

## DECONSTRUCTING DICHOTOMIES

### Nature's queer nexus, reclaiming spaces and identities

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#### Abstract

The discourse on the relationship between humans and nature has been under alteration since its inception. This relationship is usually seen in the form of binaries. The existence of queer flora and fauna has never managed to come to the centre and has always been subjected to the periphery. Hence, a need to “queer” this relationship is required to challenge the dominant discourse of sexuality and nature, to reject the anthropocentric ideas of nature and to acknowledge its complexities. This paper uses the concept of “queer ecology” to question the idea of nature or wilderness as culturally constructed by situating queer desires within natural spaces. It refers to the works of the queer American writers to highlight how certain spaces that are designated as “nature” are violently defended against queers in a society in which that very nature is exploited. It finally highlights the close association of the queer community with nature and works on the conservatory practices to not just protect nature but also the queer community by critiquing the heteronormative tendencies that observe homosexuality as a “crime against nature”.

#### Keywords

Nature, Heteronormativity, Queer, Homoeroticism, Ecology

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between humans and nature has long been characterized by a complex interplay of dominance, exploitation, and segregation. Rooted in anthropocentric ideologies, this relationship is often conceptualized through rigid binaries - such as human versus non-human, culture versus nature, and domestic versus wild - that reinforce the divide between the natural world and human society. This dichotomous thinking has contributed significantly to the marginalization of both non-human species and human communities that deviate from normative structures, particularly those identifying as queer.

Historically, cultural evolution - from the Paleolithic era to the modern industrial age - has reinforced human supremacy over the natural world. As societies became increasingly structured and hierarchical, norms surrounding gender, sexuality, and identity solidified. The earliest traces of culture can be spotted from the Paleolithic age i.e. the Old Stone Age wherein hunting through stones was the dominant culture. The animal species were exploited because it was the means of survival. Then came the Neolithic age where the focus shifted from hunting to agriculture. The violence was now perpetrated on the plant species. Then came the Iron Age that introduced specialized agriculture. This age was a relatively progressive age and had a progressive society. The stratification of communities on the basis of culture was first observed in this age. It had defined norms and anyone who deviated from those norms was ostracized from society. Like, for instance, in India, this age was called Vedic age and distributed the Indian society into four varnas i.e. four communities. Each community had strict norms and the person who didn't comply with those norms was marginalized. These norms decided and facilitated the distribution of work according to the communities and assigned tasks according to the gender roles. However, in other societies, the gender wasn't strictly bifurcated into "male" and "female". There were a lot of indigenous tribes like Maori, Tupi-Guarani, Apache, Navajo, Winnebago etc, that were fluid in terms of sexuality (Lugones, 2007:200). Gender was not an organizing principle before colonization as is evident from the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria (Lugones, 2007:196). There was no stringent binary or hierarchy in many tribes of the pre-colonial era. The whole idea of gender binary was introduced during colonialism for socio-political and economic dominance. This western ideology was ingrained so deeply that the scars were visible even in the post-colonial era. One can notice how heterosexualism and the colonial/modern gender system are

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intertwined. By imposing heterosexual norms, colonizers not only reshaped local social structures but also redefined family structures, kinship systems, and property laws, often in ways that facilitated their economic and political dominance. The family unit, structured around heterosexual marriage, became a cornerstone of colonial governance. In many indigenous societies, kinship systems were more fluid, with roles and relationships that did not necessarily conform to the rigid nuclear family model promoted by colonial powers. By enforcing heterosexual marriage and sexual relations, colonial regimes sought to produce predictable, controlled labor forces, often tied to capitalist economies through institutions like marriage, inheritance, and land ownership. These systems suppressed the diversity of sexual and familial relationships, further entrenching colonial control over indigenous bodies and land.

