamentally attritional orientation toward ecosystems.’²⁷ Klein therefore argues that we can only move beyond extractivist depletion and towards ‘a world with no sacrifice zones’ by adopting another, *regenerative* outlook, in which renewable resources allow us to live ‘nonextractively.’²⁸ Positive processes in this sense are regularly described in terms of resilience, but Klein prefers a more active concept: ‘resilience ... is a passive process, implying the ability to absorb blows and get back up,’ whereas ‘[r]egeneration ... is active: we become full participants in the process of maximising life’s creativity.’²⁹ Other thinkers working on sacrifice zones and extractivism have likewise proposed regenerative responses to the slow violence of capitalism.

Building on her ethnographic observations about oil palm plantations in West Papua, for instance, Sophie Chao has forcefully argued that, while ‘plantations are rooted in the logic of mastery, discipline, and control over environments deemed useful only insofar as they serve particular humans’ ends,’ ‘there is more to the plantation than extraction and extinction,’ seeing that ‘[p]lantations have persistently proven potent birthing grounds for the emergence of multispecies resistance and resurgence.’³⁰ Even in the midst of ‘the unthinkable violence of racialising plantation logic’ – in the middle of these particularly brutal sacrifice zones – there is room for hope and for ‘counter-plantation ecologies and stories.’³¹

In a similar fashion, Gómez-Barris and Farrier have drawn our attention to pockets of hope and strategies of resistance. *The Extractive Zone* denounces several extractivist processes but it also pinpoints moments of political resistance and exuberant life that Gómez-Barris characterises in terms of social ecologies and submerged perspectives. If developmentalist policies result in one-dimensional, monocultural sites that have been fragmented, cordoned off, and decontextualised with the help of what she calls ‘the extractive view,’ fragile attempts to use ‘submerged perspectives’ help to enliven and re-animate multidimensional and multisensorial habitats that proliferate layers and relations.³² In her view, we can begin to reverse the damage of extractivism – including the emotional damage she calls ‘the melancholies of late capitalism’ – when we relinquish top-down views for the local and embodied experience exemplified in ‘a fish-eye epistemology,’ for example, and in a more general ‘submerged viewpoint [that allows us] to see what lies within the ecologies all around us.’³³ What critical research can do, she ventures, is track ‘social and knowledge formations that exist alongside the colonial developmental paradigm, showing how the extractive zone has not managed to fully colonise life, but reduces, eliminates, and destroys its heterogeneity.’³⁴ A similar response can be found in Farrier’s account, which provides further details about the modes of resistance available to us as readers and literary critics. As we have seen, he recounts how extractive global economies sacrifice people and places in the name of the profit generated by efficient forms of simplification and homogenisation. According to this logic, there are no forests only timber, no objects only commodities, no people only labour power – a world starkly divided between useful resources and expendable waste. One way in which we can challenge this process, he argues with the help of twenty-first-century literature, is to disturb and reverse that process of simplification, restoring a thicker, interconnected sense of time and space to the zones of everyday life – an ecologically sensitive mode of ‘thick description’ that challenges what critics have called ‘the apparent placelessness of extraction.’³⁵ What we can and should do, according to Farrier, is to cultivate ‘an art of noticing the dense arrangement of relations in ostensibly simplified

environments.³⁶ Because certain texts and images are able to function as ‘a kind of diffraction apparatus’ that multiplies relations, these cultural artefacts invite us to rediscover complex modes of entanglement, relations of mutualistic transformation between humans and nonhumans.³⁷ Even when thinking about the mine and the plantation, we should hence consider multispecies knots or what Anna Tsing calls ‘patches,’ ‘mosaic[s] of open-ended assemblages of entangled ways of life.’³⁸ As viewers and readers, we need to go below the water line and diffract rather than homogenise the meaning of places, patches, zones.

While critical modes of reading can aim to resist extractivist mindsets, they cannot always be disconnected fully from harmful modes of production. In *Pollution is Colonialism* (2021), Max Liboiron urges readers to reimagine research practices beyond implicitly as well as explicitly colonial views of land, science, and reading. As Liboiron clarifies, modern society has turned Land into property and resource, and modern pollution science facilitated that transformation by assuming the right to access any site and by adopting a theory of assimilative capacity, which identified supposedly acceptable levels of pollution in terms of a certain threshold. By quantifying that level of admissible harm, these scientists helped to legitimate damaging practices and effectively turned ‘[t]he area under the curve [into] a sacrifice zone, designed for pollution.’³⁹ This broader argument is important, but Liboiron’s attempt to decolonise science is particularly interesting because it connects these issues to the question of reading. In a related text, Liboiron contests the fact that ‘[i]n academia, we are often ... rewarded for reading extractively ... and taught to mine texts for what we want,’ practicing ‘a consumptive mode that uses texts like a resource.’⁴⁰ We can hence distinguish between reading as instrumentalising extraction and reading as generous exchange.

