

Queer Renaturalisations: Guy Hocquenghem's Contradictory Nature Politics, Between Identity and Desire

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ABSTRACT

Queerphobic discourses variably frame nature as defined by reproductive heterosexuality or as defined by unruly desires that civilised heterosexuality promises a progress away from. This article argues that both these politicised determinations of nature follow the logic of 'renaturalisation' – a strategy that invokes nature and the natural to reinforce a normative process – and that the ambiguity in nature discourses stems from the conflictual construction of queerness as both social and antisocial. Because queerness oscillates between being a recognisable identity and a critique of everything social, nature discourses used to justify heteronormative ontologies are contradictory and must change according to the context of the argument. Excavating a theory of renaturalisation from Guy Hocquenghem, this article suggests that queer politics should take nature seriously not because nature is inherently progressive or conservative but because this very duality materialises through cultural anxieties around queerness.

Keywords: renaturalisation, queer ecologies, Guy Hocquenghem, materialisms, feminist epistemologies

INTRODUCTION

Nature is a contentious subject for queer people. Populist political movements and a re-emerging Far Right are these days using nature in queer- and transphobic discourses in two contradictory ways. On the one hand, these fractions claim queer sex and gender formation to be wholly *unnatural*. In this dominant discourse, heterosexuality epitomises nature and the natural, forming a moral imperative to perform binary, reproductive cultures and bodies. On the other hand, Far Right groups, following centuries of religious discourse, cast the queer and trans body as unruly and uncivilised and hence in fact *closer to nature*. According to this discourse, heterosexuality is a civilising force, fulfilling a certain human capacity for controlling wayward desires in the body. Here, nature exemplifies not something to mirror or aspire to, but something to keep a distance from, a queer non-human 'other' to avoid.

Since 'nature' is such an ambiguous term in queerphobic discourses, how does nature condition queer subject formation and politics in a heteronormative society? Within queer studies, the contradictory view of nature appears regularly in discussions about the possibility of queer lives that are at odds with society. 'Nature', writes Nicole Seymour, 'occupies a particularly strange position within queer theory: both abhorred and needed, as a kind of conceptual whipping boy' (Seymour, 2013: 4). Queer theorisations of nature variably regard nature as singular or multiple, conservative or liberatory, contextually dependent or a universal substratum. Some claim that heteronormativity deploys several irreducible conceptions of nature (Alaimo, 2016; Gosine, 2010; Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, 2010; Seymour, 2013), while others hold that a queer project needs either a non-ambiguous or at least a non-reactionary conception of nature (Mehrabi, 2020; Morton, 2009; Nyong'o, 2012).

This article will suggest that although these conceptions of nature are irreconcilable, they have in common an argumentative structure, which is derived from generalised cultural anxieties around queerness. I will argue that the politics of nature deployed (both as essentially heterosexual and essentially non-heterosexual/queer) follows a logic of 'renaturalisation', defined as a strategy that invokes nature and the natural in order to reinforce a normative process, and I will show how these ambiguous nature discourses emerge from the construction of 'queer' as a liminal case. The structural marginalisation of queerness in social discourse ties heteronormativity to the aspirational figure of the human through deploying opposed discursifications of nature: nature as expression of reproductive heteronormativity, and nature as the space of unruly desire. This duality suggests that queer politics

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must rethink its relation to nature; not because nature discourses are inherently either conservative or critical, but because they produce and are produced by historical conjunctures that configure queerness.

For this argument, I will analyse the polemic work of early gay liberationist Guy Hocquenghem and his critique of how heteronormative humanism stages the relation between human and nature. Hocquenghem may be best known for his anti-capitalist and anti-establishment militancy of the post-1968 era, a sharp critic of the socio-sexual politics of capitalism and the nuclear family. Currently, the scholarship on Hocquenghem only pays scant attention to his discussion of the connection between sexual politics and the nature question, but I find in his materialist analysis of desire an understanding of how nature is constitutive of 'queer' both as queer or LGBT lives and 'antisocial' queer critique at odds with all established institutions and identities. Through an exposition of his fragmented work, I will excavate a theory of how sexuality-based othering operationalises nature through such renaturalisation strategies in both these uses of 'queer'.

