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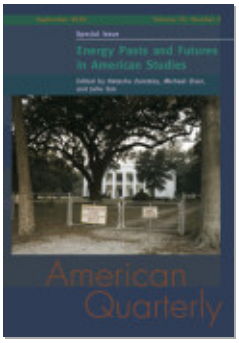

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Lotuses in Muddy Water: Fracked Gas and the Hare Krishnas at New Vrindaban, West Virginia

Kevin Stewart Rose

Each morning before the sun rises, devotees of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in New Vrindaban gather in a dimly lit temple to chant the *mahamantra* to Krishna. As the residents of this remote religious commune in West Virginia's northern panhandle chant in unison, their voices rising and falling over the hourlong service, robed worshippers offer a series of objects to an image of Krishna to stir up their lord's love for the Earth. The flame of a ghee lamp is waved before the image, offering Krishna the pleasure of warmth and light produced from the milk of the community's sacred cows. Then the lamps are carried to each of the devotees, who, one by one, briefly hold their hands over the flame before placing them on their heads, transferring the warmth of the lamp to their own bodies. Next, a pink flower is held up to Krishna before again being carried to the devotees. They look intently on the flower and again place their hands near the object before moving them to their noses to take in its scent. In this series of offerings, New Vrindaban's residents frame their day with a sensuous, physical encounter with the beauty of the Earth. First, offering the objects to Krishna, they remind themselves of their deity's love for the Earth. Then, carrying these objects to one another, they engage their own senses in this same love. The ritual offers an embodied foundation for their appreciation of the planet and their commitment to the communal life of plain living and high thinking that called them to West Virginia in the first place.[1]

As the service comes to a close, residents and pilgrims enter a period of meditation. Often, especially when pilgrims are visiting, a few devotees undertake another event, *go-puja*, a service of cow worship and milking that reflects another linchpin in the community's environmental ethic: cow protection. Crossing the road that divides the temple and barn, residents and pilgrims carry a ghee lamp to offer the same warmth and light to the cows, a red powder to apply a bindi to each cow's forehead, and several bananas to be given as gifts

to the animals. Devotees offer these gifts to the cows and then begin the daily task of milking, undertaken with care and gentleness.[2]

These two events reflect New Vrindaban's love for the land and animals that surround them. Yet, as devotees make the short walk from the temple to the barn, they cross over a freshly paved road that serves as a subtle visual marker of a tension in the community's environmental ethic: their partnership with fossil fuel capitalists in extracting natural gas from beneath their feet. In 2010 New Vrindaban agreed to a contract with AB Resources, allowing fracking to commence on New Vrindaban's sacred land.[3] Many devotees have expressed ambivalence about this partnership with the fossil fuel industry, though others are more sanguine about the way the royalties might lead to opportunities for expanding their Krishna-conscious relationship with the land. On both ends of this spectrum, ISKCON religious thought and practice have provided resources through which the devout might process this newfound partnership between their back-to-the-land commune and American petrocapitalism.[4]

Over the past few decades, scholars of religion and ecology have been preoccupied by the question of whether contemporary religious communities contain thought and practice that can help mount a response to the growing climate crisis.[5] A recent wide-ranging survey of religion and ecology publications found that most "advance a claim that the world's religions or some of them are becoming environmentally friendly."[6] In this way, scholarship on religion and ecology tends to assume, as another review put it, that "what [religions] say and do about climate change—whether they encourage concern or help their adherents recognize and cope with the challenge—could . . . make a decisive difference."[7] In other words, many scholars are themselves hopeful that green religions will help society confront climate change.

The story of New Vrindaban raises a different possibility. Within this small, Hindu-derived, back-to-the-land commune in northern West Virginia, a religious community whose founder explicitly stated that fossil fuel extraction would "mar the whole idea" of plain living and high thinking at New Vrindaban nonetheless finds itself in partnership with petrocapital.[8] While other scholars set out in search of religious discourses that might encourage resistance to fossil fuel hegemony, New Vrindaban calls for greater attention to how such discourses are embedded in and shaped by existing networks of extraction and consumption.[9]

In this essay, I investigate New Vrindaban's entanglements in petrocapitalism's pervasive networks. As residents think through their relationship with fracking, many are keenly aware of how their lives are always already pervaded by fossil fuels in ways that make those entanglements feel unavoidable. As

Stephanie LeMenager has suggested, contemporary American efforts to respond to the coming climate catastrophe are everywhere haunted by "the *everything* of oil."[10] Fossil fuels are omnipresent in American life, and New Vrindaban residents know it.[11]

Following Timothy Mitchell's call to consider "particular ways of engineering political relations out of flows of energy," I argue that fracked gas—thanks to its materiality as a nonsolid fossil fuel—should be seen itself as an agent of neoliberalization.[12] The story of New Vrindaban is a concrete example of the way the neoliberal state, defined by David Harvey as an "apparatus whose fundamental mission was to facilitate conditions for profitable capital accumulation," is bolstered by specific forms of energy.[13] Fracked gas in particular favors these patterns of capital accumulation because of its material qualities. As Mitchell suggests, gas and oil are "not as vulnerable to stoppages or sabotage as the carbon energy networks of the coal age."[14] In New Vrindaban's debates on whether to allow fracking, many looked to their founder and his successors' environmental ethics as resources for resistance. However, their political and economic environment favored deregulated, unfettered extraction that could leverage gas's liquid nature to circumvent resistance.[15] New Vrindaban's financial precarity meant that its future as an organization might just depend on the potential gas royalties. This combined with the knowledge that—because of natural gas's unruly transgression of property lines—refusal of a fracking contract would be unlikely to stop the eventual extraction of the gas. As a result, community leaders signed a contract, and those who had initially resisted it turned to religious teachings that could help them process their new partnership with petrocapital.

Ultimately, New Vrindaban exemplifies how neoliberal political economies powered by the free flow of fossil fuels create conditions for, in the words of Wendy Brown, "the transformation of political problems into individual problems with market solutions."[16] When resistance to the gas contract failed, other teachings helped mediate the community's new relationship with fracking. Many came to believe that the economic bounty of their new partnership with petrocapital could facilitate transcendence of that partnership's corrupting effects.[17] One community member put it this way:

> You know lotuses, they grow in muddy water, and but, the muddy water doesn't get on the leaves or dirty the flower. So similarly, even though we are in this world where there's all kinds of negative influence, right? And all kinds of bad stuff happening . . . so they grow in muddy water and how the material world is, so we want to be as pure and clean as the lotus flowers.[18]

When resistance to petrocapitalism as a political problem seemed to have reached a dead end, petrocapital's entanglements were reimagined as an internal issue. Turning away from their previous resistance to the fracking contract, New Vrindaban residents came to imagine a spiritual transcendence through which their consciousness might rise above their corrupt surroundings, specifically manifested by petrocapital's extractive intrusion into their sacred land.

