

Crude wars in sacrifice zones: graphic witnessing of slow violence and slow justice in *Crude: A Memoir*

A.K. Ajeesh 

Department of English, School of Sciences and Humanities, SR University Warangal, Telangana, India
ajeeshak9387@gmail.com

Abstract: This article reads *Crude: A Memoir* as a work of graphic witnessing that exposes oil extraction in Ecuador's Amazon as a form of war fought in sacrifice zones. The memoir recounts how Texaco-Chevron's operations left behind hundreds of waste pits, poisoned rivers, and collapsing communities. Such attritional harm exemplifies what Rob Nixon has called "slow violence," devastation that spreads gradually and invisibly across generations. Alongside this ecological attrition, the decades-long legal battle waged by the Unión de Afectados por Texaco (UDAPT) reveals another temporality: "slow justice," as communities wait in contaminated landscapes while Chevron evades liability through delay, arbitration, and jurisdictional maneuvering. The graphic form of *Crude* plays a crucial role in documenting this struggle. Roudeau's illustrations transform testimony into visual evidence, rivers drawn as black veins, flare towers as hostile sentinels, creating a counter-archive to corporate narratives of remediation. In presenting forests, animals, and spirits as witnesses, the memoir invokes indigenous cosmologies that extend justice beyond human-centered frameworks. By framing oil as war, the environment as battlefield, and graphic narrative as testimony, *Crude: A Memoir* makes visible the lived reality of sacrifice zones. It calls for an understanding of environmental justice from the Global South that confronts both slow violence and slow justice while affirming rebellion and survival in the ruins of extraction.

Keywords: environmental devastation; oil extraction; graphic memoirs; counter-archive; *Crude: A Memoir*.



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Introduction

In recent years, graphic narratives have become strong vehicles for social critique, bridging art, testimony, and activism to address some of the most urgent crises of our time. They have turned their gaze on war, human rights, and environmental devastation, revealing how such conflicts reverberate across human and nonhuman worlds. *Crude: A Memoir* (2021) (hereafter *Crude*), co-authored by Ecuadorian lawyer Pablo Fajardo and journalist Sophie Tardy-Joubert, belongs to this emergent canon. It recounts Fajardo's decades-long legal struggle against Texaco (now Chevron) for one of the largest oil-related environmental disasters in history. As both memoir and documentary, *Crude* offers a counter-history to corporate narratives, transforming local suffering into a global story of ecological violence and resistance. It is not merely a personal chronicle but, as its introduction notes, "a metaphor, the allegory of a process that has completely escaped human control" (Fajardo et al. 5; Nicolino, "Never Give Up" in *Crude*).

Although oil drilling is not conventionally narrated in martial terms, its effects parallel those of war. Across the Global South, pipelines function as weapons, flares as incendiaries, and polluted rivers as mass graves. Lawsuits replace peace treaties, yet the devastation mirrors siege and occupation. *Crude* makes this analogy explicit. It depicts how campesino and Indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon were poisoned, displaced, and impoverished by decades of extraction, and how their quest for justice became entangled in global corporate and legal infrastructures. In this framing, the Amazon becomes a theatre of violence, the environment itself a battlefield where extraction and litigation replace combat.

The historical backdrop is staggering. Beginning in the late 1960s, Texaco drilled over 300 wells and constructed 18 production stations in northern Ecuador with little state oversight (Kimerling, *Amazon Crude* 439). Billions of gallons of toxic produced water were dumped directly into streams; waste pits were left uncovered; and gas flaring poisoned skies. For Secoya, Cofán, Siona, Kichwa, Shuar, and Waorani peoples, this meant the collapse of subsistence economies, the erosion of spiritual ties to forests, and alarming rises in cancers and birth defects (see Coronel Vargas et al.). In *Crude*, oil is not inert matter but a predatory force. One of its most powerful sequences shows black pools seeping across panels like invading armies, devouring land, animals, and homes. Extraction appears as ecological warfare by slow attrition.