The article is structured as follows: I first unpack heteronormativity's two contradictory articulations of nature which are present in queer ecologies literature and also in Hocquenghem's historical analysis of queer identity and desire. In these works, both discourses exhibit the logic of renaturalisation and reflect the modern heteronormative construction of queer(ed) minoritarian identity-affirmation and antisocial desire, respectively. The following part relates my Hocquenghemian concept of renaturalisation to existing work on the term, discussing its articulation of the relation between human and nature. In the last part, the article returns to Hocquenghem and using his writings speculate on how heteronormativity and the structural marginalisation of queerness not only interpellates but also entrenches the human-nature binary.

STAGING THE HETERONORMATIVE ENVIRONMENT: QUEER CRITIQUES OF NATURE

Part of the richness of the literature on queer ecologies consists in showing how heteronormativity defines nature and the natural in multiple and ambiguous ways (Anderson et al., 2012; Gaard, 1997; Gosine, 2021; Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, 2010). To define this relation, queer ecologists work with two primary assumptions: on the one hand, nature as describing the imagined naturalness of heterosexuality in humans (unlike other sexual formations), and on the other hand, nature as signifying unruly desires against which heteronormativity claims to stand for civilised respectability. As I detail in the following, this dual modality of nature embodies a fundamental conflict that queer politics faces.

Firstly, heteronormativity casts nature as fundamentally heterosexual. In this view, heterosexuality belongs to the realm of the natural, and queerness, its inversion, is decidedly unnatural or, at most, accidental to the survival of the species. As the story goes, sexual reproduction is the cornerstone of species reproduction, and thus constitutes its primary driver for all non-human nature. In actual fact, however, this heteronormative epistemology is not concerned with or curious about non-human nature. It refers to heterosexuality in nature only in order to justify heteronormativity in humans. In this account, a select part of nature, reproductive sex, essentially defines the human. If heterosexuality is natural, and nature describes the essence of the human, heterosexuality is not only a nature-imposed imperative, it defines the human *par excellence*.

One queer response to this normative grounding in sexual reproduction has been to illustrate how nature overwhelmingly expresses queer socio-sexual forms. Nature often disappoints heteronormative expectations when looking at the social organisation of sexualities, care, and community in non-human species (Ah-King, 2018; Bagemihl, 1999). Sex behaviour in the natural world is diverse, defying heteronormative expectations of binary genders and complimentary monogamy (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Willey, 2016: 73–94). Animals and bacteria themselves exceed human definitions of gay, bi, queer, inter, and trans, and even elemental particles exhibit what could be called masturbatory and queer/trans properties (Barad, 2015; Hird, 2004). Non-normative sexualities of the (non-human) natural world are part of the core fabric of these non-human ecosystems – such sexual diversities are of course normative to those species. By showing the multifaceted organisation of social reproduction which so exceeds human definitions, queer ecologists problematise such normative fantasies of heteronormativity in nature, when imagined as primarily hetero-reproductive.

Secondly, heteronormativity casts nature as a space of wayward sexual multiplicity that heterosexuality promises a progress away from. This view typically posits non-normative sexualities as not-quite human, and therefore relegated to the space of the less-than human. Similar to how the mark of 'woman' under patriarchy designates inferiority because associated with nature (Merchant, 1980; Mies and Shiva, 1993), the queer other occupies the position of nature in the human-nature binary that constructs the human as a placeholder for civilised respectability (Gaard, 1997). These civilisational discourses intersect with colonial frameworks of paternalist rulemaking for the 'savage', the yet-to-become human, and the logically never quite fully recognisable subjects (Carter, 2007; Gosine, 2021; Luciano and Chen, 2015). Indeed, much queer theorising on the place of nature highlights this Enlightenment-based thinking and colonial heritage as regulating the deviant and their habitat. Think in this

context of dimly lit parks and cemeteries as liminal sites for cruising and gay male socialising; places that are constantly policed and under threat of disappearing (Gandy, 2012; Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, 2010). Or think perhaps of so-called conversion therapy, which seeks to reshape and confine the differently libidinalised body according to heteronormative ideals.

