If you choose Camille 1 - Children of the Compost **focus on the three parag raphs of text highlighted on page 150-152.** However for your presentation you will want to provide some backgrond and context (highlighted below, on page 143 and 142)

The extract here are from the book **Staying with the Trouble Making Kin in the Chthulu by Donna Haraway,** which is a avialable online via the UAL Library see:

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The Camille Stories

Children of Compost

And then Camille came into our lives, rendering present the cross-stitched generations of the not-yet-born and not-yet-hatched of vulnerable, coevolving species. Proposing a relay into uncertain futures, I end *Staying with the Trouble* with a story, a speculative fabulation, which starts from a writing workshop at Cerisy in summer 2013, part of Isabelle Stengers's colloquium on *gestes spéculatifs*. Gestated in SF writing practices, Camille is a keeper of memories in the flesh of worlds that may become habitable again. Camille is one of the children of compost who ripen in the earth to say no to the posthuman of every time.

I signed up for the afternoon workshop at Cerisy called Narration Spéculative. The first day the organizers broke us down into writing groups of two or three participants and gave us a task. We were asked to fabulate a baby, and somehow to bring the infant through five human generations. In our times of surplus death of both individuals and of kinds, a mere five human generations can seem impossibly long to imagine flourishing with and for a renewed multispecies world. Over the week, the groups wrote many kinds of possible futures in a rambunctious play of literary forms. Versions abounded. Besides myself, the members of my group were the filmmaker Fabrizio Terranova and psychologist, philosopher, and ethologist Vinciane Despret. The version

8.1. *Mariposa* mask, Guerrero, Mexico, 62 cm× 72.5 cm × 12.5 cm, before 1990, Samuel Frid Collection, UBC Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver. Installation view, *The Marvellous Real: Art from Mexico, 1926–2011* exhibition (October 2013—March 2014), UBC Museum of Anthropology. Curator Nicola Levell. Photograph by Jim Clifford.

leaves of native, local milkweeds—unavailable along most of the routes. Not just the presence of any milkweed, but the seasonal appearance of local milkweed varieties from Mexico to Canada, is syncopated in the flesh of monarch caterpillars. Some milkweed species flourish in disturbed land; they are good pioneer plants. The common milkweed of central and eastern North America, *Asclepias syriaca*, is such an early successional plant. Milkweeds thrive on roadsides and between crop furrows, and these are the milkweeds that are especially susceptible to herbicides like Monsanto's glyphosphate-containing herbicide, Roundup. Another milkweed is also important to the eastern migration of monarchs, namely the climax prairie species native to grasslands in later successional stages. With the nearly complete destruction of climax prairies across North America, this milkweed, *Asclepias meadii*, is fiercely endangered.[13]

Throughout the spring, summer, and fall, a large variety of early, midseason, and late flowering plants, including milkweed blossoms, produce the nectar sucked greedily by monarch adults. On the southern journey to Mexico, the future of the North American eastern migration is threatened by loss of the habitats of nectar-producing plants to feed the nonbreeding adults flying to overwinter in their favorite roosting trees in mountain woodlands. These woodlands in turn face natural-cultural degradation in complex histories of ongoing state, class, and ethnic oppression of campesinos and indigenous peoples in the region, for example, the Mazahuas and Otomi.[14]

Unhinged in space and time and stripped of food in both directions, larvae starve and hungry adults grow sluggish and fail to reach their winter homes. Migrations fail across the Americas. The trees in central Mexico mourn the loss of their winter shimmying clusters, and the meadows, farms, and town gardens of the United States and southern Canada are desolate in summer without the flitting shimmer of orange and black.

