



# Women & Environments

international

## Ecofeminism:

CONVERSATIONS FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM

### Privilege, Nonviolence, and Security

An American Ecofeminist  
Responds to 9/11

### Conflicting Values in a Conflicted World

Ecofeminism and Multicultural  
Environmental Ethics

### Ecofeminism and Environmental Democracy

Exploring the Connections

NO. 52/53 • FALL 2001  
SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE • \$5.95





## 25 Years of Women & Environments

### Guest Editors for this issue:

Catriona Sandilands and Sherilyn MacGregor

**Managing Editor:** Regula Modlich

**Design:** Serina Morris

**Logo designed and donated** by artist Elizabeth Forrest

**Cover Art:** Heather Rigby

**Editorial Board:** Suzanne Farkas, Noreen Farooqui, Gaye Frances, Sherilyn MacGregor, Regula Modlich, Michelle Murphy, Dajana Simic, Sandra Tanny, Katherine Verhagen, Irene Wamala and Joy Woolfrey (advisor); Assistants: Rachel Robb and Emily Lizzi

**Founding and Past Editors:** Rebecca Peterson, Gerda Wekerle, Judith Bell, and Lisa Dale

Women & Environments International is a unique Canadian magazine, which examines women's multiple relations to their environments – natural, built and social – from feminist perspectives. Since 1976, it has provided a forum for academic research and theory, professional practice and community experience. By volunteering their time to the collective editing and production of Women & Environments, Editorial Board members contribute to feminist social change. The magazine is associated with the Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto.

**Subscriptions:** Within Canada: Individuals: 3 double issue subscriptions: CAD \$22.00; 6 double issue CAD \$38.00, Institutions and Businesses CAD \$49.50 US and overseas subscribers, please remit the above rates in US currency or Canadian equivalent.

**Women & Environments International Magazine:** ISSN 1499-1993, was founded as Women & Environments in 1976 and publishes two double issues annually. Women & Environments is a member of Best of the Alternative Press and is indexed in Alternative Press Index, Canadian Periodical Index, Social Sciences Index and Women's Studies Abstracts.

### Address all Correspondence to:

Women & Environments International Magazine  
Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies,  
New College, University of Toronto,  
40 Willcocks St., Toronto, ON, Canada, M5S 1C6

phone: (416) 978-5259 fax: (416) 946-5561  
e-mail: [we.mag@utoronto.ca](mailto:we.mag@utoronto.ca)  
Website: [www.weimag.com](http://www.weimag.com)

Canadian Publication Mail Agreement # 188 6576  
PAP Registration # 09211  
Printed on 50% Recycled and 30% Post-Consumer and Acid- and Chlorine-Free Paper

# WE Celebrate

## Launch

Join us in toasting the  
release of **Ecofeminism:  
Conversations for a  
New Millennium**

**Ecofeminism:  
CONVERSATIONS FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM**

**Privilege, Nonviolence,  
and Security  
in American Ecofeminist  
Responses to 9/11**

**Conflicting Values in a  
Contested World  
Ecology, War and Multicultural  
Environmental Ethics**

**Ecofeminism and  
Environmental Democracy  
Reframing Consciousness**



Come and converse with the editors, writers, artists, volunteers, and sponsors who helped produce this special issue. Meet and network with other WE readers!

**Friday, January 25, 2002, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.**

In the Lounge of the Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies at New College (40 Willcocks Street) University of Toronto.

Refreshments • Entertainment • Door prizes  
Extra Special Subscription/Renewal Offer

**For directions and further information, call us at:**

416-978-5259 (we reply to our messages)

or e-mail us at: [we.mag@utoronto.ca](mailto:we.mag@utoronto.ca)

## On the Cover

"Trace" by Heather Rigby

Heather Rigby is an installation/performance artist living in the Durham Region in Southern Ontario. In her performance works, she engages in defining ritual space for exploring the politics of the body. (See back cover for a more detailed bio)

"Trace" was created in 1999 as part of a performance piece called "Tongue" which addressed the silencing and loss of power women often experience and the ravishing displacement this has on their bodies. It is a silhouette of a woman's body (wheat flour on tar paper) holding a staff with a circle on the end, a trace of a mirror on a pole.

Photo: Rick Amos

# Contents

No.52/53

## ABOUT THE GUEST EDITORS

**Catriona (Cate) Sandilands** is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University. She is the author of *The Good Natured Feminist: Ecofeminism and the Quest for Democracy* (Minnesota: 1999). Her current work flows in two directions. The first concerns the intersections of sexuality and ecology and includes a monograph on lesbian separatist land communities ("*This Land Has Called Forth From You Your Strengths as a Lesbian*": A Separatist Ecology? available from the IWSGS); the second explores the politics of nationalism and nature in the Canadian national parks system.

**Sherilyn MacGregor** is an Editorial Board member of *WE International* who recently completed a doctoral degree in Environmental Studies at York University. She will be taking up a short term Adjunct Professor position at the University of Wisconsin in January.

The guest editors would like to thank the Editorial Board of *WE International*, especially Reggie Modlich, for their willingness to stretch the magazine both physically and conceptually in this issue.

## WE Speak

- 4 A word from this issue's editors  
Thank you, Upcoming Issues

## FEATURES

- 7 **Privilege, Nonviolence, and Security:**  
An American Ecofeminist Responds to 9/11  
Noël Sturgeon
- 10 **What is Ecofeminist Art?**  
Deborah Mathew
- 12 **A Challenge for Ecofeminism:**  
Gender, Greening, and Community Forestry in India  
Bina Agarwal
- 16 **Conflicting Values in a Conflicted World:**  
Ecofeminism and Multicultural Environmental Ethics  
Lori Gruen
- 19 **Ecofeminism on the Wing:**  
Perspectives on Human-Animal Relations  
Greta Gaard
- 23 **Ecofeminism and Environmental Democracy:**  
Exploring the Connections  
Robyn Eckersley
- 27 **Of Mice and Women:**  
Early Modern Roots of Ecological Feminism  
Sylvia Bowerbank

## WE RESEARCH

- 30 Women and "Sustainable Development" in the Costa Rican Rainforest  
Ana Isla
- 32 Pesticides and Women Agricultural Workers in South Africa  
Leslie London
- 34 On The Place of "Lived Experience" in Ecofeminist Research  
Sherilyn MacGregor

## IN THE FIELD

- 36 What to Think? Ecofeminism and Eco-agriculture in Ireland  
Martha McMahon
- 38 Putting A Feminist Face into Practice: Contradictions in the French Green Party  
Andil Gosine  
Interview with Franziska Bratner
- 40 A New Biotechnological "Fix" for Environmental Health? Examining the Environmental Genome Project  
Giovanna Di Chiro  
Interview with Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg

- 45 **In Print**
- 48 **On Video**
- 50 **WE Surf**
- 51 **Ecofeminist Reading List**
- 52 **Announcements**
- WE Focus** - Artist Heather Rigby

# WEspeak

## Ecofeminism: Conversations for a New Millennium

This issue of *WE International* marks something of a departure for the magazine. Risking oversimplification of a complex collection of writings in a historically varied magazine, let's just say that there is a lot more theory between the covers than usual. In particular, this issue offers a sense of the ongoing theoretical conversation that makes up *ecofeminism*, a subject that hasn't appeared overtly in this magazine since the Spring of 1988. In implicit comparison to the depiction in 1988 (Vol. 10, No. 3) of ecofeminism as a relatively new movement, this issue highlights some of the most vibrant themes of ecofeminist scholarship now that we can no longer reasonably claim infancy. (We've come a long way, baby!)

As a body of ecological, political, and feminist theory, ecofeminism has actually had a difficult childhood. As Bina Agarwal points out in her article in this issue, ecofeminism (disturbingly, at the level of international political negotiation) has often been associated with the position that women have an innate and special relationship to nature and that this relation nominates women as the planet's natural caretakers. This stance has caused many scholars and activists (including Agarwal) to go elsewhere for their theoretical inspiration. For others, however, the challenge has been to develop an ecofeminist position that explicitly questions both the gendering of nature and the naturing of gender that accompanies such facile woman/nature equations. And as recent ecofeminist texts demonstrate admirably, such challenges have developed into a body of theory crafted from culturally, intellectually, and politically diverse positions. Anti-racist, queer, postcolonial, democratic, and anti-globalization politics have brought crucial and challenging questions to the ecofeminist table; literary critics, historians, philosophers, biologists, economists, and sociologists – many of whom are also activists – have fashioned increasingly interdisciplinary and increasingly thoughtful political and intellectual ecofeminist positions in response.

But why bother with ecofeminist theory at all? In the first place, ecofeminism demands that we stop and *think*, that we reflect on the feminist and ecological ethics and politics of our living and working. In particular, ecofeminism asks that we question some of the commonly-held assumptions about “women” and “environments” that might undergird our varied actions in the world. How, Greta Gaard might ask, do our ethical positions include implicit claims about nonhuman animals? How, as Sylvia Bowerbank suggests, are feminist conceptions of nature the products of historical – and perhaps problematic – claims about gender? How, as Noël Sturgeon so poignantly reminds us, are these reflective questions about power and privilege even more necessary in the post “09/11” world context?

