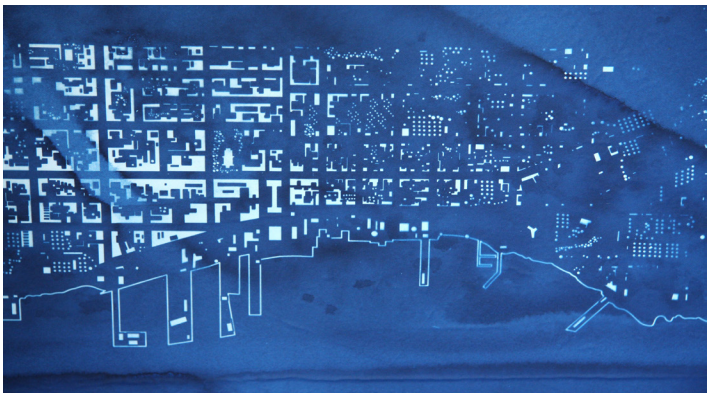
# UnderCurrents

*journal of critical environmental studies*

*Issue 19*


## *from queer/nature to queer ecologies*

*celebrating 20 years of scholarship and creativity*

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2015

UnderCurrents *is a collectively and student-run journal based out of the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University.* UnderCurrents *explores the relations among environment, culture, and society, and publishes thematic issues on a rolling basis. All back issues are available, free of charge, on the* UnderCurrents *website. We are committed to publishing a variety of scholarly, creative, and activist work that critically engages with conceptions of the environment.*

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| **orders & correspondence** | UnderCurrents<br>c/o Faculty of Environmental Studies<br>277 Health Nursing and Environmental Studies Building<br>4700 Keele Street, York University<br>Toronto, ON M3J 1P3<br>currents@yorku.ca<br>http://www.yorku.ca/currents |
| **reviewers** | Dara Blumenthal, Naomi De Szegheo-Lang, Amanda Di Battista, Ronak Ghorbani Nejad, Oded Haas, Victoria Ho, Kelly Ladd, Jessica Lee, Adam Linnard, Andrew Mark, Michaela McMahon, Marianna Szczygielska, Coral Voss, Ciann Wilson |
| **layout & design** | Oded Haas, Victoria Ho, Adam Linnard, Andrew Winchur |
| **distribution** | Sarah Iannicello, Jacob McLean |
| **graduate assistants** | Tye Shutty, Madison Van West, Sarah Iannicello, Adam Linnard, Jacob McLean |
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# Between Belly and World

ELANA SANTANA

Just my face is buried in her belly fur
But all of me is there, inside her belly
All of me is outside of it too
I'm somewhere in between
belly and world
So warm
I wonder if she knows I'm there, all there.
Her tail wraps itself around my neck
My eyes are closed but I can see everything
Her smell is burnt and sweet
She breathes steady
A small motor runs in her throat
And her heart is beating fast
I imagine my breath and heart starting to mimic the soft darkness
of her
She's lying down in a circle
Two sets of eyelids closing in on each other from every angle
I feel invisible
Like I found the perfect hiding spot in a game of hide and seek
I can see everything
And make myself known when I am ready

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# Conversations in Queer Ecologies

## *An Editorial*

AMANDA DI BATTISTA, ODED HAAS & DARREN PATRICK FOR THE *UNDERCURRENTS* EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE

In *UnderCurrents* Volume 6 (1994), the editorial collective experimentally mapped out intersections between queer and environmental politics. The goal of Vol. 6, called "Queer/Nature," was to subvert normative categories of nature by reading them through the perspective of queer identity. In the opening editorial, Shauna M. O'Donnell and the *UnderCurrents* editorial collective wrote that, "a politics of nature can no longer be an articulation of white, male, heterosexual prescriptive or descriptive privilege" (2). Perhaps especially since the release of "Queer/Nature," critical discussions of/at the intersections of gender, sexuality, and nature have not only become more commonplace, they have also widened in scope to considerations of ecological relationships. Taken in a broad sense, ecology speaks of both complex webs of relations between the human and non-human—themselves ideological, racialized, and problematic conceptual markers—and the simultaneously fraught and comforting notion of "home," the *oikos*.

In the Faculty of Environmental Studies (FES) at York University, where this journal is housed, queer ecological work has both learned from and contributed to a range of scholarly conversations (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson; Hird and Giffney; see also Anderson et al.). At the same time, the *UnderCurrents* editorial collective is itself situated in a community that constantly pushes the limits of a politics of inclusion as part of scholarly-activist-artistic efforts to move beyond apparently settled disciplinary approaches to "environmentalist" and/or "queer" identities and practices. There are many crucial spaces where such efforts unfold: in the individual contributions to the field of queer ecologies by students and faculty, on the walls of and in the physical space of the Zig Zag and Crossroads galleries, in the classroom, and through connections made between queer ecological work taking place here and work being done elsewhere. However, for this editorial collective of Vol. 19, it is the Equity Seminar Series, organized by the student-led Accessibility, Community and Equity group and sponsored by FES, that stands out for its exceptionally generative re-imaginations of what, exactly, a politics of environmental and ecological justice can —and, indeed, should—encompass. The Seminar Series has consistently highlighted scholarship, arts, and activisms at the intersections of disability justice, anti-racist and decolonial scholarship and activism, queer, trans, and feminist politics, and critiques of institutional violence. We note this work here because it shapes how we look at both the process and outcomes of creating this Volume. Further, and more importantly, the work of the Seminar Series is crucial to the political ecology of knowledge in which *UnderCurrents* is situated. With this in mind, Volume 19, "From Queer/Nature to Queer Ecologies: Celebrating 20 Years of Scholarship and Creativity," sets out neither to represent queer ecologies as a whole, nor to suggest that the work of re-imagining environmental politics is finished. Rather, we seek to engage with some of the exemplary ways in which queer ecological imaginations continue to evolve in and from our particular context.

Here, we cannot help but think of another context—the broader world of queer theory—in which there is something of a seasonal tradition of editorializing and worrying the boundaries and aspirations of both "queering" and "theorizing." Such reflection has identified the anxious intersections that define and delimit the potentials of both "queerness" and "theory." Take Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's 1995 piece for *PMLA*, "What Does Queer Theory Teach us About X?" In it, the authors point to the "radically anticipatory" aspect of queer theory, which they offer as a way to confound "assertions that queer theory has only academic—which is to say, dead—politics" (344). Shirking both easy labels of "theory" and the citational universes they invite

and imply, Berlant and Warner opt for a radically open idea of queer *commentary* that addresses and speaks of queer *publics* "that can comprehend their own differences of privilege and struggle . . . whose abstract spaces can also be lived in, remembered, and hoped for" (344). Here, queer derives its salience from resisting presumptions of both "stable referential content and pragmatic force" (344) even as it "maintains a desire to create new contexts, and not just professional ones in which cool work can be performed" (347). These contexts necessarily include political and personal communities that overlap with academia, but are, thankfully, never fully captured or knowable by its particular mechanisms of formalization. The queer personal remains political. Or, we might turn to another introductory editorial written in 2005 by David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and Jose Esteban Munoz that asked, "What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?" The authors address this question by way of noting "the limits of queer epistemology, the denaturalizing potentials of queer diasporas, and the emergent assumptions of what could be called queer liberalism" (1). Here, queer troubles the intersections of "empire, race, migration, geography, subaltern communities, activism, and class" (2). Their answer to the titular question? "A lot" (3).

As we began work on this volume, we felt similar anxieties and potentials latent in noting—as we did in our call for papers—a shift from queer "nature" to queer "ecologies." In this movement, we saw an opening for something other than a boundary-drawing or canon-making exercise. Indeed, we hopefully imagined that this volume would sing a different tune about queer theory, one with strong notes of environmental politics and practices, keyed to queer criticisms that have grown around and in those fields of power. The putative shift from "nature" to "ecologies" not only suggests critical pluralization, it also tracks with the movement of environmental studies beyond now well-established, if not mainstream, critiques of nature/society binaries. Certainly, the term *nature* is no less salient, complex, or contradictory than it was twenty years ago. Nevertheless, a move toward ecologies speaks to the proliferation of sites, relationships, "objects," and contexts that might either be queer/ed or that might speak back to institutionalized theories and practices of queerness, in turn unsettling our ideas of what such theories and practices should focus on or how they are reproduced both as and in environmental studies.

Of course, shifts in academic queer theory and environmental studies are not metonyms for changing concrete political struggles, even if they are deeply concerned with such struggles. In the twenty years since Volume 6 was published, a thoroughly non-exhaustive litany of such changes would doubtlessly include: The putative "end" of the 1990s HIV/AIDS crisis in North America, the dawn of HIV criminalization in Canada, an increasing mainstream political emphasis on gay marriage and gays in the military, increased mainstream attention to racialized police violence and discourses of "safe space," the alarming rise of Islamophobia following 9/11, related and complicit projects of homonationalism, the escalation of apartheid conditions in Palestine, the intensification of global warming and the uneven distribution of its impacts in terms of race, class, and gender. Each of these broad issues finds specific articulations at York, whether in resistance to racial profiling and campus militarization through the Cops off Campus, the persistence of groups such as Students Against Israeli Apartheid despite administrative censorship and sanction, or the continued work of student-activists, including several in our own faculty, to empower communities disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS and its criminalization.

Our collective decision to focus on queer ecologies in this context has brought forward important, and necessarily challenging, questions: Who and what is part of queer ecologies? Who and what is not? Why? How do our own networks, assumptions, positions, and locations shape our desire for a breadth of submissions, especially from perspectives and fields that have not always been tightly interwoven into the discourses, ideas, and practices of queer ecologies as we had described it in the call for papers? It is one thing to remain open to submissions from trans*, queer, of color, and disability scholarship—an openness we hopefully expressed in our call—but such openness was only a first step toward asking how our own reflections and assumptions about what queer ecologies has been might translate into the concrete work envisioning what queer ecologies might yet become. As

**BECOMING WOLF-READING BEUYS.** Peter Hobbs.

we release this volume, such work has rarely seemed more urgent or more possible. Indeed, in "From Queer/Nature to Queer Ecologies" we see a celebration of the strengths of queer ecologies' affirmatively perverse and polyvocal imagination. At the same time, we note the important work yet to be done in further weaving those strengths together with work that not only queerly resists precise definition, but does so while staying firmly fixed on the goal of justice both in our immediate communities and in a wider world.

The contributions to this Volume offer multiple ways into the discussion of what queer ecologies has been, is, and might become. We highlight two particularly powerful contributions here. In "Shimmers Below the Surface: Emergent Strategy and Movement Building through 2-QTPOC Media," Anabel Khoo explores how queer ecologies articulates with social movements, activist art, and activist scholarship. Focused on the two-spirit, queer and trans people of colour (2-QTPOC) media performance collective Mangos with Chili, Khoo argues that the ecological notion of emergence helps us to recognize the too often submerged, gendered, and racialized labour of collective organizing. Khoo's piece brings queer ecologies into conversation with the work of collective healing from the deep wounds of racism, colonialism, and the oppression of gender and sexually non-conforming people. Khoo's approach to queer ecologies also speaks of intersecting sites, systems, and strategies of both oppression and liberation, attuning us to the descriptive power of concepts such as structures of feeling, affective intensities, and relational dynamics.

Bambitchell's cyanotype series, "Where the Trees Stood in Water," offers a powerful example of a collaborative, queer, and affective intervention into environmental politics. Using archival maps of Toronto, Bambitchell's amorphous, time-travelling, and gender fluid cartographer guides us through the city's colonial, industrial, and gentrified past and present in a journey that creatively resists hegemonic histories of the land. Bambitchell's work troubles officialized narratives and surfaces often ignored or silenced stories and queer geographies. Through beautifully layered images, "Where the Trees Stood in Water," blends craft, fact, and fiction in a manner that exceeds what scholarly work traditionally can—or, indeed, often aspires to—accomplish, while also encapsulating the deeply sedimented forms of power that queer ecological scholarship so methodically seeks to unravel.

While the bulk of this issue is made up of work that we received in response to our call for papers, it also includes edited transcriptions of recordings that we collected from a ninety-minute roundtable conversation with Gordon Brent Brochu-Ingram, Peter Hobbs, and Catriona Sandilands, all of whom have contributed in different and important ways to the growth of queer ecologies. Both the "Queer Ecologies Roundtable" itself and our choice to include parts of it in this issue speak to our desire to give readers many ways to approach a deceptively simple question: What is queer ecologies, here and now? We also see the roundtable as a way to move *UnderCurrents* beyond the page and to take seriously the role of alternative media in democratizing knowledge production and promoting creative pedagogies. In collaboration with *CoHearence*, a podcast series produced by PhD students in FES, an audio podcast will be made available on the *UnderCurrents* website.

Much like the 1994 volume, "From Queer/Nature to Queer Ecologies" is both an experimental and particular snapshot of what is currently conceived of as queer nature/ecology. Our hope for this volume is to push past well-established discourses of queering environmentalism by looking not only at the journey to queer ecologies, as explored in the "Queer Ecologies Roundtable," but also at the very ecologies (and queerness) of queer ecology itself. While the document you are holding in your hands or reading on the screen suggests some of the ways that the contributors to Volume 19—along with the *UnderCurrents* editorial collective—imagine potential trajectories for the field, queer ecologies remains necessarily slippery; we hesitate to make any concrete claims regarding its future beyond what we have already called for. We can, however, suggest ways that *UnderCurrents* might continue to grapple with discussions opened up in "Queer/Nature" and taken up again here. So, we end this editorial where "Queer/Nature" began, with a commitment to reimagining the limits of "a politics of inclusion" (3) and to raising questions of what it means to actively undertake such a politics in our institutional work.

As we close, we would like to note that the crucial insistence on social justice as both a topic of discussion and a call to action in our collective will find form and content in the the next edition of the journal, our third since relaunching in 2013. That forthcoming Volume of *UnderCurrents* will focus on Environmental Justice scholarship and activism. As the outgoing editorial collective, we could not feel better about the direction *UnderCurrents* is going as it continues to bring together work that challenges not only the boundaries of scholarly disciplines, but also the boundaries of our political imaginations both in and beyond the university.

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# Shimmers Below the Surface

## *Emergent Strategy and Movement Building through 2-QTPOC Media*

ANABEL KHOO

*"You are not a drop in the ocean, but the whole ocean in a drop."* –Rumi

Somewhere, where the *virtual* and *actual* are intermingling, collective dreams and material enactments resonate together. In the oscillations where chaos and order overlap, something novel is emerging. You need not follow me into this realm. You are already there.

Political potential exists all around us, but it surfaces and circulates in different forms: as ordinary and catastrophic; as mundane and magnificent. I am interested in the ways this fluid complexity of power and materiality is negotiated in the building of social justice movements, and how such efforts generate politicized subjectivities and material realities at the boundaries, thresholds, and margins of the discursive categories of identity and ideologies. To understand and affirm the subtleties in social movement building, I turn to the cultural work of Mangos with Chili, a two-spirit, queer and trans people of colour (2-QTPOC) media performance collective, currently based in the San Francisco Bay Area. To understand deeply the power that media making and cultural work have to offer for collective liberation, I conceptualize the work of Mangos through the ecological paradigm of emergence, a visionary framework that is attuned to this potential, as one which is ephemerally and materially abundant. In exploring the media and performances showcased at Mangos with Chili events, as well as the politics articulated in interviews with select artists from Mangos, I hope to show how their performances tune into the embodied knowledge and relational experience necessary for the kind of paradigm shift that thinking through queer ecologies engenders.

Through negotiations among non-normative identity, histories of colonialism, and spirituality, Mangos with Chili offers a politic and set of practices that hold difference affirmatively while leaving enough space to imagine and enact new worlds. Through the lens of queer ecologies, I read the performances and words of Micha Cárdenas, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Landa Lakes, Qwo-Li Driskill, and Manish Vaidya as texts; the themes of openness, adaptation, excess, and interdependence bring the political potential of ecological complexity to the fore. Through the work of 2-QTPOC media like Mangos with Chili, I hope to illuminate the subtleties of political work and the value of everyday struggle by honouring the work that shapes a paradigm for movement building in the following ways: First, by emphasizing the need for creative adaptive energy in a time when political resistance is fractured and easily co-opted in neoliberal discourses of freedom. Second, by working with, rather than despite, emotionality, trauma, and intuitive connection to humans and environments. And, finally, by developing sustainable skills and strategies that generate new ways for humans to support and work through conflict with each other.

### Mangos with Chili: An Emergent Strategy for Collective Liberation

Founded in 2006, by Cherry Gallette and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Mangos With Chili, "the floating cabaret of queer, trans and two spirit people of colour bliss, dreams, sweat, sweets & nightmares," describes itself as:

> A North American touring, Bay Area-based arts incubator committed to showcasing high quality performance of life saving importance by queer and trans artists of colour . . . including dance, theater, vaudeville, hip-hop, circus arts, music, spoken word and film. More than a performance incubator, we are also a ritual space for two spirit, queer and trans communities of color to

> come together in love, conversation and transformation. Our goal is to present high quality performance art by [2-QTPOC], but so much of our work is also about creating healing and transformative space through performances that are gathering places for community. (Mangos with Chili)

Beyond showcasing various 2-QTPOC artists, Mangos with Chili serves not only as an event and a ritual, but also as a performance of social movements in formation. While Mangos is quite popular, it is neither referred to, nor itself claims to be totally encompassing or even fully representing "The Revolution" or the central point of a mass-based political movement. Rather, the transformative potential of Mangos is in its "incubating" process in which movements are becoming without already being. Mangos attends to what shimmers below the surface of movements, what pervades between the conscious and unconscious worlds: vectors of political imagination, textures of trauma, and currents of healing forces that push and pull movements. Beyond "calling" for justice, Mangos performances conjure questions about what justice does, feels like, and works for in the present. In this way, Mangos with Chili invites us to consider their cultural production as what Raymond Williams calls a "structure of feeling," which is "emergent" because it "organizes, moves and shifts as resolution *in solution*: it does not 'have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before [it] exert[s] palpable pressures and set[s] effective limits on experience and on action'" (qtd. in Gordon 201). Attempting to consolidate identity, goals/demands, and strategy at the expense of the relational dynamics of a community or movement forecloses and denies the structures of feeling that are nevertheless always producing varying affective intensities that offer fertile substance through which robust movements can grow. It is not only important to name Mangos as a specifically 2-QTPOC performance collective, but to also highlight their work of shifting entire paradigms of thought, imagination, being, and relating to one another.

Neither simply a standalone show nor a mass political campaign, Mangos engages in the ongoing work of fostering the conditions that allow for political transformation. One way to appreciate and explore the organic quality of 2-QTPOC media produced through Mangos – media which negotiates the tensions between representation and materiality—is to understand it within an ecological paradigm described as *emergence*. While the phenomena of emergence and complex systems have been theorized across the natural sciences and sociological explorations of chaos theory (for example, the seemingly spontaneous, self-organizing synchronicity of fireflies, flocking of birds, and weather patterns), my consideration of emergence as it relates to the cultural work of 2-QTPOC media makers is mainly inspired by past and ongoing media-based movement building in Detroit, largely led by women of colour and youth leaders.

## Mangos performances conjure questions about what justice does, feels like, and works for.

In 2013, at the *Allied Media Conference* (AMC), an annual Detroit-based gathering that fosters mediated strategies for social transformation, organizer and writer Adrienne Maree Brown described "emergent strategy" as an approach to movement building that brings together physical science and speculative fiction, defining emergence through several qualities of enactment. First, emergent strategies are rooted in relationships that are forged upon critical connections (as distinguished from critical mass) shaped by a commitment to community accountability and radical care. Second, emergent strategies build strength by being fractal and decentralized. Finally, emergent strategies are adaptive and generative, in that they create possibilities instead of foreclosing them. In the opening speech at AMC 2013, Brown explained:

> Nothing is wasted, or a failure. Emergence is a system that makes use of everything in the iterative process. It's all data . . . Many of us have been socialized that constant growth, and critical mass, are the ways to create change. But emergence shows us that adaptation and evolution depend more upon critical connections. Dare I say love. The quality of connection between the nodes in the patterns. (Brown)

Emergence can complicate understandings and practices of political resistance that depend on a dichotomy that positions social injustice as a matter of either political apathy or mass mobilization. In turn, 2-QTPOC media making as an emergent strategy redefines or shifts paradigms of social justice organizing. Elizabeth Grosz posits that queer politics teaches us to "embrace the openness, to welcome unknown readings, new claims, provocative analyses—to make things happen, to shift fixed positions, to transform our everyday expectations and habitual conceptual schemas" (qtd. in Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson 37). If so, then how can a queer ecological paradigm like emergence help us challenge what comes to be considered as a *successful* or *strong* movement?

Brown's elaboration of emergence helps to illuminate the potential for 2-QTPOC media production, as a relational process, to challenge the objectivity and empiricism so central to the colonialism of Western enlightenment and modernization throughout the last five hundred years. Such claims to objectivity and empiricism have come to

shape the standards and practices of social justice movement building in North America. Brown's vision of emergent strategy is a holistic approach that embraces a diversity of tactics, while remaining imbued with politically transformative energy that does not discount the urgency of political resistance. Taking up emergence as a movement building strategy follows work by Detroit-based philosopher and activist Grace Lee Boggs who, in 2014, at ninety nine years old, calls us to "grow our souls" by embracing a politic that values the quality and sustainability of the organizing process just as much as the public rallies and direct actions. Boggs turns to quantum physics to emphasize the value of local and small scale changes that "affect the global system, not through incrementalism, but because every small system participates in an unbroken wholeness" (50). If, as Boggs describes, "acting locally allows us to be inside the movement and flow of the system, participating in all those complex events simultaneously," then being able to recognize the worth and qualities of process-focused work, such as cultural production, necessitates a practice of listening or attunement to all that is and always will be unfolding, rather than strictly targeting a permanently coherent objective (50).

In our conversations about emergence, Micha Cárdenas, artivist, hacktivist, poet, and dancer with Mangos, discussed the merits and challenges of cultural production as an emergent strategy. Having both been at the AMC 2013, we looked at the opening speech together and Cárdenas noted that what she thought was most exciting about emergence was that it was about listening: "[When] Adrienne was talking about meeting strategies based on emergence—when somebody has a feeling—[she was talking about the practice of] stopping and responding to the feeling, instead of just pressing forward with the agenda" (Cárdenas, 2013). However, practicing 2-QTPOC media-based movement building as an emergent strategy that pays attention or listens to natural forms of organization also involves redefining dominant notions of what is "natural." This is especially important considering both historical and ongoing attempts of institutionalized knowledge to codify sexuality, gender identity, and racial difference based on their deviance from a white, able-bodied, heterosexual, non-working class male norm. For example, there may be evolutionary theories that claim that queerness or transness are counter-survival based on specific ideas of reproduction. According to Cárdenas, the notion that queerness is not "natural" is based on a dangerous logic, because "we are not above nature," and that "the idea of human exceptionalism comes from some kind of Christian, Descartes, Kantian idea that we are embodiments of a Christian god that is outside of nature, and that nature is a defilement of our being, of our true being" (Cárdenas).

## "We Have Always Existed": Excess and Fluidity in Two-Spirit identity

As an emergent strategy, Mangos with Chili makes space for movement building among the excesses of emotion, experience, and embodiment. These excesses surround discursive categories of identity and ideology. Instead of attempting to consolidate a single unified notion of queerness and racialization that recreates oppressive standards of normativity, 2-QTPOC media such as Mangos with Chili embraces an expansive and complex notion of identity. Mangos explores the lived experiences that often supersede totalization. Consequently, it shapes new understandings of how to relate to one another and vision new ways of living. In challenging a simple representational politic, Mangos enacts queerness as queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes it: "an open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" (qtd. in Cvetkovich 122).

Part of challenging simple representations of difference and queerness is apparent in Mangos' featuring of two-spirit artists. However, it is important to note that this inclusion can allow two-spirit as an identity to also retain its inherent distinction from categorical boundaries of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, which tend to dominate standards of queerness in human and civil rights-based narratives for social justice that are incommensurable with decolonial futures. In his 2010 article, "Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities," Scott Lauria Morgensen, who identifies as a queer settler, addresses homonationalism—wherein U.S. queers appear as a form of U.S. exceptionalism, becoming what Jasbir Puar has called "queer as regulatory"—claiming that such forms of modern sexuality are not products of settler colonialism, but rather arose as methods to produce settler colonialism. More importantly, Morgensen explains that "[t]he normative function of settlement is to appear inevitable and final. It is natural again whenever sexuality or queer studies scholars inscribe it as an unexamined backdrop to the historical formation of modern U.S. sexual cultures and politics" (117). Therefore, two-spirit people embody an imminent refusal to the inevitability of settlement and modern sexuality.

Furthermore, in the article "Stolen from Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic," Qwo-Li Driskill, a Cherokee Two-Spirit/Queer scholar, activist, and performer, describes two-spirit as "a word that resists colonial definitions of who we are. It is an expression of our sexual and gender identities as sovereign from those of white GLBT movements" (52). However, "[t]he coinage of the word was never meant to create a monolithic understanding of the array of Native traditions regarding what dominant European and Euroamerican traditions call 'alternative' genders and sexualities" (52). According to Driskill, "there is currently no term in Cherokee to describe Two-Spirit people. [Two-Spirit people] simply *are*. However, within [their] stories are roadmaps for contemporary Cherokee Two-Spirits. Many Two-Spirit stories address difference, the embodiment of dichotomies, and

journeys between worlds" (55, original emphasis). While two-spirit pushes back against being assimilated into a colonial discursive framework of queerness, it also exists as a guide for ways of living that fluidly negotiate multiple realms simultaneously. In Driskill's video poem "Stomp Dance: Two-spirit Gathering. A Giveaway Poem," featured in the 2013 Mangos show in Toronto, Driskill says: "[S]ome say we can't do these things. But I recall the story of water spider and how she carried that hot coal on her back anyway. . . . This is the work of our two-spirit people. We are part of a story that does not end in the destruction of the Earth. When we dance, manifest destiny shakes. . . . We are an emergence of fire and turtle shells. We are the ones the world can no longer shake" (Quofacenosehead, 2012). Two-Spirit erotics haunt territorial configurations and imaginings of settler futurity as a queerness we may feel as "the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality [as] a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present" (Muñoz 1).

Part of embracing the in-betweenness of queerness also extends to renegotiating the normative linear temporalities of Western institutionalized history by revisiting the blurriness between the past and present. Landa Lakes, two-spirit performer and painter, focused on the history, narrative and implications of residential schools in North America. In her performance at the Mangos 2013 show in Toronto, she particularly highlighted the ongoing renegotiation between traditional and colonial culture: "[The early European colonizers] had this thought of course that dates back to the 1800's which was you know, 'kill the Indian, save the man.' . . . And even today, you still see so many people suffering from this time there, and there is always this clash that exists now between what is Native and traditional and what was taught at the boarding schools that sort of embarrassed people." The audiovisual and dance performance began with a projected video backdrop, which displayed historical footage of the residential schooling system and quotes recounting the violence of its legacy. While the video footage played, Lakes's dance shifted from her standing alone on stage to a point where she revealed herself wearing traditional dance regalia. She invited audience members to join in a circle dance to "show how, although stripped away by the boarding schools, our culture has somehow survived and continues to prosper" (Lakes).

The power of the performance not only lies in reclaiming the history of residential schooling as a story of resistance, but also in that the struggles to heal from that history are themselves embodied, offering a moment of what Katherine Hayles describes as "rememory." Referring to Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Hayles explains rememory as "putting back together parts that have lost touch with one another and reaching out toward a complexity too unruly to fit into disembodied ones and zeros" (13). For Lakes, revisiting the past is a way to inform the present experiences of two-spirit people:

> There were some people who were doing some really brave things and that was back like almost a century ago, 40 years ago even, 30 years ago. . . . Especially [for] those who cross over the gender spectrum, it's good for us to relate to that, because today sometimes people who sort of are in between a gender spectrum sometimes, may feel not yet strong enough. . . . It's important for us to know that we've always existed. (Lakes)

In other words, the ancestral knowledge that two-spirit people "always existed" exceeds the normative bounds of a colonial logic that was designed so that Native people were never meant to survive; it reconfigures what is possible for the future.

## Unapologetic Cultural Work and the Ancient Wisdom of Femme Politics

As an emergent strategy that involves the intuitive work of listening to desire and vulnerability in everyday experiences, Mangos with Chili performances are also rooted in a femme politic that prioritizes the relationality of movement building. The kind of femme politic I am considering here is not only about a certain kind of aesthetic or identity, but also what Cárdenas describes as "something that exceeds normative bounds of what's feminine or [what] femininity [is]" (Cárdenas). It is this attention to a vibrant femininity, and an affirmation of its excessiveness, that informs Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, co-founder of Mangos, who identifies as "a queer disabled Sri Lankan cis femme writer performer, organizer, and badass visionary healer." Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha looks to sharks as an inspirational metaphor for oppressed femininities whose power exceeds normative standards of acceptability and policing:

> There's a lot of femmes of colour I know who have talked—and you know white femmes too, but—they talked about this idea . . . of like battling this idea of feeling like you're too much. You know, that like, they're too hungry, they're too needy, they're too loud, they're too feminine, they're too all these things. And, there's something about how sharks are unrepentant about their hunger that feels really life affirming to me. (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, "Leah")

Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha cowrote the "Femme Shark Manifesto" in 2008, originally posted online on livejournal.com, which was received as "a femme of colour sermon, call to arms, affirmation and prayer," and eventually inspired its own contingent in the San Francisco Dyke March. In the zine *All Our Holes are Hungry: Hungry for Justice and Fucking, Femme Shark Communique #1*, the Femme Shark Manifesto proclaims an unapologetic series of statements that articulate the complexity of 2-QTPOC femmeness:

WE WORK TOWARDS LOVING OUR CURVY, FAT, SKINNY, SUPERSIZE,
THICK, DISABLED, BLACK AND BROWN FINE-ASS BODIES
EVERYDAY. WE REALIZE THAT LOVING OURSELVES IN A
RACIST/SEXIST/HOMO/TRANSPHOBIC/ABLIST/CLASSIST
SYSTEM IS AN EVERYDAY ACT OF WAR AGAINST THAT SYSTEM.
. . . . . .
WE'RE OVER BUTCHES AND BOYS AND OTHER FEMMES
TELLING US WHAT WE NEED TO DO, WEAR OR BE IN
ORDER TO BE "REALLY FEMME."

