



Biophilia in the Hinterland: Symbiotic Affects in *Robinson in Ruins*

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INTRODUCTION: NONHUMANS IN THE HINTERLAND

Patrick Keiller's *Robinson in Ruins* (2010) is the third work in the trilogy which began with *London* (1994) and was followed by *Robinson in Space* (1997). As is the case in the first two instalments, *Robinson in Ruins* is a feature-length film essay presenting a fictional protagonist, the politically radical Robinson. At the beginning of the final film in the trilogy, Robinson has been released from Edgcott open prison; the reason for his being detained is never revealed, but one might suspect it is because of his political activism. In Keiller's film, apart from his research into England's landscapes, which involves a radical critique of different modes of capitalism, Robinson's radicalism also results in a rejection of daily capitalism: eschewing home ownership, he is homeless, squats and begs, sustaining himself on his savings. In this respect, Robinson "walks" his radically political "talk." His film project is devoted to the long history of class and capitalist

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struggle “on the island on which he is shipwrecked,” like Defoe’s famous protagonist, after whom he is named.

Robinson is also a stand-in for Keiller, and therefore a representative of political filmmaking. As Mark Fisher (2010) explains, the radical drive of *Robinson in Ruins* focuses on the history of “antagonism and martyrdom” on the part of people struggling against feudalism and capitalism. To study this history, Robinson engages in a “wandering,” which begins on “22 January 2008” (according to the last of the five intertitles which introduce the film). This date also marks the beginning of the global financial crisis, which Robinson researches with particular attention for its impact in the hinterland of London.

In his *Hinterland*, geographer Phil A. Neel (2018) elaborates a critique of capitalism around the distinction between the “near” and “far hinterland.” This distinction is indispensable for an analysis of Keiller’s film. While Neel’s case studies are China and the United States, his definition of the “far hinterland” is apposite for the landscapes which Robinson films. Unlike those which are “near” and which are “largely suburban,” the far hinterland is “rural” or “quasi-rural” (Neel 2018, 18, 16). As Neel points out, far hinterlands comprise “disaster industries” (2018, 17). In Keiller’s film, Robinson moves through backwaters featuring ruined industries of old car manufacturers, post-industrial wastelands, and disused military sites, stretching from Silchester to Greenham Common. He explores edge places beyond the city’s rural outskirts, between abandoned nuclear bases, but also the active industries comprising gas and oil storage centers. Notably, his camera will discover two disused cement mines, one in the Ridgeway area, and the other close to the ruins of Hampton Gay, on the far side of the Cherwell. Varying from Neel’s model, the very British hinterland of *Robinson in Ruins* includes not just post-industrial wastelands, for example the cement mines, but also the historical ruins of churches and sixteenth-century estates, such as those of Hampton Gay. Keiller’s film, moreover, reveals a hinterland rich in flowers, fences, and gas markers: a nonhuman world of both organic and inorganic entities. This affirms Hanneke Stuit’s (2021) point that the notion of a hinterland does not “de-limit itself to particular places.” On the one hand, she notes, the hinterland exposes places of “ruination and decay,” but on the other hand it can also move from industry into wilderness (Stuit 2021).

In this chapter, I contend that Keiller’s film produces its own theories of the far hinterland by having Robinson use a series of static shots to focus on the nonhuman world, while keeping the accounts of human

history and the climate crisis within the narrative of the voice-over. Landscape painting and photography are traditionally human-centered. Keiller's radical move consists of treating landscape photography as that which privileges the nonhuman, both organic and inorganic, while keeping the human present through the voice-over, spoken by actress Vanessa Redgrave. Her narrative focuses on the protagonist Robinson, whom we never see in the flesh as he is purportedly wielding the camera. Toward the end of the film, Redgrave explains that she and her late "lover," who remains unnamed, worked with Robinson's research findings in the past. She will now use his nineteen film cans and a notebook to establish a post-2010 "Regional Center," named after Robinson, which has the goal of "economic reconstruction." This information gives a political legitimacy to Robinson's work, which, as I will explain, includes the vision of forming an intentional community with a socialist agenda. Keiller invites the spectator to consider how the far hinterland can become a space through/in which to question, to repurpose, or even to dismantle regimes of late capitalism. Key to the film's re-consideration of different capitalisms, as they emerged in different centuries, is the significant attention paid to the nonhuman world.

