Guest Column: Queer Ecology

TIMOTHY MORTON

nearer than breathing, closer than hands and feet
—George Morrison, "The Reawakening of Mysticism"

ECOLOGICAL CRITICISM AND QUEER THEORY SEEM INCOMPATIBLE, but if they met, there would be a fantastic explosion. How shall we accomplish this perverse, Frankensteinian meme splice? I'll propose some hypothetical methods and frameworks for a field that doesn't quite exist—queer ecology. (The pathbreaking work of Catriona Sandilands, Greta Gaard, and the journal *Undercurrents* must be acknowledged here.)[1] This exercise in hubris is bound to rattle nerves and raise hackles, but please bear with me on this test flight. Start with the basics. Let's not create this field by comparing literary-critical apples and oranges. Let's do it the hard way, up from foundations (or unfoundations). Let's do it in the name of ecology itself, which demands intimacies with other beings that queer theory also demands, in another key. Let's do it because our era requires it—we are losing touch with a fantasy Nature that never really existed (I capitalize *Nature* to make it look less natural), while we actively and passively destroy life-forms inhabiting and constituting the biosphere, in Earth's sixth mass extinction event. Giving up a fantasy is even harder than giving up a reality.

At Christmas 2008, Pope Benedict XVI declared that if tropical forests deserve our "protection," then "the human being" (defined as "man" and "woman") deserves it no less: "We need something like human ecology, meant in the right way." His proclamation explicitly targeted "gender" theory. To undermine the false dichotomy of Nature and history on which papal homophobia depends, scholarship must research the ways in which queerness, in its variegated forms, is

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https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2010.125.2.273 Published online by Cambridge University Press

installed in biological substance as such and is not simply a blip in cultural history.[2]

Unfortunately, a great deal of ecocriticism provides a toxic environment in which to spawn queer ecology. Ecofeminism (the classic example is Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature*) arose out of feminist separatism, wedded to a biological essentialism that, strategic or not, is grounded on binary difference and thus unhelpful for the kinds of difference multiplication that is queer theory's brilliance. Much American ecocriticism is a vector for various masculinity memes, including rugged individualism, a phallic authoritarian sublime, and an allergy to femininity in all its forms (as sheer appearance, as the signifier, as display). Other environmentalisms (such as ecophenomenology, as practiced by Kate Rigby, Glen Mazis, and others) are more promising for their flexible, experiential view that Nature is a process, not a product—but I worry that they might just be upgrades.

Interdependence and Intimacy

Judith Butler makes a case for queer ecology, because she shows how heterosexist gender performance produces a metaphysical manifold that separates "inside" from "outside." The inside-outside manifold is fundamental for thinking the environment as a metaphysical, closed system—Nature. This is impossible to construe without violence. Using Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger* and Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*, Butler demonstrates that the inside-outside manifold sustains gender identification and rituals of exclusion that can never be totally successful—the body just isn't an impermeable, closed form (*Gender Trouble* 133–34). Butler also holds that "nature" as such be thoroughly revised through ecological notions of interrelatedness (*Bodies* 4). As I've argued elsewhere, ideologies of Nature are founded on inside-outside structures that resemble the boundaries heterosexism polices (*Ecology* 19, 25, 40, 52–54, 63–64, 67, 78; "Ecologocentrism"). All life-forms, along with the environments they compose and inhabit, defy boundaries between inside and outside at every level. When we examine the environment, it shimmers, and figures emerge in a "strange distortion."[3] When the environment becomes intimate—as in our age of ecological panic and scientifically measurable risk (Beck)—it is decisively no longer an environment, since it no longer just happens around us: that's the difference between weather and climate.

