MATERIAL ENTANGLEMENTS WITH THE NONHUMAN WORLD: THEORIZING ECOSEXUALITIES IN PERFORMANCE

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Michael J. Morris, B.F.A.

Graduate Program in Dance Studies

The Ohio State University

2015

Dissertation Committee:

Norah Zuniga Shaw, Advisor
Harmony Bench
M. Candace Feck
Catriona Sandilands
ABSTRACT

This dissertation develops multiple theories of eosexuality with three works of performance: Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens’ performance art project the Love Art Laboratory (2004-2011), Carlos Batts’ pornographic film Dangerous Curves (2010), and Pina Bausch’s dance Rite of Spring (1975). Following the premise that all sexuality—even human sexuality—is always already ecologically entangled with any number of nonhuman lives and materials, I consider the ways in which the performing arts produce views and understandings of these entanglements. Thinking with these three case studies, I develop multiple overlapping, intersecting, and diverging theories of eosexuality that each figure human/nonhuman relations in ways that think beyond anthropocentric definitions of sexuality and the culture of human exceptionalism that such anthropocentrism reinforces.

Following the use of the term “eosexuality” in Stephens and Sprinkle’s performance artwork, I suggest that the significance of this concept will be as multiple and shifting as the terms from which it is assembled—ecology and sexuality—and that each of the performance works within this study demonstrates specific choreographic principles with which eosexuality can be thought. Methodologically, I approach this material through a process of choreographic thinking, first articulating the prominent features of each performance and the choreographic principles that they instantiate, then using those principles to mobilize my theorizations of sex, sexuality, and human/nonhuman relations. These theories are supported by the work of critical theorists and philosophers across a range of disciplines, an
interdisciplinary constellation including queer theory, feminist philosophy, posthumanisms, new materialism, porn studies, and dance and performance studies.

With each of these three case studies, I arrive at a unique understanding of ecosexuality. The Love Art Laboratory presents ecosexuality as a matter of orientation, in which that toward which we become oriented is not an object from which we are separate but a relation of which we are a part: our intra-active material entanglement within the nonhuman world. Dangerous Curves envisions bodies as promiscuous assemblages of discontinuous parts depicted at multiple scales, in which parts do not add up to bodies organized into one of two sexes and do not stay discretely bound within categories such as “human” and “nonhuman,” for which sexualities proliferate at any number of connections. In Rite of Spring, both dancing bodies and dirt fluctuate between animation and stillness, presenting a range of dynamic inclinations across a shared material continuum. Thinking these tendencies in relation to the “sexual instincts” and the “death drive,” Rite of Spring asks: how might we pursue life for its own sake, without our lives at its center? If sexuality is the unfolding of life in excess of survival, what might it mean to pursue a sexual life, specifically when “life” already encompasses the nonhuman? Together, these readings unfold the critical potential of these performance works and contribute to the scholarly consideration of the growing eosexuality movement.
DEDICATION

For lives that have not yet been made to matter.

For the artists who show us new ways of making our world meaningful and new ways of
making our world.

For Carlos Batts (1973-2013)

For Pina Bausch (1940-2009)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation only exists because of innumerable relations of influence, inspiration, and support. No full account of these countless enabling relations can be given, yet I would like to acknowledge and extend my heartfelt gratitude for a few:

To the artists whose work provided the impetus for the thinking that I have done here. In particular, to Elizabeth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle: I cannot begin to quantify how much you and your work have influenced me, as an artist, as a scholar, and as a person. To Jiz Lee, Syd Blakovich, and April Flores: thank you for your bold, courageous performances. To Carlos Batts, who is no longer with us: thank you for showing me new ways of seeing and understanding pornography and sexuality. To Pina Bausch, who is also no longer with us: thank you for dances that move me toward new ways of thinking, feeling, and making dances.

To Judith Butler and Donna Haraway: there are pages and pages of scholars who are cited within this dissertation, and they have all been influential, but there is no way to measure the degree to which your work has shaped how I think and what I am capable of thinking.

To the Department of Dance at The Ohio State University, to Susan Van Pelt Petry, and to the Graduate School at OSU: thank you for the years of generous funding that have made this dissertation and degree possible, in the forms of a University Fellowship, teaching
and research positions, project grants, travel grants, and a Presidential Fellowship. I am very privileged to have been supported so substantially.

To my committee, Norah Zuniga Shaw, M. Candace Feck, Harmony Bench, and Catriona Sandilands. You have each taught me so much, and this dissertation is evidence of your support, your rigor, your influence, and your care. In particular, to Norah and Candace: I do not know what my work would be without your influence.

To Carrie Noland, Susan Leigh Foster, and the collected faculty and participants in the 2014 Mellon Dance Studies Summer Seminar: your insights and perspectives came at the perfect time, and were vital to the dissertation that I was then able to write.

To my faculty, classmates, and colleagues during my years in both the MFA and PhD programs in the Department of Dance at OSU: you have been my community, my friends, and my family. You have inspired me and reminded me why I love this discipline.

To Maree ReMalia: thank you for your tireless support, perspective, encouragement, and care.

To my parents, James and Cindy Morris: thank you for your constant support and for years of allowing me the opportunities to become who I was going to be.

To Matthew, my twin: the rigor, criticality, and excellence of your artistic practice—folded so carefully into the subtlety, elegance, and decadence of your aesthetic—never cease to inspire me. This dissertation is dedicated to the artists who show us new ways of making our world meaningful and new ways of making our world, and of such artists, you were the first I ever knew. My work is stronger because of the ways you challenge me to think, and your influence is throughout these pages.
VITA

2007.............................. B.F.A. in Modern Dance, Belhaven University

2008-2009........................ University Fellowship, The Ohio State University

2009............................... Labanotation Teaching Certification, The Ohio State University Dance Notation Bureau Extension

2009-2014........................ Graduate Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University

2011............................... “Eco Homo? Queering Bodies, Queering Sustainability”
                                 Keynote address/performance with Catriona Sandilands, Staging Sustainability: Arts Community Culture Environment, York University, Toronto, Canada

2011............................... “Theorizing Ecosexuality: Intersections and Interventions in Sexual and Environmental Subjectivity”
                                 Ecosex Symposium II, Center for Sex and Culture, San Francisco, California

2012............................... “Queers, Fairies, and the [Dancing] Dream of Liberation: Reading Frederick Ashton’s The Dream Through Harry Hay’s Radical Fairie Philosophy”
                                 Meanings and Makings of Queer Dance, Congress on Research in Dance Special Topics Conference, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

2012............................... “twincest/body fluids/fluid bodies”
                                 Queer Places, Practices, and Lives: A
Symposium in Honor of Samuel Steward, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

2013…………………………………….. The Writing Across the Curriculum Outstanding Writing Instruction Award, The Ohio State University

2013…………………………………….. “Ecosexuality in Performance: the Love Art Laboratory, Intra-Activity, and the Sexuality of Matter Itself”
In Bodies We Trust: Performance, Affect, and Political Economy, Performance Studies Conference, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois

2013…………………………………….. “Towards a Posthuman Ethics: Moving With Others in Karl Cronin’s Somatic Natural History Archive”
Decentering Dance Studies: Moving in New Global Orders, joint conference of the Congress on Research in Dance and the Society of Dance History Scholars, Riverside, California

2014…………………………………….. “When Lesbians Become Ecosexuals, Or The Ethical Progression From Queer to Posthuman”
Queer Places, Practices & Lives II, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

2014…………………………………….. Mellon Dance Studies Summer Seminar, Stanford University

2014…………………………………….. “Implied Ethics: Describing Haecceity and the Persistence of the Event”
Writing Dancing/Dancing Writing, joint conference of the Congress of Research in Dance and the Society of Dance History Scholars, Iowa City, Iowa

2015…………………………………….. Presidential Fellowship, The Ohio State University

2015…………………………………….. Graduate Associate Teaching Award, The Ohio State University
Publications


Fields of Study

Major Field: Dance Studies

Additional Fields of Study: Performance Studies, Gender Studies, Sexuality Studies
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... ii

Dedication ......................................................................................................................................... iv

Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... v

Vita ....................................................................................................................................................... vii

Chapter 1: Introduction ................................................................................................................... 1
  Premises ........................................................................................................................................... 1
  The Function of the Term: Ecosexuality ......................................................................................... 7
  Review of the Literature and the Existing Context for this Dissertation .................. 19
  Methodologies: Choreographic Thinking, Inverse Contextualization, Thinking With Figures, Reading With Love ................................................................................................. 46
  Chapter Summaries ......................................................................................................................... 62

Chapter 2: The Love Art Laboratory’s Ecossexual Orientation Toward the Intra-active Material World ......................................................................................................................... 66
  The Love Art Laboratory and Material-Semiotic Practices ....................................................... 66
  *Green Wedding Number Four* and Difference Within Continuity ......................................... 72
  Camp Aesthetic and Multiple, Shifting Signifiers ....................................................................... 81
  Shared Orientations, Human/Nonhuman Inter- and Intra-actions ......................................... 90
  Distributing Agency to the Nonhuman World .......................................................................... 101
  Staying With the Trouble, Marrying the Mess ........................................................................... 110
  On Eroticism and Love ................................................................................................................. 117

Chapter 3: *Dangerous Curves*, Pornography, Ecosexuality, Desiring-Machines, and Fluids 135
  Art and Pornography: Multiple Functions ................................................................................. 139
  As Pornography, Feminist Porn, and the Erotic Organization of Visibility ............................ 145
  Choreographic Principles of the Scene ...................................................................................... 153
  Carnal Thoughts and Cyborg Desires ....................................................................................... 165
  Water: Body Fluids, Planetary Fluids ........................................................................................ 169
  Performing Queer Naturecultures ............................................................................................ 181
  The Dangers of *Dangerous Curves* ....................................................................................... 189

Chapter 4: Pina Bausch’s *Rite of Spring*: Gender, Matter, Life, and Sexuality Beyond Survival ................................................................................................................................. 197
History and Context........................................................................................................199
Gender and the Heterosexual Matrix ............................................................................203
The Human and the Nonhuman: Dancing Bodies and Dirt ........................................220
Animateness and Inanimateness: Activity, Inertia, Life, Sex, and Death ..................237
Sexuality and Extinction...............................................................................................249

Chapter 5: Conclusions ...............................................................................................259
Further Artworks...........................................................................................................265
Further Study...............................................................................................................270
Further Living .............................................................................................................277

Bibliography..................................................................................................................280
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Premises

Two brides caress clumps of dirt between their hands, their fingers, their lips, and their toes as they make vows to take the Earth as their lover.

Within a frame pulses an assemblage of bodies and landscape—three fleshy bodies deep inside a ravine at the base of a waterfall. Fingers and flesh and fluids and fallen tree meet, bodies open to each other, enter any number of orifices, water flows over stone and lips, and sunlight glistens across their surfaces.

Elsewhere, dancers run and drop and roll through peat; they push and press through the earth spread across a stage, and the earth clings to their sweaty skin.

On a small stage, a soloist masturbates, penetrated by a steel dildo, accompanied by dense academic prose describing the human body as already more than human, sex as material tendencies toward both life and death, and pleasure lived out at a planetary scale, hurtling toward extinction. Steel and lube and anus and hand and cock slide over and against each other as words and flesh press into and away from each other.

Somewhere anyone removes a condom—perhaps from a silicone dildo, perhaps from a biological member—and tosses it into a trashcan from where it proceeds to a landfill somewhere else.

Somewhere an alarm goes off and someone ingests a small pill to regulate reproductive cycles, molecules that sink into the body, alter its sexual potential, and escape the body, urinated into water that flows between any number of bodies and systems and lives.
Somewhere anyone sits alone in front of a computer screen, confronted with moving images of bodies fucking, and the machine becomes a companion in their private sexuality.

Somewhere a bride carries a bouquet of flowers, a bundle of floral sex organs tied with a satin bow.

Somewhere someone receives lab results confirming that they have tested positive for HIV, a lifelong inter-species companionship that will change how they have and think about sex and compel them into other lifelong relationships with a cocktail of pharmaceuticals.

In a laboratory somewhere, small animals are injected with experimental vaccines for sexually transmitted viruses; the inoculations of these small nonhuman companion species shape how human bodies might have sex with each other, recruiting them into the history and production of our sexualities.

Everywhere bees enter and jostle the folds of flowers, one after another, a promiscuous inter-species sexuality on which the life of the planet relies.

Everywhere birdsong and brilliant colors erupt into vibrant displays of biodiversity, the patterns, products, and excess of sexual selection.

Everywhere the world becomes artistic, becomes sexual, precisely where life pushes beyond organic need into rich spectacles of pleasure, desire, and beauty.

Everywhere life unfolds through sexuality, and sexuality extends throughout any number of materials and lives.

Everywhere sexuality is already ecological, and materiality quivers with any number of sexual dimensions.

This dissertation develops multiple theories of eosexualsity with three works of performance: Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens’ performance art project the Love Art
Laboratory (2004-2011), Carlos Batts’ pornographic film Dangerous Curves (2010), and Pina Bausch’s dance Rite of Spring (1975). The premises of this study are manifold:

1. First, sexuality—even human sexuality—is always already entangled in countless ways with any number of nonhuman lives and materials. These “ecologies of sexuality” are inter-active—extending between multiple bodies and along any number of relations with others that exceed the boundaries of the human body; they are intra-active—incorporating any number of co-dependent nonhuman lives swarming within each seemingly “individual” human body, and bringing attention to the ways that the human body itself is already constituted by larger relations in which it is implicated; and affective—where the forces and flows and intensities that we come to perceive so prominently in sex and sexuality migrate beyond the scenes of intercourse and coitus.¹

2. Second, in addition to asserting that all sex and sexuality are already ecological, sexuality, when broadly understood as a set of abstract formal principles, qualities, and movements, offers any number of structures and frameworks that are useful toward thinking material and ecological relations.

¹ Alphonso Lingis, writing about the continuity between the affects—the speeds, movements, intensities, durations, and frequencies—of human life with those of the nonhuman world, writes, “The hand of the child that strokes the dolphin is taking on the surges of exuberance that pulse in its smooth body while the dolphin is taking on the human impulses of intimacy forming in close contact with the child’s face. The woman who rides a horse lurches with the surges of its impulses, while the horse trots with her prudent programming. The movements of her body are extending differential degrees of speed and retardation, and feeling the thrill of speed and the soothing decompression of retardation. These movements are not productive, they extend neither toward a result nor a development. They are figures of the repetition compulsion; one strokes a calf each night on the farm, one rides a horse through the woods with the utterly noncumulative recurrence of orgasm … When we, in our so pregnant expression, make love with someone of our own species, we also make love with horse and calf, the kitten and cockatoo, the powdery moths and lustful crickets.” Alphonso Lingis, “Bestiality,” symplokē 6, no. 1/2 (Special Issue: Practicing Deleuze & Guattari, 1998): 61-63. Lingis’ argument is that what we encounter as the affective spectrum of human sexuality exceeds any act of making love with our own species, figuring affect as one dimension along which sexuality is already entangled with any number of other interspecies material experiences.
3. Third, addressing the nonhuman dimensions of sexuality is necessary for the
deterritorialization of human sexuality, specifically when “human sexuality” continues to
function as a frontier along which the violence of both human exceptionalism and
normative/naturalized sexualities are defended and maintained; indeed, while the utilization
of “Nature” and “natural” for the normative regulation of sexualities has become
increasingly discussed in the literatures of queer theory, queer ecologies, queer biologies, and
feminist science studies, the issue of interspecies sexualities remains a persistent threatening
taboo. As Andrea Beetz, a scholar of veterinary medicine, writes, “In a time when sexuality is
discussed openly in most Western societies, sexual contact with animals remains one of the
last taboos and is rarely discussed. If it is mentioned, the general population usually reacts
with ridicule, disgust, moral outrage, and sometimes also indifference or voyeuristic curiosity,
but rarely with informed comment and/or a desire for more knowledge.”

I reference the pervasive social discomfort and outrage at the thought of bestiality or zoophilia not because
these phenomena, practices, or desires figure into this study of ecosexuality but because we
might appreciate them as symptoms of a social tendency toward defending a fantasy of
human exceptionalism, where “the human” must remain markedly different from other life
on this planet, and where sex and sexuality remain fraught fronts along which this imaginary
exceptionalism is defended and reinforced. By “human exceptionalism,” I refer to the belief

3 Legal scholars Michael Brown and Claire Rasmussen have discussed this problematic attachment to human
exceptionalism in their own analyses of the legal arguments for the criminalization of bestiality. They describe
human exceptionalism as the “most philosophically grounded and internally consistent” rationale for the
criminalization of human/nonhuman sexual contact. This rationale argues that one of the reasons bestiality
should be legally condemned “is that such degrading conduct unacceptably subverts standards of basic human
dignity and is an affront to humankind’s inestimable importance and intrinsic moral worth.” However, as
Brown and Rasmussen show, the argument for legal enforcement of our humanity “represents human
exceptionalism in a somewhat contradictory way, implying that humans are exceptional and thus sex with
animals must be forbidden. However to codify such a boundary in the law is an indication that humans need
external force to enforce these boundaries. The law represents both the uniquely human codification of rules of
that human life is not only qualitatively different from all other life, but that humans occupy the top of an ontological hierarchy “in a position superior to everything else on earth,”⁴ “the premise that humanity alone is not a spatial and temporal web of interspecies dependencies … the institutionalized, long dominant Western fantasy that all that is fully human is fallen from Eden, separated from the mother, in the domain of the artificial, deracinated, alienated, and therefore free.”⁵ This anthropocentric exceptionalism persists from a long Western philosophical tradition that maintains the human right to dominion over the planet, resulting in the violent instrumentalization of the nonhuman world from which the human is said to be separate.⁶ By insisting that sexuality has never been a purely human affair, ecosexuality challenges the mythology and ideology of human exceptionalism that would set “mankind” apart from and above other life on this planet.⁷

⁵ Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 11.
⁶ Alan Drengson writes of this philosophical tradition from Christianity to secular humanism to contemporary technocratic doctrine: “Prior to the scientific revolution, the dominant Western philosophy of humans and nature was Christian. The world was seen as created by an act of God’s love. Humans were created in His image. The world was theirs in trust from Him. Their role was to have dominion over it, but also to care for His creation. Nature was thus sacralized. Humans would destroy it only at the peril of eternal damnation. However, then the world came to be conceptualized as a machine, when modern methods of control began to be applied, there was tension between this Christian outlook and the scientific views of humanism. Essentially, humanism took over many Christian values, but it especially emphasized priority of human dominion over the world. In harmony with modern science humanism emphasized human ability to understand the world, to demystify it, to desacralize it, and to control it. As both god and soul were left out of humanist philosophy, there eventually arose the technocratic doctrine … which stressed individualistic separatism, utilitarianism, mechanism, and anthropocentrism. Nature became a secular object, resources to be used to satisfy human cravings.” Alan Drengson, “Shifting Paradigms: From Technocrat to Planetary Person,” *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, eds. Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue (Berkley: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 86.
⁷ In this sense, ecosexuality would enact what Haraway—following Derrida—describes as a wound to human exceptionalism. She writes, “Freud described three great historical wounds to the primary narcissism of the self-centered human subject, who tries to hold panic at bay by the fantasy of human exceptionalism. First is the Copernican wound that removed the Earth itself, man’s home world, from the center of the cosmos and indeed paved the way for that cosmos to burst open into a universe of inhumane, nonteleological times and
4. A fourth premise of this dissertation is that art—here specifically the performing arts—provides meaningful occasions on which ecological dimensions of sexuality and sexual dimensions of materiality are made manifest, enacting structures, principles, and choreographies with which to think such entanglements.

5. And further, beyond the specific theoretical project of this dissertation—namely ecosexuality—this dissertation asserts that performances and the choreographic principles through which they emerge generate concepts along with affects, that they provide resources for critical theory, for philosophy, for thoughtful interrogation of our world and how it comes to matter.⁸

Through a limited series of case studies, I develop the beginnings of several theories of ecosexuality—critical conceptions of how human life and the nonhuman world touch and enter each other, assemble and copulate with each other, and are constituted and reconstituted in and through each other. These theories are developed with three specific performance projects: a multi-year performance artwork, a pornographic film, and a dance. Grounding these theories in close engagement with these performances themselves, I insist

---

⁸ This assertion both echoes and slightly dissents from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s claim that art generates affects while it is the role of philosophy to generate concepts. They write, “It should be said of all art that, in relation to the percepts or visions they give us, artists are presenters of affects, the inventors and creators of affects. They not only create them in their work, they give them to us and make us become with them, they draw us into the compound.” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 175. Deleuze and Guattari reserve the generation of concepts for the work of philosophy, although they admit that affects and concepts—while indicating distinct modes of thought—may pass into one another, in either direction.
that the real political and theoretical potential of these works comes from their specificity, their unique properties, their own terms, what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari would call their *haecceity*—those properties that make this thing *this thing*, and not any other. As such, the theories developed within and throughout these chapters prioritize close, descriptive readings of each project. By prioritizing description, I am insisting that while performances may illustrate thoughts and theories, they are never merely illustrations: performances are themselves already the enactment of theories, and by prioritizing close readings of the performances themselves, their prominent features and choreographic principles, my writing becomes a process of following performances toward new ways of thinking, translating performances into words, and extending their efficacy and potential.\(^9\) While theorizing performances of ecosexuality— theorizing ecosexuality with and in performance—I am also putting stakes both in the significance of performance as partner for philosophy and critical theory, and in particular strategies for developing theory that emerges from close descriptive analysis brought into composition with other critical bodies of thought.

**The Function of the Term: Ecosexuality**

I first encountered the term “ecosexuality” in the work of artists Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens. During the fourth year of their Love Art Laboratory project, they declared themselves ecosexuels and began generating projects that explored how this term comes to matter. I discuss the Love Art Lab in much greater detail in Chapter 2, but I want to acknowledge from the beginning that the evolution of my own research and the project of

---

\(^9\) I discuss the importance of prioritizing descriptive writing about performance in greater detail in “Implied Ethics: Describing Haecceity and the Persistence of the Event,” presented at the 2014 Joint Conference of the Congress on Research in Dance and the Society of Dance History Scholars, November 15, 2014, Iowa City, Iowa.
this dissertation emerged in response to and in ongoing dialogue with Stephens and Sprinkle’s work. My experience with their work—which eventually came to include collaborating on their work, discussed more in the conclusion—is responsible for my conviction that ecosexuality proposes radical interventions into how both sexuality and ecological entanglements might be understood, that such interventions deserve explication and theorization, and that the performing arts provide rich sites at which to do this work. This dissertation begins with a critical examination of Stephens and Sprinkle’s work, then turns toward examples of performance in the disciplines of pornography and dance that generate distinct views of the entanglement of sexuality with the nonhuman world.

In their presentation “Sexecology 101,” presented in their theater piece *Dirty Sexecology: 25 Ways to Make Love to the Earth*, Stephens and Sprinkle define ecosensual as:

Eco—From latin oeko: home, household.
1: A person that finds nature sensual, sexy.
2: A new sexual identity.
3: Person who takes the earth as their lover.
4: A term used in dating, i.e. metrosexual

In their *Ecosex Manifesto*, they identify themselves as ecosexuals and the Earth as their lover. They write: “We are madly, passionately, and fiercely in love, and we are grateful for this relationship [with the Earth] each and every day. In order to create a more mutual and sustainable relationship with the Earth, we collaborate with nature. We treat the Earth with kindness, respect and affection.”

They describe a variety of ways that they make love to the Earth through their senses—shamelessly hugging trees, massaging the earth with their feet, talking erotically to plants, caressing rocks, being pleased by waterfalls, admiring the

---

Earth’s curves, and so on. They write: “We are a rapidly growing community of … artists, academics, sex workers, sexologists, healers, environmental activists, nature fetishists, gardeners, business people, therapists, lawyers, peace activists, eco-feminists, scientists, educators, (t)evolutionaries, critters and other entities from diverse walks of life.”\textsuperscript{12} Finally, they conclude, “Ecosexual is an identity. For some of us being ecosexual is our primary (sexual) identity, whereas for others it is not. Ecosexuals can be GLBTQI, heterosexual, asexual, and/or Other … We hold these truths to be self evident: that we are all part of, not separate from, nature. Thus all sex is ecosex.”\textsuperscript{13} I have spent years studying, writing, and speaking about ecosexuality in the work of the Love Art Laboratory, and my subsequent chapter discussing their work goes into greater analysis of their use of this term. The work that Stephens and Sprinkle do and have done offers a complex, multifaceted, and evolving rhizome of words, concepts, and performances through which their ecosexuality has become articulated. Ecosexuality is for them a sexual identity that encompasses or traverses other sexual identities, a set of practices, a community, a description of love on a planetary scale, and even an ontology for both “nature” and “sex.” No single, simple summary of their ecosexuality is possible; rather, it has required sustained engagement, careful attention, and thoughtful reflection in order to identify many of the implications that their use of the term ecosexuality makes possible.

Beyond the work of the Love Art Lab, the definition of “ecosexuality” must remain plural, multiple. The term “ecosexuality”—also sometimes written “eco-sexuality”—is itself already a kind of compound or assemblage of multiple terms, a portmanteau or neologism that merges the terms “eco” and “sexuality” to refigure both terms in and through the other.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
It indicates a semantic plane of composition and experimentation: at the collision of “eco” and “sexuality,” the meanings of ecosexuality will be as multiple and shifting as the terms from which it is assembled.

The prefix “eco-” comes from the Greek word *oikos* meaning “house” or “home.” Its use in the term ecology—introduced into the vocabulary of science in 1866 by zoologist Ernst Haeckel—refers to the environment in which organisms live as “our widest home.” Its use in this way intended to point to the co-constitution of organisms and environments in the ongoing processes of evolution. Organisms evolve in tandem with their environments; thus, the world in which the organism lives must be understood as part of—not merely the context for—what an organism is, has been, or might become. Ecology, in this sense, was primarily a framework for understanding the co-implication of organisms and their world, that their inter-relations are fundamental to what and how they are.

Ecofeminist Judith Plant has brought particularly critical attention to the function of the term “eco”—or “home”—in the concept of ecology. She writes, “As women, of course, we must be very careful with a movement that idealizes home. For home has been anything but a place of liberation for us. To be different, home needs to be newly understood, revalued, and redefined.” She writes that the use of the Greek *oikos* in *ecology* is “clearly an indication that home means much more than the nuclear family. As it is in the natural world, where all life is interrelated, teeming with diversity and complexities, so it is with everyday

---

human life.” The “home” of ecology then becomes an occasion on which to carefully critique the concept of “home” and its implications for differently situated people—here women—and an opportunity to rethink “home” through the larger context of a complex, diverse, and fully interrelated world. The “eco” of ecology is not merely an environment inside which life unfolds, nor must it be the replication of a site of gender inequality and domestic labor on a planetary scale; it is a world composed of any number of lives that evolve and flourish fully entangled with each other. The semantic reliance of “ecology” on “oikos” is already an opportunity to rethink human culture—specifically gender relations and the distribution of labor in regards to “the home”—in the context of the much larger world.

At its basis, Timothy Morton articulates the ecological thought—the impulse for thinking ecologically—as the recognition that “everything is interconnected.” He writes:

Ecological thinking might be quite different from our assumptions about it. It isn’t just to do with the sciences of ecology. Ecological thinking has as much to do with art, philosophy, literature, music, and culture. Ecological thinking has as much to do with the humanities wing of modern universities as with the sciences, and it also has to do with factories, transportation, architecture, and economics. Ecology includes all the ways we imagine how we live together. Ecology is profoundly about coexistence. Existence is always coexistence.

Morton asserts that “ecology” is a way of thinking, one that moves across disciplines and infects all kinds of models for thought (the virus metaphor is his). Ecology, while historically and etymologically linked to the sciences, has come to describe an approach to the world and to thinking, an approach that prioritizes interconnectedness and coexistence. He writes that “[t]he ecological view to come isn’t a picture of some bounded object or ‘restrictive economy,’ a closed system. It is a vast, sprawling mesh of interconnection without a definite

---

17 Ibid., 133.
19 Ibid., 4.
center or edge. It is radical intimacy, coexistence with other beings, sentient and otherwise—and how can we so clearly tell the difference? He writes that thinking ecology is not only thinking “about ecology,” but requires “thinking that is ecological,” thinking that remains radically open, resisting closure or conclusion. He writes that studying art is a necessary practice for ecological thinking because “art forms have something to tell us about the environment, because they make us question reality”; art offers us new possible perceptions, and as such, encourages our perceptions and our thinking to remain open. For Morton, then, ecology requires thinking interconnection, intimacy, and coexistence, where doing so requires openness and a resistance to closure or finality. Ecology describes a relational mode, one that becomes instantiated in thought as well as materiality, a conceptual framework as much as a representation of the interconnectedness of life on this planet.

For my purposes, I take the prefix “eco-” to direct attention toward the entanglement of human lives with the nonhuman material world, what others would call or have called “nature.” Like Morton, I take “eco” or even “ecology” to refer primarily to our interconnectedness—or “intra-connectedness,” as I will discuss more throughout this dissertation. While owing much to science, ecology has moved beyond the practice of the scientific method, and instead directs our attention toward the ways in which our habitual structures of thinking must be opened up by our entanglement with the larger world of which we are a part. This direction of attention functions differently, with different priorities and different vocabularies, within different disciplines: the “eco” of an ecologist in not fully identical to the “eco” of an ecofeminist; indeed, the “eco” of a “deep ecologist” can be differentiated from the use of the same term in environmentalism or what Arne Naess has

---

20 Ibid., 8.
21 Ibid.
called “shallow ecology.”

The “eco” of “ecosophy”—ecological philosophy—and the “eco” of an ecopsychologist are not the same, nor are they identical to the “eco” of ecocriticism or ecodramaturgy. In each case, “eco” takes on specific meanings and implications because of the terms with which it is joined and the particular disciplinary context within which it operates. As it copulates with “sexuality,” I understand “eco” to turn sexuality toward its entanglement with nonhuman materials and lives, marking the openness of sexuality to a world that is much larger than ourselves, the interconnectedness of sexuality with lives that are not our own.

However, this merging of terms is more of a laboratory for experimentation, a plane of composition for significations, than it is in any way conclusive. Just as “eco” shifts in its significance, “sexuality” has been defined in countless ways across any number of disciplines and contexts, in bedrooms and back alleys, in academic discourse, in medicine, in psychology, in religion, in art, in political activism and law. In as much as the term “sexuality” roams promiscuously throughout these different contexts, finding new partners and building other relations wherever it goes, “ecosexuality” is already an encounter between unstable terms, an occasion on which those instabilities collide and generate any number of possible perspectives and definitions.

Sexuality as a term has circulated and functioned in a multitude of ways: as both behavior and identity, as discourse, as the grounds for political activism and the pursuit of civil rights—particularly with the feminist and LGBT movements in the United States and Europe in the 20th and 21st centuries. It has become an area of academic study in a number

---

of disciplines and the focus of artistic production across a range of media. As the context of the term changes, so also does its meaning and potential use. In as much as “sexuality” has come to matter in any number of ways, the term “ecosexuality” takes on this instability and shifting multiplicity as well. Each instance of “sexuality” introduces a distinct set of possibilities and concerns that might in turn inflect what “ecosexuality” comes to mean. For example, sexuality can be thought as a biopolitical apparatus through which power acts on and through bodies as well as reproducing bodies on which power might act. Sexuality can be thought as “impulses, desires, wishes, hopes, bodies, pleasures, behaviors, and practices” comprised within a set of regimes that constitute what a body is, including its sex. Or sexuality can be thought as “energies, excitations, impulses, actions, movements, practices, moments, pulses of feeling,” a matter of movement, energy, intensities, with temporalities, with rhythms, with speeds: almost a dance, it seems. Sex as an activity can be thought of as a site at which “relationality is invested with hopes, expectations, and anxieties that are often experienced as unbearable. Sex, though subject to the pressures of legal sanction, social judgment, unconscious drives, and contradictory desires, holds out the prospect of discovering new ways of being and of being in the world.” Sex then can be a place at which we encounter the possibility—or at least the hope for the possibility—of becoming other than we have been, as well as the very limits of ourselves and others beyond which such becomings, possibilities, and hopes reach.

26 Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman, Sex, or the Unbearable (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), vii. This is a definition of sex offered early in this co-authored text. As the book unfolds, it is a definition that they redress, deconstruct, abandon, and rediscover; it short, it remains open and contested, and its open contestation might be as much a part of how Berlant and Edelman define sex as the definition that they offer in their introduction.
In addition to sexuality as a social apparatus, as individual feelings, or as a horizon of possibilities, sex and sexuality have also been defined biologically. Following Darwin and echoing Freud’s description of “sex drives,” evolutionary biologist Dorian Sagan describes sex as a “basic biological urge.” He describes sex first as sexual reproduction, defined as “the formation of new individuals from the genes of at least two different sources.” However, despite the strong link between sex and reproduction in our species as well as in most plants and animals, he writes that “sex and reproduction are not necessarily connected.” In excess of reproduction, “The urge to merge does not stop demurely at its ‘proper’ objects but continues blundering on.” Sex does more than fuel genetic recombination and reproduction; Sagan writes:

> [S]exual attraction ensures that organisms will be linked in many ways … the energy that would go into the chase in earlier times helps organize individuals into complex aggregates, and the ancient energy of eros, redirected and domesticated, drives more modern pursuits, such as art, work, and purchasing of products … its excess spills over into nonreproductive pursuits, including what Wilde called ‘the love that dare not speak its name.’

While Sagan’s biological account of sexuality starts with the bacterial exchange of genetic materials and meanders through sexual selection and the sexual reproduction of the species, it eventually extends into social organization, artistic production, labor, capitalism, and nonreproductive pleasures. Even at its most scientific, sexuality does not remain singular or stable in its definition, shifting and evolving and sprawling in its significance.

Across and between these and other definitions and domains of sexuality, we can locate alignments, partial agreements, shared perspectives, shared discursive traditions, as

---

28 Ibid., xi.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 104.
31 Ibid.
well as disagreements, differences, and frictions. Rather than address or attempt to resolve these alignments and disagreements, or offer an exhaustive survey of how sexuality has been defined, I mean to indicate that sexuality is not and has never been only one thing. The variability of sexuality extends into any possible definition of ecosexuality; in turn, ecosexuality can provide an occasion to consider how ecological entanglements and material interconnectedness might inflect our thinking about sexuality as biopolitical apparatuses, social regimes, identity politics, personal practices, dynamics of speed, frequency, intensity, and motion, feelings of hope and aspiration, the biological urge to reproduce, and biological instincts that exceed reproduction into nonreproductive pursuits.

Writing toward multiple theories of ecosexuality, this dissertation moves alongside and throughout the richly diverse ways in which sexuality has been understood, engaging more deeply with some theories and models than others. In each chapter, writing principally from the performances themselves, I have considered that whatever else sexuality might be, it can be understand to have a vocabulary, a style, a syntax, characteristic features and structural principles. In other words, sexualities—how they are defined and how they are presented—can be approached as choreographies, as organizing principles and formal features that are articulated in their corporeal enactment, their documentation, and their re-presentation. In turn, choreographies have the potential to suggest, construct, and produce

---

32 This understanding of sexuality as choreography is influenced by Butler’s theory of performativity as well as queer theorists such as Sara Ahmed and Elizabeth Freeman who have theorized the spatial and temporal dimensions of sexuality. See Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). It also recalls Susan Leigh Foster’s analysis of gender as choreography. See Susan Leigh Foster, “Choreographies of Gender,” *Signs* 24, No. 1 (Autumn, 1998): 1-33. It is also informed by Foster’s later questions regarding choreography: “… what are these bodies doing?; what and how do their motions signify?; what choreography, whether spontaneous or pre-determined, do they enact?; what kind of significance and impact does the collection of bodies make in the midst of its social surround?; how does the choreography theorize corporeal, individual, and social identity?; how does it construct ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality?” Susan Leigh Foster, “Choreographies of Protest,” *Theatre Journal* 55 (2003): 397.
particular sexualities. In each chapter, I have turned to specific theories of sexuality that are compatible with the choreographic elements that I identify in my analysis of each performance. In writing about the Love Art Lab’s performances, I draw first on their own discussion and writing about ecosexuality, then bring to that discussion the work of Sara Ahmed on the spatiality of sexuality through orientation and the intimate nature of materiality in the work of Karen Barad. In writing about Dangerous Curves, I turn primarily to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in order to articulate the assemblages of human and nonhuman bodies and parts that are framed, cut, and re-presented at multiple scales in Batts’ film. The formal dimensions of Bausch’s Rite of Spring—its rigidly coded gender roles, its orientation of bodies to face or couple with each other, its vacillation between frenzy and quietude, and its escalation toward exhaustion—find useful vocabularies in Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity, Ahmed’s queer phenomenology, Elizabeth Grosz and Barad’s writing about matter and life, and Sigmund Freud’s theorization of sexuality as material tendencies that take on the force of “life instincts” and “death drives.” Freud’s theories are further developed toward discussing the inhuman dimensions of sexuality by feminist scholar Claire Colebrook.

Each chapter is itself an assemblage, bringing together the performances themselves with the work of existing theories of sexuality in order to generate another version or


understanding of ecosexuality. In each case, how the performance can be understood is transformed by the theories with which it is brought into contact. Conversely, I believe that each of these theories of sexuality not only finds articulation or illustration in and through these performances; I believe that their potentialities are compounded and increased through their encounters with performance, finding new possibilities for their use, new dimensions for how they can be understood choreographically in and through performance.

I want to be very clear: there is no necessary relationship between the performances I describe and the theories I employ in my discussion of them. These same performances could and would be understood differently if I were to involve different theories and frameworks in my theorizations, if I were to build different assemblages of activity and thought. These chapters are experiments in how both performance and theory can come to matter, what I discuss in the section on methodologies below as “reading with love.” These chapters demonstrate some of what each of these performances and theories can do, actualizing some of their potential through their unions, but certainly not exhausting what can be done, with these theories or these performances. This dissertation is then neither final nor sovereign in the conclusions it reaches; it is instead the articulation of some possibilities and a model for how other encounters between performance, philosophy, critical theory, and writing might be thought.

Working at the intersection of multiple performances, multiple theories of sexuality, and multiple understandings of ecological materiality, I will develop several strands of a theory of ecosexuality. Broadly, I will define ecosexuality as any sexuality that encompasses and exceeds both human and nonhuman life, an orientation toward the intra-activities within which the human is not finally separable from the nonhuman and all sexuality is already
populated by that which is not human. Ecosexuality is an insistence that sexuality has always been an ecological affair. Thinking sexuality beyond the human—beyond the anthropocentric norms from which the history of sexuality emerged, norms that continue to organize and constrain thinking about sexuality—activates significant lines of flight that potentially open up theoretical and practical gridlocks around issues of sexuality and sexual difference as they relate to life and livability—in ecology, biology, healthcare, legislation, and other discursive horizons that cannot be known in advance.

**Review of the Literature and the Existing Context for this Dissertation**

My experience of theorizing ecosexuality has required a kind of theoretical promiscuity. The performance works I am considering in my dissertation have functioned as solicitations, provocations to find language and thinking through which they might be theorized and articulated in writing. In response to this provocation, I have turned to a wide range of theoretical frameworks, some that make easy bedfellows with one another, others that produce tensions when brought into contact. This research operates primarily within dance and performance studies, investigating the role of performance in articulating the constitution of bodies in and through their material relations. However, this work is enabled by thinking taking place in new materialisms, posthumanism, feminist and queer theories, queer ecologies, and the work of Deleuze and Guattari, among others. In this respect, this work composes a landscape of multiple planes, multiple discursive traditions, finding points of connection at which they articulate productively in and through one

---

36 Many scholars in dance and performance studies have explored the relevance of dance to corporeality and material relations in diverse ways, including Susan Leigh Foster, Peggy Phelan, Ann Cooper Albright, André Lepecki, Erin Manning, Marta Savigliano, Carrie Noland, Thomas DeFrantz, Randy Martin, Mark Franko, Rebecca Schneider, among many others.
another, and allowing these various bodies of knowledge to diffract into one another in ways that potentially offer useful reconfigurations of how each body of knowledge might be thought. By bringing together these diverse perspectives in order to theorize ecosexuality in these performance works, the performances are made to speak to and through these perspectives; through these performances, these perspectives come into new composition, and such assemblages will not leave their composite parts as they were. By being brought into assemblage with one another, each of these disciplinary perspectives can come to function differently, to be animated and enacted in new ways by the performances they will be used to articulate, actualizing new virtual possibilities for how each might come to matter.

Thus far, there has yet to be any robust literature addressing or theorizing ecosexuality as a term, concept, or phenomenon; the existing scholarship on ecosexuality has been limited to the work of only several writers in only a few publications. Elizabeth Stephens has written about her own work with Annie Sprinkle as the Love Art Laboratory, identifying as “eco-sexuals,” developing the field of “sexecology”—exploring places where sexology and ecology overlap—and reflecting on how they came to this work and these identities in the *Canadian Theatre Review*. Stephens and Sprinkle have also co-authored a critical reflection on their own weddings to the moon and the Appalachian Mountains in *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*. Serena Anderlini-D’Onofrio has written about ecosexuality in relation to bisexuality, ecological sustainability, and eros/love as ecological resources in the *Journal of Bisexuality*. Anderlini-D’Onofrio is also co-editing with Lindsay Hagamen the forthcoming anthology *Ecosexuality: Notes for an Orgasmic Earth*, an

---

edited volume bringing together essays by “leaders in the emerging ecosexuality movement [that] explore the power of love, sex and intimacy to energize the transition to an ecologically sustainable culture.”

A prominent advocate for bringing attention to ecosexuality, Anderlini-D’Onofrio has also given lectures on ecosexuality worldwide, written extensively about ecosexuality on her own blog, and aggregated links to other online discussions of ecosexuality. Her work discusses ecosexuality primarily as an “art of loving,” contextualizing polyamory and other relational styles within questions of sustainability on a planetary scale. Sociologist Jennifer Reed has written and presented about the ecosexual movement as “an emerging grassroots social movement that begins at the intersections of environmental and sexuality issues,” contextualizing ecosexuality in relation to queer social movements and ecofeminism.

Ecosexuality has been the theme of both national and international symposiums—in Santa Monica, CA, San Francisco, CA, Portland, OR, Madrid, Spain, Bourges, France, and Colchester, England—bringing together scholars, artists, and activists to present their work with this emerging movement. It has been discussed in presentations on any number of conference panels, perhaps most visibly in Stephens and Sprinkle’s “Assuming the Ecosexual

Position” presentation on the “Eco Art Performance: Deep Time and the Now of Environmental Performance” at the PSi 19 “Now Then: Performance and Temporality” conference at Stanford University (June 26-30, 2013), where Sprinkle was also given the Artist/Scholar/Activist Award in recognition of her career. Ecosexuality has been the focus of workshops, university courses, and visiting lectures and presentations at any number of colleges and universities. My own work on ecosexuality will be published in the forthcoming Oxford Handbook of Dance and Theatre, edited by Nadine George-Graves, and has been presented at a number of conferences. Just as significant as its appearance and circulation in scholarship and academic settings, ecosexuality has become increasingly visible in other cultural and social settings, including publications, gatherings, and Facebook groups. Together these efforts have done considerable work toward developing what could be called a culture of ecosexuality—practices, gatherings, conversations, an evolving constellation of ways of thinking sexuality in relation to the nonhuman world—but are only beginning to bring ecosexuality into critical, scholarly discourses around sex and sexuality.

44 Two examples include Jamie Epstein and Hannah Richter offering a course entitled “Ecosexuality: Queering the Path to Sustainability” at UC Santa Cruz in the spring of 2014, and Elizabeth Stephens offering a studio art class focusing on ecosexuality at UC Santa Cruz in the autumn of 2014.

45 I have presented work on ecosexuality at Queer Places, Practices & Lives II (The Ohio State University, May 16-17, 2014), In Bodies We Trust: Performance, Affect, and Political Economy (Northwestern University, October 11-13, 2013), the Ecosex Symposium II (Center for Sex and Culture, San Francisco, CA, June 17-19, 2011), Battleground States: Collapsing Cultures and Darkened Dreamscapes (Bowling Green State University, February 25-26, 2011), and the Congress on Research in Dance (Seattle, WA, 2010).

46 For particularly visible examples: Stefanie Iris Weiss, Eco-Sex: Go Green Between the Sheets and Make Your Love Life Sustainable (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2010); “Up Front: Annie Sprinkle,” The New York Times July 1, 2011, in which Sprinkle spoke to the editors about ecosex.

47 For example, “Surrender: The Ecosexual Convergence,” June 12-16, 2014, a five day camping event in the forests of southern Washington intended to “bring together EcoSexuals to connect, celebrate, learn, and create.” http://www.ecosexconvergence.org. Sprinkle also presented a panel entitled “ECOSEX! Make the Earth Your Lover: Heat Up Your Sex Life as You Slow Global Warming” with environmental activist Kim Marks and sociologist Jennifer Reed at the 2014 CatalystCon West, a conference “created to inspire exceptional conversations about sexuality … that will unite sex educators, sexologists, sex workers, writers, activists, and anyone with a passion for creating change.” http://catalystcon.com/about/faq/.

In the absence of a robust literature specifically theorizing ecosexuality, this dissertation stands to make a significant contribution to the development of critical scholarship in this area while also demonstrating that the work of performing artists has already made significant contributions to how ecosexuality might be understood. While ecosexuality as a movement has come to involve artists, academics, and activists of many kinds, art—particularly performance art—has been central to this movement. Sprinkle and Stephens, who explicitly identify themselves and their work as ecosexual, have been leaders in this movement, generating a wide range of projects that they describe as ecosexual, and gathering together dozens and dozens of other artists to create work that contributes various perspectives of ecosexuality. In addition to the trans-disciplinary literatures that constitute the context for this dissertation—namely queer theory, queer ecologies, queer biologies, ecofeminism and queer ecofeminism, posthumanisms, new materialisms, eco-dramaturgy, and other scholarship discussing performance in relation to the nonhuman, addressed below—a thorough survey of existing literature must acknowledge that the work of artists in a range of performing and visual media also contributes to the existing field within which this dissertation participates. Inasmuch as artists have been integral to the emergence of the ecosexual movement, this dissertation is only the start of the kind of critical attention that ecosexual artworks require. I have here given an extended theorization of only three projects—the Love Art Lab, which is identified explicitly by the artists as “ecosexual,” Dangerous Curves, which has been discussed by the artists as potentially ecosexual, and Pina

---


50 Jiz Lee, Carlos Batts, and April Flores presented it as part of their presentation “Green Porn” at the first EcoSex Symposium, produced by Elizabeth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle at Highways Performance Space on
Bausch’s *Rite of Spring*, demonstrating how ecosexuality can function as a critical framework for the analysis of works that have not been previously identified or circulated as ecosexual. An exhaustive survey of the existing artworks that create the context both for these three performances and for this dissertation would involve more expansive analyses of other artists who do work they identify as ecosexual, and artists and artworks that have not been identified as ecosexual yet nonetheless address the entanglement of sexuality and the nonhuman.

Alongside the nascent scholarly literature of ecosexuality and artistic productions that create the conditions of this dissertation, there have been a number of moves in popular culture that contribute to the context of this dissertation. For example, in both the sex education and the sex toy industry, attention has been given to the ways in which sex and sexuality affect the larger nonhuman world. Sexologist Dr. Carol Queen writes: “Sex is part of our lives, so any issue that concerns us out of the bedroom has implications inside it: if we recycle, buy local produce, watch our carbon use, and think ecologically in other ways, it makes sense to do the same when we make sexual choices. Our well-being and that of the earth are connected.”51 Views like Queen’s have led Good Vibrations—the company for whom Queen works as resident sexologist, company spokesperson, and sex educator—to introduce “green” sex toys and other products that reduce ecological impacts, using rechargeable batteries, materials that produce less toxic chemicals in production, lubricants made from natural and/or organic ingredients, and products made from long-lasting

---

materials—like glass, sustainably harvested wood, metal, or silicone—that can last a lifetime of reuse and are less likely to end up in landfills.\textsuperscript{52}

Other sex toy companies, such as Babeland—based in Seattle, WA—and As You Like It—based in Portland, OR—have also made ecological consciousness and sustainability priorities in their business models.\textsuperscript{53} As You Like It was created by environmental and social justice activist Kim Marks and positions itself as both “a leader in Eco-Sexuality” and “a gender inclusive, body positive, sex positive, and environmentally conscious sexual health shop that is wholly committed to being sustainable” in their practices.\textsuperscript{54} As You Like It brings “sexual health and consumer information to the forefront,” and provides environmentally friendlier products that minimize impacts on the biosphere. They prioritize long-lasting, rechargeable, non-toxic materials, and offer a comprehensive guide of typical toxic materials that you will not find in their products. Of course, “greening” and “sustainability” are marketing strategies as much as they are changes in thinking and practice. However, I offer these as practical ways in which people have come to consider the ecological consequences of sex and sexuality; a critique of how these considerations are marketed for capital gain is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

In her book \textit{Eco-Sex: Go Green Between the Sheets}—the first book published that directly addressed ecosexuality in any form—author Stefanie Iris Weiss writes, “Sex can be one of the lowest-impact forms of entertainment (and exercise) on the planet, but only if you do it right. Green sex doesn’t have to be clean, vanilla sex; it can be as kinky as you please.

\textsuperscript{52} In addition to rating the ecological impact of the products in their Ecorotic\textsuperscript{®} Collection, Good Vibrations—a sex toy company based in San Francisco—also offers online educational materials about the ecological impact of a range of sex practices.
\textsuperscript{53} Visit http://www.babeland.com/other-ways-to-shop-eco-sex-toys/1/149 for more on Babeland’s “Eco Sex Toys.” Visit http://asyoulikeitpdx.com for more about As You Like It’s mission, values, and products.
\textsuperscript{54} “Our Value – As You Like It,” http://asyoulikeitpdx.com/about/our-values/; “Mission – As You Like It,” http://asyoulikeitpdx.com/about/.
But if you want it to be good sex (in all senses of the word), then it’s time to make your love life truly sustainable.” Her book is a practical guide to changing consumption practices in and around sex intended for the general public. While it relies almost entirely on a somewhat uncritical view of “sustainability” and survival, tends toward moralizing positions about what makes sex good and what is bad for the planet, and discusses sex from a mostly heteronormative, domestic perspective, it does carefully and responsibly outline many ways that modern sex and sexuality have direct repercussions on the world beyond the bedroom. She traces a spectrum of practical ecological implications for human sexualities and sex practices, including the chemical effects of condoms as they enter landfills, birth control medication as it is urinated into water supplies and ecosystems, lubricants and sex toys as they circulate in our bodies, refuse, and water supplies, the impact of reproduction on global resources, and issues of sustainability related to the manufacture and distribution of health and beauty products. What Weiss, Queen, Good Vibrations, Babeland, and As You Like It have usefully shown is that in very practical, physical ways, sex and sexuality—like human bodies, like the Earth itself—are populated by nonhuman materials and affect both human and nonhuman lives. These are practical realities that require reconceptualizing how we think about sex and sexuality.

Alongside the social movements and limited writing done on or under the moniker “ecosexuality,” sex and sexuality have been extensively theorized throughout a range of disciplines and bodies of literature, including biology, sociology, anthropology, psychology, medicine, law, the humanities, and the arts. As a rethinking of sexuality in more than human terms, this dissertation offers a potential intervention for any number of these disciplines.

---

55 Weiss, Eco-Sex, 1.
Specifically, to the extent that sex and sexuality can be thought as effects of social norms, operations through which bodies, desires, and pleasures are constrained within normative categories that enable life and livability for some while foreclosing the possibility of life or livability for others, ecosexuality destabilizes such categories and norms and potentially expands how livability might be distributed. By accounting for various ways in which sexuality is already entangled with the nonhuman world—by thinking sexuality beyond anthropocentric terms—I hope to disrupt the ways in which sexuality is deployed to constrain or foreclose livability for both the nonhuman and the human, and to redirect the force with which sexuality can enable lives and ways of living for both as well.

Developing a genealogical account for the ways in which sexuality operates as a set of social apparatuses with which power acts on and through populations and bodies, Michel Foucault makes the claim that what is understood as “sex” is produced through the operations of “sexuality”:

All along the great lines which the development of the deployment of sexuality has followed since the nineteenth century, one sees the elaboration of this idea that there exists something other than bodies, organs, somatic localizations, functions, anatomo-physiological systems, sensations, pleasures; something else and something more, with intrinsic properties and laws of its own: “sex.”

In Foucault’s account of the various discourses through which “sexuality” came to be figured—namely, religion, medicine, psychoanalysis, and the law—he positions “sex” as an effect of operations of power through which historically situated and socially specific versions of sexuality came to be designated, diagnosed, regulated, and ascribed to bodies. He claims that through these various discursive practices, “sex”—an effect of sexuality—came

---

to be situated as its cause, making it possible “to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere: sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified.”

Through the regulation and production of sexualities, bodies and their attributes came—and come—to be given their sex, a sex which each is said to always already have been, indeed, a sex which bodies themselves are said to express rather than the terms to which bodies have been given over and must forcibly receive.

How does sexuality produce sex? Or rather, if sexuality is said to produce sex, what is the nature of that sex, and what is the nature of the sexuality of which it is an effect? These are questions that are raised and addressed by Judith Butler. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler writes:

> Can we refer to a “given” sex or a “given” gender without first inquiring into how sex and/or gender is given, through what means? And what is “sex” anyway? Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal, or hormonal, and how is a feminist critic to assess the scientific discourses which purport to establish such “facts” for us? Does sex have a history? Does each sex have a different history, or histories? Is there a history of how the duality of sex was established, a genealogy that might expose the binary options as a variable construction? Are the ostensibly natural facts of sex discursively produced by various scientific discourses in the service of other political and social interests? If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called “sex” is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all.

