

# Vegetate

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Vegeō, vegēre, veguī, vegetum

In popular parlance, when people vegetate, they spend the weekend on the couch in flannel pajamas in a monster binge of multiple seasons of *Scott and Bailey* (or, at least, I might). When people vegetate *persistently*, their brainstems keep basic functions going (circulation, respiration, digestion) but they do not display what we generally like to think of as consciousness: they are considered alive and cannot be killed/let die without a lot of legal wrangling, but they do not demonstrate critical kinds of awareness or independent capability. Even more: as Mark Twain wrote famously in *The Innocents Abroad*, vegetating is directly opposed to activity, to citizenship, and to cosmopolitanism: “Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime.”<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, when plants or fungi or viruses vegetate, they are understood to grow prolifically, even abnormally quickly (although the usage is a bit anachronistic, tumors are also said to vegetate when they metastasize). According to the *OED*, plants vegetate both intransitively and transitively: they vegetate by growing (as in the annual rhythms of vegetation and senescence or death that are common among temperate angiosperms) and they are also vegetated by cultivators who create landscapes by establishing particular plants to grow in particular locations with particular results. Plants also vegetate by propagating asexually: witness the rhizomatic growth of trembling aspens in the middle of North America that spread on a pretty cosmopolitan spatial and

temporal scale, creating (arguably) the largest and oldest single organism on the planet.

Vegetal *veering* is thus a form of movement that is conceivably both passive and active.<sup>2</sup> When people and animals vegetate, they are considered largely inert: alive but not quite fully. When plants and other nonanimal organisms do likewise, they are considered abundantly alive, perhaps even excessively so. Etymology makes things even more complicated. The English word *vegetate* dates from the early seventeenth century and means to grow as plants do; the sense of leading an inert, passive life employed by Twain emerged later, in the mid-eighteenth century (not accidentally at about the same time as the beginning of the modern sciences). The word originates, however, in the Latin *vegĕre*, “to be active,” and applies (intransitively and transitively, actively and passively, singularly and plurally) to a range of persons, plants, and other beings, including the active first-person human singular: *vegeō*, *I am lively*, *I am active*, *I excite*, *I arouse*.

To understand this paradox, prolific vegetal (vegetating?) philosopher Michael Marder might direct us to the Greeks, whose thinking on questions of life and living has exerted, and continues to exert, a powerful influence on Western metaphysics. Very briefly: for Aristotle, there are three kinds of living force (or soul, or *psukhe*): growth, nutrition, and reproduction (nutritive or vegetative soul); perception, sensation, and locomotion (sensitive soul); and thought and intellect (rational soul). Hierarchically arranged, plants are at the lowest level and display the activities suited to vegetable beings, those of the nutritive soul; up the ladder, then, animals display sensitive soul, and only human beings rational soul. However, these soul activities are *cumulative*, meaning that beings higher up the scale demonstrate both their own unique forms of activity and those of the beings below them: animals display nutritive as well as sensitive activities, and humans have sensitive and nutritive desires as well as rational ones.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, when people vegetate, they are not so much being *passive* as demonstrating those *activities* that are consistent with the vegetal undergrowth of their *psukhe*: growth, nutrition, reproduction, decay. Reflecting on vegetating, then (which would, of course, no longer be vegetating: plant soul is not self-representing in this way even if we do access something of vegetal desire when we are thirsty), could indicate a practice through which people might come to feel the

pulsing vibrations of our plant-selves, our kinship with plants, our common enactments of liveliness, something almost completely foreign to our habitual instrumentalization of the entire plant kingdom as wholly other, largely inert, and unquestionably consumable.