Some critics have pointed to *Robinson in Ruins'* examination of nonhuman/human co-operation. Fisher (2010) sees this examination proceeding through Robinson's attraction to microbiologist Lynn Margulis's work on biophilia, which she defines as the "love of life and living systems" (1998). Robinson is inspired by Margulis's rejection of what Redgrave terms the "capitalist, cost-benefit, and competitive interpretations" of Darwinian evolution. Rather, Margulis espouses the "co-operative strategies" that exist between different organisms (Fisher 2010). Paul Dave registers the film's exploration of the "human/nonhuman alliance," but he still leans toward treating it as a metaphor for "the identity and political potential of the working class" (2011, 22). For Robinson, exploring "co-operative" strategies involves filming the history of socio-economic inequalities, while drawing attention to human dependencies on the non-human world.

My analysis moves beyond current scholarship on the film to explore how Keiller's theory of the far hinterland interlaces the narratives of underpaid workers, the poor, and the land. In what follows, I will explore this theory through its nonhuman and human landscapes, doing so in three sections. In the first, I introduce *Xanthoria Parienta*, or lichens, as non-human players representative of Keiller's class and climate politics. The

second section explores how the film's cinematography and narration investigate biophilia as a set of symbiotic connections between flowers and Gas Pipeline Storage System (GPSS) markers. In the third, the romantic-looking ruins of Hampton Gay, its nearby satellite dishes and a cement mine will be analyzed through Jobb Arnold's concept of "land affects" (2018), as it hinges on Sara Ahmed's work on "affective economies" (2004). Both Arnold and Ahmed aid me in exploring how what I term "symbiotic affects" circulate between different sites from different historical epochs, and between human and nonhuman beings in the far hinterland.

MARGINAL IN PLAIN SIGHT: LICHENS AT THE EDGE

Robinson's wanderings have a certain spontaneity. It is as though his roaming follows an affective flow which lures him into unknown edge places and backwaters. Indeed, the first *OED* definition of "hinterland" refers to the "backcountry" or the "fringe areas of a town or city," particularly behind a river. Robinson roams in the vicinity of the river Cherwell, a tributary of the Thames. The roads, diversions, pockets of fields, and historical ruins around Newbury comprise overlapping spaces tucked away along quiet roadways which wander off the beaten track. This is an intersection between the outskirts of metropolitan areas, along the liminal space of the near hinterland (suburban areas), and pointing to the far hinterland of rural, agricultural spaces (to recall Neel). At one such threshold, the Kennington roundabout, Robinson finds a road sign which gives directions to leave the bypass (Fig. 13.1a). One is the A34 to Newbury, a place historically central to Robinson's Speenhamland research, which Redgrave narrates as the camera takes ever closer shots of the road sign and the lichens who live on it.

As we contemplate the sign, Redgrave reports that Robinson has been "enlisted" by these "non-human intelligences" to "preserve the possibility of life's survival on the planet." The "non-human intelligences" are the lichens who live a "marginal" and "hidden" existence on road signs. This aspect of being hidden and marginal mimics certain far hinterland spaces, such as disused quarries or clusters of flowers along slip roads, hidden away between fields and power-grids. The lichens, then, can be regarded as representatives of the nonhuman world, nestled in hinterland spaces, hiding in plain sight. By "enlisting" Robinson and his eco-political project of landscape photography, the lichens draw attention to the nonhuman world and the dependency of the human world upon it.



Fig. 13.1 Road sign to Newbury (a); Lichens on road sign to Newbury (b); Greenham Common (c); GPSS marker with yellow top (d). Screenshots from *Robinson in Ruins*

One crucial theme running through the film is the threat of global warming. Redgrave quotes Robinson's reading of the famous sentences from Frederic Jameson's *The Seeds of Time*: "it seems to be easier for us to imagine today the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the break-down of late capitalism." Over the course of the film, Redgrave delivers three reports about the climate crisis, all indicating that excess uses of carbon dioxide will have devastating consequences for life on earth. Following Jameson's quote, turning the tide requires finding alternatives to late capitalism. The lichens point Robinson in the direction of Newbury, which witnessed the 1795 Settlement Act, legislation addressing the exploitation of local workers.

