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Is Landscape Queer?

Kate Thomas

What is a landscape

A landscape is what when they that is I

See and look.

Gertrude Stein¹

There is something queer here, as I will argue in this chapter. Stein asks and answers her question in the same breath, not even pausing to use a question mark, her answer formed mostly from a slew of pronouns. As Stein scholar Sarah Posman argues, the thing about this definition “is that it contains everything at once. There is no chronology of emotion, no Aristotelian development that forces you to keep up. . . . Everything is there for you to explore at once, there are as many ins and outs as you want there to be.”² Elsewhere, Stein expressed admiration for the way that landscape has “an existence in and for itself,”³ a dictum that sounds almost like queer self-fashioning; after all, *she* is, herself, Stein, she is stone on which we all stand. But to be clear, this is not an argument for queer belonging, not precisely. Stein lived and wrote as an expatriate, a “deterritorialized” subject, an American who had made her home in European landscapes.⁴ But if she resisted considering herself marked and defined by man-made territory, she embraced the idea that she—everyone—is produced by terroir: “anybody is as their land and air and water sky and wind and anything else is.”⁵ Anybody is as land and air: bodies are produced by landscape, just as landscape is made by us, by “what when they that is I/See and Look.” This is not the queerness that is other, but the queerness that is all-togetherness in space and time, the queerness

that unmakes ontological difference and replaces it with shifting relationality in and of and across landscape.

Stein wrote *Stanzas* in the country house in the Rhône Valley that she and Alice B. Toklas had started renting in the 1920s.⁶ This house, set high on a hill in the small village of Bilignin, had formal and vegetable gardens, a terrace that overlooked farmland and woodland, hills with streams and lakes, and beyond that—the Swiss Alps. Nevertheless, *Stanzas* describes neither flora and fauna nor geographic or environmental features. Instead, Stein disarticulates the compound noun “landscape” into a tumble of monosyllabic words that express position, perspective direction, and relation. It is, therefore, perhaps no wonder that the literary form she came to most associate with landscape was drama. Living in that “landscape that made itself its own landscape,” as she described Bilignin, “so completely made a play that I wrote quantities of plays.”⁷ Both landscape and drama had, she felt, “formations,” and both are about “being always in relation.” Landscape is always “in relation one thing to the other thing.”⁸

Stein’s poetics of land-as-relation finds resonance in the etymology of the English word “landscape.” The suffix “scape” doesn’t derive, as has sometimes been supposed, from “scope,” which invokes visual perception, but is rather a cognate of the German “schaft” or Dutch “skip,” which means “creation, creature, constitution, condition” and becomes “ship” in English. “Scape” thus operates in the way it does in words like “friendship” or “companionship”: it means the “state or condition of being.”⁹ Kenneth Olwig has shown how cultural geographers of the 1980s, such as Denis Cosgrove, were guided by a belief that “scape” was a visual prompt and therefore tied the concept of landscape to Renaissance perspectival representation and Johnsonian notions of a pictorial scenic. The field of Landscape Architecture has since unearthed older definitions of landscape that emphasized not scenery but instead place and polity.

Landscape is not, in other words, the province of painters, architects, and theatre designers. Landscape is neither a scenic view nor a backdrop. It is also neither solely nature nor solely culture. It is land in a relationship. As Anne Whiston Spirn points out, *landscape* contains the notion of a “mutual shaping of people and place: people shape the land and the land shapes people.”¹⁰ But is this etymology a prompt to understand landscape as a thing in and of itself, in communion with itself, self-constituting, or rather a thing only brought into being by an encounter with a sensate “I”? The latter might emphasize cultivation, the former upon something more like *genius loci*, a spirit of place.

We might therefore begin to answer the question “Is landscape queer?” by noting that when we talk, as we commonly do, of “sexual orientation,” we are using a spatial metaphor. The idiom acknowledges that sexuality might be a matter of, as Sara Ahmed writes, “how we inhabit spaces as well as ‘who’ or ‘what’ we inhabit spaces with.”¹¹ It is also a matter of how we traverse those spaces. Back in 1993, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick made the observation that has become foundational to the field of queer theory; that the root meaning of “queer” is “across.”¹² “Across” is a preposition, the part of speech that signals direction, time, place, location, or spatial relationship. In what might be called a “prepositional turn,” queer theory veered away from nouns and definite articles, declining to define “the homosexual” as a distinct, discreet, and identifiable subject, turning instead towards ideas of relation and, I argue, landscape. Twelve years before Sedgwick showed us queer’s affiliation with being “across,” “transverse,” or “athwart,” Michel Foucault had also spoken of how the homosexual lived “slantwise.”¹³ In this interview, he argues that the “diagonal lines” homosexuality lays out in the social fabric reveal other possible forms and textures of relation: it discloses “the formation of new alliances and the tying together of unforeseen lines of force.”¹⁴ Once again, we see (even very early) queer theory

declining to define “the homosexual” as a fixed point, a delimited, delimiting noun, and a definite article. Instead of being a bounded subject, the homosexual is, for Foucault, an “occasion” for making manifest many “virtual” kinds of affiliation and relation. The term on which he comes to rest is spatial. “We must think,” he concludes, “that what exists is far from filling all possible spaces.”