Human society used to define itself by excluding dirt and pollution. We cannot now endorse this exclusion, nor can we believe in the world it produces. This is literally about realizing where your waste goes. Excluding pollution is part of performing Nature as pristine, wild, immediate, and pure. To have subjects and objects, one must have abjects to vomit or excrete (Kristeva). By repressing the abject, environmentalisms—I am not denoting particular movements but suggesting affinities with, say, heterosexism or racism—claiming to subvert or reconcile the subject-object manifold only produce a new and improved brand of Nature.

One way this pans out as gender construction is the compulsory extraversion of much Nature writing. I've been struck by how environmentalist literary critics like to haze nonbelievers. Karl Kroeber suggests that if you don't believe Nature exists, you need to stand out in a midwestern thunderstorm (42). This suggestion now sounds distressingly almost like waterboarding. A commentator on my *Amazon.com* blog specified what Slavoj Žižek needed for daring to endorse ecology without Nature: "Every academic wanting to pontificate on the absence of nature or their convenient version of 'ecology' should be dropped in the Bob Marshall wilderness with a knife and forced to find his or her way out" (Robisch). (I fantasize that Žižek would emerge from this muttering, "I found my way out, but although there were a lot of animals and plants, I didn't find Nature.") A discus-

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sion on the e-mail list of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment in March 2009 concerned how to teach Henry James as an environmental writer ("Henry James"). It was mooted that James, with his shut-in characters and his introverted prose, could be taught as an example of how not to be one: what James and his characters need is a good breath of fresh air. . . .

But does that which is called Nature really work by exclusion? Might it be that queer theory has a strange friend in nonessentialist biology? What would that friendship look like? Most humanists, myself included, need remedial math and science classes, but they will find little to frighten them. In any case, science is too important to be left to scientists. Ecology stems from biology, which has nonessentialist aspects. Queer theory is a nonessentialist view of gender and sexuality. It seems the two domains intersect, but how?

Claiming this might not be radical or revisionist. Just read Darwin. Evolution means that life-forms are made of other life-forms. Entities are mutually determining: they exist in relation to each other and derive from each other. Nothing exists independently, and nothing comes from nothing. At the DNA level, it's impossible to tell a "genuine" code sequence from a viral code insertion. In bacteria, for example, there exist plasmids, entities not unlike pieces of viral code. Plasmids resemble parasites in the bacterial host, but at this scale it's impossible to tell which being is a parasite and which a host (Dawkins, *Extended Phenotype* 159, 200–23, 226; paging Hillis Miller . . .). DNA is literally a code that RNA translates in order for ribosomes to manufacture enzymes (end result: life-forms). Ribosomes can be programmed to read DNA differently: genetic engineering shows how a bacterial cell could manufacture plastics instead of proteins (see *Material World* for this uncontroversial bit of life science). In a sense, molecular biology confronts issues of authenticity similar to those in textual studies. Just as deconstruction showed that, at a certain level at any rate, no text is totally authentic, biology shows us that there is no authentic life-form. This is good news for a queer theory of ecology, which would suppose a multiplication of differences at as many levels and on as many scales as possible.

Consider the following example, from the journal *Virology*. ERV-3 (human endogenous retrovirus 3) may code for a protein that enhances the immunosuppressive properties of the placental barrier (Boyd et al.). You are reading this because a virus in your genes may have helped your mom's body not be allergic to you. Such entities lack a device of which they would be the components—organs without bodies.[4] Might we sneeze because rhinoviral DNA codes directly for sneezing in order to propagate itself (Dawkins, *Extended Phenotype* 200–03, 226)? At the DNA level, the biosphere is permeable and boundariless: "the whole of the gene pool of the biosphere is available to all organisms" (qtd. in Dawkins, *Extended Phenotype* 160). Yet we have bodies with arms, legs, and so on, and we regularly see all kinds of life-forms scuttling around. Life is not Natural—it's Life 1.0, so to speak (Žižek, *In Defense* 440). If anything, life is catastrophic, monstrous, nonholistic, and dislocated, not organic, coherent, or authoritative. Queering ecological criticism will involve engaging with these qualities.