Plain Living and High Thinking among the Hare Krishnas

When ISKCON's founder, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, landed in New York in 1966, the eventual linkage between his religious thought and the back-to-the-land contingent of the counterculture was by no means a foregone conclusion. Bhaktivedanta—known to his devotees by the honorific Srila Prabhupada—had been raised in India, where he studied with a religious reformer in the Chaitanya Vaishnava tradition. Chaitanya Vaishnavism is distinctive for its emphasis on bhakti-yoga, a highly devotional form of spiritual practice that the religion scholar Kenneth Valpey describes as "devotional engagement with the divine, as a process of self-realization and God-realization that emphasizes relationality with a supreme being as ultimate reality."[19] One example of bhakti spiritual practice centers on the chanting of the supreme deity's names in the form of the *mahamantra*, "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare." Chanting this mantra in public spaces, in group worship, and in individual meditation remains the central devotional practice of ISKCON today.

After about a year of preaching and teaching in New York, Prabhupada shrewdly relocated to the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, hoping that his message would resonate with the young people flocking to this countercultural epicenter.[20] It did, and the movement began growing quickly around 1967. Soon, Prabhupada directed his new followers to create rural communities where they could develop their Krishna consciousness, instructing them to organize their community in accordance with an ancient way of life he identified as the "Vedic social system." As Prabhupada put it in one interview, the devotee should "learn to love this natural mode of life, life in a wide-open space. Produce your own grain. Produce your own milk. Save time. Chant Hare Krishna. Glorify the Lord's holy names. At life's end, go back to the spiritual world to live forever. Plain living, high thinking—ideal life."[21] One of Prabhupada's successor-gurus put it this way in 1988: "To prosecute God consciousness on Earth, as well as to attain ecological balance, devotees recommend living simply. . . . Living simply in relation with the land creates

a natural balance between ourselves and the Earth."[22] By reproducing the Vedic social system, devotees say they are simultaneously enabling their own Krishna consciousness and cultivating a more environmentally friendly way of living in the world.

New Vrindaban came into being in 1968, a little over two years after Srila Prabhupada arrived in the United States and founded the first ISKCON temples in New York City and San Francisco. Two converts of Prabhupada's new mission in San Francisco answered an advertisement in an alternative newspaper for land outside Moundsville, West Virginia, available to spiritual seekers. With New Vrindaban in West Virginia, Prabhupada and his devotees hoped to create a place pervaded by an intense emphasis on devotees' cultivation of a simple life and close relationship with the land. It seemed a promising opportunity to reproduce the Krishna-conscious simple life Prabhupada had been describing, and when they brought the idea to their leader, he agreed. In a 1968 letter to Hayagriva Swami, Prabhupada expressed his approval and offered a few words of guidance:

> I have advised Kirtanananda and yourself to convert West Virginia into New Vrindaban. . . . [New] Vrindaban does not require to be modernized because Krishna's Vrindaban [in India] is transcendental village. They completely depend on nature's beauty and nature's protection. . . . Better to live there without modern amenities. But to live a natural healthy life for executing Krishna Consciousness. It may be an ideal village where the residents will have plain living and high thinking.[23]

Along with another devotee, Kirtanananda Swami, Hayagriva relocated to West Virginia with the intention of creating the self-sufficient farming community. In the years that followed, Kirtanananda would serve as the primary leader.[24]

New Vrindaban's founding coincided with a period of widespread interest in the recovery of simple, traditional lifestyles that could cultivate greater reliance on agricultural labor, home craftsmanship, and communal living, as an alternative to the suburban consumer culture that had risen to prominence in the 1950s. Young adults had found temporary satisfaction of their desire for liberation from the suburban mainstream in the psychedelic spaces of Haight-Ashbury and Woodstock, but by the end of the 1960s, many began looking for longer-term solutions, often drawing on lifestyle guides like Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog* or John and Jane Shuttleworth's *Mother Earth News*.[25] As one account of New Vrindaban's founding put it: "Their early efforts seem to mirror those of many rural communal experiments in the 1960s and 1970s. The emphasis was on simplicity and getting back to nature."[26] Many New Vrindaban residents who joined in the 1970s and 1980s remain deeply influ-

enced by this moment, such as Lilasuka Dasi, who relocated there in 1980. Her understanding of the link between Krishna consciousness and environmental stewardship draws on the discourses of the counterculture, as she says herself:

> We understand that the world is created by God, we're all parts and parcels of God, as such we are meant to be stewards of the Earth, stewards of the Earth means you take care of the Earth. . . . But as stewards of the Earth and having dominion over animals we are meant to live in harmony with nature and with Earth and with animals with the Earth itself, we actually see the Earth-planet, almost like we call it Mother Earth. You know, I mean *Mother Earth News*, you know you've heard that catalogue from my old hippie days.[27]

In this way, Lilasuka Dasi personally interweaves her religious thought—showing the intense devotion to a personal god that characterizes ISKCON thought and practice—alongside the influence of her hippie days to account for her desire for harmony with the environment.

Although much of the appeal of back-to-the-land communal living during this time centered on romantic dreams of harmony with Mother Earth, founding members quickly found that financial difficulties and hard labor would characterize their new lives in rural West Virginia. As Hayagriva wrote in a 1974 letter, "There is so much involved in getting a commune functioning that it is no wonder that most of them fold out and die before the first spring flowers bud. The advice: don't try to start one without Krsna."[28] These financial hardships were exacerbated by a conflict of visions over the purpose of New Vrindaban. Though Prabhupada had advised simplicity and austerity in his 1968 letter to Hayagriva, he soon pressed the community to find ways to become a site of pilgrimage for the rest of the movement. This demand carried with it significant costs, as it meant building lodging facilities for pilgrims and an opulent set of seven temples envisioned by Prabhupada to attract them. Before the seven temples could be built, the community first took to constructing an opulent residence for their founder. Though it could not be completed before his death in 1977, the Palace of Gold was dedicated in 1979 in Prabhupada's honor and remains to this day the primary attraction of pilgrims and visitors.

