

the radical potential of queer nature's presence on instagram:
queer and "decolonially-informed" stories of more-than-human solidarities

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A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Art History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts (Art History) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Unceded Kanien'kehá:ka territory

July 2019

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CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

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Estelle Wathieu

Queer Nature is a nature-connection project in service of the queer community and their allies. Queer Nature was launched in 2016 by Altai, Pinar, and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd on Arapaho, Ute, and Cheyenne territories (Boulder Country, Colorado). They offer sliding scale workshops and 'wilderness' immersions that facilitate multispecies relationship-building and access to ancestral skills while bringing awareness to Indigenous and settler colonial histories. In parallel to these activities, the Queer Nature co-founders regularly share photographs and stories on the corporate social media platform Instagram. Now followed by more than 14,000 people online, this artistic, activist, and scholarly project is representative of the ways that systematically marginalized communities can use social media as a means for community building and circulating ideas and practices. The market-driven nature of online networking services and the financial interests that dictate them mean that platforms such as Instagram are constantly changing. The infrastructures that support these services are, further, fragile and vulnerable, particularly with regard to the crisis of climate change. With these considerations in mind, this thesis creates a space in which Queer Nature's online artistic practice is given a careful, critical contextualization as both participating in queer visual culture and contributing to a "futurist" sensibility. Grounded in photographic visual analysis, this thesis investigates the radical potential of Queer Nature's images, and their circulation, in a time of great uncertainty. The context of this work is both political, in that attacks against queer and racialized communities have not ceased, and environmental, in that the dramatic loss of biodiversity and the rapid rise of sea levels have the most profound impact on the most vulnerable populations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I thank Dr. Cynthia Hammond for supervising the present research project. I believe that her openness and profound kindness have helped me find the energy to finish my Master's thesis. I am grateful for her precision, care, and directness, and I hope to carry her teachings with me in the future.

I warmly thank Dr. Alice Ming Wai Jim, my reader and previous supervisor for her patience and continuous support over the past four years. Her generosity in terms of time and community building efforts have truly facilitated my adaptation and integration to the department and 'Montreal.' Through EAHR Concordia, the student-driven research group that Dr. Jim advises, both friendships and critical awareness have been built and nurtured. I thank Adrienne, Charissa, Eli, Gaby, Jeanne, Jennifer, Kanwal, Nima, Samantha, Tamara, Tianmo, Tiffany, Sarah-Ève and all past, present and future members of EAHR, for their love and their work, both visible and invisible. I am grateful to Dr. Jim for bringing us together.

It is also important to me to express my gratitude to the Department of Art History and the Faculty of Fine Arts for investing in my academic training. Without their financial support, I would not have been able to move to the island and learn as much as I did over the past four years. In the same spirit, I thank the professors and lecturers for whom I worked as a Teaching or Research Assistant since I started the program in September 2015—notably, Dr. Tammer El-Sheikh, Dr. Kristina Huneault, Dr. Heather Igloliorte, Dr. Alice Ming Wai Jim, and Mikhel Proulx—for offering me these opportunities and their mentorship. I would also like to thank Dr. Cynthia Hammond, Dr. Heather Igloliorte, Dr. Johanne Sloan, and Dr. Anne Whitelaw, for their graduate seminars. In the latter, I have been exposed to methodologies that continue to shape the way I look at the world today. I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to Dina Vescio, Candice Tarnowski, and Dr. Anna Waclawek for their guidance and emotional support. They have helped me navigate an academic environment that was completely new to me, and their presence have made the cold hallways of the EV building more humane and convivial.

I sincerely thank Katrina Caruso who made this thesis come to life thanks to her dedication, thorough editing work, and her kind generosity. I am also indebted to Altai, Pinar, and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd, co-founders of Queer Nature. Regularly engaging with their scholarship and their art has been a source of both reflection, excitement, and comfort, and I hope the present research project will do justice to their work. I extend my gratitude to the creators and contributors of the Chai Chats, For the Wild, and Healing Justice podcasts, as well as to adrienne maree brown, Octavia Butler, Donna Haraway, and Robin Wall Kimmerer for creating and sustaining visions of change that have changed my outlook on life.

Je dédie ce mémoire de recherche à ma Maman, Anne, pour les batailles qu'elle a menées au nom de ma survie et de la sienne, l'énergie et le temps incommensurables qu'elle a dédiés à ces dernières et le courage qu'elle a rassemblé pour interrompre un cycle d'abus aux nombreuses ramifications. Je la remercie d'avoir tracé un sillon de changement et de guérison par ces gestes, mais aussi par la construction d'un nid de confort et douceur dont Caramel et le jardin font partie. Avec ce mémoire, je souhaite rendre hommage à la profondeur de ses liens avec les oiseaux et autres êtres plus-qu'humains, ainsi qu'à son goût d'une écriture aussi belle que précise.

I thank Gabi, who I met a few days before classes began and whose fire, wittiness, and brave vulnerability continue to influence me to this day. I thank her for her love, her constant support, and for teaching me, through her example, how to build a relationship with myself and my emotions. I also thank her for introducing me to Queer Nature's work through a wonderful podcast recommendation which led me to write the present thesis. May we continue to challenge each other as tenderly and truthfully as we have done over the past four years. I thank Camille and Kat, two of the strongest and coolest people I know, for their presence and for sharing both laughs and tears with me. I thank Daniel, for sharing so many hours in the AHGSA office with me, and for being the most generous and flamboyant friend one could hope for. I thank the four of them, as well as Tal-Or and Samantha, for making our graduate student association's 2017 conference, *no neutral art, no neutral art historians*, as thought-provoking and warm as we could.

I thank Veera for teaching me how to love and live again. I send her a breeze of sparkly and tender emojis and my love, always. I thank Shriram for being such an anchor in my life through our long walks and frank conversations. I thank Maud for holding space for me when I was feeling the most disoriented, and for helping me reach a certain material stability through extremely concrete gestures. I thank Fili for accompanying me in a long but hopeful winter, and for committing themselves so courageously to their artistic and spiritual journeys. Je remercie Camille et Laïka, pour m'avoir accueillies avec autant d'ouverture dans le quartier et pour leur soutien sans faille. Il me tarde d'observer les prochaines éclipses et pleines lunes en leur compagnie et de les accompagner dans leur épanouissement. Je remercie Caro pour sa franchise, son énergie et ses rires communicatifs. Je remercie Marine pour nos cafés et notre amour de la nourriture. Je remercie Kevin pour son *care* et sa bienveillance. I thank Palden for his supportive messages and comforting hugs. I thank Gen for recently coming into my life and sharing warmth, books, and delicious food projects with me! Je remercie les ami.e.s que je vois trop peu souvent, mais pour lequel.le.s j'éprouve toujours beaucoup de tendresse : Armelle, Julie (x2 !), Élise, Lucas, Julia, Leonor, Sienna, Suzanne...

Finalement, je remercie les compagnons et guides que sont les plantes de Camomille, Lavande, Tulsi, Orties, Damiane, Agripaume, Ashwagandha, Rose, Passiflore, Bourrache... pour leurs leçons et le répit qu'elles m'ont offert. I thank Chesley and the members of City Farm School's two cohorts, as well as Andi from Blueberryjams for sharing their experiences and facilitating relationship-building processes with these incredible companions and guides.

It can seem overwhelming to face our own alienation from the land, but we celebrate these beginnings as ways to start filling the gaping void of this society with meaningful connections and direct experience.

– Knowing the Land is Resistance, *Towards an Anarchist Ecology*

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INTRODUCTION

We are stuck with the problem of living despite economic and ecological ruination. Neither tales of progress nor of ruin tell us how to think about collaborative survival. It is time to pay attention to mushroom picking. Not that this will save us – but it might open our imaginations.

- Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*¹

Queer Nature's project, just like this research thesis, takes place in a time where the awareness of environmental collapse is becoming more and more widespread. Finally reaching mainstream media and political spheres, the growing awareness of the negative consequences of climate disruption on both human and more-than-human communities² is often accompanied by feelings of grief, anger, and helplessness.³ In this time of rapid change, the capitalist and extractive system that created the conditions for this environmental crisis continues to profit from feelings of disenchantment and despair. These feelings limit individual and collective horizons of actions and self-reinvention, making quick fixes more appealing. However, I believe that these feelings, despite their potential for exploitation, are completely healthy and rational, and that they show how *connected* human beings still are to their environment. If alienating attempts have failed, the news reminds me every day that destructive forces continue to be at play, and that each human being is complicit to some degree.⁴ Thus, it is important to prioritize

¹ Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 19.

² I understand 'more-than-human' as a term which encompasses all forms of nonhuman life (e.g., animal, vegetal, mineral), and ascribe a certain reverence to them (i.e. include the notion of a spiritual and energetic connection to these life forms).

³ It is important to note that many people, notably members of Indigenous nations, have been aware of these environmental changes before today. In an interview with Naomi Klein, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson states: "Indigenous peoples have lived through environmental collapse on local and regional levels since the beginning of colonialism [...]. Our elders have been warning us about this for generations now – they saw the unsustainability of settler society immediately. Societies based on conquest cannot be sustained." Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 73–4.

⁴ "Since it is not possible to avoid complicity, we do better to start from an assumption that everyone is implicated in situations we (at least in some way) repudiate. We are compromised and we have made compromises, and this will continue to be the way we craft the world to come,

nuanced, compromised and speculative stories that account for the complexity of these change processes. These stories can help resist feelings of disempowerment and encourage humans to act in solidarity and resistance with each other and with more-than-human communities. Following the call of scholars like Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing and Alexis Shotwell for a shift in focus from binary and purity thinking to these more expansive visions of interdependence, I chose to hold space for and critically contextualize Queer Nature. Queer Nature is a recent world-making project defined by its “aspirational solidarity”⁵ towards both LGBTQ2IA+ peoples, QTBIPOCs,⁶ and more-than-human beings.

queer nature’s offerings⁷

Queer Nature has been described as the hybrid love story⁸ that unites its two human co-founders, Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd (who married in 2016), and Altai, the female Husky who shared their life until recently,⁹ in the stewardship of queer souls

whatever they might turn out to be.” Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 5.

⁵ Shotwell defines the concept of ‘aspirational solidarity’ as such: “Elsewhere I have forwarded a conception of aspirational solidarity – a “solidarity based on collective conceptions of worlds that do not yet exist” – as a norm that might guide action toward humans but also toward worlds in which all sort of beings flourish (Shotwell 2013, 105).” Shotwell, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*, 13.

⁶ The terms LGBTQ2IA+ and QTBIPOCs are abbreviations that stand for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Two-Spirit, Intersex, and Asexual, and Queer and Trans Black and Indigenous People of Color, respectively. It is to be noted that the LGBTQ2IA+ should not be equated to white, even if the need for an abbreviation that encompasses the experiences of racialized queer folks has been identified.

⁷ The titles of the chapters and their sub-sections are written in lower-case characters. This choice is influenced by my personal opinion that capital letters, among other norms, have been used in academic settings to make ideas appear more fixed and intimidating.

⁸ Queer Nature was described as a love story in: Queer Nature (@queernature). “Happy Pride Month!,” Instagram photo, June 3, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BjlA2D_BLu/.

⁹ While previous testimonies about the launch of Queer Nature did not mention Altai, Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd paid tribute to Altai’s role as a more-than-human co-founder and a recent ancestor at the occasion of her death in January 2019. Queer Nature (@queernature), “Altai is a Co-Founder of Queer Nature,” Instagram story, January 30, 2019. <https://www.instagram.com/queernature/>.

and the creation of a “decolonially-informed”¹⁰ queer nature culture. According to their origin story, the creation of their “organism”¹¹ can be traced back to their encounter at the Wilderness Awareness School on Duwamish territory (‘Seattle, Washington’) ¹² in 2013. Sharing similar interests and relationships with the land and their more-than-human kin, Pinar, a non-binary Indigenous futurist¹³ of Huanca, Turkish and Chinese ancestries,¹⁴ and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd, a white non-binary settler of Greek ancestry,¹⁵ deepened their relationship with each other and the ecosystems of which they were a part. This began with earth-based skill building (also called place-based, survival or ancestral skills)¹⁶ and graduate studies in ecology studies at University of Vermont for Pinar and religious studies at Claremont Graduate University (‘California’) for So. Two summers later, their participation in the School of Lost Borders’ Queer Quest on Northern Paiute and Newe territories (‘Big Pine, California’) encouraged them to foster a dream that prioritized the healing of their community.¹⁷ More broadly, they wished to dismantle the disconnected dominant culture that separates human beings from other earth systems through the

¹⁰ As far as I know, this neologism has only been used by the Queer Nature co-founders. This term provokes feelings of uneasiness in me, as the past participle suggests that decolonizing methodologies can be fully grasped and contained, while decolonization is often described as a process.

¹¹ Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd write: “We are not an ‘organization,’ but something far less formal and more fluid—an organism—something living, emerging.” Queer Nature (@queernature). “Happy Pride Month!”

¹² In this thesis, English names for sites that are located on stolen Indigenous land will be put in single quotation marks to question the validity of this naming practice. My goal is to remind the reader and myself to remain aware of the histories of colonization and genocide that are connected to these naming practices. References to other contested terminology or concepts - such as the idea of ‘nature’ - will also be put in single quotation marks.

¹³ At the time of writing this thesis, this is how Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd self-identified. Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd (@queerquechua), Instagram account, accessed March 31, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/queerquechua/>.

¹⁴ Queer Nature, “Who We Are,” accessed March 31, 2019, <https://www.queernature.org/who-we-are>.

¹⁵ So Sinopoulos-Lloyd often presents themselves as Greek-American (e.g. in the short biography that accompany their article “Tracking as a Way of Knowing,” *Written River*, May 31, 2016, <http://writtenriver.com/tracking-as-a-way-of-knowing/>). To avoid giving more legitimacy to the settler state, I choose to use the expression “settler of Greek ancestry” to refer to this artist, just like I would do for myself with my Belgian heritage.

¹⁶ Straub, Gale, “Queer Nature – Meet Co-Founder Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd,” *She Explores: Women in the Outdoors* (blog), April 12, 2017, <https://she-explores.com/features/queer-nature-pinar-sinopoulos-lloyd/>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

distinct concepts of ‘nature’ and (human) ‘culture.’¹⁸ Through a collaboration with the Women’s Wilderness Institute on Arapaho, Ute, and Cheyenne territories (‘Boulder County, Colorado’) in the Spring 2016, they launched sliding-scale workshops under the name Queer Nature. This partnership enabled the co-founders to create spaces¹⁹ where QTBIPOCs and white members of the LGBTQIA+ community could spend time connecting with each other, learning place-based skills and connecting with the land and more-than-human beings.²⁰ Since then, Queer Nature has been collaborating with other ‘wilderness’ schools²¹ across the country to offer skill-sharing workshops and field trips/multi-days immersions, as well as consultations on equity, diversity, and inclusion work. Funding themselves through these collaborations and paid services, they also benefit from the monthly support of twenty-nine patrons.²²

¹⁸ This mandate/vision resonates deeply with the principles outlined by the collective *Knowing the Land is Resistance*: “We are settlers on this land, raised in cities, rootless, and alienated from the ecosystems we can’t help but be part of. But we want to unlearn what we have been taught by the dominant culture, and in the process, we want to re-learn joy, connection, and wonder while embracing grief and loss in order to heal. We want to decolonize, and to do this, we need to build a new kind of relationship with the land.” *Towards an Anarchist Ecology* (Hamilton, 2014), 3.