I rather like this idea, but I am getting ahead of myself. The fact that vegetating is considered an active part of the human psyche in Aristotle and in many other places in the history of Western philosophy does not, despite my desire to the contrary, mean that vegetating is *valued* in this schema any more highly than it is in modern, more taxonomic separations. Plants remain at the bottom of the ladder of living for Aristotle, and scholars as diverse as Dante Alighieri, G. W. F. Hegel, and Hannah Arendt confirm his anthropocentric order in which thinking—and doing/acting thoughtfully—is always already understood as a higher form of living than vegetating because it enacts the *noblest* elements of the human's tripartite soul, because it demonstrates an orientation of growth to a *higher* teleological purpose in the dialectical upward-progression of Spirit and/or because it enables the individual person to conduct a reflective dialogue with herself in order to move *beyond* the biological exigencies of bodily survival. Don't get me wrong: I am a big fan of thinking (with Arendt, I firmly believe that allowing the mind to withdraw from the phenomenal, processual world of vegetating and animating for a while in order to reflect on it is a necessary—if not, unfortunately, sufficient—preventative of tyrannies both totalitarian and banal). But is it really necessary to demean the form of living that is vegetating in the process of defending reasoning, reflecting, and understanding? Is a recognition of our own vegetative life *as such*—an understanding, however tentative and fleeting, of our own constitutional plantiness—necessarily a capitulation to couch potato-dom?

Marder does not think so: his book *Plant-Thinking* includes the important observation that plants encourage us to imagine a form of living that is not always predicated on the central assumption of an individual self in encounter with discrete others: the plant is “indifferent to the distinction between the inner and the outer, it is literally locked in itself, but in such a way that it merges with the external environment, to which it is completely beholden.”<sup>4</sup> Elaine Miller makes a similar point in *The Vegetative Soul*, which (brilliantly) follows vegetation through nineteenth-century German Idealism and Romanticism: here, “the vegetative soul,

in contrast to the animated soul, emphasizes rootedness, vulnerability, interdependence, and transformative possibility rather than a separation of soul from body, actualization, and a stance of aggressiveness and self-preservation.”<sup>5</sup> And Theresa Kelley, following similar philosophical shoots, spends a delightful chapter of her book *Clandestine Marriage* pitting Hegel against J. W. von Goethe in an extended fencing match between vegetative desire and teleological orientation: for every subordination of nutritive growth to the pointedly individuating and entelechial dictates of Spirit, she parries, via Goethe, with a defense of “the individuality, particularity, and metamorphosis of the plant form, and the contingent, unsystematic energy of nature in general.”<sup>6</sup>

Vegetation flourishes, in these forays, because the process of *thinking like a plant* reveals to us what we have chosen to forget in dominant Western philosophical and scientific imaginations of our human selves as primarily rational, self-organizing, and independent beings over and above all others: a sense of our profound dependence on and location in the conditions of our growth and decay, including the other beings with whom we share these elements of liveliness. To vegetate, then, suggests a thinking response to our plantiness. As Marder argues, this kind of work involves not only thinking *about* plants as objects of attention and reflection (given how many people fail to notice plants at all, that is still not a bad place to start) but also thinking *with* plants “and, consequently, *with* and *in* the environment, from which they [and we] are not really separate.”<sup>7</sup> I vegetate, you vegetate, we vegetate: despite the inevitable difficulties of representation, and debates about ethical action, that will no doubt adhere to any project of thinking like/with/as plants, it seems to me that it is ecologically important to reflect on the ways in which we are constituted by vegetal desires that both connect us with and remind us of our shared aliveness with/as plants. Although vegetating does not presume a specific right course of action toward particular plants, such as demanding the inclusion of plants in privileged liberal discourses of rights (in fact, it suggests the opposite: opening the question of ethical relationship to forms of life and relationship that are not premised on the masculine, singular, sovereign agent and may instead align more closely with feminine, plural modes of subjectivity),<sup>8</sup> it most certainly suggests an attentive and lively practice in which possibilities for ecological kinship are able to germinate, proliferate, and even effloresce.

