



Annie Sprinkle & Beth Stephens with Jennie Klein

ASSUMING

THE ECOSEXUAL

POSITION

THE EARTH AS LOVER

# ASSUMING THE ECOSEXUAL POSITION

## THE EARTH AS LOVER

*Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens  
with Jennie Klein*

Foreplay by Una Chaudhuri

Afterword by Paul B. Preciado

Postscript by Linda Mary Montano



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS  
MINNEAPOLIS  
LONDON

## **ECOSEX MANIFESTO 1.0**

### **(I) WE ARE THE ECOSEXUALS.**

The Earth is our lover. We are madly, passionately, and fiercely in love, and we are grateful for this relationship each and every day. In order to create a more mutual and sustainable relationship with the Earth, we collaborate with nature. We treat the Earth with kindness, respect, and affection.

### **(II) WE MAKE LOVE WITH THE EARTH.**

We are aquaphiles, terraphiles, pyrophiles, and aerophiles. We shamelessly hug trees, massage the Earth with our feet, and talk erotically to plants. We are skinny dippers, sun worshippers, and stargazers. We caress rocks, are pleased by waterfalls, and admire the Earth's curves often. We make love to the Earth through our senses. We celebrate our E-spots. We are very dirty.

### **(III) WE ARE A RAPIDLY GROWING GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF ECOSEXUALS.**

This community includes artists, academics, sex workers, sexologists, healers, environmental activists, nature fetishists, gardeners, businesspeople, therapists, lawyers, peace activists, ecofeminists, scientists, educators, revolutionaries, critters, and other entities from diverse walks of life. Some of us are sexecologists, researching and exploring the places where sexology and ecology intersect in our culture. As consumers we aim to buy less. When we can, we buy green, organic, and local. Whether on farms, at sea, in the woods, or in small towns or large cities, we connect and empathize with nature.





#### **(IV) WE ARE ECOSEX ACTIVISTS.**

We will save the mountains, waters, and skies by any means necessary, especially through love, joy, and our powers of seduction. We will stop the rape, abuse, and the poisoning of the Earth. We do not condone the use of violence, although we recognize that some ecosexuals may choose to fight those most guilty of destroying the Earth with public disobedience and with anarchist and radical environmental activist strategies. We embrace the revolutionary tactics of art, music, poetry, humor, and sex. We work and play tirelessly for Earth justice and global peace. Bombs hurt.

#### **(V) ECOSEXUAL IS AN IDENTITY.**

For some of us, being ecosexual is our primary (sexual) identity, whereas for others it is not. Ecosexuals can be LGBTQIA+, heterosexual, asexual, and/or Other. We invite and encourage ecosexuals to come out. We are everywhere. We are polymorphous and pollen-amorous. We educate people about ecosex culture, community, and practices. We hold these truths to be self-evident: that we are all part of, not separate from, nature. Thus all sex is ecosex.

#### **(VI) THE ECOSEX PLEDGE**

I promise to love, honor, and cherish you, Earth, until death brings us closer together forever.

**¡VIVA LA ECOSEX REVOLUCIÓN!**



### **Earth as Lover, Earth as Mother**

We respect the Indigenous and Aboriginal cultures, as well as ancient western and eastern civilizations that have embraced, and still embrace, Earth as mother. We both learned from these traditions. These knowledges have influenced our practices for much of our lives. We have and sometimes still do embrace the Earth as mother: the Earth does give us life and takes incredible care of us, giving us what we need to survive. Our manifesto, however, boldly states that we see the Earth as our lover, that we love the Earth and find erotic potential in nature, and we are turning our love for the Earth into revolutionary actions. Even as we move to embrace the Earth as lover rather than Earth as mother, we do so with respect.

But we don't relate to the Earth only as a lover or mother. The Earth can morph and be imagined as any archetype interchangeably or in combination with other archetypes: friend, host, caregiver, sister, empress, magician, crone, patient. . . . The Earth lover can also be imagined as a sexy Earth mother—after all, many women have sex to become mothers. Given the virgin-whore dichotomy that still pervades western culture, many people find it abhorrent to think of mothers as sexual beings. Someone on one of our Ecosex Walking Tours commented that the Earth could be imagined as a MILF (Mother I'd Like to Fuck). Given that MILF is not about incest, and in the porn lexicon an "older" woman can be in her late twenties or beyond, we see this as a term that eroticizes women beyond a certain age. Some folks don't want to think of the Earth as anything but Mother Earth, and we respect everyone's choices in this regard.

Our version of ecosexuality has quite a bit in common with ecofeminism, even though we don't always see eye to eye with ecofeminists. The ecofeminism movement emerged in the 1970s as a critique of both the oppression of women and the destruction of the Earth as mutually reinforcing systems of patriarchal oppression.<sup>31</sup> For ecofeminists, embracing the construction of Earth as Mother was a means by which nature could be anthropomorphized and thus understood as something that should not be harmed. We are in agreement with that ideal.

