Introduction

The Editors

In a 2013 installation called *Give us, Dear,* artists Matthias Böhler and Christian Orendt confront us with the dehumanizing and predatory processes that have defined and continue to define resource extraction as part of a global modernity. *Give us, Dear* is a 6.5-meters-long sculpture made of paper, wire, wood, glue, metal, rubber, ink, and acrylic paint. It represents a creature, "ambivalently human and/or animal" ("A Reference Companion") laying on the floor of an exhibition room. The creature is not alone. Around five hundred "anthropomorphic beings" (ibid.), made up of wires and hot glue, are harvesting the multiple materials that compose the beast: from its skin, nails, teeth, and hair/fur to its blood, mucus, and excrement. The sculpture contrasts starkly the immobility and powerlessness of the creature with the imaginary mobility and business of those besieging it, who are using industrial and pre-industrial objects such as cranes, ladders, scaffoldings, pumps, carts, bridges, to extract and exploit the creature's body and fluids. Two holes have seemingly been punched out in a wall of the exhibition room to transport the resources away and bring new workers to the extraction site.

In *Give us, Dear,* extractivism is depicted as an all-encompassing, cannibalizing enterprise. It not only critiques the notion that the human and more-than-human world is solely here to "give us" raw materials and sources of energy but it also humanizes that same object of extraction. The installation creates discomfort in the audience for it is faced with its own demise: The anthropomorphic quality of the creature and the fact that its human exploiters are made from the same materials, highlight that what is being extracted and what is being consumed are, ultimately, we ourselves. The fate of extractive industries' workers is also questioned by the installation as it highlights the intergenerational and enduring aspects of extraction: New workers and new machinery will replace old workers and their tools.

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Give us, Dear *by Böhler & Orendt, 2013 (multi-part sculptural installation, 1,4 x 2,2 x 8m, black copied and shredded DIN A4 paper, newspaper, wallpaper paste, chicken wire, wood, hot glue, metal, rubber rings, ink, acrylic paint).*

Collection of Neues Museum Nürnberg in cooperation with Elke Antonia Schloter and Volker Koch. Image courtesy of Böhler & Orendt.

The sculpture may seem repulsive at first glance, yet it is also deeply sentimental as spectators are made to empathize with the strangely human creature and its suffering. Indeed, as it is laid on its side in a recovery position—its head resting on one arm and the palm of its hand seemingly feeling the ground—the creature suggests helplessness and defeat, but also exhaustion, despair, and hopelessness. *Give us, Dear* requires viewers to feel what extractivism might feel like: from the violence of mining, drilling, and logging of the Earth to the pain and trauma that the extractive enterprise inflicts on its own workers. It is through the sentimental mode that the art installation renders the ordinariness and opacity of global extraction as a spectacular and embodied experience: extraction as intrusion, violation, and disruption of the planet(ary). The title of the work plays on the contradictory relations at the core of modernity: (Western) societies value, even treasure, the Earth and its components but consume it wholly through extraction and exploitation. The noun "Dear" seems to

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be used as an affectionate name for the creature, perhaps as *pars pro toto* symbolizing humanity and the planet, to emphasize its beloved and treasured quality. In somewhat oxymoronic fashion, "Dear" also clashes with the command "give us," which dictates that something should be transferred or handed over voluntarily and therefore highlights the 'toxic relationship' that humans entertain with the planet through extractivism. What happens, the installation seems to ask, when Earth provides us with its very last drop of (fossil) fuel? *Give us, Dear* raises key questions and concerns that the contributors of this volume address. It can be read as exemplifying the conditions and processes that highlight why extractivism has such a firm grip on societies in the Western hemisphere. The installation makes viewers consider the complex entanglement of resource extraction and affect by evoking the sentimentalization involved in the exploitation of a seemingly benevolent and always giving "Dear" Earth.

