



(Com)Post-Capitalism

Cultivating a More-than-Human Economy in the Appalachian Anthropocene

BRADLEY M. JONES

Department of Anthropology, Washington University in St. Louis, USA

Abstract This article explores the cultivation of life in ruins. At the foothills of Appalachia, I focus on a permaculture farmer—Sally of Clearwater Creek—fostering arts of (making a) living on a damaged planet. Ethnography in the Anthropocene requires tending and attending to those making the best of the mess that’s been made: a commitment to noticing things not (only) falling apart, but (also) coming back together again. In other words, an attention to compost—the (de)compositional processes and collaborative assemblages nourishing all life on earth. Building on “more-than-human” and “human economy” theorizing in the environmental humanities and economic anthropology respectively, this article develops the concept of the “more-than-human economy” to better understand the “problem of living despite economic and ecological ruination” (Tsing 2015). At Clearwater Creek a multi-species ecological ethic recursively informs an economic paradigm for making ends meet with others, where surpluses born of synergies feed back into a resilient system, revaluing weeds and waste. Sally’s labors reflect a new form of ethical, ecological, and economic entanglement that crops up in the interstitial spaces and disturbed landscapes of the Anthropocene. Permaculture praxis—an embodied relationship with more-than-human others and an attention to symbiotic communities of co-flourishing—contributes to the cultivation of “arts of attentiveness” (van Dooren et al. 2016) necessary for living (well) on a damaged planet. Promising, yet precarious, these emergent forms of life offer hope in a blasted landscape (Kirksey et al. 2014).

Keywords Anthropocene, permaculture, Appalachia, compost, postcapitalism, ruins

Invest in the Millennium . . .
Say that the leaves are harvested,
when they have rotted into the mold.
Call that profit. Prophecy such returns.
Put your faith in the two inches of humus
that will build under the trees every thousand years . . .
practice resurrection.
—Wendell Berry¹

1. Berry, “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front.”

“I dream of mycorrhiza” Sally said. A curious answer to a common query in my ongoing research with alternative farmers cultivating lives and livelihoods at the edges of capitalism and a changing climate. “What’s your dream for this farm?” often reveals aspirations of sustainability, rural revitalization, the simple life, and close relations with others and the land. Sally’s response offered similar sentiments veiled in an unorthodox yet fertile idiom. “I dream of mycorrhiza,” she repeated, “subsoil networks more complicated than the human brain, caught up in the act of recycling all life.” Mycorrhiza—symbiotic associations of roots and fungus—come into being in intimate, interspecies relations, forming an infrastructure of interconnection.² They decompose dead matter and recycle remains in the service of rebirth. At once material and metaphoric, caught up in cultivating more-than-human flourishing, it was an apt description for Sally’s project—but not hers alone. A way of working and worlding that I call (com)post-capitalism.

This essay brings thick ethnographic attention to the foothills of Appalachia and focuses on a permaculture farmer and her farm, Sally of Clearwater Creek. Formerly denuded by extractive logging and later further trampled by the running of hogs, Clearwater Creek is a scarred space—like its kindred Appalachian hills beyond—and the (by-)product of an economy of abandonment.³ At once an illegible,⁴ out-of-the-way place,⁵ and an “other” America,⁶ life grows in and of these ruins. Established at the turn of the new millennium, Clearwater Creek is a millennial venture—a utopian project actively cultivating a world to come, in the soiled space between salvation and apocalypse, no prospects of transcendence and no guarantees. As Kim Fortun asks, what is the task of ethnography at the limits of late industrialism, when “much of the infrastructure, many of the paradigms that have held it up, are exhausted. Things are falling apart, again.”⁷ Some rightfully suggest it demands staying with the trouble and an attention to life in ruins.⁸ I propose that it requires a careful (and care-full) tending and attending to those making the best of the mess that’s been made; a commitment to noticing things not (only) falling apart, but (also) coming back together again. In other words, an attention to compost—the (de)compositional processes and collaborative assemblages nourishing all life on earth.

Recent interdisciplinary scholarship on human/environmental interactions has brought necessary attention to the more-than-human, oriented to exposing a multitude of lively co-constituted critters. This approach attends to and indexes the relations and

2. Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, 138–39.

3. Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*.

4. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

5. Tsing, *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen*.

6. Stewart, *Space on the Side of the Road*.

7. Fortun, “Ethnography in Late Industrialism,” 449.

8. For “staying with the trouble,” see Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*; for “attention to life in ruins,” see Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*.

categorical collapses of humans and their others while seeking to catalyze a more nuanced notion of stewardship.⁹ Critical of the *anthro-* in both *anthropology* and the *Anthropocene*, more-than-human thinking emphasizes that we humans are not in this alone and, machinations of modernity and man to the contrary, never have been. At the same time, research in economic anthropology is calling for attention to the “human economy,” a means of rendering a more holistic depiction of economics and its actors than the rationalized models of self-interested profit-maximizers offered by economists. The human economy emphasizes the work of the household (broadly conceived) and an economy’s original role in providing for communal needs as well as the (re)production of human life and that which sustains it.¹⁰ It encompasses the broad array of production practices used to secure livelihoods both within and beyond the market and its attendant relations and logics.¹¹ Building on more-than-human and human-economy approaches, this essay develops the concept of the “more-than-human economy,” seeking to emphasize that as conceptual boundaries collapse for ourselves (as researchers) and our others (as informants) we must attend to what spills over to saturate seemingly disparate domains.¹² In highlighting how ecological and economic paradigms reciprocally reinforce one another in a more-than-human economy, I suggest that we cannot only better understand the multispecies interdependencies through which all life and value generate, but also better comprehend the emerging ecological, economic, and ethical entanglements germinating in the fraught yet fertile grounds of the Anthropocene’s disturbed landscapes.¹³ New value and values emerge at these unruly edges.

In what follows I explore the nature of (com)post-capitalism, and muddle in its multiple meanings at Clearwater Creek. The first section brings attention to compost as the more-than-human collaborations essential for sustaining life, on the farm and beyond it. The following section foregrounds emerging post-capitalist forms of (re)production cropping-up in damaged ideological and environmental landscapes, approaches recursively inspired by compost paradigms and undomesticated by the logic of capitalism. The final body section highlights how dominant ecological, economic, and material forms are (re)cycled to nourish alternative social relations and subjectivities. It

9. Lorimer, *Wildlife in the Anthropocene*, 4.

10. Hart, Laville, and Cattani, *Human Economy*.

11. Bear, Tsing, and Yanagisako, “Gens.” The human economy also recognizes the performative violence such conceptual cleavages engender, bringing into being that which they name.

12. As Margaret Schabas emphasizes in *Natural Origins of Economics*, 5, “Until the late Enlightenment, the natural and the economic realms were one and the same” and only gradually over the nineteenth century was economics “denaturalized.” That economic models are recursively developed in “conversation” with natural models was the crucial insight of Stephen Gudeman and Alberto Rivera’s seminal *Conversations in Colombia*. An “economy of nature” model may persist (and arguably resist) in the margins of Colombia, but I argue not there alone.