Rob Nixon's concept of 'slow violence' helps make sense of this portrayal. Unlike spectacular warfare, slow violence "is incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales" (Nixon 2). Oil's toxicity works invisibly, embedded in contaminated water, soil, and bodies, its consequences unfolding across decades. *Crude* makes visible this temporality, weaving testimonies with historical timelines to show how attritional violence undermines life-worlds. By aligning ecological critique with war studies, it reframes oil extraction as a protracted assault that places Indigenous communities under siege.

The graphic form is central to this work of witnessing. Comics uniquely combine image and text, allowing for a layered testimony that oscillates between affect and evidence. Fajardo's narration situates the memoir as collective resistance, while

Roudeau's drawings render testimonies into visceral imagery: children playing near oil-slicked puddles, campesinos holding jars of poisoned water, elders recounting illnesses. These function as counter-archives, refusing Chevron's denials and bureaucratic abstractions. As Hirsch notes, such visual texts "mediate between personal recollection and collective history" (*The Generation of Postmemory* 106). They force readers to confront what legal documents obscure: that extraction inscribes suffering on bodies, lands, and ecologies. Hillary Chute calls this "graphic witnessing", testimony that acknowledges the difficulty of representing trauma while insisting on its necessity (*Disaster Drawn* 2).

The legal battle it documents underscores how justice is thwarted by asymmetries of global power. In 2011, an Ecuadorian court ordered Chevron to pay \$9 billion in damages, and in U.S. courts, Judge Kaplan discredited the Ecuadorian judgment under RICO, and international arbitration panels demanded Ecuador annul its rulings (Orellana López n. pg.). As Kimerling observes, such outcomes reveal how international law often shields corporate sovereignty while undermining community rights (Kimerling, "Indigenous Peoples" 542). The courtroom, like the oilfield, becomes a battlefield.

In this sense, *Crude* highlights a fundamental distinction between environmental struggles in the Global North and South. Whereas Northern discourses often revolve around conservation or carbon mitigation, in Ecuador, environmentalism is bound to survival. Access to clean water, ancestral territories, and basic health define justice. Fajardo himself calls *Crude* a metaphor for processes "that have completely escaped human control," leaving communities with the stark choice "to submit or revolt" (Fajardo et al. 5). The memoir exemplifies what Santos terms an "epistemology of the South", a knowledge framework that centres the struggles of marginalized peoples as central to global justice (Santos 21).

In broader terms, the Chevron–Texaco case exemplifies the contradictions of neoliberal extractivism and petromodernity. Scholars have called such cases paradigmatic of "immiserizing growth," where economic expansion worsens dispossession, lowers living standards, and narrows possibilities for development among already marginalized populations (Pellegrini et al. 463). Petro-capitalism, defined as "a form of capital accumulation founded on the extraction, distribution, and consumption of petroleum" (Castree et al. 367), becomes legible here in its starkest terms: profit for corporations, devastation for communities.

Crude translates this complex history into a form accessible to global publics. By combining legal record, personal testimony, and visual narrative, it humanizes the abstraction of neoliberalism, showing how petro-capitalism inscribes itself on bodies and landscapes. Fajardo's story embodies the lived experience of resistance: a lawyer who rose from poverty in the oil fields to challenge one of the world's largest corporations, only to discover that the battle would be waged not only in polluted rivers but in international courts stacked against the marginalized. The memoir's value lies in rendering these dynamics visible, offering a counter-archive that insists the "Amazon Chernobyl" is not a closed chapter but an ongoing struggle for justice.

Oil as war

To describe oil extraction as a form of warfare may sound like a metaphor, but the history of Chevron-Texaco's operations in Ecuador's Amazon makes the analogy literal. As *Crude* recounts, the arrival of oil infrastructure resembled an invasion: drilling rigs cut through dense rainforest, roads divided once-continuous ecosystems, pipelines slashed across Indigenous territories, and flare towers glowed like watchtowers, spewing smoke into the night sky. For the indigenous tribes, this was not development but occupation. Roudeau's panels underscore the violence visually: slick black crude spreads across the land in shapes that recall spilled blood, collapsing distinctions between battlefield and oil field.