As I suggested earlier, Imre Szeman and Jennifer Wenzel have objected to such extensions of mining metaphors. They ask: ‘[I]s reading really so similar to mining? Is meaning really a finite, non-renewable resource, whose production depletes the source (and immiserates those at the site of extraction)? Is the energy consumed or produced by processes of interpretation truly like the burning of fossil fuels?’⁴¹ They are right in reminding us of the fact that reading is not exactly mining and that use is not necessarily abuse. We can actually distinguish between multiple types of extraction, extractivism, and extractivist aesthetics, and such differences matter. Yet Liboiron is undoubtedly right too in pushing us to read more generously and to make sure that, whenever we use ideas from other writers, we are careful not to integrate them so seamlessly as to ignore divergent contexts and positions and the power imbalances at play in an academic economy that is linked to rather than disconnected from global extractivism. For our purposes here, moreover, this potential disagreement is less important than the fact that these

critics are united in encouraging us to inspect our own reading protocols while keeping in mind various modes of extraction and the multiple meanings associated with specific sites. In comparing sacrifice zones and rethinking reading, the aim is to do justice to particularity, not to flatten differences and efface relations.

Historical zones

While thinkers like Klein, Farrier, Liboiron, and Gómez-Barris underscore the intensification of extraction in recent decades, this economic logic obviously has old roots and we can hence locate numerous sacrifice zones in the literary archive. In the introduction to a special issue on 'Literature and Extraction,' the editors claim that '[a]t 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.'⁴² At the same time, they maintain that the nineteenth-century novel is defined by its 'resource unconscious,' the fact that it exhibits 'a constitutive absence that centres on empire and resource extraction.'⁴³ The claim that such environmental violence is not always apparent and that we should therefore probe the gaps and silences of texts is a productive one. Yet other critics have shown that extractivism is far from absent in older literature. For instance, Tobias Menely's *Climate and the Making of Worlds* (2021) returns to the seventeenth and eighteenth century to trace how the traditional literary focus on farms and pastoral landscapes comes under pressure in the age of the mine, the factory, and the plantation. As he shows, the shift from the solar energy regime of a mainly agricultural English economy to the mineral energy regime of an increasingly globalised and industrialised imperial economy constituted a literary as well as an economic shock, given the poor fit between established textual models that foreground the renewable cyclical flows operative in a certain location and new economic realities that appear to decouple production from the physical environment and foster 'an extractive language of exhaustible reserve that can be claimed once and for all.'⁴⁴

This prehistory of the extractive imagination is developed further in Elizabeth Carolyn Miller's *Extraction Ecologies* (2021), a detailed account of nineteenth-century extractivist literature, its prescient anxiety about resource exhaustion, and its representation of 'the resource frontier and the sacrifice zone.'⁴⁵ As Miller recounts, '[f]rom the 1830s, the decade when steam power achieved definitive sway within British industrial production, to the 1930s, when the early glimmers of nuclear power suggested the promise of new illimitable forms of energy, narratives of mineral resource extraction permeated literature and culture, carrying stories of exhaustive futures, movement outward and downward, [and] energy

dreams' (198-9). In this period, her analysis documents, we regularly encounter exploited workers, imperial frontiers, claustrophobic mines, buried treasure, reproductive failure, and other signature traces of the extractivist imaginary in literary texts ranging from Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to 'Sultana's Dream' and *The Hobbit*. Despite their differences, Miller observes, these narratives function like 'alle-gories of extraction' (150) and help to produce an 'extractive imaginary' (149). And while they are frequently critical of unsustainable modes of extraction – by describing their results as 'exhausted futurity' (43) rather than 'regenerative futurity' (41), for example – these nineteenth-century texts, more troublingly, also 'generate extractive desire' themselves (120). Miller's analysis accordingly helps to contextualise the debate on today's environmental challenges and its literary responses by returning us to 'the first century of industrial extraction, when energy path dependencies were still hardening into the global system of fossil fuel exploitation that we inhabit today' (143) and when dominant cultural discourses 'normalised extractive frameworks for thinking about time and space that still shape our thinking today' (85). Indeed, these early forms of extraction already demanded 'acrobatics of denial...before the rising awareness of the climate crisis: denial of the labour of others and of the ruin of sacrifice zones' (183).

Miller's argument is productive in the present context, furthermore, because it enriches the previous observations about twenty-first-century literature and extractivist double binds. In line with the publications mentioned earlier, Miller observes that the narratives she is interested in often feature 'settings of extraction or exhausted extraction' (19), damaged landscapes which can be analysed in terms of 'sacrifice zones' (19) and 'extractive zone[s]' (38). In fact, her analysis documents '[t]he sacrifice zones of Britain and its empire, where industrial terraforming pulverised the land, casting up at least as much waste and damage as it did treasure' (25). Yet Miller adds several qualifications to this basic argument. First, she stresses that the seemingly noble notion of sacrifice does not work in this context; 'all these novels belie the logic that the term "sacrifice" implies, which is also the logic of extraction: the idea that one part can be forfeited without affecting the whole' (81). In addition, Miller again believes that the notion of the sacrifice zone should not be interpreted too narrowly, as her argument aims 'to expand notions of what qualifies as an extractive setting' (22). Her account provides several examples of figurative sacrifice zones. Writing about *Sons and Lovers*, Miller remarks that a factory 'is described in terms that liken it to [a] mine, suggesting that the coal pit extends into all areas of industry and indeed all areas of life in an extraction-based society' (76). Even interpersonal relationships can be interpreted in a similar light: '[i]n such passages, Miriam is the zone of sacrifice, and it is Paul who takes