In the second place, ecofeminism demands that we stop and talk. For many of the writers whose work is presented in this issue, a central concern is that we not only acknowledge our differences but craft from them a *conversational* theory, a politics of *dialogue*. In particular, recent developments in ecofeminism would have us move beyond a singular and problematic narrative of oppression based on white, heterosexual, western-centric assumptions about women and nature and toward a

more thoroughgoing and context-sensitive position that holds critical conversation as a central political and intellectual tenet. Robyn Eckersley, for example, insists that democracy must be a central ecofeminist political goal and that a variety of positions, and a variety of ways of speaking, be respected in political deliberation. As Lori Gruen also emphasizes, deliberation does not gloss over conflict; any genuine call for a democratic or multicultural ecofeminist politics must include a recognition that culturally and materially diverse configurations of gender and nature embody differences that are often difficult, pressing, and uncomfortable. Ecofeminism does not, in this light, answer the tough questions so much as it provides a series of intellectual and political resources with which to ask them in a more probing manner.

This issue of *WE International* is, then, both a reflection of current ecofeminist conversations and a call for a larger one. The editors hope that, in another fourteen years or so (or maybe sooner) a third overt raising of ecofeminist questions in the pages of *WE International* will show once again how far we've grown. ☸

### Thank You

*WE International* gratefully acknowledges the general support of the Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies, University of Toronto and the financial support provided by the following organizations: the Publications Assistance Program (PAP), the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC), Marshall Macklin Monaghan, Urban Strategies, the Canadian Urban Institute, The Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University, and Match International. We also thank the following individuals for their generous donations: Serina Morris, Elizabeth Forrest, Bertha Modlich, Martha McMahon, Regina Cochrane, Barbara Rahder, Lee Quinby, Susan Wismer, Gerda Kaegi, and Judith Kjellberg Bell. An especially warm thank you to all those who volunteered their time to help us put out this issue, especially Suzanne Farkas, Emma Thacker, Joanna Fine, Liann Bobechko, Vaia Barkas, and Reggie Modlich.



# Upcoming Issues

Help make them happen

*Women & Environments International* invites your donations, submissions, and ideas for our upcoming issues.

The Spring 2002 issue of WE will focus on **Feminist Ecological Economics**, a developing field that places household and community production and reproduction at the *centre* of economic life and takes as a starting point the unpaid work that is vitally necessary to build and maintain homes, human relationships and communities, without which there is no "economy." Guest edited by Ellie Perkins, the issue will highlight the overlapping perspectives of women and environmental activists on economic change, including an interview with a pioneer in the field, Finnish activist Hilikka Pietila.

**Women Rebuilding their Communities after Conflict/Disaster** will be the theme of our Fall 2002 issue. The issue will feature the experiences, analyses, and recommendations of women working for peace and reconciliation in communities around the world.

**Build a Network for Feminist Change!** A Network Directory and Index issue is long overdue. Submit your name and/or the names of other great women and women's groups who should be listed (perhaps interviewed) in the Directory. Fill in the form at the back of this issue and an additional double issue will be added to your subscription.

Donations of \$50 and over qualify for a tax-deductible receipt and should be made out to the University of Toronto. Please mail to:

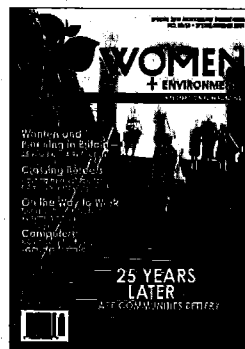
Women & Environments Magazine  
 IWSGS, New College, University of Toronto  
 40 Willcocks St., Rm 2042  
 Toronto, ON M5S 1C6 Canada  
 phone: 416-978-5259  
 fax: 416-946-5561  
 e-mail: [we.mag@utoronto.ca](mailto:we.mag@utoronto.ca)  
 website: [www.weimag.com](http://www.weimag.com)

## Did you receive Issue 50/51?

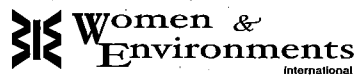
A database glitch skipped some labels in our last mailing. If you did not receive your copy of Issue 50/51, our 25th Anniversary Issue, please e-mail us at:

[we.mag@utoronto.ca](mailto:we.mag@utoronto.ca)

We will send it out immediately with our sincere apologies!



## Keep the conversation going. Tell us what you think!



e-mail us your "letter to the editors" at:  
[we.mag@utoronto.ca](mailto:we.mag@utoronto.ca)

Subaru  
 bare

~ helen laurence (1997)

can't you see?  
 we deserve this — to have  
 april rain greet our skin  
 bare as tulips  
 shot from darkness into  
 this tender light —  
 knowing spring  
 fat with promise  
 where can we go?  
 not only to expose  
 our largest organ — giving  
 permission for skin  
 to meet delicate mist  
 or sunlight gently  
 entering beauty begetting  
 beauty undiminished  
 by layers — protection become  
 prison — but to release  
 zinnia pores to blue jay chicks  
 to humming  
 bees connecting with  
 nectar to allow  
 all our cells rose  
 pinesap overflowing bark —  
 where will we go?

helen laurence lives on secluded wom-  
 enland in southern Oregon where she plays  
 with nature, lending her an occasional human  
 voice in poetry and story. She teaches writing  
 at Rogue Community College; recent publica-  
 tions have included *Manzanita Quarterly*,  
*Sinister Wisdom*, and *W-3*.

# Subscribe to: Women & Environments international

## Feminist Perspectives on Women's Relations to their Social, Natural, and Built Environments:

- 25 Years of Exploration and Discussion
- Theory and Practice
- Research, Projects, Events, and Publications
- Canada and Around the World

**Check our Website:** [www.weimag.com](http://www.weimag.com)

All back issues are depicted on our website and available for \$7.00 (\$11.00 for double issues and \$5.00 for photocopies of out-of-print issues)

### Special Offer (expires March 31, 2002):

3 double issues for \$18.00 or  
6 double issues for \$35.00 to individual subscribers  
regularly \$22.00 and \$38.00 respectively

Institutions and Businesses: 3 double issues \$49.50

US and Overseas Subscribers please pay in US funds

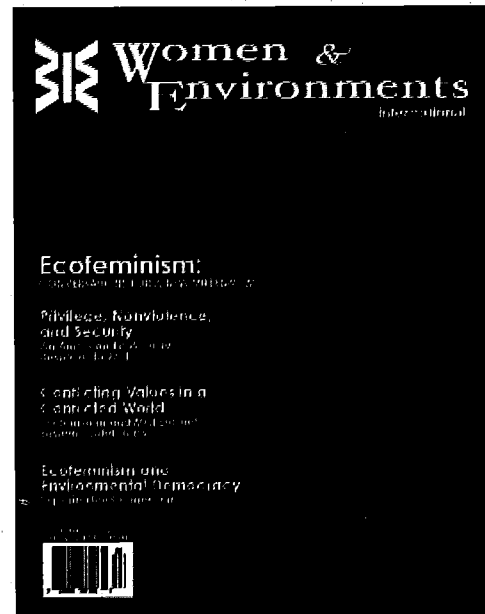
### Send cheques in the attached envelope to:

**Women & Environments International Magazine,**  
Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies,  
New College, University of Toronto,  
40 Willcocks St., Rm 2042  
Toronto, ON M5S 1C6

e-mail: [we.mag@utoronto.ca](mailto:we.mag@utoronto.ca)

phone: 416-978-5259

fax: 416-946-5561



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization or Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province/State: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal/Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_



## Features

# Privilege, Nonviolence, and Security:

An American Ecofeminist Responds to 9/11

Noël Sturgeon

Just when I thought I was finished writing the piece for this special issue, the events of Tuesday, September 11, 2001 occurred. I was called by my partner to the television, where we witnessed the first World Trade Center tower burning, and then the amazing image of another plane hitting the second tower. Then, the towers collapsing, one following another. And the Pentagon too, slammed into by a third plane, and then the news that a fourth plane had crashed in Pennsylvania. Before these astounding events are fully comprehended, even taken in, the day is moving on, and we have to send our child off to school. As soon as he is out the door on the way to the bus, I want to call him back, keep him near me. My partner is somewhat calmer, and convinces me that it is better for our kid to go to school than to be home in front of the T.V. My own words to my child, as he leaves, words meant to reassure, come unpleasantly back to me all day: *"Don't worry, honey. There's one good thing about living here in the middle of nowhere, in the wheat-fields of eastern Washington — you're perfectly safe."*

At what price is that illusion of safety for my child purchased, a safety and cherishing which every child in the world surely deserves as much as my own? What about all of the children, the women, and the men around the world who are brutalized, hungry, worked unbearably hard, and are exploited to support the institutions that provide me with that sense of safety and well-being? And I am not saying that I don't deserve, and my child doesn't deserve, that safety. But I am painfully aware that, despite my work against it, the

system of which I am a part produces an illusion of security for me through depriving others of their life, liberty, and happiness. And, like it or not, I share with the authors of the destruction in New York a similar anger at the same system. Before I even know who those authors are, I have only to look at the targets that have been hit to instantly understand our common anger, as horrifying as that realization is.