The analogy becomes sharper when we consider the scale of devastation. Between 1964 and 1992, Texaco drilled more than 300 wells and built 18 production stations, dumping an estimated 16 billion gallons of toxic wastewater directly into rivers and streams (Kimerling, *Amazon Crude* 601). Instead of the spectacle of bombs, the assault unfolded incrementally: toxic residues seeped into groundwater, bioaccumulated in bodies, and silently dismantled subsistence economies. Fajardo's narration makes plain that rising cancer rates, miscarriages, and infant deaths were not collateral accidents but predictable consequences of cost-cutting practices shielded by state complicity. In this sense, oil's lethality mirrors war's attrition, territories poisoned, populations incapacitated, and survival itself undermined.

War, however, presupposes confrontation. In Ecuador, as elsewhere in the Global South, oil warfare was profoundly asymmetrical. Victims rarely knew the moment they were struck: the water they drank, the fish they ate, or the soil they farmed delivered exposures without visible event. This invisibility insulated the corporation. In *Crude*, the asymmetry is dramatized in courtroom scenes: campesinos and Indigenous leaders testify to decades of illness, while Chevron's lawyers counter with technical reports and teams of experts. Withdrawal tactics reveal further parallels with war. When Texaco left Ecuador in the early 1990s, it abandoned hundreds of open, unlined waste pits and signed a narrow "cleanup" agreement with the state that covered less than one percent of the contaminated zone. The company then claimed immunity from future claims (Fajardo et al. 88). This strategy recalls retreating armies that leave ruin behind, destroying what they cannot control. For Amazonian communities, Texaco's exit was not a liberation but an escalation: the poisons remained, but the perpetrator had crossed borders, leaving the battlefield intact but devoid of accountability.

The militarized logic of extraction is hardly confined to Ecuador. In Nigeria's Niger Delta, Shell's spills and flares created such toxicity that Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni people cast their resistance as a war for survival, only to face violent repression by the state. They confirm Achille Mbembe's diagnosis of necropolitics: extraction organizes "death-worlds," spaces where life is systematically eroded not by bullets but by toxins, displacement, and abandonment (Mbembe 40). *Crude* situates Ecuador within this global landscape of oil wars, reminding readers that ecological devastation is rarely accidental but orchestrated, managed, and normalized. As Judith Kimerling has argued, "Texaco's operations in Ecuador were not simply negligent, they represented a calculated

decision to sacrifice Amazonian communities for corporate gain” (“Indigenous Peoples” 421). *Crude* reframes that sacrifice as an act of war.

This war also unfolds on temporal terrain. Unlike a conventional battle, oil’s residues do not dissipate when combat ceases; they linger for generations. Hydrocarbons seep into aquifers, accumulate in organs, and alter reproductive health. Coronel Vargas et al. document heightened rates of miscarriages, cancers, and birth defects among exposed populations. Kyle Whyte terms such harm “intergenerational injustice,” where contamination forecloses futures (“Indigenous Climate Change Studies” 157). *Crude* visualizes this persistence by juxtaposing images of 1970s flare towers with contemporary testimonies of illness, collapsing decades into single frames. The battlefield is not only physical but psychic. Elders in the memoir describe how the forest lost its enchantment, becoming hostile and alien. This resonates with Glenn Albrecht’s concept of solastalgia, the distress of environmental change experienced at home, akin to the trauma of exile (*Earth Emotions* 44). Oil warfare thus produces internal displacement: people remain in their territories but feel estranged from landscapes rendered uninhabitable. For Indigenous cosmologies that understand forests and rivers as kin, this estrangement is ontological as well as material. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro’s account of multinaturalism, nonhumans as subjects with perspectives, helps frame *Crude*’s scenes of ecological casualties: fish floating belly-up, livestock collapsed in oil-soaked fields, birds fleeing perpetual flares (“Cosmological Deixis” 479).

