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Environmental Eros: From Ecofeminism to Eco-Queer

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Environmental Eros: From Ecofeminism to Eco-Queer

By

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M.A., The Ohio State University, 2009

Advisor: Lynne Huffer, Ph.D.

An abstract of a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in 2016

Abstract

Environmental Eros: From Ecofeminism to Eco-Queer
By Lauran Ellene Whitworth

Professor of environmental studies Catriona Sandilands avows, “Environmentalism needs queers” (2001). This dissertation probes the inverse of Sandilands’ proclamation: do queers need environmentalism? In *Environmental Eros: From Ecofeminism to Eco-queer*, I examine representations of nature as a mode of political messaging. My case studies are three modern American counter-cultural movements: 1970s ecological feminism, the Radical Faeries (ca. 1979 to today), and contemporary ecosexuality. In each of these back-to-the-land efforts, sexuality and environmental ethics inform one another in ways that have yet to be fully examined in existing scholarship. Previous research has focused on how discourse of “the natural” has been deployed against marginalized groups (Gaard 1997)—for example, the supposed unnaturalness of same-sex relations, but there has been less focus on nature imagery used by these groups to further their *own* political projects. The latter is the focus of this dissertation, which offers new insights into environmental aesthetics in LGBTQ politics.

Using my archival training and my certification in Film & Media Studies, I conduct close readings of understudied print ephemera and experimental films produced by figures associated with these LGBTQ back-to-the-land movements. I argue that the environmental ethics of these movements have been overshadowed by the sexually liberatory nature of these political projects, which have too often been dismissed as outmoded relics of a bygone era. Instead, the dissertation demonstrates that these materials exhibit an *environmental eros* in the Greek sense of the word “eros,” a desire for that which is greater than the self. By fostering a deeper connection with the environment, these movements challenge how we think about sexuality and reconfigure how we see ourselves in relation to both human and nonhuman others. Ultimately this project not only makes a case for the inclusion of these lesser-known movements in histories of American environmentalism, it also rethinks how sexuality, subjectivity, and the natural world are interrelated, a philosophical intervention especially relevant in our current ecological moment.

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Introduction: Erotic Environs

> To read and to write is to become entangled; to allow oneself to be snagged upon or enmeshed amidst a profusion of other texts and ideas. Born of these twin entanglements, criticism is necessarily an act of collaboration between an author and a churning mass of other things.
> —Fran McDonald and Whitney Trettien, *Thresholds*[1]

Barbara Hammer's film *Dyketactics* (1974) opens with medium distance shots of naked women cavorting in a field. Amidst close-ups of nipples and labia is footage of flowers, flora superimposed over genitalia, sun-kissed, intertwined legs, and bare feet digging into grass. It is a film quintessentially of its era and ever far removed from our own. Researching queer eco-erotics for the past couple of years has made me accustomed to the varying degrees of befuddlement and discomfort that my dissertation materials spur—even, at times, from myself. In fact that "what is this?!" response is partly what led me to pursue this project, as a challenge to myself to engage objects and ideas so seemingly out-of-sync with our contemporary ethos. Yet, it is this very "out-of-sync-ness" that I seek to mine in exploring 1970s ecological feminisms, the beginnings of the Radical Faerie "movement" (ca. 1979), and contemporary ecosexuality.

Film scholar Greg Youmans recounts his experience showing Hammer's 1974 *Menses* to a group of students, who sat silently and, I imagine, awkwardly for the duration of a film that juxtaposes recitations of ludicrous writings about menstruation with a group of women triumphantly stealing feminine hygiene products from a grocery store. Youmans observes, "I discovered afterward that they [the students] had assumed that the film could not possibly have been meant to be funny. I slowly spoke the events of

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[1] This quotation is excerpted from a description of *Thresholds: a digital journal for criticism in the spaces between*. Fran McDonald and Whitney Trettien are the journal's coeditors (accessed March 5, 2015,

Menses back to them, without inflection […] until the students at last recognized and appreciated the film's intentional absurdity" (2012, 117). Youmans notes that scholars like Margo Hobbs Thompson, who writes about 1970s feminist arts journals, assume that these "subcultural artworks […] are earnest and free from irony," thus making them "difficult for a contemporary audience to take seriously" (quoted in Youmans 116-17). Notice the paradox in Thompson's observation that these materials are so sincere that they *cannot* be taken seriously. Youmans explains, "the assumption that a contemporary queer viewer can only, at best, laugh at such work and never with it is quite pervasive" (Youmans 117). Ecological feminisms, the Radical Faeries, and contemporary ecosexuality share an ability to elicit skepticism from modern audiences—be it outright confusion, a generalized repulsion, or self-assured snickers; yet, as I will argue, the discomfort that drives these reactions is part and parcel of an *environmental eros*, an ethical eco-erotics, that I aim to delineate throughout this project.

In the chapters that follow, I conduct close readings of understudied print ephemera and experimental films produced by figures associated with three modern American counter-cultural movements: 1970s ecological feminisms, the advent of the Radical Faeries (ca. 1979), and contemporary ecosexuality. I argue that the environmental ethics espoused by these groups have been overshadowed by the sexually liberatory nature of these political projects. In other words, it is easy to read these movements as erotic in a strictly sexual sense because they conjure a bygone era of sexual liberation through their embracing of non-normative practices like group sex and non-monogamy. Instead, I locate in these archival materials an environmental eros in the Platonic sense of the word eros, a desire for that which is "larger than the self" (Willett

2014, 10), which pushes the boundaries of traditional sexuality. This environmental eros posits nonhuman nature as a source of not just sensual but ethical inspiration—a facet of these back-to-the-land movements that is largely taken for granted in existing scholarship. By desiring in and with nature, these eco-erotic philosophies: 1) challenge how we think about sexuality (who and what can arouse); 2) embrace human/nonhuman hybridity, a theoretical move that resonates with much contemporary feminist and queer theory; and 3) model relationality between human and agential nonhuman others that welcomes interdependence and challenges human supremacy. Ultimately, these groups espouse posthumanist ideals with the potential to reconfigure how we see ourselves in relation to the world around us.

Returning to viewers' (and also scholars') ambivalence regarding these materials, our hesitation or inclination to laugh dismissively at these artifacts seems to say as much about us as it does these movements. From our current, post-essentialist position these groups are naïve and even problematic vestiges of failed liberation projects (while contemporary ecosexuality is an emergent movement, its calls to "make love with the earth" nonetheless harken to earlier periods of so-called "free love" embodied in 1960s countercultural slogans like "make love, not war"). As devotees of queer theory, many of us have learned to be skeptical of liberationist logic that leaves us trapped in what Michel Foucault has called "the repressive hypothesis" (1990). Foucault's term describes the widespread belief that the seventeenth century ushered in a repressive quelling of speech about sex when, in actuality, it spurred "a steady proliferation of discourses concerned with sex," "a veritable discursive explosion" (18, 17). In an oft-quoted excerpt, he avers, "We must not think that by saying yes to sex, one says no to power; on the contrary, one

tracks along the course laid out by the general deployment of sexuality" (157). I suspect that this wariness of "the agency of sex" (157) is partly what drives dismissal of these sexually liberatory materials; however, I also wager that the prominent eco-centric philosophies of 1970s ecological feminisms, the Radical Faeries, and contemporary ecosexuality also offend our post-essentialist sensibilities. After all, the word *naïve* is derived from the Latin *nativus* for "natural" or "native" and is defined as "without insincerity," "earnest," and "down to earth."[2]

In his "Performing Essentialism: Reassessing Barbara Hammer's Films of the 1970s" (2012), Youmans remarks:

> Within the field of queer theory, the term *performativity* usually circulates as the antithesis of essentialism. If the former signals queer anti-identity, then the latter is what the early-1990s queer turn was turning against: a shameful past of naively totalizing, ideologically rigid, and damagingly exclusionary gay and lesbian identity politics. (120)

Inspired by Eve Sedgwick, "who insisted on the constructive and 'reparative' potential of queer performativity and performances of self" (120-21), Youmans reads Hammer's 1970s films as "ritual performances" "that bring the performative and the essentialist together" (121). This notion of "ritual performance" can be applied to each of the movements I address here: lesbian feminists perform an essentializing alignment with the environment that ultimately overwhelms the bounds of human/nonhuman; Radical Faeries practice an erotic other-oriented spirituality that deploys joy and wonder to combat queer shame; and ecosexuals, the most performative of my case studies, enact a campy eco-erotics that queers our affective registers and what we have come to expect of contemporary environmentalism. In each of these literal and philosophical returns to

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[2] "Naïve," *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed January 1, 2015, ahttp://www.oed.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/Entry/124881?redirectedFrom=naive#contentWrapper.

nature, ritual is not only "an ideal microcosmic experience," it is also "an endurably important means of invoking a new order of things in the macrocosm" (Kay Turner quoted in Youmans 122). The "ritual performances" discussed in the following chapters show us glimpses of worlds within worlds that are not just idyllic sites of escape; they are loci of a non-normative relational ethics of eros that return us to the world at-large changed.

Throughout this project, I track the erotic ecological ethics that are part of what I am calling environmental eros. I chose the word "eros" intentionally to emphasize its ancient usage, in which eros "is erotic but not narrowly sexual" (Willett 2014, 17). As Lynne Huffer explains, "if ethics begins with the Socratic question, how are we to live? eros is the name we can give to a mode of living both expressed and unexpressed, both appearing and not: an uncertain, embodied, disruptive encounter of subjects with others" (2013, 12). The confusion spurred by these eco-erotic writings and films—Are they serious? Are they ironic? Are they essentializing? Are they performative?—is a case in point of eros as a "disruptive encounter." After all, the word disturb contains within its etymological roots the word "turbid" meaning to confuse, bewilder, or muddy.[3] While the playful tenor of my materials assuage the more violent and precarious workings of eros illuminated by scholar-poet Anne Carson (1986),[4] my case studies nonetheless disturb, as they embody a "desubjectivating ethics," a Foucauldian "ethics of the self as a self-undoing practice of freedom" (Huffer 2013, 30).

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[3] "Disturb," *Online Etymology Dictionary*, accessed March 3, 2015, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=disturb&allowed_in_frame=0.

[4] In *Eros the Bittersweet* (1986), Carson describes the push and pull of eros and the desirous reach of the lovers. She maintains that "union" between these figures "would be annihilating" (62).

In viewing the environment through the lens of sexual politics (and vice versa), I offer *Environmental Eros: From Ecofeminism to Eco-Queer* as a different sort of sexuality studies project, one which does not hinge on identity politics but on challenges to the fixity of atomistic identity through erotic connections to nonhuman nature. Each of these so-called liberation movements entail eco-erotic configurations that challenge human exceptionalism and thus offer an alternative lens through which to imagine relations between humans and other species. Pink Floyd's lyrics to the song "Lunatic" declare, "You re-arrange me 'till I'm sane." Eros rearranges us until *we're* strange. Just as these movements and their artifacts create unexpected and uncomfortable encounters that render our present moment strange, eros has the potential to render us strange to ourselves. In the context of environmental ethics (versus interactions between lovers, as eros and the erotic are more commonly known today), the human subject becomes estranged from itself through these eco-erotic encounters, which makes room for connection beyond and outside the self. Thus, this more expansive being is ultimately reconstituted through a relational ethics that disavows the autonomy and supremacy of the human subject.

Back to Nature in Contemporary Feminist and Queer Theory

In the sections that follow, I give a very brief overview of feminist and queer engagements with nature to show the ways in which alignments of women and queers with the elemental have been both welcomed and admonished. The role of "the natural" has long preoccupied feminist theorists, particularly for the ways nature (the biological) and culture (the social) map onto feminist conceptions of sex and gender. In one camp

(nature), theorists root behavior in biological determinism. In the other (culture or nurture), traits are believed to be socially acquired. Although there are theorists who posit the biological and social as antithetical, there are others who argue that they not only mutually reinforce one another but that they are also radically entangled (Fausto-Sterling 2000), a perspective now popular in the environmental humanities (Cronon 1996, Morton 2007, Sturgeon 2008). In her canonical 1949 text, *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir explains, "Male activity […] has subjugated Nature and Woman," blurring the lines between nature and culture, as culture is buttressed by a discourse of "the natural" masking as science (2010, 75).[5] For this recognition of the twin domination of women and nature, a number of ecofeminist philosophers look to Beauvoir as a proto-ecofeminist (Mellor 1997).[6] Yet while Beauvoir may be useful for understanding how women have been aligned with "the natural" under patriarchy, she ultimately perpetuates a feminist suspicion of "the natural": "it must be repeated again that within the human collectivity nothing is natural, and woman, among others, is a product developed by civilization" (761). At stake for Beauvoir and the feminist epistemological interventions that follow are the ways in which culture has been deployed under the guise of the so-called "natural." Advocating to dismantle this association of women with nature (in contrast to some ecofeminists and cultural feminists, who embrace the association and re-deploy it),

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[5] While it is clear that Beauvoir perceives Nature as largely having been coopted by culture, it is important to note that she retains a sense of the natural. For example, on a number of occasions she concedes that there are "natural differentiations" between males and females, such as men's superior physical strength (766). She asserts that "these facts cannot be denied," yet she is quick to offer the caveat that "they do not carry their meaning in themselves" (46-47).

[6] Mellor quotes Beauvoir in *Feminism and Ecology*: "Man seeks in woman the Other as Nature and as his fellow being. But we know what ambivalent feelings Nature inspires in man. He exploits her but she crushes him, he is born of her and he dies in her; she is the source of his being and the realm that he subjugates to his will" (quoted in Mellor, 79-80). One also senses that Rosemary Radford Ruether is drawing from Beauvoir's theorizations of immanence and transcendence when she asserts, "It is characteristic of the male ideology of transcendent dualism that it cannot enter into reciprocity with the 'other'" (1975, 195).

Beauvoir maintains that if "woman" has been a socio-historical construct, one founded on claims of "the natural," then she can also be otherwise.[7]

Beauvoir's illumination of the mutual subjugation of women and nature resonates with American ecofeminist thought, which proliferates in the 1970s and 80s in cultural feminist texts like Rosemary Radford Ruether's *New Woman, New Earth* (1975), Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside* (1978), Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* (1978), and Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and The Scientific Revolution* (1980). While these ecofeminist configurations of women as especially aligned with the natural environment have been dismissed as essentializing and largely abandoned in contemporary feminist theory (see Mellor 1997; Sturgeon 1997; Warren 2000), feminist interventions into ecological issues have nonetheless increased in today's epoch of environmental justice and sustainability. The recent return to nature in feminist thought—after a period of denaturalization inspired by figures like Judith Butler and the widespread acceptance of social constructionism—can be viewed as part of this

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[7] Beauvoir challenges biological determinism, yet she retains sexual difference such that "woman" is not wholly culturally determined either (not all nature yet not solely cultural either). The gap between the two, for Beauvoir, is the space of women's potential liberation from "woman." She avers, "it is not the body-object described by scientists that exists concretely but the body lived by the subject. The female is a woman, insofar as she feels herself as such […] Nature does not define woman: it is she who defines herself by reclaiming nature for herself" (49). This last phrase "reclaiming nature for herself" is much more aligned with 1970s ecological feminism, which founded a burgeoning collective identity on nature imagery derived from ancient myths and indigenous history.
In a continuation of Beauvoirian thinking, Sherry Ortner's 1974 article asks, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" Seeking to understand "the universal devaluation of women," Ortner abjures biological determinism as an unsatisfactory explanation: "This is to say, not that biological facts are irrelevant, or that men and women are not different, but that these facts and differences only take on significance of superior/inferior within the framework of culturally defined value systems" (71). Instead Ortner proposes that woman's association with nature in the nature/culture results in her universal subordination. Like Beauvoir, however, Ortner is careful not to say that women are wholly associated with nature, since she perceives women as also ambiguously posited between nature and culture (86-87). In other words, woman cannot be fully relegated to nature, since she does participate in culture—even if in lower order culture. For example, women are more closely associated with children and reproduction (an act of nature), yet they are also charged with raising, teaching, acculturating, and socializing those children (an act of culture) (80).

naturalizing lineage.[8] To be sure, feminist philosophers of nature, including scholars in feminist science studies and feminist new materialism, distinguish themselves from their ecofeminist predecessors through their posthumanist inclinations,[9] yet they nonetheless deploy nonhuman nature to advance their own conceptual arguments. In other words, much recent theory uses animals, landscapes, and the material world as the basis for their imaginings of feminist and queer futures, but they rarely think these contemporary feminist and queer ecologies alongside earlier predecessors, such as ecofeminists or Radical Faeries. Examples include: Karen Barad's theorization of agential realism and the intra-actions of matter (*Meeting the Universe Halfway* 2007), Donna Haraway's work on trans-species relations (*When Species Meet* 2008), Stacy Alaimo's trans-corporeality (*Bodily Natures* 2010), Elizabeth Grosz's "insect ethics" (*Becoming Undone* 2011), and Hasana Sharp's "politics of renaturalization" (*Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* 2011). In much of this work, there is a move away from human intersubjectivity toward increasingly abstract admixtures and entangled contingencies that in many ways displace the human. The paragraphs that follow offer a survey of some of these contemporary feminist and queer returns to nature.

For Haraway, nature takes the form of "companion species," like South African wolf-dog hybrids, the northern hairy-nosed wombat, a moss dog found by her friend Jim, and even the comingling of her saliva with that of her Australian Shepherd, Cayenne

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[8] Lynne Huffer argues that Butler, "the most influential feminist philosopher of *de*naturalization," "increasingly relies on life as an anchor for the ethical theory she develops in her later work" (123). See "Foucault's Fossils: Life Itself and the Return to Nature in Feminist Philosophy" (2015) for Huffer's critique of feminist returns to nature through the transhistorical notion of "life itself."

[9] See Heather Davis' interview with Elizabeth Grosz regarding the egoism of sustainability. In this interview, Grosz states, "For Darwin, I believe, the idea that humans must become stewards of a nature that is now in jeopardy must be regarded as ludicrous and as narcissistic as much of human self-evaluation tends to be: humans are neither the problem nor the solution but a momentarily dominant or privileged species" (Davis 2012).

Pepper, intra-acting in “world-making entanglements” and “naturalcultural contact zones” (2007, 4-5). In response to the fact that ninety percent of cells in the human body are comprised of bacteria and other tiny microbes, Haraway poetically writes, “I become an adult human being in company with these tiny messmates. To be one is always to *become with* many” (4). Challenging dualistic and dialectical thinking of human versus animal and cultural versus natural, Haraway advocates for “becoming with” and “other worlding.” She insists that central to connection between species are “look[ing]” and “behold[ing]” from the Latin *specere*. She explains, “To hold in this regard, to respond, to look back reciprocally, to notice, to pay attention […] to esteem […] To knot companion and species together in encounter, in regard and respect, is to enter the world of becoming with, where *who and what are* is precisely what is at stake […]” (19).

Similarly, in *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art*, Grosz cross-pollinates Charles Darwin, Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze, and Luce Irigaray to think through forces of materiality and to put forth a nonhuman-centric concept of life, in which the human is “one among many species” (2011, 2). Grosz is interested in processes that “enable life to erupt from certain mixtures of chemicals, to complicate and enable materiality to undergo becomings, and to generate living beings of all kinds, within which both individuals and species […] also become more and other than their histories through their engagement with dynamic environments” (2). In ways that connote filmic engagements with nature discussed in the following chapters, Grosz too perceives ecology and the material world as a mode of transcendence that “opens up forms of life outside, beyond, or after the human” (2-3). Like Haraway and other philosophers of trans-species ethics, Grosz offers examples of symbiosis and human/nonhuman

entanglements; for instance, ant species that maintain "intertwined 'melodies'—duets—with other living species, particularly fungi, with whom they co-evolve" (184). This particular type of fungus breaks down leaves, rendering them more edible to the ants; in return, the ants tend to the fungus. In this same section, entitled "Art and Animal," Grosz links human production of art to "the sexual forces of animals," asserting that "the resources of nature […] become the raw materials of the human arts" (7). For example, the colors and patterns used by animals to attract their mates often inspire human fashion. The scents that lure bees to flowers are emulated in perfumes (7). Such phenomena lead Grosz to argue that the "human arts are thus as inhuman as the human itself is: both are the transformation, the reworking, the overcoming of our animal prehistory and the beginning of our inhuman trajectory beyond the human" (186).

This turn to environmental aesthetics, which Grosz does even more explicitly in her final chapter, an analysis of aboriginal desert art by The Martu Women's Painting Collective, is also found in the work of queer theorist José Muñoz. Instead of the biological, Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia* (2009) contains metaphorical environments, such as Ernst Bloch's term "wish landscapes," as a means of illuminating "future affective worlds" of queer possibility (5, 27). Of particular interest to this discussion of "the natural" in contemporary feminist and queer theory is Muñoz's analysis of visual artists Andy Warhol (1928-1987) and Jim Hodges (b.1957), both of whom infuse their work with ecological imagery. Muñoz addresses Warhol's camouflage paintings, a series the artist began in 1986, as well as Jim Hodges' mural *Oh Great Terrain* (2002)[10] and asserts that both Warhol and Hodges "remak[e] the natural in a fashion that enables the viewer to

[10] A 2007 exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis, MO, "Remember Heaven: Jim Hodges and Andy Warhol," may have inspired Muñoz's chapter "Just Like Heaven."

envision a new world," a "queer utopian 'wish-landscape'" (140). In this same chapter, Muñoz discusses Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* and Marcuse's reference to Orpheus and Narcissus, whom Muñoz reads as queer figures associated with nature but outside of reproductive and heteronormative schema: "Queer aesthetics attempt to call the natural into question. The Orphic and Narcissistic represent a queer potentiality within the realm of the natural that has been diminished by a certain ordering or perhaps even a hijacking of the natural" (139). Muñoz reclaims these mythological figures associated with nature in the service of queer futurity and likewise uses environmental imagery in the form of horizons and landscapes to explore the possibilities of queer utopia: "queerness as lyric and modality are […] potentially transformative, allowing for new horizons and vastness of potentiality" (141).

Most recently, feminist thinkers in both the humanities and physical sciences have entered debates surrounding the Anthropocene, a word increasingly used to describe the anthropogenic destruction of ecosystems that marks our current geological era. Conference panels and entire conferences abound on the topic, which has also received attention in major feminist journals. The latest issue of *philo*SOPHIA, a journal of feminist continental philosophy, is a special issue dedicated to "Anthropocene Feminisms" (January 2016), and *GLQ*'s recent special issue "Queer Inhumanisms" (June 2015) contains feminist and queer inquiries into the ecological. Dana Luciano and Mel Y. Chen, guest editors of "Queer Inhumanisms," explore how the boundaries between the human and nonhuman "rub on, and against, each other, generating friction and leakage." They ask, "When the 'sub-human, in-human, non-human' queer actively connects with the other-than-human, what might that connection spawn?" (186). Through an overview

of "queer inhumanisms" in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, Roderick Ferguson, Jasbir Puar and others, Luciano and Chen assert, "the figure of the queer/trans body does not merely unsettle the human as norm; it generates other possibilities—multiple, cyborgian, spectral, transcorporeal, transmaterial—for living" (187).

It is with these possibilities of generative "friction and leakage" that I return to earlier incarnations of "multiple," "transcorporeal," "transmaterial" living, which offer us historical precedence for these contemporary projects. By creating this simulated conversation, bringing the "now" of feminist and queer theory and ecosexuality to the "then" of 1970s ecological feminism and the early days of the Radical Faeries, I hope to create encounters that reveal a historical continuity where one has not necessarily been seen before. This recursive move, bringing the past in conversation with the present, is a reparative one, in Sedgwick's sense of the word (2002).[11] And it stems from a sense that contemporary feminist and queer ecological theory must often cut off their own history and along with it previous manifestations of these now popular posthumanist abstractions to appear especially novel and "beyond the human." This contemporary move toward in- and non-humanisms, coupled with our entrenched suspicion of essentialism, leaves projects such as 1970s ecofeminism and the Radical Faeries relatively under-theorized. Such "avoidance tactics" enable us to bypass the cringe-worthy earnestness of these

[11] In Chapter 4 of *Touching Feeling*, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're So Paranoid You Probably Think This Essay is About You" (2002), Sedgwick draws from Melanie Klein to delineate several characteristics of paranoid reading and paranoia in general, including that it is anticipatory and mimetic as well as a project of exposure (130). In contrast to this "hermeneutics of suspicion," a term she borrows from Paul Ricouer, reading reparatively is "to surrender the knowing, anxious paranoid determination that no horror, however apparently unthinkable, shall ever come to the reader *as new*; to a reparatively positioned reader, it can seem realistic and necessary to experience surprise […] Because the reader has room to realize that the future may be different from the present, it is also possible for her to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly reliving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently from the way it actually did" (146).

earlier eras of ecological thought when it might be most generative for us to sit with them, "to take [their] absurdity more seriously" (Youmans 127).

In that spirit, let me return to Hammer. Inherent in Hammer's title *Dyketactics* are several interlocking words that I perceive as through lines connecting 1970s ecological feminisms, the Radical Faeries, and contemporary ecosexuality: tactics, tactility, and tackiness.[12] The cultural artifacts that drive this project are tactical in their overall efforts to deploy environmental imagery in the service of their respective movements' philosophies as well as in the specific stylistic traits utilized by the poets, artists, and filmmakers I address (for example, Barbara Hammer's use of stop-motion photography and superimposition). The content of these materials as well as their stylistic effects emphasize the tactile, the haptic, and the erotogenic. And this touch, be it literal or philosophical in the sense of contingencies and mutual regard, undergirds the other-oriented ethics that are the hallmark of each of these movements. These haptic communitarian ethics are also what bring these eco-philosophies *into contact* with contemporary feminist theory. Touch, as Haraway poetically describes it, "ramifies and shapes accountability […] Touch does not make one small; it peppers its partners with attachment sites for world making. Touch, regard, looking back, becoming with—all these make us responsible in unpredictable ways for which worlds take shape" (2008, 36).[13] Lastly, these materials are tacky. Not only are they seemingly passé, sticky subjects that we cannot seem to shake, but they are also excessive: the sex-positivity,

[12] Many thanks to Aaron Goldsman for his sharp insights about the ways in which Hammer's title encapsulates these elements.

[13] Grosz also emphasizes the haptic in *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (2011): "Universal forces—gravity, light, heat; the forces of wind, sun, rain, moon, and planets […] touch us unmistakably, not through predictive understanding that is required in the sciences or in forms of rational belief, but only through our bodies, our living bodies. Art touches living bodies and induces transformations in those bodies which affect and move them and change art in the process" (188).

essentializing nature imagery, campy performances, erotic poetics, wild costumes (or more often, a lack of apparel altogether), nonsensical neologisms, even their earnestness, their joy (one Radical Faerie writes, "the joy has been almost to[o] much to bear" (Treelove 1975, 42)). In an era when we are seemingly underwhelmed by the sounding of environmental alarms, these performative eco-philosophies overwhelm us in generative ways.

"QueerNatureCultures"[14]

Environmental Eros: From Ecofeminism to Eco-Queer attempts to think the queer and the ecological together, a tricky task in light of the denaturalizing tendencies in queer theory, a field steeped in anti-foundationalism and what Sedgwick and others have deemed "anti-biologism." Scholarship specifically attuned to queerness and nature has often focused on how rhetoric of "the natural" and biological determinism have been used against marginalized groups—indigenous peoples, women, people of color, and queers. For example, in "Toward A Queer Ecofeminism" (1997), Greta Gaard examines the social construction of "the natural" in Christianity and colonialist rhetoric. Deploying a queer ecofeminist lens, she elucidates "the ways in which queers are feminized, animalized, eroticized, and naturalized in a culture that devalues women, animals, nature, and sexuality" (119). But what is absent from Gaard's analysis and others like it is consideration of how queers have represented themselves in relation to nonhuman nature, an avenue of inquiry that has spurred some scholarly attention but which begs for further critical engagement.

[14] I borrow the title of this subheading from David Bell's article "Queernaturecultures" in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010): 134-145.

Until recently, "queer" in ecocriticism has mostly been a stand-in for the peculiar versus a reference to queer-identified beings (Seymour 2013, 13). While this trend is changing, one can still find contemporary surveys of literature and the environment that altogether neglect gender and sexuality. For example, Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism* (2012) offers an overview of American ecological philosophy but devotes only a couple of pages to ecofeminism and queer ecology. As is indicative of much environmental humanities scholarship, sexuality and gender are not central to Garrard's overview of ecological literature. This is also true of histories of American environmentalism. Benjamin Kline's *First Along the River* now in its fourth edition (2011) devotes a mere paragraph to ecofeminism, including this vague comment on its contributions: ecofeminism "offers a positive alternative dichotomy for human interaction among the genders and with nature" (87).[15]

Much existing eco-oriented scholarship in the humanities and certainly in the sciences confirms anthropologist Kate Weston's assertion that "environmentalism and queer politics seldom seem to intersect" (quoted in Seymour 2013, 1). Weston attributes this estrangement to "a narrow association of ecology with visible landscapes and sexuality with visible bodies bounded by skin. In the pages of journals, as in popular culture […] the field itself merely offers a place to suffer or to frolic, a simple backdrop for the playing out of sexual politics" (quoted in Seymour 2013, 1). Accounting for the lack of queer engagements with the ecological, literary scholar Nicole Seymour cites queer theory's "negative turn," including the "anti-social thesis," as a hindrance to "the

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[15] David Pepper's *Modern Environmentalism* (1996) devotes a subsection in his chapter "Radical Environmentalism" to ecofeminism, even parsing out different strands of ecofeminist philosophies, such as "cultural/radical ecofeminism" versus "social ecofeminism" (106). I suspect that Pepper's inclusion of these materials is due to his writing in the 1990s, a time when ecofeminism was particularly controversial (hence numerous 1990s anthologies are devoted to the subject).

development of queer ecological stances" (5). She maintains that

> without a perspective that is at once ecological and queer, we cannot intervene in some of the most pressing intellectual and political conflicts of the contemporary era; we cannot adequately address oppression, especially interrelated oppressions; and we cannot effectively interpret a great deal of the cultural and artistic output of the past several decades. (17)

In this spirit, *Environmental Eros* brings Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and the environmental humanities into conversation in order to mine LGBTQ eco-centric cultural production for the ways in which ecological imagery both shores up certain sexual identities and simultaneously undermines the sanctity of the autonomous human subject through trans-species contingencies and communitarian ethics. By making environmental aesthetics and ethics central to my analysis, I aim to redress Weston's observation that in ecocritical studies the environment is often "a simple backdrop for the playing out of sexual politics" (quoted in Seymour 2013, 1).

My work builds on interdisciplinary scholarship in queer environmental studies, such as that found in the oft-cited anthology *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 2010). This collection of essays addresses topics ranging from queer animality to toxic discourse, focusing on both queer environmentalism as well as "eco-normativity" in conventional environmentalism (di Chiro 2010). *Queer Ecologies* illuminates three ways in which sexual politics and the politics of the natural have informed one another: rhetorically through sexological and medical discourse (i.e. who and what are considered un/natural), which would likely include Gaard's queer ecofeminist examination of religious rhetoric; biopolitically through regulation of nature-spaces (for example, the ways in which fears of the queer, particularly male homosexuality, became associated with urban degeneracy and were one

of several factors spurring the American National Parks movement—an effort to reignite masculine vigor and restore national character); and socio-culturally as sites of queer resistance. Examples of the latter include ethnographies of actual queer communities, such as land dyke communities in rural Oregon and Fire Island off the coast of New York City, a haven for urban gay men, as well as fictional accounts of so-called gay or queer pastoralism in literature and film (think: *Brokeback Mountain*).

Environmental Eros exemplifies this last mode of queer ecological inquiry by approaching environmental aesthetics through the lens of sexuality studies. Unlike much existing queer ecological scholarship, my interests are simultaneously philosophical, anthropological, and aesthetic. I examine actual sites of queer resistance—lesbian-feminist communes, Radical Faerie sanctuaries, and ecosexual performances; however, my access to these sites and the environmental ethics espoused there is not only through archival materials, such as writings by self-identified lesbian-feminists, Radical Faeries, and ecosexuals, but also through illustrations and films produced by figures associated with these movements. Importantly, these visual materials themselves serve as a mode of queer relationality, as these groups collaboratively fashioned an LGBTQ ecological iconography of sorts. This iconographic sharing transpired as these print materials circulated amongst these communities—for instance, the editors of the Radical Faerie periodical *RFD* cut and pasted drawings from other rural journals into their magazine because they were short on reader submitted art and graphics (*RFD*, Spring 1976)—as well as in more inadvertent ways, such that Radical Faeries and ecosexuals draw inspiration, even if unknowingly, from earlier ecological feminist practices and tropes.

Accessing these politics of nature through the aesthetic is fitting for these "naturecultures," a neologism that embodies the mutual imbrication of nature and culture (Haraway 2003, 3). Elizabeth Grosz stresses the import of this interplay between art, nature, and culture when she asserts, "art is a detour of nature, so nature is transformed through art into culture, into history, into context, into memory, into narratives which give us, the living, a new kind of nature, one in which we can recognize or find ourselves, one in which we can live, survive, and flourish" (Grosz 2011, 189). The print and filmic materials that I consider here are aesthetic flourishes that attempt to depict and model flourishing queer naturecultures. My bringing the environmental humanities into conversation with Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies is necessary to do justice to these naturalcultural phenomena. Furthermore, this trans-disciplinary frame illustrates the possibilities of a "queer way of thinking environmentally and ecologically" as well as "an environmental or ecological way of thinking queerly" (Seymour 2013, viii).