something irreplaceable, but elsewhere in the text it is Miriam who is the extractive force in the relationship' (77). Moreover, while earlier novels with imperial settings illustrate the intimate link between colonialism and extractivism, Miller reminds us of the fact that 'sacrifice zones are not always extraterritorial as we see in the recent history of US uranium mines, mountaintop removal, and fracking on Indigenous lands or in impoverished communities' (202). Much like Naomi Klein, finally, Miller addresses the ideology of 'extractivism' that inflicts violence on these sites (6) and she adds that, because new resources continue to be necessary, especially at a time of structural energy transition, 'It is crucial to disambiguate two terms that have often worked in tandem in this study: extraction and extractivism. ... If a crucial aspect of extractivism is a depletionary idea of the earth that disregards the ethic of stewardship, we may conclude that it is possible to imagine extraction outside of, or beyond, extractivism' (200). Even as we are surrounded by sacrifice zones, in other words, we need to reject their logic and develop an equitable, recycling-friendly form of 'extraction without extractivism.' In line with the remarks by Szeman and Wenzel, Miller's return to the archive hence suggests that we should distinguish between distinct forms of extraction and should not conflate resource use and abuse.

While these precedents continue to shape our literary and resource imaginations, it cannot be denied that the twenty-first-century situation is different too. According to Amartya and Dawson, our current age is characterised by 'the expansion of extreme forms of extraction, such as offshore drilling, fracking, tar-sands mining, and open-pit mining.'⁴⁶ This intensified form of extractivism has now reached a stage where it is 'transgressing key planetary ecological boundaries' despite official declarations about sustainable development, and the situation is different politically too, given the lethal mix of 'resource nationalism and extractivist populism' we can find in multiple countries today.⁴⁷ Martín Arboleda likewise argues that we have entered a new phase of extractive capitalism in *Planetary Mine* (2020). Mining may still be regarded as a basic activity by the general public, but this is no longer true in the age of 'the smart and robotised mine.'⁴⁸ We are now living in a 'planetary mine,' he maintains, seeing that technological breakthroughs in robotics and geospatial information systems have led to the automatisisation of extractive processes and targeting of formerly unprofitable sites; that local mining sites have become less important after their integration into hyper-connected supply chain networks and spatially extended 'geographies of extraction'; and that the focus of activity has shifted from Europe to Asia without turning China into a new extractive empire because its 'global presence has ... been defined not by its military or even its political emissaries, but by its supply chains.'⁴⁹

Consider the remarkable, almost-automated journey of copper, Arboleda submits, from its origin in Chile to its destination in China:

Autonomous trucks and shovels ... put the metal into a semi-automated train, which then takes it to a smelting and electrorefining facility, where computerised ovens transform it into copper cathodes. The cathodes are ... sent to one of the megaports of the mining industry in the Atacama Desert, where gantry cranes load the cargo into a container ship. After crossing the Pacific, our container is unloaded by the swiftness of the vast mechanical systems of the capital-intensive Chinese ports. Finally the copper cathodes end up in one of the infamous 'dark factories' of the Pearl River Delta. Here, robots ... operate in the dark, turning copper into the wires that hundreds of thousands of human labourers in electronics assembling facilities will later etch into the electronic gadgets we carry in our pockets.⁵⁰

In today's form of global extractivism, labourers have increasingly been replaced with robots, even unpromising mining sites have become profitable, and the isolated sacrifice zone of the old mine has been traded in for a hyper-connected landscape of extraction with a centre of gravity that lies in the East rather than the West. This newly integrated and automated form of extractivism is not just multiplying sacrifice zones across the planet but also leads to 'peasants ravaged by debt, police forces bizarrely out of control, mining towns riddled by cancer epidemics, and rampant labour casualisation.'⁵¹ In contrast to earlier analyses that stressed the divide between profit here and damage elsewhere, furthermore, this process has made the lives of workers in the global North and South increasingly indistinguishable. Consequently, the central contradiction now is that people across the globe are 'at once materially connected and subjectively fragmented by commodity production' as we are witnessing 'advanced functional integration in the world economy [alongside] radical ethnoracial and sociospatial fragmentation.'⁵² In other words, extractive industries are now everywhere and are eroding the standard of living for everyone despite the appearance of cultural particularity promoted by nationalist ideologies and the commodities produced by this robotic form of global capitalism.

Mines, earthworks, publics: Lucy Ellmann in the sacrifice zone

As the contributions to this special issue illustrate, a broad range of contemporary writers are picking up the thread of earlier texts by responding to the violent legacies and new articulations of extractive capitalism. An interesting example of this trend is Lucy Ellmann's novel *Ducks, Newburyport* (2019), as I mentioned earlier, an encyclopaedic novel that won the Goldsmiths Prize and braids together the epic interior monologue of an overworked Ohio housewife – a monologue composed of subclauses that start with the phrase 'the fact that' – and the third-person narrative of a female cougar who attempts to retrieve her missing cubs in a hostile

world dominated by humans and shaped by sexist, racist, and speciesist violence. I am unable to do justice to this multifaceted novel here and will therefore limit myself to a short explanation as to why it is pertinent in the present context.⁵³ In general terms, *Ducks, Newburyport* gestures towards capitalist sacrifices and extractivist mindsets, while hinting at recent shifts in terms of cultural fragmentation, global labour casualisation, and the insidious slow violence of nuclear radiation and so-called forever chemicals. This is particularly clear in the novel's treatment of space, as it contrasts heavily polluted sacrifice zones with indigenous earthworks that embody a radically different attitude towards the nonhuman landscape. In addition, the narrative counteracts contemporary anxiety and absent-mindedness by cultivating a form of environmental anger that sharply differs from the compromise aesthetics of other contemporary texts and restores agonistic tensions to literature and the environmental publics it produces, as I will now explain.