FEMME SHARKS RECOGNIZE THAT FEMMES, BUTCHES,
GENDERQUEER AND TRANS PEOPLE
HAVE BEEN IN COMMUNITIES OF COLOUR SINCE
FOREVER.
THAT BEFORE COLONIZATION WE WERE SEEN AS SACRED
AND WE WERE SOME OF THE FIRST FOLKS MOST
VIOLENTLY ATTACKED
WHEN OUR LANDS WERE INVADED AND COLONIZED.
. . . . . .
WE RECOGNIZE THAT FEMMES ARE LEADERS OF OUR
COMMUNITIES.
WE HOLD IT DOWN, CALM YOUR TEARS, ORGANIZE THE
RALLY, VISIT YOU IN JAIL, GET CHILDCARE HOOKED UP,
LOAN YOU TWENTY DOLLARS.
FEMMES ARE WELDERS, AFTERSCHOOL TEACHERS,
ABORTION CLINIC WORKERS, STRIPPERS, WRITERS,
FACTORY WORKERS, MOMS, REVOLUTIONARIES
DEDICATED TO TAKING THE SYSTEM THE HELL DOWN
SO WE CAN BE FREE!

(Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, "All Our Holes")

Having emerged nearly 400 million years ago, roughly 200 million years before dinosaurs, sharks are ancient creatures that have witnessed many changes on Earth (Eilperin). And yet, sharks are not revered in Western society as sources of wisdom, but vilified based on their instincts to survive. Some species of sharks are endangered, which, according to Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, parallels the threat of femininity "whether it's cis-gendered femmes of colour, trans femmes of colour, disabled femmes of—or not of—colour, sex working, working poor femmes. . . . There's just this terror of monstrous femininity, and unleashed femininity . . . and you know people are really scared of it. But actually it's a complete typical oppressor flip, because actually femininities are under attack all the time. Like you know we don't rule the world. I mean we kinda do, but we don't" (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, "Interview").

Considering this, the practice of femme politics through performance and media making is especially important to highlight, especially since cultural work and emotional support in social justice organizing can often be deemphasized as less urgent and essential than the masculinized roles of public speaking, direct action or leading meetings. It is not necessarily that femme-identified people are always delegated feminized roles, but "it's a feminized skill to nurture and be relational, and nurture relationships in all their complex movement ways" (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, "Interview"). The support that comes at the micropolitical level that femme politics embraces—from comforting a friend to working overtime—fits with the notion of movement building as ecological complexity, because it is about bringing things back to how do we deal with difficult situations in everyday life, in our material realities. For Cárdenas, "If we're thinking about emergence as some sort of new model for social movements, or model for social change, then part of that question is: 'Where does social change happen?'" (Cárdenas). While 2-QTPOC media in Mangos strives toward collective liberation from oppression, it is also "trying to create change on an individual scale. Like if you can improve someone's life, that's a political act" (Cárdenas).

Affirming the cultural production and movement building that Mangos enacts through a femme politic shows the immense power that lies in the excess of sensitivity, not as superfluous and unnecessary, but rather as a life sustaining practice and approach to enact, process, and vision new tactics and new worlds. A femme politic also challenges us to tune into the wisdom of human emotionality and embodiment. According to Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, the disparaging of art as activism comes from a masculinist and sexist point of view that prioritizes the "hard facts"

over the cultivation of intuitive knowledge that comes with cultural work when, in reality, both are required:

> Audre Lorde said "The white father said I think therefore I am." And the Black mother, the poet, whispers in my dreams, "I feel therefore I can be free." And she didn't say that it was going to be one over the other, but she made an incredibly deep link that Black, queer feminism is about the intelligence of feelings. . . . You know, it's not a march, but it's giving us visions, and it's transforming our consciousness. And helping us see and remember different ways to be, and we absolutely fucking need that. You know, it's not an opiate—it's another fucking tool. (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, "Interview")

### 2-QTPOC Magic: "Answers to our Ancestors' Prayers"

The 2-QTPOC media work of Mangos is also grounded in a spirituality that exceeds the confines of institutionalized religion and linear temporalities, and opens up possibilities for movement building. The spirituality in the performances themselves or the politics that inform their work come from personal versions of ancestral practices in faith, hope, and intention that challenge the dichotomy of queerness, as white and secularist, and racial identity, as associated with heterosexuality and organized religion.

As part of media making, 2-QTPOC spirituality offers emergent routes of survival and healing that help imagine new worlds, especially where the "rationality" of neoliberalism and rights-based narratives fail to provide freedom from the violence of structural and internalized oppression. However, it need not follow a linear progression from survival to healing and then, finally, to imagining. Rather 2-QTPOC spiritual practice is a way to enact all these processes simultaneously. Queer of colour scholar and healer M. Jacqui Alexander, who writes about harnessing a connection with "the Sacred" in order to honour the knowledge that ancestral ghosts offer to histories of survival, notes the ever-present proliferation of the metaphysical that often goes undetected: "If [the Sacred] is to be found everywhere in the terrain of the everyday as part of the continuous existential fabric of being, then it lives simultaneously in the daily lives of everyone, . . . in daily incidents, in those 'things' we routinely attribute to coincidence, those moments of synchronicity, the apparently disparate that have cohesion but under another framework" (qtd. in Cvetkovich 137).

Alexander's approach to metaphysical attunement reshapes what can be considered as ecological or emergent because she claims that it is possible to hold seemingly disparate ideas, identities, and experiences together to find different ways of knowing and generating political possibility. Her approach adds to the inherent queerness of ecology, affirming that ecology itself includes ghosts and memories, just as much as it encompasses molecules and minerals. The electricity that runs through our bodies is the same energy that connects us to the quantum and metaphysical. For Landa Lakes, being two-spirit has "to do with the spirituality behind it" as pivotal and inherent to any political organizing work:

> It's not just that you're Native and gay, but it's your spirituality that sort of brings it all together. . . . You're a part of this greater concept of a tribal base or a nation that you're also a part of and consequently you're also a part of, like, these traditions, these old ancient traditions that are just a part of you . . . especially with social justice, especially within the Native community is that in order for me to really respect those who have gone on before me I have to understand what they've gone through, and they've gone through a lot, so social justice now is about me getting justice or settling things. (Lakes)

It is not enough to simply identify as 2-QTPOC discursively, as the metaphysical that circulates among our bodies and environments is what gives the experience and wisdom of being 2-QTPOC its potency. These attachments, spiritual residuals, are necessarily part of an emergent strategy for social justice, as they highlight that one's politics is not only rooted in ideology, but it is also something that we hold in our bodies. Furthermore, M. Jacqui Alexander emphasizes the metaphysical impact of the affective work to maintain political energy that is purely oppositional: "[o]ne of the effects of constructing a life based principally in opposition is that the ego learns to become righteous in its hatred of injustice . . . and it is these psychic residuals that travel, sometimes silently, sometimes vociferously, into social movements that run aground on the invisible premises of scarcity—alterity driven by separation, empowerment driven by external loss—and of having to prove perpetual injury as the quid pro quo to secure ephemeral rights" (326). Bringing in considerations of the metaphysical in 2-QTPOC cultural work and social justice movement building conjures questions that necessitate thinking ecologically—via systems of circulation, pressures, temperature, and electricity that divide and connect humans with others, both human and non-human, as part of the myriad complex dimensions of the universe. What happens to these "psychic residuals" if they are treated as ideological remainders? What do our bodies/minds/spirits know, not separately but simultaneously? What do we choose to hold on to and what do we remain bound to without knowing?

Manish Vaidya, who performed a poem called "In Defense of Magic" at the Mangos show in June 2013, called *Free: Two-Spirit, Trans and People of Colour Visions of Freedom*, describes magic as ancestral power that reclaims co-opted forms of traditional Indigenous and people of colour healing:

> When I'm talking about magic, I'm talking about intuition. I'm talking about things like yoga, meditation, acupuncture, acupressure. I'm talking about all these things as ancestral wisdom. [I'm] looking at Western science as the alternative, actually, that's the complimentary thing. That the tools, the skills, the resources that people have learned, how people have built resilience, that that is actually, all of that together, is magic. (Vaidya)

Vaidya takes an expansive approach to a 2-QTPOC magic in his writing to "support people in returning to their inner wisdom" (Vaidya). He helps people to develop emergent strategies of processing the impacts of intergenerational trauma, sexual abuse, and depression, all of which resonate in the body or through what Vaidya calls "blood memory" (Vaidya). When engaging with this level of vulnerability it is crucial to create cultures of collective liberation. Talking about magic and healing requires navigating the stigmas attached to these concepts because of colonialism and cultural imperialism that outlawed spiritual practices of Indigenous and people of colour, practices which were later co-opted by white cultures. In addition, this cultural dispossession has generated survival strategies that rely on closing oneself off from vulnerability and emotionality, making it difficult to feel safe enough to tune in to the affective and spiritual violences that a body can hold. In his poetry and performance, Vaidya attempts to create openings that allow for a space or moment in which vulnerability is manifest. This often happens through a mix of comedy, tender confessions, and social critique. Nevertheless, the comedic relief Vaidya offers in his pieces do not discount the power of 2-QTPOC magic; although he is framing magic through humour, he is also upholding metaphysical and embodied intergenerational legacies with unapologetic conviction: "What I'm trying to say is that I believe that each person alive today is the answer to their ancestors' prayers" (Vaidya). Thus, humour allows for a moment of self-forgiveness, either for believing or not believing in magic, a moment that affirms the legacies of femmephobic, homophobic and colonial violence that have come to pervade Western society. Vaidya's comedy opens a space for tenderness and then returns to a personal truth to linger among the audience:

> I have this line in that piece *In Defense of Magic*: "Beloved queers of colour, we know we're healers, sacred, right? Don't we know we're irreplaceable, powerful, intuitive, resilient magic makers, shapeshifters? Don't we know we shape our futures with clues our ancestors drop into our dreams?" And this is a part of tension in the audience, right, that some people are like "Uhhh... what the fuck are you talking about?" you know. So then the next line is: "Sometimes I remember I was taught to forget"... So, I turn it on myself, to make it ok for audience members to have that little bit of distance. (Vaidya)

## Ecology itself includes ghosts and memories, just as much as it encompasses molecules and minerals.

At the Mangos show *Beloved: A Requiem for Our Dead*, the featured performances commemorated 2-QTPOC who have passed. The show was also significant as "a place [where] a lot of 2-QTPOC came together to collectively mourn our dead and remember our dead" (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, "Interview"). The show included everything from "a piece about Whitney Houston and queerness . . . to Black closeted queer icons and media and what that means" to "found video footage of Sylvia Rivera when she was still alive when Marsha P. Johnson had just died, talking about their love and their relationship" (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, "Interview"). However, the event was more than a show with diverse content. It was a collective ritual attending to the perpetual struggles with loss, grief, longing, violence, and love that haunt 2-QTPOC histories and resistance. Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha spoke about the power of having a theatre space, however temporary, not only as a place to remember the fragility of life and our connection to it, but also as a place to affirm the living and their ongoing work: "There's that phrase: 'funerals aren't for the dead, they're for the living.' I think there's something about us coming together, and it reminds me of that June Jordan essay where she said 'Some of us didn't die,' [that she wrote after 9/11]. [She said] some of us did not die. I guess we were meant to live. So what are we going to do with it? . . . How can we be there for each other?" (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, "Interview").

### "Dare I Say Love": Sustainable Relationship Building Through Complexity

When Adrienne Maree Brown described her vision of emergent strategy, one of the most crucial aspects was that of evolving through "critical connections," which brings up the need to build interdependent, sustainable relationships rooted in love. Through performance art, poetry, visual art, video and dance, Mangos with Chili fosters the relational conditions necessary to forge connections based on a vulnerability that fuels both the pain and the

power to enact and imagine new ways of moving towards collective liberation. Beyond the performances themselves, the 2-QTPOC media that is made within Mangos informs larger skills and practices of community and relationship building. The cultural work of Mangos is part of the labour that goes into building kinship networks of trust that enable visibly mass-based movements for social justice to emerge seemingly spontaneously. Because Brown dared to say "love" in describing emergence and ecological complexity, I want to honour that risk and talk about what love can mean in the context of 2-QTPOC cultural work.

In the Mangos show performed in Toronto in 2013, Manish Vaidya performed a comedic spoken word piece called "Love Letters," in which he said that he does not like the word "smash" in "smash the state," and prefers to substitute it with "lovingly make irrelevant." Such a process of making irrelevant rather than defining the boundaries of "state" or "community" is about the "becoming [of a] political subject whose solidarities and commitments are neither to ends nor to imagining the pragmatics of a consensual community, but to embodied processes of making solidarity itself . . . where the pure mediality of being in the present of the political and the sensual is what matters and not any ends or preconditions" (Berlant 260). According to Vaidya, love is a practice in community and worldmaking that "isn't so much new age, but ancestral," that works beyond dismantling forms of oppression by simultaneously building new forms of communicating and relating to one another to replace it:

> So, I like, I hug my cat all the time [laughs] you know, I sing to her. [These] are little things that are actually huge and important. And the people in my life, my friends, my family, which is my chosen family, and then my very complicated relationships with my birth family. . . . They're part of my work, how I show up as a cis-gender male, my masculinities, how I perform them, [and] are central to how I build movement. (Vaidya)

In this sense, love is a practice of relating to others with empathetic attention and yet remaining within one's own capacities. By affirming the complexity of vulnerability that circulates throughout identities and experiences of queerness, racialization, and colonialism, this concept of "love" can also function as an organizing principle to guide interactions and creative movement building that does not necessarily entail forging intimacies and friendships despite one's capacity or compatibility, but does involve valuing the existence of others within a paradigm of interdependence.

He does not like the word "smash" in "smash the state," and prefers to substitute it with "lovingly make irrelevant."

For example, Mangos can be thought of as working toward movements in transformative justice and community accountability. Transformative justice is about holistic approaches to harm reduction and conflict resolution that do not rely on violence and isolation as punitive measures perpetuated through institutions such as prisons and hospitals. Community accountability focuses on practicing a politic of confronting violence and oppression within communities and social movements. Both transformative justice and community accountability approaches practice communication methods and conflict resolution focused on living *in solution*, while simultaneously confronting violence and internalized oppression holistically by being attuned to the embodied process of making community rather than viewing it as a clearly mapped out destination. Nevertheless, Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha warns that in

> working through loving relationships, [we] know [that] love is not automatic. It's actually like . . . there are so many learned skills that go with figuring out how we love ourselves well, and love others well and not sacrificing ourselves in loving each other... and not, like, smoothing over or minimizing trauma or oppression when we love each other. So, like, it may sound simple, and it is, but it's also not. . . . As the [Black feminist] Combahee River Collective said in their statement, "We are ready for the lifetime of struggle that lies before us," and that's real—it is a lifetime of struggle. (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, "Interview")

However, working from an organizing principle of love that is based on ecological complexity in turn creates a paradigm through which conventional notions of what makes a successful social justice movement are destabilized. Often, the relational processes involved in cultural labour of 2-QTPOC media making are absorbed into everyday ritual and intimate histories. Such labour is constant, but it is not always visible or valued as deeply politically transformative. Recently, Bench Ansfield and Jenna Peters-Golden, members of Philly Stands Up!, a transformative justice collective working with perpetrators of sexual assault in radical communities, wrote in the feminist magazine *make/shift* about "how not to succeed in transformative justice," expressing their ambivalence about the concept of "success":

> Success is conventionally understood as signifying completion and resolution, as opposed to reflecting the jumble of small victories, uncertainties, and defeats that typify organizing work. . . . Success presumes that there is a way to undo the harm that has occurred, to come out of an accountability process with an unqualified victory. But in an accountability process, it is critical to remember that there is no way to undo harm, that each moment of progress is paired with moments of failure or dismay, and that healing is not the same as curing. (31)

The cultural work of Mangos with Chili emerges from sites and oscillations of attachment, trauma, violence and pain propelled into the present moment through a certain sense of visionary urgency. Their work invests the present with an "urgency [to] reinvent, from the scene of survival, new idioms of the political, and of belonging itself, which requires debating what the baselines of survival should be in the near future, which is, now, the future we are making" (Berlant 262).

To conceptualize and practice 2-QTPOC media making as an emergent strategy towards collective liberation emphasizes the relationality of ecology and shifts critiques of queer identity and political change from a dichotomous Cartesian analysis toward an affirmative paradigm that holds differences as assemblages of complex relations and contradictions. While it is important to name oppression where it surfaces, it is more important to remember to do so knowing that movement building is so much more than just that. The challenge is to remain committed to political change while also reaching beyond purely oppositional politics; politics that necessitate stabilizing, naming, and structuring as prerequisite to targeting oppression and striving for new ways of living and relating to one another. Emergence occurs in the ongoing work of honoring survival strategies, affirming our vulnerability and resilience, and visioning and practicing ways not only to survive, but also to thrive.

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# Queer Ecologies Roundtable Discussion

## *Part 1: From Queer/Nature to Queer Ecologies*

GORDON BRENT BROCHU-INGRAM, PETER HOBBS & CATRIONA SANDILANDS

On September 11, 2014 members of the *UnderCurrents* editorial collective sat down with Gordon Brent Brochu-Ingram, Peter Hobbs, and Catriona Sandilands—scholars working within the field of queer ecologies—to talk about the successes, challenges, and possibilities of queer ecological scholarship. We began by asking Gordon, Peter, and Catriona to reflect on the contribution that "Queer/Nature," Volume 6 of *UnderCurrents,* made to discussions at the intersection of queerness and environmentalism and invited them to reflect on how queer ecologies has changed in the twenty years since that volume's publication. With an interest in the future of the field, we asked the roundtable participants to tell us how they understood queer ecologies in the present moment and to suggest some of their favourite scholarly, activist, and artistic examples of queer ecological work.

The generous conversation that took place around Catriona's dining room table, with Brent joining on Skype from Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, opened up avenues through which we might trace the history and sketch the futures of queer ecologies. We have transcribed the conversation and included four parts of it in this volume. These fragments of the roundtable are scattered throughout in an effort to put them into conversation with the scholarly and creative contributions that comprise Volume 19. Edited for clarity and flow, the pieces are intentionally incomplete, reminding us that any conversation about queer ecologies must remain open to new associations, trajectories, and challenges.

In addition to our transcriptions, and in order to capture the unique conversational nuance and energy of the roundtable itself, members of the *UnderCurrents* editorial collective recorded the roundtable discussion. As part of *UnderCurrents*' commitment to both creative and collaborative scholarly practice, we've teamed up with the *CoHearence* co-producers to create a podcast episode, available publicly on the UnderCurrents website and through the CoHearence iTunes feed. The podcast offers a fuller record of the roundtable discussion and is an ideal way to give readers auditory access to the voices of the discussants and to allow us to imagine UnderCurrents beyond the page or the computer screen.

We sincerely thank Gordon, Peter, and Catriona for participating in this conversation and for generously agreeing to allow us to share it with you here.

***UnderCurrents:*** Shauna O'Donnell's editorial for *UnderCurrents* Volume 6, "Queer/Nature," points, in the end, to the question of affect and signals the political and creative possibilities of introducing what we might call a concept-practice of persistent love into the investigation of queer nature. O'Donnell writes:

> Queer is, for the most part, defined from a position of "affectional preference." And nature is, in the dominant paradigm, "that which is not human." To love, in both of these instances, is to jar up against confining categories of being in this space, and this time, on earth. What is required in this act, as [Caffyn] Kelly [one of the contributors to that volume] reminds us, is persistence. (3)

What has persisted in your own scholarly and personal relationship, maybe even your own loving relationship, with practices, ideas, politics, and methods of investigating queer natures and, eventually, queer ecologies?

**Gordon Brent Brochu-Ingram:** In reflecting on my own 1994 article in "Queer/Nature," on spatial contextualization of queerness—which is an awkward term that I'd never use now—I was mostly relying on Foucault's methods for sketching the development and destabilization of institutions of nature,

on one hand, and sexuality, on the other hand; perspectives that had historically been repro-centric and heteronormative. So to talk about queer nature twenty years ago was really to approach a frontier.

Today, my 1994 *UnderCurrents* essay feels a bit naive and over-personalized. From [my current] vantage point, the value of the "Queer/Nature" conversation was in the crude attempts to try on notions of social space as habitat within an ecosystem. . . . Methodologically, I was adapting interdisciplinary methods from environmental studies to queer populations that in 1994 had still only been defined through sociology and epidemiology (especially in relation to AIDS) and literature (in relation to early queer theory). So, a lot of these rich possibilities in 1994 for interdisciplinary investigations have been more recently appropriated and cordoned by cultural geography, a subfield that is too often adverse to recognition of complex biological contexts and mixing qualitative markers with quantitative methods.

From the standpoint of research methods, that 1994 queer natures moment was quite promising in bringing sexuality into environmental studies. But the research that has followed has been less creative, with many interdisciplinary research and methods still underutilized. Forgive me if I'm being a little adversarial. . . . I think that there were a lot more possibilities that the 1994 discussion opened up that haven't been pursued [by] very many researchers. In my mind, the most promising line was the cluster that Cate [Sandilands] has nurtured at York that has led to the queer ecologies discussion. But that's largely a York animal and when I get out into the broader world of queer studies and queer theory, a lot of the possibilities that we glimpsed twenty years ago have barely been explored and applied.

**Catriona Sandilands:** I think you might go to the wrong conferences Brent . . . [laughter] I would almost say the opposite. Certainly in the last three or four years . . . there's [been] a proliferation of works that are trying to stage a conversation between queer and ecology, and specifically to take up some of the threads that were raised in the "Queer/Nature" volume, about thinking about queer beyond the subject positions of LGBT individuals.

What I might argue is the point that came up in the "Queer/Nature" [volume] that hasn't been returned to in quite so robust a manner is the relationship between that sort of ontological/epistemological queering and on-the-ground political activism. If I see a gap, that's kind of what it looks like for me. . . . I think that queer ecology is naming an increasingly diverse set of scholarly and creative practices but I'm not quite sure how it is being manifest in activism.

**Peter Hobbs:** It's hard for me to talk about twenty years of queer ecologies/natures . . . but looking back at the "Queer/Nature" issue today, I was struck—and maybe this is echoing some [of the] sentiment that Brent is expressing—[that] I could identify certain tropes, concerns, and sentiments that were expressed in the issue [and that] are still being expressed today. So there is sort of a lag, a proliferation of queer ecology or queer materialism, there is a real interest in using the methods and not so much the theory. . . . I guess queer theory had to end. It couldn't continue troubling theory where queer ecologies can continue. I see the similarities in the stuff that [was] taken up in [the 1994] issue is still being taken up today. So I was quite impressed when I went back and looked.

**Darren Patrick:** Cate you're nodding . . .

**Catriona Sandilands:** I was nodding because it's still a very impressive document. And hats off to Shauna [O'Donnell] for dreaming it up and for bringing together a very interesting collection of approaches. It was a bit of a stab in the dark because we had no idea what we were doing. Even the piece that I wrote is a collage piece; there is no coherent sense of what the relationship was going to be between queer and nature, and it is interesting to look back at the piece and see what directions I followed, that I'm continuing to follow, and what directions have gone by the wayside . . . either dying a good death or [seeing the] things that I may need to look at again.

One of the things I do realize that I am still quite committed to is understanding queer as a mode of politicized estrangement of the familiar. So Jack Halberstam talks about queer theory and queer politics as essentially any version of politics that does not have the white heterosexual couple at the centre of it. And I think that that kind of estrangement is the kind of work that I do and that Peter, Brent, Nicole Seymour, Robert Azzarello, and that Darren do—calling into question some of the comfortable habits of ecological and environmentalist thought that align with this understanding of the couple. So, for example, one of the figures from queer theory who has emerged into the queer ecological universe is Lee Edelman. His book, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, [explores] the notion of reproductive futurity and the ways in which this is an imaginative and psychic structure for capitalist societies. It is also very much part of a certain kind of environmentalist narrative—and several people have used him as a way of calling into question the heteronormativity of much contemporary environmental discourse.

For me, even if the kinds of modes of estrangement, the places where I'm thinking about estrangement, the particular things that I'm trying to make strange have changed, I'm still quite attached to that understanding of queer as an actively anti-heteronormative mode of questioning. Which is actually pretty portable, it goes a lot of interesting places.

*Conversation continues on page 27.*

# From the River to the Sea

## *Israel, Palestine, and Queer/Feminist Ecologies*

MITCH GOLDSMITH

In this paper, I set out to critique Israeli oppression of Palestinians in three parts. Firstly, I examine Zionist tropes surrounding the creation of Israel. It is often remarked that Israel was created from nothing: uninhabited land not used to its full potential, land that was wasted and that could, with Jewish ingenuity, be turned into an Oasis in the middle of desert: *a land without a people for a people without a land* (Shapira 41). In these tropes, Palestinians, if they are even acknowledged, are understood as backwards, stupid or primitive, unable (and undeserving) to develop the land and the local resources. This first portion of the critique will specifically examine the afforestation initiatives of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) in Israel, and the ways these JNF efforts promote these types of Zionist myths and tropes.[1] As Irus Braverman has thoughtfully documented in *Planted Flags: Trees, Land and Law in Israel/ Palestine,* the JNF and the Israeli government have sought to construct pine forests, reminiscent of European landscapes, atop stolen and destroyed Palestinian villages, in an effort to conceal Palestinian existence and remake not only the Israeli environment but also its cultural memory. As Braverman notes, "the pine is synonymous with the Zionist project of afforesting the 'desolate' land of Israel, and the olive [tree] has become emblematic of the Palestinian struggle against Israel's occupation and for national independence" (10). Israeli environmental policy, including their afforestation efforts with the JNF, attempts to craft an Israeli narrative that erases Palestinians from the land completely.

Secondly, I demonstrate how these tropes suggest the supposed superiority of Israeli Jews—namely their ability and intellect, which is portrayed as having allowed them to accomplish what Palestinians could not. The tropes, moreover, reveal a set of ideological underpinnings about the innate "nature" of Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. Aspects of Israeli society construct sociological projections of the Israeli Jew as "naturally" superior to others, particularly Arabs and Palestinians who are seen as "naturally" inferior, closer to nature and even animal-like. For this portion of my critique, I will draw heavily from both Mera Weiss' *The Chosen Body* and Jasbir K. Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages*. By placing these texts in dialogue, I will highlight the ways in which Israeli society crafts projections of the Israeli body in juxtaposition with sociological constructions of nature and the Arab body. An embodied Israeli identity is established and reaffirmed through a manipulation and mastery of the land. The possession and mastery of the land re-inscribes a dominant Israeli embodiment while the dispossession of land creates an emasculated and disempowered Palestinian/ Arab body. These constructions serve to naturalize the asymmetrical power imbalance between Israelis and Palestinians.

Finally, Israeli constructions of "nature" and "human nature," in reference to both themselves and Palestinians, colour Israeli environmental policy. The final portion of my critique focuses on destructive Israeli environmental policies within the occupied territories. Because Israel largely controls the flow of goods, materials, and other capital within the occupied territories, it also has the ability to make the import and export of resources between Palestinian communities and other nations virtually non-existent.[2] This is particularly true in Gaza, where the borders and waterways remain under an illegal and disastrous blockade.[3] Both urban and rural communities in Palestine suffer, with large cities (particularly in Gaza) quickly moving towards the brink of ecological disaster. These devastating processes of environmental degradation are tantamount to processes of ethnic cleansing and raise serious questions about the use of land, landscapes and nature in occupation and violent conflict.

Israeli destruction of farmland, including olive groves, and the havoc Israel has wrought on Palestinian communi-

ties through disastrous environmental policies will be examined and put into dialogue with recent NGO reports on the ecological impacts of occupation on Palestine. I will specifically draw from Amnesty International's 2009 report *Troubled Waters—Palestinians Denied Fair Access to Water*, the United Nations 2012 report *Gaza 2020: A Liveable Place?* and the 2013 United Nations Human Rights Council report on the effects of Israeli settlements on Palestinian life. These policies of "maldevelopment," or what Vandana Shiva calls neo-colonial "development projects [which] appropriate [or destroy] the natural resource base for the production of sustenance and survival," further superimpose "the ideologically constructed category of western technological man as a uniform measure of the worth of classes, cultures and genders" (3–5).

To conclude my analysis, I will turn to Palestinian civil society's call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israeli and international institutions complicit in the occupation and other acts of violence against Palestinian communities.[4] It is my hope that this paper can act in furtherance of this call, representing one voice amongst many in support of this nonviolent social, political and economic movement to effect change in the region. In my attempt to craft linkages amongst what at times appears to be divergent theories and movements, I hope to unite ecofeminist, queer, environmental, and anti-racist politics in a way that is both meaningful and responsive to the complexities of each movement's unique cultural context.

Throughout this analysis, I will draw heavily from ecofeminist theory, which offers a unique approach to critique the occupation and Israel's asymmetrical relationship to Palestine. As Rosemary Putnam Tong explains, "ecofeminism strives to show the connections among all forms of human oppression" as well as "human being's attempts to dominate the nonhuman world" (246). Ecofeminists articulate "the view that there exists a direct link between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature" (Putnam Tong 251). More recently, ecofeminists have expanded this theory to include an intersectional analysis of the oppression of other marginalized persons, such as queer people, people of colour, and colonized persons. Ecofeminists argue that patriarchy seeks to construct women, people of colour, queer people, and others as non-normative, inferior, or closer to nature, animalizing them in such a way as to prevent them from having a culture, intellect, or even a physical embodiment. This, in turn, both blocks access to and establishes the importance of the dominant white/heterosexual/male norm. For example, in her essay *Towards a Queer Ecofeminism*, Greta Gaard argues that "[f]rom a queer ecofeminist perspective . . . it becomes clear that liberating women requires liberating nature, the erotic, and queers. The conceptual connections among the oppressions of women, nature, and queers makes this need particularly clear" (29). Gaard understands these patriarchal constructions of difference as an attempt to naturalize oppression and violence against marginalized persons.[5]

Ecofeminists argue that patriarchy seeks to construct women, people of colour, queer people, and others as non-normative, inferior, or closer to nature.