My case studies are queer in a traditional sense of the word, since they are chock full of same-sex desire as well as trans-species erotics; yet, they are also stylistically queer in the ways in which they aestheticize these environmental ethics and shirk conventions of genre. This is most evident in the films I address, which are experimental amalgams of documentary film, eco-poetic nature films, and avant-garde autobiographies. I incorporate film into this project because it is uniquely positioned to capture the "ritual performances" of these eco-erotic movements. All of the films that I engage—those of Barbara Hammer, James Broughton, and Beth Stephens—contribute to existing conversations regarding *performative documentaries*, a term developed by documentary film scholar Bill Nichols.

Nichols understands the word "performative" as a "dramatization and self-conscious theatricality," which he explains moves the documentary genre away from "its most commonsensical purpose—the development of strategies for persuasive argumentation about the historical world" (1994, 94). Instead, performative documentaries contain a "window-like quality of addressing the historical world around us," which "yields to a variable mix of the expressive, poetic, and rhetorical," and "blurs yet more dramatically the already imperfect boundary between documentary and fiction (94). Furthermore, performative documentaries "mak[e] the viewer rather than the historical world a primary referent […] These films address us, not with commands or imperatives necessarily, but with a sense of emphatic engagement that overshadows their reference to the historical world" (94). Apropos for my focus on environmental eros, performative documentaries "stress […] qualities of duration, texture, and experience" (95). Film scholar Thomas Waugh applies Nichols' concept of performative documentaries to post-Stonewall lesbian and gay films, including Barbara Hammer's 1975 *Superdykes* (1997). Youmans reads this as an effort to eschew charges of essentialism lobbied against many gay liberation documentaries of this period:

> Waugh's queer recuperation of 1970s gay and lesbian filmmaking as performative documentary was both an effort to grant many films historical and political legitimacy as documentaries (against their not-infrequent dismissal as solipsistic works of the avant-garde), and an effort to demonstrate that they are more performative, which is to say less essentialist, than previously thought. (120)

My consideration of films by Hammer, Broughton, and Stephens enriches this ongoing conversation about the performative nature of LGBTQ documentaries and, at the same time, helps me establish these films and the movements from which they emerge as "ritual performances" that involve complex imbrications of sexuality, spirituality, and

subjectivity beyond mere escapes into or alignment with nature. Nichols perceives performative documentary as an "attempt[t] to reorient us—affectively, subjectively—toward the historical, poetic world it brings into being" (99).[16] This is an especially fitting description for environmental eros, which, I argue, drives this affective re-orientation that Nichols describes. As Ann Carson reminds us, "properly a noun, eros acts everywhere like a verb" (63). Hammer, Broughton, and Stephens' films as well as the writings that comprise the subjects of my close readings do not just exude environmental eros, as though it is a substance we can locate within them. Instead, these films and writings are performative artifacts that picture historically contingent, eco-erotic phenomena that then stage further encounters with their contemporary readers and viewers each time they are stumbled upon.

In Chapter 1, "Into the Woods: Environmental Eros in 1970s Lesbian-Feminist Aesthetics," my artifacts are illustrations from feminist arts and political periodicals, such as *Amazon Quarterly, So's Your Old Lady,* and *WomanSpirit*. These publications circulated amongst feminist and lesbian-feminist readerships, including those occupying women's land communities. As one might expect, nature imagery is a prevalent trope in American feminist cultural production of this period, in which metaphors of human growth as trees, drawings of shells and tubers, and female-centric myths rife with nature symbolism proliferate. I bolster this archival research with close readings of the experimental films of avant-garde filmmaker Barbara Hammer (b. 1939), whose early

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[16] On the self-realizing aspects of performative documentaries, Youmans writes, "It is eye opening to think about the media works created in the inventive and exhilarating first decade after gay liberation as *performative documentaries.* The way the term suggests that play-acting (performance) leads to reality (documentary) brings attention to the 'realizing' aspects of gay and lesbian film performances: the way that the archive of queer subjects acting up on film in the 1970s has so much to tell us about who queer people in fact were at the time, but also the way that, through performance for film, queer people sought and at times succeeded in realizing new selves" (120).

work from the 1970s reveals the use of nonhuman nature as a vehicle of sexual and self-expression. This alignment of female-bodied beings with the natural environment has often been dismissed as spurring essentialism; however, I counter these critiques through close readings of this nature-driven iconography. In so doing, I show that much art and literature from this decade does more than merely equate women with "the natural." These films and illustrations demonstrate that these rural locales were not solely utopian escapes but agential actors in radical re-imaginings of feminist subjectivity and relationality. In fact, as much as this environmental imagery was used to help ground lesbian-feminist identity (and it was), it simultaneously challenged notions of an autonomous human subject in ways that complicate these reductive claims of gender essentialism.

Equally subject to critique for their gendered conceptions of the natural world, the Radical Faeries comprise the subject of my second chapter, "'An Ecology of Spirit': The Radical Faeries and 1970s-80s Gay Pastoralism." Chapter 2 provides an overview of the primary tenets of the Radical Faerie Movement, inaugurated in 1979 under the leadership of gay rights activist and Mattachine Society founder Harry Hay (1912-2002). This historical contextualization buttresses visual analysis of print cultural artifacts, including periodicals like *RFD: A Country Journal for Gay Men Everywhere*. In the second portion of the chapter, I introduce American experimental filmmaker James Broughton (1913-1999), who spent time among the Radical Faeries and in many ways was a cultural icon to the group. Like Barbara Hammer's films, Broughton's later films have often been abjured as quintessentially "California" and too whimsical to warrant serious scholarly engagement. I contest this claim by analyzing Broughton's films alongside Radical Faerie

literature to elucidate the ways in which nature-inspired mysticism and sexual expression intersect. My analysis makes clear that the environment sustains queer modes of belonging amongst humans as well as between humans and nonhuman nature. Taking up Film and Media Studies scholarship on Broughton, in particular, I refocus attention away from Broughton's *The Bed* (1969), a sexual liberation film if ever there was one, and toward his critically acclaimed but lesser known film *This Is It* (1971). *This Is It* illustrates my overall take on Broughton and the Radical Faeries as liberatory not for their uninhibited sexuality in and of itself, but for the ways in which the eco-erotic spurs a renewed and highly intersubjective sense of self in a communal setting founded on the power of joy and wonder.

True to its ancient Greek roots as generative, a source of world making, and chaotic, eros drives the affective incongruence of my case study in Chapter 3. "'From G-Spots to E-spots': Ecosexuality's Campy Environmentalism" considers eco-erotics in a contemporary context by engaging the ecosexuality movement and specifically SexEcology, a term coined by Annie Sprinkle and her co-collaborator and partner Elizabeth Stephens. This artist duo posits "SexEcology" as "a new field of research exploring the places sexology and ecology intersect" ("Sexecology 101"). In this chapter, I use Stephens and Sprinkle's performances and their recent documentary, *Goodbye Gauley Mountain: An Ecosexual Love Story* (2013), to demonstrate ecosexuality's concurrent urgency and playfulness embodied in a theatrical environmental sensibility that I call *eco-camp*. While ecosexual thought and experience do not necessarily move us beyond the human, they do challenge human exceptionalism through a mode of florid performance, spectacle, and ostentatious (eco)sex-positivity that champions new forms of

relationality between humans and other earthly inhabitants. Ecosexuality's campy ecological ethics offer us an alternative to the didacticism and moralism that characterize much contemporary environmentalism. In the spirit of carnival, the tragi-comic and, at times, parodic tone of ecosexuality generates an affective dissonance that spurs us to feel the full effects of our discordance with nature. While Chapters 1 and 2 arguably emphasize attunement with nature that risks reinforcing an idyll that is increasingly unsustainable, ecosexuality's campy eco-erotics simultaneously entertain and bewilder (and perhaps even arouse), stirring an unsettling array of responses for these unsettling times.

Anne Carson views eros in a similarly unsettling and "unnerving" vein in the *Lysis*. She writes: "When he inhales Eros, there appears within him a sudden vision of a different self, perhaps a better self, compounded of his own being and that of his beloved. Touched to life by erotic accident, this enlargement of self is a complex and unnerving occurrence" (1986, 35). Carson's words, "touched to life by erotic accident," are an apt description for the eco-erotic encounters discussed throughout this project. These histories, writings, illustrations, and films both depict "contact zones" and create them, as my interactions with them have felt very much like the "complex and unnerving" "world-making entanglements" of eros (Carson 35; Haraway 2008, 4). They have simultaneously drawn me in and repelled me, elicited my inquiries only to further mystify me. They have evoked self-doubt, as massive research projects are wont to do, and concurrently emboldened me, reminding me of the import and promise of interdisciplinary scholarship. This project is ultimately my attempt to attend to these historical moments and their materials in the same way that they advocate we tend to each other.

Chapter 1

Into the Woods: Environmental Eros and 1970s Lesbian-Feminist Aesthetics

> I knew as a child that the world is alive, […]
> I heard voices in rocks and whispered to plants
> And never questioned their response […]
> So, I talk to the rocks, hear voices in the sea,
> Honor shared embraces with plants and moon.
> My voice again can howl, cry, or speak strong,
> And my soul by the teacher I trust.
> —Grace Hardgrove, "Animism"

> i am the green child
> i am the child of rain
> green leaves curl and speak
> from my tongue
> white flowers open
> white flowers are my eyes
> my green arms
>   spill out
> the rushing rivers
> my fingers are green
> with the waters
>   sounds
> birds sing in my mouth
>   ancient songs.
> —Barbara Mor, "Bitter Root Rituals"

The 1970s saw a convergence of ecological and feminist projects—the first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970, the same year that San Diego State University ushered in the country's first Women's Studies department. Also in 1970, PBS broadcast *Our Vanishing Wilderness*, the first American television series devoted to raising environmental awareness.[17] As many feminists lobbied for federal passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and reproductive rights in *Roe vs. Wade* (1973), there were simultaneous ratifications of environmental legislation, such as the Clean Air Act (1970) and the National Environmental Policy Act (1970), which created the Environmental

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[17] The program began as a book project by Shelly Grossman, a nature photographer, and his wife, Mary Louise Grossman, a nature historian and writer. "Our Vanishing Wilderness," PBS, accessed March 4, 2016, http://www.thirteen.org/ourvanishingwilderness/.

Protection Agency. In 1971, Canadian activists founded Greenpeace, an anti-nuclear environmental organization, whose radical direct actions have secured its presence in global environmental politics still today. With this confluence of environmentalism and women's rights, the 1970s was also a harbinger of environmentally-minded feminist activism and theory. Although feminist scholarship on American ecological feminism makes clear that ecofeminism was not "a monolithic movement" and was instead "a fractured, contested, discontinuous entity" (Sturgeon 1997, 3), much ecofeminist thought nonetheless agreed and continues to concur that there are connections between patriarchy's degradation of the environment and its oppression of the disenfranchised, be they women, people of color, or the poor. As feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether explains:

> Since women in Western culture have been traditionally identified with nature, and nature, in turn, has been seen as an object of domination by man (males), it would seem almost a truism that the mentality that regarded the natural environment as an object of domination drew upon imagery and attitudes based on male domination of women. (1975, 186)

Throughout this dissertation, I use the terms "ecological feminism" and "ecofeminism" interchangeably. Earlier scholarship on ecological feminism(s) more clearly demarcates between these terms, particularly during the 1980s and 90s when many feminists rejected the gender essentialism inherent in much American ecofeminism. For example, in *Feminism and Ecological Communities: An Ethic of Flourishing* (1998) philosopher Chris Cuomo explains,

> I prefer to think of my work as *ecological feminism*, in an effort to keep emphasis on feminism, and also to distance my approach somewhat from other work done by self-titled ecofeminists […] 'ecofeminism' is an umbrella term referring to forthright attempts to link some versions of feminism and environmentalism, and 'ecological feminism' refers to the particular subset of ecofeminist approaches […] On the whole, I find that

> a large amount of ecofeminist work has focused too exclusively on the objects of oppression (such as women and nature), and has not adequately explored the connections among the various forms and functions of oppressive systems. (6)

While I agree with the reasoning behind Cuomo's distinction, I find her commentary indicative of debates in the 1990s over the usefulness and pitfalls of ecofeminism, which I am not interested in rehashing in this chapter. Furthermore, the label "ecofeminism" seems to have circulated much more frequently in the 1990s than in my case studies from the 1970s, in which few writers and artists identify explicitly as ecofeminists and many indeed demonstrate their awareness of systemic inequality and intersectionality. I nonetheless use both ecological feminism and ecofeminism as shorthand for eco-centric American feminists of the 1970s and 80s, all the while acknowledging that there are disparate environmental philosophies and ethics that comprise these catchall categories. Environmental philosopher and historian Karen Warren credits French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne's *Le feminisme ou la mort* [*Feminism or Death*] (1974) with bringing the term "ecological feminism" into circulation. As texts like Ruether's *New Woman, New Earth* (1975), Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside* (1978), Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* (1978), and Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and The Scientific Revolution* (1980) demonstrate, the environment was at the forefront of feminist thinking—from academic theory to feminist print materials to experimental filmmaking (Warren 2000, 21).

In this chapter, I go back to nature as it was depicted and understood by 1970s feminists to delineate an environmental eros, in which nonhuman nature is itself a source of erotic inspiration and increased sexual and self-awareness. As one might expect, nature imagery is a prevalent trope in American feminist cultural production of the 1970s, where

metaphors of human growth as trees, drawings of shells and tubers, female-centric myths rife with nature symbolism, and talk of menstruation and moon cycles abound. Much of this alignment of female-bodied beings with the natural environment has been dismissed as spurring essentialism and positing an eternal and ever-nurturing feminine more attuned to and thus best equipped to protect Mother Earth.[18] However, I argue that these critiques have too quickly renounced ecofeminism and thus neglected its impact on current trends in feminist and queer environmentalism. Expanding on earlier work by Catriona Sandilands (2002), I perceive these eco-erotic environmental ethics "as contributing to (rather than opposed to) contemporary 'queer' cultures" (154).[19] While the 1970s feminist artifacts I consider in this chapter may seem out of synch with our contemporary era, I demonstrate that these "cultures of nature" (Sandilands 135) permeate present-day engagements with the natural world, such as posthumanist philosophy and feminist new materialism.

As is evident in 1970s feminist print culture, film, and photography, the land was integral to many feminists' self and communal identity and their efforts to achieve cultural visibility. Whether women were literally returning to the land by establishing collectives and communes such as those still in existence today in southern Oregon (Sandilands 2002), or whether their returns were more figurative, much feminist art and literature of the 1970s involved women and the environment. This chapter examines the aesthetics of this once emergent back-to-the-land culture to explore how everyday nature

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[18] For a discussion of this alignment of women and nature as a form of "strategic essentialism," see Catriona Sandlilands' "Lesbian Separatist Communities and the Experience of Nature," *Organization & Environment* 15.2 (2002): 131-163.

[19] I do not want to disregard the ways in which some facets of second-wave feminism are incompatible with contemporary queer and queer feminist philosophies, such as the bi-, trans-, and queer-phobic factions of second-wave feminism. While my archival materials showed little to no evidence of explicitly trans-phobic ideologies, it is easy to see how discourse of "the natural" deployed in ecofeminist thought could be (and has been) deployed against trans and gender queer folks.

imagery like trees, tubers, and rocks became vehicles for 1970s feminist politics, sexuality, and spirituality. While this feminist iconography contains depictions of nature as an ideal setting for the establishment of individual and communal identity, thus infusing these materials with an oft-criticized escapist air, these illustrations and films demonstrate that the natural environment was not a utopic elsewhere but an essential actor in transformative re-imaginings of subjecthood and relationality. If, as scholars like Chaia Heller and Greta Gaard warn (Gaard 1993), contemporary environmentalism has portrayed nature as a defenseless damsel in distress in need of rescue by an eco-friendly knight in shining armor, the ecological feminists engaged here queer this heteronormative romantic narrative in ways that stand to benefit current environmental rhetoric. Furthermore, this aesthetic investigation has historical implications, as I contend that this nature imagery and its concomitant environmental ethics reveal a radical ethos often neglected in histories of second-wave feminism.

My primary materials of focus are illustrations from the out-of-print arts and political periodicals *Amazon Quarterly, So's Your Old Lady,* and *WomanSpirit*, which circulated amongst feminist and lesbian-feminist readerships, including those occupying women's land. I buttress this analysis with close readings of the experimental films of avant-garde filmmaker Barbara Hammer (b. 1939), who was active in Bay area feminist circles in the 1970s and 1980s and whose early films reveal the use of nonhuman nature as a vehicle of sexual and self-expression. Putting Hammer's 1970s films *Dyketactics*, *Women I Love*, and *Multiple Orgasm* in conversation with feminist and lesbian back-to-nature efforts not only confirms the crossover between these political and artistic realms (for example, photography workshops held on women's land attracted city-based artists

like Hammer), but it also demonstrates the pervasive use of the natural environment as a mode for transcending gender inequality and as a means of establishing a sort of feminist iconography. Close examination of these iconographic tropes and trends confirms that much art and literature from this time does more than merely equate women with the natural environment. These visual materials reflect burgeoning conceptions of feminist, particularly lesbian-feminist, selves shored up by synchronicity with the earth.

In "Free for All Lesbians: Lesbian Cultural Production and Consumption in the United States during the 1970s" (2007), Heather Murray offers a detailed socio-historical overview of this developing environmental aesthetic and places it in a specifically lesbian context. While lesbianism was a point of particular tension among 1970s feminists (Echols 1989), many women's land communes were founded as part of a burgeoning lesbian separatist movement. Texts like Jill Johnston's *Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution* (1973) and foundational feminist theory, such as Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1980), attest to the belief that "feminism was the theory, lesbianism the practice" (Valentine 1997, 111). Murray observes that the 1970s "marked a moment when the meaning of being a lesbian took on a broader feminist significance, referring to more than simply a homoerotic attraction but a distinctive sensibility and culture" (251). She continues, "lesbianism was not simply a sexual orientation, then, but a sexual preference and a chosen feminist philosophy" (252). "Lesbian Nation," one of numerous ideologies circulating at this time, included "a separatist women's economy, institutions, cooperatives, values, and culture," including "barter systems, back-to-land movements, and communes" (252-53). Some lesbians took

this attempt at "nationhood" literally by joining so-called "land dyke" initiatives throughout the United States (253).

The land dyke periodicals examined here complicate histories of American feminism, which typically disparage or altogether neglect ecofeminism. Alice Echols mentions ecofeminism only once in her well-known history of radical feminism, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (1989). Echols equates ecofeminism with cultural feminism, which she eschews in favor of radical feminism:

> Eco-feminists and feminist pacifists have argued that women by virtue of their closeness to nature are in a unique position to avert ecological ruin or nuclear annihilation. This thinking marks a further departure from radical feminism, which maintained that the identification of women with nature was a patriarchal concept. (288)

By contrast, "radical feminists defined ecology and militarization as human rather than [solely] feminist issues" (288). Discussing tensions between radical and cultural feminism's end goals, Echols perceives the former as attempting to overthrow the sex-gender system altogether while the latter relies on an "affirmation of femaleness" that hinges on sexual difference (287). Thus Echols affirms that in the late 1980s "the question of whether feminism entails the transcendence of gender or the affirmation of femaleness [had] become the new feminist fault line" (287).

Lillian Faderman's *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (1991) does not discuss ecofeminism but does devote a few pages to lesbian separatists, whom she argues were "foils" to "more moderate lesbians" and thus made the latter's political demands seem all the more reasonable (245). Faderman briefly discusses land trusts and lesbian communes, but she says nothing of

their environmental ethics.[20] Instead, she posits these back-to-land efforts as failed utopian endeavors. Referencing Sally Gearhart's *The Wanderground* (1978) and Rochelle Singer's *The Demeter Flower* (1980), two novels in which women rule society with nature's blessing, Faderman writes: "Separatism as a permanent way of life, however, as most of the separatists discovered, was easier in science fiction than in reality" (240). With regard to sexuality, Faderman identifies lesbian-feminists as "left out of the socially sanctioned pursuit of sexual pleasure in the 1970s" (249). She explains,

> in the midst of rampant sexuality among heterosexuals and homosexual men, lesbians in the 1970s either felt the new 'sexualization' to be irrelevant to their old lifestyles or—as lesbian-feminists—were too busy designing the Lesbian Nation to turn their attention to what they generally regarded as the triviality of sex. (247)[21]

Faderman's desexualizing of lesbian-feminists is at odds with the eco-erotics palpable in the land dyke literature and illustrations that I discuss below.

As is clear from even these brief summaries, these rather reductive narratives of ecofeminism and lesbian-feminism cannot account for the imbrications of sexuality, subjectivity, and spirituality evident in these back-to-land aesthetics. Even works featuring lesbian-separatist communities like Dana Shugar's *Separatism and Women's Community* (1995) and Gill Valentine's "Making Space: Lesbian Separatist Communities in the United States" (1997) reduce these land dyke communities to failed utopian

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[20] For more information on the daily operations of these land dyke communities, see Catriona Sandilands' "Lesbian Separatist Communities and the Experience of Nature," *Organization & Environment* 15.2 (2002) and Gill Valentine's "Making Space: Lesbian Separatist Communities in the United States" in *Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, Marginality and Rurality* (1997). One of the only compilations of its kind, *Lesbian Land* (1985, ed. Joyce Cheney) is a rich anthology of writings by individuals who lived in lesbian communes during the 1970s and 80s. A handful of the communities featured are still in existence today.

[21] In a befuddling move, Faderman simultaneously conflates lesbian feminism and cultural feminism and elsewhere parses these groups when it comes to "lesbian sexual radicals" and sexual exploration: "The cultural feminists were unimpressed by the argument of lesbian sexual radicals that until women are free to explore their own sexuality any way they wish, they will never be truly free […] Cultural feminists believed that lesbian sex must be consistent with the best of lesbian ethics" (1991, 250).

projects (Sandilands "Rainbow's End" 2002). Catriona Sandilands' ethnographic study of lesbian-separatist communities in Southern Oregon demonstrates that there was "a growing recognition that utopian possibility is a horizon rather than a concretely achievable project" (2002, 41). In challenging Shugar and Valentine's narratives of the demise of lesbian separatism, Sandilands argues that these histories not only neglect that a number of lesbian-separatist communes from the 1970s have actually survived in one form or another, but these narratives also reveal their "own utopian pretensions" (44). Thanks to the benefit of hindsight, these 1990s narratives present then-contemporary feminist theory as "free from its past mistakes, an intellectual utopia that is, somehow, cleansed and does not commit the same apparently authoritarian mistakes that the separatists did" (44). In other words, by distancing themselves from rural separatism, Valentine, Shugar, Echols, and others "declare themselves separate" (44). Sandilands reads this "historical and spatial compartmentalization of rural lesbian separatism, in the midst of 1990s queer and anti-essentialist theorizing" as "a rupture between utopian vision and realpolitik which reifies both and equates utopianism with theoretical oversimplification, with inattention to diversity, and with a blinding ideological rigidity" that neglects the ways these land dyke communities "have themselves revised the relationship between utopian and worldly politics in a rather different way" (45).

Like Sandilands, I too am advocating for a reconsideration of 1970s ecological feminisms beyond failed socio-political experiments; however, departing from Sandilands' solely ethnographic focus, I attend to the cultural production of these lesbian-separatist communities, specifically the environmental eros driving this imagery. If eros is "an uncertain, embodied, disruptive encounter of subjects with others" (Huffer 2013,

12), then in the spirit of eros, I revisit these land dyke communities with the hopes that they will disrupt our existing narratives of feminist and environmental history, revealing new worlds and ways of being in the process.

Lesbian-Feminist Print Culture

Writing on naming patterns in titles of lesbian and gay periodicals, Robert Ridinger distills a number of recurring themes and imagery, including mythological and ancient symbols like labrys (or double-headed battle axes) and cowrie shells. On the prevalence of nature imagery—plants, animals, the ocean, the moon, weather—in lesbian and gay periodicals, he observes:

> The ideas of oneness with the planet and the desirability of creating or renewing one's ties to it via ceremonies of various kinds achieved a rebirth in the 1960s and 1970s, assisted in no small part by the rise of an active environmental movement and the popularization of eastern philosophies stressing the interconnection of all life. (1996, 62)

Ridinger's survey of lesbian, feminist, and lesbian-feminist titles confirms the pervasiveness of nature imagery in art and literature of this period. Titles like *Maize*, *Calyx*, *Grapevine*, *Amaranth*, and *Grassroots* emphasize growth, sustenance, and fertility (61). Insect imagery in titles such as *Chrysalis* connote transformation and unfurling, even "coming out." Political and oceanic imagery converge in *Lesbian Tide*, *Gay Tide*, and *Making Waves*, all of which convey "restless energy and unceasing activity" (62). Ridinger illuminates the prevalence of this turn to nature in lesbian and gay artistic, literary, and political publications, but he falls short of exploring the philosophical underpinnings and ethical implications of this imagery.

Relatively little has been written on lesbian-feminist aesthetics. In one of few journal articles devoted to 1970s lesbian-feminist print culture, Margo Hobbs Thompson investigates the various styles and subject matter of this 1970s "lesbian sensibility." Focusing on the interplay between sensibility and identity, Thompson argues that "lesbians confronted a constant challenge to embrace sexuality without being reduced to it" (2006, 414). While Thompson acknowledges the role of nature imagery in lesbian-feminist art and even analyzes illustrations also studied here, she ultimately oversimplifies this "woman/nature association" as an alignment that merely "recast[s] as positive many of the negative stereotypes associated with women in patriarchal society" (420). In what follows, I probe the nuances of lesbian-feminist ecological representation, illuminating a number of aesthetic trends and their philosophical effects: a melding—not just an alignment, but a transfiguration—of human subjects and nonhuman nature, metaphors of human bodies as terrain, motifs of lips and speech, a rejection of speciesism and human superiority, and what I am calling environmental eros, in which the environment is a source of increased sexual and self-awareness but also the basis for transfiguration that renders the subject radically contingent.

Janice Grantz's logo for *A Woman's Place*, women's land in Athol, New York, shows two hands emerging from a tree.[22] From one hand a white bird, perhaps a dove, takes flight while the other hand grips a hammer. As many women's land publications confirm, hand tools were preferred to power tools when cultivating and constructing on the land. Here, the implication is that these women are extensions of nature, communing with "her" and building community with what "she" provides as her felled trees and

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[22] This illustration can be found in Joyce Cheney's *Lesbian Land*, p. 20 (Minneapolis: Word Weavers, 1985).

branches may later become construction materials for living quarters. The commune's name appears to grow out of the tree roots and that name is also the foundation upon which the tree rests. The implications of a symbiotic relationship are clear. Just as the tree provides for its inhabitants, so too those inhabitants will support the tree.

That these women were building literal structures while also building community and consciously constructing lesbian culture is clear in the frontispiece of the first issue of *WomanSpirit*, a quarterly periodical published from 1974-1984 by women's land pioneers and longtime partners Ruth and Jean Mountaingrove. In the inaugural 1974 issue, the editors wrote an expository piece entitled "Why *WomanSpirit*?" On a page underscored by a life-like drawing of a sinewy plant root, they inscribed:

> We are feeling stirrings inside us that tell us that what we are making is nothing less than a new culture. What women are doing by exploring the spiritual sides of their lives is essential for the building of a new women's culture. We must decide what we will take with us on this creative journey. What parts of our experiences are valuable and needed for our continued struggle? What behavior, thought patterns, values, images, illusions, and artifacts of non-feminist culture will we choose to leave behind? As we continue to tear down the institutions and relationships that oppress us, we are also building, making, creating. (Autumn 1974, 1)

This root imagery is especially fitting for the founding statement of *WomanSpirit*, one of the first of an array of periodicals crucial in establishing and maintaining feminist and lesbian-feminist community at this time. The advent of *WomanSpirit* coincided "with the rise of the alternative feminist press network that flourished during the 1970s and 1980s in the United States" (Long 2008, 14). Like other 1970s feminist print ephemera, such as the Los Angeles-based *Lesbian Tide* (1971-1980), the first national lesbian newspaper, *WomanSpirit* began as a reader-written quarterly with a regional audience; however, over time, it achieved national distribution through sales in feminist bookstores and music

stores and through exchanges with other feminist presses (Long 2008, 14). Unlike many of these publications, which were produced in city centers, *WomanSpirit* was created at Rootworks, part of the Oregon Women's Land Trust (or OWL). Like its gay male counterpart, *RFD*, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 2, *WomanSpirit* focused on the lives of rural women and lesbians with hopes of building community beyond the urban centers most often associated with lesbian and gay life. Just as roots ground a plant, to return to "Why *WomanSpirit*?", so too print materials such as these were foundational for this emergent facet of lesbian culture and lesbian-feminist identity, an identity bolstered by a relationship with the environment.

In "A Country Lesbian Manifesto," the authors explain, "A lifestyle in which you must keep yourself warm, fed, and clean without central heating, plumbing, or plentiful jobs becomes a gratifying reinforcement of self-respect and strength. Which is for us a step in learning to live as a positive contributor to the environment around us" (Sankey and Benewicz 1973, 20-21). Here, we see a yoking of environmental stewardship with self-sufficiency that recurs throughout this branch of 1970s lesbian-feminist thought. It is clear that "going back to the land" was not only an effort to reconnect with nature and reorient one's life with natural cycles; it was also a means of proving self-reliance, an essential step for women who had for so long seen themselves as beholden to men. In ecofeminist philosopher Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (1978), Griffin poetically describes this shared resilience between herself and the environment around her: "The earth is my sister; I love her daily grace, her silent daring, and how loved I am *how we admire this strength in each other, all that we have lost, all*

that we have suffered, all that we know: we are stunned by this beauty, and I do not forget: what she is to me, what I am to her" (219).

Similarly, in a black-and-white line drawing entitled "Recognition of Likeness" by Claire Sagkins and dated 1976, traced fingers merge with small flowers [Fig. 1.1]. At the top of the composition are two interlocking circles, perhaps symbolic of the sun and moon, celestial entities to which these ecological feminists were particularly attuned. Poems and editorials from these periodicals reveal an interest in lunar cycles, as numerous articles discuss planting new seeds and crops with particular moon phases. The circles also connote Borromean rings, known as symbols of unity and interdependence in the study of ancient geometry. Often denoting the unity of God and humankind, the overlapping space of the interlocking circles forms an area deemed the *vessica piscis* or a *mandorla*, an ovular or seed-like shape associated with birth and creation (Mesa Creative Arts 2014). In feminist cultural products of the time, from guides to holistic medicine to almanacs, there was a clear effort to explain and treat bodily processes and ailments with knowledge derived from the natural world. "Recognition of Likeness" speaks to this striving for semblance and synchronicity as well as the aforementioned affirmation of self through nature. Note in the illustration that the outstretched fingers not only grasp and are enveloped by the pansies, but the thumbs and forefingers overlap and touch, as though it is through nature that one better knows, senses, touches oneself—or in the case that it is two separate beings touching hands, one another.

Other illustrations push the boundaries of this bonding of human and nonhuman nature even further. In "Inversion," a poem featured in *So's Your Old Lady*, Shelia Fletcher writes of "something shifting, thund'ring / in our bodies." She describes human

bodies as “cosmic ears” that “heard the earth rumbling with the spheres” (1976, 11). As the earth rapidly spins, the bodies become wind and seemingly for the first time, she writes, “we heard our own roar” (11). Lying together, the bodies ultimately become stars. The geological stirrings that Fletcher describes spur stirrings within human entities, who through this attunement with the earth not only begin to morph into natural entities like the wind and earth, but also hear the roaring within, an eco-erotic phenomenon also described in the subtitle to Griffin’s text, “The Roaring Inside Her.” Griffin expresses a similar accord with the earth and cosmos when she imagines what will be said of the coming age of women’s liberation: “The age when she learned to speak with the animals. The age when she discovered the seed. The age during which she wove truth about herself. The age when she joined forces with the Earth. When she listened and was heard. The age when she knew she was not alone. The Age of her Resonance” (174). Again, it is through nature—here the seed and animals—that these female subjects better know themselves and those around them.

This theme of resonance appears in yet another illustration from *So’s Your Old Lady*, in which a figure is connected to a gnarly tree [Fig. 1.2]. Like an umbilical cord, the tendril-like vein joins the tree and human-tree hybrid, whose legs, arms, breasts, and open mouth are barely discernable amidst the winding labyrinth of sinewy vines that compose the body. Flowers grow from the figure, suggesting that this linkage has fostered growth just as connection with the tree has generated a leaf. In a chapter entitled “Forest: The Way We Stand,” Griffin describes trees in a forest. She writes,

> The way we stand, you can see we have grown up this way together, out of the same soil, with the same rains, leaning in the same way toward the sun. See how we lean together in the same direction. How the dead limbs of one of us rest in the branches of another. How those branches have

> grown around the limbs. How the two are inseparable. And if you look you can see the different ways we have taken this place into us. Magnolia, loblolly bay, sweet gum, Southern bayberry, Pacific bayberry; wherever we grow there are many of us […] how each cell, how light and soil are in us, how we are in the soil, how we are in the air, how we are both infinitesimal and great […] (220-221)

Throughout the passage, Griffin addresses "you," and describes the trees' knowledge of their higher purpose as something this "you," presumably masculinist society, would not understand. In this extended metaphor, Griffin does not simply compare varieties of trees to diversity amongst a group of women; instead, women *are* trees—"the sugar pine, white-bark pine, four-leaf pine, single-leaf pine, bristle-cone pine […] each alone, yet none of us separable" (220, 221). Like the trees in Griffin's forest, the human-tree hybrid in the 1976 illustration [Fig. 1.2] takes a stand and is strengthened through its connection to the other plant.

