



## The earth is a big badass butch dyke in menopause

Beth Stephens<sup>a</sup> and Annie Sprinkle<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of California Santa Cruz; <sup>b</sup>E.A.R.T.H. Lab SF

### ABSTRACT

In this article, ecosexual artists and activists Beth Stephens & Annie Sprinkle re-envision our planet as a butch dyke in menopause. This displacement of the "mother" earth trope re-orientates the urgent questions of climate change and consent. Acknowledging the common pitfalls of anthropomorphism, they argue that imagining the Earth as a butch dyke lover enables a radically embodied and joyous mode of environmentalist politics. Stephens and Sprinkle situate their bodies in continuity with the earth in a relationship of queer interdependency as they invent new ways of being in the world that disengage from an abusive, extractive relation to the earth through the cultivation of a loving, playful relationship with our planet. They envision Butch Earth as a switch who invites us into a multitude of embodied, sensual, mindful responses beyond the limits of self-other paradigms. To counter the dominionistic practice of extraction and exploitation, the artists propose an ethical practice of co-sense, rather than consent, in which humans attune themselves to the earth via the senses, a process enabled by repeated, communal, non-monogamous marriages to the planet. Stephens & Sprinkle's curiosity and imagination invite the reader to play and perhaps think about the Earth reciprocally in a relationship grounded by love and sensuality.

### KEYWORDS

ecosexual; climate change; queer; lesbian; menopause; femme; anthropomorphism; Mother Earth; Butch dyke; Lover Earth

We are sybaritic cougars with lesbian tendencies who are madly, passionately, fiercely in love with the Earth, and we spend as much intimate time with/in nature as possible.<sup>1</sup> One of us is a CIS female ultra-femme, and one of us is a CIS female butch; however, our primary identity is ecosexual. We imagine the Earth as our romantic partner and lover. For us, the Earth is a big badass butch dyke in menopause.

We understand that anthropomorphism can be problematic because it attributes our own, sometimes opaque, qualities to non-humans to learn (possibly) about ourselves. If we forget this, we forget how anthropomorphism invents other beings as fictional mirrors for ourselves. However, an ethical orientation to non-humans requires entering a state of human unknowing to attempt to understand them.

Anthropomorphism's imaginative actions sometimes may forge ongoing affective links between humans and mountains, trees, planets, rivers, "Gods," ancestors, spirits, animals, biome clouds, etc. The enjoyment of imagining sometimes spills over, exceeding its aim of reflective self-understanding. This excess brings us into an intimate, affective relationship with Butch Earth. Love overflows; a place where I loved you can become a place I love.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this is how humans love the Earth, indirectly, in echoes. If so, echo needs stone's impenetrable but resonant surfaces to bounce, resound, and proliferate, "tion, tigron, tigger, tiger, big-one tiger...grrrrrrr, growler..." We love the stone Butchness of Earth, and love to feel it resonating.

Some cultures and peoples imagine the Earth as a mother. "Mother Earth" feeds, nurtures, and loves us unconditionally. Others imagine the Earth as a "Father Earth," who protects and provides for us and shares his wisdom. As the Earth changes, as we change, we imagine the Earth differently, sometimes as non-binary, other times as transgender, all gendered, or beyond gender.

We eroticize nature to lubricate our responses to life's challenges and help us to be happy and fulfilled. The hills are alive, and they are sexy! Our imaginations run wild, through fields of sunflowers, across rainbows, and into the underworld's echo-y caves and burrows.

Our bodies, made of water, stardust, minerals, and trillions of non-human creepy crawlers (inside us and all around our skin), are part of the Earth, not separate from it. Many humans think we are different from and superior to the Earth, which causes harm, like unsustainable resource extraction, pollution, climate catastrophe, species destruction, war, and other forms of eco-violence and eco-destruction.

As anyone hot for butches knows, a butch lover can morph, become masculine, feminine, tough, or vulnerable, depending on their moods and fancies. The Earth is a shapeshifter, able to become not only a mother or a father, but a friend, priestess, magician, child, host, and on and on and on. Butch Earth is a sex magician, who adores witches, drag queens, radical faeries, pagans, lesbians, and every being that loves butch dyke powers.

What about Earth's pronouns? Pronouns change depending on age, style, mood, and desire. Lesbians, feminists, queers, and trans folks have created, used, and transformed many pronouns over the years; we invent pronouns to fit our living as acts of creative sur-thriv-al. We use BE and BER, though they/them suffice, too).

Words cannot describe the magnificence, majesty, and profundity of our lover, the Butch Earth (BE). BE is to die for (many protectors and environmental activists have). BE is everything! BEyond the BEyond. BER gravity gathers us close and keeps us from floating off into space. BE is mysterious, seductive, cunning, and smart. BE feeds our heart's desire to love BER entirely.

The Earth is an artist, farmer, a creator of rocks, sky, sea, and sand. BER is the source and a host to all known creatures. BER oceans hold incredible life forms—fluorescent, bioluminescent, shimmering. Butch Earth has a quiet presence; they cruise, seduce, turn us on, and make us giggle. BE flags the entire hanky code: pink, yellow, blue, black, white, red, yellow, and so, so many shades of green.

