

# “Green Marxism” Reading Group

The [V21 Collective](#) & [VCologies](#) are pleased to convene an interdisciplinary summer reading group on the subject of “Radical Ecologies.” Focusing on critical theory in the Marxist tradition, we will be seeking to engage, historicize, and apprehend the place of Metabolic Rift analysis as developed in the venerable [Monthly Review School](#) and in relation to the study of nineteenth-century literary and visual cultures. Theoretical readings will include selections of Marx, organicism in G.W. Leibniz, and Brett Clark, John Bellamy Foster, and Richard York’s *Ecological Rift*, literary works by Percy Bysshe Shelley, Elizabeth Gaskell, and M.P. Shiels, and the art of Joseph Wright of Derby, the Otolith Group, and Jane Prophet, among others. Participants will come away from discussions with new tools for the materialist study of literature and art, ecological problematics, the forces and relations of production that cause them, and the struggle for environmental justice, more broadly.

To sign up, please register at this [link](https://forms.gle/7XERvydequvFbW819) (you will receive readings and the Zoom link via email):  
<https://forms.gle/7XERvydequvFbW819>

## **June 23, 1pm PDT/4 pm EDT: "Metabolic Rift"**

For our first meeting, we'll review recent debates over the "metabolic rift" -- Marx's observation that industrial agriculture deranges humanity's relation to nature and will inevitably exhaust the soil. Recent theorists have debated the extent of this insight, and the best way to conceive the relation between the relentless search for profit and degradation of the environment. In light of these discussions over the proper boundaries of capitalism, and its instrumental relation to nature, we'll also talk about the role of organic and mechanistic analysis in Marxist thinking.

John Bellamy Foster, "Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology"

Jason W. Moore, "Metabolic Rift or Metabolic Shift? Dialectics, Nature, and the World-Historical Method"

Andreas Malm, *The Progress of this Storm*, chaps. 6 & 8.

Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* Chap. 15.

## **July 28, 1pm PDT/4pm EDT: "Machines and Organs"**

NB: Virtual watch party of The Otolith Group, *The Radiant* film (64min) to take place July 7, 1pm PDT/4pm EDT

In this second meeting, we'll focus on the question of the machinic, the possibility of monism and organicism in response, and the imaginary as grounds of anti-capitalist resistance. Taking Marx's critique of the industrial apparatus and engagement with Leibniz as a basis for his radical ecology predicated on labor and social metabolism, we'll seek to understand the possibilities and limits of this orientation as applied to Percy Shelley's theory of revolution and opposition to mechanization in Book III of his first major poem, *Queen Mab*. We'll also see how

radical ecologies play out across a polytych of art by Joseph Wright of Derby, Adolph Menzl, The Otolith Group, and Jane Prophet.

Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, Ch. 5

G.W. Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, § 10

Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Queen Mab*, Book III

Art: Joseph Wright, *Arkwright's Mill at Night*, c. 1783-3; Adolph Menzel, *The Iron Rolling Mill (Modern Cyclops)*, 1872-75. Oil on canvas; The Otolith Group, *The Radiant*, 2012. HD video essay, sound; Jane Prophet, *Conductor*, 2014. Electro-Luminescent Cables and Water

### **August 25, 1pm PDT/4pm EDT: "Apocalypse and Populations Bombs"**

In the final month of the series we will be reading an excerpt from MP Shiel's post-apocalyptic *The Purple Cloud* (1901) as a way of thinking about the resonances between Metabolic Rift discourse and demography. Shiel's "Sibylline Prophecy" imagines a future event that wipes the world clean of all human life save a single man, Adam Jeffson. Alone, Adam begins to enact capitalist logics of destruction, consumption, and expansion even in a world bereft of the Social. Demographic arguments often assume tight causal relationships between population trends and resource consumption, but *The Purple Cloud* offers a fictional view of ideology operating free of any larger demographic principles. Alongside the novel excerpts, we will be engaging with selections from Dr. Elizabeth Carolyn Miller's forthcoming book, *Extraction Ecologies and the Literature of the Long Exhaustion* as well as Dr. Dan Nemser and Dr. Brian Whitener's response to Dr. Nathan D. Grawe's arguments for how Demographic Realism will shape the future of higher education. The session will seek to produce a fuller understanding of how conceptions of population and resource dynamics can shape fictions, environments, and even the academic fields in which we work.

M.P. Shiels, *The Purple Cloud* (1901)

Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, selections from *Extraction Ecologies and the Literature of the Long Exhaustion*, forthcoming

Nathan D. Grawe, "The Agile College: How Institutions Successfully Navigate Demographic Changes"