An untitled back cover from a summer 1975 issue of *WomanSpirit* similarly emphasizes the convergence of female forms and organic matter [Fig. 1.3]. In this illustration, a woman has leaves for hair, twigs for fingers, and roots for legs.[23] With her head cocked back and a bare breast exposed, she positions her part human, part flora body to face the moon. The handwritten inscription on the drawing reads, "I am the world I love the world I am." The lack of punctuation enables multiple readings of the statement: "I am the world. I love the world I am"; "I am the world. I love the world. I am"; or "I am the world I love, the world I am." In each instance, being ("I am") is contingent upon a love for the world, thereby challenging Descartes' "cogito ergo sum" (I

[23] This same melding of human and tree form is in circulation today as is evidenced by the logo for the Hedgebrook women writers colony on Whidbey Island near Seattle. The logo contains a profile view of a human face with abundant foliage growing from the head and roots emerging from the figure's neck. Much like lesbian-land communities, the colony encourages creativity through female bonding, shared meals of locally-sourced foods, and communing in nature. See: https://www.hedgebrook.org (accessed March 4, 2016).

think therefore I am). In this instance, it is love for the world, even more specifically eros as feeling not exclusively thinking, that constitutes the subject. Furthermore, "I" and the world are coextensive, which defies the sanctity of the Cartesian subject as separate. The human/nature hybrids pictured throughout lesbian-feminist print culture are monstrous incarnations of these unsettling yet welcomed upheavals of the autonomous subject.

Feminist liberationist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether echoes these sentiments of reciprocity in *New Woman New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (1975), a text often quoted in 1970s and 80s ecofeminist circles. In imagining "a new social vision," she asserts:

> Society would have to be transfigured by the glimpse of a new type of social personality, a 'new humanity' appropriate to a 'new earth.' […] A society no longer bent on 'conquering the earth' might, however, also have more time for the cultivation of interiority, for contemplation, for artistic work that celebrated being for its own sake. But such interiority would not be cultivated at the expense of the community, as in monastic escape from 'the world.' It would be a cultivation of the self that would be at one with an affirmation of others, both our immediate neighbors and all humanity and the earth itself, as that 'thou' with whom 'I' am in a state of reciprocal interdependence. (211)

In these images from 1970s feminist and lesbian feminist print culture, we see literal transfigurations of the human form emblematic of psychic and social transformation that many 1970s lesbian feminists championed. Ruether writes, "Such solidarity is not utopian, but eminently practical, pointing to our actual solidarity with all others and with our mother, the earth, which is the actual ground of our being" (211). While the human subject is not altogether discarded, these illustrations are emblematic of a coextensive subjectivity that posits the thinking-feeling, erotic subject as mutually imbricated with the environment around it.

Essential to this newly imagined subjecthood is recognition of the erotic, a subject much discussed in 1970s feminist circles. In her 1978 text *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*, Audre Lorde avers, "The erotic has often been misnamed by men and used against women. It has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, the plasticized sensation. For this reason, we have often turned away from the exploration and consideration of the erotic as a source of power and information" (1984, 54). She continues, "We have been raised to fear the *yes* within ourselves, our deepest cravings" (57). Part of our maligning of the erotic, according to Lorde, is our separation of the spiritual from the erotic, a holdover of enlightenment thinking that insists on extracting that which is thought from that which is felt, sensed, and thus of the body. In the 1970s, it is clear that many feminists saw communing with nature as a means of traversing these polarities. Imagery from this time period reveals that the environment was a source of spiritual, ethical, *and* erotic inspiration, a phenomenon that I am calling environmental eros. Just as Lorde theorizes the erotic as a "reminder of [one's] capacity for feeling and joy," environmental eros understands the erotic as expansively sensual versus solely sexual. Explaining that the erotic is derived from *eros*, which she defines as "the personification of love in all its aspects—born of Chaos, and personifying creative power and harmony," Lorde explains, "when I speak of the erotic, then, I speak of it as an assertion of the life force of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives" (55). Even though I expand Lorde's figuring of the erotic beyond the exclusively feminine by tracking eco-erotics within female, male, and queer

circles, I nonetheless envisage environmental eros as a feeling-as-knowing that Lorde champions.[24]

While gardening, communal living, and sustaining oneself through one's labor were a source of strength and joy for inhabitants of women's land, the environment also inspired erotic expression. Often self-reliance and self-awareness, reciprocity with the land and others, and sensuality overlapped in ways that far exceed sheer sexual acts or statements of sexual identity. Just as Lorde understood the erotic as more than mere sexual stimulation, these lesbian feminists' erotic identification with the natural environment demonstrates radical understandings of human/nonhuman nature and the potential for reimagined relationality therein. This is especially evident in one of the most pervasive trends in 1970s and 80s feminist illustrations: the use of vaginal imagery coupled with floral, geological, and other organic matter. Susun Weed's drawing of the "Cunt Garden" at Laughing Rock Farm in Upstate New York contains various crops placed in the shape of a "c," as a concentric band curves around the central slit and hole, where the nutrient rich compost is stored (quoted in Cheney 1985, 79).[25] While Weed's cunt garden takes a disparaging term used against women and turns it into a fecund garden plot, creating parallels between composting and women's fertility, her autobiographical account of farm life reveals that nature is simultaneously a maternal figure and an ideal partner, a mother-lover of sorts.

Writing of her experiences on the farm, Weed reflects on the loss of former partners, who decided to leave her and the land community they had built together:

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[24] Even Lorde's explanation of the erotic uses roots as metaphors. She writes, "The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly *rooted* in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling" (53; emphasis added).

[25] This illustration can be found in Joyce Cheney's *Lesbian Land*, p. 79 (Minneapolis: Word Weavers, 1985).

> I grieved, I turned to the Earth for comfort. I lay on my belly in the garden, crying, and saw the Earth transform my sadness into food and medicine. 'It is only anger and resistance which make you miserable and powerless,' she told me, 'Open to change. Forgive, And ask for forgiveness.' Slowly I let go of my sense of loss and opened to the beauty and abundance of life. I forgave and asked for forgiveness. I experienced grace and renewal. I was led to understand that my task in this life is to act as a voice for the Earth, and especially for the plants; to heal people's fears of the green life and the green witch, and to reconnect women with the dark, life-giving, nurturing energies of the Earth. The rock and the soil, the weeds and the trees of Laughing Rock are my partners in teaching these truths. Mother Nature is my lesbian community and she is large hearted and true. She is always my next destination, full of surprises and generosity, and she is always waiting at home to hold me when I grow weary. (79)

Weed's commentary again indicates a perceived symbiotic relationship, in which humans "act as a voice for the Earth," nourishing the garden with their tears, and the earth heals, teaches, instructs, and consoles. Obviously, questions of if the earth can "speak" for itself are taken for granted by most 1970s ecological feminists and, as I will address in Chapter 3, such pitfalls of recognizing the earth as an agential subject continue to confound contemporary environmentalism. Though Weed's commentary and much of the environmental imagery discussed in this project relies on anthropomorphism to imbue "Mother Nature" with agency—here, "she" is depicted as a dutiful parent/partner "waiting at home"—Weed's understanding of the ecological entities of Laughing Rock as partners and teachers nonetheless reflects an interdependence central to environmental eros. The cunt garden is not only a playful coopting of a derisive term, it is a model for partnership that draws attention to pleasurable facets of the female body and the potential for not just sexual but erotic intimacy therein.

Similar alignments of female genitalia with organic matter are evident in Tee Corinne's *The Cunt Coloring Book*, which was published in 1975 and is still in print

today. The book combines dozens of vaginal portraits and drawings, many drawn from life with Corinne's friends and lovers as models, and was released as a mode of sex education to help women and girls better understand their anatomy and thus better achieve future sexual pleasure. Corinne, who was formerly lovers with Barbara Hammer, has a cameo in Hammer's film *Women I Love* (1976). At one point, Corinne is sitting at the kitchen table drawing a vaginal illustration that would become part of the coloring book. An August 1976 cover of *So's Your Old Lady* features one of Corinne's drawings containing a plant rife with flower buds adjacent to a cavernous abstraction, which for anyone familiar with Corinne's work at this time, would be legible as female genitalia. The drawing is enclosed within an ovular frame that connotes a seed or egg-like form. It is difficult to distinguish the flower petals from the folds of the vaginal form, as the two meld into one another. In another illustration featured inside the magazine, Corinne again uses an ovular frame. In intricate lines, she features a close-up of a vagina with the labia slightly spread. The vaginal lips are multi-layered, shaded in varying thicknesses of curving lines. Someone unfamiliar with Corinne's illustrations might read the image as some sort of biological abstraction—the interior of a seashell, a labyrinth, cavern walls, a enlarged cell or organism. In much of the vaginal imagery circulating at this time, one recognizes attempts to align the feminine with the natural and/or to posit that which is natural as feminine. Clearly, ecofeminists and lesbian-feminists were reversing dominant systems of value by reclaiming the discourse of the natural traditionally used to devalue women, as Sherry Ortner's "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" (1974) elucidates. Embracing their alignment with the natural not in opposition to culture but as a source of new, female-centric culture, lesbian-feminists posited nature and "the natural"

as a source of authority and empowerment. If women knew and celebrated the beauty and intricacy of flowers and flora in the environment, so too should they appreciate their own folds and intricacies and the possible pleasures such anatomy could yield. While this ideological move in ecological feminist thought was undoubtedly an effort to reverse dominant systems of value, I am arguing that this reimaging was emblematic of 1970s land dykes' reimagining of their relationships with the environment.

Such a line of thinking is apparent in "Embrace Within Flower," another illustration by Claire Sagkins that appeared in a February 1976 *So's Your Old Lady* [Fig. 1.4]. This child-like line drawing offers a dissected look into a flower, as layers of concentric circles represent enfolded petals that form around an ovular center. At first glance, the folds and dense center look like much of the vaginal imagery discussed above, another extended metaphor of nature's riches and the intricacies of the female body, but the center also appears to contain two highly abstracted figures with interlocking limbs and appendages. The heads form two overlapping rings, a symbol of interdependence, featured in Sagkins' "Recognition of Likeness" mentioned previously [1.1]. That the dense center could be both a plant ovule and two figures embracing suggests that nature is a source of pleasure between an individual and her natural surroundings as well as a generative means for better knowing others. Unsurprisingly "Ovules" was the name chosen for popular photography workshops run by lesbian feminists on land that once comprised the Oregon Women's Land Trust (Corinne, "The Blatant Image").[26] This drawing does not merely suggest that nature can be a site for enriched intimacy, be it

[26] Ruth Mountaingrove, mentioned previously as a founding editor of *WomanSpirit*, is also a photographer, and she orchestrated these workshops. Tee Corinne was a participant in Ovules and even though she did not live permanently on "women's land," she and her partner considered their rural estate "Poppyseed" to be "lesbian land" (Sandilands 2002).

sexual or not, but that the countless fruitful intimacies found in nature, such as the bee that helps to pollinate a flower like the one pictured, can be a model for humans to better recognize their interdependence not just with the environment but with one another.

Lesbian Land, an edited volume of stories, drawings, and photographs from women's land collectives, epitomizes the environmental eros that I have been describing. The back cover contains the following motto: "Our feet on the ground / Our heads in the clouds / Our hands on each other." The playful slogan confirms a number of principles that circulated within these communities. The land is the bedrock of these efforts at alternative living, and it inspires other-oriented ethics that expand one's sense of self. "Heads in the clouds" also alludes to the celestial cycles and rhythms by which many of these inhabitants live, celebrating solstices as is customary in pagan rituals, planting according to the phases of the moon, and understanding one's bodily cycles through larger natural and planetary rhythms like mercury retrogrades. The last sentence of the motto, "our hands on each other," is clearly sex-positive and complicates Faderman's desexualized depiction of lesbians of this period. This motto demonstrates a melding of environmentalism, sexuality, and spirituality or mysticism, which is also evident in poetry featured in lesbian-feminist journals.

In an untitled poem by Christine Mack Gordon, a figure "clung to the watersweeping branch / and became / the sea nymph / newly born of mother water / waiting for the stranger / who would soon / enter her world" (1976, 25). Numerous erotic poems feature similar imagery in which presumably human subjects are reimagined as riverbeds, animals, and bodies of land. In Dianna Hunter's "Dream Days," a woman is described as "a sodden, tawny river" and "a sunny throbbing day of spring." The speaker

is a “fish, breeze, / crazing-dancing insect.” The figures’ eyes and tongues meet, as the two “love dance on the leafy floor” (1973, 3). In Ester Doughty’s “yes,” human bodies are described as hills and soil: “Flying low over / your dark hills / the doors of my underside opened / into a well of unfathomable humus / dense space full of the hum / and lightdust of germination / Reverberations of rootworld richness en[r]apt me touched me / yes” (1976, 18). Notice here how the author offers the compound nouns “lightdust” and “rootworld” as linguistic amalgamations indicative of the human and ecological amalgamations that drive the poem’s imagery. Furthermore, that this erotic encounter reveals new realms and worlds, “lightdust of germination” and “rootworld richness,” is fitting for eros as a world-making phenomenon as it was in ancient cosmogonies. This sensual nature imagery of “dark hills,” “rootworld richness,” and “unfathomable humus,” the latter another word for compost or soil, results in an affirmation of sex positivity (note the “yes” of Doughty’s title) as well as an affirmation of intersubjectivity. Metaphors of fruitfulness abound in other poems like Linda McDonnell’s “For Astrid,” in which a woman, presumably Astrid, is described as “blackberry woman / raspberry woman,” whose wild hair and wild eyes reveal “deep brambled paths / a tangle of dark green scratchy leaves / hidden, luscious fruit” (1976, 24). By the end of the poem, the speaker’s mouth is “ringed red / with raspberry juice,” doubtless a metaphor for oral sex, and the lovers are held “in the dark arms of the moon.”

Likewise, the speaker in another McDonnell poem, “Written May 27th, 1976,” describes herself as “a parched land, / a dry-brush country,” and warns that her lovers’ “grazing hand / sends small sparks leaping / that die down slow / and flare up / in the night.” Again human bodies are compared to bodies of land, and lovemaking is likened to

an unpredictable forest fire (31). Pat Collins' poem "Like Rain" also functions as an extended metaphor of lovemaking but here with the rain: "We seem inside a steady, drumming rhythm / of rain now […] energy cracks, rolls and ripples / to a distant sky… / a last gusting shower along / our retreating action; we laugh / caught in its ripe flippancy. / Fields sleep, yielding, fragrant, after rain" (1976, 33). Adjectives like "ripe" and "fragrant" connote rain-soaked land after a storm but also the sweat and steam of post-coital bodies.

As these excerpts of lesbian-feminist poetry demonstrate, numerous art and literature from this period depict Mother Earth and her creations not only as sources of visual inspiration, ideal tropes for exploring and envisioning female sexuality, but also as sources of erotic energy. In Barbara Altar's article "A Sea Anemone was the Ocean's Vagina," the author writes about her erotic encounter with the ocean in literal versus metaphorical terms. A poem begins the essay: "And she did open to me / And I did open to her / And I came and I came / And I have come / To the Ocean / My Love, My Mother, My Sister, / My Goddess" (1976, 8). Presumably autobiographical, the author, who has been feeling displaced and despondent, seeks solace in the water of Sunset Bay and Cape Arago along the southern Oregon coastline. Again vaginal imagery melds with other organisms, this time with fauna instead of flora, as the speaker describes her erotic encounter with a sea anemone. The narrator recounts her experience, wading in the calm tide pools of Sunset Bay, wondering how she can be intimate with such cold and salty seawaters, and observing the ocean angrily crashing into the shores at Cape Arago. She describes encountering an icy green and lavender sea anemone, which she deems "the vagina of the sea." She writes, "And I saw to my amazement that she was utterly open to

me" (8). The speaker offers chants and odes to the ocean and is so aroused that she masturbates next to the sea creature, as the incoming waves and water brush up against her naked body.

During their intimate exchange, another sea urchin approaches the sea anemone, and when the speaker shoos the stranger away, the sea anemone closes. The speaker interprets this as a lesson in jealousy and sharing, topics certainly on the minds of lesbian-feminists involved in polyamorous and open relationships[27] and land dykes, more often spelled "landdykes" in yet another merging of sexuality, subjectivity, and the environment, trying to live communally and share resources and skills. The sea asks the speaker to pick up debris from its shore and, in exchange, offers the speaker shells and driftwood shaped like vaginas and seeds. While the speaker's interpreting shells and anemone as female genitalia easily reads as anthropocentrism, seeing nonhuman nature not as it is but in human form, the speaker nonetheless recognizes the sea as an active entity capable of teaching humans how better to live and interact with nonhuman nature as well as other humans. Furthermore, the subject's openness to an erotic exchange with the ocean suggests a radical reconceptualization of sex and sexual subjecthood that serves as a precursor to contemporary ecosexuality discussed in detail in Chapter 3. In the second portion of this chapter, I turn to the experimental films of Barbara Hammer to

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[27] Angela Willey has written about the racial implications of monogamy and polyamory. In "'Christian Nations', 'Polygamic Races', and Women's Rights: Toward a Genealogy of Non/Monogamy and Whiteness" (2006), Willey examines pro-monogamy depictions of polyamory as "backward" and "Other" and pro-poly exaltations of "free native sexualities," revealing that both camps operate on colonialist and Orientalizing depictions of the indigenous Other (quoted in Haritaworn, Lin, and Klesse's introduction to *Sexualities* 9.5, a special issue on polyamory). Willey's observations of Orientalizing trends in polyamorous discourse hold true in much lesbian-feminist literature of the 1970s, which, whether embracing polyamory or other presumed facets of indigenous or "primitive" culture, reflects Western ecofeminists' racial essentialism and appropriation of non-Western cultures. In much ecofeminist literature, non-Western women are exalted as quintessential ecofeminists yet are noticeably absent from ecofeminist anthologies and literature (Sturgeon 1997).

further elucidate this interplay of the ecological with lesbian-feminist sexuality and subjectivity.

Barbara Hammer's "Creative Geographies"[28]

This environmental eros in lesbian-feminist print culture is also apparent in experimental film and photography. American experimental filmmaker Barbara Hammer (b. 1939) came out as a lesbian in 1970—around the same time she enrolled in film school. In many ways, her coming out coincides with her coming into filmmaking, which explains why many of her early films focus on lesbian sexuality and visibility. While teaching English at Santa Rosa Junior College, Hammer sat in on a sociology class devoted to the history of women's liberation. This was Hammer's entree into feminist politics, which spurred her and others to form the Santa Rosa Women's Liberation Front (Hammer 2010, 14). In the 1970s, Hammer, who retorts "My Goddess!" throughout her memoir, formed a film distribution company called Goddess Films. She explains, "We feminists were studying ancient women goddesses at the time, hence the name. After a while it didn't interest me anymore and I left the goddess circle and dropped the name and logo" (76). Goddess imagery and the retelling of ancient myths and history pervade 1970s lesbian print culture, as is evident in texts like *Ripening* (1981) and *Dreaming* (1983), both subtitled "An Almanac of Lesbian Lore and Vision," as well as periodicals with allusions to ancient cultures like *Amazon Quarterly*. Because Hammer eventually recants her interest in goddess imagery and her filmic focus on nature and the female body altogether, the prevalence of environmental imagery in her early work has garnered

[28] "Creative geography" a term used by American experimental filmmaker Maya Deren (1917-1961), whom Hammer discusses in her 2010 memoir (234).

sparse scholarly attention. In fact, in spite of her prolific career, Hammer is rarely discussed even in the context of experimental cinema. When scholars have addressed Hammer's work (Kleinhans 2007, Vennell 2012), they often focus on her more contemporary feature-length films *Nitrate Kisses* (1992) and *History Lessons* (2000), eschewing her early films as essentialist relics of a by-gone cultural feminism.

For example, film scholar and *Jump Cut* founder Chuck Kleinhans maintains, "Time and experience have shown that the push to a we-are-all-alike politics of identity served unity and celebration at the expense of paying attention to crucial differences of race, class, age, and experience, and lifestyle" (2007, 170). Kleinhans reads Hammer's film *Still Point* (1989) as "her definitive reassessment of 1970s cultural feminism" (170). In the film, Hammer juxtaposes a woman sunbathing in a pastoral landscape, a Hammer trademark of the 1970s, with footage of a city dweller rummaging through trash on the streets of New York City. By acknowledging that not everyone is afforded the leisure of romps in the woods, Kleinhans interprets *Still Point* as Hammer's *mea culpa* for the romanticism of her earlier work. "For some feminist critics," Kleinhans notes,

> the romanticism of Hammer's work in the 1970s created a disturbing undercurrent. Some rejected what they viewed as her ideology of a separate mythic goddess spirituality or Amazon culture. Some found images of naked women in pastoral nature a flight from reality and her autobiographical depictions of her own body and those of her lovers a recapitulation of masculine patterns of looking. (171-172)

Furthermore, part of the avoidance of Hammer's films and arguably 1970s feminist and lesbian-feminist materials in general seems to stem from "a fundamental problem of historical analysis" brought on by a postmodern wariness of identity politics (170). As Kleinhans explains, "the modernist gay and lesbian stance sought affirmation in identity. Thus the act of 'coming out' was finding and declaring one's true identity

against explicitly social and political repression." Conversely, "the post-modern queer stance seeks affirmation in diverse and fluid performance. The performance of queer is a constant restaging and acting out always open to another way" (170). While I agree with Kleinhans' premise (and he himself encourages scholars to return to Hammer's work with fresh eyes), this line of thinking nonetheless is fodder for caricatures of the dowdy, essentializing lesbian feminist of second-wave feminism out-styled once again by the ever in and chic queer kids, as discussed by Sandilands above and more recently by Huffer (2013, 6). Such thinking overlooks the queer potential of Hammer's filmic beginnings (Youmans 2012).

Hammer herself denies that her films depict a universal lesbian experience. She asserts, "If I have put a 'lesbian life' on the screen in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is to have put an unfixed, transparent, morphing character as much influenced and made by the times in which she/he/we/I/you live as determined by illusory self-construction" (244). Hammer's early films reflect "the idea of *trying* to be a lesbian, of 'lesbian' as an utopian identity of the horizon as something to be strived for and aspired to—and even intentionally performed" (Sandilands 2002, 47). While Hammer employs the natural environment as a means of buttressing, even performing a burgeoning collective lesbian identity, she also fosters an environmental eros that complicates the solidity of that same subjecthood by blurring the boundaries of human and nonhuman nature and positing the latter as a source of erotic stimulation. Thus, it is my contention that Hammer's engagement with the ecological is actually one of the more dynamic and contemporarily relevant facets of her filmic oeuvre.[29]

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[29] Greg Youmans has also defended Hammer's 1970s films as strategically essentializing. He reads Hammer's early work "with rather than against other queer and feminist projects of sex-centric world

The subtitle of this section is entitled “creative geography” and is a phrase Hammer attributes to American experimental filmmaker Maya Deren (1917-1961), whom Hammer cites as an influence on her own work. Hammer writes,

> The physicality of Maya Deren’s films impressed me. I could feel the director’s energy in her presence behind the camera and in her movement on screen as an actor. Her invention of the concept of “creative geography,” montaging vast expanses of time and space through the unifying image of a woman walking, impressed me. (2010, 234)

Deren’s impact on Hammer is evident in the younger filmmaker’s 1970s work: the interplay of light and dark, the heightened sense of mobility and motion, emphasis on hands and feet and disembodied action like a hand completing a quotidian task, as well as both filmmakers’ placement of themselves as actors in front of the camera. Though Hammer has received less scholarly attention than some of her avant-garde peers, Hammer’s films are undoubtedly in conversation with other experimental films of the 1960s and 70s, for example, Stan Brakhage’s *Window Water Baby Moving* (1962) and Carolee Schneemann’s *Fuses* (1965).

In the spirit of experimental environments and “creative geographies,” Hammer’s *Dyketactics* (16mm, 1974) begins with superimposed footage of bare feet walking through grass and a person driving a convertible with the top down while fondling a dildo. From the start of the film, nature imagery is comingled with sexual exploration and pleasure. That all of the initial figures are in motion creates a shared momentum that infuses the film with a liberatory ethos. This sense of freedom is underscored by the

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making” (2012, 112). Youmans uses contemporary queer work, such as Jen Smith’s *Magick and the Gay Counter Culture* (2006), K8 Hardy & Lesbians on Ecstasy’s music video “Sisters in Struggle” (2007), and A.K. Burns and A.L. Steiner’s *Community Action Center* (2010), all of which pay homage to Hammer and/or other facets of 1970s feminism, as occasions for revisiting Hammer’s films. I expand on Youmans’ work by focusing less on the performative aspects of essentialism and instead on the environmental imagery and ethics that often accompany it. In other words, the environmental drives my analysis while queer performativity in films of the 1970s and today, which happens to transpire in nature in many of these films, is Youmans’ primary focus.

driver's sun-kissed and windblown hair, which visually rhymes with the gold and green grass that rustles beneath the bare feet walking through a field. In both scenes, the glare of the sun casts shadowy shapes across the camera lens. Throughout this assemblage of rapid shots of women cavorting in a field, close-ups of women's bodies, and a lovemaking scene with which the film closes, there is no dialogue, only the sounds of an electronic wind chime. Initially the film was comprised of one hour of footage of female friends partaking in nature rituals in the country. When editing the film, Hammer "cut the lackadaisical footage to shreds, only keeping the core of each image that showed touching. The hour became two minutes" (ultimately 4 minutes, 110 shots) (Hammer 2010, 27). She recalls,

> I asked Cris to film Poe Asher and myself pretending to make love (in all my filming of sexuality, it has never been documentary). I directed her to stroke us with the camera as if she were part of the sexual foreplay. I wanted an intimate cinema, not a cinema of distance that invited voyeurs. My favorite shot is when I asked Cris to wind the camera tight and set it on the ground between our bodies, and let it film by itself as we ran our hands from our bellies to our breasts. This was as close to showing the interior sensation of touch as I could imagine. (27)

Without realizing it, Hammer had created the first film representing lesbian-lovemaking to be made by a lesbian.

While the film is significant for its contributions to lesbian history and visibility, what is most pertinent to this discussion of nature and lesbian aesthetics is that the bulk of the film transpires in a tree-lined field and other settings outdoors. Throughout *Dyketactics*, Hammer visually aligns her female subjects, including the filmmaker herself, with the natural environment. In one shot, a woman leans against a tree. Her head and feet are cropped out of the shot, and the camera focuses on her side and back, as folds of her skin rest against the bark of the tree. The veiny creases of the tree's bark conjure

wrinkled and leathery human skin, and Hammer's use of superimposition furthers this visual rhyming of bodies of trees and land with human forms. In several shots, she superimposes facets of female anatomy—exposed breasts, nipples, and torsos—with elements of the landscape. In one scene, Hammer overlays the view of a woman's body from her feet as a backdrop to women running and dancing in a field. The woman's body serves as a faint terrain, the field upon which the women tread. In other examples, Hammer uses color to create visual parallels, as she focuses on red flowers, red clothing, and the red skin and seeds of a pomegranate. Elsewhere she includes close-up shots of hands and feet in water superimposed with images of a hand scooping out the fleshy interior of a melon. Pause the film at almost any point, and one finds an abstract collage of women's bodies superimposed with earthly materials like grass, leaves, and rushing water. Thus, it is easy to read Hammer's film simply as an homage to women, their bodies, and the bodies of land they inhabit; however, the technical aspects of *Dyketactics*—the use of superimposition and rapid editing which splices shots swiftly together—creates a melding of human subjects with their ecological surroundings. In this way, the film both pictures and generates eco-erotic sensory experience.

In many ways this coming out film (both for Hammer as a lesbian filmmaker and for lesbian sexuality more generally) is less about political visibility and more about sensuality, the haptic experience of women loving and attending to other women. Hammer asserts,

> But explicit sexuality was not the moving, internal force of *Dyketactics* (although it was an important part). It was sensuality, the experience of touch and sensation, that was heightened for me as a woman loving a woman. Sensual imagery that evoked physical sensations in the audience was its basic aesthetic principle. (2010, 99-100)

Even in the film's most explicit moments of lovemaking in an interior setting, the outdoors are prominent, as trees are visible beyond the bedroom windows, and the couple basks in prominent sunlight. For Hammer, the film "proselytiz[es] [her] newfound place, [her] lesbian homeland" (99-100). Notice her use of geographical metaphors as she imagines her budding sexuality as a "homeland." In this closing scene, the sunlight is as much a subject of the lovemaking as are the human figures, all "part of a continuum of nature and intimacy" (Kleinhans 2007, 170-171).

In one scene, a lizard crawls on a naked back. In another, fingers caress bare breasts and a shell necklace that hangs between them. Shots later, feet immersed in water are juxtaposed with feet walking on land and then back to water rippling over bare toes as they stroke the skin of another's leg. Hammer ensures that "every frame in the film has an image of touching" to facilitate "the audience feel[ing] in their bodies what they see on the screen" (2010, 64). And integral to these scenes of touch is not only the carnal connection between the human figures, but the role their environment plays in heightening and even sparking these erotic encounters. Hammer explains, "*Dyketactics* is the free and joyful expression of direct erotic energy […] the images were edited by and for the sense of touch: images of touching, eating, cleaning, washing, digging, climbing, stroking, licking, bathing, butting, hugging. Textural editing. Feel it. Feels good" (90). The latter is especially fitting for a filmmaker who deems her films "feeling images," "an inseparable unity of emotion of thought/idea/image and internal bodily states of excitement" (85). "Feeling" is apt for its dual meaning: feeling as in an emotion or affective state but also feeling as in touching. Hammer's film emphasizes elemental texture—blades of grass, ripples of water, even her opening and closing credits are

painted over a course stone wall—while accentuating bodily texture—close-ups of skin reveal pores, hair, moles, wrinkles. And these ordinary facets of the human body become entities worthy of filmic meditation in Hammer's hands. Hammer's film suggests that being in touch (literally) with the earth—sunlight on skin, water rippling across one's feet, hands immersed in the seed-filled flesh of fruit, grass and leaves against one's back—better enables one to touch another as well as oneself.

The touching and caressing we witness in *Dyketactics* and a number of Hammer's other films are not solely erotic for the sake of being sexually explicit, they are also ethical. Much has been written in phenomenological philosophy on touch and skin, but more recent work in film phenomenology has focused on tactility and embodiment, what some have called "haptic visuality" and "the skin of the film" (Sobchack 1992 & 2004, Marks 2000 & 2004, Barker 2009). Laura Marks defines "haptic visuality" as a

> kind of seeing that uses the eye like an organ of touch […] a way of seeing that does not posit a violent distance between the seer and the object […] Haptic visuality sees the world as though it were touching it: close, unknowable, appearing to exist on the surface of the image. Haptic images disturb the figure-ground relationship. (2004, 80-81)

In *The Tactile Eye: Touch and The Cinematic Experience*, Jennifer Barker expands Marks' "haptic visuality" to develop her theory of the haptic nature of the relationship between the viewer and the cinematic object, all engaged in what she calls a "field of tangibility" (2009, 27). Inherent in her theorizing of "the skin of the film," is her insistence on "texture as something we and the film engage in mutually" (25). In what

sounds reminiscent of feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray[30], Barker underscores this reciprocity and mutuality:

> The touch between our skin and another's brings our own perceptive and expressive act into greater relief. In pressing ourselves against the other, we can feel ourselves touching. We and the other render each other real, sensible, palpable, through mutual exposure. In some sense, the touch of our skin upon the world and that of the world on our skin is what brings us into being. (34)

Barker draws on the Latin root for touch, *contingere*, which generates words we associate with touch like "contact," but also unexpected derivatives like "contingency," "a natural affinity between two things" (32). Barker's commentary enriches our understanding of touch in Hammer's films. Hammer's insistence that every frame of *Dyketactics* contains instances of touch can thus be read as more than mere lesbian sexual escapades. As the analysis that follows makes clear, touch in Hammer's films reveals a complex interplay between subjectivity, tactility, and the erotic.

In *Dyketactics*, Hammer not only depicts touch, she elicits it. At times, Hammer's focus on bodily, geological, and organic surfaces—from human skin to tree bark to rocks—both invite and obscure the viewer's look, necessitating a "haptic visuality" that "requires the viewer to work to constitute the image, to bring it forth from latency" (Marks 2000, 184). Just as the figures in Hammer's films desire one another, the engaged viewer desires to get closer to "the skin" of her films to better discern the superimposed images, which themselves overlap and touch.[31] The touching within the film—both actual

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[30] Irigaray writes, "So many representations, so many appearances separate us from each other. They [men] have wrapped us for so long in their desires, we have adorned our selves so often to please them, that we have come to forget the feel of our own skin" (*This Sex Which is Not One* 1985, 218).

[31] Clearly not all viewers will find themselves intrigued or even aroused by Hammer's films, but I nonetheless maintain that even repulsed viewers may find their sense of touch heightened in these scenes of tactility and texture.

and technically through superimposition—and the film's solicitation of our touch spur what Barker calls an "erotic tactility" (40):

> In the palpable tactility of the contract between the film's skin and viewer's skin and in the extent to which that contact challenges traditional notions of film and viewer as distant and distinct from one another, the tactile relationship between the film and the viewer is fundamentally erotic. Film and viewer come together in a mutual exchange between two bodies who communicate their desire, not only for the other but for themselves, in the act of touching. (34)

It is this "erotic tactility" that brings us not only to the surface of Hammer's films but also to the "surface of ourselves," "feeling ourselves more keenly in the touch of our skin against the film's skin, a touch in which we and the film constitute one another and bring each other into being" (35). In Hammer's films, what spurs this tactility is not just footage of women caressing other women, but figures, including Hammer and her camera, touching, caressing, and engaging the natural environment. This "erotic tactility" is part and parcel of the environmental eros made manifest in Hammer's work.

That this "erotic tactility" is driven by environmental eros is evident in Hammer's other films of the 1970s, particularly *Women I Love* (16mm, 1976) and *Multiple Orgasm* (16mm, 1976). *Women I Love* reads somewhat straightforwardly as a filmic ode to women in Hammer's life. The film features portraits of friends and lovers, including Tee Corinne. While portions of the film contain footage and photographs of various women, many pictured camping and in the woods, the film is also an homage to nonhuman nature. Sounds of rain, thunder, birds, crickets, frogs, perhaps even pigs snorting are audible throughout the film. And it seems no coincidence that Hammer's technical experimentation, including stop-motion animation and time-lapse photography, takes place with fruit, vegetables, and crashing waves.