---

57 Ibid., 154.
58 While it does not become central to Butler’s project, others have carried out such feminist assessments of science and the scientific practices through which sex is produced. In particular, see Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), and *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™: Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
Here Butler follows Foucault in asking whether sex itself might be culturally constructed, a construction that is accomplished in the service of particular political and social interests. She also makes explicit, here and throughout her work, an aspect of sex that often remains implicit or invisible in Foucault: sex is constructed as a binary pair, male and female, and this artificial binary itself might be central to understanding how it is that “sexuality” comes to produce “sex.” Sex is positioned as the “cause” or ground for an aggregated set of meanings, the gender that one is given. The binary construction of gender as a set of social functions comes to be attributed to the materiality of bodies, (re)producing bodies themselves as one or the other—male or female—limiting both what bodies can be and thus how they might live. Butler argues that the production of gender as binary positions—masculine and feminine—that are required of bodies to be the “natural” expressions of their given sexes—either male or female—occurs within a matrix of compulsory heterosexuality. She writes:

The heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between “feminine” and “masculine,” where these are understood as expressive attributes of “male” and “female.” The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of “identities” cannot “exist”—that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which practices of desires do not “follow” from either sex or gender. “Follow” in this context is a political relation of entailment instituted by the cultural laws that establish and regulate the shape and meaning of sexuality.\(^6\)

In other words, it is within the practices of a cultural paradigm in which sexuality is reducible to a reproductive imperative, in which reproduction requires that bodies be differentiated along a binary axis of “male” and “female,” in which those sexed bodies are required to perform the social operation of their genders in ways that are consistent with what is said to express the nature of their sex, and in which desire—organized along this same binary and

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 24.
constrained to always flow only toward the opposite “sex” in service to reproduction—the individual subject becomes produced and regulated. Following Foucault, Butler suggests that sex comes to be produced as an effect of sexuality, an effect that then gets positioned as its cause. But it is not merely that sexuality produces sex: it is within the cultural matrix of compulsory heterosexuality that binary sex is produced. Individuals are compelled to maintain the appearance of unity—where unity is understood to denote the imaginary causal relations between sex, gender, and desire—within a culture in which one is intelligible or socially recognizable only to the degree that one succeeds in maintaining the appearance of that unity, and in which recognition and intelligibility is a necessary condition for livability.

What is the force of this matrix of intelligibility through which bodies are compelled to participate in the reiteration of binary sex/gender and the heterosexualization of desire? Following from the work of Monique Wittig, Butler suggests that gender is the workings of “sex,” where “sex” is “an obligatory injunction for the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize itself in obedience to a historically delimited possibility, and to do this, not once or twice, but as a sustained and repeated corporeal project”—which Butler describes as the performativity of gender.  

Butler suggests that the notion of a “project” implies too great an agency on the part of the subject who comes to appear under such a sign, as if it is through the force of a radical will that the sign of sex is taken up and reiterated. She offers that because the question of gender is a question of survival—a question of who can live and how—“the term strategy better suggests the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs.”  

If we understand the performativity of gender as an ongoing performance within a compulsory culture, it is “a performance with clearly

---

61 Ibid., 190. Gender performativity is discussed more in Chapter 4.
62 Ibid.
punitive consequences. Discrete genders are part of what ‘humanizes’ individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right.”

In order to become recognizable as “human,” one must first be recognizable within one of two available gender positions. In order to live, one must remain legible within the given terms of binary gender/sexual difference and the presumption of a heterosexual matrix within which such binary positions function.

Following her work on theorizing the performativity in *Gender Trouble*, Butler turns her attention to the materiality of bodies, the ways in which bodies are materialized through their given sexed positions, and how those processes of materialization produce—and are constituted by—bodies that are either intelligible, thinkable, and thus livable, or bodies that are not intelligible, unthinkable within the terms made available through which bodies become sexed, and thus abjected as unlivable. She writes that the exclusionary matrix “by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet ‘subject,’ but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject.” With the term “abject,” Butler refers to those “unlivable” and “uninhabitable” zones of social life:

> … which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the ‘unlivable’ is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject. This zone of uninhabitability will constitute the defining limit of the subject’s domain; it will constitute that site of dreaded identification against which—and by virtue of which—the domain of the subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life.

---

63 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
Here Butler makes explicit her claim that in order for life to be made livable, it must be intelligible as coherently sexed; its body must be made to comply with the highly gendered regulatory schemas through which the binary sexed positions are established, accruing within their parameters an assortment of anatomical features, bodily functions, genetic and hormonal compositions, linguistic operations, and legal and medical designations, all of which are idealized as the measure of whether a particular body can matter, whether it can be considered human and viable for life. The parameters of such viability depend on the production of those abject lives that remain unintelligible, not viable for a livable life, as the external limit of the livability of intelligible subjects. Butler’s proposal, then, is that sex, as an effect of the regulatory norms of (hetero)sexuality and gender, is a forcible materialization that enables and constrains the livability of life, making some lives viable through the exclusion of others. Binary gender positions are produced as necessary within a matrix of normative compulsory heterosexuality, and sex is produced as the material truth of such genders, the biological reality that gender is said to express. In other words, for those who are recognized as intelligible—those for whom sex, gender, and sexuality appear to maintain a stable, causal relationship, those for whom recognizable sex is achievable through the materiality of their body—the possibilities for survival are constrained by the prescriptions and expectations of a compulsory heterosexual economy.  

Theorizing ecosexuality, here in this dissertation in relation to performance, thinks sexuality beyond these normative, regulatory terms, and in doing so, generates other possibilities for how bodies, sex, and gender might be thought as well. Inasmuch as sexuality is already a discursive apparatus that

---

66 Foucault also affirms this point: “It is through sex—in fact, an imaginary point determined by the deployment of sexuality—that each individual has to pass in order to have access to his own intelligibility (seeing that it is both the hidden aspect and the generative principle of meaning), to the whole of his body (since it is a real and threatened part of it, while symbolically constituting the whole), to his identity (since it joins the force of a drive to the singularity of history).” *History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, 155-156.
regulates, enables, and constrains how life might be lived and what lives are livable through a range of social practices, expanding possibilities for how sexuality can be thought creates conditions for changing possibilities for life and livability.

While sexuality and thus ecosexuality carry implications for theorizing life and livability, these issues are not limited to the discourses of sexuality, sex, and gender. Concern with livability and life characterizes a range of theoretical projects and forms of political activism across many disciplines and contexts. What constitutes a life, what are the conditions necessary for that life to be livable, and what are the factors that determine the conditions of livability are questions that are asked in the fields of philosophy, law and legal studies, critical race studies, indigenous studies, the sciences and science studies, medicine and health care, among others, and in relation to issues such as reproductive rights, immigration, the rights of non-citizens, war, the prison-industrial complex, police brutality, animal rights, and so on. How life is defined—implicitly or explicitly—and what rights or protections are ascribed to that which is recognized as a life varies throughout these fields and contexts; in other words, it makes a difference when life and livability are discussed from perspectives as different and divergent as the philosophical tradition of vitalism to the different branches of the life sciences, from debates surrounding abortion to debates surrounding war or the death penalty, from political movements demanding that #BlackLivesMatter and TransLivesMatter to animal rights activisms, from activists pursuing environmental policies that attempt to preserve a planet capable of supporting human life to philosophers thinking in terms of human extinction and life on this planet beyond human life. As Judith Butler writes:

What makes for a livable world is no idle question. It is not merely a question for philosophers. It is posed in various idioms all the time by people in
various walks of life … It becomes a question for ethics, I think, not only when we ask the personal question, what makes my own life bearable, but when we ask, from a position of power, and from the point of view of distributive justice, what makes, or ought to make, the lives of others bearable?67

This variability of how and where life is defined and for whom suggests that from the start, to speak of “life” is already to speak of a particular discursive production of what is meant by “life” and the values that are associated with that meaning. Relevant here is not only that livability and life are questions that are asked in a range of idioms, but that in each context, they become ethical questions particularly in relation to power.

Foucault was one of the great thinkers of life in relation to power, articulated throughout his oeuvre and conceptualized within the terms biopower and biopolitics.68 Achille Mbembe describes biopower as “that domain of life over which power has taken control.”69 Relatedly, Susan Stryker summarizes Foucault’s concept of biopolitics as “the combination of disciplinary and excitatory practices aimed at each and every body, which results in the somaticization by individuals of the bodily norms and ideals that regulate the entire population to which they belong.”70 Biopolitics are the operations of power that organize the bodies comprised within a population according to categories that regulate how such bodies can live. Sex and sexuality can be understood as biopolitical operations at the scale of both populations and individual bodies, although for Foucault, the most basic of mechanism of power is race, where racism can be understood as “an artificial biologization of social, cultural, linguistic, or economic differences within a supposedly biologically monist

population—that is, as a selective evolutionary process of ‘speciation’ through which new kinds of social entities that are considered biologically distinct from one another emerge.”

This logic of race and racism, conceptualized as “the enmeshment of hierarchizing cultural values with hierarchized biological attributes to produce distinct categories of beings who are divided into those rendered vulnerable to premature death and those nurtured to maximize their life”—underpins other such biopolitical divisions, such as distinguishing men from woman, queers from straights, able- from disabled bodies, cisgender from transgender, or even, arguably, the human from the nonhuman. The segmentation of populations into hierarchized categories, and the production of such segmentations as biologically determined, maneuvers the processes of life itself—its variability and difference—into the mechanisms through which it might then be enhanced or eliminated. In thinking life and livability, Foucault and biopolitics have been highly influential in interrogating how lives are made to live or die, in regards to sexuality and in regards to many other operations of power.

Following after the work of Foucault, Mbembe introduces the concept of necropolitics as a supplement to Foucault’s biopolitics. Asking whether the notion of biopower—the ways in which power takes hold of life—is “sufficient to account for the contemporary ways in which the political, under the guise of war, of resistance, or of the fight against terror, makes the murder of the enemy its primary and absolute objective,” Mbembe offers necropolitics as a concept for dealing with the specific ways in which power takes control of death and killing. Particularly under the conditions of war and conflict, where lives can be stripped of their rights and reduced to what Giorgio Agamben describes as “bare life”—life reduced to

---

71 Ibid, 40.
72 Ibid, 40-41.
only that remainder of life that is left when social position and personhood have been
eliminated,\(^4\) as in concentration camps or prisoner-of-war camps—the determination of
what lives are killable or disposable must be considered integral to the determination of who
can live and how. While death and killing are not the focus of my theorizations of
eceosexuality in this dissertation, any political conception of life and livability that might
emerge from an expansive notion of sexuality will have to account for how lives can be lived
alongside other lives that are allowed or made to die.

Of course, determinations of who lives and dies are never only concerns for human
lives, and even human life and livability already rely upon nonhuman lives in any number of
ways. This entanglement of humans with nonhuman others has been the focus of much of
Donna Haraway’s work, tracing the co-evolution of human and nonhuman companion
species throughout civilization and particularly in regards to medical and scientific
practices.\(^5\) To consider the livability of human lives is to consider particular modes of living
and cultural practices that support specific ideologies of quality of life, ways of life that
already depend in countless ways on the living and dying of nonhuman lives. Asserting that
human lives rely on the killing of nonhuman lives is not the same as asserting that death is a
necessary part of life. As Butler writes, “within that vast domain of organic life, degeneration
and destruction are part of the very process of life, which means that not all degeneration
can be stopped without stopping, as it were, the life processes themselves.”\(^6\) The pursuit of
life or livability for more forms of life will never be a question of suspending all death; nor,


Paradigm, 2003); *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™: Feminism and Technoscience*
(New York: Routledge, 1997); *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

as Butler writes, can the conclusion be that “everything that can die or is subject to
destruction (i.e., all life processes) imposes an obligation to preserve life.” The questions
then, as with Mbembe’s necropolitics, must be: who can be killed or made to live in agony?
Under what conditions? Why and how?

In her discussion of human/nonhuman instrumental relations within laboratory
research, Haraway addresses the vexing ethical questions of “the greater good,” where that
good becomes most often articulated in terms of “human good” at the cost of animal lives
and wellbeing. Particularly in medical and veterinary research, for example, animals are
instrumentalized in order to further human lives and ways of life, by researching diseases,
testing vaccines and medications, and studying animal behavior within captivity. Such
research can involve degree of freedom and suffering, and while not all such research results
in the killing of instrumentalized animals for the purposes of study, such research does occur
and continues to be justified. Haraway offers that “it is a misstep to separate the world’s
beings into those who may be killed and those who may not and a misstep to pretend to live
outside killing … This is not saying that nature is red in tooth and claw and so anything goes.
The naturalistic fallacy is the mirror-image misstep to transcendental humanism.” She
writes that we must let go of the command, “Thou shalt not kill,” as a way of figuring out to
whom such a command applies “so that ‘other’ killing can go on as usual and reach
unprecedented historical proportions.” Because there is no living without killing, to live
under the pretense of “Thou shalt not kill” will always involve the erasure of killing that
takes place, the production of deaths that not matter in order to maintain our innocence. She

---

77 Butler, Frames of War, 23.
78 Haraway, When Species Meet, 79.
79 Ibid., 80.
suggests that the commandment might instead read, “Thou shalt not make killable,” arguing for fully situated, critical and responsible multispecies living, in which the suffering of others always matters, in which we are obligated to share in the suffering that we cause. She does not offer a moral prescription for when interspecies killing is ethical and responsible or when it is not. Rather, she argues that no one is innocent from killing, and in the messy multispecies knots of living and dying, we must continually ask how we might learn to kill well. Haraway’s work is a critical reminder that the discussion of life and livability is never limited to human lives, and human lives are already enabled by the suffering and dying of nonhuman lives as well. While the suffering and dying of nonhuman lives does not become the focus of theorizing performances of ecosexuality, the effects of expanding thinking about sexuality to account for ways it is already entangled with the nonhuman can shift or alter how such lives might matter, and thus how they might die or live.

Although performance does have the capacity to intervene directly in the politics of life and livability—as in the work of ACT UP and other instances of performance protest addressing healthcare for those living with HIV/AIDS80, or public protests and marches participating in the #BlackLivesMatter movement in response to excessive police brutality, violence, and the killing of black people81—performance also has the capacity to intervene indirectly within the socio-political imaginary, providing perspectives that affect what is thinkable and thus what may become actionable. As Mbembe writes, operations such as colonial occupation involve not only the seizure of land and the erasure of existing property

arrangements; it also involves the classification of people according to different categories and the “manufacturing of a large reservoir of cultural imaginaries” that enable the “enactment of differential rights to differing categories of people for different purposes.”

Belief systems, paradigms, and what is thinkable constitute the foundations on which violence and killing—or life and living—are made possible. It is within this dimension of conceptual intervention—the dimension of theory, which is related to but distinct from politics and political activism—that I am primarily considering the three performance works included within this study. Each offers perspectives from which to think the entanglement of sexuality with/in the nonhuman world, and in doing so, opens up what might become thinkable in and for such relations. Inasmuch as sexuality and human/nonhuman relations are sites at which livability is both enabled and constrained, these performances of ecosexuality provide ways of (re)thinking how lives and livability might matter at such sites.

Operating within the wide fields in which livability functions as a crucial question, the domains with which this dissertation engages most directly are theories of sex and sexuality. Much of the work of queer theory and queer politics has involved the interrogation and destabilization of normative sexualities, generating more visibility, intelligibility, and recognition for more sexualities, sexual orientations, and sexual subjects, thus extending

---

83 According to Wendy Brown, “Theory is not identical to politics … Activists must not expect theory to coincide with politics. Theory can incite, illuminate, and help transform political life but it is not identical with it, and we learned this a long time ago from Stuart Hall who said, ‘Look, at it’s most basic, theory opens up meaning, makes meaning slide in a potentially infinite way. Politics is about bids for hegemony over meaning. Its aim is to fix meaning, for your team, rather than the other one. And these are really two different kinds of tasks, and each is extremely important in the world. That’s why we have the academy and why it’s not identical with Washington, D.C. Moreover, what’s philosophically and logically right, or even right as a principle, isn’t always politically right, tactical, or useful.” Wendy Brown, “Women Dissolved or Defended? The Naming Debate in Reproductive Freedom,” lecture given at the Feminist Change and the University symposium at the Pembroke Center at Brown University on March 6, 2015. “Feminist Change and the University: Keynote Address by Wendy Brown (Video 3 of 3).” Published by Brown University, March 18, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2Eop1_T02s.
viability to more forms of life and living. But the ways in which sexuality, sex, and gender function as infrastructural apparatuses in the formation of “the human” already impacts far more than only human life. Projected onto nonhuman lives in any number of disciplinary contexts, these same norms that constrain human lives and livelihood come to shape how nonhuman animal and plant lives are understood and thus are allowed to live or made to die.

As argued in the introduction to *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, “there is an ongoing relationship between sex and nature that exists institutionally, discursively, scientifically, spatially, politically, poetically, and ethically.”84 Catriona Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, the editors of that volume, put forward that:

> [T]he 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.85

*Queer Ecologies* gives considerable attention to the historical entanglement of discourses of sexuality and nature, how particular sexual behaviors came to be “naturalized” in evolutionary and sexological thinking in the early twentieth century, how historical and contemporary “natural spaces” have been shaped and organized by “changing understandings and agendas related to sexuality,” and how queer-identified scholars and others have insisted “on highlighting, subverting, and transforming heteronormative nature relations.”86 The authors demonstrate how a reproductive bias re-inscribes the same compulsory heterosexuality that constrains human sexualities onto the study of nonhuman lives, disregarding or diminishing the significance of non-reproductive sexual behaviors in

---

84 Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, eds., *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2010), 5.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., 6.
animals, or attributing such behaviors, as well as nonhuman animal transsexualities, to pollution and ecological catastrophes. These heteronormative biases not only affect the practice and study of ecology and biology, but also the policies and activisms that can result from such studies. Other texts such as Donna Haraway’s *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991), Bruce Bagemihl’s *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity* (1999), Joan Roughgarden’s *Evolution’s Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People* (2004), and *Queering the Non/Human* (2008), edited by Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird, have contributed similar attention to the ways in which heteronormativity, the reproductive bias, and patriarchal gender relations have been inscribed into scientific accounts of nonhuman life.\(^\text{87}\) Following from the recognitions that sex and sexuality directly impact both life and livability, and that the norms of human sexuality already carry implications for human relations with nonhuman lives, this dissertation operates in tandem with these existing bodies of literature, pursuing more ways that more bodies and more lives might come to matter. This mattering is both material and semiotic; it concerns the meaning that is given to bodies and ascribed to their surfaces, and also the material existence through which such meanings must be lived.

It is from this impulse to reconfigure how bodies—both human and nonhuman—might come to matter that this research takes its momentum. Following a distinctly queer trajectory in understanding how sexuality produces bodies, enabling and constraining how they come to matter and how they might live, I turn to additional bodies of literature for considering how sex and sexuality might be thought. Specifically, through the writings of

---

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, sexuality is articulated as pervasive throughout social and material existence. It escapes its function as an apparatus for the production and regulation of human subjects and can no longer be thought as a facet of only human life; in fact, Deleuze and Guattari ask us to consider the inhuman sexuality of human sexuality, a molecular sexuality, a sexuality that does not rely upon or reiterate the molar conventions and configurations of human bodies or binary sex. Sexuality for Deleuze and Guattari is expansive, flowing throughout any number of material assemblages. It is the force of bodies becoming in and through entering into composition with other bodies. In this sense, their view is in part initially consistent with that of Foucault and Butler; both Foucault and Butler also write of the production of bodies in and through their ongoing relations. Also potentially consistent with Butler’s pursuits to a point, Deleuze and Guattari write of a sexuality that is not between one or two sexes, but a sexuality that produces a multitude of possible sexes, n-sexes, a thousand tiny sexes. However, significantly for Deleuze and Guattari, these hundred thousand sexes are not human, even when they take place within the molar composition of the human. They take place within but also exceed the operations of power, legislation, juridical law, medicalization, and so on, through which human sexualities are produced. They are a multiplicity of orientations, connections, and conjunctions of surfaces, sensations, and flows, some of which contribute to the formation of molar


89 While I offer a cursory introduction to Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of sexuality here, it is discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 3 in relation to *Dangerous Curves*. 

42
aggregates—those seemingly stable formations identifiable as “male” or “female”—and others of which flow against such compositions, escaping and opening formations to the possibility of their own deterritorialization. Following Deleuze and Guattari, despite the persistence of sexual norms, such norms are always already becoming undone from the inside out, destabilized by any number of connections, sensations, and eruptions of intensity that refuse to be contained within the narrow border of “heterosexuality” or binary, totalizing sexes.

While my theorizations of ecosexualities rely heavily on this Deleuzo-Guattarian conception of sexuality, they are not identical to it. My particular concern is the entanglement of sexuality within ecological relations, the ways in which human bodies come into composition with nonhuman bodies, and how such intra-actions materialize other possibilities for how such bodies might become. Deleuze and Guattari discuss sexuality as a “desiring-machine” that comes into assemblage with any number of other machines—Oedipal-machines, political-machines, economic-machines. My interest is how such a sexuality functions within ecological relations, the systems of material relations through which life is produced, enabled, and constrained, and how those assemblages come to function within performance.

To a Deleuzo-Guattarian view of molar/molecular sexuality, I also bring new materialist views, specifically those articulated in the work of Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, and recent work by Elizabeth Grosz. In bringing these writings together, I believe it becomes possible to begin to articulate something like a sexuality of matter itself. Within a “new materialist” account of matter, including Barad’s “agential realism” and Bennett’s “vital materialism,” an atomistic view of matter is exchanged for a relational view, rejecting an
understanding of the world as comprised of objects and things in exchange for a world of intra-activity and becomings (discussed more at length in the following chapters). If for Deleuze and Guattari, sexuality is a force of becoming that flows between and throughout assemblages of pieces and parts in ongoing processes of actualization, then it becomes possible to discuss the becoming of matter itself in its iterative intra-activity as any number of molar and molecular sexualities.

In addition to theorizing the entanglement of sexuality with the nonhuman world, this dissertation will function primarily within dance and performance studies, working alongside other scholarship that examines gender, sex, sexuality, and the nonhuman world in relation to dance and performance. Within dance and performance studies, there are a number of scholars and texts that analyze and discuss sexuality in performance: *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities On & Off The Stage* (2001), edited by Jane Desmond, Peter Stonely’s 2007 *A Queer History of the Ballet*, Judith Hanna’s article “Dance and Sexuality: Many Moves” in the *Journal of Sex Research* (2010), Peggy Phelan’s *Unmarked: the politics of performance* (1993) and *Mourning Sex: performing public memories* (1997), David Gere’s *How To Make Dances in an Epidemic: Tracking Choreography in the Age of AIDS* (2004), and José Esteban Muñoz’s *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999) to name a few. However, each of these scholars, drawing from a range of theoretical frameworks—including but not limited to psychoanalysis, queer theory, feminist philosophy, and semiotic analysis—consider sexuality primarily in exclusively human terms or oriented toward human lives and human

---

concerns. In addition to the consideration of sex and sexuality in performance, there is also a growing body of literature in theater and performance studies addressing the relationship between performance and nature, environmental studies, and the nonhuman: *Performing Nature: Explorations in Ecology and the Arts* (2005) edited by Gabriella Giannachi and Nigel Stewart, *Nature Performed: Environment, Culture and Performance* (2003) edited by Bronislaw Szerszynski, Wallace Heim, and Claire Waterton, *Readings in Performance and Ecology* (2012) edited by Theresa May and Wendy Arons, and a growing body of literature addressing performance and animal studies by scholars such as Una Chaudhuri and Ron Broglio. However, for the most part, issues of sex and sexuality do not enter into these anthologies, articles, and monographs. In regards to these existing literatures, then, this dissertation makes a decisive move toward considering both sexuality and the nonhuman world with and in performance, examining how they are entangled in ways that have yet to be thoroughly addressed by dance or performance studies.

In addition to the existing trans-disciplinary scholarship within which this dissertation is situated, we might also consider the previous work and careers of the artists addressed in this dissertation as “existing literatures” with which these works and my analyses of them are in relation. Another approach to this material would involve a genealogical and biographical survey of Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens, Carlos Batts, April Flores, Jiz Lee, Syd Blakovich, and Pina Bausch. Each of these artists have created significant bodies of work that deal with bodies, sexuality, and the nonhuman world; their

---

earlier work created the conditions from which the Love Art Lab, *Dangerous Curves*, and *Rite of Spring* emerged, and their later work creates further context through which we might understand each artist’s ongoing and evolving relationship to bodies, sex, sexuality, and the nonhuman. While this dissertation prioritizes choreographic thinking—analysis of these specific artworks themselves and generating theory with and through these analyses, discussed further below—considering these works and the ecosensualities that they figure within each artist’s history and larger oeuvre would certainly provide further ways of understanding the context of ecosensuality and its relationship to artistic production.

**Methodologies: Choreographic Thinking, Inverse Contextualization, Thinking With Figures, Reading With Love**

I sit down to write. Surrounded by books in stacks and piles, computer resting on my crossed legs, staring at a screen that is layered with any number of browser tabs and open Word documents, thinking between all of these textual interlocutors, scholarship happens. I am writing about performances, but in order to do so, I must imagine them, re-member them, re-create them for myself from the documentation and ephemera that remain from these events—mostly online archives of videos, photographs, artists’ statements, transcripts, and other written accounts. I re-member them although I cannot call them up in my memory. I was not there at the time of many of these events. And yet I must put them back together, for and with myself, membering again what happened then. Even when I was not there then, something of then and there must become here and now with me in order for me to think with and through these events. In a sense, each event continues for me in the present; in another sense, I produce a new imaginary event for myself from the materials I’ve
been given. So from the beginning of the writing, I am entangled with these performances: they occur for me—with me—in my reception of the traces that remain of them and in my imaginary reconstruction of what they might have been.

I cannot escape the sense that there is something instructive in these conditions of production: already there is something ecological in this thinking and writing, something interdependent, something *intra*-active. This writing is not the performance event itself, but it depends upon the occurrence of the performance event for its emergence. I am implicated in the writing just as much as I am implicated in the version of the performance that I must imagine for myself in order to write about it, and yet the writing is never only me. This is neither a transparent view of a performance that once was, nor is it entirely an invention of my own imagining: it is both and between, reducible to neither and more than both. These are my thoughts, my views, my words, but: I do not think alone, a view is always a relation of seeing and being seen, and any words that I might write do not originate with me. My thinking is always informed and enabled by others. My thinking is shaped by the choreographic structures instantiated in these performances that I re-member. The view that I see, what comes into view, what appears for me and how I understand what appears is conditioned by the collective with which I think, the *thinking-together* of performance events, choreographies, performers, scholars, and a world of ecological, material relations. This is not a matter of *one* here—of me—but a matter of many, together, including you—a matter of *we*.

As I sit and write, the writing unfolds through a hybrid of several methodological practices and approaches. With each project, I begin with a close reading of the work’s prominent features, its choreographic properties and principles, then proceed to follow these
principles toward how they might inform or mobilize critical thinking, leading me toward a view of the world beyond the performances themselves. Ultimately, through the process of conducting these close readings, I come to recognize my primary methodologies as “choreographic thinking” and “inverse contextualization,” informed by what Deleuze has called “reading with love” and Haraway’s use of “figures” with which to live and think, discussed in more detail below.

My close readings of the choreographic principles at work in each project are heavily informed by frameworks proposed by dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster in Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance and dance critic and historian Marcia Siegel’s use of lexicons as an analytic for performance research. In Reading Dancing, Foster writes that instead of attempting to decipher a choreographer’s intended meaning, we can:

… look, on the one hand, at the choice of movement and the principles for ordering that movement and, on the other, at the procedures for referring to or representing worldly events in danced form. That is to say, we can begin to ask how any dance means what it does. ‘Reading dancing’ is the name I have given to this active and interactive interpretation of dance as a system of meaning.

Foster proposes five categories for the analysis of choreography: frames, modes of representation, vocabulary, style, and syntax. Vocabulary identifies the specific actions that the performers do; style identifies the dynamic qualities and tendencies of those activities,

---

92 By “close readings,” I am most closely following Susan Leigh Foster’s use of the term “reading,” discussed below. I am also here following Donna Haraway when she writes, “Readings must be engaged and produced; they do not flow naturally from the text. The most straightforward readings of any text are also situated arguments about fields of meanings and fields of power. Any reading is also a guide to possible maps of consciousness, coalition, and action.” Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women, 114. Readings are not the texts themselves; they emerge from both the text and the reader, instantiate particular conventions for making meaning, and provide pathways for further action. In the context of this dissertation, I am using “reading” to refer to a process of making meaning of performances, while not reducing those performances to mere texts.


94 Foster, Reading Dancing, xvii.
including but not limited to the frameworks for movement analysis developed by Rudolf von Laban; and syntax identifies the principles through which the vocabulary is organized, the choreographic structure that gives the dance or performance its internal logic or consistency. Frames identify the para-choreographic information that sets the performance apart as a discrete event within the world from which it emerges—including marketing materials, the space in which it is presented, the given timeframe for the event, and so on: anything other than the dance or performance itself that shapes how it will be viewed and understood. Modes of representation identify how the dance or performance establishes referential relationships with the world beyond itself, how its vocabulary, style, and syntax come to resemble or refer to the world. As I move across different media—performance art, pornography, and dance—these categories shift to accommodate the specificities of the media: for instance, when analyzing Dangerous Curves as a video work, I take the movement of the camera into careful account, whereas camera work, while integral to the documentation of both the Love Art Lab’s weddings and Bausch’s Rite of Spring, cannot be said to belong to the prominent features of the performances themselves.

In conjunction with Foster’s frameworks for reading dancing, my approach is heavily influenced by Siegel’s lexicon analysis. Siegel writes:

> Lexicon construction is a way of isolating the principal elements in any dance or performance … A lexicon is a list of the most prominent things one sees in initially encountering the work. Instead of establishing an inventory of everything the dancer does, we list what we notice—a subtle but important shift that brings into the foreground the performative event and the distinctive patterns by which it produces its effects … A lexicon is exactly what it implies: a kind of dictionary, or collection of materials which the choreographer (or cultural style) has selected to fashion the work. It is non-preferential, disorganized, quickly noted, a list, not even descriptions or
complete sentences. It can contain movements, dynamic factors, kinesic
cues, costumes, gestures, people, anything and everything that stands out.  

Foster’s frameworks are invaluable toward the analysis of performance, but in and of
themselves, they do not direct any specific activity through which such frameworks can be
applied. Siegel’s lexicon provides a course of action, namely writing down the most
prominent features of a work. A lexicon is in this sense emergent: rather than applying
predetermined categories to a dance or performance, a lexicon allows the researcher to
develop the significant terms for analysis from the work itself—in other words: developing
analyses on the performance’s own terms. My own approach hybridizes these methods,
following Foster’s frameworks as guidelines for how I might direct my attention, while
allowing the unique properties of each performance to come forward and shape how those
categories come to matter in relation to each work. Thus, my analyses shift to accommodate
the specificities of the media. For example, in my analysis of Rite of Spring, it became
necessary to catalogue the complex movement vocabulary and phrases in order to adequately
ascertain the syntax of the choreography. This involved drawing on my training in
Labanotation, sketching out notation for the choreography through several close viewings of
the documentation footage, then asking when and how those movements and phrases
recurred, who performed them, on what facings, and so on. For Dangerous Curves, where the
movement vocabularies are less intricate and choreographically complex, it became more
important to generate quantitative data for the specific ways in which the camera related to
the bodies being filmed—wide or close-up shots, focusing on human or nonhuman
bodies/materials, and focusing on contact/connections between human bodies or between
human and nonhuman bodies/materials. I catalogued every shot in the scene I am discussing

---

using these emergent categories in order to clarify the vocabulary and syntax of both the camera and the performers, and to assess the frequency with which various cinematic strategies were utilized. For the Love Art Laboratory, I conducted a close reading of a single event—*Green Wedding Four*—focusing primarily on the activities (vocabulary) that were included in the event as well as how those activities were organized (syntax). I also addressed what I perceive to be the larger organizational structures of the seven-year project, such as the repeated production of shared orientations and human/nonhuman inter- and intra-actions as the substance of their work. With the Love Art Lab, it was also necessary to analyze written materials—their *Ecosex Manifesto* and Artist’s Statements—as part of their overall project, continuous with and inflecting the significance of their performance events.

Working from both lexicons and close readings, I develop careful descriptions of each project as the foundation for any theory that I generate. While description remains a subjective account of the artworks I discuss, I believe that it is a strategy for doing justice to the performances themselves, attempting to carry something of the performances themselves into the writing about the performance, as opposed to a form of writing that would reduce the artwork to a mere symbol for theory.\(^6\) In her influential essay “Against Interpretation,” Susan Sontag passionately opposes the hermeneutic mode of interpreting artworks, in which art is treated as a symbol or code, its relevance or value not in its form, but in the content that the form is said to represent. She writes that this style of interpretation “excavates, and as it excavates, destroys; it digs ‘behind’ the text, to find a sub-

---

\(^6\) Any written description of a performance will be a translation, not identical to the performance itself, but continuous with it. The etymology of the word “translate” comes from the Latin *translates*, meaning “carried over,” suggesting the transportation of materials from one site to another—here, from the performance and into words—rather than any absolute ontological division between the performance itself and writing about the performance. For more on this sense of translation, see Bruno Latour, *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
text which is the true one.” She writes that to interpret in this way is “to impoverish, to deplete the world—in order to set up a shadow world of ‘meaning,’” and that the world, “our world, is depleted, impoverished enough.” She writes, “It is always the case that interpretation of this type indicates a dissatisfaction (conscious or unconscious) with the work, a wish to replace it by something else.” She calls for “acts of criticism which would supply a really accurate, sharp, loving description of the appearance of a work of art,” revealing its “sensuous surfaces.”

Following Sontag, I find that descriptive writing prioritizes formal characteristics as already meaningful, not to the degree that they stand for, represent, or symbolize some absent content, but as a positive internal consistency, a singularity or what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe as a *haecceity*—those qualities that make a thing *this thing* in its specificity. Descriptive writing gives attention and language to the presence of the performance, what the performance is and what it does. With Sontag, I pursue description as a critical methodology, specifically description that attempts to account for each performance’s *haecceity*, writing that articulates not only what happened in the performance, but those elements and characteristics that give each performance its singularity, its specificity. Bringing the performance into writing in this way figures the performance itself as a necessary participant in the development of theory.

---

98 Ibid., 7.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid., 10.
101 Ibid., 13.
103 I have argued elsewhere that writing of this kind enables performances to persist in the present and circulate as influential, affective events in our world. See Michael J. Morris, “Implied Ethics: Describing Haecceity and the Persistence of the Event.”
While relying on strategies for performance research introduced by Foster and Siegel and prioritizing description, my attention to the nonhuman elements of these performances as participants and agents marks one significant development of these strategies within this study. Both Foster and Siegel articulate their strategies for “reading dancing” and “lexicon research” primarily—almost exclusively, with the exception of peripheral elements such as costumes or lighting—in relation to the activities and functions of human performers in contexts defined by human participants. Although each of the performances I have examined takes the activities of the human participants as definitive—these are performance artworks initiated by human artists—I have attempted in my analyses to extend recognition to those nonhuman materials with which each performance emerges in partnership. Thus, what I discuss as the work of the Love Art Laboratory is not limited to the agency and activities of Sprinkle, Stephens, and their human collaborators, but also includes the material support of particular sites, the physical presence of nonhuman elements such as dirt or water or sound systems or hilltops. I describe Dangerous Curves not only as a sexual encounter between three human bodies situated within an outdoor setting, but a scene in which the nonhuman elements of that setting—the rocks, the waterfall, the fallen tree, the camera—are composed within the sexual relations that the film depicts. Pina Bausch’s Rite of Spring is not merely a dance of human bodies atop a plane of peat spread across a theatrical stage, but an ongoing exchange of force, movement, agitation, and stillness across both flesh and dirt, a play of dynamic tendencies across both human and nonhuman materials.

With each project, the carefully developed descriptive accounts of their features and choreographic principles then became the basis of developing critical thinking. What each one can be said to do then became a framework or a blueprint through which to think; the
same principles and structures that previously mobilized and organized bodies, activities, and events came to mobilize and organize thinking, critical theory, and writing. This is what I understand as “choreographic thinking.” In his essay “Choreographic Objects,” William Forsythe writes, “Choreography is the term that presides over a class of ideas: an idea is perhaps in this case a thought or suggestion as to a possible course of action … Choreography’s manifold incarnations are a perfect ecology of idea-logics; they do not insist on a single path to form-of-thought and persist in the hope of being without enduring.”

Forsythe asserts that choreography and dancing are two distinct and very different practices, and asks, “[I]s it possible for choreography to generate autonomous expressions of its principles, a choreographic object without the body?” He writes that despite the relegation of the body in motion to “the domain of raw sense” throughout centuries of Western culture, “choreographic thinking being what it is, proves useful in mobilizing language to dismantle the constraints of this degraded station by imagining other physical models of thought that circumvent this misconception. What else, besides the body, could physical thinking look like?” This is a question that Forsythe has asked and answered throughout his work, perhaps at no greater scale than in the Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced project developed in collaboration with Norah Zuniga Shaw, Maria Palazzi, and a team of specialists from The Ohio State University and members of The Forsythe Company.

105 This distinction has been asserted by others, including Susan Foster. See Susan Foster, “Choreographies of Writing,” performative lecture presented by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage on “Susan Foster! Susan Foster! Three Performed Lectures,” http://danceworkbook.peah.us/susan-foster/choreographies-of-writing.html. Foster describes choreography here as a set of “theoretical goals” that then become enacted, negotiated, and modified in the live performance of dance.
107 Ibid.
At the core of Forsythe’s proposal of choreographic objects is the assertion that the potential of choreography is not exhausted in its expression or articulation as a dance; choreography can be articulated in any number of forms, any number of expressions, that each demonstrate the properties and principles of that specific choreography. In the same way that choreography indicates possible courses of action, provides structures or principles that organize activity or produce certain possibilities for activity, choreography can then also be used to motivate, structure, organize, or produce thinking.\(^\text{108}\) Choreography that gives me an impetus for movement, or generates a certain set of possibilities for how I might move, can also give an impetus for my thinking and generate a set of possibilities for how I might think. Writing from the methodologies of the Synchronous Objects project, Zuniga Shaw writes:

> What if the ideas inside a dance become something other than a dance? … In this way the terms ‘thinking’ and ‘knowledge’ remain open, slippery even: not a space of definition but a space of creation … To a certain extent it can be understood as a form of translation. Like any good literary translation, a choreographic object stays true to the original thinking space of the maker while allowing for new comprehensions of the work.\(^\text{109}\)

And yet, she writes, this work “goes beyond the purview of translation. Translation implies a close adherence to the original, but in the creation of a choreographic object, ideas are allowed to jump and swerve out of familiar territory and to become completely

\(^{108}\) This mode of choreographic thinking bears resemblances to what has been called “performative writing,” wherein structures and principles from a performance can shape or influence the form that writing takes. However, while writing/performative writing are modes of thinking, thinking is not reducible to writing, and choreographic thinking is not identical to performative writing. For more on performative writing, see Susan Foster, “Choreographies of Writing”; Susan Leigh Foster, “Choreographing History,” in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Leigh Foster, 3-24 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Peggy Phelan, “Thirteen Ways of Looking at *Choreographing* Writing,” in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Leigh Foster, 200-210 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Vida L. Midgelow, “Sensualities: Experience/Dancing/Writing,” in *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing* 10, no. 3 (2013): 3-17; Della Pollock, “Writing Performance,” in *The Ends of Performance*, eds. Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane, 73-103 (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

unrecognizable in their new forms.”

Zuniga Shaw’s description of “thinking” and “knowledge” as remaining “slippery” and “open,” jumping and swerving beyond familiar territory, recalls both Timothy Morton’s description of ecological thinking as fervently committed to remaining open and Deleuzo-Guattarian “deterritorializations” and “lines of flight,” those trajectories that cut across existing, familiar structures and frameworks, exceed their boundaries, and blaze pathways over new horizons. Zuniga Shaw continues, asserting that in this mode of thinking, “There is rigorous analysis and in-depth study of a source in order to bring forth its attributes, but then the outcome can become a new work in its own right.”

Within my research, rigorous analysis of choreography—utilizing the strategies from Foster’s “reading dancing” and Siegel’s “lexicons,” supported by other modes of analysis such as Laban Movement Analysis—then functions as a stage within the process of this choreographic thinking. Analysis of each of these performance works allows me to identify the principles and structures that they instantiate; from this analysis of attributes, I then proceed into the generative process of thinking with these choreographies, unfolding comprehensions into new and sometimes unpredictable forms.

In each chapter of the dissertation, I allow the choreographic features of the project to organize my thinking, to suggest conceptual structures as starting points and as solicitations for critical theories and frameworks that could be useful or productive toward

---

100 Ibid., 11.
111 Ibid.
112 Choreographic thinking has also been discussed by scholars Erin Manning and Megan Nicely. Drawing extensively on the work of William Forsythe and the Synchronous Objects project, Manning develops choreographic thinking as a philosophical project, theorizing the movement of thought and the thinking in moving. See Manning, Always More Than One: Individuation’s Dance (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013). Nicely ascribes choreographic thinking to a range of choreographers and thinkers, including Forsythe, Manning, Tere O’Connor, Susan Rethorst, and Jeannine Durning. While not all of these choreographers use the phrase “choreographic thinking,” Nicely articulates the ways in which each furthers a project of aligning thinking and moving. See Nicely, “On Choreographic Thinking,” dancersgroup.org, March 1, 2014, http://dancersgroup.org/2014/03/on-choreographic-thinking/.
thinking about and with each project—for instance, the vacillation between frenzy and quietude in *Rite of Spring* bearing formal similarities to Freud’s discussion of the “life instincts” and the “death drive,” or the fragmentation and composition of bodies in *Dangerous Curves* resembling Deleuze and Guattari’s characterization of sexuality as assemblages, bodies without organs, and desiring-machines. Following my analyses of the prominent features and choreographic principles at work in each project, choreographic thinking describes the process of thinking and writing with each performance, working with those choreographic features to generate autonomous theories and philosophical expressions of those choreographies that nonetheless take these initial performances as their conceptual grounds. Echoing Zuniga Shaw’s description of choreographic objects, these writings “integrate the information learned through the labors of translation into new creative outcomes. They are closely linked to the dance, they issue from it (as does any translation), but they also step out away from it.” These performances function as “choreographic resources” for the generation of critical theory—specifically multiple theories of ecosexuality.

Although this practice of choreographic thinking begins with a close articulation of the performances themselves, this writing moves beyond the initial performances toward the world they can be said to address. In each chapter, what begins as thinking with each performance eventually develops into ways of thinking about the world beyond the performance, a practice that M. Candace Feck has identified as *inverse contextualization*. She writes:

If [dance scholar Sally] Banes’ concept of contextualization can be summarized as the act of placing a given dance experience against a larger

---

landscape so as to understand it (the dance) more fully, then inverse—or reverse—contextualization—would place dance in the center, as the point of departure, and articulate the ways in which it reaches out to engage with or comment upon the world beyond the performance.¹¹⁴

Inverse contextualization is “the act of using dance as a baseline from which one might launch a discussion of other ideas.”¹¹⁵ Inverse contextualization, as I understand it and as I have taught it in my own writing courses, involves asking: how can what I have seen about this dance or performance now show me something about the larger world? How can the dance or performance function as a lens or framework for examining the world beyond its frame? Taking each of these performances as a site at which choreographic principles are articulated, my methodology then follows the specific choreographies toward how the world beyond these performances—from which they emerge, with/in which they occur—might be thought. Choreographic thinking in this case involves considering the specificities of each performance as a framework or structure through which to consider sexuality, ecological relations, bodies, genders, sexual difference, life, and materiality. Choreographic thinking leads to inverse contextualization, from first thinking each performance on its own terms with its own choreographic principles to then following those same principles toward contemplating the world.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that this process of “thinking with” performances is strongly influenced by the work of Donna Haraway and her methodological reliance on thinking with figures—cyborgs, coyotes, tricksters, primates, dogs, companion species, string figures, and so on. Throughout her oeuvre, Haraway has written with this menagerie of figures that are fully material and fully semiotic, actual figures that are both

¹¹⁵ Ibid.
historically situated within specific periods and apparatuses, and which also do symbolic or ideological work toward accounting more fully for the worlds we are making with them. She writes, “I learned early that the imaginary and the real figure each other in concrete fact, and so I take the actual and the figural seriously as constitutive of lived material-semiotic worlds.”

She goes on to write:

Figures do not have to be representational or mimetic, but they do have to be tropic; that is, they cannot be literal and self-identical. Figures must involve at least some kind of displacement that can trouble identifications and certainties. Figurations are performative images that can be inhabited. Verbal or visual, figurations can be condensed maps of contestable worlds. All language, including mathematics, is figurative, that is, made of tropes, constituted by bumps that make us swerve from literal-mindedness. I emphasize figuration to make explicit and inescapable the tropic quality of all material-semiotic processes, especially in technoscience. For example, think of a small set of objects into which lives and worlds are built—chip, gene, seed, fetus, database, bomb, race, brain, ecosystem. This mantralike list is made up of imploded atoms or dense nodes that explode into entire worlds of practice. The chip, seed, or gene is simultaneously literal and figurative. We inhabit and are inhabited by such figures that map universes of knowledge, practice and power.

Haraway points to the figures with which we map and navigate our world, both materially and semiotically. The computer chip, the gene, the seed, the ecosystem, like the cyborg, primates, women, and dogs, are linguistic and figurative tropes that emerge from within historically situated apparatuses that shape how we know and live our world. Their figurative nature does not negate their reality or materiality, but rather points to the ways in which words and ideas depend upon and result in material practices. That they emerge as constructions from and within webs of meaning and making does not make such figures any less real; rather, considering the tropic nature of such figures is to consider how they materialize meaningfully, how they come to matter. The figure of the gene as an “object of

---

117 Ibid., 11.
“knowledge” is a semantic description of an actual, biological reality; it is not merely a linguistic construction. However, for all its materiality, it is also an index of particular knowledge-making practices, ways of thinking, cultural values, and potential courses of action—for example, mapping the human genome, experiments in genetic engineering or gene therapies, the pursuit of a “gay gene” that would confirm queer sexualities as a genetic condition or predisposition, and so on. Thus, such figures or objects of knowledge simultaneously indicate material realities, the processes through which material realities become known and represented, and the future, potential practices that such realities and representations enable. Figures are both citational of the processes from which they emerge and consequential—they result in any number of possible consequences. Thinking with such figures is thus to consider both how the world has come to matter and how it might matter into the future; such figures map world-making processes that have been and—like Forsythe’s description of choreography—suggest possible courses of action. Haraway has modeled this practice of thinking with Others, with figures, for decades, and I view my practice of choreographic thinking—thinking with performances—as consistent with her practice of thinking with figures. I partner with performance artworks, dances, and films the way that Haraway partners with cyborgs, companion species, and other SF critters, in a style of thinking that I ultimately consider to be akin to love.

As I discuss further in Chapter 2, Alain Badiou describes love as a process of constructing a life from the perspective of Two—or, rephrased, from the perspective of

---

more than one self. In a small formal resemblance, I recognize thinking with others—with performances, with figures, with scholars who have taught me the practical skills toward thinking with performance and others with whom I develop my own critical perspectives—as a process of constructing a view of life from the perspective of many more than one. Although I am the one writing, I am never only one writing; I am already more than one, writing with and from a collective, a multiplicity of perspectives that find themselves assembled and re-assembled in these lines and pages. To the degree that writing about performances in this way involves thinking with others—the development of thought that displaces any singular sovereign subject in favor of a distributed collective of participants—and to the degree that love might be understood, as Badiou suggests, as the construction of a life from the perspective of more than one, then love, it seems, functions here as a methodological principle.

Staying with love as a principle of my methodology, I will quote at length Gilles Deleuze’s description of what he understands as “reading with love”:

There are, you see, two ways of reading a book: you either see it as a box with something inside and start looking for what it signifies, and then if you’re even more perverse or depraved you set off after signifiers. And you treat the next book like a box contained in the first or containing it. And you annotate and interpret and question, and write a book about a book, and so on and on. Or there’s the other way: you see a book as a little non-signifying machine, and the only question is ‘Does it work, and how does it work?’ How does it work for you? If it doesn’t work, if nothing comes through, you try another book. This second way of reading’s intensive: something comes through or it doesn’t. There’s nothing to explain, nothing to understand, nothing to interpret. It’s like plugging in to an electric circuit. I know people who’ve read nothing who immediately saw what bodies without organs were, given their own ‘habits,’ their own way of being one. This second way of reading’s quite different from the first, because it relates a book directly to what is Outside. A book is a little cog in much more complicated external machinery. Writing is one flow among others, with no special place in

relation to others, that comes into relations of current, countercurrent, and eddy with other flows—flows of shit, sperm, words, action, eroticism, money, politics, and so on … This intensive way of reading, in contact with what’s outside the book, as a flow meeting other flows, one machine among others, as a series of experiments for each reader in the midst of events that have nothing to do with books, as tearing the book into pieces, getting it to interact with other things, absolutely anything … is reading with love.

What Deleuze describes as the “second way” one might read a book—reading with love—I take as a mode of approaching the performances about which I write. They are not boxes in need of opening, as if the point were to offer readings that evacuate the significance that each performance contains. Rather, each performance is a little machine about which I ask, “How does it work?” or, “How might it work?” Deleuze’s questions recall Forsythe and Zuniga Shaw’s articulations of their own experimental questions: what if? And what else? The answers to these questions in this dissertation will begin with those choreographies that each performance can be said to enact, then develop into a series of experiments, articulating the choreographic principles of each performance, getting those principles to interact with other things—namely, philosophy and critical theories—in order to see what they might do, to discover what views of the world—or inverse contextualizations—they might enable, toward theorizing how sexuality might be thought with these performances as *ecosexuality*.

**Chapter Summaries**

As I have described, each chapter develops a distinct theory of ecosexuality—or a distinct strand within a theory of ecosexuality that will remain multiple—in conjunction with the particular choreographic principles and prominent features of each performance project included within this study. There are resonances between these distinct lines of inquiry, and

---

there are scholars whose work supports my own in more than one place. In other ways,
there are places that move in divergent directions within each chapter. These resonances and
divergences are integral to any sum theory that this dissertation produces. In as much as a
theory of ecosexuality will remain multiple, it will also move across alignments and
affiliations, and preserve difference and contrast as necessary for any thinking about a world
that also emerges with/in and through difference.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the work of the Love Art Laboratory, Annie Sprinkle and
Elizabeth Stephens’ seven-year performance art project in which I first encountered the term
ecosexuality. With their work, I develop a theory of ecosexuality that embeds the human
within the nonhuman, challenges the “naturalness” of nature, and implicates human activity
with/in the intra-activity of a larger, messy, troubled world that we have made, that we are
making, and with which we are made. Following the Love Art Laboratory, eco-

In Chapter 3, I develop another strand of thinking ecosexuality with a scene from
Carlos Batts’ pornographic film *Dangerous Curves*. Starting from a discussion of the circulation
of this work as pornography, as feminist pornography, and as art, I move to an analysis of
the film itself drawing on the work of porn studies scholars Linda Williams and Beverly
Brown and their description of pornography as “an erotic organization of visibility.”
Following the premise that pornography does not merely extend extreme visibility to pre-
existing bodies, sexes, and sexualities, but rather contributes to the production of each through various strategies and techniques, I ask how bodies and (eco)sexualities are generated in and through Dangerous Curves. Through a close analysis of the scenes’ choreographic principles—including the interactions of human bodies and nonhuman materials and the mechanisms of the camerawork and editing—I describe the bodies in this context—following Deleuze and Guattari—as desiring-machines, assemblages of promiscuous pieces, parts, and flows, and sexuality as events of temporary relations, where the terms of the relation or assemblage are never only human. Giving particular attention to the function of water and body fluids in the scene, I theorize how bodies are always in the process of exceeding themselves, passing beyond their boundaries and implicating themselves within larger ecologies. In addition to the ecological entanglement of bodies and sexualities at a planetary scale, I also discuss the posthuman potential of the film’s ecosexuality in relation to the medium: as video pornography, the film implicates technology and machines within sexuality and sexual relations.

In Chapter 4, I discuss Pina Bausch’s Rite of Spring. Starting from a description of the choreography’s participation in the reproduction of highly normalized binary gender roles, I pursue particular choreographic features—facings, shared movement vocabularies, and unison dancing—to point to some ways in which the choreographic stylizations of gender do not hold absolutely. Across these norms and ruptures of gender, I give attention to the human/nonhuman relations within this dance, namely the interactions between dancing bodies and the layer of dirt on and with which they dance, and consider the agency and intra-activity of these human and nonhuman performers. Contemplating the human and the nonhuman together within a continuum of materiality, I pursue additional choreographic
features—the fluctuating tendencies toward both activity and inertia, animateness and inanimateness—toward an understanding of sexuality within a broad, nonhuman, inorganic context. Drawing on the work of Claire Colebrook and Sigmund Freud, I discuss sexuality in terms of tendencies toward life, acting simultaneously and in counterpoint to instincts toward death, or the “death drive.” Here eosexuality becomes a matter of the materiality of sexuality beyond the human species, both before its appearance and after its inevitable demise. Following the final exhaustion and collapse of the central figure in Bausch’s work, I turn my attention to the exhaustion and collapse of the human species: our inevitable extinction. The eosexuality of this chapter turns us toward the intensification of life and matter, precisely when survival is no longer the goal, dancing in the face of our own extinction.

In the Conclusion, I gesture toward the further potential of this research, the kinds of inquiries it enables, and the kinds of additional work that it positions me to pursue. In a brief reflection on my own choreographic and performance work, I address several themes that emerge throughout the dissertation, and gesture toward how this dissertation might enable or inspire other works of performance. As a piece of choreographic thinking, these theories were developed with and from performances—the Love Art Laboratory, Dangerous Curves, and Rite of Spring. As theories moving from performance and into writing, this dissertation then develops strategies and tools that might move back into performance, further articulating eosexuality at the entanglement of performance, ecology, and sexuality. I then address the further potential research for which this dissertation creates space, and the ways in which the particular eosexualities I theorize here offer provocations for how we might live.
CHAPTER 2: THE LOVE ART LABORATORY’S ECOSEXUAL ORIENTATION TOWARD THE INTRA-ACTIVE MATERIAL WORLD

The Love Art Laboratory and Material-Semiotic Practices

On May 17th, 2008, four hundred people gathered in the Sinsheimer-Stanley Festival Glen of redwoods on the campus of the University of California in Santa Cruz for a wedding to the Earth. This wedding was part of a larger seven-year collaborative project called the Love Art Laboratory (LAL) produced by former sex-worker, feminist porn icon, and performance artist Annie Sprinkle and her wife, artist, activist, and educator Elizabeth Stephens. From December 2004 to December 2011, Sprinkle and Stephens created visual art, installations, theater pieces, exhibitions, lectures, printed materials, activism, and live performances that explored, generated, and celebrated love as a form of artistic-political response to “the violence of war, the anti-gay marriage movement, and our prevailing culture of greed.”¹ From the beginning, their motto was “Eroticize everything!” from artworks, collaboration, and gallery spaces to their bodies and personal lives. Within the framework of their project, everything was potentially erotic; anything could be eroticized, whether celebrated or denigrated, pleasurable or painful—including, for example, Sprinkle’s breast cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatments during the first year of the LAL project. Love and eroticism—both of which I theorize in this chapter—provided the thematic material of their art as well as strategies for approaching subject matter and for generating their work.