Despite its financial hardships and austerities, New Vrindaban grew rapidly during its first fifteen years or so, peaking in its population nearly a decade after Prabhupada's death. In 1975 the community reported 122 people in residence (65 men, 43 women, 14 children). By its peak in the mid-1980s, it had 377 adult residents.[29] Lilasuka Dasi characterized the time as one of intense community and expanding religious devotion: "We decided to move here to live more of a rural life. . . . There was a real sisterhood and brotherhood, also. So,

on that personal level it was really wonderful actually. And we were all growing in Krishna consciousness."[30] Many of those devotees who relocated during these early years of austerity look back on the time fondly. Gabriel Fried, who joined permanently in 1981, describes it this way:

> It was a very dynamic time. . . . everything we did we did as service, we would get a very small compensation, you know fifty dollars a month just to buy basic stuff but generally our needs were met. So, shoes and whatever little bit of clothing. And everything we did, we did as service, we did for the Lord, we did for the pleasure of Srila Prabhupada. . . . we were up at two o'clock in the morning, we had all of our rounds chanted and then we would just be doing service all day long. . . . it was a very wonderful, very exciting, very dynamic time.[31]

While Prabhupada did not live to see the community's peak period in the mid-1980s, Fried's narration suggests that much of his initial vision was coming to fruition: a growing community living the kind of rustic, simple life that could best facilitate deepening relationships with Krishna, one another, and the land around them.

All this began to change in the mid-1980s as a series of scandals began to weaken the community. In 1986 a former resident named Stephen Bryant was murdered. The victim had produced a one-hundred-page document alleging Kirtanananda's involvement in child abuse, drug dealing, and sexual exploitation. A group of residents formed a surveillance team to track Bryant's whereabouts. On May 22, 1986, a member of that team, Thomas Drescher, followed Bryant to Los Angeles and shot and killed him at close range.[32] The case sparked a wide-ranging investigation by the FBI, IRS, and state police, ending in a raid of the community in early 1987. By 1988 this scrutiny over Kirtanananda led to his and the community's formal excommunication from ISKCON.[33]

These troubles at the legal level coincided with revelations of Kirtanananda's sexual abuse of young devotees. In late 1986 a young devotee who had been serving as Kirtanananda's personal assistant informed two elder members that the guru had sexually assaulted him. Kirtanananda denied wrongdoing, and his victim was forced to leave the community. Having been excommunicated from ISKCON along with New Vrindaban, Kirtanananda remained in power for several years. Kirtanananda continued in leadership until 1993, when a devotee witnessed him engaged in another sexual encounter with a young adult male.[34] In 1996 Kirtanananda underwent a retrial. He was sentenced to twenty years in prison on federal racketeering charges, largely because Drescher, imprisoned for murder, had heard of Kirtanananda's sexually abusive behavior and became newly willing to testify against him.[35]

In the aftermath of these events, what New Vrindaban's current leadership calls "the troubles," devotees defected in large numbers. While in the mid-1980s, New Vrindaban could boast 377 adult residents, by 1991 the number had dwindled to 131. After Kirtanananda's departure, the community began rebuilding its reputation, being formally reinstated into ISKCON in 1998.[36] Even so, with just a third of its high-watermark membership and bankruptcy looming, the community's future remained uncertain.

Fracking at New Vrindaban

By the early 2000s, New Vrindaban's population was faltering, its infrastructure was in disrepair, and its finances were dwindling. When gas companies arrived in the area in 2005, looking to negotiate fracking contracts with local property owners, the potential royalties looked like a major lifeline for the community. Under neoliberalism, captains of industry and their political allies often rely on a crisis moment to expand their capital accumulation into new territories. They bring the promise of recovery to a struggling community so long as it is open to unregulated extraction and trade.[37] And the abundant natural gas beneath New Vrindaban made it a particularly attractive locale for fossil fuel development. New Vrindaban sits on the Marcellus Shale, a formation long thought by natural gas drilling operations to be inconsequential. In the early 2000s, surveyors began to rethink that assumption, and eventually the US Geological Survey published revised estimates that suggested it may be the largest reserve of natural gas on the planet. Gas companies first contacted New Vrindaban in 2005, and a lease was signed in 2010, granting AB Resources the mineral rights for drilling on its land. The income from selling these rights, as well as a subsequent sale of rights to the Utica Shale, has resulted in eight million dollars in bonuses and royalties, most of which has been spent on restoring structures, beautifying the grounds, and adding residential spaces in hopes of attracting more visitors and residents.[38]

A number of New Vrindaban residents, convinced that fracking ran counter to Srila Prabhupada's teachings, mounted significant resistance to the potential contract throughout this five-year negotiation process.[39] Aware of West Virginia's long history of coal and oil extraction, Prabhupada had in fact spoken almost directly to the issue when he wrote in a 1967 letter to Hayagriva: "If in our vicinity some such industry (coal or oil industry) is started, the whole idea of Vrindaban will fade away." Because it interfered with the plain living and high thinking envisioned at New Vrindaban, he went on, fossil fuel development in the area would threaten the entire enterprise. "The New Vrindaban

ida [*sic*] is that persons who live there will accept the bare necessities of life to maintain the body and soul together and the major part of time should be engaged in development of Krishna Consciousness. . . . Industrial development (or mining industry) in the neighboring places will mar the whole idea."[40] For many community members aware of Prabhupada's writings on the topic, a fracking contract would seem to undermine their commitment to plain living and high thinking.

At a community meeting on natural gas in 2008, some residents pointed to Prabhupada's teachings, mentioning that he "describes extraction of coal and oil as being similar to the activities of Hiranyaksa, which resulted in the earth being thrown off its orbit," and asking questions like "Does this represent plain living, high thinking?" and "Is this what we joined the movement for?"[41] Many were troubled by a deep sense that a fracking contract would be out of step with Prabhupada's vision, and made their feelings known at community meetings as a form of resistance. Lilasuka Dasi, who maintains a connection to her hippie days, described her resistance to the drilling this way:

> It's been insane, it's like the Joni Mitchell song, "They pave paradise and put up a parking lot," you know? That just reminds me of that because you know I was very much against the drilling. . . . we'd come to the meetings to fight against the whole thing, to not sell your mineral rights. I couldn't understand why they would do it. . . . different people say different things, some say that, "yes, we think our spiritual master Prabhupada would take this as a boon, as a benediction, as a blessing." But other people would be like "are you kidding? Prabhupada spoke against having industry anywhere near the area as much as possible" . . . We totally resisted it, didn't do it, didn't sign up.[42]

Rather than embrace fossil fuel exploration with open arms, then, New Vrindaban residents struggled with the new reality of fracking in their region, with many devotees mobilizing teachings from within their own tradition to mount resistance.

