

Putting the World to Work

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Abstract

This text is a translation of the recently published book's Introduction by Cara New Daggett, *The Birth of Energy: Fossil Fuels, Thermodynamics, and the Politics of Work* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2019), where this author records how 19th-century cultural imaginaries (particularly those gestated in the British Isles) were deeply convulsed by the articulation of two specific phenomena: on one hand, the creation of a new fossil fuel-based industrial production regime (in particular the massive use of coal) and the increase in employee productivity (subject to the logic of relative capital plusvalia, i.e. the work intensification for each unit of time); on the other hand, the emergence of a new concept of energy around thermodynamic science, which legitimized productive imaginaries and fossil imperialism through the theological perception of nature as an infinite source of resources at the service of human material progress (Western).

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