I would propose that Foucault’s “all possible spaces” might be glossed as “landscape.” After all, they are physical and social spaces that promise dimension, heterogeneity, and interrelation. Foucault’s polymorphous relations that can be manifested out of and into “all possible spaces” are reminiscent of the “endless forms” dwelling in a “tangled bank” that heaves into view in the final, deeply poetic paragraph of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859). This bank teems with vegetation and creatures of “many kinds,” “various” life forms, all “different from each other” but contiguous, touching, and entangling. Homosexuality, Foucault suggests, is a point from which we might apprehend a full, free-ranging landscape rather than looking out only at sanctioned scenic views with their hierarchies of foreground and background or treading only paved and narrow pathways. By the end of the interview, it’s as if homosexuality has been the agent that materialized a full and lush landscape in place of what Foucault calls “a background of emptiness.” We can now return to Ahmed, who makes this latent connection between queerness and landscape architecture fully explicit:

In landscape architecture, they use the term ‘desire lines’ to describe unofficial paths, those marks left on the ground that show everyday comings and goings, where people deviate from the paths they are supposed to follow. Deviation leaves its own marks on the ground, which can even help generate alternative lines, which cross the ground in unexpected ways. Such lines are indeed traces of desire: where people have taken

different routes to get to this point or to that point. It is certainly desire that helps generate a lesbian landscape, a ground that is shaped by the paths that we follow in deviating from the straight line.¹⁵

Ahmed's reflection on how unsanctioned desires form new pathways, any which way, is a version of literary critic Catherine Belsey's conviction that "Desire. . . can go anywhere."¹⁶ Belsey's "anywhere" suggests that desire can be found in any or every place and also that it can take you to those places. It is omni-locational. It would follow, therefore, that landscape, a "ship" containing and connecting locations, can take you to all desires.

When Ahmed makes the connection between queer theory and landscape architecture so direct, she is, herself, taking a "different route" from most other critics. When queer theory turned its attention to spatiality, it first focused on the way major cities offered refuge to queers migrating from presumptively hostile small towns and rural settings, congregating in urban bars and public spaces and cruising grounds. Metropolitan centers occupied the center ground of queer studies. As Scott Herring observed in 2010, "Much of queer studies wants desperately to be urban planning, even as so much of its theoretical architecture is already urban planned."¹⁷ Herring is referring to epistemologies such as the closet and politics such as "coming out"; these supposedly foundational and universal structures of queer life are, Herring argues, "urban-based."¹⁸ In between the queer theory of the early 1990s and Herring's book, there had, in fact, been a wave of scholarship—much of it by geographers, cultural studies, and literary scholars—that had tried to provide a corrective to the way that queer theory was privileging what David Bell calls "metrosexuality."¹⁹ Coming out, going west, moving on up, following the yellow brick road: the disco choruses of the queer liberation movement had allied queerness with leaving places behind. In the course of this, certain kinds of places with certain kinds of affiliations were

left behind. Despite queer studies' intellectual and political allegiance to those who are sexually marginalized, many of its scholars and activists ended up, themselves, marginalizing non-urban spaces: rural, suburban, the heartlands, the farm.²⁰

These spatial chauvinisms edged out queer people whose access to metropolitan spaces was more difficult or who were simply more at home in other kinds of communities and landscapes. Leaving a small town might also mean leaving behind working-class culture. Navigating new paths in a new city might be less enticing to those dealing with disability or chronic health conditions. Relocating in order to find a sexual community might produce dislocations of racial and ethnic ties. So those who are sexually othered might nonetheless cherish varying kinds of pleasure that lead them, as Elton John's 1973 "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" has it, away from the penthouse and back to the plough: "When are you going to land?" the song asks, counterpointing the rustic scapes of the woods and the farm to the rootlessness of disco and emerald cities. Another version of this call to be "close to the land" would be taken up by the Radical Faeries just a few years later; influenced by the hippie, neo-pagan, environmental, and feminist movements, the first Spiritual Conference for Radical Fairies took place in Arizona in September 1979. Lesbian back-to-the-land movements date back even further; the landdyke, or womyn's land movements of the 1970s and 1980s that sought to carve separatist utopias out of a recognition of interdependence were following in the footsteps of nineteenth-century women's suffrage movements that similarly used rural retreats to try and remove themselves from the bounds of patriarchy.²¹ Lisa Moore has documented how "back to the land" felt like a move "back to ourselves," creating "a lesbian aesthetic of the domestic outdoors that transcends the traditional garden space."²² Efforts to find and farm "promised lands," of course, risk reproducing the problems of settler colonialism, whether it be by imposing white and middle-