¹⁹ They believe that accessibility is not only a question of financial means, but also of physical and emotional accommodations. “Queer Nature designs and facilitates nature-based workshops and multi-day immersions intended to be financially, emotionally, and physically accessible to LGBTQ2+ people (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Two-Spirit) and QTBIPOCs (queer and trans black and indigenous people of color).” Queer Nature, website homepage, accessed June 1, 2019, <https://www.queernature.org/>.

²⁰ Queer Nature, “Partners,” accessed May 26, 2019, <https://www.queernature.org/partners>.

²¹ I emphasize here that ‘wilderness’ schools (also called nature-connection or survival schools) and their programs have been historically targeted to white settlers of the middle class. Most often self-funded, these institutions rely on expensive tuition fees. Given that nature-connection schools are located in more remote areas, attending their programs supposes that one has both the time to travel and the financial means to cover the additional expenses. Ideologically, the fact that these establishments favor the survival of white settlers who already benefit from the infrastructures of a society designed to protect and support them is highly questionable. The fact that in some cases, survival schools are state funded (e.g. wilderness school of the Connecticut State Department of Children and Families) supports the idea that they contribute to solidify the settler colonial project. Centering white voices and perspectives, but relying on skills and knowledges learned from Indigenous communities, these institutions do not hesitate to brand themselves as teaching ‘primitive living skills.’ This point of view reinforces a linear understanding of time and ideas of ‘progress,’ while continuing to position Indigenous peoples as ‘savages.’ Queer Nature’s aim is to decolonize these programs and empower people who have been denied access to the land and these specific skills.

²² These patrons give donations through Patreon, an online membership platform and payment processor designed to facilitate the funding of independent projects, most often artistic.

While a relationship with the land can also be nurtured in urban, rural, and in-between spaces, these experiences can be extremely significant for individuals who have been systematically prevented access to these spaces. Cis-heteronormative settler colonialism has (among other discriminations and violations) displaced Indigenous nations from their territories, actively prevented access to the land ownership to Black farmers.²³ Furthermore, it has pathologized queer folks by portraying them as unnatural anomalies. Moreover, it has made access and connection to the land (both physically and spiritually) more difficult, if not traumatic, for many members of these communities.

In parallel to these activities, the Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd have created a website, QueerNature.org, as well as several accounts on the most popular corporate social media and video-sharing platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube).²⁴ Through these digital platforms, they share carefully curated images, taken with a digital camera²⁵ and their smartphones. The photographs include thorough and open-ended captions in which they develop their vision for Queer Nature. Now followed by more than 14,000 people on Instagram (Figure 1), this artistic, activist, and scholarly project represents a few of the ways that systematically marginalized communities can use social media to favour community-building and circulate ideas and practices. Referred to as a “social sculpture”²⁶ in homage to artist Joseph Beuys, this collaborative art practice draws on his efforts towards social transformation and democratizing the arts. The aim of this ongoing project is to increase the accessibility of and potential for nature connection among queer communities and their allies through visual representations and texts that tell stories of interdependence and have the potential to spark feelings of wonder for the complex workings of our ecosystems. While such visions and theorizations cannot

²³ Leah Penniman and Karen Washington, *Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm’s Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2018).

²⁴ Queer Nature, “Queer Nature – Home,” Facebook page, accessed May 26, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/queernature>; Queer Nature (@queernature), Instagram account, accessed April 1, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/queernature/>; Queer Nature, “Queer Nature,” YouTube channel, accessed May 26, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCV39iMZu-oy508YVUWb5AQ>.

²⁵ Specifically, they use a Sony Alpha A7Rii with a 50mm lens. So Sinopoulos-Lloyd (@borealfaun), “I’ve been practicing making #khachapuri from scratch,” Instagram photo, June 1, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/ByJhsM0AGXk/>.

²⁶ Queer Nature, website homepage.

replace the actual relationship-building process with the land, they can offer a language for and open a path towards that land.

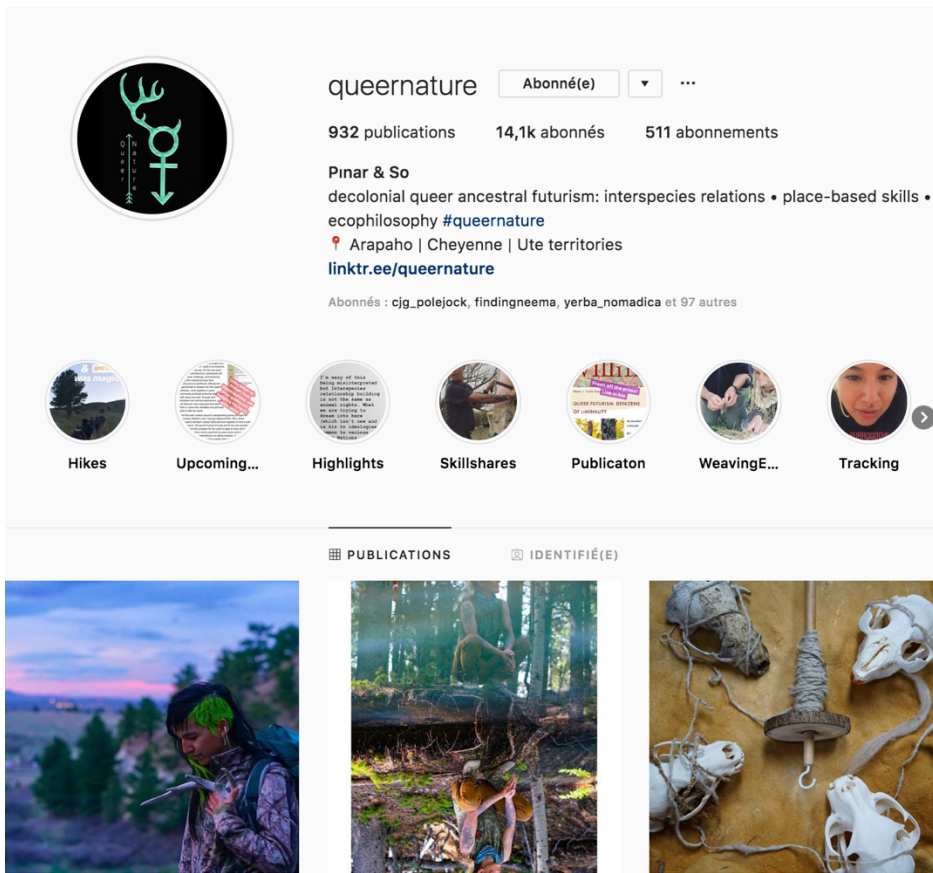


Figure 1. *Queer Nature's Instagram account (June 1, 2019)*

Screenshot, 2019.

Source: Queer Nature, Instagram account, 2019.

<https://www.instagram.com/queernature/>

instagram: mutual contamination of queer and neoliberal spaces

Before I proceed further, it is important to note that Instagram, the main online space that Queer Nature chooses to occupy, does not share the vision and values that Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd put forward through their organizing work and their art. Since its creation in 2010, Instagram has become one of the most dominant and fastest

growing corporate social media platforms²⁷ with 1 billion active users worldwide since June 2018.²⁸ The application is widely used in the ‘United States’, where 110 million of its active users are located.²⁹ Initially, Instagram started as an extremely simple image-sharing platform, where the user could only post a one image at a time, but had the option to add a filter to it. The application now offers a diversity of features, including private messaging since 2013, ‘stories’ since 2016, and a video application since 2018, in the hope of holding its own against the competition (respectively, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and YouTube). Since Facebook purchased Instagram in 2012, the photo-sharing app has moved progressively towards monetizing its content, notably through the creation of targeted ads in 2013, business profiles in 2016, ‘shoppable’ posts and stories in June 2018, and the launch of Checkout, an e-commerce feature, in March 2019.³⁰ These decisions have ensured the company’s profitability by answering the demands of corporations, notably advertising companies. The monetization of the users’ attention and the extension of an individualistic culture based on cultural capital (notably through ‘influencer’ figures) sustain conditions in which neoliberalism can prosper.³¹

The rapid succession of updates forces users to continuously adapt themselves to an environment that they do not control, one that is designed to extract something from them (e.g., their attention or revenues). Media theorist Wendy Hui Kyong Chun calls

²⁷ I borrow this expression from critical communication theorist Christian Fuchs whose work on digital labour has shaped the way I come into social media environments. See: Christian Fuchs, *Social media: A critical introduction* (Sage, 2017).

²⁸ Hannah Boland, “Instagram Hits 1 Billion Users as It Launches Video Service to Rival YouTube,” *The Telegraph*, June 20, 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2018/06/20/instagram-hits-1-billion-users-launches-video-service-rival>.

²⁹ Jessica Clement, “Instagram: Statistics & Facts,” *Statista*, March 8, 2019, <https://www.statista.com/topics/1882/instagram/>.

³⁰ Stories disappear after twenty-four hours and appear on the top of each user’s homepage. They can be simultaneously posted on Facebook and Instagram, and their reach can be personalized through selecting a list of ‘close friends,’ or through blocking access to certain users.; Instagram Press, “Bringing Shopping to Instagram Stories,” June 12, 2018, <https://instagram-press.com/blog/2018/06/12/shopping-in-instagram-stories/>; Instagram Press, “Introducing Checkout on Instagram,” March 19, 2019, <https://instagram-press.com/blog/2019/03/19/instagram-checkout/>.

³¹ Christian Fuchs, “Social Media and Capitalism,” in *Producing the Internet: Critical Perspectives of Social Media*, ed. Tobias Olsson (Göteborg: Nordicom, 2013), 25–44, <https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/item/8yzv3/social-media-and-capitalism>.

these impromptu changes moments of “crisis.” She describes vividly the disruptive effect of digital updates and its correlation with neoliberalism mechanisms.³² Chun’s notion resonates deeply with how Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing’s delineates “the era of precarity.”³³ In the case of Instagram, these moments of “crisis” are orchestrated in order to push companies to sponsorship for ads on Instagram, with the promise that they will be able to better reach the accounts who follow them, or a greater number of followers. As each update is intended to increase the company’s profits, Instagram actively cultivates secrecy around them, notably with regard to the way its algorithms distribute users’ attention. As a result, the people managing accounts for small organizations or businesses often need to spend more time and money publishing content on the platform. For example, they may need to post a story announcing that they have published a new post.³⁴ While the artists behind Queer Nature do not seem to depend on Instagram as their sole source of income—their ‘organism’ benefits from local grants (e.g. Community Foundation's Open Door Fund in 2016), and their large following guarantees that their workshops will be well-attended—these contextual elements should be considered in order to better understand the conditions under which their photographs are consumed.

In spite of being a strong proponent of neoliberalism, Instagram remains to this day a space where a large portion of the population socialize with others, as well as to entertain and educate themselves. Structurally marginalized individuals and communities are widely present on this corporate social media platform. They seize the opportunity for connecting with each other and building on- and offline networks of resistance and care.³⁵ The emphasis on the individual’s representation, notably through the rise of the front-

³² Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2016).

³³ “What if, so I am suggesting, precarity is the condition of our time – or, to put it another way, what if our time is ripe for sensing precarity? What if precarity, indeterminacy, and what we imagine as trivial are the centre of the systematicity we seek?” Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, 20.

³⁴ Until now, stories have appeared at the top of the user’s personalized feed. Extremely short (7 seconds for a picture and 15 seconds for a video), they constitute a quick way for users to catch up on new content. Because the algorithm sometimes hides content, advertising a new post with a story is a way Instagram users can increase the visibility of their content.

³⁵ Leanna Lucero, “Safe Spaces in Online Places: Social Media and LGBTQ Youth,” *Multicultural Education Review* 9, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 117–28.

facing camera in smartphones, and the distribution of self-representational images (also known as selfies), coincided with the rise of identity politics and the reclaiming of identities for which people had been shamed or threatened. Scholar Cathy Cohen calls this the “personal politicized identity.”³⁶ Given the current political context in which racial and gendered discriminations are particularly high,³⁷ selfie activism remains an empowering act of everyday activism³⁸ for which a user can be punished by the corporate social media platform (e.g., censorship),³⁹ or by other users (e.g., cyberbullying). I propose that Queer Nature’s artists are simultaneously influenced by this now-dominant representational mode yet also detaching themselves from its more individual aspect by prioritizing their positionality as a collective. In this way, they are progressively making their own world through visual and textual storytelling. If they are inevitably contaminated by the dominant frameworks that one encounters on corporate social media platforms, they can also have an influence on the neoliberal matrix with content that celebrates connection, multispecies accountability, and ethical relationships.

³⁶ Cathy Cohen, “The Radical Potential of Queer?: Twenty Years Later,” *GLQ* 25, no. 1 (01 2019): 140–44.

³⁷ Human Rights Campaign, “Violence Against the Transgender Community in 2019,” *Human Rights Campaign*, accessed May 26, 2019, <http://www.hrc.org/resources/violence-against-the-transgender-community-in-2019/>; Veronica Stracqualursi, “Trump Administration Proposes Rule That Removes Obama-Era Transgender Health Care Protections,” *CNN*, accessed May 26, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/05/24/politics/hhs-rule-transgender-protections/index.html>; K. K. Rebecca Lai, “Abortion Bans: 8 States Have Passed Bills to Limit the Procedure This Year,” *The New York Times*, May 15, 2019, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/us/abortion-laws-states.html>.

³⁸ I borrow this term from Sonja Vivienne’s book, *Digital Identity and Everyday Activism: Sharing Private Stories with Networked Publics*, *Palgrave Studies in Communication for Social Change* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

³⁹ For instance, Instagram can shadow ban (or mute) users. Shadow banning means that a user’s posts and hashtags can only be seen by the persons who follow their account, and not to the broader community. This decision is often temporary and is taken without noticing the user in question, and the name of the term reflect the lack of transparency of the social media platform. Since its launch, Instagram has been banning pornographic content, but also any images that would be too suggestive or provocative to their unspecified or vague criteria (e.g., body hair and the nipple area of bodies that are conventionally read as feminine). Instagram’s Shadow Ban on Vaguely ‘Inappropriate’ Content is Plainly Sexist,” *HuffPost Canada*, April 29, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/instagram-shadow-ban-sexist_n_5cc72935e4b0537911491a4f.

a note on the reclamation of the word ‘queer’

The name Queer Nature echoes Queer Nation, a New York City-based activist organization that was created in the 1990s in response to the acts of violence perpetrated against gay people in the midst of the AIDS outbreak.⁴⁰ Queer Nation was one of the first organizations to reclaim the derogatory term ‘queer’ and to mobilize it in a context of queer liberation. Since the 1990s, the word has been used in multiple ways. It has been used as umbrella term to encompass the diversity of sexual and gender identities at an individual level in a similar way. It has also been used in academic settings as a methodology which aimed to reframe concepts that are at the basis of “imperialist, capitalist, white supremacist patriarchy”⁴¹ (e.g., the movement towards queer-ing environmental studies and privileging the notion of ecosystems rather than ‘nature’).⁴² Finally and most importantly, the concept has served as a rallying cry for queer liberation outside controlling categorization. This diverse range of practices continue to this day through contributions of activists and scholars both off- and online.⁴³ Choosing ‘Queer Nature’ as the name of their project might show Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd’s knowledge of the movement’s history and academic discipline, but It also indicates that the reclamation of the word queer as still having the potential of being a powerful rallying cry.⁴⁴ In “The Radical Potential of Queer?: Twenty Years Later,” Cohen suggests

⁴⁰ I warmly thank Princesse Lamarche for sharing this thought with me.

⁴¹ bell hooks, *Understanding Patriarchy* (Louisville: Louisville Anarchist Federation, 2010), <https://imagineborders.org/pdf/zines/UnderstandingPatriarchy.pdf>.