13. On disturbed landscapes as terrains of transformative encounter, see Tsing *Mushroom at the End of the World*. I suggest disturbance catalyzes not only new ecological relations, but social relations as well.

emphasizes how Sally's projects are also life projects and her work a way of (weedy) worlding. Throughout, I stress aspects both promising and precarious, refusing, like Sally, to be made docile by the domination of what pushes back but at the same time recognizing that alternative world-making projects are rife with anxieties and ambivalences. Indeed, Clearwater Creek is an ambiguous utopia.¹⁴

The essay's style and form seek to mirror its content, entangled in emerging ideas, a composite composition immersed in the middle of things. The always unfinished nature of compost rejects clean analytics and resists resolution. It is a scholarly work of bricolage, assembled from diverse parts and paradigms and mimetic of Sally's (de)constructive labor. The essay's heavy use of interdisciplinary citation in various stages of digestion is itself a citation politics, a lesson learned from Sally about paying homage to an array of otherwise silent sources.

As a paradigm of human environmental interaction, the energy and surplus cycling model proposed by compost engenders novel ways of conceptualizing the economy and recalibrates our ethical commitments to each other and earth others. It helps us "learn to be affected"¹⁵ and contributes to the cultivation of "arts of attentiveness" necessary for living (well) in blasted landscapes.¹⁶ It also allows scholars to move beyond recent arm-chair theorizing on the Anthropocene that emphasizes the need for new concepts and practices and attend to actually-existing forms of thinking and acting otherwise.¹⁷ What alternatives grow in the "weedy landscapes"¹⁸ between subsistence and the market, between cultured nature and natured culture, between the one-way path of progress and the space on the side of the road?¹⁹ What can we learn by thinking about and thinking through the (re)cycling and composting of "waste"—organic matter, industrial debris, anachronistic ideas—in our own and other's efforts to make something of the ruins? What hope for survival might post-capitalist projects and politics provide? (Com)post-capitalism, like emergent ecologies,²⁰ represents an ambiguous form of socio-ecological entanglement that crops up in the interstitial spaces and disturbed landscapes of the Anthropocene and threatens to unsettle the existing order. It is an art of (making a) living on a damaged planet—about how to compose a common world together as well as how to compost it.²¹

14. See Le Guin, *Dispossessed*.

15. Despret, "The Body We Care For," 131.

16. van Dooren et al., "Multispecies Studies."

17. On the need for new concepts and practices see, e.g., Scranton, *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene*.

18. Tsing, *Friction*. See also Tsing, "The Buck, the Bull, and the Dream of the Stag."

19. Stewart, *Space on the Side of the Road*.

20. Kirksey, *Emergent Ecologies*.

21. For "living on a damaged planet," see Tsing et al., *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*; for "how to compose a common world together," see Latour, "Another Way to Compose the Common World"; for "how to compost it," see Abrahamson and Bertoni, "Compost Politics."

Cultivating Compost

A once degraded ridgetop meadow, Clearwater Creek now teems with life (fig. 1). Surrounded by hardwood Appalachian forest, and misty hills beyond, the landscape is a patchwork of intercropped vegetables arranged like the disorderly pews of a terrestrial temple, contoured to the slope. Plantings are rotated many times annually based on a complex calculus of pest management and cultivar collaboration, but in mid-July the heirloom corn is high, peering out over the trellises of cucumbers and not-quite-ripe tomatoes. The greens and bean plants have begun their decay, in their place already a flush of onions, and mound upon mound of potatoes—purple, red, and gold. The food forest sits just on the horizon, beyond the pollinator apiary, where the perennial trees sag with apples, pears, and nuts. Flowers and herbs, inviting beneficials and warding off pests and pathogens, are interlaced throughout, veiling numerous irrigation ponds. Bare earth is nowhere to be seen, the soil covered with decaying plant life or a thick mat of straw and lawn clippings, offering shade from the punishing summer sun and shelter for diverse bacteria beneath. The spring box taps an underground water source farther up the slope; down below, the forest is home to mushrooms and a diversity of medicinal plants. It is a landscape of abundance sustained in symbiosis: a community of compost.

Compost is fertile as both a material and a metaphor. Soil in the making, compost is constituted by layers of organic matter breaking down with the assistance of aerobic bacteria, fungi, protozoa, earthworms, and other nonhuman others. Decomposition in the service of recomposition, compost is a multispecies cycling of nutrients and energy; a paradigm of circularity that stands in clear contrast to reductionist, unilinear thinking. Compost refers not only to a specific, set-aside pile of working waste common on organic farms but the range of often unobserved metabolic processes constantly regenerating the farm landscape. In other words, as I learned from Sally, compost is not just the strata of carbon-rich brown layers and nitrogen-rich green layers utilized instrumentally as fertilizer, but all the symbiotic and synergetic processes of nutrient recycling stewarded on sustainable farms. Sally's approach affords the collapse of compost bins and compost binaries, and brings attention to the multitude of more-than-human cycles and collaborations cultivated across the expanse of Clearwater Creek.

Donna Haraway offers compost as a master metaphor for our troubled, troubling times.²² For her compost becomes grounds for deconstructed dichotomies in which life and death, human and more-than-human others, are always already co-constitutive. Compost, then, is a heuristic for tending and attending to the unexpected mutualisms engendered by a precarious yet promising anthropogenic era—a Rubicon river crossing that for better or worse “changes everything”²³—where we're forced to “become-with

22. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.

23. Klein, *This Changes Everything*.



Figure 1. A landscape of multispecies mutualism. Photo by author.

each other or not at all.”²⁴ In considering compost, Haraway thinks with Maria Puig de la Bellacasa to argue that soil, compost, and the whole range of human economic and ecological relations are not only “matters of concern” but also “matters of care.”²⁵ They demand consideration and a commitment to foster the conditions of their flourishing. Composting is a vital element of permaculture that likewise offers a fertile site to expose and explore the ethical entanglements of humans and their others. As a principled praxis of caring for the earth, caring for people, limiting consumption, and returning the surplus, permaculture proposes a life-sustaining interdependency committed to holistic closed-loop systems. Among permaculture’s many design principles, several capture something of the ethic and ecology of the agricultural approach—Use Edges; Value the Marginal; Produce No Waste; Value Diversity.

Lessons in permaculture are gleaned only obliquely during the frantic summer season, over idle chats while washing potatoes and wrangling beans. Sally follows the “three sisters” technique of polyculture cropping, with heirloom corn providing the

24. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 4. Haraway goes so far as to render humans as “that worker of and in the soil,” “eating and being eaten, messmates, compost.” Always at table together and now so more than ever, we are messmates indeed, in the fullest meaning of the term.

25. Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care*; see also Latour, “Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?”

stake for pole beans that fix nitrogen and ground squash that shelters the soil and suppresses weeds. The three sisters is a model of synergy and symbiosis: a multispecies metonym for living well in the Anthropocene. “Permaculture is about closing the loop,” Sally tells me, “about eliminating inputs and outputs by producing everything right on the farm or as locally as possible.”²⁶ She continues,

The soil-science triangle they teach in conventional ag[riculture] schools is totally wrong. Their model is all about attaining a chemical balance by way of tweaks, adding alkaline or base to balance the soil, or lime. But that’s what manure does. And vegetation. I try to utilize as much of my farm as possible to *totally close the system*. The thing about permaculture is it’s not a controlled experiment in a laboratory but a *replication of natural processes*. It’s an approach that’s all about managing energy—redirecting it here, diverting it there—but recycling as much of it as possible so that no energy is wasted, and no more labor expended than absolutely necessary.