Going up a scale or two, evolution theory is antiessentialist in that it abolishes rigid boundaries between and within species (Cohen; Darwin, *Origin* 34–35, 163; Dawkins, *Ancestor's Tale* 309–13, 569). Life-forms are liquid: positing them as separate is like putting a stick in a river and saying, "This is river stage *x*" (Quine). Queer ecology requires a vocabulary envisioning this liquid life. I propose that life-forms constitute a *mesh*, a nontotalizable, open-ended concatenation of interrelations that blur and confound boundaries at practically any level: between species, between the living and the nonliving, between organism

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and environment.[5] Visualizing the mesh is difficult: it defies our imaginative capacities and transcends iconography. Perhaps negative imagery will have to do, picturing what the mesh is not. It isn't soft and squishy like many of the organic metaphors favored by environmentalism (the "web of life") or by postmodern theory—I'm thinking of ideas such as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's rhizomes, preferred to "arborescent" forms because they're supposedly nonhierarchical (Morton, *Ecology* 52–53, 107–09). Queer textual form can offer "an open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances" (Sedgwick 8; see also Khalip). Organic palpability has so often been adapted to authoritarian masculinism that queer ecology must thoroughly interrogate organicism and its ideological effects.

What about sexuality? Biodiversity and gender diversity are deeply intertwined (Roughgarden 306–07). Cells reproduce asexually, like their single-celled ancestors and the blastocyst attached to the uterus wall at the start of pregnancy. Plants and animals are hermaphroditic before they are bisexual and are bisexual before they are heterosexual. Males and females of most plants and half the animals can become hermaphrodites either together or in turn, and hermaphrodites can become male or female; many switch gender constantly (27, 34–35). A statistically significant proportion of white-tailed deer (at least ten percent) are intersexual (36). Hermaphroditic snails entwine with seeming affection (Nuridsany and Pérennou; Darwin, *Descent* 303–04). Moreover, processes of sexuality are not confined within species. Encountering another individual benefits plants, but they do it through other species, such as insects and birds. The story of evolution is a story of diverse life-forms cooperating with one another. Bees and flowers coevolve through mutually beneficial "deviations" (Darwin, *Origin* 76–79 and *Descent* 257).

Heterosexual reproduction is a late addition to an ocean of asexual division (Dawkins, *Ancestor's Tale* 626). Heterosexuality only seems a good option (rather than an "expensive" plug-in) from the point of view of macromolecular replicators (Dawkins, *Extended Phenotype* 160). It doesn't make sense from the standpoint of these molecules' vehicles (us and the beetles). Gender as performance is underpinned by evolutionary "satisficing": if your body kind of works, you can keep it (156; Roughgarden 26–27). This accords with Butler's view of performativity as regulated sets of iterated functions that act as constraints (*Bodies* 94–95). To this extent, DNA itself is performative. There's no contradiction between straightforward biology and queer theory. If you want a queer monument, look around you.

This brings us to what is horrifyingly called "the question of the animal" (I can't help thinking of "the Jewish question" when I hear this). Ecological critique has argued that speciesism underlies sexism and racism (Wolfe)—why not homophobia too? How do we think about life-forms and their diverse sexualities and pleasures? Any attempt at queer ecology must imagine ways of doing justice to life-forms while respecting the lessons of evolutionary biology—that the boundary between life and nonlife is thick and full of paradoxical entities. The biochemist Sol Spiegelman showed that there is no rigid, narrow boundary between life and nonlife (Dawkins, *Ancestor's Tale* 582–94). This issue isn't simply semantic. There must have been a paradoxical "preliving life" made of RNA and another replicator—perhaps, as Spiegelman argues, self-replicating silicate crystals. Biology abolishes vitalist fantasies of protoplasm extruding itself into the shapes of living organisms. Vitalism may be old hat, yet the resurgence of Henri Bergson and Deleuze and Guattari in the academy prolongs it. People still habitually assume that the life-nonlife boundary is tight and thin, in dogged opposition to contemporary science: think of Terri Schiavo and environmentalist fantasies such as Gaia. A virus is a macromolecular crystal