⁴² Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, eds., *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); “From Queer/Nature to Queer Ecologies Celebrating 20 Years of Scholarship and Creativity,” *Undercurrents. Journal of Critical Environmental Studies* 19 (2015), <https://currents.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/currents/issue/view/2202/showToc>; Jonathan M. Gray, “Heteronormativity without Nature: Toward a Queer Ecology,” *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 137–42.

⁴³ On Instagram, numerous handles that contain the word ‘queer’ have been claimed by activists and theorists. For instance, the following accounts have been created to talk about the underrepresented realities of being queer in a rural setting in ‘North America’:

@radicalqueerspodcast, @rural.cripqueer.optimism, @queerfarmecologies, @yal_queering_appalachia, @countryqueers, @queerswhofarm, @queerappalachia.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that even if the positive use of the word ‘queer’ is becoming more common, it does not mean that all people from diverse sexualities and gender identities feel at ease with

that a tension exists between the use of this term as a “personal politicized identity” and its use as “a unifying framework for mobilization and action or [a] space available for interrogation and imagining of who could be included in a or the queer political project and what might be the political basis of queer unity.”⁴⁵ Given the open-ended definition of queerness that Queer Nature prioritizes⁴⁶ and their mandate clearly articulated towards the healing and the liberation of their communities, I believe that the ‘organism’, through their complex world-making project, creates a space where one can reflect on their “collective position relative to [settler] state and capitalist power”⁴⁷ and deepen their relationship to the land and its inhabitants, both human and non-human.

structure of the thesis

The aim of this thesis is to explore the radical potential of Queer Nature’s world-making project through a visual analysis of a selection of the photographs they share on their Instagram account. Given the scope of their artistic production that is accessible online (on June 1, 2019, there were 932 posts published on their Instagram account alone) and the limits of this graduate research project (notably in terms of length and time), I have selected fifteen of their photographs for reference. From these images and stories, three main directions have been identified. These directions also structure the three chapters of this thesis: the re-definition of the concept of ‘nature’ by Queer Nature; their queer-ing of the survival skills industry, and; their “decolonially-informed” approach grounded in their personal ancestral work. Informing one another, these three paths intersect regularly. The analysis here is also informed by some of my personal

the use of this term or choose to use it as an identity label. The same goes with the reclamation of the slurs like ‘dyke’ or ‘slut.’

⁴⁵ Cohen, “The Radical Potential of Queer?: Twenty Years Later,” 142.

⁴⁶ Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd state in an interview: “This word has a complexity to it almost like an entire ecosystem of queerness. I love the poet, Brandon Wint’s words on queerness: “Not queer like gay. Queer like, escaping definition. Queer like some sort of fluidity and limitlessness at once. Queer like a freedom too strange to be conquered. Queer like the fearlessness to imagine what love can look like...and pursue it.” This is applicable to gender and sexual orientation. I would also add that queerness is a landscape. My experience of genderfluidity is like an expanding landscape of my soul in relation to the natural world.” Straub, “Queer Nature – Meet Co-Founder Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd.”

⁴⁷ Cohen, “The Radical Potential of Queer?: Twenty Years Later,” 142.

experiences as a non-binary person and settler who has experienced both healing from changing my outlook on what I had known to be ‘nature’ and my constant reassessment of the impact of my actions, as a settler, on unceded (stolen) Kanien’kehá:ka territory. While this thesis cannot encompass all the nuances of the world that Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd are still in the process of co-constructing, this thesis aims to give the reader a sense of the complexity of their vision and the power and the limits of their hybrid storytelling before the future of Instagram or the internet are further compromised.

chapter 1

an ode to complexity: unsettling colonial views of ‘nature’

All the thousand names are too big and too small; all the stories are too big and too small. As Jim Clifford taught me, we need stories (and theories) that are just big enough to gather up the complexities and keep the edges open and greedy for surprising new and old connections.

- Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*⁴⁸

There are, and have been, numerous attempts to understand and define the concept of ‘nature’, that is, non-human worlds. A key aspect of Queer Nature’s mandate is to “envision and implement ecological awareness [...] as vital and often overlooked parts of the healing and wholing of populations who have been marginalized and even represented as ‘unnatural.’”⁴⁹ Given this ambitious objective, it seems important to attempt to understand what ‘nature’ means to Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd, and how this meaning manifests in their online diffusion of co-created digital photographs and texts.⁵⁰

In ‘North-American’ settler-colonial contexts, the mechanistic and simplistic view of ‘nature’ that has been promoted by most settler institutions (including corporations), can be traced back to the Enlightenment and the rise of an extractive and capitalist culture (manifested and powered by the privatization of the commons in England⁵¹ and colonization of other continents through the doctrine of *terra nullius*⁵²). In the introduction of *Decolonizing Nature*, T. J. Demos writes:

⁴⁸ Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016), 101.

⁴⁹ Queer Nature, “Our Mission,” accessed March 29, 2019, <https://www.queernature.org/what-we-do>.

⁵⁰ As stated in introduction, Altai, an Alaskan husky who passed away in January 2019, is both a member of the Sinopoulous-Lloyd family and a non-human Queer Nature co-founder.

⁵¹ I first encountered this idea when reading an article written by H el ene Richard. “Comment la propri et e priv ee a  et e impos ee par la force,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, September 2016, https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/publications/manuel_d_economie_critique/a57184. I came across the idea once again in Silvia Federici and Peter Linebaugh, *Re-Enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2019), 27.

⁵² Andrew Fitzmaurice, “The Genealogy of Terra Nullius,” *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (April 2007): 1–15.

The colonization of nature, emerging from the Enlightenment principles of Cartesian dualism between human and nonhuman worlds, situated the nonhuman world as objectified, passive, and separate [...] Destructive and utilitarian, idealized and exoticized nature has been colonized in concept as well as in practice.⁵³

While I resist the hegemonic notion that non-human worlds have been colonized in their totalities by humans and the consequences of their actions,⁵⁴ I do believe that it is important to situate the concept of ‘nature’, at least, how it was and is framed in Europe and on the territories that European settlers colonized, and are still colonizing today. I believe this situating is crucial, given that nature is still a key notion within frameworks that justify and enable mechanisms of land theft⁵⁵ and racial and gendered⁵⁶ violence

⁵³ T. J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), 14.

⁵⁴ This position is deeply influenced by the concerns expressed by J. K. Gibson-Graham notably in the following quote: “When theorists depict patriarchy, or racism, or compulsory heterosexuality, or capitalist hegemony they are not only delineating a formation they hope to see destabilized or replaced. They are also generating a representation of the social world and endowing it with performative force. To the extent that this representation becomes influential it may contribute to the hegemony of a ‘hegemonic formation’; and it will undoubtedly influence people’s ideas about the possibilities of difference and change, including the potential for successful political interventions.” J. K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (as We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), x.

⁵⁵ Be it using the excuse of land conservation in the case of National Parks (see: Robert Poirier and David Ostergren, “Evicting People from Nature: Indigenous Land Rights and National Parks in Australia, Russia, and the United States,” *Natural Resources Journal* 42, no. 2 (2002): 331–51) that reinforce the romanticization of nature and of the imaginary linked to the terra nullius doctrine, or for pure corporate interests (the latter example having received media attention would be the construction of pipelines of Chevron, TransCanada, and Enbridge that would go through Unist’ot’en territory). “Support Us,” *Unist’ot’en Camp* (blog), accessed March 29, 2019, <https://unistoten.camp/support-us/>.

⁵⁶ In ‘North America’ (e.g., MMIWG (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls), an acronym that has been needed given the extent of the gendered violence against Indigenous Women, including the lack of resources that the state institutions like the police mobilize when a new Indigenous woman is reported missing in the ‘United States’ and ‘Canada’) and on the European continent when the time where this doctrine was developed (Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, Second revised edition (Brooklyn, New York: Autonomedia, 2014), 202.

(including environmental racism⁵⁷ and the genocide⁵⁸ of Indigenous peoples) to this day. In parallel to this particular definition of ‘nature,’ and despite oppressive structures, Indigenous nations (and their epistemologies and cosmologies) are surviving. At another level, some settlers are nurturing or reviving relationships to ‘nature’ that are pertinent to their particular lineage.⁵⁹ In the past thirty years, the academy has been starting to reflect these realities and shifts, as seen with the work of environmental biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer bridging embodied experiences of relationships with more-than-human worlds, as well as cultural teachings within the academic disciplines of botany and environmental biology.⁶⁰ The discussions around the terminology that refers to the ‘natural’ world and the implications of that terminology on ways of relating to our environment (e.g., Donna Haraway often uses terms such as more-than-human worlds in lieu of ‘nature,’⁶¹ Timothy Morton proposes to go away from the term of ‘nature’ itself,⁶² and T. J. Demos advocates for a critical use of the term)⁶³ are also a testimony to this change.

⁵⁷ “Environmental racism is similar to other structurally induced racial and gendered forms of state violence that result in high rates of underemployment, income insecurity and poverty, low educational attainment, high rates of incarceration, and other harms common in Indigenous and Black communities.” Ingrid Waldron, *There’s Something in the Water: Environmental Racism in Indigenous and Black Communities* (Winnipeg; Black Point: Fernwood Publishing, 2018), 5.

⁵⁸ In the ‘Canadian’ context, cultural genocide was acknowledged in Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.*, 2015, 1. More recently, a “race-based genocide of Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis, which especially targets women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people” was identified by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and denounced in *A Legal Analysis of Genocide: Supplementary Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, June 2018, 1.

⁵⁹ Given the current extent of cultural appropriation (notably, in spiritual and healing circles), they might not represent a majority of settlers, but these initiatives should still be mentioned. I believe that reconnecting with one’s own culture(s) and traditions has the potential to decrease the romanticization and appropriation of other cultures.

⁶⁰ Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, First edition (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013).

⁶¹ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 2016.

⁶² Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁶³ He states: “It’s crucial to acknowledge nature’s significance as a rallying cry within contemporary resurgence of Indigenous and / environmentalist activism, which also insists that humans are fully integrated in and part of the natural realm.” Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, 20–21.

These conversations that are taking place within the porous borders of the academy influence Queer Nature's artists Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd, just as their ancestral and activist work. Their "decolonially-informed" understanding of 'nature' highlights the latter's complexity, notably in terms of interspecies relationships and interconnection with the human psyche. In this chapter, I focus on *Cenééteenii'éihii & ceeh'ee. (Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay & Juniper in Arapaho)*⁶⁴ (fig. 2) to see how this perspective is translated through Queer Nature's art practice. Conducting an intertextual analysis of a photograph that centres more-than-human beings, I am interested in both the visual representation of the 'natural' world and the more-than-representational aspect of these portrayals. I see in these pictures curated views of the complex entanglement of human and more-than-human worlds and traces of culturally situated "sensory experiences with landscape"⁶⁵ that invite the viewer to deepen their awareness and presence to their environment while reflecting on their specific positionality as they move through the world and its contested histories.

⁶⁴ The photograph was taken on Arapaho, Cheyenne and Ute territories. Arapaho is also the name of an Algonquin language spoken by the traditional custodians of the lands that Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd were visiting.

⁶⁵ Emma Waterton. "More-than-representational landscapes," in *The Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies*, second edition, ed. Peter Howard, Ian Thompson, Emma Waterton and Mick Atha. (London: Routledge), 91-101. Accessed through Academia.edu, https://www.academia.edu/38548810/More-than-representational_landscapes, 14.

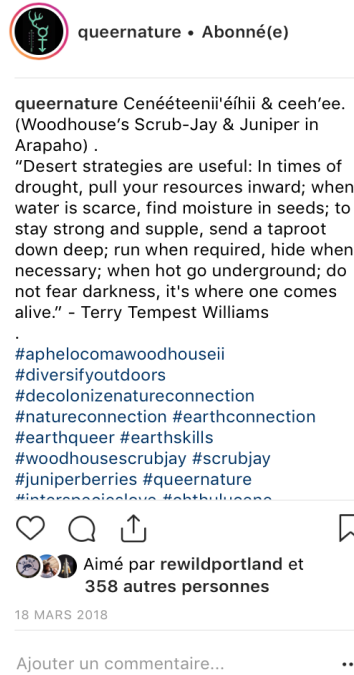


Figure 2.
Cenééteenii'éhii & ceeh'ee. (Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay & Juniper in Arapaho)
Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd. 2018. Photograph and text.
Source: Queer Nature, Instagram account, 2019.
<https://www.instagram.com/p/Bgd8W14jKBa/>

#interspecieslove

In Figure 2, one can see a vertical photograph that depicts two indigo feathers from an adult bird (known in English as the Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay) alongside juniper berries, leaves, and branches laying on the ground in an outdoor setting. The Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay feathers are in focus in the centre of the photograph, thus attracting the attention of the viewer through both their vibrant colour and their positionality. Standing relatively vertical thanks to the support of a thin but solid juniper branch, the indigo feathers are portrayed in a way that emphasizes their precarious beauty. The two feathers' iridescence stands in contrast with the messier aspect of some of their parts, especially in the case of the feather on the left of the photograph. Likely to

be traces of saliva, the feathers' stickiness tends to indicate that a fight with a predator has made the feathers fall from the Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay they were adorning.⁶⁶

However, even if there is an emphasis on feathers' uniqueness and their story, the photographers also underline the relationships that tie them to the other beings in their surroundings. The presence and beauty of the Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay feathers is notably accentuated through the harmonious colour scheme. On one side, the juniper berries, which are both in and out of focus, echo the feathers' indigo colour and the silvery blue juniper branches contribute to unifying the picture and strengthening the bonds between the more-than-human beings portrayed. On the other side, the juniper's bright green of leaves in the background create a visual bridge between the indigo feathers and berries, as well as the spots of soft yellow sunlight passing through the leaves of a tree that remains out of frame. These visual cues tell stories of coexistence, interdependence, and co-evolution, especially when one knows or learns that the Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay eat juniper berries along with other sources of nourishment.⁶⁷

Laying on the ground and detached from the beings that grew them (the Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay and the juniper tree), the bird feathers and the juniper berries will either be picked up by another sentient being, or decompose and nourish the organisms present in the soil and which provide energy to plant beings, which in turn nourish both human and non-human beings. The seemingly harmonious relationship that ties these beings together is also conveyed through the blurriness that shrouds them. Remaining out of focus, the earth, the juniper branches and their leaves seem to tenderly frame (or hold) the two feathers and the few berries which are in focus, a portrayal that

⁶⁶ "Predators of adults and fledglings include bobcats, house cats, accipiters, and Great Horned Owls." The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, "Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay," *Celebrate Urban Birds*, accessed March 29, 2019, <https://celebrateurbanbirds.org/learn/birds/focal-species/woodhouses-scrub-jay/>.