Even so, the community's financial precarity throughout this decade, a result of the mass exodus of residents and major decline in visitors and donations that resulted from its "troubles" in the 1990s, made the royalties difficult to pass up. As Lilasuka Dasi put it, "We were totally against it, but the temple [leadership] did it anyhow, and there was a lot of money involved so it was hard to resist."[43] Though New Vrindaban's troubles were unique, the way its economic status made the arrival of the fossil fuel industry a potential lifeline reflects an overall pattern in the way neoliberalism's modes of capital accumulation through deregulated resource extraction expand their reach.[44] In Stephanie LeMenager's words, "With the rust-belt keenly suffering . . . fracking has come to look like salvation."[45]

From the perspective of Fried, a devotee who led negotiations with the gas company, the fracking royalties should indeed be seen as a kind of salvation, a reward for the community's renewed commitment to Krishna consciousness on the other end of its troubled 1990s. "That really caused us to become very introspective," Fried said, "to look internally to study what it is we were doing and where we had failed ourselves. And to turn it around and as you can see the result you know from getting back on track and getting refocused and now the Lord's reciprocated in a wonderful way."[46] Vrindaban Palika, an Indian devotee who moved to New Vrindaban more recently than Fried and Dasi, put it this way:

> Maybe that is what Krishna wants. . . . And if they say no to the drilling, then this would hardly be here, and hardly no one would be coming, and no renovations. . . . But when Srila Prabhupada and all these young boys and girls poured their hearts into projects like this, and through and through it was labor of love, and initially they had bought just a small house and because the land was available they bought . . . then suddenly I will give them money through the drilling, let me see how they will take advantage of the money.[47]

In her account, Palika suggests that the selection of the West Virginia panhandle as the location of New Vrindaban may itself have been part of a divine plan to place the community over a natural gas rich mineral formation and bring it a share of royalties. Jaya Krishna Das, a Swiss devotee who moved to New Vrindaban in 2011 to serve as temple president and guide the community's use of the fracking income to rebuild itself, put it in even starker terms. Reflecting on the fracking royalties, Das said, "Over time I came to the conclusion that actually it's a gift of Krishna. It's maybe the one reason why New Vrindaban was created in this place. Which, in North America is so big, we could have created New Vrindaban in so many other places, which would have been maybe much more favorable for growing food, attending cows, whatever if you see in the Midwest or whatever, but there is one reason we ended here."[48]

Fracking and Krishna Consciousness

With the fracking contracts in place, proponents and opponents alike looked to their tradition to make sense of their new partnership with the fossil fuel industry. From the temple president's perspective, the windfall of fracking royalties is best seen as a gift of Krishna. As Das described it, "The creation is actually an expression of the desires of God. . . . but the desire of God is to create this planet, this universe, this planet, many other universes, and we see in this planet different natural resources. So, for me it's a natural gift of God that

we have this natural resource in New Vrindaban."[49] Even so, ISKCON's view of the planet as Krishna's creation is one of several teachings that has proved ambiguous and pliable, as devotees have tried to process their community's new partnership with the fossil fuel industry. This conception of the Earth as Krishna's creation emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things through the flow of divine energy and the cause and effect relations of karma. Devotees conceive of all Earth, its resources and residents, in relation to divine energy. In Prabhupada's words, "Everything is being done by the natural mechanism of Krishna. *Parasya shaktir vividhaiva shruyate*: the Lord is orchestrating everything by His innumerable, inconceivable energies."[50]

In one sense, the Earth's connection to these divine laws and energies can be said to make environmental responsibility imperative. In *Divine Nature*, a 1995 text on Hare Krishna ecology, Michael A. Cremo and Mukunda Dasa Goswami explain: "If one causes unnecessary suffering to another living entity, one will undergo suffering in return. This suffering may come as environmental problems."[51] If humans act in opposition to karmic laws, overusing natural resources or killing animals for food, those same laws will result in punishment. Prabhupada was explicit on this point: "If they do not recognize the proprietorship of the Supreme Lord, all the property they claim as their own is stolen. Consequently, they are liable to punishment by the laws of nature."[52] From this viewpoint, karma would suggest that humans bear direct responsibility for ecological balance. Environmental problems are nature's response or reaction to unrighteous action, a problem that plain living and high thinking seeks to resolve. When devotees maintain and expand these forms of life—simple living, cow protection, responsible use of resources—they help ensure karmic and ecological balance in the world. Put in these terms, the convergence between God-conscious plain living and ecological balance is not merely coincidental, it is causal. And it is imperative of the devout to cultivate God consciousness in order to ensure the health of the planetary web life.

However, as New Vrindaban residents have shown, this same teaching can be taken in multiple directions. From another point of view, the promise that everything on Earth is controlled by laws that extend far beyond human action has been interpreted as license to engage with things like industrial expansion and fossil fuel extraction for the sake of expanding God consciousness, counting on the fact that Krishna will ensure the planet's survival. Paraphrasing Prabhupada's thoughts on karma in relation to late-sixties anxieties about overpopulation, Cremo and Goswami put it this way: "If the population is good, then no matter how numerous, they will be able to cooperate with each other peacefully and with the blessings of God receive ample resources from

Mother Earth."[53] In other words, if devotees pursue Krishna consciousness, karma will ensure the health of the planet. Krishna's care for the Earth, "orchestrating everything by His innumerable, inconceivable energies," might be read as a guarantee of the Earth's survival. When asked whether the fracked gas extraction was a concern in terms of climate change, Das turned to this teaching to account for the potential harm this gas consumption might do:

> Our Scriptures say if people on this planet are really serving God, what is their ultimate duty, the whole planet will flourish. It will be enough food for everybody, there will be enough gold created, there will be enough diamonds and pearls created in the seas, so everything can be recreated by Mother Earth. But her creation depends on the consciousness of the planet. And if the consciousness is God directed and it's increasing, then it will be much more affluent than it is nowadays.[54]

If devotees must make pragmatic decisions to extract natural resources and create pollution to expand Krishna consciousness over the long term, it may be worth it in the long run.