The heteronormative inculcation of what belongs to nature displays not only the centrality of the question of nature to a variety of queer politics; it shows how nature is strategically operationalised to the point of contradiction. In the words of Mario Mieli, ‘Blinkered heterosexuals use the concept of “nature”, like that of “against nature”, according to their own convenience’ (Mieli, 2018/1977: 27). Such a Machiavellian logic is by no means rare in the field of sexual minority politics, and indicates that contradictory discourses likely may exist contemporaneously (Chitty, 2020: 27; Henao Castro, 2019). Oftentimes, the (un)naturalness of sexual minorities is secured through racist stereotypes, depending on the historical conjuncture. For example, as Andil Gosine argues, if anti-sodomy laws of the colonial forces worked to question the proper humanity of colonised subjects, present-day homonationalist discourse casts their purported homophobia to be doing the same thing: ‘homophobes trading places with homosexuals as the target in need of training and policing’ (Gosine, 2021: 74). As such, nature strategies in the field of sexual politics has the effect of interpellating and renegotiating ‘othering’ politics surrounding the human as exceptional (Wynter, 2003). For the present case, invoking nature is a strategy of sexual othering where the natural indicates aspirational normalcy.

HOCQUENGHEM’S QUEER MATERIALIST ANALYSIS OF DESIRE

The duality of heteronormative strategies of nature suggests a splitting in the construction of the sexual minoritarian subject. Spread across his political writings, Guy Hocquenghem depicts this splitting as endemic to queerness, or to use his term ‘homosexual desire’¹, which appears dually as both sexual minority identities and anti-identitarian desire. On both sides, nature constantly emerges as a central political axis in Hocquenghem’s ideas. I here outline the basic elements of Hocquenghem’s theorised tension between identity and desire, and I elaborate how nature as renaturalisation becomes a structuring principle of how queerness develops as a political category.

The politics of nature in Hocquenghem’s work comes into view through his historical account of homosexuality and his materialist analysis of desire. As a first step, homosexuality and desire are counterposed. As he states: “Homosexual desire” – the expression is meaningless’ (Hocquenghem, 1993/1972: 49). Desire is for Hocquenghem unclassifiable as heterosexual or homosexual; it is polyvalent with no pre-given preferred sexual object. Desire as libidinal force can potentially connect to a multitude of differently gendered bodies. In his argument, he draws on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1983/1972) and understands desire relations to be constituted as a series of non-exclusive connections functioning according to the connective ‘and ... and’ rather than the disjunctive ‘either/or’ (Hocquenghem, 1993/1972: 117). Desire in this early post-structuralist formulation is non-discriminatory and multi-functional, it is polymorphous, perverse, and even, he writes, bisexual (Hocquenghem, 1993/1972: 74).

In Hocquenghem’s analysis, the generalised repression of same-sex desire creates the condition for the constitution of late modern homosexual identity. Hocquenghem cites Michel Foucault’s (1988/1965) historical analysis of the medical regimes that advanced this construction. With the advent of modern medical technologies of classification, homosexuality was continuously confessed, repressed, and rigidified into a categorisable mental disease. Importantly, then, homosexual desire and homosexual identity do not coincide historically and are in constant tension. They constitute a personal and cultural battlefield between status quo-enforcing identity politics and desire’s rupturing antisocial criticism (see Hocquenghem, 2022/1972: 94–101).

Rather than using a Foucauldian genealogical account², Hocquenghem explicitly grounds his analysis of homosexual identity in capitalist cultural politics, notably in struggles surrounding the nuclear family. For the sexual

¹ Since the scope of my article concerns contemporary sexual marginalisation, I use queer or queerness to designate both sexual identity and non-normative desires. The only exception to this in the article is several places in the section on Hocquenghem, where I attempt to stay faithful to his own vocabulary. Queer conveys bisexuality and non-normative gender presentations in ways that Hocquenghem’s homosexual desire does not, which in my view attests to archival and political limitations in his scholarship – limitations that he himself articulates in several places. However, since the politics of ‘homosexual desire’ resonates deeply with the wider queer ecologies literature, I have decided to downplay these definitional differences for the majority of the article for reasons of clarity.