## Vegeta(ria)t(e)

Despite important criticisms of his anthropocentrism, Michel Foucault remains a key interlocutor in contemporary thinking about multispecies biopolitics. As he writes in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, “For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question.”<sup>9</sup> What is important to note here is that, for Foucault, it is precisely the embodied *animality* of humans—our shared biological capacities for living and dying that can be harnessed directly by forces of power primarily oriented to *bodies* rather than, say, to consciences—that renders us biopolitical subjects. Although as Nicole Shukin and others have pointed out, this human-animalization does not mean that animals are generally well treated in biopolitical relations (some animals are highly regarded and appear to become humanlike in law, policy, and popular culture even as others are exploited, enslaved, and killed en masse),<sup>10</sup> it does mean that matters of life and organismic kinship—including ecological understanding—potentially come to the fore in new ways: humans become biological beings, and other biological beings begin to look more like us as a result. Animal suffering, for example, emerges as an important ethical/political concern in the same context as laboratory rats are considered useful models for human reactions to medication: we are understood to share elements of physiology, response, and affect, and to function optimally or wither (for Foucault, to make live or let die) in response to similar kinds of variables.

As Jeffrey Nealon writes in his provocative intervention into biopolitical understanding, it is thus not *the animal* that is abjected in and excluded from modern understandings of life, but rather *the plant*: animals do not function in modernity as our Others because we are so powerfully rendered animal ourselves. Instead, what remains in the sphere of absolute Otherness is the vegetal. “Following Foucault’s reading,” Nealon writes:

One might suggest that [the] role of abjected other as having been played throughout the biopolitical era [is] not by the animal but by the plant—which was indeed forgotten as the privileged form of life at the dawn of

biopower. In this context it is probably worth recalling that the biomass of plant life on Earth's terra firma does remain approximately one thousand times greater than the combined zoomass of all humans and other animals.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, he argues, it is important not just to trace the ways in which Western thinkers have historically subdivided life by contrasting humans with animals (as is Giorgio Agamben's project in *The Open*),<sup>12</sup> but also to examine how we currently and institutionally organize our planetary preeminence by equating meaningful life (*bios*) with animality and expendable "mere" life (*zoë*) with vegetality.

More precisely, continental philosophy—the main subject of Nealon's inquiry—remains largely opposed to a consideration of the ways in which plants *as plants* enact, complicate, and model life and living in a biopolitical era: despite (for example) Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's multiple invocations of the rhizome as a mode of nonteleological subjectivity and liberation, the metaphor does not get at the actual conditions of vegetation (and thus life) in neoliberal, biopolitical capitalism. In this moment, he argues, "the vegetable *psukhe* of life is a concept or image of thought that far better characterizes our biopolitical present than does the human-animal image of life."<sup>13</sup> To vegeta(ria)t(e), here, is then to consider more fully how we are biopolitical subjects in an era that intervenes not only in our human and animal souls (rationality, subjectivation, perception, discipline) but also in our vegetal ones, in the realms of nutrition, growth, and decay: in other words, in our growing, eating, thirsting, reproducing, senescing, decaying, and composting bodies.

Plants are clearly treated badly in neoliberal biopolitics. Think, for example, of the ways in which so-called terminator technologies are employed by multinational agri-corporations specifically to deny plants the ability to reproduce of their own accord by producing fertile seeds to spawn a new generation. In addition to the fact that such technologies deprive farmers of the ability to collect and save seeds for future planting (which is the point of the technology), they also intervene directly into plants' bodies in order to render their properties of growth and reproduction as sites of profit and accumulation as fully as possible. Plants are intensively hybridized, genetically altered, vegetated/germinated, and controlled on a massive scale, and their specific capacities are patented

in order to serve particular corporate ends: from attempts to hybridize and/or regulate against open pollination to direct genetic and chemical manipulation of specific cultivars in order to create vegetal forms that serve specific consumer desires (strawberries in Canada in February that taste somewhat like strawberries), precisely the quality of *vegetation* is more and more harnessed to capitalist accumulation. Hence, I propose the *vegetariat*:<sup>14</sup> capitalist accumulation is not possible without the ever-intensifying exploitation of the surplus labor of plants. Intensive (ab)use of plants is the rule, even in a universe that has begun to question the widespread exploitation of animals, because we still do not largely consider plant-lives as meaningful.