Gaard's queer intervention into ecofeminism and environmental studies marks an early blending of queer affectivity in ecofeminist and environmental analysis. A queer/ed perspective on natures and environments offers an important way to better understand the use of "the natural" through tropes of land and people's relations to land, particularly in the context of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. As Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson remark in their tremendously important collection *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire,* queer ecologies function as means of "probing and challenging the biopolitical knots through which both historical and current relations of sexualities and environments meet and inform one another" (5). Queer theorists interested in ecologies and environments have found particular interest in "the naturalization of particular sexual behaviours . . . historical and contemporary formations of natural spaces . . . related to sexuality" and "a variety of literary, philosophical, and pedagogical projects that insist on highlighting, subverting, and transforming heteronormative nature relations" (6). A queered ecofeminist standpoint will better allow us to understand the ways in which sexuality functions in the context of occupation, how Zionist tropes about Palestinians and Arabs works to mark them as queer, deviant, and different. Attention to queer ecologies in the context of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, coupled with an ecofeminist theoretical framework, will allow for a richer analysis than either theory could provide alone.

For example, from a queer/ed ecofeminist perspective we can observe that institutions and people in power craft archetypes of the dispossessed that re-inscribe the latter's supposed proximity to nature, recasting them as animal-like and holding their inferiority as "innate" or "in their nature."[6] These dynamics often function in the colonial or post-colonial context, where the West is thought to be *the* location of culture and the Global South is thus identified as closer to nature, primitive or retrograde. As Huggan and Tiffin explain in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment,* such post/colonial relations of power as expressed through relations to the land manifest

themselves in various forms of ecological imperialism, biocolonialism, and discursive and material environmental racism, codifying relations of power in ways intimately connected to understandings of land and the natural (3–4). It is important to place attention on the many ways in which theorists and activists have been addressing the social, cultural and political ramifications of environmental policy without collapsing these divergent theories into a single, monolithic ideology. Queer ecologies and ecofeminism complement one another and better allow us to understand the ways in which Israel uses nature and landscapes to further its oppression of Palestinians. We can do this while still understanding queer ecologies and ecofeminism as theoretical movements with unique contexts, histories, and discursive practices.

## I

In *The Chosen Body*, Meira Weiss argues: "The Zionist revolution that aimed to create a new people for a new land had a unique bodily aspect. . . . For early Zionist thinkers . . . returning to Israel and working the land would restore the health of Jewish bodies. The Zionist revolution involved a 'return' to Zion, to nature, and to the body" (1). For early Zionist thinkers and Israeli settlers, "Zionism was to be 'Judaism with muscles'" (1). This new totemic projection of the strong and powerful embodied Jew was constructed in opposition to the image of the weak, hyper-intellectual, and emasculated diasporic Jew in need of "the heroism of his forefathers in the land of Zion" (1). It is Weiss' contention that these early Zionist projections of the ideal Jew, and the ideal Jewish body, became internalized in contemporary Israeli culture in what she calls the phenomenon of "the chosen body" or the "idealization of health, power and perfection" (4).

This construct encapsulates a "masculine, Jewish Ashkenazi, perfect and wholesome" embodiment, as an "ideal type by which concrete Israeli bodies are screened and molded from their birth to their death" (4–5). Weiss explains that the chosen body is often crafted in the image of the Israeli "pioneer" or the "sabra" (tough, authentic Israeli-born Israeli), and both embodiments are characterized with a type of mastery and domination over the land (5). For as Weiss argues, "the conquering of land and labor during the first *aliyot* (waves of immigration to Palestine)," as well as Israeli independence and successive military conflicts, "were all used to shape, justify, and sustain the construction of the Israeli body" (6). The supposed superiority of the chosen body becomes re-inscribed through Israeli manipulation of the natural environment. Therefore, for the Israeli pioneer and *sabra*, conquering of the land and of the Palestinian people also meant conquering the image of a previously dispossessed and emasculated Jew. The act of taking Palestinian land re-inscribed a heterosexualized androcentric Jewish identity. By identifying oneself through a cactus native to Israel/Palestine, namely the sabra, one is able to recast a supposed naturalness of the Israeli settler colonialist presence in the region.

This new identity, created to alter the natural landscape of Israel/Palestine, codified the supposed divine right of Israelis to the land and the local natural resources. As Irus Braverman explains, "labor and the transformation of nature through labor in particular was central to the development of the new *halutz ivri* (Hebrew Pioneer): a Jewish farmer who cultivates the land and lives off the fruits of his or her labor" (76). For early Zionists, a (Western) European Jewish farmer was almost unheard of. European Jews' preoccupation with urban life and intellectual pursuits was thought to have removed them from an embodied reclamation of Jewish power and collective identity. For early Zionist thinkers, "through the performance of planting, the 'rootless cosmopolitan' Jew from the cities of Europe would be transformed into a physical laborer who experiences an intimate connection to the Land" (Braverman 77). It was argued, "the labor involved in the act of planting thus heals and *naturalizes* the Jew while at the same time normalizing him or her into a new national identity" (Braverman 77, my emphasis). This new embodied projection of the productive, powerful, self-actualized Israeli Jew, or the "chosen body," is then set apart against the Israeli/American/Western projection of the Arab body as retrograde, inferior, emasculated/queered, and more closely aligned to nature. While the Palestinian/Arab is seen as more closely aligned with nature, thought of as primitive, and removed from shared cultural mores, the Israeli/Jewish body is thought to dominate nature, the land, and others tied so closely to it in these supremacist projections.

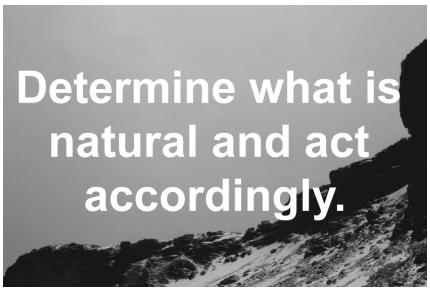
In *Terrorist Assemblages*, Jasbir K. Puar argues "Muslim masculinity is simultaneously pathologically excessive yet repressive, perverse yet homophobic, virile yet emasculated, monstrous yet flaccid" (xxv). For Puar, processes of Western biopolitics reimagine and recreate Arab bodies through a racialized queer paradigm. As part of a larger process of carving out space in Western society for certain assimilated queer bodies, the Arab "sexually exceptional subject is produced against queer*ness*, as a process intertwined with racialization, that calls into nominalization abject populations peripheral to the project of living, expendable as human waste and shunted to the spaces of deferred death" (Puar xxvii, author's emphasis). Through a limited sanctioning of normative queer embodiment, what Puar calls "homonationalism," other queer/ed identities (in this case the Arab body) become set apart, feared, and reviled just as more normative queer bodies were in the years and decades prior. Under homonational regimes, non-Westernized Arab bodies become understood as retrograde, death driven, perverse, unclean, and so on. These sexed/raced Palestinian/Arab male bodies are now more closely associated with death and perversion due, in part, to a Western hyper-fascination with terrorism, jihad, suicide bombing, and Arab sexuality. This has occurred as the connection of more normative queer bodies with death (where AIDS equals perversion and death) fades from public memory.

Puar explains that Western probar-

# Ways To Change The Body/Land

JAIMES MAYHEW



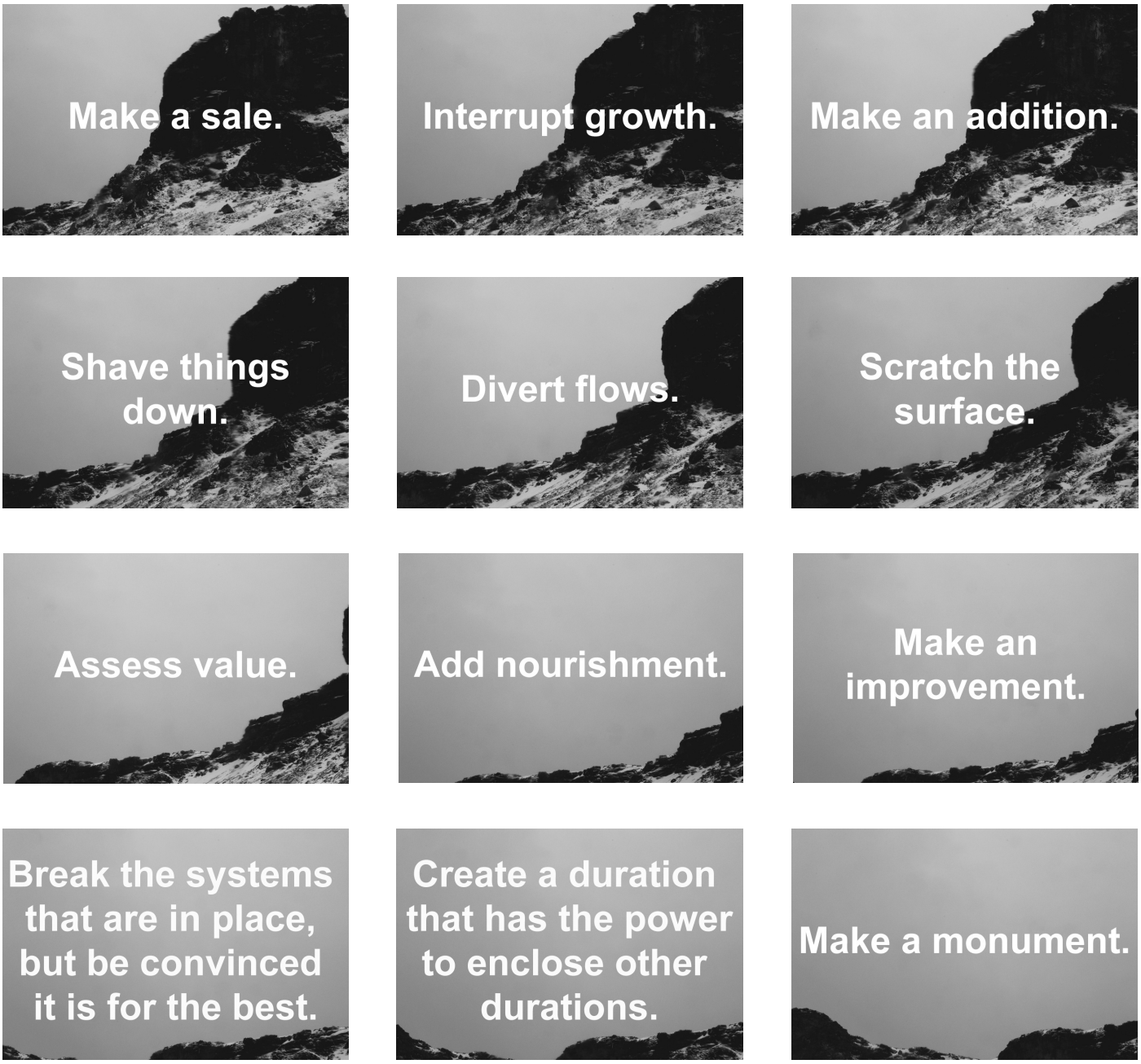




Inspired by eco-queer and eco-feminist notions of power and ecology, as well as my own experience as a transgender person from a family of geologists and ecologists, *Ways To Change The Body/Land* is a series of photos taken out of a car window in southern Iceland with instructions that suggest small ways one could change the social, political, cultural, physical, or ecological contexts of a body or landscape: the body/land. These instructions are abstract, inciting a call to action but not assigning the power that is needed to follow through. This leaves room for questions—if one wanted to change a body/land by assessing value, what kind of value should be assessed? Would taking out a life insurance policy assess value? Would estimating available resources assess value? All of these works seek to acknowledge the constant flux of a body/land in a perpetual state of becoming. Although I do not believe that landscapes and bodies are qualitatively the same, I believe that we assign meaning to both in similar ways.

jections of "Islamic sexual repression that plagues human rights, liberal queer and feminist discourses" become intertwined with the "Orientalist wet dreams of lascivious excesses of pedophilia, sodomy, and perverse sexuality" (14). Furthermore, Raz Yosef argues in *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema*, "Israeli heterosexual masculinity and its seemingly unified collectivity cannot imagine itself apart from the conception of externalized, sexualized ethnic and racial 'others' on whom it was founded and which it produced" (1). Yosef continues, "Zionist phallic masculinity is constituted through the force of exclusion of the queer, the (homo)eroticized Mizrahi [Arab Jews] and the Palestinian male 'others'" (1). Israeli body narratives have excised understandings of the weak, emasculated (homoerotic?), disempowered, and disposed disasporic Jew and placed these attributions onto their constructions of the Palestinian/Arab body.[7] Yosef explains that these hyper-masculine constructions of Israeli Jewish embodiment become "structured by Orientalist perspectives about the East [or the Global South], especially that of Eastern bodies, associated with lack of hygiene, plagues, disease, and sexual perversity. By assigning the Eastern population as objects of death and degeneration, Zionism created internal biologized enemies against which the Zionist society must defend itself" (3).

In these Western projections, Arab




societies, and particularly Arab sexuality and masculinity, are understood as closer to nature, their behaviour animal-like and lacking the cultural sensitivity of their Western counterparts. These projections bleed into Israeli animalizing discourse around Palestinian "natures" even as they underpin early Zionist and contemporary Israeli narratives about the founding of Israel. In the latter, early Zionists are thought to have found a backwards people unable to care for themselves, the land, or the natural resources of Israel/Palestine. If the Palestinian people are acknowledged at all, Israeli myths about the founding of Israel construct a Palestinian embodiment that, although close to nature, is unable to properly *master* nature and nature's resources.

## II

Zionist narratives about the Jewish settlement of Israel often either deny the existence of a Palestinian people or characterize pre-1948 Palestine as a backwards land ruined by backwards people. As an example of the former, during the 2013 Israeli Independence Day celebrations, the president of Israel, Shimon Peres, denied the existence of a Palestine people while championing Israeli mastery over the "barren and disappointing land":

> I remember how it all began. The whole state of Israel is a millimeter of the whole Middle East. A statistical error,

ren and disappointing land, swamps in the north, desert in the south, two lakes, one dead and an overrated river. No natural resource apart from malaria. There was nothing here. And we now have the best agriculture in the world? This is a miracle: a land built by people.(Pappe, "Israeli Denial")

In her study of Jewish responses to malaria in pre-1948 Palestine, Sandra Sufian explains, "the modern drive in Israeli society to rule over nature is commonly conveyed in the stories about malaria and swamp drainage in Israel/Zionist history" (4). However, similar narratives, this time acknowledging an Indigenous Palestinian population, can be found in Theodor Herzl's *Altneuland*, published in 1902. The particular passage that follows, from the Zionist leader's famous Orientalist utopian novel, uniquely illuminates this Israeli archetype and links an understanding of Palestinian inferiority with their inability to master the land. For this reason, I have included an extended excerpt:

> Jaffa made a very unpleasant impression. The town was in a state of extreme decay . . . the alleys were dirty, neglected, full of vile odors.
>
> Everywhere misery in bright Oriental rags. Poor Turks, dirty Arabs, timid Jews lounged about—indolent, beggarly, hopeless . . .
>
> The landscape through which they passed was a picture of desolation. The low-lands were mostly sand and swamp, the lean fields look as if burnt over. The inhabitants of the black-wash Arab villages looked like brigands. Naked children played in dirty alleys.
>
> Over the distant horizon loomed the deforested hills of Judea. The bare slopes and the bleak, rocky alleys showed some traces of present or former cultivation.
>
> "If this land is our land," remarked Fredrich sadly, "it has declined like our people."
>
> "Yes, it's pretty bad," agreed Kingscourt. "But much could be done here with afforestation, if half a million young giant cedars were planted—they shoot up like asparagus. This country needs nothing but water and shade to have a great future"
>
> "And who is to bring water and shade here?"
>
> "The Jews!" (qtd. in Braverman 83–84)

In these Western projections, Arab societies, and particularly Arab sexuality and masculinity, are understood as closer to nature.

Seemingly inspired by Herzl's Jewish utopia, the Jewish National Fund, a wing of the World Zionist Organization, began a massive pine planting and afforestation initiative shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel. Nur Masalha explains, "in the post-Nakba period [after the creation of Israel] the Jewish National Fund planted hundreds of thousands of European trees, intended to conceal newly destroyed Palestinian villages" (120). JNF Zionist tree planting almost exclusively focused on the non-native pine tree. As Masalha continues, "this has been an ecologically very destructive policy pursued largely for political purposes to wipe out the ancient landscape and render the newly acquired areas Jewish European" (121). Today, dozens of Israeli pine forests sit atop destroyed Palestinian villages, concealing a Palestinian history of existence. Elsewhere, historic Palestinian villages, long since purged, are now home to Israeli communities. These communities and their surrounding pine forests sit atop a land whose landscape has been altered through this "naturalizing" effect. Yet, similar to the Israeli constructions of "the chosen body," these pine trees become embodied Jewish trees, an occupying force whose roots run deep.

Of these pine afforestation initiatives, Braverman writes: "unlike so many colonial afforestation projects of the twentieth century, the significance of the Zionist afforestation project lies not in the economic role of the forest trees, but rather in the heightened significance of trees as symbolic, physical and imaginary connections to (and disconnection from) land that are exercised through these trees" (Braverman 6-7). The prevalence of JNF pine trees in Israel "naturalize [a] Jewish Presence" as they come to symbolize a Jewish connection and mastery of the land (Braverman 7). In the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the Israeli pine trees themselves become occupiers, operationalized as a front for the Israeli government to conceal Palestinian existence and to seize current Palestinian land, razing homes and whole communities. But, complicating these embodiments, Israeli pine trees also symbolically represent Israeli bodies, through processes of memorialization, commemoration, and celebratory tree planting.

During her interview with a high-ranking JNF officer, Braverman recounts, "trees . . . are used to physically capture, occupy, and control land" (17). Israeli practices of capturing, occupying and controlling landscapes—most prominently demonstrated in the uprooting of olive trees during the expansion of the physical occupation of Palestinian land—coupled with an

Israeli policy of collective punishment against Palestinians, a retributive measure to punish Palestinians for the political instability of the area. Irus Braverman notes, "since its inception, and increasingly in the last two decades, the State of Israel has been uprooting large numbers of Palestinian olive trees" (129). She continues that while Israel denies these practices are punitive or acts of retribution, as those practices would then be considered illegal under international law, Israel nonetheless admits such practices make room for more Israeli military infrastructure. One example is the Separation Wall, which snakes through the occupied West Bank, Israeli checkpoints and security towers, and buffer zones between Israel and Palestine.

To complicate the matter, Braverman explains that for many Israelis, the planting of pine trees and pine forests symbolically and referentially comes to symbolize another type of Jewish presence, a spectral presence of Jews killed in the Holocaust, in violent conflicts in the region, or as remembrances of Jewish folk heroes in the Israeli psyche. Through processes of tree naming, memorializing, and commemoration, Israeli pine trees "not only represent the dead but they also transform the memory of the dead through revival: the human body, in other words, is incarnated in the body of the tree" (Braverman 70). These practices further naturalize a Jewish presence in Israel/Palestine and serves to depoliticize, or at least to remove, JNF's afforestation projects from political debate because of the seemingly solemn ritual of tree planting as memorialization.

### III

Israeli policies of maldevelopment, which adversely affect ecological diversity in the occupied Palestinian territories, threaten the lives and futurity of Palestinian communities. Israeli pine forest monocultures harm the land, as related infrastructure reroutes water and other natural resources away from the occupied territories and into Israel, and involves the targeting and damaging of Palestinian infrastructure (like greenhouses and water systems) during military attacks. Overall, these processes seek to reanimate understandings of Israel's technocratic mastery over the environment. By seizing land, water, and other natural resources from the occupied Palestinian territories, Zionists and their apologists further blame the victim by framing the ecological crises in Palestine as the result of Palestinians' "natural" stupidity, corruption, and general backwardness. These Orientalist projections of Palestinian/Arab "nature" are used as a scapegoat by Israel to conceal their racist environmental policies.

Orientalist projections of Palestinian/Arab "nature" are used as a scapegoat to conceal racist environmental policies.

In 2005, the pine tree was included in the list of wild tree species native to Israel even though "preservationists define the same pine as a major threat to the biodiversity of the local ecology, and even as an invasive species" (Braverman 43). In Israel, these pine trees are an invasive species whose "pine needles kill most of what grows underneath them" (Braverman 116), damaging the soil and land around these trees and within JNF forests. These massive pine monocultures not only remake the Israeli natural landscape, but also further damage the natural biodiversity of Israel. The manipulation of nature and natural resources for the "benefit" of Israeli society is part of a larger structure of domination that dually dispossesses Palestinians from their natural environment and their ability to plant and harvest crops, to fish, to move freely on their land, and to provide enough food and water for their families.

In the 2009 report *Troubled Waters: Palestinians Denied Fair Access to Water*—published shortly after Israel's "Operation Cast Lead" in late 2008 and early 2009 in which Israel killed over 1,000 Gazans and injured over 5,000 more—Amnesty International notes that a "lack of access to adequate, safe, and clean water has been a longstanding problem for the Palestinian population of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. . . . [T]he problem arises principally because of Israeli water policies and practices which discriminate against the Palestinian population" ("Troubled Waters" 4). The report documents Israeli per capita water use as four times that of Palestine, with Palestinian per capita water use dramatically under the World Health Organization's recognized necessity level of 100 litres per day (Palestinians only use 70 litres) ("Troubled Waters" 4). The report continues that rural Palestinians are more likely to lack clean drinking water and, because of Israel's restrictions on movement and the blockade of Gaza which disallows the majority of new infrastructure building within the Strip, water cannot be moved from urban areas to more remote regions. Furthermore, for those who do have access to water, poor water purification and sewage systems leave the water dangerously contaminated.

Reflecting on Israel's treatment of Palestinians, Amnesty International observes that "Israeli settlers [living in illegal settlements in the West Bank] face no such [water] challenges—as indicated by their intensive-irrigation farms, lush gardens and swimming pools" ("Troubled Waters" 5). While Israel manipulates the natural environment in such a way as to support an oasis of luxurious settler compounds in the West Bank, Palestinian resources are rerouted away from Palestinians in need, instead going to serve Israeli excess. As the report continues, during the decades of occupation, "Israel has

over-exploited Palestinian water resources, neglected the water and sanitation infrastructure in the [occupied Palestinian territories, (OPT)], and used the OPT as a dumping ground for its waste—causing damage to the groundwater resources and the environment" ("Troubled Waters" 5). In what can only be described as the crushing power of an Apartheid regime committed to the collective punishment of their targeted minority population, Amnesty International contends that:

> Scores of wells, rainwater harvesting cisterns and roof water tanks have been destroyed or damaged by Israeli forces during their military operations, as well as many [kilometres] of water mains and other facilities and irrigation networks. Water mains and sewage conduits have been routinely crushed by tanks and armoured vehicles during Israeli military incursions into Palestinian towns and refugee camps in both the West Bank and Gaza, and residents' water tanks have often been shot at and damaged by soldiers. While some of the damage has been incidental, much of the destruction by the Israeli army has resulted from deliberate, direct or indiscriminate attacks, in violation of international humanitarian law. ("Troubled Waters" 63)

Similar findings have been reported by the United Nations in their Gaza 2020 report, which notes that because of the strain placed on Gaza's aquifer, "the aquifer could become unusable as early as 2016, with the damage irreversible by 2020" ("Gaza 2020" 11). The 2013 United Nations Human Rights Council investigation into the effects of illegal Israeli Settlements on Palestinian life also corroborate the findings of these inquiries.

Documenting the effects that Israel's "Operation Cast Lead" had on Gazan infrastructure, the United Nations *Gaza 2020* report finds, "6,268 homes were destroyed or severely damaged; 186 greenhouses were destroyed; 931 impact craters in roads and fields were counted; universities faced US$25 million in damages; 35,750 cattle, sheep and goats, and more than one million chicken and other birds were killed; and 17% of the cultivated area was destroyed" ("Gaza 2020" 4). Additionally, the report finds that "water and sanitation infrastructure suffered almost US$6 million in damages" ("Gaza 2020" 4).

Activists and academics have sought to effect change *with* Palestinians through scholarship, activism, and campaigning.

Because of Israeli military restrictions on the movements of Palestinians within Gaza and the occupied territories, farming and cultivating their land, or fishing in internationally recognized Palestinian waters, can be difficult or even deadly for Palestinians (Frykberg). Thirty-five percent of Gaza's agricultural land is located in what Israel calls the "buffer zone" between the two countries, meaning it cannot be cultivated ("Gaza 2020" 6). If Palestinians disobey these orders, they risk being assaulted, arrested, or killed by Israeli soldiers, and Israeli bulldozers and other military machinery will almost certainly destroy their crops and land. Palestinians attempting to fish in waters that are internationally recognized as their own face similar barriers, with 85 percent of their maritime areas restricted ("Gaza 2020" 6). Gazans entering these waters risk being harassed, shot at, or killed and their boats damaged or sunk by Israeli soldiers.

The United National Human Rights Council's (UNHRC) 2013 report corroborates many of the findings from the UN officers in Palestine and Amnesty International. Additionally, the 2013 UNHRC reports hearing "numerous testimonies on violent attacks by [Israeli] settlers [on Palestinians in the West Bank], including physical assaults on the person, the use of knives, axes, clubs and other improvised weapons, as well as shootings and throwing Molotov cocktails. The testimonies also recounted the psychological impact of the intimidation from armed settlers trespassing on Palestinian land, at Palestinian water springs or in the midst of Palestinian neighbourhoods in Hebron and East Jerusalem" (UNHRC 12). The report also documents "the impact of violence and intimidation on the lives and livelihoods of Palestinian farmers: preventing Palestinians from accessing their land close to settlements through violence and intimidation; burning, uprooting and attacking Palestinian crops; settlers taking over the land and planting their own crops; fencing off and constructing on Palestinian agricultural lands" (UNHRC 12). The Council also heard testimony from Palestinian communities who witnessed settlers tampering with or destroying their water systems in an effort to force the Palestinian communities to leave the area in search of water. The UNHRC documented that oftentimes, when Palestinians protested the violence and harassment from Israeli settlers, they were met with more violence by Israeli soldiers seeking to suppress Palestinian assembly and political organizing (UNHRC 16).

## IV

A broad understanding of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination—a movement that calls for an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the siege on Gaza and further demands Israel's respect of Palestinian human rights—is reaching a critical mass in the West. Students, scholars,

and progressive activists are at the forefront of thoughtful and engaged activism in solidarity with Palestinians, particularly in their call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israeli and international institutions which further Palestinian oppression. As Palestinians, and the activists in solidarity with them, continue their liberatory struggle, it is important that we consider the myriad ways in which environments, landscapes, and natures are used, crafted, and recreated as a means to promote or abridge Palestinian rights.

In 2011, postcolonial feminist scholar and activist Chandra Mohanty, along with Indigenous and women of colour activists, artists, and scholars from the United States toured the West Bank in a solidarity delegation to bear witness to Israeli aggression and State terror in their continued occupation of the Palestinian West Bank and other systemic abuses. The delegation likened what they observed to Apartheid.[8] Coming from diverse backgrounds, some growing up in the Jim Crow South, others on United States Native American reservations, and in Apartheid South Africa, the delegation sought to reaffirm its support for an end to the occupation and to craft linkages between the continuing oppression of Palestinians and other contemporary and historical social justice struggles. Similarly, the following year, a queer delegation went to Palestine to speak with Palestinians about the occupation and the ways in which Israeli aggression against Palestinians intersects with global systems of power, including but not limited to systems of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and colonialism. Upon their return to the United States, both delegations called on the American people—particularly academics and scholars—to endorse the Palestinian people's struggle for self-determination and the global BDS movement which aims, non-violently, to pressure the Israeli government to end the occupation of the West Bank, the siege on Gaza, and the broader suppression of Palestinian rights.

For decades, activists and academics have sought to effect change *with* Palestinians through scholarship, activism, and campaigning. Since the Palestinian call for a global BDS movement in 2005, feminist and queer activists and academics have been particularly active in speaking out against the occupation and other abuses perpetrated by Israel.[9] However, the ecofeminist implications of the occupation and Israeli aggression, including the ideologies of land and embodiment that frame current environmental policy in Israel and the occupied territories, have been under-examined. It is my hope that this analysis will, in part, provide a response to the call for critical academic engagement with Israel and Palestine by providing an ecofeminist analysis and critique of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. In this way, it will further the call for solidarity issued by women's and queer groups and provide a new resource for activists and feminists abroad to understand the occupation in a more nuanced and ecologically minded way.

Israeli homonationalist discourses about nature, land, and landscapes underpin unjust power relations between the Israeli State and Palestinian communities. And while Israeli aggression continues to intensify, activists in the West have made significant gains in response to Palestinian civil society's call for solidarity and support of BDS. In 2013, the Association for Asian American Studies,[10] the American Studies Association, and the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association all endorsed academic boycotts of Israel.[11] The first Homonational and PinkWashing conference was held in April 2013 at the City University of New York hosted by the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies, and the burgeoning "Open Hillel" movement in the US has seen Jewish college students challenging restrictions on speech regarding Israel, the occupation, and other related issues. Whether through "Open Hillel" initiatives, campaigns championing BDS, and queer students of colour and Indigenous students challenging pinkwashing and other attempts to make the oppression of Palestinians more palatable, the movement has continued to attract attention and gain momentum, with robust debates on Israeli policy and Palestinian self-determination growing at universities across North America.