The colonial powers not only imposed heterosexual norms and binary gender systems on colonized populations, but these systems continue to affect gender and sexuality norms in post-colonial societies. This becomes even more problematic when these binaries of ‘male- female’ and “natural” and “unnatural” begin to be visible in context of nature, designating it a heteronormative status. This limits one’s perspective to mere binaries and denaturalizes everything that doesn’t fall into the binaries including homosexuality and negates its existence from the equation. These heteronormative norms lead to the marginalization of the queer community because it fails to fit into these gender binaries. It dehumanizes them. These oppressive norms are legitimized by their association with nature and any kind of non-compliance lead to marginalization and therefore, the urges of the queer are suppressed because their urges don’t align with the defined and “legitimate” genders and so to continue living in the society, they have to obey the norms.

The heteronormative framework works on the binary of “natural” and “unnatural”. The homosexuals are portrayed as a perversion of nature because nature has always been designated a heteronormative status. The stringent binaries that are formed without having a comprehensive knowledge about the ecosystem limits one’s perspective and therefore, the need to “queer” this concept is required to challenge the dominant discourse of sexuality and nature, to reject the anthropocentric ideas of nature and to acknowledge its complexities. The field of queer ecology emerges as a response to these dominant discourses. It challenges the heteronormative frameworks that define nature, repositions queer identities within ecological contexts, and critiques the cultural narratives that determine what is considered “natural” or “unnatural.”. It forces one to question all the truths and pre-existing norms that have been naturalized and

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have been passed on for decades, without any questioning. It questions the evolutionary evidence that is being used to back heteronormativity. Queer ecology transgresses the boundaries established by evolutionary theory. This paper adopts queer ecology as its central theoretical framework to interrogate the ideological separation between queerness and the natural world.

This study hypothesizes that the heteronormative framing of nature is a socially constructed discourse, not a biological truth, and that queerness exists inherently within the natural world. By queering nature, we can dismantle anthropocentric and binary models and create inclusive narratives that recognize ecological and sexual diversity. In doing so, this research advocates for a paradigm shift - from viewing queerness as "unnatural" to recognizing it as a vital and integral part of the ecosystem, ultimately working toward both environmental justice and queer inclusion.

## 2. QUEER ECOLOGY

Queer ecology emerged in the early 21st century as an intersectional approach that brings together queer theory and ecological thought. Scholars like Catriona Sandilands, Heather R. White, and Donovan Schaefer have expanded the field by arguing that traditional environmental discourses often ignore the complexities of identity, sexuality, and gender in their discussions of nature. Rich and Pratt, with their critiques of gender, sexuality, and power structures, provide a foundational lens for these ideas. Rich's intersection of sexual identity and ecological activism, for example, reflects the early seeds of what would later be formalized as queer ecology. Rich came out as a lesbian in the 1970s, which marked a significant shift in her work. Prior to this, her poetry reflected more conventional themes of marriage and motherhood. However, her coming-out process and her political engagement with feminist and LGBTQ+ causes led to a more radical critique of patriarchal structures, heteronormativity, and the limitations imposed on women and queer people by mainstream society. Rich's poetry often links gender, sexuality, and ecology, illustrating how patriarchal and heteronormative systems of oppression are entwined with ecological destruction. In works like *The Dream of a Common Language* (1978) and *The Burning of Paper Instead of Children* (1973), Rich critiques the ways that societal structures - particularly those relating to gender and sexuality - also impact the environment. For Rich, queerness was not only a sexual or gendered identity but also a critique

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of the social and natural world, advocating for a radical reimagining of ecological and social systems. Her critique of the binary, heteronormative, and capitalist structures of power in her work resonates with the central tenets of queer ecology, which calls for a recognition of the fluidity of nature, identity, and social systems. Rich's focus on the ways in which women, especially lesbians, have historically been excluded from ecological discourse contributes to queer ecological thought by highlighting how gendered and sexual identities shape our relationship to the environment.

Rich's essays and poetry about feminist ethics, environmentalism, and human rights lay the groundwork for understanding the intersections of human social structures and the natural world. Her critique of male-dominated environmental thought, especially in the context of women's roles in nature, aligns with key queer ecological concepts that reject the anthropocentric view of the environment.