With this promise that a steadily expanding Krishna consciousness will itself ensure planetary survival, Prabhupada and his successors tend to take a pragmatic stance toward modern technology, industry, and fossil fuel intensive activity. Though he often worried that these activities could interfere with the simple way of life best suited to religious devotion, he recognized how widespread modern technology and industry truly was, and maintained that Krishna consciousness could be cultivated amid high-tech and industrialized modes of existence:

> We don't directly attempt to stop the modern advancement of technology. The so-called advancement of technology is suicidal, but we don't always talk of this. [Laughter]. People today are extremely attached to this so-called advancement. Therefore, when Lord Chaitanya appeared five hundred years ago, He gave a simple formula: chant Hare Krishna. Even in your technological factory you can chant. You go on pushing and pulling with your machine, and chant, "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna." You can devote yourself to God. What is wrong there?[55]

So, while a life protected from the influence of modern technology and industry is preferred—"the ideal life" as he stated elsewhere—"we don't always talk of this." The expansion of Krishna consciousness takes priority. Because divine energies can be trusted to guarantee the survival of the planet, devotees can table their utopian visions in favor of a pragmatic orientation toward economic opportunity that might help them expand their message of Krishna consciousness. As long as the gas companies guaranteed in their contract certain precautions against the direct pollution of New Vrindaban's air or water, the

royalties could be taken and invested in the community to support its work of expanding Krishna consciousness by restoring the community's status as a beautiful pilgrimage site for visitors. In Das's words, "The main question for us is how do we use the *lakshmi*, the money, which we receive from that. If we use it in the proper service to God, then from my personal perspective, that's absolutely approved. But, so the main topic is the consciousness when we decide how to use these funds which we received from the gas companies you know?"[56]

For those who encountered this process from positions of relative privilege and authority, such as the temple president Das and lead contract negotiator Fried, then, this newfound relationship with petrocapital is experienced as an invitation to claim economic agency within the free market. Taking a pragmatic orientation toward the planet and its resources—Krishna guarantees environmental survival as long as the devout cultivate God consciousness—the temple president and board members look to another teaching: *yukta-vairagya*. This concept proved especially important for Fried, as he thought through his role as key negotiator behind New Vrindaban's partnership with the gas companies. Fried described the teaching this way:

> In our philosophy, we have a basic principle called *yukta-vairagya* and it means to use everything in the service of the Lord. So Prabhupada actually gives an example he says a surgeon uses a knife and is able to heal a person to take out cancer or whatever and remove an appendix. That same knife in the hands of a criminal is a terrible thing and in the hands of a surgeon it's miraculous. So here, we have the same energy. The same knife can be used in a positive way or can be used in a negative way.[57]

While other interpretations of ISKCON teachings on the environment might emphasize the value of simplicity in the Vedic social system, as well as the necessity of environmental responsibility in light of the planet's interconnectedness through divine energies and karmic laws, Fried's emphasis on *yukta-vairagya* represents the way ISKCON tradition can allow for a view of the devout's relationship to the environment as morally neutral. Whether extracting fossil fuels from the Earth or living a life of austere simplicity and subsistence farming, what matters is whether the individual is cultivating God consciousness. With Fried and other community leaders' emphasis on *yukta-vairagya*, a network of political and economic relationships, subterranean flows of natural gas, and technical infrastructures of extraction seems to encourage a particular mode of discourse through which a political problem—whether and how to challenge the power of the fossil fuel industry—is transformed into a question of how to grow spiritually while navigating this network.[58]

Tragic Subjects of the Kali Yuga

To others, however, New Vrindaban's newfound relationship with the fossil fuel industry remains troubling. Even with Das and Fried's insistence that the royalties will be used in the service of Krishna, to some the fracking still compromises their view of the Earth as sacred and worthy of protection. Lalita Gopi, a devotee who works in cow protection, expressed this view. While milking the cows after their veneration at *go-puja*, she paused to reflect on the question of fracking: "It's very, very sad. . . . it is much harder to live here, you know, it really took a big toll. This is a place of nature and people are connected to the Earth and to farming and so that was just like, 'Oh no!' Everybody's very, very torn up about it."[59]

For members of the community who find their new reliance on fracking royalties most troubling, another ISKCON teaching, the notion of the *Kali Yuga*, has helped them process the arrival of fracking all around them as well as the ultimate failures of resistance efforts. The Vedic scriptures speak of multiple ages through which human history passes. According to many, history is now taking place within the fourth and most degenerate age, *Kali Yuga*. For many ISKCON devotees, this framing of time helps explain their encounter with neoliberalism's networks of extraction and accumulation as tragic subjects who, despite their efforts of resistance, failed to prevent their community's partnership with petrocapital.[60] Vrindaban Palika, for example, felt ambivalent about the drilling because of her concerns about possible pollution to air and water, but ultimately understood the drilling as an expected feature of this corrupt age. From her perspective, because of *Kali Yuga*, the community's entanglements with fossil fuels are unsurprising:

> You know, both ways are not good results either way. That tells me that this is the age we are living in. And it has been predicted. Everything is in the scriptures, that what this age is called, what are its symptoms. So, in this age of *Kali Yuga*, what are the symptoms: that our lives are short lived, that we are not going to be that intelligent, and that there is a lot of hypocrisy and conflict and violence all that. . . . So what are we supposed to do? We are supposed to look at the benefits of this age, and work on ourselves. So, I go by that. How am I working on myself?[61]

For those who remain ambivalent about the fracking contract, *Kali Yuga* helps explain how their resistance was overcome, as profit-seeking fossil fuel companies closed in on the community. One of the community's most recent converts, Doug Sauer, connected fracking to *Kali Yuga* as well:

> There's different ages that take place, and it's kind of a repeating cycle. And we're in what is called now the *Kali Yuga* which is the most degraded age in the cycle, and it's a cycle that's predominated by quarrel and frustration. And people, their minds are disturbed most often, and there's just not a lot of cooperation taking place. . . . we need to take the situation as it is and try to work with what you have in order to bring as many people to Krishna consciousness as possible.[62]

In other words, through this conceptualization of time as *Kali Yuga*, devotees might simultaneously embrace a utilitarian orientation toward fossil fuel development while coming to grips with what can feel like a lack of agency in the face of the ubiquitous forces of profit seeking and extractive that surround them.