With these gains in mind, it is imperative that critiques of the oppression of Palestinians by Israel consider ecofeminist and queer ecological perspectives for a fuller and more complete understanding of the conflict.

## Notes

1. I use the term "Zionist" in the broadest sense possible and recognize its muddled and confusing taxonomy. As Sarah Schulman writes in *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International*, "In the common parlance of people who support human rights for Palestine, 'Zionist' is a weird buzzword. It means 'people who are pro-Israel' . . . [Rather than understanding all Jews or Jews with a connection to Israel as Zionists] for me, 'Zionists' are a subset of people who support Israel" (140–141).
2. Economic effects of Israeli policy become even more stark when one looks at Israel's cultivation of exportable consumables from their illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank and their purposeful hindering of Palestinian export of goods from Gaza and elsewhere. For example, see the ongoing campaigns against SodaStream, a product sold widely in the West, made in an illegal Israeli settlement in the West Bank.
3.Human rights organizations the world over have called the Israeli siege on Gaza illegal, immoral, and disastrous for Palestinians living in Gaza. For more see, Nebehay's "U.N. experts say Israel's blockade of Gaza illegal" published via *Reuters*.
4.When writing about the many ways the Israeli State functions in relation to Palestine, language gets tricky, jumbled, and unclear. I recognize that in this paper I sometimes use the term "occupation" and the phrase "occupation of Palestine" as a catch all for both the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Israel's siege on Gaza, as well as Israel's discrimination of Palestinian peoples inside Israel and broader Israeli policies of disenfranchisement and oppression. This is a limitation on my part as a writer and a scholar and I hope my reliance on the term occupation does not flatten or oversimplify the totality of the Palestinian lived experience.
5. Interestingly, Gaard explains that queer folks fit into this patriarchal paradigm in a unique way, as they are often thought of as "against nature" or "unnatural."
6. See Surasky's "Out of answers on how to confront BDS, StandWithUs comic book portrays Palestinians (and allies) as vermin, reminiscent of Nazi propaganda" on the site *Monodoweiss*.
7. Borrowing from Western/Israeli totemic projections of Israeli and Palestinian embodiment, I use their constructions as a means of critique. I understand that not all Israelis are Jews and not all Palestinians are Arab or Muslim etc. These non-normative Israeli and Palestinian bodies become further marginalized in Western/Israeli projections of the Israeli Jewish chosen body and the Palestinian Arab queered, emasculated body.
8. See Talpade Mohanty et al., "Justice for Palestine: A Call to Action from Indigenous and Women of Color Feminists." I was privileged in 2013 to attend a graduate seminar with Professor Chandra Talpade Mohanty at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. Professor Mohanty spoke movingly about her 2011 solidarity tour of Palestine. Not long after, I was able to meet Professor Sarah Schulman in Toronto where she too spoke about her queer solidarity delegation to Palestine shortly after Mohanty's. These women's moving experi-

ences allowed me to re-examine my relationship to the neo-liberal academy and the possibility of creating liberationist scholarship that could challenge Western institutions which too often obfuscate our relationships to global systems of power and oppression, like the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

9. For example, in her book *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International*, Sarah Schulman writes, "the [BDS] boycott's global participants include a significant number of LGBT people: Palestinians, Israelis, and Internationals who approach boycott from a queer politic" (126).

10. See Barrows-Friedman, Nora, "BDS Roundup: US scholars group unanimously passes boycott of Israeli institutions" on the site *Electronic Intifada*.

11. See Abunimah, Ali. "Major Indigenous studies group endorses Israel boycott" at *Electronic Intifada*.

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# Queer Ecologies Roundtable Discussion

## *Part 2: Examining Heteronormativity, Reprocentricity, and Ecology*

GORDON BRENT BROCHU-INGRAM, PETER HOBBS & CATRIONA SANDILANDS

***UnderCurrents:*** There [were] a lot of really interesting knots in that first round of things. One of those knots touches on something that Peter said about the relationship between queer theory as a kind of academic enterprise and queer ecology as this ostensibly more mobile enterprise that can travel. In queer politics, in general, the process of engaging with heteronormativity, the process of engaging with reprocentricitiy is, in some sense, what makes it queer. As ecology helps the queer travel in different universes and attaches it to different kinds of things, how do heteronormativity and reprocentricity act as centres for what queer ecologies is doing? Do you think that the insistence on queer ecology or queer theory as an anti-reprocentric or anti-heteronormative enterprise changes when we start to pay more attention to ecology as a mode of doing the work?

**Gordon Brent Brochu-Ingram:** I have a kind of a strong response. . . . The queer ecologies framework for me has been pretty easy to graft onto a whole body of decolonial and Indigenous theory around environment. You know, it's hard sometimes, and I say this as somebody who is very a highly assimilated mixed-race Indigenous person. My mother's family is Metis with deep roots in three regions in northern Canada, boreal Canada. I grew up as part of an Indian Reserve community in Southern Vancouver Island, but [I was], you know, pretty middle class. So like many of us, it has taken me much of my life to process that and I often do it through colonial theory. Now I think that there is a very direct relationship between some of our queer ecologies methods because there is a deeper critique of science. Science as we know was largely a Euro-centric, decolonial, imperial project. . . . The queer ecologies conversation gives me a kind of decolonial bridge between white-neocolonial environmentalism on one-hand, which I see all over this region—Salt Spring Island and Southern Vancouver Island—but also the remnants of Indigenous ecological knowledge on the other hand, which has seen a huge resurgence not only just because of this year's [2014] Supreme Court of Canada decisions [regarding Tsilhqot'in First Nation] but a huge sort of cultural resurgence both in Indigenous populations and in the broader population around here. So it's on everybody's minds out on the west coast. So there are some other bridges and possibilities that the queer ecologies conversations—we'll call them doors, you know—doors that lead to bridges that sometimes people want to walk along.

**Peter Hobbs:** Brent do you have an example of a good bridge?

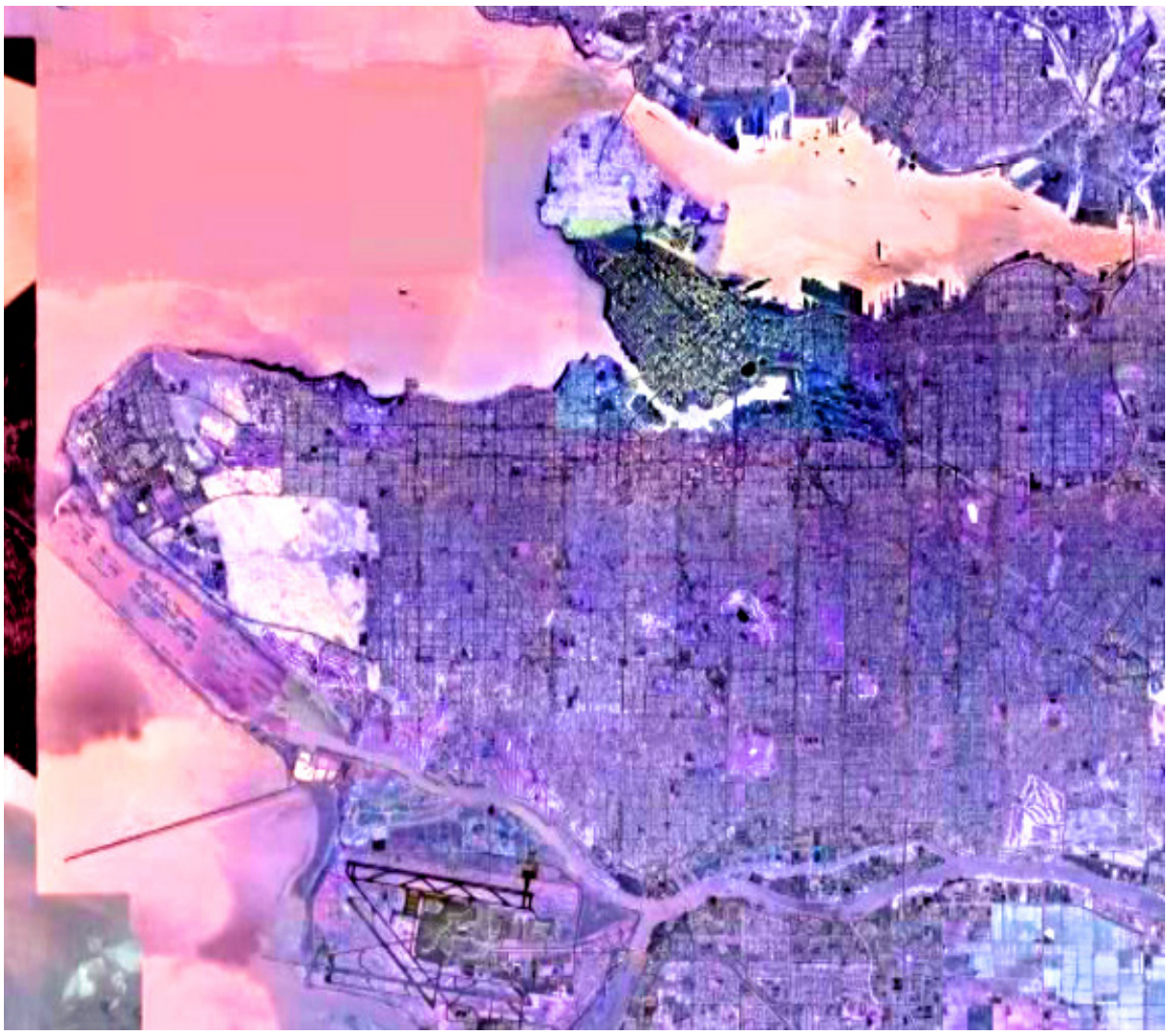
**Gordon Brent Brochu-Ingram:** Yeah! . . . If you're serious about calling into question the reprocentricity and heteronormativity of modern science and modern ecology, then you start to open the door to a range of other narratives and experiences and investigations of our environments. It's everything from traditional environmental knowledge to the kind of cultural narrative that we see in environmentalism. But ecology as a science as we've known it is up for reconsideration. It's not necessarily undermined, but it's broadened. And I think we've all been doing that. On one level we've been trying to shore up the importance of ecology and environmental studies. At the same time, especially with the queer work, we're calling some of the earlier assumptions, such as reprocentricity and heteronormativity into correct question. We're demolishing part of modern science, ecological science, and we're trying to find substitutes.

**Catriona Sandilands:** I think you could also argue that there is a trajectory of queering in some versions of ecological science, even though the folks doing it probably—actually, defi-

nitely—wouldn't call it that. So moving away from, for example, some of the more reductionist genetically driven accounts of evolutionary biology that focus on the idea of the adaptive trait being carried by an individual through the process of sexual selection. Moving away from an understanding of that as the central model of inheritance—in some ways Lamark ends up being somewhat vindicated—we're able to look at the ways in which environmental conditions trigger genetic change and mutation. There's one understanding in evolutionary biology that difference in a species is only produced through sexual relationship, but in fact, it is increasingly obvious that that's not the case. So it's no longer the case that you have to have the heterosexual coupling at the centre of questions of change and genetic inheritance. There are . . . epigenetic forces. There are ways in which we can now look at life in much queerer ways, and that queering is coming from the humanities, the arts, the social sciences. I would argue that it's appearing in the sciences as well. I'll just end it there, end of thought.

**Peter Hobbs:** The only thing that I would add to that is that it's not new. You know, science has always been interested in an experimentation and wonderment. It thrives, it should thrive on, experimentation and wonderment. That's what the best science does. That's what science is supposed to do . . . it productively mangels and entangles. And I would add, and it might be a trope that I use way too much, but it's that the world is always already queer . . . I think that's one of the main points of queer ecologies—seeking out the queerness in everyday life and reminding people that, of course, science is constructed following certain restrictions and certain disciplines, but it is also the performance of matter. Yeah. And then I'll end there.

*Conversation continues on page 46.*



**VANCOUVER FROM GOOGLE EARTH 4 2008.** Gordon Brent Brochu-Ingram.

# ‘The Picture in my Head is my Reward’*

## *The Mental Mapping of a Queer Urban Perspective*

GOEDELE DE CALUWÉ & MARION WASSERBAUER

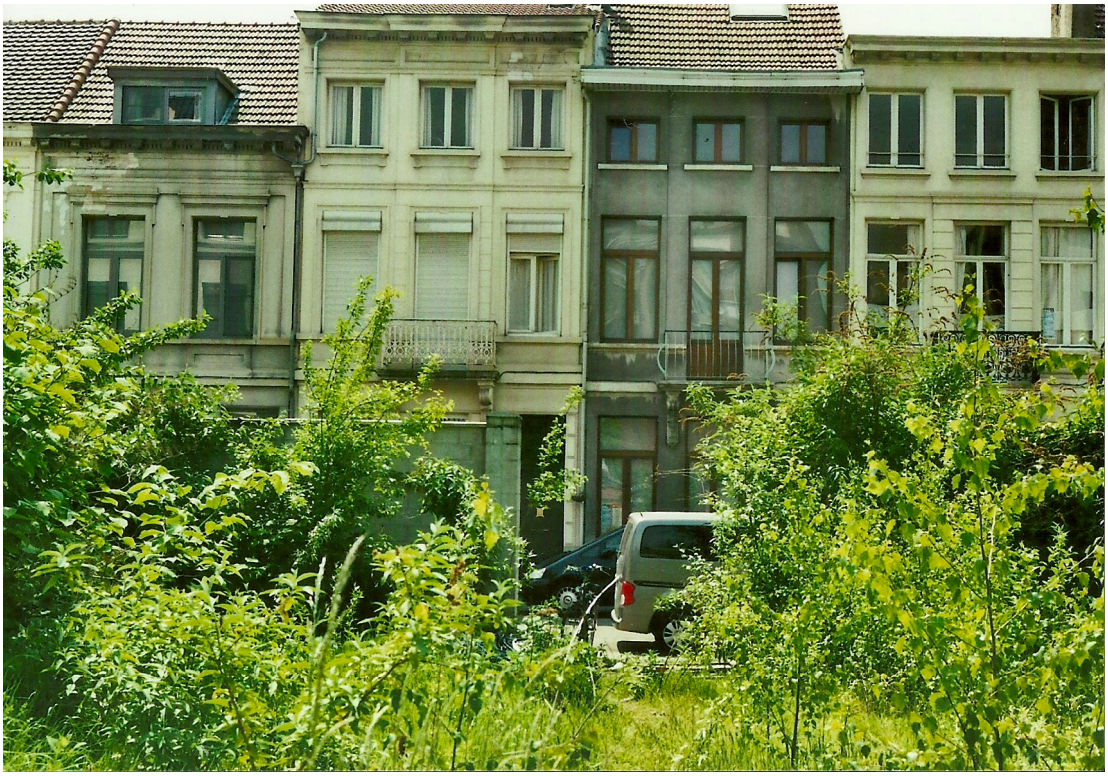
Urban space is a productive force reflecting and affecting human interaction both with other humans and with their environment (Lefebvre). Traditionally the urban scheme is envisioned to control and order ‘nature’ and social interaction, and to sustain the power of a dominant group (Foucault). Yet due to the complexity of the post-capitalist city, this urban realm is not a smooth surface. Sometimes temporary cracks form, where space is opened up for creating alternative orderings (Hetherington 40). Because of their ambivalence, these spaces do not clearly belong to anyone, and can easily be claimed. It is this type of place that queers and other minority groups have often repurposed and appropriated to their needs. With our photographs we hope to visualize these fragments in the urban environment, where the imposed order suddenly stops, and where organic (over-) growth takes over. Here nature reclaims temporarily unused urban space and thus disrupts the idea of a human-constructed and human-controlled landscape and the idea of ‘city’ in a dualistic relation with ‘nature.’ In this sense, our photographs represent a queer version of urban typologies like ‘park’ or ‘garden’.

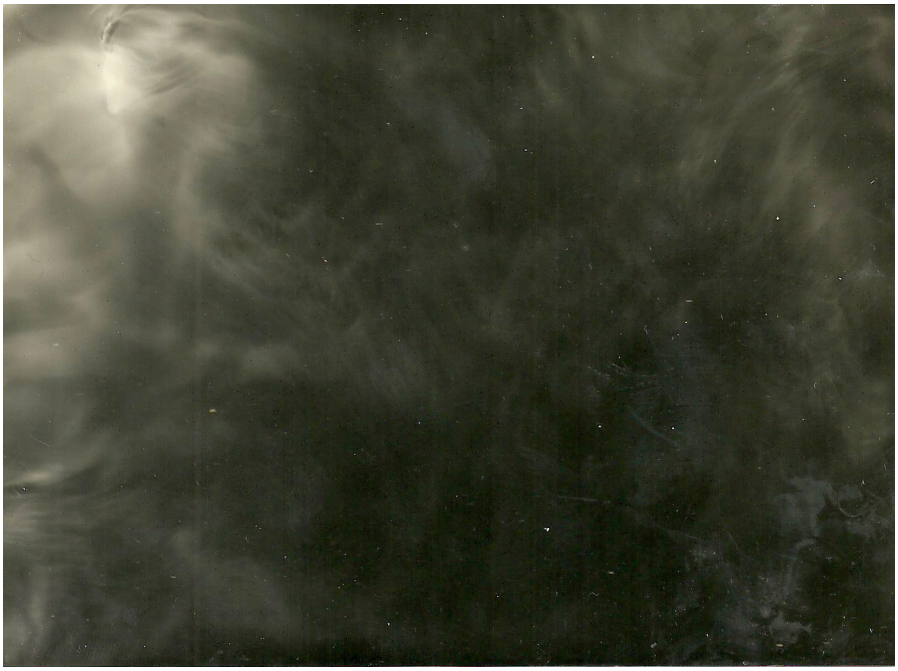
The process of discovering these places through chance encounters and capturing them on film has an important queer dimension. Queering space, in this context, means looking differently at the urban realm—with a queer eye, so to speak. Instead of focusing on queers in space, the aim of this project is to investigate in what way our environment reflects (hetero-) normative assumptions and directs behaviours. The places in our project disrupt the seemingly homogeneous city with its smooth construct of order that establishes a false notion of naturalness, and hides (hetero-) normative biases.

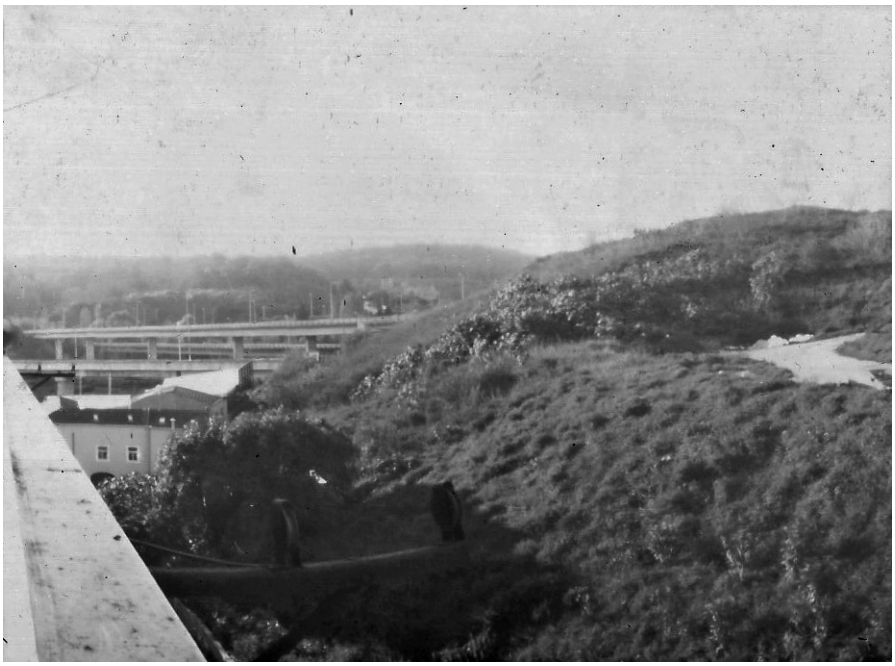
These intentions are repeated in our decision to work only with analogue material. All of the queer urban phenomena discovered are temporary spaces. Either human agency or natural growth itself will change these spaces constantly and we feel that the click of a finger on the release button of an analogue camera, capturing the very moment on a film roll—unalterably and definitely—corresponds accordingly. The mechanical clicking of an analogue shutter mirrors the wink of an eye more accurately than a digital medium. On top of that, the slow process of finishing a film roll, developing it, and only then rediscovering what one has actually caught on film, freezes these spatial moments in time. The defectiveness of the analogue media is preserved as such to reflect—in a similar way—the beauty of failure, of cracks, overlaps and scratches.

Evidently, a lot of work is still to be done in the analysis of space—both urban and architectural—as reflective of power structures, in order to expose both their positive and negative effects. With a queer eye, we try to defy the heteronormative power structures that traditionally shape urban space. Queer ecologies have the capacity to offer a less evident, but all the more interesting perspective on these matters. We hope this project can contribute to ongoing research in queer geographies and urban studies, by exploring different modes of representation, outside of our own academic comfort zone.

* Stern, Marnie. “Patterns of a Diamond Ceiling.”







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# Queer Theory for Lichens

DAVID GRIFFITHS

*"Lichens are queer things"* —Wyndham

"We are all lichens." This is the concluding sentence of an article published in December 2012 in *The Quarterly Review of Biology*. The article, "A Symbiotic View of Life: We Have Never Been Individuals," is co-authored by biologist Scott F. Gilbert, historian of biology Jan Sapp, and historian and philosopher of science Alfred I. Tauber. The article identifies six criteria by which individuality is defined in the biological sciences: anatomical, embryological, physiological, immunological, genetic, and evolutionary. They also note that these criteria are neither mutually exclusive, nor has individuality been described in these terms in the history of biology. The article argues that organisms cannot be defined as individuals by any of these six criteria and suggests that no organism is autonomous and independent; rather, all organisms are like lichens, the symbiotic merger of a fungus and photosynthetic bacteria or algae.

In this article, I will outline Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber's symbiotic view of life as well as offer an introduction to lichens, including a brief history of their taxonomic classification. Following this I will ask: if we have never been individuals—if we are all composites like lichens—then what does this mean for sexuality? I will stress that questions of biological classification and biological individuality are not just relevant to biology, but are always connected to various social and political questions. I will therefore gesture to some of the ways in which the symbiotic view of life can offer new perspectives on a number of bio-political questions. My approach is not to make a simple translation from the biological to the social, but rather to addend to the ways in which the biological and the social are always already interconnected, as well as to point to what Donna Haraway calls the "traffic on the bridge between what counts as nature and culture" (*Modest_Witness* 56). In this article, I will primarily focus on the primacy of heterosexual biological reproduction in discourses about human and non-human sexuality and sociality. This includes the overemphasis of sexual reproduction and vertical inheritance at the expense of many other forms of production and reproduction, as well as multispecies interconnections and co-involvements. I will argue that lichens and other examples of biological symbioses can offer ways of thinking about sexuality beyond this heteronormative framework. In fact, lichens and other symbioses suggest a queer ecological perspective that could go some way toward denaturalizing the primacy of heterosexuality and sexual reproduction in defining and legitimating bodies, practices and communities.

## The Symbiotic View of Life

Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber trace the biological concept of the individual to the early modern period. They state that the notion of independent citizens emerged at the same time as "the notion of the autonomous individual agent framed a biology that was organised around the study of particulate, interacting, living entities" (Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber 326). Building upon this, Darwinism focused on discrete individuals and identified competition between individuals as the driving force of evolution. As the article emphasizes, even the discovery that organisms are aggregates of living cells was used to support the primacy of the individual: cells existed to construct and sustain a singular and autonomous organism (Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber 326). They identify the emergence of ecology in the second half of the nineteenth century as something of a turning point, complementing the focus on individuals in the biological sciences with the idea of ecological systems and relationships between individuals. Ecology encompasses all relationships between organisms at all scales. Scale is important; as Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber point out,

technology has allowed the biological sciences to conceptualise relationships at ever smaller scales. The microscope revealed a world of bacteria, protists, and fungi, while further technological developments revealed organisms and biological agents such as viruses at an even smaller scale. This is important, as new technologies have revealed a "world of complex and intermingled relationships—not only among microbes, but also between microscopic and macroscopic life" (Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber 326). What is clear in these scaled multispecies ecologies is that sexual reproduction and vertical inheritance are only part of the picture, and that it is a heteronormative misinterpretation of "life" and "nature" to overemphasize these. Ecological perspectives reveal a queer commingling, the production and reproduction of life between vastly different scales. This challenges the notion of individual discrete human bodies and the privileging of sexual reproduction in public discourse.

Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber state that this symbiotic view of life is not new to the microbiological or botanical sciences, but that the zoological sciences are only recently starting to consider animals as multispecies composites. They argue that:

> The discovery of symbiosis throughout the animal kingdom is fundamentally transforming the classical conception of an insular individuality into one in which interactive relationships among species blurs the boundaries of the organism and obscures the notion of essential identity. (326)

The authors identify six ways that animals have been considered individuals in the biological sciences and provide examples of scientific research that challenge animal individuality within each definition. To challenge anatomical individuality, they refer to Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan's work on *Mastotermes darwiniensis*, commonly known as termites, which are part of a larger reproductive colony, and cannot digest the cellulose in their diet without the gut symbiont *Mixotricha paradoxa*, itself an aggregate of at least five separate species (Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber 363; Haraway, *When Species Meet* 285–286). To challenge developmental individuality, they emphasise the importance of symbiosis in animal development, including the role of microbial symbionts in the life cycle of mammals (Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber 328). Among much non-human animal research, physiological individuality is thrown into question by recent work on the Human Microbiome Project, which stresses the role of non-human microbiological agents within the traditional limits of the human body in normal and healthy human functioning (329; Turnbaugh et al.). The Human Microbiome Project also challenges notions of genetic individuality, as ecological metagenomics has revealed diversity in bacterial genomics within populations of humans (327).[1] The concept of immune individuality is challenged by a shift in how the immune system itself is conceptualised. The immune system has traditionally been considered a defensive system and the immune self is defined clearly against its external environment and its defence against dangerous and invasive "others" (330; Klein). However, recent research suggests that immune systems are "created, in part, by microbial symbionts" (331). With all this in mind, the authors conclude: "there is no circumscribed, autonomous entity that is *a priori* designated 'the self.' What counts as 'self' is dynamic and context-dependent" (333).

Importantly, Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber are making both a biological and socio-political point. The biological individual and the social individual—that is, the autonomous rights-holding citizen—are always connected. As Michel Foucault recognised in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, reproductive sexuality is a hinge that connects the "anatomo-politics" of the body and the "bio-politics of the population" (Foucault 139). Foucault's concept of bio-politics is intimately linked to bio-power: the regulation of bodies and practices through a number of discourses, health practices, laws, and other regulatory mechanisms that surround biological bodies and human populations. The crucial point for my argument is that the notions of a biological and social individual are not separate, but are both part of the emergence of the individual bio-political citizen. That is, a biological definition is always social and not in a simple one-to-one relationship; rather, biological and social definitions are linked in ways that are always complex as well as politically, socially, and historically situated. Furthermore, it is central to my argument, as the scientific research just discussed demonstrates, that there are no universal and transcendent traits that define the individual (human or otherwise); instead, the self or individual is always contingent and context-dependent.

What is clear in these scaled multispecies ecologies is that sexual reproduction and vertical inheritance are only part of the picture.

In this article, I pay attention to the queer connections and cominglings within and between organisms, and I will suggest that doing so offers a new scientific perspective on a number of bio-political issues. I will now offer brief examples that include certain biomedical theories and practices, and the stigmatisation of infected or diseased bodies. If we have never been individuals, then neither have we been uninfect-

ed and pure. I will discuss the example of people living with HIV/AIDS to argue that there are links among the biological status of the virus and the bio-political status of "individuals" who are infected and their biomedical treatment. Viewing all bodies as multispecies assemblages—rather than seeing bodies as necessarily being either clean, healthy and pure, or infected, unhealthy and impure—could thus have consequences for how infected bodies are conceived of, and therefore treated and cared for. My main focus, however, will be the primacy of sexual reproduction in biological and social discourses. This primacy delegitimises bodies, practices, and communities that are not arranged around heterosexual biological reproduction, or are arranged around non-normative sexualities. I will argue that the symbiotic view of life can challenge this conservative and heteronormative approach to human and non-human sexuality and sociality.