class notions of property ownership, displacing established communities, or “playing Indian” on Indigenous land.²³ Even lesbian-of-color land movements that grew out of resistance to white middle-class dominance struggled to establish strong and lasting roots or, indeed, avoid the fetishization of Indigenous connections to the land.²⁴ La Luz de la Lucha, for example, which became womyn of color land in the Fall of 1977, was empty and in foreclosure by 1979.

Claiming and queering land has been both a powerful and problematic practice.

Critical theory has had a similarly hard time knowing how to put sexuality and landscape into relation with each other. The disciplines of landscape architecture and queer theory have played coy with each other; it is rare to find an entry on sexuality in the indexes of landscape architecture texts, and similarly rare to find queer theory, considering how landscape might shape and be shaped by sexuality. But we have long known that landscapes have an erotics. We might think of the fashion for ribald gardens in the eighteenth century or how, at Versailles, as Marc Treib fetchingly puts it, “amorous trysts occurred in the bosks.”²⁵ Or we could look up the word “sexuality” to find that its first documented use refers to the sexuality of plants; this application comprises the first six entries in the Oxford English Dictionary. Indeed, our very origin stories often site sex in a garden. Literary scholar Lisa Moore points out, “The rich history of associations between transgressive sexual knowledge and the garden goes back to the myth of Eden.”²⁶ Moore’s particularization that the sexuality found in gardens skews transgressive is pertinent. E. M. Forster’s groundbreaking “gay novel,” *Maurice*, is as much a love letter to the “greenwood” of England as it is a love story between two men.²⁷ The book, written in 1913–1914, revised in 1932, again in 1959–1960, and only published posthumously in 1971, defied literary convention by giving Maurice and his gamekeeper lover Alec a happy ending, a plot in which they were “parted no more.”²⁸ Forster writes in the terminal note to the novel, “I was

determined that in fiction anyway two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows.”²⁹ Forster imagines this space of queer eternal felicity very specifically as a landscape: “Maurice and Alec still roam the greenwood,” he writes.³⁰ Forster glosses this greenwood as a pastoral idyll “in which it is still possible to get lost,” a place where one can take refuge in a “forest or fell . . . [or] cave.”³¹ Forster had first-hand experience of this kind of greenwood, an experience that prompted him to write *Maurice*. The novel was, he wrote, a “direct result” of a visiting his friend Edward Carpenter’s back-to-the-land gay commune at Millthorpe in Derbyshire. Seeing Carpenter relish what he called “simple living” in his “happy valley” with his lover George Merrill, farming and making sandals was like glimpsing into an Arcadian grove of gay possibility.³² Forster admired Carpenter for having pushed through the privet hedges of suburbia and cut across the manicured quadrangles of Cambridge to root himself in nature instead of convention. In the novel, Maurice wonders if same-sex relationships will ever be acceptable in England, to which the doctor trying to cure him of his homosexuality says, “I doubt it. England has always been disinclined to accept human nature.”³³ Forster fights this naturalization of heterosexuality by arguing for the queerness of landscape. He uses the topos of the greenwood to figure nature as validating human nature’s manifold desires. For many gay rights activists emerging from the fin de siècle, the English bucolic—and the cross-winds of Walt Whitman’s American eco-erotics—provided a strong defense of homosexuality. As Matt Cook observes, the bucolic is “used by John Addington Symonds, Edward Carpenter, and E. M. Forster to legitimize their queer desires and to show continuity with the natural as it enfolds them.”³⁴ Green, we might say, is gay.

This fin de siècle queer embrace of the bucolic tended, however, towards earnest utopianism.

And as such, it involved a certain placelessness: “utopia,” meaning “nowhere” or “not place.” It

involved the spatial and temporal displacements of “not here, not now,” and because it turned towards the Classical world and its climes, it also involved investment in “over there” or “back then.” Symonds and Carpenter both, for example, held passions for all things Greco-Roman, and Carpenter credited “the delightful landscape and climate of Italy” for resuscitating him to a “new life.”³⁵ The fin-de- siècle bucolic romanticized the rural, or Arcadian landscapes, turning its back on others as commercial and crass. But of course, there is no equal sign between “landscape” and “rural.” A landscape does not have to be green. Nor does a landscape have to be welcoming or even sustaining. As anthropologist Anna Tsing puts it, “A landscape is a gathering in the making. . . . Landscapes are both imaginative and material; they encompass physical geographies, phenomenologies, and cultural and political commitments.”³⁶ The fin-de-siecle queer writers described and built—whether literally, in Carpenter’s case, or literarily in Forster’s case—their queer landscapes. But these were gatherings particular to their own queer moment. They were describing—or imagining—the only kinds of landscapes in which they could be queer. The later “Go West” generation (“west” meaning not the high plains and mountains of the phrase’s first iteration but the rainbow-flag-draped streets of San Francisco) would invert the paradigm of the bucolic, turning its back on the rural and the suburban and the small town, embracing cities as the only places in which they could live gay lives.

