Preface

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In the volume, the editors ask us to consider "what extraction feels like" and how its feeling-states and bodily sensations are tentatively captured in representational media from television series to novels, film, visual and performance art. At "the nexus of affect studies and the environmental humanities," *To the Last Drop* challenges the energy humanities, in particular, to take seriously how affects associated with fossil fuels converse with ideologies, politics, and social movements. Affects can unstick us from dangerous attachments, such as automobility, cathect us to more sustainable hegemonies, such as the Green New Deal, and contribute in a multitude of scarcely traceable ways to atmospheres of resistance or transition. But affects do not, cannot, lead directly into any determinate behavior—and therein lies the rub for some politically committed scholars in the era of climate crisis, where the need for systemic and structural change is so urgent, so *yesterday*. No wonder that "affect studies" has been "marginalized in energy studies" whose focus tends toward development, as Cara Daggett insightfully notes in this volume.

The political scientist Deborah Gould has argued that "affective states can shake people out of deeply grooved patterns of thinking and feeling and allow for new imaginings"—yet "affect is an effect of being affected, and an effect that is itself a preparation to act in response, but in no preset or determined way" (Gould 32; 26). The inchoate quality of affect, as pre-emotional, un-narrativized feeling, opens the study of affect to critical contempt ("dithering while the planet burns," Hornborg) in our crisis times, especially for Marxists who overlook Raymond Williams' *Marxism and Literature*. In that classic analysis of the cultural dimensions of hegemony and revolution, affects persist in excess of hegemonic contracts; they are the structures of feeling "at the very edge of semantic availability" that may seed social change (Williams 134). How many symposia have I attended where the "environmental humanities" is elided with caricatures of the new materialisms, to which affect studies contributes, while

the "energy humanities" is announced, with equal simplicity, as a desolate Marxism where cultural expressions never surmount the machinic means of production, which run on oil? In this cartoonish debate, the environmental humanities appear as frivolous and feminine, the energy humanities masculine and relentlessly economic.

Fortunately, such heteronormative hyperbole rarely mars the scholarly writing that laid the groundwork for this volume—and it has no place in the volume itself. Lauren Berlant's concern for "waning genres" and especially the psychoeconomic con of cruel, neoliberal optimism (235), Stacy Alaimo's notion of the transcorporeal exchange of toxins and other industrial effluents across porous bodies, and Karen Barad's insistence, from her background in physics, on relationality as foundational to the performance of identities, are among those new materialist ideas which influenced first and second-wave energy humanities scholarship by Imre Szeman, Jennifer Wenzel, Kathryn Yusoff, Cymene Howe, Patricia Yaeger, Dominic Boyer, and myself, to name a few. NB some in the aforementioned group also are avowed Marxists. Meanwhile Indigenous scholarship and activism, some of it explicitly connected to anti-extractivist social movements like Idle No More or #NoDAPL, have checked both Eurocentric Marxisms and new materialisms for their blindness to the persistence of colonialist violence in the Americas, Australia, and other settler regions which only recently began to appreciate Indigenous epistemologies. Zoë Todd and Vanessa Watts, among others, call out some strains of new materialism for cultural appropriation, in their attempts to express relationality without acknowledging the Indigenous ontologies for which relationality always has been central (Todd, "An Indigenous;" Watts, "Indigenous Place-Thought"). Several authors in this volume specifically frame their analyses as a critique of settler sentiments, signaling contemporary efforts to decolonize the energy humanities.

The environmental humanities, too, has undergone decolonial reckonings, as we recognize that even our foundational terms ("environment," "humanities") reflect the bourgeois, Eurocentric biases that Sylvia Wynter describes as foundational to hegemonic humanisms. Self-reflection in regard to colonialism and its collateral injuries, including racism, has long been an attribute of American studies, which owes much of its critical acumen to race and ethnic studies. The same influences, especially from Black thought, flash at crucial junctures of affect studies with cultural studies. Berlant's critique of sentimentality's unfinished business could be said to begin in James Baldwin's searing insights about the spectacularization of anti-Black racism and to engage

Saidiya Hartman's early analyses of "scenes of subjection" across abolitionist media (book of the same title), while more recently Christina Sharpe's lyrical critique of the affective "weather" of anti-Blackness (102), like Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's descriptions of the "feels" of Black fugitivity (97–99), correct affect studies' sometimes tacitly white assumptions about "ordinary" feelings and lives. The contributors to this volume who "track the neoliberal present, in which affective life and structural conditions are often out of step" (Staiger et al. 11)[1]—in Ann Cvetkovich's words—do so with a keen eye towards the ways in which hierarchies of race, ethnicity, class, ability, and gender impress feelings upon bodies and spaces.

References to Sara Ahmed's "affective economies" by many authors in this volume and in the book title as well ensures its sensitivity to how social hierarchies, including racism, generate feelings. Moreover, several chapters address 18th and 19th century genres that betray the historic entanglements of racial capitalism, extractive sentiments, and fossil fuels. One of the great pleasures of *To the Last Drop* resides in its sharp reimagining of earlier critical insights into the identities and mythemes generated by settler colonialism in North America. Manifest domesticity (Amy Kaplan), regeneration through violence (Richard Slotkin), beset (white) manhood (Nina Baym), and other scholarship of the 1990s, when American studies recognized itself as the study of empire, are redeployed here, within the material contexts of fuel. From "petro-masculinity" to "extractivist nostalgia" to "the melancholy of extraction," authors throughout this volume approach the conflicted identity performances of the era of climate crisis and U.S. imperial decline, which in so many respects feels like, and perhaps is, a referendum on petromodernities within the long project of Euroamerican empire.

Scholars here propose terms for socioecological transition, making this volume kin to other Anthropocene era-making lexicons, such as Matthew Schneider-Mayerson's and Brent Ryan Bellamy's *An Ecotopian Lexicon*. The volume is also kin to earlier explorations of petroemotionality and petrogender, as in my own "petromelancholia," Alaimo's "carbon-heavy masculinities" (95–96), and Yusoff's "coal subjectivities" (780). Such critical concepts function as proto-genres—keys to transition narratives, to new patterns of expectation and self-scripting in an era of the unexpected, if not unthinkable. Attending to the microdynamics of affect is a scholarly knowledge practice rather than a social movement, to be sure. Yet such practice approaches the "unthought

1 Ann Cvetkovich in *Political Emotions* 11.

known," as Berlant called the condition of "being historical in the present" (235). Being historical in the present implies being forced to think about feeling as a mode of world-making within social atmospheres of almost inexplicable change, where feeling, left unthought, might swerve toward violent retrotopia—as we are reminded by Heike Paul's close reading of the rhetoric of Donald Trump.

Near the end of *To the Last Drop*, Daggett offers that "there is a pedagogical moment in recognizing how one's feelings are attached to certain stories, even stories we no longer believe. This means having a kind of affective intelligence about our bodies and selves, one that learns how to develop our capacity for new sensibilities."

Let me add that ecological sensibilities and desires for post-oil living must be cultivated across discourses, practices, and movements, against the inertia of habit as well as the overt propaganda and violence of fossil capital.

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