For us, BE is a switch, sometimes top, sometimes bottom. BE can be a cruel mistress without a safe word. Butch Earth rolls us round in BER mossy softness, takes us along BER rugged curves, and holds us with BER starry sky-eyes. Yet, BE must submit, with measure, to sustain all earth beings in an eco-concert of interdependencies.

How do we make love to BER? Imaginatively, sensually, and with embodied mindfulness. We find BE-spots, something in nature that is sensual or sexy, which can be as small as a lily's stamen or vast as a sunrise over Yosemite Valley. A BE-spot can be the sound of bullfrogs, the taste of a juicy yellow peach, the feel of a peacock's feather on one's inner arm, the smell of honeysuckle in the sun. BER expanding, verdant, and rolling horizons, BER pine and sulfate scents, BER lemongrass, mushroom, and iron tastes, and BER rustling, cracking, and crashing sounds...we are a-gasp at their sensual prowess, power, and glory.

What about consent? True, we can't speak to or hear all of BER being, so we can't ask and BE can't consent. Within these limits, we "co-sense" BER and attune ourselves to BER wants, needs, and likes. Sadly, we live in a sex-negative, patriarchal, dominionist society where killing a tree is OK, but hugging a tree is taboo and perverted. Ignoring, abusing, and destroying Earth is normal, business as usual, and co-sensing the Earth is woo-woo and indulgent. Ecofeminists observe that dominionists imagine BER as female making it easier for certain people to abuse, rape, and exploit BER. Remember: No Safe Word.

To make our love of the Earth visible and to entice others to love the Earth, too, we repeatedly and publicly marry BER. We vow to love, honor, and cherish BER, and repeatedly embrace BER within all BER fine and public spaces. We are, after all, performance artists who invite other humans to love and marry BER. We married BER soil in Austria, coal in Spain, mountains in Appalachia, lakes in Finland, seas in Venice, and brine shrimp in the Great Salt Lake alongside the famous Butch art Earthwork: Spiral Jetty.

Although we are married, we are not monogamous. We are pollen-amorous. Butch Earth has enough love for all and will live on beyond human time and imagination. BE is a super slut— an inclusive compendium of sexual entities having different kinds of sex, day and night, night and day, everywhere, all the time. BE ejaculates everywhere; their dandelions spread their seeds in the wind, tsunamis swell, volcanoes spew, and cherry trees

blossom-gasm. BE is a massive orgy. We don't know how BE keeps their energy up, but they do.

Butch Earth is badass. BE has Dykes on Bikes power: anarchistic, hairy, unkempt, with a comfy bitch seat that reclines. BE can be fun as hell and kinky in full leather, with a punk rock aesthetic and politics. BE wears bling and is BEdazzling.

We've had great sex with BER over the years. Sometimes, we have made love, straddling their waters swirling through their hot springs; we have rubbed honey, clay and sand on our naked bodies on the beach, then rinsed it off in BER salty waters; we have run naked through their stinging nettles. Ecosex has an edge! For us ecosexuals, human coupling is always far better outdoors.

The Earth is 4.54 billion years old, plus or minus fifty million years, and we are so very young by comparison. Butch Earth is a MILF, and even a GILF. Butch Earth is in menopause, having lots of hot flashes and mood swings. BER globe is warming. Butch Earth is in that phase of life—the Pyrocene. BE is drying up from drought. BER estrogen is lowering. BER anger is up. BER hot flashes are brutal. No joke. They consume entire towns and everything and everyone in them.

BE is a tough old broad, a survivor, who withstands and even embraces those committing horrible violence until BE seeks revenge through so-called natural disasters.

BE is a porn star. Who doesn't get titillated by graphic Earth porn? We are not BER only fans. BE is on IG, X-Twitter, and Facebook. Occasionally, we watch TV specials about BER. For us, travel ads are like gor-geo-usly shaved pussies, like wildflowers blooming, whales breaching, and slugs making love. BE strikes a pose like no-body's business. Sex work is work, and BE is up for it.

Loving Butch Dyke Earth is deeply satisfying. When BE is your lover, you are never alone. We engage in secular worship and adoration of butch dyke Earth. We want and need to please BER. We protect and defend BER with poetry, performance art, film, and activism. When we pleasure our swollen dyke clitorises, we pleasure the Earth. All sex is ecosex. We will love Butch Earth until, in death, we enter BER body for eternity. Let us not be severed from BER love.

With gratitude to Jenny Hubbard for productive conversations about Butch as Earth.

## Notes

1. The following feline identifiers created by Peggy Shaw's tongue may be substituted for cougar: "tion, tigron, tigger, tiger, big-one tiger...grrrrrrr, growler," for those in the gentlemanly menopause spectrum. See Shaw (2011) pp. 77-8.
2. See Spinoza (2018), Proposition XXII.

**Disclosure statement**

The authors report no conflicts of interest. The authors alone are responsible for the content and writing of the paper.

**Funding**

The author(s) reported there is no funding associated with the work featured in this article.

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