For the child's symbionts, Camille 1's birthing parent chose monarch butterflies of North America, in two magnificent but severely damaged streams, from Canada to Mexico, and from the state of Washington, along California, and across the Rocky Mountains. Camille's gestational parent exercised reproductive freedom with wild hope, choosing to bond the soon-to-be-born fetus with both the western and eastern currents of this braid of butterfly motion. That meant that Camille of the first generation, and further Camilles for four more human generations at least, would grow in knowledge and know-how committed to the on-

goingness of these gorgeous and threatened insects and their human and nonhuman communities all along the pathways and nodes of their migrations and residencies in *these* places and corridors, not all the time everywhere. Camille's community understood that monarchs as a widespread global species are not threatened; but two grand currents of a continental migration, a vast connected sweep of myriad critters living and dying together, were on the brink of perishing.

The child-bearing parent who chose the monarch butterfly as Camille's symbiont was a single person with the response-ability to exercise potent, noninnocent, generative freedom that was pregnant with consequences for ramifying worlds across five generations. That irreducible singularity, that particular exercise of reproductive choice, set in train a several-hundred-year effort, involving many actors, to keep alive practices of migration across and along continents for all the migrations' critters. The Communities of Compost did not align their children to "endangered species" as that term had been developed in conservation organizations in the twentieth century. Rather, the Communities of Compost understood their task to be to cultivate and invent the arts of living with and for damaged worlds in place, not as an abstraction or a type, but as and for those living and dying in ruined places. All the Camilles grew rich in worldly communities throughout life, as work and play with and for the butterflies made for intense residencies and active migrations with a host of people and other critters. As one Camille approached death, a new Camille would be born to the community in time so that the elder, as mentor in symbiosis, could teach the younger to be ready.[15]

The Camilles knew the work could fail at any time. The dangers remained intense. As a legacy of centuries of economic, cultural, and ecological exploitation both of people and other beings, excess extinctions and exterminations continued to stalk the earth. Still, successfully holding open space for other critters and their committed people also flourished, and multispecies partnerships of many kinds contributed to building a habitable earth in sustained troubled times.

The Camille Stories

The story I tell below tracks the five Camilles along only a few threads and knots of their lifeways, between the birth of Camille 1 in 2025 and the death of Camille 5 in 2425. The story I tell here cries out for collaborative and divergent story-making practices, in narrative, audio, and visual performances and texts in materialities

from digital to sculptural to everything practicable. My stories are suggestive string figures at best; they long for a fuller weave that still keeps the patterns open, with ramifying attachment sites for storytellers yet to come. I hope readers change parts of the story and take them elsewhere, enlarge, object, flesh out, and reimagine the lifeways of the Camilles.

The Camille Stories reach only to five generations, not yet able to fulfill the obligations that the Haudenosaunee Confederacy imposed on themselves and so on anyone who has been touched by the account, even in acts of unacknowledged appropriation, namely, to act so as to be response-able to and for those in the seventh generation to come.[16] *The Children of Compost beyond the reach of the Camille Stories might become capable of that kind of worlding, which somehow once seemed possible, before the Great Acceleration of the Capitalocene and the Great Dithering.*

Over the five generations of the Camilles, the total number of human beings on earth, including persons in symbiosis with vulnerable animals chosen by their birth parent (syms) and those not in such symbioses (non-syms), declined from the high point of 10 billion in 2100 to a stable level of 3 billion by 2400. If the Communities of Compost had not proved from their earliest years so successful and so infectious among other human people and peoples, the earth's population would have reached more than 11 billion by 2100. The breathing room provided by that difference of a billion human people opened up possibilities for ongoingness for many threatened ways of living and dying for both human and nonhuman beings.[17]

CAMILLE 1

Born 2025. Human numbers are 8 billion.
Died 2100. Human numbers are 10 billion.

In 2020, about three hundred people with diverse class, racial, religious, and regional heritages, including two hundred adults of the four major genders practiced at the time[18] and one hundred children under the age of eighteen, built a town where the New River and Gauley River flowed together to form the Kanawha River in West Virginia. They named the settlement New Gauley to honor the lands and waters devastated by mountaintop removal coal mining. Historians of this time have suggested that the period between about 2000 and 2050 on earth should be called the Great Dithering.[19] The Great Dithering was a time of ineffective and widespread anxiety about environmental destruction, un-

8.3. Monarch butterfly caterpillar *Danaus plexippus* on a milkweed pod. Photograph by Singer S. Ron, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

mistakable evidence of accelerating mass extinctions, violent climate change, social disintegration, widening wars, ongoing human population increase due to the large numbers of already-born youngsters (even though birth rates most places had fallen below replacement rate), and vast migrations of human and nonhuman refugees without refuges.

