

“Strange Coupling”: Vegan Ecofeminism and Queer Ecologies in Theory and in Practice

Chapter 2: Queer Ecologies, Complications and Possibilities in Coupling with Queer Vegan Ecofeminism(s)

ADRIANA JIMÉNEZ RODRÍGUEZ

Escuela de Lenguas Modernas

Universidad de Costa Rica

Abstract

This chapter begins by defining queer ecologies and providing a synthesis of some of the most relevant queer ecological analyses available so far while critiquing them from a vegan ecofeminist point of view. The main objective of the chapter is to prove that theoretically, it is possible to achieve a vegan ecofeminist queer ecological critical stance. The chapter also provides specific guidelines to such vegan ecofeminist queer ecological analyses.

Key words: vegan ecofeminism, queer ecologies, methodology of vegan ecofeminist queer ecologies

Resumen

Este capítulo comienza definiendo las ecologías *queer* para luego exponer una síntesis de los análisis más relevantes de esta área a la vez que los critica desde una perspectiva ecofeminista vegana. El objetivo principal del presente capítulo es probar que es teóricamente posible concretar una posición crítica llamada ecofeminismo vegano *queer*

ecológico. También, se ofrece una guía metodológica específica para lograr dicho tipo de análisis crítico.

Palabras claves: ecofeminismo vegano, ecologías queer, metodología de las ecologías queer ecofeministas veganas

Queer ecologies explore the complex interconnections between the construction of “the queer” with the construction of “nature.” “The queer” begins with *queer* as an open signifier that contests all normativity (heteronormativity / homonormativity or any other). However, it is a word that exists in constant transit. *Queer* has gone from a violent heterosexist insult to a re-appropriated term (for some) that expressed / expresses pride (for some) in the face of insufferable oppression (for some)¹ to a highly politicized philosophical term and separately (or not) an identity (or lack thereof). I will mention only one example in terms even of its various meanings in academia, in Seymour’s words:

As of this writing [2013], a search for the word ‘queer’ in ISLE, the journal of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, and the most prominent journal of its kind, returns twenty-five hits—at least five of which include the term as a synonym for ‘strange,’ not as a reference to issues of gender and sexuality. (p. 13)

In this sense, my discussion of the multiple ideological positions that cohabit inside “the queer” is itself relocated in a tiny little academic niche

when paired with “ecologies”. For the purposes of the present analysis, “the queer” is *all* that and even hangs finally open-ended. The “queer” in “queer ecologies” also demands “the queer” to shake itself out of what one can perhaps call *activism apathy*: “. . . queer fictions and theory are known for their cynicism, apoliticism, and negativity, such that ‘queer environmentalism’ sounds like an oxymoron” (Idem 2). In what ways does the social construction of “the queer” interconnect with the social construction of “the natural”? This is queer ecology’s ultimate beginning question. In what specific ways can an examined, critical queer-ecological perspective irrigate a queer vegan ecofeminist literary analysis of literature as a cultural product and manage to sprout complex theoretical offspring?²

In many ways, “queer,” coupled with “nature” expands to include the colored, the disabled, the displaced and dispossessed. “Nature” has been taken for granted as a concrete “thing” and a concrete “concept.” Here, coupled with “the queer” it has become problematized as a debatable and debated space in constant construction, destruction, deconstruction and reconstruction. This coupling is not only “strange,” but still very recent: “. . . the relationship between the natural and the queer is still a new area of focus for those in environmental activism and literary

studies, one that has not yet infiltrated all quarters of those fields" (Seymour, 2013, p. 13). In another sense, "queer nature" has been historically used to oppress members of minority groups (not to even *mention* nonhuman animals!) in theoretical and very concrete ways, for example the way in which the medical community has identified disability with disease, or the way in which Lady Gaga has encouraged the public to embrace the fact (and human rights' activism favorite argument-slogan) that queers "are born this way." Essentialism plays such a huge part in the imbrications between science, medicine, state policy and actual human and nonhuman bodies that it is veritably very difficult to escape. The main point remains: nature is still an uncontested *thing*. Indeed, if "nature" "is the foundational point of departure for queer theory, then, it is a departure that has left much to be resolved" (Seymour 4). When confronted with the idea that nature is as much a social construction as inherent heterosexuality or mammal lifelong monogamy, most literature scholars will still frown a stiff "What will you think of next? Is nothing sacred anymore?" No. Nothing should be, anyway, and yes, everything that we think around is mediated by social construction. Let's start then, negotiating this relationship in an organized way:

Specifically, the task of a queer ecology is to probe the intersections of sex and nature with an eye to developing a sexual politics that more clearly includes considerations of the natural world and its biosocial constitution, and an

environmental politics that demonstrates an understanding of the ways in which sexual relations organize and influence both the material world of nature and our perceptions, experiences, and constitutions of that world. (Erickson and Martimer-Sandilands, 2010, p. 5)

Queer ecologies, then, is a field that could not possibly exist without the groundbreaking work of LGBTQ studies, queer theory, ecofeminism, and environmental justice movements.³ Departing absolutely from any essentialist beliefs in anything "natural," queer ecologies question the deep imbrications between "the natural" and "the queer" and therefore, much of what is actually in between.

Our planet is collapsing. The brutal extent of human-produced environmental catastrophe, as well as its devastating effects on human and nonhuman animals alike is almost immeasurable. Queer ecologist critics begin by asking *how* or even *if* it is possible to deal with so much destruction, death, and loss. I want to start here because I want to establish that it is possible to still work for something. Donna Haraway speaks of "surviving in the ruins." Eli Clare, with Haraway, speaks of embracing our pain, and expressing it fully. Seymour adds that imagination is a fundamental component of (planetary) empathy, as is queer optimism. In order to answer these basic questions, we require response-ability: "staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad

unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings” (Haraway, 2016, n. p.). Her position is crucial to what I believe is the task of queer ecologies. So many times I am personally and professionally horrified by either the “it’s too late to do anything about it and anyway what can my personal choices matter” or the “God will save us; we do not need nature anymore” and its illogical equivalent “technology will save us; we do not need nature anymore” attitude. Haraway emphasizes the uselessness of these positions while still recognizing that technologies can indeed be allies in surviving in the ruins when she laments that many people insist in

a comic faith in technofixes, whether secular or religious: technology will somehow come to the rescue of its naughty but very clever children, or what amounts to the same thing, God will come to the rescue of his disobedient but ever hopeful children. In the face of such touching silliness about technofixes (or techno-apocalypses), sometimes it is hard to remember that it remains important to embrace situated technical projects and their people. They are not the enemy; they can do many important things for staying with the trouble and for making generative oddkin. (2016, n. p.)

Seymour insists that “empathy is largely an act of imagination.” That is, in order to fully grasp the magnitude of planetary destruction and human and

nonhuman suffering at this point in history, we have to find ways to reach past our individual and even community experiences and embrace the all, however painful it may be—and it is.