The central practice of the LAL was a series of annual performance art weddings produced in collaboration with various national and international communities. With these weddings, Sprinkle and Stephens persistently renewed their vows of love and commitment to one another, an insistent affirmation of same-sex love and the right to marry. Following a structure inspired by Linda Montano’s *14 Years of Living Art*, each year and wedding incorporated colors and themes derived from the seven primary chakras. In 2004, they married in *Red Wedding One* in New York City, celebrating the themes of security and survival, themes that continued to inform their work throughout 2005. In 2006, they married again in an *Orange Wedding* in San Francisco, celebrating the themes of creativity and sexuality, and committing to love and honor their community. In 2007, they became legally married in *Yellow Wedding #3* in Calgary, Canada, celebrating power and courage.

At a pivotal moment in the LAL project, beginning in 2008 with *Green Wedding Number Four*, Stephens and Sprinkle declared themselves “ecosexuals” and began making ecological vows in addition to their vows to one another. Green was the theme of the

---

2 The use of weddings as a structure through which to organize and stage their art and activism was in many ways an effect of the times at which the project began. In their artists’ statement for their first performance art wedding in 2004, they write: “When war broke out two years ago we became legal domestic partners to propose love as an alternative vision to the war. Then there was the flurry of gay weddings across the country. This incited the right wing to propose an anti-gay marriage amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which was a thinly disguised and hateful proposition intended to discriminate against Americans seeking alternative family structures. We were angry and disappointed when the California Supreme Court stopped these weddings just one day before our scheduled marriage appointment at city hall” ([http://loveartlab.org/artist-statement.php?year_id=1](http://loveartlab.org/artist-statement.php?year_id=1)). While there are many potentially many conservative, normative dimensions to using weddings and marriage as a framework through which to stage the LAL project—see Judith Butler, “Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 13, no. 1 (2002): 14-44—it is important to note that to do so enacted a very particular political resistance during a time when the rights to marry were heavily contested, particularly in California in 2003 and 2004, as they continue to be throughout the United States. Stephens writes that they had “chosen the most iconic of love rituals, the wedding, as a platform to challenge restrictions regarding who is human enough to own the right to legally marry or engage in other forms of public love.” Elizabeth Stephens, “Becoming Eco-Sexual,” *CTR* 144 (Fall 2010), 13. Rather than an act of assimilation, the LAL’s weddings began as a form of insistent protest against the regulation of public love and prohibitions against same-sex marriage.

3 Chakras are a system classifying the life experience and energy centers in the body, taxonomized in yogic philosophy. For a thorough discussion of the chakras, see Anodea Judith, *Wheels of Life: A User’s Guide to the Chakra System* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2006).
wedding; it is the color associated with the fourth chakra—the heart chakra—but also refers to the “green” environmental movement. With this wedding, ecosexuality became a new frontier for “eroticizing everything,” distributing sexual potential to the nonhuman material world at a planetary scale. Their project—oriented toward generating, exploring, and celebrating love—expanded to include environmental concerns; their love, Stephens writes, “had grown to encompass nature and the planet,” and their weddings came to inspire more attention and care for the nonhuman material world.\(^4\) What began as a protest against prohibitions on same-sex love through the staging of their own marriage in annual same-sex weddings took on new, environmental orientations, utilizing marriage and weddings as formats for performing ecosexuality and for staging love and commitment for the planet. In 2008, they made their vows to take the Earth as their lover in Santa Cruz, California. In the years that followed, they married the Sky in Oxford, England, and the Sea in Venice, Italy (2009); the Moon in Los Angeles, California, and the Appalachian Mountains in Athens, Ohio (2010); the Snow in Ottawa, Canada, the Rocks and Coal in Spain, and the Sun in San Francisco, California (2011). They have written an *Ecosex Manifesto*, produced national and international Ecosex Symposiums, and continue to produce performances, workshops, “ecosex walking tours,” gallery exhibitions, and films that enact their vision of ecosexuality. They also continue to stage weddings in which they marry more and more of this planet, most recently Lake Kallavesi in Finland (2012) and the soil in Krems, Austria (2014).

Sprinkle and Stephens use the term “ecosexuality” as a sexual identity, and have pioneered a new field of research, art, and activism they call “sexcology,” exploring the places where sexuality and ecology intersect, and doing what they call “making the

\(^4\) Elizabeth Stephens, “Becoming Eco-Sexual,” *CTR* 144 (Fall 2010), 16.
environmental movement sexier” by utilizing eroticism as an ethical resource toward environmental activism. Thinking with the work of the LAL, I understand ecosexuality as an orientation toward the intra-active entanglement of the human with-and-in the nonhuman material world from which we are not apart, eroticizing not an object but a constitutive relation. Ecosexuality as I will theorize it following the work of the LAL becomes oriented not toward an other, but toward continuity and connection, toward the loss of separable, bounded selves, and toward relational disindividuation.

The LAL makes a range of aesthetic, semiotic, discursive, and material interventions into how we might understand sexuality, the nonhuman material world, and our fundamental relations in-and-with it. Their work involves an ongoing practice of reterritorializing language, ritual, sexuality, and human/nonhuman relations, making critical moves that have implications for sex and sexuality, for ecology, and for materiality. Throughout their seven-year project, they introduce a range of keywords and linguistic experiments—in their artist’s statements, their wedding homilies and vows, their Ecosex Manifesto, and so on. These words are more than mere language or rhetorical maneuvers detached from materiality or activity. Their words lead to action, unfold alongside or throughout performance, describe how their work is meaningful to them, and provide discursive frames through which we might consider the significance of their practice. Their performance artworks—their ongoing weddings, their ecosexual walking tours, their rich body of collaborative artworks and art

---

5 I am borrowing this term “intra-actions” from feminist quantum physicist Karen Barad, and discuss it more in depth below. Here I mean to signal an orientation toward that from which we are not separate.

6 Although the primary focus of this chapter will be the seven-year Love Art Laboratory project, which was completed in 2011, I have chosen to address the work most often in the present tense for two reasons: first, because Stephens and Sprinkle’s work with ecosexuality and sexecology continues to develop beyond the seven years of the LAL, many of these concepts remain in use. Second, and more philosophically, I am choosing to situate the work in the present in order to emphasize what it is doing here and now, in this chapter, in my own theorizations of their work and in conjunction with the work of critical theorists that I include in my writing. Although the events themselves can be said to be in the past, they continue to produce effects in these lines and pages, in the present. There are a few places where I shift into the past tense for the sake of clarity.
events—demonstrate practical, material dimensions for the possibilities that they articulate in language. In this sense, in order to theorize the LAL’s ecosexuality, I will discuss their work as an evolving material-semiotic assemblage, reducible to neither language separated from materiality nor performance apart from the language with which such activities become articulate and thinkable. The LAL’s ecosexuality emerges across and between language and action, wedding vows and walking tours, kisses and keywords, aesthetic styles, ethical evocations, and environmental activism; theorizing ecosexuality with their work requires considering these multiple intersecting dimensions.

In describing the LAL’s work as a material-semiotic assemblage, I am following feminist biologist Donna Haraway’s use of the hyphenate “material-semiotic” and feminist quantum physicist Karen Barad’s similar and related term “material-discursive.” Haraway refers to the material-semiotic in order to bring attention to the ways in which objects of knowledge emerge from knowledge-making practices in which language and matter, the literal and the actual, the ontological and the epistemological, are fully entangled. This is not to reduce the world—in Haraway’s case, most often the world of technoscience—to a mere linguistic construct or sign, but to indicate the ways in which language and ideas shape and inform experimental procedures and scientific apparatuses through which we come to know the world. It is also intended “to highlight the object of knowledge as an active, meaning-generating axis of the apparatus of bodily production, without ever implying immediate presence of such object or, what is the same thing, their final or unique determination of what can count as objective knowledge at a particular historical juncture.”7 In other words, that which is known through figures and signs participates in what and how it takes on

meaning, without ever suggesting that such figures and signs give unmediated access to the materials to which they refer.

Similar to Haraway, Barad also asserts the entanglement of material phenomena and the discursive practices through which they become known and represented. In her *agential realism*, Barad presents a performative understanding of discursive practices, challenging “the representationalist belief in the power of words to represent preexisting things.”

She writes, “Unlike representationalism, which positions us above or outside the world we allegedly merely reflect on, a performative account insists on understanding thinking, observing, and theorizing as practices of engagement with, and as part of, the world in which we have our being.” Words and ideas do not merely reflect or represent an objective world that we encounter as if from the outside; rather, discourse produces particular phenomena in and through material practices. For Barad, “the primary semantic units are not ‘words’ but material-discursive practices through which (ontic and semantic) boundaries are constituted.”

In other words:

> [D]iscursive practices are specific material (re)configurings of the world through which the determination of boundaries, properties, and meanings is differentially enacted. That is, discursive practices are ongoing material intra-actions of the world through which specific determinacies (along with complementary indeterminacies) are enacted within the phenomena produced … Meaning is not a property of individual words or groups of words but an ongoing performance of the world in its differential dance of intelligibility and unintelligibility.

Following Haraway and Barad, I am suggesting that the language that the LAL uses is not merely rhetorical or representational, but that it both shapes their material practices and relies upon their practices for its meaning. Fully entangled and taken together, their words

---


9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., 141.

11 Ibid., 148-149 (italics original).
and practices become meaningful in and through each other. Their performances reconfigure what their words might mean; their words shape the significance of what they have done and open up possibilities for what they might do. In considering their eosexuality, I will move between words and actions, language and performance, follow how each swerves into and shapes the other. I will begin with a discussion of their first eosexual wedding—Green Wedding Number Four—then move out from the specificities of this event toward their larger project and their eosexuality more generally. Holding difference within continuity, generating unstable signifiers with which to refer to the Earth, producing multiple shared orientations, and embedding the human within the nonhuman are prominent principles that emerge from their work, and these principles become the basis of the eosexuality that I theorize in this chapter.

**Green Wedding Number Four and Difference Within Continuity**

“Elizabeth M. Stephens & Annie M. Sprinkle request the honor of your presence and collaboration. May 17th, 2008: We will make vows to the earth and formally enter the environmental movement. Attire: Please wear green and dress in the theme(s) of the wedding.

Themes: Love/earth (4th chakra).”

The wedding invitation goes on to request no material gifts, instead welcoming collaboration in the wedding ceremony. This invitation resulted in over 150 collaborators contributing to the production of a three-hour event attended by approximately four hundred people, each one contributing their unique interpretations of the wedding’s themes.

---

Jennie Klein describes it as “an extravagant affair that included twenty-one mini-performances, three large cakes, hors d’oeuvres, and a Green Dinner produced by Dogstar Catering,” with performances as diverse as “an operatic strip tease, a yoga demonstration by a world champion yogini, Fluxus artist Geoffrey Hendricks’ Peace Handstand, a homily by Helen and Newton Harrison based on their love and understanding of the biological diversity of dirt, and a politico-shamanic performance by Guillermo Gómez-Peña as [the] High Aztec Priest.”

As I examine the photo and video documentation of the wedding, one of the most prominent features is the wide variety of green, the countless shades and materials in which the color green is instantiated: the outdoor stage is green; the seats—arranged in a semicircle along the back of the stage for the performers, with seats for the audience facing and wrapping around the front of the stage, almost completing a circle of viewers and participants—are green; a vast, shimmering, green silken canopy is suspended above the stage between towering redwoods amidst branches and branches of green leaves; and the majority of the participants filing into the glen wear green. Before the ceremony begins, the video shows two figures crossing the stage, the first—listed in the program as the “Flower Grrrl,” Sur Rodney—dressed in a full dark green robe, carrying a basket, and tossing flower petals onto the stage. The video cuts to the participants processing toward the stage, dressed in an eclectic array of costumes: someone wearing a green and white Diane von Furstenberg-esque wrap dress, someone else wearing a period empire-waist green gown. There’s a bustier flounced with layers and layers of green tulle and a dark green suit with a

---

15 For a full list of participants, refer to the archived program online: http://loveartlab.net/PDF/GreenWedProgram2.pdf.
fedora and pink rose boutonniere. Carol Queen—notable sexologist who officiated the LAL’s Orange Wedding—wears a stylish vintage green dress and wild cat-eye glasses. She is followed by Stephens and Sprinkle in their elaborate green wedding couture, each wearing a headdress, a green corset, and a skirt made of strips of fabric in different shades of green. Sprinkle carries a bouquet, her face framed by waves of her vibrant red hair and a spray of peacock feathers; Stephens carries a staff that is almost twice as tall as she is and wears a wireless microphone over her left ear. Overall, green is the thing, and there are as many different versions of wearing green as there are participants; there are no uniforms here.

Difference within continuity pervades the Green Wedding, recurring and reverberating throughout its aesthetic dimensions and organizational structures. Like the hundreds of variations of green attire that populate the wedding, the twenty-one performances that comprise the ceremony each demonstrates a different interpretation of the wedding’s themes, ecosexuality, and what it means to marry the Earth. One after another, the performers take center stage, the open space between the audience and the other performers seated at the back of the stage, and offer their contribution. Veteran porn performer Veronica Hart, dressed in a light green cocktail dress and green butterfly wings, opens the ceremony with an introduction, reminding the audience of the themes of the wedding. Linda Montano—the artist who gifted the seven-year, chakra and color-themed structure to the LAL—wearing a vibrant pink tunic and scarf that pops against the sea of green, sings a guttural rendition of “That’s Amore.” Fluxus artist Geoffrey Hendricks performs a headstand, with bells and blessings—pieces of paper that read “Love,” “Peace,” “Compassion,” “Annie,” “Beth,” and “Earth”—hanging on string suspended between his

16 I have not described all twenty-one performances here, only a selection to demonstrate the diversity of the participants’ offerings.
toes. Poet and academic Camille Norton, wearing a bright green top and dark sunglasses, reads a poem entitled “Little Wicket.” Joseph Kramer, founder of the Body Electric School of Erotic Massage, leads the crowd in a deep breathing exercise. An opera singer, Emma McNairy, stands center stage, strips off her dark green bikini top, and flings her arms wide as her voice soars. “Did you guys know that the Earth is really, really kinky?” asks artist and sex worker Sadie Lune, dressed as a dominatrix in piles of black feathers, green tulle, and green leaves; she flogs a blind-folded assistant with a bouquet of flowers. Dancer Alessandro Rumie, an alum of UC Santa Cruz, bare-chested and wearing black tights, performs a dance choreographed with dance scholar Mark Franko: sinking and rising in a deep lunge, his torso twists and his arms fold and unfold sequentially around him. Artists Isabel Reichert and Sean Fletcher stand back to back with a live snake coiling over their shoulders, simultaneously reading separate texts about the loss of virginity and marriage tax penalty. Feminist pornographer Madison Young (listed in the program as Tina Butcher, her given name) stands in a bright green bikini while Stephens and Sprinkle cover her skin in damp soil that they scoop out of green flowerpots. Young reaches down into her briefs, sighing, and removes a piece of paper: “From the depths of my body, my heart, and my soul,” she reads as she turns to face Stephens and Sprinkle, who face her, holding hands. “The radiating aura of love that Annie and Beth share has left permanent imprints on this dirty girl, planted in common soil.” Helen and Newton Mayer Harrison, pioneers of the eco-art movement, stand side by side and deliver a homily entitled “Making Earth” that describes the chemical and ecological composition of soil, populated by worms and fungi and thousands of other

---

Blending sacred ritual and variety show, each performer makes their unique contribution, and together they demonstrate the wide diversity of the community in attendance.

Finally, the ceremony climaxes in a stirring sermon by Chicano performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña and vows to the Earth led by Sprinkle and Stephens. Gómez-Peña, dressed in an elaborate headdress of feathers and bones, face paint, dangling earrings, a grass skirt, and high heels, addresses the congregation:

The earth is in menopause and she is suffering. Mother Earth is suffering continuous attacks and pillage by corporations, governments and irresponsible citizens like some of us, like me. We are gathered here today to make a loving vow to the earth and to renew the long-lasting love and commitment of paramours Annie and Beth, nuestras queridas brujas y artistas del amor … We are also gathered here to arouse our passion for the Earth, to take her as our lover. For our bodies are both an integral part of this Earth and the very site for our critical artwork. And by critical, I mean necessary.

With a few strokes of anthropomorphism, Gómez-Peña figures the Earth as female and as no longer capable of reproduction, an incisive revision: “Mother Earth” is extricated from a reproductive economy, figured as a lover who is in menopause; doing so challenges the ideological alignment of women and the planet along the axis of reproductive functions. Considering the Earth as a lover and characterizing the Earth as in menopause offers alternatives for how the Earth—and, perhaps by extension, women and mothers—can be valued, other than as reproductive resources. The Earth figured as “Mother” is said to suffer, and not only through the actions of others; Gómez-Peña positions himself as part of such

---

18 The full text of their homily can be found here: http://loveartlab.org/homily.php?year_id=4.
19 A full transcript of Gómez-Peña’s sermon and Sprinkle and Stephens’ vows can be found here: http://loveartlab.org/vows.php?year_id=4. For the sake of space, I will not do a close line-by-line analysis of this text. Rather, I offer these excerpts to establish the wide-ranging ways in which the participants are interpolated.
attacks and pillaging. From the start, it seems, there can be no claim to innocence; we are, perhaps, all implicated with/in the suffering of the Earth.

At the beginning of this sermon, Gómez-Peña asks rhetorically, “Who are ‘we’?” and in layer upon layer of poetic text, proceeds to map the multiple intersecting territories of the “we” who are gathered—a range of artists, academics, community organizers, sex workers, and environmental activists. The text describes a “we” that is in some places consonant and complimentary, and in others places dissonant and dissident:

We, the Other people,
We, the migrants, exiles, & nomads in permanent process of voluntary deportation
We, the original inhabitants of this Earth
We, the transient orphans of dying nation-states
We, the citizens of the outer limits and crevasses of “Western civilization,” the outsiders of the much touted global project
We, who have no government; no flag or national anthem…other than our art
We, interracial lovers, children of interracial lovers, ad infinitum
We, the New Barbarians …
We, mud people, snake people, tar people
We, bohemians walking on millennial thin ice
Our bodies pierced, tattooed, martyred, scarred
Our skin covered with hieroglyphs & flaming questions
We, the witches who transform trash into wearable art
We, Living Museum of Modern Oddities & Sacred Monsters
We, vatos cromados y ehuas neo-barrocas
We, indomitable drag queens, transcendental putas waiting for love and better conditions in the shade
We, bad boys & bad girls over 50
We, horny angels & tender demons …
We, without guns, without Bibles
We, who never pray to the police or to the army
We, who never kissed the hand of a bishop or a curator
We, who barter and exchange favors & talismans
We, who still believe in community, another community, a much stranger and wider community, community of illness, madness & dissent, community of soil, water, fire and ice
We, frail and defiant; permanently outraged but always tender
We commit through our art to bring Eros back to the Earth
We, the artists & intellectuals who still don’t wish to comply
We, who talk back in rarefied symbols & metaphors against the corruption of
formalized religion & art
We, the urban monks who pray in tongues & rap in Esperanto
We, who put on masks, penachos & wigs to shout
We, who dance against the rhythms of the times …
We, matriots not patriots
We, Americans with foreign accents & purple tongues
We, bilingual, polylngual, cunnilingual …
We, cyber-coyotes & techno-pirates
We, the ghosts of the past in cahoots with the future warriors, in cahoots
with all innocent civilians killed on both sides of the useless War on Terror
…
jumping borders at ease
jumping borders with pleasure
amen.\footnote{This is an abridged quotation of Gómez-Peña’s sermon. The full text can be found here: “Wedding Vows,” Love Art Lab, http://loveartlab.org/vows.php?year_id=4. For the sake of space, I will not do a close line-by-line analysis of this text. Rather, I offer these excerpts to establish the wide-ranging ways in which the participants are interpolated.}

Gómez-Peña charts a diverse community, a contradictory community, a trans-national,
transgressive, anarchist, creative community. “We” come from multiple origins and move in
disparate directions; “we” are both citizens and orphans of nationstates, boys and girls and
drag queens and matriots. The gender and geography, the occupation and ontology, the
name and nationality of this “we” remains in constant flux and refuses to resolve. If Gómez-
Peña’s cartography maps a territory, it is a territory shot through with instabilities and
incoherence, with what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call “lines of flight,” rife with
deterritorialization and reterritorialization moving against any single, unifying, dominant
structure or system.\footnote{“Territorialities, then, are shot through with lines of flight testifying to the presence within them of movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization … everywhere there arise simultaneous accelerations and blockages, comparative speeds, differences of deterritorialization creating relative fields of reterritorialization.” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia}, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 55.} It is a “we” full of resistances—to borders, to regulations, to outsides
and insides—and mired in politics. If the text reads as wildly utopic in its diversity and
inclusivity, its internal tensions, its contradictions, and the places where it marks suffering,
conflict, and war make very clear: this is not a “we” that holds together easily. It describes a collective that cannot finally resolve into homogeny or perfect harmony, and it is given as an address to those gathered for Green Wedding Four, interpolating them as this “we.”

Following Gómez-Peña’s sermon, Stephens and Sprinkle come forward and stand on a plot of sod laid out on stage. Stephens begins, “Today, we would like to massage the Earth. We would like to massage her as if she’s our lover.” Steady drumming and chimes are played somewhere outside the frame of the video as Sprinkle says, “Before we make our vows, we want to get in touch with her … so we’re just going to start massaging her with our feet.” They step side to side to the rhythm of the drums, and they invite the audience and those participants seated on stage to stand, take off their shoes, and massage the Earth with them. “Take some deep breaths; put your consciousness in your feet,” says Sprinkle. The camera zooms out to show a huge group of people standing in a loose circle, facing Sprinkle and Stephens; they all shift their weight from side to side, all doing the same thing but nowhere near unison. The camera zooms in close to Stephens’ and Sprinkle’s bare feet pressing down again and again into the plot of grass. “Feel all that love and support,” says Sprinkle. “I mean, without her, where would we be?” Stephens directs the participants to open their hearts and send love down into the Earth. “You think she’s with us now?” asks Sprinkle. “I think she’s with us,” answers Stephens.

As they begin their vows, two assistants come to their sides, each carrying a basket of dirt. With each passage in their vows, Stephens and Sprinkle take handfuls of the dirt then merge the clumps of earth together between them. They begin by speaking in unison:

Earth, we vow to become your lover.
With these steps, Let us reach your love.

As they hold the dirt between their hands, pieces and particles fall between their fingers.
Through our senses we will become your lover.
Everyday we promise to breath in your fragrance

They take another handful of dirt, hold it to their noses, and breathe in deep. Sprinkle lets out a sigh—“ahhh”—and they crumble the dirt, letting it fall from their hands.

And be opened by you.
Let us not be severed from your love.
Everyday we promise to enjoy your colors
And be surprised
Let us not be severed from your love.
Everyday we promise to taste you

They merge another clump of dirt between their four hands, lean in, and each nibble at its edges.

And be moved.
Let us not be severed from your love.
Everyday ears to the ground we will listen, and we will be changed.

Holding another clump of dirt between them, they tilt their heads together and hold their ears to the soil. They press their fingers through the dirt again, letting its bits and pieces fall and drift to the ground. For the final lines of their vows, they kneel, lowering themselves to the sod, and holding more dirt between their hands.

Let us not be severed from your love.
We promise to love you until death brings us closer together forever.
We are consecrated to you, Earth, through this dirt that we will become.23

Standing between them, Gómez-Peña asks if they will practice these vows everyday to become better lovers to the Earth, to which they reply, “Si lo hare! I DO!” Gómez-Peña then puts this same question to the crowd that faces them, inviting them to make vows to the Earth, and the crowd responds boisterously, shouting, “I do!” Sprinkle and Stephens stare into one another’s eyes, holding hands, sigh, and laugh. Gómez-Peña concludes: “You may

now kiss the Earth.” They do, taking clumps of dirt in their hands and pressing their lips
into soil. Finally, Gómez-Peña declares, “You may now kiss the bride!” Stephens and
Sprinkle kiss passionately, a reminder that this ecosexual wedding is also queer. “I now
pronounce you GREEN!” shouts Gómez-Peña.

The *Green Wedding* swerves between language and bodies, between verbal and
nonverbal performances: Stephens and Sprinkle state their vows and handle the Earth in
between their palms and fingers. Sadie Lune describes the Earth as “kinky,” and then flogs a
blindfolded assistant with a bouquet of roses. Sprinkle and Stephens rub handfuls of dirt
into the bare skin of Madison Young’s body, and she then declares herself a “dirty girl,”
radiating in the aura of their love. Porn stars, academics, ecologists, yogis, sex workers, poets,
singers, dancers, and performance artists from all walks of life populate the stage and the
audience, and Gómez-Peña delivers an impassioned post-modern, anarchist sermon
mapping a heterogeneous collective that coheres contingently within the term “we.” Words
and bodies emerge from and alongside each other within the material-semiotic discursivity of
this performance art event, and this rambling assemblage of bodies and signs makes up a

**Camp Aesthetic and Multiple, Shifting Signifiers**

Across and throughout these bodies and signs, there is an aesthetic dimension to this
wedding—to all of the LAL weddings, in different ways: camp. This wedding is campy. For
all the critical maneuvers and interventions that it enacts, its overall style is big and bright
and colorful, over the top, swinging between reverence and fun, and striking a tone I might
describe as serious play or playfully serious. This superficial campiness does not diminish or
disqualify the criticality of *Green Wedding Number Four*. Rather, camp introduces specific, necessary inflections to the critical interventions that the *Green Wedding* stages. Camp is one mode through which the LAL figures a perspective of the Earth, a perspective that shapes the theory of ecosexuality that this work enables.

Susan Sontag writes, “Camp is a certain mode of aestheticism. It is one way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. That way, the way of Camp, is not in terms of beauty, but in terms of the degree of artifice, of stylization.” Sontag identifies camp as an aesthetic mode that prioritizes artificiality and style, in both how it views and presents the world. Of the stylistic concerns of camp, Sontag delineates extravagance, glamour, and theatricality as its hallmarks. Camp depends on exaggeration and excess, and these magnitudes push camp exorbitantly beyond anything natural and boldly into the kingdom of the artificial. Sontag writes, “All Camp objects, and persons, contain a large element of artifice. Nothing in nature can be campy...” Sontag distinguishes between nature and camp along the lines of artifice; however, when considering the work of the LAL, it is nature itself that becomes the focus of their work. Sontag asserts that nothing in nature can be campy, and yet that which could be called a camp sensibility in the work of the LAL—specifically in *Green Wedding Number Four*—is their stylized presentation of nature and their engagement with it. Sprinkle, Stephens, and their collaborators take the Earth as their lover in elaborate, extravagant, excessively glamorous displays of theatricality. The mode of their performance, their intimate union, their ecosexuality, is run through with artificiality and stylization. This wedding to the Earth is decked out in plumes and sequins, wigs and high-heels, corsets, false-eyelashes, face...

---

25 Ibid., 55.
paint, fairy wings, wireless microphones, and a plot of sod laid out of a stage. This is an ecosexuality articulated through poetry and song, choreography and performance art, ritual and sentiment. The extravagant costuming gives the wedding the feel of a drag show, a carnival, or a pageant, and it is in this mode that the Earth and love for the Earth is invoked repeatedly. And yet, for all its artificiality and excess, for all its playfulness and frivolity, Stephens, Sprinkle, and their collaborators stage this event in all seriousness and sincerity, and the sincerity of their style along with the blatant artificiality throughout their engagement with the Earth is one of the most critical dimensions of their work.

Fabio Cleto describes camp as “an aesthetic of (critical) failure.” Similarly, Sontag writes, “In naïve, or pure, Camp, the essential element is seriousness, a seriousness that fails. Of course, not all seriousness that fails can be redeemed as Camp. Only that which has the proper mixture of the exaggerated, the fantastic, the passionate, and the naïve.” If the LAL is camp because it is a performance of an extravagantly theatrical nature, a nature that is full of the artificial, a nature that fails at being natural, it is not so because it fails to approximate a “natural nature” that remains beyond the reach of the Green Wedding or ecosexuality. Rather, it is a performance of nature itself as having already failed any idealizations of its “naturalness.” June L. Reich describes camp as “the celebration of passionate failures … The triumph of theatricality over substance, it is cynical, ironic, sentimental, pleasure-seeking, naively innocent, and corrupting.” The Green Wedding stages a union with the Earth, with nature, in nature, as part of nature. This is a queer nature, an excessively fabricated nature, a loosely organized and highly stylized nature full of the trappings of culture, not as a failing

imitation of a nature that is not queer, fabricated, or stylized, but as a bold and active participation within a natureculture that is already queer, that has always been fabricated, that emerges continuously from any number of styles and exaggerations. It is in this passionate failure of a natural nature that the LAL seeks pleasure and sentiment, in ways that potentially corrupt traditional sensibilities—regarding nature, marriage, and sexuality—altogether. The camp aesthetic that the LAL performs is a kind of failure, but it is the unabashed failure of an ideal that renders the ideal pleasurably obsolete.

At the end of her “Notes on ‘Camp’,” Sontag writes: “Camp taste is a kind of love … Camp taste identifies with what it is enjoying. People who share this sensibility are not laughing at the thing they label as ‘a camp,’ they're enjoying it. Camp is a tender feeling … Camp taste nourishes itself on the love that has gone into certain objects and personal styles.” Love is also how Sontag begins her essay, writing, “Indeed the essence of Camp is its love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration.” Love, identification, enjoyment, and tender feelings are key values throughout Green Wedding Number Four and the LAL's work more broadly. If camp is a kind of love, a mode of identification and enjoyment, a tenderness toward one's object, as Sontag suggests, then the extravagant, excessive style of the LAL and their ecosexual weddings can be taken as an articulation of love for and identification with the Earth. The aesthetic matters: to the degree that the Green Wedding

---

29 Donna Haraway utilizes the term “naturecultures” as an alternative to the terms nature and culture, as a way of drawing attention to the constitutive relationship between human (cultural) subjects and the object of nature. It is her term for the continuum of co-constitutive natures and cultures, spanning co-evolutions and shared histories of companion species, human and nonhuman, subjects and objects, in which culture and nature are not finally discrete but fully entangled in their co-emergence. The term “naturecultures” indicates the intra-dependency between nature as a construction of culture, as well as nature as an active participant in—not separate from—culture. This does not reduce nature to a mere cultural construction, but suggests that what we understand as nature and how we come to such understanding relies on any number of cultural practices that make nature meaningful in particular, situated ways. See Donna Haraway, “Introduction: A Kinship of Feminist Figurations,” in The Haraway Reader (New York: Routledge, 2004), 2.
30 Sontag, “Notes on ‘Camp’,” 65, italics original.
31 Ibid., 51.
stages an identification, identifying with the Earth, it also identifies the Earth with this campy artificiality. It is an identification with the Earth’s artificiality, and an identification of the Earth with this big, bright, queer, colorful ceremony/community.

Even as I suggest that the camp aesthetic of the *Green Wedding* figures a particular version of the Earth, I hope it has become equally clear throughout my description of the ceremony that *there is no one Earth here*: just as diverse as the participants’ self-presentations and performances are the number of ways that the Earth has been characterized, stylized, and addressed. “The Earth” itself becomes a sign with which to aggregate any number of perspectives, relationships, materials, and ideas that inflect different views of what is understood as “the Earth.” It becomes necessary to ask: What does “Earth” mean in this context, and how does that meaning affect how we might understand the significance of this union, this wedding to the Earth? The Earth is addressed in many different ways from many different positions, in direct, physical, sensory encounters, in language, and through the implications of all the ways in which participants style themselves for the wedding. In other words, we might consider how the actions of the participants can be taken as an address that configures the Earth within a specific relational position—speaking about the Earth, standing and sitting and walking on the Earth, smelling and tasting the Earth, and so on. We might also consider how the participants’ costuming and regalia suggest many different ways that the Earth and “marrying the Earth” are understood by those who gathered for this wedding. A review of the ceremony and its participants, along with Gómez-Peña’s address, makes evident that those who gathered for *Green Wedding Number Four* come from many different walks of life, and espouse through their presentations many different views. The Earth is Romanticized, figured as a forest for fairies and nymphs and other-worldly
The Earth is feminized, referred to as “she” and “her” throughout the ceremony itself as well as the artists’ statement for the event. The Earth is anthropomorphized, described in human terms again and again. The Earth is figured as a “mother,” and is also extricated from a reproductive economy—she is “in menopause.” The Earth is figured as that of which our bodies are an integral part, something from which we are not separate; the Earth is also figured as that which we will one day in death become. The Earth is figured biologically and ecologically as a fecund system of innumerable forms of life. The Earth is eroticized as a lover. The Earth is fetishized as “kinky,” aligned with a deviant sexual position. The Earth is figured as a war zone, a battleground, divided up into contested territories colliding against one another. The Earth is described as a sensory experience, both given to our senses and that to which we are given over by those same senses. And this list could go on.

Importantly, the Earth is figured as polluted, violated, pillaged, and exploited. Gómez-Peña says that the Earth is suffering continuous attacks and pillage; in their artists’ statement, Stephens and Sprinkle write of the Earth: “It’s so painful to watch her suffer—to witness the unbelievable pollution of her oceans, her mountaintops brutally sliced off, deadly chemicals and piles of electronic waste dumped all over her, her premature global warming, the pollution of her air, the holocaust of her trees…” In ways that recall the LAL’s earlier work eroticizing Sprinkle’s cancer and chemotherapy treatment, ecosexuality is used as a way to engage a sick and suffering world. Even while grieving the suffering and pollution of the

[32] Describing Green Wedding Four in her memoir, Madison Young writes, “It could have been a scene out of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, it was so magical and lush with eroticism and creativity. Sparsely dressed green fairies flitted about, artists in elaborate costumes of goddess-like creatures with flowing green garments that looked like nymphs were blowing bubbles.” Madison Young, Daddy: A Memoir (Los Angeles: Rare Bird Books, 2014), 149-150. Young’s account emphasizes accents of a “supernatural Nature,” a Romantic trope familiar throughout ballet, theater, and literature, although only one aspect of the scene here.

Earth, this is the Earth that they marry: an Earth of polluted oceans, an Earth that has been violated, an Earth of deadly chemicals and landfills, polluted air and excessive deforestation. This is an Earth for and with which we are responsible, and it is an Earth of which we are a part. Again, there is no possibility of innocence here. Marrying this Earth is marrying the messes that we have made, that we are making, and of which we ourselves are made. There is no return to a better, more “natural” planet; marrying the Earth will not be a return to Eden.

Certainly there are ideological consequences to each of the ways that the Earth becomes characterized and figured with the Green Wedding; for instance, ecofeminists and queer ecofeminists have written extensively for decades about the implications and consequences of aligning “nature” with “women,” and queer ecologists and biologists similarly address the consequences of projecting frameworks for thinking human sexuality onto the planet and nonhuman forms of life. Rather than explicating the nuances, specificities, and consequences of the many ways that the Earth becomes figured by each performer and participant in Green Wedding Four, I want to emphasize the necessary plurality of how the Earth is addressed and positioned, and consider the potential implications of such plurality.

Like Gómez-Peña’s mapping of “we,” like the diversity of those gathered for the wedding, the Earth that becomes figured is not homogenous or resolvable. It is a figure cobbled together from and between many points of view, emerging both from consistent, shared perspectives—this crowd tends towards a sex-positive Earth, for instance—and from the tensions of contradictions that cannot be reconciled—for example, between points where the Earth seems to be figured as a nature separate from human interference, and the points where the clear artificiality of an unnatural nature are on full display. It is an Earth as described by Deleuze and Guattari, an Earth that is “permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles.”35 Within the context of this one event, the Earth is figured in any number of ways, aligned with any number of ideological values and politics, flowing in all directions and roaming along different trajectories. In effect, it is asked to stand for or with all of these positions, and it is this shifting, multiple, messy figure—these many “Earths” operating under the sign of a single “Earth”—that is taken as a lover, “the Earth” to whom the participants become wed.

Queer ecologist Catriona Sandilands, writing specifically about the assertion of a shared connection between women and nature, demonstrates what could be productive in the alignment of mutually unstable terms. She offers that there is potential for irony and joint subversion in the assertion that women and nature share a tacit connection:

… in resistance to (but located within) hegemonic narratives, the idea of women’s ‘naturalness’ can be taken up as a performative questioning of the solidity of both. If ‘women’ are connected through statements of women’s biological essence to a ‘nature’ that is radically unstable, then queering ‘nature’ can be expanded to embrace the failure of ‘woman’ as a (heterosexualized) coherent identity. If ‘nature’ is connected through

feminization to a ‘woman’ that is not coherent, then the gendering of nature calls attention to its own unrepresentability.36

Following this logic, if Earth comes to stand for and with any number of complimentary and contradictory alignments—functioning as a shifting, unstable signifier—and then becomes the ground for all kinds of analogies and associations—Earth as mother, Earth as lover, Earth as ecosystem, as natural, as supernatural, as kinky, as what our bodies are already part of, as our future yet to come, and so on—then the instability and incoherence of “Earth” in this context potentially introduces instability to these other terms as well. In their mutual instability, the connections made between Earth and these other positions cannot be based on any essence or original nature; alliances between terms must be understood as functional, strategic, and provisional, rather than essential, natural, or ontological. Even the broadest maneuver in characterizing the Earth here—anthropomorphism—presents an opportunity for mutual destabilization. Anthropomorphizing the Earth extends characteristics of the human—the anthropos—to the nonhuman planet, a potentially problematic move that could easily obscure that which is precisely not human about the Earth, a colonizing projection of human values, desires, and terms onto the nonhuman planet. However, this move is not unilateral: to the same degree that anthropomorphism extends human terms to the nonhuman world, such terms and how they have functioned will also adapt and transform. The anthropomorphizing of a plural, unstable “Earth” involves the co-extensive destabilization of what it means to be human. In addition to enacting a union with the Earth, then, Green Wedding Number Four stages crises in signification and ideology that potentially

reverberate throughout how we might think about the planet, humanity, sexuality, gender, bodies, and so on.

**Shared Orientations, Human/Nonhuman Inter- and Intra-actions**

Thus far I have emphasized the range of difference that *Green Wedding Number Four* comprises as well as the destabilizing operations that it accomplishes—naming a diverse community run through with multiplicities and contradictions that do not resolve, staging a sincere and campy love for an unnatural nature, and productively figuring a compound view of the Earth that does not fully cohere. However, the *Green Wedding* and the larger LAL project composes and creates as much as it disrupts. I will now turn my attention to the strategies and mechanisms with which the LAL generates community, holds difference within continuity, and produces an understanding of the world in which the human is folded into the nonhuman. How these strategies work within and beyond *Green Wedding Number Four*, the LAL’s subsequent weddings, and several of their adjacent projects will be integral to my theorization of ecosexuality in this chapter.

Within each of their weddings, within their artists’ statements, and within their *Ecosexual Manifesto*, ecosexuality is made a matter of orientation, and orientations come to function in several different ways. Most ostensibly, ecosexuality is presented as a sexual orientation, specifically an orientation directed toward the nonhuman material world—the Earth, the Sky, the Sea, the Appalachian Mountains, and so on. Within the contexts of the LAL’s annual ecosensual weddings, these are orientations that are shared by any number of participants, volunteers who have chosen to contribute to each wedding, and in doing so, align themselves—metaphorically, ideologically, perhaps even libidinally—with an ecosensual
orientation. Each wedding brings together a diverse collective of participants, and these participants are held together in their heterogeneity, convening around a shared purpose and converging along their shared orientations. Queer theorist Sara Ahmed writes of orientation, “Orientations involve directions toward objects that affect what we do, and how we inhabit space. We move toward and away from objects depending on how we are moved by them.”37 In the Green Wedding—as in each of the LAL’s weddings—bodies are moved by the nonhuman world, orienting themselves toward that world. Each of these performers is moved by the Earth, moved figuratively to volunteer to participate in this event and moved quite literally to travel to the event and move in any number of ways during their performances—dancing, singing, reading poetry, performing headstands, covering themselves in dirt, making vows.

Significantly, the orientation that the weddings’ participants are moved to assume is an orientation that they share. On shared orientations, Ahmed writes:

To direct one’s gaze and attention toward the other, as an object of desire, is not indifferent, neutral, or casual: we can redescribe ‘towardness’ as energetic. In being directed toward others, one acts, or is committed to specific actions, which point toward the future. When bodies share an object of desire, one could say they have an ‘affinity’ or they are going in ‘the same direction.’ Furthermore, the affinity of such bodies involves identification: in being directed toward a shared object, as a direction that is repeated over time, they are also oriented around a shared object.38

The shared orientations of bodies turning toward their shared objects—the Earth, the Sky, the Sea, and so on—produce a figurative gathering around these objects. The bodies of these participants take on an affinity with each other; they bring themselves together to go “in the same direction” and in effect generate a collective identity, and shared ecosexuality. These

38 Ibid., 120 (italics original).
shared orientations are concretized by Stephens and Sprinkle inviting participants to make vows with them. Collectives or communities are formed through this gathering around shared objects and shared vows, collectives that do not preexist their gathering together but are produced as effects of these performance events.

Discussing the role of performance in generating such communities or collective identities, performance studies scholar Richard Schechner writes, “Performances—whether in the performing arts, sports, popular music, or everyday life—consist of ritualized gestures and sounds. Even when we think we’re being spontaneous and original, most of what we do and utter has been done and said before—by us even.”39 Although ritualized activities characterize all performance, Schechner identifies ritual as a category for performance that implies specific structures, functions, processes, and experiences. Schechner writes, “Rituals are collective memories encoded into actions. Rituals also help people (and animals) deal with difficult transitions, ambivalent relationships, hierarchies, and desires that trouble, exceed, or violate the norms of daily life.”40 Creating a liminal space that is in some way separate from everyday life allows people to enact and become selves other than their daily selves. Schechner writes, “[W]hen they temporarily become or enact another, people perform actions different from what they do ordinarily. Thus ritual and play transform people, either permanently or temporarily.”41 Schechner gives weddings as an example of a ritual that transforms the participants, transitioning them from one life role or status to another. In this sense, while rituals provide a temporary space that is in some ways separate from daily life, its effects remain—in some cases, permanently. While many features of the

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
LAL’s eosexual weddings mark these events as outside of daily life—the settings, the elaborate costumes, the stylized campy performances, the sermons and homilies, the vows, and so on—like any wedding, these events are intended to transition and transform the participants. As participants gather together for each of these events, contribute their performance, and are giving the opportunity to make vows with Stephens and Sprinkle, their assumption of a shared eosexual orientation within the ritualized context presents the possibility of lasting or even permanent change.

Specifically addressing the role of ritual in establishing social bonds and communities, Schechner writes: “While in a liminal state, people are freed from the demands of daily life. They feel at one with their comrades; personal and social differences are set aside. People are uplifted, swept away, taken over.”\(^{42}\) This sense of ritual camaraderie—or what cultural anthropologist Victor Turner called “communitas”\(^{43}\)—is generated by the ritual process, through practices that produce an experience of solidarity: all wearing some version of the same color, for instance, or moving and speaking in ways that are shared, unison action, sharing a facing, focus, or orientation, or being part of a group formation, like a circle. Ritual provides an opportunity to feel a part of others, together belonging to something bigger than oneself. Although his language is distinct from Ahmed, and although Schechner does not address the concept of orientation directly, his discussion of the use of ritual in the formation of collective identities and communities echoes Ahmed’s description of shared orientations producing collective affinities or identities. Within the LAL weddings, shared orientations are one of the ritualized mechanisms through which collaborative communities of practice are produced.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 70.
\(^{43}\) Ibid.
In addition to the figurative ecosexual orientation that is shared by participants in each of the LAL’s weddings, the ritual of each event comprises literal choreographies of orientation. Within each ceremony, rather than an audience of witnesses oriented toward two individuals who are, in turn, oriented toward one another—as in many traditional weddings—the orientations in the LAL weddings are multiple and shifting. The relationship between the audience and the performers in each wedding constitutes a relationship of orientation, the performer presenting themselves to the spectators, the spectators directing their attention and focus to each performer. As each performer takes center stage—cycling through the roles of spectator then performer then spectator once again—the spectator/performer orientation takes on any number of objects and focal points. The scale and spatial configurations for each wedding vary: for example, the Green Wedding and the Purple Wedding to the Moon both took place outdoors and included a large number of performers and spectators arranged in a loose circle facing the stage of an amphitheater; the Purple Wedding to the Appalachian Mountains and the White Wedding to the Snow both took place indoors with the audience arranged in pews facing the stage at the front of a chapel space; the Blue Wedding to the Sea and the White Wedding to the Sun took place outdoors with a relatively small crowd arranged in a semi-circle and a circle respectively. However, while the spatial design of the participants varies, the basic practice remains the same: any number of performers come to occupy the center of attention, and as they do so, the shared orientations of the spectators—or the number of objects toward which their shared orientation is directed—multiply. In this very tangible sense, these weddings are structured or choreographed to produce multiple shared orientations, and in doing so, function as the
kind of ritual practice Schechner describes as generating a sense of commonality and community through and along these multiple and shared orientations.

The overlap between ecosexual orientations—toward the Earth, the Sky, the Sea, the moon, the mountains, and so on—and the ritualized activity of spectators orienting toward performers provides several critical possibilities. First, this convention in the LAL’s weddings could be taken as an opportunity for critique: what does it mean to marry the Earth, for instance, to declare one’s orientation toward the Earth, and then to engage in a three-hour performance event in which human body after human body occupies center stage? In the midst of ostensibly becoming oriented toward the Earth, the Sky, the Sea, the Appalachian Mountains, and so on, within the context of the weddings themselves, human bodies remain the center toward which everyone faces. To the extent that the bodies of human performers remain the focal point of each wedding, does this not keep the nonhuman material world at the margins, off centered, out of view? While the nonhuman material world takes a prominent position within the rhetoric of the LAL’s ecosexuality, within many of the performances themselves, human bodies maintain their centrality.

However, while this tension between rhetoric and performance might produce friction, I believe that when taken together as a discursive material-semiotic practice, a more nuanced and critical reading becomes available. To declare oneself to be oriented ecosexually toward the Earth, and then to spend hour after hour of wedding after wedding directing attention toward human bodies, would seem to insist on implicating human bodies and human activity with-and-in-and-as the nonhuman world. To declare oneself oriented toward the Earth in word, then to direct one’s attention toward human bodies in performance, poses the bold statement: these human bodies are part of the nonhuman material world.
Rather than marginalizing the nonhuman by directing attention to human bodies, the LAL’s weddings centralize the role of the human as part of the nonhuman. This implication of the human within the nonhuman, the orientation toward a nonhuman world from which we are not separate, forms the erotic basis of the LAL’s ecosexuality.

Throughout the LAL’s work, the discreteness of the human and the nonhuman is blurred in a number of ways. In both the spoken text and the activity of their vows in *Green Wedding Number Four*, Sprinkle and Stephens commit themselves to be lovers to the Earth through their senses, figuring their love in terms of corporeal, sensorial reciprocity. Through their senses, they open to that which they are not. Phrase by phrase, their vows figure sensation and perception as erotic, loving sites of connection. This is a re-signifying maneuver: emphasizing the senses as pathways along which bodies are entered by the world that they perceive, by textures and sights and sounds and smells and flavors, Stephens and Sprinkle articulate their vows in terms of the incessant inter-coursing between their bodies and the Earth. This re-signification, the senses becoming erotic, is not merely linguistic; it is woven through gesture after gesture, taking handfuls of dirt in their hands, pressing them between their palms, holding dirt close to their eyes and nose and ears, taking it into their mouths. As they speak, they also demonstrate ways in which bodies encounter the earth at the sites of their senses, gesturing toward the countless ways that bodies and the world meet every day.

Philosopher Judith Butler writes that bodies “are always in some sense outside themselves, exploring or navigating their environments, extended and sometimes dispossessed through the senses. If we can become lost in another, or if our tactile or visual or auditory capacities comport us beyond ourselves, that is because the body does not stay in
its own place and because dispossession of this kind characterizes bodily life more generally." Bodies can be lost in others by way of our senses carrying us beyond ourselves, and carrying that which is beyond us into our bodies. Through our senses, we are given over to a world of others that is given to us; this is fundamental to Butler’s ontology of bodies and the basis of Stephens and Sprinkles’ vows to become lovers to the Earth. Importantly, for the LAL, the world of others to whom our bodies are given over is not only human.

Figuring human/nonhuman relations primarily through perceptual/sensorial reciprocity, cultural ecologist David Abram writes:

> The recuperation of the incarnate, sensorial dimension of experience brings with it a recuperation of the living landscape in which we are corporeally embedded. As we return to our senses, we gradually discover our sensory perceptions to be simply our part of a vast, interpenetrating webwork of perceptions and sensations borne of countless other bodies—supported, that is, not just by ourselves, but by icy streams tumbling down granite slopes, by owl wings and lichens, and by the unseen, imperturbable wind.

According to Abram, through our senses, we discover our corporeality as necessarily reciprocal with the land. Drawing on the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Abram discusses the exchange of the conventional contrast between “subjective” and “objective” for a “felt contrast between subjective and intersubjective phenomena.” He writes, “By acknowledging such links between the inner, psychological world and the perceptual terrain that surrounds us, we begin to turn inside-out, loosening the psyche from its confinement within a strictly human sphere, freeing sentience to return to the sensible world that contains us.”

---

46 Ibid., 36.
47 Ibid., 262.
we perceive, by which we are perceived, and to which we are given over through such reciprocal perception. Abram asserts that it is through this intimacy of sensorial reciprocity that we become attentive to the needs of the living world:

There is an intimate reciprocity to the senses; as we touch the bark of a tree, we feel the tree touching us; as we lend our ears to the local sounds and ally our nose to the seasonal scents, the terrain gradually tunes us in turn. The senses, that is, are the primary way that the earth has of informing our thoughts and of guiding our actions. Huge centralized programs, global initiatives, and other ‘top down’ solutions will never suffice to restore and protect the health of the animate earth. For it is only at the scale of our direct, sensory interactions with the land around us that we can appropriately notice and respond to the immediate needs of the living world.48

Abram figures direct, sensory interactions as a potential basis for ethical responsiveness to the living world of which we are a part. What Butler describes as the dispossession of general bodily life by way of the senses, and Abram describes as an intimate sensorial reciprocity that can become the basis of ethical responsibility to the planet, Sprinkle and Stephens figure as erotic, as the mode of their love for the Earth and their eosexuality. Through their senses, they seek to recognize the Earth, and in doing so, recognize themselves as given over to the Earth that they perceive, a loving dispossession that complicates where one ends and the other begins, and stimulates the potential to respond ethically to the world to which they are given over.

Inscribing the human within the nonhuman—blurring the boundary between the nonhuman and the human—is fundamental to the LAL’s eosexuality. In his sermon for the Green Wedding, Gómez-Peña says that “our bodies are both an integral part of this Earth and the very site for our critical artwork.”49 Similarly, in their Ecosex Manifesto, Stephens and Sprinkle write: “In order to create a more mutual and sustainable relationship with the Earth,

48 Ibid., 286 (italics original).
we collaborate with nature…. We hold these truths to be self evident: that we are all part of, not separate from, nature. Thus all sex is ecosex.”

According to the LAL, we are all part of—not separate from—what they call nature. “Nature” is that with which we collaborate in order to create a more mutual and sustainable relationship with the Earth. This nature with which we collaborate is not a separate entity with whom we *inter*-act, but that of which we are all a part. Thus, for the LAL, collaboration with nature is something that is *internal to* a nature that is radically inclusive, or perhaps *nature’s collaboration with/in itself*. For this reason, they write, “…all sex is ecosex.” All sex is ecosex because the “we” that we are is internal to and not separate from this nature. Ecosexuality, then, is not sex with a nature or material world from which we are separate—an *inter-active* sexuality—but is *internal to*—an *intra-active* sexuality *with/in*—the material world of nonhuman relations of which we are already a part. For the LAL, to marry the Earth is to commit to that from which we can never be separate. Ecosexuality is an orientation toward a nature to which we already belong, toward the *intra-active* entanglement with a nature of which we are a part.

I am borrowing this term “*intra-active*” from Karen Barad. She writes:

> The neologism *‘intra-action’ signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies.* That is, in contrast to the usual *‘interaction,’* which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of *intra-action* recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through their *intra-action*…. ‘Distinct’ agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense, that is, *agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don’t exist as individual elements*.

Intra-activity is the fundamental relation within Barad’s *agential realist* account of matter and materiality. Drawing from an elaboration of the quantum physics of Neils Bohr, Barad writes: “…matter does not refer to a fixed substance; rather, *matter is substance in its intra-active*
becoming—not a thing but a doing, a congealing of agency… ‘Matter’ does not refer to an inherent, fixed property of abstract, independently existing objects; rather, ‘matter’ refers to phenomena in their ongoing materialization.” According to Barad, matter is not a static substance; it is always a process of materializing through its involution or involvement with/in itself. Such involutions are becomings, relations that precede and produce relata, in which each related element or term comes to be in and through its relations.

I am suggesting that the ecosexuality that the LAL performs within their weddings and within other contexts stages an intra-active perspective of the human and the nonhuman, a view of the world in which the human is necessarily and indelibly entangled with the nonhuman, a view that can become the basis for care, desire, love, and activism. This view carries considerable resonances with ecological perspectives of life on this planet. Advocating for a “deep ecology” that engages ecological crisis beyond the superficial concerns of pollution and resource depletion, philosopher and environmental activist Arne Naess argues for the “[r]ejection of the human-in-environment image in favor of the relational, total-field image” of organisms as “knots in the … field of intrinsic relations.” Echoing Barad’s definition of intra-activity, Naess writes, “An intrinsic relation between two things A and B is such that the relation belongs to the definitions or basic constitutions of A and B, so that without the relation, A and B are no longer the same things.” He argues that the identification of an “ecological self”—a self that identifies with the world beyond oneself—is necessary for any meaningful, lasting, substantial ecological activism, a view that recalls Abram’s assertion of our perceptual reciprocity and embeddedness within the world as the

52 Ibid., 151 (italics original).
54 Ibid.
basis of ecological responsivity. “We may be said to be in, of and for Nature from our very beginning,” Naess writes. “Society and human relations are important, but our self is richer in its constitutive relations,” and “these relations are not only relations we have to other humans and human communities.”