There is so much to be said, to be felt, and to be understood, about the devastation brought down upon New York, D.C., and Pennsylvania, but I want to concentrate here on the idea of privilege and its relation to knowledge, to consciousness. Originally, that is essentially what this article was going to be about, to explore why white middle-class ecofeminism, often in well-meaning ways, repeatedly appropriates the environmental activism of women of color and poor women. Problematically, I think, ecofeminism often assimilates that activism to an idealist understanding of women united to save the environment which obliterates the class and race divisions which may matter most to women of color environmentalist activists. I have written about this before, but I wanted to make that analysis more contemporary by applying it to the coalition work we see in the present anti-corporate globalization movement, to warn against assuming that ecofeminism is a welcome label to Third World activists, because of this history of white ecofeminist appropriation. I intended to explore how white privilege can operate to prevent those of us who are white feminist environmentalists from thoroughly understanding the ways in which environmentalism for non-domi-

nant others is so deeply entwined with questions of economic justice. And I wanted to critique the tendency of some U.S. feminists to continuously and ruinously present "classism" as though it is a matter of personal prejudice rather than a structural foundation for other forms of inequality. I hoped that this analysis would help us to move away from understanding the problems we face in ways that reduce inequality and injustice to mistakes of feeling, politics of identity, abstractions, or ideologies rather than effective, concrete systems of exploitation and profit from which many of us benefit.

But the reaction of many Americans to the events of 9/11/01 (how poignant, to realize that the date is the same number as our emergency number in the United States, something every kid learns very young — when you need help, call 911) demonstrate the effects of privilege far better than some of the other examples I had planned to use. And they also call for a strong feminist environmentalist response, an urgent effort to try to prevent further devastation and murder, to renew our commitment to antimilitarism and world economic justice in the face of what will surely be frightening war fever in the U.S., manipulation of people's emotions to support further imperialist actions, devastation of people and the environment from more bombing and war. As I write this, only a few days after the attack, while so much is still unknown and unsure about the perpetrators and their reasons for their actions, people on the T.V., in the newspapers, in my classes, and in the streets are calling for blood, for vengeance whether or not they revenge themselves

upon the innocent. President George W. Bush, reveling in his sudden legitimacy, vows to "hunt down" the killers and those who harbor and fund them. The fact that the U.S. has trained, harbored and funded so many terrorists, including Osama bin Laden himself, whom everyone immediately blames, goes without comment until several days later, and then is only a marginal point rather than a serious question of responsibility and self-analysis for Americans.

And I am sick at heart for the anti-corporate globalization movement, whose vital analysis of the connections between global capital, exploitation of workers, and destruction of the environment, whose solidarity across international, racial, and political lines, had given me hope once again for the possibility of a better world.

I am painfully aware that, despite my work against it, the system of which I am a part produces an illusion of security for me through depriving others of their life, liberty, and happiness.

How can we witness the attack on those symbols of what we oppose in that movement, the center of global capital in the World Trade Center, and the center of imperialist militarism in the Pentagon, without recognizing the consistency between the analysis of those who are responsible for the attack and the analysis of the anti-corporate globalization movement? If, as was true in the Oklahoma City bombing, the killers had turned out to be white American racists, the targets might have been the same, though explained differently as connected through a Zionist anti-white conspiracy. Are we to ignore these scary symmetries? How are we to insist on the difference between our opposition and theirs? How

will we continue to beat the same drum that we have for a while now, to point out that global capitalism, imperialism, militarism, racism, sexism and environmental destruction are all part of one system? How will we ever be able to make these connections in our collective actions, in the face of this outpouring of blind patriotism and worldwide grief, in an atmosphere in which the World Trade Center will acquire a sacred glow, in which many Americans are calling for more military spending and action in the deep desire to reacquire their false sense of security?

Despite our desire to see the smugness of global capitalism shaken, to call the centers of power to account for their arrogance and their profiting from other people's oppression and suffering, we can never take heart at what has happened. To kill people so horribly, to literally incinerate thousands of people in a ball of heat, dust and rubble, so that the ash of bodies floats for days in the air, what a ghastly phenomenon for New Yorkers to bear! Do we think about the ovens in the concentration camps in Nazi Germany? Do we think about the hundreds of people killed in the Iraqi hospital in the Gulf War? Do we think about the Palestinian children shot down by Israeli soldiers? Do we think about the Israeli families in buses exploded by Hamas bombers? Do we think about Hiroshima? Do we think about millions killed in Rwanda? Do we think about the women tortured and raped in Bosnia? What are our reference points, what distinctions should we make? These events are not the same, they are not equivalents, but they are all killing and brutality justified as war, murder under the guise of military action. They are all to be condemned and rejected as effective or justifiable actions.

This is the important difference between our opposition and the opposition of those who could plan or feel satisfaction at these events. Nonviolence is the key to social change, to feminist environmentalism, but it must be a militant nonviolence, an uncompromising nonviolence, a persistent nonviolence, a nonviolence. It must be on the side of liberation against colonialism,

against economic exploitation, against environmental catastrophe. We must recommit ourselves to nonviolence, to remember and revitalize the feminist analysis of the connections between violence, masculinism, brutality, economic exploitation, and oppression. We must reject the puerile imitation by protestors of police and security forces, under the illusion that meeting force with force is efficacious. Yet we must insist on the importance of the difference between human beings and property, and not give in to the idea that all protest is violence, that nonviolence is never angry, never furious, never militant, never causes discomfort.

Now, after 9/11, can we finally rise up and prevent the continuation of a cycle of violence? Let's look for whatever openings there might be in the wall of media misdirection and complacency to call out to people who are horrified at these acts. Let us take advantage of the need (certain to be temporary) of the U.S. for the support of a global coalition; let us call for a Palestinian state, an end to the development of a missile defense system, a shift in priorities to addressing poverty and exploitation around the globe. Let us aim, together, to change the world so that the hate we saw manifested is unjustified, these acts of violence are seen as unnecessary, so that everyone has a satisfying life, food, shelter, education, worthwhile and adequately compensated work, freedom to worship, a healthy environment. We must make the connection between militarized violence and the structural violence of everyday poverty, abuse, toxicity, and exploitation, and see them both as equally horrific and insupportable. We must delegitimize terror, whoever commits it.

To do this, to make this analysis, we need to understand the functions of privilege for those of us who are privileged by this system. We cannot just bemoan inequality and oppression without accounting for our being advantaged by it. Privilege protects some of us from knowing fully the horrors of our present global economic system, and saves us from realizing and rejecting our complicity in it; thus, it protects the system from the rebellion of



those inside of it, those who can effectively take it apart from the inside through nonviolent noncooperation and resistance.

How can we not know what is happening in sweatshops, in mines, in factories, in fields, and in homes around the world? Who is it that doesn't already know these things? Our privilege blocks the voices of opposition from around the world from reaching us, creates an everyday world that is like a bubble separating us from those who are different from us, from the natural world, from the risks and intense joys of meaningful work and action. It prevents us even from knowing our own suffering connected to that system, our own lack of freedom, choice, and knowledge. It teaches us to accept the ways things are, convinces us we are powerless and trains us in cynicism and arrogance. It whispers to us that it doesn't really matter what we buy, how we live, who we count as our community.

But it is not an impervious bubble; privilege can be understood, broken through, by learning from those voices of opposition, even when, and perhaps especially when, they challenge us and condemn our complicity, our lack of vision and courage to work for a different kind of world. And, ironically but hopefully, the benefits that are gained by privilege — the access to information, communication technologies, resources, time, influence, our function as consumers — can be used against complacency, ignorance, war fever, unthinking support of global capitalism, militarism and imperialism.

Who is surprised that America should be so hated? America is not attacked because it represents freedom and democracy, as CBS News anchor Dan Rather and his cronies would have us believe. The U.S. is hated because we have so often worked against democracy and freedom. We don't even have to go back very far to see this, though we should educate ourselves about the consistent patterns of our history. Just look at the actions of the present Bush Administration. In the short time he has been illegally installed as President, George W. Bush refused to sign the Kyoto Treaty addressing global warming, insisted on renewing missile defense proposals

which further exacerbate the threat of nuclear war, directed the U.S. not to pay its debt to the UN, pushed through a massive tax cut which has benefited the wealthy elite, argued for a set of agree-

Privilege protects some of us from knowing fully the horrors of our present global economic system, and saves us from realizing and rejecting our complicity in it.

ments to further expand the ability of multinational corporations to freely operate without labor or environmental regulations within the Americas, promoted nuclear power and nonrenewable gas and oil production in wilderness areas and on Indian reservations, and supported Prime Minister Sharon's demolition of the peace process. These actions are just a variant of dominant U.S. policy, but not inconsistent with years of U.S. hegemony over the world. If we don't know that all of these things mean further devastation and exploitation for the poor people of the world, and more destruction of the planet, then our privilege prevents us from clear understanding and we must therefore find ways of knowing that break through our complacency, that shake our world and raise our consciousness.

Instead of the word of false security and privilege, that I offered my son as he went off to school on 9/11, I now want to say to my child: "*Your security depends upon peace for every being on the planet. Your life is connected to all life on earth. What you do has ripples around the world. You need to know everything about how different people are living today, the rich, the poor, and the in-between, and to make sure that you are not benefiting, even indirectly, from someone else's pain. If you find that you are, you need to work with like-minded people to reject those benefits, stop that pain, right the wrongs done*

*in your name. But never accept the idea that you must cause pain and suffering, death and destruction, in the name of justice. A great woman, Audre Lorde, once said: 'The Master's tools will never dismantle the Master's house.' And another, Alice Walker, said: 'Only Justice will stop a curse.' But, child, you are not alone. I will help you, honey. You are safe because I am joined in this resolve by millions of other committed people in this world. It is the greatest work we have ever done together. And we must succeed."*

<sup>1</sup> Noël Sturgeon, *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> It is even more crucial to learn how to make clear distinction between the hatred of Islamic fundamentalism and the hatred of the anti-corporate globalization movement for U.S. led global capital and militarism, now that the new anti-terrorism bill passed by the U.S. Congress has enabled almost any resistance or opposition to be defined as terrorism. Even before 9/11, U.S. politicians in Washington and Oregon were attempting to define environmental activists as "eco-terrorists," supporting state bills to establish the death penalty for "eco-terrorism." On my local TV news, "eco-terrorists" were visually represented by images of the 1999 Seattle protesters smashing Starbucks' windows. Clearly, the new anti-terrorism legislation can be used against the anti-corporate globalization movement.