There is, of course, no one site of sexual liberation. No single type of landscape that could house, express, sustain or reflect a queer life. Whitman celebrated the sensuousness of nature in *Leaves of Grass*, but he also celebrated the sensuousness of crowds on trams and buses. Artist, filmmaker, and gay activist Derek Jarman’s first muse was London; his earliest films focused on the Docklands. But as a frequent visitor to the queer cruising grounds of Hampstead Heath, he also well understood how any metropolis has bucolic pastoral spaces enfolded within it; when he

ventured over “the invisible border [where] your heart beats faster, and the world seems a better place” he found his own Eden, his own Arcadia: “lying in the grass under the stars with some stranger was ecstasy,” he wrote.³⁷ If he could perceive the heterogeneity of landscapes, it was perhaps because he understood himself as an amalgam, an artist who could work with a range of media and materials. In *Modern Nature*, he writes that if “fate had turned out different,” he would have been a professional gardener because he was a passionate amateur practitioner of the horticultural arts.³⁸ He devoted the last years of his life to his beach garden at Prospect Cottage in Dungeness, which he bought in 1987. Having been diagnosed with HIV a year earlier, he was “gardening on borrowed time,” as he described it in a scribbled note in a sketchbook. The cottage and garden, which would be his home until his death in 1994, sit on a shingle shore in the shadow of the Dungeness nuclear power station. To Jarman’s eye, this landscape was “parched,” “bone dry,” and “wounded.”³⁹ It expressed, in other words, physical endangerment and a need for care. Jarman took his ailing body to a failed and abandoned landscape, where he became an architect of wonderment and compassion. Garden and artist would salvage each other together. The dominant man-made features of the borrowed scenery of Prospect Cottage invoke both life-saving and peril; it looks out on two lighthouses, two lifeboat stations, and two nuclear power reactors. Jarman called it a “landscape of past endeavours.”⁴⁰ It’s a phrase that conjures up a sense of struggle, possibly futile. These six built structures navigate the divide between salvation and destruction. The lighthouse and lifeboats are civic furniture devoted to safety and rescue but are needed because of the peril of storms and sea. Nuclear power stations might arguably be classed as life-sustaining because they provide energy but given that the Chernobyl disaster had occurred in April 1986, just under a year before Jarman bought the cottage in May of 1987, they would instead have been viewed as ominous. They were ominous and politically odious: an

insignia of Margaret Thatcher's pledge to build one nuclear power station every year and a reminder of lesbians at Greenham Common protesting nuclear weapons. But Jarman had a perverse—perhaps compassionate—attraction to the apocalyptic. In *The Last of England* (1987), he'd fantasized about living in a "little lead-lined house," calling it The Villa Chernobyl and furnishing it with a "Geiger-counter in the hall ticking where the grandfather clock used to chime away the hours."⁴¹ Living with nuclear reactors in full view was, of course, a wry metaphor for how his own life had been turned into a half-life by a virus. It also metaphorized not being afraid to stand on the front lines, squarely facing a fucked up world and the forces that power it. Jarman had always, Peake tells us, liked pylons for that reason, too.⁴² Rather than harboring a Ruskinian hatred of the ruination of "scenery" or seeking solace in the purely picturesque, Jarman embraced landscapes that were blighted, stigmatized, or abandoned. He was a high priest of queer art's theology of salvaging discarded spaces and materials and of finding beauty in that which others consider ravaged or toxic.

Jarman's biographer, Tony Peake, explains the draw of Dungeness: "Jarman had loved places that were interzonal, that stood between other worlds, or on the fringes of them."⁴³ Prospect Cottage, which was originally a fisherman's shack, sits lightly and liminal on a stretch of shingle beach where land meets sea. It is an unenclosed plot, fenceless and thus un-English, fully open to the elements, whether gentle or buffeting, witness to the constant mutability and also endurance. For Jarman, gardening supplied a mystical, metaphysical release from what Elizabeth Freeman has called "chrononormativity," the conventional timelines of what Jarman called "heterosoc."⁴⁴ Jarman writes:

The gardener digs in another time, without past or future, beginning or end. A time that does not cleave the day with rush hours, lunch breaks, the last bus home. As you walk in

the garden you pass into this time—the moment of entering can never be remembered.