² The relation between Foucauldian and Marxist analyses of the development of modern homosexual identity has been the topic of debate for many years. It is not on this point that Hocquenghem offers the most insightful historical analysis. The reconstruction that I attempt here brings together Foucault’s (1988/1965) work on the invention of homosexual identity through modern systems of classification, which Hocquenghem cites explicitly (Hocquenghem, 1993/1972: 51), with an analysis of Hocquenghem’s constant reference to the determining role of the capitalism for the sexual identities. Of recent appearance, Christopher Chitty’s *Sexual Hegemony* (2020) argues against a nominalist view such as Foucault’s that the

deviant, the wound of homosexuality – violence, rejection, invisibilisation – largely concerns family relations with its static, gendered categories. The nuclear family is the site where the misfit first feels the violence of heteronormativity. The family as institution of course changes according to geographical, cultural, and historical location. Indeed, part of the expansive logic internal to the cultural politics of capitalism is the constant decoding and recoding of social institutions such as the family. With 19th century industrialisation, mass-urbanisation led to a population density in many major cities in the global North which also fertilised growing sexual minority subcultures. Union victories for labour rights freed up leisure time and gave a minimally expendable income for the growing middle classes. These material conditions contributed to the decoding of the family relation and potentialised greater individualisations of sexual experiences, expressions, and identities (D'Emilio, 1983; Drucker, 2015: 112; O'Brien, 2019).

Hocquenghem argues that this decoding of the family function, the loosening of the discursive rule of obligatory heterosexuality, was recoded increasingly so that the sexual minority internalised the logic of the family as a structuring principle centred around guilt. Instead of external parental figures to condemn same-sex activities, subjectification according to imperatives of 'the normal' increasingly regulated these desires. Cultural anxieties around queer desire and its critiques of heteronormative society ensued, leaving increasingly little space for identifications beyond the hetero-homo binary. As he writes: 'After capitalist decoding has taken place, there is no room for any form of homosexual integration other than that of perverse axiomatization' (Hocquenghem, 1993/1972: 93). By axiomatisation is here understood the cultural construction of a supposedly fixed identity that appears as given by nature. A good example of such an axiomatisation is the generic 'coming out' narrative so central to queer cultural affirmation. In what Judith Butler later calls the 'expressive model of gender' (Butler, 1990: 186), the queer person names their identity and in this utterance establishes a fiction of an internal and fixed sexuality, a performance that situates the origin of sexual minority formation inside the subject.

Hocquenghem's work demonstrates how the historical internalisations of the logic of the family constructs sexual identities in the tension between desire and identity. Desire is in Hocquenghem's writing first and foremost an antisocial impulse, which breaks open identities and shows their historical contingency. As he notes: 'Nobody will ever eliminate the polyvocality of desire' (Hocquenghem, 1993/1972: 50–51). With the stubborn axiomatisation of sexual identities, two conflicting axioms are created, which must exist at the same time. In this emerging duality, Hocquenghem's critical project sides with the popular 1970s construction of the anti-capitalist potency of homosexual desire, seeing it as an anti-social impulse, predominantly present in marginal sexualities. This politicisation of sexuality in Hocquenghem prefigures the later anti-social turn in queer studies and activism when it appears in the 1990s (see Bernini, 2017), but situates it clearly within the Marxist confines of anti-capitalist critique and activism, of the milieu in which he writes.

In the historical struggle over homosexuality, nature appears on both sides of the identity-desire binary as a determining logic. Despite its centrality, the category of non-human nature has largely gone unnoticed in the Hocquenghem scholarship until now or, at most, it has been dismissed as inconsistent (e.g., Marshall, 1996: 34–35). In this article, I contend that Hocquenghem is not inconsistent but rather fruitfully contradictory because he describes and explains the contradiction in heteronormativity's deployment of nature. The commonality in how both sides of this binary operationalises nature offers some building blocks for a common theory of renaturalisation in the field of sexual politics.

On the level of anti-identitarian desire, nature is that non-human force which seeks to break down identity, and replace it with non-regimented sexual flux. Throughout, Hocquenghem uses non-human sex as a codeword for the antisocial desire that queer positionality offers special access to. With its privileged position to the workings of desire, '[the gay movement is] turning Nature from a guilt-inducing reference to a term of equivalence with the immediacy of desire' (Hocquenghem, 1993/1972: 150). Nature is seen to embody the liberating potential of desire: 'flowers and insects have no sex; they are the very *machine* of sexual *desire*' (Hocquenghem, 1993/1972: 91, italics as in original). Animals repeatedly represent sexual polyvocality for Hocquenghem, a hope in non-assimilation to hetero-human sociality. Nature is productive, and signifies those processes that continuously break open sedimented sexual identities. For Hocquenghem, sexual liberation becomes possible in the attention to and care for these ruptures of the non-human.