Pratt's feminist and queer consciousness grew out of her own experiences with oppression. Her coming-out story was pivotal in the development of her political activism, especially concerning the struggles faced by queer women, particularly lesbians of color. Pratt's poetry connects queer identity with the historical struggles for liberation, and this perspective is vital in understanding her approach to ecology. Much like Rich, Pratt's work offers a critique of heteronormativity and patriarchal structures, but she also provides a critique of environmental injustice. Her work is informed by the intersectional politics of race, class, gender, and sexual identity, which informs her approach to queer ecology. Pratt's experiences as a Southern lesbian, alongside her activism, led her to develop a deeply ecological understanding of social systems, where oppression - whether based on gender, sexuality, or race - is intimately tied to environmental degradation.

*Crime Against Nature* (1990) is one of Pratt's most influential works. The collection combines autobiographical narratives with themes of environmental justice, especially focusing on the struggles of women and queer people in the South. Pratt critiques the ways in which patriarchal and heteronormative structures have led to ecological harm, drawing connections between personal experiences of oppression and larger social and environmental issues. Pratt's poetry often invokes the South as a site of both ecological richness and exploitation, where environmental degradation and societal oppression are intricately connected. Her works highlight the resilience of marginalized groups, including queer and women-of-color communities, who are often at the forefront of environmental and social justice efforts. Pratt's focus on the lived experience of queer women in the South offers a poignant commentary on how environmental

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degradation disproportionately impacts marginalized communities. Her emphasis on the intersectionality of gender, sexuality, race, and ecology provides a critical lens for understanding queer ecology as not just a theoretical framework but a lived reality for many LGBTQ+ individuals.

Both Adrienne Rich and Minnie Bruce Pratt made significant contributions to queer ecology through their reflections on gender, sexuality, and environmentalism. Rich's feminist and lesbian identity, coupled with her critiques of patriarchy and heteronormativity, provided an intellectual foundation for understanding how sexual politics are deeply intertwined with ecological degradation. Pratt, with her focus on the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and environmental justice, demonstrated the importance of recognizing the agency of marginalized communities in both understanding and solving environmental issues. Their works reflect the importance of an intersectional, inclusive, and fluid approach to ecology - one that acknowledges the complex relationships between identity, power, and nature.

### 3. DISCUSSION

The non-essentialist theory of queer ecology proves the natural existence of the queer community because evolution was the result of natural selection, as proposed by Darwin. This means that only those species survived that were the fittest and were able to adapt to the environment. This implies that the survival of the species depends on their health as well as the health of the environment. This reflects a clear relationship between species and their environment. Since the homosexual species have existed and survived as well, it is rational to conclude that they are as much a part of nature as the heterosexual species because if they were "unnatural", they would have become extinct. Queer ecology bridges this gap between homoeroticism and nature. It not just voices the concerns of a specific community, but it aims at forming a safe space for other marginalized groups as well.

Queering deconstructs the idea of nature and propagates deromanticizing of nature i.e. deconstructing the warm, protective imagery of "Mother Nature" and accepting it as wild, unsettling and dangerous as represented in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner". Queering further delves deep into the structuring of culture and makes one question the ways in which humans are located in nature. It challenges the narratives that establish what's "natural" and what's "unnatural" and does the "othering" of the unnatural. It points out