55 Figuring “self-realization” as a process in which the self is recognized to belong to the world rather than to be separate from the world, Naess asserts that this sense of an ecological self produces “the equal right to live and blossom” as a clear value, and that the quality of life—even the quality of human life—“depends in part upon the deep pleasure and satisfaction we receive from close partnership with other forms of life.”

56 The LAL’s weddings function as a mechanism for realizing this ecological self, for fostering deep pleasure and satisfaction in recognizing our entanglement with the nonhuman world toward which we become oriented. The world is not simply an environment in which we occur or a nonhuman object of desire for an ecosexual subject; rather, through their performance practice, Stephens, Sprinkle, and their collaborators stage desiring orientations toward a nonhuman world with which we are already intra-actively engaged.

Distributing Agency to the Nonhuman World

While I have taken the time to critically theorize the implications of positioning human bodies at the center of eosexual performance artworks, these performances are actually already human-nonhuman interactions, comprising any number of materials alongside the human. For example, within the Green Wedding: recall Sprinkle and Stephens rubbing dirt into the bare skin of Madison Young, Sadie Lune flogging a woman with a

bouquet of roses, or Stephens and Sprinkle making their vows to the Earth, bare feet stepping back and forth on the plot of sod, handfuls of dirt merging between their hands and crumbling to the ground. The following year, in 2010, at the Blue Wedding No. 5 (to the Sky) in Oxford, England, Uri Baruchin presented a garden swing installation, on which participants could swing between the Earth and Sky as part of the wedding. Clare Cochrane offered “Rings on Wings” as the Ring Bearer for the wedding, repelling with a suspension rig down the side of the Grove House outside of which the wedding was held, as if moving through the sky. Tessa Wills offered a piece entitled “Sky Burial (Don’t Forget Your Daily Bread),” in which the form of a human body made of bread was laid out in the yard to be eaten and carried away by birds. That same year, for the Blue Wedding to the Sea in Venice, Italy, performers presented their bodies engaged in all kinds of human/nonhuman material assemblages: Lian Amaris and Sadie Lune, dressed in metallic blue lycra mermaid costumes, rolled on the ground with one another, removing objects from zippered pockets at their crotch and sucking a double-headed dildo. Tim Stüttgen performed a piece entitled “the final castration” that ended with him flinging himself into the canal alongside which the wedding took place. Diana Pornoterrorista, covered in blue body paint, performed a blue anal fountain on a platform in the center of those gathered for the ceremony, squirting water out of her body that ran down onto the ground. Off to one side, Natalie Loveless knelt in front of a bucket of water, carefully wrapping her head tightly in clear filament before repeatedly dunking her bound head into a bucket of deep violet water. Loveless’ piece ended with her cutting herself free of the filament that she had wrapped meticulously throughout the

---

57 For more about the performances and artworks presented as part of the Blue Wedding No. 5, see the photo documentation here: http://loveartlab.org/wedding-album.php?year_id=5; and the program here: http://www.loveartlab.org/PDF/2009Program.pdf.
ceremony; her face bore the deep marks from the twine, a visceral reminder that our bodies carry the marks of our actions: the sea is full of plastic, and our bodies are not invulnerable to this state of things. These examples from the *Green Wedding* and the subsequent *Blue Weddings* are only a sample of the ways in which human performances are already intimate human/nonhuman material interactions throughout the LAL’s work. While human performers persistently occupy center stage, they do so in ways that give prominence to direct, material, sensorial encounters between human bodies and nonhuman materials, staging human bodies acting with or acted on by nonhuman materials, figuring such interactions as central to an intra-active nature of which we are already a part.

Beyond the performance art wedding events, Stephens and Sprinkle have created a number of other projects that stage intimate inter-/intra-actions between the human and the nonhuman: in 2009, Stephens and Sprinkle began leading their first “Ecosexual Walking Tours,” including a “Desert Tour for Lovers.” For Valentine’s Day, they led a group of artists, academics, and activists on a tour in the southern California desert. They collaborated with artist couple Paula Poole and Brett Stalbaum, and invited participants to each locate and share their “V-spot”—a view or plant or place that they found particularly erotic. As tour guides, they pointed out a multitude of phallic or vulvular shapes in the landscape, sensuous textures, delightful colors, and the fragrances of lavender and creosote along their walk. One photo documenting this project shows Sprinkle squatting on the ground, stroking and licking a large, rough, grey rock; another shows Stephens and Stalbaum holding and kissing a smaller stone. There’s a photo of someone mounting and humping a large stone, and

---

58 For more about the performances and artworks presented as part of the *Ecosexual Blue Wedding to the Sea*, see the photo documentation here: http://loveartlab.org/slideshow.php?year_id=5&cat_id=121; and the program here: http://www.loveartlab.org/PDF/VeniceProgramDesign.pdf.
another looking down with Sprinkle’s ample cleavage to the left side of the frame with scattered rocks on the ground to the right. The photographs show the group walking down a patchy dirt path alongside a rocky slope. There are a number of photos that include no human bodies at all: a rock with a shallow pool of damp sand settled into a sink in the top of its surface; several fuzzy, prickly phallic cacti, some thick and curving, others more slender, protruding into the desert air. Other desert plants—cacti and succulents—are low and round or broad and flat; even when they do not suggest anything particularly anthropomorphically “genital” in their forms, they still offer a haptic quality in their waxy surfaces and brightly colored nubs and spines. There are different colorations on the surface of rocks—a splash of red on a striated grey stone, a white spot shaped like a heart on dark granite, a surface that is muddy with browns and greens and oranges and hints of blue. In another photo, a dry tree branch is lined with deep, dark crevices, small splits and cracks that open its surface to its insides. To be clear, this documentation itself is not the substance of this work; these photographs merely trace something of what was done by the participants on the walking tour itself, namely: seeking out sensory experiences with various elements in their surroundings and practicing associating sensation—sights, smells, textures, and so on—with pleasure and eroticism. As with their vows to the Earth in *Green Wedding Number Four*, Sprinkle and Stephens articulate sensory exchange as the basis of an erotic orientation to the nonhuman world, the method of becoming lovers to the Earth. The walking tour provides an opportunity to notice and appreciate sensation, practicing sensation as appreciation and perception as an erotic experience. Stephens and Sprinkle have led similar eosexual walking tours in San Francisco, Boston, and Athens, Ohio.59

59 While the “Desert Tour for Lovers” took place in a remote location in the southern California desert near
Within such human/nonhuman inter- and intra-action, the participation of nonhuman materials is irreducible to the effects of human agency. A vast array of materials goes into the production of each wedding or walking tour, and those materials must be considered as participants, as agents within both the event that took place and how we understand its significance. Barad writes that “…agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has.” Agency is not an attribute or a possession of subjects or objects; it is the space of possibilities that is enabled through specific intra-actions, and the enactment of some possibilities rather than others. The agency of specific events or phenomena can be located within the specific possibilities that are enabled and constrained by the forces at work within that situation; crucially, it is not only the force of “human” participation that exerts the agency of what can and cannot become. In other words, agency in Barad’s account might be reconceived as the capacity for materializing possibilities, where those capacities do not belong to any individual entities, but rather establish the conditions through which such entities emerge within relations, and the possibilities for how such emergences take place—what political theorist Jane Bennett describes as “always a human-nonhuman working group.”

In thinking about the agency of nonhuman materials with-and-in human/nonhuman intra-actions, I return to the scene of the LAL’s eosexual walking tours and the documentation of the “Desert Tour for Lovers.” The walking tours are an exercise in

---

60 The agency of materials, objects, and things is discussed more below and in more detail in Chapter 4.
61 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 178 (italics original).
practicing perception, in eroticizing sensation, but also in following the call of nonhuman materials and the affects they produce. They are a practice in what Jane Bennett describes as a perceptual style, “open to the appearance of thing-power.”65 By “thing-power,” Bennett refers to “the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle.”64 Bennett’s vital materialism gives attention to the capacity of inanimate things and nonhuman materials to affect bodies, to act on other things—including but not limited to human bodies—as a method of rightly ascribing agency to the world beyond the human. She asserts, “Organic and inorganic bodies, natural and cultural objects (these distinctions are not particularly salient here) all are affective. I am here drawing on a Spinozist notion of affect, which refers broadly to the capacity of any body for activity and responsiveness.”65 The LAL’s ecosexual walking tours engage directly with this affective agency of the nonhuman world: Stephens and Sprinkle and those who join them follow the solicitation of nonhuman materials, respond to the seduction of surfaces and smells, sights and sensations of all kinds. In pursuing sensation, the nonhuman world leads, and human bodies follow. Bennett’s vital materialism usefully recasts these kinds of perceptual experiences as more than merely subjective experiences; they are occasions on which the power of nonhuman things acts on human bodies, stirring their capacities and soliciting their response. She writes, “Vital materialists will thus try to linger in these moments during which they find themselves fascinated by objects, taking them as clues to the material vitality that they share with them.”66 Ecosexuals, it seems, linger in these moments as well, giving in to the fascination and vitality of the nonhuman, acted upon as well as acting in and with a

---

63 Ibid., 5.
64 Ibid., 6.
65 Ibid., xvii (italics original).
66 Ibid., 17.
mutually affective material world. What Abram describes as an intersubjective, incarnate, sensorial reciprocity with the living nonhuman world, Bennett distributes to the inanimate and the nonliving as well. In their ecosexual walking tours, the LAL turn their attention to affective and agential relations with both the living and nonliving, the organic and inorganic. This reciprocity is fundamental to how both the nonhuman and the human intra-act with/in each other in and as ecosexual entanglements.

Looking again at Green Wedding Number Four, along with the human collaborators, the “ontologically heterogeneous public” acting within the wedding includes the grove of redwoods where the wedding takes places, the amphitheater, the vast array of materials that comprise costumes, props, set pieces, and sound systems, and even the food materials of the catering. The wedding emerges from the inter- and intra-actions of any number of material relations, encompassing human and nonhuman agencies, the living and the nonliving, the organic and the synthetic, the linguistic, the technological, and so on. The Karen Sinsheimer and Audrey Stanley Festival Glen—an outdoor performance space on the UC Santa Cruz campus originally “discovered” and developed for the Shakespeare Santa Cruz festival in 1982—literally creates a space, a place for the event to occur, large enough to accommodate four hundred participants. While large, there is a limit to the space that the glen can provide, and this limit exerts force on the size and scale of the event, enabling some possibilities and not others. The towering redwoods that surround the glen offer definition to the space: they create, in a sense, a world apart. Like the wooded forest in A Midsummer Night’s Dream.
Night's Dream, for which the glen was first used by the Shakespeare Santa Cruz festival in 1982, this bit of wildness on the University of California Santa Cruz campus, the small wood of trees that surround the grove, quite literally sets it apart from the rest of the campus, from daily life. Concurrently, as an outdoor space, away from the theatrical conventions of the proscenium stage, it is also in a sense more worldly, more a part of the world, of a common piece with the state parks and forests on either side of the campus.

The agency of the space is perhaps most acute in the support it provides for the unfolding of the event itself. Just before their vows, Sprinkle asks, somewhat rhetorically but nonetheless provocatively, “Without [the Earth], where would we be?” The Earth, and more specifically the amphitheater positioned within the redwood clearing, literally gives place to the event; without the Earth, where would we be? I take Sprinkle to suggest that any “we” that we are depends on the place provided by the Earth, its support for the unfolding of our lives; the being of this “we” is already a matter of where and with. Without the Earth—with no where—what being would be possible? What action can take place without place? In her discussion of public protests and collective political action, Judith Butler describes the material environment as a participant in the action that takes place. Addressing political protests such as those taking place in North Africa and the Middle East in 2011, she states, “…the square and the street are not only the material supports for action, but they themselves are part of any theory of public and corporeal action that we might propose. Human action depends upon all sorts of supports—it is always supported action.”


108
Butler, this material support is not only a stage for action; the material environment—and the physical support that it provides—is configured as a part of the action. She states:

So when we think about what it means to assemble in a crowd … we see some way that bodies in their plurality lay claim to the public, find and produce the public through seizing and reconfiguring the matter of material environments; at the same time, those material environments are part of the action, and they themselves act when they become the support for action.  

There can be no performance, no protest, no occupation, no gathering and claiming public spaces without the material support that such spaces provide to those actions. No action—and certainly no collective action—occurs in a vacuum; the place of action provides an enabling condition, the condition of possibility, and must be figured as a participant with/in such action, distributing agency across human bodies and nonhuman materials.

It would be an error to consider the agency or participation of place to be “passive”; despite unfolding through a temporality that is more or less imperceptible to human senses, we must remember that materiality and material persistence are ongoing, active processes. Each of the LAL’s performances is an occasion on which bodies laid claim to a public space for collective action, action which cannot be thought separate from the active support that the physical environment provided. Within Green Wedding Number Four, for instance, the stage itself and the circle of seats that surround the performance space, the performers each taking center stage in turn, and the hundreds of participants seated in the audience, are all held up and held together by the Earth that they had gathered to marry. In a very real way, the Earth supports this union; or, thought differently, the constant, necessary support of the Earth that

71 Ibid.
72 See Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway; Bennett, Vibrant Matter; Judith Butler, Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex” (Great Britain: Routledge, 1993); and Elizabeth Grosz, Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
enables the *Green Wedding* specifically—and all life on this planet much more broadly—is an aspect of the long-term, significant relationship that this wedding sought to recognize.

**Staying With The Trouble, Marrying The Mess**

In addition to embedding human performers within the nonhuman world and appreciating nonhuman elements as constituents within the LAL’s work, these works should also be considered for how they are a part of the world that they eroticize. These artistic practices enact ways of thinking about or approaching the world, but they also participate in this world, part of how the world unfolds. If we are not separate from the Earth, if, as Gómez-Peña said in his sermon, our bodies are both part of this Earth and the site for critical artwork, then such critical artwork, including *Green Wedding Number Four*, is part of the Earth that was married. The diverse continuity of performers and performances, the stage, the seating, the sound systems, all of the costumes and sequins and feathers and tulle that make up the camp theatricality of the ceremony, all those materials carried to this site and whatever materials or waste were taken away afterwards: all of this must be considered as part of the already messy, incoherent figure of “the Earth” toward which the event was oriented. To marry the Earth of which we are already a part is to figure that activity as part of that to which we commit ourselves. *Green Wedding Number Four* is not only a wedding to the Earth; it is also a way of being part of the Earth.

In order to recognize human/nonhuman interactions as inherent within the intra-active materiality of the Earth, and in order to understand the LAL’s performance artworks as part of the larger nonhuman world toward which they are oriented, it is necessary to return to that which was already signaled by the artificiality of the LAL’s camp aesthetic and
the figuring of the Earth as polluted, pillaged, and brutalized. If, as the LAL suggests, we are part of, not separate from, Nature, and if the LAL’s weddings are themselves part of the Earth that is wed, then the material collective of human and nonhuman actants that each wedding comprises reminds us: no idealized, “pure,” “natural” or “wilderness” Earth was ever within sight/site within these performances. If there is a “nature” here, it is not simply “natural,” but a “natureculture” in which human culture is fully embedded within and coextensive with nonhuman nature. Staging human/nonhuman interactions at the center of each wedding literalizes the role of the human with-and-in the nonhuman world toward which ecosexuality becomes oriented. There is no Earth here without humans and human activity; this is an Earth for and with which we are responsible, and it is an Earth of which we are a part.

Centralizing human/nonhuman inter- and intra-activity functions as a reminder that marrying this Earth is marrying the material-semiotic messiness that we have made and of which we ourselves are made, where incoherent signifiers and ecological responsibility collide. There can be no innocence here. In this sense, I consider Stephens and Sprinkle’s ongoing ecosexual weddings to be strategies for what Haraway calls “staying with the trouble,” an effort “to be responsible inside living and dying in knotted, mortal naturecultures and pastpresents.” She writes that staying with the kind of mundane trouble that “terran critters, including people,” must live requires “facing those who come before, in order to live responsibly in thick copresents, so that we may bequeath something liveable to those who come after.” Even as each wedding turns toward a different aspect of our

74 Ibid.
world—the Earth, the Sky, the Sea, and so on—each continues to stay with the trouble of the world as it is, the world that emerges in part as a consequence of human participation in vast human/nonhuman working groups, and commits to staying with the trouble and messiness of this world. We cannot undo what has been done, and there is no return to a better world, but perhaps by maintaining such commitments, bequeathing something liveable to those who come after might become possible. Resonant with Haraway, Stephens and Sprinkle conclude their Artist’s Statement for the *Green Wedding* saying, “Ultimately we hope to do our part to leave our lover Earth in a nice afterglow for future generations so that they too may experience all of the pleasures, excitement and satisfactions that we have experienced with her in our lifetimes.” 75 The work of the LAL is to love and delight in the Earth as it is while remaining active participants in shaping the world that will follow.

This sense of marrying the mess and staying with the trouble is made explicit in a number of the LAL’s projects following *Green Wedding Number Four*. In 2009, when they married the Sea in Venice, queer feminist scholar Beatriz Preciado declared as their Anti-Priest officiate:

> To marry the Sea today, in 2009, is to embrace a sick being. The Sea we are going to marry is, as we ourselves are, polluted, sick, but alive and historically charged. During the last two hundred years the human species has contributed to poisoning the water, killing fish and water mammals, threatening the health of the Sea and therefore putting at risk the survival of the planet. 76

Preciado considers the sickness of the Sea to require surrendering our anxieties around immunity, to accept that as part of the Sea, we are already infected, and that purity is an impossible ideal that enables all kinds of violence against “the other” that we fear. In order

to marry such a sick Sea, Preciado asserts that we must “get rid of fear of the other, fear of queerness, fear of sickness, fear of ugliness, fear of the grotesque, fear of the virus, fear of death.” There is no way to marry the Sea—or any part of our world—while denying its illness and pollution or the ways in which we ourselves are contaminated along with it. There is no way to become immune to or from a troubled planet of which we are a part. For the LAL, marrying the Sea required committing to the history and effects of those who came before, from which this sick Sea emerged, and accepting their place—their responsibility—within the world as it is.

Staying with the trouble, in 2010, the LAL married the Appalachian Mountains as a form of protest against the increasing use of mountain-top removal (MTR) in coal mining in the Appalachian Mountains. The following year, in 2011, they married the coal in Gijon, Spain. Marrying the mountains was a commitment to that which has been devastated by MTR—not only the mountains themselves, but the ecosystems that the mountains support, the incalculable number of lives and forms of life that have been threatened, violated, and compromised in the pursuit of fossil fuels. The Purple Wedding to the Appalachian Mountains was populated by activists in the fight against MTR, and those living and struggling with its effects in the Appalachian region. Eco-chaplain Sarah Vekasi spoke on behalf of community organizers and environmental activists working in and around Appalachia, describing the importance of their work and her work supporting those communities. The late Larry

77 Ibid.
79 Mountain-top removal (MTR) is a form of surface mining in which explosives are used to remove large amounts of mountain to expose underlying coal seams. The excess rock and soil is dumped into nearby valleys.
80 Vekasi, who holds a Masters of Divinity from Naropa University, coined the term “eco-chaplaincy” and defines it as “a form of inter-religious and secular ‘spiritual’ support for people engaged in environmental and
Gibson, renowned anti-mining environmentalist and founder of the Keepers of the Mountain Foundation, delivered a tearful homily of personal stories of living, growing up and growing old in West Virginia, on land ravaged by MTR. I performed a Butoh solo entitled Re-Membering the Mountains (discussed more in Chapter 5) as demonstration of grief and mourning. It was a somber event, focused as much on the tragedy and violence of MTR—the tangled knots of living and dying—as on the beauty of the Appalachian Mountains.

The following year, the Black Wedding to the Coal in Gijon, Spain, staged a commitment to coal, that which has been desired within the fossil fuel industry—that which fuels devastation throughout industrialized life on this planet. As Graham Bell Tornado said in his “Homily to the Coal” during the 2011 ceremony:

Coal played an important role in the beginning of our age of destruction, it powered the industrial revolution … there is also a dark history of coal—deaths in the mines, pollution. It played a significant role in the fabrication of our age of individualism, consumerism and Neo-liberalism and it forms part of our ‘Hysteria.’

Sprinkle wrote of this wedding, “Many of our performers had family members who died in coal mines or were effected by mining, so there is a real intense emotional component to this performance.” What I observe in the documentation is a bacchanalian intensity: at the beginning of the video documentation, performers are laughing and smiling in various states of social justice work to prevent burn-out and inspire and sustain long-term vision. The goal is to provide support for the … transition from the Industrial Growth Era towards a Life-Sustaining society.” She writes, “While chaplains provide spiritual support to any member of the institution [where] they are employed—be it the military, a hospital, prison, hospice, or school; eco-chaplains provide spiritual support for organizations, communities and individuals working on behalf of Earth” (http://www.ecochaplaincy.net/ecochaplaincy.html). Her work focuses primarily on those working in and around the fight against MTR and ecological devastation.

81 “Homily to the Coal by Graham Bell Tornado,” Love Art Lab, http://loveartlab.org/slideshow.php?year_id=7&cat_id=187. The homily was delivered in Spanish during the wedding itself but has been translated on the Love Art Lab’s website.

of undress, kissing and licking each other; later, smoke wafts through the air like incense as a performer hangs ropes of coal from her nipples and pours hot black candle wax across her chest. Another performer throws herself haphazardly to the ground atop a bed of scattered coal, rolling violently over and across it; they are joined by two others who are only partially clothes, and together they roll over each other and the coal, black streaks marking and accumulating on their skin. Another performer pulls a piece of black coal out of her vagina, wets it with her saliva, and rubs it over her naked body, blackening her flesh. A woman with large breasts strips away her top and rubs her head, face, arms, and breasts with black paint while wailing; she strips off more of her clothes, and then spins and whirls around the small stage, the paint drying across the surface of her skin. Stephens and Sprinkle make vows—in Spanish—holding large pieces of coal, and the crowd repeats their vows along with them. They bend each other over and kiss each other’s asses for a “dirty kiss,” then kiss the chunk of coal they hold. The video documentation of the wedding crossfades to Sprinkle and Stephens naked in a bed while participants lay pieces of wet coal over the surfaces of their bodies.

The mood of the *Black Wedding to the Coal* swerves from joyful to painful, ecstatic to irreverent, solemn to tender. While pain and distress are staged again and again by different performers, there are also moments that seemed almost orgiastic, hedonistic. What I cannot ignore when reviewing the documentation, what I believe to be critical to how this wedding functions, is the presence of the coal itself. It would have been a different wedding entirely to speak of coal as fuel for our industrial age of destruction, to acknowledge the deaths caused by coal mining, then to stage an ascetic wedding that abstained from the

---

83 Because this wedding took place in Spain, all of the text form the ceremony itself, including the program, is in Spanish. My observations are here primarily visual.
consumption of coal or protested its use. Instead, acknowledging the personal tragedy and planetary destruction that has been driven by coal, the LAL and their collaborators staged a wedding in which they rolled around on top of coal, pulled it from their bodies, rubbed it into their skin, caressed and kissed chunks of it, laid naked with it lying on top of them, and carried the dark traces of those encounters as marks on their flesh. In this bacchanal of consumption, these bodies do not remain clean. Rather than disavow their complicity in the violence that surrounds coal, Stephens, Sprinkle, and their collaborators boldly figure themselves within this mess. I suggest that this stages the non-innocence required to marry both the mountains and the coal, to stay with all sides of the trouble—as both activists and consumers—and to engage intimately with the intra-active world that we have made and are making, the world by which we are made.

While I find the LAL’s work to make critical moves toward refiguring the human as embedded within the nonhuman, and while I think they responsibly address the human role in producing the mess of a world that they marry, in as much as the weddings themselves are part of the world that they marry, the question remains whether these practices themselves produce a more livable world. I have suggested that the LAL’s work demonstrates an ecosexuality that orients human people toward their entanglement with and in the nonhuman world, and I will suggest that doing so is not only inherently erotic but also enables a form of ethical responsiveness. However, the weddings themselves—while responding to the ecological trouble in which we are not innocent—do not directly diminish or resolve the material conditions of such trouble. As the *Black Wedding to the Coal* demonstrates perhaps most explicitly, not only do the weddings participate in the material, ecological reality of the world, they can also actively participate in the very consumption
processes in which we are not innocent. While the LAL’s practices are fully material, the contributions and interventions made by their work are primarily conceptual, theoretical, and philosophical, generating possibilities for how we might understand sexuality and the entanglement of human life with/in the larger nonhuman world. I believe these possibilities in turn enable conditions for more attention to our part in the world, for how we might respond more ethically, and for how ethical responsiveness can emerge from ecosexuality.

On Eroticism and Love:

Annie: “All sex is love, in a way.”

Beth: “Not all sex is love, honey. Some sex is just hot, sexy, fucking.”

Annie: “I think everything is a love. That’s love. That’s love. It doesn’t have to be romantic love. Love comes in all kinds of forms. Find the love in the sex, or find the sex in the love.”

Through close attention to the material-semiotic practices of the LAL’s eosexual weddings and subsequent projects, it should be clear that our intra-active entanglement with the nonhuman world—the implication of the human with-and-in-and-as the nonhuman, the figuring of sensorial reciprocity as the basis of eroticism—is integral to the ecosexuality that the LAL performs and to any theory of ecosexuality that can be developed with their work. These strategies and elements constitute not only the conditions of Stephens and Sprinkle’s artistic practice; they also suggest a theory of erotic relationality. However, rather than suggesting that Stephens and Sprinkle eroticize this fundamental, material entanglement with

---

84 Interview with Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens, December 19, 2009, San Francisco, California.
the nonhuman world, I will theorize the ways in which this particular understanding of
materiality is already erotic. While their motto has long been “eroticize everything!”,
Stephens and Sprinkle’s eosexuality will be best understood as the recognition of that which
is already erotic within our constituting relation with the nonhuman world, what Naess
describes as ecological self-realization.

Intra-activity, or what Naess describes as a “field of intrinsic relations,” in which
the relation belongs to the definitions of the terms that it relates, is a truly erotic state of
affairs. Georges Bataille claims that “the whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-
contained character of the participators as they are in their normal lives.” Bataille’s account
of eroticism insists that the basis of eroticism—in both sexuality and death—is the desire for
and experience of continuity or continuous being in a world in which we—human beings—
are regularly figured as discontinuous, individuated embodied subjects. The eroticism of this
desire for pervasive continuity and disindividuation lends a violence to sexuality and a
sexuality to violence; both disrupt—“destroy” even—the self-containment of individually
bounded persons. Eroticism transgresses the seemingly stable borders that separate one
individual from another, one’s insides from one’s outsides. In that recognizing ourselves as
part of—not separate from—the Earth toward which we become oriented transgresses or
disrupts any sense of ourselves as self-contained, completely discontinuous, separate, or fully
individuated, this orientation is inherently erotic: we turn toward the world, the world of
which we are a part, and in doing so, we are undone, opened up. As what we know or at
least experience so acutely in sexuality—our penetrability and permeability, our openness

and vulnerability—becomes a condition of our ecological entanglement, of materiality itself, it seems eroticism saturates our world. Following Naess’ account of deep ecology and Barad’s account of matter, in which relations precede relata, in which continuity is the condition for and constitution of any discontinuous material being, we might say that there is an eroticism in this account of matter, or that matter itself is erotic. Barad’s account of matter, like Stephens and Sprinkle’s eosexuality and Naess’ deep ecology, offers perspectives of ourselves, of nature, of matter itself, as continuous, intra-active, no longer self-contained, but fully entangled with the world. Coming to these perspectives already entails a loss of individuation, a loss of the clear conceptual separation of self and other: an erotic experience of the world of which we are a part, an eosexual orientation.

In what I find to be a radical reorientation of sexuality, within the LAL’s eosexuality, there is no clear distinction between desiring subjects and their objects of desire. When the object of desire is that from which one is not separate, then it seems that relational inseparability itself becomes that toward which desire is oriented. Or, in other words, an eosexual orientation is directed not toward the Earth as a discrete entity or environment, but toward an intra-active entanglement with-and-in the world from which we are not apart, eroticizing not an object but a relation. Eosexuality can then be understood as an orientation toward continuity and connection with/in the nonhuman material world, toward the loss of separable, bounded selves, toward relational disindividuation and entanglement. Such entanglements “are not [merely] a name for the interconnectedness of all being as one, but rather for specific material relations of the ongoing differentiating of the world,” where difference is internal to relations that condition the emergence of relatively
different beings. Our entanglement with the Earth is not the reduction or elimination of difference, but a realization of what Barad calls “enfolded traces of othering.” She writes, “Othering, the constitution of an ‘Other,’ entails an indebtedness to the ‘Other,’ who is irredubibly and materially bound to, threaded through, the ‘self’—a diffraction/dispersion of identity.” Ecosexuality and the multiplicity of orientations produced within the LAL’s ecossexual weddings refigure both the participants who orient themselves toward the nonhuman world and the nonhuman world toward which they orient themselves. Self and other are figured as different but not discrete, already given over to and threaded through each other. I am not claiming that this is how each and every participant in the LAL’s weddings experienced those events or their effects on themselves; rather, by giving careful attention to the specific characteristics of the weddings in the context of the LAL’s larger project, I am suggesting that these are epistemological and ontological possibilities that their work suggests.

In as much as the LAL performs ecosexuality as an erotic orientation, and in as much as this relationality is enacted in both word and deed, we must also consider that from the start, they are also performing a style of love. Admittedly, there is a messiness between love and sexuality in the LAL’s project. Often, they articulate their ecosexuality as love and care for the Earth. Sexuality and eroticism function as mediums through which that love and care function.

88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 This ambiguous relation between love and sexuality is not original to the LAL. Indeed, it could be argued that the whole of psychoanalytic theories for love understand love as a libidinal drive towards attachment to either a “love-object” or to a fantasy that exists in excess of any object but becomes projected onto any number of objects. Thus, psychoanalytically, any final distinction between love and sexuality cannot hold. While psychoanalysis is not a major framework in this chapter, I reference it to cite a considerable theoretical precedent for the messy entanglement of love and sex. For more on this topic, see Lauren Berlant, Desire/Love (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2012).
care are expressed. Love and sexuality are folded into each other throughout the LAL’s work; thus, any theory of ecosexuality that I develop with their work must also consider the role of love within such a theory.

To invoke the eroticism of Bataille is to also acknowledge that eroticism and sexuality can entail both violence and violation. Ecosexuality as I have theorized it within this chapter thus far does not necessitate any particular ethical relationship to the nonhuman world; rather, it extends sexuality as a way of thinking our ecological entanglements. Environmental destruction and devastation, the violence and violations of activities such as mountain-top removal, chemical spills, and certain practices within the global agro-industrial complex, even the less morally charged language of “climate change” within what has been called the *anthropocene:* none of this is necessarily prohibited within a view of ecosexuality as the erotic recognition of our entanglement and continuity with the nonhuman world. In as much as rape and sexual violence are conceivable within our existing understandings of interpersonal, human sexuality, such violent relations remain conceivable and transposable within ecosexuality thought at ecological and planetary scales. The significant condition to the LAL’s ecosexuality—what I am convinced makes Sprinkle and Stephen’s ecosexuality an ethical orientation toward both sexuality and the nonhuman world—is the structure within which their ecosexuality emerged: the Love Art Laboratory. It was within the seven-year project of exploring, generating, and celebrating love that Sprinkle and Stephens declared themselves ecosexuals and began practicing their ecosexuality. Love, then, conditions the constitution and emergence of this ecosexuality, and as such, requires attention in order to more fully explicate the ecosexuality of the LAL.
I hesitate to write about love or to attempt to theorize love. As Jean-Luc Nancy writes, “The thinking of love, so ancient, so abundant and diverse in its forms and in its modulations, asks for an extreme reticence as soon as it is solicited. It is a question of modesty, perhaps, but it is also a question of exhaustion: Has not everything been said on the subject of love?”

Stephens similarly writes about the LAL project:

We understand that love is simultaneously a rich and a problematic proposition to suggest as an engine for social change through art. It is a highly contested site of inquiry, especially in the context of critical theory and performance art. Love has been evoked countless times with mixed results ranging from disastrous acts committed for the love of God, to the banal love that one consumes on the pages of magazines such as the National Enquirer. Love has been exploited on such a massive scale through pop music, films, and advertisements that it has been rendered virtually meaningless. Exploring love is taboo in many of the artistic and intellectual circles we inhabit.

Yet, she says, the LAL loves taboo, and they believe that love “can be a powerful motivating force for enacting cultural, political, and creative change if offered in a non-judgmental, non-coercive, experimental, and creative manner. Love can create joy and ... engender empathy.” Stephens accounts for both the problems that the use of the concept of love carries, then proceeds to claim the cultural, political, creative potential of love, an ethical engine for social change—what I am considering to be the ethical conditions from which the LAL’s ecosexuality emerged. I will not presume to offer a comprehensive theory of love, nor do I intend to offer an authoritative theory of how the love of the LAL must be thought; rather I intend to offer a partial theory of love crafted from the thoughts of several philosophers, as a suggestion for how love might be thought and as a demonstration of how a theory of love might provide an ethicality to the LAL’s ecosexuality. This means that not

---

93 Ibid.
only might love be thought or theorized differently—of course it has and will be—but also that the project of the LAL and their ecosexuality might be understood differently when considered through other theories of love.

Judith Butler, specifically considering the effect and efficacy of saying “I love you” as a speech act, writes that to say “I love you” is to submit to a cliché, to figure oneself within a specific syntactical structure, to figure one’s relationship to another through the cliché of this syntax. She writes:

In saying ‘I love you,’ a certain ‘I’ is installed in one of the most repeated phrases in the English language, a marketed phrase, one that belongs to no one and to anyone. One risks full evaporation into an anonymous citationality: I speak as countless others have spoke, say the same words, and you are equally substitutable at such a moment. On the one hand, the citationality of the speech act offends our sense of singularity or even authenticity, if that is a value we have. On the other hand, it is precisely through the citationality of the speech act that the body emerges in a specifically linguistic form.  

Within the elocution of the words “I love you,” there is the risk of a loss of one’s specific sense of self, the appearance of a cliché in one’s place, the installation of an anonymous “I” in relation to an equally anonymous “you.” With Butler, we have already considered that our bodies are already given over to a world of others by way of the senses; in as much as a world is given to our perception, we are in a sense dispossessed, given over to that world. Here Butler notes that in giving oneself—one’s body to and in these words—there is a loss of some part of oneself, one’s particularity or the specificity of the somatic sense of oneself that is conveyed through the words “I love.” This is of course true not only of the words “I love you,” but a function of language more generally: in submitting ourselves to language, we both express and constrain ourselves to terms that do not originate with us, that are not of

---

our making or even entirely of our choosing. We articulate ourselves within the available terms—the terms we have been given—and in doing so we both actualize some part of who we might be and accept the limitations that the available terms put on our experience of ourselves. Within the available terms of saying “I love you,” we venture what Butler calls a “wager”: saying “I love you” puts oneself at risk, exposes some part of oneself, one’s body, one’s experience of oneself/one’s body in relation to another, with the desire or hope that such a revelation will be accepted, reciprocated even. She writes, “To say ‘I love you’ is, through the strange logic of citationality and transversivity, to be located over here and over there, at risk of disappearing into anonymity or of being exposed in ways that sometimes seem impossible to bear.” Love—or more specifically, saying “I love you”—entails an amount of risk: the risk of losing oneself within the linguistic cliché, the risk of exposing oneself, the risk that the love that one has expressed in this utterance will not be reciprocated. In speaking one’s love, one gives oneself over to the risky, uncertain interval between “I love you” and “I love you, too,” and in that interval, one might become lost.

The theme of uncertainty in regards to love surfaces for Butler in an earlier text entitled “Doubting Love” in which Butler considers her own uncertainty about love, specifically through a concise analysis of a single sentence from Freud. Freud writes, “A man who doubts his own love may, or rather, must doubt every lesser thing,” and in response, Butler considers what it means to doubt one’s love, how doubting one’s love might be a question of gender—it is for Freud “a man” who doubts—how doubting one’s love might also mark a doubting of oneself, and what we might understand of love by way of Freud’s

95 Ibid., 237.
assertion.  

She concludes that it seems, for Freud, “the goal is not to doubt one’s own love, to come to have certainty in it, and to somehow know oneself in the dispossession that love provides,” and writes, “I am the one who loses myself here, in this way, under these conditions; who finds the following irresistible; who falls then and there; who wants, who idealizes, who pursues; who cannot forget this or that thing, wants it again, cannot stop wanting it easily; who wants to be pursued, or to become unforgettable, irreplaceable.” It is significant I think that Butler figures herself as an “I” that becomes lost in this way, under these conditions, the conditions of both loving and contemplating love. It is not certain how it is that the “I” comes to be lost, but perhaps this very uncertainty is itself how the “I” becomes lost. It matters that it is a “one” whose self is lost, a loss of one-self. The one is lost where one cannot resist, where one falls, where one wants, where one wants again, where one cannot stop wanting. The loss of a self it would seem is a loss of a singular self, a singularity that becomes lost in wanting—and this loss of a singular self for me recalls both the continuity that Bataille figures as the basis of eroticism and that which is erotic about ecological entanglement and material intra-activity. Consistent with the presentation of the LAL’s ecosexuality, in love, a “one” that “I” am becomes lost, and perhaps in this loss there comes the realization that there was no fully individuated “one” in the first place.

Butler goes on to write:

I cannot pretend to know myself at the moment of love, but I cannot pretend to fully know myself. I must neither vacate the knowledge that I have—the knowledge, after all, that will make me a better lover—and I cannot be the one who knows everything in advance—which would make me proud and, finally, loveable. Love always returns us to what we do and do

---

97 Ibid., 65.
not know. We have no other choice than to become shaken by doubt, and to persist with what we can know when we can know it.98

The moment of love does not allow for the pretense of knowing oneself, but then, as Butler has addressed extensively elsewhere, full knowledge of oneself is not available to any of us.99

Uncertainty is not only a condition of love, but a condition of the self. She writes that she must not vacate the knowledge that she has, nor can she be the one who knows everything in advance, a one who can proceed with certainty, specifically the certainty that she is loveable. Between inhabiting partial knowledge and foreclosing the possibility of being the one who knows everything in advance, the singular becomes plural: it follows that love returns us to what we do and do not know; we have no other choice but to persist with what we can know when we can know it. The “I” that becomes lost is replaced by an “us” and a “we” who stand in its place, and it seems to me that Butler is signaling something about love in this syntax. Partial knowledge and uncertainty become shared orientations; if love returns us to what we do and do not know, it is significant that in love, the uncertainty that I face, to which I turn, becomes uncertainty that we face, to which we are re-turned. What we can know when we can know it becomes a companion with which we must persist; the temporal delay of knowing is not that which we must overcome, but is figured as a condition of our persistence. Love, then, would seem to be the persistence of us following the loss of one-self when faced with uncertainty and that which we do not yet know. Love is a matter of one becoming more-than-one.

Alain Badiou’s In Praise of Love begins with a defense of love against what Badiou describes as the contemporary joint liberal and libertarian threats of safety and comfort, a

---

98 Ibid., 65-66.
99 This is a theme throughout Butler’s oeuvre, but becomes most central in Giving an Account of Oneself (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).
world in which the media proposes the possibility of “zero risk” love—such as online dating, through which presumably all the variables can be known in advance—and arrangements made primarily for ongoing pleasure, where “love” is one of many hedonistic alternatives, and thus unnecessary. He suggests that love is an antidote to the thought that individuals only pursue their own self-interest in today’s world, offering the possibility that “you can experience the world from the perspective of difference.”

His view is that love is “a quest for truth.” He writes:

> What kind of truth? you will ask. I mean truth in relation to something quite precise: what kind of world does one see when one experiences it from the point of view of two and not one? What is the world like when it is experienced, developed and lived from the point of view of difference and not identity? That is what I believe love to be. It is the project, naturally including sexual desire in all its facets, including the birth of a child, but also a thousand other things, in fact, anything from the moment our lives are challenged by the perspective of difference.

There are several shortcomings to Badiou’s philosophy of love, namely its recurring presumption of heterosexuality—although he does later reject the birth of a child as a necessary event for love on the basis that it would require denying the possibility of love to sterile couple and homosexuals who do not reproduce—and its insistence on formulating love as an experience of the couple, of two, and not more—which would foreclose the possibility of polyamory and other structures for multiple loves. He also rejects love as an ethical sentiment and insists that love is distinct from politics in that politics is a project of a collective of individuals and love is a project of Two who are irreducible to One. Despite these limitations, however, there are several points that can be usefully retained from Badiou:

---

101 Ibid., 22-23.
102 Ibid., 50.
103 Ibid., 24.
104 Ibid., 53-76.
first, he insists that love necessarily involves a separation or disjuncture—the differences between individuals—and the production of a Subject of love that views the world through the prism of such differences. “Love isn’t simply about two people meeting and their inward-looking relationship: it is a construction, a life that is being made, no longer from the perspective of One but from the perspective of Two.”\textsuperscript{105} Read alongside Butler, we can consider that the loss of self in love is not the exchange of one-self for an-other, a process of one-to-one substitution, but a loss of one because one has become more-than-one—for Butler, “we,” for Badiou, Two, and for the LAL, many. Thinking Badiou in conjunction with the LAL is productive in several ways: Badiou’s philosophy of love contributes to how we might understand love as a condition of Sprinkle and Stephen’s ecosexuality, while the LAL’s practice contributes multiple enjoinders to Badiou’s philosophy of love. The LAL offers queer unions in place of heterosexual couples; they also propose that love as the construction of a life from the perspective of difference can be between and across many more than two, and involves much more than the human.

Although Badiou argues that his philosophy of love is distinct from an ethical project, I do not agree. I find the pursuit of a world produced from the perspective of difference—where difference cannot be resolved into any individual position or collapsed into sameness, where what is multiple must be maintained within the composition of any “we” that we are—is an exemplary strategy toward co-existence. While closely resembling ethical mandates offered by other scholars,\textsuperscript{106} Badiou articulates these concerns as a

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 29.

\textsuperscript{106} Donna Haraway among others calls for “the loving care people might take to learn how to see faithfully from another’s point of view” in “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” in \textit{Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature} (New York: Routledge, 1991), 190. She demonstrates throughout her oeuvre that the knowing subject is always partial, located, and finite, always in process and never finished, and that co-existence requires us to see together “without claiming to be
philosophy of love, recognizing “love” as the framework in which the LAL’s ecosexuality emerges, Badiou’s philosophy assists in articulating what is ethical within their ecosexuality.

Read together, the love of Butler, Badiou, and the LAL resonate with thoughts on love offered by deep ecologist Arne Naess. Naess first quotes Erich Fromm, who writes:

> Love of others and love for ourselves are not alternatives. On the contrary, an attitude of love toward themselves will be found in all those who are capable of loving others … Genuine love is an expression of productiveness and implies care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge. It is not an “effect” in the sense of being effected by somebody, but an active striving for the growth and happiness of the loved person, rooted in one’s own capacity to love.\(^{107}\)

Naess deploys Fromm’s definition of love towards his own theory of ecological self-realization, arguing that a true environmental ethics will not rely on self-sacrifice out of love for Nature, but understanding a love of the planet as an act of self-love. He writes, “Through identification [people] may come to see their own interest served by conservation, through genuine self-love, love of a widened and deepened self.”\(^{108}\) He argues, more than twenty years before the LAL’s *Green Wedding Number Four*, that we should begin to move towards an ecological ethics based not on duty or obligation but out of an expanded sense of self in which we take pleasure and joy. He writes, “As I see it we need the immense variety of sources of joy opened through increased sensitivity towards the richness and diversity of life, landscapes of free Nature … Part of the joy stems from the consciousness of our another.” Such joining requires engaging in “otherworldly conversations”—conversations with others and their worlds that are not our own. These are conversations that cannot, must not, resolve, but must remain ongoing, a questioning together with positions not our own that orients us toward a future of other possible worlds. See Donna J. Haraway, “Situated Knowledges”; Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_OnoMouse™: Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Haraway, “Otherworldly Conversations; Terran Topics; Local Terms,” in *The Haraway Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004); *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). This ethicality might also be broadly figured as a goal of most versions of feminism as well.


intimate relations to something bigger than our ego." Like the LAL, Naess argues for a loving identification with the nonhuman world with which we are ecologically entangled, figures that identification as the basis for pleasure, and positions that pleasure as a resource for deep environmental activism: environmental activism as an activity of self-love for a deeper, wider, internally diverse ecological self.

The second point that I find usefully retained from Badiou, which resonates readily with the LAL’s project, is his articulation of the temporality of love. He writes:

[L]ove cannot be reduced to the first encounter, because it is a construction. The enigma in thinking about love is the duration of time necessary for it to flourish…. Love is above all a construction that lasts. We could say that love is a tenacious adventure. The adventurous side is necessary, but equally so is the need for tenacity. To give up at the first hurdle, the first serious disagreement, the first quarrel, is only to distort love. Real love is one that triumphs lastingly, sometimes painfully, over the hurdles erected by time, space and the world.

While I am wary of the way in which this position might be used to fetishize permanence or the cultural premium placed on relationships that last “forever,” it is consistent with the LAL’s use of marriage as a structure for their love and the vows they have made throughout their years and years of weddings. Love for Badiou requires the ongoing commitment to experiencing the world from the perspective of difference, particularly when faced with difficulty.

If love, according to Badiou, is above all a construction that lasts, how does it accomplish this tenacity? Discussing love and commitment, Butler writes:

If I commit myself to someone, I seek to stand for my future. But if my future is precisely what cannot be fully known, I am not really able to commit myself knowingly. So if I commit myself under circumstances that

---

109 Ibid., 26. I say “more than twenty years before the LAL’s Green Wedding Number Four” because this essay was first published in 1987.

cannot be predicted, that means that I commit myself in the face of the unknowable. I agree to remain committed to some ‘you’ or to some ideal regardless of whatever circumstances intervene … Commitment would be the agreement to commit oneself anew, time and again, precisely when circumstances change. And this would mean changing the concrete meaning of commitment as circumstances change. In other words, commitment would rely on the renewability of the vow, if commitment requires a vow. But it would also require an openness to changing oneself and one’s comportment depending on what new circumstances demand. Thus, commitment would not involve inflexibility, but would entail an agreement to make oneself anew in light of the unexpected demands that challenge one’s commitment.\textsuperscript{111}

For Butler, to commit to another is to commit oneself under circumstances that cannot be predicted, where such circumstances will require committing oneself anew when circumstances change. Commitment itself relies on renewability within changing circumstances, and the renewability of the commitment requires an openness to changing oneself. In this sense, the unknowability of future circumstances to which one commits results in a commitment to an unknown future self who one will become. Or, in other words, to the extent that the durability of love involves a commitment to maintaining a view of the world from the perspective of difference, and to the extent that such a commitment involves giving oneself over to unknown future circumstances—circumstances that will require oneself to change—love will require a commitment to a mutable self that remains more than singular and cannot be fully known in advance. This recalls Butler’s assertion that “I cannot pretend to know myself at the moment of love” and that love returns a plural self—“us”—to what we do not know. For both Butler and Badiou, love must resist certainty, must face what is not known or what cannot be known in advance, and must proceed with only partial knowledge—of the future, of the other, of the self, and of the relational circumstance in which “self” and “other” will become (re)constituted.

\textsuperscript{111} Butler, “Responses: Performative Reflections on Love and Commitment,” 238.
Butler and Badiou’s discussions of love and commitment recall the temporality and durability of love as it is performed by the LAL. The annual recurrence of the LAL’s weddings figure them as iterations, each one occurring anew while also citing those weddings that came before—their own and the much larger history of weddings through which the wedding performative comes to carry its efficacy and force. Weddings—and by extension, marriage—are for the LAL enacted again and again, and each repetition involves innovation and the expanding recognition of accumulating relations—with each other and with various elements of the larger nonhuman material world. With each wedding, their commitments grow and change, adapting to what Stephens describes as their expanding love, and this is a practice that remains ongoing. At the beginning of the LAL in 2004, their plan was to stage these weddings annually for seven years; however, although the LAL project was officially completed in 2011 with the White Wedding to the Sun, Stephens and Sprinkle continue to stage ecossexual weddings and produce work that relates to ecosexuality and sexecology. Their most recent wedding—which echoed many of the concerns from Green Wedding Number Four—was a wedding to the soil on May 1, 2014, as part of the Donau Festival in Krems, Austria. What began as the seven-year LAL project continues as a “tenacious adventure” for Sprinkle and Stephens as they continue to explore, celebrate, and generate loving ecosexuality in their work and in their lives. As their work continues, as they renew their vows to the world with each subsequent wedding, as their version of ecosexuality continues to evolve, they do not remain unchanged. On the contrary, as I hope has been made clear, their ongoing material-discursive practice insists on an expansive ecological perspective of the self, a humanity that identifies with the nonhuman as the basis of desire, love, and care.

112 Documentation of this wedding can be found at: http://sexecology.org/wedding-to-the-dirt/.
If ecosexuality is an orientation toward the intra-active relationality of the world, of matter itself, a turning away from radical individuality and human exceptionalism, an erotic turning toward a world with which we are continuous, toward our continuity with the world, then love as the pursuit of a world from the perspective of difference-between-many—both human and nonhuman—provides the basis for ethicality within that orientation. The becoming of matter itself is already erotic in its continuity run through with enfolded traces of othering and the loss of fully individuated agents; love—following Butler, Badiou, and Naess—insists upon the recognition of that loss of one-self, and the pursuit of a world lived from the perspective of more-than-one. Love here also insists that difference be maintained within the continuity of “we,” within the entangled relations through which we are constituted and from which we live our lives together. This way of thinking love, when thought with the LAL project, emphasizes the ethics in what might otherwise be only erotic, the LAL’s ecosexual orientation toward the Earth—the vast, messy, troubled, naturecultural confederacy of intra-active assemblages between the nonhuman and the human, between the natural and the artificial, between care and violence, between death and living.

The LAL’s seven-year project, including their ecosexual weddings, provided ritual performance settings in which participants gathered around shared orientations; they created liminal spaces in which participants were invited to collaborate, to co-create, and to make vows together that potentially extend indefinitely into their daily lives as durable, loving attachments to the planet. Within these performance settings, contingent communities of human and nonhuman agents were formed and recognized; language and signification is slippery as nonhuman and human participants are interpolated in multiple, unstable, and sometimes contradictory ways. The diverse communities created in these contexts can, in a
sense, figure the relationships proposed with the polluted Earth, the sick Sea, the violent entanglement of the Mountains and the Coal: relationships that must live with “contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes” and “the tension of holding incompatible things together.”

“Marrying the mess” or “staying with the trouble,” to love, honor, and cherish these planetary lovers are vows that will never be complete, commitments that must be renewed again and again, work that must continue indefinitely into a future that must not be made from only one perspective and that cannot be known in advance.

---

CHAPTER 3: DANGEROUS CURVES: PORNOGRAPHY, ECOSEXUALITY, DESIRING-MACHINES, AND FLUIDS

Opening shot: looking up into misty white sunlight streaming over the top of a waterfall and through a canopy of luminous green leaves. Water flowing in reverse, spilling up a glistening rockface. A droplet of water splashing off the lens of the camera and darting into the air. The image drifting clockwise in a gradual rotation. A fallen tree leaning against the top ridge of the rocky cliff.

Cut: the frame of the camera moving up the length of a fleshy leg stepping into dark water. Water lapping at the ankle then the knee. Cut: the camera panning, following water falling upward in a spray of countless streams and drops.

Cut: the motion of the camera continuing upward, drifting over the surface of the leg: a thigh, hips, a waist, an elbow, an arm—more parts of a body coming into view.

Cut: water splashing from the basin at the bottom of the falls, a clear, frothy white against the backdrop of dark stone, spraying into the air as the camera follows the spray.

Cut: back to a body, a close framing of an arm, a chunky silver cuff, a black sequined top, a fleshy waist, short black shorts, bare thighs, legs gently pushing through shimmering knee-deep water. My eyes moving with the frame over this body, the wet stone, the dark water.

Cut: zooming in toward the white water pouring up and over the jagged, mossy, gleaming rocks. Dizzying.

Dissolve: the full body of Jiz Lee comes into focus, materializing through the spray of the
waterfall. The edges of the frame are blurry and soft, making the crispness of the center of the image feel closer. Lee, wearing dark sunglasses, licks the palm of their hand and fingertips, and leans forward against the rocks.\footnote{Jiz Lee is a genderqueer porn star who prefers the use of gender-neutral pronouns they, their, them, etc.}

Cut: a splash of white water tumbling up and over rocks.

Cut: Lee slowly pressing their face into the waterfall, sliding their tongue into its stream.

Cut: water rushing over rocks high above.

Cut: close-up of water pouring over Lee’s tongue, spilling into and out of their mouth. Water dripping down their chin as they turn toward the camera.

Cut: close-up of their hand gripping the rocks, their leg fluidly maneuvering through the water that subtly rises and falls all around them.

Cut: in a wide shot, Jiz Lee stands partially submerged in water at the foot of the falls, posing against the dark, mossy rock face, the water flowing up the rocks as if it were being pulled back into its source.

These are the opening shots of the third scene in the film \textit{Dangerous Curves}, establishing a syntax for how and what will be shown: the scene is composed of mostly hard cuts alternating between close-ups and wide shots that roam over bodies both human and nonhuman that come to occupy the frame. Directed by Carlos Batts, written, cast, and styled by Batts’ wife and muse April Flores, and featuring performances by Flores, Jiz Lee, and Syd Blakovich, \textit{Dangerous Curves} was released by HeartCore Films in 2010, and was awarded “Most Deliciously Diverse Cast” at the Fifth Annual Good for Her Feminist Porn Awards the same year. The film includes four scenes of outdoor sex between a diverse range of bodies—diverse in regards to size, race, sex, sexuality, and gender—including two two-
person scenes, a solo burlesque performance on a beach, and the three-way scene that takes place in and around a waterfall on which this chapter focuses.