Sally treats healthy soil as an invisible ecology of multispecies flourishing in which a world of submerged, more-than-human labor—worms, microorganisms, fungi—teems just below the surface. Her own work is a working-with, oriented less to the production of vegetables than the orchestrated “replication of natural processes.”

Exemplary of the more-than-human economy she strives to cultivate, Sally treats soil as vibrant matter as well as a natural form of domestic labor—or kin and caring work—that is often unobserved and unappreciated yet essential to the (re)production of life and value. As Sally intimates, this ecological paradigm departs radically from conventional soil science where soil is treated as an inert substance dependent on technoscientific tweaks. Indeed, by the dominant and dominating logic, dirt is less a matter of care than it is matter out of place.²⁷ Plantation monocultures extract and capitalize on the soil’s hidden labor, clearing ground for the “appropriation” and “substitution” of commodified inputs,²⁸ and catalyzing Karl Marx’s Metabolic Rift in which otherwise interdependent social and biological processes are severed.²⁹ However, as Puig de la Bellacasa suggests, soil is a “bioinfrastructure,” an understated yet indispensable apparatus on which a collective lives, works, and depends.³⁰ An ecology of taking care of excess waste and redirecting flows of organic energy is by this reckoning also an ethic of taking care of the more-than-human. A cosmology of compost.

26. Throughout the article, quotes are derived from personal communication with Sally over the course of July 2016, unless otherwise indicated. All names of persons and places are pseudonyms.

27. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*.

28. Goodman, Bernardo, and Wilkinson, *From Farming to Biotechnology*. These concepts refer to key strategies of industrial capital to create debt and dependency relations across agricultural landscapes. See also Fitzgerald, *Every Farm a Factory*. On the perils of extractive and enclosed plantations, see Haraway, “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene.”

29. Foster, “Marx’s Theory of Metabolic Rift.”

30. Puig de la Bellacasa, “Encountering Bioinfrastructure.”

Extending the concept beyond the soil, bioinfrastructures include all the entangled life-sustaining labors on the farm, processes that are often invisible and in which humans are thoroughly enmeshed. Like other forms of infrastructure, these backgrounds are often only observed in their absence or their breakdown.³¹ Yet the Anthropocene is an invitation to cultivate “arts of noticing.”³² Clearwater Creek is at an unruly edge, a site of resistance “illegible” to the state. It operates off the grid and lacks plumbing, electrical utilities, garbage removal, and other manifestations of the modern. With nowhere else to go, so-called waste at Clearwater Creek requires staying with the trouble. The compost toilet, fundamental to Sally’s holistic farm, is a key pragmatic component of a more-than-human ecological assemblage and a particularly rich metaphor of multispecies entanglement. The damaged landscapes of human hubris remind us that, quite literally, “we simply can’t hide from our shit anymore.”³³ Human excrement is combined with organic carbon matter, and then cycled through an aerobic system of decomposition until—with the alchemy of months, microbes, and magic—it becomes a generative application to be reincorporated back into the organic system. Not only is human waste disposed of in an environmentally sustainable manner, through multispecies collaboration it becomes a source of critical nutrients supporting biological growth. Recover Resources, Produce No Waste, Value the Marginal: permaculture principles as well as adages for the Anthropocene.

Waste is reconsidered at Clearwater Creek: so too are weeds. At once the impetus for myriad technoscientific “advancements” in industrial agriculture, and the back-breaking bane of organic farming, weeds become partners in permaculture polycultures. While spreading organic coverage on the plant beds, Sally reflects, “Weeds have been in the soil for a thousand years. When they come up, they’re just doing their job, which is to protect and cover the soil, preventing exposure. That’s why we mulch. And layer the crops. Because if we do that job, they won’t have to.” For Sally, weeds are keepers of the soil. They are also prognostic, offering lessons on landscape ecology by indicating imbalances of moisture or acidity, soil compaction, or poor soil health. A natural guide, then, they teach what to plant, suggesting their own remediation if we learn to listen. Moreover, their decay and reincorporation into the soil provide critical biomass for fertility, feeding myriad microorganisms teeming beneath. Sally works with weeds and weeds work with Sally. Another permaculture principle: the problem is the solution. Appreciation rather than antipathy, collaboration rather than conflict. Sally’s weedy landscapes expose multispecies mutualism and encourage the cooperation of compost.

The backyard birds at Clearwater Creek are an exception that proves the rule of the benefits of working in collaboration with nature. They also highlight the frictions, tensions, and essential ambivalences of these relations. Ducks, geese, and other critters are critical components of an organic agricultural ecology, offering a biological form of

31. Star, “Ethnography of Infrastructure.”

32. Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, 17.

33. Kawa, “Shit,” unpaginated.

pest control—snacking on slugs and snails—and a mobile form of nitrogen-rich fertility. However, because these foragers are prone to making meals of marketable produce, at Clearwater Creek they spend significant energy managing the ducks. From erecting and repairing makeshift fences, to scouting and herding operations when these boundaries are inevitably transgressed, the labors of attempting to discipline recalcitrant nature are time-intensive and taxing. Sally’s playful dubbing of the fowl as “little terrorists,” was not lost on me, offering as it did a particularly poignant metaphor for making kin (or not) in the Anthropocene. Policing borders, maintaining boundaries, mending walls, these are the problematic paradigms, the messy muddles, the semantically saturated metaphors of troubled times. The task ahead is to cultivate care across and despite difference, fraught as it might be “with the risks and joys of composing a more livable cosmopolitics.”³⁴ Like compost itself, it’s a hot congeries of critters all the way down.

Arts of (Making a) Living on a Damaged Planet

Compost reminds us that we are always *in media res* and centers our attention on the middle of things. Ever navigating the circularity of the in-between, such are the “arts of living on a damaged planet” but also the arts of *making a living* on a damaged planet. Sally is at once a subsistence farmer and tethered to the market. She is embedded in a diverse array of economic activity that sustains her life and livelihood—from the exchange of volunteer labor and the bartering of goods, to the sale of produce at farmers markets and the marketing of natural-building skills online. She is post-capitalist in the sense offered by J. K. Gibson-Graham in that she muddles in an economic diversity in which capitalism has been decentered.³⁵ She is peri-capitalist in the sense proposed by Anna Tsing in that she shuttles back and forth between noncapitalist and capitalist forms to cobble together a piecemeal living.³⁶ Precarious livelihoods are the edge effects of capitalism, emerging at the margins of market governance. They are riddled with anxieties, certainly, but also often abound with the aspiration of alternative world-making projects. The more-than-human economy at Clearwater Creek manages to live despite capitalism and anthropogenic climate change, yet like any good compost is nourished by their ruins.

Post-capitalism umbrellas the wide diversity of economic activity that supports well-being within and beyond capitalism. It is a radical project of deconstructing economic orthodoxy, displacing the centrality of capitalism to academic and activist activity, and performatively calling other possible social and economic worlds into being. Informed by critical feminist studies, post-capitalism reveals the heterogeneity of economic spaces, highlighting how market exchange is no more critical to social and economic wealth than noncommodified household and caring labor, cooperative enterprises and

34. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 15. See also Stengers, “Cosmopolitical Proposal,” and van Dooren, “Care.”