Because the environment bears scars, it also becomes witness. In court, jars of contaminated water and maps of polluted rivers become weapons of the weak, evidence marshaled against corporate denial. This evidentiary politics recalls Eyal Weizman’s concept of ‘forensic architecture,’ where landscapes themselves function as archives of violence (*Forensic Architecture* 55). By treating soil and water as witnesses, the memoir refuses corporate erasure and asserts that the forest itself testifies. At the same time, *Crude* insists that the battlefield is not only a site of suffering but of resistance. In this sense, the Amazon is not just a landscape of death but a terrain of insurgent life. Anna Tsing’s “arts of living on a damaged planet” resonate here: communities cultivate resilience in ruins (Tsing 4). The analogy of war also unsettles spectatorship. For readers beyond Ecuador, *Crude* is not only documentation but indictment. It reminds audiences in the Global North that the war waged in Lago Agrio fuels global economies, that the battlefield is connected to everyday consumption elsewhere. The closing injunction, “We must never give up”, is directed not only at Amazonian plaintiffs but at publics whose demand sustains extractive frontiers. Oil wars, *Crude* insists, are not distant conflicts but constitutive of our shared planetary present.

Graphic memoir as testimony

If extraction turns the environment into a battlefield, then *Crude* turns the page into a witness stand. Its purpose is simple and radical: when law, science, and policy are buried under abstraction or captured by power, the graphic memoir can carry testimony, visually, affectively, and evidentially, across languages, courts, and publics. What emerges is not illustration-as-ornament but a documentary practice: a mode of graphic

witnessing in which looking becomes an ethical act and images function as exhibits (Chute 3–6).

Written reports and court transcripts risk dissolving the human into data; they are vital and yet often illegible to those outside specialist circles. *Crude* answers that impasse by making evidence legible without diluting complexity. This is not a rejection of documentation but a re-mediation of it. As Marianne Hirsch argues of visual culture in traumatic history, images can bridge the gap between personal recollection and collective memory, carrying experience beyond its first witnesses (*The Generation of Postmemory* 106). *Crude* activates precisely that relay: it converts dispersed testimonies into sequential art that demands recognition.

Two features of comics are crucial here. First, co-presence: panels on a single page can place multiple times, spaces, and perspectives in dialogue. A 1970s flare tower can face a contemporary jar of blackened water and a courtroom close-up, compressing decades of “slow violence” into one field of vision without reducing causality to a caption. Second, readerly assembly: gutters compel the reader to stitch fragments into narrative. That cognitive work, what comics theory calls closure, enlists us as participants rather than spectators. Testimony is not just delivered to us; we complete it.

The art insists that testimony is always mediated, selected, framed, stylized, yet still binding. Hillary Chute argues that documentary comics foreground this constructedness while refusing the slide into relativism; partiality is not a flaw to be hidden but a condition to be made visible and accountable (*Disaster Drawn* 6). *Crude* hews to that ethic: the hand that draws is part of the testimony. That acknowledged mediation is not aesthetic flourish. It is a counter to the very strategies Chevron deployed: to recode suffering as anecdote, to shelter behind technicality, to replace lived exposure with tables and ranges. By showing how it shows, the memoir deprives denialism of its usual maneuver, “that image is deceptive, that story is biased”, and reframes bias as the moral angle a witness must own.

One of *Crude*’s most incisive moves is to ask readers to read the environment, soil, water, tree line, as an archive. In Eyal Weizman’s terms, this is a forensic aesthetic: the practice of treating damaged sites as material witnesses (*Forensic Architecture* 55). Blackened rivers, sheen on ponds, the geometry of unlined pits: these are not merely backdrops but inscriptions of corporate action. Although Fajardo’s “I” frames the narrative, *Crude* is structurally plural. Campesinos, Indigenous leaders, nurses, and organizers speak; their portraits are given the dignity of time and scale. Sequence does the political work: one voice followed by another by another produces a cumulative weight that resists the legal tactic of isolating claims. Testimonio in Latin America has long foregrounded such collective speech as resistance; *Crude* extends that tradition into environmental struggle, an eco-testimonio where land and water are not just the setting but co-witnesses.

Images of suffering can slide into spectacle. Susan Sontag warned of shock that curdles into numbness (21); Judith Butler asks how frames pre-select whose grief counts (25). *Crude* meets that challenge by embedding each charged image in a web of relation, before/after, cause/consequence, voice/context, so that the reader’s look is situated rather than voyeuristic. The book leans into what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson calls ethical

staring: attention that is conscious of its own power and oriented toward recognition rather than consumption (*Staring* 188). Colour participates in this ethics. Roudeau codes a moral geography: Amazonian greens and ochres for living ecologies; heavy blacks and sullied blues for oil and effluent. The palette is argumentative, not decorative, it teaches the eye to tell vitality from contamination, care from indifference.