Filmed in a variety of long-take close ups, the group of lichens growing around the word Newbury can be read as signifiers for Redgrave's account of the events leading up to the Settlement Act. She explains that Robinson has discovered how systems of early capitalism developed through the displacement of "settled agricultural workers" from their rural homes so that they could work elsewhere. Redgrave details how, in 1795, a group of magistrates at the Pelican Inn, Speenhamland, in the area of Newbury, produced an amendment to the Settlement Act, which aimed to "prevent

the removal of poor persons until they were to become chargeable.” This would ensure workers received a minimum wage to be set in line with sharply rising bread prices. As Redgrave shares this information, the camera makes a very tight close-up of the lichens, revealing them in all their yellow and leafy glory (Fig. 13.1b). I read the cluster of resilient lichens as a signifier for the resilience of an early version of social regulation against the brutal effects of capitalism.

Like the displaced workers of 1795, Robinson roams down little-traveled roads. Therefore, the lichens are signifiers not just of key, political events but of the hinterland spaces in which these events were actually lived and suffered. Keiller’s landscapes focus on ruins, wastelands, and edge places. Some have been repurposed, like the RAF base at Brize Norton. Others have been left to freeze in time, like the disused cement mine and its surrounding area in the vicinity of Hampton Gay’s ruined village. Others yet have been opened to the commons, which, while accessible to those who might wander, are under the ownership of a combination of heritage societies and local councils. This signals how nonhuman spaces intersecting with derelict spaces in the hinterland are not free from some mode of human ownership.

Another example of this, which is oddly hiding in plain sight, can be found at Greenham Common. Once a US air-force base for nuclear missiles, it was finally de-commissioned in 1991. The base is surrounded by very high fences and is filmed from a distance in wide shot. Keiller’s camera does not cross the fences. It is as though there is something slightly menacing which still hangs around the military buildings in the form of a lingering atmosphere of danger and secrecy. The sloping walls of the large edifices give the impression of ruined bunkers which, in their green, grassy coatings, were designed as a piece of camouflage in that they appear to be miniature hills (Fig. 13.1c). The narrator provides no information as to whether these cleverly camouflaged buildings were aircraft-hangers or nuclear weapons storage facilities.

In Neel’s sense of the far hinterland, the abandoned air-base at Greenham Common is what late capitalism has left behind: ruins from the military-industrial-complex. One shot reveals a rusty US army water pipe in a field of grazing cows. Redgrave reports that, once decommissioned by the Ministry of Defense, the surrounding fields were purchased for one pound sterling by the local council. Thus, while the cows and water pipe mark out a space open to the commons, they are still under ownership. In the far hinterland, humans are symbiotically linked to history, to local

councils, to the governments of nation states, to global investment in the fossil fuels that powers nations, to late capitalism, and to the nonhuman world. Such human dependency is brought to the surface through Keiller's filmic exposure of late capitalism's edge places, its resilient ruins and persistent lichens.

BIOPHILIA IN THE FAR HINTERLAND: FLOWERS AND GPSS MARKERS

Symbiosis as a concept comes into its own through the film's cinematic techniques of eliciting spectatorial biophilia. In *Robinson in Ruins*, there are numerous scenes featuring a range of different flowers, from the yellows of cowslips and large leaf *lantana*, to the distinctive red of a *papaver* and wild teasels. The yellow and red colors of the flowers correspond to the yellow and red of two GPSS markers, one with a yellow top (Fig. 13.1d) and the other with a red one. These different members of the nonhuman world, that is the flowers (organic) and the markers (inorganic), are bound together cinematographically by the fact that they are both paid the serious attention of very long takes, lasting three to four minutes. The dwelling camera draws the spectator's biophilia toward these organic and inorganic matters, revealing how both flowers and markers—the latter literally marking the fossil fuel pipelines of gas and oil in the ground below—live interdependently. Close to one marker is a cluster of pyramidal orchids along a roadway circuiting one of the oil depots. In the far hinterland, flowers and markers are not just close neighbors. Markers and road signs can even mimic flowers. The red of the GPSS marker and the buds of the *papaver* resemble the reds of metal signs warning intruders to keep out of gas and oil depots. These signs and their wire fences are late capitalism's "gatekeepers" and are also given the attention of long takes. Fences remind spectators that the enclosed spaces are in the ownership of the UK government or have been repurposed by global companies. All of these nonhuman entities are filmed to become the focus of the spectator's biophilia. However, as this hinterland is still under a late capitalist regime, to what extent can a biophilic response help us to re-think that regime?