Ellmann's interest in extraction is clearly signalled by the novel's references to mines and other polluted sites in the contemporary US. Just consider the map at the end of *Ducks, Newburyport*, which tracks the cougar's journey across human territory but also identifies the location of felled forests, nuclear plants, and coal mines.⁵⁴ We also learn that the cougar passes by 'abandoned coal mines, landfill sites and mile-wide, earthwrenched industrial wasteland' (672). In thinking about her everyday life and its calendars and cooking pots, the mother ponders mines too, and the fact that we live in a violent society that continues to sacrifice humans and animals and to pollute rivers as well as the air:

the fact that Revere Ware pots have that nice copper bottom, ... the fact that the Indians mined copper for thousands of years all over Ohio, the fact that I don't like mines and quarries, the fact that in England they had pit ponies who were hardly ever allowed up ... , the fact that they spent their whole lives down mine shafts, pulling coal around in the dark, ... the fact that I don't know why we have this old American Lung Association calendar on the fridge still, the fact that ... seven million American schoolchildren have asthma, the fact that those seven million kids have to struggle through the smog like pit ponies ... the fact that the Ohio's the most polluted waterway in America, ... and acid mines drain into it, acid mines, dear me, the fact that I can't imagine people digging for acid, ... the fact that farms and industries deposit whatever they want in the Ohio, ... the fact that in 2007 it had sixty-one pounds per something of mercury, and now, just ten years on, it's got three hundred and eighty pounds ... (104, 321)

While pit ponies belong to the past, this extractivist mindset has only intensified in recent years, the mother's spiralling monologue implies, and it stubbornly persists despite monitoring strategies and well-meaning NGOs. Nor is the US the only country that features leaking mines and structural ecological violence, as is shown by a reference to the 2015 Mariana Dam disaster in

Brazil, for example, which released ‘sixty million cubic meters of iron ore waste’ into the Atlantic and contaminated the land ‘for decades to come with arsenic, lead and mercury’ (623).

Besides mines, Ellmann’s narrator ponders US sites that are contaminated with chemicals and radiation, occasionally by the same companies, resulting in a landscape replete with sacrifice zones, including extremely polluted ‘superfund sites’ that require expensive long-term cleanup operations:

the fact that ... hundreds of thousands of pounds of PFOA were dumped in the Ohio River, even though everybody knew it was harmful ... the fact that PFOA will outlast the human race ... the fact that DuPont helped make the first nuclear bombs, the fact that their Hanford site is the dirtiest place on earth, ... the fact that it’s a Superfund site, so they’re supposed to clean it up but how, the fact that I’m not sure they can, ... the fact that that site won’t be safe for two hundred and forty thousand years, ... the fact that now our drinking water’s so polluted they’re advising us to voluntarily filter it, boil it, or use bottled water, ... the fact that we already *have* a DuPont water filter in the fridge, ... the fact that first they poison you, I mean DuPont, and then they sell you the *antidote*, (77, 236, 238, 260, 293, 486)

As such observations imply, the world of this protagonist does not just include sacrifice zones but *uninhabitable* zones that are beyond immediate and perhaps even long-term repair. The damage inflicted on these sites spills over into rivers and the landscape more generally, furthermore, harming every creature living nearby, given the transcorporeal nature of pollution, to use the terminology of Stacy Alaimo. Sacrifice zones, you might say, inevitably generate collateral sacrifices. Underlining the reach of this damaging logic, the narrator occasionally even worries about sites beyond Earth. The mother observes ‘that Uranus has a layer of diamonds in its ocean’ (348) and later mentions a plan to store nuclear waste elsewhere: ‘the fact that they probably want to dump it on Pluto now, or Uranus, but not in the sea of diamonds, because they probably have other plans for that’ (355). As the mother’s zigzagging monologue implies, moreover, our minds have become sacrifice zones too. To be alive today is to be worried, the text suggests, about financial debt, vulnerable children, and violent men, and our mind has become alarmingly fragmented due to 24/7 labour, environmental grief, and internet reading.

