

## Out of Office: Mycorrhizal encounters and the art of feminist un/learning

We need space that is not designated as institutional space to be able to talk about the problems with and in institutions.<sup>1</sup>

What do you do when your world starts to fall apart?  
I go for a walk, and if I'm really lucky, I find mushrooms. Mushrooms pull me back into my senses, not just—like flowers—through their riotous colors and smells but because they pop up unexpectedly, reminding me of the good fortune of just happening to be there. Then I know that there are still pleasures amidst the terrors of indeterminacy.<sup>2</sup>

Analysing the sexual and racial politics of the university, Sara Ahmed describes a range of practices and discourses through which this institution sustains and reproduces itself, such as citation or career progression, as walking on a path. Ahmed's refrain goes like this: "*The more a path is used, the more a path is used.*"<sup>3</sup> This implies that with every use a path's direction becomes clearer and more straightforward to follow. At the same time this causes existing and alternative paths to fall out of use and discourages new alternatives from appearing. Thinking about the university as a path, Ahmed helps us understand how the routes in and through the institution are cleared and maintained for (and by) those who are most closely associated with white, masculine, heterosexual, cisgender and non-disabled embodied subjects dwelling in the Global North and/or West. This is at the expense of those whose situations do not afford proximity to these positions. Importantly, however, while the image of walking on a path illuminates aspects of 'use' pertinent to the university, Ahmed simultaneously deploys the notion of queer use. This being a particular kind of 'misuse' which allows us to imagine "how things can be used in ways other than for which they were intended or *by those other* than for whom they were intended."<sup>4</sup>

Attempts to break the racist and sexist logic of the university and to diverge from or repurpose its well-worn pathways have re-emerged in past years all over the world. Take, for example, the nation-wide student protests in South Africa sparked by student and political activist Chumani Maxwele throwing a bucket of excrement over a bronze statue of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century British colonialist Cecil Rhodes on the campus of

the University of Cape Town on 9th March 2015. Calling attention to racial injustices that define the post-apartheid South Africa, this protest has, since then, spread to universities world-wide, launching demands for decolonisation and urgent transformation of curricula and hiring practices. Elsewhere, in Hungary and Poland, protests emerged between 2018 and 2020 opposing the marginalisation and ban of critical studies of gender and sexuality by the countries' respective conservative-nationalist governments. Another attempt to diverge from the university's well-worn paths emerged with protests against sexual abuse on campuses. For a semester in 2014, Columbia University art student Emma Sulkowicz carried a mattress around campus for the entire time she attended the same University as her rapist, after the case against him was dismissed by the institution. In 2016, Sara Ahmed resigned from her post as Professor of Race and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths University in London in protest at the failure to deal with the problem of sexual harassment. Despite heightened visibility and attention in the wake of social movements against sexual violence such as #MeToo, started in 2006 by American activist and sexual harassment survivor Tarana Burke, universities continue to fail to acknowledge and support students and staff members who experience such abuses.

Starting from considerations of the sexual and racial politics of the university, this article contributes to efforts to make the university a more just journey by continuing a path taken during a series of feminist reading & mushroom foraging walks we first initiated in 2017 during a workers' strike at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. The "we" here stands for the two authors, researchers of theories and practices of feminism and visual culture. Two women whose route through the world is shaped through and by classed, urban, cis-gendered and racialised privileges. Lenka comes from a village in the rural south of Czech Republic, while Elspeth is from a small city in the south-east of the United Kingdom. The two countries—Czech Republic and the United Kingdom—also epitomise the polarity of attitudes towards fungi in European cultures. In ethnomycological literature the expression "mycophilia" is used to describe attitudes that embrace and revere fungi and broadly characterises Slavic culture.<sup>5</sup> "Mycophobia" names a derisive attitude toward fungi that characterise what we might call Anglo-Saxon culture.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the UK and Czech Republic also epitomise the European geo-political West-East axis, which

together with the “Global North and South” axis defines an unjust global distribution of power and resources.