Perhaps there are two answers to this. Firstly, the film provides a dire warning about the climate crisis, which is driven by capitalism. What is noteworthy is that the film uses biophilia as a method of drawing the spectator in, while also furnishing the spectator with the scientific facts about

a future apocalypse. As the camera settles on the red berries of the *arum italicum* flower (an identical red to the top of one GPSS marker), Redgrave cites an article in *Nature* reporting that “rates of species loss” have been “seriously underestimated.” The scientists consider two different scenarios. One is that in two hundred years (from 2010), the biosphere will collapse but then possibly recover. The other is that “irreversible heating” will cause the end of all life on the planet. In the latter scenario, the GPSS marker and the oil pipelines would be as endangered as the flowers, as the hinterland would degrade into a dead, dystopian landscape. After Redgrave discusses this scenario, the camera settles on another flower, the wild teasel, with a long take exceeding five minutes. During this, Redgrave explains that *Nature’s* report into species degradation has studied a range of genera, including, importantly, the butterfly. Appropriately, the camera studies a butterfly on the wild teasel, and two bees as they pollinate the flower. In the wake of the most recent IPCC report (2022), as reported by Fiona Harvey in *The Guardian* (2022), it is hardly necessary to repeat that excess levels of carbon dioxide released from the burning of fossil fuels will produce tipping points that will destroy most life on earth. Perhaps the far hinterland could be a potential space for reducing the transit points of fossil fuels by literally abandoning more parts of the electricity grid. Or, equally well, rather than being abandoned or left to its own devices, which might cause pollution, one can imagine the electricity grid could be repurposed using renewable energy sources in order to serve local communities.

The idea of such repurposing links to the second answer to the question of how to think of better ways of using the far hinterland for projects that benefit both the environment and people. This second possible solution appears to Robinson in the area of the Ridgeway, when he discovers a disused cement quarry. He shares his desire to repurpose it for the development of new and sustainable industries, the profits of which will go to the commons. He discovers that there is already a plan to build “eco homes” on the site surrounding the quarry. Such initiatives re-conceptualize hinterland spaces for the purposes of creating some form of ecological balance. But such a “balance” needs more than activism. It requires affective investments too. It is not just that, as Redgrave explains, Robinson “is inclined towards biophilia.” For Robinson, biophilia is an affective challenge to capitalism itself. He demonstrates this when the camera leads spectators into an undefined edge-place. Here, they are drawn into a sumptuous encounter with a single white foxglove. During this

particularly long take, immersed in the ambient sound of birds, it is hard not to feel a flow of affects toward the foxglove as it glides back and forth in the gentle breeze (Fig. 13.2a). In a clear critique of capitalism, Redgrave