Though Ellmann’s novel underscores this proliferation of sacrifice zones, it also directs our gaze to more positive settings, including the Native American mounds and earthworks that can be found in Ohio. In fact, the map included in the novel does not just pinpoint polluted sacrifice zones but also sites such as Alligator Mound and Serpent Mound, spiritually resonant locations which express a conception of place that is diametrically opposed to the assumption of expendability and interchangeability implicit in a hyper-

capitalist worldview. As Ellmann's narrator, a former history professor, reflects:

the fact that the Hopewell people lived here for thirteen thousand years and didn't wreck a thing, ... the fact that they didn't pollute the drinking water of millions of people, or leave radioactive waste that won't be safe for three hundred thousand years, the fact that the Europeans managed to just trash the place in a few hundred years, ... coal mines, salt mines, ... seven hundred Indian mounds in Ohio alone, the fact that Alligator Mound's kind of nice, but Serpent Mound's really something, ... the fact that until recently nobody took care of the mounds, the fact that they let cattle graze all over them and some mounds collapsed under the weight of the cows, ... they leveled all the mounds that got in their way, but they supposedly sort of restored them later, (336)

Bearing in mind the insights of Max Liboiron, one might conclude that such passages reproduce the stereotype of the Ecological Indian and treat Native American culture as a resource that is available to everyone. Yet such an interpretation would overlook passages such as 'the fact that the Indians mined copper for thousands of years all over Ohio' (104). Nor should we disregard the novel's attention to historical uncertainty and geographical particularity, its awareness of the need for cross-community and cross-generational solidarity, and its suggestion that the multi-directional memory generated by historical awareness can be a vital instrument in producing that solidarity – as is also suggested, incidentally, in Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything*. Via these ancient spaces, furthermore, the novel hints at a perspective akin to that of the Indigenous theorists who 'juxtapose sacrifice zones with some notion of sacred lands, bodies, or ecologies' and thereby gesture beyond 'the distributive justice framework that largely underlies EJ [environmental justice] theory.'⁵⁵

I therefore propose that we consider these sacred sites – these *counter-sacrifice* zones – along the lines of Chadwick Allen's trans-Indigenous perspective on earthworks. As he claims, building on the work of Native American artists, these mounds should not be seen as isolated memorials that mutely register a tragic past. They are rather dormant sites of 'enduring vitality' that continue to generate ties with other creatures and features of the landscape, and that invite visitors to experience its more-than-human meshwork from a variety of embodied perspectives – remember Gómez-Barris – rather than a single top-down tourist view.⁵⁶ Crucial for our purposes, places like Alligator Mound are also associated with a peculiar 'performance of energy,' one that is obviously opposed to the single-use, non-regenerative conception of energy that underpins extractivist thinking and its polluted sites.⁵⁷ A similarly regenerative dynamic is hinted at in the cougar plot of Ellmann's novel. In the course of her journey, this tenacious creature 'dozed atop ancient Indian mounds' (630) and while her storyline does

not end entirely happily, the cougar finally arrives on Alligator Mound, where 'she was jumping high into the air, like a ballerina' before being captured alive by a gentle tracker with Cherokee roots (943). In contrast to superfund sites, these earthworks seem to harbour hopeful energy and to multiply relations between creatures and communities in ways that ultimately move beyond distributive justice and gesture towards futures on the other side of sacrifice.

Ducks, Newburyport draws attention to mines and other damaged sites while hinting at the regenerative possibilities attached to sacred mounds. This spatial contrast is not the only way in which Ellmann's novel responds to environmental damage. In terms of plot, the narrator's daughter Stacy frequently expresses her desire to resist forms of violence and injustice and her son Ben has embarked on a brave but tragically inadequate attempt to monitor the dubious water quality of regional rivers. But I want to end this brief analysis by taking a closer look at a more unusual aspect of this anti-extractivist narrative, namely its agonistic stance and its implied audience. Drawing on the work of Chantal Mouffe, Rachel Greenwald Smith has recently targeted the centre-left belief in consensus and dialogue, and its literary articulation in what she calls compromise aesthetics. Writing against the background of the Trump presidency, like *Ducks, Newburyport*, Smith is not entirely opposed to compromises, but she questions the idea that polarisation is always bad and moderation always good: 'Why is compromise so readily seen as a moral good, even when so many compromises means tacitly consenting to injustice?'⁵⁸ To her mind, this idea follows from the liberal embrace of 'individual freedom, incremental change, and the rational exchange of ideas' (13), a position that appears benign but ultimately sidesteps democratic disagreements for a bland tolerance. And if this imperfect peace sounds like an acceptable result, we should know that 'political partisanship and identitarian claims are more prone to essentialism when a focus on instrumental compromises empties the public sphere of the opportunity to engage in substantive political conflicts' (18). What we actually need in the realm of politics is passion and strong positions, 'a ferocity of commitment' (59-60) that violates gendered conceptions of 'niceness' (15) and the belief 'that people, especially women, be even-toned, moderate, and reasonable' (59). This political tension between moderation and polarisation has literary implications, Smith continues. Because she holds that we do not need art that promotes a form of 'compromise aesthetics,' for instance by being 'both digestible enough to be salable and formally interesting enough that readers aren't hungry for a truly oppositional avant-garde' (11). We should rather champion works with an 'oppositional style' (22) that aim for structural change, that are 'willing to take strong positions' (77), exhibit the 'radicalism and the kind of militancy associated with

movement-based literature' (104), and are not afraid to 'draw lines and force [their] audience to publically choose sides' (154) – as in works that use 'the oppositional structure of satire, for instance, or ... rule-based formal constraints' (14). What we need now is something like the 'rant' (72, 174). What we need is an agonistic novel that abandons niceness and moderation for strong positions and an avant-garde commitment to textual constraints and political opposition. What we need, you might say, is something like *Ducks, Newburyport*.