On the level of social identity, nature shows up in the marginalisation of queer subjects as group. Shifting heteronormative strategies within capitalist cultural politics have regarded homosexuality as unnatural, as a flaw in

medical/linguistic construction of an identity would constitute a radically new set of sexualities and tries instead to situate sexual politics within interclass and intraclass dynamics. Hocquenghem appears to not have a clear position on this question but if anything might agree with this critique. As Deleuze states that Hocquenghem 'denounces homosexuality as a word (...) homosexuality as nominalism' (Deleuze, 2004/1972: 286). Because Hocquenghem's language is markedly permeated by Foucauldian terminology on this issue, it might be good to keep in mind that Hocquenghem's concept of 'homosexual desire' is exactly not homosexual in its late modern determination but 'a flow without origin or goal, a matter of experimentation and not interpretation' (Deleuze, 2004/1972: 285).

nature, or as a crime against nature (Hocquenghem, 1993/1972: 61, 76). 'Nature here plays its paranoid role as the supreme segregating authority' (Hocquenghem, 1993/1972: 62); the heteronormative deployment of this idea of nature functions as a moral command when invoked by traditionalist conservatives. Nature is here allied to a political project that continuously surveils bodies according to what is considered properly natural. In claiming this moral superiority, conservatives aim to restore nature's purported heteronormative equilibrium which is epitomised in the two sexes and heterosexual reproduction. Hocquenghem, however, repeatedly rejects nature on this account. As he writes: 'There are two sexes on earth, but this is only to hide the fact that there are three, four, ten, thousands, once you throw that old hag of the idea of nature overboard' (Hocquenghem, 2010/1973: 69). The heteronormative idea of nature as (heterosexual or homosexual) identity is in direct conflict with non-human nature as desire, because identity conceals the diversity and instability of the non-human.

In the tension between identity and desire, the concept of nature embodies a contradiction with a logic that is mirrored on each side of this contradiction. On both sides, nature exhibits two elements. First, nature is a process. Both identity and desire are continuously attempting to affect the social field despite neither being able to eradicate the other. In Hocquenghem's analysis, desire constantly challenges identity, a challenge that cannot be resolved. Second, nature conveys normativity; it signifies a normative field that attaches itself to a political project whether in attempting a reconsolidation of 'natural' homosexual identity or in attending to non-human homosexual desire. In sum, nature in Hocquenghem is a contradictory category that signals a normative process. It is this politicised definition that in this article I call renaturalisation.

This exposition of Hocquenghem shows how we can consider the politics of desire so central to the liminal construction of queerness as to be concerned with the question of nature. The heteronormative conceptions of nature as either expressive of reproductive hetero-exceptionalism or the space of unruly bodies are based on the dualism between identity-breaking desire and status quo-enforcing sexual identity. On both sides, nature is used as a renaturalisation: a strategy that invokes nature and the natural to reinforce a normative process.

MULTIPLE RENATURALISATIONS: THE MORE-THAN-HUMAN PERSPECTIVE

The two renaturalisation strategies, the two opposed heteronormative discursifications of nature, are not only different methods for queer marginalisation, they also rest on two different understandings of the relation between human and nature. If heterosexuality defines both humans and nature then the human is not categorically different from nature (monism), and if heterosexuality expresses a progress away from nature's unruliness, then the human is categorically different from nature (dualism). The operation of renaturalisation used here therefore has important implications for debates on the politicised relation between human and nature.

Renaturalisation as a term finds use in such disparate academic disciplines as law, politics, urban studies, geography, and architecture. When the concept appears, it commonly signals a normative project. In law, for example, renaturalisation refers to the process whereby a formerly excluded national regains citizenship (de Hart, 2015; e.g., Williams, 2014). We speak of renaturalisation when German governments grant German citizenship to victims and descendants of victims of Nazi de-nationalisation. Here, renaturalisation describes the desired effort to include the expelled back into the nation. Nature and the natural designate a moral imperative where the individual's return to the nation signals the rectification of a pre-given, normative natural state: the original belonging to a given nation. Legal scholars thus deploy renaturalisation to attribute nature and the natural to the national citizen such that it bestows the nation with normative qualities.