After coming out as ecosexuals, we began thinking about how the Earth had been described as female and mother in the stories and spiritual traditions of contemporary and ancient cultures. In western literature the "Earth" has always been constructed as feminine, a trope that was not challenged by second-wave feminist theory, which posited the idea of Earth as mother as an alternative to patriarchy. We wanted to go beyond the gender binary when it came to thinking about the Earth. As bad grrrl feminists, we were skeptical of binary constructions of the Earth as Mother/Other. As queers, we were eager to embrace the concept of the Earth as nonbinary or



We imagine our Earth lover as all genders, transgender, gender fluid, gender bending, and sometimes male or female. Authors' collection.

trans. Mothers (including Mother Earth) have not been treated terribly well in popular culture, which tends to construct the ideal mother as either asexual or heterosexual, self-sacrificing, white, and Christian. As feminists, we have a great deal of empathy and respect for the first generation of ecofeminists who promoted the idea of Earth as Mother to bring attention to the need for environmental activism. As queers and ecosexuals we wanted to expand the idea of environmentalism by combining it with the sex-positive feminism of the nineties, the cultural context from which our art careers were nourished. Today, as aging women whose bodies are no longer taut, we want to acknowledge the materiality of nature, a materiality that doesn't always conform to patriarchal anthropomorphizing fantasies of nubile, beautiful, fertile women or of dangerous vagina dentatas ready to do away with humanity at the drop of a hat. To counter these stereotypes, we adopted the metaphor of the lover instead.

An important event for us was Joanna Macy's workshop *The Work That Reconnects*. Macy basically argues that all of our connections to the Earth are intimate and ancient. Attending her workshop brought us together with like-minded participants who were also thinking about more profound, more loving connections with the Earth.<sup>32</sup> We love the queerness of the idea of Earth as lover, and we align our practice

with ecofeminist scholar Greta Gaard, who has explored the connection between ecofeminism and queer theory and called for both movements to learn from each other.<sup>33</sup> Gaard writes:

A queer ecofeminist perspective would argue that liberating the erotic requires conceptualizing humans as equal participants in culture and in nature, able to explore the eroticism of reason and the unique rationality of the erotic. Ecofeminists must be concerned with queer liberation, just as queers must be concerned with the liberation of women and of nature; our parallel oppressions have stemmed from our perceived associations. It is time to build our common liberation on more concrete coalitions.<sup>34</sup>

Embracing the Earth as our lover, rather than our mother, radically changed our relationship to the planet that we share with billions and trillions of living and non-living material entities. To be someone's lover is more open-ended than being their mother. The lover assumes a relationship based on romance, sexual attraction, and sensual pleasure. The lover's relationship does not assume identities that conform to the gender binary and power dynamics of male and female. The category of the lover is more slippery than that of parent and avoids heteronormative family ideology. Our metaphorical and material shift to Earth as lover holds the potential to create relationships between humans and nonhumans that might lessen destructive and controlling practices such as taking resources (mining) or domesticating (damming rivers and streams). The lover archetype evokes pleasure or *jouissance* based on mutual needs and desires. Earth as lover has the potential to inspire humans to give as well as receive both love and support from the Earth.

Furthermore, the category of Mother represents an ideological construction that has been used to police the excess of pleasure and ecstasy, whereas the lover represents the promise of the as-yet-unknown. A lover is someone we want to get to know better, treat well, pamper, romance, and pleasure. Most to the point, if one does not treat a lover well, the lover can leave for someone else who will treat them better. While the Earth can't actually leave us, it can become so inhospitable that we have to live in radically different ways on it—or leave it. Mars, anyone?

We understand that “Earth as lover” is a metaphor that anthropomorphizes our planet. We feel it can be a useful and fun strategy to help both ourselves and others connect with that which extends beyond human understanding. French philosopher Bruno Latour has recognized that refusing to anthropomorphize a nonhuman is the height of human arrogance because it makes the nonhuman lesser than the human.<sup>35</sup>

As Latour states, “To enforce the gap between human subjects and nonhuman objects is the most anthropocentric of all modes of relation invented.”<sup>36</sup> Or, as Colette Guillaumin pointedly writes, “As soon as people want to legitimize the power that they exercise, they call on nature—on the nature of this difference.”<sup>37</sup> Both Latour and Guillaumin point out how humans use the idea of nature to justify their domination over it.

Ecosexuals, on the other hand, anthropomorphize the Earth to help examine and hopefully help heal the human–nature binary embedded in western epistemology. This binary erases our connection to nature by elevating humans above all else. Jane Bennett, in her book *Vibrant Matter*, suggests that as scholars and human beings we take seriously all things human and nonhuman. The vitality and agency of these more-than-human things wield influence on how we navigate, feel, understand, and are in the world.<sup>38</sup> Anthropomorphism can be used to take seriously the agency of nature and to position it as an active participant in the ongoing development of life on this planet, but it also means that we seek to understand nature on our own terms, yet again. We ask, as humans, what other terms can we employ given that the Earth is so much more than simply human?

### **Ecosexuality, the Anthropocene, New Materialisms, and Posthumanism**

Our definition of *ecosexuality* deliberately reflects current ideas about posthumanism and new materialism, in which the human is understood to be one of many sentient and nonsentient beings that exist on this planet. Some people assume that sex has to be genital, or that ecosexuals primarily engage in physical sexual acts with nonhumans, but physical contact is not mandatory in the evolving field of ecosexuality, although it can be a part of it. In terms of engaging with nonhumans, many ecosexuals take a more conceptual, playful approach. This allows humans to connect with and derive pleasure from nature and ideally to be inspired to give something back to it. Ecosexuality provides alternative ways of thinking about sexuality that go beyond human reproduction, genital sex, and human exceptionalism (the belief that humans are different from and superior to all other forms of life). Since humans are part of nature, ecosexual practices can include human-to-human sexual contact, including genital sex. Ecosexuals, however, consider all parts of the body to be potential sites of sexual pleasure. We see the body as expanding beyond its own skin, in forms such as biome clouds, the unique clouds of bacteria and microbes that surround the bodies of all organic beings, animals, and plants.<sup>39</sup> Ecosex is a paradigm shift: we don’t have sex with just another person, but instead we have sex with their water, minerals, bacteria, biomes, and even stardust!