### Lynn Margulis and Symbiogenesis

In an article published in 1967, "On the Origin of Mitosing Cells," Lynn Margulis suggests that eukaryotic cells (cells with a membrane-bound nucleus) originated through the merger of previously free-living prokaryotic cells (cells lacking a nucleus). In particular, she hypothesizes that organelles such as mitochondria and chloroplasts can all be "considered to have derived from free-living cells, and the eukaryotic cell is the result of the evolution of ancient symbioses" (226). Margulis argues that in the case of mitochondria, the prokaryote's ability to provide energy through respiration provided the host cell with an evolutionary advantage. Similarly, chloroplasts—organelles that convert carbon dioxide into organic compounds including sugars using energy from sunlight—are thought to have once been photosynthesizing prokaryotes that survived absorption. Like the mitochondria, chloroplasts offered their host cells an evolutionary advantage through the production of energy. Margulis suggests that this originary absorption and symbiosis happened somewhere between 2.7 and 1.2 billion years ago, due to geological evidence that poisonous oxygen began to flourish in the atmosphere during this time (226). Margulis's theories on the origins of mitochondria and chloroplasts were not accepted at the time, but have since become widely accepted.[2]

Margulis has subsequently developed this theory and published widely on symbiosis and symbiogenesis. Symbiosis refers to long-term stable physical and behavioural association of different types of organisms. Symbiogenesis refers to a long-term stable symbiosis that leads to evolutionary change (Margulis and Sagan 12). Symbiogenesis theory emphasises the creative force of symbiosis. Free-living organisms are usually considered the object of natural selection; however, if two individuals form a close enough symbiotic relationship the association of organisms can become the target of selection. For example, certain animals have acquired photosynthetic symbionts, just as have the fungal partner in lichen symbioses, and as did the eukaryotes that became plants (Margulis and Schwartz 207). Examples include the green sea slug *Elysia viridis*, whose ancestors ingested green algae, which now permanently reside in the slug's tissue. Adult green sea slugs do not gain their energy from digestion, but rather from sunlight, in much the same way as plants do. As Margulis and Sagan state: "Green animals provide graphic examples of symbioses that lead to symbiogenesis" (13). Margulis argues that symbiosis is actually the primary mechanism of evolutionary novelty and speciation, rather than the gradual accrual of genetic mutation and variation. Margulis and Sagan describe this approach as "Darwinism not neodarwinism" (3–33). Symbiogenesis is not anti-Darwinian; on the contrary, "symbiogenetic acquisition of new traits by inheritance of acquired genomes is rather an extension, a refinement, an amplification of Darwin's idea" (15). The ancestors of *Elysia viridis* formed a symbiosis with green algae, which provided the slug with an evolutionary advantage: the ability to gain energy directly from sunlight. Slugs with the evolutionary advantage were selected for and produced more offspring, whereas those without did not. Margulis argues that this example of symbiogenesis is not an anomaly, but rather illustrates the fact that symbiosis is the major force of novelty and speciation in evolution. This is important: Margulis's account demonstrates that lichens are not anomalies but are rather illustrative of the fact that life and nature are found, if anywhere, in the complex and queer cobbling together of multispecies relationships. Crucially for my argument, this decenters heterosexual biological reproduction and vertical inheritance as the *only* way that life produces and reproduces and challenges a restricted and restricting view of human sexual reproduction.

If two individuals form a close enough symbiotic relationship the association of organisms can become the target of selection.

### Lichens

Before exploring some of the bio-political consequences of thinking of human beings as symbiotic multispecies communities, it is important to have a clear idea of what Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber are referring to when they say, "We are all lichens." To explore how a human is like a lichen, I will offer a brief naturalcultural history of lichens.[3] Lichens are a symbiotic merger of what is called a mycobiont and a photobiont.[4] A mycobiont is a lichen-forming fungus, whose role in the symbiosis is to

construct the thallus—that is, a plant or fungal body that is undifferentiated into roots, stems, or leaves—that houses the photosynthetic symbiotic partners. These partners, the photobionts, provide the thallus with energy through photosynthesis, and are either cyanobacteria or algae. Myra Hird states: "Cyanobacteria invented oxygeneic photosynthesis, which has come to dominate metabolism for producing fixed carbon from carbon dioxide" (*The Origins of Sociable Life* 32). Green algae photosynthesise through their chloroplasts, which are themselves ancestral symbiotic cyanobacteria. This is symbiosis within symbiosis, or as Hird says, "symbionts all the way down" (*The Origins of Sociable Life* 84).[5] As Thomas H. Nash III stresses in *Lichen Biology*, lichen symbioses are very complex, and may involve more than two partners. Lichens generally exist as discrete thalli, and are implicitly treated as individuals in many studies, even though, as Nash points out, they may well be a symbiotic fusion of organisms from three kingdoms of life; Nash argues that this misrepresentation has consequences for the biological sciences (1). I will return to this point and argue that thinking of all organisms, including humans, as non-individual multispecies communities does indeed have consequences for the biological and medical sciences, but also has consequences for thinking about human and non-human sociality and sexuality.

Prior to the discovery of the symbiotic nature of lichens, they were considered autonomous and individual organisms. In 1867, the botanist Simon Schwendener proposed the dual theory of lichens on September 10 at the annual general meeting of the Swiss Natural History Society (Honegger, "Simon Schwendener (1829–1919) and the Dual Hypothesis of Lichens" 307). Schwendener was a respected botanist, and held the Chair of Botany at the University of Basel. At the meeting, Schwendener proposed a hypothesis based on work he had done on lichens, algae, and fungi with a light microscope. Although not confirmed by experimental evidence, Schwendener proposed that lichens are not autonomous plants, but rather a symbiotic relationship of fungi and algae. Schwendener's hypothesis was vigorously rejected by the scientific community for some time—at least until the end of the nineteenth century. The last published attempt to disprove the dual theory of lichen was published as late as 1953, even though this was fourteen years after a lichen was first successfully resynthesized from its independently cultured fungal and algal partners under sterile conditions (Schmidt; Thomas; Honegger, "Simon Schwendener" 308). There is an interesting parallel here with Margulis's proposal of the endosymbiotic origins of eukaryotic cells. Each proposal was rejected outright to begin with, and took decades of further research and experimental evidence to be taken seriously in the scientific community. The idea of individual, autonomous organisms seems to be very deeply entrenched in the biological sciences, and still has a hold as a seeming given that is difficult to challenge. As mentioned previously, the notion of the biological individual is linked with the notion of the social, or bio-political, individual citizen. I will return to the fact that the bio-political individual is central to theories and discourses of social and sexual normativity. I will suggest that thinking with lichens can potentially offer a queer way out of heteronormative narratives of human and non-human sexuality and sociality by decentering heterosexual biological reproduction as the *only* way that life (re) produces.

Schwendener proposed that lichens are not autonomous plants, but rather a symbiotic relationship of fungi and algae.

Rosmarie Honegger argues that the rejection of Schwendener's proposal of a dual theory of lichen should be placed in an historical context:

> The main problem of Schwendener's opponents was, with high probability, the holistic view of living beings in general which persisted far into the 19th century and even beyond. At the beginning of the 19th century, it was not known that different organisms may live in close connection or even one within the other. Microbial, plant, animal, and human pathogens were not recognized as such e.g., rust or smut pustules were considered as ill outgrowths of the plant proper. The identification of pathogenic micro-organisms and the study of their life cycles and development on or within their hosts were among the most fascinating and important discoveries of the 19th century. ("Simon Schwendener [1829–1919] and the Dual Hypothesis of Lichens" 311)

While for Schwendener, the dual theory of lichens elegantly explained the observations he had made with a light microscope of lichens, fungi, and algae, the prevailing scientific paradigm of the time was that all organisms were individuals and could be taxonomically defined as such. Thus, while the hypothesis had some appeal among some botanists working with lichens, in general it was rejected until further evidence, such as experimental resynthesis, was provided.

Lichens are involved in ecological relationships with many animals, including serving as food or shelter for invertebrates. M.R.D. Seaward states that some insect larvae "have cases partially

constructed out of lichen fragments" and that some weevils "actually have carapaces which facilitate the growth of lichens on them for protective crypsis [protection from predators via camouflage]" (276). In some of the larger, flightless weevils, this lichen covering is even used as a habitat for some species of mite (276). Once again, it is symbionts all the way down. Many birds use lichens as material for their nests, and some even show a preference for species of lichen (290). Birds also use lichens for camouflage, and for decorative display. A large number of mammal species feed on lichens, and Seaward lists "deer, elk, ibex, gazelle, musk ox, mountain goat, polar bear, lemming, vole, tree mouse, marmot, squirrel, monkeys, and some domestic animals" as including lichens in their diets, particularly as winter feed (291). The winter diet of reindeer and caribou can be more than 50% lichen (291). Humans have used and continue to use lichens for a number of different purposes. Lichenologist Sylvia Duran Sharnoff has compiled a huge bibliographical database of "lichens and people" which demonstrates the diversity of ways in which lichens have been used by humans. These include in brewing, as cosmetics, in dyes, as fuel and food, in medicine, and as perfumes and poisons. These examples demonstrate that not only are lichens a symbiotic relationship between at least two partners of different species (if not kingdoms), they are also interconnected and involved in complex naturalcultural relationships with humans and non-human animals.[6]

### We Have Never Been Individuals

So how is a human like a lichen? Every human cell has a bacterial power source, much like the lichen's reliance on its photobiont. Mitochondria are organelles within the eukaryotic cell that have distinct DNA and are involved in the production of adenosine triphosphate (ATP), a source of chemical energy. Further, as Margulis suggested in 1967, eukaryotic cells were once non-nucleated prokaryotes that survived absorption by another cell. Mitochondria thus provide animal cells with energy in much the same way as a photobiont provides photosynthetic energy to the lichen. Further, human health also depends upon bacteria, particularly the bacteria living permanently in the gut. These bacteria (or "human gut microbiota") produce enzymes absent from the human genome, which allow humans to gain energy from complex sugars in terrestrial plants. As Ruth E. Ley et al. emphasise, these plants have dominated diet throughout human evolution. Their research demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between human and bacteria, through a comparison of "the bacterial assemblages that are associated with humans and other mammals, metazoa and free-living microbial communities that span a range of environments" (776). Importantly, this research emphasizes the consequences this symbiotic relationship has had on bacterial, as well as human evolution. They state that their "analyses indicate that gut-associated microbiotas are profoundly different from other free-living microbiotas from across the biosphere" (786). The symbiotic co-evolution of human and gut bacteria has shaped the morphology and behaviour of both humans and gut bacteria. Neither is viable without the other; human gut microbiota have evolved to live in the specific environment of the human gut, while humans have evolved to depend upon food that could not be fully digested without this specific internal symbiotic community. What becomes clear from this perspective is interconnectedness in an ecological "mesh," to use Timothy Morton's term, in which relationships are formative and co-constitutive (*The Ecological Thought*).

The symbiotic co-evolution of human and gut bacteria has shaped the morphology and behaviour of both.

This is what Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber call the symbiotic view of life. And it depends upon one of the most important consequences of Margulis's theory of symbiogenesis: the impossibility of thinking of life in terms of individuals. As Margulis states:

> of all the organisms on Earth today, only prokaryotes (bacteria) are individuals. All other live beings ("organisms"—such as animals, plants and fungi) are metabolically complex communities of a multitude of tightly organized beings. That is, what we generally accept as an individual animal, such as a cow, is recognizable as a collection of various numbers and kinds of autopoietic entities that, functioning together, form an emergent entity—the cow. "Individuals" are all diversities of co-evolving associates. ("Big Trouble" 273)

This diversity of co-evolving associates is observable at the level of symbiotic gut microbiota and at the level of the human cell. It is impossible to think in terms of individual human bodies, as these bodies are emergent entities formed through the co-evolution of more-than-human agencies. As Dorion Sagan describes: "The human body . . . is an architectonic compilation of millions of agencies of chimerical cells" (367). Crucially, in Margulis's symbiogenetic account it is not the case that lichens are anomalies in being symbiotic fusions of more than one species; rather, humans are like lichens because there are no such things as individuals, except perhaps prokaryotic bacteria (although

these too depend upon their interconnectedness and co-involvement in the ecological mesh). Symbiosis is the rule, not the exception. All organisms are emergent multispecies aggregates and communities.

This rethinking of the human individual as a lichen-like symbiotic multispecies community offers possible rewards in the area of medicine and health care. An example of this approach in scientific practice is the Human Microbiome Project. Described as the "logical conceptual and experimental extension of the Human Genome Project," the Human Microbiome Project proposes that the human body be thought of as a "supra-organism"—that is, a collection of organisms that function as an organic whole, such as an ant colony (Turnbaugh et al. 804). Peter J. Turnbaugh et al. suggest that applying this approach to genomic science demands the sequencing of the genetic material from all the organisms that make up the human body, referred to as the microbiome. Specifically, they claim that the Human Microbiome Project can have positive effects on personal medicine (in particular for the treatment of malnourishment, obesity, autoimmune disorders, and some cancers) as well as providing answers to "some of the most inspiring, vexing and fundamental scientific questions today" (804). This appears to confirm Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber's assertion that coming to terms with the fact that we have never been individuals will have benefits across the biological and medical sciences. This is biopolitical as much as it is biomedical. If bodies are reconsidered as supra-organisms, always already "infected" or "inhabited" by countless infectious agents such as bacteria or viruses and, because the biological and the social are always interconnected, then this could potentially go some way to alleviate the social stigma that accompanies certain illnesses, diseases, or conditions.

This is particularly pertinent to people living with HIV/AIDS. As early as 1983, Larry Kramer drew attention to the intersection of class, sexuality, and race in the bio-politics of HIV/AIDS and its scientific research and medical treatment:

> There have been no confirmed cases of AIDS in straight, white, non-intravenous-drug-using, middle-class Americans. The only confirmed straights struck down by AIDS are members of groups just as disenfranchised as gay men: intravenous drug users, Haitians, eleven haemophiliacs (up from eight), black and Hispanic babies, and wives or partners of IV drug users and bisexual men. (30)

Although the spread of HIV/AIDS has affected many other groups since the early 1980s, disenfranchised communities are still disproportionately affected. HIV/AIDS also demonstrates the complex traffic between the biological and the social, as these communities are also disproportionately targeted by a form of bio-power that functions through the classification, identification, elimination, or constraint of individuals considered dangerous to the overall health or fitness of the population, nation, or race. Until 2010, the United States continued to deny immigrants citizenship on the basis of HIV/AIDS status. The ban on people with HIV/AIDS entering the USA and becoming US citizens was enacted in 1988 and only lifted in 2010. Crucially, the US ban suggests that an individual with HIV/AIDS is considered a dangerous entity—much like a virus—that must be prevented from entering the body of the nation.

An individual with HIV/AIDS is considered a dangerous entity–much like a virus–that must be prevented from entering the body of the nation.

Ed Cohen describes viruses as "transboundary by nature," moving genetic material between organisms and ecosystems, while also troubling attempts to maintain boundaries, to define organisms as individuals, and to localize "life" within bounded membranes against the exterior world (18). This is what he describes as the "paradoxical politics of viral containment": multispecies (here human-viral) interdependence and the permeability of organisms are only recognised through the framework of the microbiological as external, foreign, and dangerous. Thus, "viral 'illness' [is] an anthropomorphic qualification dependent on the understanding of the human body as a unified, bounded, political whole *that must survive any threat to it*" (Livingston and Puar 10, emphasis in original). This discourse also reflects, complements, and even justifies the bio-political reconfiguration of people living with viral infections as dangerous intruders themselves: intruders that must be eradicated or kept out of the political nation state. The symbiotic view of life, however, recognizes the fact that all organisms are always already infected. Certain illnesses, infections, and conditions such as HIV/AIDS have historically been (and are contemporarily) linked to non-normative individuals, communities, and practices. The bio-political status and biomedical treatment of individuals living with these infections depend upon several biological definitions, such as that of organisms as bounded and unitary and viruses and other microbiological agents as foreign and dangerous intruders. While it is beyond the scope of this article to fully explore, the symbiotic view of life rethinks the difference between the body of a person living with HIV/AIDS and

the body of a "healthy" person as one of degree, not of kind. Seeing all bodies and organisms as already infected offers a perspective that could go some way to counter the stigma that surrounds HIV/AIDS, as well as other illnesses and infections.

The symbiotic view of life suggests that we are not individuals, and that we have never been individuals. While the traditional view of organisms (including humans) is that they are self-contained, discrete, and autonomous individuals, scientific research is increasingly suggesting that this is misleading; the view of organisms as individuals is perhaps no longer viable. This is illustrated in the symbiotic bacterial ancestry of the mitochondria in "human" cells, as well as in the contemporary symbiotic relationships that are at work in the human gut microbiota. Eating, digesting and living are impossible without our symbiotic relationships. The brief naturalcultural history of lichens that I have offered illustrates these points and demonstrates that if life and nature are to be found anywhere, it is not autonomous individuals but the constitutive comminglings, involvements, and interconnected relationships that make up the ecological mesh.

### What Does this Mean for Sexuality?

Observations of non-human social and sexual behaviour are often used to explain and support normative ideas about human sociality and sexuality. However, as evolutionary biologist Joan Roughgarden's *Evolution's Rainbow* suggests, biologists tend to observe and interpret nature through a frame of social and sexual normativity. Roughgarden suggests that this leads either to misinterpreting or simply missing a large amount of biological diversity. Nature is then used as a comparison to human sociality and sexuality, and, consequently, non-normative practices, identities, and communities lose out—reframed as necessarily unnatural. However, as Sharon Kinsman asks:

> Because most of us are not familiar with the species, and with the diverse patterns of DNA mixing and reproduction they embody, our struggles to understand humans (and especially human dilemmas about "sex", "gender" and "sexual orientation") are impoverished. Shouldn't a fish whose gonads can be first male, then female, help us to determine what constitutes "male" and "female"? Should an aphid fundatrix ("stem mother") inform our ideas about "mother"? There on the rose bush, she neatly copies herself, depositing minuscule, sap-siphoning, genetically identical daughters. Aphids might lead us to ask not "why do they clone?" but "why don't we?" Shouldn't the long-term female homosexual pair bonding in certain species of gulls help define our views of successful parenting, and help reflect on the intersection of social norms and biology? (197)

## Non-human social and sexual behaviour are often used to explain and support normative ideas about human sociality and sexuality.

Nature is interpreted through the lens of heteronormativity to justify, explain, or support a conservative, normative status quo in human sociality and sexuality. Roughgarden and Kinsman both point out that if we start to look at the true social and sexual diversity of nature, this not only reveals a wealth of biological diversity previously ignored, but also can offer resources for thinking of human practices, identities, and communities outside of the frame of heteronormativity.

As well as viewing human sexuality through a lens of "natural" sexuality (based in part on misinterpretations of nature) normative theories of sexuality are, more often than not, founded on the idea of individual human beings or bodies, and the numerous ways they can combine. What is often ignored or effaced in these accounts is the very multiplicity of the body itself. One account that attempts to remedy this is Hird's article "Re(pro)ducing Sexual Difference." In this article, Hird argues against the primacy of sexual reproduction and vertical inheritance as signifiers of sexual difference in public discourse, and questions "the assumption that human 'reproduction' has much to do with either sex or the constitution of 'femininity'" (94).

I argue that human bodies are constantly engaged in reproduction and only sometimes (and for a short time) engaged in specifically "sexual" reproduction. The networks of bacteria, microbes, molecules and inorganic life which exist beneath the surface of our skin take little account of "sexual" difference and indeed exist and reproduce without any recourse to what we think of as reproduction. Human imagination may be limited to a narrow understanding of "sexual" reproduction, but a prolific variety of reproductive means occur in "nature" (Hird, "Re(pro)ducing" 94).

Heteronormativity depends upon overstating the importance of sexual reproduction between two individual human bodies. As an alternative, Hird emphasizes the fact that bodies are always already multiple, and engaged in continual reproduction. What might be thought of as "human" cells—bacterial ancestry aside—continually reproduce: "We reproduce our own livers every two months, our stomach linings every five days, new skin every six weeks and ninety-eight percent of our atoms

every year" (Hird, "Re(pro)ducing" 102). Beyond that, the human body is a teeming multispecies ecosystem that is constantly engaged in reproduction, connections and transfer outside of the narrow understanding of sexual reproduction in heteronormative public discourse.

### Queer Ecologies

Queer ecologies emphasise the interconnectedness of all organisms, along with their naturalcultural histories. Sketching a preliminary framework of queer ecology, Timothy Morton asks: "Ecology stems from biology, which has nonessentialist aspects. Queer theory is a nonessentialist view of gender and sexuality. It seems the two domains intersect, but how?" ("Queer Ecology" 275). Morton's framework embeds the human in a network or mesh of living and non-living agencies, and in doing so, opens the human up to unpredictable encounters with strange and unknowable others. It also stresses the fact that humans are themselves networks of living and non-living agencies, and not singular sovereign individuals. Hird's approach outlined in "Re(pro) ducing Sexual Difference" could also be described as a queer ecological account. It recognises the ecological interconnectedness and involvement of what is commonly thought of as the individual human organism with countless bacterial, microbial, and other agencies. It also stresses that the ignorance of such entanglements supports and is supported by heteronormative narratives in the social and sexual status quo. Attention to bacteria reproducing on and underneath our skin, in our guts, and in our cells is part of a queer ecological perspective that deemphasises heteronormativity and sexual reproduction while drawing attention to the myriad of queer phenomena that make up life and nature.

I want to argue that lichens are queer things, and that human individuals are indeed all lichens; we are all queer multispecies consortia, always already involved in countless and unpredictable constitutive relationships at all scales. Earlier, I discussed Cohen's definition of viruses as "transboundary by nature." I want to expand this to suggest that transboundary by nature is in fact the rule, rather than the exception. Haraway discusses transuranic elements, comparing them to transgenic creatures or organisms, organisms that carry and transmit exogenous genes (genes from other organisms) to their offspring:

> Like the transuranic elements, transgenic creatures, which carry genes from "unrelated" organisms, simultaneously fit into well-established taxonomic and evolutionary discourses and also blast widely understood senses of natural limit. What was distant and unrelated becomes intimate. (*Modest_Witness* 56)

The symbiotic view of life suggests that all organisms are involved in boundary crossings and gene-shuffling. All organisms (including humans, carrying genes from other organisms on and beneath our skin, in our guts and in our cells) are thus transboundary, and like Haraway's transuranic elements or transgenic creatures, simultaneously fit within historically and socially constructed taxonomies while drawing attention to their constructed, non-essential and non-transcendent nature. As Nash states, lichens may well be symbiotic mergers of organisms from three distinct kingdoms of life, and so offer a specific challenge to the boundary making practice of taxonomy (1). A symbiotic ecological view of lichens draws attention to the (hetero)normativities involved in taxonomic practice that lead to the definition of biological individuals. Focussing on lichens draws attention to natural limits in taxonomy, while simultaneously challenging those limits and threatening to destabilize species (even kingdom) boundaries.

Lichens also demonstrate the queer ways, sexual and otherwise, that life reproduces. Many lichens reproduce by forming offshoots that include both mycobiont and photobiont, whereas some produce mycobiont spores that must then "find" photobiont cells to incorporate, or to encourage in their colonization of the new organism. Through the lens of heteronormativity, which over-emphasizes heterosexual biological reproduction between individual organisms, this may seem like a queer way to reproduce indeed. But, as Hird argues, a normative account of human reproduction also misses much queer ecological reproduction that is going on in what is commonly thought of as the human body. Even human sexual reproduction is not as simple as two individual humans producing a child with a mix of human genetic material. Human babies are born with gut microbiota. While it has long been assumed that the entirety of a baby's gut microbiota must colonize the baby after leaving the womb (and research has shown that breast milk encourages this colonization), recent research shows that even in the womb, a foetus is not sterile and has its own unique symbiotic community (Hamzelou; Wiley). Once again, this could have biological and political ramifications. Briefly, the argument about when a foetus becomes an individual bio-political citizen with individual rights is potentially complicated by the symbiotic view of life. Furthermore, this assumed "purity" and "sterility" of the foetus is connected to the contested notion of the "innocence" of foetuses in

Focussing on lichens draws attention to natural limits in taxonomy while destabilizing species boundaries.

abortion rights debates. This is an example of a potential social consequence of the view that "we have never been individuals"; there is not any clean and pure space of transcendent individuality, even in the womb. The symbiotic view of life can have important social and bio-political ramifications that deserve further exploration. The important point to draw out for my argument is that symbiotic bacteria are as essential for human life and reproduction as photobionts are to lichens. We are all lichens then, and even heterosexual biological reproduction turns out to be a rather queer phenomenon, involving multispecies interactions and interconnections.

Queer theory for lichens suggests that we have never been invidivuals, and that attention to this can have positive biomedical consequences.

## As Queer as Lichens

We have never been individuals. Attention to this fact reveals the queer multiplicity of ways in which life goes about cobbling itself together, producing and reproducing organisms and ecological relationships. I have argued that a queer ecological view (building on Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber's symbiotic view of life) might open up the naturalcultural mesh for exploration and interrogation and this may have a number of bio-political consequences. I agree with Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber that resisting the normativities of defining humans (and other organisms) as individuals can contribute positively to the biological sciences, bio-political and the Human Microbiome Project seems to suggest one of the ways in which this view of life could impact medicine and health practices. I have also gestured to some bio-political consequences of this view of life, including the definition of individuals as bio-political citizens and the stigma that surrounds diseased or infected bodies, particularly those historically and contemporarily linked to non-normative bodies, communities and practices. A queer ecological perspective also helps to illuminate areas of research that may be obscured when viewing human and non-human biology through the lens of heteronormativity and with an undue emphasis on sexual reproduction. This should, in turn, work to question the sorts of narratives and discourses that brand some bodies, communities and practices natural and some unnatural. If heteronormativity and sexual reproduction no longer define the frame through which nature is viewed, then this will have an effect on the definition of some social and cultural practices as "natural." This is important politically, as normativity masquerading as nature necessarily supports the conservative status quo and is hostile to non-normativity. Queer theory for lichens suggests that we have never been individuals, and that attention to this can have positive biomedical consequences. This symbiotic view of life can also work to denaturalize the primacy of heterosexual biological reproduction in discourses of normative and non-normative bodies, practices and communities.

## Notes

1. Research suggests that microbiome populations are diverse and related to specific national and cultural histories. Jan-Hendrik Hehemann et al. used comparative gut metagenome analyses to characterise enzymes from a particular species of marine bacteria which live with marine red algae of the genus *Porphyra*. Importantly, their research demonstrates that genes coding for the enzymes that specifically aid digestion of *Porphyra* algae have been transferred to a particular gut bacterium isolated from Japanese individuals. Hehemann et al. show that these enzymes and the genes that code for them are frequent in the Japanese population and are absent from North American individuals. They suggest that nori seaweed makes a large contribution to daily diet in Japan suggests that these enzymes are likely acquired via bacteria. This community of bacteria, living in a symbiotic relationship with and within the human body, illustrates the non-individuality of what is thought of as "the human" as well as the importance of horizontal gene transfer (that is, a method of passing on genes that gets on just fine without heterobiological sexual reproduction) to both bacterial and human life.
2. Other scientists have recognised Margulis's refusal to give up on her endosymbiotic theory against the prevailing paradigm science of the time. Richard Dawkins stated: "I greatly admire Lynn Margulis's sheer courage and stamina in sticking by the endosymbiosis theory, and carrying it through from being an unorthodoxy to an orthodoxy. . . . This is one of the great achievements of twentieth-century evolutionary biology, and I greatly admire her for it" (Margulis, "Gaia is a Tough Bitch" 129).
3. I take the phrase naturalcultural from Donna Haraway's term "naturecultures." She uses this term to emphasise the inseparability of nature and culture. Nature is always a product of, and understood through, culture. Yet at the same time, culture is a product of biological beings and not restricted to humans; thus culture is a product of nature. Rather than discrete and oppositional, nature and culture are inseparable as naturecultures (Haraway, *When Species Meet*).
4. My biological account of lichens is drawn from Thomas H. Nash III's textbook, *Lichen Biology*. Particularly Nash's "Introduction"; T. Friedl and B. Büdel's chapter, "Photobionts"; R. Honegger, "Mycobionts"; R. Honneger and S. Scherrer's chapter on "Sexual reproduction in lichen-forming ascomycetes"; and M. R. D. Seaward's chapter on "Environmental role of lichens".
5. Hird's phrase "symbionts all the way down" is a play on the phrase "turtles all the way down" which refers to the problem of infinite regress. The "turtles all the way down" story was popularised in Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* in which he wrote: "A well-known scientist (some say it was Bertrand Russell) once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the center of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: 'What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.' The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, 'What is the tortoise standing on?' 'You're very clever, young man, very clever,' said the old lady. 'But it's turtles all the way down!'" (1).
6. I am employing the term "involvement" to signal an alliance with Carla Hustak and Natasha Myers' ecological approach as outlined in "Involutionary Momentum: Affective Ecologies and the Sciences of Plant/Insect Encounters." In particular, I wish to signal that "being involved" with another organism is not necessarily to be part of a neo-Darwinist functional economy, but rather to be part of the "creative, improvisational, and fleeting practices through which plants and insects *involve* themselves in one another's lives" (77).

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# Queer Ecologies Roundtable Discussion

## *Part 3: Politics, Resistance, Alliances, and Imbroglios*

GORDON BRENT BROCHU-INGRAM, PETER HOBBS & CATRIONA SANDILANDS

***UnderCurrents:*** In preparing for tonight's roundtable, we went back to Andil Gosine's contribution to the *Queer Ecologies* book, "Non-white Reproduction and Same-Sex Eroticism: Queer Acts Against Nature," in which he raises three powerful concerns/questions about the formation of queer ecologies. The first regards the "*political geography of queer ecology*: Is the production of 'queer ecology' a decidedly Euroamerican project?" (166, emphasis in original). Building on this, the second is "a concern about *race-racism*: If queer ecology is to maintain a primary gaze on the production of nature in Euroamerican contexts—which, despite my reservations is, I think, a legitimate and viable option—what becomes of race-racism?" (166, emphasis in original). Finally, "*a concern about the political resistance*" by way of articulating a mode of politics that goes beyond alliances in its "refusal of race-racism [as] not separate from the refusal of heteropatriarchy," Gosine finally asks, "Might queer ecology be better served, for example, by the kind of model of political resistance that has been articulated by black lesbian feminists such as Audre Lorde, M. Jacqui Alexander, and Dionne Brand, where its work is not merely to attend to the 'sexuality' part of oppression, but to recognize and work with its full, complex rendering?" (167–168, emphasis in original).

So, in light of Gosine's questions, what might it look like if queer ecologies were to strengthen its engagements with other self-forming fields and to other modes not only of resistance but also of research?

**Gordon Brent Brochu-Ingram:** [O]ne thing I've been thinking about is how important these queer nature and ecology conversations have been for creatively coming up with more resources, more theoretical ammunition. To challenge retrogresses and increasingly 'neoliberal' . . . conceptualizations of both ecology and LGBT communities. So, for example, I've been recently moved by the new work . . . on critiques of homonationalism, like Jasbir K. Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages*. But also what's really been useful this year is Christina Hanhardt's 2013 *Safe Space: Gay Neighbourhoods History and the Politics of Violence*, which is really about missed opportunities for coalition building. I see a lot of potential, and I go to some meetings where people recognize the potential. But in my world out here—and maybe not at York University—it's still been in its very formative stages [of seeing] how these new forms of queer ecologies investigation and analysis can help us build bridges that lead to new kinds of coalitions.