35. Gibson-Graham, *Postcapitalist Politics*.

36. Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*.

nonprofits, gift giving and reciprocal exchange. Approaching the diverse economy attentive to the being-in-common of humans and nonhumans is also a fertile ethics for the Anthropocene.³⁷ Here I employ Gibson-Graham's "technique of re-reading" in an effort to uncover what is possible in contemporary political-economic experiments but often obscured from view. Gibson-Graham's iceberg model for the economy, where wage labor and capitalist firms are but the visible tip of substantial economic activity below the surface of the sea,³⁸ I argue, is the economic analogue to a permaculture ethic of appreciating the diverse labors submerged beneath the soil surface. This is post-capitalism generated by compost. Use Edges, Value the Marginal. Use and Value Diversity. Mantras for the more-than-human economy.

The domain of the "economic" is much broader than the blinkered boundaries of what is too often taken unproblematically as capitalism.³⁹ There is no singular "economy," a monolithic entity that organizes the provision of needs and wants through market exchange. Rather, economies exist in the plural, embedded in social systems, and refer to the diverse ways in which communities meet material needs and labor to make a livelihood. Moreover, "capitalism" not only draws on but is dependent on practices and processes it cannot itself generate—social and multispecies relations; reproductive, affective, and metabolic labors—"fundamental contradictions of the regime of capital itself."⁴⁰ As the forces of modernity strive to delimit and disembed—the market from society, production from reproduction, waged work from kin work, value from values—the household remains central to this economy (as its etymological origin *oikos* suggests). The largely subsistence-oriented farm that Sally operates is a form of householding and by extension a brand of resistance and autonomous self-sufficiency fundamental to sustaining rural, peasant, and informal economies.⁴¹ The household affords the (re)production of life beyond the market and thus an opportunity for cultivating alternative systems and social relations irreducible to its narrow logics. Whereas householding has traditionally been oriented primarily to meeting the needs of the rural farm family, family is more inclusive in the more-than-human economy in which both human and nonhuman labor is valued.

The more-than-human economy, inspired recursively from Sally's permaculture practice, is abundant at Clearwater Creek and in the communities she cultivates on the

37. Gibson-Graham and Roelvink, "An Economic Ethics for the Anthropocene"; Gibson-Graham, "A Feminist Project of Belonging in the Anthropocene."

38. Gibson-Graham, *Postcapitalist Politics*, 70.

39. Bear, Tsing, and Yanagisako, "Gens." Although I appreciate the reframing of our twined economic and ecological crises in a manner that implicates economic structures and not a generalized "humanity" while also foregrounding disparate effects, there is arguably no more egregious form of capitalocentrism than the so-called capitalocene.

40. For "affective labor," see Hardt "Affective Labor"; for "metabolic labor," see Beldo, "Metabolic Labor"; "fundamental contradictions of the regime of capital itself" is found in Foster, Clark, and York, *Ecological Rift*, 63.

41. Gudeman, *Anthropology and Economy*. See also Halperin, *Cultural Economies*, 153: "Householding consists of multiple and interconnected livelihood strategies associated with diverse capitalist and non-capitalist economic institutions."

farm and in the region beyond it. Consider how Sally translates between philosophy and practice, and regimes of value and commensurability:

It's so important to have connections. Our lives thread and are intertwined. Self-sufficiency isn't really it, it's *about interdependency*. It can only come from community; you do this, I do that, you have milk, I make leather. When there's not that you have to build it and it's really hard to grow. We've built a lot in the last decade. The principles of interdependency, mimicking natural systems, these apply to everything. It's obvious in the polyculture but it applies to our economic system especially. This is the only way we're going to make a new model. This comes through cooperation. You don't even have to have money, if someone puts their skill and time into something, you don't conceptualize it through market mediums. It's more about skill and relative scarcity. I'll value what you produce.

As interdependency ensures a flourishing three sisters polyculture it also buttresses a community economy of reciprocity, collaborative labor, and mutual exchange. Against the alienation that derives from extracting surplus, Sally participates in an economy in which human and nonhuman value refuses to be reckoned by the bottom line. Moreover, surpluses circulate within the system rather than being captured and carted off as capital—a clear antithesis to the dominant, decaying economy of the extractive mining industry in Appalachia, and one framed in overt opposition to it.⁴² In these hills, the worth of human labor and its products is indexed more by use-value than exchange-value; goods circulate based on relative excess and relative need emancipated from the market and re-embedded in social relations. New social and economic approaches are born in and out of capitalism's material and ideological ruins.

In and around Clearwater Creek, principles of interdependency can be evidenced across an array of sites and scenes. At market, vendors barter with one another, exchanging excess for goods they need or desire. Virtually everything that gets consumed at Clearwater Creek is either produced on the farm or acquired through non-monetary exchange—milk comes from the neighbor's cow, pork from just down the street, bread from the Amish family in the next town over. The conclusion of the farmers market is always a lively space of trade in which one person's trash—too many baked goods or too much squash—becomes another's treasure. The economic cognate of compost. Much of the labor on the farm is that of voluntary exchange with daily tasks performed by apprentices in return for knowledge and experience, while larger one-off building projects (such as the shed or greenhouse) are executed by friendly work parties that inevitably transform into social parties. Even the regular community gatherings operate by this makeshift model and potlucks are a frequent occurrence. In the more-than-human economy cultivated in and around Clearwater Creek, bringing what you have to

42. The literature on Appalachia as an internal colony dominated by industrial extraction and exploitation is extensive. See for instance Eller, *Uneven Ground*; Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness*; Stewart, *The Space on the Side of the Road*; and, recently, Stoll, *Ramp Hollow*.

the table is met with abundance. Like polyculture farming, the whole adds up to more than the sum of its individual parts. Symbiosis, symposis, and sharing the surplus; the potluck economy is a human homology of cultivating interdependent ecologies.

Compost circularities and collaborations recursively inform economic principles and undergird the “more-than-human economy” of post-capitalism. But this rendering of community harmony is altogether too comfortable, eliding the myriad tensions of making a living and making a life at the margins of market governance. In the midst of the orchestrated clutter of the workhouse a newspaper article perches upon a pile; the headline reads “Don’t Let Your Children Grow Up to Be Farmers.” I think of that article one afternoon when Sally returns from errands in obvious despair, informed that the transmission on her truck was now far beyond repair. Her skilled tinkering had gotten the gears this far but they would have to be replaced. Even with salvaged parts from the junkyard, and donated labor, several hundred dollars is a fortune in an economy with plenty of collaboration but little cash. Failing to hold back tears, she laments “I’ve just been living on the edge for so long. I feel like a failure all the time. I don’t have money to buy anything. Not even coffee. And now the truck needs fixed and I don’t know what I’m going to do. I could wait several years and wouldn’t have the money to fix it. I feel so close to losing it all . . . all the time.” Living on the edges of capitalism is living on the edge indeed, an anxious space between precarious presents and uncertain futures.⁴³ The broken gearbox invokes a literal “troubled transmission . . . an interruption within a transition,”⁴⁴ representing a breakdown in an improvised infrastructure for alternative world-making. Here emerging and residual forms of relation, meaning, feeling, and value rub against one another in a friction both generative and agonizing. (Com)post-capitalism at Clearwater Creek is nourished by imperial debris—the durable subjects and objects of colonial and capitalist power still occupying the present—but can be feeble in face of it.⁴⁵

Precarity elicits a vulnerability to others and recognition that we are not in control, sprouting seeds of a more-than-human, post-man subjectivity. But insecurity is often experienced as a nightmare: “As for nature, the only thing worse than being closed to the natural world is being radically open to it.”⁴⁶ At Clearwater Creek, an affective atmosphere of anxiety is as thick as the fog of the Appalachian hills. I recently learned from a former apprentice that with no other assistance at the height of harvest season Sally had worked herself to such exhaustion that she literally passed out in the fields. Coming to under the scolding summer sun, Sally inexplicably exploded at the volunteer for not pulling her weight (the volunteer proceeded, not able to take the stress anymore, to pack up her things and hike out of Clearwater Creek). Precarity is the visceral experience of a worlding slipping away.⁴⁷ It’s in the frenzied, frenetic rush to get to market

43. Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, 61.