Around you the landscape lies transfigured. Here is the Amen beyond the prayer.⁴⁵

The key term in this passage is “transfigured.” As a gardener, he is doing the transfiguring—the planting, the pruning, the planning—but he is also profoundly changed by the landscape in which he works. When he broke ground on his Prospect Cottage garden—his first garden of his own—he imported thirty rose bushes from a supplier in Kensington. They died. He learned instead to use a palette of native plants—sea kale and teasels, viper’s bugloss, gorse, wild peas, and sea holly—all hardy, somewhat vegetal forms. For high points of color, Jarman turned to the foxgloves that are both wild and contain toxins, and then the blood-red flower that thrives on traumatized soil, the poppy. The result is a garden that is neither rural nor urban, neither simply bucolic nor entirely post-industrial. It grows out of gravel and is decorated with flotsam and jetsam, driftwood, and fishing floats. It speaks of both paradise and ruin.

But Jarman was an artificer, too. His garden combines deference to both the tenet of genius loci—the spirit of place—with the arts of displacement. Jarman followed the landscaper’s dictum of “right plants right place,” but he also imported large quantities of compost, which he buried under the shingle. How distant was he, really, from Oscar Wilde, who wore a green carnation in defiance of Nature with a capital “N?” Wilde’s green carnation was a campy defense of desires that many considered unnatural, and of how the queer is often seen as a “hothouse flower.” The queer subject is stigmatized as rootless, aberrant, contrived, or not part of the reproductive tree of life and has often been figured as a terrible deformity away from the natural world. But what we mean by nature, what we recognize as natural, what kinds of growth we nurture, and what we suppress are all constructs and change with each generation and, indeed, across a single generation. Young Jarman embedded himself in landscapes of pulsating life, like the “pre-

Lapserian” cruising grounds of Hampstead Heath, rich with anonymous pleasures, and then removed himself to beautify and then die in a post-apocalyptic place redolent of tempests, drowned sailors, and bachelor fishermen. Jarman was an outsider, a transplant to Dungeness, and he didn’t take refuge in the dogmas of the autochthonous. “Why shouldn’t I,” he wrote, “invite people into another garden rather than walk in theirs?”⁴⁶

Jarman’s garden, along with his writings about gardening and scenery and belonging, joyfully instigate what Jill H. Casid has called “Landscape Trouble.” This title, which she gives to her 2008 contribution to a roundtable on landscape theory, tips the wink to a classic work of queer theory. Judith Butler’s groundbreaking book *Gender Trouble* was published almost thirty years earlier in 1990. Casid’s piece is about colonialism and landscape and the thorny question of how disindigenation has been a powerful tool of colonialism through deforestation, the transplantation of plantation crops, or the “graft[ing of] one idea of island paradise onto another.”⁴⁷ This focus on how empires are not only built but also planted and transplanted or “inhumed,” to use the term Casid coins, resonates against the way that queer theory and culture have challenged our definitions of nature and the natural.

Casid’s earlier work, in *Landscape and Colonialism* (2005), brings postcolonial and queer theory together, examining the trope of “nomadic gardens of queer longing” in Shani Mootoo’s 1996 novel *Cereus Blooms at Night*.⁴⁸ As Audre Lorde challenged us to ask what tools we needed to dismantle the master’s house, this novel asks what it takes to uproot, or overgrow the master’s plantation. “To plant,” Casid reminds us, “was to make colonies.”⁴⁹ Sowing seed was one way of staking a claim on the land and metaphorizing that land as an inseminated woman sought to naturalize both imperial agrarian practices and heterosexual reproduction. Casid reminds us that the idiom of “husbandry” yokes together the possession of land with the patriarchal possession of

women. In imperial agrarian discourse, landscape is allowed—forced—to be feminine, but it is never allowed to be queer. But the plot of Mootoo’s novel—both its narrative and its place/location—“sustains seemingly impossible relations of desires” between a “cast of transgendered, transhuman, queer and ethnic hybrids.”⁵⁰ The story shows us that plants, allowed to run wild, can have the power to not only over-run the master’s garden but also dismantle the master’s house; the titular cereus takes hold of the walls of a sexually abusive father’s house and pulls them down around his corpse. *Cereus Blooms* is, Casid concludes, a story in which “‘nature’ takes revenge against the regime of the ‘natural.’”⁵¹ The garden can rise up against the patriarchal imperial gardener. Through hybridization, relocation, or simply running rampant, the plantings of the European landscape garden, or the plantation, can become sex rebels and decolonial activists.

