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Editorial Foreword

BIG RIG: METAPHYSICS AND PETRO-POLITICS Nearly thirty years have passed since the nearly simultaneous publication, in 1997, of Fernando Coronil's epic *The Magical State* and Michael Taussig's semi-fictional *The Magic of the State*, both centered on Venezuela and its so-called resource curse. The same kind of resource curse continues to afflict Venezuela, Trinidad, Sudan, Nigeria, and many other states with economies overly reliant on extractive economies. And here we are again, and here we are still, in a state of seeming paralysis in our relationship with oil. It would be chilling if we weren't already so numb by now to realize how little has changed since 1997 and *The Magical State*, other than the rising temperatures and seas. Or at least how little has changed *politically*, despite the heaving, combustive technological and scientific transformations of the last generation.

The three essays joined here each address, in different ways, the socio-economic and spectral interfaces of extractive regimes: first returning to the case of Venezuela; then Trinidad; and finally to a comparison between India and the United States. **Aaron Kappeler's** effort, "The Devil and Florentino: Specters of Petro-Populism in Venezuela," builds directly from Coronil's analysis together with June Nash's (1979) and then Taussig's (1980) studies of the devil as a spectral power indexing plantation and mine workers' alienation in South America. Kappeler's Venezuelan devil, possessed of a schizoid split between deification and demonization, spits venom in multiple directions at once, applied variously to Hugo Chávez, to George W. Bush, to the United States, to oil itself, to the labor of its extraction, and more, linking them indelibly together in a shared semiotic, political, and metaphysical frame.

In "The Subterranean Unsettling of Science, Race, and Religion: Obeah, Petroleum Geology, and Risk in Trinidad," **J. Brent Crosson** focuses on the shifty word, *science*, as it appears in the fields of both petroleum geology and in Afro-Caribbean religion. Crosson demonstrates the ways that science marks out overlapping domains of risk in relation to unpredictable, invisible worlds—the uncertainties of subterranean oil exploration and drilling, on one hand, and of Afro-Trinidadian spiritual work, on the other. Yet "science" also instantiates a key difference in play in these two economies, demarcating matters of precision and predictive accuracy for petroleum geologists and engineers; and issues of moral legitimacy and ethical practice for Afro-Trinidadian spiritual workers.

Elizabeth Chatterjee's "Towards an Energetics of Class: Comparing Energy Protests in India and the United States," compares social movements that erupt from fossil fuel economies: the independent trucker movement that blocked highways in the United States in 1973–1974, and again in 1979; and a procession of trucks, tractors, and motorcycles that overran the lawns surrounding India's parliament in New Delhi, in 1988. Who, exactly, takes part in these fuel riots that

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have become so common and widespread, most recently in France's yellowjacket (*gilet jaunes*) protest that paralyzed Paris? Chatterjee leverages this illuminating comparison to zero in on class-stratifications *within* the energy sector—including the many intermediate groups of energy actors who occupy middle rungs between scientists, engineers, and state agents at the top, and extraction laborers at the bottom. She argues that energy protestors tend to share a specific class position, namely those who are precariously situated between big capital and wage labor, and whose material livelihoods feel dangerously dependent on state-mediated energy supplies.

MOVING ORIGINS The phrase, "moving origins," plays on a triple-entendre. First, narratives about primordial times, creation, or the ethnogenesis of specific lineages are constantly in flux, notwithstanding claims of their permanence and unchanging authenticity. Second, such origin stories are affectively evocative, often motivating sentiments of affinity, pride, and outgroup animosity. Accounts of origins move people to protect and patrol, or, alternatively open or revise social boundaries. And third, origin stories may be *about* movement, whether in the sense of migrations from afar to a new homeland, diasporic sensibilities of loss and a longing for return, or the movements of cosmic or telluric forces that birth or renew the known world and keep it alive.

Rémi Hadad's story, "Re-Territorializing the Neolithic: Architecture and Rhythms in Early Sedentary Societies of the Near East," hews closest to this third notion of "moving origins." Hadad presents a vivid intervention into standard accounts of Neolithic architecture. Against the alleged achievements of a revolutionary sedentarism that led to permanent built forms that anchored ancient urban life, Hadad shows that most Neolithic societies preferred impermanent buildings composed of earth. Far from celebrations of fixity or monumentalism, the structures were constantly in decay, and always in need of cyclical tending and renovation. If anything, Hadad suggests, the Neolithic archaeological record suggest the valuation of transience, repetition, and repair—rhythms of movement—far more than it seems to value permanence. It is we moderns who seem to long for, and project into the past, the supposed advances of fixity, stability, and the monumental.