During this terrible period, when it was nonetheless still possible for concerted action to make a difference, numerous communities emerged across the earth. The English-language name for these gatherings was the Communities of Compost; the people called themselves compostists. Many other names in many languages also proposed the string figure game of collective resurgence. These communities understood that the Great Dithering could end in terminal crises; or radical collective action could ferment a turbulent but generative time of reversals, revolt, revolution, and resurgence.

For the first few years, the adults of New Gauley did not birth any new children, but concentrated on building culture, economy, rituals, and politics in which oddkin would be abundant, and children would be rare but precious.[20] The kin-making work and play of the community built capacities critical for resurgence and multispecies flourishing. In particular, friendship as a kin-making practice throughout life was

elaborated and celebrated. In 2025, the community felt ready to birth their first new babies to be bonded with animal symbionts. The adults judged that most of their already-born children, who had helped found the community, were ready and eager to be older siblings to the coming symbiont youngsters. Everybody believed that this kind of sympoiesis had not been practiced anywhere on earth before. People knew it would not be simple to learn to live collectively in intimate and worldly caretaking symbiosis with another animal as a practice of repairing damaged places and making flourishing multispecies futures.

Camille 1 was born among a small group of five children, and per[21] was the only youngster linked to an insect. Other children in this first cohort became symbionts with fish (American eel, *Anguilla rostrata*), birds (American kestrel, *Falco sparverius*), crustaceans (the Big Sandy crayfish, *Cambarus veteranus*), and amphibians (streamside salamander, *Ambystoma barbouri*).[22] Beginning with vulnerable bats, mammal symbioses were undertaken in the second wave of births about five years later. It was often easier to identify migratory threatened insects, fish, mammals, and birds as potential symbionts for new children than reptiles, amphibians, and crustaceans. The preference for migratory symbionts was often relaxed, especially since corridor conservation of all kinds was ever more urgent as rising temperatures due to climate change forced many usually nonmigratory species outside their previous ranges. Although their first loves remained traveling critters and far-flung pathways—mostly because their own small human communities were made geographically and culturally more worldly through cultivating the linkages required to take care of their partners in symbiosis—some members of the Communities of Compost committed themselves to critters in tiny remnant habitats, as well as to those whose finicky ecological requirements and love of home tied them tightly to particular places only.[23]

Over the first hundred years, New Gauley welcomed 100 new births with babies joined to animal symbionts, 10 births to single parents or couples who declined the three-parent model and whose offspring did not receive these sorts of symbionts, 200 deaths, 175 in-migrants, and 50 out-migrants. The scientists of the Communities of Compost found it impossible to establish successful animal-human symbioses with adults; the critical receptive times for humans were fetal development, nursing, and adolescence. During the times that they contributed cellular or molecular materials for modifying the human partner, the animal partners also had to be in a period of transformation, such as hatching, larval

ecdysis, or metamorphosis. The animals themselves were not modified with human material; their roles in the symbioses were to teach and to flourish in every way possible in dangerous and damaged times.

Almost everywhere, the Communities of Compost committed themselves to maintaining their size or to growing through immigration, while keeping their own new births at a level compatible with the earth's overall human numbers eventually declining by two-thirds. If new in-migrants accepted the basic practices of the Communities of Compost, upon request they received permanent residency and citizenship rights as compostists in inventive and usually raucous kin-making ceremonies. Nonresident visitors were always welcome; hospitality was regarded as both a basic obligation and source of mutual renewal. Visitors' lengths of stay could become a contentious matter and was even known to break up kin affiliations and sometimes entire compostist communities.