The film begins with close-up shots of the interior leaves of a cabbage. The camera's proximity enables the viewer to see fine details like beads of water pooling atop the dark green and purplish leaves. For the first few minutes of the film and prior to the title shot, Hammer deliberates on an array of vegetables— cabbage, lettuce, broccoli, artichoke, and cauliflower—while the sounds of chirping birds echo in the background. In the title shot of the film, *Women I Love* is featured in white fabric on a black backdrop, and blades of tall grass are visible in the left corner. In the shots that follow, Hammer uses stop-motion animation to unfurl the leaves of green lettuce. For the first few minutes of the film, there are no title figures as one might expect, no signs of the women the film's subject/"I" purportedly loves. This begs the question: are these vegetables, tall grass, and the earth from which they grow included among the figures that Hammer loves?

Even though portions of this film transpire indoors, the non-diegetic sounds of nature infuse the film with a sense of continuously being *en plein air*. This amalgamation of indoor and outdoor space is furthered in scenes in which yellow daffodils are pulled from a dishwasher, swept up with a broom, soaked in a sudsy sink with dishes, and clamped inside plastic speculums, all while the soundtrack shifts to the sounds of drizzling rain and a thunderstorm. In fact, organic materials like the yellow daffodils often link interior and exterior settings, as the same female figure and flowers are featured in the following scene. When the woman goes outdoors, she caresses and kisses daffodils in a field, running the petals against her lips and licking them. Scenes later waves crashing into the shoreline take on an erotic intensity, as Hammer uses time-lapse photograph to accelerate the film speed, creating the impression of rapid approaches and

retreats from the shore not unlike the comings and goings of a sensual encounter. Even more so than in *Dyketactics*, in *Women I Love* Hammer makes clear that the environment itself is erotic.

This sensuousness is arguably most explicit in extreme close-ups of human lips that reveal their manifold cracks and crevices.[32] As with the vegetables featured in the opening segment, Hammer includes close-ups of lips and eyes, the striations and color variations of the latter resembling the veiny leaves and skin of the vegetables. Hammer cuts from the voluminous folds of the cabbage and lettuce to scenes of cunnilingus (or simulated oral sex) doubtless meant to draw attention to their lip and lip-like semblance. In fact lips are a motif that occur throughout the film, from the opening cabbage, to the close-ups of human lips amidst footage of oral sex to photographs of women kissing, to the woman licking the daffodils, to the closing footage of vaginal lips superimposed onto shots of butterflies and crashing waves. For insights into this motif, we look to Hammer's most explicitly erotic film *Multiple Orgasm*.

This conjoining of nonhuman nature with the erotic is most pronounced in Hammer's 1976 film *Multiple Orgasm* made the same year as *Women I Love*. *Multiple Orgasm* is a short, noticeably silent film featuring footage of vaginal stimulation and

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[32] This is the same era as Luce Irigaray's "When Our Lips Speak Together" (1980), *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985), and *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985), and while Hammer does not explicitly quote Irigaray in her memoir, the filmmaker demonstrates that she is versed in feminist and psychoanalytic theory. For Irigaray, and as I argue for Hammer, touch is tied to the lips (the lips of the mouth and labia). Irigaray writes, "Lips of the same form—but of a form that is never simply defined—ripple outwards as they touch and send one another on a course that is never fixed into a single configuration" (*Speculum* 1985, 230). In *This Sex Which Is Not One*, she entreats: "Open your lips; don't open them simply. I don't open them simply. We—you/I—are neither open nor closed. We never separate simply: *a single word* cannot be pronounced, produced, uttered by our mouths. Between our lips, yours and mine, several voices, several ways of speaking resound endlessly, back and forth. One is never separable from the other. You/I: we are always several at once" (Irigaray *This Sex* 1985, 209). The trans-subjective, even posthumanist potential of this last phrase, "we are always several at once," seems especially pertinent to this discussion of the other-oriented ethics of environmental eros.

rapturous facial responses superimposed onto shots of cavernous rocks and caves.[33] Hammer's signature quick cutting and rapid camera movement creates a frenetic pace fitting for this ecstatic content. As the camera skims the expansive rocky terrain, fingers simultaneously scan labia and clitoris.[34] Not unlike Hammer's other 1970s films, which also contain driving and motorcycle imagery as well as footage of walking, *Multiple Orgasm* exudes an air of exploratory pleasure as Hammer merges scenes of intense sexual stimulation and pleasure with seemingly unpeopled caverns and rock formations. What do we make of this merging of geological and physiological imagery, which comprises the entirety of this film? As in her other 1970s films, Hammer creates visual semblances between the natural environment and female forms, as layers of weathered rock resemble vaginal folds, and the nostril holes of one figure (Hammer) echo the craters visible in various cave walls [Fig. 1.5]. Perhaps heavy-handed in her visual puns, Hammer accents moments of orgasmic peaking with shots of cliff peaks and vertical rock formations [Fig. 1.6]. Hammer's open mouth and head tilted back are recognizable as classic iconography of ecstasy and pleasure.[35] And the parted mouth of the joyful figure is underscored by the camera's roving through open-mouthed caves and chasms. It is this

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[33] Again Irigaray is relevant, as she discusses auto-affection and woman re-touching herself in *Speculum*: "She is identified by every *x* variable, not in any specific way. Presupposed is an excess of all identification to/of self. But this excess is no-thing: it is vacancy of form, gap in form, the return to another edge where she re-touches herself […]" (230).

[34] In "'Dear Sisters': The Visible Lesbian in Community Arts Journals," one of the few scholarly articles devoted to lesbian-feminist aesthetics of the 1970s, Margo Hobbs Thompson discusses masturbation as "part of a radical feminist discourse of sexual empowerment in the early 1970s," but claims that "images of women masturbating were rare in feminist art" (411-412). She mentions Betty Dodson's illustrations in *Liberating Masturbation* (1974) and briefly examines a woodcut print by Kaymarion in a December 1973 issue of *Amazon Quarterly*. These examples coupled with Hammer's films, *The Cunt Coloring Book* by Tee Corinne (1975), photographs like Honey Lee Cottrell's "LR at the Beach" (1976), as well as the writings of French feminists Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray suggest that masturbatory inference and imagery was more prevalent than Thompson acknowledges. See Thompson's article "'Dear Sisters': The Visible Lesbian in Community Arts Journals," *GLQ* 12.3 (2006): 405-423.

[35] An interesting contrast could be made between *Multiple Orgasm* and Andy Warhol's *Blow Job* (1964). Hammer does not cite it as an influence, but it is likely that she saw the film in her filmmaking classes or while immersed in the experimental film scene in California.

recurrence of lip and mouth imagery that I want to emphasize and that I believe is crucial to understanding these films as "creative geographies" of eros.

Clearly reflecting the influence of 1970s French feminist literary theory once known, problematically, as *l'écriture feminine*—Hammer avers, "We must write, photograph, film our sexuality, because it's one of the bases of our new language" (2010, 131). Like the writings of Kristeva, Cixous, Irigaray, and others, Hammer's films reveal overlapping themes of the human body as terrain and female sexuality as unexplored territory that could lead to the discovery of a new language—for Kristeva and Cixous literal speech and writing, for Hammer a new visual and aesthetic language. As Cixous avers, "To write. An act which will not only 'realize' the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal" (1976, 880). Crucial to reclaiming these "bodily territories" is writing through the body. Cixous continues, "By writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her […] Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write yourself. Your body must be heard" (880).

Cixous, who likens writing to a volcanic eruption, uses metaphors of nature throughout her 1975 essay "The Laugh of the Medusa." She writes, "we are ourselves sea, sand, coral, seaweed, beaches, tides, swimmers, children, waves […] More or less wavy sea, Earth, sky—what matter would rebuff us? We know how to speak them all" (859). For Cixous, the body speaks. In Hammer's notably silent film *Multiple Orgasm*, "bodily territories," both human and geographical, also "speak"—vaginal lips, mouths of

caves, stalactites and stalagmites, the ecstatic eyes and mouth of the figure pleasuring herself, even Hammer's shadow against the cave wall.

In the context of Hammer's eco-erotic films, what the bodies and bodies of land speak of is pleasure, desire, and delight in discovery, themes stressed in Cixous' feminist treatise:

> Almost everything is yet to be written by woman about femininity: about their sexuality, that is, its infinite and mobile complexity, about their eroticization […] about trips, crossings, trudges, abrupt and gradual awakenings, discoveries of a zone at one time timorous and soon to be forthright. A woman's body, with its thousand and one thresholds of ardor […] will make the old single-grooved mother tongue reverberate with more than one language. (885)

These words resonant in the context of Hammer's films: "mobile complexity," "trips" and "crossings," "awakenings" and "discoveries" of bodily and spiritual zones. In an early 1980s *Fuse Magazine* article, Hammer paraphrases Kristeva, avowing that "sexual pleasure is an open-ended form, is anti-finite" (2010, 131). She notes, "how the holes, spaces, and mutations in the new form of women's writing is jouissance. There are places and spaces to go. The orgasm opens to other possibilities. We are multiple" (131). In *Multiple Orgasm*, the roving camera surveys "the holes, spaces, and mutations," and instead of lack or an abyss, what is found there is pleasure. "A woman's body, with its thousand and one thresholds of ardor." Hammer uses literal thresholds of plateaus and cave mouths to continue a feminist reversal of lack, traversing what Cixous deems "the dark continent" of women who have been rendered strange and unknown even to themselves. In the spirit of feminist imagery found in 1970s print culture—of the darkened recesses of shells and labyrinths—Hammer overlays biomorphic and biological orifices, challenging viewers to see these physical and figurative openings as "thresholds

of ardor" awaiting exploration.

Drawing from Freud's *Totem and Taboo* in her analysis of *Multiple Orgasm*, film critic Jacquelyn Zita argues that "taboo is most intimately connected with touching […]" This observation fuels her assertion that "the intimacy of *Multiple Orgasms*, the numerous images of vaginal openings, clitori, and oral pleasure are meant to convey the overwhelming message that women have the power to touch themselves and other women who are drawn to them" (1981, 31-32). Yet for Hammer this erotic fervor is not strictly sexual; it is a "powerful combination of emotional-spiritual expression." She writes,

> if we understand eroticism as "physiological changes of increase in pulse rate, rise in body temperature, greater or lesser activity of glands, and spiritual response involving the elevation of the spirit […] As we reclaim and reconnect our body as a source of lesbian imagery including erotic visualization, we bring to cinema a power and force, that of our unique selves. The source of our knowledge comes from our bodies. (2010, 130).

And not just human bodies, but, as *Multiple Orgasm* makes clear, bodies of land. What Zita and other scholars engaged with Hammer's work have seemingly neglected is that what these women touch, either literally or through the simulated touch of superimposition, is not only themselves or one another but also the natural environment. And it is here, in the throes of *environmental eros*, that we find the transformative and radically queer potential of Hammer's films.

In her recent book *Are the Lips a Grave?*, Lynne Huffer discusses the figure of the masturbatory dyke, including Cixous's equation of writing with masturbation (2013, 120). In *Multiple Orgasm*, Hammer "writes" herself onto the film's skin, using her shadow against a cave wall to capture her self-portrait. And it is not coincidental that this artist's statement and "coming into being" literally and philosophically overlaps with a

scene of masturbatory pleasure. It is in this fashion that *Multiple Orgasm*, one of Hammer's easily dismissed films, embodies the theoretical contribution of Hammer's 1970s work. In a title clearly sexual, one finds a linking of touch and subjectivity, a bringing to the fore of lesbian desire and thus lesbian identity; yet, Hammer queers this "erotic tactility" and concomitant "coming into being" by expanding it into interspecies amalgamations of human and nonhuman nature, of geologic bodies and human bodies. The overlaid images of self-stimulation and cavernous terrain are not just metaphors for the female body meant to encourage corporeal exploration; instead, as Huffer writes of Cixous, they are the "latent promise of the potentially transformative, orgasmic production of ever new forms" (120). Thus, masturbation in *Multiple Orgasm* goes beyond self-pleasuring and self-affirmation; it facilitates a transformation of the self, as we no longer perceive the human figure as separate from her environment. Her orgasmic peaking and flared nostrils merge with the rock faces, the texture of her lips and skin with the weathered walls, her bodily orifices with the cavernous thresholds. And while the subject remains intact in Hammer's films, these unions of biomorphic and biological forms nonetheless emphasize the human subject as radically contingent.

Susan Griffin writes of "*space where nothing is ever still and motion always changes shape* […] *movements rush the air* by the force of what she feels. *and penetrate the stone*. Where she makes out the invisible, where she touches the real" (170). Griffin's words resonate with Hammer's "feeling image" films, in which nature—wooded enclaves, ocean shores and waves, rocks and caverns, flowers and insects, fruits and vegetables—is a catalyst for haptic and sensory experience, a touching of the human and nonhuman other that enables a fuller realization of oneself. While Hammer and fellow

lesbian feminists were attempting to ground their burgeoning culture in ancient antecedents, many who, like the mythical Amazons were affiliated with the natural world, we nonetheless witness far more than a mere equation of women with nature. Hammer's stylistic experimentation and the illustrations from lesbian-feminist periodicals depict amalgams of human and nonhuman nature that blur the bounds of traditional subjecthood and agency by simultaneously illuminating the contingent nature of subjectivity and the erotic dimensions of the natural world. Metaphors of sexuality and identity as unexplored territory abound in lesbian-feminist journals as in Hammer's films, where nature is not solely a site for sexual exploration between humans; it also inspires psychic and spiritual exploration that reveals modes of identification and relationality capable of transfiguring these human subjects.

Chapter 2

‘An Ecology of Spirit’: The Radical Faeries and 1970s-80s Gay Pastoralism[36]

> Let us gather therefore—
> in secure and consecrated places…
> To re-invoke from ancient ashes our Fairy Circle…
> To dance…
> To meditate—not in singular isolation of Hetero subject-
> OBJECT praxis, but rather in Fairy Circles reaching out to
> one another in subject-SUBJECT evocation…
> To find new ways to cherish one another.
> Harry Hay, “Toward the New Frontiers of Fairy Vision”

> As long as there have been men, man has felt too little joy: that alone, my brothers, is our original sin. And learning better to feel joy, we best unlearn how to do harm to others […]
> ~Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*[37]

Escapes into nature are a prominent trope in gay male cultural production. From muscle magazines of the 1950s and 60s to pulp fiction to Wakefield Poole’s cult classic *Boys in the Sand* (1971), filmed on the infamous Fire Island, to Ang Lee’s *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), the environment often serves as an aesthetically pleasing site for exploring gay male erotic desires. One of the earliest scholarly considerations of nature’s role in gay male literature is Byrne R.S. Fone’s “This Other Eden: Arcadia and the Homosexual Imagination” (1983). In his essay, Fone perceives “greenwoods” as a prevalent trope in all literature but one especially prominent in “the gay imaginary.”[38] In a chronological literary tracking from Virgil’s *Second Eclogue* (42 BCE) to E.M. Forster’s *Maurice* (1960), Fone identifies three primary ways in which this “Arcadian Ideal” functions: 1) to delineate a locale where gay characters can be themselves and

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[36] “Ecology of Spirit” was a phrase used in *RFD* 10 (Winter 1976), 22.
[37] Quoted in Jane Bennett ‘s *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001): 13.
[38] Fone has been rightfully critiqued for his “essentialist conception of a transhistorical and transcultural ‘gay sensibility’ and ‘homosexual imagination,’” in which “gay” refers exclusively to white, male literati (Shuttleton 2010, 127).

consummate their desires; 2) to connote homosexuality in a text otherwise devoid of queer content; and 3) "to establish a metaphor for certain spiritual values and myths prevalent in homosexual literature and life […]" (13). Notice the overlapping of sexuality, subjectivity, and spirituality in Fone's conception of the gay pastoral. As characters come into these locales, they "come out" to themselves and to one another; hence, these idyllic enclaves operate as sites of self-affirmation as well as community building (21). Fone asserts, "But if Arcadia serves as the scene for personal discovery and revelation, we have seen that it is also the place where a spiritual voyager can find a safe haven with others like himself and celebrate their common rites" (30). Yet these spiritual and communal facets of gay pastoralism are often trumped by an excessive focus on these escapes into nature as sexually liberatory.

For example, thirty years after Fone, David Bell largely reduces queer pastoralism to sexual liberation (2010, 135), as though the *only* motivation for a retreat into nature is for a sexual tryst. Bell writes, "in discussions of nature as a space for queer desires to find liberation, nature itself is often evoked, giving its blessing" (135). In the queer pastoral, "nature becomes the natural setting for sexual desires outlawed by human civilization" (143). Recapitulating the nature idealism found in his case studies of naturism and eco-porn, Bell asserts that "reconnecting to sex" through the environment "renaturalizes humanity […] by reminding us of our own embodied naturalness" (137). Likewise, it naturalizes non-normative sex acts transpiring in these "greenwoods," an example of reverse discourse, in which queerness, usually maligned as "unnatural," is re-aligned with "the natural."[39] This is a popular mode of interpretation and analysis in queer ecocritical

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[39] For example, sodomy laws were previously classified as "crimes against nature" (along with prostitution, child molestation, and bestiality) until repealed in the Supreme Court Case *Lawrence vs. Texas* (2003).

studies and in assimilationist LGBTQ politics in general (hence, the traction gained by the "born this way" defense of homosexuality). Yet this reductive analysis fails to fully attend to nonhuman nature, relegating the environment to a mere backdrop for human action and sexual experimentation. Such a depiction is not corroborated by LGBTQ subcultures like the Radical Faeries for whom the environment has played a pivotal, even agential role in queer spirituality, subjectivity, and community building. As with lesbian separatists discussed in Chapter 1, this analysis also inadvertently leads to a dismissal of these queer eco-erotics as naïve socio-sexual experiments instead of forerunners of posthumanism and interspecies flourishing, topics which currently preoccupy contemporary feminist and queer theorists.

In this chapter, I continue my exploration of environmental eros as a disruptive encounter, one that challenges the autonomy and supremacy of the human subject and makes room for an interspecies relational ethics. My case study is the eco-erotic ethics of the Radical Faeries, "a networ[k] of gentle men devoted to the principles of ecology, spiritual truth, and, in New Age terms, 'gay-centeredness'" (Timmons 2011, 32). Drawing from primary materials, such as *RFD: A Country Journal for Gay Men Everywhere*, I argue that what is most profound about the Radical Faeries is not their sexually liberatory ethos in and of itself, but their reverence for one another, a communitarian response ethics rooted in their veneration of the natural world. I explore the writings of Faerie forefather Harry Hay (1912-2002), among others, to elucidate the spiritual aspects of Faerie sexuality and, in particular, Faerie eco-erotics. In the second part of the chapter, I turn to the films of James Broughton (1913-1999), a filmmaker-poet and Radical Fairie elder. I incorporate him here not only because he was an important

figure for many Radical Faeries, but also because his films help us tease out the philosophical underpinnings of Radical Faerie environmental aesthetics and ethics. Broughton's eco-centric films are emblematic of a playful devotion that couples sexual exploration with nature-based spirituality also embraced by the Radical Faeries. The effect of this melding of spirituality and sexuality is a practice of serious play that fosters childlike, even queer wonder. Such qualities differentiate this back-to-land movement from other environmental efforts and are a precursor to the campy eco-erotics to come, such as those examined in Chapter 3.

First, a brief word on Radical Faerie scholarship to date: Like the other case studies addressed in this project, relatively little has been written about the Radical Faeries. Much existent literature is comprised of autobiographical accounts of gatherings by former or current Faeries (Thompson 1987, Hay 1996, & Thompson, et al. 2011). Foundational Faeries like Arthur Evans, Harry Hay, and Mitch Walker produced texts on homophile history, psychology, and spirituality (Evans 1978 & Walker 1980), which offer some insights into Radical Faerie culture; in turn, several biographers have written about these figures and their significance as gay activists and thinkers (Timmons 2012). Early scholarship on the Radical Faeries appeared in religious studies, often in anthologies on neo-paganism (Adler 1979) and, more recently, in texts on LGBTQ spirituality (Conner 1993). Current scholarly attention has focused on rural versus urban tensions made manifest in the Radical Faeries (Herring 2007 & 2010; Morgensen 2008), which I discuss in more detail later on. Elizabeth A. Povinelli (2006) and Scott Lauria Morgensen (2009 & 2011) provide outsider ethnographies of the Radical Faeries that consider the group's relationship to histories of colonization. Both problematize claims of

cultural appropriation lobbied against the Radical Faeries for their hodge-podge spirituality, which draws on an array of indigenous practices. I what follows I give an overview of Morgansen's ethnographic observations because this question of cultural appropriation comes up often when I mention my work on the Radical Faeries.

Morgensen acknowledges that "the radical faerie founders [and lesbian feminists before them] framed the country and primitivity as repositories of an authenticity long sought by urban subjects of metropolitan societies" (2009, 77). While recognizing the implications of nonnative and predominantly white American men attempting to free "an indigenous gay nature by briefly removing to the rural and natural sites that code as indigenous in a settler society," Morgensen's ethnographic work ultimately leads him to perceive Radical Faerie culture as "a creative mediation of the racial, national, and colonial conditions of sexuality" (91). Furthermore, Morgensen uses Radical Faerie writings and interviews to establish that many Faeries were aware of this mediation of colonial histories as well as their liminal position as both products of settler culture and its exiles, particularly at the onset of the AIDS epidemic (72, 83). In fact, exchanges in several of the aforementioned anthologies and in *RFD* demonstrate that drawing inspiration from indigenous sources was a point of contention in debates surrounding Faerie spirituality. In addition, men of color have been members of the Radical Faeries. Chapter 4 of Morgansen's *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (2011) addresses the experiences of Radical Faeries of color, particularly the group Faeries of All Colors Together (FACT). He also tracks Radical Faerie collaborations with Native gay and Two-Spirit men in the 1990s.

Discussions of "the land" and "emplacement" punctuate Morgensen's

intersectional analysis, but his overarching interest is in "sexuality's colonial legacies" (91) and on nature as symbolic of indigeneity. Neither he nor the other scholarly work cited here begin their inquiry into the Radical Faeries from an explicitly ecocritical standpoint, one that focuses on the group's environmental ethics and aesthetics. In many discussions of the Radical Faeries, scholars who focus on Faerie nature rituals like Beltane or May Day presume environmental and erotic exchanges. In what follows, I challenge this taken-for-grantedness by teasing out the ethical implications of Radical Faerie eco-erotics. I draw on Herring's notion of "critical rusticity," on Morgensen's ethnographic observations about sanctuary and gatherings, and on Adler's discussion of neo-paganism and play, but I approach these various elements through environmental eros, which I will demonstrate is the through-line between these seemingly disparate facets of subjectivity, spirituality, and sexuality.

On "the Spiritual Significance of Sexuality"[40]

The Radical Faeries are an international network of gay and queer-identified beings, chiefly male-bodied, for whom nature worship and nature-based ritual are a central part of their amorphous spiritual practice. "A mixture of a political alternative, a counter-culture and a spirituality movement," Radical Faeries, "like their mythological antecedents, cannot be easily defined or pinned down" (Timmons 2011, 32). Historians cite 1979 as the advent of the Radical Faerie movement. On Labor Day Weekend of that year, gay activists Harry Hay, Don Kilhefner, and Mitch Walker hosted "A Spiritual Conference for Radical Faeries" at the Sri Ram Ashram, a desert sanctuary near Tucson,

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[40] Allen Page, "Army of Lovers: An Evocation of the First Spiritual Conference for Radical Faeries," in *The Fire in the Moonlight: Stories from the Radical Faeries 1975-2010*, eds. Mark Thompson, Richard Neely, and Bo Young (Maple Shade, NJ: White Crane Books, 2011), 69-72.

Arizona [Fig. 2.1]. The conference flyer bullet points the goals of the gathering: to "explor[e] breakthroughs in gay consciousness," "shar[e] gay visions," and probe "the spiritual dimensions of gayness." Though there were proto-Faerie gatherings prior to 1979, veteran gay rights advocate Harry Hay is consistently credited with introducing and popularizing the term "Radical Faerie" (Hay 1996, 189). Hay coupled *radical* for "root," "essence," and "politically extreme" with *faerie* (also spelled "fairy" and "fairie"), an insulting epithet hurled at gay men, but also a synonym for sprites and nature spirits (Timmons 33). Hay described "the ancient fairy" as "an immortal, luminous nature spirit who danced in circles in the moonlight and did good deeds at whim" (quoted in Timmons 33). In his 1970 Western Homophile Conference address, Hay publicly reclaimed the term *faerie*: "Our Faerie characteristic is our Homosexual Minority's central weakness—and paradoxically [it is] also the keystone of our enduring strength […]" (1996, 200).

In "On the Question of Names," an essay by LASIS (Louisiana Sissies in Struggle) that appeared in a 1981 issue of *RFD*, the authors elucidate the etymology of words being recouped by the gay liberation movement—words like faggot, sissy, and faerie. There are a number of potential sources for the word *faerie*, including the Persian "peri," "a spiritbeing comparable to the wonderful genies of Arabian Nights fame" (16). In Old French, *faer* means "to enchant." As with Puck from William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or Peter Pan from J.M. Barrie's tale of the same name—two figures of enchantment that recur in Radical Faerie writings—the authors maintain that "wherever […] you encounter the *idea* of Fairy, you will find beings who interweave with the people—enchanting, helping when the people respect Faerie visions, and vanishing behind veils of illusion when they don't" (16). Along with emphasizing

Faerie's charm, elusiveness, and societal contributions (the latter was a particular preoccupation of Hay's), LASIS also underscores the fierceness of Faeries. They write, "At best 'fairy' is a word hets [heterosexuals] use in mild derision, when they're trying to be liberal or 'nice,' to describe Sissies. It's as though, on some unconscious level, hets recognize that the Being before them has a *power* that is not to be lightly tested. Fairies[…] are Beings to be reckoned with!" (16). By radicalizing and reclaiming this derogatory term, the Radical Faeries challenge "the mythic image of Fairies that has come down to hets through their folklore," "one of sexless—at best, androgynous—beings" (16). Crucial to the might of these reimagined Faeries is the mobilization of an erotic spirituality.

As I will demonstrate throughout this chapter, it is not sexuality or sexual pleasure in and of itself that many Faeries cite as their source of strength nor is it solely the visibility that accompanies an identitarian politics; instead, it is strength derived from the erotic deployed in the service of individual and communal spiritual awakening. LASIS explains, "Throughout our ancient span of countless thousands of years, we have hidden from heterosexuals the source of our spiritual power: our sexuality. It is here, in the energizing sexual/spiritual communion that passes between us, that the source of Faerie power lies" (16). Will Roscoe, a veteran of the gay rights movement and an early Radical Faerie, echoes similar sentiments: "I can still remember the thrill of seeing the words *radical* and *spiritual* used together for the first time in the call put out in 1979 for the first Faerie gathering. It was the realization, as I heard a Gay man recently put it, that there was something more that I could do with my sexuality besides simply 'accept it'" (quoted in Hay 1996, 246). In the section that follows, I use the writings of Faerie forbearer Harry

Hay (1912-2002) as well as excerpts from *RFD: A Country Journal for Gay Men Everywhere*, a reader-written periodical affiliated with the Radical Faeries and still in production today, to establish some of this nebulous group's founding principles and to emphasize the ways in which subjectivity, sexuality, and nature-centric spirituality are mutually imbricated. Countering perceptions of sexual liberation as solely a pleasure-seeking venture, for Radical Faeries like Hay, sexuality is a "gateway to [the] Spirit" (Hay 1996, 248).

The spiritual import of sexuality is the subject of countless reflections by former and current Radical Faeries. Hay once asserted that the "Radical Faeries [aren't] a group or a movement" but instead are "a process for self-development, growth and change, a way of 'being and becoming'" (246). Another Faerie reiterates this: "a Radical Faerie is not so much something you are, but someone you continue to become" (Perryman 2011, 273). Central to this practice of "self-elaboration" (Povinelli 2006, 98) are the spiritual dimensions of the erotic. In his keynote at the last Western Homophile Conference in Los Angeles (1970), Hay avers:

> […] we Homosexuals have a psychic architecture in common, we have a Dream in common, man to man, woman to woman. For all of us, *and for each of us*, in the dream of Love's ecstasy—the God descends—the Goddess descends—and for each of us the transcendence of that apotheosis is mirrored *in the answering glances of the lover's eyes.* (194-95)

Here, it is ecstasy that spurs an encounter with the divine, whose presence is found in the responsive look of the lover. The melding of the erotic with the divine is especially evident in Hay's use of the word apotheosis (or deification), as the lover becomes god-like, an ascension in this context that parallels sexual climax.

This ecstatic "communion of spirit," a term Hay used often, is also evident in a 1982 fall issue of *RFD* dubbed "the erotic issue." As is customary in *RFD*, each issue offers a different tagline for the meaning of the title letters, which originally stood for "Rural Free Delivery," a contemporary postal term denoting the delivery of mail to rural homes (previously rural residents had to hold post office boxes in town centers). This issue's tagline is "Rapturous Faggot Debauchery." In an essay entitled "Eroticism," the author Raven builds on Audre Lorde's "Uses of the Erotic" (1978) to affirm the import of desire and ecstatic energy for Radical Faeries:

> I can no longer feel that efforts for erotic liberation are secondary to other issues. There seems to be some factor here, that we are calling eroticism, which is *a kind of connective link between ourselves and another, to the planet, to our own quality of being*. Eroticism is important 'stuff'! And I envision us as potential 'warriors' of sensual delight, and 'champions' of play. (Raven 1982, 26; emphasis added)

Raven's delineation of the erotic as a "connective link between ourselves and another" demonstrates what many gay liberationists of the time perceived as "the untapped potential of Gay sexual responsiveness" (Roscoe quoted in Hay 249). When responding to the question "why is sex so important for gay men?", Hay recalled his sense of the importance of sexuality, even as a child: "the overwhelming urge to sexuality I've felt since perhaps the age of eight or nine […] had been always urging me that we are supposed to discover something about our sexuality *collectively—something it is supposed to accomplish* when we invoke it as one voice collectively" (249). Drawing on Hay, Roscoe maintains that "our insistent sexual drive [is] a 'question' demanding an answer" and that "even our occasional, instantaneous connections with strangers can involve almost telepathic communication and the exchange of intense and affirmative erotic energies" (248). Setting aside the problematic nature of such essentializing claims

about gay men's proclivity for sex and the repressive hypothesis that drives them, this mobilization of sexuality nonetheless demonstrates that the erotic dimensions of sexual liberation were not exclusively sexual. They were also vehicles for transformative spiritual growth and the basis of an erotic communitarian ethics grounded in recognition of "connective links" (as well as ruptures) between oneself, others, and the surrounding world.

Subject-SUBJECT Consciousness

Hay expounds upon this interplay between sexuality, spirituality, and subjectivity in subject-to-SUBJECT consciousness, a concept he developed in the 1960s and espoused throughout his activist career.[41] An avid student of anthropology, mythology, and Marxism, Hay perceived society at large to be locked in a Hegelian dialectic of subject versus object fueled by the widespread objectification of the marginalized, be they women, queers, people of color, or the poor. The result is a "Hetero-Male-oriented-and-dominated world" (Hay 1996, 260). Hay believed that gay men's and lesbians' attraction to their same gender, a mutual recognition of one subject attracted to a like or similarly situated subject, offered a way out of this dialectical loop (201). The basic premise of subject-SUBJECT is "enjoying each other's enjoyment." Hay explains,

> If you allow me to tune in, nonjudgmentally, on your enjoyment, whatever that might happen to be […] as I hope you will, in similar fashion, tune into my enjoyment […] We would be intimately tuned in to sharing each other's enjoyments as subjects, each to the other, and each to himself as well. (248)

[41] Hay uses capitalization for emphasis throughout his writing. Unless otherwise noted, any capitalization, italics, and punctuation in excerpts from his writing and elsewhere are true to their original form.

This emphasis on pleasure is unsurprising for a sexually liberatory subculture, but what I want to underscore here is that for Hay and the Radical Faeries enjoying one another's enjoyment trumps individual pleasure-seeking. And this mutual recognition leads to more fully recognizing one another as subjects (and as I discuss below, this includes recognition of both human and nonhuman subjects).

In his essay "Toward the New Frontiers of Fairy Vision…subject-SUBJECT Consciousness" (1980), Hay references "the Fairy Family Circle," another concept of which he often spoke: "The Fairy Family Circle, co-joined in the shared vision of non-possessive love—which is the granting to any other and all others that total space wherein each may grow and soar to his own freely selected, full potential—reaching out to one another subject-to-SUBJECT, *becomes for the first time in history the true working model of a Sharing Consensus*!" (261). Here the individual is supported by the collective, "The Fairy Family Circle, through a "non-possessive love" that enables him to more fully realize his sense of self. This personal growth is both contingent upon and enables subject-to-SUBJECT connection with others.

For Hay, this "reaching out to one another" is not only interpersonal, but also interspecies. Hay's essay, "Toward the New Frontiers of Fairy Vision…subject-SUBJECT Consciousness" (1980), was published in a summer issue of *RFD* and in Fairie-inspired anthologies like *New Men, New Minds: Breaking Male Tradition* (1987). While some Radical Faeries found Hay's philosophies and terminology too doctrinaire, Radical Faerie literature from the 1970s and 80s nonetheless reflects the influence of Hay's thinking on erotic attunement and its role in community building at a local and even planetary level. For example, in a 1981 *RFD* article "Fairy Wings Fly Into Infinity,"

a contributor writes, "By accepting, nurturing our Fairyness, we can help guide the planet's thinking to value receptivity and subjective-holistic relations." He continues, "Only through receptive attunement to inner guidance and its expression in service to humanity, to our animal, plant, human and spirit brothers and sisters all over the world, can the new world emerge" (Floating Eagle Feather 46). For many Faeries, this "new world" of interspecies receptivity and even "Fairyness" itself was only possible with a dismantling of hegemonic masculinity.