This teaching seems especially useful in light of fossil fuel hegemony in American society, where companies are aided by the state in taking almost unlimited powers of extraction as they seek out more and more sources of fossil fuel extraction.[63] This is part of the long story of fossil fuels in America, but one that was especially exacerbated by the transition from coal to oil and gas. As Timothy Mitchell explains, in the midst of that transition and the energy crisis it produced in the 1970s, economists developed "market devices [that] were intended as an alternative to democratic methods of governing matters of public concern, by converting them into matters of private regulation by those with the resources to operate as market agents."[64]

This drive toward deregulated extraction that might restrict democratic methods of governance of fossil fuel networks was not simply a result of new alliances among economists, oil companies, and politicians. As Mitchell suggests, the transition from coal to oil and gas as primary energy sources has directly constrained democratic possibilities because of the material difference between the two energy sources. Oil and gas's liquidity means that, in contrast to coal, they can be easily moved in large quantities over long distances, flowing through infrastructural assemblages too varied and dispersed to be easily blocked by organized labor.[65] Further adding to the hegemonic power of fossil fuel companies, courts have generally granted them "rule of capture," a legal precedent taken from English conventions allowing property owners to kill animals that crossed their property line.[66] In applying a rule about wild animals who move overland to fossil fuels that flow underground, the courts make a seeming concession to the material agency of fossil fuels.

Thanks to the rule of capture, and because fracking operations can extract laterally, had New Vrindaban refused a contract, gas companies could have drilled next to their land and pulled the gas from beneath them. New Vrindaban residents were well aware of this fact. Not long after the fracking contract

was signed, a proponent posted an article on the community's blog explaining just this problem: "The stark reality was that because of the geography of New Vrindaban properties and the Rule of Capture, a significant amount of the natural gas that New Vrindaban had claim to was going to be taken regardless if we signed a lease or not."[67] In light of these intertwining political, economic, and geologic formations, many began to feel that, despite their ambivalence, the fracking was unavoidable. Nearly every interviewee used the phrase "best of a bad bargain" to refer to this problem: they may have felt ambivalent about the drilling, but if the gas was coming out of the ground no matter what, the best option was simply to take the royalties.

All this combines to create a compelling feeling of "the *everything*" of fossil fuels around New Vrindaban.[68] As an elder of the community commissioned to write a treatise on fossil fuels put it, "At this point, our individual and collective dependence on fossil fuel and technology is so entrenched into our daily lives that most of us could not live without them." Ultimately, the treatise reads, most of the community is "so addicted to and dependent upon fossil fuels, that it could be viewed as hypocritical to now refuse on philosophical and moral grounds to derive some benefit from the drilling."[69] This sentiment resonates directly with Fried's comments, when he reflected that, because of his reliance on gas in nearly every minute of his waking life, resistance to the gas developments around New Vrindaban would have been pointless:

> We also had to be very honest with ourselves. I drive a car. Everyone here drives a car. We're heating with gas with propane. We're cooking with propane. We're using diesels for our heavy equipment. You know every time we turn on the light switch that's the coal industry supporting the coal industry supporting the fossil fuel industry. We are part of it and we're consumers and we support it. So how can we look at it and say oh this is a bad thing if we ourselves are using it now the question is how are we using it. . . . Can we do this in a way that will be quote unquote Krishna conscious.[70]

This feeling that the *everything* of fossil fuels made these entanglements unavoidable was reflected by many. Gopi, for example, interpreted it this way: "It was my understanding that it was unavoidable because the industries were coming in and they were not going to accept no for an answer."[71] Dasi, who had attended many meetings with her husband in order to protest the community's consideration of a fracking contract, herself finally decided that the rule of capture made that resistance futile when the company knocked on her own door and stated its intention to remove the gas beneath her home as well: "If they are going to go under our property anyhow and everywhere around us, we're going to get our compensation for this, so we signed up anyway to get

our little bit of money."[72] By identifying this era as uniquely corrupt through their scriptural language *of Kali Yuga*, devotees embrace a utilitarian orientation toward economic gain while coming to terms with what can feel like a lack of agency in the face of American capital's voracious drive for more and more sites of fossil fuel extraction.

In the end, then, those who had initially resisted found themselves part of what felt like an unavoidable bad bargain. The question became how they would deal with that bargain, how they would square their religious commitments with that bad bargain and position themselves in a way that would protect their central goal of cultivating Krishna consciousness. The notion of *Kali Yuga* gave some a resource for understanding that bleakness and living with the unstoppable hegemony of fossil fuel. Vrindaban Palika preferred to focus on her own spiritual growth and leave the negotiations to community leaders she trusted to be tested by the corruption of the current age. For her, the task of devotees amid this age of corruption was like that of the lotus flower in muddy water: "Even though we are in this world where there's all kind of negative influence, right? And all kinds of bad stuff happening . . . we want to be as pure and clean as the lotus flowers."[73] By virtue of the rule of capture, through which gas companies are empowered to take gas from beneath a property owner's land with or without consent, many devotees came to see resistance to the contract as futile in light of the powerful flows of finance and fuel converging on the fracking sites all around them. With their own fracking contract in place, they search their cultural and religious thought for a way to withdraw from those considerations completely, instead focusing on themselves as individuals and as a community. Though floating in the corrupt waters of the existing system, they turn from direct resistance to a kind of spiritual transcendence of the interlocking political, economic, and geologic limits around them.