Its recognition at the Feminist Porn Awards first brought Dangerous Curves to my attention as an innovative pornographic film; later that same year, Jiz Lee, Carlos Batts, and April Flores presented it as part of their presentation “Green Porn” at the first EcoSex Symposium, produced by Elizabeth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle at Highways Performance Space on October 24, 2010, in Los Angeles, CA. This Symposium was the “honeymoon” for Stephens and Sprinkle’s Purple Wedding to the Moon during the sixth year of their Love Art Laboratory project. The following year, during the EcoSex Symposium II in San Francisco, CA, this “waterfall scene” from Dangerous Curves was included in an “EcoSexual Queer Porn” screening produced by feminist pornographer Madison Young and Femina Potens Art Gallery. The appearance of this film within the context of Sprinkle and Stephens’ Love Art Lab project and the “EcoSexual Queer Porn” screening initially inspired me to ask how ecosexuality might be articulated in performances other than the Love Art Lab, in modes of performance other than performance art. Dangerous Curves presented itself as not the only but an exemplary site with which to examine how ecosexuality comes to be articulated, performed, and produced in pornography.

Outdoor or public sex as a theme or genre in pornography is not unique to Dangerous Curves. Straight, gay, and lesbian mainstream porn, queer and alternative porn, and porn activist sites such as FuckForForest.com—an “ecoporn” site that makes outdoor erotic photos and videos available to paying members to raise money for ecological activism

projects\textsuperscript{3}—together include innumerable titles that situate sex and sexuality in outdoor settings. There is a sense in which all such porn—set outdoors or in public spaces—likely does some work toward expanding the definitions of sexuality, moving it outside of private or domestic spaces, and depicting relationships between human sexuality and the larger nonhuman world, even in superficial ways. In addition to its appearance and circulation in contexts specifically concerned with ecosexuality, what is unique about \textit{Dangerous Curves} in relation to other outdoor porn that I have seen is the particular attention that it gives not only to the human bodies in the scene, but also to the site with which those bodies come into contact. Rather than focusing exclusively on human bodies and the landscape merely providing a backdrop for the queer sex that is depicted, Batts’ camera work and editing moves over and around the surfaces of and contact between flesh, fluids, water, stone, foliage, sunlight, and any number of nonhuman elements that come to occupy the frame. The camera depicts these human and nonhuman bodies at multiple scales, zooming out to show whole bodies interacting within their milieu and zooming in to show pieces and parts configured in a series of innumerable combinations; the effect, I will argue, is that this scene in \textit{Dangerous Curves} figures ecosexuality as a vibrant naturecultural continuum of both human and nonhuman bodies, as pieces, parts, processes, and flows moving in and out of assemblages within the frame.

Water, fluids, and fluidity play leading roles within the assemblages of bodies and parts depicted. The persistent prominence of the waterfall surging throughout the scene

\textsuperscript{3} “Fuck For Forest,” http://www.fuckforforest.com. Fuck For Forest is “an erotic, non-profit ecological organization” that offers mostly amateur, outdoor “ecoporn” to paying members “to protect nature and liberate life.” The money raised by the site is donated to environmental activism organizations in Brazil, Ecuador, Costa Rica and Slovakia. For an analysis of Fuck for Forest, see David Bell, “Queernaturecultures,” in \textit{Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire}, eds. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2010).
establishes a continuity with the fluids of bodies dripping, squirting, spraying, and leaking. Body fluids mark the permeability of bodies and their parts, places where bodies exceed their boundaries, seep into the larger nonhuman world. This function of fluids in this scene becomes an occasion with which to recognize how bodies and their surroundings flow in and out of each other, blurring the lines of their discreteness, opening the human to the nonhuman, and reterritorializing the role of ejaculation within pornography—conventionally a phallocentric trope within mainstream, hard-core pornography—toward ecological ends.

As described in the Introduction, my overall approach to Dangerous Curves is a practice of choreographic thinking: identifying and articulating the choreographic properties and principles operating within this scene, and considering those properties and principles as structures with which to think. Doing so involves critical examination of how the film is framed in its marketing and circulation, the modes and methods with which it presents that which it depicts, and how the attention of the camera and the progression of the scene suggest a number of sexualities—queer and ecossexualities—that encompass both the human performers and their nonhuman environment.

**Art and Pornography: Multiple Functions**

When I first began to write about this scene, my claim was that because it is part of a pornographic film that serves an overtly erotic function, its focus on the proliferation of promiscuous connections between human bodies, body parts, and the landscape distributes eroticism to any number of human and nonhuman participants. While I still hold this to be true, this claim turned out to be not so simple to make. Although this film circulates and functions as “pornography”—and more specifically as “feminist pornography”—it is also
marketed as “art.” Both “pornography” and “feminist pornography” are complex, multifaceted, and historically contested terms, as is “art.” How this film inhabits or moves between these various categories suggests a range of frameworks and genealogies of influence through which it might be considered. I will begin my analysis of *Dangerous Curves* by first examining the ways in which it is positioned by the director, the producers, the performers, and the industry, and then turn to how pornography and feminist pornography have been defined within porn studies and by the feminist porn movement. By discussing the film as pornography and situating this chapter in relation to porn studies, I mean to signal the contributions this chapter makes not only to a theorization of eosexualities in performance but also to the study of pornography as a site at which bodies and sexualities are not only represented but also produced.

The description of *Dangerous Curves* on both Carlos Batts’ website and the website of its producers, HeartCore Films/Good Releasing, reads:

> “Embark on an erotic journey where the landscapes of libido come to life. Although this road may twist and turn, the real dangerous curves are those of the fierce fashionistas that exist in these environments. The waterfall isn’t the only thing getting Syd Blakovich and Jiz Lee wet as they create their own cascades with the big beautiful April Flores…. As you wind your way through these orgasmic women getting off in the great outdoors, admire the sensual scenery and hug those dangerous curves.”

In *Dangerous Curves*, “landscapes of libido come to life.” The phrase “landscapes of libido” can function in multiple ways: in one sense, landscapes are ascribed with libido themselves, extending erotogenicity to the nonhuman world; in another sense, libido might be figured as landscapes, terrains of elevation and depression over which an “erotic journey” might roam. The word “come” cannot help but take on an erotic suggestion in the context of an adult

---

film; these landscapes come/cum, and their climax is “to life,” suggesting an orientation of
these libidinal landscapes toward “life”—perhaps, I will suggest, specifically “life” in excess
of the human. This road—presumably the path of this erotic journey—is not straight; it
twists and turns, but although the queerness of the road, the ways in which it meanders away
from straightness, may present dangers, the “real dangerous curves” are the “fierce
fashionistas that exist in these environments.” They are the “real” threat, although it is not
yet entirely clear why.

I pause when I read the word “exist” here. This is a film that offers graphic
depictions of outdoor sex; however, rather than reading “fierce fashionistas that fuck/have
sex/make love in these environments,” all the sex that is shown in this film is here
condensed and transfigured into the word “exist,” made into a matter of “existence,” an
unexpected syntax that supplies outdoor sex and sexuality as the form and content of a kind
of being, a matter of ontology. In another line of word play, “getting wet” is used here to
indicate the excitement and arousal of the performers, and the description playfully—
although perhaps also critically—connects the “cascades” that Blakovich and Lee create with
Flores—their secretions and ejaculations—with the cascades of the waterfall around which
the scene is organized. It is noted that these are “women”—despite Jiz Lee’s identification as
genderqueer—and that they are “orgasmic.” The viewer is invited to “admire the sensual
scenery,” an invitation that seems to exceed the presumed function of a pornographic film
to provide—primarily—bodies to be admired and desired. Whether this is an invitation to a

---

5 In answering the question “What is Genderqueer? (for me, right now),” Lee writes: “Someone who is
‘genderqueer’ has fluid ideas about gender expression and may not identify as being a man or a woman…As
someone who struggled (and still struggles) with gender I found myself uncomfortable with what was expected
of me in terms of cisgender appearance and behaviors…as a person who was assigned female at birth many
things that society expects of me as a ‘woman’ feel unnatural.” Jiz Lee, “What is Genderqueer? | Jiz Lee,”
more expansive sexual experience that gives erotic consideration to the landscape, or
whether this is intended as a metaphor that figures “women’s” [sic] bodies as scenery, the
film’s description opens the way for the world beyond human bodies to be considered.

All this word play and innuendo might be little more than salacious marketing copy,
up-sexing and up-selling both bodies and environments as a veritable panoply of pleasures
pandering to potential viewers. However, I am reluctant to dismiss the critical potential of
this writing; as suggestive as it might be, some of what it suggests are analogies between the
human and the nonhuman, landscapes and libido, sexual fluids and waterfalls, bodies as
scenery and scenery as bodies. While maintaining some ambiguity, this description situates
this film in relation to landscapes, life, danger, and existence, positioning those elements that
surround and exceed human bodies as integral to what this film is and what it does. Can a
film that is said to matter in these ways be merely pornographic, or might this suggest ways
in which Dangerous Curves elevates, focuses, or re-orient the potential relevance of
pornography?

In addition to the marketing description of Dangerous Curves—which, although highly
suggestive, never refers to the film directly as pornography—the way the film is positioned
by the producers and director signals how they intend the film to be received. Avoiding
language that specifically categorizes the film as pornography, it is situated within bodies of
work described as art, education, and entertainment. Dangerous Curves was released by
HeartCore Films, a line of films produced by Good Releasing described as offering “artistic
alternatives to formulaic features with films by independent artists with fresh, diverse
content.”6 Insistently, this production line markets itself as art, not as pornography; its

6 “HeartCore Films :: Good Releasing,” accessed February 17, 2014, http://goodreleasing.com/heartcore-
makers are described as artists, not pornographers. The value of the work is ascribed to its innovation, providing alternatives to “formulaic features,” although that to which these features and formulas belong goes unnamed. Similarly, the production company itself, Good Releasing, does not use the term pornography in its self-description.  

Despite not being marketed explicitly as pornography, there are a number of markers that make *Dangerous Curves* identifiable as pornography to potential viewers. Although Flores’ co-stars in the scene I am discussing—Jiz Lee and Syd Blakovich—both describe themselves as artists—Lee holds a BA in Dance, Blakovich studied photography in college, and the two collaborated outside of porn as a performance art duo called *twincest*—they both also identify as “porn stars” and openly discuss working in the “porn industry.” The film is sold and distributed on websites that identify their products as porn. When interviewed by XCritic.com and asked, “What would be a porn film you’d recommend to someone not familiar with your work?” Flores listed *Dangerous Curves*, noting it as her favorite movie and responding, “I wrote that film. The whole vision and the whole look of it was mine. That film represents me most in terms of an artist.”

---

7 Good Releasing, established in 2009 by sex toy company Good Vibrations, is described as offering “various lines of adult titles and educational films,” representing “independent artists creating authentic and diverse content.” “About :: Good Releasing,” accessed February 17, 2014, http://goodreleasing.com/about.


held together: it is recommended both as a porn film and as a representation of Flores as an artist.

Perhaps the most compelling reason to consider Dangerous Curves as pornography came in 2010 when it was awarded “Most Deliciously Diverse Cast” at the Fifth Annual Good for Her Feminist Porn Awards (FPA). This is an award for a film exemplifying “fundamental principles of feminist porn: showcasing diversity, valuing differences in who is on screen and what they love to do, and showcasing the sexy desires and expressions of people typically excluded from or stereotypes in the mainstream industry, including people of colour and big beautiful bodies.”

The diversity of this cast operates along multiple axes, including race—Lee is Pacific Islander, Blakovich is Japanese American, and Flores is Latina (Mexican/Ecuadorian)—gender identity, sexuality, and size. In as much as Dangerous Curves is produced and identified as an art film, it is also circulated, distributed, received, and celebrated as both pornography and award-winning feminist pornography.

However, to be clear, I am not invested in answering whether or not something “is art” or “is pornography,” as if these terms referred directly or exclusively to clearly defined ontological positions. Rather, I am interested in how objects circulate, the terms that are applied to them, how the circulation and identification of the same object in multiple genres or terms offers an opportunity to consider the ways that genres and terms intersect and intervene in one another. I am even more interested in how terms situate objects within discursive histories, and how they provide us with methods of approach. Here I follow the logic of performance studies described by Richard Schechner:

---

[A] performance takes place as action, interaction, and relation. In this regard, a painting or a novel can be performative or can be analyzed ‘as’ performance. Performance isn’t ‘in’ anything, but ‘between’ … To treat any object, work, or product ‘as’ performance—a painting, a novel, a shoe, or anything at all—means to investigate what the object does, how it interacts with other objects or beings, and how it relates to other objects or beings. Performances exist only as actions, interactions, and relationships.

Following Schechner, I am primarily considering Dangerous Curves “as” performance, analyzing its actions, interactions, and relationships. I am here also suggesting that the terms “art” and “pornography,” like the term “performance,” indicate ways in which an object might be treated, approached, or considered—“as” art and “as” pornography—rather than asserting a single, stable, ontological, and exclusionary nature for either art or pornography. Dangerous Curves clearly circulates and functions as both and thus invites critical consideration as both pornography and art.

As Pornography, Feminist Porn, and the Erotic Organization of Visibility

Throughout this chapter, I pursue thinking of the scene I analyze “as pornography” to the extent that doing so provides useful ways to consider its functions and positions this chapter within the field of porn studies as well as dance and performance studies, bringing the discursive history of the genre to bear on my analysis and allowing my analysis of the film to make a range of interventions into the conventions of the genre. In this section, I begin to outline several ways that pornography has been defined, multiple sides of cultural debates surrounding porn and its function, and elements that have characterized

pornography within porn studies in order to suggest how *Dangerous Curves* might be considered as pornography and to position its contributions within the contestation surrounding the genre.

In her landmark text *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the ‘Frenzy of the Visible’*—the text which inaugurated what has now become “porn studies”—film studies scholar Linda Williams offers an examination of “the genre of heterosexual film pornography from a feminist, Foucaultian perspective.” Tracing a history of contemporary hard-core pornographic cinema from the emergence of film technologies in the late 19th and early 20th century, Williams figures early motion picture studies of human bodies in relation to Foucault’s genealogical account of the history of sexuality as it operates across a number of discourses, a *scientia sexualis* fixated on a “knowledge of pleasure: a pleasure that comes of knowing pleasure.” She writes, “… the proliferating medical, psychological, juridical, and pornographic discourses of sexuality have functioned as transfer points of knowledge, power, and pleasure. They are places where sexualities could be specified and solidified.” The desire to see and know more of the human body, she asserts, underlies the very invention of cinema, and this desire becomes condensed within the genre of hard-core pornography in what she calls “the principle of *maximum visibility.*” This principle operates through a range of techniques and practical conventions within the genre: privileging close-ups of body parts over other kinds of shots, overlighting easily obscured genitals, selecting sexual positions that show the most of bodies and organs, the inclusion of a variety of sexual “numbers”—different sex acts in different configurations with different positions and

---

15 Williams, *Hard Core*, 35.
16 Ibid.
choreographies—and the externally ejaculating penis—or “money shot.”

This principle of maximum visibility structures pornographic film in such a way as to reveal and make visible as much of bodies, their activities, and their pleasures as possible. Pornography then can be considered a domain of visibility in which bodies, their desires, and their pleasures, however elusive, are pursued and made to appear.

Critically, for Williams—following Annette Kuhn and Beverley Brown—pornography produces meanings for sex and sexuality, rather than transparently representing a natural sexuality that pre-exists its representation. Following Foucault, she writes that “discourses of sexuality name, identify, and ultimately produce a bewildering array of pleasures and perversions,” and positions pornography alongside a number of adjacent and mutually reinforcing mechanisms through which discourses of sexuality operate. Williams defines pornography as “the visual (and sometimes aural) representation of living, moving bodies engaged in explicit, usually unfaked, sexual acts with a primary intent of arousing viewers,” adding to this Beverley Brown’s notion that “pornography reveals current regimes of sexual relationships as ‘a coincidence of sexual phantasy, genre and culture in an erotic organization of visibility.’” Brown argues against a definition of pornography that assumes implicit scales of extremity and exposure, a medium of representation characterized as “extremely explicit,” where “representation is thought essentially as a transparent medium giving more or less access to its object,” or, in other words, pornography as “a literal representation whose content merely happens to exceed certain, disputed boundaries of

---

17 Ibid., 48-49.
19 Williams, Hard Core, 114.
20 Ibid., 30.
acceptability.” Rather than merely extending extreme visibility to a known field of sex, sexuality, and bodies as objects that pre-exist their pornographic representation, Brown’s suggestion is that pornography employs various strategies and techniques that organize how bodies are seen, in effect producing them as erotic. She emphasizes that sexuality is “not just a matter of acts and bits of bodies” and that representation is “not just a matter of what [is] seen but how that seeing [is] organized.” Extending visibility is a process of making or producing that which is made visible for the viewer, not merely revealing its object as it already exists. To consider this scene of *Dangerous Curves* “as pornography,” then, is to suggest that it produces a particular erotic organization of visibility, and to inquire after the particular methods with which this production of eroticism is accomplished. Specifically, I will articulate the ways in which it organizes visibility to produce an ecosexuality that eroticizes human bodies and the materials of the nonhuman world with which those bodies are presented.

Considering *Dangerous Curves* as pornography positions it within a contested genre. While writing a history and theorization of hard-core pornography, Williams grapples with how pornography has and might be defined. Reviewing legal documents as well as writings by historians, anti-porn feminists, and anti-censorship feminists, she describes pornography as an “elusive genre.” Following historian Walter Kendrick, she offers a view of pornography as constituted primarily by its relationship to censorship and controlled circulation, giving one definition as “simply whatever representations a particular dominant class or group does not want in the hands of another, less dominant class or group. Those in

---

22 Ibid., 136.
23 Ibid., 145-146.
power construct the definition of pornography through their power to censor it.” This definition figures pornography as a shifting genre of representation within larger apparatuses of power, class, and the control of access to knowledge. Within this view, pornography is produced through relations of power; representations, whether textual or visual, become pornography through the process of being censored by those in power and withheld from other members of society. In other words, the apparatus of controlled access acting upon materials transforms it into pornography. Williams also offers Robin Morgan’s famous anti-pornography slogan that figures pornography itself as both violent and the cause of violence: “Pornography is the theory, and rape is the practice,” a slogan quoted almost exactly in the influential 1986 Attorney General’s Commission on Pornography. This view of pornography as a site of violence and the cause of further violence—particularly against women—is at the core of the anti-pornography feminist argument, an argument made primarily by Morgan, Andrea Dworkin, Susan Griffin, Catherine MacKinnon, and Susan Kappeler, among others. Williams spends considerable space outlining these arguments and their fallacies, contrasting them with the “anti-censorship feminist” position, and the collision of these positions in the feminist “sex wars” of the 1980s. Both the anti-pornography and the anti-censorship feminist positions can be correlated with fundamental disagreements regarding sexuality itself, the relationship between sex and violence, and the

26 Williams, *Hard Core*, 12.
27 Ibid., 16. The Attorney General’s Commission on Pornography in 1986 was not the first federal investigation of pornography: In 1970, the Presidential Commission on Pornography concluded that, “unlike explicit depictions of violence, pornography had no measurable adverse social effects.” The 1986 Commission, appointed by Ronald Reagan to make recommendations regarding the regulation of pornography, “came to the overwhelming conclusion that hard-core pornography *is* violence, and that this violence hurts women most of all.” It resulted in a 1,960-page report, which altered debates on pornography in the 1980s and continues to influence thinking on pornography today.
politics of pleasure—particularly female pleasure—making pornography a relevant component in both the history of these conflicts as well as the ongoing interrogation of sex, sexuality, power, violence, and feminism. According to Williams, the anti-pornography position depends on an assumption that sex is inherently oppressive to women, that women are debased, exploited, or violated when they have sex on camera, and rejects any possibility of pornography functioning as a vehicle for empowerment, social progress, and cultural change. This position risks invalidating the cultural contributions, lived experiences, and agency of many ethical pornographers, and rejects the very possibility of an ethical pornography. However, following Kendrick, this opposition—the anti-pornography position—may be fundamental to what comes to be constituted as pornography. The conflict surrounding the genre of pornography may be a necessary condition for any progressive cultural contributions made by anything that can be called “pornography.”

In contrast to the anti-porn feminist position, the feminist porn movement—a movement that encompasses both modes of production within the porn industry as practiced by feminist directors, producers, and performers, as well as the feminist study of pornography and its discussion within scholarship—rejects the view that all pornography is reducible to a “visual embodiment of the patriarchy and violence against women,”\textsuperscript{29} and is committed to a careful and nuanced consideration of pornography, how it is made, and its potential effects.\textsuperscript{30} The Feminist Porn Awards, a leading proponent in the development of


feminist porn as a genre, offers the following criteria for movies, short films, and websites to be considered for nomination:

1) Women and/or traditionally marginalized people were involved in the direction, production and/or conception of the work. 2) The work depicts genuine pleasure, agency and desire for all performers, especially women and traditionally marginalized people. 3) The work expands the boundaries of sexual representation on film, challenges stereotypes and presents a vision that sets the content apart from most mainstream pornography. This may include depicting a diversity of desires, types of people, bodies, sexual practices, and/or an anti-racist or anti-oppression framework throughout the production. And of course it must be hot! Overall, Feminist Porn Award winners tend to be movies that consider a potentially female or trans viewer from start to finish. This means that you are more likely to see active desire and consent, real orgasms, and women and/or trans folk taking control of their own fantasies (even when that fantasy is to hand over that control). 31

The FPA considers work that puts the means of production into the hands of women and/or other traditionally marginalized people. 32 In striving to depict “genuine pleasure, agency and desire” for all performers, feminist porn both participates in the “principle of maximum visibility” described by Williams in mainstream hard-core pornography and questions/contests the principles and priorities by which such visibility is achieved. Feminist porn raises the question: how can pornography depict a diverse range of bodies, sexes, genders, desires, and pleasures when mainstream pornography has so often failed in this

1986).
32 The 2013 anthology The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure also offers a definition of feminist porn: “As both an established and emerging genre of pornography, feminist porn uses sexually explicit imagery to contest and complicate dominant representations of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, ability, age, body type, and other identity markers. It explores concepts of desire, agency, power, beauty, and pleasure at their most confounding and difficult, including pleasure within and across inequality, in the face of injustice, and against the limits of gender hierarchy and both heteronormativity and homonormativity. It seeks to unsettle conventional definitions of sex and expand the language of sex as an erotic activity, an expression of identity, a power exchange, a cultural commodity, and even a new politics. Feminist porn creates alternative images and develops its own aesthetic and iconography to expand established sexual norms and discourses…. Ultimately, feminist porn considers sexual representation—and its production—a site for resistance, intervention, and change.” The Feminist Porn Book recognizes feminist porn as a genre that differs from not only mainstream pornography but from the cultural norms and inequalities in which mainstream porn participates. See Penley et al., The Feminist Porn Book, 9-10.
pursuit of visibility, satisfied with figuring all desire and pleasure through depictions of straight male desire and pleasure? And to the extent that pornography can be said to produce bodies, sexes, and sexualities in their particularity through a variety of techniques, feminist pornography concerns itself with generating more strategies for organizing visibility and more possibilities for how sexualities, sexes, and bodies might be produced.

Consistent with the project of feminist pornography, while describing the ecosexuality that is made available by this scene in *Dangerous Curves*, it is worth noting that this scene and the sexuality it envisions deviates from several significant conventions of mainstream hard-core pornography, simultaneously intervening in the norms of both mainstream pornography and the particular organizations of sexuality that those norms (re)produce. In Williams’ analysis, the pursuit of visibility in mainstream pornography often follows a phallogocentric organization around iconic markers of male pleasure, specifically erection, penetration, and ejaculation. She writes that, “Hard-core pornography is not phallic because it shows penises; it is phallic because in its exhibition of penises it presumes to know, to possess an adequate expression of the truth of ‘sex’—as if sex were as unitary as the phallus presumes itself to be.”\(^3^3\) Williams argues that in mainstream hard-core pornography, even female bodies and female pleasure are made to refer back to male bodies, evidence of his virility and pleasure, his eventual ejaculation—on screen and the presumed male viewer’s. It is not simply what gets shown in mainstream hard-core pornography that demonstrates its phallic logic—as if to show a particular organ, a penis, constitutes the values by which the film is organized. It is the tropes associated with the representation of this organ and the presumptions on which such tropes rely—the presumption that genuine pleasure can be

\(^3^3\) Williams, *Hard-Core*, 267.
summarily represented in these limited functions of a single organ and that visible representations of these physical responses are sufficient in achieving “maximum visibility” of the parts of sex that matter—that make mainstream hard-core pornography phallic. To depict the “genuine pleasure, agency, and desire” of all performers, specifically performers who identify as women and other traditionally marginalized people, requires the re-organization of visibilities, exploring more variations and locations for where pleasure might be situated, and following principles of representation provided or suggested by the specificity of bodies being depicted. It requires not only expanding what pleasures, agencies, and desires get shown, but also attending to the specificity of these bodies and sexualities in order to innovate the cinematic methods and conventions through which they are shown. In my analysis of *Dangerous Curves*, I will demonstrate the ways in which this film redistributes both eroticism and agency, to human bodies that are often marginalized within the dominant culture of mainstream pornography due to race, gender, sexuality, and size, and beyond human bodies to their relations with the world in which they are situated. As pornography, *Dangerous Curves* depicts extreme visibility, but what is made visible and how this visibility is accomplished offers a reterritorialization of what bodies and sexuality can mean.³⁴

**Choreographic Principles of the Scene:**

At the start of the shot, the camera moves down the length of the waterfall, droplets of water splattered across the lens. Gradually, Lee drifts into the frame, their face upturned and

---

³⁴ To be clear, in this chapter, I am not specifically making a claim about the experiences of the performers in this scene. I am rather making a claim about how sex and sexuality are composed within the frame, through the choreographies of the camera and the editing. In this sense, my claim is more about the eosexuality made available to the viewer than the experiences of the performers.
their mouth open, streams from the waterfall splashing across their tongue as the camera continues down the length of their body.

Cut: Lee stands knee deep in water at the center of the frame while the camera zooms out, bringing more of the waterfall, the rockface, moss and foliage into view, then roaming back up the waterfall, Lee’s body falling out of the frame.

Cut to a series of close-up shots: Syd Blakovich’s hand, her waist, her chest, her shoulder. Cut: the camera moving down the wet surface of a tree, then Blakovitch’s face coming into the frame, then her torso, then her thighs.

A series of dissolves: hands and fingers stroking the flesh of inner thighs, fingers pushing through verdant moss and dry leaves, legs spread, hands moving toward a groin.

Cut: Flores standing with her hand on her hip next to the fallen tree.

Cut: a moving shot, starting on the ground: rocks and leaves, a shiny black boot, a thick ankle, wide thighs and hips, a bare crotch, a curving belly, black mesh stretching over large breasts.

Throughout the scene, the camera moves over the performers’ bodies, then continues to roam over the surfaces of their environment; alternately, the camera drifts over rocks and trees and rushing water, then continues over the surfaces of the performers’ bodies. When human bodies come into the frame, they do not remain centered; the direction of attention remains unsettled and diffuse, moving again and again to the performers’ surroundings as well. In close-up shots, pieces and parts are presented in isolation or temporary connections, and these connections appear promiscuously as the scene unfolds. Water streams into mouth, hand grips rock, fingertips brush thigh and push through moss. Lips meet lips, tongue licks nipple, fingers slide over and through labial folds, mouth covers
clit, vagina surrounds fist, and so on. In wide shots, bodies are shown as wholes in various positions and relations within their surroundings, but these wide shots do not last for long before the scene returns again to the scale of close-ups and body parts. These prominent features of the camera’s approach to that which is shown—the constant motion of the camera, roaming over human bodies and their nonhuman surroundings alike, and the ongoing alternation between close-up and wide shots—are integral to how visibility is organized and how eroticism is distributed within this scene; they are the mechanics of how an ecosexuality becomes articulated.

A shot cuts in close to Lee’s fingers stroking and circling Flores’ vulva, moves up the curves of her belly and breasts, then continues up the length of the tree against which Flores leans to the top of the waterfall above. Another shot moves down the length of the tree to where Lee and Flores kiss, down their bodies to where Lee’s fingers continue to stroke the soft hills and crevices of Flores’ flesh. A shot moves from Lee’s head lapping between Flores’ legs, up Flores’ body to where Blakovich’s legs are spread wide and Flores’ fingers are taken into Blakovich’s vulva, and finally drifts left to where the waterfall streams over the rockface. A close-up of where Lee’s hand rubs against Flores’ clit and Flores’ labia fold around Blakovich’s fingers moves down Flores’ leg and over the surface of the mossy rock on which the three are fucking. That which the camera surveys and depicts through its constantly roaming gaze exceeds the conventional preoccupations of mainstream hard-core pornography, and in doing so, potentially exceeds normative understandings of sex and sexuality. As Williams has argued, normative, mainstream hard-core pornography typically fixates attention on a limited range of body parts—genitals, breasts, anuses—and sex acts, and positions the ejaculating penis as a primary signifier—or phallus—to which all other
parts—including female bodies and their parts—and activities are made to refer. That to which the camera gives attention is exposed and made visible to the viewer as the “truth of sex,” figured within the particular vision of sexuality that pornography depicts, the version of sexuality that pornography produces. In this sense, the gaze of the camera distributes erotic potential, organizing that which is made visible in the service of sexuality. To the extent that mainstream hard-core pornography can be said to (re)produce a normative sexuality through its prioritization of a limited range of body parts and sex acts within its frame, all organized around a phallic perspective of sexuality, this scene distributes erotic potential more diffusely, bringing any number body parts and surfaces—and not all of them human—into the sexuality that it produces. No single part takes on singular or primary significance, and across any number of surfaces and parts, the camera continues to roam.

This constant motion of the camera produces two different but related effects: first, and crucially to my theorization of this scene as presenting an ecosexuality, the camera continuously brings the nonhuman surroundings into view alongside the three human performers. This is a matter of what is shown. Second, even when human bodies appear prominently within the frame, they do not remain fixed or centered. The constant motion of the camera prioritizes movement and a range of foci rather than focusing exclusively on human bodies, parts, or sex acts. This roaming attention—moving from bodies to landscape, from landscape back to bodies—creates a kind of visual continuity between the human performers and their surroundings. In this scene, the rocks, the trees, the waterfall, and so on, are not treated as a mere backdrop or setting for the sex that occupies the camera’s focus; rather, the camera approaches the nonhuman site and the human bodies in the same way, in gradual panning motions moving over their many surfaces. The continuity of this
motion across different surfaces, never fully settling in a single place, performs a mode of non-preferentiality in which no one body part takes on more persistent prominence than any other, and in which human bodies are not the only materials that matter within the frame.

The continuous alternation between wide and close-up shots, framing bodies as wholes and as pieces and parts within a range of connections and a variety of assemblages is also integral to the syntax and vocabulary of this scene. A wide shot that shows Flores reclining on a mossy rock with Lee to her right, kissing her neck and stroking her clit, Blakovich kneeling between her legs, and the waterfall flowing over her left shoulder is interrupted with a close-up of hands pushing into soft flesh, one hand kneading the surface while the fingers of another are taken inside. A wide shot circling the three performers—Lee and Blakovich licking and gripping Flores breasts and thighs and neck—is interrupted with a close-up of a hand covering a vulva, the fingers curling, almost gripping the thick folds as they slide along surfaces becoming interior. A wide shot that moves up over Blakovich’s ass as she kneels in dry leaves on the ground between Lee’s legs, up over Lee, Flores, the tree, and the waterfall cuts to a close-up moving along the skin of a knee, a smooth thigh, a hand moving out of view inside a vulva, a tongue lapping at a dripping clit. A wide shot drifting around Flores squatting beside Lee, pounding their chest with her fist, surrounded by green ferns cuts to the flesh of a breast shaking beneath forceful striking. A shot of Flores and Lee kissing cuts to a close-up of a ladybug crawling around a rosy nipple. Over and over again, I am shown whole bodies in various arrangements within their milieu, then those shots cut to close-ups of surfaces and parts.

This particular mechanism in the vocabulary and syntax of this scene moves between two modes of visuality that Laura Marks distinguishes as “haptic” and “optical.” She writes:
Haptic perception is usually defined as the combination of tactile, kinesthetic, and proprioceptive functions, the way we experience touch as both on the surface of and inside our bodies. In haptic visuality, the eyes themselves function like organs of touch. Haptic visuality, a term contrasted to optical visuality, draws from other forms of sense experience, primarily touch and kinesthetic. Because haptic visuality draws on other senses, the viewer’s body is more obviously involved in the process of seeing than is the case with optical visuality.35

Optical visuality sees from a distance, organizes the view into distinct and recognizable forms; in contrast, haptic visuality sees from up close, where distinct forms are not entirely recognizable, and seeing becomes a kind of touching. Marks suggests that few videos or films are entirely haptic, that the “haptic image usually occurs in a dialectal relationship with the optical,” where the “oscillation between the two creates an erotic relationship, shifting between distance and closeness.”36 Following Marks, one way that this scene of Dangerous Curves generates eroticism within its organization of the visible is through this oscillation between distance and proximity, the alternation between close-ups and wide shots and the ways that bodies are made available to the viewer’s senses in and between both. The camera backs away to show me whole bodies in situ, appealing to what Marks calls optic visuality; the camera comes close to indistinct flesh and slick surfaces, depicting isolated, local connections and soliciting what Marks calls haptic visuality. Haptic visuality facilitates a seeing that resembles touching—a form of seeing that appeals to the viewer’s body, erotic in its intimacy and in its disruption of the appearance of full knowledge or mastery that distance and optical visuality offer—and this seeing is made even more erotic as it oscillates with optic visuality, pulling back and pulling close, pulling back and pulling close, again and again.

35 Laura Marks, Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 2-3 (italics original).
36 Ibid., 12-13.
Within this erotic vacillation of haptic close-ups and optical wide shots, this scene enables a particular reading of bodies as alternately wholes and parts, what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe as molar bodies composed of and traversed by any number of molecular forces and flows. Bodies here resist totalization or unification into consistently integrated wholes. The viewer is alternately shown wide shots depicting bodies at the molar scale, bodies as whole entities, as integrated subjects, the bodies of Lee, Blakovich, and Flores, and close-ups of pieces, parts, and flows at the molecular scale, images that animate parts as parts in relation to each other, depicted not for how they resolve into the body as a whole but for how they function in activity and connection—mouth to mouth, tongue to clit, hand to breast, foot to cold water, fingertip to stone. At this molecular scale, the personal becomes impersonal: rather than Lee’s head and Flores’ hips, a head and these hips. Rather than Blakovich’s fingers entering Lee’s vulva, these fingers entering a vulva. A breast, these lips, this ass, this pushing, this opening, this sliding, this stroking: parts and their capacities circulating through any number of connections apart from the role they play for any whole body or person. These bodies function as what feminist scholar Elizabeth Grosz describes as “a discontinuous, nontotalizable series of processes, organs, flows, energies, corporeal substances and incorporeal events, speeds and durations.”\(^\text{37}\) Grosz writes that Deleuze and Guattari provide a way of understanding the body “in its connections with other bodies, both human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate, linking organs and biological processes to material objects and social practices while refusing to subordinate the body to a unity or homogeneity of the kind provided by the body’s subordination to

Deleuze and Guattari understand the body in terms of “what it can do, the things it can perform, the linkages it establishes, the transformations and becomings it undergoes, and the machinic connections it forms with other bodies, what it can link with, how it can proliferate its capacities.” For Deleuze and Guattari, bodies are not fixed materialities; the materiality of bodies is continually (re)constituted in conjunction with other materials, processes, and bodies. In their ongoing transformations and becomings, bodies become those capacities that they enact, those potentialities that they actualize. Within the unfolding series of molar bodies presented in wide shots and molecular connections viewed in haptic close-ups, bodies are both done up and undone; parts are shown in their linkages and connections, and with each reconfiguration of the performers’ bodies in relation to each other or parts coupled with other parts, the viewer is shown more and more of these bodies’ capacities, more of what they can do, the things they can perform.

Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of bodies as both molar and molecular also reconceives of sex and sexuality in ways that can be useful toward articulating the ecosexuality of this scene. Frida Beckman argues, “…everything is potentially sexualised through Deleuze’s philosophy.” Deleuze and Guattari claim that “sexuality is everywhere” and “we always make love to worlds.” They propose a model for sexuality enacted as “desiring-machines,” breaking “with the Oedipal notion of desire as a continuous reproduction of a familial ‘theatre.’” Desiring-machines denote the production of intensities

---

38 Ibid., 165.
39 Ibid.
on all levels and in all modes of being.”⁴² Desiring-machines provide “an opening up of the organisation of sexuality and bodies to allow for $n$ sexes and for all kinds of bodies”⁴³ and operate through “a multiplicity of connective combinations that reach across sexes and species and genera.”⁴⁴ For Deleuze and Guattari, then, sexuality is not limited to the interactions between two sexes, cannot be reduced to genital sexuality, and cannot be contained exclusively within the realm of the human. Deleuze and Guattari explode the stage on which sexuality unfolds, figuring sexuality through the construction of desiring-machines—insistently experimental, impermanent assemblages of parts that are always partial, never final, and never whole. Sexuality moves beyond the boundaries of binary sex; any number of sexes—what Deleuze and Guattari term “$n$-sexes”—are produced at the sites at which assemblages are established as so many molecular encounters and copulations. This sexuality reads as ecological: everywhere, produced within a multiplicity of connections between all kinds of bodies, spanning $n$-sexes, encompassing the human, the nonhuman, the vast material world. An ecosexuality indeed.

Explicating the term *assemblage*, political theorist and new materialist Jane Bennett writes:

Assemblages are ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts. Assemblages are living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within. They have uneven topographies, because some of the points at which the various affects and bodies cross paths are more heavily trafficked than others, and so power is not distributed equally across its surface. Assemblages are not governed by any central head: no one materiality or type of material has sufficient competence to determine consistently the trajectory or impact of the group. The effects generated by an assemblage are, rather, emergent properties, emergent in that their ability to make something happen

---

⁴³ Ibid., 13.
⁴⁴ Ibid., 16.
(a newly inflected materialism, a blackout, a hurricane, a war on terror) is distinct from the sum of vital force of each materiality considered alone.\footnote{Jane Bennett, \textit{Vibrant Matter: Toward a Political Ecology of Things} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 23-24.}

Bennett’s explanation of the concept of \textit{assemblage} emphasizes the emergent capacity of an assemblage of relations, the potential to act as a collective of parts in ways that are specific to the collective, in ways that exceed the individual capacities of the parts and even the sum of those capacities within their bodies of origin. The capacities of all parts are enhanced and increased within the assemblage. Parts become (re)defined within machinic connections with any number of other parts, making the materiality of the body or of sex primarily a matter of dynamic parts in shifting assemblages, thus a matter of ongoing reconfiguration and transformation. In that pieces and parts are constituted within their relations, no one particular sex can be said to pre-exist the assemblages of which it becomes a member. Sexes—not simply one or the other, male or female, but any number of sexes, \textit{n-sexes}—and sexualities are emergent, unpredictable, and experimental.

This vocabulary of desiring-machines built from assemblages of pieces and parts is useful toward describing the particular organization of visibility in this scene of \textit{Dangerous Curves} and toward articulating the particular bodies and sexualities that this organization can be said to produce. The close-up and wide shots depict any number of surface contacts between any number of parts. In shot after shot, parts take on different functions: hands grip then cup then caress then strike, fingers stroke then probe then flick then rub then fuck; a smiling mouth becomes a kissing mouth then a sucking mouth then a biting mouth then a gaping mouth; a vulva is stroked then opens and surrounds then fucks then squirts; a stream of water falls then splashes then soaks and makes slick. These functions or capacities emerge within connections: as a mouth meets a breast, it becomes a mouth that sucks; as a fist meets
a vulva, it becomes a fist that thrusts; as a clitoris meets a tongue or hand, it becomes a clitoris that swells. As a rock meets a body, it becomes a rock that supports. As a crevice is entered by three bodies, it becomes a crevice that receives. Touching leads to wetness, and wetness leads to more wetness. Stroking leads to probing then to more opening then to deeper probing. Actions and movements accelerate and build in intensity, a head bobbing more fervently between legs, fingers pumping more vigorously in and out of wet, fleshy openings. If desiring-machines are irreducible to only two sexes and resist locating sexuality only at the sites of certain parts, then Dangerous Curves unfolds through the representation of any number of sexes—n-sexes—produced at the sites of all of these promiscuous machinic connections, each of these linkages between all of these parts, and the sexualities that erupt with/in these relations.

Deleuze and Guattari’s sexuality of desiring-machines, assemblages, and n-sexes moves us beyond the constraints of coherent binary genders and sexes, and even beyond the cohesive distinction between the categories of the human and the nonhuman. Within the close-ups and wide shots and throughout the roaming gaze of the camera, human bodies and parts established connections with any number of nonhuman materials as well: soft hand holding hard stone, mouth opening to falling water, foot stepping into pool, body reclining onto coarse rock or against damp tree. The fingers that stroke and probe and flick flesh also push through tufts of moss and dry leaves and dip into flowing streams. Hands that press into stone press into folds of flesh then return again to stone. Fluids drip from mouths and lips and run along stone surfaces. Ladybug crawls over breast. The nonhuman site of this scene is not only ever-present for the sex that unfolds; by directing the viewer’s attention to these connections between human bodies and nonhuman materials, Batts figures these
assemblages within the erotic vacillation between the haptic and the optical, within the organization of visibility through which this scene unfolds. The sexuality that appears within the frame encompasses the nonhuman as well.

To be clear, claiming that this scene moves beyond the representation of bodies within the constraints of binary gender, sexual difference, or species is not a claim for “undifferentiation,” as if everything depicted is rendered as the same or as if differences do not matter. As philosopher Brian Massumi argues, “a call for an end to binary systems of difference is not a call for undifferentiation or sameness. Oppositional difference is the same, it is the form of the Same: it is the most abstract form of expression of society’s homogenizing tendencies.” Massumi argues that “undifferentiation” is the flipside of “difference” only within a closed systems of identification in which difference is constrained into limited, often binary, categories—male or female, human or nonhuman, for example. The contrast to an order of “identity/undifferentiation” would be “hyperdifferentiation,” in which differences proliferate indeterminately in any number of directions. I am suggesting that the ecosexuality of this scene emerges at the sites of any number of machinic connections, between any number of pieces and parts, n-sexes produced through n-sexualities. Depicted at both molar and molecular scales, articulated through both optical and haptic visualities in close-ups and wide shots that drift and roam in constant motion, never fully settling, priority is distributed promiscuously across a horizontal plane of differences. Within this scene, the viewer cannot hold bodies-as-wholes within view for long before the whole is exchanged once again for a part, and it isn’t long before any part is

---

exchanged for another and another.\textsuperscript{47} The surfaces and pieces of human bodies are not the only parts that matter; the nonhuman site and its materials continually come into contact with human bodies and parts, and these connections are brought again and again into the frame and presented to the viewer. In the following section, I will turn my attention to the ways in which these machinic assemblages between the human and the nonhuman exceed the frame of the camera, implicating the body of the viewer and any number of technologies into the ecosexuality that this scene performs.

\textbf{Carnal Thoughts and Cyborg Desires}

Cut, or maybe crossfade, to another surface contact: screen to eye, and from the eye—my eye—to other senses, most notably touch, my own physical experiences that are solicited by my sight of this scene, and the physical sensations—the excitations, the intensifications—that stir at the interface between my body and the screen. I have watched this scene innumerable times, sometimes continuously from beginning to end, sometimes with halting stops and starts as I scribble down notes describing in detail that which I see. Sometimes sitting at my computer, my body feels distant from the images moving across the screen. At other times, I feel escalating intimacies between this scene and my parts as my body responds—physically—with breathing deep and shallow, quickening pulse, some

\textsuperscript{47} In describing these cinematic features, I am not suggesting that such features are entirely unique to this film. Certainly, most pornography tends to frame bodies as both wholes and parts, in shots that reveal the body as a whole from multiple angles and in shots that focus entirely on individual body parts framed independently. Other genres of porn are also invested in traversing the surfaces of bodies, although the mainstream emphasis on penetration does mark an ambivalence in this investment, the drive to get \textit{inside} the unseen interiors of bodies concurrent with the need for \textit{maximum visibility} on their surfaces. And, as Williams has noted, while mainstream hard-core pornography does fixate on the climax of male ejaculation or “the money shot,” equally important to the iconography of the genre is the build up to that climax through a combination of different “sexual numbers”: masturbation, straight (penis/vagina) sex, lesbian sex, oral sex, different sexual groupings (ménage à trois, orgies, etc.), anal sex, and so on. In a study comparing \textit{Dangerous Curves} and other porn films, it would be useful to note these similarities, and identify how similar tropes are deployed differently and to different effects.
places becoming hard, some places becoming wet. As an object of study, a performance that I am theorizing, this scene of Dangerous Curves solicits my attention, my comprehension, my language, my scholarly activity of writing, fingers stroking keys. But this does not negate the incorporation of my body and its involuntary responses, my arousal, in the comprehension, my physical participation within this assemblage of seeing and feeling and thinking. In fact, it requires it. Vivian Sobchack asserts:

As ‘lived bodies’ (to use a phenomenological term that insists on ‘the’ objective body as always also lived subjectively as ‘my’ body, diacritically invested and active in making sense and meaning in and of the world), our vision is always already ‘fleshed out.’ Even at the movies our vision and hearing are informed and given meaning by our other modes of sensory access to the world: our capacity not only to see and to hear but also to touch, to smell, to taste, and always to proprioceptively feel our weight, dimension, gravity, and movement in the world. In sum, the film experience is meaningful not to the side of our bodies but because of our bodies. Which is to say that movies provoke us in the ‘carnal thoughts’ that ground and inform more conscious analysis.  

Sobchack argues that the film viewer, whom she describes as a “cinesthetic subject,” makes sense of sight through an embodied vision in-formed by the knowledge of the other senses. Whereas Marks organizes visuality along a spectrum, on which certain kinds of images—haptic images—appeal to the viewer’s body and sense of touch, Sobchack suggests that all sight must be embodied, relying on the faculties of the viewer’s other senses. This is not necessarily or always a conscious association between the senses; the very sensibility of the senses emerges from their cross-modal connectivity; “the cinesthetic subject both touches and is touched by the screen—able to commute seeing to touching and back again without a thought.”  

Sight is not disembodied; like all of the senses, it requires the lived body’s collective physical experiences for its intelligibility. As the camera moves, I move as well, my

---

48 Sobchack, Carnal Thoughts, 60 (italics original).
49 Ibid., 71 (italics original).
perception of its motion relying on my own sense of movement. As I watch skin stroke skin, flesh becoming wet, bodies supported by fallen trees and boulders, my seeing is informed by my flesh, my own experiences of stroking and being stroked, my own sense of wetness, my experience of being supported. With the camera, I come close and back away and come close again, I roam, my eyes feel along any number of surfaces. These images solicit my sense of touch and at times my own self-touching. The sexualities of desiring-machines depicted on screen are not the only assemblages that matter in this ecosexuality: in seeing, sitting with my computer watching this scene, I, my computer, and my parts participate in the assemblages of bodies, of desiring-machines, produced by Dangerous Curves.\textsuperscript{50}

In addition to the viewer, this assemblage must also account for the technology on which such carnal thoughts and embodied responses depend. Video cameras, computers, video editing software, internet service providers, servers, web browsers, and media players are only some of the pieces and parts that enter into composition with these desiring-machines. Lest it seem that ecosexuality in this chapter is only a matter of flesh and blood and waterfall and stone, any sexualities in which this film participates are also already engaged with machines. This ecosexuality has been the sex of cyborgs all along. As Donna Haraway wrote so influentially in the 1980s, “By the late twentieth century, our time, our mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs.”\textsuperscript{51} We are all already simultaneously both animal and machine, couplings conceived as coded devices “in an intimacy and with a power that was not

\textsuperscript{50} Notably, Jiz Lee has written about the function of mirror neurons in viewing and responding to pornography. Mirror neurons implicate the viewer’s body in that which is viewed. Lee points to this as a kind of potential “sex education,” in which viewers can learn more about their bodies and desires through their embodied reactions to the porn that they view. See Jiz Lee, “Seeing Is Believing: Cognitive Neuroscience in a Queer Porn Revolution,” \textit{Art XX Magazine} 2 (2009), 6.

generated in the history of sexuality” and populating worlds “ambiguously natural and
crafted.”\footnote{52} Although the primary arguments and interventions of Haraway’s “Manifesto for
Cyborgs” have more to do with the status of women and feminism in relation to science and
information technologies in the late twentieth century, her figuration of cyborgs provides a
rich context in which we might think the implications of a sexuality—even an ecosexuality—
that intensifies and erupts within our connections with our computers and our screens. She
writes that the cyborg is:

... resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is
oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence. No longer
structured by the polarity of public and private, the cyborg defines a
technological polis based partly on a revolution of social relations in the oikos,
the household. Nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be
the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other.\footnote{53}

Sexualities become irrevocably cyborg when they incorporate high-speed internet, web
browsers, and internet pornography. These are resolutely perverse intimacies, jacking in and
jacking off across network connections that blur the distinctions between what can be
thought of as private and public: queer outdoor sex in a waterfall streaming across
bandwidth and appearing on my screen transforms public sex into something potentially
quite private; the usernames and passwords and credit card transactions that mediate my
access to these materials transform what might seem private into a matter of records that are
kept on file and visible somewhere else. The sexualities performed in Dangerous Curves as well
as the sexualities of users accessing and viewing this film—including my own—cannot be
disentangled from the technologies that mediate my intimacies with this material.

“Communications technologies and biotechnologies are the crucial tools recrafting our

\footnote{52} Ibid.
\footnote{53} Ibid., 9.
bodies,” Haraway writes, and this is demonstrated acutely within the physical encounters enabled by the entire apparatus of internet pornography. She asks, “Why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin? … For us, in imagination and in other practice, machines can be prosthetic devices; intimate components, friendly selves. We don’t need organic holism to give impermeable wholeness.” Our bodies extend into our machines, through the intimate connections and commitments we make to them. If bodies are never only molar wholes, if they are already run through with any number of molecular flows, comprised of any number of pieces and parts within any number of assemblages, and we are already permeable, as I will discuss below, then indeed we have no need to maintain a belief in a pure or uncontaminated organic holism. If the sexuality of desiring-machines disintegrates the organism and the organization of its body into \( n \) connections, any number of assemblages, then the medium of Dangerous Curves—internet pornography, digital video—provides an occasion with which to recognize that such connections and assemblages encompass our technologies and machines as well. The bodies constituted within this ecosexuality are also cyborg bodies; these bodies—our bodies—and their sexualities are not limited to experimentation with the living and the organic.

**Water: Body Fluids, Planetary Fluids**

Throughout this scene, the waterfall constantly fills the roaming frame, behind, alongside, or flowing over the bodies of the performers. As faces lap between legs, saliva drips from lips. Hands moving in and out of vulvas are slick with wet. Approaching the end of the scene, Blakovich goes down on Lee, fingers swirling in between their labia, head

---

54 Ibid., 23.
55 Ibid., 36.
fervent between their legs. Their movements get faster and more forceful, and the quick cuts and circling shots of the camera start to get dizzying, and then Lee cums, ejaculating onto Blakovich’s hand. The camera zooms in close as Lee squirts again and again and again, ejaculate spraying toward the camera and running down the rocks. Blakovich sucks on Lee’s vulva, and more saliva drips from between them, adding to the fluids flowing over the stone, into the moss.

Cut: Flores is seated on a rock with Blakovich and Lee standing over her, both masturbating, the waterfall behind and between them. Flores licks her own fingers, drops her head back, and pushes her fingers into her mouth. Lee ejaculates again, spraying into the air and all over Flores, and perhaps Blakovich does as well? Her hand is wet and dripping. Saliva drips down Flores’ chin, and the waterfall thunders behind them all, framed perfectly by their bodies. They all begin to kiss, and the image blurs, their individual shapes collapsing together.

This is a really wet performance, as promised in the marketing description of the film: “The waterfall isn’t the only thing getting Syd Blakovich and Jiz Lee wet as they create their own cascades with the big, beautiful April Flores.” Water is ubiquitous in this scene, one of the most prominent features of this performance. It tumbles and sprays down and up the rock face, pooling at the bottom of the ravine. The performers stand knee deep in it as it laps about their legs. Water flows over bodies, and fluids flow out of bodies, dripping and erupting from their openings, soaking their fingers and faces, running down the rocks. The scene finds a kind of climax when Lee ejaculates, but it is an ejaculation against the backdrop of the continuous eruption of the waterfall with which the scene begins and ends. Thinking through water, wetness, and fluidity reveals more ways in which bodies are productively

---

refigured and displayed in this scene. The resemblance and proximity between the waterfall and the ejaculations—along with the many other instances of body fluids throughout this scene—are ways in which bodies and landscapes refer to one another, metaphorically, metonymically, and materially. The establishment of such references and relations reconfigures how body fluids have functioned within the context of pornography and uses fluids and fluidity to situate permeable bodies within a larger context of ecological relations.

As I mentioned above, mainstream hard-core pornography, from the 1970s onward, has been obsessively fixated on male ejaculation, or “the money shot.” The ejaculation of the penis figured as the climax around and toward which the scene is organized positions the ejaculating penis as the phallus, the primary signifier to which all the rest of sex is made to refer.57 Williams has argued that in addition to “the money shot” providing evidence of male pleasure, ejaculation of the penis has also been used as a device to signify the presumption of female pleasure, “a substitute for what cannot be seen.”58 With the first representation of ejaculation in pornography in the 1972 film Deep Throat, with the money shot, “we appear to arrive at … the visual evidence of the mechanical ‘truth’ of bodily pleasure caught in involuntary spasm; the ultimate and uncontrollable—ultimate because uncontrollable—confession of sexual pleasure in the climax of orgasm.”59 However, Williams writes, “this confirming close-up of what is after all only male orgasm, this ultimate confessional moment

57 Earlier I claimed that no other organ or act takes on the phallic position of compelling singular attention and obsessive fixation in this scene, and while I do hold this to be true, it would be possible to suggest that the ubiquity of water—specifically the waterfall, which received more screen time than any other element in the film—is the central focus on which the film is fixated and around which it is organized. Although I do not theorize the fixation on water and fluids in this scene as “phallic,” it could be productive to argue that fluids—including the waterfall—take on the prominent role conventionally filled by the penis within the phallic logic of mainstream hard-core pornography. It is worth asking: what might be the subversive potential in expropriating the phallus to fluidity itself, including female ejaculation and a moving body of water within the nonhuman landscape? Such an intellectual exercise is beyond the scope of this chapter, but could indicate how this film might be differently and usefully figured to other philosophical ends.