Slow violence is hard to narrate because it lacks a single explosive scene. Comics answer by layering temporalities within and across pages: a spill in the 1970s; a burial in the 1990s; a clinic in the 2010s. No panel screams catastrophe; the page quietly does. Environmental harm often operates below thresholds of ordinary perception. *Crude* labours to visualize the non-obvious: the thin film on a creek, the residue on skin, the light of a flare reflected in a child's eye at night. The page conveys smell and texture by proxy, glossy blacks, stippled skies, cross-hatched fumes, summoning senses that words alone cannot. This sensory register is not a flourish; it is testimony to how contamination is lived: through taste, smell, touch. It collapses the distance between "pollution" as a category and pollution as a daily intimacy.

Beyond scenes and faces, *Crude* punctuates its narrative with maps of the Oriente, a timeline (1964–2018), and capsule biographies of litigants, officials, and witnesses. These elements do three kinds of work. They situate (where, when, who), they discipline (checking memory against dates and institutions), and they implicate (showing connections beyond Lago Agrio to courts in New York, The Hague, Ottawa). The effect is a portable archive. Readers are given coordinates for further inquiry and a structure against which denial can be measured.

The memoir's very production models the relay of testimony: Fajardo's account; Tardy-Joubert's script in French; Roudeau's drawings and colour; English translation by Hannah Chute; publication by Graphic Mundi. This chain is not neutral. It multiplies audiences, Spanish-speaking plaintiffs, Francophone and Anglophone publics, legal observers, without stripping the story of locality. In an era when corporate harm is transnational and legal redress scattered across jurisdictions, such multilingual circulation isn't ancillary; it is a condition for testimony to function where the original court cannot compel.

Any project that depicts suffering at scale runs risks: voyeurism (consuming pain), fatigue (numbness through repetition), false closure (the image as end rather than invitation to act). *Crude* mitigates these by anchoring charged scenes in context, by alternating registers (intimate, procedural, panoramic), and by refusing tidy resolution. The "where are they now" notes and the ongoing legal epilogue insist on unfinishedness. Images are never let stand alone as spectacle; they return as recurring motifs, the pit, the jar, the road, so that recognition matures into understanding.

Crude does what good testimony must: it names, shows, and binds. It names actors and decisions across decades; it shows bodies and landscapes marked by those decisions; and it binds readers to what they have seen by giving them an archive they cannot unsee. In the aftermath of extraction's "war," testimony is the weapon the dispossessed can wield. The graphic memoir sharpens that weapon: not to wound, but to cut through denial, to pierce indifference, and to expose the grammar of harm in a medium ordinary publics can read and remember. That is *Crude*'s political intelligence. It does not ask

images to do what courts should; it asks them to do what courts too often cannot: carry the truth across borders, outlast campaigns of erasure, and keep the case open in the only venue Chevron cannot empty, public memory.

Justice as resistance, solidarity and struggle

Crude treats justice not as a tidy verdict but as a field of struggle shaped by asymmetries of power, jurisdiction, and voice. Its narrative makes plain how formal legal systems falter when asked to discipline a transnational corporation, and how communities innovate bottom-up forms of redress, archival, moral, and political, when courts stall or capitulate. If the environment becomes the battlefield of extraction, justice in *Crude* is the long campaign to keep that battlefield visible and to hold perpetrators to account wherever law, memory, and solidarity can reach.

Crude is careful to show how power operates outside the courtroom as well as within it. Chevron's litigation spend, widely reported as running to the order of a billion dollars, dwarfs the raffles, chicken-dinner fundraisers, and NGO grants that sustain UDAPT's efforts. Public relations becomes a second jurisdiction: corporate websites such as "The Amazon Post," seeded talking points, and reputational campaigns work to recode plaintiffs as extortionists and judges as corrupt. The legal fight is mirrored by a fight over frames. When Chevron sought *forum non conveniens*, Ecuador's courts were "adequate"; when those courts ruled for the plaintiffs, they became unfit. *Crude* stages that pivot as hypocrisy rather than legal nuance, but its larger point is structural: when defendants can shop fora, silo assets, and weaponize delay and narrative, "winning" a judgment is only the prelude to a much steeper climb.