Conclusion

While scholars of religion and ecology in America remain vigilant in their search for religious discourses that might successfully resist the hegemonic drive of fossil fuels, the story of New Vrindaban should draw attention to how even the most seemingly green religious traditions are nonetheless located within and shaped by petrocapitalism's vast networks of extraction and accumulation that are, as Bruno Latour wrote of the ozone hole, "simultaneously real, like nature, narrated, like discourse, and collective, like society."[74] In other words, the question of whether religious ideas about the environment will succeed in confronting the fossil fuel industry and its prolific contributions to climate

change cannot simply be a problem of competing discourses. Recent success stories about religiously motivated resistance to proposed fossil fuel extraction have focused on the "struggle to enact and sustain incommensurable moral orders" and "the multiple contested values and narratives that contribute to . . . resistance."[75] Crucially, though, these struggles unfolded in significantly different political, economic, and geologic conditions than those surrounding New Vrindaban. In the case of New Vrindaban, royalties would serve as a direct and pivotal intervention for a struggling community. In the cases of resistance to fracking in Wyoming or to mountaintop removal in lower Appalachia, the proposed economic gains were much more diffuse and abstract, primarily taking the form of promises of job creation and increased tax revenue for the state.[76]

New Vrindaban's collective identity was deeply rooted in the idea that a simple life of subsistence farming would be the most conducive to its pursuit of religious devotion and higher consciousness. Even so, when gas companies arrived in the early 2000s with fracking contracts in hand, many came to feel that compliance was unavoidable. Whether they accepted the royalties or not, the corporate and state alliance behind fossil fuel extraction almost guaranteed the companies' access to the gas beneath New Vrindaban's land. New Vrindaban's own entry into partnership with the fracking industry shows the way religious discourses circulate within networks of extraction produced by the neoliberal state in association with the material unruliness of liquid fossil fuels and the voracious drive of petrocapital. In this way, natural gas itself supports a political economy that demands unfettered flows of finance and fuel, happy to see individuals focusing on their lotus-like growth in light of that system's seeming inevitability.

Notes

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1. Kevin Rose, field notes, January 27, 2019.
2. Rose.
3. Anya Litvak and Molly Born, "The Palace That Gas Rebuilt: Hare Krishnas Welcome Drilling," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* December 13, 2015, www.post-gazette.com/business/powersource/2015/12/13/The-palace-that-gas-rebuilt/stories/201512130100.
4. I use *petrocapitalism* to refer to "a form of capital accumulation founded on the extraction, distribution, and consumption of petroleum." See Alisdair Rogers, Noel Castree, and Rob Kitchin, "Petrocapitalism," in *A Dictionary of Human Geography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199599868.001.0001/acref-9780199599868-e-1390.
5. Much of this began as attempts to refute Lynn White Jr.'s 1967 claim that "Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt" for current environmental issues. See Lynn White Jr., "The Historic Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1203–7. Since that essay's publication, religion and ecology scholarship has focused on excavating religious teachings that might prove themselves environmentally positive. Todd LeVasseur and Anna Peterson observe this in their introduction to a recent edited volume devoted to White's legacy: "To no small extent, most work including scholarly writing and also teaching—in the fields of environmental philosophy, ecotheology, and the environmental humanities generally constitute a reply to or commentary upon White's article" (LeVasseur and Peterson, eds., *Religion and Ecological Crisis: The "Lynn White Thesis" at Fifty* [New York: Routledge, 2017], 4).
6. Bron Taylor, Gretel Van Wieren, and Bernard Zaleha, "The Greening of Religion Hypothesis (Part Two): Assessing the Data from Lynn White, Jr., to Pope Francis," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 10.3 (2016): 309.
7. Robin Globus Veldman, Andrew Szasz, and Randolph Haluza-DeLay, "Introduction: Climate Change and Religion—a Review of Existing Research," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 6.3 (2012): 263. Two recent studies that take this optimistic view of the power of religious ideas in environmental resistance are Justin Farrell, *The Battle for Yellowstone: Morality and the Sacred Roots of Environmental Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); and Joseph D. Witt, *Religion and Resistance in Appalachia: Faith and the Fight against Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016).
8. Prabhupada to Hayagriva, August 17, 1968, vanisource.org/wiki/680817_-_Letter_to_Hayagriva_written_from_Montreal.
9. Taylor, Van Wieren, and Zaleha find in their impressive survey of religion and ecology research that "religious ideas themselves are less important to environmental attitudes and behaviors than many partisans and scholars assume" ("Greening of Religion Hypothesis," 312). Their welcome corrective calls for attention to those who present countervailing claims or ideas from within the tradition that resist the greening of their religion, but it is too narrow. Such voices play an important role in the story of New Vrindaban, but so do the vast networks of fossil fuel infrastructure, supported by closely aligned state and corporate actors. As Bruno Latour famously stated with regard to the ozone hole, "The networks are *simultaneously real, like nature, narrated, like discourse, and collective, like society*" (*We Have Never Been Modern* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993], 6).
10. Stephanie LeMenager, *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11.
11. By exploring the material entanglements that grant these relations a sense of inevitability, or "always alreadyness," I am thinking with Stacy Alaimo's and others' work on New Materialism. While Alaimo's work would suggest that communities who gain awareness of their porous positionality in these material networks should lead to stronger environmental commitments, New Vrindaban's entanglements often feel so inevitable and overpowering that residents ultimately accept them, albeit ambivalently. See Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 20.
12. Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (London: Verso, 2011), 8.
13. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.
14. Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, 144.
15. As Mitchell has shown, this neoliberal political economy is produced largely thanks to "a long struggle" that "unfolded through the 1970s and beyond, to today, in which oil companies continually used their political connections to defeat legislation aimed at restricting their influence or at managing natural resources" (*Carbon Democracy*, 197). Moreover, thanks to the so-called Halliburton loophole in the 2005 Energy Policy Act, the fracking industry in particular expanded under the auspices of neoliberal

deregulation, circumventing the hindrances of regulatory protections such as the Safe Drinking Water Act that have affected other fossil fuels (LeMenager, *Living Oil*, 9).