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that instructs cells to produce copies of itself. If a virus is alive, a devil's advocate might claim, so is a computer virus. Life-forms themselves undermine distinctions between Natural and non-Natural. Derrida hypothesized that deconstruction applied to the life-nonlife boundary (*Of Grammatology* 9 and *Animal* 104). Given the powerful affinity between them, it's as if Darwin had read Derrida, although Derrida never addressed Darwin at length (Milburn). And given the deconstructive DNA in queer theory, we could also forge queer ecology through Derrida.

Queer ecology may abandon the disastrous term *animal* and adopt something like *strange stranger*—my bad translation of Derrida's *arrivant*. To us other life-forms are strangers whose strangeness is irreducible: *arrivants*, whose arrival cannot be predicted or accounted for ("Hostipitality"). Instead of reducing everything to sameness, ecological interdependence multiplies differences everywhere. How things exist is both utterly unmysterious and unspeakably miraculous. Interdependence implies that there is less to things than meets the eye. Yet this lessness means we can never grasp beings as such. This doesn't mean life-forms don't exist: in fact, it's the reason they exist at all.

Queer ecology will worry away at the human-nonhuman boundary, too. How can we ever distinguish properly between humans and nonhumans? Doesn't the fact that identity is in the eye of the beholder put serious constraints on such distinctions? It's not just that rabbits are rabbits in name only: it's that whether or not we have words for them, rabbits are deconstructive all the way down—signifying and display happen at every level. Nothing is self-identical. We are embodied yet without essence. Organicism is holistic and substantialist, visualizing carbon-based life-forms (organic in another sense) as the essence of livingness. Queer ecology must go wider, embracing silicon as well as carbon, for instance. DNA is both matter and information. True materialism would be nonsubstantialist: it would think matter as self-assembling sets of interrelations in which information is directly inscribed. The garden-variety environmentalisms, with their vitalist webs of life, have ironically strayed from materialism. Queer ecology would go to the end and show how beings exist precisely because they are nothing but relationality, deep down—for the love of matter.

Strange strangers are uncanny, familiar and strange simultaneously. Their familiarity is strange, their strangeness familiar. They cannot be thought as part of a series (such as species or genus) without violence. Yet their uniqueness is not such that they are independent. They are composites of other strange strangers. Every life-form is familiar, since we are related to it. We share its DNA, its cell structure, the subroutines in the software of its brain. Its unicity implies its capacity to participate in a collective. Queer ecology may espouse something very different from individualism, rugged or otherwise.

Community is a holistic concept, used for instance in Aldo Leopold's acclaimed notion of "biotic community" (225). For the sake of the whole, parts might be left to die—the whole is bigger than their sum, after all. By contrast, collectivity results from consciously choosing coexistence. This choice cannot be totalizing. Collectivity is always to come, since it addresses the *arrivant*, evanescent to the same extent as she, he, or it (how can we tell for sure?) is disturbingly there. We shall achieve a radical ecological politics only by facing the difficulty of the strange stranger. This brings us to the epigraph from the Christian theologian George Morrison. Ecological coexistence is "nearer than breathing, closer than hands and feet" (106). We have others—rather, others have us—literally under our skin (Clark). This is about symbiosis, but it's also about what Donna Haraway calls "companion species."

Ecology is the latest in a series of humiliations of the human. From Copernicus

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through Marx, Darwin, and Freud, we learn that we are decentered beings (Derrida, *Animal* 136), inhabiting a universe of autonomous processes. Ecological humiliation spawns a politicized intimacy with other beings. This intimacy is a polymorphously perverse belonging (and longing) that doesn't fit in a straight box—an intimacy well described by queer theory when it argues that sexuality is never a case of a norm versus its pathological variants. Such intimacy necessitates thinking and practicing weakness rather than mastery, fragmentariness rather than holism, and deconstructive tentativeness rather than aggressive assertion, multiplying differences, growing up through the concrete of reification. It's life, Jim—but not as we know it.