Again, this is not to say that I think that we should pursue anything like plant rights in response to this exploitation (a proposition that many animal rights advocates find patently absurd if not outright destructive to animal rights and welfare agendas).<sup>15</sup> In fact, rather than imagine that plants should be granted ethical status on the basis of their resemblance to humans (e.g., their potential capacities for pain and suffering), we should instead consider the ways in which people and animals are increasingly organized and controlled *like and even as plants* in a neo-liberal biopolitical universe. Our capacities for nutrition, growth, and reproduction are the precise vectors of intervention in current economic and policy debates about “proper” life and living: people are not only animalized, but people and animals are also vegetated, treated as beings whose most plant-like capacities are the stuff of concern. To hell with questions of perception, sensation, and rationality in this era: what is at the forefront of current political debate is where and when and how we are to live as reproducing, productive bodies who serve the polis by way of being, simply, alive. Growing. Populating. Spreading. Invading. Vegetating. Vegetariating.

In this context, recent literature on “plant intelligence” gives me pause. On the one hand, I am very pleased to see plants get recognition for the important work they do to keep life going (including, but obviously not only, under capitalism) and also for the ways in which they participate as complex, sensate, and interactive beings in the process (in fact, so much so that the line drawn between “vegetal” and “animal” forms of liveliness no longer holds firm). According to Stefano Mancuso and Alessandra Viola, for example, “A compelling body of research shows

that higher-order plants really are ‘intelligent’: able to receive signals from their environment, process the information, and devise solutions adaptive to their own survival.”<sup>16</sup> Further, their intelligence is both singular and collective: “They manifest a kind of ‘swarm intelligence’ that enables them to behave not as an individual but as a multitude.”<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, then, this research is all too easily parlayed into new modes of control: understanding *and harnessing* collective vegetal intelligence, here, becomes another mode of biopolitical intervention into life as, for example, plant signaling chemistry comes to be used in new agricultural, communicative, and even robotic technologies. As Mancuso and Viola themselves enthuse: “For some time now, there’s been talk of plant-inspired robots, a real generation of planetoids. . . . Plans are also under way for the construction of plant-based networks, with the capacity to use plants as ecological switchboards and make available on the Internet in real time the parameters that are continuously monitored by the roots and leaves. . . . Soon the plant Internet may become part of everyday life for all of us.”<sup>18</sup> The point is that the exploitation of plant intelligence is not, here, only about plants: in this context, because we all vegetate, we all *vegetariate*.

That plants have intelligence is not really a new understanding. That plants are understood to have intelligence in much the same biological manner as animals and humans have intelligence is, however, a relatively recent incorporation of vegetation into popular discourses of animation/perception and even cogitation/thinking that were once considered the sole realm of *Homo sapiens*. I do not mean to suggest that it is a bad idea to extend understandings of intelligence to include plants. I do mean to suggest that it is a mistake to equate the consideration of plants as intelligent, responsive, thinking beings with the idea that this understanding means that plants will necessarily benefit from this new understanding or that an understanding of shared vegetative intelligence is necessarily liberatory. Human beings have become animals in the biopolitical age: we are members of a species, population, race, sex, group, vector, heredity. This incorporation has not spelled better treatment for people. Animals have become “people” in the manner that people are now animals: beings that can suffer, emote, relate. This treatment spawns new ethical responses to animals but only within a very limited range. And now: plants. It’s an open question.