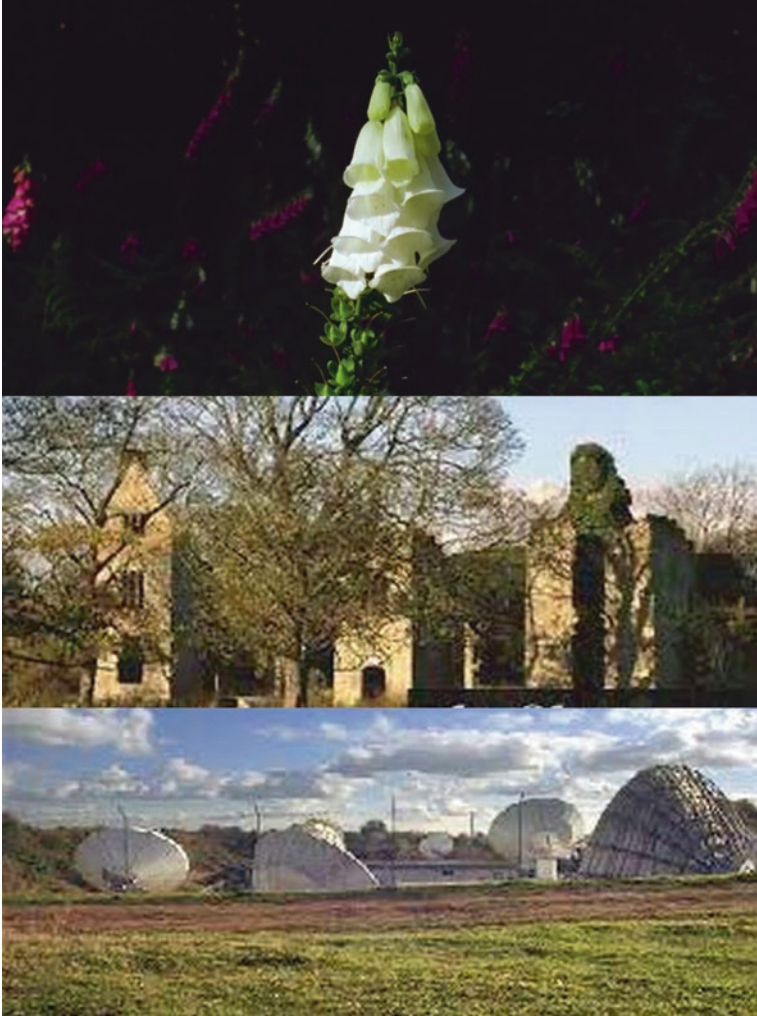


Fig. 13.2 White Foxglove (a); Ruins of Hampton Gay (b); Satellite dishes (c). Screenshots from *Robinson in Ruins*

cites Margulis's claim that biophilia has not only given humans an evolutionary capacity to form "symbiotic" relationships with the natural world, but that this "symbiosis" also occurs between different phyla. For Margulis, it is not competitive relations between different phyla that count, but the "mutualism" between them. During the film's use of contemplative long takes, mutualism, that is, symbiosis, extends not just between different flowers, but between the flowers *and* the GPSS markers and the nonhuman world of the hinterland.

The film underscores how biophilia as a love of life and "living systems" should not just be associated with nature areas. As home to the natural world and the technical designs of humans, the hinterland might be particularly conducive to biophilia in the broad sense advocated by Margulis. Redgrave explains that Robinson believes that "designers of artifacts" should "seek to emulate the morphogenesis of life forms." Perhaps the red top of the GPSS marker in the vicinity of Brize Norton, which has an identical red color to the *papaver* flower, is an example of its designer emulating the red color of that flower. The yellow of the GPSS marker is not only the same yellow as cowslips and large leaf *lantana*, but is of a similar hue to the yellow of the lichens. Redgrave reports that lichens thrive on the nitrogen and carbon from the cars. On another road shown in the film, the fumes of cars transport the spores from the pink orchids along the road, resulting in more of the flowers being seeded. The organic and inorganic entities of the nonhuman world are not only mutually dependent, but according to Robinson, humans can make the inorganic mimic the organic. In this way, socio-economics could be made to mimic the natural world. Then it could be transformed into an eco-socialism which operates not through ascending lines of ever-increasing profits, but through natural cycles of growth then de-growth, of fecundity then barrenness.

One "theory" of *Robinson in Ruins* is that resistance to capitalism and its destructive effects takes place affectively, through biophilia. The film lavishes itself in long takes of both organic and inorganic entities that sensitize spectators to their symbiosis with the natural world. The resulting montage cuts between quarries, depots, fences, markers, and flowers. Visually, the film sets up cinematic circuits to enhance the spectator's desire to make symbiotic connections in and with the far hinterland. The rich entanglement of the inorganic and organic spreads across the hinterland, which, in turn, produces what Jobb Arnold has termed land affects,

a concept that I will unpack in the next section by way of Sara Ahmed's canonical essay "Affective Economies."