Erickson’s and Mortimer Sandilands’s introduction to the one standing anthology on queer ecologies begins by clarifying that both “historically and in the present. . . sexual politics has had a distinctly environmental-spatial dimension, and landscapes have been organized to produce and promote (and prohibit) particular kinds of sexual identity and practice” (2010, p. 12). They are referring, for example, to the heteronormative patriarchal practice of urban-park creation as a space to fully disclose and display “proper” heterosexual behavior⁴ (mothers with babies in strollers, heterosexual couples courting, children engaging in “appropriate” gendered physical activity). The interesting thing is, though, that at night, urban parks are often reclaimed by the male homosexual community (well-documented rites of public gay sex), thereby challenging and maintaining (via the invisibility of the gay practices under the cover of the night and the brutal censorship of police enforcement, for example) the social-environmental status quo. This is precisely the realm of queer ecologies. How does, for instance, a movie like *Brokeback Mountain* challenge—or support—the landscape ecology of heterosexual patriarchy in a particular historical moment of the United States history? Only one possible answer inevitably points to the challenge of pastoralism as heterosexual. When you show two handsome macho cowboys engaging in homosexual sex in a rural space that has been socially constructed as the place where “men can

be men" and "men" is inherently understood as "heterosexual men" then we can begin to truly see the transgressive nature of the movie's premise of "unnatural" romantic / erotic love. "Queer ecology suggests, then," the authors continue, "a new practice of ecological knowledges, spaces, and politics that places central attention on challenging hetero-ecologies from the perspective of non-normative sexual and gender positions" (2010, p. 22). Therefore, "queering ecology" involves the opening up of environmental understanding to explicitly non-heterosexual forms of relationship, experience, and imagination as a way of transforming entrenched sexual and natural practices toward simultaneously queer and environmental ends" (2010, p. 30). Who uses what space to what ends and under whose sanction? What ecosystem is created between the human and the nonhuman in those contexts? In what ways do the interconnections between landscape, community, humans and nonhumans alter the space? Thus, we seek to unravel the myriad ways in which the social constructions of the "natural" and the "queer" are irrevocably linked. In so doing, we will be better able to find innovative ways to challenge the undeniable damage and destruction wreaked on this planet (and the humans and nonhumans surviving in its ruins) by violent, patriarchal, hetero and homo-normative ways of existing.

Let's begin with queer sex and queer animality, following the structure of *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*. Stacy Alaimo problematizes the issue of queer nonhuman animals as an argument in support of, let us say "gay rights," even if at times it seems to me more like gay *existence*.

After reminding us that the Scientific⁵ categories of "nature" and the "natural" have historically been used against homosexuals, women and all people of color, she affirms that "the question of whether nonhuman nature can be queer provokes larger questions within interdisciplinary theory regarding the relations between discourse and materiality, human and more-than-human worlds, as well as between cultural theory and science" (2010, p. 52). The only two sides to the discussion so far have been basically "homosexuality in humans is unnatural because there are no homosexual nonhuman animals and nature knows best," and, much more recently, "homosexuality is natural in humans because look there are thousands of homosexual nonhuman animals." The first statement alludes to the fact that Scientific discourses have been purposefully blind to the obvious instances of homosexual behavior in nonhuman animals.⁶ Thus, a "queer-science-studies stance parallel to that of feminist empiricism would insist that the critique and eradication of heteronormative bias will result in a better, more accurate account of the world—simply getting the facts (not-so) straight" (2010, p. 54). The second has perhaps not been as damaging culturally as the first (as any other Scientific argument in the service of the heteronormative, patriarchal oppression of minorities) but it is equally simplistic. In other words, to continue to place "the queer" as social still assumes that "the natural" is heterosexual. Alaimo argues that it is not and that it is urgent to explore the multiple complexities surrounding critical arguments that continue to build on the age-old human / nonhuman opposition.

Meanwhile, queer theorists have for the most part engaged in an astounding “I do not care” attitude⁷. In fact, and as well, for “many cultural critics, who fear that any engagement with nature, science, or materiality is too perilous to pursue, queer animals are segregated into a universe of irrelevance” (2010, p. 55). However, for a queer ecological pursuit exploring the vast proliferation of “the queer” in “the natural” is fundamental, specifically in terms of animal sexuality, to address a number of issues: How has animal sexuality been traditionally studied? (for the most part blindly, given the strict censorship of heteronormative bias), to what ends have the results been used and at the service of whom? How has this impacted the real lives of queer animals (including human animals)? This plus the multiple changes that are finally taking place in the field, just to name a few.

The very first bipolar opposition to demolish is the nature / culture dualism. I am referring very concretely still to the realm of animal sexuality. Indeed, “rather than continuing to pose nature / culture dualisms that closet queer animals as well as animal cultures, and rather than attempting to locate the truth of human sexuality within the already written book of nature, we can think of queer desire as part of an emergent universe of a multitude of naturecultures” (2010, p. 60).⁸ These are interesting ideas. Natureculture is a concept, originating in the work of Donna Haraway, that refers precisely to the synthesis of nature and culture, and the impossibility of separating them in ecological relationships that are both biophysically and socially formed. Most of the research on animal sexuality has approached it only through

the opposition nature / culture and is thus fatally flawed. To stay within the homonormative is equally a mistake—and here we see a leaning towards the second argument that I mentioned at the beginning of this section, the “see? Animals are gay so we can be gay and it is okay”—*we were born this way baby!*⁹ More recent research in nonhuman naturecultures has shown that “the remarkable variance regarding sex, gender, reproduction, and childrearing among [nonhuman] animals defies our modes of categorization, even explodes our sense of being able to make sense of it all” (2010, p. 67). The task of queer ecologies requires dedicated problematizing of these limiting categories that have imprisoned both “the natural” and “the queer” in impossibly tiny rhetorical and sometimes material closets. Alaimo concludes her piece by remarking that “by eluding perfect modes of capture, queer animals dramatize emergent worlds of desire, action, agency, and interactivity that can never be reduced to a background or resource against which the human defines himself” (2010, p. 67). She then expresses “awe” for this wonderful natural queerness and hopes that such awe “may. . . foster queer-green ethics, politics, practices, and places” (2010, p. 68). It is astounding that after such careful analysis of the ways in which nonhuman animals are so alike to human animals, including an exploration of several nonhuman naturecultures, Alaimo does not even refer to what these “queer-green practices” may be. I cannot possibly imagine her sitting down to eat a piece of dead cow after speaking so eloquently about the deep interconnections between humans and nonhumans. Clearly a person so

lucid and well-informed cannot possibly deny the simple fact that you *cannot* be “green” and eat meat. What about the rich possibility of connections between the issue that she is discussing and the categorization of millions of nonhuman animals as “food source”? What about the capitalist, heteronormative sexual violence that is quintessential to farm factories? What place does queer nonhuman animal sexuality have in this systemic regime of animal cruelty and forced reproduction for profit? Is that not also an area that queer ecologies should at the very least mention? Which leads me to wonder... Why does she stop at that basically tepid well-wishing statement at the end of her article? I want to explore this more carefully as I analyze three more instances of queer ecological inquiry. I want to know where the disconnect between queer ecologies and vegan ecofeminism begins and how it can end, theoretically and methodologically.