It is from these singular and multiple positionings that we take on our exploration of academic work, aesthetically and politically transformative practices, and life with fungi. This is propelled by the process of “learning to unlearn,” a term formulated by Madina Tlostanova and Walter D. Mignolo as an epistemic response that enables a process of delinking from coloniality, the logic that drove European modern colonialism and which has been shaping the world ever since.<sup>7</sup> Tlostanova and Mignolo follow the principle of “learning to unlearn in order to relearn” articulated by Amawtay Wasi, a university led by indigenous intellectuals and activists in collaboration with non-indigenous peoples in Ecuador, who seek to foster relationships of sharing and care not only among other humans but among non-humans and the Earth. Following this lead, we propose mushroom foraging as feminist decolonising pedagogy—what we will call the art of feminist un/learning—and in doing so suggest that encounters with the diverse ecology, queer biology and striking biodiversity of fungi may provide openings not only for aesthetic and intellectual innovation but also political transformation. This potential we try to capture through the phrase “mycorrhizal encounters.”

Our aim is to test a premise that the art of feminist un/learning through mycorrhizal encounters is a creative practice engaged in the ethical possibility of working and living inside and outside educational and cultural intuitions. Additionally, we aim to offer this examination as an intervention in a rapidly growing field interested in fungi, especially within English speaking worlds of scientific and humanities research, entrepreneurship, popular culture, activism, and art. In the first part of the article, we give an account of the circumstances in which the Out of Office walks emerged in 2017 and explore the imbrication of foraging, feminism and the university. The second part develops on how to imagine and thus make possible a more just world through encounters with fungi and examines what is at stake when using fungi to meet such ends.

## **Mushroom hunting and feminist reading in Meanwood Park**

In 2017, we were doctoral students, whose income came in part from employment as graduate teaching assistants at the University of Leeds, and who were led by the circumstances of precarity to become active in local struggles for better working conditions. In particular this was directed toward changing exploitative and precarious forms of employment that lacked the basic worker rights such as sick pay and pensions. In May 2017 the University of Leeds branch of the University and College Union (UCU) entered a dispute with university management over proposed changes to University Statutes (the laws that govern the institution). The proposed changes included the introduction of “dismissal for some other substantial reason,” which UCU pointedly described as amounting to a “sacker’s charter.” The woefully undefined terms of “some other substantial reason” would provide too much freedom for managers to dismiss staff, arguably making jobs less secure and putting academic freedom at risk. In other institutions where “Some Other Substantial Reason” has slipped through, unforeseen uses of the catch-all dismissal procedure have allowed institutions to use this clause as a way to wriggle out of paying redundancy packages for which staff were eligible at the end of their fixed term contracts. The change in statutes were identified as particularly dangerous for minoritised staff not only because they are more likely to be on fixed term contracts, but also because the “dismissal for some other substantial reason” clause could be directly used to silence voices critical of the sexism, homophobia, transphobia and racism in British universities.<sup>8</sup>

In the context of racist and heteropatriarchal neoliberalisation marked by increasing privatisation and marketisation of British universities, the changes to the statutes posed serious concerns at the University of Leeds, prompting a day of industrial action taken in June 2017 followed by three further days in October 2017. Like the discussions of the state of Higher Education that emerged from large-scale nationwide industrial action that would follow in the months following and again in 2020, this local Union dispute gave a context for discussions about increased casualisation, institutional racism, ableism, ageism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia.

Alongside the industrial action, Leeds UCU invited contributions to an off-campus “Teach-Out,” a programme of events developed by striking university workers. For this programme we devised an event we had been thinking about for a while and that we named “Out of Office: Feminist Readings & Mushroom Hunting in Meanwood Park.” Out of office names both the notifications set on our email during the withdrawal of our labour during the industrial action and the literal act of going out of the office. The aim, however, was not so much to take colleagues out of their offices to appreciate the English woodland but rather to provide a space and time for the interrogation of the current academic culture of the corporate university and sustain collective reflections on how it shapes our intellectual and institutional (working) habits. Similarly, for us, mushroom foraging is not only a leisure activity, or a way of obtaining edible objects considered to be gourmet treats difficult to buy in the UK, but also an ethically oriented and sensuous practice which makes us re-consider our individual and collective relationship to work, academic work, and feminist decolonising work in particular.