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how the concretization of this binary of “natural” and “unnatural” lacks credibility because it is highly subjective, and this can be proven through the concept of cultural relativity. What’s “natural” for one culture isn’t necessarily “natural” for another culture and therefore it’s required to question the legitimacy of the authorities that form the binaries and try to seek control. “To queer nature is to question its normative use, to interrogate relations of knowledge and power by which certain “truths” about us have been allowed to pass, unnoticed, without questioning” (Sandilands, 1994: 22). We must acknowledge the indispensability of “queering” our perception for finding effective methods to deal with the environmental problems because the term “queering” is not one-dimensional but rather two-dimensional. It is not just limited to the representation of the queer community and environment, but it also propagates the idea of moving against the grain i.e. resistance against the hegemonic ideology. Queer ecology resists forced heterosexuality and resists heteronormativity in nature. It combines the two realms – sexuality and environment and uses each realm to question the construction of “natural” in both culture and nature. It intertwines the idea of sexuality and nature in a manner that the discourses of nature shape the discourses of sexuality and vice versa. This idea is backed up by evolutionary evidence that proves that the relationship between sexuality and biodiversity can’t be simply categorized in heteronormative terms, especially when evolution proves that we all evolved from single-celled asexual ancestors that reproduced by themselves. The plants and animals were hermaphroditic before they were bisexual and later, heterosexual and yet the queer community has always been sidelined by the dominant heteronormative cultures and is delegitimized in the name of it being opposed to nature or “unnatural” while completely neglecting the existence of queer flora and fauna like the clownfish, lichens, willow trees and mole rats (Liefte, 2021). This not just projects ignorance but also the divide between the human and the non-human world. The stringent divide between ‘humans’ and ‘animals’, wherein, one is regarded as acceptable and civilized while the other category is termed as unacceptable and uncivilized while deliberately neglecting the inhuman acts that often blur this divide speaks a lot about how the dominant cultures are formed, prioritizing one community over another. Both the animals and the queer community are treated as the “other”, as the subalterns. This is evident from the way the rules and laws are made and molded by the authoritative forces for the environment and the community without consulting with the subjects. The emphasis is always on the “needs” of the power figures instead of the subjects. The fact that the LGBTQ+ had recently achieved its basic human rights in some countries

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but are still not considered legitimate citizens in different parts of the world which unfurls the dehumanizing aspect of these hegemonic cultures. Another instance is Minnie Bruce Pratt's collection *Crime Against Nature*, wherein, the writer shares her experience as a lesbian in the USA and condemns the social and judicial system of the country that has declared her a "misfit" for her two sons. The title of her collection is a satirical take on the system that sees queerness as the "crime against nature". She questions the authority for putting her in a luminal space and delegitimizing her motherhood solely on the basis of her deviation from the traditional hierarchical structure of heterosexuality. In her poem, "Poem for my Sons", Minnie Bruce advises her sons to resist against the hegemonic power and challenge the norms of the society. She teaches them to never take anything for face value and to question the pre-existing ideas, subtly hinting towards the structuring of gender. She alludes to the idea of fluidity in gender when she asks her sons to be "true" men and not "real" men. The term 'true men' probably hints towards the idea of humanity whereas 'real men' seems to be hinting towards the social concept of masculinity that requires a man to strictly adhere to its norms in order to be called a "man". She's probably warning her sons against this rigid social construct of gender that can hinder one's sense of morality as a being because of the gender battles. Here, she is using a queer perspective to differentiate between "human" (real men) and "humanity" (true men), while inculcating a sense of moral responsibility for other living creatures as well. She further states, "I can only pray: That you'll never ask for the weather, earth, Angels, women, or other lives to obey you." (1990: 14). These lines are the essence of queer ecology because it projects resistance against the anthropocentric outlook towards the environment. In the above stated lines, Pratt talks about dismantling the idea of domination of humans over the environment. She denounces the idea of hegemonic domination of mankind over other beings and calls this the "crime against nature". The sense of discrimination and hatred is so deeply rooted that it not just limits itself to humans but extends to non-humans too. This framework of hierarchy is used for flora and fauna as well. That's why some species are valued over others and the violence done to the species that lie lower in the hierarchy is somehow justified. Queer ecology challenges this anthropocentric approach towards ecosystems. "Crossing lines between bodies, species, and environments [that] call on viewers to intervene in the violence being done to other species, for the survival of all the species who depend on these ecosystems, our own and others" (Cárdenas, 2022: 212).