<sup>3</sup> Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color*. Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981.

<sup>4</sup> Alice Walker, "Only Justice Can Stop a Curse," in Judith McDaniel (Ed.), *Weaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1982.

Noël Sturgeon is Associate Professor and Chair of Women's Studies at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington.

**Three-feather Summer**  
- Cornelia Hoogland

Apostrophes of white  
stroke the ground, my cheek.  
I'm lining my nest.

I find an eagle feather, then another.  
A third at Gravelly Bay.  
Three white eagle feathers!  
I'm being shown the door:  
big flight, wide sky. What's up?

In her latest book of poetry, *You are Home* (Black Moss Press, 2001), Cornelia Hoogland places herself bum-down in a natural world that she shakes free from virtual home page or romantic notions, in order to write within an earthly web of relations. Hoogland teaches at the University of Western Ontario where she can be reached at [choogland@UWO.ca](mailto:choogland@UWO.ca).

# What Is Ecofeminist Art?

## An Introduction to the WE Gallery

Deborah Mathew

Works by the artists featured in this essay appear throughout this issue of *WE International*.

At its core, ecofeminist art is an artistic response to feminist and ecological concerns. Just as there are many shades of feminism (liberal, socialist, radical, etc.), so too there are many varieties of ecology (biological, spiritual, social, etc.). Central to feminist studies are gender analysis and the reclamation of women's history and wisdom. Central to ecology are systems thinking, cyclical time and an acknowledgment of nature's inherent intelligence. Central to both is the embodiment and materiality of power. Historically, a link drawn between the oppression of women and the domination of nature created an overlap of the two fields, subsequently coined "ecofeminism." Scholars have investigated empirical, conceptual, epistemological, spiritual, material and political frameworks which reveal a hierarchical reality that conflates women and nature, and devalues both. Correcting the imbalances is the underlying motivation of ecofeminism.

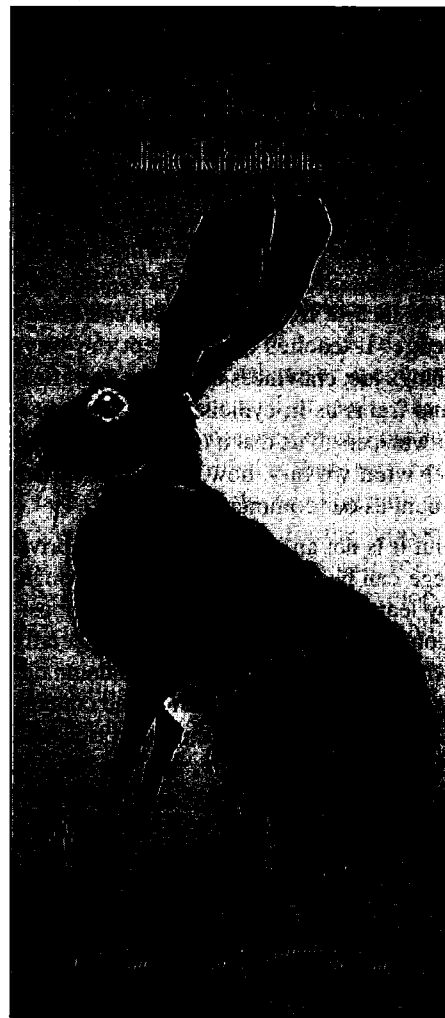
Feminists are interested in an egalitarian society and many are cognizant of utilizing non-hierarchical, relational processes in achieving their aims. Meanwhile, ecologists promote a non-anthropocentric vision of nature. Humans are but one small node in a three dimensional web of life, most of it beyond human. Combining feminist and ecological spheres and addressing them in an artistic manner results in something we dare to name "ecofeminist art." It is an art without a precise definition or form; this is its strength. Some ecofeminist artists articulate social and environmental concerns in conventional gallery spaces. Others choose alternative forms in unorthodox spaces. These may be site-specific installation, ritual and performance, habitat restoration and other

unconventional media that mainstream society may not yet identify as "art." I will focus on the latter forms and reveal the complex strategies of exemplary artists.

Susan Leibovitz Steinman salvages waste materials from the sites she redeems. Her public art installations emerge from a co-creative process with the site's community that engenders an understanding of the location's cultural and ecological history, as well as its present and future ideals. In 1997, in a project titled *California Avenue, California Native*, Steinman planted native bunch grass and indigenous perennial wildflowers along the roadway median as a gateway sculpture for Palo Alto, CA. This public art commission included updating existing brick sidewalks with "poetry bricks," inscribed with three lines of text contributed by California residents in response to a contest requesting reflections on "quintessential California." Flagpoles along the street carried hand-painted banners of native flora and fauna.

This work honors California's diversity and involved residents, both human and more than human, creating community and increasing awareness of local ecology. As such, the community "owns" the site and subsequently cares for it. Embedded in Steinman's collaborative, inclusive strategy are feminist principles arising out of the 1970s feminist movement. This approach contrasts sharply with the masculine disconnected "plunk" art that grants the "genius artist" power to place any sculptural object in a public place. Accentuating wise relationships within the public sphere creates connections across gender, race, class and species. Steinman's projects reflect a commitment to social transformation through the melding of art, ecology and community action. ([www.SteinmanStudio.com](http://www.SteinmanStudio.com))

While the public art work of Steinman



Banner of native animal by Susan Leibovitz Steinman

reflects a feminist approach to social ecology, the art of Dominique Mazeaud is deeply embedded in spiritual ecology. Centering on compassion, she calls herself a "heartist." Her work involves personal and community ritual on behalf of the Earth. A current example is *The Most Precious Jewel*. Since 1998, once a month, she sits in the town plaza of Santa Fe, New Mexico where she resides. Her face, covered with a white mask, conveys an air of peace and anonymity. One of her intentions is to inspire passersby to think and remember the immeasurable gift that is the



Earth. Mazeaud sits beading the cloth globe and as interested individuals engage her in conversation, she invites them to stitch three beads on their favorite parts of the Earth. One bead is given as a tear of joy for her beauty, a second as a tear of grief for her ills and a third, as a small gesture the beader may be inspired to take on the Earth's behalf. Beading is a woman's craft; the artist intentionally re-claims the traditions of women who beautify and maintain that which supports our physical, social and spiritual well-being. When the globe is totally beaded, she will make a sacred pilgrimage, carrying the "bejeweled Earth" in a cradleboard across the United States. She also has brought the jeweled globe into the classroom, to teach children about the spirited, generous Earth.

Educating students in unusual settings is also essential to Erica Fielder's artwork, which unifies a naturalist's love of nature with: "objective" biological ecology. Aiming to instill wonder and awe, Fielder creates "sensory field guides" for people to use in relating to the natural world. These beautiful hand-made books encourage readers to rely on their bodies and senses to understand the environment, an act that has distinctly feminist roots.

Fielder's work also revolves around watersheds and our human relationship to them. *Salmon Skin Cape* is a reminder that the water we drink once ran in the sap of trees, the veins of otter and will once again cycle back to the streams in our own backyard. *Gesture of Return* is a ritual in which she invites participants to return salmon bones to their own watersheds with a thankful intent. Inspired by native traditions, this work unites ancient ways with modern ecology. People can research or simply connect intuitively with their own watershed, communing and connecting with the environment that supports them. Fielder's work rebalances the masculine presence of reason and objectivity with the archetypal feminine qualities of emotion and subjectivity. Her idea is that the intimacy created by our sensory involvement helps to heal human relations with the Earth. ([www.ericafielder-ecoartist.com](http://www.ericafielder-ecoartist.com).)