44. Berlant, “Commons,” 393.

45. For “imperial debris,” see Stoler, “Imperial Debris.”

46. Purdy, “Mushroom that Explains the World,” unpaginated.

47. Stewart, “Precarity’s Forms.”

because the produce scale is broken and there's only one spot with an electrical outlet. It's in the passionate prayers for sunlight when the secondhand solar panel gives out, and the deep freezer starts to thaw. It's in the enraged reaction to an apprentice dumping the excess ice water from the bottom of a cooler, "Why in the world would you waste that." Indeed, a conservation ethics is always already a conservation economics, and necessity is the mother of invention. "Economic statistics can grasp the condition of poverty in negative terms but not the forms of life . . . or capacities for innovation they generate."⁴⁸ The Janus face of vulnerability to nature and yet the stimulus of emancipatory forms of economic entanglement, precarity is the pro and the con of (com)post-capitalism.

Inhabiting the Anthropocene: Ruin and Rebirth, Weeds and Waste

Ducking into the outdoor kitchen, one is welcomed with a statement fashioned prominently above the doorway: "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete." This quote is oft-repeated around Clearwater Creek, in lunchtime conversations about political resistance or orienting visitors to the vision of the farm. Indeed, for Sally, it's a guiding principle of (com)post-capitalism, at once a way of conceptualizing her working and worlding at an unruly edge and a manifesto for a more-than-human economy at the margins.

As we've seen in the sections above, (com)post-capitalism is a precarious form of livelihood that both engenders new kinds of mutuality and exposes its subjects to conditions of intense vulnerability. Orthogonal to the logic of capitalism and yet never fully free from its orbit or deleterious effects, there is no promise of stability. But an analysis of a circular economy, of making ends meet with others, cannot end there. Precarious livelihood and wageless work is, *but is not only*, the pernicious condition of those most ravaged by global capitalism. It is, *but is not only*, what's left for the left out or the left behind. It is a survival strategy, *but it is also* a life project, fashioning and fashioned by particular social relations, sentiments, subjectivities, and modes of inhabitation.⁴⁹ As Kathleen Millar urges, to treat such labor as mere means of subsistence or survival is myopic, leaving little room to ask what else is produced in the process or to trace "how work is not only a livelihood but also a key site of struggle in everyday efforts to construct the good . . . how work is fundamentally entangled with moral and existential questions of what it means to live well."⁵⁰ This section gives life to Sally, adding a more human element to the more-than-human economy at Clearwater Creek while also positioning its post-capitalist politics as an ethics and an ethos. I emphasize that forms of making a living are also forms of making a life, and that the story of work cannot come without its world. Not, that is, if we are to better understand how ideologies quite

48. Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, xi.

49. Millar, *Reclaiming the Discarded*, 8.

50. Millar, *Reclaiming the Discarded*, 12–13.

literally come to matter or how precarious projects are experienced in everyday, embodied, and—in Sally’s case—potentially emancipatory ways.

Sally first came to these secluded hills after spending much of the 1980s as an unfulfilled corporate landscape architect, followed by nearly a decade with her husband in Mesoamerica. Working and living with highlanders she learned subsistence, simplicity, and survival: arts of getting by together. When her marriage ended abruptly she gathered the fragments of a shattered sense of self, returned to the US, and settled into Appalachia. With friends and what was left of her savings she split a hundred-acre parcel on an abandoned ridgetop zoned as unsuitable for habitation. In the aftermaths of both a broken marriage and an ecologically destructive extractive industry, Sally began cultivating (a) life in ruins.

Appalachia beckoned with an aura of an authentic frontier, a clearing in the woods, a blank slate for a new life. It offered an edge for experimentation and reinvention: Use Edges, Value the Marginal. Yet her experiences of working and worlding with highland *campesinos* linger. It is written in the built environment and land practices—traditional subsistence approaches combined with appropriate technologies and indigenous design—and in the polyculture agriculture itself. Not only do these methods (such as the three sisters above) produce an abundance of food sustainably on a limited amount of land, as with other heirlooms they also carry memories as well as meaning. While selecting seed of landrace corn for preservation and next year’s planting, Sally reflects, “The future of humanity rests in your [the volunteers] hands. It may seem like a mindless task but it’s as far from mindless as imaginable. It’s the most important thing that we can do. This is exactly how we used to do it when I was living with the Mayans. Every time I select seed, I think of sitting around with those women. Corn is sustenance for me now too.” Corn, a cultigen both obligate and obligating, suspended in biological and moral skeins. To inhabit a world, cultural as well as biological, as Vinciane Despret and Michel Meuret remind us, “is at once to be transformed by the environment and to transform it.”⁵¹

Sally’s shelter is precariously perched. In the valley below, conventional farms are strewn across the landscape and one of Sally’s nearest neighbors grows genetically modified corn. Each time we pass, Sally offers a poignant rebuke, “I just can’t believe he farms this way . . . he’s a Trump supporter you know.” Walking us through the towering rows of heirloom corn one afternoon, Sally gets worked up: “If I found a yellow kernel on one of these I don’t know what I’d do. I’d probably just call it quits right then and there. I’m already thinking about building my own cedar casket. Maybe then I can put it to use. Luckily I have this perimeter of forest between me and them [industrial agriculture]. So I should be safe up here. But you never know with that stuff.” The refuge of hills, a perimeter of pine, offers itself as a site of purity but also danger.⁵² Contamination lingers on the horizon and genetic drift threatens to sully the local moral and material world.

51. Despret and Meuret, “Cosmoecological Sheep and Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet,” 32.

52. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*.



Figure 2. The dumpster house, a meditation on salvage and salvation. Photo by author.

Indeed, the borders of Clearwater Creek are porous, and dwelling in this Appalachian ridgetop clearing is also an inhabitation. As Tim Ingold argues, being in the world is a becoming with the world, and inhabiting an environment is “not to look back on the things to be found in it, but to join with them in the material flows and movements contributing to their—and our—ongoing formation.”⁵³ While recombinant DNA in the form of genetically modified seeds contributes to an identity in contradistinction, Clearwater Creek is a site of its own alchemy of recombination—a refuge for refuse. As in the late industrial landscapes explored by Jason Pine here too “assemblies of objects that demonstrate extraordinary levels of articulation” are cobbled together from makeshift parts, Frankensteinian yet functional compositions that are also a “kind of world-compositioning.”⁵⁴ This work of bricolage is made manifest in what is playfully known as the “dumpster house”—the farm’s main multipurpose space for labor and leisure. Fashioned out of the industrial effluence of abject objects, gleaned from the garbage, the building (tenuously) stands as a composted critique of late capitalism and its (dis) contents (fig. 2). Shelves, jars, cutlery, appliances, tarps, plywood, books, coolers, pallets,