Practices of extraction—as shown in *Give us, Dear*—have long been entwined with narratives of economic growth and technological progress and can be considered part and parcel of the history of Western modernity and its regimes of exploitation: of bodies, resources, and land. Extractive colonization in its various forms has often been legitimized with a rhetoric of civilizational superiority and entitlement ("white man's burden"), at times along with pseudo-scientific notions of natural hierarchies that "stripped [nature] of activity and rendered [it] passive" in order to "be dominated by science, technology and capitalist production" (Merchant 514). As early ecofeminist Carolyn Merchant (*The Death of Nature*, 1980) and Americanist Annette Kolodny (*The Lay of the Land*, 1975) have shown, the rationalized destruction of nature often appears in heavily gendered—and we might add racialized—narratives.

Despite the scientific language and focus on technological processes as well as the more recent 'techno-fix' rhetoric regarding climate change, resource extraction is only seemingly a sober and rational affair (cf. Matthew Huber's notion of an "addiction" to fossil fuels). There are, in fact, deep affective attachments and dependencies that have long undergirded these developments. With rising critique of extractivism in a decolonial vein, both on a local and a global scale, these attachments become more contested and difficult to sustain. At the same time, they also become more visible and more explicit as they weaponize a defense of the status quo and a way of life dependent on extractivism that has long been simply taken for granted and that is made to appear as being without alternative. While this volume focuses on the romance with extraction and the romancing of extractivism in the sentimental mode firmly lodged into, at least, Western cultural imaginaries, it also addresses

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what Lauren Berlant have called "countersentimental narratives" (2011, 55). For Berlant, these narratives are part of "a resistant strain within the sentimental domain" (ibid.) and "are lacerated by ambivalence: they struggle with their own attachment to the promise of a sense of unconflictedness, intimacy, and collective belonging with which the U.S. sentimental tradition gifts its citizens and occupants" (ibid.). As some contributions in this volume make clear then, sentimentality—and the political feelings it can give rise to—has also been deployed to produce a sharp critique of extractivism.

To grasp the full force and intensity of such "affective economies" (Sara Ahmed) of extractivism, in which emotions "align individuals" with others "through the very intensity of their attachments" (119), it is important to look for the myriad forms of entanglements and complicities of what is considered "the good life" with extractivist practices and lifestyles; to bring into view the displaced, latent, and tacit forms of attachment to extractive practices and fantasies; and to analyze them with a view to their underlying implications regarding race, gender, class, and region. Inspired by a large body of scholarship by eco-feminist writers who have emphasized the parallels between extractivism and gender, notably in the feminization of nature and the romanticization of resource extraction in settler-colonial societies (see Kolodny, Merchant, Daggett), we consider the intersection of extractivism and sentimentality a meaningful site to interrogate the mechanisms behind the lasting power of extractive systems.

Moving away from a heavily gendered conceptualization of the sentimental (in the U.S. dating back to the 19th century), we conceive of the sentimental as a communicative code that works to establish relations, for example between the individual and the community, or the state. In *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* (1997), Lauren Berlant, for example, have conceptualized and problematized the "intimate public sphere" as a space of convergence of the private and the public, the personal and the political. More recently, and regarding the genre of melodrama, political scientist Elisabeth Anker has identified in *Orgies of Feeling* (2014) the formula of political melodrama in U.S. politics following 9/11—a formula that relies on the specific affective features of melodrama in order to create national unity in the face of crisis. Similar phenomena can be seen elsewhere in times of political crisis. Judith Butler has pointed to practices of mourning that show the limits of what and who can or cannot be sentimentalized—and hence grieved (*Precarious Life*, 2004).