An art of social change, ecofeminist art

creates a healthy web of interrelationships between humans and others. As with most dualisms, culture and nature, essentialism and social construction dissolve as ecofeminist artists nurture a worldview founded on mutual respect, compassion and direct action. Superseding modernist notions of the ethical, aesthetic and politi-

cal, this visionary art form is a powerful commitment to a sustainable, vital future for the planet and its inhabitants. ❧

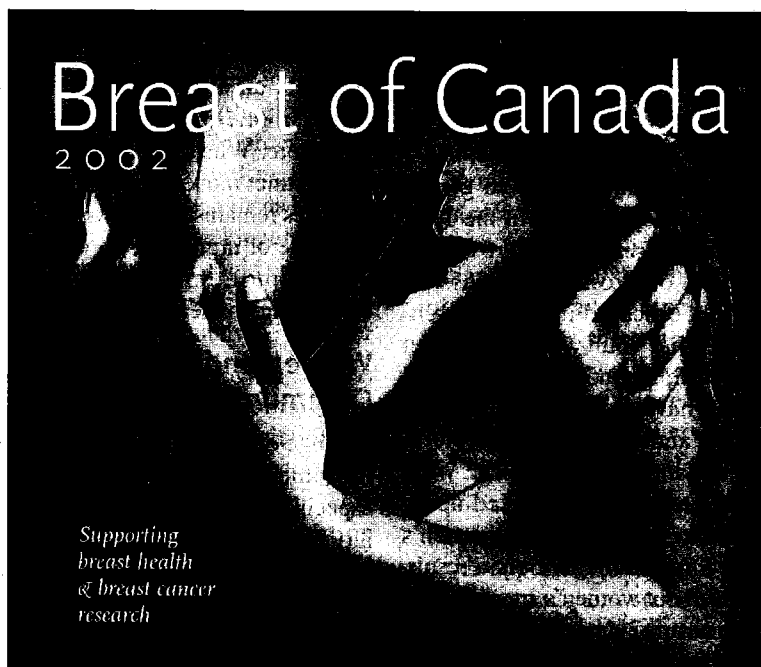
**Deborah Mathew** has worked as a biologist, a guide for women's wilderness trips and as an artist. She has taught an "Art and Ecology" seminar class for 5 years at the University of Wyoming and a studio version in Costa Rica this past summer.

#### Further Reading

Orenstein, Gloria (1996). "Methodology of the Marvelous." *Matriart*. Vol. 6, No. 2: Artist, Ecology, and the Locus of Rootedness. Published by WARC (Women Artists Resource Center), pp.26-35.

Boettger, Suzaan (1994). "In the Missionary Position: Recent Feminist Ecological Art." In Joanna Frueh, Cassandra L. Langer & Arlene Raven. (Ed.), *New Feminist Criticism*. NY: HarperCollins, pp.248-63.

Gablik, Suzi (1991). *The Reenchantment of Art*. NY: Thames and Hudson.



## Breast of Canada™ Calendar 2002

### A Stunning Breast Health Calendar

40% of net profit directed towards Breast Cancer Support Services Outreach and Breast Self Examination Education Program.  
Retail \$24.95 plus applicable taxes and shipping.

[www.breastofcanada.com](http://www.breastofcanada.com) · [info@breastofcanada.com](mailto:info@breastofcanada.com)  
Fax Orders Line: 519-824-9289

Published by Art Jam

# A Challenge for Ecofeminism: Gender, Greening, and Community Forestry in India<sup>1</sup>

Bina Agarwal

Certain ecofeminist positions have significantly influenced views on women and the environment in international fora and among donors in ways that are a cause for concern. These are especially positions that define women's relationship with nature in "essentialist" terms. Cecile Jackson, for instance, observes that "ecofeminist approaches have colonised the views of development agencies."<sup>2</sup> Rosi Braidotti *et al.* similarly note that "the idea of women's privileged position in environmental management and their closer connection with nature" is "embraced wholeheartedly" by many.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, at times these connections are even expressed in oft-repeated ecofeminist metaphors of women "healing" or "reweaving" the world.

Such influences also extend to global agendas, such as spelled out in the 1992 *Women's Action Agenda 21*. Here a passing mention of women's rights in resources was obscured in the overarching message that "our wounded planet needs [the] healing touch of women" and that "women have a special relationship with nature" and thus a special role in promoting sustainable development. What has therefore tended to be picked up by policy advocates is the idea of women's naturalized *roles*, not *rights*. As a result, assumptions about women's special ability to "heal nature" can easily translate into schemes which increase women's work burden, without any assurance of their share in resources, or of men sharing women's workloads.

Within many ecofeminist writings themselves there is also a notable persistence of the idea that the women's movement and the environment movement automatically share a common emancipatory agenda and "egalitarian perspective" as was emphasized by Carolyn Merchant many years ago.<sup>4</sup> Vandana Shiva has likewise argued, "woman and nature are intimately

related, and their domination and liberation similarly linked. The women's and ecology movements are therefore one."<sup>5</sup>

Given their influence and persistence, such ideas warrant testing against ground experience; they should be challenged where found wanting. This article, written from the position that ecofeminist views have historically proved problematic — because of their assumptions about the relationship between women and nature and about the inherent connections between feminism and ecology — takes a rather different view. It considers the experience of community forestry in India and uses these experiences to further substantiate an alternative perspective of *feminist environmentalism*, elaborated elsewhere. Whether or not ecofeminism, as a distinct movement, responds to these critiques remains, in the context of at least a decade of argument, an open question. In that spirit, this paper is offered as a continuing challenge.

## Women and Community Forestry

A range of forest management initiatives has emerged in India in recent years, especially in the form of village community forest groups (CFGs). Some are state-initiated under the Joint Forest Management (JFM) programme launched in 1990, in which village communities and the government share the responsibility and benefits of protecting and regenerating degraded local forest land. Others have been initiated autonomously by elders or youth clubs; yet others have historically mixed origins, such as the *van panchayats* or forest councils of the north-western hills. Today there are over 36,000 JFM groups alone, apart from a few thousand other groups. These are in addition to the protection efforts spearheaded by environmental movements such as Chipko in northwest India.

Based on my fieldwork and existing case studies a brief sketch is presented here of how these groups perform. In terms of regeneration, many have had notable success. Where the rootstock is undamaged, natural regeneration begins apace. Many JFM forests I visited in 1995 and 1998 showed impressive results. Barren hill-sides which five years earlier had yielded little except dry twigs and monsoon grass were covered with young trees. Biodiversity had also increased, incomes risen, and seasonal outmigration fallen. But from a gender perspective the results were far less impressive.

The CFGs are managed through a General Body (GB) constituted of all village households and an Executive Committee (EC) of between nine and fifteen members. Few women are members of either. Typically less than 10% of GB members are women. Under the JFM programme in several states the rules allow membership to only one person per household. This is invariably the male head. The autonomous groups have no formal membership rules, but follow traditional norms which excluded women from village decision-making bodies. Also, even where women are members, usually few attend; those that do rarely speak out and when they do speak their views are seldom taken seriously or their interests and expertise recognized.

Women's lack of direct membership and participation in decision-making adversely affects theirs and the family's welfare, efficient institutional functioning, and scope for women's empowerment.

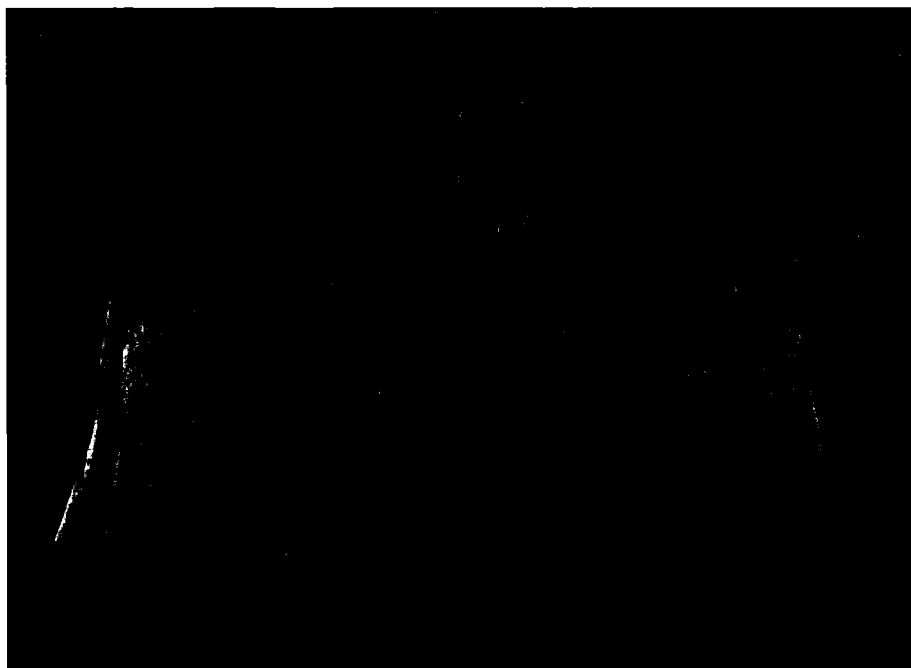
To begin with, the forest management rules framed by the all-male groups take little account of women's concerns. In many JFM villages, women are barred from collecting even dry twigs. Where earlier they could fulfill at least part of their needs from the protected area, they were now forced to

travel to neighboring sites, spending extra hours and risking punishment if caught. In some sites in Gujarat and West Bengal, women who earlier spent one to two hours to collect a headload of firewood, ended up spending four to five after forest closure, and journeys of half a kilometer lengthened to eight or nine. Some sought help from young daughters, with negative effects on the latter's schooling. When neighbors too closed their forests, women bore the costs of economizing and switching to inferior fuels such as cropwaste, even weeds, which generate more smoke and cause health problems. In many regions firewood shortages persist even after eight to ten years of regeneration, since rules banning entry remain in place, and few alternative solutions have been sought by the community.

Typically the self-initiated autonomous groups are even more male-biased. Many all-male youth clubs in eastern India, for instance, have not only banned forest entry, they have been selling the forest products obtained from thinning and cleaning operations. Poor households cannot afford to buy this firewood and other forest products which they had earlier collected free. Moreover, the cash generated through the sales is often put in a collective fund. Women have little say in fund use. In several cases the money has been spent on a clubhouse or club functions.