**Catriona Sandilands:** To tentatively stick a finger into that huge pie . . . there's one work, one text that, for me, perfectly encapsulates what I think is the potential of queer ecologies. And that's Shani Mootoo's novel *Cereus Blooms at Night*.

One of the reasons that I've been, in recent years, so incredibly drawn to works of art and literature is that they are able to stage and perform those complicated articulations and cross-penetrations . . . in incredibly accessible and powerful ways, that works that call themselves 'theory' do not necessarily need to do, because theories are attempting to universalize and literary texts are showing the dense particularities of certain kinds of relationships.

But Mootoo's novel stages—I can't talk about it in all its glorious complexity—but it stages a relationship among gender, sexuality, species, race, colony, and [ableism]. And I particularly love it because it does so through plants. [I]t's an extraordinary representation of the dense ways in which all of these different relationships are articulated. Does it offer up a politics? No, it doesn't. That's not the work that it attempts to do. Does it draw our attention to the ways in which these power relationships are densely interwoven and actually inseparable? You know, you cannot name a single source of oppression as primary in that text. . . . It offers this incredibly

**ELK RADIO. Peter Hobbs.**

powerful articulation and you end up, after having read the novel, with an incredibly deepened understanding of each one of those different sets of relationships. If you ask me for a single queer ecological text to read, that's the one I will give you.

The other thing I would say is that . . . the way in which queer theory is going to come back into the queer ecological conversation is through queer people of colour theory. And we've already seen that with Mel Chen's book *Animacies* and I think that there are ways in which some of this more recent theoretical work is seemingly asking different kinds of queer theoretical questions.

So, Foucault was incredibly influential, Lee Edelman has been incredibly influential, enabling us to ask different kinds of questions. I think that precisely works [by] . . . Puar, Chen, and also . . . Katherine McKittrick [are] asking us to re-think what it means to ask a queer question.

**Peter Hobbs:** Yeah, I was going to mention Mel Chen's book as my pick. . . . Mel Chen's book is amazing because it does all this work—and that's the whole point of the book—that's what makes it so good, because [Chen] formats the book so that [the] methodology matches . . . what [they're] doing. There's a mirroring going on there, right? [Chen] talks about messy imbroglios and [is] creating messy imbroglios, and that's important to what queer ecologies is.

*Conversation continues on page 60.*

# My Animal, My Darling

ELANA SANTANA

The food has all gone bad
The cat is not happy with her water
I've lost track of how long the dishes have been sitting there
And I'm floating inches above the earth for you

I speak out loud walking home
Asking bird nests for empathy
Telling trees how much I love you
Softly
and patiently
Imagining you can hear me

I'm struggling to find the rock
my mother says is inside me
Where do I even begin to look?
Between my shoulder blades?
Where I can't quite reach?
perhaps
What kind of rock are you now?
without a body magnetizing you all day

I heard on the radio today
that they found the magnetic highway, after forty-five years of traveling
It will be the first mission to make it out of the solar system
I miss being next to you in your car

I'm struggling to see the color in the life of the little boy I was introduced to tonight
His name is Mars
He asked me if my grandmother died
I almost told him about my grandmother, how she's almost ninety-three, had a bad fall, but she's still alive
and thoughtful
and beautiful
I forget his godfather's name
I think it might be Chris
he remembered my name weeks later
this scares me

I'm no longer a precious place
in your mouth
or around your melodic hands

It's all in a moment
it's all right outside the moment
Time is different without you
I've never loved you more
This time, it's true

Tonight I begged the wet blue air
I begged for affection from the range of goldens seeping out from mute houses
I begged for belonging from the street cats making their rounds
I begged for a holdfast from the ocean where you run headfirst into waves
I watch from the shore with a smile and a wave

I keep imagining us walking
Cassie running, grinning, tail wagging, she keeps looking back at us
I keep imagining us walking
I'm always somewhere with you
and it's just us
You and me, and everything unbearably alive around us

Your hand wraps around my fist
Turtle into shell
Snail into shell
Crab into shell
Shell around shell

The wind takes pieces of my hair out to sea
and rests them over the horizon
The wind is a collector of my oddities

This is the only way to know you right now
My back broken
My body in pieces
Offering whispers of words into postal imaginaries

I imagine a kahloesque bus crash on my way to school
My body golden and impaled, time is frozen
I imagine my small plane crashing on my way back from New York
I would call you mid-air
I would somehow be saved
All ninety-eight pounds of me floating leaf like to ground

This will bring you back
You'll be on the next flight
I'll paint my words in front of you
Strip you down and paint them on you and around you
You'll see

Do you remember when
I told you to smell me
and it stopped us in our tracks?
My smell
Our face closeness
Your face closeness
my animal
my darling

# Dark Ecology and Queer, Amphibious Vampires

NAOMI BOOTH

"Queer reworlding," Donna Haraway has recently argued, "depends on reorienting the human" (*Companion Species* xxiv). In Haraway's account, "[q]ueering has the job of undoing 'normal' categories, and none is more critical than the human/nonhuman" (xxiv). Haraway is one of a number of critics who have recently highlighted the ways in which the disruptive energies of queer theory might intersect with an ecological disruption of species categorization.[1] Queering, then, is seen in this article as necessarily extending in ecological directions, challenging the conceptual integrity of the 'natural' and the 'human,' alongside the heteronormative and anthronormative[2] apparatus these categories have often supported (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 22). Haraway famously gave us the species-disruptive hybrid figure of the cyborg as a "political myth" that might help us with the task of "reinventing" Nature ("A Cyborg Manifesto" 149). I propose in this article that other ambiguous, "more-than-human" creatures (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 23) presented in the literature of previous centuries might be read as the imaginative forerunners of such a reinvention. Specifically, I will suggest that the unruly figure of the vampire in late nineteenth-century literature can be read as an early imagining of species-challenging hybridity, a hybridity that is also inherent in the terms 'queer' and 'amphibious.' I propose that 'queer,' 'amphibious,' and 'vampire' might be viewed as contiguous concepts, animating an ecological aesthetic that "ruthlessly denature[s] and de-essentialize[s]" the concept of nature in vampire texts (Morton, "Ecology as Text" 1).

Recent queer and ecologically-informed criticism has focused on the vampire as "a kind of queer nature that refuses the binary opposition between the natural and the unnatural, especially in terms of the sexual" (Azzarello 139). In this paper, I build on previous descriptions of the vampire as "eco-deconstructive," reading Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) alongside Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), a text in which a queer female vampire is explicitly described as "amphibious." The amphibian has been given an important place in the critic Timothy Morton's recent attempts to theorize "dark ecology" (*Ecology Without Nature* 185). Morton calls for a re-estimation of "Nature," demonstrating that "[l]ife-forms are constantly coming and going, mutating and becoming extinct" (21). Rather than venerating Nature as a single, identifiable fetish object, Morton encourages us to see the world as ecology in motion, as a multiplying series of interconnected life forms (*and* texts). The Latin *ambo*, "in both sides," infuses Morton's account of how species-relation and aesthetics might be simultaneously rethought along ecological, interconnected lines. There is an ethical imperative, Morton argues, to value and protect the marginal, the ambivalent, and in particular the *amphibious*:

> [I]f current industrial policies remain unchecked . . . spaces, such as coral reefs, and liminal spaces (Latin, *limen*, boundary) such as *amphibians*, will be increasingly at risk of being wiped out . . . I mean here to support these margins. As a matter of urgency, we just cannot go on thinking of them as in "between." We must choose to include them on this side of human social practices, to factor them into our political and ethical decisions. (51)

The amphibian must, for Morton, be brought into our view of what it means to be a social human, and might be used to challenge our distinction between Nature and ourselves, between subject and object. The amphibious, then, is a liminal category that might be used to problematize the conceptual coherence of "species," and to produce an inclusive and ecological version of the human. For Morton, the ecologically re-

conceived subject is necessarily a queer project:

> To contemplate ecology's unfathomable intimacies is to imagine pleasures that are not heteronormative, not genital, not geared to ideologies about where the body stops and starts . . . It's not that ecological thinking would benefit from an injection of queer theory from the outside. It's that, fully and properly, ecology is queer theory and queer theory is ecology: queer ecology. ("Queer Ecology" 280–1)

In this paper, I argue that early vampire narratives might be reread as queer ecological fictions, re-imagining the human as a liminal, amphibious entity, reconstituted as a hybrid through the dark ecology of new blood relations. The assemblages, erotic species confusions, and queer desires that emerge in relation to the vampire establish an ecology that is far darker in tone than some contemporary, commodified versions of pristine Nature.[3] Morton tells us that the ecological thought, as "the thinking of interconnectedness," has a lingering darkness that has nothing to do with "a hippy aesthetic of life over death, or a sadistic-sentimental Bambification of sentient beings" (*Ecology Without Nature* 185). It has more in common with the "goth assertion of the contingent and necessarily queer idea that we want to *stay* in a dying world: dark ecology" (185). Morton's "dark ecology" describes human entanglement in the world at the moment of the apprehension of ecological catastrophe. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands, editing a recent collection on *Queer Ecologies* (2010), makes similar claims for the importance of the apprehension of loss in nascent queer ecological work. The final part of this paper considers the importance of melancholic haunting for current theorizations of queer ecology, positing vampire literature as an example of the "non-normalizing relationship to the past" (Mortimer-Sandilands 341) that might be constitutive of queer, dark ecologies.

### Queer Dreams and *Dracula*

Fictional vampires have, since their inception, threatened to reconstitute traditional human families along the lines of newly forged blood relations. They act to impair individual agency and to transmute desire and connection along decidedly queer lines. When the first narrator of *Dracula*, Jonathon Harker, is making his journey east to visit the Count, he tells us that he does not "sleep well, though [his] bed was comfortable enough, for [he] had all sorts of queer dreams" (Stoker 8). Harker initially blames the paprika in the local food, but these "queer dreams" are a foreshadowing of the dreamy state in which he will soon exist, imprisoned in Count Dracula's castle. A sort of prolonged nightmare is to follow, for Harker and for us as readers. And this nightmare is pleasurable and terrifying by turns, as agency and mobility begin to seem impossible in the "paralysis of fear" produced by the vampire (19). In the opening stages of the novel, Harker describes himself in thrall to the Count, existing in a strange sleep-deprived state, in which he often wonders if he is dreaming. He falls asleep in a room in the castle he has been warned away from, and what follows is an exquisite description of the erotic pleasures of immobility, the paralysis of the dreamer sliding into a fantasized sexual immobility.

Three finely-dressed young women appear before Harker, with "brilliant white teeth, that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips" (45). Harker feels towards them an uneasy "longing" that is "at the same time some deadly fear." And he confesses to feeling in his heart "a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips" (45). The "wickedness" he self-diagnoses here is not just the desire for women other than his betrothed, the virtuous Mina; it seems also to be a more profoundly interdicted desire for *passivity*, to be sexually predated by three "voluptuous" women. Harker describes "looking out under my eyelashes in an agony of delightful anticipation" as the three advance upon him. As the fairest of them approaches, he can smell on her "sweet breath" an "offensiveness, as one smells in blood"; he can then feel the "supersensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited—waited with beating heart" (46).

Early vampire narratives might be reread as queer ecological fictions, re-imagining the human as a liminal, amphibious entity, reconstituted as a hybrid through the dark ecology of new blood relations.

The count intervenes at this point, claiming Harker for himself and depriving him and the female vampire of their consummation. Harker is overwhelmed by what he has experienced: "the horror overcame me, and I sank down unconscious," leaving the Count to carry him to bed (47). The sinking man seems here to be subject to a queer fall; his sinking represents the male desire to be erotically overwhelmed, made passive, by the vital, predatory vampire. When

Van Helsing, a model of vigorous masculine endeavor, storms Dracula's pile and encounters these same sleeping female vampires, he records the same languorous effects of their "voluptuous beauty." In his idiomatic English, he describes them producing the desire for immobility in a man, a desire for

> *delay*, til the mere beauty and fascination of the wanton Un-Dead have hypnotize [*sic*] him . . . and the voluptuous mouth present to a kiss—and man is weak . .. I was moved to a yearning for delay which seemed to paralyse my faculties and to clog my very soul. (393)

At this point Van Helsing describes a "strange oppression" beginning to "overcome" him: "Certain it was that I was lapsing into sleep, the open-eyed sleep of one who yields to a sweet fascination" (393). The waking dream/nightmare of fascinated immobility at the advance of the beautiful vampire threatens to overwhelm Van Helsing, the upright scientist, too. The figure of the vampire renders the male characters of the novel prone to all sorts of queer sinkings; to faints, coyly termed "falls"; to hysterics;[4] and, most profoundly, to the desire for a yielding, erotic immobility. Vampirism makes *men* subject to the kind of languorous immobility that had become symbolically associated with *feminine* forms of pathology by the end of the 18th century.[5] We might read *Dracula*, then, as a kind of erotophobia. It suggests the dangers of the vampiric overwhelming of its male subjects, while revelling in describing the temptation towards "delay." Morton describes erotophobia as "the fear of and fascination with a feminized state" (*Ecology Without Nature* 137). The possibility of passive (feminized) masculine states here is a source of terror, which nevertheless betrays erotic fascination. Dracula threatens *all* of his victims with the desire to be immobile, to be subject to "a languorous ecstasy" which might seem dangerously close to desiring a "feminized state"; the queerest of dreams.

# Animals Off Display

MARIANNA SZCZYGIELSKA

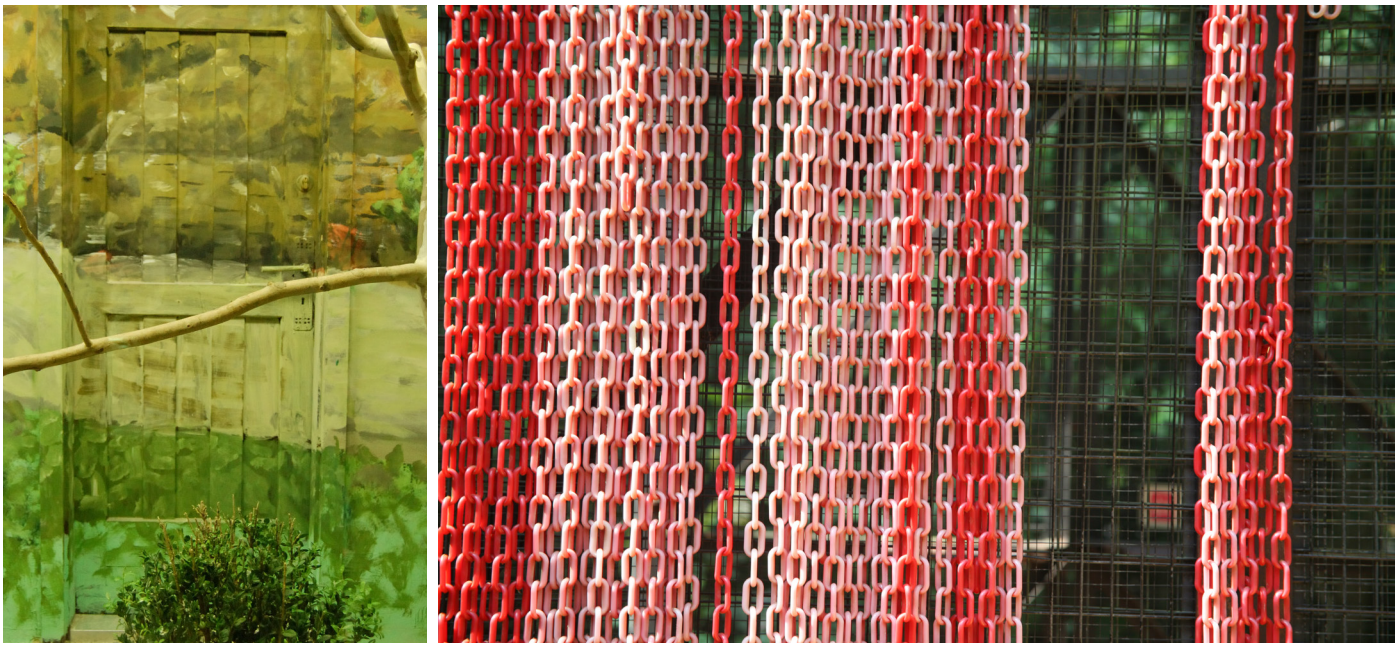
This series of photographs is an attempt to explore the impossible spaces of the contemporary zoological garden from a queer ecological perspective. I intentionally focus on the artificiality and finitude of the zoo landscape rather than on nonhuman animal bodies that are already overrepresented in the zoological reimagination of natural habitats. The zoo with its taxidermic taxonomy captures nonhuman animals within the species boundaries, turning them into things on display. Wary of the limits of representation I focus on what usually remains in the background, or functions as an obstacle for "wildlife photography," on the very edges of the voyeuristic imagemaking practice so present in the zoo nowadays. In this sense I see the zoo as a paradigmatic example of a Foucauldian heterotopia—a real place that stands outside of its space, and creates an illusion of a world in miniature captured in a timeless void.[1] There is no fire in a two-dimensional forest; there is no key to the door in the painted jungle. The photographs were taken in various zoological gardens around the world (Hungary, Poland, Singapore, Malaysia, Canada) as part of a large project, "Queer(ing) Naturecultures: The Study of Zoo Animals.

1. Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces," Diacritics 16 (Spring 1986), 22-27.


**THE TORONTO ZOO. Marianna Szczygielska.**

One of the key threats *and pleasures* of vampire narratives, then, is the imagined effect of the vampire on the agency and desires of his victim. None in a vampire narrative is safely allowed to remain themselves. This is most dramatically manifested as the telepathic influence the vampire is able to exert on his victims through the drinking of blood. But, in *Dracula,* there is also a parallel mesh of influence and interrelation between the ostensibly non-vampiric characters. I use the term "mesh" here to posit a parallel to Morton's idea of life-forms constituting an ecological "mesh":

> a nontotalizable, open-ended concatenation of interrelations that blur and confound boundaries at practically any level: between species, between the living and the nonliving, between organism and environ-



**ZOO IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY/FŐVÁROSI ÁLLAT- ÉS NÖVÉNKYERT (L) AND MALACCA ZOO, MALAYSIA/ZOO MELACA (R). Marianna Szczygielska.**

> ment. Visualizing the mesh is difficult: it defies our imaginative capacities and transcends iconography. ("Queer Ecology" 275–6)

Vampire fiction might be read as one (alarmist and eroticizing) attempt to iconize ecological mesh, a proleptic literature of ecological awareness. The vampire and his victims in *Dracula* form a new and bloody mesh. Blood transfusions between other characters in the novel provide a parallel circulation of blood-exchange, which similarly reconstitutes all the narrative's main characters as enmeshed entities. Lucy Westerna, a beautiful young woman who is nightly drained of her blood by Dracula, is given transfusions in an attempt to save her from anemia. Arthur, Lucy's betrothed, has donated his blood for this purpose, and feels that, even though her premature death prevents an actual marriage ceremony, the mingling of blood has made Lucy "his wife in the sight of god" (Stoker 185). At this suggestion, Van Helsing's face grows "white and purple by turns" (185). The Professor's intermittent floridity and blanching here reveals his dis-ease at this blood-tie version of marriage. All the strong young men in the novel (who have also mostly been in love with Lucy) have donated their blood to her, unbeknown to Arthur. This blood promiscuity means that all the men are now married to the polyandrous Lucy, and also, by blood-mingling extension, to each other, to the Count, to Mina, and to Jonathon Harker.

The bloodletting that has made even the most virile among them feel "faint" has also bound them all together in an erotic mass-transfusion. This is the kind of pan-erotic connection that the vampire critic Christopher Frayling refers to as "haemosexuality" (xx), working from Maurice Richardson's earlier influential psychoanalytic description of the cast of *Dracula* constituting one big incestuous family: a "kind of . . . necrophilius, oral-anal-sadistic all-in wrestling match" (387). In Richardson's account, the "morbid dread" of the vampire stands in, following Freud's dictum, "for repressed sexual desire" and the desire suggested here is for a multilateral, immobile sexual overwhelming in undifferentiated haemosexuality. A queer new version of the incestuous human family is produced here: a mesh of conjoined characters, living and undead.

## Blood Relations and Erotic Contagion

The dis-ease with which Van Helsing, the medical professional, encounters this erotic mingling of blood is partly a realization of proliferating sexual connections, but it is also intimately connected with the vampire's connection to disease. There have long been anthropological accounts of vampires that link their supposed appearances to altered physical states and to contagion. Christopher Frayling tells us that when vampire epidemics were reported across eastern and central Europe between 1672 and 1772, the Age of Reason and Enlightenment thinking adduced medical explanations that might correspond with contemporaneous scientific thinking. Some suggested food poisonings might be responsible for the belief in vampires, or that communities were embroiled in collective nightmares following opium use. It has also been suggested that plague was being re-imagined as vampirism:

> The symptoms of the victim —pallor, listlessness, fever, nightmare—were thought to be those of the plague. The transmission of the 'vampire's curse' from predator to victim, who then became predator in


**MALACCA ZOO, MALAYSIA/ZOO MELACA. Marianna Szczygielska.**

> turn, was a graphic way of explaining the rapid spread of plague germs. (Frayling 25)

The possibility of vampirism as an account of rabies has also been considered, and Frayling suggests that most recent folklorist analyses of the vampire outbreaks of 1731–2 have concluded that the "manifestations" represent, at least in part, "attempts by preliterate communities to make sense of what we would today call 'contagion'" (26).[6] Ernest Jones, in *On the Nightmare*, makes the same point about the close correlation between the visitation of the Black Death and reports of vampirism in the Middle Ages, telling us that "even as late as 1855 the terrible cholera epidemic in the Dantsic revived such a widespread belief in the dead returning as vampires to claim the living that, according to medical opinion, the fears of the people greatly increased the mortality from the disease" (413). It is interesting that Jones mentions cholera here, given the accounts of the horrific epidemics in Ireland that Bram Stoker's mother, Charlotte, wrote for him. In these she describes to Stoker the disease's "bitter strange kiss" and the fact that many were buried alive, "stultified from opium" (Stoker 412). The double meaning of pathology can be felt to resonate here, as both the apprehension of disease and *the pleasurable feeling* of succumbing that might bleed out from its strange, bitter kiss.[7]

To further explore the ramifications of erotic contagion in the context of dark ecology, I turn now to a slightly earlier queer vampire tale. It is perhaps no coincidence that this tale was also written by an Irish writer, one who had lived through the cholera outbreaks as well as the horrific starvation and cannibalism of the Great Famine (1845–1852). Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* was originally published in 1872 as part of his popular *In a Glass Darkly* collection, which ostensibly presented the posthumous papers of an occult detective. This particular case is narrated by its central character, Laura, who recounts the visit she and her father received in their "lonely" forest mansion in Styria[8] from a beautiful, refined young woman who is unexpectedly placed in their care. The two young women, Laura and Carmilla, seem to remember one another instantly. Carmilla claims to share a traumatic "dream" that Laura also had as a young child, in which a beautiful woman caressed her: she "lay down beside me on the bed, and drew me towards her, smiling; I felt immediately delightfully soothed, and fell asleep again. I was wakened by a sensation as if two needles ran into my breast very deep at the same moment, and I cried loudly" (90).

The two girls begin to share a reciprocal trance-like attraction: "I wonder whether you feel as strangely drawn towards me as I do to you?" Carmilla asks Laura. "Now the truth is, I felt rather unaccountably towards the beautiful stranger," Laura tells us. "I did feel, as she said, 'drawn towards her,' but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed. She interested me and won me, she was so beautiful and indescribably *engaging*" (101, emphasis in original). Laura exhibits the mesmerized fascination common to the vampire experience, and this sense of captivated immobility is deepened and inflected through the repeated use of the term "languor." Carmilla's "bodily langour" is often remarked upon, and becomes part of her attractiveness to Laura: "Her beauty was, I think, enhanced by that graceful langour that was peculiar to her" (123). Carmilla exhibits the nineteenth-century vogue for looking consumptive, as described by Susan Sontag. "Romantic agony," Sontag tells us, is trammeled during this period into a glamorization of debilitation, whereby specific kinds of morbidity are transformed into the desirable state of langour (30).

When Carmilla's attentions to Laura become particularly ardent, she briefly wonders, in a Shakespearean turn of mind, if Carmilla might be a man dressed as a woman, come to woo her. But, she decides, this is implausible: "I could boast of no little attentions such as masculine gallantry delights to offer . . . there was always a langour about her, quite incompatible with a masculine system in a state of health" (105). Carmilla's attractiveness is bound up with her langour and the exquisite feminine illness it connotes. The possibility of this langour being infectious is the basis for reciprocal erotic attraction here. Laura describes Carmilla's embraces becoming "foolish," that is over-intimate, and wishes to extricate herself from them: "but my energies seemed to fail me. Her murmured words sounded


**OLD ZOO IN POZNAŃ, POLAND/STARE ZOO W POZNANIU. Marianna Szczygielska.**

like a lullaby in my ear, and soothed my resistance into a trance" (104).

The dangerousness of this seductive langour is made manifest as young girls in the surrounding area begin to die. The young women report seeing a ghost, or a figure that seizes them by the throat, and then the process of their decline is described as "sinking" (106, 109). Laura's father thinks they are in the midst of an epidemic fever, and both girls wear charms as an "antidote against the malaria" (118). However, it becomes clear that Laura has now contracted this "illness." Every morning she feels an increased "lassitude and languor"; she believes that she is darkly transforming: "I feel myself a changed girl." Her apprehension of this sickness is also an apprehension of her failure of volition:

> [A]n idea that I was slowly sinking took gentle, and, somehow, not unwelcome possession of me . . . Without knowing it, I was now in a pretty advanced state of the *strangest illness* under which mortal ever suffered. There was an unaccountable fascination in its earlier symptoms that more than reconciled me to the incapacitating effect of that stage of the malady. (118)

The erotic immobility of the vampire/contagion victim is further attested to in Laura's nightly dreams, where strange sensations visit her, in particular the "peculiar cold thrill which we feel in bathing, when we move against the current of a river" succeeded by the feeling that "warm lips kissed me, and longer and more lovingly as they reached my neck and throat . . . a sense of strangulation, supervened, and turned into a dreadful convulsion, in which my sense left me, and I became unconscious" (118, 119). Sexual ecstasy and horror in the midst of disease/predation climax here into a swoon. But, Laura refuses medical help for her dreadful/ecstatic complaint, she tells us, because of the "narcotic" influence that is acting upon her (119).

Carmilla *is* the contagion. She admits that she has herself "suffered from this very illness" (109). Discussing the spread of the "fever" with Laura's father, she tells him that the "disease that invades the country is *natural*. *Nature*. All things spring from Nature—don't they? All things in the heaven, in the earth, and under the earth, act and live as Nature ordains? I think so" (109). Vampirism, contagion, and the spread of queer desires *are* Nature in Carmilla's account. Further, she pursues an erotic intimacy with Laura which seems to share much in common with Morton's conception of ecological intimacy: "a polymorphously perverse belonging (and longing) that doesn't fit in a straight box—an intimacy well described by queer theory when it argues that sexuality is never a case of a norm versus its pathological variants" ("Queer Ecology" 278).