In the context of extractivism, ideological uses of the sentimental often run on a form of denial of the violence extractivism causes, at home and

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elsewhere, and attempt to obscure its larger consequences. In the U.S., for example, with the move towards climate-related regulations, some have expressed resentment and feelings of nostalgia about what has been considered a vanishing lifestyle rooted in "cheap energy"—LeMenager diagnoses these responses, among others, as symptomatic of a contemporary "petromelancholia" (*Living Oil*, 2013). Likewise, the regressive and defiant narratives of fossil fuel (hyper-)consumption analyzed by Cara Daggett in "Petro-masculinity: Fossil Fuels and Authoritarian Desire" seem to be often tinted with sentimental overtones—in plots of (male) victimization, displaying an extractive heroism that (re-)affirms the hegemony of extractivism.

At the nexus of affect studies and environmental humanities, this volume offers readings that expose and de-sentimentalize, as it were, the romance with extraction. It also points to instances where an eco-critical re-sentimentalization takes place. In fact, the volume aims to introduce more ambivalent approaches to the sentimental in new narratives of environmental stewardship. Case studies draw on literature (diaries, novels, personal letters), film, television series, video games, and other forms of public discourse as well as institutional politics; they examine the links between forms of extractivism and racialized and gendered discourses of sentimentality and the ways in which cultural narratives and practices deploy the sentimental mode in plots of (familial) attachment, sacrifice, and suffering to promote or challenge extractivism.

This volume consists of ten scholarly essays, two interviews, one with a scholar, Cara Daggett, one with a writer of fiction, Jennifer Haigh, and an artist's account of the multi-component project "Oil Ancestors: Relating to Petroleum as Kin." Some of the publications in this volume have developed out of conference papers delivered at an international workshop the editors hosted at Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg in October 2021.

Katharina Fackler's contribution introduces the practice of 19th century whaling as an enterprise of extractive capitalism. She specifically valorizes the perspective of a whaling wife, Mary Brewster, who joins her husband on his tours and hence becomes a widely traveled woman whose journals grant us insights into the formation of an early "extractivist imagination." Fackler's reading shows how Brewster's perspective is informed by extractivist logics and profit seeking and thus effects a thorough commodification of the Pacific, its human and non-human inhabitants, and schemes of how to exploit them. In "Ecologies of Docility and Control," **Sophie Hess** examines

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the role of a 19th century elite women's boarding school in Maryland, U.S.A., The Patapsco Institute, in (re-)producing and legitimizing the beginning of an extractive culture. Through analyses of the writings of both teachers and students (in poetry, journals, and correspondences), Hess argues that the school's community manifested a gendered, classed, and racialized space of ecological control, which rationalized early extraction (industrial metal production and agro-industrial grain processing) and romanticized the country's territorial expansion. **Amy Fung**'s paper offers a critical appraisal of Canada's National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, which became a federal holiday in 2021. According to her, the rhetoric of grief and mourning recently adopted by political leaders rings hollow as it aims to primarily provide closure for a history of dehumanization of Indigenous peoples and a gigantic, rarely acknowledged land theft. Rather than to face the implication of its genocidal and extractive past and ongoing inequality and racism, the wish for "reconciliation" appears to be a lip service paid to the victims of extractive colonization while a pervasive settler sentimentality continues to exist unchallenged in Canadian politics and society. **Gesa Mackenthun** discusses a set of novels by Native American women writers Linda Hogan, Louise Erdrich, and Diane Wilson to shed light on the subtle entanglement between the use of sexual violence against Indigenous women and the extractive violence used against the land. In a critical reading of these novels, Mackenthun shows how the affective intimacies evoked in the literary texts present a viable alternative to the extractive intimacies of colonization. Moreover, these texts contribute to the survival and revival of Indigenous plant cultivation, validates women's intimate knowledge of seeds and plants, and suggests an alternative land use. In this scenario, it is not the proverbial American farmer but the Indigenous gardener who is tilting—and protecting—the land. **Verena Wurth**'s contribution focuses on "extractivist nostalgia" in the successful TV series *Mad Men* (2007–2015) as it romanticizes forms of extractivism. Analyzing the series as an example of "petro-TV," which she conceptualizes as a televisual form of Ghosh's "petrofiction," Wurth's reading of *Mad Men* makes visible the ways the show tends to hide the sites and sights of extractivism behind a nostalgic aestheticization of consumer culture and (some) modes of transport, while negatively representing other, more sustainable alternatives. **Brian Leech**'s article, entitled "Feeling Senti-Metal," examines the nostalgic and romantic representations of gold mining in the U.S. popular tough-guy television shows *Gold Rush* and its spin-off, *Parker's Trail.* He connects these representations to U.S. American frontier myths of rugged masculinity, boundless riches, and