⁶⁷ I do not have the scientific knowledge to explain why Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay and juniper berries are the same vibrant color, but the fact that they look so harmonious and beautiful together puzzles me and signifies to me that it might be a sign that they have co-evolved together for centuries. On a similar note, one could read the chapter "Asters and Goldenrod" from Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*. In this chapter, Kimmerer writes "What is the source of this pattern? Why is the world so beautiful? [...] Why two flowers are beautiful together would violate the division necessary for objectivity. [...] The question of goldenrod and asters was of course just emblematic of what I really wanted to know. It was an architecture of relationships, of connections that I yearned to understand." Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 39–47.

resonates with the notion of interspecies love, one of the hashtags that Queer Nature included in the Instagram caption of their post. It is important to mention here that this digital photograph was taken by both Pinar and So Sinoupolos. This act of co-creation influenced by both Indigenous and settler positionalities help deconstruct the romanticized idea that BIPOCs would be ‘closer to nature’ than white settlers, or that they would be the sole inheritors of the earth. Such representations are the product of centuries of a colonial mindset which thrives on the feeling of disconnection of white settlers from themselves and the land, and the objectification of racialized peoples (e.g. the racist stereotypes of the ‘primitive’ and the ‘noble savage’) that justifies land theft and other acts of violence, including the genocide of Indigenous peoples. In this artistic and activist project, the fact that both Indigenous and settler subjects are oriented toward the land and its more-than-human inhabitants invites the viewer, whomever they are, to slowly build or deepen ethical relationships with the ecosystem they are a part of.

a tender and resolute orientation toward more-than-human worlds

However, I believe that the notion of interspecies love embodied in Figure 2 is not solely limited to the relationships between the Woodhouse’s Scrub-Jay, the juniper trees, and the earth, but also includes the ties that connect Pinar and So Sinoupolos-Lloyd to these more-than-human beings. While the two humans in question might not be visually present within the frame, the photograph constitutes a trace of the multispecies encounter. Furthermore, it shows the viewer how the more-than-human beings appeared to the humans who photographed them.⁶⁸ In this context, more-than-representational theories become pertinent to approach and analyze this photograph. Centring the human subject’s position and bodily sensations and notably the “range of our sensate engagements with the landscapes that flow in, around and through us,”⁶⁹ these theories offer a bridge between my visual analysis and the human experiences that have led to the co-creation of this image.

⁶⁸ The notion of appearance of the more-than-human beings to the photographers’ attention is influenced by the writings of Sara Ahmed on phenomenology and of Robin Wall Kimmerer on Indigenous epistemologies (in which the plants make themselves known to the persons who are needing them).

⁶⁹ Waterton, “More-than-Representational Landscapes,” 14.

For instance, the choice of the focus underlines the relationship between the Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay the berries by directing the viewer's attention to it, but also mimics the visual acuity that Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd have developed through their tracking and artistic practice. Through observing and analyzing their work, it is clear that they know how to compose images that are aesthetically pleasing to humans. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed writes:

By reading the objects that appear in Husserl's writing, we get a sense of how being directed toward some objects and not others involves a more general orientation toward the world. The objects that we direct our attention toward reveal the direction we have taken in life. Other objects, and indeed spaces, are relegated in the background; they are only co-perceived.⁷⁰

Thus, Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd's focus on more-than-human worlds and the skills they have developed as a result, reveal their long-term orientation toward (or even stewardship of) more-than-human worlds. The act of taking this photograph and sharing it with a wide audience online also demonstrates the artists' intentions to share a specific point of view with others. The tenderness with which the scene is portrayed, as well as the care that is put in the composition of the image, indicate both the love of the artists for more-than-human beings and their dedication to protecting these ecosystems. They advocate for ecological awareness by emphasizing the notion of interdependence, a concept that has the potential of leading to a decolonized way of understanding what is often referred to as 'nature.'

However, the use of more-than-representational theories should not erase the fact that the humans involved in taking this photograph are situated at the intersection of marginalized identities, one of the photographers being both queer and Indigenous. Resuming Tolia-Kelly's ideas about the limitations of these frameworks,⁷¹ Waterton writes:

The intuitive and embodied encounters often imagined in the literature are at times a little too unproblematic in their conception and seemingly float free of any imposed subject-positions and attendant capacities to affect and be affected

⁷⁰ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 32.

⁷¹ Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, "Fear in Paradise: The Affective Registers of the English Lake District Landscape Re-Visited," *The Senses and Society* 2, no. 3 (November 1, 2007): 329–51. Cited in Waterton, "More-than-Representational Landscapes," 7.

(see also Lormier 2008; Tolia-Kelly 2017; Tolia-Kelly and Raymond 2017). As a consequence, such approaches tend to assume that the engaging body is that of a mobile citizen, ‘freed of fear and concerns over racial and/or sexual attack, fear of the lack of “rightful encounter” with a particular moral geography governing access, and indeed, free of the chains of childcare, work and the economic constraints to roam’ (Tolia-Kelly 2007: 337; see also Askins 2009).⁷²

In the case of Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd and, more broadly, queer folks living in ‘North America,’ I will show that their sole existence in a cis-heteronormative and capitalist settler society does influence the “availability”⁷³ of the more-than beings (or the chance of their encounter with queer folks).

in the “background” of the photograph: the embodied experiences of racist cis-heteronormativity

If one considers the “background”⁷⁴ of the encounter portrayed in *Cenééteenii’éihii & ceeh’ee* (fig. 2), one should take into account the fact that in ‘North America,’ racist cis-heteronormativity is not omnipresent, but still largely dominant. While white settlers have romanticized racialized people for their closer bond to ‘nature’ for centuries now, this relationship is still perceived as a threat to colonial projects. Both state policies (e.g. creation of national parks), settler popular culture (e.g. the figure of the ‘savage’), and individual actions (e.g. racist aggressions, subterfuges that led to land theft)⁷⁵ are actively trying to prevent access to the land. As explained in the introduction of *Queer Ecologies*, the history behind the creation of ‘wilderness’⁷⁶ spaces on the

⁷² Waterton, “More-than-Representational Landscapes,” 12.

⁷³ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 38.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Andrew Kahrl, “Black People’s Land was Stolen,” *New York Times*, June 20, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/20/opinion/sunday/reparations-hearing.html>; David Love, “From 15 million acres to 1 million: How Black People Lost Their Land.” *Atlanta Black Star*, June 30, 2017. <https://atlantablackstar.com/2017/06/30/from-15-million-acres-to-1-million-how-black-people-lose-their-land/>.

⁷⁶ Both remote spaces and racialized and queer peoples have been represented as sites to conquer, tame and colonize/’civilize.’ The concept of ‘wilderness’ often describes liminal spaces that are not fully understood but upon which settlers want to exercise control. My discomfort with this term is also linked with

continent has also coincided with the “naturalization of heterosexuality”⁷⁷ and the “cultivation of hetero-masculinity.”⁷⁸ As a result of these histories and in combination with contemporary processes of marginalization of QTBIPOCs and white queer communities, racialized and/or queer people are still a minority in rural, even if they are now estimated to be more than three million to live in these more remote areas.⁷⁹ The construction of the figure of the racialized subject as ‘savage’ continue to inspire racist aggressions.

Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd have themselves experienced racial and gendered violence within remote contexts. One can read in a recent statement published by them on on their personal (but still public) Instagram account: “This picture was taken before I was profiled, stalked, recorded and surveillanced by a white cisman who then followed me to the trailhead parking lot and blocked my car with his idling vehicle to write down my license plate.”⁸⁰ This troubling and angering account gives an idea of the extent of what visible minorities can experience in more remote settings.⁸¹ Located at the end of the caption that accompanies a portrait of the non-binary Indigenous futurist in Yavapai, Hopi, and Western Apache territories, this quote encourages the viewers critical thinking and remind them that even if the photographs are empowering and aesthetically pleasing,

⁷⁷ Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, eds., *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, 13.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁹ Movement Advancement Project, *Where We Call Home: LGBT People in Rural America*, April 2019, www.lgbtmap.org/rural-lgbt.

⁸⁰ Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd (@queerquechua), “Can DEI work be co-liberatory within the confines of capitalism?”, Instagram photo, February 22, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BuNDVmXBWBP/>.

⁸¹ It is noted that this threat is also present in urban settings, where many (if not most) racialized and queer peoples live. One could name the numerous cases of urban Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (see: Annita Lucchesi, “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Report” (Seattle: Urban Indian Health Institute, 2018), <http://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf>), as well as the recent physical assaults of queer folks in ‘Portland’ (See Blair Stenvick, “Queer Portlanders Shaken By Reports of Anti-LGBTQ Violence,” *Portland Mercury*,” February 19, 2019, <https://www.portlandmercury.com/blogtown/2019/02/18/25935639/queer-portlanders-shaken-by-reports-of-anti-lgbtq-violence>) and murders in ‘Toronto’ (see: Jane Doe, “Serial Killer Shame Shines Light on Toronto Police’s History of Violence against the Vulnerable,” *NOW Magazine*, March 28, 2018, <https://nowtoronto.com/api/content/c9d2b9fc-32c2-11e8-a80e-121bebc5777e/>).

the societal conditions that surround the embodied experiences of ‘wilderness’ spaces and the production of these images are tainted by social discriminations and acts of violence.



Figure 3.

Can DEI Work be Co-Liberatory within the Confines of Capitalism?

Pinar So Sinopoulos-Lloyd. 2019. Photograph and text.

Source: Queer Quechua, Instagram account, 2019.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BuNDVmXBWBP/>

While the histories of the oppression of racialized peoples in ‘North America’ have their specificities, they are all rooted in ideas of racial ‘purity’ and control. In this context, targeted acts of racial and gendered violence do not need to be experienced firsthand to have its affect travel through queer and racialized folks and create a collective trauma around the site where the violence has been experienced by a member of the community. In order to survive to a traumatic event, survival strategies are put in place. Narrated by Katie Hogan in “Undoing Nature: Coalition Building as Queer Environmentalism,” the following account about the reactions of a Black family to the decision of two of its members to tour the national parks in 1995 show the impact of white supremacy on the freedom of movement of marginalized peoples and their sense of safety and well-being.

Peterman’s family members were so concerned for Peterman and his spouse’s safety that they brought the couple loaded guns. Peterman understood his family’s

reaction as historical memory of the Ku Klux Klan. Although Klan activity did occur in cities, the Klan carried out many of its acts of terror, murder and torture in the wilderness.⁸²

In spite of these violent contexts, Queer Nature and other initiatives such as Native Women Wilderness, Native Outdoors, Wild Diversity, POC in Nature, Disabled Outdoors, Unlikely Hikers aim to diversify the outdoors industry.⁸³ Queer Nature distinguishes itself by choosing to centre more-than-human beings and seeing in more remote places “a place to gather strength against the forces of domination”⁸⁴ through interspecies relationship-building.⁸⁵ This process of including more-than-human beings to the coalition-building between queer and remote communities is described in Quigley’s “Nature as Dangerous Space,” which Katie Hogan paraphrases as follows: “In other words, nature is an opportunity to build theoretical overlaps and an opportunity for activist coalitions among seemingly disparate groups and communities.”⁸⁶ The need to build these relationships and solidarities might be even more pressing considering the era in which these initiatives are taking place.

“nurturing what might still be:” queer interspecies synchronicity in the Chtulucene

The implications of these oppressive systems on the lives of marginalized folks is heightened by the discrepancies of the resources that are mobilized to deal with the

⁸² Katie Hogan, “Undoing Nature: Coalition Building as Queer Environmentalism” in Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, *Queer Ecologies*, 240–241.

⁸³ In 2015 and 2016, many newspapers identified the ‘diversity problem’ of national parks in the ‘United States.’ More recently, two scholars have listed the main obstacles to the access of racialized peoples to these ‘wilderness’ spaces (David Scott and KangJae Jarry Lee, “People of Color and Their Constraints to National Park Visitation,” *The George Wright Forum* 35, no. 1 (2018), 73-82). It is noted that diversity work does not always carry anti-racist values and that it can sometimes contribute to solidify the settler colonial project and benefit whiteness as a whole.

⁸⁴ Peter Quigley, “Nature as Dangerous Space: Foucault’s Challenge to Marxism, Liberal Humanism and the General Call for ‘Grounded Responsibility,’” in *Discourses of the Environment*, ed. Éric Darier (Oxford; Malden: Blackwell, 1998), 201–202, cited in Katie Hogan, “Undoing Nature: Coalition Building as Queer Environmentalism,” 233.

⁸⁵ “Our curriculums necessarily go beyond recreation in nature to deep and creative engagement with the natural world to build inter-species alliances and an enduring sense of belonging.” Queer Nature, “Our Mission.”

⁸⁶ Katie Hogan, “Undoing Nature: Coalition Building as Queer Environmentalism,” 233.

hazards associated with industrial accidents and climate change.⁸⁷ In *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chtulucene*, Donna Haraway writes: “Eating each other properly requires meeting each other properly, and that requires good-enough synchronicity.”⁸⁸ Given the circumstances (both social and environmental) underlined in the introduction, such synchronicities between queer and/or racialized peoples and their more-than-human kin could become even rarer as both human and nonhuman communities are being displaced and put under pressure. This context of increased precarity is also represented by the inclusion of the hashtag #chtulucene in the caption of the photograph *Cenééteenii'éihii & ceeh'ee* (fig. 2).⁸⁹ The Chtulucene is a word that Haraway invented and defined in the introduction of *Staying with the Trouble*:

A compound of two Greek roots (kthôn and kainos) that together name a kind of timeplace for learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying in response-ability on a damaged earth. Kainos means now, a time of beginnings, a time for ongoing, for freshness. Nothing in kainos must mean conventional pasts, presents, or futures. There is nothing in times of beginnings that insists on wiping out what has come before, or, indeed, wiping out what comes after. Kainos can be full of inheritances, of remembering, and full of comings, of nurturing what might still be. I hear kainos in the sense of thick, ongoing presence, with hyphae infusing all sorts of temporalities and materialities.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ “As the environmental justice movement evolved in Canada, it was increasingly being appropriated by white environmentalists. Not surprisingly, their concerns about the right to clean air and water and climate change has rarely extended to Indigenous, Black, racialized, and low-income communities that are more vulnerable to these and other environmental hazards (deacon and Baxter 2013; Fryzuk 1996; Waldron 2015a; Wiebe 2016.” Waldron, *There’s Something in the Water*, 67. Another important reading on the subject is Sarah Marie Wiebe, *Everyday Exposure: Indigenous Mobilization and Environmental Justice in Canada’s Chemical Valley* (Vancouver; Toronto: UBC Press, 2016). For more information on the impact of climate change on queer communities, please read Brady, Aletta, Anthony Torres, and Phillip Brown. “What the queer community brings to the fight for climate justice.” *Grist*, April 9, 2019. <https://grist.org/article/what-the-queer-community-brings-to-the-fight-for-climate-justice/>.

⁸⁸ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 73.

⁸⁹ In other places, “ecocide” is a related term that Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd use to describe the larger phenomenon that frames and informs their work, as seen in their interview with *For the Wild* podcast. Ayana Young, “Queer Nature on Reclaiming Wild Safe Space,” Podcast audio, *For the Wild*, December 20, 2018, <http://forthewild.world/listen/queer-nature-on-reclaiming-wild-safe-space>. For more information on this concept, a good entry-point can be the following article: Una Chaudhuri and Shonni Enelow, “Theorizing Ecocide: The Theatre of Eco-Cruelty,” in *Research Theatre, Climate Change, and the Ecocide Project: A Casebook*, ed. Una Chaudhuri and Shonni Enelow (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2014), 22–40.

⁹⁰ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 2–3.

I argue that this synchronicity is, itself, the subject of Figure 2. The hopeful and resolute idea of “nurturing what might still be” is carried through the process of taking a photograph that underlines the beauty of interspecies relationships (as described in previous sections),⁹¹ as well as through the act of sharing it online. This combination of actions has the potential to build a movement towards embodiment and healing through encouraging people to pay attention to and engage with their surroundings and the more-than-human beings with whom they share their space.