If many more in-migrants wanted to join Communities of Compost than were possible to accommodate, new settlements formed with mentors from the seed towns. In-migrants in the early centuries often came from ruined areas elsewhere, and their seeking both refuge and belonging in the Communities of Compost—themselves committed to the arts of living in damaged places—was an act of both desperation and faith. The original founders of the Communities of Compost quickly realized that in-migrants from desperate situations brought with them not only trauma, but also extraordinary insight and skill for the work to be done. Resettlement in still other ruined sites and establishment of alliances and collaborations with people and other critters in those areas required the best abilities of the mentors and the in-migrants. Plant symbionts were not joined to babies in the Communities of Compost for several generations, although recognizing profuse sympoiesis—world making—with plants was fundamental for all compostists.

New Gauley decided to emphasize in-migration of people over new births for the first three generations, and after that time there was both more flexibility and the need to recalibrate births and deaths. In- and out-migration tended to equalize as more places on earth restored conditions for modest resurgence and reasons for seeking new homes rested much less on war, exploitation, genocide, and ecological devastation, and much more on adventure, curiosity, desire for new kinds of abundance and skill, and the old habits of human beings to move, including hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, and farm-and-town-living people. Opportunistic social species tend to move around a lot; human beings outside

captivity have always been extraordinary ecosocial opportunists, travelers, and path makers. Added to that, by 2300, more than a billion human beings on earth had themselves been born into new kinds of symbiotic relationships with other critters, in addition to the much older multispecies associations that characterized human people as well as every other sort of living being throughout ecological, evolutionary, developmental, historical, and technological histories.

Before birth, Camille 1 was given a suite of pattern-forming genes expressed on monarch surfaces over their transformations from caterpillar to winged adult. Camille 1 also received genes allowing per to taste in the wind the dilute chemical signals crucial to adult monarchs selecting diverse nectar-rich flowers and the best milkweed leaves for depositing their eggs. Camille 1's gut and mouth microbiomes were enhanced to allow per to safely savor milkweed plants containing the toxic alkaloids that the monarchs accumulate in their flesh to deter predators. As an infant, Camille 1's oral satisfactions with fragrant mammalian milk were laced with the bitter tastes of cardiac glycosides, tastes that the human parent nursing per dared not share. In per's maturing mindful body, Camille 1 had to learn to become in symbiosis with an insect composed as five caterpillar instars before metamorphosis into a flying adult, which in turn experienced seasonally alternating sexually excited phases and sexually quiet diapause. The symbiogenetic join of Camille and monarchs also had to accommodate the diverse parasitic and beneficial associates of the butterfly holobiont, as well as pay attention to the genetics of the migrating populations.[24]

The compostists did not attempt to introduce into Camille 1's already complicated symbiotic reformatting any of the genes and timing patterns that the butterflies use to utterly disassemble and recompose their entire being in the chrysalis before emerging as winged imagos. Nor did the parents attempt to alter Camille's visual capacities and neural arrangements to perceive physically in the butterfly color spectrum, or to see as if Camille had the compound eyes of an insect. Mimesis was not the point of the alterations, but fleshly suggestions braided through innovative pedagogical practices of naturalsocial becoming-with that could help the symbiosis thrive through five human generations committed to healing damaged human and nonhuman lives and places. In its most reductive expression, the point was to give the butterflies and their people—to give the Migrations—a chance to have a future in a time of mass extinctions.

By five years of age, Camille 1's skin was brilliantly banded and colored in yellow and black like a late-stage monarch caterpillar, increasing in intensity until age ten. But by initiation into adult responsibilities at age fifteen, Camille 1's skin had the muted tones and patterns of the monarch chrysalis. As an adult, Camille 1 gradually acquired the pattern and coloration of a vibrant orange and black adult butterfly. Camille 1's adult body was more androgynous in appearance than that of sexually dimorphic monarch adults.