This recognition that grown and built environments should be considered to have agency, and be made up of “vibrant matter,” to use the term coined by Jane Bennett, is central to the “non-human turn” that has recently brought together queer and environmental studies. In 2008, Noreen Giffney and Myra Hird published *Queering the Non/Human*, an essay collection that proposes that the human is neither central to nor uniquely sentient in the world.⁵² The non-human is as thinking, as agent, and as desiring as we have imagined ourselves to be; Giffney and Hird’s essays give a collective shove to the anthropocentrism, anthronormativity and anthropomorphism. As Michael O’Rourke writes in the preface: “Our transimmanence, or allness, a being-with towards others, *all* others, brings about new modes of sociability.”⁵³ Two years later, *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, edited by Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, similarly explored how “sexualities and environments meet and inform one another.”⁵⁴ Their essays challenge us to hear how the spatial and the sexual are inextricable when we talk

about the “orientation” of our desires and the “environments” that might stimulate or inhibit those desires. “These spatial-sexual processes,” they write, “have also affected the spaces of *nature*, not only in formal and designated natures but also across socionatural environments, more broadly.”⁵⁵ One contributor, Gordon Brent Ingram, seeks to address the “enigmatic gap”⁵⁶ of sexuality in the field of landscape ecology, pointing out that its critical vocabulary of “patches,” “edges,” “ecotones,” “flow,” and “matrices” are perfectly suited for describing how marginalized sexual subjects find spaces in which to gather, connect, live, and love. In 2013, Nicole Seymour’s *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination* joined this new body of work on “queer ecology,” tracing an evolution in which “natural” was “something of a dirty word in queer theory”⁵⁷ with an understanding that nature may teach us a thing or two about being strange. As Tim Morton writes in a 2010 guest column in *PMLA*, “All life-forms, along with the environments they compose and inhabit, defy boundaries between inside and outside at every level. When we examine the environment, it shimmers, and figures emerge in ‘strange distortion.’”⁵⁸ All these theorists of queer ecology agree that everything we are and everything around us exists in a condition of such interspecies intimacy that it doesn’t even make sense to think of insides and outsides, centers and peripheries, foreground and background. In other words, we are our landscape.

With this understanding that landscape is, to use Donna Haraway’s term, a “natureculture”⁵⁹ that is not a backdrop to human life and desire but instead exists in dynamic interrelation with it, let’s return now to Stein’s definition of landscape with which I opened this chapter: “A landscape is what when they that is I/See and look.” Stein’s assertion that “A landscape is. . . is I” sounds very like an assertion made by trans theorist Susan Stryker just two years ago: “Because I am there, and because I am trans, this is a transecology.”⁶⁰ Stryker makes this grounding claim about the ground

in the preface to a 2020 essay collection called *Transecologies*. Theorizing bodies-in-place and place-in-bodies is an alternative to both biological essentialism and social constructionism. Nicole Seymour's essay in the collection argues that nature is a site and paradigm of transitioning as central to all life forms. Seymour calls this "organic transgenderism" and proffers the observation that gender transition is "akin to the life-cycle changes of plants and animals."⁶¹ She cites poet Oliver Baez Bendorf, "If you've ever doubted that a body can transform/completely, take the highway north from town. . . . The land where I was/born was born an ocean, and that ocean born of ice."⁶² Together, Seymour and Baez turn to landscape as a natureculture (oceans and highways) that manifests how transformation is crucial to all forms of life.

Lucas Crawford begins his 2015 book *Transgender Architectonics* with a premise similar to Stryker's: "Transgender space in general may be defined. . . by those spaces that we visit and must navigate on a daily basis."⁶³ He goes on, however, to explore the importance of "trans-imaginative worlds," showing that trans subjects don't just exist in or fit into extant places and spaces but can instead be architects of the "acts and collaborations that happen across bodies, buildings, and milieus,"⁶⁴ and hermeneuts of accidental or constructed "otherworldly landscapes."⁶⁵ Crawford agrees with Seymour: theorizing *trans* and *architecture* together "draws out the always-already trans quality of materiality" and leads us towards an understanding of the "ubiquity of constant transformation for all."⁶⁶ This metaphysical theorization of all life and all spaces as universally "always-already trans" does not, of course, gloss over the perils that queer and trans subjects all too often experience when navigating both gender politics and landscapes, nor the frequent ways that the logistics of finding medical care and social resources force trans people to make geographic relocations. In an earlier article, Crawford points out that "the experience of gender modification seemingly demands metaphors of sovereign territoriality as