In his piece *Penguin Family Values: The Nature of Planetary Environmental Reproductive Justice*, Noel Sturgeon applies queer ecologies to the portrayal of penguin families and sexuality in human media and how it reflects the assumed superiority of the U.S. family structure (whether heteronormative or homonormative) and its damaging effect on the environment. He begins by pointing out how feminists of color have worked very hard in expanding the white-women-centered concept of “reproductive rights” (abortion, the day-after pill, etc.) into the less racist, culturally-broader concept of *reproductive justice*, which includes the right to access to the means to properly care for and nurture children—childcare, prenatal care, childcare, access to clean air, healthy environments and food,

freedom from coerced sterilization, to name just a few (2010. p. 103). He argues that the “politics of reproduction—of people, of families, economies, and environments—centers around gendered arrangements of work and sexuality, and recognizing this politics is important in coming up with solutions to social and environmental problems, let alone in resisting manipulative political discourses” (2010. p. 104).¹⁰ Sturgeon goes on to explain that, hegemonically, heterosexuality is considered “natural” and therefore “correct” because it is a form of sexuality that is reproductive. However, in reality, only one type of heterosexual family is being defended, for example, by the Christian right in the U.S. The fear of women, especially young women, being fully in control of their reproductive rights “concurrently appeals to an underlying racism and classism that wants to prevent women of color and poor women in particular from having access to choices and support for their own reproductive decisions, and thus forming other kinds of families than the kind imagined to be the model blessed by the (right-wing) God” (pp. 106-107).¹¹ In this sense, limiting reproductive justice to the non-white, working class women in the U.S. actually also works in “promoting environmental damage by naturalizing heteronormative patriarchy, preventing us from imagining and putting into place alternative ways of living more lightly on the earth” (2010. p. 107).¹² I think that the (non-vegan) consumption practices that Sturgeon refers to (see footnote 10) rely largely on the reproductive violence inflicted upon (mostly female) nonhuman individuals for human profit. If we are to seriously address the

interconnectedness between the ecological impact of the Global North's patriarchal, nuclear, heteronormative family unit surely we have to do by looking carefully not only at the environmental devastation produced by factory farming, but also at the ethical / moral implications of torture and murder of nonhuman animals and the gender-cultural meaning of meat-eating.

In Sturgeon's piece, the significance of the penguins in the midst of his general discussion of (human) reproductive justice and the place of the (white American) nuclear heteronormative (and homonormative) family in the state-sponsored late capitalist global environmental devastation is that a few of them have been used in the media to either condemn or validate human queer families via the undeniable existence of "gay" penguins in nature (seen as "real" nature, in spite of the multiple complications in such ontological conception of the world as divided in nature / culture in the mainstream human imaginary). Queer penguins, then, have been a non-human cultural banner, in a way, and Sturgeon points out how, regardless of which side the banner hangs on, this representation still naively relies on nature as given, and on nonhuman sexuality as rigid and monolithic. Gay activists have glorified token "gay" penguins (especially ones that have adopted an orphan infant penguin). Movies such as *The March of the Penguins* and *Happy Feet* glorify patriarchal, heteronormative nuclear family structures. Sturgeon wryly points out that the "gay" penguins that inspired the famous children book *And Tango Makes Three!* actually broke up later and then one of them mated

with a female penguin, for instance. Does that make the penguin "not gay," to the horror of homonormative activists? Does that automatically invalidate the non-normative family that the penguin did start with his at-the-time-same-sex partner? It is far more interesting, actually, to look at the omission of this fact in the media and the public imagination.¹³ After all, their family existed, and I think "not gay" would be much better categorized simply as *queer*. How does the social construction of nonhuman animal sexuality relate to the construction of human sexuality? How does this relationship bounce off the impact of actual human families on the environment?¹⁴ These are the queer ecological issues at the heart of the penguin issue, precisely because "in both pro-heterosexualist and pro-gay cases, arguing for the naturalness and superiority of the U. S. nuclear family form ignores its implications in environmental problems" (2010, p. 114). Sturgeon also connects the media representation of what could be viewed as heroic penguin exceptionalism¹⁵ to the very real conditions of indigenous people in the Arctic who get blamed for their sustainable hunting / fishing practices in an environmental landscape devastated by the consumer practices of precisely the nuclear homo / heteronormative families of the Global North, particularly the American ones. I return to my original criticism of this author's particular blindness to the major role of human animals of exploiting and eating nonhuman animals, for instance in the form of factory farming, when he himself concludes his piece with the following statement: "Responsibility to these ecological niches, networks, and dynamics can be brought into view only if we understand ourselves as

animals among other animals, with varied sexualities, complicated family relationships, complex political systems, and multiple desires" (2010, p. 129). Perhaps we should begin to consider the issue of the representation of queer penguins as a symptom of a larger issue: What does the human interpretation of penguin sexuality really say about human sexuality (particularly in terms of reproduction) and especially as situated in a particular environmental landscape devastated by a fossil-fuel based economy that also houses many peremptorily ignored human indigenous communities? I agree with Sturgeon's conclusion to his essay: "We are not outside the earth looking down upon it. Instead, we are inside specific biosystems and complex relationships with other biological entities. (...) Responsibility [can only be achieved] if we understand ourselves as animals among other animals, with varied sexualities, complicated family relationships, complex political systems, and multiple desires" (2010, p. 129). I believe he is saying, along Haraway, that we need to stay with the trouble, not as "one more animal that is obviously interconnected to earth and other animals," I would say, but as one more type of animal who has wreaked havoc, death, injustice and devastation on all beings and ecological landscapes in the planet.

Andil Gosine continues Sturgeon's queer ecological discussion of planetary reproduction by shifting it more into the exclusively human aspect. His basic argument is that "read against the heterosexist, racialized formations of nature engendered through these projects (the creation of national parks, etc.), heterosexual, potentially reproductive sex between non-white

people and homosexual sex. . . threaten colonial-imperialist and nationalist ambitions" (2010, p. 150). In the sense that they directly challenge the main objective of heterosexual reproduction of the white nuclear family as the maintenance of the Global North's continued domination of the Global South, he contests that "both are 'queer acts' in that they challenge the stated norms of collaborating colonial narratives of race, sex, and gender, though which modern formations of nature have been constituted" (Idem). He means that the very construction of nature *and* nations has relied entirely on the reproduction, both physical and metaphorical of hegemonic heterosexual white humans. Indeed, and precisely because of the imperative of white heteronormative procreation, "the sex of Others had long preoccupied the imaginations of social and economic stewards of Euroamerican culture" (2010, p. 151), especially in the processes of the historical construction of sexuality and reproduction of white subjects in and out of the colonies in the varied quests of global imperialism.¹⁶ This critic points out, for example, the ways in which white men's sex acts with native women were actually perceived as "a necessary evil" and that, if censored, could lead to "worse" acts, such as "masturbation or homosexual sex" (2010, p. 159). There was sufficient racist anxiety about unwanted miscegenated offspring, however.¹⁷ The (literal and metaphorical) placement of non-white bodies in white (or white-dominated) society has always obsessed the various imaginaries of The Nation. Here we can see how the artificial (and hegemonic) social and cultural construction of both *nature* and *nation* coincide on multiple levels. "Nationalism,"

explains Gosine, “is always predicated on radicalized heterosexuality, as the survival of nations demands the reproduction of bodies. It is for this reason that women have been regarded in nationalist discourses as objects of both reverence and slippage; they are biological reproducers of the nation, but any sexual transgressions on their part (lesbianism, interracial sex) mean that they also threaten its survival” (2010, p. 156). I find it interesting that he fails to mention that some nations are more likely than others to place the reproduction of their *own* bodies above any consideration of the moral validity of alternative sexual orientations (clever, clever assimilators!). Some nations, for example, support (socially and financially) the continuous reproduction of *their* bodies (particularly over “other” bodies) within nationalist nuclear families, gay or straight. Some nation-states actively encourage homosexual couples to procreate, via strong surrogate programs for homosexual male couples, for example. In this case, *the nation* is supreme, and the configurations of *the natural* can be adjusted as necessary. Namely, it simply does not matter whether gay male sex acts are natural or not, as long as more of *their* babies are being produced, whatever exploitative means necessary (such as the rented wombs that carry them—oftentimes without even tainting the fetus with “other race” blood). Again, queer ecologies, in Gosine’s article, make it easier to see how nature and nation are configured via the same (white, male, heteropatriarchal, heterosexist—imaginary) means.