Against Compulsory Nature

If being "environmental" only extends phobias of psychic, sexual, and social intimacy, current conditions such as global warming will persist. Instead of insisting on being part of something bigger, we should be working with intimacy. Organicism is not ecological. In organic form the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Many environmentalisms—even systems theories—are organicist: world fits mind, and mind fits world. The teleology implicit in this chiasmus is hostile to inassimilable difference. Interdependence implies differences that cannot be totalized. The mesh of interconnected life-forms does not constitute a world. Worlds have horizons: here and there, inside and outside; queer ecology would undermine worlds. Relying on touchy-feely ideologies of embeddedness, ecophenomenology resists the humiliating paucity of the incomplete ontic level. No ontology is possible without a violent forgetting. We can't fight metaphysics with metaphysics without violence. Queer ecology will explore this radical incompleteness through a profound and extensive study of sexuality. The mesh of life-forms is not an alternative to organicism: thinking so would be seeking a new and improved version of Nature.

Organicism polices the sprawling, tangled, queer mesh by naturalizing sexual difference. This contradicts discoveries in the life sciences. The biologist Joan Roughgarden argues that gender diversity is a necessary feature of evolution. Moreover, her argument is possible because Darwin himself opened a space for it. Strict Darwinism might even be friendlier to queer ecology than Roughgarden, because it's so antiteleological (Marx liked it for this reason). Roughgarden makes more of a teleological meal than necessary to justify the existence of homosexuality in lizards, birds, sheep, monkeys, and bonobos (145). Individuals and species don't abstractly "want" to survive so as to preserve their forms; only macromolecular replicators "want" that. From the replicators' viewpoint, if it works ("satisficing," as stated earlier), you can keep it (Dawkins, *Extended Phenotype* 156; Roughgarden 26–27). A profusion of gender and sex performances can arise. As far as evolution goes, they can stay that way. Thinking otherwise is "adaptationism."

You want antiessentialist performativity? Again, just read Darwin. The engine of sexual selection is sexual display, not the "survival of the fittest"—Alfred Russel Wallace, wary of nonutilitarian conclusions, urged Darwin to insert that troublesome phrase (Dawkins, *Extended Phenotype* 179–80). Sexual display accounts for a vast range of appearances and behaviors. There's no good reason for some aspects of my appearance (for instance, my reddish facial hair)—a few million years ago, someone just found it sexy. Despite numerous critiques of Darwin's views on gender (Grosz 72–79), a reserve of progressive energy remains. Because Darwin reduces sexuality to sheer aesthetic display (sub-Kantian purposelessness), *The Descent of Man* is as antihomophobic as it is antiracist (Grosz 87).[6] It refuses to traffic in the idea that pleasure in surfaces contrasts with "real" activity.

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Desire is inescapable in an ecology that values intimacy with strangers over holistic belonging. Yet environmentalism strives to rise above the contingency of desire. Loving Nature thus becomes enslaved to masculine heteronormativity, a performance that erases the trace of performance: as the green camping slogan puts it, "Leave no trace." Masculinity performs no performance. If you appear to be acting masculine, you aren't masculine. Masculine is Natural. Natural is masculine. Rugged, bleak, masculine Nature defines itself through contrasts: outdoorsy and extraverted, heterosexual, able-bodied—disability is nowhere to be seen; physical wholeness and coordination are valued over spontaneity (McRuer; Mitchell and Snyder). Nature is aggressively healthy, hostile to self-absorption. Despite repressive images of Mother Nature, Nature is not feminine. There is no room for irony or for ambiguity that is more than superficial. There is scant space for humor, except perhaps a phobic, hearty kind.