Taking the title of the programme, “teach-out,” quite literally: as *to teach*—as in to show and demonstrate—*outside*, our teach-out took us elsewhere, outside and beyond the academic institution and its paths and patterns of “knowledge production.” At the conjunction of fungi and their foragers with feminist, decolonial and race-critical academic work is a path that traverses anthropology, creative arts and environmental activism.<sup>9</sup> Following in the tradition of this newly and rapidly growing field, Out of Office treads boundaries of various academic fields. We might even say it trespasses the borders of what is traditionally considered “academic work,” while also crossing notions of “direct political action” and “art work” in order to situate the corporatisation of the university (and the struggles against it) within different and broader narratives for social and environmental justice.

Searching for, picking, cutting and, importantly, smelling mushrooms may not traditionally be considered intellectual and academic activity, yet, simultaneously, it is a highly specialised skill which provides a specific route for learning and relating to the world. Learning about and with mushrooms is always partial, situated and in motion. If education is thought of as walking or being led on a path, as a journey in time, space and with others—as we hear from the etymology of the word

“pedagogy”—then mushroom foraging invites a particularly intimate form of embodied pedagogy. The walks we initiated explored learning from/with mushrooms, not least in terms of their shapes, colours, smells, their lives, habitats and interactions with their living and non-living surroundings. We noticed that this learning required a particular form of attention manifested in the pacing of movements, a focus on sensation, intense concentration, attentiveness to long and short-term changes in weather conditions and interest in the geology and vegetation of the particular area. It also required the cultivation of something we started to call “the mushroom gaze,” a kind of attentiveness not unrelated to what feminist anthropologist Anna Tsing has described as “arts of noticing”.<sup>10</sup>

### **Searching for a somewhere else**

Having brought along mushroom identification books, raincoats, mushroom knives and baskets, all participating forager-readers—comprised of university students, staff, their family and friends—were given excerpts from texts to be read aloud by the group as we gathered in the entrance of Meanwood Park. The first text was “Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays” by Jewish-French-Algerian feminist writer and theorist Hélène Cixous. The group assembled, and Lenka began to read from Cixous’s famous essay:

If there is a somewhere else that can escape the infernal repetition, it lies in that direction, where it writes itself, where it dreams, where it invents new worlds.

And that is where I go. I take books; I leave the real, colonial space; I go away. Often, I go read in a tree. Far from the ground and the shit. I don’t go and read just to read, to forget—No! Not to shut myself up in some imaginary paradise. I am searching: somewhere there must be people who are like me in their rebellion and in their hope. Because I don’t despair: if I myself shout in disgust, if I can’t be alive without being angry, there must be others like me. I don’t know who, but when I am big, I’ll find them and I’ll join them, I don’t yet know where.<sup>11</sup>

Cixous is proposing a way out from what she describes as “the Empire of the Selfsame,” a culture that is phallogocentric and deadly for all. Recalling the situation into which she was born and which Cixous describes as unliveable—the situation of a Jewish girl in Algeria under French colonial rule in the wake of the Second World

War—she reflects on the experience of her childhood and her belief in going somewhere else, to meet a community of readers which, at that time, she accessed by going to read a book in a tree.

“Somewhere else,” marking a journey and a place, is primarily understood in Cixous’ writing in relation to desire, politics and literature. Cixous’ famous text can also be related to education. The book *La Jeune Née/The Newly Born Woman* (where Cixous’ essay “Sorties” appears alongside an essay by Catherine Clement) was published only a year after Cixous founded *Études féminines* at the University of Paris 8, the first and oldest doctoral program in women’s studies in Europe.<sup>12</sup> The University of Paris 8 was founded as the *Centre Universitaire Expérimental de Vincennes* in 1969 following the protests of May the previous year. The new university sought to serve as an alternative to the traditional French academic environment. Before moving to the northern suburbs of Saint-Denis in 1980, the University of Paris 8 resided at the location of its foundation, in *le Bois de Vincennes* [the Vincennes woods], the largest public park in Paris. The first feminist programme in a European university was thus founded among the trees.

Following these connections and reading the description of somewhere else as going to read in a tree can be interpreted not simply as a metaphoric (or even literal) romantic escape to a presumed asocial nature set apart from real politics, but as a move which calls for novel conceptualisations of feminist creative work, practices of reading, educational spaces and collectives. Cixous’ forays through the means of poetic language, which pillages phallogocentric and colonial structures through the writing from the feminine/*l’écriture féminine* thus can be understood as opening a space (a somewhere else) for transformative practices that allow for imagining and making possible social and environmental justice.