Anthropocentrism is rooted in the obsession of humans with

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themselves and to ensure that they always remain at the center, domination over other species is required. A simple example to explain the unnecessary obsession of human beings with dominance and control in gardens. Gardens can be considered artificial or man-made ecosystems. Garden as a space is a tamed version of wilderness. It's an example of man's attempt at exercising his heterosexual masculinity. This is the reason why the activities of hunting or cutting the trees are associated with "masculine" activities according to the norms. The ideology of conquering or taming nature is associated with "manhood". The true crime against nature is this problematic masculinity that seeks validation by exercising dominance over other species and environment through forced normative heterosexuality. Pratt in her poem "Crime Against Nature" points out how the violence perpetrated by men in the name of nationalism is never questioned but is applauded «No one says crime against nature when man shoots one or two or three or four or five or more of his children or wife» (1990: 118). This queer perspective helps one to question the unchallenged, rigid ideas and facilitate the expansion of knowledge through discourses. The marginalized groups are banished from these male dominated spaces, and history proves how these become spaces of violence for the marginalized people like the lynching of blacks on the southern trees and queer people being murdered in the wilderness. The plants in the garden are forced to grow according to the gardener, are cut, shaped and planted according to his/her will but the plants who fail to comply are uprooted and thrown out, like the weeds that are considered to be the misfit in the garden. The gardener decides what kind of plants stay and he/she has complete autonomy on the lives of the plants. The queer community is treated like the weeds, the "misfits" because they don't fit in the hierarchical structure of the society, hence, are treated as the outcasts. The gardener is the metaphor for all the hegemonic tyrants who rule the world according to their norms and anyone who fails to comply is banished. So basically, these "misfits" have no place of belonging. They are either "too wild" or "too unnatural" to belong. The division of space is also gendered but is restricted to only two genders. The public sphere is for the male members while the domestic sphere is reserved for the female members. The queer community is conveniently sidelined from this division of space and that's why they experience a lack of belongingness. They acquire a liminal space in society. Queer ecology changes the dominant narrative and resituates the community in the natural spaces they were once banished from. This idea is projected in Marie Bruce Pratt's poems "Shame" and "No Place". «There was no place to be/simultaneously or between» (1990:18). In these poems, she shares her experience as a

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lesbian mother and narrates her ostracization from society. She says how she experiences loss of belonging in the heteronormative world and tries to create a safe space for people like her through her imagination, in the lap of nature. The queer community has managed to survive by creating a safe space for themselves, primarily in nature. «Queer and trans practices of kinship have always encompassed ecological relationships everywhere between rural and urban, whether we as environmental communication scholars acknowledge them or not... these cultures of kinship offer antidotes to abandonment in the struggle to build places of survival». (Cram, 2024: 21)

This is evident from a short story “Brokeback Mountain” by Annie Proulx wherein two gays seek the refuge in nature to explore their sexual relationship. The untamed wilderness becomes a safe space for them that is free from the heteronormative surveillance of the town. This imaginative “natural” place is in contrast with her “unnatural” state and by situating herself within a “natural” setting, she reverses that “unnaturalness” and in doing so, simultaneously debunks the myth of calling homosexuality a crime against nature. Nancy Duncanson talks about the struggle of queer community with reclaiming spaces. She states «Hegemonic heterosexuality of most environments has made the queer invisible or if they choose to signal their sexuality, they must be constantly under the exhausting pressure and responsibility of political struggle over the definition of space. As long as the queer... remain invisible, radical geographical explanations of oppression will remain unnecessarily homogenous and insensitive to differences among those who are marginalized and oppressed» (1996: 4-5). This concept of space appears again in Pratt’s poem «The Place Lost and Gone; the Place Found» (1990: 38) where Pratt finds a space for herself in nature. She calls this space “in-between places”. The idea of space doesn’t restrict itself to humans and extends to the natural world as well. In this anthropocentric world, nature has been sidelined, and it procures a liminal space. With the booming technology and rising civilization, large acres of forests are being converted into habitable lands for humans, leading to the disruption of the ecosystem. It’s no more about finding civilization within nature but more about finding nature within civilization. There was a time when humans were scared of nature and worshipped it. They associated the human consequences with the reward or punishment of nature, but it soon shifted to humanization of nature, wherein nature began to be exploited for human greed. Carolyn Merchant in her book *The Death of Nature* talks about the evolution of the world from the natural to the mechanical one. She critiques this celebrated progress by highlighting the harm it has caused to the more-than-human

