

Energy Reckonings

“Who will bring the transition and for what purpose? Who will benefit and at what expense?”

--Kolya Abramsky

In our current moment of climate emergency, how have writers, literary critics, and theorists reckoned with the idea of energy transition? Transitioning to a low or no-carbon society will involve radical, systemic societal change. Debates over the best pathway through energy transition have pivoted around comparisons to earlier energy transitions (wood, coal, oil, electricity). Where one locates the beginning of a transition, in other words, shapes how one imagines its future. In his newest book, *The Nutmeg's Curse*, Amitav Ghosh co-locates our contemporary crisis with the origins of colonialism. Kim Stanley Robinson, in his cli-fi novel *Ministry for the Future*, depicts a world in which the transition is never completed. What do such temporal figurations of our present moment suggest about the role of the energy humanities in understanding transition?

The Literature Working Group seeks to assemble a pre-constituted seminar on Energy Reckonings that would explore this transitional moment through a shared set of readings (to be announced) and works in progress. We aim to move back and forth between our theoretical readings and our research projects in order to advance our understanding of both. We welcome proposals about projects at all stages of development. Potential topics include:

Transition, change, the emergent and emergencies

Fiction, science fiction, and science fact

Figuring the Anthropocene and the sixth extinction

Indigenous, postcolonial, and other resource fictions and literary traditions

Literary and cultural representations of energy futures, Afrofuturism, futurity

Reading science and policy as literary texts; reading literary texts through scientific or policy lenses

Temporality and imagining transition

Historicizing transition

The role of affect such as climate anxiety and eco-despair

Literature and hope

Seminar Requirements:

To apply for this seminar, the prospective participant should submit to both organizers a proposal describing the research project that brings them to this topic. Include contact information with email address, a brief bio, and any requests for audio-visual equipment. Please indicate whether you plan to attend the conference in person. Proposals due no later than December 19th.

Participants in the seminar will read selected texts and share overviews or samples of their projects in advance of the conference. Details on both to follow.

Seminar moderators:

Helen Kapstein

John Jay College, CUNY
English Department
524 West 59th St, NB 7.63.19
New York, NY 10019
hkapstein@jjay.cuny.edu

Michael Malouf
George Mason University
English Department
4400 University Dr., MSN 3E4
Fairfax, VA 22030
mmalouf@gmu.edu