

Composting: Translation in Remains

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Abstract:

Composting is a form of material repurposing of what remains: it is a practice of making the new and the unexpected from decomposition and the alchemy of more-than-human relations. Open to error and to chance, is also potentially a site of 'culpable failure'; as Haraway remarks of compost - 'you can put the wrong things into it' (Haraway and Franklin 2017). Typically associated with waste, for Arthur and Jentink (2018) thinking with compost also involves a negotiation between 'decomposition as the undoing of Western intellectual and political sovereignties' and 'recomposition: making and remaking a different world alongside nonhuman co-constituents of land'. But what happens when the ecosemiotic context of the compost bin meets translation practice? And what creative-critical experiments emerge when we make composting and textual decomposition a part of the translation process? In this creative-critical paper, we will explore the theoretical and speculative possibilities of using composting as a method of translating Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Framing composting as a form of multispecies poetics, we suggest that composting Whitman's 'multitudes' has the capacity to attend to new 'critical metabolisms' in a more-than-human context (Hamilton and Neimanis 2018) and to reframe human language and experience as both nonsovereign and permeable.