All of the symbiont children developed both visible traits and subtle sensory similarities to their animal partners in early childhood. Although they should not have been surprised, the consequences of this developmental fact blindsided the adult compostists, as the first serious conflicts in New Gauley erupted in the learning groups of the young. Five youngsters who were bonded to animal symbionts, two children born to dissenting parents, and so not bonded with such symbionts, and five in-migrant children without symbionts made up the first cohort of little ones. The symbiotic young were struggling to integrate mindful bodies unimaginable to their parents. In addition, each symbiosis was the only one of its kind in these early generations.

Camille 1 formed fierce friendships, especially with Kess, the youngster bonded with the American kestrels; but each symbiotic child was acutely aware of their irreducible difference. Kess and Camille gravitated to each other partly because they knew kestrels ate butterflies, and both of their threatened animal symbionts flourished best in fields, meadows, roadsides, pastures, and mixed woodlands full of a myriad of flowering plants. From the beginning, the symbiont children developed a complex subjectivity composed of loneliness, intense sociality, intimacy with nonhuman others, specialness, lack of choice, fullness of meaning, and sureness of future purpose. This landscape of converging and diverging feelings tended to grade into arrogance and exceptionalism toward the nonsymbiotic children, and even toward their parents and other nonsymbiotic adults of New Gauley. Because symbionts were still rare in the overall population of an area in the initial generations after the first Communities of Compost were established, in vulnerable moments nonsymbiotic children and adults could and did feel the symbionts were freaks, both more-than- and other-than-human, and seriously threatening. Remembering that humanity meant humus, and not Anthropos or Homo, did not come easily in the webs of Western cultures that predominated in New Gauley. Determined to help youngsters through

the mazes of self-preoccupation, social enthusiasm, playfulness, pride in each other, fear, competition, and bullying that they had known in school, the New Gauley adults and their young were faced with quite another challenge in the emerging community of both symbiotic and nonsymbiotic children.

New Gauley compostists soon found that storytelling was the most powerful practice for comforting, inspiring, remembering, warning, nurturing compassion, mourning, and becoming-with each other in their differences, hopes, and terrors. Of course, the Communities of Compost emphasized a deep and wide range of approaches to educating both young and old, and the sciences and arts were especially elaborated and cherished. For youngsters and adults of most species in the communities, play was the most powerful and diverse activity for rearranging old things and proposing new things, new patterns of feeling and action, and for crafting safe enough ways to tangle with each other in conflict and collaboration.[25] The practice of friendship and the practice of play, both ritualized and celebrated in small and large ways, were the core kin-forming apparatuses. Libraries in many formats and materialities abounded to evoke curiosities and sustain knowledge projects for learning to live and die well in the work of healing damaged places, selves, and other beings. Decolonial multispecies studies (including diverse and multimodal human and nonhuman languages) and an indefinitely expandable transknowledging approach called EcoEvoDevoHistoEthnoTechnoPsycho (Ecological Evolutionary Developmental Historical Ethnographic Technological Psychological studies) were essential layered and knotted inquiries for compostists.[26]

Compostists eagerly found out everything they could about experimental, intentional, utopian, dystopian, and revolutionary communities and movements across times and places. One of their great disappointments in these accounts was that so many started from the premises of starting over and beginning anew, instead of learning to inherit without denial and stay with the trouble of damaged worlds. Although hardly free of the sterilizing narrative of wiping the world clean by apocalypse or salvation, the richest humus for their inquiries turned out to be SF—science fiction and fantasy, speculative fabulation, speculative feminism, and string figures. Blocking the foreclosures of utopias, SF kept politics alive.