What is more, in English, the title of Cixous’ essay includes the word “foray,” a term meaning to pillage, raid or undertake a hostile incursion, a word also commonly used to describe an expedition for the purpose of collecting mushrooms. Our own foray, a search for this so called “somewhere else”, continued by following mushrooms. The walk began, tracing the path up a ridge high above Meanwood Beck, then followed a path down over a bridge and into the Hollies. Mushrooms, as many of you will know,

appear unexpectedly or contingently thus enacting a literal disruption. During moments when we were reading or discussing a part of the text, someone would spot a mushroom under some leaf litter nearby and our attention and thoughts were immediately shifted. Despite the end of October being a little late in season we soon found jelly ears, also known as black fungus, or, as Lenka explained, *Jidášovo ucho* [Judas' ear] in Czech, a naming that in English has an even more troubling rendering: "Jew's ear."<sup>13</sup> Discovered in the woods were also bracket mushrooms such as birch polypore and lots of common earthballs and puffballs—the latter proving especially exciting when touched to release a cloud of spores—and a solid black stalkless mushroom named King Alfred's Cakes.

In the spirit of Anna Tsing's foundational study *Mushroom at the End of the World*, the Out of Office walk offered the foraging of mushrooms as a space to reconsider work and its value (what is and what is not considered productive labour) in relation to a particular geo-political context. Who picks certain kinds of mushrooms, and when, how and why, tells you a lot about a place and its politics. For instance, during our walk, one of the participants recalled reading stories the year before about fungi-foraging gangs of Eastern Europeans raiding British forests, employing language reminiscent of racist and classist condemnations of Traveller communities. The connections between these news stories emerging around 2015-16 and the political climate in Britain were not hard to spot. The year 2015 was the moment when the debates around Brexit, where fear of non-white immigrants and foreigners "stealing resources and jobs" in particular played a decisive role in the nationalist discourse around "Britain taking back control," leading to a referendum, the result of which has been Britain leaving the European Union in 2020.<sup>14</sup>

Another mushroom we encountered during the walk in the late October was the striking purple amethyst deceiver which in Czech is called *lakovka ametysová*. The amethyst deceiver is a mycorrhizal fungus, meaning that it lives in mutually symbiotic relationship with a plant, in this case trees such as beech. Mycorrhizal mycelium and organisms that form associated networks (such as slime moulds with their protoplasmic strands) have recently gained unprecedented attention. In the case of slime moulds, for example, this is mainly a result of a growing awareness of their



refined problem-solving behaviours achieved without a central nervous system and the ease with which one can render this process into a display for aesthetic pleasure.

In fact, fungi (and slime moulds) in general have been gaining extraordinary popularity in the contemporary English-speaking world. A culture that in ethnomycological literature once represented an exemplary case of “mycophobia” is becoming “mycophilic.” Even more than that, in English-speaking popular culture and scientific and humanities research, entrepreneurship, activism, and arts, it seems that fungi and slime moulds are becoming instrumental to how humans narrate their relationship to the world and imagine its future. In these narratives, fungi and slime moulds represent solutions to pressing global challenges of various kinds (environmental, techno-scientific, economic and socio-psychological) imbued with promise and the hope of salvation. For example, in 2008, prominent American mycologist and entrepreneur Paul Stamets gave a TED talk entitled “6 ways mushrooms can save the world.” Stamets’ work with mycelium, particularly in terms of mycoremediation of ecosystems and mycopesticides, has been hugely influential. His influence even led to a main character being named after him in the recent Star Trek franchise, *Star Trek: Discovery*, a series which explores a mycelium network as a discrete subspace domain (a mycelial plane of space-time) connecting every part of the multiverse. The character Paul Stamets, played by Anthony Rapp, leads a team who devise a “spore drive” propulsion system by which they can instantly traverse great distances through the network. This astromycotechnology equips the United Federation of Planets to pursue and accomplish its political interests against various enemies, such as the Klingon Empire and the Emerald Chain. What is implied, is that to save the interests of the Federation is to save the “universe” (within which only certain planets count). The science-fictional and speculative powers of mycelium serve as a refracted representation of the same problematic desire also represented in the click-bait title of the TED talk.