well as literal movement from place to place by those who practice it.”⁶⁷ Crawford’s linking of trans experience with a districting/redistricting trope has a foundation in the much earlier work of Jay Prosser, who in 1998 observed that “metaphoric territorializing of gender and literal territorializations of physical space have often gone hand in hand.”⁶⁸ This territorialization often takes the form of colonization; Native Studies scholars such as Scott Lauria Morgensen have detailed how “racialized heteropatriarchal control” has been foundational to white settler colonialism, and the sexual policing of Indigenous bodies has been a way into and through stolen land.⁶⁹ What if, however, in each of these scenarios, land rises up to meet us? What do I mean by this? Crawford gestures towards one answer when he suggests that “each bodily transition (from gender to gender or place to place) may be a matter of spatial ethics as much as sexual ones, of orientation to place as much to the body, of being moved in certain ways as much as moving.”⁷⁰ When Crawford hypothesizes that place can “move” us he is allowing the landscape traversed by the trans subject to be affectively agent. It might prompt us to find a land- or eco-centric emphasis within Susan Stryker’s assertion; when she affirms, “Because I am there, and because I am trans, this is a transecology,” it is possible that the “thereness,” which Stryker makes the primary clause of the sentence, is as formative of her trans self as the other way round.

And so we can return to what Ann Whiston Spirn told us: “Landscape moves and shapes each one of us.”⁷¹ We must take the capaciousness of her phrase “each one of us” seriously, understanding it to include queer subjects. “Include” is not in the sense that a gate has been opened by a keeper who has decided to let us into an enclosure, but in the sense of *being incorporated into*. In Gertrude Stein’s tautological sense of “A landscape is. . . is I,” the queer subject emerges in and out of landscapes of refuge and paradise, peril and pleasure, knowing all the while that we exist within each other’s embrace.

Notes

¹ Gertrude Stein, *Stanzas in Meditation: The Corrected Edition*, eds., Susannah Hollister and Emily Setina (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012 1932), 213. *Stanzas* was composed in 1932 and first published in 1956.

² Eugene W. Holland, Daniel W. Smith, and Charles J. Stivale, eds., *Gilles Deleuze: Image and Text* (London and New York: Continuum, 2009), 52.

³ Gertrude Stein, *Lectures in America* (New York: Random House, 1935), 225. She redoubles the sense that landscape is sovereign unto itself, subject to no jurisdiction when she writes: “It was a landscape. And it belonged to no country,” 176.

⁴ This term is Gilles Deleuze’s, applied to Stein by Isabelle Alfandary, “Becoming American, Becoming Agrammatical: Reading Stein with Deleuze,” in *Gertrude Stein in Europe: Reconfigurations Across Media, Disciplines, and Traditions*, eds. Sarah Posman and Laura Luis Schultz (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 129.

⁵ Gertrude Stein, *Narration: Four Lectures* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 48.

⁶ They first rented the Bilignin house in 1929, and often spent six months of the year there. Edward Burns, ed., *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Carl Van Vechten, 1913–1946* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 674.

⁷ Gertrude Stein, *Last Operas and Plays* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1935), XLVI.

⁸ Stein, *Lectures in America*, 264.

⁹ Kenneth R. Olwig, *The Meanings of Landscape: Essays on Place, Space, Environment and Justice* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2019), 4–9.

¹⁰ Rachel Ziady DeLue and James Elkins eds., *Landscape Theory* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 92.

¹¹ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 1. Using a phenomenological approach, focusing on lived and affective experiences, Ahmed explores how spaces change both our individual bodies and the collective social bodies to which we belong: “spaces ‘impress’ on the body,” shaping and reshaping the body and the “skin of the social,” 9.

¹² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993). The word “comes from the Indo-European root *-twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart*,” xii.

¹³ Michael Foucault, “Friendship as a Way of Life” in *Michel Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1994), 135–140.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 138, 140.

¹⁵ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 19–20.

¹⁶ Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1994), 6.

¹⁷ Scott Herring, *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁹ David Bell, “Eroticizing the Rural” in *De-Centring Sexualities: Politics and Representation Beyond the Metropolis* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000, 83–101), 84.

²⁰ Exceptions include: Lisa Moore, “Safe Space, Silo Storage, Outhouse with a View: Lesbian Garden History” in Andrew Gorman-Murray and Matt Cook eds., *Queering the Interior*

(London: Bloomsbury, 2018); Will Fellows, *Farm Boys: Lives of Gay Men from the Rural Midwest* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); Karen Lee Osborne and William J. Spurlin, eds., *Reclaiming the Heartland: Lesbian and Gay Voices from the Midwest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Michael Warner, “Walden’s Erotic Economy” in *Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex and Nationality in the Modern Text*, ed., Hortense Spillers (New York: Routledge, 1991), 157–74; Andrew Gorman-Murray, Barbara Pini & Lia Bryant, eds., *Sexuality, Rurality, and Geography* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013).

²¹ See Joyce Cheney’s 1985 book *Lesbian Land* for documentation of lesbian land movements such as Daughters of Earth, HOWL, Spiral Women’s Land Cooperative, and WEB.