58 Williams, Hard Core, 95.

59 Ibid., 100-101.
of ‘truth,’ can also be seen as the very limit of the visual representation of pleasure. In order to make the ejaculation visible, the male performer must withdraw from any physical, tactile connection with the body of his female partner; with the emergence of this convention, viewers are tacitly asked to believe that this shift from a tactile to a visual pleasure at the crucial moment of the male’s orgasm is what these performers want, that this ejaculation makes visible her desires and pleasure and much as it does his. In this sense, the depiction of ejaculation in pornography has been historically concerned with signifying more than just male pleasure, representing female pleasure that is otherwise, presumably, unrepresentable. The cum shot is thus, as Grosz puts it, “…no longer an unmediated representation and demonstration of his pleasure (as one would expect); it becomes an index of his prowess to generate her pleasure. His sexual specificity is not the object of the gaze but remains a mirror or rather a displacement of her pleasure (or at least his fantasy of her pleasure).”

However, the ejaculations depicted in this scene of Dangerous Curves, while potentially participating in the principle of “maximum visibility” by relying on ejaculation as one device through which “ultimate and uncontrollable” sexual pleasure is made visible, are different from the ejaculation described by Williams in key ways, redeploying a prominent trope of mainstream pornography toward new effects. First, in this scene, there are no male bodies ejaculating. All three performers might be described as “female bodied,” and although Lee

---

60 Ibid., 101.
61 This of course does not take into account how male ejaculation functions differently in gay male pornography as a genre. The close resemblance between the choreographies of mainstream gay male porn and those of mainstream straight porn—in the escalating series of sexual numbers leading to penetration and culminating in the external cum shot—could be usefully theorized for the ways in which masculine and feminine gender roles are produced through sexual choreographies, even when the performing bodies are assigned the same sex.
62 Grosz, Volatile Bodies, 199.
identifies as genderqueer, they do refer to themselves as “a person who was assigned female at birth” and describe their ejaculations as “female ejaculation.” Second, tactile connection is not abandoned in exchange for visual pleasure: Lee’s first ejaculation takes place with Blakovich’s hand and fingers continuing to circle and probe their vulva, gushing out onto Blakovich’s arm and the rock beneath them, and their second ejaculation onto Flores erupts from beneath Lee’s own hand as they stimulate themselves. Lee’s ejaculation while being fingered and fucked by themselves and by Blakovich thus queers the trope of “the money shot.” It functions as a representation and demonstration of their own explosive pleasure, alone and with each other, not a displacement or a fantasy of another’s pleasure.

Beyond the ways in which the trope of ejaculation is refigured or queered in this scene, female ejaculation itself must be considered for its specificity, not reduced to the same functions as male ejaculation nor to the ways in which male ejaculation has been thought or theorized. As Grosz points out, despite its fluidity, male ejaculate—semenal fluid—is generally displaced in favor of solidification:

Seminal fluid is understood primarily as what it makes, what it achieves, a causal agent and thus a thing, a solid: its fluidity, its potential seepage, the element in it that is uncontrollable, its spread, its formlessness, is perpetually displaced in discourse onto its properties, its capacity to fertilize, to father, to produce an object. Man sees that his ‘function’ is to create, and own, at a (temporal and spatial) distance, and thus to extend bodily interests beyond the male body’s skin through its proprietary role, its ‘extended corporeality’ in the mother whom he has impregnated and the child thereby produced, making them his products, possessions, responsibilities.

---

65 Grosz, Volatile Bodies, 199.
Grosz discusses this strategy—this tendency to refigure or reduce male body fluids to that which they make, that which they solidify, the object they produce, rather than to acknowledge the uncontrollable, excessive, disruptive, messy nature of such fluids as they move from the inside out—as an attempt to distance men from those very qualities that they project onto women. Given these tendencies in the treatment of male bodily fluids, how can female ejaculation be understood differently, and how do those differences affect how we might read this film?

Stephen Linstead does an exceptional job discussing and theorizing the under-discussed and contested phenomenon of female ejaculation. Tracing writings about female ejaculation back to Greek and Roman physicians and philosophers, Linstead offers a history of female ejaculation: the early debates as to whether or not female fluids contributed to reproduction that date back to Hippocrates and Aristotle, the denial of the existence of female ejaculation in the Middle Ages and into modern day, and the instigation of the contemporary debate with the publishing of Josephine Lowndes Sevely and J.W. Bennett’s 1978 paper, “Concerning female ejaculation and the female prostate.”

He writes, “Sevely and Bennett summarize the historical literature on the female prostate and argue that:

1. both male and female have prostates;
2. in females, size and distribution of this gland varies widely;
3. the male prostate produces most of the fluid ejaculated (the testes contribute only a small amount containing sperm);
4. in some women the female prostate (or para- and peri-urethral glands) allow ejaculation of a fluid, which is not identical with urine, through the urethral meatus.”

---

Adding to the medical, scientific, and philosophical history of female ejaculation, Linstead turns to the work of Annie Sprinkle—another primary figure in this study—who incorporated demonstrations of female ejaculation into “stage performances, autobiography, and videos which inhabit the boundary between pornography, sex education, and art.” Sprinkle was one of the first—and easily the most famous—to extend widespread visibility and representation to female ejaculation. Linstead uses his discussion of Sprinkle and her work presenting female ejaculation as a way to ask why female ejaculation, only recently becoming represented in Sprinkle’s work and in later pornographies, became “part of a realm of unknowing for so long, and why both male pornography (with its apparent quest to represent the unrepresentable) and feminism (with its quest for the return to control of women’s sexuality to women) suppressed or denied this knowledge.”

He suggests that female ejaculation presents a problem for the model of a body as unitary, solid, and clearly bounded—in other words, a phallic body. Linstead turns to Deleuze and Guattari for a model of a body that is produced through desiring-machines, what Deleuze and Guattari describe as a Body without Organs that is “the field of immanence of desire, the plane of consistency specific to desire.” Linstead writes that this Body without Organs “resists being structured, channeled and formed, it refuses hierarchization, sedimentation, striation, layerings and overcodings—it is a changing pattern of intensities and flows; it seeks to empty itself of significances, to break away, not from the organs, but from the organization of the organs which is called the organism.” He writes that female ejaculation might well be regarded as “a symbol of flows that flow from the body without organs. As such it becomes

---

68 Ibid., 40-41.
69 Ibid., 41.
70 Ibid., 44 (italics original).
71 Ibid. (italics original).
transgressive, subversive of patriarchy, dissolving boundaries between binaries, refiguring our understandings of bodily control, and rewriting femininity out of its polarized opposition to masculinity. The spray from between Lee’s labia—as well as saliva dripping off of lips, vulvas, fingers, and fists—mark the places where bodies exceed themselves, pushing beyond their permeable boundaries and making any clear division between inside and outside temporary and conditional. Of course, the openness of these bodies is already made explicit at the molar or macro scale, as bodies alternate between penetrating and having their own orifices penetrated by fingers and fists and tongues. The bodies performed here do not conform to the normative constraints of sexed bodies, in which to be male is to penetrate and to be impenetrable, to be female is to be penetrated and never to penetrate. All bodies performed here are penetrable/penetrated; all bodies penetrate in turn. Along with these molar displays of penetrability, body fluids present molecular capacities for permeability. Body

72 Ibid., 45.
73 Luce Irigaray, in her text Elemental Passions and others, develops a line of theory that opposes the heterosexist construction of (heterosexual) sex in which the man is penetrating, singular, cohesive, closed at his edges, and the woman, penetrated, reinforces his closed singularity by his containment within her incorporated edges. See Luce Irigaray, Elemental Passions, trans. Joanna Collie and Judith Still (New York: Routledge, 1992). Butler also writes, “This means that he […] will never be entered by her or, in fact, by anything. For he is the impenetrable penetrator, and she, the invariably penetrated.” Judith Butler, Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex” (Great Britain: Routledge, 1993), 50. To conceive of sex as mutually penetrating, mutually permeating and interdependent along axes of attention, sensation, pleasure, flesh and fluids, is ostensibly queer.
fluids mark molecular flows, excesses, and exchanges, making visible a materiality that destabilizes the discrete, contained character of bodies. Grosz writes:

> Body fluids attest to the permeability of the body, its necessary dependence on an outside, its liability to collapse into this outside (this is what death implies), to the perilous divisions between the body’s inside and its outside. They affront a subject’s aspiration toward autonomy and self-identity. They attest to a certain irreducible ‘dirt’ or disgust, a horror of the unknown or the unspecifiable that permeates, lurks, lingers, and at times leaks out of the body, a testimony of the fraudulence or impossibility of the ‘clean’ and ‘proper.’ They resist the determination that marks solids, for they are without any shape or form of their own. They are engulfing, difficult to be rid of; any separation from them is not a matter of certainty, as it may be in the case of solids. Body fluids flow, they seep, they infiltrate; their control is a matter of vigilance, never guaranteed.  

Drawing from the work of Mary Douglas and Julia Kristeva, Grosz writes an account of body fluids as a disturbance, disruption, or threat to the presumed solidity of the body, to the body as clean and proper, self-identical, and unified. Body fluids—their leaking and seeping and flowing and lingering—make a mess of what might otherwise seem to clearly be “inside” or “outside” of one’s body, and by extension, oneself. Body fluids are “borderline states,” sites of danger and vulnerability, potential pollution and contamination. “Blood, vomit, saliva, phlegm, pus, sweat, tears, menstrual blood, seminal fluids, seep, flow, pass with different degrees of control, tracing the paths of entry or exit, the routes of interchange or traffic with the world, which must nevertheless be clear of these bodily ‘products’ for an interchange to be possible.” These “routes of interchange” with the world are traversed by what is inside moving outside—and what is outside moving inside—where bodies exceed themselves out into the world and the world makes its way inside; any absolute separation

---

75 Ibid., 195.
between a unitary, impermeable body and a world that is distinct from it has already been impossible.

Body fluids, marking pathways of exchange between bodies and the world, where one enters and becomes part of the other, situate bodies within a larger continuum of fluids in our world. Our fluids do not begin or end with any singular, human individuals: they come into us, they flow out of us, they seep and lubricate between us, they trace pathways along which we are opened to a world of other materials, other bodies, other fluids, places where we are entered and places where we escape ourselves. It is not only between human bodies that fluids are exchanged. Evolutionary biologists Lynn Margulis and Dorian Sagan remind us, “Though adulterated with other compounds, we, like all living matter, are mostly water—that is, hydrogen and oxygen.” All life, including human life, emerged and emerges from water on this planet; we are composed of it, we carry it from place to place, we require constant rehydration, and what we think of as our body fluids eventually flow from us back into the expansive continuum of water on the surface of this planet. Water is also that which we drink, with which we grow our food and cook, in which we bathe and swim, across which we sail, into which we deposit our bodily and industrial waste. The ever-present waterfall depicted in this scene of Dangerous Curves can function as a metonym for the water of our world, planetary fluids with which the fluid excesses of bodies are continuous. The ejaculations and the waterfall mark multiple points along a continuum of all the various ways in which water moves on earth—over rocks and cliffs and pooling in ravines, gushing out of bodies fucking—distinguished spatially by permeable fleshy borders that conditionally

---

contain “inside” spaces but which also mediate flowing access between these “insides” and their “outsides.”

Whether considering the significance of planetary fluids or body fluids—and especially when considering them together—such fluids must be thought in relation to the concepts of pollution and contamination. Routes of interchange and borderline states introduce the possibility of potentially hazardous materials entering and infiltrating systems of which they are not already a part, systems to which they pose a threat. This is true for human bodies as well as for bodies of water; indeed, the discourses surrounding bodily management and environmental management are inextricably intertwined. Queer ecologist Catriona Sandilands writes that “the ecologically docile body of modern environmentalism reduces, reuses, and recycles as acts of personal, not only planetary, salvation…. this ecological subject finds particular pleasure in the cultivation of a particular kind of disciplined body, specifically, a ‘natural’ body striving to be ‘free’ of the corrupting toxins that increasingly plague the world.”

She discusses the increasing concerns about environmental contamination as an effect on the health of human bodies, making both bodily and environmental security anxiously fixated on boundaries, where bodies are understood as “independent ‘systems’ located in an external, sometimes hostile, environment.”

Following Emily Martin and Rachel Carson, Sandilands correlates this “ecological body politic” with immunity discourses, both of which take pollution as a founding issue, particularly since the onset of AIDS. Bodily integrity and ecological integrity both strive toward a management of bodies and spaces that keeps “the inside in, the outside out, and the physic-moral line

---

78 Ibid., 21.
between the two as clear as possible.”79 Body fluids—the paths of interchange that they trace and the borderline states that they demarcate—indicate the vulnerability of bodies to one another and to the environment. Similarly, water—what I have called “planetary fluids”—indicates a considerable vulnerability of those lives and ecosystems with which it is entangled, through which it flows. Recall the recent chemical spills in West Virginia in 2014—just one of innumerable environmental catastrophes resulting from industrial activities—in which 5,000 gallons of 4-methylcyclohexane methanol, a chemical used in coal processing, seeped from a ruptured storage tank into the Elk River, contaminating the water supply for nine counties, 300,000 people, and countless nonhuman lives.80 Both we and our world are vulnerable, and our water, our fluids, are significant sites—or, perhaps not “sites,” perhaps “streams” or “flows”—where we recognize and experience our vulnerability.

Within this flowing continuity between bodily and planetary fluids, it is significant that in this scene of Dangerous Curves, no use of safer-sex barriers comes into view.81 The absence of any kind of safer-sex barriers between bodies here is conspicuous, especially given Lee’s extensive blogging about safer-sex practices and Flores’ 2009 public decision that she would primarily perform girl/girl scenes and only perform boy/girl scenes if a condom was used, specifically in reaction to an HIV scare in the porn industry and out of concerns regarding the risks of having “unprotected sex” with multiple partners.82 The sense of risk

79 Ibid., 22.
81 While no barriers are in sight, due to laws and industry standards in California requiring all porn performers to have negative-STI (Sexually Transmitted Infection) results current within the last thirty days, it is certain that all three performers in this scene were clear on the STI status.
that the absence of barriers suggests takes on even greater magnitude when the fluid exchange is not only between human bodies but between human bodies and the landscape as well. As I watch Lee, Blakovich, and Flores fucking without barriers, their fluids literally mingling with one another and the water of the environment, I think of the “sick sea” about which Beatriz Preciado spoke in the Love Art Laboratory’s *Ecosexual Blue Wedding to the Sea*. The “unprotected sex” in this scene has far greater significance than merely marking the absence of barriers between the fluids of human bodies. In a world that holds a sick sea, in which waters can be run through with chemical spills, in which fluids can carry toxins and disease that devastate ecosystems and immune systems alike, in a world of bodies that traffic in and through such fluids, bodies that are largely made of water, fucking in a waterfall without barriers between bodies cannot be fully immune from the implication of risk.

Inasmuch as this scene is saturated with delight, it is also tinged with danger. What if the greatest danger in this scene of *Dangerous Curves* is that which we present to ourselves, where “we ourselves” are water, fluid, permeable, leaking and seeping?

**Performing Queer Naturecultures**

In the final shots of the scene, the camera again pans over the waterfall, the dark, wet rocks, the slick bark of the fallen tree, a black salamander crawling through the dry leaves on the ground.

Cut: in a wide shot, Lee, Blakovich, and Flores, now almost entirely naked, walk together into a recessed crevice at the bottom of the waterfall. The image has a fish-eye distortion, as if trying to take in as much as possible: the magnitude of the stone cliff, how it gets wetter

---

83 See Chapter 2.
and darker toward the waterfall at the center of the frame, the vibrant green plants sprouting all over, the three naked bodies making their way toward this darker, wetter cleft in the stone. Lee crawls up onto a small ledge beneath the gentle cascade; Blakovich and Flores face each other, kissing and caressing the curves of each other’s bodies. The lush scene moves in and out of focus, giving the image a misty blurriness and softening the outer edges of the performers’ bodies. The camera moves in close to the three, and slowly spins upward, looking into a thousand tiny drops of water falling downward, splashing onto the lens and causing the image to run together even more.

It would be easy to read these final shots as completing a progression within the scene of becoming more and more “natural,” as the performers move closer and closer to “nature”: the bodies shed their clothes—their “cultural” trappings—becoming increasingly naked as they move deeper into the waterfall. Initially, the human bodies stand out as “other” within their setting: their fashionista wardrobe—sunglasses and sequins and boots and belt buckles and glittering jewelry—seems to be juxtaposed against the irregular rocks, the flowing waterfall, the patches of green flora, the misty sunlight. As the performers shed their clothes and literally move farther into the space at the base of the waterfall, there seems to be less distance—figurative and spatial—between them and their surroundings, heightening a sense of their intimacy and belonging with/in the “natural setting.”

But of course becoming more naked is not simply becoming more natural, as if the clothes that are shed are the only “cultural artifacts” in sight. The bodies are themselves cultural productions, organized by discourse, coming to matter through the socially inscribed significance of their pieces and parts, made meaningful through the aggregation of
those significant parts into approximations of the available categories of sexed bodies. Specifically within the genre of pornography that relies “upon the supposedly unmediated body on display for the audience,” the cultural over-coding that gives bodies their significance, constituting them as sexed and gendered in one of only two ways—male or female—carries particular force. When the presumption is that specific anatomical features compose the body of a woman or the body of a man, and the specific anatomical features of bodies are fully revealed within the pornographic logic of “maximum visibility,” the supposed self-evidence of sexed/gendered bodies conceals the cultural norms that have assigned such bodies their gender/sex. The fashionista costumes may refer metonymically to some aspects of cultural production, but as these traces of culture are removed, the bodies themselves, which rely on other institutions and practices of culture for their legibility and intelligibility, come into view. The Deleuzo-Guattarian reading of bodies that I offer above enhances particular potentialities within the iconography of Dangerous Curves. Writing this scene and this theory in these ways not only emphasizes a particular conception of bodies and sexualities; it also resists articulating sexualities and bodies in ways that fall in line with the normative constraints of gender and sex. Doing so disrupts—while never fully


86 Sexuality Studies scholar Bobby Noble has suggested that feminist porn is, in part, “shaped through an epistemological and political imperative of incoherence, and this incoherence informs its visual language,” an imperative to rupture the normative sense through which bodies are made intelligible. Writing specifically about the work of FTM (female-to-male) trans performers in pornography, Noble brings attention to the ways in which language, surgical modifications of the topography of bodies, and the performance of different sex acts not only render bodies incoherent within existing sex/gender norms, but in doing so, expose the operations of such norms in constraining what and how bodies come to be seen and recognized, specifically in pornography. Noble, “Knowing Dick.”
eliminating—the forceful self-evidence of cultural categories such as “women,” “female bodied,” “nature,” and “culture,” as they come into view and as they surface in language.

To discuss this scene in the terms “natural” and “cultural” is not unproblematic; these terms are not neutral, nor are the conditions of their emergence. Historically, nature has been represented in several monolithic forms: first, nature has been figured as passive, inert matter, a resource or raw material for culture, “appropriated, preserved, enslaved, exalted, or otherwise made flexible for disposal by culture in the logic of capitalist colonialism.”\(^7\) At most, it is the foil for culture, a “zone of constraints” on what human actions become possible, “the field for the imposition of choice.”\(^8\) In the second case, nature has also been used as a model for human action, “a potent ground for moral discourse,” in which to be “unnatural, or act unnaturally, has not been considered healthy, moral, legal, or, in general a good idea.”\(^9\) In both senses, nature consolidates a particular understanding of what it means to be human. Taken separately, the former produces the human as distinct from nature, the civilized and civilizing force of culture, capable of taming, managing, and dominating the wildness of nature; the latter produces the human as aspiring toward that which nature represents, where nature serves as the screen on which human ideological struggles have been projected in order to maneuver nature into a legitimizing position for specific forms of human morality. The human, in this sense, is “good” if he aligns with nature, a nature that bears the projection of a range of human ideologies. These human/nature relationships cannot be resolved into one another, yet even in their

---


\(^9\) Ibid.
ambivalence, both demonstrate the use of nature as an object that affirms a particular form of human subject. Introducing the terms “nature” and “culture” into my reading of this scene of Dangerous Curves allows me to address how this scene intervenes in the function of these terms.

At multiple scales, this scene presents queer sex within an outdoor setting that is continually brought into the frame with and alongside the bodies of the performers. If this outdoor site can be considered a “natural setting,” then the scene that unfolds here produces a potentially unlikely alignment between queerness and naturalness. Queer ecofeminist Greta Gaard and queer ecologist Catriona Sandilands have both written about the historical configuration of “queer” in relation to the concept of “nature.” Gaard positions the queer—or, more precisely, queers of a particular historical situation—as figures who have been backgrounded, radically excluded, and marked as lacking the standard qualities of normative Western culture. She describes them as the product of two mutually reinforcing dualisms: heterosexual/queer and reason/the erotic. She goes on to align each of these dualisms with the dualisms of culture/nature and male/female, among others, and calls for a close reading of the historical periods in Western Europe in which the ideological correlations between the erotic, queer sexualities, women, persons of color, and nature became established. Within these dualistic constructions, queers are figured in a fraught relation to nature:

On the one hand, from a queer perspective, we learn that the dominant culture charges queers with transgressing the natural order, which in turn implies that nature is valued and must be obeyed. On the other hand, from an ecofeminist perspective, we learn that Western culture has constructed nature as a force that must be dominated if culture is to prevail. Bringing these perspectives together indicates that, in effect, the ‘nature’ queers are urged to comply with is none other than the dominant paradigm of

---

90 Greta Gaard, “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism,” in Hypatia 12, no. 1 (Winter 1997), 114-137.
heterosexuality—an identity and practice that is itself a cultural construction, as both feminist and queer theorists have shown.\footnote{Gaard, “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism,” 120-121.}

According to Gaard, to be queer is to be considered “unnatural” by the dominant culture, where nature is figured as the source of a “natural order.” Or, where nature is figured as that which is wild and must be tamed by culture, queers are considered out of control, failing to comply with the necessary refinement of cultural practices. Whether nature is figured as raw resource or moral edict, queers are maneuvered into an oppressed position, as either outside of a “pure” and “natural” nature or in need of the “civilizing” force of heterosexuality.

Sandilands also argues that there are strong historical connections between the regulation of sexuality and the management of nature. She traces how discourses of nature have been employed, “at least since the nineteenth century, to formulate, regulate and specify sexual identities.”\footnote{Sandilands, “Eco homo,” 24.} She writes:

Arguments from nature, which have been used to create taxonomic representations of ‘species’ of sexual characters—inverts, onists and the like—were part of the mechanism by which so-called pathological sexualities were isolated and controlled. The only ‘natural,’ non-pathological sexuality was organized, by exclusion, around a very narrow band of reproductive, penetrative heterosexual activities.\footnote{Sandilands, “Eco homo,” 24.}

In this move, nature and “the natural” are used to legitimate normative, heterosexual, reproductive sexual behavior—and, by extension, those subjects who come to be identified with such behaviors—and to mark as illegitimate and “unnatural” any sexual behavior that exceeds the boundaries of this narrow category. Sandilands also recounts the processes through which this “naturalization of heterosexuality” is accompanied by a “heterosexualization of nature,” in which same-sex eroticism in other species is explained.
away in an effort to maintain the “naturalness” of heterosexuality. Here nature functions simultaneously as the screen onto which normative heterosexuality is projected and the grounds on which the naturalness of such norms rely. Echoing Gaard, Sandilands’ account shows how nature is made into a moral code to which “unnatural” and “immoral” queers must submit, just as nature is made to submit to the projections of dominant human cultures and used as a resource to legitimate those cultural constructions.

Taking Gaard and Sandilands together, we might then examine the potential alignment of queer sexualities and nature performed in this scene of Dangerous Curves. Queers having been charged with transgressing a natural order, this alignment of “natural” and “queer” would contest the presumed heterosexuality of that order of nature, figuring that natural order to be a fiction. In this scene, bodies fuck queerly—by which I mean, bodies perform queer sexualities by fucking in ways that have nothing to do with heterosexuality or reproduction—with and in nature. Queer human sexuality and the nonhuman “natural” setting are brought into composition with one another within the camera’s roaming frame. The camera moves continuously over and around this site and these sexualities, figuring them as continuous with one another and even bringing attention to the points at which they connect, where the performers’ bodies and their parts connect with the nonhuman materials around them. The fluids of these bodies flow out into and over this “natural” site, gesturing toward the permeability of bodies and their ecological entanglement with the fluids of the landscape. Rather than queer bodies excluded from the naturalness of nature, these bodies and their sexualities are shown to be continuous with this site, entering into assemblage with

94 This projection of heterosexuality onto nonhuman forms of life is explicated in far more detail in Bagemihl, Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity; and Roughgarden, Evolution’s Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People.
it. Ecosexuality here encompasses both sexualities of desiring-machines—where the molar categories of gender or species are undone by the proliferation of any number of connections between pieces and parts, $n$-sexes and $n$-sexualities at any number of scales—and queer sexualities figured as part of, not separate from, nature.

Whether across bodies or environments or any alignment between them, no move toward nature or the natural leaves culture or the cultural behind, and this reading—in which nature is performed as something quite queer—troubles or disrupts any clear distinction between “culture” or “nature.” In its place, this scene offers a more distributed, pervasive consistency, a naturecultural continuum of both human and nonhuman bodies, held together in relations of eroticism, partial equivalencies, contingent resemblances, and a shared milieu in which the landscape, human bodies, fluidity, technologies, and my own body are already participants. From the very start, the “natural setting” shown in this scene is inhabited by human participants—the performers and the videographers, who, while outside of the frame, are nonetheless present throughout. From beginning to end, Lee, Blakovich, and Flores intimately engage with the “sensual scenery” in the many compositions and assemblages that I describe above. Here nature and culture touch and shape each other, caress and support each other, flow into and out of each other, to the degree that the distinction between each of these others is no longer clear. Here ecosexuality is enacted as more than simply a natural setting for queer sex: queer sex can be read as continuous with any number of other material assemblages and intensities. This is an ecosexuality that extends throughout a sprawling assemblage: of water, stone, flesh, video, technology, my

---

own body, others with whom I think, words typed out at my computer now brought into contact with you and your own body.

**The Dangers of Dangerous Curves**

Having articulated the methods through which eosexuality is enacted as an erotic organization of visibility that encompasses both the human and the nonhuman, the extension of that eosexuality into technologies and the body of the viewer, the specific function of fluids in this scene, all within a queer naturecultural continuum, I want to now turn my attention to the dangers of Dangerous Curves.

Possible hazards abound throughout this scene and my analysis of it. One concern could be the way in which this scene—like many porn films—potentially objectifies the bodies of the performers. Throughout this scene, the performers are consistently poised and posed for the camera. The effect is highly stylized: these shots feel like a fashion editorial in which urban fashionistas just happen to find themselves juxtaposed with an outdoor, “natural” setting. This stylized vocabulary is at work from the very opening of the scene: Lee’s body presses against the rocks, posing in striking angles, bending at the hips, twisting from the waist to turn their face into the sunlight. Later, Blakovich crouches down to her hands and knees, lowering herself and spreading her legs over a broad rock, tipping one shoulder toward the camera then the other, arching her back. When all three performers first appear together, Flores stands almost in profile, her hand on her hip, fondling her breasts. She bends forward, leaning her ass against the trunk of the fallen tree, and pulls one breast then the other through the off-the-shoulder neckline of her dress as she stares into the camera. The consistently stylized placement of the performers’ bodies in what could be
described as hyper-feminized vocabularies and the direct confrontation of their gazes produce a compound effect: on the one hand, these are bodies posed and positioned to be seen, to be viewed, and thus, in a sense, objectified; on the other hand, the viewer is met by the gaze of each performer and must then to some degree recognize them as a person returning the gaze of the camera, and by extension the viewer’s own gaze.

The stylized hyper-feminine vocabularies through which the performers display their bodies to the camera/viewer are not neutral. They position themselves in order to be viewed, clearly presenting themselves to the camera, and are, in this sense, rendered as objects for the gaze of the spectator. This objectifying gaze has been theorized extensively by Laura Mulvey, beginning with her seminal essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.”

96 Grounding her theorization of cinematic conventions in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Mulvey argues that in a world ordered by a pervasive sexual imbalance, “sexual pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female,” and that the “determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly.”

97 Mulvey argues that this active/passive heterosexual division inherently structures the direction and distribution of the cinematic gaze as well as any pleasure or identification produced by such gazing, formulating any active gaze—of the spectator, of the camera, or of the protagonists—as automatically a “male gaze” directed toward a passive “female fetish object.” While grounding her analysis in cinema, she claims that film reveals “pre-existing patterns of fascination already at work within the individual subject and the social formations that have moulded him,” and that film “reflects, reveals and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images,

97 Ibid., 11.
erotic ways of looking and spectacle.”

In other words, her analysis of cinema is an analysis of a symptom of patriarchal society and how gazing mediates power imbalances across sexual difference, manifest but not originating in film. The gaze within a phallocentric society is thus objectifying, and where female bodies are presented, they are styled and coded with a quality of “to-be-looked-at-ness,” objects to be consumed by the active gaze of masculinized subjects.

Beverley Brown suggests of a few caveats on the notion of objectification, specifically in reference to pornography. She writes:

Initially and tritely, all representation objectifies, all representation fragments. We should also be wary of taking ‘objectification’ to signify an omission, a dehumanization, in which pornography just leaves out or fails to portray other aspects of the feminine or aspects of sexual relations that could be, as it were, simply placed alongside sexuality to give a fuller, more healthy, picture.

To the objection to objectification, Brown responds with the obvious: all representation objectifies, produces a partial object—presenting only some of its attributes—to be seen.

She goes on to suggest that arguing for a more complete representation of women, femininity, or sexuality reinscribes the presumption that there is a “whole” or “complete” sexuality, femininity, or woman to be represented, which is itself an idealized projection. Rather than objecting to objectification itself or to partial or incomplete representations, it might be useful to ask: to the degree that the performers’ bodies are objectified, what can these “objects” do? What does this “objectification” accomplish? Of what are the partial objects depicted capable?

---

98 Ibid., 6.
99 Mulvey even acknowledges that cinema has changed over decades and can no longer be described as a single, monolithic system, but argues that however self-conscious the industry manages to be, it remains restricted within a formal mise-en-scène reflecting the dominant cultural ideology. Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” 7.
Returning to the specificities of the work, it is significant that these performers all look directly into the camera, returning its gaze as well as the gaze of the viewer. While one possible hazard of this scene is that the performers’ bodies can be apprehended as objects to be looked at, figuring them within a phallocentric organization of sexual difference—a hazard that no doubt haunts any explicit presentation of female bodies within a patriarchal culture—the gaze of the performers complicates this apprehension. If their bodies are objectified by their posturing and presentation, they are objects that can gaze: they are also subjects. To the degree that we might conditionally follow Mulvey and understand the gaze as a locus of agency, the gaze of the performers—Lee, Blakovich, and Flores—directed both toward the camera and toward one another, positions them as agents who view, dislodging them from the narrow position of passive objects only to be viewed.101 Within one register, at the scale of social relations between embodied subjects, these performers present themselves as agents of their own presentation. Stylized, poised, posing, and fucking, Lee, Blakovich, and Flores demonstrate their own agency, putting their own bodies and their own sexualities on display for the camera/viewer that they address.

101 It is worth noting that while Mulvey’s theory of the male gaze introduced in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” has been highly influential and useful toward sensitizing spectators to the operations of power within the apparatus of film—particularly in relation to gender—both Mulvey and many other theorists have subsequently addressed the role of the female spectator and her agency. See Michele Aaron, Spectatorship: The Power of Looking On (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), 35-43. With the introduction of queer theory to film studies, there has also been considerable scholarship on the specificities of a “queer gaze” or queer spectator position. See See Ellis Hanson, Out Takes: Essays on Queer Theory and Film (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Michele Aaron, New Queer Cinema (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2004); and Jackie Stacey and Sarah Street, eds., Queer Screen: A Screen Reader (London: Routledge, 2007). There has also been growing scholarship accounting for “the transgender gaze” in both pornography and cinema more generally. See See Bobby Noble, “Knowing Dick: Penetration and the Pleasures of Feminist Porn’s Trans Men,” in The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure, eds. Constance Penley, Celine Parreñas Shimizu, Mireille Miller-Young, and Tristan Taormino (New York City: The Feminist Press, 2013); and Judith Halberstam, “The transgender gaze in Boys Don’t Cry,” in Queer Screen: A Screen Reader, eds. Jackie Stacey and Sarah Street (London: Routledge, 2007).
Throughout this chapter, I have theorized in favor of viewing bodies as pieces and parts that do not cohere into unitary subjects and destabilizing “the human” through the distribution of sexuality to a larger nonhuman context. While I maintain committed to these processes as positive and productive, when considering the potential dangers of *Dangerous Curves*, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that dismemberment, disintegration, and dehumanization can pose threats as well, particularly to those bodies that have never been considered whole or fully membered, to those subjects who are already rendered incoherent, to those lives that have never been made livable as human.\textsuperscript{102} Mulvey and others have described the breaking up of the female body from a complete whole as a strategy toward fetishizing the female body as a defense against the castration anxiety of the male gaze.\textsuperscript{103} By fragmenting the body into parts and ascribing an overvaluation to those parts, the “danger” or “threat” that the female body signifies to the male viewer—the threat of castration—is disavowed, substituting body parts as fetish objects that can reassure the [male] viewer of his possession of the phallus. Beyond the psychoanalytic implications, the fragmentation of bodies and subjects could be said to enact a kind of violence, dismembering bodies and disintegrating subjects with dehumanizing effects. These ecosexual lines of flight that I have here pursued would seem to disrupt the very categories of legibility and livability that have already been denied to so many. My hope, however, is that the theorizations of bodies that I have pursued, the work I believe this scene of *Dangerous Curves* accomplishes, do not simply deny access to these registers of wholeness, coherence, or humanity, but instead offer ways

\textsuperscript{102} I am thinking here particularly of female bodies that have so often been figured as “lacking” or even as signifying lack; trans* and intersexed bodies that have been figured as incoherent, failing to approximate the available categories of sex or gender; or any number of lives that have been figured as less than human due to the color of their skin, to race, to national identity or un-documentation, to disability or differences of ability, to age or illness.

of recognizing these categories as already inadequate or unstable, even for those who have had access to them, thereby moving toward other ways of recognizing, thinking, and valuing bodies and lives.

Another danger that haunts this film, and potentially any feminist porn film, is that of reception. As prominent sex educator and feminist pornographer Tristan Taormino writes, “Although I am trying to make a different kind of porn, once I put it out in the world, I can’t control how it’s received. Some people may grasp what I’m trying to do; others may simply see a hot film that turns them on. Ideally, people get it and get off on it.” Taormino puts considerable emphasis on the feminist production of porn, with practices such as emphasizing female pleasure in the filming of a scene, including performer interviews that portray performers as three-dimensional human beings, providing fair and ethical working environments, and casting diverse bodies in ways that do not reduce them to stereotypes. She writes that her emphasis on the feminist production of porn is in part because “it’s difficult to designate what a feminist porn image looks like.” Even while attempting to develop and depict a feminist porn iconography that “responds to dominant images with alternative ones,” working with images that “question and contradict other pornography that represents men and women as one-dimensional objects,” Taormino points back to the agency of the viewer in making porn meaningful, in ways that will hopefully be consistent with its feminist intentions, but may not be. Images, like any media, circulate indeterminately, and even the most responsible modes of production cannot control the reception of images nor how they will function in different contexts. Award-winning

---

105 Ibid.
106 Taormino, “Calling the Shots,” 261.
feminist porn films might still register as objectifying or degrading for some viewers. The empowerment and agency that performing in porn can give to the performers, as both Lee and Flores have described in their writing, may or may not be legible to a viewer. Partial bodies and body parts may be apprehended as fetish objects for a male gaze. The alignment of female bodies of color in an outdoor setting may be received as reproducing a stereotype that both women and people of color are somehow inherently “wild.” While my readings of Dangerous Curves emphasize its work as positive and productive, other readings will remain possible, and, as Taormino reminds us, much of the agency in reading resides with the viewer.

Alongside these hazards, the dangers of Dangerous Curves to which I have given most of my attention are those that productively threaten established orders and existing norms. It offers a view of bodies that exceed their boundaries, and depictions of sexuality that move beyond Oedipal and anthropocentric constraints on sex and desire; it figures bodies and sexualities as assemblages of parts and molecular connections, disrupting the organ-ized molar designations of bodies and organisms. By presenting queer/ecosex without the use of protective barriers, it stages the vulnerability and risk that pervades both bodies and the ecological relations of which they are already a part. As a “Deliciously Diverse” film, it gives representation to a diverse range of body size, gender identities, and racial background, challenging many of the idealized norms for beauty or desirability in which pornography and

culture more generally traffic. In these ways, Dangerous Curves fulfills the function of feminist pornography to expand the boundaries of sexual representation on film and challenge dominant/mainstream norms for bodies and pleasures. It “explores concepts of desire, agency, power, beauty, and pleasure at their most confounding and difficult,” unsettles “conventional definitions of sex and expand[s] the language of sex as an erotic activity,” and “develops its own aesthetic and iconography to expand established sexual norms and discourses.” As such, it figures pornography as a site for resistance, intervention, and change—within the genre of pornography and the culture within which it circulates. The real “dangers” of Dangerous Curves are the threats it poses to dominant norms, for how pornography is produced and utilized, for how bodies and sexualities can be thought and viewed, and for how the permeable relations between the nonhuman and the human can come to matter.

---

CHAPTER 4: PINA BAUSCH’S RITE OF SPRING: GENDER, MATTER, LIFE, AND SEXUALITY BEYOND SURVIVAL

A sheath of light comes up on a stage covered in dark soil; a lone woman lies prone atop a piece of red fabric spread over the surface of the dirt. Her eyes are closed, and her movements are slight, her face and fingertips gently caressing the soil through the fabric. Her head and shoulders barely lift then settle softly back into the support of the ground. Another woman runs onto the stage illuminated by another sheath of light that cuts a long diagonal across the dirt. The thin material of her lightweight beige slip swishes around her body as she runs, its breezy shifting in contrast to the heavy stillness of the dirt covering the stage. She halts abruptly, tipping forward as if perched at a precipice, then curls downward through her spine and knees, grasps the bottom hem of her slip, and lifts it up to cover her face as she uprights herself, exposing her stomach, hips, and legs. A third woman enters running, stops, and sinks into a deep grand plié, gazing down at the dirt, and bringing her hand to rest lightly upon the ground. One by one—or sometimes two by two—more women enter, some running, some with long, drifting steps. The music stirs then settles, and all but one of the women lower their bodies face down into the dirt.

More lights come up, but the stage space remains dim, a plane of earth sparsely populated and surrounded by unremitting darkness. The woman that remains standing throws her arms open wide and lifts her sternum upwards before her hands dart suddenly, carrying her into a series of quick steps and undulations of her spine. The women around her on the ground slowly lift and lower their upper bodies away from and back to meet the
soil. The contrast between the soloist’s agitated, urgent gestures and the subtle, placid rise and fall of the women lying in the soil delineates two opposing tendencies that escalate throughout the dance that follows: on the one hand, the dancers find moments of relative stillness, quietude, or repose; on the other hand, they throw themselves into aggressive, repetitive running, stomping, and whirling, thrashing spines, flinging limbs, and blows that strike their own bodies. The dance fluctuates incessantly between these tendencies, building into flurries of activity, making a rambling mess of dancing bodies and dirt, then settling into brief and lengthy passages of near stillness before again erupting into frantic motion.¹

In this chapter, I examine Pina Bausch’s *Rite of Spring*—which premiered as *Frühlingsopfer* (1975) and has also been presented as *Le Sacre du Printemps*—for the prominent choreographic principles through which an ecosexuality becomes articulated. Three primary, overlapping modes of organizing movement and bodies pervade the dance, and my claim is that the intersection of these various modes provides opportunities for their deterritorialization and undoing as well as generates possibilities for how sexuality might be thought. The first and most evident mode of organization is gender, the binary relationship between women and men, how they are styled, positioned, and mobilized within the choreography. This binary differentiation of bodies along gender lines is not unusual for Bausch’s choreography; indeed, the relationship between men and women is one of the most persistent themes in her dances. I begin by discussing how gender and sexual difference are performed within this choreography, then proceed to examine the ways in which the choreography suggests the partiality and potential instability of these performative categories.

¹ This opening description and descriptions of the dance throughout this chapter are based on viewings of Pina Bausch, *Le sacre du printemps: Igor Stravinsky, chorégraphie Pina Bausch* (Paris: L’Arche and Tantztheater Wuppertal, 2012), DVD.
Next, I consider the relationship between the human and the nonhuman within this dance, specifically the entanglement of dancing human bodies and the nonhuman dirt that spreads across the surface of the stage. Looking to new materialist accounts of materiality and agency, I theorize the human and the nonhuman as emerging from their relations, mutually marked by their exchange. Lastly, I consider the vacillating movement dynamics within Rite of Spring—the tendencies towards activity and inactivity, frenzy and stillness—as indicative of inclinations toward both animateness and inanimateness. Pursuing these tendencies beyond human bodies, I theorize these dynamic qualities as potentialities of matter and life more broadly. In Freudian terms, these tendencies can be described as the “instincts toward life” or “sexual instincts” and the “death drive.” Working from Rite of Spring, Sigmund Freud, Elizabeth Grosz, and Claire Colebrook, I theorize ecosexuality as sexuality specifically in excess of human bodies or organic need, an impulse within all matter and life, concerned with intensification that is separate from any pursuit of survival. Moving from the final moments of Bausch’s Rite of Spring toward an inverse contextualization of this dance, I consider with Colebrook how sexuality might be thought in terms of extinction, how the ecology of human and nonhuman relations becomes sexual precisely when it is no longer oriented toward survival of the human species.

**History and Context:**

_The Rite of Spring_, with a musical score by Igor Stravinsky and choreography by Vaslav Nijinsky, was originally premiered by the Ballets Russes on May 29, 1913. Stravinsky described his concept for the ballet as “a scene of pagan ritual in which a chosen sacrificial
virgin danced herself to death.”

Dance historian Lynn Garafola describes the piece as “nothing less than a vast human tapestry, a vision of primal man and his primal tribe, and the human sacrifice that ensured the continuity of both.”

The libretto, developed with Nicholas Roerich, takes place in two parts: the First Part, “The Kiss of the Earth,” which depicts a procession of the tribe’s elders and the “Eldest-Wisest” kneeling down to kiss the earth, and the Second Part, “The Great Victim,” in which one young maiden is condemned by fate to be sacrificed.

Garafola writes that while the plot of the ballet referenced a mythic, pagan Russian past, it was primarily a metaphor, “a vehicle for conveying the tragedy of modern being.” She writes, “Sacre exposed the barbarism of human life: the cruelty of nature, the savagery of the tribe, the violence of the soul … Above all, it presented a society governed by instinct, the brute instinct of Eros in his Freudian guise—wedded indissolubly to Thanatos.”

From its earliest instantiation, Rite of Spring has been a portrait of human life swinging between the impulses toward eroticism and death.

There have been many adaptations of Rite of Spring, including works by Mary Wigman, Léonide Massine, Martha Graham, Maruice Béjart, and others. In general, what unites these various works is their use of Stravinsky’s score and persistent thematic elements dealing with sacrifice and fertility. Angenette Spalink writes, “Even though choreographers create their own adaptations of the piece, at the core of each production is the ritual of virgin sacrifice, the spilling of blood into the earth, which must be completed in order for spring to arrive.”

While each choreographer develops their own adaptation with their own

---

4 Ibid., 65.
5 Ibid., 68.
6 Angenette Spalink, “Choreographing Dirt: Performances Of/Against the Nature/Culture Divide,” (PhD
choreographic style, vocabulary, and syntax, the fascination with fertility rituals as thematic source material persists. At its inception and throughout its history, Rite of Spring has staged the entanglement of human sexuality and the fertility of the earth; whatever else this dance has done or can do, it has been formulating versions of ecosexuality all along.

Pina Bausch’s Rite of Spring was premiered by the Tantztheater Wuppertal on December 3, 1975, at the Opera House Wuppertal. It was originally presented as the third movement in a three-part evening of dances set to the music of Stravinsky entitled Frühlingsopfer, although soon after its premiere, it began to be staged on its own, without the first and second parts—Wind von West and Der zweite Frühling. Rite of Spring became one of the Tantztheater Wuppertal’s most frequently performed and successful pieces, continuing to tour internationally for close to forty years. Although Bausch’s Rite of Spring features Stravinsky’s original score, the choreography departs from Nijinsky’s entirely, and its relationship to the original libretto is far more abstract. Spalink notes, “In contrast with Nijinsky who situated his staging in pagan Russia, Bausch’s production takes place in an unspecified time and location. The production does not use scenic elements or props; only a layer of peat covers the stage.”

Excised from any particular mythology, geography, or time period, Bausch’s Rite of Spring could be any time or any place, its abstraction lending the piece a kind of universality, an examination of human relations organized less by a plot than by themes and tropes: women and men posed in opposition then tumultuous union with one another, one woman hand-picked by one man, and the one woman dancing herself to death as a crowd of men and women look on.

dissertation, Bowling Green State University, 2014), 120.
9 Spalink, “Choreographing Dirt,” 120.
The work of Pina Bausch has received considerable scholarly attention and popular notoriety. She is included as an influential figure within the canonical history of 20th century dance and theater—“among the game changers in dance, following in a line of innovation that extends from the work of early dance pioneers” such as Isadora Duncan and Loie Fuller, through Rudolf von Laban, Mary Wigman, and Kurt Jooss in Germany, and American influences such as Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Denishawn. Recent works such as Norbert Servos’ *Pina Bausch Dance Theatre* (2008), *The Pina Bausch Sourcebook: The Making of Tanztheater*, edited by Royd Climenhaga (2013), the popular feature-length 3D dance film *PINA* by Wim Wenders, and Angenette Spalink’s inclusion of Bausch’s *Rite of Spring* in her 2014 dissertation, “Choreographing Dirt: Performances Of/Against the Nature/Culture Divide” all demonstrate the continuing interest in Bausch’s historical and aesthetic contributions, her choreographic processes and working methods, and the relevance of her work in relation to larger issues of society, culture, and materiality. Unlike the other pieces that I have addressed in this dissertation—the Love Art Laboratory and *Dangerous Curves*—there is a considerable literature dedicated to Bausch’s oeuvre and her *Rite of Spring* in particular, including monographs, edited volumes, dance reviews, interviews, documentary films, chapters of edited volumes, dissertations, and history books. My intention is not to reproduce or summarize that literature here; rather, my contribution will be considering Bausch’s *Rite of Spring* as a performance of eosexuality, an examination of how the dance itself enacts sexualities that both reiterate and complicate normative productions of gender, sexual difference, and human/nonhuman relations.

---

Gender and the Heterosexual Matrix:

The usefulness of thinking ecosexuality with Bausch’s *Rite of Spring* is that, unlike the Love Art Lab and *Dangerous Curves*, in which ecosexuality emerges from or alongside explicit presentations of queer sexualities, here ecosexuality must be read within the context of a highly normative performance of gender, sex, and sexuality. One goal for this chapter is to show that even where bodies are organized within these binary norms, sexualities that escape such norms occur—material sexualities that cannot be fully constrained within the roles of men and women, male or female, heterosexual desire, or even the category of “the human.” Beneath or alongside this production of binary sexual difference at the molar scale pulse molecular sexualities and sexual differences that are inherent to life itself—from which human life emerges but that cannot be limited to human life.11 In addition to enacting a drama of violent relations between two sexes, Bausch’s *Rite of Spring* also enacts a choreography of materials both human and nonhuman, living and nonliving, organic and inorganic. Through the interplay of materials and relative speeds, *Rite of Spring* stages an inhuman sexuality that exceeds and passes through the human, an ecosexuality that involves the human, but cannot be fully contained within its gendered terms. In order to address the ways in which *Rite of Spring* presents an ecosexuality that escapes the normative dimensions of its choreography, it is necessary to first address such dimensions, how they become

---

11 See Chapter 2 for more discussion of the Deleuzian concepts of “molar” and “molecular.” According to Tom Conley, “In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari apply the ‘molar’ and ‘molecular’ to political bodies. Molar entities belong to the State or the civic world. They are well defined, often massive, and are affiliated with a governing apparatus. Their molecular counterparts are micro-entities, politics that transpire in areas where they are rarely perceived: in the perception of affectivity, where beings share ineffable sensations; in the twists and turns of conversation having nothing to do with the state of the world at large; in the manner, too, that a pedestrian in a city park sees how the leaves of a linden tree might flicker in the afternoon light.” Tom Conley, “Molar,” in *The Deleuze Dictionary, Revised Edition*, ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 176. The molar corresponds to totalizing processes that take their organizing principles from external sources—such as gender norms or State apparatuses; the molecular scale is given to account for those forces and flows that move within and across molar formations, never fully resolving into totalizing territorializations.
articulated in the dance, and the ways in which they already provide avenues of thinking their undoing.

Early in the dance, after spreading out over the stage, the women gather into a tight clump upstage left, all staring at the red fabric that has been left discarded in the soil. Suddenly they drop all together into a heavy unison phrase that pulses with the forcefulness of the music: fast step to the right, doubling over at the waist, fast step back to a wide stance, two quick-but-weighty bounces, then flinging their arms to hit hard between their legs, and repeat and repeat—step-fold, step back, bounce, bounce, hit, step-fold, step back, bounce, bounce, hit. Soloists emerge from the group to dance quick, lighter phrases as the group steadily migrates across the stage as a heavy, pulsing crowd. The individuals who break away always return, reabsorbed into the churning unison of the group; the phrase varies into faster steps and directional changes, stomping on bent knees and twisting rapidly with contracted spines. Despite their brief departures, the force of this unison reclaims individual bodies, carrying them back into the fold.

Out of the darkness at the back of the stage, a man runs forward, followed by men entering from all sides. The women scatter. For a moment they stand, all facing different directions and each facing no one in particular, some with their eyes cast to the ground, others looking around as if startled. Men and women are strewn around the stage, and for the briefest of moments, they are all suspended in tense stillness. The stillness begins to reverberate with small, steady bounces, tiny pulses on bent knees, then the dancers break into movement: a male soloist in the center of the group swings his arms into a strong, soft curve that carries one foot across the other, steps into a wide stance, flings his arm forward then back to propel him into a turn. Dancers begin to run, darting around the stage, coming
to abrupt pauses as men and women find themselves face to face, and fleeing again with no where to run.

The dance progresses through highly gendered vocabularies and structures: the men dance together in small and big groups, as do the women, groupings that recur again and again. In parts, women are singled out, surrounded by men, their bodies assaulted or grabbed and dragged across the dirt floor. For a while, the men and the women dance different phrases with distinct vocabularies. Throughout the dance, the choreographies of the women and the men can be distinguished by dynamic qualities as well—although these differences never remain absolute. Frequently, the men’s movements are faster, stronger, with more intense impact while the women’s movements are softer, more sustained, and seem to swim from one gesture to the next. Even the stage space itself takes part in this division of the sexes: for example, early in the dance, the stage is divided clearly down the middle, with men on one side and women on the other, what Norbert Servos describes as “a timeless, archaic-looking arena, a battle ground of life and death,” an arena for a “war of the sexes.”\(^{12}\) All the women, grouped together stage left, hammer away in the same repetitive phrase blow by blow, while the men pound out their own similar but different repetitive choreography.

Repetition surfaces again and again as a primary syntactical logic in this dance: men and women are not only separated into different groups performing distinct movements; they do so belligerently, throwing their bodies into the same actions, the same phrases, over and over again.

Between the two groups positioned on either side of the stage, one man stands alone from the crowd, erect above the discarded red fabric. Quite suddenly, they all stop. They

stare at him, immobilized as he slowly lowers himself face down onto the fabric spread over the dirt, occupying the position of the woman from the opening of the dance. For a moment, the two groups gaze over his prone body, faced with the others standing and staring opposite them. Then the music swells, and they all take off running in all directions, a frenzy of motion once again erupting from stillness. Distinctly gendered movement vocabularies briefly dissolve: they all jump and dive to the ground, roll across the dirt, colliding with and grasping at each other, arms flinging, spines whipping, no one moving in synch with anyone else, but all performing the same or similar gestures. As the camera pans closer, I can see the streaks and grit of dirt clinging to the skin of their sweaty bodies.

After a time, the one man rises from the red fabric and moves closer to the group of women who have gathered again in a clump on the opposite side of the stage. One woman picks up the fabric and brings it back to the others who pace anxiously and push closer into one another. One by one the women present themselves to this one man, each carrying the red material to him, retreating back to the other women, and handing it off to whomever is next. The one man stands still and stares hard at each of them. Finally, and quite suddenly, he grasps the arms of one of the women. Everyone else explodes into a large unison phrase, jumping, stomping, and undulating from head to tail. The women are in one group, the men in another, and in the middle of it all, this one man strips this one woman and redresses her in a loose, revealing red dress. Whether or not we choose to read this narratively—following the original libretto, accepting this as a Chosen Virgin to be sacrificed in a fertility rite—this central interaction demonstrates a clear dynamic of gender relations. He selects her, handles her, undresses her, redresses her, and in doing so marks her, and she submits; this brief scene is in itself a portrait of gender and power, within this dance and within the world
beyond the stage. The control and manipulation of a female body by a male body stands at
the center of a community organized along a rigid gender binary; men and women are
separated, and the pair in the middle act out how these discrete genders relate.

The gendering of the choreography—or the choreographies of the genders—is
perhaps most pronounced in the partnering: one woman is grasped and thrown by several
men onto the face of another man; he catches her and turns her horizontally across his chest
while the others look on. Later, after the one woman has been stripped and dressed in the
red dress, all of the women run and jump onto male partners, the women’s legs straddling
the men’s hips. They all cling tightly to each other, fling their heads back and whip their
spines from side to side, the women kicking their legs on either side of their partners’ bodies.
Servos describes this moment as “an orgiastic fertility rite, celebrating the rising rhythm of
coitus. But this, too, happens as though under duress, its violence more closely resembling
rape than an act of pleasurable release.”13 Whether or not we read this partnering as
simulated intercourse, it is an intensely gendered choreography of heterosexual coupling,
covering the stage in what amounts to a climax of how these bodies might be shown to be
for one another. In this piece, men and women dance in discrete groups with vocabularies
and styles that are often also distinct from each other; when these bodies come together,
women are lifted, legs spread around their partners, and men do the lifting, as that around
which the women wrap themselves.

