

Rachel Carson and the Power of Queer Love

Lida Maxwell

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Lida Maxwell's enthusiastic academic study reappraises scientist Rachel Carson's motivations in light of ecological crisis and queer studies.

Although Carson grew up in Pennsylvania, her affinity for the ocean became paramount. On Southport Island, Maine, she met two enthusiastic readers, Stan and Dorothy Freeman. An instant connection sprang up between Carson and Dorothy. Maxwell contends that Carson's experience of unconsummated romantic love prompted her awakening to wonder and connection, fueling *Silent Spring*.

"The Lost Woods" separated the women's houses; letters, words of affection, and a kiss united them. Their correspondence is a major resource. There are also several black-and-white photographs of them together. Their fondness for a species of thrush becomes a sweet metaphor: the veery is "the voice of their love."

Moving beyond biographical documentation, the book posits a link between queerness and conservationism. If heteronormativity implies that people should be concerned about climate change because of their children's futures, Maxwell offers "non-instrumental" queer love as a purer impulse: Love is a more effective inspiration than fear; creatures and landscapes are to be appreciated for their own sake, and individual needs and desires honored.

A discussion of white privilege and excessive consumption injects intersectionality: James Baldwin and Donald Winnicott are among the thinkers referenced. Scholarly jargon threatens to overwhelm the narrative in places. Still, Maxwell's work is appealing, proposing the concept of "human–nonhuman assemblages of love, wonder and pleasure." Visiting Southport with her partner, she bridges past and present and confronts unfortunate realities: Carson's Lost Woods were not preserved; the island is full of "Private" and "Keep Out" signs that seem at odds with her vision of nature as a collective treasure.

Rachel Carson and the Power of Queer Love promotes harmony with nature through an impassioned fusion of biography, cultural critique, and environmental advocacy.

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