ENCLOSURES AND LAND AFFECTS

Before turning to Ahmed and Arnold, it is important to ask: how do you get excited about satellite dishes stuck behind barbed wire or a disused cement works? (Fig. 13.2b). Keiller's camera draws us toward these less sightly constructions by alerting us to what is in their vicinity: the sunlit ruins of Hampton Gay (Fig. 13.2c). In the sixteenth century, both here and on Enslow Hill, a raft of uprisings against enclosures took place. Toward the end of the film, Redgrave explains that in late Elizabethan times, acts of enclosure "proved disastrous for locals," as these robbed them of their farming lands and pushed them into food poverty, while the gentry became wealthier. On 21 November 1596, Bartholomew Steer and his fellow rebels arrived at Enslow Hill to initiate the tearing down of fences throughout the area. The film breaks up the "uprising" narrative with shots of satellite dishes, all enclosed by tall fences. After Redgrave notes that the satellites are under global ownership, Robinson comes upon yet another "ruin," the disused cement works, dating back to 1929. Here, he has a moment of what Redgrave reports to be "experiential transformation," as his charged affective state yields a vision of developing the cement works into an intentional community.

There are also strong emotions attached to the historical ruins of Hampton Gay. It is steeped in the history of those who rebelled against land enclosures, who also had a vision for a better world, free from the exploitation of feudal lords. Yet while the ruins exude a heritage-style attractiveness, the cement works and the satellite dishes, with their high fences and "keep out" signs, remain unsightly. The establishing of a community could, potentially, transform the quarry with its unmined cement into something which, while not as attractive as the heritage ruins, can become more inviting once the participants (and, by association, the film's spectators) experience land affects. Land affects can be experienced not just for the sightly, but the unsightly too. With work and time, humans can develop a pleasurable experience of such land affects, or what are effectively symbiotic relationships with the sites of the hinterland. *Robinson in Ruins* invites spectators to recognize symbiotic, affective engagements between the far hinterland's closely interrelated sites, across different

temporalities: the historical ruins (1597), the quarry (1929–), and the dishes (2010–).

As I shall argue in this section, there is a flow of affects between the film's narratives about the satellite dishes, the historical ruins, and the plans for the cement quarry. To theorize how these affects circulate, I will turn first to Ahmed. In "Affective Economies," Ahmed focuses on the surfaces between "bodies and signs" (2004, 117). The term "affective economies" specifies how affects "align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments" (Ahmed 2004, 119). Combining a psychoanalytic with a Marxist, economic approach, Ahmed refers to the "affect" which "does not reside positively in the sign of the commodity, but is produced only as an effect of its circulation" (2004, 120). Ahmed notes that in Freud's "model of unconscious emotions, the affect itself is not repressed: rather, what is repressed is the idea to which the affect is attached" (2004, 125).

Such a repression of an idea can be traced in the filming of the globally owned satellite dishes in *Robinson in Ruins*. These dishes are surrounded by fences which might be understood as necessary to prevent people from doing damage to them. What this perception represses is that the fences are primarily there to protect the profits of the global owners. In contrast, the 1597 story of Bartholomew Steer leading the rebels against the feudal landlords produces an idea which is not repressed: the rebels fought for justice against oppression. If the film allows this idea to circulate to the fenced quarry containing the satellite dishes, it can "stick" to the repressed idea that fences are there to help sustain capitalism. Once this connection is made, neoliberalism can be likened to modern feudalism, and the visceral sense of rebelliousness from the sixteenth century might ignite a spark in the twenty-first-century spectator, inciting them to acts of civil disobedience against the fences.

Affects can thus move backwards and forwards across different historical times, as well as between different sites on the land. This movement of affects between spaces is what Jobb Arnold defines as "land affect," or what he terms "the direct experience of mobilized free-floating ecological energies" (2018, 97). As he explains, such energies are registered unconsciously and sometimes consciously in human affective states (Arnold 2018, 97). For Arnold, Ahmed's theory of circulation helps to understand that "affects" are what "cause people *to feel with the land*" (2018, 97; emphasis in original). As Arnold explains:

Intense experiences of land affect—such as an encroaching forest fire—mobilize and transmit ecological energies, innervating the connective tissues that exist between interdependent webs of human and other-than-human life. (2018, 97)

Once a flow of energies is set in motion, the conducted affects pass through the “interdependent web of human and other-than-human life.”