## Vege(bili)tate

I am walking through a grove of old Douglas-fir trees on the southeastern tip of Vancouver Island, in the place that was ancestrally, and is now again, known as PKOLS. In SENĆOŦEN, PKOLS means “White Head,” possibly referring to the fact that the place was the last from which the glaciers receded from Vancouver Island (for about 160 years, the place was also known by white colonists as “Mount Douglas,” but after a different Douglas).<sup>19</sup> The trees are large, brown, wet, thick, textured, and imposing. There are enormous sword ferns everywhere in the understory, green, dense, reaching, enclosing. It is December, and everything drips with the winter rain. The trees, ferns, salal, and Oregon-grape shine slick green against the pewter sky.

Coast Douglas-firs (properly hyphenated because they are not true firs) typically live to be over 750 years old and can reach ninety meters in height. The WSÁNEĆ people (who call them JSÁY) have used them extensively for thousands of years: their thick bark is an excellent, hot-burning fuel; their durable wood can be crafted into all manner of useful implements, like poles for salmon weirs; their prolific and sticky pitch is “used as a cement to patch canoes and water containers . . . [and also] as a salve for wounds.”<sup>20</sup> Starting in earnest in the mid-nineteenth century, others of the firs’ properties made them the most important industrial tree species on North America’s west coast, Vancouver Island included: their immense size and straight, strong, tightly grained wood made them ideal as building material, and in places like PKOLS, their proximity to the ocean made them easily accessible commodities. There are almost no old growth Coast Douglas-firs left as a result: one study “estimated that only one-half of one percent (about 1100 hectares) of the low coastal plain is covered by relatively undisturbed old forests.”<sup>21</sup> Environmental organizations such as the Ancient Forest Alliance (AFA) are thus determined to preserve what few are left, such as in the Edinburgh Mountain Ancient Forest, part of which has already been industrially clear-cut (leaving behind the second largest Douglas-fir on record, nicknamed Big Lonely Doug, a fine figure of charismatically tragic megaflorescence). There is some protected second growth (as at PKOLS, which was logged but set aside as a reserve in 1858), but large areas of coastal forest have been converted into tree farms (more accurately, fiber farms), in

which a clear-cut forest area is slash and burned to get rid of snags and stumps, replanted, and harvested again once the trees have reached a marketable size.

The massive commodification of Douglas-firs is a stunning example of the ways in which plants are the vegetal foundations of capitalism and colonialism. Treated as individual units whose value is estimated almost entirely in terms of board-feet of timber, they cannot be anything other than resource, standing reserve, bare life: the vegetariat, writ especially large. It is interesting, then (if not all that surprising), that environmental organizations like the AFA and ecoluminaries such as David Suzuki and Wayne Grady have sought to develop greater public respect for the trees by portraying their mode of living up the vitality hierarchy, emphasizing their singularity, individuality, and even quasi-personhood. So there is Doug, there is Luna of Julia Butterfly Hill fame, and there is also the rather anthropomorphized individual portrayed “arbobiographically” in *Tree: A Life Story*, which is simultaneously a knowledgeable foray into the ecological interconnectivity of coastal forest life and a striking example of the ongoing tendency to think of certain trees as heroic exceptions to the multiplicity, contextuality, and lack of self-boundedness associated with vegetation.<sup>22</sup> (For example, Aristotle allowed that trees have a telos, Deleuze and Guattari specifically contrast the rhizomatic with the arborescent, and Suzuki and Grady’s is neither the first nor the last work in the arbobiographical genre.)