Gosine’s second point is that categorizing non-white heterosexual sex between people of color and male gay

sex as “queer”¹⁸ in the same queer ecological move shifts emphasis from bodies to sex, and points out the ways in which for example, blaming non-white overpopulation in the Global South for planetary devastation is part of a long history of racist, colonial oppression. Thus, he is attacking the popularly-held view that the planetary devastation that we are struggling to survive in is the result of non-white people’s unchecked, excessive procreation. Obviously, it is not.¹⁹ It is the result of violent, exploitative capitalist practices that view both natural resources, non-human animal bodies and Global South labor as theirs to profit from. “The denunciation of homosexuality,” he explains, “shares much in common with the attacks on the fertility and potentially reproductive sexualities of non-white men and women. First, nature stands in for nation in both narratives, an easy epistemological substitution, as nations have the same requirements as healthy environments: reproductive species and resistance to the incursions of foreign bodies” (2010, p. 155). According to him, both nature and nation require “protection” from the contaminating presence of non-white, non-straight bodies. This is, of course, in and of itself an oxymoron.²⁰ The imaginary “healthy nature” that needs protection from toxic bodies, whether homosexual or non-white, does not exist. What remains is almost-complete planetary annihilation, tidy little elite urban parks or questionable “national reserves” notwithstanding. This theorist also supports Greta Gaard’s original statement that human erotophobia has a lot to do with this blaming of people of color overpopulation from the Holy Environmentalists Of The

Right (along with the alleged need for protection from gay male sex²¹): "Sexual pleasure is denied through two entwined strategies: the characterization of sex as an act of death and the denial of individual agency by non-white and homosexual subjects in forming sexual desire" (2010, p. 163). In other words, the colonialist lens through which people of color's sexuality is viewed in traditional environmental discourses is as violent as the way in which gay male sex is equated with death. I think, however, that omitting a discussion of farm factoring as a fundamental cause of global warming shows once again what I have begun to think of as queer ecologies academic fear of association with vegan ecofeminism. Even if it is specifically the topic of discussion, and he is speaking about what does *not* cause global warming, I believe that invisibilizing the daily holocaust of nonhuman animals and its proven correlation with environmental destruction and planetary climate change is shocking. Why can we not even mention the human animal treatment of nonhuman animals particularly when it is so relevant to the discussion?²² Finally, in Gosine's opinion, moving toward queer ecologies would necessitate three main theoretical moves: a concern about the political geography of queer ecology, a concern about race-racism, and a concern about political resistance (2010, pp. 168-169). I do not necessarily feel that queer ecologies explicitly negate these three tenets, but I do believe in the importance of re-highlighting them, especially from an Other-perspective.

I am going to conclude my analysis with a brief discussion of some of the ways in which queer ecologies address disability. Of course, disability is

as socially constructed as nature and human and nonhuman sexuality, but what is most interesting is looking deeply at the ways in which these constructions imbricate and interconnect in the face of a hetero / homonormative, able-bodied-oriented, patriarchal society. In her article "Polluted Politics? Confronting Toxic Discourse, Sex Panic, and Eco-Normativity," Giovanna Di Chiro explores one of the imbrications between the construction of disability (seen as disease) and nature, focusing on a strong criticism of what she terms eco(hetero)normativity, a "version of anti-toxics environmentalism [that] while professing laudable and progressive goals, mobilizes the knowledge/power politics of normalcy and normativity and reinforces what queer and disability theorists have analyzed as a compulsory social-environmental order based on a dominant regime of what and who are constructed as normal and natural" (2010, p. 202). This type of environmentalism is part of a hegemonic discourse where "disability becomes an environmental problem and lgbtq people become disabled—the unintended consequences of a contaminated and impure environment, unjustly impaired by chemical trespass" (Idem). Di Chiro talks about the ways in which anti-toxic environmentalism emphasizes only *one* negative consequence of POPs (persistent organic pollutants), namely, on how they disturb hormonal systems, damage the reproductive organs and create sexual instability; recent research of this type has helped fuel social hysteria over, *of course*, a threat to the sexual virility of the male human (via the male nonhuman).²³ She references the importance of ecofeminism and environmental

justice movements in her approach and relevantly asks if it is possible to defend everyone's right to a clean, healthy environment that does not rely so heavily on normativity. "There is good reason for alarm," she states, "but where should the critical attention lie? The hyperfocus on the world turning into hermaphrodites participates in a sexual strategy summoning the familiar 'crimes against nature' credo and inviting culturally sanctioned homophobia while at the same time sidelining and naturalizing 'normal' environmental diseases such as cancer" (2010, pp. 210-211).²⁴ She cites several famous researchers who have profited in popularity by becoming "men with a message," like endocrinologist and amphibian biologist Tyrone Hayes, whose research and "electrifying" presentations that focus on chemical castration and de-masculinization fit into the "residues of [. . .] eco-normativity (or eco[hetero]normativity) that appear in the alarmist discourse of the anti-toxics arm of the environmental movement, residues that [appeal] to pre-existing cultural norms of gender balance, normal sexual reproduction, and the balance of nature" (2010, p. 224). Di Chiro also examines "feminist and environmental justice challenges to normal environmentalism [which are] *queering* ecological thinking and creating new possibilities for genuine coalition politics with the aim of disrupting the social power of eco-normativity" (Idem), such as Sandra Steingraber's research on the historical trends in the onset of puberty in girls and the effects of endocrine disruptors on female reproductive systems. In the entire piece, however, and in all of the research and articles that she analyzes, nonhuman animals²⁵ appear only

as laboratory subjects of experimentation or, ironically, threatening fore-shadows to human "sexual disorders."

The inspiration for Di Chiro's queer ecological analysis of (eco)heteronormative anti-toxic environmentalism / sexual (gonadal and hormonal) alterity comes from queer and disability activist Eli Clare, whose book *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness and Liberation* is a cornerstone in the field. His importance for queer ecological theory, I believe, cannot be over-emphasized. Clare truly speaks from his body, from the margins of ecological, biological and social abuse that is difficult to grasp from the heights of what in comparison strikes me as my *high* privilege, and which I find incredibly elucidating. Raised as a girl in a rural working-class family and sexually abused by his father and his male friends, Clare explores the complex interconnections between body and landscape—in his particular case, both devastated²⁶—from a personal perspective that seeks healing both through introspection and personal growth *and* very engaged political activism. He explains his multi-layered commitment to social / environmental transformation thus: "Skin of our bodies and skin of the world. This is how to understand the land as well as the flesh. To be unsingular, fractured and whole, grieving and proud, in universal solidarity and difficult alliance, never to allow urgency or burning injury to keep us from demanding the whole, intricate, inclusive story" (2015, n. p.). I feel that his words express my passionate belief in the "universal solidarity and difficult alliance" that I think is so possible between vegan ecofeminism and queer ecologies precisely. I fully endorse his