Before and throughout the gendered choreographies of Bausch’s Rite of Spring, the
costuming works to position these bodies in one of two mutually exclusive categories. The
women are all dressed in uniform silky beige slip dresses that cling and swirl over their

13 Ibid., 38.
bodies as they dance; the men are all topless and wear uniform black pants. The lightness of
the women’s dresses—even when the soloist is dressed in the one red dress—makes them
stand out in the dim light against the dark space behind them. Similarly, the men’s bare
upper bodies gleam, while their lower bodies sometimes recede into the dark backdrop. The
women all wear their hair long; the men all wear their hair short. Even before they do
anything, their appearances are rigidly regulated. Or, in other words, these bodies do not
appear without having already been gendered by what they wear, made to appear regularly
and uniformly in one—and only one—of two available roles. Through many of the dance’s
most prominent features, Bausch’s *Rite of Spring* relentlessly reiterates the most apparent, top-
level organization of bodies into a binary vision of gender, sexual difference, and the
heterosexual matrix.

Before turning to a critical discussion of how the operations of gender performativity
come to function in *Rite of Spring*, it is worth briefly expounding on the observation that
sexual difference and gender relations are pervasive themes throughout Bausch’s oeuvre.
Marianne Goldberg writes that whereas until recently, “American dance formalists have
erased gender differences by giving performers androgynous roles … Bausch’s pieces have
been laden with gender clichés and the symbiosis and violence they provoke between men
and women.”14 She credits Bausch with scrutinizing “the social constructs that separate men
and women into opposites,”15 though noting that “[Bausch] has never introduced an
alternative to the gendered behavior she so acutely critiques.”16 With no way out, “her
performers reiterate the details of their inexorable social and psychological patterns. They are

---

14 Marianne Goldberg, “Artifice and Authenticity: Gender Scenarios in Pina Bausch’s Dance Theatre,” *The Pina
15 Ibid., 264.
16 Ibid., 275.
trapped in the polarities and power relations of the artifice of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ …
Yet she points—by default—to the need for a society that exceeds the limits of the one we
inhabit.”17 According to Arlene Croce, “In Bausch’s work, men brutalize women and women
humiliate men; the savage round goes on endlessly … She keeps referring us to the act of
brutalization or humiliation—to the pornography of pain.”18 Joan Acocella also notes “sheer
stark brutality, usually inflicted by men on women” as a trope of Bausch’s early work.19
Amanda Smith quotes an early interview with Bausch, who said that her work was “about
relationships between man and woman. The pieces are about how much we want to be
loved. We are all afraid of death.”20 Smith writes that “sex and death are inextricably
intertwined in the world of Pina Bausch,” pointing to the sacrificial victim wearing blood red
who “dances herself to death in the unstoped and unstoppable action” of Rite of Spring as an
exemplar of this entwining.21 Fraught and violent relations between men and women turn up
again and again as a fixation within Bausch’s tanztheater, often with the starkness of critique,
while seeming to offer little or no possibility of a world that is not ordered by such relations.
Bausch does not glamorize or idealized these normative gender roles or the rigidity of binary
sexual difference, but neither does she offer any overt way out or alternative. And yet, I will
suggest, even within these seemingly rigid macro or molar structures, Bausch’s choreography
indicates possibilities for their undoing, without necessarily demonstrating what will come
when they come undone.

17 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
Bausch’s stark, visceral portrayals of gender both reflect and participate in the circulation and production of such genders as a reality. The mechanics of gender in Bausch’s *Rite of Spring*—the spatial formations and groupings, the distinct movement vocabularies and dynamics, the diametric, complimentary partnering roles, the costuming—all function as what Judith Butler describes as repeated stylizations of the body, “a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.”22 In this sense, gender functions as a kind of choreography of bodies in everyday life from which the choreography of the concert dance stage can be said to emerge, and with/in which dance as an art form always operates.23 Butler theorizes gender as neither substance nor being, but a process of becoming, an ongoing, iterative production within socially mandated regulatory sexual norms. Gender as a binary pair—masculine or feminine, male or female—coalesces as an effect of a “compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality,” what Butler calls “the heterosexual matrix,” in which “the masculine term is differentiated from the feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire.”24 She writes:

The internal coherence or unity of either gender, man or woman, thereby requires a stable and oppositional heterosexuality. That institutional heterosexuality both requires and produces the univocity of each of the gendered terms that constitute the limit of gendered possibilities within an oppositional, binary gender system. This conception of gender presupposes not only a causal relation among sex, gender, and desire, but suggests as well that desire reflects or expresses gender and that gender reflects or expresses

23 This continuity between gendered choreographies on the concert dance stage and choreographies of gender in daily life is a primary concern in Jane Desmond’s edited anthology *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities On & Off the Stage* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001). Desmond writes, “In ballet, social dance, film, club performances, and modern dance, choreographed behaviors enact notions of romance, sex, physical expressivity, and sexual identity. These motions gain their meanings in relation to dominant discourses about ‘male’ and ‘female,’ about ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine,’ about ‘heterosexual’ and ‘homosexual.’ They also do so in relation to movement conventions that have their own resonant histories on the stage and in daily life.” Desmond, *Dancing Desires*, 4.
desire. The metaphysical unity of the three is assumed to be truly known and expressed in a differentiating desire for an oppositional gender—that is, in the form of oppositional heterosexuality.\textsuperscript{25}

Here Butler points to the role of sexuality and desire within the production of gender: discrete binary genders are positioned and defined in relation to each other, both through their opposition to each other and through the presumption of their natural desire for the other. Thus, what it means to be a woman is defined as one who is not a man and as one who desires men; what it means to be a man is defined as one who is not a woman and as one who desires women. The internal coherence of either gender depends upon the matrix of heterosexuality in which gender roles are organized in heterosexual desiring relations to each other. The production of binary gender roles in \textit{Rite of Spring} is accomplished through the way discrete gendered movement vocabularies, styles, and syntaxes are assigned to bodies differently gendered as well as how such bodies are made to relate to each other.

If we think of binary gender positions as a set of choreographies, these are choreographies that are distributed and disseminated throughout any number of organized social practices that bodies learn and rehearse and perform consciously and unconsciously over time. Choreographies of gender within daily life are compulsory and cannot be construed as resulting from the will or choice of individual subjects, like a dance that a performer learns and then chooses when and how to perform. Butler describes gender as \textit{performativ}e, “produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence,” in which the coherence of one’s gender denotes an alignment of gender, sex, and sexuality, the aggregation of attributes, characteristics, activities, and styles. No subject chooses to submit to such regulatory norms; rather, it is through submitting to the reiteration of such norms

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
that one becomes the subject one is said to be. “In this sense,” Butler writes, “gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed.”

She writes elsewhere:

> For if gender is constructed, it is not necessarily constructed by an ‘I’ or a ‘we’ who stands before that construction in any spatial or temporal sense of ‘before.’ Indeed, it is unclear that there can be an ‘I’ or a ‘we’ who has not been submitted, subjected to gender, where gendering is, among other things, the differentiating relations by which speaking subjects come into being. Subjected to gender, but subjectivated by gender, the ‘I’ neither precedes nor follows from the process of this gendering, but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves.

To the degree that we consider the choreographies of *Rite of Spring* to participate within the performative force of regulatory norms, the dancers cannot be said to precede such gendering processes—dancers who become gendered; rather, they emerge within and as the matrix of gendered relations that the choreography instantiates. These choreographies condition the very possibility of their appearance, their intelligibility within the terms of this dance and the culture in which it circulates.

As I discuss in the Introduction, Butler theorizes gender and sex within the heterosexual matrix as “an obligatory injunction for the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize itself in obedience to a historically delimited possibility, and to do this, not once or twice, but as a sustained and repeated corporeal project.” Bodies are given over to this obligatory injunction under the threat of punishment, where survival itself depends on successfully approximating one’s given gender/sex. Sexual difference, like gender and as an effect of gendered and gendering practices, becomes reduced and constrained into binary male and female positions in service to a reproductive economy within the heterosexual

---

26 Ibid., 34.
matrix, in which bodies are presumed to exist in complimentary positions for the purpose of reproduction. Both gender and sex then emerge as effects of the repetition of mutually constituting performative norms and practices—what I am calling, following Susan Leigh Foster, choreographies of gender—within a compulsory heterosexual matrix. To say that the gendered dancing bodies in Rite of Spring are presented and produced as if for one another is to say that the choreography mobilizes bodies as female or male in part by positioning them—in groups and in partnering—as if intended for the other sex.

However, even within these molar presentations and constitutions of bodies into binary categories, the distinction between the gendered choreographies do not hold absolutely: where group formations begin as exclusively composed of women or exclusively composed of men, the groups blend, and the whole ensemble dances together. For example, about a third of the way through the dance, out of a swirl of ferocious dancing in which the women dance one phrase against the men dancing a different phrase, all of the dancers suddenly scatter and then pause. Distributed in no particular order around the stage, each dancer faces in a different direction, their faces turned downward toward the ground. Gradually they drift into a shared formation, a large circle surrounding the crumpled red fabric that has yet to be assigned to the chosen woman. All facing counter-clockwise and alternating woman, man, woman, man, they all together curl into a deep contraction, bending their knees and doubling over. In unison, they straighten, take one step forward,

29 Arguing for choreography as a more useful framework than performance for theorizing gender, Foster writes, “Choreography, the tradition of codes and conventions through which meaning is constructed in dance, offers a social and historical analytic framework for the study of gender, whereas performance concentrates on the individual execution of such codes. Choreography resonates with cultural values concerning bodily, individual, and social identities. Choreography presents a structuring of deep and enduring cultural values that replicates similar sets of values elaborated in other cultural practices, whereas performance emphasizes idiosyncratic interpretation of those values. Like performativity, choreography consists in sets of norms and conventions . . . Choreography also focuses on the interrelationality of various sets of codes and conventions through which identity is represented.” See Susan Leigh Foster, “Choreographies of Gender,” in Signs 24, No. 1 (Autumn, 1998): 5-6.
then double over again. They step open to the side, turning to face away from the center of the circle, and sway from side to side before again dropping into a standing fetal position. Moving all together around the parameter of the circle that they trace, even with the distinct alternation in their line-up, gendered choreography recedes as this collective unison and spatial formation become the dominant organizing principles. All facing in the same direction and moving along the same oblique path, the most prominent features are what they share, what unifies them, and the minute individual differences—rather than gendered differences—between how the dancers execute the same choreography.

The gender-neutral unison does not persist indefinitely; binary roles reassert themselves as the women all approach the men in front of them and lean on them for support. But now the totality of the gendered choreographies has been shown to be neither necessary nor absolute. Moving again into a unison that disregards gender, they all kneel, put their hands to the ground, and lower themselves into the dirt. Raking their fingers through the soil, coming back up to standing, doubling over once again, it seems that something these dancing bodies share, regardless of gender, is their relationship to the earth, over which they step, toward which they descend, onto which they surrender their bodies, and through which they run. In the last moments of this circular choreography, they all collapse to the ground, stand, collapse again, crawl through the dirt, stand once again, and together drop into the heavy unison phrase that the women performed earlier: fast step to the right, doubling over at the waist, fast step back to a wide stance, two quick-but-weighty bounces, flinging their arms to hit hard between their legs, and repeat. They whip again and again through their spines, fling their heads, an almost vomiting motion, before taking off running as a pack. If I read these bouts of unison as temporary remissions of binary gendered
choreographies, the visceral force of the choreography can suggest that these are remissions that these bodies cannot abide for long.

During the last five minutes of the dance—the chosen woman’s solo in which she dances herself into exhaustion—the crowd stands, watching and dancing in unison, all covered in sweat and dirt, all facing this one woman that was marked by the one man. Here, although women and men alike take on shared choreography and facings, they are all oriented toward the chosen woman, in alignment with the orientation of the one man who chose her. If there is any point in Bausch’s Rite of Spring at which this society seems to be ordered by a dominant “male gaze,” it is here, when everyone else on stage comes to follow the gaze of the one man, orienting themselves toward the chosen woman just as he has oriented himself toward her. Everyone falls in line with his [heterosexual] orientation; his orientation, gazing on the woman in red, becomes the orientation of all.

Orientation, how bodies come to turn or face toward one another, is another choreographic device through which the binary gendered bodies of a compulsory heterosexuality are both regulated and at times refused. In Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others, Sara Ahmed asks, “What does it mean for sexuality to be lived as oriented? What difference does it make ‘what’ or ‘who’ we are oriented toward in the very direction of our desire? … If we foreground the concept of ‘orientation,’ then we can retheorize this sexualization of space, as well as the spatiality of sexual desire.” Ahmed directs us toward the ways in which sexuality is spatialized and space is sexualized according to orientation. Spatiality is sexualized through the directions of our desires, through the directions that we

---

30 Refer to Chapter 3 for a more thorough discussion of the “male gaze” and Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.”
face and in which we move, but also through the reception of directions—orders—to become oriented in such ways. Ahmed writes:

The lines we follow function as forms of “alignment,” or as ways of being in line with others. We might say that we are oriented when we are in line. We are “in line” when we face the direction that is already faced by others … the body gets directed in some ways more than others. We might be used to thinking of directions as simply which way we turn, or which way we are facing, at this moment or that moment in time. Direction then would be a rather casual matter. But what if direction, as the way we face as well as move, is organized rather than casual?  

She argues that bodies are directed by any number of cultural norms, and that they over time take the shape of this direction. Rather than being casual occurrences, the ways in which bodies align with other bodies, the ways in which the orientation of bodies fall in line with other bodies already oriented in those ways, points to how orientations are received as directives that carry particular force to conform when given by a majority. How bodies face, what or whom they face, what or who is within reach when they face in that direction, what becomes possible or impossible from that facing: these are the ways in which given orientations affect what bodies can do and what bodies can be.

In regards to sexuality, Ahmed argues like Butler that bodies take the shape of binary genders or sexes through the direction of such bodies along a presumed heterosexual axis of desire. She writes:

The naturalization of heterosexuality involves the presumption that there is a straight line that leads each sex toward the other sex, and that “this line of desire” is “in line” with one’s sex. The alignment of sex with orientation goes as follows: being a man would mean desiring a woman, and being a woman would mean desiring a man … The naturalization of heterosexuality as a line that directs bodies depends on the construction of women’s bodies as being ‘made’ for men, such that women’s sexuality is seen as directed toward men.

---

32 Ibid., 15.
33 Ibid., 70-71 (italics original).
Ahmed describes this stable and oppositional heterosexuality required for the reproduction of binary genders as a “compulsory orientation … a fantasy of the natural fit between men and women’s bodies, as if ‘they were made for each other’ in the sense of being directed toward the other, or even ready-to-hand, for each other.”

The belief that bodies identified as female are intended for bodies identified as male and that bodies identified as male are intended for bodies identified as female embeds the compulsory orientation of a presumed heterosexuality within the very flesh and formation of bodies. The complexities of bodies and of difference are reduced to two oppositional categories to the degree that each category is defined exclusively by the other and to the degree that each one can be said to be for one another. Yet, as Ahmed notes, the fallacy of the binary categories and their presumed tendency toward or for each other is revealed precisely because such categories and presumptions must be enforced and policed. Because it is possible to fail in such orientations and such categories—because it is possible to be oriented differently, because it is possible that sex, gender, and desire will not align along a binary, heterosexual axis—such orientations and categories falter in their insistence of their own naturalness or innateness.

Orientations are a mechanism for producing a naturalized heterosexuality within Rite of Spring, a view of female and male bodies being for each other. But, to the degree that such orientations do not persist absolutely, the directedness of bodies also suggests the potential to escape the normative directions that they have been given.

As they relate to dance and choreography, orientations, facings, and direction are lines along which desires become articulated, and along which the compulsory heterosexualization of desire is reproduced. In discussing the pas de deux of classical ballet,

---

34 Ibid., 85.
Susan Leigh Foster writes that in addition to celebrating “breathtaking physical accomplishment,” these dancing bodies:

… are also desiring bodies, bodies that turn away from and rush back toward one another, bodies that touch one another, that strive together delicately and fervently in front of other bodies who, from their anonymous location in a darkened auditorium, desire them as well … And these two bodies, because of their distinctly gendered behavior, dance out a specific kind of relationship between masculine and feminine. They do more than create an alert, assertive, solicitous manliness and a gracious, agile, vibrant womanliness. Their repeated rushes of desire—the horizontal attraction of bodies, the vertical fusion of bodies—do more than create unified sculptural wholes that emblematize the perfect union of male and female roles.  

For Foster, the ways in which bodies are made to turn toward each other and rush back to one another—their horizontal attraction, their facings—can be evidence of desire, alignments of desire between bodies that correspond to the distinctly gendered behaviors given to such bodies.

While Bausch’s *Rite of Spring* is not identical to the formulaic *pas de deux* of classical ballet, it certainly occurs continuous with ballet in the history of Western concert dance, and Foster’s insights in relation to ballet find easy application in considering the demonstration of desire in *Rite of Spring*. In *Rite of Spring*, bodies presented as female and male come to face or return to one another as if each is intended for the other. Groups of women and groups of men face off against one another on either side of the stage. At parts, they are divided into male and female pairs, each pair facing one another. In more than one part, a group of men surrounds a single woman, all of them facing her, all oriented toward her. Leading up to the selection of the chosen woman, the women leave their cluster one at a time, each coming to face the one man who stands waiting, facing them. Made to face one another, turn toward

---

one another, and return as if for one another, dancing bodies are presented as female and male in part through how they are oriented in relation to each other.

The heterosexual orientation of bodies in *Rite of Spring* is not done just once or twice but repeated compulsively throughout the dance. These are facings and directions that dancing bodies take on again and again. On repetition, and resonant with Butler’s theorization of gender performativity as an iterative repetition, Ahmed writes that as we repeat certain actions, “Our body takes the shape of this repetition.”\(^3^6\) Through the repetition of these heterosexual orientations in the choreography, the dance sustains the appearance of these bodies as gendered; the consistency presents such repeated orientations as a quality of these bodies themselves rather than a direction that these bodies have received. In turn, these bodies take on the effects of these repetitions: for instance, men lifting women repeatedly produces the physical effects of bodies that lift as male and bodies that are lifted as female. Bodies materialize as the effects of how they are repeatedly oriented in relation to each other and the activities that such orientations enable.

However, as with the other choreographic conventions through which gender and binary sexual difference become constituted, exceptions and deviations from such choreographies reveal their partiality and contingency. There are several moments in the dance at which the frenzy of activity dissolves into moments of near total stillness, bodies distributed around the stage, all facing in different directions, all oriented differently. If the normative ideals of the heterosexual matrix require the alignment of gender, sex, and orientation, then during these brief moments of suspension, in which each body stands oriented toward no one in particular, this presumptive heterosexual orientation dissipates.

\(^{3^6}\) Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 57.
The heteronormative gendered orientations of these bodies no longer holding, they stand disoriented, or re-oriented. These moments stand queerly within the unfolding of choreography that in so many other ways forcefully reiterates the gendering of bodies through the repetition of various stylized acts. These moments, in which bodies fail to fall in line and reiterate their heterosexual directedness, suspend ever so briefly the force of such directions, and in their uncertainty, mark an openness to how else they might become oriented, the possibility of becoming oriented differently.

In any number of ways, Bausch’s *Rite of Spring* stages a seemingly rigid binary that organizes gender, sexual difference, and orientation. However, throughout the dance, binary gender roles, heterosexual directedness, and the mechanisms through which they are produced become interrupted. Such moments, while never fully eliminating or displacing the persistence of gender as a choreographic device in *Rite of Spring*, do point toward lines of flight, the potential to destabilize or deterritorialize such categorical structures. In the sections that follow, I will show that other differences—traversing across and beneath these gendered divisions—also come to matter, potentially troubling the rigid significance of gender and binary sexual difference.

**The Human and the Nonhuman: Dancing Bodies and Dirt**

While binary gender and sexual difference surface as the most prominent organizational features in Bausch’s *Rite of Spring*, these are not the only differences or relations that organize this dance. Just as prominent as the relations between female and male bodies, the relation between the human and the nonhuman—the dancing bodies and
the dirt spread over the stage—persists quite literally as the ground for any other significant features.

Before the dance begins, six large bins filled with peat are rolled onto the stage.\textsuperscript{37} With heavy thuds, the bins are tipped over and the dark earth spills at the feet of the workmen. The workers spread the peat across the stage with broad strokes of what seem to be shovels, push-brooms, and rakes. The peat piles up in small heaps, at first resisting the push of the tools, then giving in to the displacement, spreading in shallow, haphazard topographies of loose matter. As the workers step around and through the peat, it retains their footprints; their tools cut lines across the footprints, and the shifting plane collects the marks that they make. Gradually the stage is covered with the dirt, a huge square of brown earth somewhat surreally situated within the walls of the proscenium stage space. The backstage is exposed, and so it looks as if some anonymous desolate landscape has been framed, excised, and planted here alongside the lighting equipment, the stage riggings, and the assorted clutter of the theater’s backstage. The plane of peat, finally spread out, is covered with streaks and lines and footprints that follow no particular logic but nonetheless disclose a certain history of how it came to be there. The workers then move in a line from the front edge of the stage to the back, brushing and smoothing the dirt, erasing their marks and footprints and leaving behind a patch of earth that one could almost believe has not been touched. The film fades to a blackout, and the lights come up on the lone woman lying face down on the red fabric in the dirt.

\textit{Rite of Spring} is not the only of Bausch’s works to incorporate nonhuman materials as agents within the performance. \textit{Palermo, Palermo} (1989) opens with “a five-ton concrete wall

\textsuperscript{37} The following scene appears in Wim Wenders’s 2011 documentary film, \textit{Pina}. 

221
falling backward; the rubble covers the stage throughout the work,” impeding the
performers, forcing them “to pick their way through something, watch their step.”38 In
*Balubart (Bluebeard)* (1977), the stage is strewn with dry, dead leaves; in *1980* (1980), the stage
is covered with green sod.39 In *Café Müller* (1978), the stage is filled with empty chairs and
tables that dancers stumble through and rush to reconfigure. In *Nelken (Carnations)* (1982),
the stage is filled with a field of flowers; in *Ahnen* (1987), huge cacti tower above the dancers;
and in *Vollmond (Full Moon)* (2006), a giant boulder sits on stage left, a stream of water runs
across the stage, and rain falls from above. Indeed, a critical study of the roles of nonhuman
materials as agential participants throughout Bausch’s oeuvre would show that for all of
Bausch’s attention to the abstract drama of human relations, her work has steadfastly staged
the complexity of human/nonhuman relations as well.

As Spalink describes, Bausch’s use of nonhuman elements, particularly in
interchanges with human bodies, “is often unnerving, violent, and jarring.”40 She writes:

> Take for instance *Viktor*, where a dancer places bloody strips of packaged
> raw meat into her pointe shoes. As she dances, blood oozes from her shoes. Meanwhile,
onstage performers placed above her shovel dirt that falls down on her body. Or *Nelken*, a piece where the stage is carpeted with thousands of carnations upon which the dancers perform various scenarios, eventually crushing most of the flowers. Or perhaps *Gerbirge*, which a dancer ‘drowns’ in a sea of felled pine trees.41

Spalink asserts that in such works, “there are not bodies and nature in harmony, but rather
bodies and elements out of context and at odds with one another.”42 This antagonism might
be implicit in Bausch’s use of “real” natural materials, described by Gabrielle Cody as a

---

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
“necessary cruelty,” nature “torn from its organic root and bluntly placed in the artificial enclosure of a theatre. This gesture—the mythical rendering of a catastrophic, global displacement—is in and of itself her most powerful metaphor for the fragmentation of our condition through the cultural representation of organic bodies.”

She describes Bausch’s work as “fraught with images of consumerism and waste … the truest most credible naturalism of our time.” Indeed, for however much these nonhuman elements might signal or signify “nature,” they are also evidence of ecological impact, human theatrical productions that displace and consume other parts of the planet for the purpose of art.

In her analysis of the role of the dirt (peat) in the choreography of *Rite of Spring*, Spalink describes the peat as both a symbolic metaphor and as literal, material matter:

“Metaphorically it represents the earth’s soil and the ritual spilling of blood that must occur in order for spring to arrive. Physically it is a natural element on stage that the dancers must acknowledge as something that alters their movement and marks their bodies.”

Following Una Chaudhuri’s assertions that “Theater ecology … will call for a turn toward the literal, a programmatic resistance to the use of nature as metaphor,” Spalink attends to the unique properties and complex chemical composition of peat, the specific material that is used to cover the stage in Bausch’s *Rite of Spring*. She reports that peat is comprised primarily of “partially decomposed plant remains which form stratified layers in old lake basins or other wet grounds.” It is found “in mires or bogs, wetland areas that are not purely land or water that are typically located throughout North America and Europe, with a particularly high

---

44 Cody, “Woman, Man, Dog, Tree,” 129.
47 Spalink, “Choreographing Dirt,” 125.
density in Germany, Scandinavia, and Ireland.” While the choice of peat for the stage material in Bausch’s *Rite of Spring* seems very specific, neither Spalink nor I could find any sources detailing why Bausch chose peat instead of another element—some other variety of dirt, soil, mulch, sand, etc.—or where the production team acquired(s) the peat. Spalink does an exceptional job contemplating the ethical implications of the peat, writing, “In *The Rite of Spring*, ecological and historical traces of the [undisclosed] bog from which the peat was removed charge the performance space. In this way, this biological and cultural context of the peat ‘matter’ onstage.”

Drawing from feminist new materialists such as Karen Barad and Stacy Alaimo, she discusses matter and nature as agentic, the peat as another body on stage with symbolic and physical attributes that exert force both on the material unfolding of the dance and the potential symbolic significance that the dance conveys. She contemplates the ecological impact of harvesting peat as a natural resource and its capacity to preserve the remains of dead bodies, pointing to these scientific and archeological associations as ways in which the use of peat in this production contributes to environmental destruction and potentially inflects the meaning of this dance. While the specific peat used in this production remains anonymous, what can be known about peat as a material more generally impacts how we might think about this production’s potential environmental impact and how a science of soil might allow *Rite of Spring* to signify differently.

While Spalink’s report on the composition and ecological condition of peat enriches her analysis of *Rite of Spring*, it ultimately operates as a form of hermeneutic reading in which the actual soil on stage functions symbolically or metonymically for the findings of scientific

---

48 Ibid.
49 In addition to reviewing interviews and publications, I also contacted the Tanztheater Wuppertal, but received no reply.
50 Spalink, “Choreographing Dirt,” 128.
discourses that occur beyond the frame of the performance itself. The chemical composition and ecology of peat—not this peat, but peat more generically—are forms of representational knowledge of the material world produced through what Barad describes as “material-discursive apparatuses” or what Donna Haraway describes as “material-semiotic processes.” In laboratory and fieldwork settings, codified scientific practices are enacted in order to generate data that is representative of particular attributes that are made perceptible through specific systems of measurement. I appreciate Spalink’s attention to these kinds of contextual information as a method of interpretation; however, much more interesting to me—and where I will give my own attention—is when Spalink turns to the ways in which the peat performs within the context of the dance itself. The role of the dirt, particularly in relation to the dancing bodies, will be integral to theorizing ecosexuality with this particular work.

There are two prominent ways in which the peat exerts itself on stage in Bausch’s *Rite of Spring*: the first is concerned with the exchange of marks, the ways in which the peat retains the marks of the dancers’ activities and the ways in which it in turn marks their fleshy, sweaty bodies. The second function is a tendency toward inanimateness, toward inertia and stillness. These are the attributes of the peat that are enacted throughout Bausch’s dance and the characteristics that will inform my own reading of the piece.

From the opening moments of the dance, human bodies and nonhuman peat exchange marks, the evidence of their ongoing encounters, traces of what has happened

---

between them. As the lights come up and I see the woman alone lying on the red fabric in the dirt, the camera zooms in close.\textsuperscript{52} Her arm drifts gently through the dirt as her torso rises and falls; the dirt retains a modest, smooth arc in her wake, and already begins to cling to her skin and spill over her forearm as it advances. The peat collects between her fingers, dirties her elbow, and works its way up onto the red fabric. This opening caress, this smallest and simplest of movements, is not without displacement. Behind her, another dancer in a deep \textit{grand plié} drags her fingers through the peat, leaving miniscule marks like tiny, curving riverbeds coursing through the dirt. As more dancers run and walk onto the stage, the peat becomes compacted beneath their feet, holding onto their footprints as they move onward.

One way this dance might be characterized is an accumulation of displacements, marks being made and marks left behind. The piece begins with the dirt smoothed, erased of traces of the workers who distributed it across the stage, cleared of the history of its arrival here. As dancers enter, already leaving their footprints in the dirt, their bodies and costumes are similarly clean and clear, the histories of their bodies’ arrivals similarly opaque. However, as the dance unfolds, the peat and the dancers become increasingly implicated in one another’s materiality, each one carrying the marks of the other. As dancers lie front-down in the dirt and come back to standing, the peat holds trenches in the shape of their bodies, marking both their absence and former presence. Likewise, the dancers’ beige dresses and bare skin become increasingly soiled, muddied by the mingling of sweat and dirt and fibers. As the camera cuts in close, I can see where particles and clumps of dirt smudge the dancers’ faces, arms, knees, and feet. By the end of the dance, the stage is entirely disheveled, the peat having been shoved and overturned constantly by the dancers’ actions; the dancers equally

\textsuperscript{52} The descriptions of \textit{Rite of Spring} in this section are taken from Wim Wenders 2011 film \textit{Pina}, which incorporates many more close-ups and detail shots.
carry the marks of these interactions. Despite the complex structures that organize the
dancers’ movements into repeated phrases, disparate groups, and spatial formations and
trajectories, no logic or rationale remains legibly inscribed on these bodies or in the dirt. All
that remains is layer upon layer of displacement and disturbance, a history of human and
nonhuman exchange.

It would be simple to focus exclusively on the activities of the human performers
here, to discuss this work as an example of human agents exerting their displacing force on
the earth—at the scale of both the relocation of the peat from wherever it came to the
concert stage and at the scale of the dancers leaving marks in the ground on which they
dance. It would be just as simple to read these acts of disturbance as metaphors or
metonyms for—or, perhaps more accurately, continuous with—the much larger
project/process of the human species disturbing, displacing, and re-distributing the planet,
the cumulative effects of which have come to be called the anthropocene. The anthropocene
has been defined as “a new geologic epoch, defined by unprecedented human disturbance of
the earth’s ecosystems.”53 The anthropocene is a geological term proposed by ecologist
Eugene F. Stoermer that has come to describe the recognition or claim that: “humanity is
now influencing every aspect of the Earth on a scale akin to the great forces or nature. There
are now so many of us, using so many resources, that we’re disturbing the grand cycles of
biology, chemistry and geology by which elements like carbon and nitrogen circulate
between land, sea and atmosphere.”54 The claim made by the term anthropocene is that the
cumulative effects of human life on this planet have and will become so immense that all the

53 “AURA: AARHUS University Research on the Anthropocene | Profile: Living in the Anthropocene,”
http://anthropocene.au.dk/profile/.
planet’s ecosystems will bear the marks of human presence, and that the accumulation of such effects will form—or has already formed—a distinct geological age that will be legible within the strata of the planet. The most widely recognized of such effects is climate change. Reading Bausch’s *Rite of Spring* as a choreography of human activities that displace and mark the earth replicates the maneuver by which cumulating ecological and geological change is ascribed to human activity, an Age of the Anthropos—the human.

However, such a reading would re-inscribe the human as the only or primary agent of displacement, an anthropocentric view that prioritizes human life and human activity as the lives and activities that matter most in our accounting. Doing so figures the human as acting alone, apart from the rest of the planet, as if from the outside of nature, rather than considering that both the human and the nonhuman—as well as the stage or planet as a whole—emerge from mutually constituting relations in which no entity or agency emerges unchanged. Displacement, disruption, and leaving marks are not powers that belong exclusively to human beings; rather, as Claire Colebrook has noted, “… the condition for the possibility of living, of being, even if one is not human, is creating some sort of disturbance or pollution on the planet. There’s no living without consumption, there’s no living without some form of displacement, there’s no being ethical, being responsible, or being ‘natural’ without some form of disturbance.”

Colebrook’s contention with the concept of the anthropocene is that in a move that is intended to broaden attention to global ecological effects, the human is re-inscribed—literally and figuratively—as an exceptional factor rather than as part of a much larger and longer history of consumption, displacement, pollution,

---

and evolution on this planet. The earth bears the marks of human life, but the earth bears
the marks of all life, just as all life—including the human—bears the marks of living and
dying with, on, and as this planet of others. Similarly, the peat that covers the stage in
Bausch’s *Rite of Spring* does come to bear the inscrutable marks of human actions, but so also
do human bodies bear the marks of those actions, marked by the dirt just as they leave
marks in the dirt. None of these participants emerges unchanged; in the end, all result from
their interactions, marked as they are by their mutual and collective disturbance and
displacement.

Spalink gives a provocative reading of this exchange of marks as a process of
inscription, in which the skin of the dancers becomes inscribed as “dirty.” The mingling of
sweat and peat discloses the effort and labor of these dancing bodies and brings gritty
attention to the surfaces of their flesh, giving the piece what Arlene Croce describes as “an
element of yuck.”56 Drawing from Julia Kristeva and Mary Douglas, Spalink reads these dirty
bodies as marked by disorder, unruliness, and abjection, inscribed with “the fleshiness of the
body and the unseemliness of these natural excretions … the materiality of human and
earthy bodies and the viscous porosity between both.”57 This reading figures the interaction
of human bodies and peat in *Rite of Spring* within cultural traditions of cleanliness and bodily
management; by staging dirty bodies, Bausch confronts and potentially subverts borders
between dirty and clean and the discrete categories of human and nonhuman that regimes of
cleanliness police.

57 Spalink, “Choreographing Dirt,” 143.
Alongside Spalink’s reading of the exchange of marks as a cultural sign, I want to discuss this dance as an apparatus through which bodies both human and nonhuman come to matter in and through their encounter. This is not only a play of signifiers; it is a material event, a materializing process. According to Karen Barad:

*All bodies, not merely ‘human’ bodies, come to matter through the world’s iterative intra-activity—its performativity.* This is true not only of the surface or contours of the body but also of the body in the fullness of its physicality, including the very ‘atoms’ of its being. Bodies are not objects with inherent boundaries and properties; they are material-discursive phenomena. ‘Human’ bodies are not inherently different from ‘nonhuman’ ones. What constitutes the human (and the nonhuman) is not a fixed or pregiven notion, but neither is it a free-floating ideality. What is at issue is not some ill-defined process by which human-based linguistic practices (material supported in some unspecified way) manage to produce substantive bodies or bodily substances, but rather the dynamics of intra-activity in its materiality: material apparatuses produce material phenomena through specific causal intra-actions, where ‘material’ is always already material-discursive—*that is what it means to matter.*

In her analyses of laboratory practices as material-discursive apparatuses, Barad describes how discrete categories such as “subject” and “object” or “human” and “nonhuman” are not fixed, but become specified and determined within the relations of a particular practice for a given purpose. The observer and the observed are folded together and marked as distinct within the specified relations of observation; the one who measures and that which is measured are joined by the system of measurement through which knowledge of both subject and object is produced. The categories of “human” and “nonhuman” can never be understood apart from the specific sites and practices through which they are given their relational dimensions and definitions; it is within specific material-discursive apparatuses that bodies and materials are produced as “nonhuman” and “human” in their relative discreteness.

---

58 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 152-153 (italics original).
Barad defines “apparatuses” as “specific material configurations, or rather, dynamic (re)configurations of the world through which bodies are intra-actively materialized.” In other words, “apparatuses are the practices of mattering through which intelligibility and materiality are constituted (along with an excluded realm of what doesn’t matter) … apparatures are material-discursive practices—causal intra-actions through which matter is iteratively and differentially articulated, reconfiguring the material-discursive field of possibilities and impossibilities in the ongoing dynamics of intra-activity that is agency.” Apparatuses specify how and why particular differences of mattering can or will emerge. In laboratory experiments—which comprise the primary objects of study for Barad, such as two-slit interference devices for measuring electrons as particles and waves, or the specific elements of sonogram technology, for example—the system of measurement employed delineates which attributes of objects will become discernable and intelligible, what properties will become articulated. Significantly, Barad considers human participants, those scientists and researchers who design, carry out, and interpret the results of such experiments, to be part of the material-discursive apparatus. Human observers are marked as subjects through the specificity of the apparatus just as matter is marked in highly specific ways as an object relative to the subject-observer. In this sense, both subjects and objects are differentially and intra-actively articulated within specific material discursive apparatuses.

Following Barad, I consider Rite of Spring to be an apparatus through which human and nonhuman bodies become articulated in and through their relations to one another; the materiality of human and nonhuman—fleshy and earthy—bodies emerge through their mutual encounters within this dance. If the differentiation of bodies and materialities does

59 Ibid., 169-170 (italics original).
60 Ibid., 170 (italics original).
not preexist their relations, as Barad suggests, how then does *Rite of Spring* come to disclose, articulate, and mark these bodies as human and nonhuman within their choreographed relations? In other words, I want to ask how this choreography enacts what Barad describes as “agential cuts” that produce the effect of separability or “exteriority-within-phenomena” that is local to the dance itself.\(^61\) Ultimately, I will argue that the ways in which the human and nonhuman can be read in and through each other within *Rite of Spring* moves bodies beyond the narrow constraints of binary gender, and positions both the nonhuman and the human within a larger continuum of sexual materiality—or eosexuality.

In *Rite of Spring*, the marks left on bodies “differentially materialize as particular patterns of the world as a result of the specific cuts” that these marks enact.\(^62\) In other words, the dance itself functions as “part of the universe making itself intelligible to another part in its ongoing differentiating intelligibility and materialization.”\(^63\) From the opening moments of the dance, bodies become differentiated together as that which surrenders weight and that which receives the mark of that weight: the lone dancer lies in the dirt, her spine undulating softly, her fingers and arms sweeping through the peat. As the dance progresses, the peat is moved by dancing bodies; it is pushed and swept and carved and flung by feet and hands and whole bodies. It gives into the activities of the dancing bodies and retains the marks of those givings. In turn, the depth and density of the dirt becomes articulate through the labor of the dancers’ bodies: the ankle-deep peat intensifies the difficulty and struggle of the dancing; the material conditions of the dirt compounded with the choreography become legible in heaving breaths and glistening, sweaty skin. The dancers’

---

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 175.
\(^{62}\) Ibid., 176.
\(^{63}\) Ibid.
sweat gradually saturates their flesh and clothes, dripping off the surfaces of their skin, soaking through the flimsy beige slips. Bodies sweat differently in different places, and these differences are presented as the effects of their effort, the struggling together of flesh and peat. As flesh becomes slick with sweat, the peat mingles with it, clinging to skin and building up layers of sediment on its porous surfaces. Dresses and pants become soiled where the sweat and dirt collect together, embedded in their fibers. Seeping, fleshy bodies carry the peat along, partnering with it at their parameters. These dancing bodies are also marked with dirt in ways that we cannot see: as the intensity of the dance increases, as the peat is kicked into the air again and again, and as the dancers’ breathing gets heavier and more labored, I am aware of how much of the dirt they must be inhaling, breathing the peat inside themselves to become marked in unseen places. By the end of the dance, fleshy bodies carry the marks of the dirt, and the dirt bears the disorderly traces of fleshy gestures. No bodies emerge from this encounter unmarked, and the marks disclose the processes through which they have together materialized: surrendering and receiving weight, receiving and retaining displacements, intensifying effort, heavy breathing and sweating, clinging and carrying.

Considering Rite of Spring as a materializing apparatus accomplishes several moves: it emphasizes that the bodies that emerge from the dance do not preexist the dance as such; the resulting marks trace the processes through which exchange produces change. These changes—these materializing effects—are the effects of this particular choreography; the same bodies/materials choreographed differently would not produce the same differences. Most importantly, the dance-as-apparatus, following Barad’s definition, produces these bodies/materials as effects of their intra-actions. The processes through which they disclose
their different properties—through which they are “cut apart” as it were—also “cut” them together. It is through their encounter together that they emerge as such. Their specificity or discreteness is relative to one another within their intra-active relations. The exchange that marks both human and nonhuman bodies also marks their entanglement; these emergent bodies cling to each other in a shared history of intra-active emergence.

The specific materializing effects of any apparatus point to what Barad describes as agency which she ascribes to all matter, both human and nonhuman. Barad insists that matter plays an agential role in its own iterative materialization. Every intra-action enables certain possibilities for materialization, for the becoming of matter in particular forms, while constraining other possibilities. Matter, for Barad, can be conceived of as the congealing of virtual potential, that which might become possible through any number of enabling conditions or apparatuses. Each intra-action materializes some possibilities while allowing others to remain virtual; in turn, matter in its newly iterated form can be understood as the coalescence of new possibilities that are opened up just as other possibilities for what might have been are foreclosed. Matter must thus be understood as dynamic and ongoing in its becoming, “a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter,” as Judith Butler puts it. The perception of matter as static, inert, or fixed is merely an effect of the iterative materializing and re-materializing processes in seemingly consistent forms, a perceptual illusion of our own mental habits that ignore the indisputable dynamism of matter from one moment to the next.

---

64 Ibid., 177.
65 Judith Butler, Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex” (Great Britain: Routledge, 1993), 10 (italics original).
Matter is not an object with preexisting stable boundaries; its definition is the actualization of specific virtual possibilities enabled within particular intra-active phenomena to which objects and the apparatuses through which they are established are internal. It is here at the enactment of particular possibilities, the transformations of matter that are particular to specific practices and apparatuses, that Barad situates her concept of agency. As I discuss in Chapter 2, Barad describes agency as “a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has.”66 Rather than an attribute or a possession of subjects or objects, agency is the space of possibilities that is enabled through specific intra-actions, and the enactment of some possibilities rather than others. The materialization of “the human” as well as “nonhuman others” are themselves possibilities actualized through specific relational phenomena.

Resonant with Barad’s agential realism is political theorist Jane Bennett’s theory of vital materialism that similarly extends agency to nonhuman materials. Bennett describes the “vitality” of matter as “the capacity of things—edibles, commodities, storms, metals—not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own.”67 She uses Bruno Latour’s term “actant” to describe “a source of action that can be either human or nonhuman … that which has efficacy, can do things, has sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events.”68 Using this term actant throughout her text, Bennett describes a distributive agency in which things—which, despite the grammar, are not nearly

66 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 178 (italics original).
68 Ibid.
as fixed or discrete as they might appear\textsuperscript{69}—as well as people are given the force they are due, asserting that agency is “always a human-nonhuman working group.”\textsuperscript{70}

Following Barad and Bennett, we can consider \textit{Rite of Spring} as a performance of both human and nonhuman agencies, not merely the actions of human performers and the effects of their actions, but a human-nonhuman collaboration that proceeds through specifically choreographed relations, materializing some potentialities and not others. Doing so makes particular human and nonhuman bodies available, within their mutual constitution, their entanglement, their exteriority to one another that remains interior to their relations. To the degree that bodies are differentiated as “human” and “nonhuman” within this dance as a choreographic apparatus, such differences emerge reliant on each other; the categories are provisional within the conditions through which they are made to appear.

In relation to my earlier discussion of gender and sexual difference, these agential processes through which human and nonhuman bodies are materialized in their specificity cut across all bodies, regardless of whether they are positioned and produced as female or male. Gendered relations are traversed by the marking of bodies/materials as human and nonhuman. The constitutive relations between the nonhuman and the human deterritorialize the stable discreteness of the mutually exclusive categories of gender; binary sexual differences are not the only differences that come to matter within these fleshy/earthy relations.\textsuperscript{71} In relation to the peat, possibilities and potentialities for bodies proliferate,

\textsuperscript{69} Bennett addresses the limitations of the term “thing” in her claim for “\textit{thing-power}” later in her text: “The term’s disadvantage, however, is that it also tends to overstate the thinginess or fixed stability of materiality, whereas my goal is to theorize a materiality that is as much force as entity, as much energy as matter, as much intensity as extension … A second, related disadvantage of \textit{thing-power} is its latent individualism, by which I mean the way in which the figure of ‘thing’ lends itself to an atomistic rather than a congregational understanding of agency.” \textit{Vibrant Matter}, 20 (italics original).

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., xvii.

\textsuperscript{71} According to Adrian Parr, “deterritorialization,” as it is used by Deleuze and Guattari, describes processes of
intensify, seep, and flow, in ways that do not entirely conform to gendered roles and choreographies. If we take the relation of dancing bodies to the peat as a phenomenon—what Barad describes as a situation of specific intra-action between object and subject\textsuperscript{72}—in which flesh and earth become through their relations, then the categories “human” and “nonhuman” come to matter across and regardless of gender.

**Animateness and Inanimateness: Activity and Inertia, Life, Sex, and Death**

Beyond and alongside the molar differentiation of bodies into male and female categories through a range of choreographic devices—differentiations that themselves do not ultimately hold—and the differentiation between human dancing bodies and the nonhuman peat covering the stage—differences that emerge entangled with/in each other—Bausch’s *Rite of Spring* churns and pulses with molecular intensities that escape such binary categories. Again and again, frenzy erupts from stillness, and frenzy dissolves or collapses back into stillness. Forces and intensities vacillate from inactivity to rapid animation. Bodies collapsed into the dirt spring back up into leaps and whirling turns, dashing around the stage like caged animals. Thrashing bodies with limbs whipping through the air push at thresholds of exhaustion and crumple to the ground. The dirt, smooth and even at the start of the dance, gets kicked and shoved, pushed under foot and into the air, and clings to the sweaty skin of the dancers’ bodies. Dynamic differences of tempo, force, and control unfold

\textsuperscript{72} Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 128.
moment by moment, intersecting and moving through dancing bodies, but not finally contained within the terms through which bodies are given their definition.73

In contrast with the forceful momentum of dancing bodies running, stomping, flinging, spinning, grasping, and striking, the peat that covers the stage exerts the most force in its inertia, its resistance to motion and its return to stillness. Rather than reading this quality as passivity, as a mute inactivity, understanding the stillness of the peat as a tendency toward active inertia, the ongoing activity of inactivity, ascribes this nonhuman material as agential. This inanimateness sits in contrast to the animation of dancing bodies, and yet these two tendencies are not mutually exclusive across the line between human bodies and nonhuman dirt: while tending toward stillness, the dirt responds to the movements of the dancers, gives in to their push, and dances along with them, flung into the air and clinging to their skin; the dancers, while mostly active, span a dynamic range between the flurry of rapid, aggressive movement to relative inactivity to collapsing and surrendering their bodies fully to the stillness of the earth. Both nonhuman and human bodies/materials occupy a range of possibilities along the continuum of moving and not moving, and although they tend toward different inclinations, their variability suggests that we might consider activity and inactivity—animateness and inanimateness—as differences that matter, forces or intensities of which “human” and “nonhuman” are different but overlapping modes. What I am suggesting here is that in addition to reading binary gender and sexual difference as significant organizing principles in Rite of Spring, and in addition to reading the choreography

73 While not referencing Laban Movement Analysis and Rudolf von Laban’s effort qualities directly, Laban’s work certainly informs my viewing and perception. I am giving attention to the ways in which such dynamic qualities unfold through time, how dynamism and temporality—classified and categorized by Laban as strong/light, sustained/quick, bound/freeflow, and direct/indirect—unfold through differentiation, and how such differentiation constitutes the grounds or conditions for any other differences that might come to matter, or through which matter becomes.
for the inter-/intra-actions between bodies/materials differentiated as “human” and “nonhuman,” we might also attend to differences of force, intensity, and animation that intersect with but are not reducible to these other differences—female and male, human and nonhuman. Shifting registers, reorienting my analysis toward molecular differences, I turn to movement dynamics as lines or axes that potentially disrupt or deterritorialize these other categories, and ultimately enable other ways of thinking sexuality and sexual difference.

Feminist scholar Elizabeth Grosz writes:

Every thing, every process, every event or encounter is itself a mode of becoming that has its own time, its own movements, its own force. These multiple becomings both make and unmake, they do (up) and they undo. These becomings enable life to erupt from certain mixtures of chemicals, to complicate and enable materiality to undergo becomings, and to generate living beings of all kinds, within which both individuals and species (if these terms make sense) also become more and other than their histories through their engagement with dynamic environments.74

Following Deleuze, Grosz figures matter and life into any number of processes of becoming, through which matter persists, through which life becomes possible and survives, through which matter erupts into life and life returns to the plenitude of materiality. Matter and life “become, and become undone”; they are inextricably entangled, multiple tendencies within the ongoing processes of time unfolding, the present becoming into the future.75 Grosz writes that life, “that excess within matter that seeks to extend matter beyond itself and its present forms, is not the ‘origin’ of the virtual but rather one of its modes of actualization, the potentiality of matter itself, insofar as matter is the material of life as well as nonlife.”76 In this view of life and matter, while life describes a particular extension or unfolding of matter’s potential, matter is not itself inert. Rather, as matter’s unfolding occurs at such a

---

75 Ibid., 5.
76 Ibid., 28.
rate and such a velocity that we tend to reduce its activity to stasis, the total inertness of matter is an effect of mental and intellectual habits that elide its active molecular unfolding, physical processes—like decay and microbial life—that occur at such a rate and scale as to be imperceptible. The liveliness of life is distinct from matter primarily in degree; life designates a dynamic, accelerated potential activity of matter, and matter provokes and supports life, the substance of life’s unfolding and persistence. Thus, Grosz writes, following philosopher Henri Bergson, that matter and life are not opposites, “binary pairs (plus or minus vital force).”77 Rather:

Life is matter extended into the virtual; matter is life compressed into dormancy. Matter thus contains the dynamic forces that engender and enrich life in its various forms … Life is always on the verge of returning to the inorganic from which its elements, its very body and energies, are drawn. Life and matter cannot, in this tradition, be understood as binary opposites; rather, they are divergent tendencies, two different directions or trajectories inherent in a single whole, matter as undivided, matter as it includes its ‘others’—life, ideality, connectivity, temporality.78

Or, in other words, “Life magnifies and extends matter and matter in turn intensifies and transforms life.”79 What we identify as “life” and “matter,” then, demarcate different spectrums of activity, of actualized potential, on a shared continuum of becoming through time. Life is the extension of matter’s virtual potential, and matter is the deceleration and condensation of life’s vibrant activity into relatively dormant conditions, the inertia of inanimateness in contrast to the animateness of life. Bausch’s *Rite of Spring* stages these divergent trajectories of activity that tend toward the potential intensities of living and nonliving matter. As I move toward a theory of eosexuality that this dance enables, I will follow these tendencies—toward activity and inactivity, animateness and inanimateness—

77 Ibid., 32.
78 Ibid., 32-33.
79 Ibid., 39.
beyond the dance itself in order to show how they situate bodies both human and nonhuman within a sexuality that extends throughout matter itself. This is not to leave the dance behind, but to expand the frame through which its prominent features can be understood, to examine these dynamics within a larger nonhuman context in order to articulate the ecosexuality of \textit{Rite of Spring}.

Grosz notes that life carries the memory and possibility of its own inorganic origins within itself and persists always at the verge of returning to its material dormancy. This persistence of life on the verge of its own inevitable return to nonliving matter has also been theorized by Sigmund Freud as functioning in direct correlation with sexuality and the sexual instincts. In \textit{Beyond the Pleasure Principle}, Freud suggests that since the emergence of life from inanimate matter, two principle instincts have directed the behavior of the organism: the ego-instincts and the sexual instincts, the former which direct libidinal investment toward the ego through the operation of the “pleasure principle” that seeks to continually discharge states of tension and excitation in favor of equilibrium, and the latter which direct libidinal investment outward toward a world of objects, toward union and conjugation with other bodies, toward connections that stimulate and excite. The ego-instinctual pursuit of equilibrium is understood as a tendency toward becoming inanimate, returning to the state of inorganic lifelessness from which the activity of life emerged; these instincts come to be referred to as “death-instincts.” In opposition to the death-instincts are the sexual-instincts, which continually defer equilibrium in favor of the pursuit of excitation through states of connection with other bodies. Thus, the sexual-instincts come to be figured as “life-instincts” or “instincts toward life.”
Freud offers that while the “sexual-instincts” were initially understood in their relationship to the sexes and the function of propagation of the species—the instinct toward life instantiated through the processes of reproduction—findings eventually necessitated that this relationship be considered less primary. While these “life-instincts” could be understood as the organic compulsion that motivated reproduction, reproduction alone was not enough to explain this tendency that “endeavors to impel the separate parts of living matter to one another and to hold them together.”

Considering biological research on the life processes of single-celled protozoa, Freud observes:

[T]he mingling of two individuals without consequent partition, just as copulation between two individuals which soon after separate, has a strengthening and rejuvenating effect.... This is in close agreement with the hypothesis that the life-process of an individual leads, from internal causes, to the equalising of chemical tensions: i.e. to death, while union with an individually different living substance increases these tensions—so to speak, introduces new vital differentia.

In this observation, copulation—reproductive or otherwise—is considered productive, in that it produces tensions and excitations, “new vital differentia” that contribute to strengthening the impulse toward life and living. Freud offers that these sexual-instincts—understood more broadly as Eros, in that their operations could not rightly be reduced to sex or to sexuality as understood to be directed toward reproduction—the instincts toward libidinal investment in other bodies, might be transposable to the relationship of living cells to one another. He speculates that it is perhaps “the vital or sexual instincts active in every cell that take the other cells for their ‘object’, partially neutralize their death-instincts, i.e. the processes stimulated by these, and so preserve those cells in life, while other cells do the

---

81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., 71.
same for them.”83 He continues, “Thus the Libido of our sexual instincts would coincide with the Eros of poets and philosophers, which holds together all things living.”84 Beyond sexuality at the molar scale of whole organisms copulating with others, Freud figures Eros as the force that propels cells toward one another, the sexual force of all living matter holding itself together.