Even where the groups distribute cash benefits through the male members, there is no guarantee of equitable sharing or even any sharing within the family. In many cases, the men have been known to use the money for gambling, liquor or personal items. Hence where women are not part of the GB and get excluded from receiving the benefits *directly*, both their and their children's welfare can be affected adversely. Not surprisingly women, when asked about their preferences, typically vote for equal and separate shares for husbands and wives.

Welfare apart, women's exclusion from decision-making can negatively affect the long-term efficiency and sustainability of these initiatives (whatever the immediate gains). Since it is typically women who



Salmon Skin Cape by Erica Fielder.

have to collect firewood and grasses regularly, their lack of involvement in framing workable forest use rules often compels them to violate the rules, in order to fulfill essential needs. Excluding women also means that replantation plans lack the benefit of their particular knowledge of plants and species which could enrich the selections, enhance biodiversity, and increase the overall productivity.

Thus what initially appear to be success stories of participative community involvement in resource regeneration are found to be largely non-participatory and inequitable in relation to women. This highlights too the problem of treating "communities" as ungendered units and "community participation" as an unambiguous step toward equity.

### What constrains women's formal participation?

Apart from exclusionary membership rules in many states, several factors restrict women's effective participation in the formal forest protection groups, such as:

- Logistical constraints associated with women's double work burdens: Women have longer workdays than men, and meetings are often called when they are busy with domestic chores or field-work. Women (especially young moth-

ers) can thus rarely attend long meetings, unless family or friends cover such responsibilities.

- Official male bias: In government schemes, male forest officers rarely consult women about tree choice or micro-plans for forest development. Many women also complain that the officers "always crosscheck with the men to verify the truth of [women's] words. And if ever there is any conflict or contradiction between the women and the men, the foresters always settle the disputes in favour of the men."<sup>6</sup>

- Social constraints: These take various forms: female seclusion practices; subtle disapproval of women's presence in public spaces; restrictive norms of appropriate female behavior and public interaction; social perceptions, articulated in various ways, that women are less capable than men, or that their participation is not appropriate or necessary; and so on. Village women claim that the committee meetings are considered to be only for men, and they are seldom called to meetings. It is assumed that men's views represent those of all family members.

- The absence of "a critical mass" of women. Women are often reluctant to attend meetings if they are only a few.

Most also feel they cannot change procedures individually, and would be more able to speak up if present in large numbers.

- Women's lack of recognized authority: Many women find that when they do attend meetings their opinions are disregarded causing them to drop out. The experience of a woman *van panchayat* member is indicative: "I went to three or four meetings... No one ever listened to my suggestions. They were uninterested."

Exceptional CFGs with 30%, 50% and sometimes even 100% women in the formal committees do exist, suggesting that the constraints are not entirely insurmountable. But such cases are few, catalysed by a local NGO, or by specific circumstances such as high male outmigration.

More common are women's *informal* patrols formed where men's groups are ineffective. This enhances the efficiency of protection. But it also adds to women's work burden and responsibility, without increasing their authority for punishing offenders which is still the domain of the formal (typically all-male) bodies.

## A Challenge for Ecofeminism

My research calls to question several of the premises about women's relationship with the environment that continue to be popular in ecofeminism and that are often transmitted uncritically into global policy literatures. First, it challenges any romantic claim that the women's movement and the environment movement both stand for egalitarian, non-hierarchical systems, or are automatically in sync. As the CFGs show dramatically, an agenda for "greening" need not include one for transforming gender relations; indeed, efforts at greening by male-biased institutions might sharpen gender inequalities.

Second, although Mies and Shiva<sup>11</sup> (among others) claim that women have a special stake in environmental regeneration, it is clear that women alone do not have such a stake. Both women and men whose livelihoods are threatened by the degradation of forests and commons are found to be interested in conservation, but from *different and at times conflicting* concerns, stemming from differences in their

respective responsibilities and the nature of their dependence on these resources. Men's interests can be traced mainly to their dependence on the local forests for supplementary income, and/or for small timber for house repairs and agricultural tools, which are their responsibility. Women's interests are linked more to the availability of fuel, fodder, and non-timber products, for which they are more directly responsible, and the depletion of which has meant ever-increasing workloads. In other words, there is clearly a link between the gender division of labour and the gendered nature of the stakes.

The women I interviewed from some Gujarat villages were unambiguous about this:

Q: On what issues do men and women differ in forest protection committee meetings?

A: Men can afford to wait for a while because their main concern is timber. But women need fuelwood daily.

Third, women's concerns, even if pressing, do not necessarily translate into effective environmental action by the community or by women themselves. Case studies of several autonomous forest-management initiatives in east India highlight both the gendered motivation for forest protection and the unequal distribution of power which has enabled men's interests to supersede women's:

In most of the cases protection efforts started only when the forest had degraded and communities faced shortage of small timber for construction of houses and agricultural implements. Although there was a scarcity of fuelwood, it hardly served as an initiating factor.<sup>9</sup>

Although firewood is a household necessity and not just a women-specific one, since it is women's unpaid labour that goes into providing it, the cost to women remains invisible or of insufficient importance to generate a community response.

Women's own responses too are far from automatic. The experience of a Rajasthan NGO is illustrative:

[T]here is nothing "automatic" in the extent of women's active participation in the development of village common lands, no matter how acute their hardship of searching for fuel and fodder... Continuous interaction with [the NGO's] women staff has been [a] crucial input for facilitating women's genuine participation.

As I have elaborated elsewhere in my concept of *feminist environmentalism*, people's relationship with nature, their interest in protecting it, and their ability to do so effectively, are significantly shaped by their material reality, their everyday dependence on nature for survival, and the social, economic and political tools at their command for furthering their concerns. Ideological constructions of gender, of nature, and of the relationship between the two, can impinge on people's response to the environmental crisis, but are not its central determinants.

To the extent that both women and men of poor households are dependent on natural resources, they would both have a stake in environmental regeneration. However, whether this leads them to initiate environmental action, and what benefits they derive from such action, would be contingent, among other things, on their ability to act in their own interest. Gender-specific interest in alleviating the environmental crisis, as also the ability to do something about it, would typically be linked to the division of labor, property and power between women and men.

On the feminist front, these insights point to the need to challenge and transform not just ideas about gender but also the actual division of work, resources, and political space between the genders. On the environmental front they point to the need not only to transform notions about nature, but also to grapple with the material factors (economic, institutional, etc.) that determine how people interact with nature.

Mies and Shiva prescribe the revival of subsistence economies in various ways, on the false assumption that in such economies women's position was complementary and equal to men's. Although they concede in passing that in future men



need to share more in domestic and subsistence work, they say little about how this might be achieved. This is unlikely to happen merely by calling upon men to "redefine their identity" and to "share unpaid subsistence work: in the household, with children, with the old and sick."<sup>11</sup> Nor is it apparent how the rural women Shiva praises for being "not owners of their own bodies or of the earth, but [who] cooperate with their bodies and with the earth in order 'to let grow and to make grow,'"<sup>12</sup> can change a long-entrenched division of labour. In fact, attempts to revive subsistence economies could further entrench women in unremitting, undervalued labour.

Rather, to move from being the main victims of environmental degradation to being effective agents of environmental regeneration, poor women will need to

overcome not just disabling gender ideology, but social and political barriers. They will also have to contend with the pre-existing advantages that men as a gender (albeit not all men as individuals) enjoy, in terms of greater access to economic resources and public decision-making forums. How this can be achieved is the real challenge ahead.

<sup>1</sup> This paper is based largely on excerpts from the much longer paper "Environmental Management, Gender Equity and Ecofeminism," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 25 (4): pp. 55-95.

<sup>2</sup> C. Jackson (1993), "Woman/nature or gender/history? A critique of ecofeminist 'development,'" *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 20 (3): p. 398.

<sup>3</sup> R. Braidotti, R.E. Charkiewicz, S. Hausler and S. Wieringa (1994). *Women, the Environment and Sustainable Development: Towards a Theoretical Synthesis*. London: Zed Books. p. 95.

<sup>4</sup> C. Merchant (1980). *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, p. xix. New York: HarperCollins.

<sup>5</sup> V. Shiva (1988). *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival*, p. 47. London: Zed Books.

<sup>6</sup> S. B. Roy, R. Mukherjee, D.S. Roy, P. Bhattacharya and R.K. Bhadra (1993). "Profile of Forest Protection Committees at Sarugarh Range, North Bengal," Working Paper no. 16, IBRAD, Calcutta, pp. 15-16.

<sup>7</sup> C. Britt (1993). "Out of the Wood? Local Institutions and Community Forest Management in Two Central Himalayan Villages," p. 146. Draft Monograph, Cornell University.

<sup>8</sup> Vandana Shiva, op. cit; Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (1993). *Ecofeminism*. London: Zed Books.

<sup>9</sup> ISO/Swedforest (1993). "Forests, People and Protection: Case Studies of Voluntary Forest Protection by Communities in Orissa", Swedish International Development Agency, New Delhi, p. 46.

<sup>10</sup> M. Sarin and C. Sharma (1993). "Experiments in the Field: The Case of PEDO in Rajasthan", in A. Singh and N. Burra (Eds.), *Women and Wasteland Development in India*. Delhi, Sage Publishers, pp. 91-127.

<sup>11</sup> Mies and Shiva, op. cit, p. 319.

<sup>12</sup> Shiva, op. cit, p.43.