statement that “our job is not to discover the single issue that trumps all others, to fight for the priority of what presses on our own skin. It’s to seek out the places where those skins rub, the spark-filled junctions where we could find ways to say a bigger yes, where we can add layer upon layer of meaning, rejoice in the complexity of our lives and use it to expand our desires beyond the limits of what we thought possible” (2015, n. p.). As a person who lives with cerebral palsy, and is part of *and* very critical of disability activism, Clare offers many enlightening insights into the interconnectedness of the social construction of “disabled” bodies, transgendered bodies, and surviving sexually-abused bodies in both rural and urban ecological landscapes constructed and limited by human capitalist practices.²⁷ His articulate belief that the body is indeed home but that it also affects and is affected by the living human and nonhuman around it synthesizes what I have been trying to do with this paper from the beginning: “The body as home, but only if it is understood that bodies are never singular, but rather haunted, strengthened, underscored by countless other bodies. . . The body as home, but only if it is understood that place and community and culture burrow deep into our bones. . . The body as home, but only if it is understood that bodies can be stolen, fed lies and poison, torn away from us. . . The body as home, but only if it is understood that the stolen body can be reclaimed” (2015, n. p.). Clare’s thoughts bring me back to Haraway’s “surviving in the ruins” and to Seymour’s “empathy as an act of the imagination” especially when I marvel once again at how, in reality, we are all speaking about queering ecology in different ways.

Clare begins by demanding that gender activists and disability activists understand that single-issue movements are doomed to failure. Like I have been arguing throughout, there is no reason why we cannot fight the various forms of patriarchal violence and oppression at the same time.²⁸ Clare states his case very clearly: “I want nondisabled progressive activists to add disability to their political agenda. And at the same time I want disability activists to abandon their single-issue politics and strategies” (2015, n. p.). He speaks from his position as a transgender person living with cerebral palsy who has a particular sensitivity to environmental destruction because of his upbringing in a working-class community that destroyed its delicate ecosystems²⁹ through brutal timber extraction and over-fishing salmon (of course both are deeply connected). He understands the ecological landscape, the exploitative capitalism that produces such senseless devastation of nature, *and* the economic / social struggle of the hardworking working class men that desperately needed jobs to feed their families in an American corporate economy that hails a new Walmart as a “blessing” in communities that used to be self-sustainable. Indeed, “to end environmental destruction, we have to acknowledge who becomes rich and who pays the heaviest price” (2015, n. p.). It is complicated. He takes the time to extend his compassion to those men that get written off as anti-environment racist redneck hicks. And whereas he lucidly sees the interconnectedness of multiple types of oppression, he falls short when considering nonhuman animals as part of the landscape ecologies of human life. Yes, he accepts that consuming

practices have to change,³⁰ but I wonder how can someone so aware of body as home cannot take the one last step towards recognizing that yes, the body that he speaks of so eloquently can be recovered and it can heal only when we recognize the truth of the nonhuman animal body as well.

Clare's other major contribution has to do with his rejection both of the social construction of disability as a disease that needs a cure (a vision that a sector of the disability rights movement participates in—and profits from... god bless capitalism) and the myth of "crip exceptionalism"³¹ that builds off this idea. He states, correctly, that "the disability rights movement, like other social change movements, names systems of oppression as the problem, not individual bodies. In short it is ableism that needs the cure, not our bodies" (2015, n. p.). Clare is partly making reference to the many money-making "charities" that exist to "cure" a number of disabilities that are decidedly not diseases.³² This is a similar move to the "inspiring" media stories of individuals that "overcome" a disability and manage to climb Mount Everest with no legs, for example. Clare points to these tear-jerker testimonials as one more way that mainstream society places disability as individual responsibility (see? she / he can do it; what is your excuse?) rather than *social, communal, imaginary* construction—with its due responsibilities to the minorities it damages, sometimes irreparably.³³ The problem is clearly the physical/cognitive design of a world that assumes the norm to be able-bodied, not the other way around.³⁴ An adept intersectionalist, Clare then takes up sexuality and gender and their

interconnection to disability rights. He is understandably tired of the invisibilization of people with disabilities' sexuality. Even today, so many years after the original publication of his seminal book, when people with disabilities are represented in the media, they are portrayed as completely asexual.³⁵ I absolutely agree when this theorist demands a rightful place in a (hetero-able-bodied) sex-saturated society: "We need images of heterosexual marriage, queer marriage, one-night stands, serial monogamy, lesbian butch and femme, first dates, enduring companionship, gay men in drag, outrageous flirtation and serious commitment, all crip style" (2015, n. p.). We desperately *need* representation of people with disabilities that inhabit multiple positionalities in terms of identity and physical / cognitive realities, yes! Finally, Clare also connects sexuality, embodiment and LGBTQ identities in urban ecological landscapes that are racist, elitist, and exclusionary.³⁶ He explains: "Queer identity, at least as I know it, is largely urban. The happening places, events, dialogues, the strong communities, the journals, magazines, bookstores, queer organizing, and queer activism are all city-based. Of course rural lesbian, gay, bi, and trans communities exist, but the people and institutions defining queer identity and culture are urban" (2015, n. p.). Queer identity is not only urban-based but also able-bodied-oriented. Queer identity, I would like emphasize, is also human animal-centered. This last aspect is missing from Clare's analysis, for example, when he concludes that "[g]ENDER REACHES INTO DISABILITY; DISABILITY WRAPS AROUND CLASS; class strains against abuse;

abuse snarls into sexuality; sexuality folds on top of race ... everything finally piling into a single human body. To write about any aspect of identity, any aspect of the body, means writing about this entire maze" (2015, n. p.).³⁷ This omission notwithstanding, I think his vision reaches closer to the complete inclusion of queer ecological struggle that I envision.³⁸

As I near the end of this discussion, I cannot help but pose a question that kept popping up in the course of my research: Why is the writing of women in the nonhuman animal rights activist front not part of queer ecologies? I would hardly call it vegan ecofeminist, even. I think that very real reasons keep women's voices in the "anecdotal" and sustain men's in the "high-theory" elaboration. What tools do women actually have to do more of the *thinking* and less of the *experiencing* (as separated spheres of human vegan ecofeminist queer ecological action)? I really do not understand or even see why the anecdotal—even the intimately experiential—and the intellectual elaboration of theory are necessarily mutually exclusive. This division is indubitably gendered; it lives in the foundationally patriarchal bipolar opposition emotion / reason—and we all know which one goes on top. Also, the derogatory treatment of women's writing about their experiences with nonhuman animal liberation organizations (such as the essay compilation *Sister Species*, for example) might be better considered from the point of view of the power relationships that mediate both the *actual* cultural production and academic / economic publication of theory and the *actual* physical presence of activist bodies that is in effect necessary

for the *actual* liberation of nonhuman animals from the multiple forms of human-created violence, torture, and murder. In other words, we are dealing with two levels of sexism here (yes, we seem to still be in this place). First, the simple fact that the overwhelming majority of actual human bodies out there in the field, witnessing, investigating, rescuing and rehabilitating—and suffering—nonhuman bodies happen to be women's. Second, the simple fact that men are still comfortably living in an academic space (time and support to actually think and produce theory) made possible by the invisible work not of little fairies but of actual women (statistically proven to be in charge, as always, of unpaid housekeeping and cooking, childcare and eldercare). That is, women are still swimming against the current, in queer ecologies theory writing just as in any other academic endeavor. Let me be clear: the at-times deeply moving essays in *Sister Species* need to be read, yes, and these women's experiences are as valid now as they were when they comprised one of the several streams that fed into the ocean that would become ecofeminism. There comes a point, nonetheless, when the women who tell these stories have to acquire the skill and training needed to take their experiences and build something more complex based on them; indeed, they need to start writing their *own* vegan ecofeminist queer ecological theory.³⁹