In Freud’s theorization, the instincts toward life—the tendencies toward animation and dynamism—erupt as the investment of the libido toward an other. It is through the differentia introduced by the other—both that which one is not and the otherness that is internal to the one—that life stirs itself, making new connections, generating new stimulation and excitation, producing new virtual potentialities for how life might become. This, for Freud, is the basis of sexuality, at the scale of the organism or body as a whole, for cells and microscopic organisms, and eventually for society and civilization. He writes that “civilization is a process in the service of Eros, whose purpose is to combine single human individuals, and after that families, then races, peoples and nations, into one great unity, the unity of mankind … These collections of men [sic] are to be libidinally bound to one another.”85 In ways that function quite literally throughout the formal structures of Bausch’s Rite of Spring, we might then consider choreographic devices such as unison, the grouping of bodies into shared spatial formations, bodies propelled toward one another, grasping each other, lifting and partnering each other, and even the consolidation of groups around shared facings and orientations as material instantiations of the tendency toward social aggregation, choreographic solutions to instincts that are fundamentally sexual. These choreographies are

83 Ibid., 63-64.
84 Ibid.
not reducible to symbolic representations of sexuality; following Freud’s theory of Eros or the sexual instincts, we might view these choreographic devices and their enactment by dancing bodies as attempts to satiate these instincts, to produce an assemblage of bodies, a contingent unity that channels libidinal bonds into and through choreography and dance. Simultaneously, these literal, physical, material sexual impulses taking form within dance are continuous with similar impulses at the scale of civilization or the species: bodies fall in line with one another, submit to uniformity, cling to each other, embrace each other, all toward the ends of establishing connections and collectives at multiple scales that prolong life through the production of successive excitation and agitation.

In contrast, life also tends toward its own demise, its return to inorganic quietude. In Civilization and Its Discontents, reflecting on his previous work, Freud writes, “Starting from speculations on the beginning of life and from biological parallels, I drew the conclusion that, besides the instinct to preserve living substance and to join it into ever larger units”—the sexual impulse toward conjunction—“there must exist another, contrary instinct seeking to dissolve those units and to bring them back to their primaeval, inorganic state. That is to say, as well as Eros, there was an instinct of death.” In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, he describes the “pleasure-principle,” writing, “We believe that any given process originates in an unpleasant state of tension and thereupon determines for itself such a path that its ultimate issue coincides with a relaxation of this tension, i.e. with avoidance of ‘pain’ or with production of pleasure.” Whereas the sexual instincts—the instincts toward life—compel living matter toward excitation and animation in connection to that which it is not, this excitation is also seen as states of agitation, which the organism experiences as discomfort or

---

86 Ibid., 105-106.
87 Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, 1.
even pain. The pleasure principle is the compulsion to diffuse or eliminate the agitation of excitation, the internal tensions produced by desire, “an attempt on the part of the psychic apparatus to keep the quantity of excitation present as low as possible, or at least constant.”

Beyond this compulsion toward pleasure or maintaining excitation as low or as constant as possible, however, Freud identifies the “repetition-compulsion,” the compulsion to repeat behavior patterns that cannot be fully explained by the pleasure-principle. In attempting to articulate the relationship between the pleasure-principle and the compulsion to repetition, Freud theorizes that there is a tendency “beyond the pleasure principle.” He suggests that “an instinct would be a tendency innate in living organic matter impelling it toward the reinstatement of an earlier condition, one which it had to abandon under the influence of external disturbing forces—a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the manifestation of inertia in organic life.” He suggests that all instincts have as their aim the “reinstatement of an earlier condition.” Thus, beyond the compulsion to discharge agitation or excitation, Freud identifies a tendency of life to return to a previous state, specifically the state that precedes all animation.

In a passage that is worth quoting in full, Freud moves from the impulsion toward the reinstatement of earlier conditions to what he identifies as the death drive:

If then all organic instincts are conservative, historically acquired, and are directed toward regression, toward reinstatement of something earlier, we are obliged to place all the results of organic development to the credit of external, disturbing and distracting influences. The rudimentary creature would from its very beginning not have wanted to change, would, if circumstances had remained the same, have always merely repeated the same course of existence. But in the last resort it must have been the evolution of our earth, and its relation to the sun, that has left its imprint on the

---

88 Ibid., 3.
89 Ibid., 45 (italics original).
90 Ibid., 46.
development of organisms. The conservative organic instincts have absorbed every one of these enforced alterations in the course of life and have stored them for repetition; they thus present the delusive appearance of forces striving after change and progress, while they are merely endeavoring to reach an old goal by ways both old and new. This final goal of all organic striving can be stated too. It would be counter to the conservative nature of instinct if the goal of life were a state never hitherto reached. It must rather be an ancient starting point, which the living being left long ago, and to which it harks back again by all the circuitous paths of development. If we may assume as an experience admitting no exception that everything living dies from causes within itself, and returns to the inorganic, we can only say, 'The goal of all life is death', and, casting back, 'The inanimate was there before the animate'.

If one goal of life—the motivation of its activities—is to return to an earlier state, the reinstatement of a previous condition that has been retained within memory, then it follows that at the basis of this motivation will be the return to the earliest state, that of inorganic, inanimate matter from which all life emerged. If the cumulative processes of life amount to stage after stage of conjugation, excitation, and animation, then alongside or beneath these processes, within and beyond the pursuit of pleasure—the discharge of agitation—flows the pursuit of equilibrium and inertia, toward the direction of death. The compulsion to repetition, even as it potentially stirs and agitates, can be seen as this tendency toward earlier states, small demonstrations of life's instinct toward its own death.

Life and matter fluctuate between the sexual instincts toward life and the tendency toward the earliest state: inanimateness, or death. Freud writes that in the life of the organism, “one group of instincts presses forward to reach the final goal of life as quickly as possible, the other flies back at a certain point on the way only to traverse the same stretch once more from a given spot and thus to prolong the duration of the journey.”

Thus within repetition operates both the death drive toward the ultimate reinstatement of that primordial

---

91 Ibid., 46-47 (italics original).
92 Ibid., 50-51.
inorganic condition and the sexual instincts toward those earlier states of excitation and agitation through which life is prolonged and death deferred. In Bausch’s *Rite of Spring*, we can observe these same tendencies within the formal characteristics of the choreography: the incessant, unrelenting tendency toward repetition, bodies hammering away at the same movement phrases again and again, and the eventual collapse into exhaustion, when the body of the chosen woman falls to the ground, meeting the dirt.

In thinking the relationship between relative animateness and inanimateness across both dancing bodies and dirt, alongside Freud’s theory of the sexual instincts and the death drive, I turn back to Jane Bennett who describes *slowness* as one way that we might consider the activity of matter and things. She says, “One way to explain the ability of paper, plastic, stone, or glass to actually overwhelm people is in terms of the things’ comparative advantage, compared to human flesh, when it comes to endurance, patience, waiting it out … It concerns what Spinoza might have called the ‘speed of things,’ of the thing, the relative slowness of its rate of change.”  

Attending to the specific affects of things on those who amass them in the television show *Hoarders*, Bennett observes that hoarding is often triggered by “the death of a parent, child, or marriage, or an empty nest. The mounds of trash, stacks of paper, etcetera, somehow compensate in an unhealthy but not unsatisfying way for that loss. Hoarding, in other words, is a coping response—or, presented as a coping response—to human mortality.”

---


94 Ibid.
present the reassuring illusion that at least something doesn’t die.”⁹⁵ At the same time that things potentially offer comfort or reassurance in their persistence and relatively slow rate of becoming, Bennett suggests that they also work on human beings by tapping into what she calls “the human inorganic.” She says, “In an act of sympathy and self-recognition, one might say, the hoard and the it-stuff within the hoarder”—that which is inhuman within the materiality of the human subject—“make a connection.”⁹⁶ She describes this act of inorganic sympathy as akin to what Freud identified as the death drive, the longing of the human body to “return to the indeterminacy of the inorganic.”⁹⁷ She describes the death drive as “a distinctive form of relationality, a peculiar associational logic, a subterranean sympathy between bodies that we normally assign to different categories: life/matter, person/thing, animal/vegetable/mineral.”⁹⁸ In relation to inanimate things, the hoarder might simultaneously take comfort in the things’ seeming permanence while also experiencing an unconscious sympathy with their slowness, their lifelessness. The inanimate seemingly offers the promise of “eternal life” in the seductive call to return to the inorganic, by appealing to the drive toward death.

Following Bennett, Freud, and Grosz together, if we take instincts toward life and death, toward dynamic, animate elaboration and conservative, inanimate dormancy, to be simultaneous and complimentary tendencies within living and nonliving matter, then the performances of dancing bodies and peat on stage in *Rite of Spring* do more than simply occupy different ranges of possibility on a shared material continuum of life and death: these materials—person and thing, biotic and abiotic—occupy a particular relationship to one

⁹⁵ Ibid.
⁹⁶ Ibid.
⁹⁷ Ibid.
⁹⁸ Ibid.
another, appealing to the virtual tendencies within the other. Human bodies stir themselves, one another, and the dirt, accessing their animate potential. Conversely, following Bennett, we might recognize what she calls “a subterranean sympathy” through which the stillness of the peat appeals to the potential inanimateness of dancing human bodies. Again and again throughout the dance, these bodies fall into moments of stillness, simply standing or collapsing to the ground, and the whole stage settles into the persistent quiet equilibrium of the peat. Repeatedly, the dancers throw themselves down into the dirt, as if giving in to its seductive call. Importantly, this is how the dance concludes, the chosen woman dancing herself into exhaustion and falling into the peat, parallel to the one man who lies supine in the dirt, surrounded by the crowd of other dancers who stand stationary, watching on. If animateness and inanimateness mark the directions of diverging tendencies toward life and death, living and dying, it seems in the final moments of Rite of Spring that the impulse toward life, toward survival, has finally been exhausted, overwhelmed by the impulse toward equilibrium, toward quiescence, toward death. The body of the chosen woman surrenders to the endurance, the persistence, the slowness of the peat, and in a gesture that is both symbolic and literal, the human is given over to the earlier—and future—nonliving condition from which it emerged.

**Sexuality and Extinction**

In the final moments of the piece, the crowd of dancers watches as the chosen woman collapses in exhaustion. What might it mean to exhaust the instinct toward survival, and to be oriented as a society toward that exhaustion of the drive to survive? Moving to an inverse contextualization of Rite of Spring, I suggest that the eosexuality performed by this
dance indicates the entanglement of sexuality with life and death. This ecosexuality first spans the material continuum of life and matter—animateness and inanimateness—then resolves in an orientation toward death and demise. Matter and ecological relations perhaps become sexual precisely when oriented toward the potential to live but no longer oriented toward survival.

What is the relationship between sexuality and survival, specifically beyond the lives of humans? In a feminist recuperation of the concepts of natural and sexual selection, following the work of Charles Darwin, Elizabeth Grosz writes:

Sexual selection operates as a principle that both is contained broadly within and also seeps into, complicates, and compromises natural selection. It is a principle of excess in relation to survival. This energetic excess is the condition for the production of biological and cultural extravagance, the uncontainable production of intensification, not for the sake of the skills of survival, but simply because of its force of bodily intensification, its capacity to arouse pleasure or ‘desire,’ its capacity to generate sensation.  

Whereas in Darwin’s work, the theory of natural selection describes the evolving fitness and survival of species, sexual selection cannot be reduced to or explained by a theory of survival. The force of sexual selection is “not directed to survival, to the acquisition of pragmatic skills, except perhaps indirectly; instead it is linked to expression and intensification … to the operative value of attractiveness and taste in the appeal that individuals of each sex exert (or do not exert) for their desired partners.”100 Throughout any number of species, Darwin identifies the development of physical traits and behavior patterns that serve no discernable purpose for survival—or sometimes in fact make organisms more susceptible to the attention of predators—but develop in order to produce

100 Elizabeth Grosz, Chaos, Territory, and Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 33.
pleasure and attract a mate. Such characteristics proliferate and intensify through
generations—where sexual behavior results in reproduction—producing the emergence of
colorful, elaborate bodies, movements, and sounds that in no direct way contribute to the
survival of the organism or the species. In as much as species can be understood as “natural
collections or kinds developed to survive and compete, they are also the a posteriori and
ultimately incalculable consequences of sexual taste, appeal, or attraction.”101 Sexuality,
suggests Grosz, can be explained less in terms of ends of goals, and more in terms of “its
forces, its effects (which can less contentiously be understood as pleasure in indeterminable
forms), which are forms of bodily intensification.”102 Following Darwin, then, sexuality can
be understood specifically as the bodily and behavioral excess of survival, the intensification
of bodies and behaviors beyond the organic needs of the organism or the species, specifically
directed instead by sensation, desire, and pleasure.

Whereas Darwin distinguished theoretically between sexual and natural selection, the
effects of both become enfolded together into the processes of adaptation and evolution.
While the effects of sexual selection proliferate in and through reproduction and survival,
making the intensities of sex and sexuality ultimately inseparable from the flourishing of
life—echoing Freud’s transposition of “life drives” into sexual/erotic instincts—such
intensities and effects are not reducible to the pursuits of survival or reproduction. For
Freud, sexuality and eroticism are mechanisms for the instincts toward life, toward the
intensification of living. For Darwin, the force of sexual selection, while not primarily
oriented toward survival, is nonetheless directed toward the intensification of life—toward
pleasure and sensation, toward creativity, color, and vibrancy, toward different speeds and

101 Ibid., 33.
102 Ibid.
frequencies—in ways that might result in but do not require reproduction. Darwin and Freud’s treatments of sexuality and life are not perfectly analogous, but both articulate sex and sexuality in relation to life and living in ways that exceed organic need, survival, or reproduction. Bausch’s *Rite of Spring* reaches its end with the exhaustion and collapse of the chosen woman and the group of other dancers witnessing this figural demise. If all the driving momentum, frenzy, and pulsing intensity of the dance culminates in this moment, coming to its conclusion—if not resolution—in the finality of the chosen woman dancing herself to death, then its intensity does not ultimately push toward persistence, toward survival. Something else drives these bodies, figuratively and literally, and that drive might be understood as sexuality.

Working from several different discursive traditions to examine sex and sexuality in relation to extinction—to what will not survive—feminist literary scholar Clare Colebrook articulates a similar but distinct explanation of sexuality, specifically in relation to time. In *Sex After Life: Essays on Extinction, Vol. 2*, she asks how we might articulate questions of time and sexual difference today, given the growing awareness of climate change and the anthropogenic contributions to the threat of extinction on a planetary scale. Provocatively, Colebrook argues: “What needs to be considered, I would suggest, is a sexual time, where sexuality is taken in its non-organic and truly sexual sense, as that which drives beyond the organism’s needs and figurations, and as that which opens thought beyond its own

---

103 The dance itself—and even art more broadly—could be understood as an effect of sexuality. Taking a broad view of the function of art, Grosz suggests, “The different arts are a consequence of the various experiments in intensification that have marked sexualized life on earth … Art and nature, art in nature, share a common structure: that of excessive and useless production—production for its own sake, production for the sake of profusion and differentiation.” Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, and Art*, 9. Art is useless in that its use is not necessary for life or survival; its intensities—its excess of color, of sound, of movement, of form, of materials—are directed toward the production of sensations and affects, the intensities of living, of being alive, regardless of whether or not the organism reproduces or the species survives. Grosz writes, “Art is the sexualization of survival or, equally, sexuality is the rendering artistic, the exploration of the excessiveness, of nature.” Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, and Art*, 11.
command and measure.” She writes that such a conception of time “might be engendered, opened from all the modes of life (organic and non-organic) that produce distinct and interconnected rhythms, but would not be gendered, could not be figured within the norms of man or his others. Time is essentially sexual, and sexuality is essentially temporal.”

Sexuality, in Colebrook’s proposition, pushes beyond human organic needs and figurations, opens from and to all modes of organic and inorganic life, including that which precedes and will continue beyond the human species. Echoing Grosz’s account of Darwinian sexual selection, sexuality for Colebrook functions specifically in excess of organic need, pushing life and living processes beyond need toward desire, toward unpredictable futures rather than teleologies defined by the needs of the organism or species. Ultimately, following this trajectory, Colebrook ascribes a sexuality to time itself, where time is that inhuman differentiating force that moves through and beyond organisms, species, life and even matter, the differentiating condition through which such realities become actualized.

Turning to the emergence of human sexuality within psychoanalytic accounts to explicate her claim regarding the sexuality of time, Colebrook writes that sexuality emerges precisely at the interval between organic need and desire. At first, the mouth of the infant attaches to the breast of the mother, fulfilling the sustenance of its biological being through that connection. She continues:

What happens, though, when the action or connection through which organic sustenance is made breaks with, or slips away from, the aim of meeting metabolic needs? That is, the mouth attaches to the breast for organic needs, but then continues to enjoy the feel of sucking, imagining or fantasizing an object; sexuality is just this slippage from organic need … A macro (or schizoanalytic) version of such slippage may be evidenced in the

---

105 Ibid. (italics original).
life of humanity. Man is coupled with the earth for his own survival. He nevertheless intensifies the processes of this coupling (processes of consumption production, resource depletion and capitalization) to the point where the process itself becomes the aim: capital generation for its own sake, consumption for its own sake, production so excessive that one requires advertising to manufacture needs and gaps.106

At the scale of the body, the organism couples with those sources and resources that meet its needs and allow it to maintain its bodily integrity and persistence. However, from such couplings, behaviors that began as ways of meeting metabolic needs exceed those origins and continue in the service of pleasurable sensation, generating desire for such activities beyond the necessary requirements of the body. Colebrook points to the elaboration of such excessive processes at the scale of the species in relation to the planet, where consumption practices that originally emerged in service to basic needs have escalated to the point that they are now oriented primarily toward their own production as ends unto themselves. Sexuality can be understood as these intensifications of activity beyond that which is necessary for survival, impulses and drives that persist for their own sake.

Following this line of thinking, Colebrook suggests that there is an essentially sexual quality to extinction: considering the consumption processes of the organism, the human species, and the original proper living organism of “Gaia”—the planet and its interdependent ecosystems as a whole—“the very processes that originated for the striving of organic maintenance—eating, reproducing, producing—have pushed the organism to (self-)annihilation.”107 Our modes of consumption then are tied to rhythms and intensities that are not reducible to or even directed toward our own survival; the present climate crisis and the specter of our own inevitable extinction points to the excess of life beyond its

106 Ibid., 129-130.
107 Ibid., 134.
survivability. Like the sucking and the desire to suck that persists beyond hunger or the need for nourishment, which Freud and Colebrook point to as an exemplar of the emergence of sexuality at the scale of the infant, Colebrook describes the global scale of consumption on this planet as inherently sexual. We no longer eat, reproduce, produce, and consume only in order to survive; the intensities of these activities have amplified for their own sake, for their own intensification. Not only do these cycles of production, reproduction, and consumption exceed our organic needs as a species; they propel us toward our own demise, our own ends, the extinction of our species—a dramatic reassertion of the repetition-compulsion and the death drive, pushing and striving at a planetary scale toward a return to inorganic quiescence, stillness, and rest.

No longer oriented toward or fixated on survival, toward an outcome or teleology specified by the needs of any particular species, life unfolds for its own sake toward an undetermined, yet-to-be-known future—a future that will exceed life in any single form, including human life. Returning to Rite of Spring, in noting the vacillating fluctuations between frenzy and stillness, between fervent repetition and exhausted collapse, I read these dynamic tendencies as continuous with drives toward both life and death, where the drive toward life is figured as Eros or sexuality, the stirring of vital potentia in conjunction with another. Whereas Freud identified these sexual drives within organic life, Colebrook figures this liveliness with/in difference broadly as a sexuality of time itself, beyond any particular life, species, or mode of living. Bausch’s Rite of Spring can be read not simply as a “battle of the sexes,” women and men pitted against one another across the gap of their differences

and the unequal distribution of power that such differences are made to support. Nor must the dance be read only as a struggle between human bodies and the nonhuman terrain, in which bodies dance ankle-deep against the inertia of the dirt, and in which neither human nor nonhuman bodies/materials emerge unmarked. *Rite of Spring* can be read as a dance of dynamic intensities that unfold as both human and nonhuman bodies and materials, across bodies gendered female and male, where such bodies are modes of becoming through which such intensities are instantiated. The repetitive agitation of the dance pulses and pushes toward more and more animation, ultimately to the point of exhaustion; for all of its liveliness, survival was never the goal, and, following Colebrook and Grosz, it is precisely in excess of survival that the intensification of life and matter can be understood as sexual. Reading *Rite of Spring* in this way implicates its dynamic qualities, its dancing bodies, and the dirt within such an understanding of sexuality, a sexuality beyond the human of which the human is only a part or single mode. Ecosexuality, in this case, is a sexuality of matter itself, encompassing both the human and the nonhuman, regardless of gender, driving toward its own intensity and its own demise.

If life on this planet—or our part with/in life on this planet—exhausts the drive toward survival and becomes no longer directed toward “a logic of sustaining or rendering ourselves viable,” Colebrook suggests, “we might ask (finally) what life is, what life might do, beyond organic self-enclosure.” She suggests that such a question would be both intensive and sexual:

… intensive, because it would not take life as it actually exists and seek to extend its range (by rendering animals more human, by hoping that humans might live longer), for it would take those aspects of life that are not fully actualized—problems, questions, disturbances—and seek to maximize their

---

force. This problem would also be sexual: not grounded upon the organism’s self-recognition but extending its power of mutation (especially those mutations that occur through unintended encounters).\textsuperscript{110}

What could become of life on this planet if we concerned ourselves not with persistence, preservation, or extending life as we know it, and instead directed our attention to how else life might become, its potential mutation? How might difference emerge through even more variation rather than reproduction of the same? What other lives or ways of living become possible or actualized if we accept our own finitude, the inevitability of our own demise? What problems would then present themselves, and what solutions? Colebrook suggests that “if we alter the logic of living on, of sustaining, extending, adapting, mitigating or justifying the human as it currently is, then something like a sexual life—a life open to the forces of its own destruction—might be given a chance.”\textsuperscript{111} Rather than the threat of extinction provoking a paranoid pursuit of preservation, the specter of our own end might compel us to consider how to pursue life for its own sake, without our lives at its center. Following the understandings of sexuality given by Darwin, Freud, Grosz, and Colebrook—indebted in part to Deleuze—perhaps this provocation to consider the evolution and intensification of life without our survival is the challenge that *Rite of Spring* asks us to face, the radical potential of ecosexuality in this instantiation.

In the last minutes of the dance, the chosen woman thrashes through her whole body, flinging her arms wide and throwing her head back again and again, doubling over at the waist as if punched in the stomach, falling to her knees then fully to the ground before desperately, almost manically, propping herself back up onto wobbling arms and knees, and throwing herself again into the dance. Her mouth is gaping, her chest heaving, her hair

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
completely disheveled; her dress hangs from a single strap now, her breasts fully exposed. Her arms and fingers shudder as she tosses them away from herself, then yanks them back to wrap around her waist. All around the edges of the stage, the other dancers stand in near-total almost-stillness, watching her, arms hanging at their sides. Their only movements by the end of piece are the faintest, slightest uncertain shifts from one foot to the other. The woman in red throws her body into the air, whirls into a turn through the peat, and collapses from the waist. Her arms tense, her eyes are wide: this dance is becoming a mania, if it was not already. She falls again and struggles back to standing, falls again, struggles back to standing. I wonder how many more times she will get back up before she finally gives in and lets go. And then it happens: she beats her chest repeatedly as if pounding a pulse back into a dying heart, then suddenly throws her limp arms up and forward as her body inclines, then falls. She crumples to the ground, parallel to the one man lying behind her; his arms settle across his body, and there they lie in the dirt. The last moment of the piece, after the final beat of the drum in Stravinsky’s score, is perfect stillness: two bodies given over to the earth, everyone else left standing and watching. It is not at all clear what will or even what could happen next, and then it is over. Their time—our time—is up.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the preceding chapters, I have developed multiple overlapping, intersecting, and diverging theories of ecosexuality that each figure human/nonhuman relations in particular ways. These theories have been developed through a practice of choreographic thinking, articulating prominent features and organizing principles at work in the Love Art Laboratory, *Dangerous Curves*, and Bausch’s *Rite of Spring*, then utilizing those principles and features toward thinking sexuality in a broad more-than-human context. This thinking unfolds the critical potential of these performance works, contributes to the scholarly consideration of the growing eosexual movement, and establishes productive ties with the work of philosophers and critical theorists. By building assemblages between these three performances and critical thought developed by thinkers beyond the performance, I allow each to become enhanced in and through their connections with the others.

Here at the conclusion, I will address both what this dissertation has done as well as some of the possibilities that it enables. My interests here are to reflect on the project at hand as well as to consider some of what might proceed or emerge from theorizing performances of ecosexuality. First, I will address the significance of this dissertation, its stakes, and what it has accomplished. Next, I describe how further performances are enabled by the theories and choreographic thinking accomplished here. I then gesture toward further scholarship in and beyond dance and performance studies for which this dissertation creates space. Finally, I consider how the theories here developed might influence or inflect ways of living, perceiving, and becoming as part of the world with/in which we live. As I discuss in
the Introduction, ecosexuality is a nascent framework and field of study; this dissertation is a
beginning for further work to be made, for further thinking to be thought, for other
innovative research, and for other assemblages and constellations of performance and theory
to be developed.

At its foundation, through the selection of its objects of study as well as its
methodological orientation, this dissertation maintains that the performing arts—here
performance art, pornography, and dance—and the choreographic principles they articulate
generate concepts as well as affects, and that these concepts provide resources for critical
theory, for philosophy, and for thoughtful interrogation of our world and how it comes to
matter. Grounding each chapter in close, careful description of the principles and structures
that organize each performance, I hold that what is made available to a viewer or spectator
within the performance itself constitutes the materials necessary to develop not only a
multitude of interpretations, but richly critical views of ourselves and our world—what I
have called, following M. Candace Feck, “inverse contextualizations.” Such formalist
descriptions and the inverse contextualizations they enable do not exhaust the potential of
any of these performances, nor is the full complexity of any given performance or how it
comes into being disclosed within the performance itself. Any work of performance emerges
from histories of practice, disciplinary traditions, ecological conditions, technological
entanglements, political investments, socio-economic infrastructures, personal and
professional relationships, and so on, and such conditions are constitutive of what that
performance will be. Rarely are those para-choreographic conditions disclosed within the
performance itself, and yet such conditions, even when withheld from view, are integral to
what and how a performance might matter within the particular historical, cultural context in
which it operates. While the effects of such factors often operate behind the scenes and beyond the margins of the page, shaping, enabling, and constraining what comes into view, within these pages, I have prioritized descriptive accounts of what is presented to the viewer—this viewer—and how such accounts can function as materials with which to think—a process I have described as “choreographic thinking.”

Utilizing choreographic thinking—considering each of these performances primarily as choreographic resources for critical thinking, here towards theorizations of ecosexual)—positions performance and choreography as generative. Although a performance can be critically examined for the ways in which it emerges from existing material, cultural, and social conditions, it also produces opportunities for moving beyond the performance itself into other translations in new and different forms. With each chapter, I ask how ecosexuality—the entanglement of sexuality with the nonhuman world—can be understood in and through the choreographic principles and features specific to each of these three performances. By prioritizing the analysis of choreographic structure as the basis for theorizing ecosexuality in these case studies, I have also demonstrated possibilities for what performances make thinkable or how performances can inform what and how we think.

Beyond my specific focus on ecosexuality within this dissertation, the project of choreographic thinking, as I have articulated it in the Introduction and practiced it within each chapter, holds space for how performance can be made meaningful.

Within each chapter, ecosexuality as I have theorized it here has become a matter of difference within continuity, sexuality becoming articulated as a mode of intra-activity, visibility, potentiality, and intensity in ways that figure the human as continuous with the nonhuman. Throughout their seven-year project, the Love Art Laboratory presents the
human as implicated with-and-in the nonhuman, a loss of discreteness as the basis of eroticism, and love as a growing expanse in which we are given over to that from which we differ but of which we are nevertheless a part. The prominent features of the LAL to which I give my attention most are the multiple functions of orientation, the various ways in which different component parts are held together in shared structures, the interplay between activity and text, the excessive camp aesthetic and its mediation of both nature and artifice, and the interactions between human performers and nonhuman elements. Looking first to the Green Wedding Number Four, I discuss how the wedding, its themes, and the contributions of its participants articulate multiple sites at which difference is held within contingent continuity—as in the many individual expressions of the theme “green” or what is meant by “Earth,” the diversity of the community interpolated together as “we” in Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s sermon, and the many different performers who take center stage toward whom the participants are oriented precisely when that toward which they are oriented is called “the Earth.” These multiple, shifting, and overlapping orientations—both literal and figurative—provide an opportunity to interrogate what it might mean to be oriented toward the nonhuman world and to repeatedly face human performers at the center of each of the LAL’s wedding ceremonies. This positioning of human performers in-and-as that which is also nonhuman echoes the LAL’s Ecosex Manifesto, in which the human is described as part of and not separate from Nature and the Earth. Within the context of this performance project, ecosexuality emerges as the erotic dissolution of separability and absolute individuation, in which the human is already given over to that which is not human. That eroticism becomes the basis of love, where love can be understood—following Butler and Badiou—as the pursuit of life and living from the perspective of more than one. This view
of love and eroticism within our entanglement with the Earth is not the collapse of
difference, but a realization of the self and other as different but not discrete, opened to and
threaded through one another.

_Dangerous Curves_ moves between the molar and the molecular, furthering a
naturecultural view throughout assemblages of pieces and parts at multiple scales. Taking the
choreographic features of the scene—the constant motion of the camera, the direction of its
gaze toward both human and nonhuman materials, the vacillation between wide shots and
close ups, and the many rearrangements of bodies, parts, and their connections—as the
mechanisms through which an ecosexuality is enacted, I turn to the work of Deleuze and
Guattari for a vocabulary of concepts with which to think bodies and sexualities as
assemblages, pieces, parts, and flows. In this scene, both human and nonhuman bodies and
parts come to matter within the frame, and sexuality can be read across a multiplicity of
surfaces and connections, spanning what Deleuze and Guattari describe as _n_-sexes that
proliferate beyond the sexes and sexualities accounted for by binary sex or gender. Sexuality
here roams across flesh and stone, through fluids and video technologies; ecosexuality in
_Dangerous Curves_ becomes a matter of permeability, the breakdown of discrete categories such
as human or nonhuman, culture or nature, inside or outside. Through its depiction of
discontinuous parts moving in and out of any number of connections at molar and
molecular scales, ecosexuality can be thought through promiscuous assemblages between the
nonhuman and the human within a naturecultural continuum in which such categories
cannot finally hold.

The prominent choreographic features of _Rite of Spring_ include the rigid but not
etirely absolute organization of movement vocabulary, spatial formations, stylistic execution,
and costuming into binary gendered categories; the exchange of effects between the dancing human bodies and the peat spread over the stage; and the fluctuating dynamic tendencies toward both activity and stillness that find expression across and throughout materials both human and nonhuman, regardless of gendered choreographies. While the organization of bodies within choreographies of gender is the most prominent feature within this and many of Bausch’s dances, I read both against and across these categories for the ways in which this dance also stages inhuman forces that unfold throughout matter and life—specifically animation and inanimateness. Reading this dance for such features offers ways of thinking the dance in relation to sexuality, sexual instincts, the death drive, and extinction. If we take the prominent tendencies toward frenzy and slowness or stillness in the dance as continuous with the basic instincts of matter and life toward animation and inanimateness, the choreography provides an occasion with which to consider life and sexuality beyond the human, where—following Colebrook—“beyond the human” or beyond the organic needs of the species—let alone its survival—might be that which makes life itself sexual. Moving from the fluctuating dynamics of the dance through Colebrook’s work with Freud, I come to consider sexuality as a material tendency that can include but also exceeds the human. With Rite of Spring, ecosexuality—the entanglement of sexuality with the nonhuman—indicates a sexuality of matter and life itself, life and matter as sexual perhaps precisely because it leaves the human behind.

With each of these projects, I have considered sexuality beyond the borders of “the human”—indeed, sexualities that open or disrupt such borders—expanding possibilities for how sexuality can be thought. These possibilities are not conclusive, nor do they guarantee that life will be made livable for more forms of life. Rather, these performances and my
readings of them throughout these chapters introduce lines of flight, openings and pathways for escaping the fixity and rigidity of categories such as human and nonhuman and binary sexual difference. In doing so, without claiming to fully break free from the lingering effects of such categories, I hope that these theories of ecosexuality make space for inventing other ways of thinking sexuality, for experimenting with other ways of living bodies and inter-species material relations.

**Further Artworks**

On November 13, 2014, I premiered a solo entitled *death drive/obscene/on-scene* as part of a show called 11 Tiny Performances, curated by Esther Baker-Tarpaga and Heidi Wiren Bartlett, and produced by The Englert Theatre and the Trumpet Blossom Cafe in Iowa City, Iowa. The show coincided with the joint annual conference of the Congress on Research in Dance and the Society for Dance History Scholars. This piece was an intentional attempt to create my own version of ecosexual performance work.

I had performed multiple pieces thus far that were intentionally ecosexual in their content and focus, each under the auspices of Stephens and Sprinkle’s Love Art Lab. In 2010, I performed a *butoh* solo entitled *Re-Membering the Mountains* in the LAL’s *Purple Wedding to the Appalachian Mountains* in Athens, Ohio. The piece was intended to grieve the loss of the Appalachian Mountains—including the eco-systems they support—to mountain-top removal, taking that devastation as the *butoh-fu* or score for a dance that moves from strength and stability, through weakness and fragility, and back toward strength and stability. Starting in *tadasana*—or “mountain pose,” a yoga posture—both feet firmly planted firmly on the ground, I slowly collapsed to the floor, crawled for five minutes up the central aisle of the
Galbreath Chapel, and struggled to return to standing, back again to tadasana. The temporal progression of the piece moving forward in time/space moves backwards through the life of the mountains, back to the strong mountain to which we can never return but the memory of which we must continue to carry.

In 2011, I performed another butoh solo entitled becoming in the LAL’s White Wedding to the Sun on Bernal Hill in San Francisco, California. This was the culminating wedding for the LAL. This solo was developed from a butoh-fu that was read aloud by Stephens, Sprinkle, and Joseph Kramer while I danced. The text of the score reads:

becoming sunflower
unfolding exquisite organization
always turning, towards the sun
decaying as a ground of wet leaves
and worms and beetles and grubs, black soil and feces
becoming crucified in arms and hands
belly gutted like a fish, ever bleeding opening onto loss
back-body becoming moon in shadow,
fingers becoming moonbeams
waves cresting and crashing with every gesture
becoming fucked in ass and mouth and eyes
lungs spreading gills through ribcage
cheeks becoming city lights
winds sweeping over plains under arms
shedding serpent skin, cells/scales pushing outward
skeleton melting glacier, thundering downstream to sea
stars as joints becoming constellation,
night guide for a weary pilgrimage
flesh as film becoming imprinted with the image of the world
watching the film from your deathbed
rising as the sun
and still becoming sunflower turning towards . . .

The text was repeated three times, each round adding another voice, accumulating layers and density in the same way that the score itself introduces more and more images and elements to be interpreted into the body. As I moved through the score, my body gradually rotating at the center of a circle of participants on the top of Bernal Hill, I attempted to embody this
collision of text and flesh, giving myself over to any number of impossible becomings that might dislodge me from any clear, stable sense of myself as human. It was a dance with the sun, attempting to contemplate myself extending through so many stages and facets of life on this planet, all ultimately nothing more than highly complex thermo-dynamic processes, the energy of the sun working itself out on the surface of the earth.

Both Re-Membering the Mountains and becoming were created for the context of the LAL’s weddings, and while they were my choreography and performance, they were made to be presented within the LAL’s ecosexual wedding structure. The piece I created and performed in 2014, death drive/obscene/on-scene, was my attempt to think ecosexual performance beyond the LAL, beyond Dangerous Curves, and beyond Rite of Spring, my own choreographic solutions to many of the issues that I have encountered and addressed throughout this dissertation. While distinct from the dissertation, this solo in many ways came out of it. In this minimalist solo, I performed a simple, practical ecosexuality—masturbating in front of an audience, penetrating myself with a steel dildo—accompanied by an audio recording of myself reading selections from Haraway, Freud, and Colebrook—all quoted within this dissertation—that have been integral to my evolving understanding of ecosexuality.

Death drive/obscene/on-scene staged a human/nonhuman sexual encounter—between my body, the steel dildo, silicone lubricant, and a small stage—bringing much of the theory of this dissertation back to my body. On the surface, this performance was the kind of practical ecosexuality that Stefanie Iris Weiss writes about in her book Eco-Sex: sex toys and lube are relatively mundane nonhuman others that are invited into human bodies and sexual practices. This piece took this mundane ecosexuality from the bedroom into public space,
refiguring sexual practice as performance. The recorded texts collided with the physical performance, potential reconfiguring how it might matter: as I masturbated on stage, a presumably individual act, I was accompanied by my reading of Haraway’s words, “…human genomes can be found in only about 10 percent of all the cells that occupy the mundane space I call my body; the other 90 percent of the cells are filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such … To be one is always to become with many.”¹ Sex with myself might then be considered sex with countless nonhuman companions that my body comprises, an inter-species orgy held from view in and as what we take to be an individual human body. The texts from Freud and Colebrook discussed pleasure, the death drive, and the propulsion of the species toward its own annihilation; sex and my own self-pleasuring then became constellated within the much larger context of survival and extinction on this planet.² At the intersection of text and body, along the intimacies between spectators, a dildo, lube, flesh, and that countless nonhuman lives that flesh conceals, I performed an intentional act of ecosexuality, indicating ways in which even our most mundane sexual experiences are already entangled with the nonhuman world.

I have committed this space to offering an account of my performance works in order to gesture toward what I hope to be one of the most fertile outcomes of this

¹ Donna Haraway, When Species Meet (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 3-4 (italics original).
² This solo has other precedents in my own work, projects that I created before articulating or understanding them specifically through the framework of ecosexuality. In 2011, I co-presented a keynote address/performance with Catriona Sandilands entitled “Eco Homo? Queering Bodies, Queering Sustainability” at the Staging Sustainability: Arts Community Culture Environment conference at York University. This piece involved a formal paper theorizing a queer ecological body politic that was read alongside a 45-minute butoh solo that took the paper as the starting point for its corporeal investigation. The following year, I created a duet entitled Horizontal Materiality: Judith Butler’s Lesbian Phallus, Donna Haraway’s Cyborg, and Beatriz Preciado’s Dildonics, presented at the Ohio State University. It consisted of two performers exchanging oral sex on a strap-on dildo that began on one performer then was transferred to the second performer. That duet was also accompanied by a soundscore of dense critical theory, staging a collision of sometimes-impenetrable theory and the penetrable bodies that such writing theorizes. Not only am I interested in continuing to stage the text of critical theory alongside erotic performances, this discursive intersection of bodies and text is central to how I have theorized ecosexuality thus far.
dissertation: the capacity of these theories of ecosexuality to influence and inform performance. The theories that I have developed throughout these chapters began in performance. Performance has been my persistent partner throughout this choreographic thinking and this writing. Here at the end, I hope that this partnership continues, that this dissertation remains in dialogue with performers and the work that they create. Inasmuch as performance provided the material with which to think these theories of ecosexuality, I believe these theories and the principles they encompass can provide materials with which to develop performance. My hope is that the critical writing here will inspire artists like Elizabeth Stephens, Annie Sprinkle, and their collaborators as they continue to explore, develop, and pioneer ecosexuality in and through their practices. I hope that this writing about *Dangerous Curves* enters both the critical dialogue about pornography within porn studies, and that it also offers new perspectives and possibilities to porn directors, producers, and performers, in and beyond the feminist and queer porn genres. In addition to contributing to the scholarly consideration of Pina Bausch’s *Rite of Spring*, I hope that this analysis of the dance’s choreographic structures, gender relations, and the relationships between human and nonhuman materials that the dance presents can provide potential lines of inquiry for choreographers and dancers, for how they approach dance making. In short, this dissertation can become a resource for performing artists, offering perspectives of choreographic structures in performance art, porn, and dance that can inform how artists consider the generation of their own work, how it produces both affects and concepts, how it enacts particular sexualities, and how it figures relationships between the human and the nonhuman world.
Inasmuch as the arts “have something to tell us about the environment,” as Timothy Morton has asserted, and inasmuch as the arts function as a site at which sexuality is both elaborated and produced, as suggested by Amelia Jones among others, the arts will continue to be an important resource for developing and staging ecosexual perspectives, for performing and theorizing the entanglement of human sexualities within the nonhuman world. Theorizing ecosexuality with performance demonstrates the usefulness of performance and art more broadly to such thinking, and hopefully stimulates the production of further art and performance with which to develop what ecosexuality can mean.

**Further Study**

In addition to the ways in which this project might inform the production of more performances of ecosexuality—or artworks that are critically attentive to the entanglement of sexuality and ecological relations, whether or not they are identified as ecosexual—this dissertation opens up space for more scholarship on ecosexuality. It also gives interdisciplinary relevance to performing arts, utilizing that which is given in performance as a resource for thinking critically about sexuality and the entanglement of the human and the nonhuman, laying groundwork for other ways in which these three performance projects might be studied and for the study of other artworks in the ways that I have practiced here.

There are countless artworks—dances, performance pieces, porn films, visual artworks, television shows, documentaries, music, literature, and so on—that figure the entanglement of sexuality with the nonhuman world, and like the three works that I have

---

addressed here, each one generates possibilities for theorizing such relations. To name only a few: Karl Cronin’s *Somatic Natural History Archive* that enacts intimate exchanges of movement and behavior between nonhuman bodies and Cronin’s own; Isabella Rossellini’s *Green Porno*—an online series of short films produced in association with the Sundance Channel—in which Rossellini playfully teaches viewers about the sexes and sexual behaviors of nonhuman species, dressing up in costumes and playing the roles of insects, mammals, birds, and marine life; *In the Body of the World: A Memoir of Cancer and Connection*, a book by Eve Ensler, the playwright most famous for writing and performing *The Vagina Monologues*, in which she navigates the intersections of her connection to her own body, sexual abuse, cancer, and her relationship to the Earth; several outdoor porn scenes produced by Gentleman Handling, a site developed by Sensate Films, an Australian porn company run by Aven Frey and Gala Vanting, two female directors pioneering what they describe as the “slow porn movement”—porn that takes time to create quality representations and consider the cultural, social, artistic, and ethical contributions made by their work; Marina Abramović’s *Balkan Erotic Epic*, a short film that delves into Balkan folklore to explore indigenous fertility rites, produced for *Destricted*, a film platform that features the work of artists exploring the intersection of sex and art in film; *Out Here: A Documentary Film About the Hearts and Hard Work of Queer Farmers in the U.S.*, a film by Jonah Mossberg documenting the lives and work of queer farmers, examining the intersection of sexual identity and agriculture. Matthew Borne’s *Swan Lake*—indeed, many renditions of *Swan Lake*—has been discussed for its queer potential, but not yet for its imagination of inter-species romantic encounters. A recent episode of Comedy Central’s hit show *Broad City* featured one of the main characters, Ilana, getting high in Central Park, then hugging, kissing, and fisting a tree, humping a log,
and losing track of herself in the erotic distraction of getting more in touch with “nature.”

The entanglement of sexuality with nonhuman lives and the planet as a whole has been performed throughout countless works across a range of media that await critical consideration, demonstrating the latent awareness of such entanglements throughout art and culture.

Not only is there a wealth of contemporary art and media with which ecosexuality might be thought and theorized, further scholarship beyond the scope of this dissertation might also consider the historical precedents from which ecosexuality emerged. While ecosexuality is a 21st century term that originates almost entirely in Western/U.S. contexts, the entanglement of sexuality, desiring human bodies, and the nonhuman world has been articulated differently throughout any number of indigenous cosmologies and historical contexts. The feminization of the earth as “Mother” has ancient roots within many cultures, and thus pre-figures gender and sexuality in relation to the nonhuman world and the nonhuman world in relation to gender and sexuality. The divide between organized culture and “wild nature” thrives as a fundamental theme throughout Shakespeare, Romanticism, the transcendental poetry of Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau, and other modern and contemporary nature writers, a division often aligned with themes of sexual repression, experimentation, and liberation, where the excessiveness of sex and sexuality finds a sympathetic home in the wild. It is far beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully address these historical and multi-cultural precedents for the contemporary concept of ecosexuality, or how emerging theories of ecosexuality—which I have here developed in relation to 20th and 21st century American and European theories of sexuality and the nonhuman world—might provide a productive framework for re-reading such precedents. Contemporary
ecosexuality did not appear *ex nihilo*, and certainly owes much—its very possibility—to centuries of global culture that shaped human understandings of nature and sexuality. However, ecosexuality is also not simply a Western, primarily white, appropriation of indigenous cultures; it does not merely replicate any single cultural perspective, and the conditions of its emergence owe just as much to Euro-American sexual liberation movements, feminism, the LGBT rights movement, and other challenges to the straight, patriarchal sexopolitical imaginary within the 20th and 21st century. Further scholarship might account for this complex historical, cultural, global context from which ecosexuality has emerged.

While the focus of this dissertation has been ecosexuality in performance, and while there is certainly more work to be done theorizing ecosexuality in dance, performance studies, and the arts more broadly, this dissertation establishes connections between a range of disciplines that positions ecosexuality as a site for further research in gender studies, sexuality studies, ecology, biology, philosophy, and any number of humanities disciplines. Moving outward from performances, performance studies, and dance studies, this dissertation brings critical, academic attention to the eosexual movement and the

---

5 Kim Tallbear, a Native American professor of indigeneity and technology at UC Berkeley, writes that while there are similarities between particular indigenous ways of knowing and the contemporary eosexual movement, the similarities are not identical, “There are occasional references in eosexual literature to Native American knowledges in ways that are what I would classify as ‘New Age,’ and I would advise caution around the appropriation of Native American knowledges and motifs to the eosexual ceremonial and artistic repertoire … There are no easy, literal translations between indigenous ontologies and eosexuality, at least among the indigenous people I run with. Rather, there are careful conversations with much careful thought to be had. That said, in the North American indigenous traditions I have encountered, humans speak of having social relations with nonhumans. Our stories sometimes feature what we today would call sexual relations between humans and nonhumans, thus creating, for example, hybrid human-bear persons. But those relations don’t seem to be cohered into something, i.e. ‘sexuality’ as we know it in Western modernity.” Tallbear brings attention to the similarities between some indigenous traditions and contemporary eosexuality not in an accusation of “appropriation,” but to caution against it, and to encourage thoughtful, critical consideration and conversation. Kim Tallbear, “What’s in Eosexuality for an Indigenous Scholar of ‘Nature’?” kimtallbear.com, June 29, 2012, http://www.kimtallbear.com/homeblog/whats-in-eosexuality-for-an-indigenous-scholar-of-nature. (blog)
human/nonhuman entanglements with which it is engaged, areas that might now be addressed in the scholarship of many other fields. Wherever sexuality is studied, its entanglement with nonhuman life can become a concern. Wherever ecological or material relations are studied, sexuality can function as a framework for interrogating those relations. The expansion of how sexuality is thought, understood, defined, and critiqued through considering its distribution throughout inter- and intra-active relations between different living and nonliving materials can have effects and consequences within any number of fields of study.

An area that deserves further attention is the ways in which sexuality and the planet are entangled through violence, where ecosexuality marks the mutual oppression of bodies and lives both human and nonhuman. The mutually constituting oppression of women and the planet has been the focus of much of ecofeminist philosophy and activism, and these efforts could be studied for the ways in which sexuality is implicated within these gendered systems of oppression. In Eve Ensler’s *In the Body of the World*, she writes about femicide—“the systemic rape, torture, and destruction of women and girls”—being deployed as a military/corporate tactic to secure minerals in the Congo, the “tin, copper, gold, and coltai...
consideration must be given to the ways in which the ecological entanglements of sex and sexuality are constituted through violence.

Whether in the study of ecosexuality within the arts or within other arenas of culture, another direction in which this research can be furthered is in regards to race. While each project I have addressed in this dissertation involves varying degrees of racial and national diversity—Dangerous Curves was awarded the “Most Deliciously Diverse Cast” at the Fifth Annual Feminist Porn Awards, in part due to the racial diversity of Jiz Lee, Syd Blakovich, and April Flores, and the diversity of the Tantztheater Wuppertal and the collaborators involved with the Love Art Laboratory have varied throughout the years of their development—I have not here prioritized race as a framework for analysis. While utilizing other critical frameworks for intervening in other fields of domination and oppression—namely those of sexuality, sexual difference, and human exceptionalism—I recognize race as a necessary area for future work. As José Esteban Muñoz reminds me, “Cultural studies of race, class, gender, and sexuality are highly segregated.” He quotes Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano as writing, “[t]he lack of attention to race in the work of leading lesbian theorists reaffirms the belief that it is possible to talk about sexuality without talking about race, which in turn reaffirms the belief that it is necessary to talk about race and sexuality only when discussing people of color and their text.” Similarly, following the work on intersectionality of race, gender, and sex by Kimberle Crenshaw among others, Siobhan B. Somerville writes, “Their

---

7 José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 8.
insistence on the importance of understanding the *intersectionality* of race and gender has opened up space in turn to ask how sexuality might also intersect with multiple categories of identification and difference,” citing Koena Mercer and Isaac Julien’s argument: “The prevailing Western concept of sexuality … *already contains racism*.” Similarly, Donna Haraway has given careful attention to the ways in which race and racism have structured even scientific understandings of sex and the category of the human. Addressing race—as it relates to sexuality and to the category of the human, and thus to any formulation of an ecosexuality—remains one of the most important frontiers beyond the scope of this dissertation. Specific areas that will require attention include: the potential implications or consequences for disrupting the categories of sexuality and species for racially subjugated bodies; how “sexuality” and “the human”—understood to signify and function differently when intersecting with “whiteness” or “blackness” or other racial positions rendered “Other” within racist hierarchies—produce different potential ecosexualities when theorized in relation to race; and how ecosexualities potentially enable or further foreclose access to identities and positions—particularly the position of the human subject—from which racialized bodies have been previously excluded. In many ways, the lines along which I think ecosexuality in this dissertation carry sexuality beyond the frame of the human subject or human subjectivity, and in doing so, figure sexuality as a line of flight that potentially escapes many of the limitations of thinking human bodies and lives in relation to subjectivity. That

---

being said, it remains to be seen what effects such an escape might produce for those bodies and lives for whom access to the position of a fully recognized subject have been mediated or foreclosed by race and racism, both historically and in the present.

Further Living

Beyond the performance and study of ecosexuality, the dissertation poses several provocations for how we might live. Each chapter raises concerns regarding the ethical challenges with which we must live and make our lives meaningful on this planet. In my readings, the Love Art Lab asks how we might commit again and again to staying with the trouble of the world that we are making and of which we are made. In theorizing love with their work and the work of Butler and Badiou, we are pushed to contemplate how we might pursue life from the perspective of difference, a view always comprising more than one life, particularly when that “more” comes to include the more-than-human. Dangerous Curves allows us to envision bodies as assemblages of discontinuous parts that do not add up to bodies organ-ized into one of two sexes, for which sexualities proliferate at any number of connections. How might we live our bodies and our sexualities for the sake of parts intensifying as parts, within temporary encounters, as desiring-machines? From this appreciation of sex and sexuality, we can also consider the relationship between sexuality and survival, or, as Rite of Spring suggests, ask: how might we pursue life for its own sake, without our lives at its center? How might we pursue living while accepting the reality of our own inevitable demise and extinction? If sexuality is the unfolding of life in excess of survival, what might it mean to pursue a sexual life, specifically when “life” already encompasses the nonhuman? These are questions for which there can never be only one answer, questions
that we must go on asking again and again. Just as this dissertation makes space for
developing further artworks and scholarship that innovate and experiment with what
sexuality can become, it also pushes toward innovative and experimental ways of living such
sexualities.

At the end of this dissertation, it is worth asking: what does it accomplish to radically
deterritorialize sexuality, to the extent that anything and everything can be considered sexual?
When what matters is that which makes a difference, when matter itself is the ongoing
differentiation of time, space, and substance, as suggested by Barad, and when difference
itself is the mode of sex and sexuality, as both Freud and Colebrook have suggested, then
sexuality, as I have theorized it, becomes distributed to materiality writ large. As I discuss in
the Introduction, sex and sexuality function as normalizing apparatuses through which the
potential life and livability of bodies are both enabled and constrained. If this is the case,
then redistributing what we might describe as sexuality, or reconsidering the many
dimensions along which sexuality might be understood, has the potential to shift the
parameters of how life and livability can be distributed as well. If human bodies are
constrained within the binary categories of sex and gender as an effect of a compulsory
heterosexual economy, and if such categories are integral to establishing what it means to be
human, then reterritorializing sexuality has the potential to deterritorialize/reterritorialize
these normative constraints on bodies as well, enabling any number of sexes—n-sexes—
produced through any number of sexualities. If normative, heterosexist ideals for sexuality
and sex are regularly projected onto nonhuman lives—as has been shown by queer
ecologists and queer biologists—then deterritorializing sexuality carries implications for
nonhuman lives as well. If sexuality, eroticism, and desire are not privileged relations
between human bodies—or, more, between specific parts of human bodies—then how we might fuck or have sex, experience sex, talk and think about sex can become more open and expansive as well. Sex and sexuality might then become more ethically responsible for their ecological effects—as suggested by Weiss, Carol Queen, and others—and also more open to unpredictable possibilities. Finally, as I suggest in the Introduction, if ecosexuality productively disrupts normative conceptions of “human exceptionalism,” especially where that exceptionalism is reiterated along boundaries between human/nonhuman sexual contact, it might then have the potential to shift thinking within discourses of the ethics of interspecies relations more broadly. While the full extent of how theories of ecosexuality might productively reterritorialize the existing discourses of sexuality, materiality, ecology, and ethics remains yet to be seen, by expanding what becomes articulated as sexuality, I believe that ecosexuality has the potential to expand what becomes recognizable, valuable, and viable as life.
BIBLIOGRAPHY:


http://dancersgroup.org/2014/03/on-choreographic-thinking/.


———. “From Ecofeminism To Ecosexuality: Queering The Environmental Movement.” In Ecosexuality: Notes for an Orgasmic Earth, edited by Serena Anderlini-D’Onofrio and Lindsay Hagamen, forthcoming.


Wenders, Wim. Pina. New York: Criterion Collection, Sundance Selects, Neue Road Movies, Eurowide Film Production, Tanztheater Wuppertal, 2013. DVD.