Carmilla's philosophy of the natural involves a version of the erotic that is at once a disintegrative and deadly fusion of the lovers *and* their transformation into other organic forms: "[Y]ou shall die," she murmurs to Laura, who is immobilized in her embrace, "die, sweetly die—into [my life] . . . you, in your turn, will draw near to others, and learn the rapture of that cruelty, which yet is love" (103). Then she kisses her. This recalls Ernest Jones's account of vampirism as the continued relation between the living and the dead, a reunion which might transform individuals into conjoined organisms. For Jones, vampiric conjoining is the correspondent of the desire for lovers to die together expressed in Wagner's Liebestod in *Tristan and Isolde*: "our being we might blend/ in love without an end" (qtd. in Jones 405). The transformative connections stressed in *Carmilla* also remind me of the many other ways in which shared blood is imagined to mesh individuals into strange new amalgams: the childhood rituals of cutting fingers and rubbing blood on blood to produce playground "blood brothers"; folk-magic beliefs that secreting menstrual blood in a man's food might bind the beloved to the bleeding woman; or the continued belief in menstrual synchronicity.[9]

Later, Carmilla extols to Laura the virtues of the opportunity "to die as lovers may—to die together, so that they may live together. Girls are caterpillars while they live in the world, to be finally butterflies when the summer comes; but in the meantime there are grubs and larva, don't you see—each with their peculiar propensities, necessities, and structure" (110). This vision of the erotic as the propensity towards merger and organic metamorphosis is followed by a description of the vampire as an "amphibious existence" (147). The vampire is both at once: it is symbiotically doubled rather than single; it is an ev-

er-changing "existence" rather than a solitary life form. In Le Fanu's imagining of the vampire as queer amphibian, as the contagious metamorphosis that *is* nature, we can discern the beginnings of the dark understanding that has been recently expounded by Morton as dark ecology. In Morton's deconstructive re-estimation of nature, those "unnatural" terms against which it might seem to stand, for instance "queer" or "disease,"[10] might instead be drawn into its purview. We might, then, hear the vampire Carmilla's plaintive question echo through Morton's work: "disease . . . is *natural. Nature.* All things spring from Nature—don't they?" (109)

The ideas of "hosting" and "hospitality" might be helpful here as ways to further explore the notion of queer vampiric/ecological/deconstructive symbiosis. The risk of contagion in *Carmilla* is simultaneously achieved through the idea of the body as the host of disease (of fever, of "malaria," of "the strangest illness"), and of the home as hosting the self-replicating vampire. Hosting and hospitality have long played an important part in vampire mythology,[11] with vampires often needing to be *invited* across the threshold into a victim's home. In the case of *Carmilla*, the vampire is handed over into the care of various aristocratic homes and she thanks each host heartily for their "hospitality," later being described by them as a "perfidious and beautiful guest" (114, 145). The uneasy proximity between hospitality and predation has been explored in J. Hillis Miller's incendiary deconstruction of the terms "parasite" and "host." Hillis Miller (1977) tells us that "parasite" originally had a positive meaning, referring to "a fellow guest, someone sharing the food with you, there with you beside [*para*] the grain" (442). As the meaning of the term "parasite" modulates towards predation, "The host and the somewhat sinister or subversive parasite are fellow guests beside the food, sharing it. On the other hand, the host is himself the food, his substance consumed without recompense, as when one says, 'He is eating me out of house and home'" (Hillis Miller 442). This sense also echoes through the use of "host" to refer to the Eucharist bread: the host as sacrifice, or symbolic victim. But if the host is both the eater and the eaten, he also contains in himself "the double antithetical relation of host and guest, guest in the bifold sense of friendly presence and alien invader," because host and ghost share the same etymological root:

> *ghos-ti*, stranger, guest, host, properly; someone with whom one has reciprocal duties of hospitality . . . A host is a guest, and a guest is a host. A host is a host. The relation of . . . host and parasite in the original sense of "fellow guest," is inclosed [*sic*] within the word "host" itself. A host in the sense of a guest, moreover, is both a friendly visitor in the house and at the same time an alien presence. (442–3)

Working through these terms as an example of deconstruction, Hillis Miller suggests that there is always already an alien guest in the home of the *text*: each reading of a poem contains "its enemy within itself, is itself both host and parasite" (447). Deconstruction is, then, bound up with the strange logic of the welcomed parasite; "Deconstruction," Derrida famously remarked, "is just visiting" ("Time is Out of Joint" 29). The idea of deconstruction as the welcome alien is perhaps even more pronounced in Derrida's idea of "autoimmunity" (*Rogues* 45). The term "autoimmunity" is best known to us through autoimmune diseases such as Multiple Sclerosis and AIDS, wherein the body treats its own material as alien, producing an immune response against its own cells and tissues. As Michael Naas explains, in Derrida's thinking, the autoimmune "entails an attack not simply on the self through some kind of self-destructive behaviour, but an attack on those things that protect and defend the self, leaving it open, vulnerable, hospitable to outside forces" (162). This is at once "a threat and an opportunity":

> The threat or danger is that in compromising the self . . . [it] may allow within it something that will eventually destroy it, a virus, a would-be assassin, a terrorist cell. But the opportunity consists in the fact that by compromising the *autos* in this way, by opening the self to what is other than and outside it, beyond its borders, it has the chance of welcoming something that may help it go

**THE SINGAPORE ZOO/TAMAN HAIWAN SINGAPURA.** Marianna Szczygielska.

beyond itself. (Naas 165)

The questioning of the integrity of the self that is inherent in the concept of autoimmunity therefore leads Naas to think of deconstruction "*as* autoimmunity" (166).

The concept of autoimmunity might then be the continuation of Hillis Miller's earlier account of deconstruction and the welcome parasite. In the account Hillis Miller provides, deconstruction is an investigation of the *inherence* of "figure, narrative and concept *in one another*" (443), so we get a sense of the way in which we might think deconstruction as a discipline of ecological symbiosis, a study of interrelations and symbiotic interdependences, and a critique of the coherence of individual selves. This idea is emphasized by Morton when he argues that life forms cannot be said to differ in a "rigorous" way from texts: both exist as series of non-unitary interrelations, as ecology and deconstruction might demonstrate to us. To develop an ecological culture, Morton suggests, we would benefit from "concepts that ruthlessly denature and de-essentialize: they are called deconstruction" ("Ecology as Text" 1).

## Queer, Dark Ecologies

Deconstructing the notion of Nature out of its naturalness, Morton's dark ecology performs the same kind of queer and contingent reimagining of nature-as-ecology (*Ecology Without Nature* 143) that is exemplified in Carmilla's notion of the natural vampire. Here, dying is imaginatively posited as the high point of collapse and interconnection in both of these ecological accounts. For Morton, "dying is becoming the environment" (71); for Carmilla, dying is entering into new vampiric life, the girlish larvae metamorphosed into the undead butterfly. Vampire narratives have long made dying mesmerizingly beautiful. Dracula's first victim, Lucy Westerna, "is a very beautiful corpse ... God! How beautiful she was" (Stoker 174, 180). "Lingering" with death as a beautiful possibility is at the heart of dark ecology. Thinking about the vampire might also, then, be thinking about *staying with* the process of dying, in life. "Lingering" with death, with something "painful, disgusting, grief-striking" is, Morton argues, "exactly what we need right now, ecologically speaking" (*Ecology Without Nature* 197). This is because, Morton argues, the looming ecological catastrophe has *already* happened: we have already entered the sixth mass extinction event and must imaginatively accept, whilst staying in the world, that we are in some sense already dead (*Hyperobjects* 7). We should, then, "be finding ways to stick around with the sticky mess that we're in and that we are, making thinking dirtier, identifying with ugliness, practicing 'hauntology' (Derrida's phrase)" (*Ecology Without Nature* 188). Dark ecology in this sense has more in "common with the undead than with life" (201). In his most explicitly vampiric formulation, Morton tells us that "The task is not to bury the dead but to join them, to be bitten by the undead and become them" (201). Our current moment of ecological catastrophe has rendered vampire fiction prophetic: *we are already* the amphibious undead stalking the diluvian world, and vampire literature has already described this strange predicament in its lingering, languorous descriptions of dark new ecologies.[12]

Vampire literature, I have argued, has a renewed relevance for theorizations of queer ecology now. In a recent publication, Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson propose that queer ecology can be seen as part of a "tradition of resistance" (21), focused on the eco-sexual transformation of heteronormativity and nature. For Mortimer-Sandilands, this resistance must involve a melancholic dwelling on "what has been lost" to our culture's destructive homophobic and anthropocentric violence (39). While literature is not the only space in which resistance might be found, Mortimer-Sandilands focuses on particular writers in the late-twentieth century for whom the "commingling of queer and ecological" sensibilities opens onto "an engagement with environmental loss and environmental responsibility" (Mortimer-Sandilands 332). Mortimer-Sandilands strikingly describes this engagement as, "a condition of *melancholia*, a state of suspended mourning in which the object of loss is very real but psychically 'ungrievable' within the confines of a society that cannot acknowledge nonhuman beings, natural environments, and ecological processes as appropriate objects for genuine grief" (333). Resonating with Morton's "grief-striking" sense of dark ecology, Mortimer-Sandilands' melancholia "suggests a present that is not only haunted but constituted by the past: literally built of ruins and rejections" (340). If our current culture produces conditions in which "the everyday relations we have with the more-than-human world are unmarked, unnamed, and ungrievable," making it "almost impossible to recognize the value of what has been lost," then queer ecological resistance must insist on a "non-normalizing relationship to the past," on the perpetual return of the things that contemporary consumer culture has diminished, denied, destroyed and commodified (333–341). The haunted and haunting tales of gothic literature, patterned on the return of the dead, might help us in this task, and the nineteenth-century vampire, as a figure of queer, dark ecology, might have a curious relevance for attempts to re-imagine our inhabitance of the material world at the start of the twenty-first century.

Queer ecological resistance must insist on a "non-normalizing relationship to the past."

## Notes

1. See, for instance, the recent collection *Queering the Non/Human* (2008), edited by Giffney and

Hird.
2. This is Alice Kuzniar's term (qtd. in Giffney and Hird 3).
3. See Mortimer-Sandilands (337) on commodified versions of "pristine" nature currently peddled by ecotourism.
4. Van Helsing is described as giving way to "a regular fit of hysterics . . . just as a woman does" (Stoker 180) under the pressure of dealing with the vampire Lucy.
5. Elaine Showalter suggests that hysteria had been the quintessential female malady for centuries, but that during the "golden age" of hysteria it assumed an especially central role in definitions of femininity and female sexuality, such that by the end of the 19th century, "hysterical" had become almost interchangeable with "feminine." Even where doctors, such as Charcot, treated male hysterics, "hysteria remained symbolically, if not medically, a female malady" (Showalter 129, 148). The critic Gretchen Mieszkowski has suggested that other forms of prostrate indisposition, in particular fainting, had become symbolically feminine by the end of the 18th century. My current research focuses on this process of feminisation in relation to swooning.
6. Frayling also advises us to consider "the initial reactions of *post-literate* societies to the AIDS epidemic. The resemblances [to folklore vampire accounts] are startling to say the least" (27). Frayling suggests particular similarities in the emphasis on an accusatory "who did it" rather than an exploratory attempt to understand the viral mechanisms of contagion.
7. The OED gives as the first meaning of pathology, now rare: "I. Senses to do with feelings."
8. Now part of Austria.
9. For a review of recent research on this phenomenon see Gosline. The review suggests that this phenomenon is an enduring myth rather than a scientifically verifiable phenomenon.
10. The "nature" writer Kathleen Jamie has recently questioned these distinctions, too, describing her visit to the pathology department of a hospital in order to challenge what she calls "foreshortened" definitions of nature, which institute "otters and primroses" over "our own intimate, inner natural world, the body's weird shapes and forms [which] sometimes go awry . . . the bacteria that can pull the rug from under us," the "rubbery brownish-pink" of a segment of colon and the "hard whitish deposit" of a tumor (24, 26–27).
11. Frayling notes that one of the earliest vampire accounts, contained in the Istrian *Ehre dess Herzogtum Krains* (1672), describes a male vampire who likes to be invited across the threshold, after knocking. This is repeated in many later accounts, where the vampire must be invited into a victim's house (Frayling 42).
12. Morton expresses the power of literature as vampiric contagion in his suggestion that the gothic tackiness of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is aesthetics as ecology in the sense that its point, rather than providing a "moral" ("don't shoot albatrosses!"), is to "infect others," to perpetuate violent interrelation through literature as contagion (*Ecology Without Nature* 159).

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# Queer Ecologies Roundtable Discussion

## *Part 4: Queer Ecologies at the Limits*

GORDON BRENT BROCHU-INGRAM, PETER HOBBS & CATRIONA SANDILANDS

***UnderCurrents:*** As we engage in this extended discussion tonight, what about an inversion of the first question: When do we reach a limit after which the work we're doing is *not* queer ecological work anymore? It's a sort of goofy contingent question to pose, but it was something that came up in our editorial process this year.

**Gordon Brent Brochu-Ingram:** Well, I have a visceral response.

**Darren Patrick:** Oh, good, we need your viscerality!

**Gordon Brent Brochu-Ingram:** That is, that we are living in a time of environmental crisis which affects everybody, including queer identified people, [which] often has huge implications for sexual practices. And, I have to say that what's going to drive the notion of queer ecology in the long term is this very queer dynamic between survival quests—quests for survival—whether its protection from violence or recognition of marriage rights or recognition of the right to live outside of any kind of accepted norm, there's going to be this drive or a kind of queer survival or a larger kind of queer space, on the one hand, and I think, we've alluded to it, I'm thinking of that book [*Cruising Utopia*] by the now sadly deceased José Esteban Muñoz. [All the works we discussed are] struggling with notions of the queer imagination as . . . somehow related to our research and our scholarship and our lives. And it's not easy—we've got these two poles—for many of us it is quite painful to try to figure out how to respond to both of those imperatives in our lives and in our scholarship.

**Catriona Sandilands:** I think that one of the things that I have struggled with in the midst of some of the more recent scholarship that has called itself queer ecology, for example, Tim Morton's editorial in the *Pacific Modern Life Association (PMLA)* journal, which a lot of people quote, and he's arguing that queer, that queerness is sort of a fundamental principle of the universe and we all kind of share it. And, in this, he ends up equating queerness with relationality. He has since changed his mind, in his more recent work on hyperobjects, he has become less interested in relations and more interested in objects, but, that's OK. And he gets quoted a lot. . . . A more sophisticated version of this is Karen Barad's work on queer performativity. In which she's also arguing that queer is somehow a basic principle of life. So, on both of those accounts, there is no limit to queer ecology, because ecology is always already queer. I start wondering, "Well, if everything is queer, than nothing is queer." Because we lose, I think we lose the specificity, we lose the politics, we lose the sense that—Peter is shaking his head, we've disagreed on this publicly before . . .

**Darren Patrick:** Let's get it on tape this time. [Laughter] Let's commit it to the global archive.

**Catriona Sandilands:** I don't think it fundamentally depoliticizes, because it is actually calling into question, it is actually calling to attention certain versions of, certain processes of life that are otherwise not considered publicly, so I think it is actually quite important. I think Barad's article is actually quite important.

Is there some way in which we need to have different ways of talking about queerness in different ontological registers? So, within the biological realm, within the political realm, the social realm, within the affectional or other realms. There seem to be different versions of what queer means. So, I think queer [ecology] is potentially limitless, but what I would actually like to see us do is speak more specifically about some of the particular conjunctions, some of the more particular

articulations that appear between and among these realms. So, that's kind of a non-answer to your question. . . . It's potentially everything, but I don't think that it should be everything. I think it should be a bunch of very particular things.

**Peter Hobbs:** I totally understand that point that you would lose specificity and you would lose specificity by opening up the notion of queer to include starfish and lead. And the idea that "if everything's queer, then nothing is queer." I understand that. And, this is sort of a minor difference, if it is a difference, because, I think we . . . are pretty much the same person. [Laughter]

**Darren Patrick:** But let's zoom in on the difference a little bit. All the disclaimers being on the table, let's talk about that difference, even if it is a minor difference.

**Peter Hobbs:** Well I knew this was going to come up. So I was thinking about this axiom: If everything is queer then nothing is queer. And how it sort of is an axiom.

**Catriona Sandilands:** As long as it's not a cliché.

**Peter Hobbs:** [Laughter] Yeah, and of course, if "everything is queer then nothing is queer;" I don't quite follow that. If everything is queer, then everything is queer.

**Catriona Sandilands:** Both things can be true at the same time.

**Peter Hobbs:** But, regardless of that—

**Catriona Sandilands:** Maybe the axiom is: "If everything is queer, then nothing is queer in the way that I want it to be queer." [Laughter]

**Peter Hobbs:** Yeah, I guess the specificity [is] a specificity for certain stories that haven't been worked over enough that I think that you would be hesitant to lose. . . . A similar criticism is made of the posthuman: that we can't talk about the posthuman because we'd lose out on the stories of all those wonderful and horrible stories of being human... So, I totally understand that, but I think that's maybe the difference between; maybe we haven't talked about the difference between a cultural studies approach to queer ecologies and looking at discourse [analysis] approach. . . .

When materialism has been introduced to queer ecologies and has taken on a role, we're looking to think with and through animals and microbes and plants. That is definitely part of the queer ecology; that's one of the most exciting parts that queer ecology is thinking with and through the animal or the non-human. And you could say the exact same thing: If everything is going to tell us a story then, of course, we're going to lose certain stories.

But I do want to point out that there is this shift away from a cultural studies to more material studies, a notion of performativity, and this call to think with and through non-human. I think [that is] important to queer ecologies.

**Catriona Sandilands:** I think that we need both things. And the work that most compels me is the work that actually manages to do both things well.

**Gordon Brent Brochu-Ingram:** Well . . . I haven't read Mel Chen's work, I know of some of [their] earlier work; I'm still stuck on this idea that queer ecologies—through this recognition of a reprocentric and heteronormative biases of 300 years of modern science—has a huge implication for how we view the world. And I thought . . . the back and forth with Peter and Cate is very important, but, for me, it's still fundamental that queer ecologies is part of a greater critique of—and a very profound critique of—much of what we know as biology and ecology. We've just begun to understand what that means for how we view the world and how we identify what's important and what's vulnerable, what we can count on and what is more ephemeral. So, I like the way this conversation is going, but, again, it goes back to a kind of critique of science; colonial science and neo-colonial science, heternormative science, patriarchal science, all the things that we have just begun to challenge. Because, what I hear with the back and forth between Cate and Peter is . . . a lot of philosophical kinds of nuance that I haven't been able to explore . . . and I'll for sure look at Mel Chen's reading.

*For bibliographic notes and a podcast of the complete roundtable discussion, please visit www.yorku.ca/currents or download the podcast from CoHearence on iTunes.*

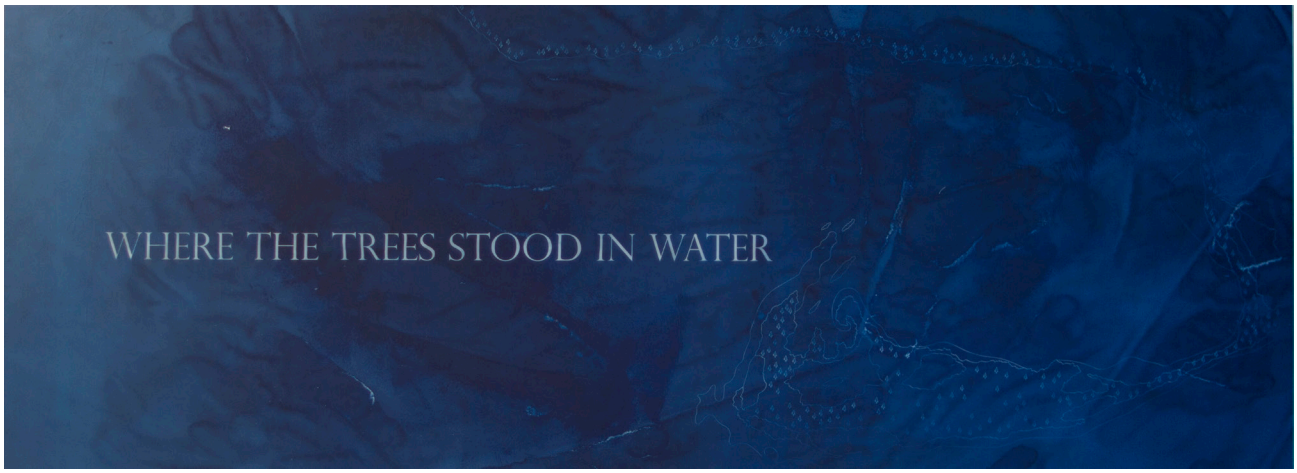
**"A VERY SEXY WOODSMAN." Photo by William Notman via McCord Museum.**

# Where the Trees Stood in Water

BAMBITCHELL

*Where the Trees Stood in Water* is a series of five Cyanotype prints tracing the historic and contemporary transformations of Toronto's Entertainment District. Each print is accompanied by an archival document—a narrative which connects geography to stories of colonization, industrialization, and the transient bodies of those effected by the remaking of Toronto's landscape.

Thank you: G Amani, Mehran Ataee, Hannah Dyer, Sameer Farooq, Gustavo Cerquera-Benjumea, Chase Joynt, Natalie Kouri-Towe, and Nadia Galati.




## *1787*

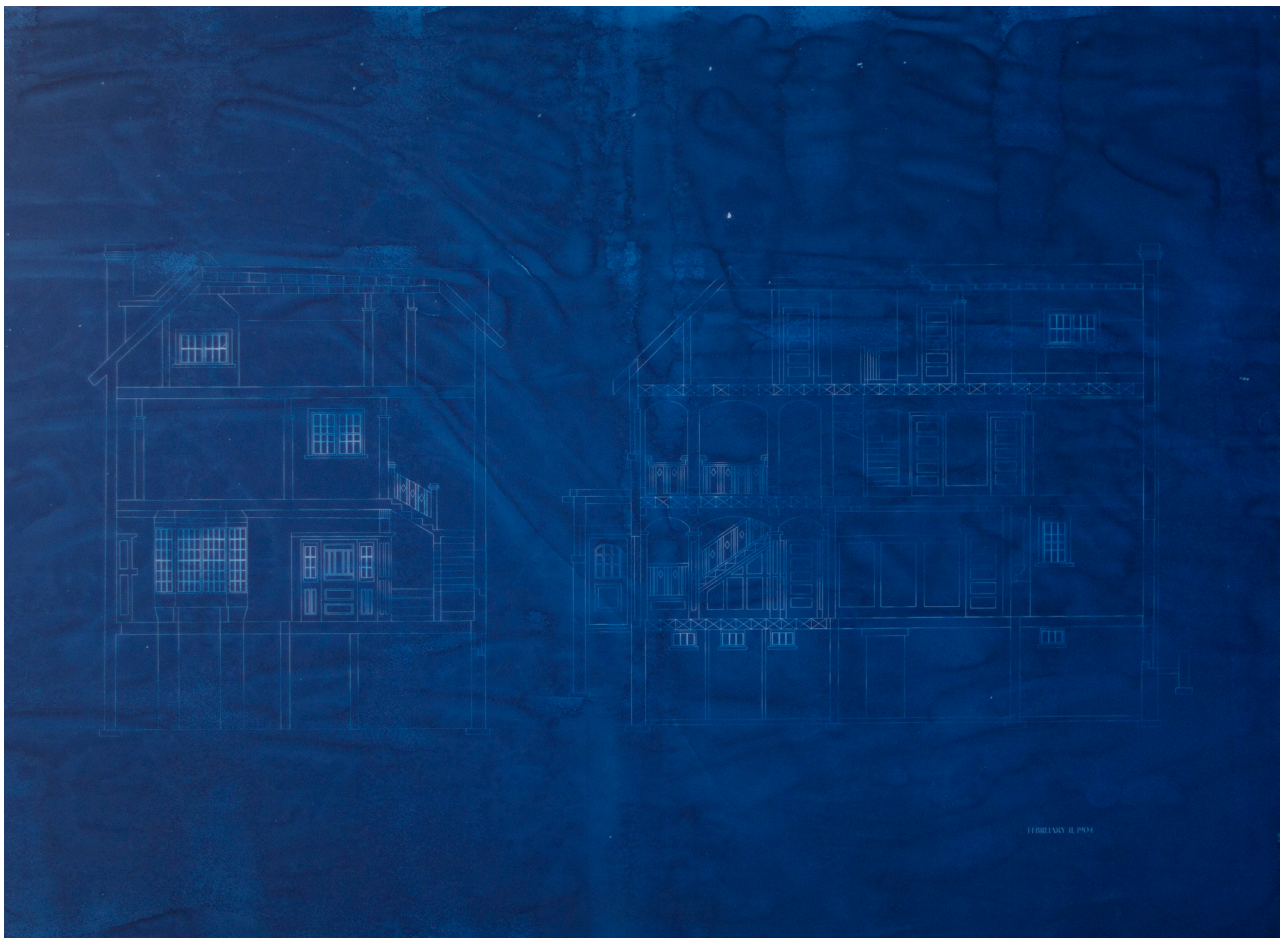
CYANOTYPE PRINT, VELLUM, 21' x 57"

Amidst the landscape that once was, stood the trees, peppered across the coastline, awaiting their fate. 1787, the Cartographer marks down, using his charcoal pencil to trace the lines that would eventually become the hub of industrialization near the east coast of the Americas, on what would become the vast intruded land. The purchase was made, the exchange occurred, the men laughed in unison as they walked away not knowing the impact of their exchange. A quarter-million-acres later, and the derelict naming of a town, lies the bloodline of the Mississaugas of the New Credit.

*1857*
CYANOTYPE PRINT, VELLUM, 33" x 45"

Furiously tracing from the islands he calls home, the Cartographer imprints charcoal to rice paper and looks out at Fort York. 1857, the streets filled with the steam of development. Under the weight of industrialization, the multi-coloured bodies push, heave, load, unload, break, crack, lift, and drop, animating York's harbour. From his safe distance, the Cartographer hears the songs they sing to keep afloat through hands splitting, skin breaking, and sweat drenching the grounds of the land they helped build. The interlude breaks the sounds of the steamship engines:

I hollow ships of freight and origin; rising tenor of spitting sea,
do not take from me
A dream of rest and family. We move cargo and coin under sweating suns,
This sprawling circuit of men, whose bodies writhe under industrious invention.
Our limbs unfastened from home, remade while humming pleas
for recognition of our labour, of anguished muscle and skin stretched, metallic.



## *1904*

CYANOTYPE PRINT, VELLUM, 33" x 45"

She walks through her house on the corner of King Street West and Simcoe Street. Trudging up and down the thick wooden floorboards, her dress—frills, bows and corset—dragging its way back and forth from England to the New World. The Cartographer sits across in the grassy knoll, charcoal in hand, tracing the lines of change over the last five decades. The songs of the kaleidoscopic bodies are washed away by the horse hooves and dragging carts. Wheels on cobblestone, boots on pavement. He watches her sit at her desk, place fountain pen to fresh paper while she stares at the open curtains in front of her and writes furiously.

Johnny* is having some of his colleagues over for dinner tonight—obviously in a continued effort to impress them and exhaust me! I must remember to tell that ragged Irish girl how to make a good banoffee pie:

1. Make a cheescake base
2. Boil 2 cups of condensed milk for 3 hours and spread over base
3. Slice some bananas on top
4. Add some whipped cream
5. Add another layer of banana

*John Coxwell Gerrard Doe III (Toronto Centre member of 8th parliament, 1899-1907)

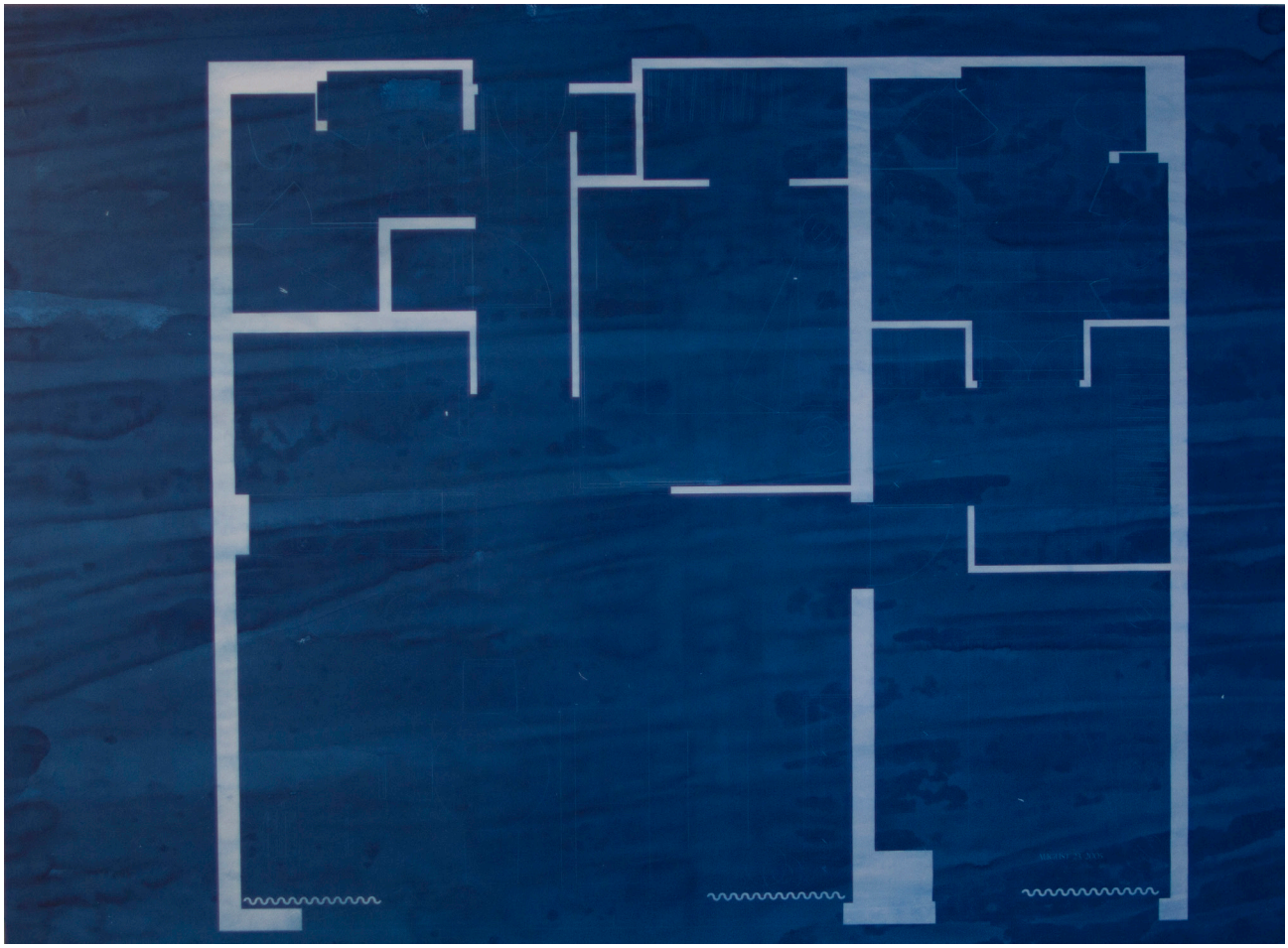
## *1981*

CYANOTYPE PRINT, VELLUM, 33" x 45"

Humid and unusually hot for an October evening, the Cartographer stares up at the twilight sky watching the suits and skirts make their way home before the landscape drastically changes to house Toronto's nightlife. 1983 Toronto, between Richmond Street West, and Peter Street, electronic music is heard as heavy handled doors open and close. The Cartographer sees the man in the slick-back hairdo, chatting with a group of well-dressed twenty-somethings. Hands exchange narcotics. Hands exchange money. Hands exchange hands. The Cartographer bears witness to this exchange week after week, as he himself purchases opiates that will occupy his feet as he searches for a companion.

The metal door bursts open. Rushing, screaming, chaos, loud noises. Gunshots? Fireworks? The Cartographer runs, the sounds of sirens swell in the near distance.

Johnny Doe, shot twice at close range on Richmond Street West, Toronto, October 3, 1983.