This encouraging tone is also present within Terry Tempest Williams’ quote in the caption of *Cenééteenii’éihii & ceeh’ee* (fig. 2):

Desert strategies are useful: In times of drought, pull your resources inward; when water is scarce, find moisture in seeds; to stay strong and supple, send a taproot down deep; run when required, hide when necessary; when hot go underground; do not fear darkness, it's where one comes alive.⁹² These metaphors linking ‘natural’ worlds and the human psyche⁹³ contribute to the work of dismantling dominant concepts of nature, concepts that have founded the Capitalocene (an age that would be defined by the accumulation of capital)⁹⁴ by highlighting the similarities between human and nonhumans, as well as the teachings that the more-than-human beings can offer humans. This highlighting helps create a sensation of belonging to a world constituted by a diversity of porous and open-ended systems that are more similar than ‘Western’ scientists once thought.⁹⁵ The feeling of belonging has the potential to nurture a sense of stewardship and an ethics of care toward more-than-human beings. This sense and these ethics can lead, in turn, to a political engagement in favour of the protection of the environment. Such engagement would then foster the conditions

⁹¹ See the following sections: “#interspecieslove” (17-19) and “a tender and resolute orientation toward more-than-human worlds” (19-20).

⁹² Terry Tempest Williams, *The Hour of Land: A Personal Topography of America’s National Parks*, First edition (New York: Sarah Crichton Books/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016), 196.

⁹³ These parallels are at the core of the field of eco-psychology to which Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd contribute through developing queer ecopsychology theories “through studies at Prescott College, Wilderness Awareness School, School of Lost Borders, Animas Valley Institute and Naropa University.” Queer Nature, “Who We Are.”

⁹⁴ Jason W. Moore, “The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, no. 3 (May 4, 2017), 594–630.

⁹⁵ Chesley Walsh, “Introduction to Holistic Physiology & Phytochemistry,” (Lecture, City Farm School, Montreal, March 22, 2019).

of the synchronicity portrayed, supporting long-term relationships between both queer and non-queer humans, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jays, juniper trees, and the soil.

not an empty land: acknowledging long-term Indigenous presence and decolonization attempts

Land carries multiple histories, especially when its location coincides with the history and ongoing reality of settler colonialism. Given that Queer Nature's community includes both BIPOCS and white community members, I would like to go back to the discussion of the potential blind spots of more-than-representational theories that would represent all encounters on the same level, through the illusion of the neutrality and universality of the experience described. Following Tolia-Kelly's proposal that "in order to combat this [weak point] we need an 'increased acknowledgement of the place of difference and power in shaping the matrices within which "we" engage with landscapes,'"96 the last section of this chapter discusses the Queer Nature human co-founders' efforts to acknowledge the specificities of their positions on and in relation to the land, and how their work pays tribute to its traditional custodians.

First, the fact that Figure 2's title, *Cenééteenii'éihii & ceeh'ee*, is in the Arapaho language is an acknowledgement of this nation's presence on this territory. Using this specific Algonquin language testifies to the long-term relationships that this nation has built and is still building with the land and the more-than-human beings who have shared this territory with them and have been (and still are) a source of nourishment, be it through food, medicine, or stories. Thus, the Arapaho title that the artists chose signifies their commitment to make visible the traditional custodians' ongoing presence on the territories that they are visiting. Furthermore, through this act, the Sinopoulos-Lloyds are showing that they have spent some time getting acquainted with the Arapaho language. Becoming cognizant of and learning Indigenous languages has the potential to foster relationships between peoples from different nations and backgrounds. Confirming my interpretation, one of the artists replied to a comment made on a photograph on their

⁹⁶ Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, "Fear in Paradise: The Affective Registers of the English Lake District Landscape Re-Visited," 337. Cited in Waterton, "More-than-Representational Landscapes," 7.

Instagram account with the following words: “We are on Arapaho, Cheyenne & Ute territories and do our best to learn the first names of our more-than-human communities as we are guests on these lands.”⁹⁷ Even though the custodians of the land are visually absent from the digital photograph, territorial acknowledgements bring awareness to their presence and relationship to the land.⁹⁸ This gesture also has the potential to dismantle the concept of *terra nullius* that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and to animate the more-than-human beings through their relationship with humans.

Queer Nature’s commitment to decolonization can be seen through the hashtags that they use in connection to the photographs they share on the social media platform. For example, they often use hashtags as such as #diversifyoutdoors (32,570 posts on March 30, 2019),⁹⁹ #decolonizenatureconnection (464 posts on March 30, 2019),¹⁰⁰ and #nativeoutdoors (6,133 posts on March 30, 2019).¹⁰¹ Using the hashtags is often meant as a means to disseminate these images, to make the photographs visible to a wider audience, which can create bridges with content embodying similar intentions. I would also suggest that the use of these specific hashtags, amongst others, contributes to creating and assembling decolonizing worlds through well-identified online locations. When users search for a specific hashtag, they are only exposed to images that have been created with similar intentions. However, hashtags are tools that surpass the porous boundaries between online and offline worlds. In his book, *The Appearance of Black Lives Matter*, Nicolas Mirzoeff writes:

The use of the hashtags as horizontal identifiers enabled people to find each other and to begin physical encounters and actions. This copresence made it possible to form a space of appearance, which can engender others, sometimes with surprising speed and reach. It is what Negar Mottahedeh has called “collective

⁹⁷ Queer Nature (@queernature), “@borealfaun lovingly holding Beetéibétee (Northern Flicker in Arapaho) feathers from a kill-site. Deep respect for these incredible scouts...,” Instagram photo, March 18, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bgd5o4XjaK1/>.

⁹⁸ The artists learnt this practice from Indigenous scholar and activist Jade Begay. Queer Nature, Instagram story, June 29, 2019.

⁹⁹ Instagram. “#diversifyoutdoors Hashtag on Instagram • Photos and Videos,” accessed March 31, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/diversifyoutdoors/>.

¹⁰⁰ Instagram. “#decolonizenatureconnection Hashtag on Instagram • Photos and Videos,” accessed March 31, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/decolonizenatureconnection/>.

¹⁰¹ Instagram. “#nativesoutdoors Hashtag on Instagram • Photos and Videos,” accessed March 31, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/nativesoutdoors/>.

sensorial solidarity online,” which is not utopian but site-specific, as in #Ferguson, which was used an astonishing 21.6 million times from June 2014 to May 2015.¹⁰⁰ The limited place of interaction becomes an open space of appearance. Because it makes common a way to be in the future, outside the enclosure, it is always becoming, always in formation, while being site-specific.¹⁰²

Thus, the use of these particular hashtags can be put in parallel with photographs that show that the artists of Queer Nature are co-constructing in-person relationships and solidarities with Indigenous organizations. This is seen in the following group portrait, where Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd are photographed with two members of Native Women Wilderness (fig. 4).



Figure 4.

Today was fierce tracking with @nativewomenswilderness
Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd. 2018. Photograph and text.

From left to right: So and Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd, Felicia Ryan Bartley, and Jaylyn Gough.

Source: Queer Nature, Instagram account, 2019.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BiI5K7FhrJx/>

¹⁰² Nicolas Mirzoeff, *The Appearance of Black Lives Matter*, ([Name], 2017), 91-92, <https://namepublications.org/item/2017/the-appearance-of-black-lives-matter/>.

As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang wrote, “decolonization is not a metaphor.”¹⁰³ This ongoing process should not be limited to performative gestures, by which Queer Nature’s use of Arapaho language and hashtags could easily fall under, if they were not accompanied by the longer process of relationship-building.¹⁰⁴ This argument echoes the reflections that So Sinopoulos-Lloyd shared on *For the Wild* podcast:

As a white person and a settler, [...] I am doing this dance of deep care and openness and listening around what belonging means, but I think that one of the things that it means to me is to be entangled in a web of relationships of reciprocity, not always in a way that totally feels good either. But because accountability is often about conflict.¹⁰⁵

The perpetual movement that the metaphor of the dance represents unsettles the fixed imaginary that is often associated with the concept of belonging. It further serves to question the validity of the idea that settlers ‘belong’ in any simple way to colonized lands, as any sentiment of belonging, no matter how genuinely felt, cannot be distinguished from its entanglement with land theft and other oppressive mechanisms.

More recently, Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd have also begun to express their belief that BIPOC communities should start being offered reparations from nature connection schools in the form of free skill sharing initiatives or the creation of sliding-scale spots reserved for racialized folks. The artists have been advocating for the implementation of these concrete measures through Queer Nature’s Instagram stories¹⁰⁶ and longer social media posts that aimed to raise awareness about the whiteness of the industry and to encourage folks to “pass [the skills they have] on to [someone who] does not look like [them].”¹⁰⁷ Notably, they highlighted that Weaving Earth was the only institution they knew in the nature connection schools that had published an explicit

¹⁰³ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012), 1–40.

¹⁰⁴ A process that can include the payment of reparations, even if individual donations can hardly be compared to the wealth redistribution that the state should operate to the benefit of BIPOCs.

¹⁰⁵ Young, “Queer Nature on Reclaiming Wild Safe Space,” 10:32–11:06.

¹⁰⁶ Queer Nature (@queernature), Instagram story, March 19, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/queernature/>.

¹⁰⁷ Queer Nature, “Survival is political,” Facebook post, March 21, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/queernature/posts/1213928992105690>.

statement relating to reparations in the ‘United States’.¹⁰⁸ Again, the hashtag #decolonizenatureconnection was used to circulate Queer Nature’s messages advocating for the normalization of reparations and the “survivalism of black, brown, trans, intersex, two-spirit, fat, disabled bodies.”¹⁰⁹ To conclude this first chapter, one could say that the view of ‘nature’ that Queer Nature proposes through Figure 2, *Cenééteenii’éhii & ceeh’ee*, and various elements of its caption, emphasize the complexity of the concept, and the fact that humans are in no way separate from it. However, I believe that if one only looked briefly at the image, one might think that it represents a homogenized and romanticized view of ‘nature,’ an approach that the foregoing intertextual analysis just debunked. Even if Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd use an intricate language that seeks liberation from the traditional nature-writing and thinking, they are still being influenced by the hegemonic visual culture of the dominant society. This ambiguity is not in contradiction, however, with the complex and open-ended world that these artists are making. The following chapter explores this idea in further depth.

¹⁰⁸ On their website, Weaving Earth states: “The high-end of the scale reflects the value we believe the program holds, and the low-end offers a more accessible entry point while ensuring we cover all costs. [...] We also recognize that the low-end might be cost prohibitive. If this is true for you, please be in touch to begin the conversation about financial assistance. At Weaving Earth we are committed to offering financial support as an act of reparations, and as an effort to make this work more accessible to any and all individuals who want to be involved.” “Year 1 – Beyond Boundaries – Weaving Earth,” 1, accessed March 31, 2019, <https://www.weavingearth.org/we-programs/beyond-boundaries/>.

¹⁰⁹ Queer Nature, “Survival is political.”

chapter 2

queering earth-based skills training: community building, joy and sovereign self-invisibilization

While the first chapter of this thesis aimed to clarify Queer Nature’s approach to the concept of ‘nature,’ the following pages focus on the visual representation of the earth-based skills workshops that the artists offer to queer and/or racialized folks in a ‘natural’ context. As mentioned in the introduction, the field of nature education and survival skills training in ‘North America’ is largely dominated by white settlers (particularly but not exclusively white cisgender men). I argue that Queer Nature reframes the masculinist framework that originated this type of workshop, and further, that this reframing successfully hijacks the original purpose of earth-based skills workshops (namely, the survival of the persons who already have the easiest access to the resources that enable them to remain alive in distress situation). In addition to diversifying a field, Queer Nature proposes activities that foster the empowerment and healing of queer folks at an individual and collective level. They do this while playing with the codes of the masculinist culture that are most often associated with survival skills. This chapter is more human-centric than the preceding chapter, and this emphasis is purposeful. As Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd said in their interview with *For the Wild* podcast, “Our queer communities have remained human-centric for good reasons, because we have moved through so much trauma together as a community and as communities.” For this reason, while the anthropocentrism is not intentional, it is unavoidable and in a sense necessary. Yet this [anthropocentrism] is not the end-goal of the workshops. As Sinopoulos-Lloyd goes on to say in the podcast interview, “we are doing very intraspecies healing right now, which makes so much sense at the moment.”¹¹⁰ This chapter foregrounds notions of interdependence at the same time as it explores the potential, within Queer Nature’s work, for recovery and healing of marginalized human subjects.

¹¹⁰ Young, “Queer Nature on Reclaiming Wild Safe Space,” 30:25–31:58.

building (stronger) communities

Given the importance of intraspecies and queer healing, the first notion this chapter explores is community building. Organizing workshops and/or retreats in small groups (10 to 20 participants), Queer Nature offers opportunities to the queer community in which they can learn skills that could both ground and empower them, and through which they can connect and build solidarities with other queer and racialized peoples. The latter objective stands in contrast with the dominant culture within survivalist circles. As Casey Ryan Kelly explains in “The Man-Pocalypse: Doomsday Preppers and the Rituals of Apocalyptic Manhood”, most doomsday preppers find pride in being self-sufficient and not needing community, as it would be read as sign of weakness. She writes:

Preppers lambast the effeminacy of entitlement culture, valorizing in contrast the self-made man of pre/industrial civilization as the only gender modality that guarantees survival. Indeed, the rhetoric of “feminine dependency” is one of the key ways that conservative men performatively enact their identities. Gibson and Heyes argue that conservatives frame liberal support for community building as feminine in order to lay claim to hegemony masculinity.¹¹¹

Remnant of a more pioneer mentality, this glorification of a purportedly autonomous human could also reveal the reconstruction of traumatic cultural memory¹¹² associated with the fact that settlers found themselves in an extremely vulnerable state as they walked through and settled on lands they did not know and in which they could not rely on the same relationships they had with more-than-human beings in Europe. Considering that settlers and slave owners in ‘America’ were able to survive thanks to Indigenous and African communities sharing their knowledge with them (in particular, herbal medicine), the erasure, from history, of these relationships and gifts is part of the violent legacy of colonialism and imperialism.

¹¹¹ Casey Ryan Kelly, “The Man-Pocalypse: Doomsday Preppers and the Rituals of Apocalyptic Manhood,” *Text & Performance Quarterly* 36, no. 2/3 (April 2016): 95–114.

¹¹² So Sinopoulos-Lloyd brings up the notion of trauma associated with ‘wilderness’ spaces in Young, “Queer Nature on Reclaiming Wild Safe Space.”

Aware of these existing dynamics and the colonial ideologies they perpetuate, Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd choose to once again centre relationship-building, but this time within the queer and racialized communities and not only between human and more-than-human worlds (see Chapter 1). This emphasis on the collective can be seen on their Instagram account, where group shots are posted soon after the workshops take place. Most likely taken with the help of a tripod and a self-timer, the depictions of the various groups share some similarities. Even if the surroundings and people pictured change from workshop to workshop, the fact that the camera remain at a certain distance from the group in order to have all the participants included within the frame limits the artistic potential of these images. If one compares two group photographs that were taken seven months apart (figs. 5 and 6), one sees resemblances in the photograph's angles, and in the emotions that are being expressed by the workshop participants. In both photographs, smiles, gestures of excitement, and friendly hugs can be observed between the participants in the scenes. Overall, the group members seem relaxed, joyful, playful, and/or amused by the situation.



Figure 5.
“Meet your Meat: the art of Death for Sustenance” class
Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd. 2019. Photograph and text.
Source: Queer Nature, Instagram account, 2019.
<https://www.instagram.com/p/Bvj0bQbB9Tw/>



Figure 6.

“This has been the most settling paramilitary experience I’ve had”

Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd. 2018. Photograph.