In a discussion of the "Hetero-Male-oriented-and-dominated world" and its masculinist competitiveness and intolerance for deviations from gender norms, Hay takes the violence and othering he and his gay peers experienced at the hands of the "Bully-boy [who] persuade[d] us to search out the 'feminine in ourselves'" (260), and turns it into a source of queer empowerment and community building: "You were *not* a feminine boy, like the boys said, you were OTHER!" (260). These "not-men," as Hay and other Faeries deemed themselves, were an unspoken brethren of others. Using spatial metaphors of a "new planet," Hay exclaims, "Let us enter this brave new world of subject-SUBJECT consciousness, this new planet of Fairy-vision, and find out […] we who have known the jubilation of subject-to-SUBJECT visions and visitations *all our lives* […]" (260). He continues, "IT IS TIME GAY LIBERATION REGENERATES ITSELF INTO THE GAY FAIRY FAMILY OF LOVING-SHARING EQUALS*,* each choosing of his own volition to be responsible for himself, each choosing of his own volition to be responsible to each of the others of his chosen fairy ring!" (214). And lest we read this "chosen fairy ring" as exclusionary or limited to Faerie sanctuaries, Hay believed gays were not only responsible to one another but also to larger society. One of Hay's primary tenets was

that "gay consciousness," the insights provided through subject-to-SUBJECT relationality, should be shared with the hetero-dominant world. He explains,

> To break through to ever more spiritually encompassing and emotionally resurrective Gay Families and Fairy Family Collectives, who by the very mutuality of their subject-SUBJECT sharing are strengthened to reach out contributively *to the Hetero community around them* […] (263)

I harp on subject-SUBJECT consciousness because these themes of egalitarianism ("LOVING-SHARING EQUALS"), healing ("emotionally resurrective"), reciprocity, and responsibility are lynchpins of Faerie intersubjectivity and spiritual practice that establish eros, here a "reaching out" and enjoyment of one another's enjoyment, as far more than an individual search for pleasure and self-fulfillment.

Most relevant to this larger consideration of the role of environmental eros in Radical Faerie philosophies and practice is that subject-SUBJECT consciousness is inherently connected to one's experience of the natural world. Hay is careful to say that subject-SUBJECT relationality extends beyond the conventionally erotic and even beyond the human. He cautions,

> We must not suppose that we share subject-SUBJECT vision *only* in the spheres of Love and personal relations. Actually, almost at once, we also begin to become aware that we have been accumulating bits and pieces of subject-SUBJECT perceptions and insights all our lives—talking to trees and birds and rocks and Teddy Bears, and remembering what all we had shared by putting it down in poetry, storing it all up for that wonderful day when we finally would flash on to what it all meant. The personal collecting and storing up of these secret treasures, these beautiful beckoning not-as-yet comprehensible secret sacra, is part of the hidden misery-cum-exaltation of growing up Gay. (258)

In his poetic recollection of the "secret sacra" of gay adolescence, interactions with nature are chief among Hay's list of foundational moments in burgeoning subject-

SUBJECT consciousness—“talking to trees and birds and rocks” and even Teddy Bears, a simulated stand-in for the natural world.

Similarly, one of the more posthumanist Faerie essays that I encountered, “Hearing the Silent Voices of Other Creatures” (1976), involves a discussion of animal activism, using live traps for rodents, and cutting meat and dairy from one’s diet. Like Hay, the author poetically notes “glimmers of an ecology of Spirit”:

> A porcupine waddles across the road in the headlight beam. We stop and murmur ‘Oh, a porcupine.’ For a moment we are children. What is this delight? The porcupine is Other […] It lives its mysterious life among the blackberry vines and fir stumps. But we mustn’t forget that it is there, quietly nibbling, sleeping and wandering. It will lead us to joy. We queer people bring an equality to living in the country. The canning is shared. The wood getting, the lovemaking, the picking of flowers. We are trying to found our new world on respect, not exploitation. It’s a good place from which to reconsider how we relate to other creatures. Some day the natural animals, the deer, the bat, the crow, and the porcupine will come to visit and I will be ready. (22)

As Hay implored, the author applies subject-to-SUBJECT consciousness to relations beyond the human. In *The Posthuman* (2013), philosopher Rosi Braidotti writes, “a posthuman ethics for a non-unitary subject proposes an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or ‘earth’ others, by removing the obstacle of self-centred individualism” (50). While the excerpt above does not undo the human subject, the “I” who will be ready for the animals, the speaker’s recognition of nonhuman nature does spur a sense of an “expanded relational self” that Braidotti endorses. The porcupine, a metonym for all of nonhuman nature, not only solicits joy in the Faerie observers—a theme to which we I return—but it is also analogous to the Faerie. The author jumps from an appreciation of this easily overlooked forest creature to admiration of the egalitarianism of Faerie living. Just as Hay advocated

that Faeries embrace their status as other, Faeries perceive themselves as disregarded yet living in ways that would benefit larger society. The author extends the mutual recognition of subject-SUBJECT consciousness to the realm of nonhuman nature, imagining a reunion between human and animal in this "ecology of Spirit" founded on mutual respect. This linking of (inter)subjectivity, the sacred, and communion with nature is evident throughout Radical Faerie lore and practice. In what follows, I perform close readings of nature imagery in Faerie poetry and illustrations to illuminate the eco-erotic foundations of this other-oriented spirituality.

Entering the "Erotic Garden of Delights"[42]

> Let the morning dew cover me…
> What do I care?
> It's always been
> the most gentle of lovers
> —Jeremy Morningstar

If sexuality is "a gateway to the spirit" for Radical Faeries, then the environment serves as a crucial source of inspiration for sparking this spiritual growth. In this section, I examine writings and illustrations from *RFD* and Radical Faerie anthologies to illuminate a number of prominent environmental themes. From eco-erotics, in which the environment is a source of erotic inspiration and even stimulation, to anti-urbanism to shape-shifting and hybridity to metaphors of growth and common ground, this imagery demonstrates that the environment was far more than a mere backdrop for human activity. First a brief word on the founding of *RFD: A Country Journal for Gay Men Everywhere*, which bills itself as "the oldest, reader-written gay quarterly around."[43] The

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[42] Raven, "Eroticism." *RFD* 32 (Fall 1982), 26.
[43] *RFD* homepage, accessed March 4, 2016, http://www.rfdmag.org.

journal began in a farmhouse in Grinnell, Iowa. Founded by working-class gay men, who were inspired by the rural lesbian separatist periodical *Country Women* (Herring 2010, 63, 66), part of the impetus for the journal was *Mother Earth News'* refusal to print gay content, specifically, the founders' Position and Situation advertisements or want-ads also known as P&S ads. The first issue of *RFD* was released during the Autumn Equinox of 1974, several years ahead of the first Radical Faerie Gatherings held in Arizona (1979) and Colorado (1980). On the title page of the inaugural issue, the editorial team states the journal's goals: "to break down the feeling of isolation […] that many […] experience in rural settings, to build some sense of community among rural gay people, and to provide the means of sharing with each other our thoughts, feelings and ideas about our unique experience as gay country people" (1974, 1). Early issues of *RFD* were printed by the lesbian-run Iowa City Women's Press (Herring 2010, 86), and as Scott Herring has noted, the influence of lesbian print culture extends beyond production.[44]

Herring devotes a chapter of *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism* to the DIY stylistics of *Country Women* and *RFD*. He delineates a distinct anti-urbanism—what he calls a "critical rusticity"—in both periodicals (86). Explaining *Country Women's* impact on *RFD,* he maintains:

> […] what this rural lesbian-separatist collective unleashed against the *Advocate*'s 'male nudist colonies' was a stylistic anarchy opposite the graphic idealizations of gay male cosmo-urbanism […] *Country Women*

[44] Interestingly, the founding members of *RFD*, who are listed as Allan, Cari, Don-Tevel, Olaf, Ollie, Rick and Stewart on the first issue's title page, acknowledged the risk of the journal being dominated by men and called for collaboration between gay men and lesbians: "No women have contributed material for this first issue, but we hope it is not so male-oriented/dominated to prevent Lesbians from using this magazine for communication with each other. And perhaps, with the Earth as our common ground, we can begin a much needed dialogue between gay women and men" (1). *RFD* 16 (Summer 1978) was deemed "The Women's Issue" and was devoted to "faggots' relationships with women" (7). Interspersed with male and Faerie-focused contributions were art and writings by women.

> offered readers […] a critical rusticity that encouraged a "lack of cultural sophistication and a preference for practical know-how." (85)

This practicality extended to the magazine's production as well. In an early issue of *RFD* (Spring 1976), the editors make a plug for reader contributions and admit that they scrounged back issues of various country publications to borrow drawings and illustrations for their own issue. This partly explains the striking similarities in imagery between lesbian-feminist print materials examined in Chapter 1 [see Fig. 1.3] and the ecologically-minded drawings found in *RFD* [Fig. 2.2]. Herring reads this "stylistic anarchy" as "an aesthetic dislocation" "from the domineering stylistics of normative urban gay male print culture in the United States" (91). These stylistic dislocations are the result of physical dislocations as Faeries welcomed reprieve from dominant society by removing themselves to Faerie refuges. Yet this "stylistic anarchy" coupled with anti-assimilationist writings like those by Hay suggest that Radical Faerie sanctuaries of the 1970s and 80s were less passive retreats into a rural idyll than active efforts to build anti-assimilationist queer community. While Herring focuses on the urban versus rural stylistics of 1970s lesbian and gay print culture and the increasing urbanization of contemporary Radical Faeries, which he sees operating today as "temporary retreats" for white, middle-to-upper class urbanites (65), my interest is in the ethical dimensions of these nature-based aesthetics, which denote an other-oriented environmental eros.

Like the ecofeminist illustrations examined in Chapter 1, Radical Faerie imagery reflects an eco-eroticism that is sensual, spiritual, *and* political. In a 1982 essay "Eroticism" by Raven, the author responds to the question, "what is your religion?" Raven's eco-erotic spiritual treatise includes excerpts from James Broughton's poem "Shaman Psalm"—"extend your vision / stretch your experience / offer your body to / the

risk of delight / where soul can run naked / spirit jump high"—which Raven expands upon:

> My spirituality is earth-centered. It has to do with relationships. And it has to do with my self. I call *it*, 'my earth initiation.' What has this got to do with eroticism? For me, a lot […] We're given birth into a sensual world that invites us to touch, experience and experiment with its Erogeny, to guide us to…well, what I like to call 'home.' And if we didn't feed on mother's breasts, hopefully we did on her touch. It all seems to get a bit complicated after that. You remember, all those 'no-no's'! Where I'm getting with this is that some time soon after each individual's genesis I have a strong sense of our being alienated from our roots in eroticism—in the earth, in our bodies. (26)

Raven employs the interrelated triumvirate of subjectivity, sexuality, and earth-based spirituality to explain an estrangement from erotic roots originating from the earth and the body. He defines eroticism "as a quality of relationship between the earth and my self […] and as a wellspring of life and power" (26) and comes to this realization after spending time in the woods, where "'Things' can get narrowed down to [the] body and what's there." He explains, "I spent some time alone in the French-Canadian Province of Quebec last summer, and was surprised to discover whole-new levels of eroticism within myself. Nudity became essential. Plants were gentle seducers. I realized how the earth, and we also, need careful touching" (26). Like Morningstar, who sees the morning dew as the most "gentle of lovers," Raven posits plants as "seducers" and the earth as an entity in "need [of] careful touching." While this eroticization of the environment entails a human projection of what it is that the environment needs—not to mention the human-centric presumption that we can meet that need, it nonetheless imbues the earth with agency otherwise neglected in mainstream society. This resonates with contemporary posthumanist theory, such as Braidotti's assertion that "desire designs a whole territory and thus cannot be restricted to the mere human *persona* that enacts it" (2006, 197).

Raven's earth initiations extend desire and relationality beyond the human. He writes, "breath / wind on flesh / touch on moss / toes in water / grounding-power-love […] And breathing could be ecstasy" (26).[45] Immersed in nature, even breathing can be an ecstatic and erotic event, and it is this erotic reciprocity with the earth—the tactile recognition emphasized in Chapter 1—that inspires more thoughtful and attentive human-to-human interactions.

In its most basic and literal form, the erotic manifests in sensual encounters between humans while in the woods. The poem "Beaver Creek Mountain" recounts a hike that resembles much erotic poetry and prose found in Fairie literature: "Reaching the top, it almost seemed / the sun's suggestion / that I pull you down / into the warm hollow / and roll you with kisses. / We stripped off our layers of clothes / and / laughingly, / held firm in the mountain's hand, / imitated volcanoes" (Chura 1977, 42). Fulfilling one of Fone's characteristics of the pastoral, nature inspires and even seems to smile upon this steamy exchange as it is at "the sun's suggestion" that the speaker initiates sex while the lovers are "held […] firm in the mountain's hand." In other, and I would argue more interesting, examples of nature-centric eroticism, bodies of land become enmeshed with human bodies, a sort of reverse anthropomorphism, a geomorphism, that we witnessed in lesbian-feminist imagery in Chapter 1. Take "Ending a Hike (at Glens Falls, N.H.)" for example:

[45] Furthermore, Raven's erotic engagement with the earth is in gender-neutral terms, a rarity in both early ecofeminist and Radical Faerie literature, which more often personifies the earth as female. Many Faeries see themselves as protectors of "Mother Earth" (also deemed "the Gracious Goddess"): "Fairies always have to be ready to step in whenever hets begin to endanger our Mother, the Earth. Let 'em destroy themselves if they must. But don't harm Her" (LASIS 1981, 16). Raven's positing of the earth as a gender-neutral agent counters this paternalistic protectionism and queers existing environmental discourse that renders the earth a victim in need of rescue.

> I wanted you to come inside of me
> with the shafting force of these falls
> that cross, crest and tumble over these rocks
> in a hammered colonnade of foamy white water
> […]
> to cascade
> and fill the hollowed
> empty bowls of my insides
> to smooth the ridges
> and seepingly fill the crevices […]
> for as you came it was not with the
> galloned force of these waters
> but with the quiet pervading ease
> of the early morning mountain fog. (David 1976, 40)

While the speaker wants his lover's ejaculation to emulate the force of the falls, the metaphor becomes increasingly geologic as the speaker renders his and his partner's insides as cavernous "ledges" and "crevices" hollowed out and smoothed like a riverbed. Instead of the "galloned force" of a raging river, the poem and its players climax "with the quiet pervading ease / of the early mountain fog." The speaker clearly draws erotic inspiration from nature for this human-to-human sexual encounter; yet, by the end of the poem, he abandons his former metaphor of the sublime intensity of the rapids for the calming quiet of morning fog. While the poem begins in the rapturous realm of human desire, it ends with a contemplative appreciation for the serenity of the natural world.

In another example of an erotic merging of human and nonhuman nature, the speaker in the poem "long before horses felt his thighs, mesmeric speaking vines" describes his lover's body intermingled with natural entities: "your body carries salt rime from bering strait and alaska; / your hair broods with dark rage of / mastodon flesh ages made gentle in your jaws; / your smile is genghis come reaching another way" (23). He continues, "in the rich dunes of your flesh, tawny with / stored sun, / i taste tomorrow and, in my longing / tongue and lips, work roots into fresh / ancestries. in these eroded

ruins of my body / you wake ancient serpents, mesmeric speaking / vines" (23). Amidst talk of fossils, ruins, and ancestries, eros, embodied in "longing tongue and lips," also spurs new roots, seeds, continents and worlds not unlike the world-making associated with the Greek god Eros, whose offspring Hedone means pleasure and bliss. The cover illustration for *RFD* 19 echoes this generative facet of environmental eros [Fig. 2.3], as a bearded figure seems to emerge from a tree. Surrounded by the sun, this human/tree hybrid is connected to the earth by roots and a phallus, a literal representation of Radical Faeries' sensuality and spirituality being grounded in and contingent upon a relationship with nonhuman nature.

The Radical Faeries thus serve as an unexpected precursor to the subject of Chapter 3, contemporary ecosexuality, in which environmentalists sensualize the earth, imagining it as a lover and partner. This is evident in Raven's poetry discussed above as well as in autobiographical accounts of nature-based rituals, which attempt to merge human and nonhuman nature in the flesh. In one erotic earth rite, a group of Faeries cake their bodies "with burnt-orange mud, forming a circle, arms locked around each other […]" (Page 2011, 70). A participant describes the scene:

> in the center of the circle, one of us is stretched on his back. Mud is layered on him. Twigs, sprouts and flowers are planted on him. The chant's rhythm accelerates, sweeping us along with its momentum. We are soon screaming and shouting invocations—mud-covered sprites, dancing to the voice of a solo pipe; by some holy madness, bring Earth to flower. (70)

In this instance, the erotic is not a conventional sex act; it is a surge of communal energy drawn from this merging of the earthly and the human that results in chants of reverie and reverence. Peter Burkholder's hymn "The Fairy Song" (1979) captures this same

sentiment: "We will celebrate the sun and the moon and the stars and the sky, Living like the earthworms, Mated with the soil, giving back more than we take" (1981, 51).

This eco-erotic egalitarianism includes reciprocity with animals. An essay in a 1977 *RFD* describes one Faerie's experience milking a goat. The goat had been unable to milk, and the speaker was increasingly exasperated; however, when he stopped thinking of the goat's care as a chore and her udder as diseased, his relationship with the goat shifted. Rubbing her udder gently as a "good friend," the goat began to milk. The speaker elucidates the ethical implications of this exchange: "I could help heal my goat friend and my people friends. The love was in me if I would only touch their real flesh with tenderness and clarity" (30). This story culminates in the speaker ritualistically masturbating in the barn, combining the goat's milk with his seminal fluids—yet another merging of human and nonhuman nature. Days later, he finds that the goat is healed and so is he. Ultimately, the explicitly erotic content of this story (the masturbation) is secondary to the interspecies connection that sparked the speaker's and the goat's healing.

Story after story in *RFD* and other Faerie anthologies echo this trend of immersion into nature, an encounter with an animal, or the experience of a nature rite spurring the release of shame and pain and the onset of intense healing, a healing that then re-opens the subject to connection, joy, and wonder. As Braidotti explains,

> the disappearance of firm boundaries between self and other […] is the necessary premise to the enlargement of one's field of perception and capacity to experience […] A depersonalization of the self, in a gesture of everyday transcendence of the ego, is a connecting force, a binding force that links the self to larger internal and external relations. (2006, 197).

In this sense, the environmental eros evident in the Radical Faeries extends beyond the purely sensual and into the ethical, as these erotic exchanges found the basis of an egalitarian communitarianism centered on shared marvel. In the section that follows, I explore the films of Radical Faerie elder James Broughton as an embodiment of what Jeffrey Cohen deems "an ethos of wonder" (2013). I show that Broughton's eco-centric films are emblematic of Radical Faerie philosophies regarding a "right to joy" (Abbott 1981, 17) in the face of internalized shame and the devastating effects of AIDS.[46]

"A Right to Joy" in James Broughton's Eco-Erotic Films

James Broughton (1913-1999) was a prolific avant-garde poet and filmmaker. He was part of the San Francisco Renaissance that preceded the better-known Beat poets and a patron saint of the Radical Faeries. Two issues of *RFD* (Fall 1998 & Fall 2013) feature the poet-filmmaker on their covers, one of which was dedicated to the artist on what would have been his 100th birthday.[47] Broughton's poetry has been featured in *RFD* since the magazine's inception, and his status as a Faerie elder is evident in a photograph of him posed with arms open like a paternalistic Christ figure. The caption reads, "Greetings and Blessings to You All" [Fig. 2.4]. Broughton attended Radical Faerie gatherings in the 1980s, but his interest in elemental subjects began years before. Due in part to the influence of his close friend, Alan Watts, the British-born philosopher best known for popularizing eastern spirituality in the United States, and also to the back-to-land ethos of the 1960s and 70s, many of Broughton's later films are filled with eco-erotic themes.

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[46] In the *RFD* article "Notes on Network and Community," Franklin Abbott writes, "We must own and ground and deeply root our right to joy" (17). *RFD* 26 (Spring 1981): 18-20.
[47] See *RFD* 95 (Fall 1998) and *RFD* 155 (Fall 2013) here: http://www.rfdmag.org/back-issues.php.

Broughton's films since the 1970s have received much less scholarly attention than his earlier work, though scores of film reviews and anthologies acknowledge Broughton as a significant figure of the second American avant-garde. One of Broughton's students, experimental filmmaker Michael Wallin, sheds light on this omission. Wallin champions Broughton as a teacher but admits that he finds Broughton's films "a bit silly and precious" (quoted in Anker, et al. 2010, 198). Commentary by film critics and filmmakers alike reveal that Broughton's later work has often been viewed as too playful and light-hearted, "too California" to be taken seriously (Foley 2013, 11). Broughton's films elicit that same "what is this?!" response prompted by the Radical Faeries, Barbara Hammer, and other eco-erotic materials discussed throughout this project. Perhaps because the environment so often signals a space of sexual liberation in pastoral narratives, particularly in LGTBQ narratives, Broughton's eco-sensual films risk appearing passé and bucolic to contemporary viewers. However, in the context of AIDS and queer shame, Broughton's films, particularly *This Is It* (1971), *High Kukus* (1973), and *Devotions* (1983), reveal themselves to be more contemporarily relevant than previously thought. That Broughton and the Radical Faeries hold simultaneously together an affective confluence of joy and shame, playfulness and devotion, enchantment amidst disenchantment, and presentness in an age of extreme precarity is ever relevant to our current crisis-ridden era.

Broughton's films manifest a nature-inspired mysticism that spurs communal queer wonder and further demonstrates the other-oriented nature of environmental eros. Environmental humanities scholar Jeffrey J. Cohen describes wonder as "a verb masquerading as a noun" (2013, 154). On wonder as a practice, he asserts, "to wonder

actively is to open oneself to the world made strange, to the world's queerness" (154). Broughton's films exude queerness in many senses of the word—they depict same-sex desire, but they also manifest queerness in their nonsensicality, such as the riddle-like quips of animals and supposedly inanimate objects, and their oxymoronic tonality ("playful devotion" and "serious play"). Broughton's 1971 *This Is It* epitomizes the "open[ning] [of] oneself to the world's queerness" that Cohen describes. The title for *This Is It* is borrowed from a collection of Zen poems written by Watts. For this metaphysical treatise, Broughton turns his backyard into an Edenic garden, casting his toddler son Orion as an Adam figure who climbs a tree, chases a bright red ball, and gathers rocks and dirt. Occasional interjections from an un-pictured god are interspersed with voiceovers of Broughton reciting the lines to his poem by the same title: "In the beginning It was already there. / And so was everything else. / And everything was just the way It is." I include *This Is It* here for two reasons: for one, I see it as emblematic of Broughton's oeuvre—a seemingly straightforward film depicting a child playing in a yard and a somewhat nonsensical poem about "It." As the poem states, "This is It," yet as I will show, "It" is more than meets the eye. Secondly, the film is an alternative origin story, one founded not on sexual liberation or utopian elsewheres as in Broughton's well-known romp *The Bed* (1968),[48] but instead on a childlike "ethos of wonder" similar to

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[48] Readers familiar with Broughton's work may be curious why I neglect to include Broughton's most famous erotic nature film *The Bed* (1968), which became a countercultural icon upon its release in 1969. *The Bed* features an orgiastic gathering upon a white iron bed in the middle of Muir Woods, California. Broughton conceived of the film while thinking about a bed as a stage for "the dance of human history" (1992, 101). As such, the film contains a diverse cast of characters, including a satyr figure, a serpent, a priest, and an "aged earth mother" (Broughton in Foley 2013, 145), performing an array of quotidian and not-so-quotidian tasks upon this same bed—sleeping, cavorting, playing, ritualizing, dying. *The Bed* is significant in the history of avant-garde cinema due to its inclusion of frontal nudity, which posed a problem for Broughton when he tried to have the film printed (an underground pornography company ended up printing the film). However, from an eco-critical perspective *The Bed* is rather uninteresting, since the film's natural setting—golden hills and idyllic tree-lined fields—provides a space for these erotic

that found in Radical Faerie writings. We watch Orion delight in spooning rocks into a large vase. We witness his rapt attention to the burning candle, as he improvises a game out of dodging its flame. We sense his self-satisfaction as he deftly pours water from a silver kettle into a plastic cup. It's as if he is discovering the world for the first time and, in the process, reminding us that we are still capable of such enchantment.

In *This Is It: and Other Essays on Zen and Spiritual Experience*, first published in 1960, Watts discusses the principles of Zen Buddhism and describes the enlightened mind as "wonder-struck at the self-evident and self-sufficient fitness of things as they are" (1973, 18). Broughton's film echoes this delight in the "fitness of things": "This is It. / This is really It. / This is all there is. / And It's perfect as It is." Several lines later, the poet underscores the interconnectedness of this Itness, which infuses everything: "This is It / and I am It / and You are It / and so is That / and He is It / and She is It / and It is It / and That is That." Watts understands this "Itness" as exceeding the bounds of a single subject or object. For Watts, Broughton, and certainly for the Radical Faeries, these "eternal moments of childhood play" and concomitant recognition of cosmic forces greater than oneself often manifest outdoors.

Watts quotes Bernard Berenson's *Sketch for a Self-Portrait* (1949) as emblematic of this "cosmic consciousness": "It was a morning in early summer […] The temperature was like a caress. I remember […] that I climbed up a tree stump and felt suddenly immersed in Itness" (quoted in Watts 20-21). Notice the eco-erotic description of the summer day as a caress in Berenson's recollection. Like Berenson and Orion, who begins

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exchanges by enabling privacy but serves as a passive backdrop, a pastoral setting relatively divorced from the activities transpiring in its midst. For this reason, I see it as a film more indicative of sexual liberation than environmental eros.

This is It perched in a tree, an *RFD* article, "Spiritual Soapbox," explores magic (also spelled "magick" in Faerie speak) through the image of a tree:

> Magick's a funny thing: like the treeness in the tree, it's there and again it isn't. Depends on what you want to see. If you *believe* that a tree is just bark and leaves, that's all you'll see. If the world to you is all day flatness of mundane 3-D, then so it is […] I was going to say something about the gayness in being gay, about the powerful and healing magick that's our fearsome responsibility. (Jamal 1977, 31).

Here, Jamal seems to be making an analogy between the essence of a tree and the essence of "gayness" as further evidence of the cosmic Itness that pervades everything. For Jamal, recognizing the magick in treeness, gayness, and "Itness" is not only metaphysical, it is also ethical, a "fearsome responsibility" and one capable of healing through self and communal affirmation.

Similar conceptions of childlike magic and wonder as recuperative pervade other autobiographical accounts written by Radical Fairies. In an essay that is demonstrative of Cohen's understanding of wonder as "opening oneself" to the "world's queerness" (154), David Allen writes, "I am committed to re-opening my heart's door. I'm inviting myself out…into the light where it's warmer. The small child excited by his own heartbeat shouts with joy" (8). Allen's essay describes the jettisoning of shame and internalized homophobia and, in its stead, a welcoming of "the childlike joy" of "remembering that we have held each other before the moon and the sun" (8). Like Allen and Cohen, cultural theorist Sara Ahmed observes that in a state of joy, "The body opens as the world opens up before it; the body unfolds into the unfolding of a world […]" (2014, 180). Ahmed too posits this opening up to wonder as transformative. She contends,

> It is through wonder that pain and anger come to life, as wonder allows us to realize that what hurts, and what causes pain, and what we feel is

> wrong, is not necessary, and can be unmade as well as made. Wonder energises the hope of transformation, and the will for politics. (181)

This emphasis on wonder, especially childlike wonder in Radical Faerie literature and *This is It*, reflects a desire to return to a state prior to the shame that often accompanies queer adolescence and adulthood.

Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick confirms this connection between queerness, shame, and childhood, arguing that what gives "queer" its political potency is its permanent yoking to shame:

> the main reason why the self-application of 'queer' by activists has proven so volatile is that there's no *way* that any amount of affirmative reclamation is going to succeed in detaching the word from its associations with shame and with the terrifying powerlessness of gender-dissonant or otherwise stigmatized childhood. If 'queer' is a politically potent term, which it is, that's because, far from being capable of being detached from the childhood scene of shame, it cleaves to that scene as a near-inexhaustible source of transformational energy. (1995, 210)

Radical Faeries, including Broughton, return to nature to shed "the filthy green frog-skin of Hetero-imitation," to quote an oft-cited saying of Harry Hay's (263). Significantly, this liberation is not primarily or even chiefly sexual. Instead, it is a liberation of consciousness, a "liberation [from] within" (Norbert 1977, 33). While this "liberation of consciousness" never fully eradicates shame, which Sedgwick makes clear is "[in]capable of being detached from the childhood scene of shame," it nonetheless provides the Radical Faeries with a "source of transformational energy" as shame energizes a capacity for joy and wonder.

Psychologist Sylvan Tomkins, who gained traction in recent years with queer theorists like Sedgwick, elucidates this relationship between shame and joy in his *Affect Imagery Consciousness. Volume II: The Negative Affects* (1963). Shame, which Tomkins

posits as "the incomplete reduction of interest or joy," arguably owes its affective force to its ability to combine with other affects in "affect-shame binds," such that any investment of positive affect has the potential to evoke shame (227). In other words, shame, a negative affect, reduces one's capacity for positive affects like joy or excitement. Shame, Tomkins maintains, "is felt as inner torment, a sickness of the soul" (118). This assertion resonates with Radical Faerie commentary about "gay soulmaking," which Mark Thompson explains as "the ongoing process of coming out inside" (1987, 237). Yet as much as shame is internalized and focused on the self, it is highly intersubjective. Tomkins explains, "The shame response is an act which reduces facial communication [...] By dropping his eyes, his eyelids, his head and sometimes the whole upper part of his body, the individual calls a halt to looking at another person, particularly the other person's face, and to the other person's looking at him, particularly his face" (120). The import of the face, arguably our primary foci of exchange with one another and the site where we most expect emotions to manifest, is illustrative of the social nature of shame. This corporeal shielding, as depicted in iconic portrayals of shame such as Masaccio's Adam and Eve in his fresco *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* (ca. 1425), is itself reflective of the social nature of shame, as this quintessential shame response is doubtless a protective gesture intended to buffer oneself from others. While shame is clearly a negative experience, Tomkins nonetheless notes its generative potential: "Shame enlarges the spectrum of objects outside of himself which can engage man and concern him. After having experienced shame through sudden empathy, the individual will never again be able to be entirely unconcerned with the other" (257). It is in this fashion that shame reminds us of our contingency and mutuality.

The gaiety that characterizes James Broughton's oeuvre and Radical Faerie philosophies may seem far afield from the gravity and sobering humiliation of shame, but it is this very shame-joy affective bind that spurs the communal, other-oriented ethics of these eco-erotics. If shame causes a closing off of the body, joy and wonder foster an opening. Ahmed explains, "Wonder opens up a collective space, by allowing the surfaces of the world to make an impression, as they become see-able or feel-able *as* surfaces […] the very orientation of wonder, with its open faces and open bodies, involves a reorientation of one's relation to the world" (183).[49] In Broughton's films and Radical Faerie writings, the environment is often the literal and/or metaphorical vehicle for these affective openings. In the poem "My Wings Unfold," the speaker describes "shak[ing] away cocoon remnants" and drawing energy from "blooming things" in his midst (Long 1980, 28). The speaker is revived by the "joy tears" of fellow Faeries, whose "ma[g]ic breath" spurs "a death" of shame and "a birth" of a new sense of self (28). Here, Faeries again attest to the healing powers of joy, derived, at least partly, from the environment and from other Faeries. For Hay, the casting off of the expectations of heteronormative society enables a reclamation of a former sense of self:

> When the Fairies reached out to make reunion with that long-ago-cast-out shadow-self so long suppressed and denied, the explosive energies released by the jubilations of those reunions were ecstatic beyond belief. When we caught up with that lonely little Sissy-boy in an ecstatic hug of reuniting, we were recapturing also the suddenly remembered sense of awe and wonder of Marvelous Mother Nature who in those years so powerfully surrounded him. (255-56).

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[49] Though she isn't often cited in these contemporary discussions of wonder, Luce Irigaray draws from Descartes in "An Ethics of Sexual Difference" to discuss the ethical implications of wonder. Because wonder transpires "before we know whether an object is 'agreeable' to us, that is, whether it suits our dispositions […]" (Irigaray quoted in Jones 2011, 112), wonder "precedes the appropriation of the other" (Jones 112). As philosopher Rachel Jones explains, "this first passion manifests an openness to the unfamiliarity of that which is encountered" (112). For Irigaray, wonder is "indispensable 'not only to life,' but also to the creation of an ethics, and above all, to the creation of an ethics of sexual difference" (112).

Thus, not only do these psychic transformations involve a reunification with the shunned queer child within, but they also bring about a reunion with nature, from whom Hay perceives the Faeries having been estranged. This is significant, as it furthers my case for these "green worlds" as more than mere escapist sites for sexual gratification. As is evident in Hay's commentary and in my reading of Broughton's *This Is It*, this immersion into nature both inspires and makes possible a renewed openness to the world.