None of this minimizes danger. *Crude* insists that the pursuit of justice in the Global South is frequently lethal. Latin America remains "the world's deadliest region for environmentalists," accounting for roughly 60 percent of activist murders (Amnesty International 119). Fajardo's brother is killed; activists receive threats; surveillance becomes routine. These are not digressions from an environmental lawsuit but its conditions. The right to seek redress is meaningful only if people can speak without risking their lives. Any account of justice that tallies judgments but not the cost of pursuing them misses what is most at stake.

The memoir also asks readers to expand what they count as justice. For the Secoya, Cofán, Siona, Kichwa, Shuar, and Waorani, justice is not reducible to damages; it includes clean water, habitable forests, the possibility of passing on ancestral territories, and the repair of relationships with more-than-human kin. *Crude* does not litigate those frameworks, but its testimony implicitly endorses a justice capacious enough to recognise subjects of harm beyond the strictly human. Boaventura de Sousa Santos's call for an "epistemology of the South" is useful here: justice grounded in lived experience rather than technocratic abstraction, articulated from positions marked by colonization and dispossession (Santos 23). The memoir enacts that epistemology by letting communities define harm in their own terms and by refusing to let corporate science set the sole standard of proof.

Temporal politics is central to this reframing. Corporations often deploy time as a

tactic; litigation stretches across decades; plaintiffs die; contamination persists; momentum dissipates. For affected communities, by contrast, justice is urgent, measured in today's drinking water and tomorrow's pregnancies. Kyle Whyte's account of "ongoing colonization" captures this tension: environmental destruction forecloses future life and renders "waiting" a further harm ("Indigenous Climate Change Studies" 162). If the state were a neutral guarantor, one might expect it to bridge these temporalities. *Crude* shows instead a state often captive to extractive imperatives. From mid-century petroleum agreements to military rule under General Rodríguez Lara, and from the oil booms that made the budget dependent on crude to the later disappointments of the Yasuni-ITT initiative, the memoir sketches a political economy in which government oscillates between benefactor and collaborator. Naomi Klein's description of "sacrifice zones", places "that somehow don't count and therefore can be poisoned, drained, or otherwise destroyed" in the name of development, helps make sense of this pattern (Klein 169). As Martz observed decades ago, Ecuador has served as "a microcosm" for dynamics common across Latin America, where weak or unstable democracies "sell off" land and legal protections under the pressure of global markets (Martz vii; Fajardo et al. 117). In this light, the failure of formal justice is not a glitch; it is a feature of a model that externalizes ecological costs onto the least powerful.

Against this backdrop, *Crude*'s insistence on rebellion is not rhetorical flourish. "The choice has never seemed so clear: submit or revolt," Fajardo declares (Nicolino 6). The revolt on offer is not violence; it is persistence: filing and refiling, travelling to Geneva, convening assemblies, raising small sums, telling the story again, refusing the sleep that amnesia demands. The book refuses tidy closure, indeed, it records Fajardo's own bleak assessment that "justice is a fiction" (112), but it also refuses despair. Its closing images return to the forest, to the possibility of phytoremediation, to the patience of ecosystems "thousands of years old" that have "seen so many men live and die" (112–14). Hope here is not naïveté; it is a political stance: a commitment to intergenerational obligations when institutions falter.

Crude reminds readers that justice is relational and contagious. The book itself is a product of cross-border collaboration, an Ecuadorian activist, a French journalist, a French artist, an English translator, an American university press, a chain that mirrors the solidarities needed to break corporate impunity. That collaboration is part of the remedy. As Joan Martínez-Alier argue, the "environmentalism of the poor" is local in its stakes but transnational in its alliances, making claims that are at once about survival and about global ethics (Martínez-Alier 12). When Matthew Noe writes that *Crude* "asks you to linger... and to not just sit with this history and injustice but to let it saturate your being such that you must take action," he names the memoir's most important judicial innovation: it convenes a court of public memory in which readers become a kind of jury, obliged not to deliver a damages figure but to decide what solidarity demands.