Source: Queer Nature, Instagram account, 2019.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BlqxrjhBt8O/>

So Sinopoulos-Lloyd, who is present in both Figure 5 and 6 as well as in Figure 4, chooses to pose with their hands held close to their face. This type of pose often reads as ‘cute’ within our current cultural context and particularly among young adults. While these gestures may not seem extremely significant or symbolic in and of themselves, when considered alongside other similar photographs and in relation to the group shots, they become a recurrent detail that creates connections. Sinopoulos-Lloyd’s poses create an impression of continuity, which could be considered to signify their long-term commitment to doing this work. While the ‘organism’ was only created in 2014, the fact that they already have in place such clear (visual) protocols facilitates the historicizing of Queer Nature’s activities. The level of clarity found in their communication, visual and otherwise, and the evident intention in the way they co-create and curate representations of the queer community, are some of the reasons why they continue to draw new workshop participants and Instagram followers.



Figure 7.
Daily reminder to make baskets & destroy white supremacy
 Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd. 2018. Photograph and text.
 Source: Queer Nature, Instagram account, 2019.
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BrngUvjhof3/>

Given the importance that their main diffusion platform gives to interconnectivity and (both public and private) social exchanges, one cannot talk about community-building without mentioning the social media platform that Queer Nature uses, and how its infrastructure facilitates these interactions. This can be seen clearly in Figure 6: while the community as a whole is not be directly visible to the viewer, it remains a central aspect of this photo and Instagram post. The person being photographed is crouching down, inspecting carefully a series of three curved branches or stems that could be used to weave a basket. Closely focused on what they are holding (which appear to be stems or thin branches), they are not looking at the camera or the photographer. In fact, it is not clear whether the person in the photograph is aware that they are being photographed or, for that matter, in the presence of anyone. Nevertheless, despite their apparent solitude, the subject of the image does not seem to be alone. First, the shape of bags or outdoor equipment in the background suggests that the figure is likely to be a part of a larger group, perhaps on a campsite. No other humans can be seen within the frame, but they might not be far, especially when one considers how close the photographer actually is to the person who is weaving the basket. Second, the area of focus chosen by the

photographer is limited to the person portrayed and the basket that they are weaving in the foreground; the remaining portion of the photograph – the background – remains blurry. This lack of focus envelops the subject in a soft and gentle aura.

I want to propose that, regardless of their apparent solitude, the person is indeed part of a larger community: the online interactions that accompanied the diffusion of the photograph on Instagram are traces of support and belonging. For instance, the basket weaver used the comments section to share the name of the designers (Divide and Dissolve, an anti-racist metal band based in Australia) of the t-shirt “Destroy white supremacy” they were wearing so that they can be rightfully credited, to which Divide and Dissolve band members replied: “[@flor delicada](#) miss you so much boo” (written by [@divideanddissolve](#)), revealing that the basket weaver and the band share a personal friendship. Another instance of users expressing love on the comments section of this photograph can be found in the following comment: “My heart just skipped a beat [@flor delicada](#) I miss you friend” (written by [@ladyursus](#)). Other Instagram users used this section to share less personal but still supportive messages. Supporting the idea of destroying white supremacy, another comment states, “make out. destroy white supremacy” ([@wild_solidarity](#)), and yet another, “yes this” ([@cacklin_jacqals](#)).¹¹³ These comments indicate that the community building aspect of the workshop extends to online spaces. It also confirms that the offering and acquisition of survival skills are just two of the many aspects of Queer Nature’s project. In fact, one can find the following statement in the mandate of the ‘organism’: “Empowerment and preparedness are undeniably part of what we do, but our overarching vision is for a deep, resilient sentiment to take hold in human hearts, and that is the sentiment of solidarity.”¹¹⁴ The mention of a “sentiment of solidarity” prompts me to talk about the feelings of joy that are embodied in many of the photographs that Queer Nature’s shares on their Instagram account.

¹¹³ “This” refers to the caption of the photograph entitled “Daily reminder to make baskets and dismantle white supremacy everyday” (fig. 7).

¹¹⁴ Queer Nature, “Our Mission.”

embodying joy

The following selection of photographs represent Queer Nature community members smiling widely and/or laughing. In Figure 7, Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd is seen roaring with laughter. Given that their eyes are hidden by sunglasses, the reader's attention is reoriented toward their mouth, the second most expressive organ for humans. The radiance of their wide-mouthed laughter seems to resonate with the vibrant colours of Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd's outfit and hair, as well as the sun's brightness reflecting off of them as well as the background. The light coming from the latter accentuates the facial expression of Queer Nature's artist through shadows that are created by the indentation of the subject's dimples. The photograph's high definition causes the contours to seem extremely sharp and to cut through the space in which this picture is taken.



Figure 8.

Our laughter in our queer, nonbinary, black and/or brown bodies shatter the binds...

Bam Mendiola. 2018. Photograph and text.

Source: Queer Nature, Instagram account, 2019.

https://www.instagram.com/p/Bo_7fPLhSzt/

As the model, co-creator, and the curator of this image, Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd chose to highlight the political significance of this laughter. In the photograph's caption, they

write: “Our laughter in our queer, nonbinary, black and/or brown bodies shatter the binds of white supremacy and co-liberate our ancestors.”¹¹⁵ This statement suggests that marginalized and liminal bodies are not supposed to feel joy within a white supremacist settler colonialism system. One might find that the reason for this perceived threat lies in the transformative and expansive potential of the feeling of joy. In the conclusion of her book, *The Promise of Happiness*, Sara Ahmed continues a thought the philosopher Brian Massumi developed in [give year of publication of original source]:

Ethical, empirical – and creative, because your participation in the world is part of a global becoming. So it’s about taking joy in that process, wherever it leads, and I guess it’s about having a kind of faith in the world which is simply the hope that it continue... But again it is not a hope that has a particular content or end point – it’s a desire for more life, or for more to life” (2003 a.n.p.) [...] Words are sticky; they retain associations even if we use them differently. In a way, by redefining joy as a good feeling, as what increases capacity for action, we also increase the power of the word: feeling good becomes good feeling; feeling good becomes what increases your power for action.¹¹⁶

Following this hypothesis and considering the limiting effects of systemic marginalization,¹¹⁷ one understands that the feeling of joy carries meaning and a potential for action that is radically political. Photographs of queer folks laughing and smiling can be seen as signs of resilience, healing, and collective and self-empowerment, which could seem at odds with the societal conditions of some of the members of the community (the queer community is composed of people who benefit from different privileges). To those who might be experiencing stigma, discrimination, and their consequences on mental health, representation of queer joy suggest that there is more to live, and that relationship building with the queer community and more-than-human beings can help deepen or restore a feeling of safety and expansion.

¹¹⁵ Queer Nature (@queernature), “Our laughter in our queer, nonbinary, black and/or brown bodies shatter the binds of white supremacy and co-liberate our ancestors...,” Instagram photo, October 16, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bo_7fPLhSzt/.

¹¹⁶ Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 214.

¹¹⁷ Marginalization can contribute to shape one’s experiences, notably through inflicting physical / emotional / spiritual trauma which effects are felt in a non-linear but long-term way.

In the context of Queer Nature's photographs, the feeling of queer joy¹¹⁸ can be traced back to the following elements: belonging to a community, mastering a new technique that was required much efforts to learn, and that is not widely accessible, satisfaction given by a technique newly mastered (fig. 9), or even building relationships and co-creating/experiencing this feeling with one's more-than-human kin (fig. 10). The activities offered by Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd thus seem to multiply the opportunities to feel joy (a feeling that could be seen as a survival skill itself) through the co-creation of a safe(r) space¹¹⁹ for queer folks to connect with 'nature,' the larger queer community, and themselves (and potentially their ancestors). Furthermore, Queer Nature's representations of queer joy are not directly linked with the expression of any sexual behaviour, a fact that seems to allow for a definition of queer joy that is more inclusive of the experiences of queer folks who identify as asexual (this spectrum includes but is not limited to asexual, Gray-A, and demisexual people).¹²⁰ This is especially important considering that queer joy is often sexualized and that experiences that fall on the asexual spectrum are often erased from the queer community. What follows is an analysis of two photographs portraying this feeling of joy in the communion with 'nature' and community.

¹¹⁸ 'Queer joy' is a term that became widely used online around 2018, notably in the following articles: Amelia Abraham and Hanna Hanra, "Community, Sex, Friendship – the Joy of Being Queer," *I-D* (blog), February 21, 2018, https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/xw5473/community-sex-friendship-the-joy-of-being-queer; Manfredi, Angie. "Representation of Queer Joy." *Queer Books for Teens*, December 31, 2017. <http://queerbooksforteens.com/best-of-lists/representation-of-queer-joy/>; Heather Dockray, "The Best Places to Find Queer Joy on Instagram," *Mashable*, June 30, 2018, <https://mashable.com/article/best-queer-instagram-resources/>.

¹¹⁹ The term 'safer' space is progressively becoming more widely used in the queer community than safe space, especially in the last few years, as a means to acknowledge that spaces may never feel safe for some: "We say 'safer' realizing that not everyone experiences spaces in the same way as others, so any one set of guidelines established to create safety may not meet the requirements of everyone and there may be complications or lapses in fulfilling those guidelines in practice." Coalition for Safer Spaces, "What we are, and why we support 'safer' spaces," *Coalition for Safer Spaces*, April 4, 2019, <https://saferspacesnyc.wordpress.com/>.

¹²⁰ Dominique Mosbergen, "Infographic: The Asexual Spectrum," *HuffPost Canada*, June 19, 2013, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/19/asexual-spectrum_n_3428710.html.



queernature • Abonné(e)
Mccauley Family Farm

queernature Queer earthy alchemy. 🔥 This was their third friction fire coal that day!
#queercraft #queernature #queerrecology #queersinnature #queersinthewild #natureconnection #natureisqueer #diversifyoutdoors #optoutside #earthqueer #earthskills #earthconnection #wildernesskills



Aimé par
lalobalocashares et
93 autres personnes

14 NOVEMBRE 2017

Ajouter un commentaire... ⋮

Figure 9.

Queer earthy alchemy

Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd. 2017. Photograph and text.

Source: Queer Nature, Instagram account, 2019.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BbgLd9MAirJ/>

In Figure 9, the viewer can see the joy that artist Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd seem to prioritize cannot be separated from the more-than-human world – seen here in the forest in the background and the fire that the person has made through manual friction. Holding the fire at the level of their eyes, the person is looking at it joyously and tenderly. One can also perceive a certain fatigue in the eyes of the person portrayed, which might suggest that the fire was (co-)created through much efforts. Two strong visual lines orient the viewer’s gaze toward the fire: the person’s right forearm creates a vertical line, and the direction of their eyes creates a horizontal line. The degree of attention directed toward the fire seems to underline its aliveness (as its flames are rather high) and its direct communication with the person who has worked hard to create it (one can see a volute of flame, curving towards the human).



queernature • Abonné(e)

queernature As our first official report back from the Queers & Wolves Weekend, it feels right to uplift the inspired words of one of our dear community members @owleyez who joined us as a participant (and thus co-creator) of this past weekend. Thank you Fēnix for your deep work in queerly re-storying the land and the other-than-human

👍 💬 📌

🌍 Aimé par mama_maiz et 462 autres personnes

29 MAI 2018

Ajouter un commentaire... ⋮

Figure 10.

Queers & Wolves Weekend

Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd. 2018. Photograph and text.

Source: Queer Nature, Instagram account, 2019.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BjXTXy4BoLD/>

Figure 10 is another post from Queer Nature's Instagram account that shows co-creation of joy between human and more-than-human communities. The photograph appears to have been taken in a clearing or campsite. Some human constructions are visible: a tent, a cabin, a fence. In the background, some thin trees are sparsely scattered. In this photograph, human and more-than-human workshop participants are gathered in a circle. No facilitator seems to be present at this moment. This could indicate that the group is relaxing or, on the contrary, is in the middle of an activity - bonding with the wolf - that they are encouraged to do autonomously. In the foreground, four participants are sitting on a tree trunk, carved to serve as a bench. At the centre of the photograph, a wolf is leaning dramatically downward, on its back - a vulnerable pose. From the photographer's vantage point, only the back of the wolf's neck and face are visible. The wolf turns its head toward the human being to the right. Meanwhile, the person to the wolf's right orients their face toward the wolf - their two noses almost touch. Just as with Figure 9, with So Sinopoulos-Lloyd posing with the fire, Figure 10 shows two beings visibly communicating. To the left of the dog, a person is watching the wolf or their interaction with the human being. Angling their body leftwards, this person seems either want to leave more space to the wolf and their interaction with their other human

neighbor, or maintain a “safe” distance from the wolf (in spite of their size, one can detect by their contracted muscles a possible unease).

These last two examples can be put in parallel with Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd’s statement from their *For the Wild* interview: they believe it is important to be in the process of “really remembering to expand ourselves to our capacities, which you know, queerness is really informed by the earth and so much more than our human bodies.”¹²¹ By fostering opportunities for encounters between the queer community and the more-than-human worlds that have become rarer and rarer (notably through the urbanization of queer communities), and circulating joyful representations of queerness,¹²² Queer Nature’s activities are oriented toward expansion and a certain embodiment and representation of “visionary fiction.” As adrienne maree brown defines in *Emergent Strategy*, which is a book that Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd has read and advertised on their Instagram account,¹²³

Visionary fiction (a term that Walidah coined) includes sci fi, speculative fiction, fantasy, magical realism, myth, all of it. In addition to this intentional genocide, visionary fiction intentionally explores how change happens from the bottom up, how change works in collective ways, disrupting the single white male here narrative, centring marginalized communities... Meaning we are at the centre of the story, as opposed to the sexy and unbelievably stylish sidekick.¹²⁴

Joy is one of the collective ways queer communities can mobilize to “increase [their] power to action”¹²⁵ and make change happen. However, even if the expression of this feeling has the potential to have a transformative and empowering effect on both the subject and the viewer, queer joy is not always accessible, nor is it always safe to express in public. That said, I argue that empowerment can be found in the multiplicity of queer

¹²¹ Young, “Queer Nature on Reclaiming Wild Safe Space,” 30:25–31:58.

¹²² This type of representation constitutes a larger trend in contemporary ‘North American’ visual culture. See: Stephen Truax, “Why Young Queer Artists Are Trading Anguish for Joy,” Artsy, November 7, 2017, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-young-queer-artists-trading-anguish-joy>.

¹²³ Queer Nature (@queernature), “I’ve learned to trust nature. If she can make my weirdo, genderqueer, capable self than she can make anything. Nature helps me reimagine...,” Instagram photo, April 8, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BhKEuv0ABw3/>.

¹²⁴ adrienne m. brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, (Chico: AK Press, 2017), 163.

¹²⁵ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 214.

modalities. In the next section, I explore a more ambiguous type of “visionary fiction” that Queer Nature’s artists propose, which suggests that the self-invisibilizing process can also be freeing.

playing around with camouflage: sovereign self-invisibilization and skilled touches of glamour

In contemporary visual culture, camouflage practices are associated with the ‘North-American’ military-industrial complex or settler hunting practices, notably through the symbol of the mass-produced camo pants. However, purposely achieving invisibility is a survival skill that is also used outside war contexts. For queer folks living in ‘North America,’ traditions of social camouflage are normalized to the extent that it is the (continuous) action of coming out that is most often seen as exceptional and rather dangerous depending on the context in which it is made. Given the social discriminations against queer and trans people, self-invisibilization has been practiced for decades, if not centuries.¹²⁶ It has the potential to increase chances to be employed,¹²⁷ keep access to family and community support, find housing,¹²⁸ have access to health care,¹²⁹ or avoid

¹²⁶ Some testimonies of trans elders clearly name this self-invisibilization process. “I think guys coming out now have a couple of generations to compare themselves to, we had nothing, because whoever was there was so deep undercover that they could not be found. Gender nonconforming folks have a similar story because the language wasn’t there to identify who their elders were.” Camouflage thus impaired intergenerational community building. Transfaith, “What Trans Elders Want You To Know,” *HuffPost*, May 22, 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-trans-elders-want-trans-youth-to-know_b_591c6eb9e4b021dd5a82908f.