53. Ingold, *Being Alive*, 88. See also Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*.

54. Pine, “Last Chance Incorporated,” 300–301.

sheet metal, a wooden wire wheel making for a tentative table. A living room, in its fullest meaning; a site of inhabitation and a work-in-progress. Dumpster diving is its own form of salvage accumulation, but one undomesticated by capital.⁵⁵ It's a brand of back talk to mainstream, mass-consuming America.⁵⁶ "I used to dumpster dive a lot," she tells me, "It got to the point where there was a joke that if you needed to get a hold of me it was best just to hang out near the garbage. More likely than the phone." At Clearwater Creek, waste is never wasted. Produce no Waste. Value the Marginal. Industrial debris is cycled and recycled into hybrid formations fashioned from the actual shell of the old. "Commodities decompose and recombine"⁵⁷ and value circulates through immanence and innovation: "People as well as things are remade through waste work . . . retooled for new economic regimes."⁵⁸ Making the world anew through occult ways of mattering, these are emergent forms of life that offer hope in a blasted landscape.⁵⁹

Kathleen Stewart encourages attention to worlds of matter—landscapes abounding with objects and emotional investment—observing the "intimate, compositional process of dwelling in spaces."⁶⁰ For Stewart, worlds are horizons of habitation in ongoing transformation and a means of understanding assemblages with attention to emergence—to the entanglement of entities and the affective attunement of being "in" something. Worlds can be overt critiques as well as cocoons, states of burrowing in, nestling down, and anticipatory of more-than-human metamorphosis. They are composed of stories, and of "the ruined objects piled up on the landscape . . . not just some kind of resistance, or even the resilience of a way of life, but the actual residue of people 'making something of things.'"⁶¹ Such worlds are fragile zones of liminality, pregnant with possibility and undetermined outcomes.

Making something of things, inhabitation demands composing and composting with objects, images, and ideas. At Clearwater Creek, the makeshift walls are everywhere wallpapered with posters and stickers of every sort—Grow Your Own Health Care. Be The Change. Belong To Each Other. Start Gardens, Not Wars (fig. 3). Scraps of material to *mâché* a countercultural cocoon in opposition to capital and the state. Be a Weed offers a particularly suggestive admonition, offering as it does an appreciation for what manages to survive (even thrive) despite disturbance as well as an interpellation of an identity in contradistinction. The sticker reads "A weed is a plant that has mastered every survival skill except learning to grow in rows. Be a Weed." As we saw above, weeds are pioneer species reclaiming bare or blasted earth; they are feral and firmly

55. See Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*.

56. Stewart, *Space on the Side of the Road*. See also Giles, "Anatomy of a Dumpster."

57. Pine, "Last Chance Incorporated," 306.

58. Alexander and Reno, *Economies of Recycling*, 3

59. Fischer, *Emergent Forms of Life*; Kirksey et al., "Hope in a Blasted Landscape."

60. Stewart, "Atmospheric Attunements," 445.

61. Stewart, "Atmospheric Attunements," 447.



Figure 3. Mantras for the more-than-human economy. Photo by author.

rooted, and often refuse to leave. At Clearwater Creek they are a more-than-human muse, a role model in their reclamation of scarred spaces. Contrarian to the monocultures of modernity and mind where “everything else becomes weeds or waste,”⁶² Sally sees her life’s work as a punk project, a refusal to be domesticated, a resilience in the face of adversity, a steward of the soil.

Meals at Clearwater Creek are a celebration of nature’s bounty and of our co-constitutive collaborations working with it. Holding hands with heads bowed, each commences with a ritualized reading from a cobbled together collection of eco-spiritual or eco-socialist sayings. A kind of prayer for the coming of (com)post-capitalism. They speak to the overt politics and ethics of Sally’s project. Consider an excerpt: “If we will have the wisdom to survive, to stand like slow growing trees, on a ruined place, renewing, enriching it . . . then a long time after we are dead the lives our lives prepare will live.” Sally sees her weedy work as a reclamation of ruins. She’s not merely surviving on a damaged planet, she’s redeeming it. Her chosen occupation is an occupation indeed; a dirt-laden direct action, a standing ground like a deeply rooted tree. And like any good compost, she understands her labors as preparation for the coming of new life. Fertile humus for more-than-human entanglements.

At Clearwater Creek, photo albums abound, chronicling trajectories of development as a life, and landscape, comes together. The outhouse is itself a scrap book of sorts, commemorating friends, volunteers, and other invisible labor with a decade of photographs bonded to the walls. A revealing citation politics that further acknowledges silent sources. In these images, individuals stand erect holding farm implements or a playful deviation, in tribute to Grant Wood’s iconic image of life on the farm. A

62. Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, 6. See also Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind*.

collage of romance and resistance, the new American Gothic. Scavenged, sentimental “ruined objects” are strewn across the landscape—a cement city sewage pipe, a kiddie pool, a tilting trailer—part of world-compositioning set to an improvised rhythm. Vestiges of abandonment, a literal making something of the things. Dwelling by decomposition. Composition as compost. Recombinant Life.

A More-than-Human Economy in the Making

Appropriate for a story of compost, this essay ends at the beginning. The quote introduced in the epigraph was another farm favorite, ritually read in anticipation of meals. A Manifesto of the Mad Farmer Liberation Front, it succinctly captures the paradigm of Sally’s project. Profit is sharing the surplus with multispecies communities. Return on investment is both more-than-human and millennial—prosperity for all, into posterity. Growth is conceptualized as a (re)cycle: rot, ruin, and rebirth. Dividends take the form of decay. Faith is placed in fertile soil and hope in humus. Liberation is a product of working and worlding together, a building of a more-than-human model that makes the old one obsolete.

Post-capitalism here refers to the decentering of capitalism as both an object of analysis and a context of contestation, as well as the displacement of capitalist subjects and politics. This perspective allows other ways of production and reproduction to emerge as viable alternatives to business as usual. I think with Gibson-Graham, recognizing the need to read for difference and seek out sites of emancipation from problematic logics and lifeways: to hold space for the nowhere of the utopian imagination and the now-here of present projects not always already compromised by capital. This is the radical act of compost, of looking for life in ruins. It is the advantage of muddling at the margins, of explorations at the edge. Such spaces can be zones of abandonment, but also of autonomy and anarchism—refuges of resistance.⁶³ This approach is not to ignore the reality of what militates against but to seed a future otherwise by identifying cracks in the concrete, emergence in the interstices, life on the other side of death.⁶⁴ We have a choice in how we interpret Sally’s struggles, so too does Sally. She sees herself as cultivating (com)post-capitalism through a kind of weedy work and worlding—without comfortable reprieve, resolution of tension, or wholesale liberation, yet still harboring a hope for reclaiming blasted landscapes. The problem is the solution. Yet another lesson learned. I have thus focused on points of rupture, highlighting new kinds of relation being built in and out of the shell of the old. If capitalism creates its own gravediggers, à la Marx, they may well take the form of composters. And if Haraway urges us to share speculative stories of the children of compost so that we might performatively

63. See, for instance, Scott *Art of Not Being Governed*, and Grubacic and O’Hearn, *Living at the Edges of Capitalism*.

64. “These experiments are the possible embryos of a new world, the interstitial movements from which a new society could grow.” Holloway, *Crack Capitalism*, 11.

invite such imaginaries into being,⁶⁵ I suggest that future is not fabulation but already here in fledgling form. Telling such tales and practicing such politics is not a “dithering while the planet burns”⁶⁶ but an art of noticing, of attentiveness, and of living, pregnant with possibility for more-than-human livability.