Renaturalisation typically also addresses nature as a more-than-human phenomenon rather than merely as a manner of speech. In architecture and urban planning, for instance, renaturalisation denotes processes where nature increasingly regulates human-built infrastructure: water streams, plants and animals stage the material context for human life. This project may either intend to bring nature closer to humans living in urban or industrialised areas or to let wildlife grow and expand outside big cities (Pech, 2016; e.g., Włodarczyk and Mascarenhas, 2016). Whether the aim is to create more sustainable cities or to restore nature on its own terms, nature is meant literally and is once again desirable: it either appeases human ill-doings or signals a threatened wilderness that should regain its natural capacities. Like with renaturalised citizenships, nature indicates a normative imperative to let nature heal what human civilisation has destroyed. Like the Hocquenghemian notion of renaturalisation being deployed here, these fields' operationalisations of the concept designate a normative process that includes nature in a rather literal sense.

The conceptual landscape of renaturalisation also resonates with the emerging literature on queer ecologies which again regards nature as both political and referring to the more-than-human, in that nature signals a normative process that is not just understood figuratively³. Queer ecologists here analyse nature as an intersectional

³ In certain strands of critical theory, the concept of denaturalisation indicates not so much an undoing of nature as a politics of questioning the natural givenness of social entities and relations and show them as socially produced. This deconstructive

space holder for diverging but mutually constituting kinds of oppression (Gosine, 2021; Kafer, 2013: 129–148; Smith, 1997). Astrida Neimanis (2014) works with the concept of ‘natural others’ to signify how nature and the natural are mobilised as othering strategies and how this othered position becomes discursified to originate in qualities endemic to the identity group itself. In other words, this mobilisation of nature projects a double move of first othering, mediated in nature, and then externalising to the target group the (supposed self-induced) cause of othering. In this context, the process of othering through nature simultaneously reasserts the human as norm: the human/nature binary marginalises those populations that are structurally cut off from acquiring full humanness. Nature is thus a series of marginalising enactments that reify a distinct segment of the human – typically white, straight, and male – to exemplify humanity. Inherited from a Cartesian mind/body dualism, the natural other occupies the space of brute matter which by human negation appears as a subordinate: ‘Not only is nature *non-human* or *more-than-human*, but it is also *less-than-human*’ (Neimanis, 2014: 28).

The nature discourses that Neimanis analyses rests on a fundamental dualist framework of the relation between human and nature. This binary logic implied by heteronormative civilised respectability politics is important, but it is only half the story. The Hocquenghemian concept of renaturalisation shares with Neimanis a concern for nature as othering, but such othering may, as we have seen, not necessarily invoke the binary relation between human and nature. In this article, I argue that nature as renaturalisation is a strategy for normative processes not only in dualist but also in monist ontologies.

Hasana Sharpe’s work (2011) draws on Spinoza to argue for renaturalisation as a human realignment with nature in a monist positioning. Conceived as an antidote to human exceptionalism, the renaturalisation that Sharp advocates sees humans as part of nature and as sharing in the same ontological processes. Cause and effect determine human beings just like non-human entities, and our capacity to act, reason, think, and desire is radically materialised through our situatedness in a world that is simultaneously social and natural. As a critique of human exceptionalism, Sharp suggests an ‘impersonal politics’, a view to the more-than-human. With a nod to second wave feminism’s insistence on the social importance of the everyday, Sharp argues that ‘the impersonal is political’ (Sharp, 2011: 155). This shift from the personal to the impersonal forefronts a critique of the supposed oppositional hierarchy between human and nature. Instead, Sharp’s Spinozist monism holds that humans are part of nature because humans operate according to the same rules as natural beings: ‘The renaturalization of humanity entails that humans are not different in kind from other finite beings: we all act by virtue of one another, by virtue of a power to be affected and affect others’ (Sharp, 2011: 53). Renaturalisation, for Sharp, denotes the normative project of nurturing a practical understanding of this releveling with nature as it asks how this realignment necessitates a reformulated mode of interaction. This endeavour entails acting with compassion and enhancing one’s positive affective capacities together with nature.