Recent research, however, suggests that Douglas-firs are not at all heroically singular; it also emphasizes that thinking about the trees’ value in terms of the particular commodity they are understood to contain misses almost all of what is going on in their lives and communities (quite literally a matter of not seeing the forest for the trees). What is going on, of course, is vegetating. As Suzanne Simard, for example, has documented extensively, Douglas-firs are active participants in a complex, subterranean network of mycorrhizae in which roots and fungi engage in an elaborate process of chemical symbiosis: the tree gives photosynthesized carbon to the fungi and the fungi transmit inaccessible soil nutrients and moisture back to the tree.<sup>23</sup> As the fungus spreads, it also links tree to plant to tree (not just Douglas-firs), creating a vast, interconnected forest network in which trees also communicate carbon to each other.<sup>24</sup> In this context, thinking of a tree as a singular and person-like being grossly

misrepresents the fact that, even though Douglas-firs germinate from seed and grow progressively larger from that origin (in the manner of individuals), they are also inextricably linked to rhizomatic soil fungi, so much so that it would be impossible to have the tree without the fungi. In this respect, it is not the trees that represent the forest at all: “Mycorrhizal fungi are considered to be *the* keystone of coastal Douglas-fir forests,”<sup>25</sup> meaning that what tends to be *valued* in the forest—old trees as singular lives, board-feet of timber as sources of profit—is not at all related to what is most *lively* in the forest (and also that what is most lively is something that is less easily anthropomorphized).

The point, then, is to not imagine *for a second* that we give rightful value to plants by making them appear “like us.” Walking through PKOLS, I try instead to *vege(bili)tate*: to restore my connection to the vegetal liveliness of the forest by connecting into the network of mycorrhizal relationships that define and sustain this place; by becoming *plural*, attending to the decentered vegetality of the forest as it resonates with my own multiple plant capacities; by paying attention to the ways in which insects, birds, and mammals also plurally interact with the trees and fungi (and other plants, mosses, and lichens) in an extraordinary dance of sustenance and relationship (which, to their credit, Suzuki and Grady depict well); and by imagining what it means for me, a white settler-colonist used to treating this place as a “park,” to be *part* of these relationships rather than just an admiring observer of their exuberant green-ness. Eduardo Kohn might allow that I am trying to think *with* the forest: “Forests are good to think with,” he writes, “because they themselves think. Forests think. I want to take this seriously.”<sup>26</sup> Or perhaps I am trying to think *as* the forest, as part of the “we” that is our collective *psukhe*. Conceiving of complex multispecies forms of biosemiotic relationality as *thought*, for Kohn, does not mean that we all think in similar ways or that I can ever remotely apprehend a mychorrhizal *umwelt*. What it does mean is that, by understanding myself as participating in the lively, thoughtful interactivity of the forest as a self among selves—or as an element in a plural, distributed “forest” selfhood—I might be able to see my own relationships to plants and others as ecologically embedded, and myself as something other than a fiber-user (or even mychorrhizae user, if the Wood Wide Web pans out): perhaps even as mindfully and multiply vegetating among the many others who are doing the same.

Robin Wall Kimmerer sums it up neatly in one chapter of her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, in which she describes replanting sweetgrass on a property in the Mohawk Valley in Pennsylvania. The place, Kanatsiohareke, is a loving and thoughtful reinhabitation of a site that was an ancient Haudenosaunee Bear Clan village, an attempt to wrest the land from white botanical settlement (it is now largely populated with timothy, clover, and daisies) and white settler racism (it is, very intentionally, an antidote to the cultural genocide perpetrated at the nearby Carlisle Indian Industrial School). Kimmerer describes the science of restoring sweetgrass to the place:

The most vigorous stands [of sweetgrass] are the ones tended by basket makers. Reciprocity is a key to success. When the sweetgrass is cared for and treated with respect, it will flourish, but if the relationship fails, so does the plant. . . . What we contemplate here is more than ecological restoration; it is the restoration of relationship between plants and people.<sup>27</sup>

For Kimmerer (and for the many Haudenosaunee people before her in this place), planting sweetgrass is an act of vege(bili)tation: participation in an ancient, ongoing ritual of planting, harvesting, and respectful use that draws on the precise vegetal properties of sweetgrass (which mostly spreads rhizomatically) and the agricultural proclivities of humans (who know collectively how and where to plant and harvest the grass in order to make the best use of these properties) in order to achieve flourishing for all concerned. To plant sweetgrass, here, is to engage in restorative ecological relationship, in a process of attentive intertwining of the capacities of people and plants in concert in a mode that, at least potentially, defies the compulsion to capitalist accumulation. Together, then, perhaps *we* can vegetate, even in the complicated, capitalist-mycorrhizal landscapes of Douglas-fir forests.<sup>28</sup>