So storytelling was the seed bag for flourishing for compostists, and Camille 1 was fed on stories. Because the brave young princess loved the

toxic forest beings, especially the despised and feared insects called the Ohmu, Camille's favorite story was *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. Like a turbo butterfly, Nausicaä could fly over the forest, fields, and towns on her agile personal jet-powered glider. The young Camille 1 could never resist that vivid sensation. Hayao Miyazaki's manga and anime story is set on a postapocalyptic earth menaced by the toxic forest's critters, who were defending themselves and taking revenge for the natural world's relentless destruction at the hands of militarized, power-mad, technological humans. Evil rulers continued to promise ultimate destruction in their drive to exterminate the toxic forest and extract the last drams of resources for the walled cities of privilege and exception. Through her study of the forest's ecology, understanding of the physiology of the mushroomlike infected poisonous trees, and love for the dangerous mutant giant insects and their larvae, Nausicaä triumphed in her efforts to save both the people and the forest. She discovered that the trees purified the toxins and drop by drop were forming a vast underground aquifer of pure water that could regenerate the biodiverse earth. Attuned to the languages of the plants, fungi, and animals, Nausicaä could calm the incomprehension and fear of the people who were poisoned by the toxic emanations of the disturbed forest. She could propose peace between humans and other-than-humans because she befriended the toxic forest, a practice that reached deep into the young Camille 1's psyche. In the dramatic concluding scenes of the story, at great risk to herself, Nausicaä rescued a threatened larval Ohmu and so stopped the stampede of its giant adult conspecifics in their rage at the humans' capturing and wounding of the youngster.

Camille 1 learned that there were many inspirations for Miyazaki's story,[27] including a Phaecian princess from Homer's *Odyssey* named Nausicaä, who loved nature and music, cultivated a fervid imagination, and disdained possessions. Along with European medieval accounts of witches' mastery of the winds, Master Windkey from Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea* also infused the Nausicaä tale. The adult Camille 1 thought that the most generative inspiration, however, was a Japanese story from the Heian period, called "The Princess Who Loved Insects."[28] The princess did not beautify herself by blackening her teeth or plucking her eyebrows, and she scorned the idea of a husband. All her passions were for the caterpillars and creeping crawling critters disdained by others.[29]

Nausicaä had a companion animal, really a symbiont, a fierce and gentle little fox squirrel. In per's memoir, the elder Camille 1 described

Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind as a fable of great danger and great companionship. Unlike conventional heroes, Nausicaä accompanied by animals, is a girl child and healer, whose courage matures in thick connection with many others and many kinds of others. Nausicaä cannot act alone, and also her personal response-ability and actions have great consequences for herself and for myriad human and nonhuman beings. Nausicaä's connections and corridors are practical and material, as well as fabulous and enspirited in bumptious animist fashion. Hers are the arts of living on a damaged planet. This twentieth-century Japanese anime child sustained Camille 1 in symbiosis with the monarchs for a lifetime.

CAMILLE 2

Born in 2085. Human numbers are 9.5 billion.
Died in 2185. Human numbers are 8 billion.

At initiation at age fifteen, as a coming-of-age gift the second Camille decided to ask for chin implants of butterfly antennae, a kind of tentacular beard, so that more vivid tasting of the flying insects' worlds could become the heritage of the human partner too, helping in the work and adding to the corporeal pleasures of becoming-with.[30] Proud of this vibrant sign of the lived symbiosis now in its second generation, once the procedures were complete the adolescent Camille 2 undertook a trip to the overwintering habitat of the eastern migration to meet with indigenous people and campesinos who were rehabilitating damaged lands and waters along the transvolcanic belt between the states of México and Michoacán.

Camille 1 had been Camille 2's mentor, and over the first fifteen years of the new child's life Camille 1 tried to prepare the second-generation New Gauley human-butterfly symbiont for sustained visiting as the guest of the diverse communities of Michoacán. But Camille 1's lifework had been almost entirely along the corridors and in the towns, fields, mines, woods, coasts, mountains, deserts, and cities of the great eastern and western monarch migrations that are north of Mexico, into southern Canada on the east and into Washington and the Northern Rockies on the west. Camille 1 worked, played, and struggled primarily with midwestern and southern farmers, agribusiness scientists, energy companies and their ruthless lawyers, mine workers, unemployed peo-