Siding with Sally, and many scholars,⁶⁷ on the importance of construction rather than critique—on building worlds rather than (only) tearing them down—this essay has highlighted how an ecological ethic proposed by permaculture recursively informs an emerging economic paradigm for making ends meet with others, where surpluses born of synergies feed back into the system. Sally’s farm exposes “weedy landscapes,” the “‘vacant places’ of progress narratives, so often imagined without value,”⁶⁸ and brings attention to what drops out in the narrow accounting of capitalist modernity. Hers is a world of compost, a ruins in the (re)making by humans and more-than-human others. It is, as Stewart says, “a place apart—an ‘other America’ defined within and against an encompassing surround and become an inhabitable space of desire.”⁶⁹ But a place apart is always already a place *a part*, assembled and entangled and caught up in webs of meaning and materiality in the making; thick with aspiration, agency, anticipation, affect, anxiety, and alterity. On the grounds of the ridgetop, things compose, decompose, and recompose to take new forms—suspended in the middle of things, with no clear resolution or dissolution. A Deleuzian plateau.⁷⁰ Indeed, “through industry and ruination, a human body and a landscape compose a life tenuously holding together.”⁷¹ It calls on us to attend to not (only) forms of metabolic labor⁷²—nonhuman vitalities that generate surplus value—but (also) forms of metabolic life. Inextricable interlinkages: economic, ecological, ethical, and otherwise.

(Com)post-capitalism is an art of making a living on a damaged planet; a more-than-human economy that reunites the two daughters of *oikos*—economy and ecology. It is an “ecology of production” in which hands on the land might lead to mutual, multi-species flourishing.⁷³ It may engender a shift in the regime of nature’s value, emancipating it from its yoke as commodity or capital, its condition as ontological other. It may

65. “The Camille Stories [Children of Compost] are invitations to participate in a kind of genre fiction committed to strengthening ways to propose near futures, possible futures, and implausible but real nows.” Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 136.

66. Hornburg, “Dithering while the Planet Burns.”

67. This literature is emerging yet extensive, including much of the recent feminist scholarship referenced throughout. For excellent introductions see Robbins, “Beyond the Suffering Subject,” and Ortner, “Dark Anthropology and Its Others.”

68. Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, 282.

69. Stewart, *Space on the Side of the Road*, 41.

70. “A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. A rhizome is made of plateaus. . . whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point.” Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 21–22.

71. Pine, “Last Chance Incorporated,” 311.

72. Beldo, “Metabolic Labor.”

73. Paxson, *Life of Cheese*.

also inspire a reconsideration, in the fullest sense of the term, of the responsibilities of humans always already constitutive of it. For it is precisely through such forms of alternative agriculture, offering as they do an embodied relationship with more-than-human others and a symbiotic, synergetic community of coflourishing, that new ways of being and acting in the world are imagined and enacted. An aspirational Planthroposcene where we learn to cultivate more livable futures with plants.⁷⁴ As Despret and Meuret highlight in the entangled, embryonic cosmo-ecologies of new shepherds, cultivating sheep also cultivates a capacity to be affected, a “practice that learns to compose with the world . . . and [helps invent] ways of inhabiting a world that is being destroyed while resisting, locally and actively, this destruction.”⁷⁵ In the disturbed landscapes of a damaged planet, emergent ecologies, emergent economies, and emergent forms of human and nonhuman life all come into being. Compositional and decompositional—characterized by rot, decay, and regeneration—(com)post-capitalism resembles the life that arises from death explored by Kristina Lyons in the *selva* of Colombia.⁷⁶ It too offers a life politics for the Anthropocene. For compost, the looping back to begin again engendered by multispecies muddles, nourishes novel ways of making a living and making a life. Both are cobbled together in and of the fecund ruins of capitalism—born of residues and emergences.⁷⁷

Stacy Alaimo offers an account of one woman’s journey “becoming dirt.” In cultivating a garden, the woman inadvertently cultivates a kinship with soil, the otherwise sullied substance. “Munching on a bag of Doritos, she is about to toss the crumbs in her composting trench but stops: ‘nope,’ I thought, ‘can’t feed that crap to my dirt.’”⁷⁸ I suggest, following Puig de la Bellacasa, that this kind of transformation is an ethics of care produced in practice, “an everyday doing that connects the personal to the collective and decentres the human, as well as grounding ethical obligation in concrete relationalities in the making.”⁷⁹ Dirt, through its cultivation and care, becomes not only a bioinfrastructure but a “bioinfrastructure of feeling”—a social experience in solution, an emerging more-than-human common sense seeking conditions of crystallization.⁸⁰ However, as Alaimo also proposes, an opening up of human bodies to a more-than-human world is always already muddled by membranes, flesh, and skin, but also judgments and symbolic imaginaries, habits, habitus, and ways of being in the world.⁸¹ This is the anxiety experienced by Sally as she quite literally struggles to downshift (e.g., the

74. Myers, “From the Anthropocene to the Planthroposcene.”

75. Despret and Meuret, “Cosmoecological Sheep,” 30.

76. Lyons, “Decomposition as Life Politics.”

77. See Williams, *Marxism and Literature*.

78. Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*, 12.

79. Puig de la Bellacasa, “Ethical Doings in Naturecultures,” 152.

80. See Puig de la Bellacasa, “Encountering Bioinfrastructure”; and on structures of feeling, Williams, *Marxism and Literature*.

81. Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*, 14.

troubled transmission) into (com)post-capitalism, and to dwell in the space between purity and danger, cooperation and vulnerability, promise and precarity, present and possible future(s). For as Antonio Gramsci notes we are inhabiting the interregnum, the gap between as “the old world is dying and the new world struggles to be born.” Now is the time of ghosts and monsters.⁸² The task ahead is to stay with the trouble of cultivating more-than-human economies demanding our care. Such are the arts of living and making a living on a damaged planet. The charter of (com)post-capitalism.

BRADLEY M. JONES is a doctoral candidate in the department of anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis. Collaborating with young and beginning farmers in Appalachia and the Hudson Valley of New York, he is interested in alternative ways of working with and knowing nature.

Acknowledgments

Like any good compost this article has benefited from the generous, generative contributions of multiple sources. For helpful comments I thank James Babbitt, Peter Benson, Venus Bivar, Zachary Nowak, Heather O’Leary, Catie Peters, Kedron Thomas, and Olav Velthuis. For steadfast support I thank Glenn Stone. I appreciate the opportunity to share at various conferences/workshops, and I thank in particular: Heather Paxson at the American Anthropological Association annual meetings (and beyond!); Annemarie Mol and the Eating Bodies research group at University of Amsterdam; Cristina Grasseni and the Food Citizens? research group at Leiden; and Washington University in St. Louis Culture Club. My gratitude also goes to two anonymous reviewers, Marco Armiero, and the *Environmental Humanities* editorial team. I appreciate continued support from the National Science Foundation and Wenner-Gren Foundation. I thank Sally for teaching me to see the possibility of life emerging from ruins.