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world in the name of modernity and evolution (1996: 192). This exploitation happened because of the uneven power relations between humans and more-than-human. Val Plumwood's famous narrative of being attacked by the saltwater crocodile changed her perception of this human-animal power dynamics and forced her to re-conceptualize what it means to be a prey. It made her reconsider the helplessness of more-than-humans in the modern world. This shifts the focus from human to non-human world and makes people more cognizant of the other species. This is the core essence of queer ecology as it decenters the anthropocentric tendencies and adds a new perspective to the nature – human relationship. The conventional relationship has been, as mentioned above, heteronormative and therefore, the space for queer desires has been absent. Desire within nature is situated only as a means of procreation. Queering decenters the retrosexual approach and allows queer desires to nurture that have been suppressed for a long time. This is because sexuality and sexual orientation have been grounded in the heterosexual biological discourses whose primary aim is procreation. Like, for instance, the dominant religions like Christianity recognizes a sexual act sinful if it's not for reproduction. The Catholic Church considers homosexual tendencies a "temptation" towards sin. Several religions teach abstinence because the idea of sexual activity for pleasure is considered a "sin". So, this conventional idea of repression of sexuality has been concretized by institutions of religion by grounding it in nature and categorizing the sexual acts as "natural" and "unnatural". The morality of sexual activity depends on its purposeless which is reproduction but if this is true, we must not forget that not all heterosexual couples are fertile and the queer people can have children by other means but still they aren't recognized as legitimate citizens like heterosexuals, but no one talks about this hypocrisy. These institutions condemn sexual activity solely for pleasure and consider it "immoral". Adrienne Rich protests against this ideology through her Poem 3 and condemns the conventional association of sexuality with procreation. She dissociates sexuality with reproduction by situating the homoerotic desire within the natural setting of winter. Winter is associated with infertility but is still a part of nature. It is enjoyed regardless of its barrenness, «the pleasures of winter» (1986:294) which alludes to the idea that pleasure is not limited to heterosexual relationships. The dominant discourses deemed homosexual relationships "barren" and therefore "unnatural" so by using the natural setting, Rich emphasizes the naturalness of the homosexual desire. This poem queers the nature of desire by replacing the heteronormative ideology of sex solely for reproduction with sex for pleasure. The poetry of Adrienne Rich (*Your Native Land*) and Minnie

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Bruce Pratt (*Crime Against Nature*) reaffirm queer desires by situating them within the space of nature. Their poetry revisits the violence perpetrated by the heteronormative norms on nature and homosexuals and highlight centuries of trauma, ostracization and cultural silencing. They combine the environmental struggles with the sexual struggles and offer a new approach to queer ecology. In the collection *Your Native Land, Your Life*, Adrienne Rich explores how one's sexual orientation determines one's position within the public and natural (native) spaces. Both Pratt and Rich depict the historical marginalization of the "outcasts" and try to reclaim the "native" spaces.

In her poem "Yom Kippur 1984", Rich problematizes the concept of solitude in nature and highlights how it is a privilege only for those who fit into the social norms while those who are considered deviants are more vulnerable to being attacked in a such places because they are viewed as "unnatural" and them entering a natural terrain is almost like a taboo and hence, a punishable offense. This dislocates homosexuals from the natural environment. Rich, through her poetry, fights for their justice. «Solitude, O taboo, endangered species on the mist-struck spur of the mountain, I want a gun to defend you in the desert, on the deserted street, I want what I can't have: your elder sister, Justice [...]» (Rich, 1986: 77).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the complex relationship between human beings and nature has been shaped by deeply ingrained cultural narratives, power structures, and rigid binaries that have long marginalized certain groups, particularly the queer community. The dominance of anthropocentrism has perpetuated an unjust hierarchy, positioning humanity at the center and relegating the natural world and non-conforming sexualities to the margins. By queering the traditional understanding of nature and sexuality, queer ecology challenges these binaries, advocating for a more inclusive, fluid, and complex relationship with both the environment and human identity. This paradigm shift seeks to break down the harmful structures that have historically silenced diverse voices, whether in the realm of sexuality or in the treatment of the environment. Through the works of poets like Minnie Bruce Pratt and Adrienne Rich, queer ecology not only defends the rights of the marginalized but also invites a reevaluation of how nature, culture, and identity intersect. Ultimately, queering our understanding of nature pushes us to question the legitimacy of dominant ideologies, urging us to create a more equitable world where all forms of

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life, human and non-human alike, can coexist without the violence of domination and exclusion.