I have done my best to discuss the "complications" segment of the title of this chapter up to here. I would like to end on the note of "possibilities." Every ecofeminist, vegan ecofeminist, and queer ecological paper that I have studied has its own very particular

scope and methodological approach. As we all know well, every critic has her / his / hier own peculiar interests and particular ways to get there. But I wanted to provide a concrete answer to the simple question that arose from all my research into these fields: How exactly does one apply a vegan ecofeminist queer ecological methodological approach to a literary work? In the midst of this long, exhausting, and challenging labor, I have found myself knitting, in the Haraway sense. And so I began stitching bits and pieces here and there until I can finally begin to see the questions that would offer a starting point to this very particular critical approach. I propose the following set of interrogations: How is nature presented in the text? How is culture presented in the text? If they are portrayed separately, what power relations mediate this conceptual / material division? What is the “environment”? What elements are included in this “environment”? Are human animals separate from the environment? In what specific ways? Are nonhuman animals included in the environment? In what specific ways? What are the relationships between human and nonhuman animals? Are nonhuman animals tortured and murdered for human consumption? Are there are references to vegetarianism / veganism? Are the connections between eating nonhuman animals and human disease mentioned, explicitly or implicitly? Are there any parallels between the hegemonic (male, white, able-bodied, healthy, Global Northerner) human treatment of nonhuman animals and other (unprivileged, colored, feminized, nonhuman-animalized, poor, diseased, disabled, Global Southerner) human

animals? (Considering as many areas a possible, namely economic, affective, sharing of spaces / landscapes, confinement and / or exploitation) What is considered “normal” and “natural” in the text? What type(s) of sexual orientation identities are presented? Which are socially sanctioned? Is queer present as part of “nature” or “culture”? Which “nature”? Which “culture”? What type(s) of human / nonhuman families are presented? Are they categorized as “natural” or “unnatural”? By whom? Are there any non-heterosexual families presented as an alternative to normative nuclear heteropatriarchal ones? If so, do they manage to intervene the ecological-social context or do they slide into homonormativity (along with its standard ecological practices)? What is / are the ecological landscape(s) in the text? Is it strictly heteronormative / homonormative or are there any queer disruptions? Is it human animal-centered? How is illness / disease presented in the text and what is its relationship to the environment, the ecological landscape, and / or “the natural”? How is disability presented in the text and what is its relationship to the environment, the ecological landscape, and / or the natural? How is reproductive justice shown in the text? Is it presented as an individual, isolated phenomenon or is it problematized as a complex, interconnected human-ecological phenomenon? Which groups are the most affected? How do the hegemonic groups respond? Who has access to what “natural” resources? What relationships of power mediate this access? Who gets fucked and who gets rich? Are nonhuman animals considered a “natural” resource? Is this consideration stable or are there

problematizing forces that disrupt this ontological definition? What are the effects of human intervention on the ecological landscape? Which groups of humans and nonhumans are the most affected by these effects? How are the forces that challenge the system by searching for alternative / sustainable ways to live in this planet resisted by the exploitative systems of economic globalization, changing gender roles, militarization, natural resource depletion, and / or environmental pollution? Thus, I purposefully end with questioning... always really the interesting beginning of the next chapter.

Notes

1. The "some" (s) in this almost-definition are fully purposeful. We are all situated in (movable) contexts. Some members of the LGBTQ community never reconciled with the term "queer." Some members of the LGBTQ community who embrace it as a manifestation of pride do so while comfortably situated in their speciesist / racial / class / gender privilege (or all of the above). For some of us members of the LGBTQ community the term is as close as we get to defining ourselves in terms of who we are and who we feel attracted to sexually / erotically. Some members of the LGBTQ community are strongly attached to their "gay" or "lesbian" identities, and this attachment speaks to the oppression that they have endured and to the political / activist struggle that they have engaged in. I am by no means at all even being fully inclusive—nor am I trying to; I am merely trying to show that *queer* is vastly diverse, both in terms of its meaning and its practical, material manifestations.
2. I still believe in these offspring, in spite of Haraway's passionate plea to "make kin not babies!" Maybe the biological *and* adoptive mother in me gets the best of rational justification. This is the place where I come from. But I do think largely from her latest book, *Staying with the Trouble* and I agree with her fundamental statement: "It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories" (n. p.).
3. I would say that queer ecologies in general need to be more in conversation with other fields, such as Critical Animal Studies or Disability Studies.
4. As the same authors explain, "in the deployment of wilderness in the nineteenth century toward masculine identification, and also in the cultivation of visible heterosexual courtship rituals in urban spaces, it is clear that bodies have been organized to interact with nature-spaces in a particularly disciplined and heterosexualized manner" (20).
5. I will capitalize this word in order to emphasize the demigod status of this self-aggrandized patriarchal institution.
6. Recent research into the multiple social biases of Science have shown, for example, the invalidity of the concept of "race," which has been amply discussed from the point of view of cultural studies, anthropology and feminist science. Even more transgressively, Ladelle McWhorter, in her essay *Enemy of the Species*, brilliantly shows how the category "species" is just as unstable, especially when used to "prove" human superiority over

- nonhumans: “A major lesson to be learned from [a] look at the history of the concept *species* is that science has not demonstrated that it merits the authority often given it to decide social, political, and moral questions. At its best, science is an important tool and component in the process of making such decisions, not a final arbiter. In many cases, we do better to question the authority – and in some cases the validity—of the science used against us rather than to embrace scientific concepts and values uncritically” (2010, p. 96).
7. In discussing Myra J. Hird’s work, Alaimo emphasizes queer theorists’ stubborn apathy towards ecofeminist or queer ecological research: “She concludes her piece by noting that since ‘gay parenting, lesbianism, homosexuality, sex-changing, and other behaviors in animals are prevalent in living matter, [i]t is at least curious that queer theory does not devote more space to the abundant queer behavior of most of the living matter in this planet.’” (2010, p. 64)
 8. Even in recent analyses Alaimo shows that critics still lean towards one or the other previously-mentioned stances: “Whereas many cultural critics cast animal sex into the separate sphere of nature, many scientific accounts of queer animal sex have rendered them too cultural, so as to render them not sexual” (2010, p. 62). The key remains breaking down that useless dualism so that we can *think* better.
 9. The more people continue to ask me what I think about the origins of homosexuality the more bored and exasperated I become. I tend to believe that all animal sexuality would flow in an organically-evolving sea of queerness if released from the crushing hetero (and homonormativity!) of patriarchal culture and socialization. Who cares if it is a matter of nature, nurture, or something in between? Is it not time to focus on more interesting issues?
 10. Here he is referring specifically to the media discourse that holds individual families responsible for environmental devastation and extremely irresponsible resource use instead of focusing on the corporate-sponsored system of exploitative patriarchal capitalism: “The burden then is implicitly placed on the Western suburban heteronormative family in the face of environmental degradation of the biosphere is based on a dangerous contradiction,” as this suburban heteronormative family “depends on women’s unpaid domestic labor, particularly in the areas of childcare and eldercare, the use of nonrenewable fuel-intensive transportation such as cars and long-distance shipping of consumer products; and the promotion of women as ‘shoppers’ who buy all of their food, clothes, and consumer goods in stores that are involved in globalized production and distribution chains dependent on the exploitation of the labor of the poor, often in the Global South, and often women” (2010, p. 107).
 11. Donna Haraway asks: “What is decolonial feminist reproductive freedom in a dangerously troubled multispecies world?” (2016, n. p.) I think it is very important to focus on her emphasis on *multispecies*. To be more specific, should reproductive justice not include the considerations and effects of human reproduction on all other animals that we already share complex ecosystems with?
 12. “Living more lightly” *cannot* not refer directly to vegan ecofeminism. Ethical lifestyle choices such as veganism, shopping local, supporting small