*Why and how have fungi become to bear the weight of this salvation? Who are they supposed to save and from what or whom?*

Literary scholar of decolonial and queer ecofeminism Aimee Bahng has also been critical of such an outlook. In an article exploring the acclaimed science fiction writer

Octavia Butler's research on slime mould, Bahng highlights how slime mould has been, she writes:

[...] swept up into a culture of optimization and risk aversion that celebrates its efficiency rather than its queerer characteristics... slime mould gets oriented toward models of competition when entrepreneurial technoscience asks it to perform spectacularized performances of problem-solving efficiency and adaptability.<sup>15</sup>

In the current era of "financialization and its attendant fields of probabilization and pre-emption" slime mould *Physarum polycephalum* has been put to work, for example, finding the shortest path between two points in a labyrinth; or recreating layouts of various systems such as Tokyo's rail network or motorways in the USA; but also, in a more explicitly sinister manner, predicting patterns of migration from Mexico to USA.<sup>16</sup>

As the above examples demonstrate, fungi and slime moulds can be put to many uses. Thinking together with Bahng, and drawing on Ahmed's call to "misuse use" as a strategy of diverging from and repurposing well-worn pathways of racist and heteropatriarchal capitalism, what uses for fungi and slime mould might emerge, beyond/beside the diagrammatic, topographic, bioremedial or aesthetic?

During a local COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 in Leeds, a vast white slime mould appeared over two or three days on an old rotten log, that Elspeth met on her daily walking route. On these days, the slime mould made her literally stop in her tracks, to pause in excitement, interest and wonder. It was a much-needed site in which to encounter daily change and shifting transformation in a period marked by intense monotony and uncertainty. Anna Tsing's words which appeared in the opening epigraph, have special resonance here. She writes: as they "pop up unexpectedly, [they remind] me of the good fortune of just happening to be there. Then I know that there are still pleasures amidst the terrors of indeterminacy."<sup>17</sup> This encounter with slime mould is an example of pleasurable unexpectedness and something met yet not fully comprehensible, producing a sort of grounding at a time of great disturbance. Within this example there is the potential to glimpse, following Ahmed, alternative uses and paths and ponder how they might be followed.

It is this potential for imagining difference that, as Bahng explores, attracted Octavia Butler to research slime moulds and other colony organisms as a means of envisioning “models of collective action, decentered modes of self-organizing, and systems of collaborative production.”<sup>18</sup> Butler’s encounter with slime mould are an opening onto thinking about alternative—that is feminist and queer—ontologies and systems of organising that are explored in the *Xenogenesis* trilogy.<sup>19</sup> Bahng also highlights Octavia Butler’s trepidation in her encounter with colony organisms “a wariness around all-too-human systems of power that might confuse ‘emergence’ for ‘colonization.’”<sup>20</sup> Here we find the significance of keeping decolonial thought not only in the frame of queer-feminist analysis but also environmental inquiry. In an Ahmedian fashion, Bahng is also concerned with how fungi and slime mould become oriented in certain directions, called upon (sometimes uncritically) to follow a certain path. While the radical mycology and new materialist image of mycorrhizal networked relations might jubilate in the blurring of individual boundaries and non-hierarchical structures of collectivity, Butler and Bahng’s insights give pause on the liberatory potential of the many uses of fungi.

Our journey has explored how engagements with fungi (mycorrhizal encounters) may lead to critical re-considerations of feminist decolonising pedagogy—what we call the art of feminist un/learning—and illuminate a creative practice oriented towards the possibility of working and living inside and outside educational and cultural institutions. Reading Bahng along Ahmed’s critical contemplation on the uses of use teaches us an important lesson. It teaches us that any project—in the university or elsewhere—which engages with (or uses) fungi to imagine and make possible a more just world need not focus its attention only to fungi and their biology, ecology and biodiversity, but also to our own relationship to fungi, our use and interpretations of fungi, and particularly their ethical, political and even affective, aesthetic or poetic dimensions. Mycorrhizal encounters, then, are encounters with mycorrhiza, a symbiotic association between a fungus and a plant that also make visible—and thus possible to problematise—one’s own relationship to such associations. It is from this standpoint that we understand these encounters as always partial, situated, embodied and entangled practice-in-motion and as embodying a possibility for feminist un/learning on the journey for a more just world.

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<sup>1</sup> Sara Ahmed: *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham and London: Duke University Press 2012), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Anna Tsing: *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2016), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Sara Ahmed: *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use* (Durham and London: Duke University Press 2019), 41. See also Sara Ahmed: *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham and London: Duke University Press 2012), 59.