Sharp reads a strong theory renaturalisation into the work of Spinoza, but her monism begs the question what constitutes the presumed difference between human and nature in the first place. That is, the project of reinserting the human in nature posits a primordial distance that we must explain rather than presume. As the Spinoza scholar Andre Santos Campos asserts:

[T]o speak of renaturalization entails an awareness of a certain lack of nature in political issues that is supposed to be overcome (...) Even so, in Spinoza’s philosophy nothing falls outside of nature, not even human exceptionalism or naturalistic ideologies – *they are rather imaginative ways of producing nature.* (Campos, 2012: 484, my emphasis)

If nature appears to not include the human in Sharp’s Spinozan reconstruction, this analysis would seem to contradict the philosophy of immanence that standard readings of Spinoza emphasise. If an entity appears as outside of nature, we must demand an account of such an appearance. In other words, when the human emerges as exceptional, the question naturally rises which historical and political events prior to this appearance constitute the condition of possibility for such a dualism. How is this rather imaginative way of producing nature created?

The Hocquenghemian notion of renaturalisation encapsulates both the dualist politics of natural othering and the monist releveling with nature. Through a historical analysis of the sedimentation of queer identity, it accounts for the material conditions that create the appearance of two conflicting, imaginative ways of producing nature. When cultural anxieties over queerness tie heterosexuality to the human by reference to nature, queer marginalisation as well as the possibility of performing the otherwise remains locked inside the contradictory field

move remains central to queer theory, which seeks to display sexuality, body and desire as an outcome of social and historical processes that by being disentangled from the necessary character of natural law become undoable (Butler, 1990: 107–193; Floyd, 2009). In Marxist theory, the discussion of commodity fetishism (Marx, 1990/1867: 163–177), which holds that under capitalism social relations become objectified and object relations become social, would later become the ground for a theory of reification that understands social relations as increasingly thing-ified and exchangeable. Reversing these progressive reifications would, not unlike the queer position, denaturalise that which appears with natural necessity and show its constitution as the product of capitalist social relations.

of nature politics. This complexity suggests that conflicting nature discourses do indeed appear simultaneously, but that this simultaneity is not arbitrary since they are rooted materially and historically in queer othering. Rather than a wholesale rejection of any talk of nature, this elaboration of renaturalisation shows how nature discourses are analytically useful for queer politics, insofar as far as they aid revealing and challenging oppressive applications of nature.

RENATURALISATION AND THE QUEER CRITIQUE OF THE HUMAN-NATURE BINARY

Even if renaturalisation strategies appear in both monist and dualist ontologies, Hocquenghem's careful attention to the latter points our analysis forward. Throughout his writings, Hocquenghem remained a serious critic of the human-nature binary as central to the persistence of heteronormativity and its violences. This focus invites us to take the analysis a step further and speculate on how the structural marginalisation of queerness might entrench the splitting of nature discourses, and by extension the human-nature binary. By way of concluding and expanding on the politics of renaturalisation for our time, the frictional social and antisocial elements of queerness in Hocquenghem's work provide tools to explain how queerphobic discourses also work to solidify the human-nature binary. If sexual politics are discursively generative, how may we understand the appearance of the human-nature binary in studies of sexual identity formation as a historical product of cultural anxieties around queerness?

In the mid 1970s, Hocquenghem found himself at the centre of a debate following the death of Italian gay filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini, who was murdered by a hustler, a male sex worker. Hocquenghem wrote an essay in the French leftist newspaper *Libération*, in which he not only considers the murderer, Pelosi, a victim of his own act, but even applauds Pasolini's killing. As he writes, he finds his death 'neither abominable, nor even, perhaps, regrettable' (Hocquenghem, 2001/1978: 283). Rather than condemning the murder out of hand, Hocquenghem addresses the structural and material desiring mechanisms that caused Pasolini to seek out the ostensible danger, in Italian hustling working environment of the 1970s. Queerness as antisocial impulse remains at odds with respectable identity formation, and Hocquenghem finds in Pasolini a resistance to this assimilation. For him, something in the liminality of queerness ties desire to incivility. He suggests that perversion – the libidinated rejection of respectability and normalcy – is a characteristic of queer desire that ties it to danger.