Beyond closure: representation and the work of memory

Crude does not end by solving a case; it ends by reframing what counts as a case. What begins as an exposé of oil and corporate impunity becomes an argument about how

we see, remember, and act in the aftermath of extraction. The book argues that when violence is dispersed across time and jurisdictions, when it is “incremental and accretive” rather than spectacular (Nixon 2), neither law nor journalism alone can carry the weight of witness. A graphic memoir can: it can bind dispersed facts to faces, embed testimony in place, and keep the record alive long after filings and headlines fade. In that sense, *Crude* is less a coda than a method, insisting that environmental struggle is fought as much in the domain of representation as in court.

This insistence on visual evidence is not a retreat from the facts of the case but an extension of them. Forensic attention to landscape, stained waterlines, pit geometrics, the architecture of flare fields, turns the Amazon into an archive legible to publics as well as experts, echoing Eyal Weizman’s argument that environments can be read as records of violence (Weizman 55–56). The point is not to replace essays with drawings, but to bring them into a common frame where technical proof and lived harm corroborate each other. In that frame, oil’s promised modernity, the “cruel optimism” of development that harms those who cling to it (Berlant 1), is exposed as a structure, not an accident: a petromodernity that funds roads and grids while unravelling the conditions of life (see Szeman).

Because the book keeps its eye on structure, justice in *Crude* is never confused with a single verdict. The Lago Agrio judgment and its afterlives, invalidation in U.S. courts, non-enforcement abroad, indemnification through arbitration, demonstrate how corporate separateness and jurisdictional design privilege capital over communities (Amnesty International 15; Kimerling, “Indigenous Peoples” 455). The memoir’s answer is not to abandon formal justice, but to supplement it with counter-powers: an archive that resists erasure; alliances that push for binding norms (from UN treaty efforts to France’s duty of vigilance); and dignitary recognition that matters even when money does not move.

What the memoir adds, crucially, and without piety, is a widening of the circle of concern. Time is the axis along which these claims converge. Corporate strategy stretches proceedings until plaintiffs age and die; contamination seeps; attention drifts. *Crude* counters with another temporality, intergenerational, stubborn, patient, akin to the “Indigenous climate time” Kyle Whyte describes, where injustice is a structure unfolding across generations (Whyte 159). The book insists on keeping harm present, not as melodrama but as continuity: the same pits still leak; the same families still boil water; the same forest registers absence. That temporal persistence turns memory into action. It is why, late in the narrative, rebellion is defined not by a single uprising but by refusal, in filing, speaking, marching, returning, to let the case close.

If the article has argued that oil is a form of organized violence and the environment its battlefield, *Crude*’s final contribution is to show how testimony, visual, communal, more-than-human, can unsettle that order. The choral quality of the narrative resists the isolating logic of litigation; the page’s polyphony makes room for scientists and shamans, lawyers and elders, data and spirits, without diminishing the authority of any.

None of this absolves readers. The book closes the distance between extraction zones and energy consumers, reminding publics that demand travels as surely as crude

does. The memoir's resources pages point outward to UDAPT and allied groups, but the deeper instruction is formal: learn to read the signs of slow violence; learn to hold multiple times together; learn to keep a case open. It stretches the ambit of justice from verdicts to relations, from compensation to repair. If oil has organized life into a regime of dependence and denial, the memoir gestures toward another epoch, not naïvely outside the fossil economy, but oriented toward the solidarities and reciprocities Glenn Albrecht names the Symbiocene (*Earth Emotions* 45). To get there requires more than a cleaner energy mix. It requires rewriting what we owe to one another and to the worlds that make us possible. *Crude* does not pretend to finish that work. It teaches how to begin, and how, when institutions fail, to go on.

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ORCID

A.K. Ajeesh  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9801-0826>

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Notes on Contributor(s)

A.K. Ajeesh is an assistant professor and Head of the Department of English at the School of Sciences and Humanities, SR University, India. His current research focuses on Environmental Humanities, with an emphasis on feral ecologies, vulnerability, ethics and justice in the Global South, exploring themes of slow violence, dislocation, and marginalisation, particularly in the context of extractive economies and industrial risk. He is also engaged with studies of trauma, memory, and life writings, investigating how personal narratives disrupt dominant discourses on war, displacement, and environmental degradation.

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