This novel about extractivist and counter-extractivist spaces can be interpreted as an agonistic novel that tries to jettison compromise aesthetics. But it also resonates with Benjamin Mangrum's argument about Rachel Carson and environmental publics – my final point here. According to Mangrum, texts like *Silent Spring* use scientific insights and aesthetic judgments to offer universalising claims that can redress environmental harm by transcending the rights of companies and property owners and by helping to create an environmental public that cares about ecology and natural beauty. Ellmann's uncompromising stance on extractivism is related to this argument, seeing that *Ducks, Newburyport* also refers to natural beauty and ecological insights and repeatedly mentions Carson's work and legacy. As the narrator exasperatedly notes at one point: 'where is Rachel Carson when we need her [?]' (929). But the angry tone of the novel and its polarising aesthetic shift the emphasis, in my view, and generate a slightly different environmental public by downplaying beauty and amplifying outrage. Targeting pollution and its collateral sacrifices, it calls into being an indignant, *anti-extractivist* public. Such a rhetorical move is productive at this point in time because it offers an alternative to compromise aesthetics and its depoliticising effects. It is also productive because solidarity might be easier to generate via accounts of harm than appeals to aesthetic criteria that only appear to be universal, as Mangrum underlines.⁵⁹ And it is productive, finally, because it encourages readers to reflect on the right political response to extractivism. One of the reasons why Szeman and Wenzel take issue with the popularity of the term 'extractivism' is that it comes with a 'fantasy of direct political transformation ... , which may well limit and inhibit politics precisely because the concept seems so easily to affirm the politics.'⁶⁰ While it criticises extractive thinking systematically, there are no easy solutions in *Ducks, Newburyport* – or in the other texts discussed in this special issue. In sum, Ellmann's novel does not just portray depleted sacrifice zones and regenerative sacred sites but it uses agonistic techniques to help generate an indignant public, which refuses the false compromises of extractivism. It suggests that the age of the sacrifice zone fits into the Capitalocene but also in the period of ecological conflict and resistance that is the Polemocene.⁶¹ Ellmann is right: why should we let any of them get away with it?

Rethinking the sacrifice zone

In the first contribution to this special issue, Louis van den Hengel examines poetic texts and queer performances related to highly destructive mining activities in the Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia, a notorious sacrifice zone or region that continues to be damaged by extractivist slow violence or, in Ryan Juskus's alternative formulation, by 'slow sacrifices.'⁶² To be more precise, Van den Hengel's analysis confronts the insights of David Farrier, Nicole Seymour, and others with Muriel Rukeyser's celebrated poetic sequence *The Book of the Dead* as well as with the documentary film *Goodbye Gauley Mountain* and the exuberant, ecosexual performance art weddings by Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens. As Van den Hengel observes, these place-based 'texts' act as a diffractive apparatus that rejects the flattened landscapes and emotions of capitalist extractions and incites a critical awareness of embodied entanglement. Furthermore, they playfully propose that we consider this sick, injured landscape not as a depleted sacrifice zone but as a potential erogenous zone that solicits our touch and desire – without overlooking the serious damage inflicted by corporate pollution and its production of negative affects such as solastalgia. Building on existing research in ecosexuality, queer environmentalism, and pleasure activism, the article hence shows how these artists and writers elaborate a productive form of 'eco-camp' that invites spectators and readers to respect the Earth's entangled agencies, to reimagine sexuality in a more-than-human direction, to cultivate a less monochromatic range of environmental tones and moods, and to build intersectional coalitions that target extraction and nurture diffraction.

Turning to another important extractive landscape, Brigitte Adriaensen scrutinises Michael Taussig's anthropological text *My Cocaine Museum*, an example of creative nonfiction that explores both historical and more recent extractivist practices in Latin America. This article demonstrates the continued value of older reflections on resource extraction and it further encourages us to examine substances like coca that have received less attention in existing research on extractivism. If we want to understand the violence and hope in this sacrifice zone or even sacrifice region, we need to juxtapose the main resource of the past – gold – and that of the present – coca leaves – and consider the spiritual implications of pollution and regeneration too. Adriaensen also reflects critically on museum practices and on Taussig's ambivalent attempt to develop an alternative textual 'museum.' In her reading, *My Cocaine Museum* appears as an anthropological diffractive apparatus that rejects capitalist and colonialist simplifications and restores the thick relationality and entanglement at play in these Colombian sites. To put a finer point on it, Adriaensen builds on the insights of Walter Benjamin and Macarena Gómez-Barris to show how Taussig's work deploys

dialectical images and the principle of montage to portray the social ecologies that can be found in Colombia's Cauca region but are silenced in official museums. Taussig's observations unveil unexpected ambiguity – seeing that local *extractive workers* appear as *entangled subjects* who seem to embody submerged perspectives – but it also offers a potential blueprint for further research. Because just as we need more research on other resources beyond fossil fuels, the notion of montage seems to be a productive, counter-extractive technique for writers and artists alike.