Masculine Nature is allergic to semblance. Afraid of its own shadow, it wants no truck with what Hegel called the night of the world, the threateningly empty dimension of subjectivity (204). Masculine Nature fears the nothingness of feminine "mere" appearance (Levinas 158). Ecological phenomena display this infinite strangeness (170). By contrast, masculine Nature is "unperversion." Organicism articulates desire as erasure, erasure-desire. Organicism wants nature "untouched," subject to no desire: it puts desire under erasure, since its concern for "virginity" is in fact a desire. Unmarked Nature is established by exclusion, then the exclusion of exclusion.

Queer ecology must show how interconnectedness is not organic. Things only look as if they fit, because we don't perceive them on an evolutionary or a geologic time scale. If you move a paralyzed cricket away from the hole that the *Sphex* wasp who paralyzed it has made (and is inspecting for the presence of wasp grubs), the wasp will move the cricket back meaninglessly, without dragging it in (Hofstadter 360–61, 613–14). The wasp doesn't have Platonic ideas of holes or food in mind; it mechanically repeats the behaviors of dragging and of looking for its young. Nature (that reified, mythical thing over yonder in the mountains, in our DNA, wherever) dissolves when we look directly at it (remember that breaking the taboo against looking directly at the goddess Diana involved dire metamorphic consequences). Nature looks natural because it keeps going, and going, and going, like the undead, and because we keep on looking away, framing it, sizing it up. Acknowledging the zombielike quality of interconnected life-forms will aid the transition from an ideological fixation on Nature to a fully queer ecology. I call this transitional mode "dark ecology" (*Ecology* 181–97). Instead of perpetuating metaphors of depth and authenticity (as in deep ecology), we might aim for something profound yet ironic, neither nihilistic nor solipsistic, but aware like a character in a noir movie of her or his entanglement in and with life-forms. Think *Blade Runner* or *Frankenstein*: queer ecological ethics might regard beings as people even when they aren't people.

All ecological positions are caught in desire. How dare ecological theory critique vegetarianism? Yet the position from which vegetarian arguments are staged might be fascinated, carnivorous carnophobia, violent nonviolence: all that meat, all those mangled bodies. Animal rights language can involve violent rendering and rending (Hacking 168–70). Percy Bysshe Shelley advocated abstaining from meat and from unfairly traded spices. Yet his vegetarian rhetoric is obsessed with obsession, equating madness with crime, crime with disease: longing for a society without a trace—a society without people (Morton, *Shelley* 134–35).[7]

Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* (and Sean Penn's film of it) reckons the terrible violence of masculine Nature. Christopher McCandless becomes Alexander Supertramp, evoking

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a gay Greek imperialist and disco lyricism—strange, given his fatal experimentation with masculine Nature. He realizes other people are important just before dying from eating a poisonous plant, in his abandoned-school-bus home in the heart of Alaska. Supertramp's location was not as remote as he believed. He was only ever a few miles from shelter and about fifteen miles from a major highway. Supertramp's concept of wildness overrode his survival instinct. Do such suicidal young men think they are disappearing into Nature when they follow this script? They might think they're escaping civilization and its discontents, but they actually act out its death instincts. They fantasize control and order: "I can make it on my own." The "return to Nature" acts out the myth of the self-made man, editing out love, warmth, vulnerability, and ambiguity. Queer ecology must visualize the unbeautiful, the uncold, the "lame," the unsplendid (Levinas 192–93, 200).