For Radical Faeries like Broughton, wonder is interpersonal and, at times, interspecies, since enjoying another's enjoyment is crucial to the communitarian ethics that Faeries like Hay espoused. In a 1987 interview, Broughton compares "man's vandalism of the earth […] to the way he treats his fellow creatures: bilking, raping, destroying, using living beings as objects of greed and exploitation," noting that "so much of human society is resentfully loveless, no wonder it is violent and guilt-ridden" (204). In a plug for anti-assimilationist gay politics, Broughton charges "straight society" and, in particular, hyper-masculinity, as especially responsible for damage to the earth, society's "shameless greed," and "its passion for war" (205). Most interesting to this discussion of shame and queerness in the larger context of returns to nature, Broughton attributes AIDS to environmental degradation:

> AIDS is an epidemic that threatens all of humankind. Its cause […] derives from the obscene polluting of the earth that exploitive greed has practiced. The growth of cancer as a killing agent was the beginning of this poisoning. Now we have a second terrible result of our inhabiting a poisoned world that destroys our immunities. Gay men are in the vanguard of this tragedy, they are martyrs to the sickness of their destructive society. (206)[50]

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[50] Mark Thompson also writes about AIDS in planetary terms: "the horror of AIDS has served as a trigger for a lot of gay men, signaling that something is obviously not right in their own society but also on the planet as well" (1987, 241).

While Broughton does not elaborate, it seems that because he, along with Hay and others, perceives gay men as particularly attuned to the environment, they are especially impacted by humankind's mistreatment of the earth. In light of Broughton's linking of AIDS and other human ailments to environmental degradation, his lyrical odes to nature are not just light-hearted homages; they are models for a much-needed re-enchantment with the planet and with one another.

Broughton's 1973 film *High Kukus* offers us a teeming ecosystem as an exemplar of interspecies flourishing. Inspired by the Japanese poet Basho's haiku of the jumping frog, *High Kukus* (1973) is comprised of a three-minute meditation on a pond at the Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate Park (Broughton 1992, 104). Broughton anthropomorphizes nonhuman nature—mud, a tree, a tadpole, a leaf—and portrays them speaking witty platitudes, such as: "'I have no desire to move about,' said the tree. 'I'm very attached to my roots.'" "'Never expect anything,' said the tadpole, 'and everything will surprise you.'" While the film is arguably one of Broughton's least "queer" films, in the sense of queer sexuality, *High Kukus* nonetheless exudes a queer wonderment through talking animals who relish in their own puns and an overall frolicsome yet philosophical mood. Describing *High Kukus*, Watts observes, "In the contemplation of lofty themes most people are serious, though not always sincere. Broughton, however, is always sincere but hardly ever serious" (quoted in Foley 167). Broughton understood "metaphysical nonsense as a key to the Infinite" and often noted that only one letter separates "comic" from "cosmic" (quoted in Foley 166). The tenor of *High Kukus* is light-hearted, yet the film exhibits an unassuming philosophical matter-of-factness similar to *This Is It*. Like Orion's Edenic escapades in *This Is It*, the idyllic ecosystem in

High Kukus serves as an exemplar of self-acceptance and radical present-ness, as the personified pond and its inhabitants model contentment and delight in their Itness.

High Kukus also sheds light on elemental experience and enchantment, a prevalent aspect of Broughton's oeuvre and Faerie literature. Political theorist Jane Bennett describes enchantment as "a state of wonder" that involves "the temporary suspension of chronological time and bodily movement. To be enchanted, then, is to participate in a momentarily immobilizing encounter; it is to be transfixed, spellbound" (2001, 5). The circular framing of *High Kukus*, an iris shot popular during the silent film era, resembles an opening not unlike a microscope or peephole. This format entices the viewer to take a closer look, to get lost in this microcosmic world within worlds, noticing the ripples on the water's surface, the flight of birds overhead, and the orchestra of frogs and crickets chirping. The film's atmospheric quality furthers this feeling of slipping into another realm, as does the content of Broughton's riddle-like haikus, which connote the poetics and play of texts like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Bennett describes the experience of enchantment as: "(1) a pleasurable feeling of being charmed by the novel and as yet unprocessed encounter and (2) a more *unheimlich* (uncanny) feeling of being disrupted or torn out of one's default sensory-psychic-intellectual disposition" (2001, 5).[51] While "torn out" is too strong and disquieting a phrase for *High Kukus*' convivial tone—though it is a fitting descriptor for eros as Ann Carson understands it, as a near annihilating phenomena—there is something otherworldly about the film. Even if playfully, *High Kukus* dislocates and "queers" our sense of time.

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[51] Alan Watts described Broughton as "having the sense that the everyday world is not only marvelous but magical—that is, uncanny in a way that is not so much disquieting as holy and nonsensical" (Watts quoted in Thompson 1987, 200).

This temporal dislocation is also palpable in accounts of Faerie rituals. In one example, a participant describes the dance of the Maypole at a Faerie gathering: "Then the dance begins. The pole in the hole reunites three worlds: the lower world of soul, the middle world in which we live and the upper world of spirit. The walls between these worlds are at their thinnest in this 'time out of all time'" (Wow quoted in Thompson 2011, 244). This ecstatic "time out of all time" resonates with queer theorist Jose Muñoz's work on queer versus straight time. Muñoz explains, "Queerness's ecstatic and horizontal temporality is a path and a movement to a greater openness to the world" (2009, 25). Drawing on what he sees as "the ecstatic unity of temporality—Past, Present, Future" in Heidegger, Muñoz asserts that "to know ecstasy […] is to have a sense of timeliness's motion, to understand […] the time of queerness. Queerness's time is a stepping out of the linearity of straight time" (25). Queer time is both the result of a temporal opening, a disruption of straight time, and the effect of a literal opening, in the case of *High Kukus*, an enclave in the form of the pond. Muñoz also perceives in queer time, "the invocation of future collectivity, a queerness that registers as the illumination of a horizon of existence" (25). Thus in Broughton's films and in Faerie rituals, these sites in nature are apertures that fuel both a temporal openness and an openness to wonder that fosters "future collectivity."

If *High Kukus* is Broughton's eco-centric model for interspecies flourishing, an antidote to an ailing planet and its people, then *Devotions* (1983) is Broughton's proposal for how to practice a "queer ethos of wonder" in a more human-centric setting. Themes of contingency, queer temporality, and serious play pervade *Devotions*, a collaborative project between Broughton and his partner Joel Singer. The film features forty-five

couples in California and Washington State, including Radical Faerie founder Harry Hay and his partner John Burnside. The bulk of *Devotions* transpires outdoors but also includes a number of domestic scenes, such as men cooking and reading together, and a few closing scenes clearly filmed in San Francisco. When explaining his motivation for making the film, Broughton wrote: "Men are the victims of a society that approves only of competitive conformists and insatiable consumers. I believe men are capable of higher pursuits […] Joel and I set out to show some of the ways that men can enjoy one another without resorting to insult or aggression" (1992, 114-15). The film reflects an embodied spirituality and ecstatic ethics shared by many Radical Faerie sanctuaries whose community creeds emphasize interdependence, sex positivity, and veneration of nature.

As befits a project entitled *Devotions*, a reverential tone pervades the film. The steadiness of the ocean's waves in the opening credits, the sort of call-and-response flute duet, and the rhythmic notes played on what sounds like a bamboo xylophone create a more contemplative tone than the fanciful classical music of Broughton's earlier films. In the opening scene, Singer tenderly brushes the sand from Broughton's face and gingerly helps the older filmmaker to his feet. As the two gaze at each other, they seem to enact Broughton's opening invitation: "Come forth brother souls […] Time to plant starseed / in one another's eyes." Broughton's "starseed" neologism suggests a union of the celestial and earthly realms, a harmonic intertwining that is underscored by the melodic duet. As in Broughton's more explicitly sensual films, touch and physical connection are emphasized but are here imbued with a ritualistic tenderness. For example, one couple shampoos each other's hair in outdoor showers and other men massage, shave, and embrace one another. In one visually stunning scene, the camera focuses on Singer's

hands gently unbuttoning Broughton's shirt. Touch is not solely a mode of sexual arousal here, it is also a practice of other-oriented care and, as the title suggests, devotion, a demonstration of the ethics of eros.

In the spirit of environmental eros, this adoration extends beyond human-to-human contact. In one scene, a man caresses a large snake as it coils itself around his body. He artfully twists and turns responding to the snake's touch. Other filmic subjects cradle and marvel at a spider, one couple lovingly bathes a dog, and another twosome embraces amidst their cats in an interspecies family portrait. Cohen describes entanglements such as these as the "tangled, fecund, and irregular pluriverse humans inhabit along with lively and agency-filled objects, materials, and forces." Quoting Michael Serres, Cohen affirms, "'Contingency means common tangency,' haptic entanglement of body and world, knotted in multidimensional admixture" (2013, xxiii). Unlike accounts of spiritual transcendence that elevate the subject beyond the bodily, in Broughton's films and writings by Radical Faeries, the corporeal is not something to be "overcome" but a mode for spiritual connection. Ahmed explains that the corporeal has often been ignored in philosophies of wonder "largely because it has been associated with the sublime and the sacred, as an affect that we might imagine leaves the materiality of the body behind" (180). Films like *Erogeny* (1978), in which Broughton transforms human bodies into sensual topographies by ascribing geomorphic traits to human forms (i.e. bodies as continents), and *Devotions* are erotic endorsements of bodily wandering and wonder. And Broughton perceives this exploration to be in the service of creative spiritual flourishing: "A quest for the ecstatic goes beyond cruising for a congenial sex object. It is not enough to get it up, get it on, and get it over with. In the urgency of our

present situation we should look toward connecting imaginatively with the souls of our brothers […]" (quoted in Thompson 1987, 203). For Broughton, "the expansion of wonder is bodily" (180) but not exclusively human nor wholly serious.

In *Devotions*, these poignant scenes of other-oriented care and connection are interspersed with Broughton's signature wit in a tonal "admixture" to borrow from Cohen (2013, xxiii) that resonates with Radical Faerie conceptions of "playful devotion" and "serious play." In one domestic vignette, two leather daddies make whipped cream and ceremoniously feed one another samples from their whisks. Scenes later, two figures caress one another, as flowers appear from one of the men's under arms and buttocks. In a decade marked by the AIDS crisis and essays like queer theorist Leo Bersani's canonical "Is the Rectum a Grave?" (1987), Broughton combats homophobia and despair with flower-filled buttocks and phallic gardens [Fig. 2.5], tropes that also appear in *RFD* [Fig. 2.6]. Broughton depicts penises as flourishing fungi thriving in a lush green garden. Such playfulness facilitates his male viewers' laughing at themselves as he pokes fun at and celebrates human genitalia through an amalgamation of human and nonhuman forms. Broughton explains, "*Devotions* was intended to indicate […] how innumerable are the ways of expressing devotion, from the playful to the profound" (quoted in Thompson 1987, 203). This playfulness, which likely contributes to Broughton's films being dismissed as trivial, is actually part of their philosophical and ethical heft.

Writing about the ethics of play, Cynthia Willett asserts, "In contrast with the abstract equality of atomized identities before modern laws, friendly play provides a training ground for a concretely situated reciprocity that binds selves-in-communities" (2014, 75). Monikers like "warriors of sensual delight" and "champions of play" appear

frequently in Radical Faerie commentary (Raven 1982, 26), who even describe their work at Faerie sanctuaries through a neologism "playbor" (for play + labor) (Giuseppe in Thompson 2011, 264). The queer wonder and joy discussed in the previous pages manifest in these "ludic interactions," which provide "glimpses of communion in play" (71, 72). This communion is echoed on a rock at the memorial grove on Short Mountain, a Faerie sanctuary in rural Tennessee: "UNION This place is dedicated to our holding together 1985" (quoted in Morgensen 2011, 87). Joy, wonder, and play are tools through which the Radical Faeries practiced "determined communion amid ongoing struggle" (Morgensen 87).

Advocating for an ethos built upon the practice of wonder, Cohen explains, "I want this queer wonder to be an explicitly collaborative praxis—and by 'collaborative' I mean 'inhumanly collaborative,' promiscuously desiring alliance with rocks, texts, forces of nature as with humans living and dead […]" (2013, 6). Broughton's films depict imaginatively promiscuous dwellings between humans but also between humans and nonhuman nature. For Cohen, "an ecosystem is an oikosystem, a *dwelling* system" (2013, xvii, xxviii). Broughton's nature films dwell in many senses of the word—they pontificate, they tarry, they may stun (a Middle Dutch derivation of dwell), and they, particularly *Devotions*, reveal queer interspecies flourishing laden with eco-ecstatic wonder.

In this chapter, I have argued for recognition of the spiritual dimensions of Radical Faerie sexuality. Foundational to this erotic spirituality is environmental eros, which manifests not only in queer desire, both human-to-human and human-to-nonhuman, but also in a shared joy and wonder that queers notions of the autonomous

subject. As Mark Thompson affirms, it is not sexual liberation or identitarian pride in and of itself that spurs this erotic spirituality: “I see pride as being of no great spiritual value. It is our compassion, which helps others to see themselves” (1987, 242). Radical Faerie practice is founded on contingencies between humans as well as between humans and other earthly inhabitants. Echoing Broughton’s anti-capitalist and anti-assimilationist commentary regarding AIDS and environmental destruction, Thompson perceives pride as “lead[ing] to isolation, inflation of individual egos and greed” (242). Instead the Radical Faeries and Broughton counter queer shame, displacement, and desolation in the wake of AIDS through an eco-centric “right to joy.” As one Radical Faerie avows, “We must own and ground and deeply root our right to joy” (Abbott 1981, 17). This mobilization of positive affects—joy, wonder, interest, excitement—in the service of communitarian ethics offers us a comically cosmic model for re-enchantment with the world, and one that we will encounter again in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

'From G Spots to E Spots': Ecosexuality's Campy Environmentalism

> The environment from which the individual could obtain pleasure—which he could cathect as gratifying almost as an extended zone of the body—has been rigidly reduced. Consequently, the 'universe' of libidinous cathexis is likewise reduced […] For example, compare love-making in a meadow and in an automobile, on a lovers' walk outside the town walls and on a Manhattan street. In the former cases, the environment partakes of and invites libidinal cathexis and tends to be eroticized. Libido transcends beyond the immediate erotogenic zones—a process of nonrepressive sublimation. In contrast, a mechanized environment seems to block such self-transcendence of libido.
> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*

> My tears could not be withheld and Mary hugged me tight. 'I feel so disconnected from nature,' I cried. 'No wonder,' she said, 'it's the middle of winter!' But I knew it was more than that—I was out of touch, and I knew in my heart that I had to get back to the Garden.
> Annie Sprinkle, "Diary of An EcoSexual"

> "One is drawn to Camp when one realizes that 'sincerity' is not enough."
> Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp'"

This chapter continues my larger query into erotic environmental ethics but in a contemporary context, what many are calling the Anthropocene, a word increasingly used to describe the anthropogenic destruction of ecosystems that marks our current geological era. The term, coined by ecologist Eugene Stoermer in the 1980s and revived by chemist Paul Crutzen (Crutzen & Stoermer 2000, 17-18), recognizes that "human beings, through their own actions, have jolted the planet into a new, unprecedented [geological] epoch […]" (Nixon 2014). Humankind has become "a geomorphic force, an exceptional actor in the planet's geophysical systems […]" In other words, "we are the asteroid" (Barnosky quoted in Nixon 2014).[52] Taking as my subject the contemporary ecosexuality

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[52] For discussions about the appropriate dating of this geologic phenomena, see Simon L. Lewis & Mark A. Maslin's "Defining the Anthropocene" (2015) as well Dana Luciano's "The Inhuman Anthropocene," which uses Sylvia Wynter's "1492: A New World View" (1995) to explore the implications of Lewis and

movement, I want to explore how ecosexuality answers the Anthropocene's call to urgency and responsibility. What might ecosexual encounters with nonhuman nature offer contemporary environmental ethics? Can ecosexuality's posthumanist tendencies queer our speciesest modes of belonging and foster an environmentalism that is not foundationally anthropocentric nor steeped in "reproductive futurism" (Edelman 2004)?[53]

In this chapter, I contend that ecosexuality's concurrent urgency and playfulness embodied in a theatrical environmental sensibility I deem eco-camp exemplifies a carnivalesque ecological flourishing. While ecosexual thought and experience do not necessarily move us beyond the human, they do challenge human exceptionalism through a mode of florid performance, spectacle, and ostentatious (eco)sex-positivity that champions new forms of relationality between humans and other earthly inhabitants. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's carnivalesque (1968) and Chris Cuomo's ethics of flourishing (1998), I argue that ecosexuality's campy ecological ethics provide an alternative to the didacticism and moralism that characterize much contemporary environmentalism. In the spirit of carnival, the tragi-comic and, at times, parodic tone of ecosexuality generates an affective dissonance that spurs us to feel the full effects of our discordance with nature. While Chapters 1 and 2 emphasized attunement with nature that

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Maslin's 1610 hypothesis. Lewis and Maslin posit that the death of over fifty million indigenous people of the Americas from war, famine, and disease resulted in reduced levels of carbon dioxide that can be seen in Artic ice cores. As Luciano argues, this genealogical versus solely geologic origin to the Anthropocene makes clear that these origin stories have deeply political implications.

[53] In *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), queer theorist Lee Edelman identifies "reproductive futurism," embodied in the ubiquitous "image of the Child," as the engine that drives contemporary politics. He explains, "the fantasy subtending the image of the Child invariably shapes the logic within which the political itself must be thought. That logic compels us, to the extent that we would register as politically responsible, to submit to the framing of political debate—and, indeed, of the political field—as defined by the terms of what this book describes as reproductive futurism: terms that impose an ideological limit on political discourse as such, preserving in the process the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the possibility of a queer resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations" (2).

risks reinforcing an idyll that is increasingly unsustainable, ecosexuality's campy eco-erotics simultaneously entertain and bewilder (and perhaps even arouse), stirring an unsettling array of responses apropos for these unsettling times.

First, a caveat regarding my use of the term Anthropocene: There is currently debate in academia both within the physical sciences and beyond about the validity of the word. Search most academic conference programs or mainstream news sources from *Smithsonian* to *Bloomberg Business* and one will find plentiful evidence of what legal scholar Jedediah Purdy has called "Anthropocene Fever" (2015). Some environmental philosophers are compelled by the term for the ways it grants a view of humans from the position of the earth. In other words, the Anthropocene is just one of the earth's many phases, which will include humans' extinction while the universe and other planetary forces will continue long after our demise.[54] Others argue that the Anthropocene further perpetuates the anthropocentrism already rampant in mainstream environmentalism. In conservationist rhetoric per usual, we remain the planet's foe and its savior (Heller 1993). This is epitomized in 2012 global campaign out of Goiás, in which a menacing cloud fist hovers menacingly over an infinitesimally small city.[55] It appears that even Armageddon will take on human form.

In another vein of critique, feminist philosopher Chris Cuomo warns of the dangers of blaming the current ecological crisis on "humans," a homogenized category that neglects the diverse impacts and experiences of industrialization and globalization and the reality that some humans—those in developed countries and, in particular, the

[54] See the following 2013 conversation between Claire Colebrook and Cary Wolfe from "The Anthropocene Project": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLTCzth8H1M.
[55] The image can be found here: http://www.ecorazzi.com/environmental-ads-goias-what-goes-around-comes-around-fist/.

United States—have had far greater impact on the environment than others (quoted in Cavallaro 2014). While there is a general consensus in scientific and scholarly realms that humans have indeed impacted the planet, as Purdy writes, "The trouble starts when this charismatic, all-encompassing idea of the Anthropocene becomes an all-purpose projection screen and amplifier for one's preferred version of 'taking responsibility for the planet'" (Purdy 2015). With Cuomo and Purdy's warnings in mind, I nonetheless use the term not for its geological precision (or lack thereof) but for its poststructuralist tendencies, for what Purdy identifies as "the most radical thought identified with the Anthropocene"—that "the familiar contrast between people and the natural world no longer holds. There is no more *nature* that stands apart from human beings […]" (Purdy 2015). Ultimately, I perceive the Anthropocene as an unstable term for particularly precarious times, and in this chapter, I am most interested in ecosexuality's response to this ecological precarity. Dub it the Anthropocene, the Holocene, or just 2016, what does ecosexuality's campy environmentalism offer this era of environmental accountability?

"Here Come the Ecosexuals"[56]

A number of scholars have written about the rampant anthrocentrism in mainstream environmentalism (Heller 1993, Gaard 1993, Plumwood 1996). Noël Sturgeon has compellingly incorporated critiques of heteronormativity and racism into her exploration of environmentalist popular culture, which, she argues, has "become a common narrative framework used to understand and legitimate certain aspects of U.S. consumerism, family

[56] In the summer of 2015, Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle launched their "pop-up performance art" tour. The duo traveled throughout California in their "Pollination Pod" as a film crew documented their environmental exploits for a second film entitled *Here Come the Ecosexuals*: https://theecosexuals.ucsc.edu.

values, global military power, and American history" (2008, 6). Scan any number of contemporary environmental campaigns and Sturgeon's assertion that environmentalists "arguing from or for the natural can support the very relations of power that produce environmental problems" rings true (2008, 12). A Greenpeace ad produced by Almap BBDO Ad Agency in São Paulo, Brazil mobilizes "the image of the Child" (Edelman 2004, 2) to raise awareness about rising sea levels.[57] A fair-skinned child with bright eyes and a stark white bow in her hair is gradually becoming immersed in water, as the murky bottom half of the image subsumes the child and is tinged with red streaks that disturbingly emanate from her nose. The ad reads: "Your child is growing, but not as fast as the oceans are rising."[58] Other environmental campaigns use a win: win logic to appeal to humankind's selfish desire to save itself. A 2014 ad for Greenpeace's #standforforests campaign contains an idyllic pastoral scene and the slogan "Protecting Forests=Protecting Yourself."[59] In another example of this anthrocentrism, WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) entreats, "Preserve Your World. Preserve Yourself," adjacent to a drawing of a waterfall wherein one sees the silhouette of a human face.[60] Another WWF illustration produced by Germainead Ad Agency (Antwerp, Belgium) ironically mobilizes fear of so-called "freaks of nature" to protect the natural in a digital image that melds a fish head

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[57] The image can be found here: http://adsoftheworld.com/media/print/greenpeace_growing_1.

[58] In *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), queer theorist Lee Edelman identifies "reproductive futurism," embodied in the ubiquitous "image of the Child," as the engine that drives contemporary politics. He explains, "the fantasy subtending the image of the Child invariably shapes the logic within which the political itself must be thought. That logic compels us, to the extent that we would register as politically responsible, to submit to the framing of political debate—and, indeed, of the political field—as defined by the terms of what this book describes as reproductive futurism: terms that impose an ideological limit on political discourse as such, preserving in the process the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the possibility of a queer resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations" (2).

[59] The image can be found here: http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/campaigns/forests/.

[60] The image can be found here: http://www.ecorazzi.com/2012/03/21/10-awesome-environmental-ads/environmental-ads-wwf-preserve-your-world-preserve-yourself/.

with a human's body.[61] It warns, "Stop climate change before it changes you." If conventional environmentalism reeks of anthrocentrism, racism, and speciesism, what might alternative, even queer responses to contemporary environmental crises look like?

Enter: the ecosexuals. The emergent ecosexual movement challenges eco-normativity through its pleasure seeking and "pollen-amorous" eros, which also expands conceptions of sex in the process. This is evident in "SexEcology, a term coined in 2009 by artist couple and founding ecosexuals Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens [Fig. 3.1]. The duo uses the word to delineate "a new field of research exploring the places sexology and ecology intersect" (Stephens and Sprinkle 2011, 20). Sprinkle and Stephens playfully revamp traditional sexology—the scientific study of human sexuality made famous by controversial figures like Havelock Ellis and Magnus Hirschfield—through pseudo-scientific definitions, diagrams, and charts. Traditional sexology has focused on human-to-human contact while SexEcology pushes the bounds of normative and even non-normative sexuality. In a glossary on their website, Sprinkle and Stephens provide the following definition of an ecosexual:

> **ecosexual** \i-ˈkō-sek-sh(ə-)wəl: Eco--From Latin *oeco*: home, household. 1: A person that finds nature sensual, sexy. 2: A new sexual identity. 3: Person who takes the Earth as their lover. 4: A term used in dating, i.e. metrosexual. 5. An environmental activist strategy. 6. A new movement. 7. Other. (Stephens and Sprinkle 2011, 20)[62]

Whereas some environmentalists expend their energy making human intercourse more earth-friendly (i.e. spreading the word about fair trade condoms, chemical-free lubricants, organic sex toys, and green dating sites[63]), Sprinkle, Stephens, and other ecosexuals

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[61] The image can be found here: http://www.trendhunter.com/trends/manfish-wwf.
[62] Ibid.
[63] See Stefanie Iris Weiss' *Eco-Sex: Go Green Between the Sheets and Make Your Love Life Sustainable* (New York: Crown Publishing/Ten Speed Books, 2010) for an example of the former.

encourage erotic encounters that are not just nature-friendly but *with* nature itself. As such, the eco-erotics of ecosexuality (the eco that precedes the sexuality) actually challenge how we think about sexuality (who and what can arouse). Though they do not cite lesbian-separatists or the Radical Faeries as sources of inspiration, ecosexuals are clearly drawing from these queer ecological predecessors. In many ways, the other-oriented erotogenic ethics of Chapter 1 and the queer wonder and serious play of Chapter 2 converge in contemporary ecosexuality. However, while previous ecofeminist incarnations contain similar themes of reciprocity and partnerships with the earth, the planet is more often conceived as a maternal figure, a benevolent caretaker and provider, who may inspire erotic moments in nature but not necessarily sensuous occurrences *with* the environment itself.[64]

Sprinkle and Stephens, who lead ecosexual workshops and speak and perform regularly at art galleries and performing arts centers, tweak former ecofeminist and environmentalist imaginings of Earth as mother to reconfigure Earth as a lover. They aver the following in clause (i) of their "EcoSex Manifesto":

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[64]*Drone Boning* (dir. John Carlucci & Brandon LaGanke, 2014), a recent film produced by Ghost + Cow films (Brooklyn, NY), illustrates this point further. In a somewhat ambiguous commentary on privacy in an age of drone surveillance, the filmmakers created the first drone-filmed porno, in which hetero- and homosexual couples have sex in a variety of picturesque locales on the outskirts of San Francisco—on a hill, in a vineyard, and upon the beaches of the Pacific. The drone provides sweeping views of the landscape as infinitesimal couples fornicate far below. While the film reads as a visual homage to natural beauty, it is ultimately devoid of explicit political content. In a more ecologically-minded example, Fuck For Forest, a Berlin-based environmental group, makes "ecoporn" to "protect nature and liberate life." "By showing the beauty of love, nudity, and real sexual adventures," the group hopes "to direct attention to and collect money for threatened nature" (http://www.fuckforforest.com). Supporters are encouraged to endorse Fuck For Forest's efforts by becoming members of the site, a requirement to view the erotic photographs and films, and contributing their own pornographic materials. The organization then donates portions of the funds to an array of projects, the bulk of which concern rainforest conservation in South America. The recent documentary *Fuck for Forest* (dir. Michał Marczak, 2012) depicts group members having sex in German nightclubs and reveals that benefitting the environment seems secondary to the group's central project of sexual liberation. Like *Drone Boning*, Fuck For Forest involves human-to-human sexual stimulation *en plein air*, rendering the environment a backdrop for human sexual exploits and leaving traditional relations between human and nonhuman nature relatively intact.

> The Earth is our lover. We are madly, passionately, and fiercely in love, and we are grateful for this relationship each and every day. In order to create a more mutual and sustainable relationship with the Earth, we collaborate with nature. We treat the Earth with kindness, respect and affection. (Stephens & Sprinkle 2011, 7)

In clause (ii) of their manifesto, Sprinkle and Stephens declare:

> We make love with the Earth. We are aquaphiles, teraphiles, pyrophiles and aerophiles. We shamelessly hug trees, massage the Earth with our feet, and talk erotically to plants. We are skinny dippers, sun worshipers, and stargazers. We caress rocks, are pleasured by waterfalls, and admire the Earth's curves often. We make love with the Earth through our senses. We celebrate our E-spots. We are very dirty. (Stephens & Sprinkle 2011, 7)

In a diagram that resembles Gayle Rubin's "charmed circle" of "Good, Normal, Natural, Blessed Sexuality" and its "Outer Limits,"[65] Sprinkle and Stephens impart their own proliferation of nature-inspired perversions [Fig. 3.2]. Their taxonomic chart includes four groups of ecosexuals: aquaphiles, teraphiles, pyrophiles, and aerophiles. From vegetable dildos to watergasms (clitoral stimulation via running water) to fire walking to cloud sex to ecstatic breathing to lovemaking with grass or moss, Sprinkle and Stephens promote an array of erotic activity with the environment.

Ecosexuality and its catalog of ecosexual practices can easily be interpreted as a "dispersion of sexualities" characteristic of modern sexual subjecthood (Foucault 1990, 37), as yet another sexual liberation project against which we have been duly warned.[66] For this reason, I am less interested in ecosexuality from an identity politics perspective (for example, their campaign to include "E" under the aegis of GLBTQ[67]) and more

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[65] See Gayle Rubin's "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." In *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*. Ed. Carole Vance (Boston: Routledge, 1984): 281.
[66] Michel Foucault characterizes the nineteenth century as an "age of multiplication: a dispersion of sexualities, a strengthening of their disparate forms, a multiple implantation of 'perversions'" (1990, 37).
[67] In a May 8, 2015 Facebook post on the "Ecosex, Sexecology and Sustainable Love" Facebook group, Annie Sprinkle shared "Don't Call Me Ecosexual" (April 30, 2015), an article by Ruby Luna May, who maintains a blog called Ecohustler. May acknowledges the generative work of Sprinkle and Stephens, but

concerned with what ecosexuality as environmental performance art contributes to this discussion of environmental ethics. That this ecological eros is packaged in a tragi-comic tonal incongruence and staginess that I am calling eco-camp renders it an unconventional environmental politics capable of resonating with crisis-weary viewers so accustomed, if not immune, to the alarms of environmental catastrophe.[68]

Environmental Performance Art

To further elucidate the ways in which ecosexuality is distinguishable from other ecologically-oriented aesthetic projects, I give a brief overview of environmental performance art. Environmental art has been the subject of several recent anthologies (Weintraub 2012, Kastner 2012, and Brown 2014), but less has been written about contemporary environmental performance art (Szerszynski, Heim, and Waterton 2003), which has links to artistic predecessors like the Earth Art movement of the 1960s and 70s. However, as Patricia Watts writes, "most Earth or Land artists were either concerned with making their mark on the land [think Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970)], or were simply performing an act of aesthetic exploration with the earth as their medium with no real concern for the principles of ecology."[69] In contrast, environmental

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finds labels like "ecosexual" divisive. She writes, "by labeling something and creating a box for it, we create a divide. It's an invitation to decide 'either I am this or I'm not.'" While Sprinkle shares May's aversion to labels, the former adds: "I like to think that Beth Stephens and I are doing a take off or commentary on the GLBTQII movements, and using the term with tongue in cheek. Sometimes I also cringe at the term/label 'ecosexual!'" She continues, "It's all a big crazy experiment. What I do know is that now for many people, the term ecosexual […] gives them/me a language to discuss and access their/our/my desires" (https://www.facebook.com/groups/ecosex/).

[68] Ursula Heise discusses ecological "doomsday fatigue" in her work. See Heise's *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[69] There are obvious exceptions to this rule, such as British sculptor Andy Goldsworthy (b.1956), who is associated with land art and site-specific sculpture. Unlike land artists largely interested in using the environment as a means to explore questions about the transitory nature of art or issues of scale, Goldsworthy as well as Stephens and Sprinkle identify as environmentalists. Environmentalism is foundational, even motivational to their aesthetic practice versus a mere backdrop for artistic innovation, as

performance art, such as Stephens and Sprinkle's ecological weddings, is "rooted in ecological concerns, as demonstrations or ritual acts, and range from solo performances both documented and undocumented, to community art projects with formal engagement between artist and citizens" (Watts). Contemporary examples of environmental performance art include: Kathryn Miller's *Seed Bombing the Landscape in Southern California* (1992), in which the artist bombards barren industrial landscapes with soil and seed clusters in an effort to restore native plants; Erica Fielder's *Bird-Feeder Hat*, which entails the artist donning a large-brimmed hat and inviting birds to perch amid its twigs and seeds; Anne-Katrin Spiess' *Carbon Neutral Bicycle Journeys* (2007-), which contain film and photographs documenting the artist biking to exhibitions where her work is to be displayed; and Eve Mosher's *HighWaterLine* (2007-), in which the artist employs a machine used to create lines on a baseball field to delineate what predicted rises in sea level will mean for neighborhoods in major cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Miami. By outlining the flood zone, Mosher makes tangible abstract scientific predictions and, in the process, conjures the haunting chalk outlines demarking the dead at crime scene investigations. Although there has been growing interest in environmental performance art, evidenced by *The Huffington Post* and other mainstream media outlets' coverage of Mosher's *HighWaterLine*, less attention has focused on queer performative engagements with the environment.[70]

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is commonplace in the history of art, from Nicolas Poussin's *A Dance to the Music of Time* (1640) to Édouard Manet's Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe [The Luncheon on the Grass] (1863) to the previously discussed film *Drone Boning*.