- businesses and producers, carpooling, protesting toxic dumping and environmental racism, growing a community garden, to name just a simple few, are all vegan ecofeminist practices that stem from joint battles with environmental justice movements. To gloss it over with a phrase like "living more lightly" exemplifies yet again my issue with queer ecologies. What is it? Do they not want to sound too ecofeminist? Is it so passé? Is it better to leave such gaping holes in what could otherwise be fruitful theoretical *and* practical collaboration?
13. Indeed, "in general, the sexual practices of [sic] animals are so variable that little can be proved about human sexuality using [sic] animal sexuality using [sic] animal examples, though it is a common narrative in popular culture" (2010, p. 113).
 14. Sturgeon brings us back to the real issue here, for movies such as *The March of the Penguins* represent the hardships of surviving in an extreme habitat as the result of the individual heroism of the nuclear heterosexual penguin family feat, without paying ANY attention to how human impact on the Earth has effectively devastated the polar regions because of global warming: "The Emperor penguin is not a survivor but an integral element of its environment, existing nowhere else but the Antarctic. This element of integration and dependence upon environmental particularities is something we are comfortable with when thinking about [sic] animals, but not when we are thinking about human societies because our dominant frameworks see us as separate from and in control of nature" (2010, pp. 114-115). The fact that the actual human communities that are suffering the distress of polar ice-melting in deep imbrications with nonhuman animals are erased from all these media representations in both racist, speciesist, and extremely violent.
 15. I agree with Sturgeon's affirmation that "the lesson of the penguins is not a lesson in intelligent design or in patriarchal heroics or in the naturalness of gay marriage; rather, it should be a lesson in the ways in which human social reproduction is interrelated with and dependent upon environments both regional and planetary, and vice versa" (2010, p.118).
 16. In this sense, in "white nationalist projects, including European colonization, homosexuals and non-white reproductive heterosexuals are strange; they make no contribution to the building and expansion of—and in fact threaten—white nations" (2010, p. 156).
 17. The process evolved accordingly, for "subsequent to the fall of European empires, these anxieties took new shape as anti-immigration discourses (...) and, as already noted, overpopulation propaganda" (2010, p. 157).
 18. As he puts it, "my characterization of both kinds of sex acts as queer is a recognition of their imbrications, and is intended as a kind of provocation to the theorization and practice of queer ecology" (2010, p. 150). I think queer ecologies as a field welcomes such provocations.
 19. The propaganda surrounding global warming (which relies heavily on deep ecology) and its causes is racist, speciesist, and suspiciously oblivious to the SYSTEM of extreme corporate capitalism that governs the world. "Al Gore" for example, "remains committed to the Malthusian rhetoric he adapted from the Erlichs, and peppers his presentation of analysis on climate change with references to and assumptions about the 'disaster' of population growth" (2010, p. 153).

20. "Nature needs protection, this logic forwards, from the toxic presence of non-white bodies," asserts Gosine (2010, p. 158).
21. I do not know why according to this theorist lesbian sex is only dangerous in one line of his entire article. I already quoted it above.
22. Probably because of my original training in literature, I find it easy to see how in theory, even theory as "elevated" as queer ecologies, what is *not* said is as important as what is said. I insist with my question, *why* are these academics purposefully not speaking about the murder of nonhuman animals for human capitalist consumption when there are so many areas of inquiry that are rich with queer ecological implications?
23. "The media fixation on gonadal deformities and sexual/gender abnormalities as the most treacherous concern," explains Di Chiro, "ends up perilously de-emphasizing and, in fact, *naturalizing* and *normalizing* the many other serious health problems associated with POPs, which are on the rise: breast, ovarian, prostate, and testicular cancers, neurological and neurobehavioral problems, immune system breakdown, heart disease, diabetes, and obesity" (2010, p. 202).
24. This author basically maps how media reports on (hetero-econormatively biased) science have focused on the effects of poisonous chemicals only from the point of view of sexual behavior and / or gender. She explains how the main focus of research (and the circulation of such research's results) has been "estrogen panic": "This concern about the excesses of estrogenic pollution (what some refer to as 'ova-pollution' is commonly articulated in popular scientific media as explaining the pan-species *instability* of maleness and as putting at risk the future existence of *natural* masculinity" (201). The title of one BBC documentary on the matter is both hilarious and terrifying; in my opinion, it is also very revealing... *The Estrogen Effect: Assault on the Male*. Would "testosterone pollution" even exist as an imaginary possibility in this world? I doubt it. Consider Louis Guillette's approach when addressing a congressional subcommittee in 1995 about the decline of alligator populations in Florida's Lake Apopka. Referring to the decline in the "male capacity" of the alligators, their tiny penises, and the "super females" that were taking over, he chose to make the following comment during his closing remarks: "Every man sitting in this room today is half the man his grandfather was. Are our children going to be half the men we are?" (2010, p. 206). Talk about male hysteria (not necessarily even about environmental destruction via POPs).
25. Once again, I am baffled by the passion and intersectional awareness in statements such as "Thinking of the body as home / ecology, especially in consideration to those bodies, communities, and environments that have been reviled, neglected, and polluted, provides an apt metaphor and material grounding for constructing an *embodied* ecological politics that articulates the concept of diversity, interdependence, social justice and ecological integrity" (2010, p. 200). How can the passion not extend to *all* bodies and make significant connections between the human and the nonhuman?
26. "Both of us," he says, "were left with clear-cut slopes like great wounds across the natural world that gave us solace, and crumbling economies that left our communities desperate" (2015, n. p.).