Stringent measures have to be taken to amend the condition of the ecosystem. The first step would be to revisit and question the existing environmental policies and approach them from an unbiased perspective, especially from an ecocentric perspective rather than from an anthropocentric one. This will ensure to look beyond the binaries and open scope for discourses. Ensure that environmental boards, committees, and decision-making bodies are diverse and inclusive, incorporating LGBTQ+ voices, perspectives, and leadership. This can help in creating policies that reflect the intersection of environmental and social justice issues. By increasing the LGBTQ+ representation in environmental NGOs, government bodies, and local conservation groups, and collaborating with queer Indigenous groups or queer environmental, more culturally relevant conservation strategies can be developed. For instance, designing public green spaces (parks, nature reserves, etc.) with queer symbols for inclusivity and for creating environments where LGBTQ+ individuals can engage with nature without feeling unsafe or unwelcome. Integration of LGBTQ+ environmental activism into school curricula, emphasizing historical figures, movements, and contemporary queer activists working on climate change and conservation will help to create awareness. Promotion of LGBTQ+ role models in the environmental sector to inspire the next generation of activists and leaders will make the natural space more inclusive. Adaptation of indigenous queer conservation practices such as that in the Tupi-Guarani culture, where there is a concept of “gender fluidity” that informs their spiritual relationship to the land. The understanding of the natural world in this context is not based on a binary view but rather a more nuanced, relational understanding that sees all entities - human and non-human - as part of a living system. Another example is that of the Māori culture of New Zealand that recognizes the importance of both male and female elements in the world, and historically, the Māori had a more fluid understanding of gender. In their traditions, there are roles for *whakawāhine* (gender non-conforming individuals) and *takatāpui* (people of the same sex who may share emotional or physical intimacy), who have historically been involved in important environmental and cultural practices. Māori cosmology sees humans as part of a larger ecological framework that includes spiritual connections to the land, sea, and other natural forces. The concept of *mana* (spiritual power) is central to Māori environmental practices, and certain individuals - regardless of their gender - may be called upon to help steward sacred lands and ecosystems. The Māori practice of *kaitiakitanga*, which refers to

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guardianship and protection of the environment, is an integral aspect of their conservation. Gender-fluid individuals might be particularly charged with upholding these responsibilities due to their perceived connection to both male and female energies, which are thought to enable a balanced approach to environmental stewardship.

The other step can be the idea of formulating these policies in accordance with the geography of different countries because each country has a different demographic and ecosystems. The myriad range of ecosystems differ from each other as each one has a distinct structure and requirements. So, a unanimous policy for such diversity may not be a sensible step and perhaps a more subjective approach can be used to achieve the desired results. The policies can be molded according to the geography of the countries to work effectively on the areas that need our attention. This is because each part has a distinct geography which equates to distinct ecosystems. These ecosystems comprise communities and with communities comes the idea of culture. So, the policies that might be suitable for one community might not be suitable for the other community. For instance, let's assume that in a certain country, the government bans animal slaughter. Now, the community that is vegan and believes in animal worship is at peace but the community that isn't vegan and performs the ritual of animal sacrifice will feel discriminated against. So, is it possible to achieve a universal solution for environmental problems while being cognizant of the sentiments of the communities? Can queer ecology lead to the formulation of more inclusive policies by being mindful of the diversity? Will the subversion of heteronormative relations lead to practical solutions or will remain restricted to mere discourses? These are some questions that need to be discussed for one to have a comprehensive understanding of queer ecology.

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