16. Wendy Brown, "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-democratization," *Political Theory* 34.6 (2006): 703.
17. The market-based solutions associated with neoliberalism need not be narrowly individualistic. New Vrindaban devotees' often frame the goal of using gas royalties to achieve higher consciousness as a collective endeavor. As Bethany Moreton describes neoliberal contexts, this could also be said to reflect a tendency for "collective human endeavor" to be confined "to the market, the church, and the family" (*To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010], 269).
18. Vrindaban Palika, interview by author and Molly Born, Moundsville, West Virginia, January 26, 2019.
19. Kenneth Valpey, "ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness)," Oxford Bibliographies, August 26, 2013.
20. For more detailed historical overviews of the international movement, see Larry D. Shinn and David G. Bromley, "A Kaleidoscopic View of the Hare Krishna's in America," in *Krishna Consciousness in the West*, ed. Larry D. Shinn and David G. Bromley (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1989), 13–33; E. Burke Rochford Jr., *Hare Krishna in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 9–16.
21. Srila Prabhupada, "Back to the Simple Life and Simple Truth," www.krishna.com/back-simple-life-and-simple-truth.
22. Satsvarupa dasa Goswami, "Save Earth Now," *Back to Godhead* #17–10 (1988), 1.
23. Prabhupada to Hayagriva, June 14, 1968, vanisource.org/wiki/680614_-_Letter_to_Hayagriva_written_from_Montreal.
24. E. Burke Rochford Jr. and Henry Doktorski, "Guru Authority, Religious Innovation, and the Decline of New Vrindaban," in *Homegrown Gurus: From Hinduism in America to American Hinduism*, ed. Ann Gleig and Lola Williams (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013).
25. For a helpful overview of the phenomenon of lifestyle guides in the early 1970s, see Sam Binkley, *Getting Loose: Lifestyle Consumption in the 1970s* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).
26. R. Blake Michael, "Heaven, West Virginia: Legitimation Techniques of the New Vrindaban Community," in Shinn and Bromley, *Krishna Consciousness in the West*, 190. The definitive work on religious back-to-the-land communities in America is Rebecca Kneale Gould, *At Home in Nature: Modern Homesteading and Spiritual Practice in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
27. Lilasuka Dasi, interview by author and Molly Born, Moundsville, West Virginia, January 27, 2019.
28. "New Vrindaban: The West's First Krsna Conscious Community," *Brijabasi Spirit* 1.34 (December 15, 1974), 2–4, quoted in Grace Catherine Eberly, "New Vrindaban: Pilgrimage, Patronage, and Demographic Change" (thesis, Ohio University, May 2015).
29. Membership numbers are from Rochford and Doktorski, "Guru Authority," 154. Visitor numbers are from E. Burke Rochford Jr., "Knocking on Heaven's Door: Violence, Charisma, and the Transformation of New Vrindaban," in *Violence and New Religious Movements*, ed. James R. Lewis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 277.
30. Dasi, interview.
31. Gabriel Fried, interview by author and Molly Born, Moundsville, West Virginia, January 26, 2019.
32. Rochford, "Knocking on Heaven's Door," 277.
33. Rochford, 279–84.
34. Rochford, 279–84.
35. Rochford, 279–84.
36. Rochford, 277.
37. Harvey identifies the 1975 fiscal crisis in New York City as the general pattern of neoliberalization. Investment bankers "seized the opportunity to restructure it in ways that suited their agenda. The creation of a 'good business climate' was a priority" (*Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 45).
38. Litvak and Born, "Palace That Gas Rebuilt."
39. Snippets of this struggle are preserved in the archives of *New Vrindaban Brijabasi Spirit*, a blog maintained by New Vrindaban residents. There, arguments for and against fracking appear in meeting minutes posted to the blog. See, e.g., Vrindavana, "New Vrindaban Natural Gas Drilling Meeting Notes 9–15–08," *New Vrindaban Brijabasi Spirit*, www.brijabasispirit.com/2008/09/21/new-vrindaban-natural-gas-drilling-meeting-notes-9–15–08/.

40. Prabhupada to Hayagriva, August 17, 1968, vanisource.org/wiki/680817_-_Letter_to_Hayagriva_written_from_Montreal.
41. Vrindavana, "New Vrindaban Natural Gas Drilling Meeting Notes 9–15–08," *New Vrindaban Brijabasi Spirit,* September 21, 2008, www.brijabasispirit.com/2008/09/21/ new-vrindaban-natural-gas-drilling-meeting-notes-9–15–08/.
42. Dasi, interview.
43. Dasi, interview.
44. Bryant Simon has provided a vivid account of this neoliberal pattern, noting that economically depressed regions in the United States "looked like a harbinger of the global phenomenon of neo-liberalism" because of their willingness to prioritize capital expansion over regulations that protected labor and the environment (*The Hamlet Fire: A Tragic Story of Cheap Food, Cheap Government, and Cheap Lives* [New York: New Press, 2017], 19).
45. LeMenager, *Living Oil*, 191.
46. Fried, interview.
47. Vrindaban Palika, interview by author and Molly Born, Moundsville, West Virginia, January 26, 2019.
48. Jaya Krishna Das, interview by author and Molly Born, Moundsville, West Virginia, January 27, 2019.
49. Das, interview.
50. Michael A. Cremo and Mukunda Dasa Goswami, *Divine Nature: A Spiritual Perspective on the Environmental Crisis* (Los Angeles: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1995), 22.
51. Cremo and Goswami, 55.
52. Goswami, "Save Earth Now."
53. Cremo and Goswami, *Divine Nature*, 61.
54. Das, interview.
55. Srila Prabhupada, "Learn to Love the Natural Mode of Life," *Back to Godhead*, May–June 2016, btg.krishna.com/learn-love-natural-mode-life.
56. Das, interview.
57. Fried, interview.
58. Brown, "American Nightmare," 703.
59. Lalita Gopi, interview by author and Molly Born, Moundsville, West Virginia, January 27, 2019.
60. With "tragic subjects," I am referring to Robert Orsi's call for displacing the Geertzian meaning-making subject "with a more tragic figure whose engagements with the world, within particular circumstances of power, proceed through media that may embody meanings against him or her" (*Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005], 170).
61. Palika, interview.
62. Doug Sauer, interview by author and Molly Born, Moundsville, West Virginia, January 27, 2019.
63. As David Harvey explains, American capital's drive for accumulation by recapitalizing and reinvesting profits in the country's fossil fuel–intensive housing and transportation infrastructures has made state support for drilling and extraction a central feature of the current political economy: "The desire to maintain an expanding flow of cheap oil has been central to the geopolitical stance of the United States over the last fifty to sixty years, precisely because capital surplus absorption by suburbanization after 1945 was conditioned upon the availability of cheap oil" (*The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2010], 76–77).
64. Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, 196.
65. Mitchell, 109.
66. Darren Dochuk, *Anointed with Oil: How Christianity and Crude Made Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 2019), 11.
67. Madhava Gosh, "The Rule of Capture," *New Vrindaban Brijabasi Spirit*, March 16, 2011, www.brijabasispirit.com/2011/03/16/the-rule-of-capture/.
68. LeMenager, *Living Oil*, 11.
69. "Treatise on Fossil Fuels," quoted in Litvak and Born, "Palace That Gas Rebuilt."
70. Fried, interview.
71. Gopi, interview.
72. Dasi, interview.
73. Palika, interview.
74. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 6.
75 Farrell, *Battle for Yellowstone*, 26; Witt, *Religion and Resistance in Appalachia*, 8.
76. Farrell, 234; Witt, 28.