²² Moore, “Safe Space,” 121–122.

²³ See, for example, Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 127–160.

²⁴ See Katherine Schweighofer “A land of one’s own: whiteness and indigeneity on lesbian land,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 8, no. 4 (2018), 489–506.

²⁵ Marc Treib, “Moving the Eye,” in *Sites Unseen*, eds. Diane Harris and D. Fairchild Ruggles (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2007), 61–86, 67.

²⁶ Lisa Moore, *Sister Arts: The Erotics of Lesbian Landscapes* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 16.

²⁷ For a detailed tracing of Forster’s use of the concept of the greenwood, see Elizabeth Wood Ellem, “E.M.Forster’s Greenwood,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 5, no. 1 (February 1976), 89–98.

²⁸ E.M. Forster *Maurice: A Novel* (New York and London: Norton, 1971), 240.

²⁹ Ibid., 250.

³⁰ Ibid., 254.

³¹ Ibid., 249. For a history of the Arcadian pastoral that informs Forster's concept of the "greenwood," see Fone, Byrne R. S. "This Other Eden: Arcadia and the Homosexual Imagination." *Journal of Homosexuality* 8, no. 3–4 (Spring/Summer 1983): 13–34.

³² Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1921, orig. 1916), 148 and 236.

³³ Forster, *Maurice* 211.

³⁴ Matt Cook, "Wilde Lives: Derek Jarman and the Queer Eighties," in *Oscar Wilde and Modern Culture: The Making of a Legend*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008), 285–304, 294.

³⁵ Carpenter, *Days and Dreams*, 67–68.

³⁶ Anna Tsing, "The Buck, the Bull, and the Dream of the Stag: Some unexpected weeds of the Anthropocene," *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 42, no. 1, 7.

³⁷ Quoted by Tony Peake, *Derek Jarman: A Biography* (Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, 2000), 151. Jarman decried the clearing of areas of undergrowth on the Heath as an attempt to discourage cruising, writing "Nature abhors Heterosoc [. . .] Nature is Queer." Derek Jarman, *At Your Own Risk* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1993), 23.

³⁸ Derek Jarman, *Modern Nature* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1994), 84 and 42.

³⁹ Ibid., 118.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 67.

⁴¹ Derek Jarman, *Kicking the Pricks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

Originally published as *Last of England*, 1987), 239.

⁴² Peake, *Derek Jarman*, 395.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 395.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁴⁵ Jarman, *Modern Nature*, 30.

⁴⁶ Jarman, *Kicking the Pricks*, 108.

⁴⁷ Jill H. Casid, “Landscape Trouble” in *Landscape Theory*, eds. Rachel DeLue and James Elkins (New York: Routledge, 2008), 179–187, 182. For more on the instrumentalization of plants to the colonial project, imported to express control, naturalize occupation and make the colonized landscape fit the imperial tastes and imagination, see also Elizabeth Hope Chang *Novel Cultivations: Plants in British Literature of the Global Nineteenth Century* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2019).

⁴⁸ Jill H. Casid, *Landscape and Colonization* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xvi. Casid’s phrase is an homage to bell hooks’ phrase “diasporic landscapes of longing.”

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, xvii.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, xxi.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, xx.

⁵² Ground for this queer ecology movement was broken by Greta Gaard over ten years earlier. See: “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism.” *Hypatia* 12, no. 1 (1997): 114–137.

⁵³ Myra J. Hird and Noreen Giffney, *Queering the Non/Human* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), xviii.

⁵⁴ Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁶ Gordon Brent Ingram, “‘The Place, Promised, That Has Not Yet Been’: The Nature of Dislocation and Desire in Adrienne Rich's *Your Native Land*” in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, eds. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 262.

⁵⁷ Nicole Seymour, *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination* (University of Illinois Press, 2013), 2.

⁵⁸ Timothy Morton, “Queer Ecology,” *PMLA* 125, no. 2 (March 2010): 274.

⁵⁹ Donna J. Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness Vol. 1* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), xxiii. For astute queer commentary on Haraway's neologism, see David Bell “Queernaturecultures,” in *Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, eds., Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 134–146.

⁶⁰ *Transecology: Transgender Perspectives on Environment and Nature*, ed., Douglas A. Vakoch (Routledge: London and New York, 2020), xvi.

⁶¹ Nicole Seymour “‘Good Animals’: The Past, Present, and Futures of Trans Ecology, in *Transecology: Transgender Perspectives on Environment and Nature*, ed. Douglas A. Vakoch (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 190–204, 191.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 194.

⁶³ Lucas Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics: The Shape of Change in Modernist Space* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2, 14.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁶⁸ Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 171.

⁶⁹ Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xii.

⁷⁰ Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics*, 129.

⁷¹ DeLue and Elkins, *Landscape Theory*, 93.