[70] Texts like Noël Sturgeon's *Environmentalism in Popular Culture* (2009) persuasively use gender and sexuality studies to interrogate heteronormativity and racism inherent in mainstream environmentalism, but Sturgeon does not consider queer cultural production that engages the environment. Increasingly, more has been written on queerness and ecology in general, such as *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (eds. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, 2010), but again queer environmentalism is less often addressed than "eco-normativity" (di Chiro 2009) in conventional environmentalism. For a more

Literary and film scholar Nicole Seymour's work stands out as a rare example of scholarship that brings together contemporary queer cultural production and ecocriticism. Building on her previous articles on ironic ecocinema, Seymour's forthcoming book *Bad Environmentalism* includes a discussion of Queers for the Climate and their tongue-and-cheek "It Gets Wetter" campaign.[71] Seymour writes, "there is something both admirable and thrillingly ironic about queer environmentalism: that those with a foreclosed relationship to 'the future' in heteronormative terms would be very deeply concerned about the future in ecological terms" (2012, 63). As a champion for irreverent environmentalism, Seymour laments that "the affective and dispositional range of ecocritical work has historically been extremely narrow—favoring decisive sentiments, be they positive (reverence and hope) or negative (fear, despair, gloom, and doom)." Instead, she proposes "that we open ourselves up to complex combinations of sentiment" (69). That "instead of remaining serious in the face of self-doubt, ridicule, and broader ecological crisis, we embrace our sense of our own absurdity, our uncertainty, our humour, even our perversity […]" (56). Seymour's work spurs questions about what an irreverent queer ecology of complex, even seemingly contradictory sentiment might look like, and how its irony, absurdity, and humor might proffer environmental ethics. While these queer divergences from the doom and gloom of conventional environmentalism are clearly unique, the question remains if they can also be politically effective.[72]

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recent discussion of queerness and post/in-/non- humanism see the "Queer Inhumanisms" special issue of *GLQ* 21.2-3 (June 2015).

[71] See the following website for the image: http://www.onepluslove.com/it-gets-wetter-queers-for-the-climate/

[72] In her early work on "irreverent ecocriticism," Seymour is less focused on explicitly queer environmental engagement. Instead she reads the television show *Wildboyz* (2003-2006) from the creators of *Jackass* and Mike Judge's *Idiocracy* (2006), unlikely environmental subjects, for their irreverent ecological potential. Her more recent work brings together queer ecocriticism and her championing of an ironic eco-cinema (see *Strange Natures* (2013) and her forthcoming book *Bad Environmentalism*); however, her case studies have

In what follows, I consider ecosexual performance art as an embodiment of the irreverence Seymour encourages. Examining Stephens and Sprinkle's "marriages" to ecological entities, as captured in their unconventional environmental documentary *Goodbye Gauley Mountain: An Ecosexual Love Story*, I contend that the political efficacy of this absurdist environmentalism hinges upon Stephens and Sprinkle's campy "politics of imperceptibility" (Grosz 2002). This imperceptibility—the product of Stephens and Sprinkle's campy embrace of polyamory, eco-erotics, the grotesque, as well as the tragi-comic tenor of their rituals and performances—flummoxes our affective and moral registers such that the sanctity of our exceptionalism is shaken, and we are more willing to consider the sentience of nonhumans nature.

Since 2008, Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle have held a number of three-way marriages/performance art installations in which they take the Earth, Sea, Moon, Snow, Rocks, Coal, and even the Appalachian Mountains as partners and lovers [Figs. 3.2 & 3.3].[73] In an era in which LGBT politics is almost exclusively focused on marriage equality, Stephens and Sprinkle employ marriage to further their environmental agenda by using the central ceremony and its ecological theme as inspiration for their activism and outreach throughout the year.[74] The ceremonies, which have taken place across the

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not included experimental and avant-garde cinema or queer environmental documentary, subjects being explored here.

[73] These weddings, which are still taking place (most recently in their wedding to the soil in Austria), are part of a decade's long collaboration between Sprinkle and Stephens. They describe the project in the following artists' statement: "Each year we orchestrate one or more interactive performance art weddings in collaboration with various national and international communities, then display the ephemera in art galleries. Our projects incorporate the colors and themes of the chakras, a structure inspired by Linda M. Montano's *14 Years of Living Art.* The Love Art Laboratory grew out of our response to the violence of war, the anti-gay marriage movement, and our prevailing culture of greed. Our projects are symbolic gestures intended to help make the world a more tolerant, sustainable, and peaceful place." See their original website: http://loveartlab.org.

[74] The artists have maintained an online archive of their weddings that includes artist statements, invitations, programs, and vows as well as photographs and video footage of the festivities. See: http://loveartlab.org/index.php.

United States and Europe, are often large-scale collaborations with local artists and activists. Stephens and Sprinkle explain, “Our networks include artists, sex workers, academics, drag queens, queer folks and others whose voices do not necessarily fit easily into the existing environmental movement” (66). Initially intended as “a performative protest” against the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA),[75] these mass weddings gradually became less human-centric. Rather than merely championing more inclusive marriage rights, Stephens and Sprinkle’s nature-based nuptials defy perceptions of marriage as solely between humans. By marrying supposedly inanimate objects—the Snow, the Sun, the Moon, even Coal—Stephens and Sprinkle queer mainstream matrimony, flouting the legal and statist legibility sought by the marriage equality movement to show “that the institution of marriage is not the only kind of serious, committed relationship possible” (61-62).

The vows exchanged during these ceremonies are often flamboyant affirmations of ecological commitments. For example, in 2010, Stephens and Sprinkle entered into “holy and irreverent matrimony” with the Moon. This wedding was spurred by their concern over NASA purportedly prospecting the moon for water and other resources. Stephens and Sprinkle collaborated with fellow performance artist Reverend Billy Talen and The Church of the Earthalujah Choir. Tallen, who is known for his Church of the Stop Shopping performances, leads anti-capitalist and environmental protests against companies like Chase Bank and the Union Bank of Switzerland, both linked to the funding of Mountain Top Removal. During Stephens and Sprinkle’s *Wedding to the Moon*, Talen performs an environmental evangelism as he guides the group in vows like, “Do you promise to be more conscious of your water consumption, in order to protect the

[75] Sprinkle and Stephens were legally wed to one another in Canada in 2007.

Moon from more human exploitation?" (63). Just as Stephens and Sprinkle shatter the sanctity and human-centrism of traditional marriage in the service of queer environmentalism, Talen utilizes his "status" as a self-proclaimed reverend to preach against close-minded religions, state-sanctioned violence, and environmental abuse. Through these elaborate performances, the artists aim to "de-normaliz[e] state practices of environmental destruction while also de-normalizing the institution of marriage itself" (64). In this way, Stephens, Sprinkle, and Talen employ eco-camp in their comical parodying of evangelical religion and "the wedding-industrial complex"[76] to draw attention to serious environmental issues and the human exceptionalism that justifies such destructive actions. This affective confluence of the serious with the absurd, perverse, and comical results in an effective "politics of imperceptibility."

Reflecting on the theoretical framing for their nature-based nuptials, Stephens and Sprinkle draw from feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz's "politics of imperceptibility."[77] Grosz explains the "politics of imperceptibility" as "the opposite of identity politics, a politics of acts, not identities," "in which inhuman forces, forces that are both living and non-living, macroscopic and microscopic, above and below the human, are acknowledged and allowed to displace the centrality of will and consciousness" (Grosz in Stephens and Sprinkle 2012, 62). Stephens and Sprinkle's "weddings" to ecological entities are largely imperceptible in a world of "state-sanctioned, legally delineated couplings" (66), and they welcome this confusion: "Nonhuman marriage or communal human marriage threatens to disrupt time-honoured patriarchal power relationships […]

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[76] See Chrys Ingraham's *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture* (2008), particularly Chapter 2 "The Wedding-Industrial Complex."
[77] For a detailed discussion of Grosz's article, see "The Impersonal is Political: Spinoza and a Feminist Politics of Imperceptibility" in Hasana Sharp's *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Our weddings incorporate humour and critique to acknowledge that the wedding ritual is an example of exploitation and servitude as well as love, collaboration and community-building" (65). Stephens and Sprinkle's absurdity, irony, imperceptibility, and seeming inconsistency (their weddings are both earnest affirmations of environmental stewardship and campy challenges to traditional marriage and religious practice) stem from their belief that their unorthodox environmental antics "can generate new energy and perspectives for engaging the depressing prospects of our planet's dwindling future […]" (Stephens and Sprinkle 2012, 66). Ultimately, the imperceptible and befuddling affective impact of ecosexuality's performative environmentalism disarms crisis-weary viewers, cleverly coaxing them into considering new forms of relationality with nature as well as new forms of environmental activism. In the analysis that follows, I will use *Goodbye Gauley Mountain* to further illuminate three dimensions of this campy environmentalism: its serio-comic tone, its tinges of the carnivalesque, and its reliance on florid performance and spectacle to foster interspecies flourishing.

***Goodbye Gauley Mountain,* Hello Eco-Camp**

In her canonical 1964 essay "Notes on Camp," Susan Sontag explains camp as a sensibility, a stylization, a "love of the exaggerated, the 'off,' of things-being-what-they-are-not" (1966, 279). As Sontag herself notes, camp is quite queer. Scholars like Esther Newton (1972), Moe Meyer (1994), and Michael Bronski (1984) have expanded upon the queerness of camp, countering Sontag's claim that "Camp sensibility is disengaged, depoliticized—or at least apolitical" (277). Ann Pellegrini has also mined camp for its political potential. In her essay "After Sontag: Future Notes on Camp" (2007), Pellegrini

discusses Bush-era American politics and asks, "where politics is so openly and cynically performative, what remains of camp as an oppositional strategy?" (169). Pellegrini perceives camp as a "form of queer resilience, imagination, and […] 'moral seriousness' in the face of vulnerability" (174). Whereas Sontag emphasizes camp's "failed seriousness" and playfulness, Pellegrini stresses camp's "moral seriousness," what she deems "camp sincerity" (174). Using examples such as Albert J. Winn's *Summer Joins the Past* (1997-2002), a haunting photographic series of abandoned Jewish summer camps, as well as Paige Gratland's *"The Sontag"* (2004), a hairpiece with a swatch of grey hair that enables its wearer to emulate Sontag's hallmark bangs, Pellegrini's camp operates in simultaneously comic and melancholic "modes" (184-85).

The ecosexuality movement helps us to reconcile these seemingly antithetical readings of camp, and camp, or eco-camp, offers us insights into the comic-tragic character of ecosexual thought and activism. Ecosexuality embodies Pellegrini's "camp sincerity" *and* Sontag's "failed seriousness." It is simultaneously irreverent and solemn, flirty and earnest, hopeful and melancholic, and this bewildering affective register is nowhere more evident than in Beth Stephens' and Annie Sprinkle's recent documentary *Goodbye Gauley Mountain: An Ecosexual Love Story* (2013). This self-produced film is part biography of Stephens' youth spent in the mountains of West Virginia, part exposé revealing the horrors of Mountaintop Removal (MTR), and part performance piece, as the garish bright red warning at the start of the film makes clear. Instead of an FBI notice about copyright infringement, *Goodbye Gauley Mountain* begins with the following disclaimer: "This film contains environmental destruction, explicit ecosexuality, and

performance art." From this startling yet playful warning, it is apparent that the film differs from the straightforward somberness of so many environmental films.

Commentary on the website of the film's distributor Kino Lorber attests to the film's eclectic and seemingly contradictory tonality. Stacy Alaimo observes, "The playful ecoeroticism of Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens makes environmentalism a bit less bleak, offering abundant pleasure rather than what we usually expect—virtuous self-deprivation within a horizon of impending doom."[78] Carol Mason notes, "Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle hilariously mock the fear of a Queer planet with a serious message of opposing mountaintop removal."[79] Dwight B. Billings remarks, "*Goodbye Gauley Mountain* is a truly informative documentary about the devastating social and environmental impacts of mountaintop removal coal mining." He continues, "It is also a celebration of the love of nature, activism, and endurance. When we watch Beth and Annie marry the Appalachian Mountains, and see beloved heroes like Larry Gibson joining in on the fun, we think about activism in new and empowering ways. It is the only MTR film that makes me smile and gives me hope."[80] Each of these observers remark on the film's tragi-comic tenor, a characteristic that distinguishes it from the often relentless moralizing so common in conventional environmental documentaries.

Goodbye Gauley Mountain's begins with a classic trope of environmental documentaries, a pristine landscape jarringly interrupted by ecological destruction. For example, throughout *An Inconvenient Truth* (dir. David Guggenheim, 2006), Al Gore's poetic meditation on a flowing river contrasts with images of polluting factories, drought-

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[78] "Goodbye Gauley Mountain," Kino Lorber, accessed March 5, 2016, http://www.kinolorberedu.com/film.php?id=1927.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.

ridden terrain, and meteorological views of Hurricane Katrina. In Josh Fox's *Gasland* (2010), recordings from the US Senate's Subcommittee on Energy and Minerals are interspersed with shaky, hazy footage of rivers, streams, and mountains and dramatic operatic music. Similarly, the expository moments of *Goodbye Gauley Mountain* contain picturesque scenes of the Appalachian mountains—sounds of birds chirping followed by close-ups of the wind rustling through leaves, sunlight through clouds, butterflies and flowers, and a turtle making its way through the underbrush—abruptly unsettled by hums of static and footage of dump trucks and factory-filled smokestacks. This preliminary scene culminates in a slow-motion explosion as a mountain is decimated to access the coal buried beneath. Tragedy is the go-to tonal armature of environmental documentaries, which establish early on their environmental cause and its culprits. Where *Goodbye Gauley Mountain* differs from its fellow environmental films is in its inconsistent, even contradictory tonality. The montage-like opening sets a discordant tenor for the film, as the playful faux warning and scenic nature footage clash with images of horrific destruction. These incongruences are palpable throughout the film, which contains statistics about the harms of MTR—high rates of cancer, sludge-filled rivers, occupational hazards, polluted drinking water—underscored by tense cello riffs and interspersed with Stephens and Sprinkle's quirky yet earnest environmental activism.

This simultaneous playfulness and poignancy, a hallmark of eco-camp, is evident throughout *Goodbye Gauley Mountain*. In one of the film's most emotive moments, Stephens visits the abandoned community of Lindytown, West Virginia, where mining companies essentially drove out the town's inhabitants. Sitting in the midst of boarded up homes and an abandoned church is a peach tree now full of fruit that no one is there to

enjoy. In another touching moment, photographer Vivian Stockman talks about what it means to be "rooted to a place." She recalls growing up on land passed between generations and her grandmother's homeopathic tutelage that showed her that the woods could be her "medicine cabinet." Stockman describes this intergenerational knowledge and shared sense of place as a "cultural continuum" that is jeopardized when these communities are threatened by environmental devastation. In yet another example, an environmental agent becomes tearful when Stephens asks about his love of the mountains. Later he weepily sings the West Virginia state song, the words of which he knows by heart.

Amongst these moving scenes and historical footage of early twentieth-century West Virginia, home videos of Stephens as a child, and the recounting of local tragedies like the Hawk's Nest Tunnel Disaster[81], there is tree hugging, grass kissing, earth massaging, and talk of "cloudgasms." During their *Wedding to the Appalachian Mountains*, we watch an elderly Larry Gibson, famed anti-mining activist from Kayford Mountain, share his harrowing account of the horrors of MTR (including several assassination attempts) and then clap in time to Tony's Circus, a band of performers in outlandish animal costumes. These unlikely environmentalist troubadours sing "Let's All Be Keepers of the Mountains" with lyrics like "they're making our mountains into a molehill." Just prior to this zany performance, a bouncing white ball appears and in sing-along style tracks the lyrics of the West Virginia anthem. Sontag asserts, "In naïve or

[81] The Hawk's Nest Tunnel Disaster took place in 1931 under Gauley Mountain (West Virginia). Workers, who were predominantly African-Americans recruited from the southern United States, were hired by Union Carbide to build a tunnel through Gauley Mountain. While dry mining the 3-mile tunnel, the men encountered silica and harvested it without masks or protective gear. Hundreds of workers developed silicosis, a deathly lung disease caused by inhaling the silica dust. In estimates that range from a few hundred to one thousand, many of the men died within weeks. The tragedy is little-known but one of the worst industrial disasters in American history.

pure Camp, the essential element is seriousness, a seriousness that fails […] the proper mixture of the exaggerated, the fantastic, the passionate, and the naïve" (283). The incongruous tone of *Goodbye Gauley Mountain* is the result of a "seriousness that fails." Ecosexuals are sincere in their advocacy for the earth and are even elegiac when it comes to the more than five hundred mountains destroyed by MTR; however, unlike most mainstream environmental efforts, they package their environmentalism in a comic and erotic ebullience that refuses to take itself too seriously.

Sontag observes, "Camp is art that proposes itself seriously, but cannot be taken altogether seriously because it is 'too much'" (284). When I discuss ecosexuality with others, some retort, "it's too much!"—marrying seemingly inanimate objects, sexual experiences with lichen, flamboyant costumes, and gaudy sex positivity; yet, this kneejerk reaction seems to stem not solely from a rejection of ecosexuality's eccentricity, but from an unwillingness to let the implications of ecosexuality's eroticism take our presumed human primacy to task. Through their eco-camp escapades, Stephens and Sprinkle playfully proposition us while proposing radical challenges to human exceptionalism. Sontag alleges, "The whole point of Camp is to dethrone the serious. Camp is playful, anti-serious. More precisely, Camp involves a new, more complex relation to 'the serious.' One can be serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious" (288). In the face of "King Coal" and MTR, what one interviewee calls "a protracted form of genocide," Stephens and Sprinkle flirt with the earth (and with the viewer) in an attempt to both "entice others to join the environmental movement" and to challenge human supremacy over nature. Ecosexuality dares us to take ourselves a little less seriously and simultaneously entreats us to take seriously the momentous impact that

our habits and ways of thinking have on the planet and its ecosystems. These queer environmental ethics are thus rendered all the more palatable through a campy charm that amuses us even as it challenges us.

In this way, Stephens and Sprinkle "use humour to disarm audiences who are tired and overwhelmed by hearing how dire the plight of the planet really is" (66). They write, "What we bring to the table is style, creativity, love and fun in the face of disaster in order to allow people to experience and connect with the Earth anew" (66). Eco-camp's failed seriousness imbues ecosexuality with what philosopher Cynthia Willett deems "an erotic politics of feminist humor" (Willett, et al. 2012, 227). In "The Seriously Erotic Politics of Laughter," Willett and her co-authors ask, "what devices are more explosive in the social sphere, more discomforting to our conventional modes of thought, more invasive of our quasi-private store of associations, than the well-packed joke, the display of wit, or the well-honed use of irony?" (218). Stephens and Sprinkle delight in witty spoofs of sex and sexuality—cloudgasms, e-spots, pollen-amorous, even SexEcology. Stephens explains, "We try to bring a fresh approach to environmentalism and those living in the coalfields seem to respond to our work with relief and even some laughter after continuously being reminded of the impossible odds that they face each and every day" (2012, 14). Thus, this comic relief is not only cathartic but also communal. In *Comedy, Seriously: A Philosophical Study*, Dmitri Nikulin asserts that "people practice comic reason in reflective deliberation with others" (2014, x). He observes, "In the tragic theatrical trial of everyday life, the modern subject appears at once as accused, prosecutor, defender, and judge […] as hero, producer, and director of its own tragic drama […]. the modern subject is both protagonist and sole actor" (vii)—much like the

narrative trajectory of most environmental messages. While "tragic reason grows out of the specifically modern notion of autonomous subjectivity—which […] is lonely and self-reliant." "Comic reason reflects a life with others. People practice comic reason in reflective deliberation with others" (2014, x). For Stephens and Sprinkle, comedy in spite of tragedy is part-and-parcel of their larger eco-camp aims as well as a mode of interspecies community building.

Thinking about the role of the comical in eco-cinema, Seymour observes, "A comedic stance entails flexibility and humility, those qualities required for humans to coexist with nonhumans, or maybe even for us to contemplate our possible demise." She continues, this comedic stance "might be the best stance at a point when humans suffer from doomsday fatigue, or an overload of 'tragedy'" (2012, 63). Similarly, in her recent work on interspecies ethics and the laughter of nonhuman animals, Willett draws from subaltern studies to argue for comedy's potential to reshape our political will. She explains, "subaltern studies have established that ridicule and other forms of humor serve not only as accessories of cruelty and props of power but also provide discourses and technologies of reversal, leveling hierarchies by turning stratified structures upside down" (2014, 30). Ecosexuality rebukes the boundaries between human and nonhuman animals, arguing that such "leveling [of] hierarchies" is no more ridiculous than blowing up mountains to access coal. Ecosexuality challenges the absurdity of environmental destruction and the anthropocentrism that spurs it through absurdist eco-camp with hopes that "the moment of laughter may jolt one out of habitual habits and cognition and open up fresh possibilities" (Willett, et al. 229). Whether we laugh with ecosexuals or awkwardly at them ("what is this?!?"), Stephens and Sprinkle's "laughing libertinage" (to

borrow from Bakhtin) facilitates a carnivalesque challenge to human exceptionalism (1968, 32).

Stephens and Sprinkle's extravagant eco-weddings embody the carnivalesque, a term developed by Russian literary critique Mikhail Bakhtin in his well-known study of folk culture *Rabelais and His World*. The word derives from carnival, a celebratory period found in many Catholic cultures. With roots in medieval festivals like the feast of fools and the feast of the ass, carnival is a period of celebratory chaos and Bacchic disorder, which typically takes place prior to the Christian season of Lent. According to Bakhtin, "carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (10). These festivities "offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world in which all medieval people participated more or less […] the serious and comic aspects of the world and of the deity were equally sacred, equally 'official'" (5-6). As captured in *Goodbye Gauley Mountain*, Stephens and Sprinkle's ecosexual weddings are inclusive collaborations that combine the comic and serious, the sacred and profane. Participants are often self-identified artists and performers, but participation is open to all. In their *Wedding to the Earth* (2008), "unofficial" priests and priestesses like performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña guide the group in meditation and prayer, and poets earnestly recite poetry such as Grace Paley's "A Walk in the Woods." These reverential moments are interspersed with the comical, such as a nonsensical rendition of "That's Amore" by performance artist Linda Montano. Campy costumes complete with peacock feathers and fake flowers pervade [Fig. 3.4]. One

participant performs an operatic (and orgasmic) strip tease in an unexpected amalgamation of so-called high and low culture.

Like these ecosexual celebrations, the carnivalesque upheavals, confluences, and reversals described by Bakhtin are temporary. This raises questions about the political efficacy of these transitory happenings. Much like Northrop Frye's "green worlds," in which the primary characters leave the "normal world" and enter alter-words of forests and faeries (think: Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), where some overarching conflict is playfully resolved, only to return to their points of origin (1957, 182), attendees gather at Stephens and Sprinkle's wedding performances in parks and forested enclaves and then return to the status quo. However, unlike Frye's idealistic green worlds, where the cast of characters' "real world" problems are resolved and they return rather seamlessly to the realms from which they came, ecosexual green worlds collide with "life as we know it." In the same way that the tonal incongruences of eco-camp befuddle our affective registers and thus open up conceptual space for us to reconsider human exceptionalism, these performances foster a generative disconnect between an ecosexual worldview and dominant culture. As Frye writes in his discussion of Shakespearean green worlds as "dream worlds," it is "the archetypal function of literature in visualizing the world of desire, not as an escape from 'reality,' but as the genuine form of the world that human life tries to imitate" (183-84). Stephens and Sprinkle doubtless hope that one leaves the space of their performances yearning for everyday life to be more like the egalitarian and collaborative environment of their ecosexual performances. Furthermore, Stephens and Sprinkle's current project, *Here Come the Ecosexuals*, a multi-month road trip across California that entails pop-up

performances and community outreach, brings ecosexuality out of performance art centers and galleries and into urban settings.[82] Instead of inviting others into their ecosexual green worlds, as is the case with their wedding performances, this tour and their other outreach efforts actively seek to confront, challenge, and, in the spirit of carnival, even mock the status quo.

Bakhtin explains that carnival "demand[s] ever changing, playful, undefined forms […] the peculiar logic of the 'inside out' (à l'envers), or the 'turnabout' […] A second life, a second world of folk culture is thus constructed; it is to a certain extent a parody of the extracarnival life, a 'world inside out'" (11). In their *Wedding to the Appalachian Mountains* (2010), the organist plays "Here Comes the Bride," yet the processional of near naked performers, people in animal costumes,[83] an emcee in a lavender tux, and Stephens and Sprinkle's extraterrestrial-looking costumes make clear that this is far from a traditional wedding. It is "a parody of the extracarnival life," the world as we know it turned "inside out" as polyamory, queerness, nudity, carnality, and other social taboos like literal filth are celebrated. Among these "turnabouts" is ecosexuality's inversion of longstanding Western social strictures about cleanliness and purity. Reflecting on her childhood love for jumping in mud puddles and relishing in the dirty water splashing on her legs, Stephens comments, "it was also a way of embodying my belief that dirtiness was next to godliness and not the other story about cleanliness" (2011, 11). In Stephens' rendering, getting dirty (literally) is divine and getting closer to the divine is sensuous, getting dirty (figuratively). This championing of the abject and

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[82] More information on this project can be found here: https://theecosexuals.ucsc.edu.
[83] It is worth noting that parades during carnival, particularly the feast of fools and the feast of the ass, included processions of dancing humans in animal costumes (Willett 2014, 77).

grotesque is a primary trait of ecosexuality and a noteworthy characteristic of the carnivalesque.

Bakhtin discusses the prominence of what he calls "grotesque realism" in his examination of Rabelais' work and folk humor in general (18-19). He writes, the culture of carnival embraces the grotesque—bodies defecating, aroused, drinking, and excreting—and opposes "severance from the material and bodily roots of the world; it makes no pretense to renunciation of the earthy, or independence of the earth and the body" (19). The carnivalesque embraces earthly delight. Even etymologically carnal and carnival share their Latin root of "carn-" for flesh. Likewise, ecosexuality celebrates the carnal and grotesque, particularly in some of its campiest of moments. Wedding performers wear dildos outside their clothing and don costumes that accentuate and exaggerate their genitalia. In their *Wedding to the Earth*, one performer pulls her monologue from her vagina à la Carolee Schneemann's 1975 *Interior Scroll*.[84] In *Goodbye Gauley Mountain*, Stephens and Sprinkle bask in the sun on a muddy riverbank, playfully rubbing mud on their bodies. Instead of continuing to posit the Earth as a mistreated and abject mother,[85] ecosexuals welcome abjection as a source of the erotic.

In the spirit of carnival, ecosexuality embraces degradation and decomposition (Bakhtin 19). Sprinkle describes her first encounter with redwood trees at Yosemite

[84] In 1975, Schneemann performed *Interior Scroll* at the Telluride Film Festival and in East Hampton, New York. After covering her body in mud, Schneemann stood naked on a table and ceremoniously pulled a long paper scroll from inside her vagina. Very much in the spirit of 1970s gynocentric feminism, she explains, "I thought of the vagina in many ways—physically, conceptually: as a sculptural form, an architectural referent, the sources of sacred knowledge, ecstasy, birth passage, transformation […] This source of interior knowledge would be symbolized as the primary index unifying spirit and flesh in Goddess worship." "Interior Scroll," accessed March 5, 2016, http://www.caroleeschneemann.com/interiorscroll.html.

[85] For more on the abject feminine, see Julie Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection.* Trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Rachel Gear's "All Those Nasty Womanly Things: Women Artists, Technology and the Monstrous-Feminine." *Women's Studies International Forum* 24.3 (2001): 321-333.

National Park: "I loved the scent of the trunk, like vanilla mixed with soil. I have a strong memory of coming across a redwood that had fallen over from a storm. I walked around off the trail and peeked at its freshly exposed roots. So soft, so sensuous, so sexy! I had to touch them" (2011, 16). Sprinkle marvels at the dying tree, challenging disdain for the base, the monstrous, and the disgusting. According to the tenets of ecosexuality, the abject, from fallen trees to slimy discharge from earthworms to the dankness of the forest floor, is not only erotic but also ethical. Beatriz Preciado's homily in Stephens and Sprinkle's *Wedding to the Sea* affirms this: "let us get rid of fear of the other, fear of queerness, fear of sickness, fear of ugliness, fear of the grotesque, fear of the virus, fear of death" (Preciado 2009). Through the theatrics and performance of eco-camp, ecosexuality champions and embodies a grotesque worldview.

In his discussion of carnival imagery, Bakhtin notes a "blend[ing] with the world, with animals, with objects. It is cosmic, it represents the entire material bodily world in all its elements" (27). His discussion includes grotesque ornaments found in ancient Roman caves and burial sites and popularized and re-circulated during the Renaissance. As Bakhtin explains, the roots of grotesque are "grotta," an Italian word for cave (with "grottesco" meaning "of a cave"). Bakhtin describes the imagery of the grotesque motif as,

> extremely fanciful, free, and playful [in its] treatment of plant, animal, and human forms. These forms seemed to be interwoven as if giving birth to each other. The borderlines that divide the kingdoms of nature in the usual picture of the world were boldly infringed. Neither was there the usual static presentation of reality. There was no longer the movement of finished forms, vegetable or animal, in a finished and stable world; instead, the inner movement of being itself was expressed in the passing of one form into the other, in the ever incomplete character of being. (32)

In this passage, the “fanciful,” “free,” “playful,” “incomplete,” and “infringed” are embraced. Unlike our contemporary usage of grotesque as something unwanted and repulsive, here a wondrous hybridity of “interwoven forms” is celebrated. To my eye, these queer ecosystems of fantastical human and nonhuman forms and intricate systems of flora and fauna are precursors to an ecosexual worldview. Like these grotesque landscapes, ecosexuality recognizes the dynamism in nonhuman nature and advocates for “anarchic communitarianism” (Willett 2014), an interspecies flourishing that reimagines relations across phylum, genus, species, and other material bounds.

Stephens and Sprinkle’s eco-camp manifests in florid performances and spectacle, a facet of the carnivalesque that Bakhtin underscores: “Because of their obvious sensuous character and their strong element of play, carnival images closely resemble certain artistic forms, namely the spectacle” (7). Synonymous with spectacle is flourish, a word that has traces of the ecological in its etymology, which is based on the Latin *florere* meaning flower. Stephens and Sprinkle’s ecosexual weddings are indeed flourishes—garish costumes, bawdy (eco)sex-positivity, and sensational erotic performance—that they hope will foster ethical flourishing. In *Feminism and Ecological Communities: An Ethic of Flourishing*, philosopher Chris Cuomo explains that “a defining feature of ecological feminist thought is its commitment to the *flourishing*, or well-being, of individuals, species, and communities” (1998, 62). As in ecosexuality, Cuomo’s model of flourishing hinges on interdependence: “The relevant common feature for ecological feminist ethics is the capacity of living things and systems to flourish […] and the fact that their flourishing—whatever it actually entails (and it will entail vastly different things for different entities)—depends on the flourishing of others” (73). Stephens and

Sprinkle embrace this model of interdependent and symbiotic flourishing. They write, "What we hope is that through embodied offerings of performance, poetry, music and art we are creating rituals that open human hearts to all life forms and perhaps this […] helps the Earth continue to flourish" (64). If the "eco-"in ecosexuality is derived from *oikos*, which is Greek for "home" or "household," then ecosexuality challenges the strictures of who or what comprise that household.

Such a call for universal trans-species flourishing is doubtless a tall order, especially in light of global capitalism, income inequality, factory farming, and other manifestations of systemic oppression, in which the flourishing of some individuals often results in the hardship of others. In advancing her model of feminist ecological flourishing, Cuomo admits that "an array of ethical tools are needed to distinguish when and how it is justified to disrupt someone or something else's flourishing, given that some flourishing must always be sacrificed for the flourishing of others" (78). Cuomo does not offer specific or concrete examples of these "ethical tools," but she does think through some instances of flourishing at the expense of others. Surprisingly, in lieu of discussions of class, labor exploitation, and environmental destruction that one might expect from this topic, her examples include hatemongering groups, hunters, and instances of human interests trumping animal interests.[86] Ultimately, Cuomo advocates

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[86] It's noteworthy that Cuomo argues that "in instances when these two forms of flourishing [between a human and a nonhuman] are in conflict, given that some effort has been made to avoid the conflict, human interests might ethically outweigh the interests of an individual dog or snake—if serving the well-being of the nonhuman would significantly detract from a human's flourishing" (75). In other places, Cuomo argues that environmental ethics should not be anthropocentric. She asserts that while environmental ethics emerge from humans, this does not mean that they are necessarily human-centric. She writes, "In environmental ethics, thinking that is 'human centered' is problematic because it fails to see humans as necessarily related to nonhuman life, and because, for purely prejudicial reasons, it considers human to be uniquely valuable. But an ethical view can consider human interests to be centrally valuable and find 'the center' of our moral lives to be also populated by nonhumans who are thick with interests" (79).

for the import of considerations of flourishing in historically and culturally contingent contexts:

> Any idea about flourishing should begin with the real world, and compare it to ideals based on the broadest possible notions of human beings' capacities and potential […] useful and accurate notions of human flourishing can only emerge from richly contextualized, sometimes local, evaluations of what it means to be human, what people want and strive for, and what enables their living in ways they value in specific historical and cultural locations. (78, 79)

For me, Cuomo's work raises more questions than it answers about universal notions of flourishing. How are we to balance human versus nonhuman welfare? How can models of flourishing accommodate conflicting interests within such an immeasurably diverse category as "human"? To borrow from Cuomo, how do we advance "conceptions of human flourishing that are sufficiently rich to accommodate the variety and complexity of forms of life—especially the lives of women and other Others [here she means human and nonhuman Others]—without rendering the concept meaningless with specificity"? (80).