Tree hugging is indeed a form of eroticism, not a chaste Natural unperformance. To contemplate ecology's unfathomable intimacies is to imagine pleasures that are not heteronormative, not genital, not geared to ideologies about where the body stops and starts. Perhaps this is why mysticisms contain reserves of unthought zones of materiality.[8] *Sacrament* is a good title for Clive Barker's novel about a gay photographer obsessed with witnessing species that are going extinct. The photographer, Will, is absorbed into a magical mural on which are depicted all Earth's life-forms:

> The deeper they ventured the more it seemed he was treading not among the echoes of the world, but in the world itself, his soul a thread of bliss passing into its mysteries.
>
> He lay with a pack of panting dogs on a hill overlooking plains where antelope grazed. He marched with ants, and laboured in the rigours of the nest, filing eggs. He danced the mating dance of the bower bird, and slept on a warm rock with his lizard kin. He was a cloud. He was the shadow of a cloud. He was the moon that cast the shadow of a cloud. He was a blind fish; he was a shoal; he was a whale; he was the sea. He was the lord of all he surveyed. He was a worm in the dung of a kite. He did not grieve, knowing his life was a day long, or an hour. He did not wonder who made him. He did not wish to be other. He did not pray. He did not hope. He only was, and was, and was, and that was the joy of it. (574)

In a kitschy ooze of ego-shuddering intimacy, Barker's mutagenic language evokes temporalities of evolution and symbiosis, "joy" as coexistence with coexistence, and with coexistents. Will's disturbing encounter with enjoyment is an act of queer reading. As Will reads, the mural "comes" orgasmically to life, absorbing him, demanding "an erotic passivity" (Khalip). The background becomes the foreground, dissolving the distance necessary for cool aesthetic contemplation rather than ecstatic sensation.

Ecological reading could begin with open appreciation, for no particular reason, of another's enjoyment, beyond mere toleration. Phobia of intimacy permeates Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*: "I fear thee ancient Mariner! / I fear thy skinny hand!" (4.224–25). The poem necessitates intimacy with the text as another person in the form of a talking, walking book and with a "thousand thousand slimy things," lowly worms who "liv'd on" (239–40). Nothing excites this phobia more than the horrifying vulnerability of feminine Life-in-Death, who personifies the strange stranger.[9] Ecological politics and poetics are antiallergenic.

How would you teach this to undergrads? Well—is Henry James green as well as pink? Are all those gorgeous, vast, immersive paragraphs and depthless (way deep? or shallow?) interiors and interiorities antienvironmental? Do they betray a failure to engage with Nature? Or is their "decadence," their queerness, a reserve of utopian energy—an energy that might be strangely greener than the usual injunctions to stop reading or writing and go

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2010.125.2.273 Published online by Cambridge University Press

outside, because it conveys an overwhelming, almost unbearable intimacy?

Ecology and queer theory are intimate. It's not that ecological thinking would benefit from an injection of queer theory from the outside. It's that, fully and properly, ecology is queer theory and queer theory is ecology: queer ecology.

Notes

Thanks so much to Elizabeth Freeman, Douglas Kahn, and Jacques Khalip for their invaluable help.

1. Mortimer-Sandilands; Sandilands; *Queer Nature*.

2. In so doing, my argument underscores queer accounts of cultural artifacts, such as Sandilands's argument that national parks are constructed according to heterosexist aesthetics (Mortimer-Sandilands; Sandilands).

3. "Strange distortion" is Shelley's phrase in his poem *The Triumph of Life* for the emergence of Rousseau as if from a tree root (line 183).

4. I adapt this phrase from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's idea of the "body without organs," a colorful materialist image of the mind (1–8). See Dawkins, *Extended Phenotype* 159. In different contexts, Lynn Margulis and Žižek have both used the Cheshire Cat's grin to similar effect (Dawkins, *Extended Phenotype* 223; Žižek, *Organs*).

5. I pursue this in *The Ecological Thought*.

6. "Sub-Kantian" means that the aesthetic appreciation is not a "higher" cognitive function.

7. Shelley himself dissected this obsession in *Alastor* (Morton, "Dark Ecology").

8. Michael Taussig has explored this in South American shamanisms.

9. For further discussion, see my postings in *Romantic Circles Blog*.

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