Vegeō. Vegeta(ria)t(e). Vege(bili)tate. You pick: think like the plants that we are, think as we are rendered plant, think with the plants with whom we are (or should be) in communicative and productive relation. But don't forget the many ways in which our lives are constituted vegetally: for the love of life in this biopolitical era, vegetate.

## Notes

1. Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad: or; The New Pilgrim's Progress* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2010), 427.
2. *Vegetate* and *veer* do not share an etymological origin, even though one might easily imagine the genesis of *veer* in the particularly vegetal movements of climbing plants toward the objects of their attachment.
3. Michael Marder, *Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013) and "Plant-Soul: The Elusive Meanings of Vegetative Life," *Environmental Philosophy* no. 1 (2011): 83–99.
4. Marder, *Plant-Thinking*, 32.
5. Elaine Miller, *The Vegetative Soul: From Philosophy of Nature to Subjectivity in the Feminine* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 18.
6. Theresa Kelley, *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 240.
7. Marder, *Plant-Thinking*, 181, emphases in original.
8. See, for example, Miller's discussion of Luce Irigaray's vegetal feminism in *The Vegetative Soul*, 189–200.
9. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 143.
10. Nicole Shukin, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
11. Jeffrey T. Nealon, *Plant Theory: Biopower and Vegetable Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 11.
12. Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).
13. Nealon, *Plant Theory*, 106.
14. I thank Hannes Bergthaller for the term *phyto-Marxism*, which inevitably gave rise to the *vegetariat*.
15. For a conversation about plant versus animal ethics, see "Michael Marder and Gary Francione Debate Plant Ethics," <http://www.cupblog.org/?p=6604>; see also my essay "Floral Sensations: Plant Biopolitics," in *The Oxford Companion to Environmental Political Theory*, ed. Teena Gabrielson et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 226–37.
16. Stefano Mancuso and Alessandra Viola, *Brilliant Green: The Surprising History and Science of Plant Intelligence* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2015), 5.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, 157.
19. See <http://cirdcommunitygreenmap.ca/story/history-pkols-mount-douglas>.
20. Nancy Turner and Richard J. Hebda, *Saanich Ethnobotany: Culturally Important Plants of the W̱SÁNEĆ People* (Victoria: Royal BC Museum, 2012), 56.
21. Samantha Flynn, *Coastal Douglas-fir Ecosystems* (Victoria: BC Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, 1999), 2.

22. David Suzuki and Wayne Grady, *Tree: A Life Story* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2004).

23. See, for example, Suzanne Simard and Daniel M. Durrall, "Mycorrhizal Networks: A Review of Their Extent, Function, and Importance," *Canadian Journal of Botany* 82 (2004): 1140–65.

24. Not surprisingly, this network is now popularly called the "Wood Wide Web," as in, for example, Manuela Giovannetti et al., "At the Root of the Wood Wide Web: Self Recognition and Non-Self Incompatibility in Mycorrhizal Networks," *Plant Signaling and Behavior* 1, no. 1 (2006): 1–5. It's a provocative metaphor in many ways but, as above, the slope between the recognition and the abuse of plant capacities is a slippery one.

25. Flynn, *Coastal Douglas-fir Ecosystems*, 4, emphasis in original.

26. Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 21. Needless to say, his understanding of "thought" is not Aristotelian: his beautiful book is based on research with the Ávila Runa people in the Upper Amazon region of Ecuador, in conversation with a posthumanist Peircean semiotics in which "we all live with and through signs" (9).

27. Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 262–63.

28. Although she is less restoratively inclined than I, this practice is related to Anna Tsing's in *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).