Recent scholarly work in feminist philosophy, feminist science studies, and animal ethics is helping us think through these interspecies ethics (see Willett's 2014 book on this very subject). Essential to many of these models of interdependent interspecies flourishing is what Kelly Oliver has called an "ethics of response-ability" (2009, 77). Oliver argues that "subjectivity is responsivity and that the ability to respond brings with it ethical responsibilities. Responsibility has the double sense of opening up the ability to response—response-ability—and ethically obligating subjects to respond by virtue of their very subjectivity itself" (77). Ecosexual philosophy offers a model for environmental "response-ability." This is embodied in Stephens and Sprinkle's "Vows

for Marrying the Earth," which include the mantra: "everyday, ears to the ground, we listen, and are changed" (2011, 5). In this fashion, ecosexuality has the potential to render us strange to ourselves, a step towards desubjectivization that reveals new worlds and ways of being in the process. As Cuomo avers, "living feminist environmental ethics entails […] a radical shift in how one sees and interacts with the world" (81). Ecosexuality's carnivalesque erotic environmental ethics jostle us out of hubristic complacency by unsettling our conceptions of ourselves as not only separate from but also superior to nonhuman nature. Through a campy embrace of the carnivalesque and the grotesque, including a cultivation of "the eros of interspecies life" (Willett 2014, 26), ecosexuality yields a vein of environmental advocacy that destabilizes human exceptionalism by "nam[ing] a desire larger than the self" (Willett 2014, 12). As Willett explains, "Eros is not a bare striving for pleasure or wild intensity, but a meaning-laden yearning" (23). Likewise, Stephens and Sprinkle's eco-camp is not merely performative nor solely erotic, it is the embodiment of a carnivalesque and grotesque worldview for which they yearn.

Pellegrini claims that camp "is both 'anticipatory,' in its in its ability to imagine different social worlds, *and* a form of historical memory." She explains, "Camp engages in a creative recycling of the past as a way to produce a different relation to the present and the future." It is an "ethical horizon [of] what might be" (184). In *Goodbye Gauley Mountain*, Stephens employs familial and communal lore, historical film footage, home video, personal narratives, and racy performance art in "a creative recycling of the past" that renders the present moment strange: how did we get to the point of demolishing mountains to harvest their resources? Bronski writes that camp entails "critical act[s] of

imagination" that foster "a re-imagining of the material world" (1984, 42, 43). Stephens and Sprinkle deploy eco-camp for this "re-imagining of the material world," and the dissonance between their zany propositions and our destructive, anthropocentric status quo creates a generative estrangement with the potential to render us strange to ourselves.

Conclusion: Absurdity in the Anthropocene

> If we want to learn to live in the Anthropocene, we must first learn how to die.
> —Roy Scranton, *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene*

Absurdity abounds in the Anthropocene. Here's one example among many: for several years running, NPR reports that "Noah" was the top male baby name in the United States. It secured the number one spot in 2014 and was the second most popular name in 2015 (Chappell 2015). At a time when discussion of rising sea levels has become routine, one cannot help but be struck by the irony of this trend. Is this choice in nomenclature evidence that parents are consciously, or even subconsciously, preparing their children for the imminent floods of our times?

Speaking of floods, I have been unprepared for the affective deluge that a project on environmental ethics inevitably spurs. Couple writing a dissertation that engages environmental precarity in the face of an increasingly precarious academic job market, and you have a recipe for ongoing malaise. In fact, I wager that this anxiety regarding "what comes next?" is why I have put off writing the conclusion of this project for so long. To finish this incarnation of *Environmental Eros* is to no longer be able to remain present with and in it. This project's completion also marks the conclusion of my tenure at Emory University, where my time as a student and instructor is up, and my future as an academic is uncertain. Perhaps the culmination of my own existential crises in the larger context of existential threats to the planet is why I have done a lot less laughing in the past year or so. Yet, one incident of amusement stands out and is particularly pertinent to ideas circulating throughout this dissertation.

As I commuted to my teaching gig at a nearby college (teaching a class on environmental justice, no less), I stumbled across *The Adaptors*, a podcast hosted by

science reporter Flora Lichtman. In this episode, "When Rats Inherit the Earth," Lichtman interviews paleobiologist Jan Zalasiewicz about his 2008 book, *The Earth After Us: What Legacy Will Humans Leave in the Rocks?* The book imagines the universe, particularly the earth, 100 million years from now. Memorably, Zalasiewicz posits rats as inheritors of a posthuman planet. That's right. The creature most likely to supersede humans is a rodent most Homo sapiens loathe and spend considerable energy attempting to exterminate (as an aside, I recently heard that Atlanta has the second highest rat population in the United States and routinely makes top ten lists on a global scale). It seems our efforts to rid ourselves of rats have actually rendered them more industrious and better equipped to inherit the earth. Biologist Ken Aplin helps Lichtman think through Zalasiewicz's premise, confirming that rats are "ideally positioned to take over the world" (Aplin quoted in Lichtman 2015). He illuminates a number of characteristics that make rats "super adapters": they are adventurous in what they eat and often feed on algae, seaweed, and insects, food sources that may endure and even thrive in periods of climate change; they can withstand fairly extreme temperatures—both hot and cold; and they can live as easily in burrows underground as they can in the tops of trees (Aplin quoted in Lichtman 2015).

I delighted in this broadcast and Zalasiewicz's absurd proposition. Perhaps this is because it corroborated my childhood belief that Splinter, a wise and benevolent, humanoid sewer rat from the cartoon *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, really did exist; but, I think it had less to do with the figure of the rat in and of itself and more to do with this podcast marking a rare example of embracing irony, playfulness, and laughter when confronted with possible (or even probable) extinction. Amidst damning statistics, which

suggest that there is a fifty/fifty chance that humans will endure another 100 years (Lichtman 2015), laughter feels heretically empowering.

Each of my case studies in this dissertation—land dykes, Radical Faeries, and ecosexuals—embody a "laughing libertinage" (Bakhtin 1968, 32), an eros of joyful disturbance that challenges anthropocentrism: Hammer's films and land dyke poetry playfully intermingle human and nonhuman forms; Broughton and the Radical Faeries advocate for serious play and playful devotion, both of which are foundational for their communitarian interspecies ethics; and Stephens and Sprinkle delight in their campy environmental antics, as they flirt with the earth and their audience members in an effort to raise environmental awareness. Yet beneath each of these eco-erotic phenomena's frolicsome expressions of joy, community, and connection loom darker affects: the social, economic, and physical challenges that permeated and ultimately dismantled many land dyke communities; the shame, alienation, and loss experienced by many Radical Faeries in the height of the AIDS crisis; the decimation of history and heritage that Stephens shows is wrought by Mountaintop Removal. The affective discordance and absurdity within these movements—their simultaneous playfulness and earnestness, their effervescence and somberness, their irreverence and deference—is unsettling and is compounded by these artifacts' anachronistic qualities, which seem so out of sync with the "decisive sentiments" of our contemporary moment (Seymour 2012, 69). As I have argued throughout this project, it is the very strangeness of these materials that has the potential to estrange us from ourselves. And, to me, this is an especially instructive exercise for the Anthropocene. At a time when we are saturated with intensified environmental urgency—extinction rates, famed climatologists exclaiming, "we're f-d!"

(Richardson 2015),[87] and The Weather Channel becoming as sensational as Fox News—I wonder if both the content of these eco-erotic materials and our encounters with them point to other ways that we can be disturbed. Are there generative ways in which we can metaphorically come undone—psychically, ethically, subjectively—before we are truly, irrevocably undone?

Recent surveys reveal that the majority of Americans remain relatively unshaken by mounting scientific evidence confirming global warming. For example, even though the Pew Research Center reports that most Americans now believe that climate change is real, few people polled rank it as a top national priority (it often ranks much lower than the economy, terrorism, health care, immigration, and other issues) (Motel 2014). Even fewer individuals report that they have taken any political or consumer action related to climate change (be it calling or writing to elected officials or even researching businesses and their environmental track records before spending money there) (Leiserowitz 2009). The top reasons for this inaction were that people lacked information and that they did not consider themselves environmental activists (Leiserowitz 2009). While appeals for greener behavior modifications ("don't forget your reusable bags!"), legislative action, and technological advances do some work to counter our harmful impact on the earth's ecosystems, I am not convinced they do anything to challenge the anthropocentrism that undergirds both our abuse of and "care for" the planet. Most environmental campaigns, such as those discussed in Chapter 3, argue that it is in our best interest to be more

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[87] In 2014, glaciologist Jason Box made headlines when he tweeted, "If even a small fraction of Arctic sea floor carbon is released to the atmosphere, we're f'd" (Richardson 2015). The tweet caused a media frenzy and seems to have nearly cost Box his job as a researcher for the Danish government. See John H. Richardson's "When the End of Civilization Is Your Day Job" (2015) in *Esquire*: http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a36228/ballad-of-the-sad-climatologists-0815/.

environmentally sound. Undergirding this anthropocentric thinking is the hubristic belief that we can actually fix such massive global problems as food and water shortage, rising sea levels, and rampant pollution. If anything is going to unsettle and dethrone human supremacy in the Anthropocene—even this term's efforts to acknowledge humans' impact on the planet has been argued by some scholars to be yet another manifestation of anthropocentrism (Ivakhiv 2014)—perhaps environmental eros with its off-putting affective discordance has the potential to unsettle us in ways that conventional environmentalism cannot.

There is something binding yet simultaneously undoing about eros broadly construed. We do eros—touching, reaching, yearning, seeking to close the distance that constitutes desire—but in the process, it undoes us. In each chapter, I have highlighted manifestations of environmental eros that unsettle the autonomous human subject and simultaneously reconnect us to the human and nonhuman others in our midst. Far from mere escapes into nature, my materials of study are examples of the disruptive potential of environmental eros, as they derive their ethics from engagements with nonhuman nature, challenging the fixity of human supremacy through interspecies contingency. While environmental eros does not offer a blueprint for ecological and/or ethical intervention, it is a mode of thinking and being that reveals a certain openness to the world. The transformative potential of environmental eros does not lie in its ability to complete entities desiring some sort of metaphysical wholeness; instead, it is its potential for revealing new modes of relationality that demonstrate what Donna Haraway deems a "knot of species co-shaping one another" (2008, 42).

I began this conclusion with a provocative claim from Roy Scranton's *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene* (2015): "If we want to learn to live in the Anthropocene, we must first learn how to die" (27). Scranton, an Iraq war veteran, compares living through war to living in the Anthropocene. He writes,

> To survive as a solider, I had to learn to accept the inevitability of my own death. For humanity to survive in the Anthropocene, we need to learn to live with and through the end of our current civilization. Change, risk, conflict, strife, and death are the very processes of life, and we cannot avoid them. We must learn to accept and adapt. (22)

Scranton's striking assertion may seem out of place amidst talk of rat anarchy and environmental eros as joyful disturbance, but I think it is an ideal way to ponder the death of *the* human as we have known it. The relationship between eros and death is one that preoccupied Sigmund Freud. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Freud identifies two conflicting drives, eros (a life instinct associated with love, sexuality, and creative impulses) and thanatos (a death drive associated with destruction and violence). While I am not interested in a psychoanalytic explication of eros at this point, I do think an interplay of life and death animates my examples of environmental eros and partly explains the affective dissonance evident in many of these materials. Talk of death in the context of eco-camp, absurdity, and irony in the Anthropocene also reminds me of an old expression that seems to be experiencing some revival today: "that slayed me!" We most often associate being slain with being violently murdered, and occasionally you hear a student remark, "that test slayed me!" Yet the word also means to "overwhelm with delight," as in "her sense of humour slays me!"[88] These conflicting meanings of slay seem ever appropriate for environmental eros as an ebullient yet nonetheless disturbing

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[88] "Slay," *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed March 3, 2016, http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/Entry/181536?rskey=iSm5BU&result=3&isAdvanced=false#eid.

phenomenon. Zalasiewicz's rat hypothesis slayed me with delight; but in order to find it amusing, we humans have to get that the joke's on us. We have to take ourselves less seriously and slowly but surely "learn to die."

I close with another story that epitomizes the concurrent delight and distress of being joyfully disturbed and figuratively slain in the Anthropocene. Last year, I stumbled across multiple Facebook friends sharing a BBC article charmingly entitled, "The Girl Who Gets Gifts From Birds" (Sewall 2015). Eight-year-old Gabi Mann, a resident of Seattle, has been feeding the crows that hang around her neighborhood since she was four. Initially the feedings were accidental, as the animals learned to follow Gabi for errant crumbs that she dropped as she juggled her afternoon snack while getting in and out of her Mom's car. Later, Gabi intentionally saved portions of her lunch to share with the birds, and she now feeds them nuts and seeds each morning. In exchange, the birds periodically leave her "gifts": paperclips, earrings, dried bones, screws, buttons, shiny pieces of metal and plastic, iridescent pebbles, and Gabi's prized possession, a pearl heart, all of which Gabi lovingly cleans and preserves in bead boxes with labels containing the dates of their discovery. Once Gabi's mother lost the lens cap to her camera while walking in the neighborhood. The next day she saw a crow ritualistically washing the lens and leaving it on the edge of the birdbath. She explains, "They watch us all the time. I'm sure they knew I dropped it. I'm sure they decided they wanted to return it" (quoted in Sewall 2015). John Marzluff, a professor of Wildlife Sciences, has studied the relationships between crows and the people who feed them. He writes, "There's definitely a two-way communication going on there […] They understand each other's signals" (quoted in Sewall 2015).

This story is delightful, surely an embodiment of "species co-shaping one another" (Haraway 2008, 42). Gabi and the crows are emblematic of coextensive flourishing and "delight in one another's delight," as Harry Hay and the Radical Faeries professed; but this story also strikes me as bittersweet, Ann Carson's adjective for eros (her book is entitled *Eros the Bittersweet*). When I saw the images of Gabi's taxonomy of gifts, I couldn't help but think of fossils (I also couldn't help but think of Lee Edelman's reading of Alfred Hitchcock's 1963 film *The Birds*[89]). Might the crows know something that we don't? The trinkets that they leave Gabi also strike me as another creature's recognition of our (humans') demise or maybe even of our mutual demise, as Gabi's treasures are similar to the plastic detritus being ingested by seabirds like the albatross, who are dying in droves in places like Midway Atoll (also known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch).[90] It's as if the crows are helping us assemble our traces, showing us the fossils for which we will be remembered—an archive that may ultimately have no audience (at least no human audience).

Environmental eros enables us to hold together these contradictory readings of Gabi and the crows. Their story can overwhelm us in simultaneously joyful and distressing ways; it can be a bittersweet exemplum of interspecies reciprocity, a reminder of the power of human/nonhuman connection for both good and ill. While my case studies in the proceeding chapters are less dark than the examples I discuss here, they too are fossils that many find befuddling (again, ecosexuality is contemporary but harkens back to earlier periods of sexual liberation). Writing about contemporary queer artists and

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[89] In *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Edelman devotes a chapter to analysis of Hitchcock's film and ultimately reads the birds as death-driven sinthomosexuals with a penchant for terrorizing children (2004, 118-149).

[90] See Thom Van Dooren's *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction* (2014) for a discussion of Midway Atoll and the albatross.

performers like Jen Smith and K8 Hardy, who reference the cultural feminist aesthetics of the 1970s in their own work, Youmans' observes that these contemporary artists "temper their investment in essentialism with camp and irony, and also with a sense of melancholy—as if, unable to fully desire this past, they are unable to properly mourn its loss" (104). This befuddling of affective and temporal registers is the lesson that environmental eros can offer. Living in the Anthropocene will require us to be more open—to the cringe-worthy past, to an uncertain future, to joyful disturbances, to fellow humans and nonhumans, to irony, and to absurdity, especially our own.

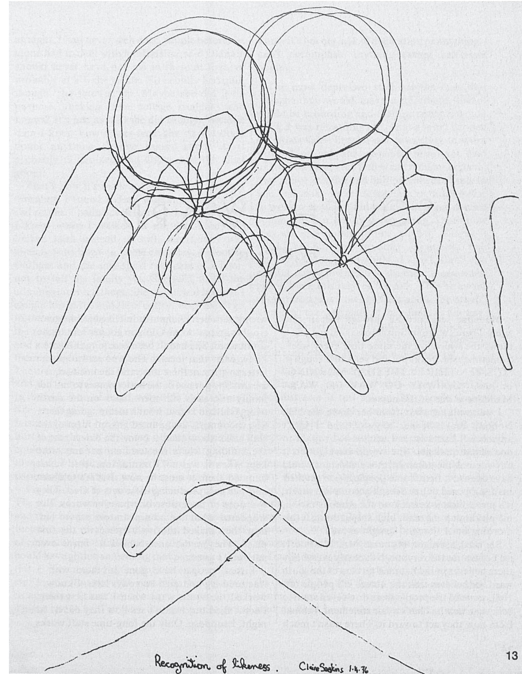

Fig. 1.1. Claire Sagkins, *Recognition of Likeness*, 1976.
Reproduced from *So's Your Old Lady* 12 (February 1976), 13.

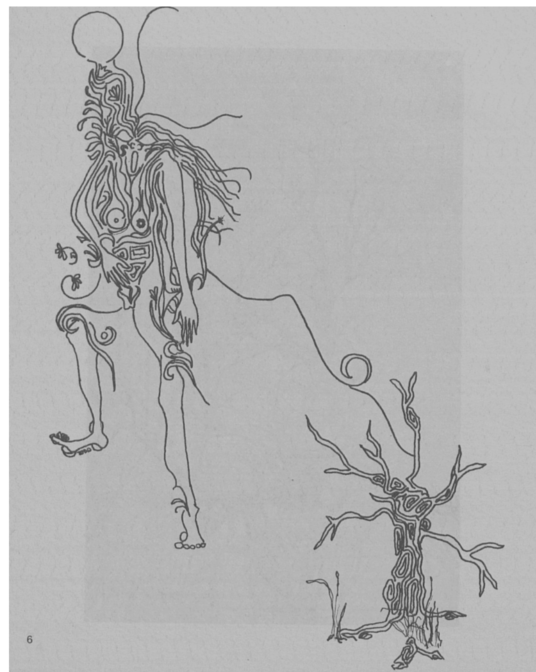

Fig. 1.2. Anonymous, Untitled Illustration, no date.
Reproduced from *So's Your Old Lady* 13 (April 1976), 6.

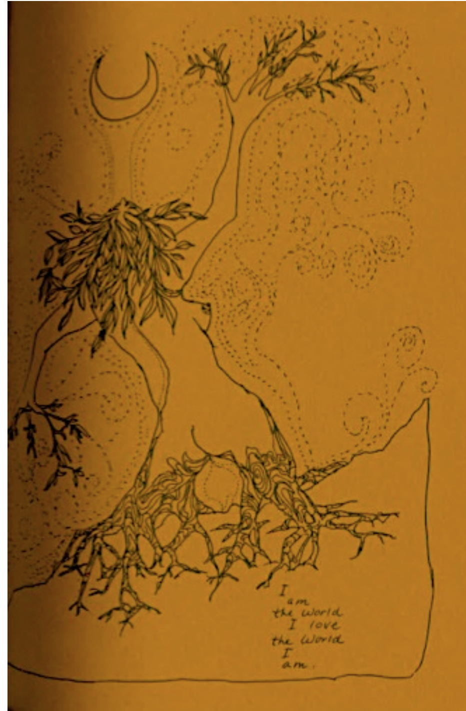

Fig. 1.3. Anonymous, Untitled Illustration, no date.
Reproduced from back cover of *WomanSpirit* (Summer 1975).

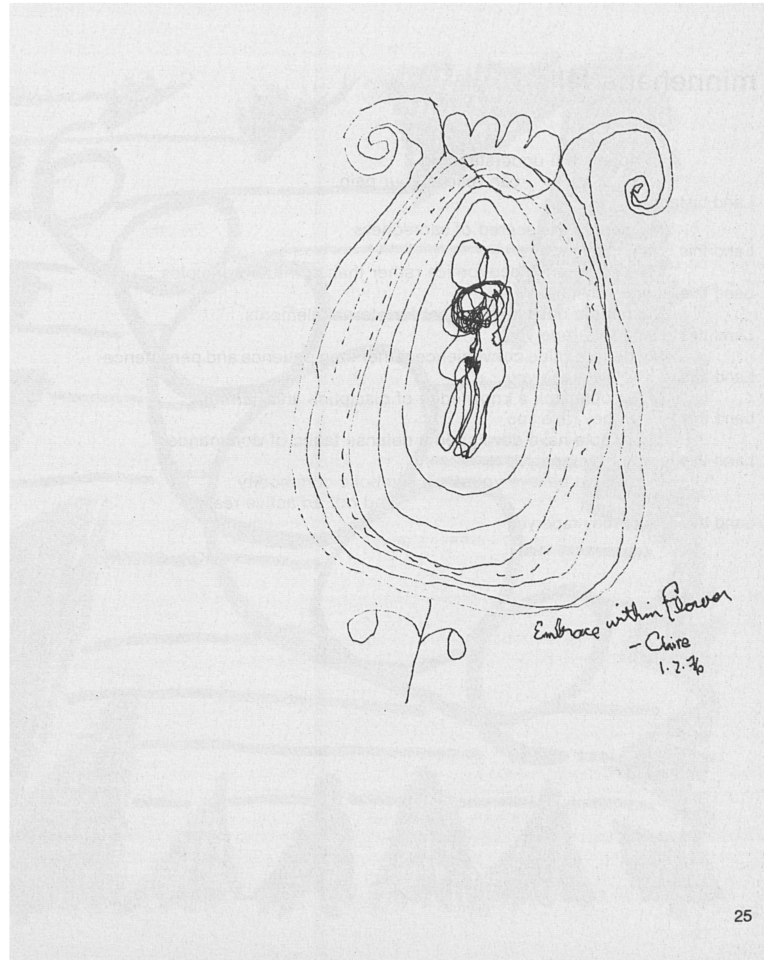

Fig. 1.4. Claire Sagkins, *Embrace Within Flower*, 1976.
Reproduced from *So's Your Old Lady* (February 1976), 25.

Fig. 1.5. Barbara Hammer, film still from *Multiple Orgasm,* 1976.

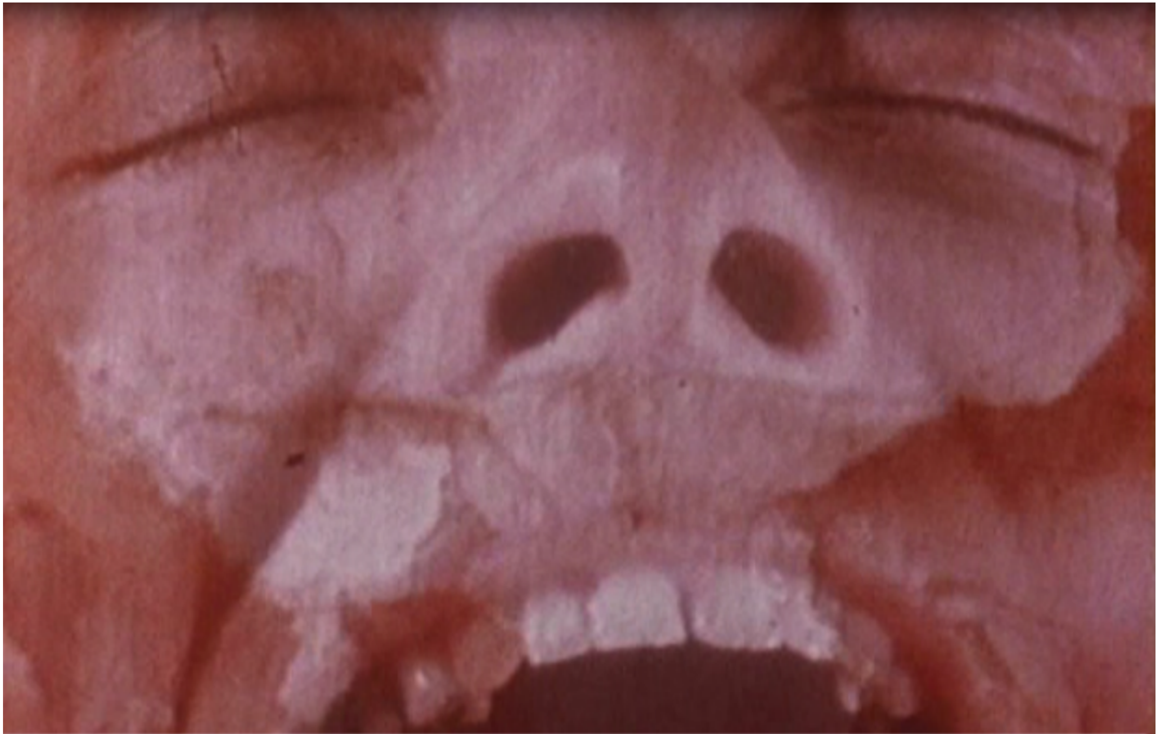

Fig. 1.6. Barbara Hammer, film still from *Multiple Orgasm,* 1976.

A CALL TO

Gay Brothers

A SPIRITUAL CONFERENCE
FOR RADICAL FAIRIES
TO BE HELD LABOR DAY WEEKEND
AUGUST 31-SEPTEMBER 1,2, 1979
AT A DESERT SANCTUARY NEAR TUCSON

- exploring breakthroughs in gay consciousness
- sharing gay visions
- the spiritual dimensions of gayness

27

Fig. 2.1. "A Call to Gay Brothers," Flier for A Spiritual Conference for Radical Faeries, 1979.
Reproduced from *RFD* 22 (Winter 1979).

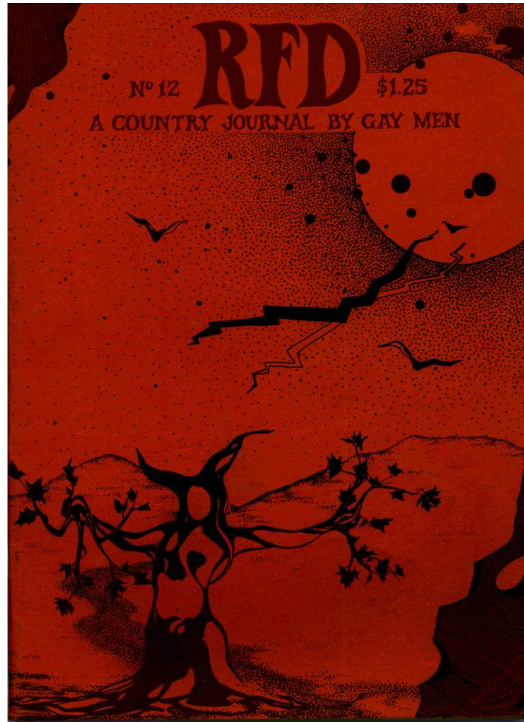

Fig. 2.2. Anonymous, Untitled Illustration, no date.
Reproduced front cover from *RFD* 12 (Summer 1977).

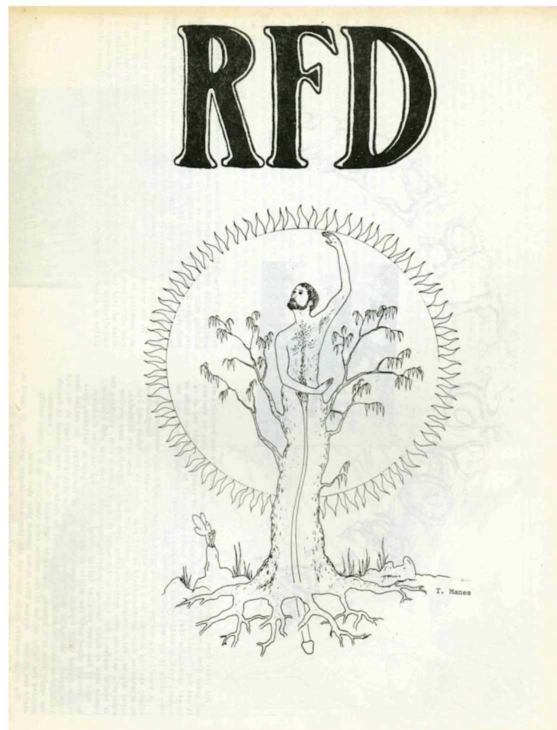

Fig. 2.3. Anonymous, Untitled Illustration, no date.
Reproduced front cover from *RFD* 19 (Spring 1979).

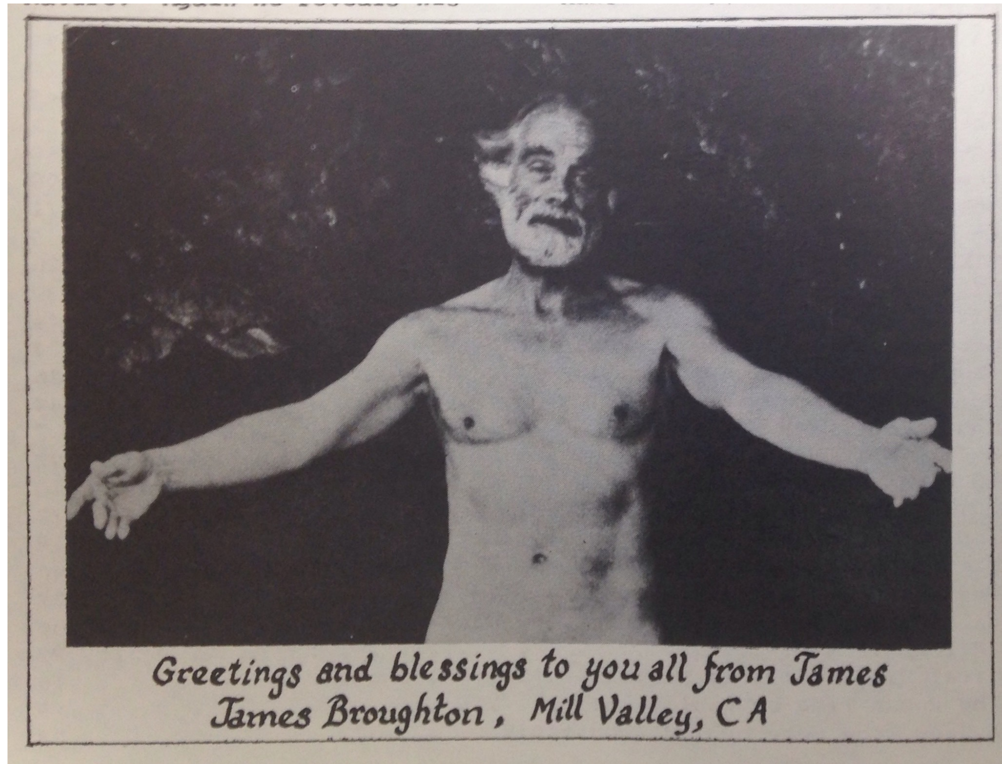

Fig. 2.4. Photograph of James Broughton, no date.
Reproduced from *RFD* 26 (Spring 1981), 2.

Fig. 2.5. James Broughton, film still from *Devotions,* 1983.

Fig. 2.6. Anonymous, Untitled Illustration, no date.
Reproduced from *RFD* 19 (Spring 1979).

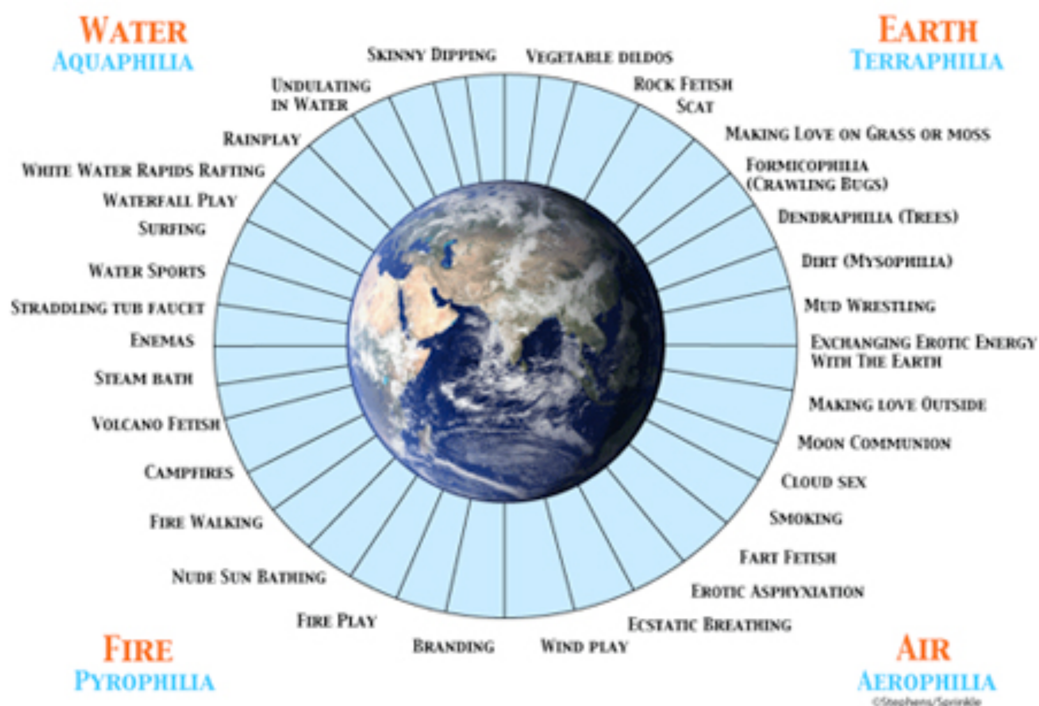

Fig. 3.1. Beth Stephens & Annie Sprinkle, Ecosexuality Chart, no date.
Reproduced with permission of the artists from Sexecology 101,
http://sexecology.org/research-writing/charts-and-graphs/ (accessed April 5, 2016).

Visit our Green Wedding Announcement Page for more information on the event

Fig. 3.2. Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle, *Green Wedding to the Earth Invitation*, 2008.
Reproduced with permission of the artists from Love Art Lab, http://www.loveartlab.org/invitation.php?year_id=4 (accessed April 5, 2016).

Fig. 3.3. Lydia Daniller, Untitled, 2008.
Reproduced with permission of the photographer from Love Art Lab,
http://www.loveartlab.org/wedding-album.php?year_id=4# (accessed April 5, 2016).

Fig. 3.4. Lydia Daniller, Untitled, 2008.
Reproduced with permission of the photographer via Love Art Lab,
http://www.loveartlab.org/wedding-album.php?year_id=4# (accessed April 5, 2016).

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