<sup>4</sup> Sara Ahmed, *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use* (Durham and London: Duke University Press 2019), 199 [emphasis added].

<sup>5</sup> Valentina Wasson & Gordon Wasson, *Mushrooms, Russia, and History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957). See also Sveta Yamin-Pasternak, 'Ethnomycology: Fungi and Mushrooms in Cultural Entanglements.' In *Ethnobiology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 213-230.

<sup>6</sup> Drawing on Wasson and Wasson, 'Anglo-Saxon' is used as a synonym to 'Slavic' in this context. The authors recognise, however, the important and ongoing debates within the field of Medieval Studies, particularly in the North American context, around the racist deployments and histories of this term for white Anglo-Americans and its connection to far-right white supremacist groups. In a UK context, the term is also often used to define a discrete historical period between the end of Roman Britain and the Norman Conquest.

<sup>7</sup> Madina Tlostanova & Walter Mignolo, *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas* (Ohio State University Press, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10075/Staying-Power/pdf/UCU\\_Rollock\\_February\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10075/Staying-Power/pdf/UCU_Rollock_February_2019.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Anna Tsing: *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2016), Alison Pouliot: *The Allure of Fungi* (CSIRO Publishing 2018); Long Litt Woon: *The Way Through the Woods: On mushrooms and mourning*. Spiegel & Grau (2019); Aimee Bahng, 'Plasmodial Improprieties: Octavia E. Butler, Slime Molds, and Imagining a Femi-Queer Commons', In *The Queer Feminist Science Reader* (University of Washington Press, 2017), 310-26; Erica Kaneseke Kalnay 'Beatrix Potter's Mycological Aesthetics.' *Oxford Literary Review*. 2019, 41(2) 160-184.

<sup>10</sup> Anna Tsing: *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2016), 37. 'Mushroom gaze' is also a kind of attentiveness which is akin to 'learning to see' that is 'more like listening than looking' described by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Robin Wall Kimmerer: *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses* (Corvallis: Oregon University Press 2003), 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> Hélène Cixous, 'Sorties: Out and out: Attacks/ways out/forays' in *The Newly Born Woman* (University of Minnesota Press 1986), 72.

<sup>12</sup> The centre is now led by Anne Berger and it is called *Centre d'études féminines et d'études de genre* (Centre for Women's and Gender Studies). See: Anne Berger, 'Gender Springtime in Paris: A Twenty-First-Century Tale of Seasons', *differences*, 27, 2 (2016) 1-26.

<sup>13</sup> For further discussion of the antisemitic underpinnings of this nomenclature see David W. Rose: 'Notes from Underground Auricularia auricula, Anti-Semitism and Political Mushrooms,' *Fungi*, 2008, 12-17; Lenka Vráblíková: 'Othering Mushrooms: Migratism and its racist entanglements in the Brexit campaign,' *Feminist Encounters*, 5(1), 1-14.

<sup>14</sup> Lenka examined how forests, mushrooms and their foragers have become critical tropes of the 'threatening Other' in the anti-immigration rhetoric in the British tabloid press that supported the Brexit campaign in Lenka Vráblíková: 'Othering Mushrooms: Migratism and its racist entanglements in the Brexit campaign,' *Feminist Encounters*, 5(1), 1-14.

<sup>15</sup> Aimee Bahng, 'Plasmodial Improprieties: Octavia E. Butler, Slime Moulds, and Imagining a Femi-Queer Commons', In *The Queer Feminist Science Reader* (University of Washington Press, 2017), 312.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 319-320.

<sup>17</sup> Anna Tsing: *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2016), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Aimee Bahng, 'Plasmodial Improprieties: Octavia E. Butler, Slime Molds, and Imagining a Femi-Queer Commons', In *The Queer Feminist Science Reader* (University of Washington Press, 2017), 312.

<sup>19</sup> Octavia Butler, *Lilith's Brood*, (Warner Books, 2000).

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<sup>20</sup> Aimee Bahng, 'Plasmodial Improperities: Octavia E. Butler, Slime Molds, and Imagining a Femi-Queer Commons', In *The Queer Feminist Science Reader* (University of Washington Press, 2017), 312.