**Bina Agarwal** is Professor of Economics at the Institute of Economic Growth at Delhi University. Her most recent book is *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*; it has won several awards.

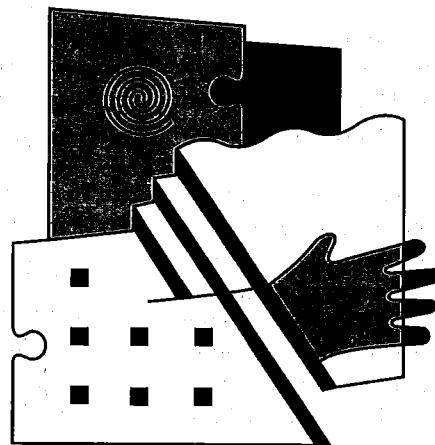
## Wanted for Publication: Art Influenced by Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is the uniting of ecology, environmentalism, and feminism. Historically, ecofeminism linked the oppression of women within the domination of nature and created a wave of interest in banishing these unjust inequities. Contemporarily, ecofeminism weaves gendered analyses with ecological concepts and proposes alternative strategies for relationship amongst humans and between human and non-human nature.

If you believe that your artwork is inspired by ecofeminist ideas and ideals, I would like to connect with you, obtaining a record of your work and thoughts, slides, CV, and a statement about your work. Please send a packet of materials to:

Deborah Mathew  
606 South 8th Street  
Laramie, Wyoming  
USA 82070

**Inquires: [debbiemathew88@hotmail.com](mailto:debbiemathew88@hotmail.com)**



## URBAN STRATEGIES INC.

257 Adelaide Street West, Suite 500, Toronto, ON M5H 1X9  
T 416.340.9004 F 416.340.8400 E [urbanstrat@aol.com](mailto:urbanstrat@aol.com)

# Conflicting Values in a Conflicted World:

## Ecofeminism and Multicultural Environmental Ethics

Lori Gruen

One of the most intractable problems facing environmentalists is how to address global environmental issues given the very different, often conflicting, ways that nature is valued within and across cultures. In many parts of the world, nature is valued as an exploitable resource that when used efficiently can raise standards of living, improve the quality of life, or increase the wealth of a select few. In other places, people believe that economic development efforts must be sustainable; promoting natural balance and improving living standards are values that can be achieved simultaneously. For many people, the value of global justice suggests that rich nations must do more to protect the global environment in order to allow for the legitimate improvement of the quality of life of the poor (a point that is lost on the current U.S. administration whose intransigence on the issue of greenhouse gas emissions is in clear violation of any principle of global justice). To make things more complicated, there are additional values beyond the value of a decent standard of living, the value of nature, and the value of justice, I'll call them "cultural values," that place some groups or nations at odds with others in their very conceptions of what respecting nature and protecting the environment means.

The controversy over the legitimacy of the revival of the Makah's whale hunt in 1999 is one example of this clash between cultural and other values. The Makah people live at the northwestern most tip of the Olympic Peninsula. For hundreds of years before contact with Europeans, they were a prosperous nation that hunted whales and sold whale oil up and down the Pacific coast. After the U.S. colonized them, they were granted treaty rights to hunt whales in exchange for giving up

most of their lands. In the 1920s they stopped hunting as the whales had become endangered by European and American commercial whale hunting. Even though no Makah currently alive has ever witnessed or been a part of a whale hunt, most Makah today view the hunt as a way to reclaim their traditions and to provide the younger generation with the basis of identities that can help to shape their goals and aspirations (some elder members of the Makah community view the hunt as a travesty).

For the majority of the Makah, the value of promoting and preserving their culture is paramount. Many environmentalists and animal protectionists, on the other hand, view the hunt as a shameless attempt by the Makah to solve their social problems by slaughtering beautiful, sentient beings. The value of whales' lives and freedom is the guiding value for

many environmentalists opposed to the hunt. Some Makah suggest that the value of the whales' lives and the value of the Makah traditions can be promoted simultaneously, but western critics cannot understand how killing young whales is a way of valuing whales. Some Makah view the value judgement of environmentalist critics as yet another form of cultural imperialism. In this case, the value of sentient lives and the value of tradition and cultural autonomy appear to be in hopeless conflict.

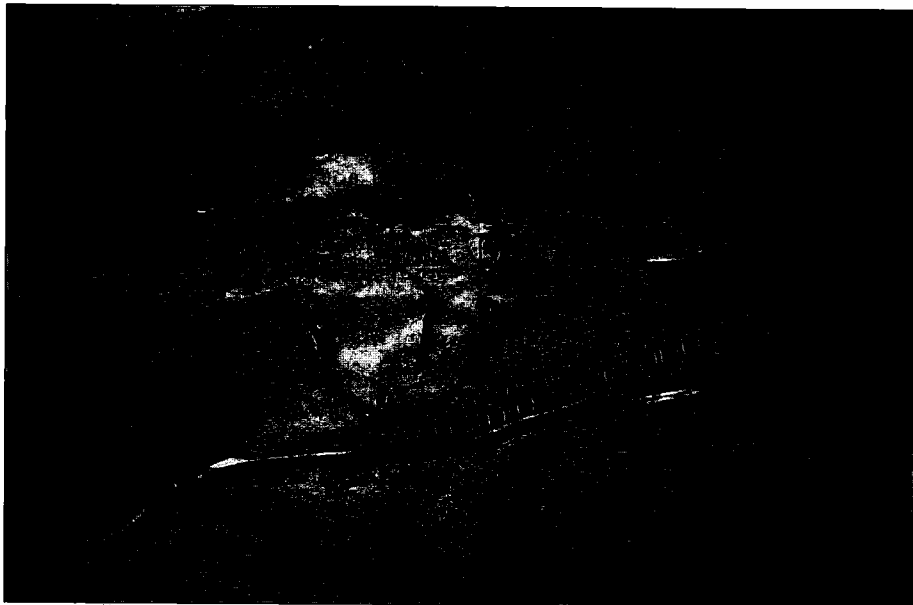
### The Challenge of Cross-Cultural Ethics

Given the enormous variety in the ways nature is valued, it may seem that there simply cannot be an ethic that applies across cultures. Indeed, it has been suggested that any system of norms meant to guide our thinking about how to protect the environment must be relative to particular cultures, and even particular communities within those cultures. I think adopting this sort of relativism is a mistake, although it is indeed important to pay attention to and learn from the varieties of reflective valuations within and among cultures. Considering the shocking rise of ethnic cleansing, racial violence, religious intolerance and other outrageous acts carried out under the banner of particular cultural identities or ethnic traditions, highlights the seriousness of the problems ethical relativism faces. In light

It has been suggested that any system of norms meant to guide our thinking about how to protect the environment must be relative to particular cultures, and even particular communities within those cultures.

Adopting this sort of relativism is a mistake.

of the atrocities that occurred in Kosovo and Rwanda, the developing slave trade in women and children in the Sudan, and the problems of siting toxic facilities in poor communities and communities of color across the globe, it is irresponsible to claim that each culture and/or community should be left to determine their own ethic. However, it is equally irresponsible for the rich and powerful to impose their peculiarly Western values on suspicious, and perhaps hostile, peoples elsewhere. Such impositions fail to take into account



Salmon Skin Cape by Erica Fielder.

the importance of cultural values, and often in fact lead to serious setbacks to the well-being of the traditionally disempowered — women, children, animals, and the natural world. So, how are environmentalists committed to promoting the well-being of all humans, animals, and the natural world and respecting cultural values, where appropriate, to proceed?

I am interested in exploring how to think about environmental protection and ecofeminist politics generally when there is a *claim* that a cultural value is at stake. The problem becomes particularly challenging when the values of a culture consistently come into conflict with the well-being of women, or racial or sexual minorities or the preservation of the natural world. Is there a way to respect the value of cultures that appear to oppress women, minorities, animals, and the environment? Or put differently, is there a non-imperialist way of justifying interference when women, minorities, animals and the environment are being disadvantaged or destroyed?

I have a sketch of a proposal for thinking about a multicultural environmental ethic.

### Values in and between Communities

My proposal begins by first identifying the boundaries of the community and determining whether the conflict of values

is an *intra-community* or an *inter-community* conflict. If it is the latter, and the conflict involves the destruction or oppression of members of one community by members of another community then outsiders are acting appropriately when they express their values and offer assistance. I will suggest below that this is the kind of conflict that exists between the Makah, the whales and environmentalists. Many conflicts are intra-community conflicts, however. In these cases, the first thing for outsiders to do is find out whether there are insiders that are seeking outside help. If that is the case, then, for the most part, outsiders who are working with marginalized or oppressed members of the community have a legitimate reason for doing so. If it is an intra-community conflict and there are no insiders seeking outside help, either because they are not aware that their conditions could be improved, or because they are suffering from a form of false consciousness, or because they are beings that are unable to ask for help (e.g., non-humans and the natural world), then the legitimacy of outside interference is more complicated.

### Examining Oppression

The proposal also involves an inter-subjective test that allows multiculturalists to condemn certain cultural practices at certain times while preserving the values of

equality, environmental protection and culture. This test involves identifying what counts as an “oppressive culture.” A culture is oppressive when the distribution of resources, liberties, opportunities and well-being is skewed in such a way that some individuals or groups of individuals have access to them and others do not. But it is more than just this sort of an egalitarian culture. Oppressive cultures deny individuals or groups of individuals the ability to pursue their way of life or to express themselves.