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emptied (hostile) landscapes. His analysis shows how the series hides theat times catastrophic consequences of mining and extractivism behind a nostalgic—and hence largely pleasurable—portrayal of small, family-led mining operations that ultimately belong to the past. In "Sentimentality, Sacrifice, and Oil," **Katie Ritson** zooms in on two recent novels—one from Norway and the other one from Great Britain—to analyze how they contribute to the memorialization of offshore oil extraction and its man-made environmental disasters in the cultural imaginary of North Sea coastal states. Her readings of Atle Berge's *Puslingar* (2019) and Iain Maloney's *The Waves Burn Bright* (2017) examine how the novels unfold their affective power through sentimentality and "strategic empathy" in plots of intergenerational and environmental conflict. **Kylie Crane** turns to discourses of nuclear extractivism in an article entitled "On Some Absent Presences of Nuclear Extractivism." She examines how the latter has been legitimized within a logic that locates scenarios of danger and of threat "elsewhere" and "elsewhen," even as its consequences can hardly be contained in such a manner. Her discussion of Bethesda Softworks' 2015 video game *Fallout 4* problematizes its cast of characters, its retro-futurist aesthetics, and its atmosphere of nostalgia as reiterating such a false sense of containment—or contain-ability—of nuclear risk. **Heike Paul**'s essay delves into foundational American mythology and its concomitant extractivist imaginary. The latter still figures prominently in political and popular culture. To illustrate this, she juxtaposes an analysis of a key appearance and speech of former President Trump in front of representatives of the oil lobby to a reading of Jennifer Haigh's novel *Heat & Light*, which tells the story of fracking in small-town Pennsylvania. As the contrast shows, the somewhat simplistic rhetoric of the treasure hunt that Trump promises to be successful and rewarding, is undercut by the narrative in which Haigh shows individual hopes and dreams to become unraveled and ultimately destroyed through the impact of fracking. As a case of "cruel optimism" (Berlant) fracking leaves people not only without their most valuable resource, the land, but also robs them of their future. In an interview with the author, Heike Paul speaks with **Jennifer Haigh** about growing up in a mining town, about masculinity, nostalgia, and about recent ideological shifts and realignments in rural Pennsylvania. **Axelle Germanaz and Sarah Marak** discuss how the 2012 movie *Promised Land* resolves the controversy about fracking through a narrative of "agrarian sentimentality" that romanticizes small-town rural life as an antidote to extractivism. As a narrative with topoi and settings typical of a culturally specific "fracking formula," the film partly deviates from other cultural artifacts on fracking in

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that it presents a version of the Jeffersonian agrarian myth as an ostensible solution to questions of both economic and environmental sustainability and safety. **Axelle Germanaz**' and **Daniela Gutiérrez Fuentes**' conversation with **Cara Daggett** examines the intersections between affect, sentimentality, and extractivism in an era of climate emergency. The discussion addresses an array of relevant issues for better understanding the depth of societies' attachments to fossil fuels and the challenges that prevent them from moving away from extractive practices and ways of life. Finally, **Fereshteh Toosi**'s contribution introduces and describes their art project, *Oil Ancestors: Relating to Petroleum as Kin*, based on a series of interactive experiences about the affective relationship between people and the products of (mineral) extraction. Readers will be able to engage first-hand with the project in practicing a meditation centered on the materiality of petroleum extraction.

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