Rachel Greenwald Smith’s *Affect and American Literature in the Age of Neoliberalism* examines the relationship between American literature and politics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Smith contends that the representation of emotions in contemporary fiction emphasizes the personal lives of characters at a time when there is an unprecedented, and often damaging, focus on the individual in American life. Through readings of works by Paul Auster, Karen Tei Yamashita, Ben Marcus, Lydia Millet, and others who stage experiments in the relationship between feeling and form, Smith argues for the centrality of a counter-tradition in contemporary literature concerned with impersonal feelings: feelings that challenge the neoliberal notion that emotions are the property of the self.

Rachel Greenwald Smith is an assistant professor of English at Saint Louis University. Her work has appeared in journals such as *American Literature, Twentieth Century Literature, Mediations*, and *Modern Fiction Studies.*
AFFECT AND AMERICAN LITERATURE IN THE AGE OF NEOLIBERALISM

RACHEL GREENWALD SMITH

Saint Louis University
For my parents
The emotion of art is impersonal.

– T. S. Eliot
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This book calls into question the notion that we own our own feelings. Likewise, writing this book has been a persistent reminder of how little we own our own thoughts. The ideas enclosed here are not in any way exclusively mine: they were fostered, challenged, and refined by the brilliance of those with whom I came into contact during the process of its evolution. Most of all, this book is a reflection of the intellectual culture of my family, in which my mother’s insistence on the importance of political critique was answered by my father’s interest in the ability of works of art to access the strange, intuitive, and unknown. In this and in so many other ways, this book would not have been written without the unceasing support and inspiration of my parents, Marta Greenwald and Gary Mac Smith, and my sister, Sophie Smith.

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