If Adriaensen juxtaposes gold mines and coca plantations with official and unofficial museums, Liliane Campos zooms in on the natural history museum as a space of hope and grief, of care and violence. Scrutinising essays, sonnets, and other poems by Gillian Clarke, Jane Robinson, and Kathleen Jamie, Campos clarifies how these Welsh, Irish, and Scottish writers respond to species extinction by portraying biological exhibits – of birds, dodos, rainbow beetles, whales – and ambivalent museum environments in the UK and Norway. Though these various projects draw attention to touch and use the rhetorical technique of metonymy to hint at larger questions and landscapes, their treatment of the museum, extinction, and manmade sacrifices differs too. As Campos's analysis elucidates, a sequence of poems by Clarke links beautiful specimens of endangered creatures to protected natural sites, whereas the texts by Robinson and Jamie choose to foreground the violence that underpins museum collections and to trace their ties to sacrifice zones of the past and the future. These creative responses to the museum do not only interrogate nineteenth-century collection strategies but also rework the tradition of the sonnet and subvert the human and cultural emphasis on sight. For as Campos demonstrates, the museum is a site where species meet and occasionally touch too; as happens most clearly in the so-called 'sympathetic repair' of conservation work, tactile encounters help to disclose the sacrifices that have enabled the museum as well as the sacrifices taking place beyond its confines, on the land and in the sea. To touch whale bones, for instance, is not to encounter sublime beauty but a complex cross-species assemblage of wood, wire, and bone, a relic of past violence that simultaneously alerts us to the plight of ocean creatures and to new sacrifice zones in the making. Reimagining the natural history museum as a haptic space accordingly enables us to resist easy consolations and to grasp – by failing to grasp – that which is being sacrificed.

In their contribution, Marco Caracciolo and Shannon Lambert consider touch too, but redirect our gaze from the museum to the scientific lab, especially labs that experiment on live animals. As they explain, these labs function as sacrifice zones in the sense that such sites clearly involve a dominance-based relationship towards nonhuman animals but also produce an awareness – often disavowed in official scientific rhetoric – of empathy and loss. We can better comprehend the dialectic of distance and proximity

involved in these experiments and negotiations, the authors argue, by describing the lab as a contact zone involving uneasy reciprocity. This awareness of violent and uncomfortable entanglement is present, they go on to show, in a short story by Tania Hershman and a novella by Jeff VanderMeer. Evoking the damage inflicted on lab animals as well as on lab workers in various ways, both 'Grounded' and *The Strange Bird* discard the visual distance typical of scientific objectivity for haptic modes of perception and a 'fingeryeyed style' that affords reciprocal engagement. This confrontation of scientific and literary modes of experimentation involving other animals unearths the ambiguity of lab work – of cross-species contact and biomedical sacrifice – and it hence points towards the need, the authors conclude, for an academic contact zone that enables a proper dialogue between humanists and scientists. Against the simplifications of this and other sacrifice zones, in short, we should nurture haptic modes of writing and thinking, and interdisciplinary modes of collaboration.

In a similar vein, Kári Driscoll's article asks if the ambivalent encounters of the modern zoo can be productively described in terms of the sacrifice zone and the contact zone. As he claims, contemporary zoo stories regularly offer versions of a 'zoo-break' narrative in which nonhuman animals escape their cages – in some cases, as in examples by Murakami and Sebald, against the background of human wars and atrocities. These narratives merit further scrutiny, Driscoll declares, seeing that these usually temporary or fatal escapes from the zoo illustrate the ambiguous logic of this modern site – which suggests that other animals are just like us but need to be treated differently and put in enclosures – with particular clarity. The connection with wartime atrocities, as in the story of the Dresden zoo after the devastating bombing attack in 1945, complicates matters further, seeing that zoo animals are sacrificed here in a double sense; apart from the fact that their deaths are seen as a sign of wartime horror, these supposedly apolitical casualties are more easily available for human mourning, given the taboo surrounding German victimhood. As such episodes reveal, nonhuman animals are framed and re-framed – and sacrificed or made grievable – in distinct ways by human culture, an awareness that has become more prominent in an age where humans wage war on animals as well as each other. We should not uncritically accept the notion that zoos are benign Arks and innocent Edens, Driscoll concludes, but these spaces and their stories remain crucial sites for those who want to rethink cross-species relationality and to break out of anthropocentric conceptual cages.

In the final essay, Jilt Jorritsma compares two texts dealing with water and anticipated floods in Amsterdam and New York to ask if the metropolis itself can be considered a sacrifice zone too. As is shown by a short story in Dutch by Jan Van Aken, some writers join urban planners and environmental thinkers in their attempts to address the threat of sea level rise by discarding

myopic views of the city and welcoming back nature and water to an environment that is often imagined to be exclusively human. Developing remarks by David Farrier, Édouard Glissant, Arturo Escobar, and others, Jorritsma subsequently identifies some of the remaining limitations of these more-than-human cityscapes, which are occasionally indebted to colonial conceptions of space, perspective, and the human. Alongside more complex views of temporality and materiality, the article shows via a reading of Teju Cole's *Open City*, its second case study, we accordingly need to make additional room for colonial histories and legacies in the cities and city narratives of the future. When we read and write the city now, we should open it up in a decolonial as well as more-than-human fashion. Repairing old environmental sacrifices remains an insufficient strategy, in other words, unless it involves a critical awareness of how such processes were inextricably linked to violence directed at vulnerable human populations.