References

- Abrahamson, Sebastian, and Filippo Bertoni. “Compost Politics: Experimenting with Togetherness in Vermicomposting.” *Environmental Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2014): 125–48.
- Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Alexander, Catherine, and Joshua Reno. *Economies of Recycling: The Global Transformation of Materials, Values, and Social Relations*. New York: Zed, 2012.
- Bear, Laura, Karen Ho, Anna Tsing, and Sylvia Yanagisako. “Gens: A Feminist Manifesto for the Study of Capitalism.” *Theorizing the Contemporary, Cultural Anthropology* website, March 30, 2015. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/652-gens-a-feminist-manifesto-for-the-study-of-capitalism>.
- Beldo, Les. “Metabolic Labor: Broiler Chickens and the Exploitation of Vitality.” *Environmental Humanities* 9, no. 1 (2017): 108–28.
- Berlant, Lauren. “The Commons: Infrastructures for Troubling Times.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 34, no. 3 (2016): 393–419.
- Berry, Wendell. “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front.” *In Context*, no. 2 (1991). www.context.org/iclib/ic20/berry/.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

82. See Tsing et al. *Arts of Living*; and Muehlenbach, “Time of Monsters.”

- Despret, Vinciane. "The Body We Care For: Figures of Anthro-zoo-Genesis." *Body and Society* 20, nos. 2–3 (2004): 111–34.
- Despret, Vinciane, and Michel Meuret. "Cosmoecological Sheep and the Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet." *Environmental Humanities* 8, no. 1 (2016): 24–36.
- Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Routledge, 2002 (1966).
- Eller, Ronald D. *Uneven Ground: Appalachia since 1945*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008.
- Fischer, Michael M. J. *Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Fortun, Kim. "Ethnography in Late Industrialism." *Cultural Anthropology* 27, no. 3 (2012): 446–64.
- Foster, John Bellamy. "Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 2 (1999): 366–405.
- Foster, John Bellamy, Brett Clark, and Richard York. *Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010.
- Gaventa, John. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1982.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. *A Postcapitalist Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. "A Feminist Project of Belonging for the Anthropocene." *Gender, Place, and Culture* 18, no. 1 (2011): 1–21.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K., and Gerda Roelvink. "An Economic Ethics for the Anthropocene." *Antipode* 41, no. 1 (2010): 320–46.
- Giles, David Boarder. "The Anatomy of a Dumpster: Abject Capital and the Looking Glass of Value." *Social Text* 32, no. 1 (2014): 93–113.
- Goodman, David, Bernardo Sorj, and John Wilkinson. *From Farming to Biotechnology: A Theory of Agro-Industrial Development*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987.
- Grubacic, Andrej, and Denis O'Hearn. *Living at the Edges of Capitalism: Adventures in Exile and Mutual Aid*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 2014.
- Gudeman, Stephen. *Anthropology and Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Gudeman, Stephen, and Alberto Rivera. *Conversations in Colombia: The Domestic Economy in Life and Text*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Halperin, Rhoda H. *Cultural Economies Past and Present*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.
- Haraway, Donna. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin." *Environmental Humanities* 6 (2015): 159–65.
- Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Hardt, Michael. "Affective Labor." *boundary* 26, no. 2 (1999): 89–100.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Commonwealth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.
- Hart, Keith, Jean-Louis Laville, and Antonio David Cattani. *The Human Economy*. Malden, MA: Polity, 2010.
- Holloway, John. *Crack Capitalism*. New York: Pluto Press, 2010.
- Hornburg, Alf. "Dithering while the Planet Burns: Anthropologists' Approaches to the Anthropocene." *Reviews in Anthropology* 46 nos. 2–3 (2017): 61–77.
- Ingold, Tim. *Perception of the Environment: Lessons on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Ingold, Tim. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge, and Description*. London: Routledge, 2011.
- Kawa, Nicholas C. "Shit." Theorizing the Contemporary. *Cultural Anthropology* website. April 6, 2016. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/843-shit>.
- Kirksey, Eben. *Emergent Ecologies*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.
- Kirksey, Eben, Nicholas Shapiro, and Maria Brodine. "Hope in a Blasted Landscape." In *The Multispecies Salon*, edited by Eben Kirksey, 29–63. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014.

- Latour, Bruno. "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern." *Critical Inquiry*, winter (2004): 225–48.
- Latour, Bruno. "Another Way to Compose the Common World." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, no. 1 (2014): 301–07.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*. New York: HarperCollins, 1974.
- Lyons, Kristina. "Decomposition as Life Politics: Soils, Selva, and Small Farmers under the Gun of the U.S.-Colombian War on Drugs." *Cultural Anthropology* 31, no. 1 (2016): 56–81.
- Millar, Kathleen M. *Reclaiming the Discarded: Life and Labor on Rio's Garbage Dumps*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018.
- Muehlenbach, Andrea. "Time of Monsters." Hot Spots. *Cultural Anthropology* website. October 27, 2016. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/979-time-of-monsters>.
- Myers, Natasha. "From the Anthropocene to the Planthropocene: Designing Gardens for Plant/People Involution." *History and Anthropology* 28, no. 3 (2017): 297–301.
- Ortner, Sherry. "Dark Anthropology and Its Others: Theory since the Eighties." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6, no. 1 (2016): 47–73.
- Paxson, Heather. *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Pine, Jason. "Last Chance Incorporated." *Cultural Anthropology* 31, no. 2 (2016): 297–318.
- Povinelli, Elizabeth. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Puig de la Bellacasa, Maria. "Ethical Doings in Naturecultures." *Ethics, Place and Environment* 13, no. 2 (2010): 151–69.
- Puig de la Bellacasa, Maria. "Encountering Bioinfrastructure: Ecological Struggles and the Sciences of the Soil." *Social Epistemology* 28, no. 1 (2014): 26–40.
- Puig de la Bellacasa, Maria. *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More-than-Human Worlds*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.
- Purdy, Jedidiah. "The Mushroom that Explains the World." *New Republic*, October 8, 2015.
- Robbins, Joel. "Beyond the Suffering Subject: Toward an Anthropology of the Good." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19 (2013): 447–62.
- Schabas, Margaret. *The Natural Origins of Economics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- Scott, James C. *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Scott, James C. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Shiva, Vandana. *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology*. New York: Zed, 1993.
- Star, Susan Leigh. "The Ethnography of Infrastructure." *American Behavioral Scientist* 43, no. 3 (1999): 377–91.
- Stengers, Isabelle. "The Cosmopolitical Proposal." In *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, edited by Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, 994–1003. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005.
- Stewart, Kathleen. *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Stewart, Kathleen. "Atmospheric Attunements." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29 (2011): 445–53.
- Stewart, Kathleen. "Precarity's Forms." *Cultural Anthropology* 27, no. 3 (2012): 518–25.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. "Imperial Debris: Reflection on Ruins and Ruination." *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 2 (2008): 191–219.
- Stoll, Steven. *Ramp Hollow: The Ordeal of Appalachia*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2017.
- Tsing, Anna. *In The Realm of the Diamond Queen: Marginality in an Out-of-the-Way Place*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.

- Tsing, Anna. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Tsing, Anna. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Tsing, Anna. "The Buck, the Bull, and the Dream of the Stag: Some Unexpected Weeds of the Anthropocene." *Suomen Antropologi* 42, no. 1 (2017): 3–21.
- Tsing, Anna, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nihls Bubandt. *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.
- van Dooren, Thom. "Care." *Environmental Humanities* 5 (2014): 291–94.
- van Dooren, Thom, Eben Kirksey, and Ursula Munster. "Multispecies Studies: Cultivating Arts of Attentiveness." *Environmental Humanities* 8, no. 1 (2016): 1–23.
- Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.