*2005*
CYANOTYPE PRINT, VELLUM, 33" x 45"

On the corner of King Street West and Blue Jays Way in Toronto, the Cartographer stands outside the SoHo Metropolitan, finishing the last of his cigarette, waiting for his dinner companion to make his way downstairs. Stubbing the brown filter into the pavement, he walks into the lobby and sits on a black leather sofa examining the freshly mounted wooden wall panels. Two men walk into the lobby, looking similar in posture and attire. They quibble all the way from the front door to the elevator. The Cartographer notices their affectionate manner, despite their frustration with one another.

Civil Union has just passed in Canada. The quibbling couple donate their marriage certificate and photographs to the Canadian Gay Archives, in exchange for a tax receipt and a thank you letter:

Dear Mr. and Mr. Doe,

We at the Canadian Gay Archives sincerely thank you for your donation of photographs and marriage certificate. This will serve as apt material for documentation of our lives and our histories.

Please see attached to this letter a tax receipt for your donation.

With Gay Greetings,

Staff, Board & Volunteers
Canadian Gay Archives

# Book reviews

## Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire

### *Edited by Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands & Bruce Erickson, Indiana UP, 2010 $30.00*

Reviewed by SARAH MAY LINDSAY

The interconnectivity of social, sexual, political, and environmental thought is explored in the volume *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*. Compiled and edited by scholars Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, this anthology includes contributions from a diverse pool of academics, drawing especially from gender relations, philosophy, English, and critical geography.

*Queer Ecologies*' subtitle is substantial in its scope; each aspect is a dot on a continuum. It may be helpful to understand this volume as an interdisciplinary examination of broad issues that are intricately connected. Thus, as a multi-point intervention into current queer and environmental discussions, it is useful to scholars in various social, ecological, and philosophical fields, and still accessible enough to act as an inroad for those with less knowledge of these themes.

In their introduction, Sandilands and Erickson choose the iconic film *Brokeback Mountain* to investigate the Western cinematographic practice of relegating homosexual acts to certain spaces—a shaming of sorts, fostering a feeling of being apart and reinforcing the need to withdraw from society. Certain spaces and societal arrangements (alone together, on a mountain) are portrayed as acceptable places for homosexuals to live and love freely. Indeed, the contrast of homosexual desire and open spaces ("spatial-sexual processes") and heterosexist cultural structures is stark and cold in *Brokeback*. The editors of *Queer Ecologies* critically expose this and point to the melancholia that comes with being suppressed and viewed as something other than "normal."

This root sadness is woven throughout the volume's three sub-sections, covering oft-contested "factual" and moral ground in chunks of related thoughtfulness. Beginning in the realm of species distinction and animal studies, the idea of the natural is deconstructed. In Western culture, heterosexuality has been naturalized to such an extent by what Stacy Alaimo claims is biased or misleading research, which results in an incorrect or incomplete knowledge base. Alaimo suggests that the scientific community is "professionally responsible for refuting claims that homosexuality is unnatural," and that "the scientific silence on homosexuality in animals amounts to a cover-up, deliberate or not." Throughout her contribution to *Queer Ecologies*, Alaimo questions the legitimacy of heterosexuality as *the* natural or normal mode of investigation.

A hierarchical structural understanding of ecological communities based on a subjective taxonomy is commonplace. This is embodied both by the naming of species and the practice of speciesism. Elsewhere, ethical theorist Peter Singer explains speciesism as a combination of racism and anthropocentrism. Part 1 of *Queer Ecologies*, "Against Nature? Queer Sex, Queer Animality," challenges a hierarchal ideology, querying where culture, reproductive justice, and "normal" animal behaviour meet within this pyramidal order. The authors reshape hierarchal thought, recombining the natural into something like David Bell's "queernaturecultures"—where one does not need to qualify as an individual, independent being to have value; life does not seek legitimacy or acceptance. The authors of the essays in this section ask whom and what constitutes nature, and why homosexuality—particularly in non-humans—is somehow understood as unnatural? Wonderfully, inclusivity is stressed and divisions are blurred in *Queer Ecologies*' first collection of essays.

In Part 2, "Green, Pink, and Public: Queering Environmental Politics," the focus shifts to politics. Questions reaching across space and place, ecological systems, and community structure fill section two. Andil Gosine addresses reproduction as a necessity, and how this implies "queer acts" are somehow "against nature." Race is also introduced as a major theme in this section, as contributors speak to the connection be-

tween space and race, and how portions of society have been claimed, cordoned off, excluded or defended for these purposes. Here, the ecology of landscapes meets ideas of sexual orientation and societal feelings of safety. Lesbian community structures in the USA (Unger) and ghetto environments (Ingram) are identified as locations of strife, both ecologically and socially. In great detail—from a nuanced understanding of "appropriately" queer living quarters, to physical barriers and spatial matrices—the queering of space that occurs in this second section freely admits that "place matters" (Unger) in political cultural organization.

The final section in this examination of queerness and environmentalism, "Desiring Nature? Queer Attachments," looks at desire, with rich discussions of love, sex acts, need, and understanding. The conversation is heavy with a fierce mixture of frustration and freedom. Questions of what is "natural" are connected to ideas of passion, longing, and belonging. For example, Rachel Stein reviews how feminist, lesbian poets Minnie Bruce Pratt and Adrienne Rich expose homophobia as a "'crime-against-nature' ideology." Stein also brilliantly summarizes the core aim of *Queer Ecologies*, recognizing:

> the power of queering nature, making obvious the potency of our ideas about nature and our use of naturalization, for ill or for good, and the very real effects of such discourses on our social/sexual identities and relationships with natural environments.

Moreover, the contribution by Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands, "Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies," works with what is most troubling within the crossing of environmental and queer epistemologies: sadness. Grief lies in the myth that only human societies are violent and unaccepting, and that all others—meant generally (the environment) or specifically (other species)—are peaceful and forgiving; angst is centered in the absence of a safe resting spot. Environmental destruction parallels societal oppression, and then twirls and combines in a multitude of complex cultural constraints. Mortimer-Sandilands points to mourning, fear, and pain as universalities. Ecological sadness is not set apart from heteronormative oppression—instead they are jointly encased in an overarching state of grieving.

*Queer Ecologies* is important on many levels of queer and ecological thinking. Problems and triumphs of emotion, fear, oppression, freedom, and understanding flow throughout, making this volume essential to the current discourses of sexuality, human and other-than-human interconnectivity, and environmental malaise.

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SARAH MAY LINDSAY graduated Summa Cum Laude from York University's Bachelor in Environmental Studies program in 2013. She is currently completing her Master in Critical Sociology, specializing in Critical Animal Studies. Lindsay's current research interests include human and nonhuman interconnectivity and interspecies equity, specifically: the sheltering of nonhuman "companion" animals.

# The Once and Future World: Nature as it Was, as it Is, as it Could Be

## *By J.B. MacKinnon, Random House Canada, 2013 $29.95*

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REVIEWED BY SARAH MAY LINDSAY

J.B. MacKinnon's *The Once and Future World* aims to displace utopian ideas of a 'perfect' pre-*Homo sapiens* planet, as well as fictional past accounts of societal peace with 'nature'. Indeed, MacKinnon paints a powerful temporal trail of ecological loss, expertly situating social phenomena within the larger context of systemic, planetary destruction. Fundamentally, in *Future World*, human societies have perpetually maimed much that was 'natural' under the guise of 'progress'; MacKinnon more precisely explains progress as anthropocentric 'greed.' What was once 'natural' bears little resemblance to current environmental conditions, as problems such as species extinction, pollution, climate change, habitat loss and poverty are the new normal. *Future World* seeks to reconnect humanity with ecology, pointing to the impossibility of disconnection: humans are in and of our 'environment.'

This is a work of non-fiction, yet the content and beauty of the author's prose would lead you to believe you are a reading an account of another place, another time, another world altogether. MacKinnon gently prods the reader with intriguing historical myths of "what once was" while vehemently seizing his audience with warnings of what will be. This, however, is not a tale steeped in desperation or melancholic messages of the end of days. There are triumphant stories of resilience despite apocalyptic change. Take, for example, the alternate telling of the fate of Rapa Nui's (Easter Island's) human citizens. The familiar fable is that the island's Polynesian settlers harvested the native tree species population to the point of extinction despite their complete reliance on the trees' existence for their own survival. Excess and greed thus fueled and determined the settlers' own demise. MacKinnon offers up a competing, increasingly probable fate for at least the humans of Rapa Nui. In this version, the native trees are still culled, yet the Rapa Nuians remain in healthy numbers, having *adapted* to the environmental shift through alternate (rock) gardening practices and the routine consumption of the rat "pests" they had (unknowingly) brought with them from the mainland.

Neither telling has been concretely "proven." MacKinnon uses these alternate accounts strategically, cautioning that greed in human societies may manifest as a complete disregard for nonhuman animals and the environment, or that, conversely, species annihilation in places of limited and competing re-

sources (i.e. anywhere on earth) is not inevitable. The latter tale is, then, a story of human ingenuity and resilience, not folly—or so it seems.

These two opposing tales describe precisely the metaphoric fork in the road at which we are positioned today. In scenario one, humankind continues its global assassination of all that is Other, bringing to fruition an end day where all life collapses in permanence. Alternately, working with incrementally fewer resources amidst continuous decimation, the human species adapts and persists indefinitely.

MacKinnon's collection of societal triumphs and dramatic environmental change lead the reader toward what the author observes to be an injurious, deep-seeded social condition. Central to the phenomenon of disconnection is human distance from the nonhuman world. Here, this nature includes other species as well as aspects of our physical environment. MacKinnon appropriately identifies the importance of social relationships and contrasts this with the troublesome dominant belief in the inapplicability (indeed, ridiculousness) of nonhuman/human connectivity in Western society. Motivating this move away from symbiotic human and nonhuman life is knowledge, or, more accurately, a societal, insidious tendency toward a lack of knowledge. Ignorance here is often a choice. MacKinnon suggests that although the discontinuity of human societies prohibits sweeping statements, one key condition has been well documented over and over: human cultures choose to forget. We rewrite and overwrite what is or was 'normal' within our lives, our connections with other lives and the relationship between the two. By shifting the baseline, we experience "environmental amnesia," where what was, is erased and replaced with a perpetual 'new' reality. Indeed, St. Augustine's inquiry—"How then am I to find you, if I have no memory of you?"—is easily answered with our silent proclamation that this is of no real concern; we will forever endure.

MacKinnon challenges this Utopian ontology with faith—however tenuous—in humanity's ability to gain sight through knowledge and a belief that anthropocentric power could prove essential rather than caustic. Tapping into the 'unique' human ability to survive, thrive, resurrect, rework, and revive, we could shed our falsely amnesiatic tendencies for a global rewrite of sorts.

This work, then, should serve environmental and social justice scholars well as an accessible place to situate and grow anti-apocalyptic discourse. MacKinnon's assemblage of well-placed, research-based analogies and historical accounts in *Future World*, collectively and cleverly persuade the reader that, as a species, humans alone have the capability to not restore, but to rewire—"rewild"—our world. From this perspective, all may not be lost (or forgotten).

# Creative Subversions: Whiteness, Indigeneity, and the National Imaginary

## *By Margot Francis, UBC Press, 2011 $32.95*

Reviewed by FLEURIE HUNTER

*Creative Subversions: Whiteness, Indigeneity, and the National Imaginary* looks at the process through which commonplace national symbols carry, as well as inform, cultural narratives of identity and belonging. The author, Margot Francis, analyzes how seemingly neutral and benign Canadian iconography—the beaver, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), Banff National Park, and the image of the "Indian"—act to reinforce certain ideas about race, masculinity, and sexuality, as they propagate the dominant "white, Anglo-Canadian historical memory." This is achieved by first offering a critical examination of the historic and contemporary discourses surrounding these symbols, followed by a look at the efforts of various contemporary artists to challenge and reimagine such notions of Canadianness. In this way Francis offers an insightful and thought-provoking perspective on the topic, and contributes to the broader task of generating an "imaginative reconsideration" of Canadian cultural mythology.

This book draws from a rich and diverse body of theoretical work. As a whole, the analysis is grounded in Michael Billig's concept of banal nationalism, which describes the relationship between common national symbols and identity formation. However, Francis pushes this idea forward by connecting to her earlier writings, and the wider literature on haunting and the notion of public secrets. Here, Francis offers a broadened perspective on banal nationalism, recognizing the counter-narratives (ghosts) that, while systematically concealed, are ever present within the evolution of such national symbols, and Canadian society as a whole. Francis also draws on the writings of Derrida and Benjamin in her approach to acts of revelation, or "outing a ghost." Based on the work of these scholars, Francis asserts a need for careful and self-reflective practice in any acts of exposure, as the risk of distortion and/or appropriation of the cause can generate a perpetuation of injustice.

This theoretical framework serves a dual purpose, as the objectives of the book are twofold. First, Francis applies this lens in order to carry out her analysis of the four specific national images. Through an examination of historic documents, relevant literature, and personal interviews, Francis traces the evolution of the prominent colonial discourses surrounding these objects, and simultaneously draws out the shadowy underrepresented counter-narratives, or public secrets. She then applies these same ideas in looking at the artistic interventions that expose public secrets and "play with and against the very notion of belonging." More so, while not referenced directly, *Creative Subversions*, as well as several of the artistic works highlighted in the book (e.g., the *Lesbian National Parks and Services* performance) can also be situated within the field of queer ecology, as Francis problematizes the heteronormative lens

through which ideas of 'nature' and 'wilderness' are constructed and reinforced through banal national images.

Each of the central chapters of the book trace the specific and unique history of the four symbolic representations. At the same time, clear themes emerge in the meta-narrative surrounding the origin and evolution of the nation. Canada is portrayed as a wild and open landscape, a space for certain bodies to pursue dreams of material well-being. Categories of the colonized and colonizer are secured and reinforced in many ways. Male territorial mastery is also a common thread. As an example, the Canadian Pacific Railway can be considered as an emblem of masculinity's domination over nature. This characterization was simultaneously denied to racialized bodies, whereby boundaries of 'us' and 'them' were construed through various means, such as homophobic sexual paranoia about men from 'the Far East.' Central to the evolution of each of these symbols is the parasitic Canadian relationship with Indigenous peoples—the simultaneous historic erasure as well as a spectacularization or fetishization of the 'Indian,' which is wrapped up in the narratives surrounding these banal national symbols as well as Canadian identity in itself.

The second portion of each chapter is dedicated to presenting the work of contemporary artists who challenge the dominant cultural myths associated with these banal national symbols. The creative interventions are diverse both in medium and intention—ranging from satirical sculptures that play with behavioural codes of female sexuality (e.g., *The Spirit of Canada Eating Beaver* by Wendy Coburn), to Richard Fung's video *Dirty Laundry*, which challenges prevailing historical memory surrounding the Canada Pacific Railway both in form and in content. The images and narrative of the video serve to problematize misconceptions regarding the Chinese workers who built the railroad, as well as the considerable absence of their memory altogether. At the same time, through the style of the film, which presents multiple and conflicting narratives, the very notion of historical truth is destabilized.

As mentioned, a common thread within the book is the (mis)representation of Indigenous peoples, which, through both systemic erasure as well as strategic appropriation of 'the Indian' caricature, is a key component of the Canadian origin myth as represented within the national symbols described. While many of the artistic works that play with/against the first three symbols address the racialized discourse of "white national belonging," the fourth chapter looks specifically at how Indigenous artists have responded to 'Indianness,' which arguably continues to haunt Canadian national memory. The works described engage in "tactics of appropriation" whereby the artists present a form of mimicry that strategically intensifies certain aspects of misrepresentation, and also refute other characterizations to be substituted with their own self-image.

The content and format of *Creative Subversions* are both clear and insightful, and the writing is complemented by the many images that supplement the analysis. The theoretical concepts of banal nationalism and haunting are effectively woven through the text, although I would have been interested to hear more about how the artistic works included (and subsequently what has been excluded from this volume) move beyond simply exposing a public secret to achieve a "transgressive uncovering" (as framed by the writings of Derrida and Benjamin). Overall, however, *Creative Subversions* provokes the reader to critically reflect on taken-for-granted emblems of 'Canadianness,' and the broader historical narrative therein.

FLEURIE HUNTER is a graduate student in Social Policy & Planning at York University.

# Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination

## *By Nicole Seymour, Illinois UP, 2013 $25.00*

Reviewed by CAMERON BUTLER

Nicole Seymour's *Strange Natures* makes a strong case for the need to cultivate a queer ecological empathy that celebrates the strange and ugly, promotes difference, and rejects constructions that oppress and divide, be it for bodies or landscapes. Her work is one in the growing field of queer ecology, seeking to destabilize our understanding of 'the natural' and reconfigure our relationship with/in nature. Seymour's archive is comprised predominately of American films and novels, from 1987 to 2006. The book contains a thorough introduction and four chapters of critical readings of her archive, as well as a short conclusion. Throughout the book, she engages with major queer theorists, such as Lee Edelman, Judith Butler, and José Muñoz, and builds on the works of queer ecological writers, including Catriona Sandilands, Greta Gaard, Noël Sturgeon, and Gordon Brent Ingram.

The introduction traces the historical divide between queer theory and ecocriticism. Seymour does not seek to define queer ecology as a field, but rather to explain why collaboration has taken so long to occur. Naturalization of heteronormativity and the labeling of queers as being "against nature" have stalled queer theorists from positive engagements with "the natural" that is so often used to justify their oppression. Conversely, ecocriticism has often lacked poststructuralist positions, opting instead for an essentialized nature, while environmentalism frequently builds its ethics out of concern over "white, heterosexual, familial reproductivity." Following this quick history lesson, Seymour describes her archive and their places within her project to outline "concrete, sincere environmental politics even while remaining, to varying degrees, skeptical, ironic, and self-reflexive."

Chapter 2, "Post-Transsexual Pas-

toral: Environmental Ethics in the Contemporary Transgender Novel," is focused on developing Seymour's idea of "organic transgenderism," as well as queer ethics of care, through readings of American Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* (1992), Jamaican-American Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), and Trinidadian Canadian Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1998). Organic transgenderism situates gender transitioning as a phenomenon that is not primarily constructed, but rather partly natural in a way that parallels puberty; it is a rejection of medical commodification to regain self-possession. Self-possession is central to Seymour's redefining of "the natural," with bodies made bioregions such that bodies and landscapes are all shown to deserve care. A brief history of transgender activism is given in regards to the development and promotion of the term "transgender" over "transsexual." However, outside of this section, the lived experiences and oppression of trans people are absent from the chapter, which leads to the chapter at times feelings too theoretical and utopian to be applicable to actual activism.

Chapter 3, "'It's Just Not Turning Up': AIDS, Cinematic Vision, and Environmental Justice in Todd Haynes' *Safe*," is a fascinating and compelling analysis of Todd Haynes's film *Safe* (1995), which follows the deteriorating health of a suburban housewife supposedly suffering from chemical hypersensitivity. Seymour suggests that the decidedly queer film techniques and narrative style highlight the processes that render marginalized bodies, and their suffering, invisible. She goes beyond previous analyses of the film and argues that *Safe* negotiates and deeply complicates environmental injustice by showing how public and private spheres overlap in incredibly intimate ways, and are simultaneously gendered, raced, and classed. Most importantly, how, and which, bodies and spaces are deemed 'safe' or 'unsafe' is deconstructed, making a convincing case for how her queer ecological empathy, based on patience, attentiveness, and appreciation of the unfamiliar or different, can expand understandings of structural violence as demonstrated through environmental racism, classism, and sexism.

Chapter 4, "'Ranch Stiffs' and 'Beach Cowboys' in the Shrinking Public Sphere: Sexual Domestication in *Brokeback Mountain* and *Surf Party*," is the longest, and arguably strongest, chapter of the book. Seymour is able to bring a unique perspective from the numerous existing critiques of Ang Lee's film *Brokeback Mountain* (2002), framed as a queer rewriting of Maury Dexter's film *Surf Party* (1964), rejecting the surveillance, cleansing, and privatization of nature and queerness that *Surf Party* promotes. In *Brokeback Mountain*, Jack and Ennis' lower-class status are shown to be critically important for "it is not just their biological and social non-reproductivity, but their economic non-reproductivity that renders them abject." Queer theorist Lisa Duggan's concept of homonormativity is deployed to underscore the tension between public and private spaces, as Seymour links queer and environmentalist struggles through their rejection of domestication and pushes them towards a rejection of capitalism's heteronormative (re)productivity.

The final chapter, "Attack of the Queer Atomic Mutants: The Ironic Environmentalism of Shelley Jackson's *Half Life*," revolves around queer irony, ethics of care, and the politics of ugly. Seymour uses Shelley Jackson's *Half Life* (2006) as an example of a queer irony that is compassionate and ethically driven, while maintaining a strong skepticism. She employs a queer erotic to guide potential reconfiguring of relationships between humans and the nonhuman. One of her best points in the book is her development of an empathetic anti-identitarianist ethics of care. In rejecting an essentialized nature, it allows one to "both love an adulterated landscape and criticize its adulteration," creating a space for discourses that can challenge violence and pollution, without contributing to the further marginalization of landscapes or bodies through oppressive rhetoric.

While a strong work overall, *Strange Natures* does face two issues in particular. First, Seymour outright dismisses anti-futurity, a queer theory position that critiques all future-based motivation for action as being inherently heteronormative, in favour of demonstrating the possibility of a non-heteronormative futurity. In not questioning the centrality of futurity to environmentalism, she misses an opportunity to explore a queer ecological imagination drawn from anti-futurity. Additionally, the book's organization around the archive requires the reader to work much harder to bring together the elements of her environmental politics. It is clear that this is, first and foremost, a work of literary analysis, and her insightful political implications are secondary. However, these details are small and the book brings a unique perspective to its treatment of its archive. It presents a powerful foundation that will likely be built upon by academics and activists to continue this project of developing an even broader queer ecological imagination.

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CAMERON BUTLER is a final year undergraduate student at McGill University, majoring in Bioresource Engineering and minoring in Environmental Studies. His work within engineering has focused on deconstructing the politics of engineering and engaging with social justice and queer ecology in hopes of reconceptualizing the field as one that seeks to dismantle systems of oppression, rather than support and maintain them. In both his coursework and activism, he explores the contributions queer theory can offer in imagining a critical sustainability that rejects the assimilationism that leaves oppressive constructions and systems unchallenged.

# Contributors

**Bambitchell** (Sharlene Bamboat and Alexis Mitchell) met in 2008 and have been fostering an artistic collaboration ever since. Their practice uses queer and feminist frameworks in order to re-imagine borders, historical patterns of movement, labour, migration, and memory. Working in various media (print, video, sculptural installation, and performance), they explore these constantly shifting narratives through the use of images, architectures, language, sound, and bodies. Bamboat and Mitchell both have independent art practices and they are members of the Pleasure Dome Experimental Film & Video Programming Collective.

**Dr. Naomi Booth** is a lecturer in Literature and Creative Writing at York St John University, United Kingdom (n.booth@yorksj.ac.uk).

**Gordon Brent Brochu-Ingram** is a Métis environmental planner and designer based at KEXMIN field station on Salt Spring Island.

**Goedele De Caluwé** graduated as MA in Architecture: Urban Planning and Design at Gent University in 2011. Since 2012 she is doing an MA in Women's Studies at the New University of Lisbon. She is currently writing a thesis about power relations in Architecture and Queering Architecture.

**Mitch Goldsmith** recently completed his MA in Gender Studies and Feminist Research at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. His writing has appeared in *Jonathan: A Journal of Gay Fiction*. He lives in Virginia. He would like to thank the UnderCurrents Editorial Collective for their invaluable critiques on earlier drafts of this essay, and give a special thanks to Professor Mohanty, Professor Puar, Professor Schulman, and Professor Grise of McMaster University for their inspiration and guidance to a young and eager graduate student.

**David Andrew Griffiths** is Wellcome Trust University Award Research Fellow at the University of Surrey. His research interests include gender and sexuality studies, in particular feminist science studies, queer theory, and cultural histories of medicine and health. Previous work includes a multidisciplinary PhD thesis within the Centre for Critical and Cultural Theory at Cardiff University and the Centre for the Economic and Social Aspects of Genomics, a research group based at Cardiff and Lancaster University funded as part of the ESRC Genomics Network. His current project is to write a recent cultural history of the treatment and care of people with intersex conditions in the UK.

**Peter Hobbs** is a Toronto-based artist and PhD Candidate in Environmental Studies at York University.

**Anabel Khoo** is completing a Master of Arts degree in Communication and Culture at York University in Toronto, and working on initiatives that bring together counseling therapy, holistic healing, and media/performance through a visionary and loving politic. For more information, visit yorku.academia.edu/AnabelKhoo, or to send feedback contact her at khoo@yorku.ca.

**Jaimes Mayhew** is a Baltimore, Maryland based artist, researcher, and educator. He received his MFA from University of Maryland, Baltimore County. In 2011, Jaimes received a Fulbright grant, and traveled to Iceland to begin his latest project, The Autonomous Energy Research Lab. Jaimes' work has been shown across the US and internationally at such venues as Eyebeam (New York City), 808 Gallery (Boston), The Transmodern Festival (Baltimore, MD), This Is Not a Gateway (London), and Hoffmannsgallerí (Reykjavík), among others. Jaimes has collaborated with such influential groups as The Institute for Infinitely Small Things, a Boston based research and performance collective.

**Elana Santana** is a recent graduate of the Masters in Environmental Studies program in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University. Her research focuses on the intersections of feminist, queer, posthumanist studies and the environment. Her academic work informs her creative pursuits a great deal, particularly in her attempts to photograph and write about the non-human world in all its agential glory.

**Catriona Sandilands** is Professor of Environmental Studies at York University.

**Marianna Szczygielska** is a PhD Candidate in the Gender Studies Department at the Central European University in Budapest. Her background is in philosophy and gender studies and she is interested in posthumanism, animals studies, queer theory and the philosophy of science. Her current project, entitled "Queer(ing) Naturecultures: The Study of Zoo Animals," examines how the concepts of nature, animality, and humanness have been and continue to be constructed in relation to sexuality through the specific site of the modern zoological garden. Apart from her academic work Marianna is also a queer-feminist activist and performer involved in various groups.

**Marion Wasserbauer** graduated as MA in the Literature of Modernity at Antwerp University in 2012. Since May 2013, she is a PhD student in the Social Sciences at Antwerp University, researching the role of music in the identity formation of LGBTQs.

# Upcoming *UnderCurrents:* Environmental Justice

Over thirty years has passed since community activists gathered together and fought back against toxic dumping in their town of Afton in Warren County, North Carolina. The decades-long resistance that took place in Warren County marked the founding of the environmental justice movement in the United States, a movement that, to this day, is predominantly led by women of colour. The framework of environmental justice has since been adopted and adapted in activist and academic circles around the world. However, though environmental justice is a relatively new term, the idea is centuries old. As Agyeman et al. point out, Indigenous peoples on the land now called Canada have long been "articulating environmental injustices in relation to loss of land, Aboriginal title, and devastation of their traditional territories and the life forms they support" (7). This issue of UnderCurrents therefore encourages broad and inclusive interpretations of environmental justice as a tool for expressing intersections and alliances between social and environmental movements.

The need for more discourse on environmental justice in Canada could not be more evident. In Toronto, we are seeing how environmental racism is unfolding with the development of Line 9 and how it disproportionately impacts Jane and Finch, a working-class racialized neighbourhood. This local manifestation of environmental injustice is linked by complex networks of pipelines and politics, networks that are expanding rapidly (think Northern Gateway, Keystone XL, and Energy East) to keep pace with industry in the tar sands. In Federal politics, the neoliberal Harper government is leading the nation without debate into a Foreign Investment Protection Agreement (FIPA) with China, investing heavily in the prison industrial complex and armed forces, and enacting sweeping omnibus bills that blatantly undermine environmental law, deregulate Canada's waterways, and reduce protection for species at risk. Meanwhile on the international level, Canadian mining and oil companies practice predatory environmental injustice throughout the global South.

Yet communities are not idle in the face of these and other injustices. From localized actions to mass movements, from Line 9 walking tours to Idle No More, and from anti-pipeline demonstrations to the Elsipogtog Nation's iconic anti-fracking protests, activists in Canada and abroad are challenging the inequitable distribution of environmental impacts and amenities, and the integrated effects on our bodies, health, and lands. This issue of UnderCurrents responds to these and other movements, asking the following critical questions: What are the connections across and between environmental and social movements? How have the commitments of these movements changed over time, and who has been affected by these shifts? What bonds have been broken and what new ones have formed? Whose voices are heard, and whose voices are silenced? In a world facing continued environmental and political crisis, how can we learn to build alliances and live together for today and tomorrow?

UnderCurrents is interested in featuring both creative and scholarly work, including essays, poetry, photographs, visual submissions, video, audio, mixed formats, and more. Features could contribute to, but are not limited by, the following considered in relation to environmental justice:

- Alliance building
- Animal studies
- Arts, activism and the environment
- Child poverty, health, and the environment
- Classism
- Community responses to environmental disaster and state violence
- Critical race and critical disability studies and activism
- Critical urban planning
- Decolonization and resistance
- Educating for environmental and social justice
- Environmental health
- Environmental racism
- Gender and the environment
- Indigenous sovereignty
- Migrant justice
- Mining justice and resource extraction
- Neoliberal globalization
- Poverty
- Prison-industrial complex in Canada
- Reproductive justice

See the following sources for excellent introductions to Canadian environmental justice.


Agyeman, Julian, Peter Cole, Randolph Haluza-DeLay, Pat O'Riley, eds. *Speaking for Ourselves: Environmental Justice in Canada*. Vancouver: U British Columbia P, 2009. Print.

Gosine, Andil, and Cheryl Teelucksingh. *Environmental Justice and Racism in Canada: An Introduction*. Toronto: Edmund Montgomery P, 2008. Print.

Selby, David, and Tara Goldstein. *Weaving Connections: Educating for Peace, Social and Environmental Justice*. Toronto: Sumach P, 2000. Print.