Mario Mieli (2018/1977), Hocquenghem's contemporary, reaches a similar conclusion about Pasolini's murder but with a different argument. Mieli, too, considers desire to come logically prior to the establishment of sexual identities (hetero or homo), but rather than focusing on queer perversion, he argues that the repression of queer desires in identified heterosexuals translates into hostility towards the sexually non-conformist. Repression of desire becomes a desire to repress. Rumours say that Pelosi was a heterosexual hustler, which would bolster Mieli's analysis that 'the heterosexual who attacks a gay man both discloses and exorcises his own homosexuality (...) the aggressor, the torturer, stands in secret complicity with his victim' (Mieli, 2018/1977: 128, see also 161). Desire becomes the basis of complicity, a common ground that unfolds into aggressor and victim.

Hocquenghem and Mieli both contend that the complicity of the queer person, Pasolini, in his own killing cannot be overlooked when analysing the construction of queerness. This point, however, needs to be understood in its historical and political context. Irrespective of one's deeds or acts, murder can of course not be excused or explained away. Contemporary feminists rightfully attacked Hocquenghem at the time for victim blaming (Bourg, 2007: 186–192), and Mieli, though more cautious than Hocquenghem, should attract the same criticism. Nonetheless, what this analysis allows for is to consider how the violent encounter constructs the victim as de-agential; how the violent act performatively constitutes the binary of aggressor and victim.

Feminist scholars of queer ecologies such as Donna Haraway (1992) and Karen Barad (2007) often frame this encounter in terms of the relation between human and nature, between discourse and matter. Rather than seeing nature as a merely passive receptor of human categorisation, queer ecologists urge us to understand that human and nature emerge as opposed through particular, politicised encounters. In these creative encounters, the non-human is co-creative of meaning: the non-human becomes complicit in social world-making practices in the productive encounter between the human and its others. As Donna Haraway writes: 'Bodies as objects of knowledge are material-semiotic generative nodes. Their boundaries materialize in social interaction among humans and non-humans' (Haraway, 1992: 297). Bodies, broadly conceived, produce meaning through boundary-making enactments; exclusions that engender agential properties. The separation of the human from the non-human creates a non-arbitrary constellation of subjecthood and objecthood that appear as ontologically separate. Karen Barad calls this process 'intra-action' which 'recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through their intra-action' (Barad, 2007: 33). These authors apply different vocabularies to emphasise the same thing: the splitting, iterative practices that separate out human/discourse from nature/matter. Unlike the renaturalisation of Sharpe, these monist ontologies can offer an explanation as to why we observe the appearance of dualisms.

Pasolini's murder is one such splitting event that opens up a structure of aggressor and victim, discourse and matter. The queer body, simultaneously *unnatural* and all *too natural*, is a battle arena where tropes of proper humanness are exercised, delimiting the human as different from nature. These interpellations of the properly human echo and intersect with similar colonial demarcations of 'not-quite-humanness' (Wynter, 2003: 301) such that the queer object of investment changes according to the prevailing sexual hegemony (Chitty, 2020; Gosine, 2021). Heteronormativity – as well as its respectability-political sibling 'homonormativity' (Duggan, 2003) – can call upon a certain normativity of nature as desirable or as decidedly non-human to secure civilised respectability (Puar, 2007). In the present case, Pasolini's murder shows the liminality of sexual minority identity formation as both uncivilised natural other and disposable unnatural other. This not quite recognisable quasi-subject illustrates the double-sidedness of victimhood and complicity that the violent act creates.

Hocquenghem's work offers a tentative explanation for the material and historical sexual constitution of the human-nature relation. With the inculcation of modern queer identity, heteronormativity operationalises nature and the natural, or put differently, the imaginative ways of producing nature are contradictorily, but not arbitrarily, constitutive of queerphobic production of identities. Renaturalisation strategies are organised so that anxieties over queerness perpetuate the human-nature binary and solidify liberal fictions of self-contained humanness. Seen through a queer materialist lens, describing the decisive historical events points to the instantiation of certain sexual identities as an effect of the shifting cultural politics of capital. Hocquenghem's materialist analysis of desire allows us to trace both those processes whereby this splitting occurs in order to, finally, upend capital's cultural politics that utilise it.

Analysing the boundary-drawing events of the sexually othered, this argument for a project of queer renaturalisation invites the reader to engage with the differentiating processes whereby the human as exceptional emerges. This project highlights the boundaries that appear with and through the natural, pushing back against the hetero-human social world, and it portrays how queered others must navigate this liminal space of unnatural and too natural. Queer renaturalisations target the possibilities in exposing these contradictions and offer alternatives for engaging human and non-human natures otherwise.

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