27. In her article "Undoing Nature: Coalition Building as Queer Environmentalism," Katie Hogan speaks about queer ecocritique, which is exactly what Clare does, I think. "The denunciation of queers as 'unnatural' and as 'crimes against nature,'" she states, "has a long history that continues to endanger queer lives and complicate queer environmental desires" (2010, p. 231). Indeed, queer ecocritique is rightfully skeptical of discourses of nature and environmentalism because "queer theories are designed to challenge the assumption that nature and the natural are neutral, independent categories exempt from critical challenge. Queer ecocritique takes the alleged 'crimes against nature-ness of queers [and people living with disabilities, especially if as a consequence of patriarchal-capitalist environmental degradation] as the focus of its work [. . .] it [also] keeps the focus on how the seemingly innocent realm of nature and ecological protection is potentially rife with ideology and violence" (2010, p. 232).
28. "Building a politics that reflects all the multiplicity in our lives and in the world," Clare argues astutely, "isn't optional, but rather absolutely necessary" (2015, n. p.). Hogan definitely adds to this statement when she states that "while typical instances of environmental degradation include a focus on chemical toxicities and vulnerable ecosystems, the destruction of queer bodies, communities and cultures through toxic discourses of unnatural and unfit are also outrageous instances of environmental destruction as urgent as disappearing species and global warming [...] Like environmental justice, queer critical consciousness continually exposes the violence and ideology of these taken-for-granted terms. In this way, queer theory's preoccupation with the uses of nature operates as a form of environmentalism that is useful to all communities deemed unfit" (2010, p. 236).
29. For Clare, these tortured forests were a refuge. He connected, quite impressively, to the trees and to the people making a living out of their death, a child-empath struggling to survive gender assignment and attribution and brutal sexual abuse. He speaks so beautifully about healing while holding himself to the land that was also the victim of patriarchal violence: "whenever I sit here listening to the wind in the trees, the haunting cry of the lizard cuckoos in the valley proclaiming the coming downpour, smell the sunbaked ferns and decaying banana leaves and feel the dense clay under me, the symbol begins to unravel. Slowly, as I listen to it, the land becomes itself again" (2015, n. p.). How can we begin to heal in the ruins? How can this healing process involve all bodies (in all their gendered and ability ranges), tree, human, rock, nonhuman, tree?
30. "In order for trees and salmon to become truly renewable resources again, we will need to consume much less for a long time" is simply not enough. And yes I expect more from someone that sensitive and brilliant.
31. Clare uses the word "crip" as a conscious, *active* re-appropriation of the derogatory term "cripple." It is my impression that there is some disagreement within the community as to the politically correct identity terms to be used. I feel that using the word "crip" is in his case absolutely valid, but absolutely not a possibility for an able-bodied person. In this sense, I can relate this to my jocular use of "dyke"

- (as in “hot dyke,” “boom dyke,” or “what a DYKE!”—all meant humorously) as a member of the lgbtq community, as opposed to a random heterosexual man on the street. Even so, it is interesting and worthy of note that, since my sexual orientation attribution is 99% of the time Passing Heterosexual Princess, I oftentimes get in trouble for using these terms freely in the presence of non-heterosexual people. I am perfectly fine with that. It is a good sign to be non-normatively uncomfortable for people everywhere.
32. “To frame disability in terms of a cure,” Clare says, “is to accept the medical model of disability, to think of disabled people as sick, diseased, ill people” (2015 n. p.).
 33. People living with disabilities have a right (almost needless to say) to live independently (with due professional assistance as needed *because* of a physical world designed in able-bodied normativity), to earn their own living, to establish relationships and community on their own terms, to negotiate (whatever orientation) sexual relations and make families, in short, to live in the world as able-bodied people do without a second thought to our privilege.
 34. I do not mean to downplay the very real impact of environmental racism, toxic dumping, nuclear energy “accidents,” oil spills, GMO crops, mutant pesticide consumption, pharmaceutical side-effects, chemical poisoning, etc., on human and non-human bodies alike. We are witnessing planetary devastation play out in our very cell composition, and one of the direct consequences is disability in some of its forms. How that disability is dealt with in a society that is deadly able-normative is what I am trying to discuss through the lense(s) of queer ecologies.
 35. I can briefly mention two recent exceptions, television show *Glee* and the movie *The Sessions*, which finally portray people with disabilities as inhabiting sexual bodies. In terms of more radical material, I find it impossible not to mention the *Yes, We Fuck* movement, which uses pornographic material to explode in mainstream society and transform and transgress traditional, conservative visions of human sexuality that conceive of sex only in an able-bodied universe. This inevitably brings me back to the FFF (Fuck-ing for Forests) activism that David Bell analyzes in his article “Queernaturecultures” in which he argues that this group mobilizes “the naturalness of sex and ‘naturefucking’ politically or counterculturally, [and] draws on a strong lineage of nature-based sex radicalism (or sex-based nature radicalism), with the nature of sex staged as a critique of both sex-negative and nature-destroying human cultures. Reconnecting to sex here renaturalizes humanity, too, by reminding us of our embodied naturalness” (2010, p. 137). Not once however, does he refer to specifically non-heterosexual sex acts or non-abled-bodied participants. The silence is deafening. How can this not be a significant type of silence in a queer ecologies anthology?
 36. It is impossible not to think of StacyAnn Chin’s incredibly relevant spoken-word poem “Poem for the Gay Games,” which addresses this same issue. The commercialization and self-satisfied homonormativity of most GLBT movements in America and their inherent sexist, classist, racist, able-bodied assimilationalist view of “gay rights”. I wonder

- what Chin thought of the offensively whitewashed movie *Stonewall*, which managed to reduce Latina and black drag-queens to backdrop local color for the "inspired" skinny white boy who is (erroneously) portrayed as throwing the first rock at the police during the famous 1969 riots that started the Gay Liberation Movement in the U.S.A.
37. Hogan emphasizes this point as well when she says "Gender, race, sexuality, religion, physical ability, and class figure prominently in who is assumed to belong in nature and who is not, who has safe access to nature and who does not" (2010, p. 241).
 38. I love Clare's perspective on healing, his personal take on *surviving in the ruins*: "ableism, transphobia, and homophobia stole my body away, broke my desire, removed me from my pleasure in the stones warm against my skin, the damp sponginess of moss growing on a rotten log, the taste of spring water dripping out of rock. Harder to express how that break becomes healed, a bone once fractured, now whole, but different from the bone never broken" (2015, n. p.).
 39. This would happily demolish the emotional / rational bipolar opposition as well! We can thread emotion into our theory-writing and design our own ways to interconnect with it all.
- Clare, Eli. *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*. Kindle ed., Durham, Duke University Press, 2015.
- Di Chiro, Giovanna. "Polluted Politics? Confronting the Toxic Discourses, Sex Panic, and Eco-Normativity." Erickson and Mortimer-Sandilands, 199-230.
- Gosine, Andil. "Non-white Reproduction and Same-Sex Eroticism: Queer Acts against Nature." Erickson and Mortimer-Sandilands, 149-172.
- Haraway, Donna Jeanne. *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Kindle ed., Durham, Duke University Press, 2016.
- Hogan, Katie. "Undoing Nature: Coalition Building as Queer Environmentalism." Erickson and Mortimer-Sandilands, 231-253.
- Kemmerer, Lisa. *Sister Species: Women, Animals and Social Justice*. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield, University of Illinois Press, 2011.
- McWhorter, Ladelle. "Enemy of the Species." Erickson and Mortimer-Sandilands, 73-101.
- Mortimer-Sandilands, Catriona, and Bruce Erickson. *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*. Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Seymour, Nicole. *Strange natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination*. Urbana, Univ. of Illinois Press, 2013.
- Sturgeon, Noel. "Penguin Family Values: The Nature of Planetary Environmental Reproductive Justice." Erickson and Mortimer-Sandilands, 102-133.

Bibliography

- Alaimo, Stacy. "Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture, and Pleasure of 'Queer' Animals." Erickson and Mortimer-Sandilands, 51-72.
- Bell, David. "Queernaturecultures." Erickson and Mortimer-Sandilands, 134-145.