¹²⁷ “Many trans people, particularly those who are racialized, face particularly acute discrimination in employment, leading to grossly inequitable access to employment, health, housing, income, and as a result, they experience extremely high rates of poverty (Namaste, 2005; Spade, 2011).” Robyn Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* (Halifax; Winnipeg: Fernwood, 2017), 80–81.

¹²⁸ “Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth are more likely to be homeless. Many of those who access housing through the shelter system report experiencing homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in that environment.” Zena Sharman, *The Remedy: Queer and Trans Voices on Health and Health Care*, 2016, 19.

¹²⁹ Sharman writes: “Nearly half of trans women and men in a Canadian study reported feeling uncomfortable discussing trans health issues with their family doctors, and almost 40 percent of them reported at least one trans-specific negative experience with their doctors.” *Ibid.*, 18.

harassment and physical and sexual assaults.¹³⁰ While useful, this adaptation strategy can have implications for the individuals mental health.¹³¹ In parallel with this self-invisibilization process, queer communities and their respective cultures are invisibilized and erased from mainstream media, legal texts, historical accounts, while being subject to increased institutional (e.g., schools,¹³² immigration services,¹³³ etc.) and interpersonal surveillance, especially for those who are racialized.¹³⁴

Given that this thesis focuses on the content that Queer Nature's artists publish on Instagram, it is also important to mention that the rise of digital spaces in the past 20 years have largely extended the reach of both institutional and interpersonal sexual surveillance. Using the concept of "social panopticons," Jimmie Manning and Danielle M. Stern suggest that it "has become normal to watch and to be watched by others through digital, often computer-mediated, technologies"¹³⁵ and that "the relationships we have are open to change as digital memory and personal archiving allow us to be watched even after we no longer want to be watched."¹³⁶ Digital infrastructures play an integral role by not only encouraging interpersonal surveillance, but orienting the type of content that permitted on their platforms. It has been well documented that the most popular

¹³⁰ "Twenty percent of participants in a Canadian trans health study reported having been the targets of physical or sexual assaults and another 34 percent had experienced verbal harassment or threats because of being trans." Ibid.

¹³¹ In my experience, not disclosing the fact that I am non-binary has had both effects: on one side, it has helped me reduce the sources of stress by avoiding certain interactions / discussions, and on the other, it has created situations in which I am more prone to feeling dissociative from being continuously misgendered.

¹³² Wendy Cumming-Potvin and Wayne Martino, "Teaching about Queer Families: Surveillance, Censorship, and the Schooling of Sexualities," *Teaching Education* 25, no. 3 (January 1, 2014): 309–33.

¹³³ Rachel Lewis, "Lesbians under Surveillance: Same-Sex Immigration Reform, Gay Rights, and the Problem of Queer Liberalism," *Social Justice* 37, no. 1 (119) (2010): 90–106.

¹³⁴ For further research, please consult the following resources: Craig Proulx, "Colonizing Surveillance: Canada Constructs an Indigenous Terror Threat," *Anthropologica* 56, no. 1 (2014): 83–100, and Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

¹³⁵ Jimmie Manning and Danielle M. Stern, "Heteronormative Bodies, Queer Futures: Toward a Theory of Interpersonal Panopticism," *Information, Communication & Society* 21, no. 2 (February 1, 2018): 208–23.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 217.

social media platforms favour hegemonic social groups (e.g. white men in the case of Facebook/Instagram).¹³⁷

One can thus understand that playing with the idea of camouflage and purposely going through training sessions on the subject, especially given the history of gendered and sexual oppression in remote settings, is not neutral. Before going to an outdoors conference at the end of March 2019 in the ‘United States’, Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd published an Instagram story in which they expressed their excitement toward bettering their camouflage skills: “nothing like exercising my own sovereignty to invisibilize myself.”¹³⁸ After the conference and on the occasion of the celebration of the International Transgender Day of Visibility (March 30, 2019), they shared the following testimony with the followers of their personal (but public) Instagram account:

I spent this weekend practicing evasion and invisibility in reverence to my quariwarmi transcestors who used these skills for survivance. [...] Now in this joining of lands in this flesh—through this hybridity—I learn how to choose invisibility for the resilience of my community rather than being invisibilized at the detriment of our collective resilience. The invitation in my practice of stealthcraft is to continually hone the gift of shape-shifting in service to radical belonging in my trans indigenous body.¹³⁹

BIPOCs are disproportionately subjected to surveillance and the acts of violence that are associated with it. These statements reflect this reality by showing how crucial and strategic processes of self-invisibilization (or passing) can be.

Not having access to a visual representation of Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd’s camouflage practice, I chose to talk about a photograph Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd took of their partner, So, while they were wearing camouflage attire (fig. 11). Given So Sinopoulos-Lloyd’s settler positionality and Greek lineage, the photograph tells quite a different story than the one that Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd had just narrated. Entitled *What if Pan was genderqueer? Wait, what do you mean “if”?!*, the photograph embodies

¹³⁷ Julia Angwin and Hannes Grassegger, “Facebook’s Secret Censorship Rules Protect White Men from Hate Speech but Not Black Children,” *ProPublica*, June 28, 2017, <https://www.propublica.org/article/facebook-hate-speech-censorship-internal-documents-algorithms>.

¹³⁸ Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd (@queerquechua), Instagram story, March 29, 2019.

¹³⁹ Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd (@queerquechua) “Our gender-variance is an ecological force of these lands without borders. we transgress colonial borders of cisheteropatriarchy and the...,” Instagram photo, April 1, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BvsvgelB2c4/>.

notions of gender fluidity and destabilization of gendered norms. On one hand, the dominant colours of the vertical photograph are a range of greens going from the kaki of the military clothes to the fresher and more vibrant green of the leaves of the small trees pictured in the background. Thus, the colour scheme echoes the caption of the photograph which mention the idea of blending and belonging. The disintegration of both conceptual and visual borders between human and more-than-human worlds dear to Queer Nature can be through the camouflage practice. This movement toward a fluidity and oneness with other earth systems tend to fit So Sinopoulos-Lloyd’s personal definition of queerness:

In terms of ecology, queerness is a kind of a growth [...], a becoming from some sort of destabilization or dissolution of fixed categories. Or you know, a becoming from an in-between space, or an edge-space which as we know from studying echo tones or edges in bioregions or ecological systems, those spaces are such fertility and fecundity.¹⁴⁰

Queer camouflage seems to be a practice which illustrates concretely these movements away from categorizations that can be tools of control and oppression.



Figure 11.

What if Pan was Genderqueer? Wait, what do you mean “if”?!

Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd. 2018. Photograph and text.

Source: Queer Nature, Instagram account, 2019.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BkUDWVih-Y/>

¹⁴⁰ Young, “Queer Nature on Reclaiming Wild Safe Space,” 33:10–33:55.

On the other hand, the close framing of the subject alongside the orientation of the lines that constitute their forearms and hands in the direction of the face of So Sinopoulos-Lloyd places the visual emphasis of the image on the forest green lipstick that they are wearing, and likewise on their lips, which are mimicking a kiss. As the eyes of the subject are closed, the lips remain the centre of attention. Both the content and the codes of the image stand in great contrast with the hypermasculine imagery that is most often associated with survivalists. The human subject is crouching on the soil of the forest in a relaxed manner, their closed eyes indicate that they are not on their guard, and their playful attitude confirm their level of comfort and security. The presence of humour in both the photograph and the caption plays with the visual references that the viewer might have of Doomsday Preppers who carefully put forward their strength, readiness to act decisively, and their seriousness and coldness (what could be read or performed as an absence of emotions). Choosing to highlight the glamorous aspect for which queer communities are often known for (and to which they are also reduced), Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd play with both queer and masculinist social codes in order to queer the visual representation of survival skills workshops (and most likely have fun in the process).



Figure 12.

Hun, let me touch up my ✨glamo✨

Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd. 2018. Photograph and text.

Source: Queer Nature, Instagram account, 2019.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BmV7fcwBcjw/>

In her article, “The Man-Pocalypse: Doomsday Preppers and the Rituals of Apocalyptic Manhood,” Sarah Marie Wiebe states that the representation of the future that is most widely associated with survival skills training is “indefinite, but hegemonic masculinity—aggression, self-reliance, stoicism, competitiveness—remain necessary. In Martin’s grave divinations, the recuperation of traditional manly skill-sets will rebuild America after disaster.”¹⁴¹ The examples presented in the present chapter show how the same survival skills were used by the Queer Nature community in a different way. Privileging exchanges, co-learning, and play, their workshops have the potential to create transformative and potentially healing experiences for their participants. Having the opportunity to do grounding exercises and build relationships with their human and non-human kin in this context would thus constitute one of the seeds for resilient and abundant queer and BIPOC futures, as well as for more harmonious and reciprocal relationships with the earth in the time of the Chthulucene. This approach seems to share connections with the values put forward by Indigenous climate justice. Emily Gilpin writes:

If there’s no trust, consent, reciprocity, and accountability, Whyte said, sustainability and climate justice cannot be achieved. If we’re genuine in our efforts to achieve climate justice, Whyte said, we need to focus on kinship, and relationships based on respect and reciprocity, otherwise, it is too late for Indigenous climate justice. ¹⁴²

Used in this way, the queering and decolonizing of survival skills training could not only increase the chances of survival of marginalized communities facing the hazards of climate change; they could also delay the arrival of the Doomsday for which survivalists are preparing themselves.

¹⁴¹ Casey Ryan Kelly, “The Man-Pocalypse: Doomsday Preppers and the Rituals of Apocalyptic Manhood,” 95–96.

¹⁴² Emilee Gilpin, “Urgency in Climate Change Advocacy is Backfiring, Says Citizen Potawatomi Nation Scientist,” *National Observer*, February 15, 2019, <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2019/02/15/features/urgency-climate-change-advocacy-backfiring-says-citizen-potawatomi-nation>.

chapter 3

queer nature's commitment to multispecies ancestral work

It has been made clear in previous chapters that So and Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd are engaged in decolonial or unsettling work, notably through accountability processes with which they are engaged, the solidarities they build with Indigenous women, and the way they approach ancestral skills and their non-human environment. The following chapter focuses on a more personal aspect of this work, namely their respective ancestral work. While most of the content published on the social media platform is written by the two co-founders, these two series of photographs pay homage to their respective, specific lineages. The artists of Queer Nature invite their followers to question their positionality and cultural heritage. This chapter is influenced by a portion of the herbalism training I am currently going through. In this context, doing research on my ancestral or family histories is encouraged in order to remain grounded and aware of the histories that have led to my birth and that continue to influence the way I move through the world to this day. Prompts to do this work include, “What is my family genealogy? Where have my ancestors come from? What were their stories, traditions, spiritual practices, and struggles like? Did they come from a colonizer culture? What was life like before they were colonized? What were their healing traditions? How did my family acquire land and wealth in North America?”¹⁴³ Doing this work, alongside learning about the histories of the places in which one finds myself, the origins of the resources that enable my everyday survival, questioning my personal motivation and engaging in local struggles and accountability processes, together have the potential to slowly dismantle existing power structures and build reciprocal and more equitable and relationships.

Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd and the riparian community

I want to open this section with the words of Queer Nature artist Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd. Pinar writes on the subject of the river and the more-than-human beings which constitutes its ecosystem:

¹⁴³ Chesley Walsh, “Introduction to Holistic Physiology & Phytochemistry” (Lecture, City Farm School, March 22, 2019).

Meet my soul twin, the riparian community around me. Some of you know I am a Yakuruna, a fresh water entity rooted in my Andina cosmologies which also is shared by Amazonian cosmologies. [...] This creek here—where I originate from—is my lover, my muse, my family.¹⁴⁴

In this text, they describe their relationship to not only the river, but the more-than-being communities that constitute the ecosystem of riparian zones. The way they situate themselves within their traditional cosmologies suggest that they have integrated them in their ways of understanding and relating to the worlds that surround them. Their intimate relationship with the riparian ecosystem is the focus of a few of their portraits. In Figure 13, they are shown as an integral part of the riparian environment.



Figure 13.

“Do you wish you were born a boy?” “No, I wish I was born a river.”

Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd. 2018. Photograph and text.

Source: Queer Nature, Instagram account, 2019.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BoF9pN4BqJf/>

¹⁴⁴ Queer Nature (@queernature), “Meet my soul twin, the riparian community around me. Some of you know I am a Yakuruna, a fresh water entity rooted in my Andina cosmologies...,” Instagram photo, February 28, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BubgO2NBTjD/>.

In this vertical digital photograph (fig. 13), Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd is portrayed slightly on the left of the picture, but still relatively centered. Standing in the river, with their legs immersed in the water up to the middle of their thighs, their eyes are oriented toward the bottom left of the frame. The photographer and the viewer do not seem in Pinar's eyes: the subject of the picture is the portrayal of the relationship between Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd and the riparian environment. The water coming from the two waterfalls in the background seems to embrace the human subject as they move towards the foreground of the picture. This unification is emphasized by a harmony of colours and a limited palette of blues, greens, browns, greys, and whites. Most of the elements in the picture are in the shadow, but some rays of the sun can be seen at the top of the image, landing on several rocks, a thin layer of the moss, the water, and on Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd's thigh in the foreground. The dominant colours of the photograph are thus in the darker tones (i.e. blue, green, ocher and grey). Within this unifying context, I observe a network of visual echoes: the neon green of Pinar's hair echoes the fresh green of the moss, and the leaves of larger plants on the rocks situated between the two waterfalls.

Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd stands still, visibly absorbed in their experience of this environment. This pose creates a contrast with the movement of the water rushing down the rocks to the larger body of water, whose velocity cannot be captured by the camera. This visual effect would seem to make the scene timeless. The viewer has not been shown enough additional elements to determine how long this moment of introspection lasted, and in which time period the person being portrayed lives. Yet there are hints in the form of the synthetic clothes, specific tattoo designs, industrial dye, and pastel lipstick. In this moment of suspended introspection and communion with the riparian environment, Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd is pictured as being focused on their internal landscape, which might be bringing them back to the inner landscape of the riparian community that raised them. I am not in a position to discuss the experience they had in this environment or the specificities of the cosmologies they are invoking, but a visual analysis of the photograph nonetheless can surface some these elements. A few months earlier, Queer Nature has posted another photograph from the same series (fig. 14). With this closer shot of Queer Nature's artist, it was not only the immersion in the water that was underlined, but their level of ease and the pleasant feelings that they seem to be

experiencing (the relaxed pose, large smile, and sparkling eyes are reminiscent of the visual representations of queer joy discussed in chapter 2).



Figure 14.

Indigenous queerness is an ecological indicator to the health of interspecies culture
Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd. 2018. Photograph and text.

Source: Queer Nature, Instagram account, 2019.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BIA5ytsBg5R/>

Sinopoulos-Lloyd and the limits of “belonging as resistance”

Given Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd’s distinct lineages and positionalities, as well as their common commitment to steward “both the queer soul and the non-human world”¹⁴⁵ and “tend to the ecologies [they] have co-created together”¹⁴⁶ through both the Queer Nature and their marriage (the two are closely interwoven in their public statements), the worlds that they are making together can only represent a messy entanglement of settler and Indigenous traditions. This echoes the histories of Indigenous

¹⁴⁵ Queer Nature, “Who We Are.”

¹⁴⁶ Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd (@queerquechua). “This earthling and magical faun married me 5 years ago. to this day i am in awe of the ecology we have co-created together. We were tending...,” Instagram photo, March 16, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BvF3T6ihqX1/>.

and settler which have been porous to the influence of each other's epistemologies. In the case of So Sinopoulos-Lloyd's exploration of their Greek heritage, their research is also done through performance and artistic co-creation with their partner. This has been captured in the photograph and caption (fig. 15) below.