The rebels of Hampton Gay engaged in the “intense experience” of losing access to the commons, to that nonhuman entity, the land. The “connective tissue” of their human, affective investment in the nonhuman world became amplified by the crisis of enclosures, the threats to the commons, the risk of food shortages, and the rebels’ defiance in the face of exploitative overlords, whom they intended to assassinate. Because of their intense feelings for the land, Steer’s accomplices ended their days in torture; they were hung, drawn, and quartered as they overlooked Enslow Hill, where their defiance had erupted. The film facilitates the circulation of potentially rebellious affects between 1597 and 2010 by cutting back and forth between the shots of Hampton Gay and the satellite dishes. Hypothetically, if the fences around the privately owned satellites were to be ripped down, the dishes could be re-possessed by the collective, which in an ideal world, according to both Robinson and Keiller, would be a socialist local council.

Collective ownership of the cement quarry is the aim of Robinson’s intentional community. As Redgrave’s voice-over explains, his goal is to “reform land ownership and democratic government” and to “pioneer the renewal of industry and agriculture,” in the face of the “disappearance of cheap oil.” The latter would greatly help in the reduction of fossil fuel use, and hence the climate crisis. As Redgrave explains, her “Advisory Group” embraces Robinson’s plan. This is the moment in the film when the group, Redgrave, and Robinson, working as a team, commit to subverting the regime of capitalism by transforming the large, enclosed area that surrounds and includes the cement works into a site for the commons.

In *Robinson in Ruins*, land affects are re-circulated in the far hinterland between Hampton Gay, the industrial sites, and those of ruination. All these liminal spaces draw on the spectator’s experience of symbiosis between the land and its nonhuman occupants. If symbiosis between living phyla and the inorganic world is how the organic, living world survives, as the film suggests, then new encounters between humans and the nonhuman world could offer models for new modes of social

organization. But ideas which question the regimes of capitalism must be carried by affects, by an embodied experience of mutualism, and by the symbiotic interrelations between people, communities, and land.

CONCLUSION: STAYING WITH THE FAR HINTERLAND

Robinson as a character may dream of utopian solutions, but Keiller's film does not explain how to implement them. It is not a handbook for revolution. Still, it provides insights into how affective engagements with organic and inorganic aspects of the nonhuman world can bring the far hinterland's regimes of capitalism into question. Neel's concept of the far hinterland refers to extraction and ruination in terms of late capitalist exploitation. While Keiller's camera films the British landscape in a similar vein, the film ultimately offers a far hinterland which is open to being affectively reconfigured, in line with the theories of Margulis, Ahmed, and Arnold.

I have referred to Keiller's film as not just questioning the late capitalist regimes of the far hinterland, but as producing new theories of how this hinterland might contribute to producing a more equitable world, in terms of both socio-economic and ecological justice. The lichens on the road sign point toward Newbury and the history of the Speenhamland Act, and as such, to an example of the successful protection of the poor. Perhaps Keiller is suggesting that the policy-making which can protect workers from our current neoliberal system of deregulation needs to be like the lichens or the flowers shown flourishing close to roads: hidden in plain sight, yet resilient. By extending biophilia for flowers to GPSS markers, Keiller posits that if humans are symbiotically and precariously dependent on the natural world of flowers, plants, and food, so too are GPSS markers, pipelines, the cement quarry, and the cement works. All these natural organisms and inorganic forms are reliant on humans for their nonhuman "lives": the oil will only flow through pipelines if humans continue to use it; the cement quarry and its surrounds can become "alive" if filled with eco-homes; and the cement works could be transformed by an intentional community. If humans end up destroying the nonhuman world through failing to prevent cataclysmic climate change, then even the inorganic "beings" will not have an environment to support their nonhuman activities.

I have explored Keiller's film as offering a theory of the far hinterland which suggests that it is formed through symbiotic and affective

connections. When the charged affects from past rebellions are circulated into our current regimes of globalized satellite dishes or, for that matter, power grids and military bases, the resulting re-circulation of affects might inspire a perception, certainly on the part of spectators, that the far hinterland can be taken back into public ownership. With this political hope installed by the completion of Robinson's film project, and as the film closes, Redgrave reports that Robinson has disappeared. Her institution inherits his notebooks and film reels, so that his research can be put to some beneficial, societal use. The implication is that the spectators, too, can use the film as an inspiration to pursue their own social projects in the far hinterland.

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