Zooming out, the afterword by Elizabeth Carolyn Miller returns to the more general questions raised by this collection of essays, paying particular attention to the notion of the sacrifice zone, its origins, and complications, to the contemporary expansion of expendability, and to the question of hope. In various ways, these individual articles further our understanding of contemporary texts and other cultural artefacts that respond to extraction and capitalist sacrifices. They also refine our conceptual toolkit by considering the advantages and disadvantages of notions such as the sacrifice zone, the contact zone, and extractivism. Furthermore, these analyses address settings and forms of extraction that have not received much attention so far – without conflating distinct contexts, positions, and types of violence. And while they ask us to consider damage and violence, they outline strategies of hope and constructive rhetorical techniques too, ranging from camp, montage, and metonymy to touch, temporal palimpsests, and anger. As sacrifice zones continue to grow, these articles imply, so does their literary and political contestation.

Notes

1. Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke UP, 2016), p. 1.
2. David Alworth, *Site Reading: Fiction, Art, Social Form* (Princeton UP, 2016), p. 2.
3. Ryan Juskus, 'Sacrifice Zones: A Genealogy and Analysis of an Environmental Justice Concept,' *Environmental Humanities* 15.1 (2023): 3-24, p. 14.
4. Imre Szeman and Jennifer Wenzel, 'What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Extractivism,' *Textual Practice* 35.2 (2021): 505-23, p. 512.
5. Lucy Ellmann, *Things Are Against Us* (Galley Beggar Press, 2021), p. 59.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-5.

7. Dina Al-Kassim, *On Pain of Speech: Fantasies of the First Order and the Literary Rant* (University of California Press, 2010), p. 9.
8. Ellmann, *Things*, p. 38.
9. Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco, *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* (Nation Books, 2014 [2012]), p. xi.
10. Juskus, 'Sacrifice Zones.'
11. Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs Climate Change* (Simon & Schuster, 2014), pp. 172-3.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 310-11.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 313.
15. David Farrier, *Anthropocene Poetics: Deep Time, Sacrifice Zones, and Extinction* (University of Minnesota Press, 2019), p. 11.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
18. Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Duke UP, 2017), p. 21.
19. *Ibid.*, p. xv.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
21. Bruno Latour, 'Some Advantages of the Notion of "Critical Zone" for Geopolitics,' *Procedia Earth and Planetary Science* 10 (2014): 3-6, p. 4.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 4.
24. Mary-Louise Pratt, 'Mutations of the Contact Zone: Human to More-Than-Human,' in *Planetary Longings* (Duke UP, 2022), pp. 125-36, p. 125.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
26. Klein, p. 169.
27. Szeman and Wenzel, p. 508.
28. Klein, pp. 187, 447.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 447.
30. Sophie Chao, 'Plantation,' *Environmental Humanities* 14.2 (2022): 361-66, p. 362.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 363, 364.
32. Gómez-Barris, pp. 5, 11.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 103, xiv.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
35. Alok Amatya and Ashley Dawson, 'Literature in an Age of Extraction: An Introduction,' *MFS* 66.1 (2020): 1-19, p. 10.
36. Farrier, p. 62.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
38. Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton UP, 2015), p. 19.
39. Max Liboiron, *Pollution is Colonialism* (Duke UP, 2021), p. 57.
40. Max Liboiron, 'Exchanging,' in *Transmissions: Critical Tactics for Making and Communicating Research*, ed. Kat Jungnickel (MIT Press, 2020), pp. 89-105, p. 95.
41. Szeman and Wenzel, p. 513.
42. Amatya and Dawson, p. 8.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

44. Tobias Menely, *Climate and the Making of Worlds: Toward a Geohistorical Poetics* (Chicago UP, 2021), p. 151.
45. Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, *Extraction Ecologies and the Literature of the Long Exhaustion* (Princeton UP, 2021), p. 199. Subsequent quotations from this publication are given as in-text references.
46. Amatya and Dawson, p. 15.
47. Ibid., pp. 3, 7.
48. Martín Arboleda, *Planetary Mine: Territories of Extraction Under Late Capitalism* (Verso Books, 2020), p. 11.
49. Ibid., pp. 12, 24.
50. Ibid., p. 16.
51. Ibid., p. 18.
52. Ibid., pp. 21, 16.
53. For a more extensive and different treatment of Ellmann's novel, see Ben De Bruyn, 'The Mom and the Many: Animal Subplots and Vulnerable Characters in Ducks, Newburyport,' *Genre* 54.2 (2021): 265-92.
54. Lucy Ellmann, *Ducks, Newburyport* (Galley Beggar Press, 2019), p. 999. Subsequent quotations from this publication are given as in-text references.
55. Juskus, pp. 17, 20.
56. Chadwick Allen, 'Performing Serpent Mound: A Trans-Indigenous Meditation,' *Theatre Journal* 67.3 (2015): 391-411, p. 398.
57. Ibid., p. 400.
58. Rachel Greenwald Smith, *On Compromise: Art, Politics, and the Fate of an American Ideal* (Graywolf Press, 2021), p. 6. Subsequent quotations from this publication are given as in-text references.
59. Benjamin Mangrum, 'Rachel Carson, Environmental Rights, and the Publicity of Aesthetic Judgments,' *ELH* 88.3 (2021): 765-93, pp. 787-8.
60. Szeman and Wenzel, p. 518.
61. Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History, and Us*, trans. David Fernbach (Verso Books, 2016), p. 253.
62. Juskus, p. 20.

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