Figure 15.

“The sea was both a symbol of home and also of otherness and even terror”

Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd. 2018. Photograph and text.

Source: Queer Nature, Instagram account, 2019.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Bp0aL1oBIpZ/>

In the horizontal photograph, the viewer can see a clear triangular composition: So Sinopoulos-Lloyd's body is laying on a rock, and their gaze indicates a line at the top left of the picture. The stability of this type composition anchors the settler subject on the large rock being covered by moss and offers a sense of grounding. This sense of belonging, the harmonious relationship with the mineral and plant beings that surround So Sinopoulos-Lloyd is particularly accentuated by the colours in the composition. The photograph's use of complementary colours, namely green/blue and shades of orange, is especially striking. The greenish blue of the rocks and algae is balanced by the orange in Sinopoulos-Lloyd's bleached and dyed hair, as well as the warm light. Various plant beings can be seen in different places of the picture, either in their physical form or in visual tributes to them. For example, one can see moss on the large rock, green seaweed

covering Sinopoulos-Lloyd's genitals, and reddish mauve seaweed in their hand. Moreover, plant life is also represented in the artist's tattoos, some in black and white and some filled with colour: a dandelion on their calve, a leaf symbol on their left arm, and a rose, which is part of a larger tattoo composition, on their bicep.

The photograph's composition indicates that it has been staged. Furthermore, So Sinopoulos-Lloyd's pose seems to refer to the reclining female nude, a popular visual theme in "Western" art history. Queer Nature's artists, however, make crucial modifications to this visual tradition. However, the conditions of this image's production, audience, and aim are all quite different from the typical representations of this theme. First, the subject seems to have control over the way their portrayal. For instance, they cover their breast with their hand, cover their genitals with seaweed, thus hiding visual cues to their biological sex, and produce an image that would validate their androgynous gender expression. Secondly, this picture is produced in an outdoor but rather intimate setting. This intimacy is emphasized by the fact that the photographer is the subject's partner, and that one of the photoshoot's goals is to produce queer eco-erotica.¹⁴⁷ While the representation of nature as a desirable space is frequent in their work, the inclusion of nudity in Queer Nature's photographs is extremely rare. Contrary to the "Western" aesthetic traditions conveyed through this picture, this image is not made for the pleasure of a heterosexual cisgender man, which was the primary audience that commissioned, purchased, and/or consumed (often for their sensual pleasure) the paintings referenced here. Rather, Figure 15 was made for the subject themselves, likewise for their partner and the queer communities with whom they are sharing this image. To see the difference in the representation of the human body (albeit, a rather feminine one), compare Figure 15 with a reproduction of French artist Paul Beaudry's oil painting, *The Pearl and the*

¹⁴⁷ Discourses around eco-sexuality are becoming more and more accessible online. For instance, one can see body positive and sex-positive campaigns (e.g., Plant Sluts Project (@plantslutproject), Instagram account, accessed April 1, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/plantslutproject/>) and independent businesses dedicated to these romantic and sexual practices (e.g., Sacred Sadism (@sacredsadism), Instagram account, accessed April 1, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/sacredsadism/>) operating on corporate social media platforms, such as Instagram.

Wave, described by the Museo del Prado as an “intensely sensual female nude.”¹⁴⁸ The model, looking directly at the painter / viewer (which can be assumed to be male given the society of the time), lifts her arms away from her body. This pose is intended to attract the attention of the viewer and facilitate the consumption of the image by the masculine, heteronormative, and sexualizing gaze.



Figure 16.

Paul Beaudry. *The Pearl and the Wave*. 1862. Oil on canvas.

Source: Museo del Prado, Website, 2019.

<https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-pearl-and-the-wave/51f1fd9f-19bb-4d4d-9d40-94a49bdba38d>

Knowing that the person photographed in Figure 15 identifies as non-binary also informs my analysis of the photograph and leads me to question some aspects of this photograph and the ideas it might disseminate. The subject, who can look visibly queer to some because of their androgynous appearance (queer representation has often been equated with androgyny, an assumption that contributes to the erasure of folks who present as more feminine), is pictured nude and in a remote context. As ‘wilderness’ spaces in urban and rural areas have been associated with heightened surveillance and repression of queer folks (from policing of gay cruising in parks to hate crimes),¹⁴⁹ the

¹⁴⁸ Museo Nacional del Prado. “The Pearl and the Wave,” accessed April 1, 2019, <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-pearl-and-the-wave/51f1fd9f-19bb-4d4d-9d40-94a49bdba38d>.

¹⁴⁹ See footnote 74.

level of comfort represented in Figure 15 could be explained by Sinopoulos-Lloyd's positionality as a white settler. The fact that this picture highlights and normalizes the subject's belonging to a place that is being marked by a process of colonization is not neutral. This is significant given that the photograph conveys the European trope of the 'nude in the landscape' - a trope which has often been associated with the idea of timelessness. The tension in the photograph is a result the co-creators' intent and of the cultural antecedents that are summoned in this type of representation, which has a long and complicated history tied to European notions of whiteness,¹⁵⁰ universalism and patriarchy. Their acknowledgement of the Esselen as the custodians of the land (seen in the caption of Figure 15) creates a hybridity that Sinopoulos-Lloyd appear to fully embrace. Believing that queer ecology theories and practices can destabilize supremacies, they expressed the following viewpoint in their interview with Anaya Young:

What queer means to me, and I think that it means something different to everyone [...]. I feel like to me queer indicates non-binary, [...] but I actually do not mean it only as a gender identity, but [...] as a sort of questioning of different dualities or dichotomies, and also a hybridity, it could be cultural hybridity. There is also a natural type of hybridity that is present, being a settler on this land as well that feels relevant. And then also another thing that I associate with queerness is mysticism, and knowing that the divine (be it the universe or nature), that it cannot be fully grasped intellectually and the surrender is really required in the name of that mystery. So to me, this all feels relevant to talking about ecology, or challenging notions of futurity or futurism that are present in dominant views of environmentalism.¹⁵¹

While I believe that the concept of hybridity can be used to dismantle purist/binarist approaches to gender and morality, I also detect a risk when settlers embrace hybridity too comfortably. This photograph symbolizes this tension for me. The idea of exploring one's own heritage seems to offer a way to reflect on the weight of their presence and actions on stolen land, as well as to offer a way to self-heal while avoiding culturally appropriative gestures and world-making. Queer radical movements have a history of

¹⁵⁰ In the 1980s, scholars have discovered that Greek statues were not white, but were in fact painted in colorful colors. The idealization of classical sculpture has been argued to be tied with white supremacist ideas of racial 'purity'. Margaret Talbot, "The Myth of Whiteness in Classical Sculpture," *The New Yorker*, October 29, 2018.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/29/the-myth-of-whiteness-in-classical-sculpture>.

¹⁵¹ Young, "Queer Nature on Reclaiming Wild Safe Space," 32:05–33:05.

appropriating Indigenous religions and rituals, notably among feminist back-to-the-land movements¹⁵² and with the ‘gay shamanism’ of the Radical Faeries of the 1970s.¹⁵³ More recently, the term ‘Two-Spirit’ has been appropriated by queer settlers, even if it is not necessarily a trans identity.¹⁵⁴ Indigenous language advocate, Kai Minosh defines Two-Spirit as follows: “[it] means aligning yourself with the ancestors, committing yourself to a process of decolonization that is sometimes painful with the knowledge of how much has been lost.”¹⁵⁵ Given that queer settlers do not experience this specific loss, claiming to be two-spirit is not only ignorant, but harmful. It also erases the spiritual aspect of this umbrella term. These few historical examples show the ethical limits of the search for feminist or queer belonging through land-based or Indigenous-inspired practices. In as much as these practices can serve to naturalize and normalize settlers’ sense of belonging, there is an ethical limit to their value. At worst, such practices bypass decolonization efforts, and risks becoming a form of queer settler colonialism. In *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*, Scott Lauria Morgensen writes:

Settler citizenship offers queer politics normatively nonNative belonging to a settler nation. Yet non-Natives also resolve their settler colonial inheritance by

¹⁵² “In land base lesbian rituals, it was just as common to find feminist renderings of Native American spiritual practice as it was to find Wiccan or neopagan practice. [...] A few women on lesbian land, particularly in the Southwest, who had also lived on lesbian land in Oregon in the seventies participated (with Native American sponsorship) in the Native American Church, attended native peyote meetings, and brought some of the rituals to lesbian spiritual circles.” Catherine Kleiner, “Nature’s Lovers: The Erotics of Lesbian Land Communities in Oregon, 1974-1984,” in *Seeing Nature through Gender*, ed. Virginia Scharff, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 248.

¹⁵³ “They framed the country and primitivity as repositories of an ancient authenticity long sought by urban subjects of metropolitan societies. Gatherings granted participants a new affinity with differences defined by place, race, class, and nation that let them feel more rural and Indigenous than they felt in everyday life.” Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization, First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 188.

¹⁵⁴ For more information on the subject, please read Jeffrey McNeil-Seymour, “Two-Spirit Resistance” in *Whose Land is It Anyway? The Decolonization and Reconciliation Handbook*, ed. Peter McFarlane and Nicole Schabus (Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC, 2017), 52-56. It is also important to note that Two-Spirit is not the only label that encompasses Indigenous queer experiences. IndigeQueer, Queer Native or Native Trans are examples of other labels that are currently in use in ‘North America’.

¹⁵⁵ Kai Minosh, “Why Non-Natives Appropriating ‘Two-Spirit’ Hurts,” *BGD* (blog), July 21, 2016. <https://www.bgdblog.org/2016/07/appropriating-two-spirit/>.

creating queer cultures that make the land their medium for liberating sexuality and gender. Gay and lesbian countercultures in the back-to-the-land collectives across the United States and Canada inspired broader circulation of their rural practices.¹⁵⁶

In much more direct and often cruder ways, an Instagram user with the handle @drphilisalwayswatching expressed similar concerns in Figure 15's comments section. They wrote, "This is settler white supremacy," in a first comment that was then followed by "Ecomysticism" like holy fuck you're really out here with hardcore settler colonial revisionism crap projecting and placing your white settler body imaginatives/futurities onto settled territories."¹⁵⁷ The two comments have received no public answer from the Queer Nature. While Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd have not deleted @drphilisalwayswatching's comments, their lack of response left untouched the potential of a transformative public conversation around the ethical limits of a nature-based queer movement that gives so much space to settler voices, experiences, and positionalities.¹⁵⁸ It is important to contextualize this phenomenon within settlers' documented tendencies, especially when they are attempting to do decolonizing work. As Tuck and Yang write in "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,"

Because settler colonialism is built upon an entangled triad structure of settler-native-slave, the decolonial desires of white, non-white, immigrant, postcolonialism and oppressed people, can similarly be entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and reinhabitation that actually further settler colonialism. The metaphorization of decolonization makes possible a set of evasions, or "settler moves to innocence", that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us*.

¹⁵⁷ Queer Nature (@queernature), "@queerquechua and I recently took a series of photos at Jade Cove in Big Sur (Esselen Territory) Inspired by the erotic power of seashore...", Instagram photo, November 5, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bp0aL1oBIpZ/>.

¹⁵⁸ I have noticed a similar situation whereby concerns that were publicly unanswered in at least one other instance. The same user wrote next to another photograph: "'Greek-American' - you mean a white settler? Adding that suffix is genocidal." While the tone of the message and the structure of corporate social media platforms does not favour embodied and transformative discussions, Queer Nature's silence raises questions. Queer Nature (@queernature), "Today was fierce tracking with @nativewomenswilderness ! Such deep gratitude to bring Iselta Pueblo, Navajo and Huanca people together...", Instagram photo, April 28, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BiI5K7FhrJx/>.

¹⁵⁹ Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," 1.

This artwork invites me to remain critical, and not to romanticize a discourse that would be so well constructed that it could hide resettlement gestures. As Queer Nature aims to be “dreaming into decolonially-informed queer ‘ancestral futurism,’”¹⁶⁰ it is crucial to look at how settler futurity weaves itself into this vision, notably through its proximity with Indigenous people and methodologies. While I do not position myself as a moral authority on this matter, I believe that the call for complex and hybrid stories should include discussions around one’s complicity with the settler colonial state and the impossibility of reconciling notions of belonging with a settler subjectivity.

¹⁶⁰ Queer Nature, website homepage

CONCLUSION

I want to conclude this thesis by returning to the quote by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing with which I began my introduction:

We are stuck with the problem of living despite economic and ecological ruination. Neither tales of progress nor of ruin tell us how to think about collaborative survival. It is time to pay attention to mushroom picking. Not that this will save us – but it might open our imaginations.¹⁶¹

Through the preceding chapters, I have shown several instances of creative, “collaborative survival” in the photographic and community-based work of Queer Nature. In Chapter One, I explored the question of the artists’ approach to ‘nature’ considering three photographs selected from Queer Nature’s Instagram account. These photographs and their captions showed that “collaborative survival” is grounded in relationship building processes with both human and more-than-human beings, notably members of Indigenous nations. In Chapter Two, the thesis shifted in focus to the representation of queer folks based on my analysis of eight photographs shared on the Instagram account of the ‘organism.’ These artworks underlined that “collaborative survival” for the queer and racialized communities can simultaneously reside in the community building efforts, creating the conditions for the expression of queer joy, and choosing to self-invisibilize and merge with ‘nature’ in an act of more-than-human drag. Chapter Three raised the question of Indigenous and settler ancestral work and its visual representation, bringing me to conclude that even if this reflective practice has a radical and healing potential, it can encompass resettlements gestures. In the case of queer settler folks, legitimizing and naturalizing belonging is done to the detriment of the traditional custodians of the land.

That said, “collaborative survival” is a principle that the artists continue to explore to this day. The radical potential of this queer world-making process puts as much emphasis on nature-connection, community-building, and visions of decolonization as it does on the richness and the complexity of its visual practice. In a time of political

¹⁶¹ Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, 19.

polarization and great uncertainty, specifically in terms of the precarious future of our environment and many species (including our own), I believe that nurturing a capacity to hold complex and ambiguous stories could be one of the most powerful survival skills.¹⁶²

However, the omnipresent use of academic frameworks and terminologies in the photographs' captions raises questions around the accessibility of the language deployed in this artistic and activist project. There is also a risk that such over-theorization leads the viewer in the opposite direction than Queer Nature's search for grounding, connection, and healing. This could represent an important limit to the collective's efforts to decolonize, as the use and consumption of academic, decolonial language may "kill the possibility of decolonization."¹⁶³ This risk mirrors the limitations of the present thesis. I have focused on the most theoretical and carefully curated aspects of their work. Focusing on human activities and human views on interspecies relationships also raises the question of how 'nature' has been able to speak through this thesis. Stating that 'nature' has not spoken through this thesis would reinforce the idea that humans and more-than-human beings are not in constant relationship with each other, and that the 'natural' realm has a unified voice. That said, I am looking forward to exploring other methodologies and approaches to writing with 'nature'.

Lastly, as I hope this thesis has shown, the intricateness and beauty of the images and texts co-created by Pinar and So Sinopoulos-Lloyd should be subject to the same critical examination as any other visual or textual cultural production that claims or aims to be decolonizing in its intentions. For as the history of 'Western' art has shown all too often, beauty and detail are the camouflage in which settlement, and resettlement gestures alike, hide in plain sight.

¹⁶² Shotwell, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*.

¹⁶³ Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," 1–40.

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