In the paper, "Inventing Ancestors and Limited Empiricism in Chosŏn Korea: A Case of the Kigye Yu Lineage," **Sun Joo Kim** demonstrates a different sense of moving origins. Sun Joo Kim explains how the quest after ancestral origins beginning in fifteenth-century Korea was accompanied by an ever-accelerating competition to demonstrate and bureaucratically perform them. The novel drive for ancestral origins, reaching ever-deeper into the opaque past for ever-more-heroic founders, produced new modes of discerning, interpreting, and rationally documenting the past in genealogical record-keeping. The result was not a simple "hardening" of genealogical truth-telling, though, because the inevitable gaps and outright inventions within these new records gave ample opportunity for non-elites to creatively graft themselves onto ancient aristocratic family trees.

INSTITUTIONS, BUREAUCRACIES, AND REGULATED PUBLICS In a riveting study of material semiotics and governance**, Miyako Inoue's** "Law's Logistical Media: The Installation of the File System in the Postwar Japanese Prosecutor's Office," details

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the installation and expansion of filing systems in postwar Japan. Inoue's paper exposes a series of fascinating ideological investments that were condensed and juxtaposed in something as apparently mundane as the vertical cabinet. These investments held tensions within: between democratic values and their enforced implementation (as imposed by the Allied Powers); between human-rights protections and the scientific management and bureaucratic supervision of those rights; and even, ultimately, between an ideal of democracy as "of the people" even as it is being installed as primarily a techno-scientific achievement. Yet if democracy was rationalized (in the Weberian sense) as technique, "the technical" was itself also invested with a spirit of democracy, producing a uniquely Japanese cluster of meanings that accrued around the filing system.

Alex V. Barnard's "A Discipline Like No Other: Marginalized Autonomy and Institutional Anchors in French Public Psychiatry (1945–2016)," offers an elegant study of Bourdieu's field theory in relation to psychiatry in France. Unlike psychiatry's assimilation to the broader field of medicine that occurred elsewhere, French psychiatry has jealously maintained its position of what Barnard calls "marginal autonomy." That is, psychiatry in France enjoys relatively low prestige because it resists assimilation to either the biomedical field or the state's Ministry of Health, yet it enjoys a unique autonomy over its own field—its discourse, institutions, patients, and sites of jurisdiction. It can achieve this, Barnard argues, by virtue of its specialized hospitals that serve as "institutional anchors." These hospitals serve to socialize future psychiatrists into a field-specific professional identity. Even more, they grant the field powerful allies within the state since they serve a function of social control and the management of the chronically ill population that few other institutions could provide.

With his article, "Of Rule not Revenue: South Sudan's Revenue Complex from Colonial, Rebel, to Independent Rule, 1899 to 2023," **Matthew Sterling Benson** analyses taxation as predation and a technology of rule. Remarkably, taxation regimes have remained perhaps the most permanent and enduring institutions of modern Sudan. Whether administered by British colonial authorities, customary chiefs and sheiks, regional war leaders, the postcolonial state, or, since 2005, the post Comprehensive Peace Agreement's leaders, taxation has continually been applied to advance only the interests of tax collectors. Benson argues that Sudan's recent oil windfalls have further hindered tax reform or accountability. In fact, oil and taxation technologies even mirror each other in certain respects, with public-facing and legitimate institutional facades that obscure shadow-zones of illicit extraction and predation.

Ramnarayan S. Rawat guides readers on a tour of vernacular literature in late colonial North India. "Recovering the Dalit Public Sphere: Vernancular Liberalism in Late Colonial North India," reveals how specific early twentieth-century genres of popular literature like poetry and songbooks, and the presses that distributed them, helped to generate an informal Dalit public sphere. This new form of Dalit identity was fashioned by the lower classes and from the ground up, in books that linked activists' houses in untouchable quarters. These readerly networks spurred a new mode of Dalit politics. Rawat reveals a rarely studied form of Dalit public that is difficult to trace, expanding scholars' overfamiliar notions of the archive and overworn ideas of how to interpret it.

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