

EDITORIAL

Queering ecopsychology

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The three of us are excited to introduce this first special issue of the *European Journal of Ecopsychology* which opens up a dialogue between queer and ecopsychology. Both are committed to transformational practices without drawing clear lines between personal and political, social and ecological. They both blur other boundaries, questioning taken for granted borders (e.g., between heterosexuality and homosexuality or self and ecosystem). Both have roots in feminism, psychoanalysis, social movements and counter cultures. Both invite us to expand our experiences of intimacy and relationships, releasing tendencies towards domination and control and nourishing capacities to connect.

A particular challenge for us as editors has been that both areas are also notoriously slippery to define. ‘How close to ‘traditional’ psychology is/should ‘Ecopsychology’ be? We encountered this time after time. I (MM) even got bored of my own voice, asking Meg and Jamie “Where is the psychology in this submission?”, or saying “I loved the paper but is it psychological enough?” There were times when this was shared as, in relation to one submission, MB was also curious, wondering whether a submission was “eco enough, or psychology enough for this journal”.

Jamie’s astute response was often to provide a reminder of why there was a need for ecopsychology and for an exploration of the links with queer. As we reviewed papers JH said: “Again, I don’t think the papers need to conform to the standards of the *British Psychology Society* as, in my view, ecopsychology is a process of becoming something different from normative psychology – especially when we queer it!” Ah, yes: one of the key links between the two domains was an intellectual and embodied realisation that there are significant problems with disciplined and disciplining science and other practices. Ecopsychology, like any other area of thought, has the potential to develop borders, orthodoxies; to become unhelpfully disciplined. In what ways might those be softened, crossed, queered?

What does queer theory, queer politics, have to offer to the tasks of radicalising ecopsychology, of keeping it vital?

For those who might be tempted to say about any given article, “This isn't ecopsychology!”, we invite you to consider Robert Greenway's approach to the ecopsychological project:

I work towards an ecopsychology that will find within language an accurate articulation of the human-nature relationship. This will of course be based on experience, but will be couched in language, and perhaps deepened by ritual and art. It must take up the deepest meanings of relationships in general and relationships between “mind” and “nature” in particular. It will be based on a variety of “modes of knowing” (neither ignoring nor privileging science). It must not be within the constraints of a particular psychology nor within a specific natural history discipline, but will be “integral” in that it will draw insight from all past and current attempts to depict “nature” from the human perspective (Greenway, 2009: 50).

Drawing on different experiences – of social movements, queer autonomous spaces, indigenous lands and community gardens; of reading, teaching, partying and organising – the contributions to this collection offer resources for articulating the challenges and wonders of relating to those which are imagined Other in the dualist mentality which imagines human/nature, hetero/homo, man/woman to be ‘natural’ divisions.

For those unfamiliar with queer theory, this is its heart. The nature of domination is not simply that heterosexuality, masculinity and whiteness (and more) are valued over and above homosexuality, femininity and racialised otherness – it is the creation of division itself, declared natural and normal, which enables the domination. By looking at the ways in which division is declared and categories naturalised, and finding ways to undo these doings, queer theory addresses the roots of domination. In particular, queer theory (and activism) attempt to highlight the ways in which a politics of gender and sexuality, intersecting with other socially constructed hierarchies, may be found in unexpected places.

This special issue offers a taste of the great possibilities of bringing together queer, eco and psyche in theory and in practice. Contributors come from a range of (inter)disciplines – including human geography, environmental planning, English, dance studies, anarchist studies, sociology and clinical and counseling psychologies. **Margot Young's** paper opens the issue by asking to what extent the psychological heritage of ecopsychology leads to the production of normative

categories of ‘human’ and ‘human nature’, potentially undermining the ecopsychological project of healing “the wound [of] the dualistic illusion that humans are ‘above’ or ‘separate’ from the natural world” (Greenway, 2009: 49). In particular, she calls for a critical ecopsychology which questions normalising divisions of sanity and madness, human and animal by exploring the ways in which these divisions are linked and potentially reinforced in (eco)psychological discourse.

The second two papers offer ecopsychology questions and commentary about links between space, mentality and wider social and ecological relations via recent engagements referred to as queer ecology (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson, 2010). **Joshua Sbicca**'s paper on eco-queer alliances addresses the vital issue of just and sustainable food production and distribution. **Gordon Brent Ingram**'s piece asks what Gregory Bateson's queer theories might bring to directly democratic forms of ecological planning. Both look to finding ways of undermining patterns of social and ecological domination and to the ways in which people are working with other forces of life to produce vibrant and radical spaces of freedom. Where Sbicca looks to autonomous queer experiments in food production for inspiration, Ingram examines three contested Canadian spaces to consider how relations might be queered to make space for minoritised people (human and otherwise) and practices. Both papers invite an ecopsychological engagement with new areas of radical social theory and movements which might contribute to healing the intertwined illusions of hierarchy, separation and normality.

The roundtable continues the theme of queer ecology, a major source of inspiration for this special issue. Jamie invited seven contemporary thinkers exploring this rich margin – **Jill E. Anderson, Robert Azzarello, Gavin Brown, Katie Hogan, Gordon Brent Ingram, Michael J. Morris** and **Joshua Stephens** – to introduce their own perspectives and then engage with the differences and commonalities among them. The result is a powerful piece of work examining challenging topics of human population, the nature of ‘nature’, queer- and eco-friendly political economies, personal and collective suffering, human exceptionalism and everyday material relations and practices. Not only does the roundtable introduce some of these scholars to each other, it introduces ecopsychology to queer ecology and vice versa. The issue concludes with two *Insight* pieces. In the first, **Kirk Shepard** looks at duck sex, clothing-optional beaches and more to examine the ways in

which certain forms of sexuality are constructed as natural and how nature itself welcomes a reconsideration of those categories. In the second, **Deborah Anapol** provocatively explores the possibilities of viewing the earth not only as mother, but also as father and as genderqueer polyamorous lover.

We hope that readers learn as much as we did in the work on this project and welcome reactions, engagements and debates for future issues of the *European Journal of Ecopsychology*. Perhaps this collection will be a spark for further fruitful discussions and other forms of action.

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References

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