In the case of animals and the natural world, an oppressive culture is one that unreflectively destroys beings and thus denies them the opportunity to flourish. Oppression is a type of domination; it exists when a person or group of persons has the capacity to harmfully interfere on an arbitrary basis with the lives of dominated or oppressed groups or entities such that the oppressed’s ability to flourish is undermined. Importantly, from an environmental perspective, oppression is not to be understood as a subjective occurrence — one needn’t feel oppressed or even be able to understand or feel at all in order to be oppressed. Oppression can be identified from the outside by noticing that there are identifiable barriers that are constructed by one group in a culture to hold back or destroy individuals or entities in another group.

That oppression can be identified from either inside or outside a culture means that one need not understand the meaning assigned to the various practices, or the role such practices play in the history or tradition of a culture in order to recognize them as oppressive in this inter-subjective sense. But what are those concerned about oppression to do when such practices are identified? An adequate solution to the problem of oppression cannot just identify what appears to be oppression as a way to justify interference with oppressive cultures. In order to be a morally and practically defensible solution, it must also provide a way of avoiding legitimate resentment by members of those cultures. So another key part of the test is to understand and assess what it would mean to avoid legitimate resentment.

But what constitutes legitimate resentment? It is important to distinguish between emotional resentment and normative resentment. Emotional resentment is a non-cognitive response to a judgement, action, practice or policy that one is unhappy with or aggravated by. As a non-cognitive response, this kind of resentment is not properly thought to be legitimate or illegitimate. Insofar as we are to judge the legitimacy of the response, the most we can say is that it is directed at an inappropriate target — for example, it is illegitimate for me to resent my colleague for not listening to me if he was, in fact, listening to me. I was mistaken in the belief that led to my emotional response. In contrast, normative resentment is legitimate when a person who makes a normative commitment to promote or protect a certain set of values or practices or ways of life does not act in ways that are consistent with that commitment, and he or she is aware that not so acting is a breach of that commitment. As an illustration, consider a timber executive from a wealthy nation who convinces a competitor from a developing country not to harvest a certain forest using a conservationist argument. The competitor may have legitimate resentment if the wealthy logger turns around and destroys a similar forest to turn a profit.

### Applying the Proposal

Now, let's return to the three types of cases I mentioned above — the case of inter-community conflict and the two cases of intra-community conflict — to see what my proposal might look like in practice.

The first kind of case involves a community or culture that is engaging in practices that violate or infringe upon the objective well-being of individuals who are outside of that community. In these cases the cultural activity extends beyond the culture and interferes with beings that do not reap the benefits of that culture. The Makah people have claimed that the International Whaling Commission's ban on hunting and killing whales undermines their ability to continue their traditional cultural practices. In the absence of this practice, the Native Americans claim their culture is diminished and the individual well-being

of their people is also diminished. Claiming that the ban violates their group rights to protect and preserve their culture, the Makah appealed to the U.S. Government that exempted them from the ban and allowed the Makah, with Coast Guard protection, to hunt and kill a gray whale. However, because the whales do not belong to the Makah culture, nor do they benefit from it, the Makah cannot legitimately resent the ban. (This is not to

Is there a way to  
respect the value  
of cultures that  
appear to oppress  
women, minorities,  
animals, and the  
environment?

say that the Makah do not have other legitimate cause for resentments — the U.S. government's violation of certain treaty rights that it recognized or granted is a legitimate cause for resentment, for example.) Given that the whales are not a part of the culture, despite the Makah's claim that they value them as members of the culture, on my view environmentalists are justified in their attempts to protect the whales.

The second kind of case involves minority communities engaging in practices that violate or infringe upon the objective well-being of members of the community who themselves are seeking help from outsiders. There are often value conflicts within cultures and when that is the case, what appears to be the majority value often wins out. That outcome is the appropriate target of opposition and protest from those committed to non-oppressive, environmental values within the culture and outsiders who support those value commitments. There is a plethora of examples of this sort of conflict, each with its own particular complexities. Environmentalists' attempts to join with the Yanomammi to protect the Amazon is one example. Consider also outsiders supporting the Chipko movement in India or

developing an international movement for environmental justice that would seek to prevent minority communities from being poisoned with toxins and pollutions. In these sorts of cases, outside involvement should not be viewed as meddling or imperialist, although the dominant culture might present it as such. As long as there are insiders that are seeking assistance, there is no legitimate ground for resentment when outsiders come to help.

The third, and to my mind most difficult cases, involve cultural practices that clearly infringe upon the objective well-being of members of the community yet either those people accept or embrace their oppression or are not in a position to object. These are difficult cases because, under my analysis of resentment, it looks as if the people being oppressed have made a normative commitment to certain practices, albeit objectively oppressive ones, and it looks as though they believe they are benefiting from the culture. Thus, by the standards I have been endorsing, it seems as though the oppressed individuals and their oppressors would have reason to legitimately resent interference from outsiders. However, while it appears that the oppressed individual in these cases has taken on a normative commitment to that oppression and believes that he or she is benefiting from the oppressive culture, this is not the end of the story. An apparent acceptance of an oppressive arrangement may be the result of adaptive preferences such that the individuals do not recognize their oppression as oppression. Or it may be a case where the subordinated individual actually makes an informed decision to enter into the oppressive situation. Determining which is which in actual fact requires a very careful examination of the beliefs and desires of the actual individuals, and I do not want to suggest that the cases I mention are clearly cases of adaptive preferences or false consciousness, or whether an informed decision to involve oneself in such a practice is being made. I do want to suggest that if it is a case of the former, then there may not be legitimate reason for resentment when individuals interfere to alter or end the oppressive practice. If



it is the latter, however, such interference may be legitimately resented. The fact that there are such cases requires further analysis of the oppressive context in order to determine whether interference can be legitimately resented.

In the end, I believe the latter, more difficult, cases are less common than the first two types of cases. Regardless, given that there is so much work to be done, I hope my proposal may provide some useful guidance for thinking through value conflicts and support crucial work being done to end oppressive and destructive practices while preserving the values of justice and nature and culture. ❧

<sup>1</sup>When I discuss *multiculturalism* I am not primarily concerned with a view that is designed to protect individuals against racial, ethnic, religious, or sexual discrimination. These important claims for protection are consistent with there being no reference to any specific conception of the value of a culture *per se* and thus would allow for Western interference whenever it looked as if discrimination was occurring. The multiculturalism I want to discuss holds that there may be something of value in addition to the good or well-being of actual individual members of a cultural group, namely the value of the culture, that must be preserved/protected.

Lori Gruen, Ph.D. is a philosopher and activist teaching ethics and politics at Wesleyan University in Connecticut.

# Ecofeminism on the Wing:

## PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONS

Greta Gaard

### Frame Tale: Bella

Her gold-wire cage sat on the counter of the video store adjoining the pizzeria. Attached to the front of the cage, a sign read, "My name is Bella, which means 'beautiful' in Italian!" Inside the cage, a small yellow-and-green canary stood alone on a plastic perch, pressing her forehead against a hanging mirror. A bell dangled from the top of the cage, a stick nest was affixed to one side, and below, two plastic dishes were attached to the bars, one with seeds, the other with a thin film of dirty water. There was no part of nature anywhere in the store: no sunlight reached the bird's cage, no fresh air, no tree branches or flowers, no breeze. Intensely drawn to comfort the little bird, I approached the cage and began talking to her, hoping that she would respond. For a long time, Bella remained immobile, her head pressed against the mirror. Then she turned, and her face held misery.

When the owner dashed over from the pizzeria to ring up my video, I asked him about Bella, and why she didn't have a companion of her own species. (It seemed confrontational to point out that she shouldn't be caged there in the first place.) He too had noticed Bella's loneliness. Evidently the man's wife was in charge of the bird, and long ago she had told him it would cost too much to have another parakeet.

All week I agonized about Bella. When I returned to rent a video the following weekend, I brought gifts: a cuttlebone for Bella's beak, and a covered bird bath that could be attached to the cage's open

door, allowing her to bathe in a water dish separate from her water bowl. Already I had contacted the local animal rights organizations and found they would picket the store if I organized the event; I had contacted Seattle's animal protection agency and requested a site visit. For the moment, I just wanted to make Bella more comfortable. For the long term, I hoped to take her from the video store and place her in a better home. But to do anything for Bella, I first needed to approach her owners.

That weekend the wife co-owner was working, and she seemed delighted with my interest in Bella. She put her hand in the cage and Bella immediately hopped on it. The woman told me about her cockatiels at home, about the scorpions and snakes she had bought for her son, and through her stories let me know that she considered herself an authority on pets. She had brought Bella to the store last Thanksgiving, and as she explained it, parakeets "don't pay as much attention to humans" if they have a companion of their own species.

The woman accepted my gifts of the cuttlebone and birdbath, and charged me the usual price for my video. When I returned the video the next day, I saw the birdbath filled with fresh water, hooked against the open cage door, and Bella inside, busily chewing on the cuttlebone.

### Why Do I Care? Ecofeminists Look at Oppression

While some people care about the suffering of animals, feminists who politicize their care for animals see a specific



**Metro Credit Union is a financial co-operative that is proud to be part of the co-operative movement.**

For more information visit us at [www.metrocu.com](http://www.metrocu.com) or contact us at 416-252-5621 or toll free at 1-800-777-8507.

To be a pet is to have all one's life decisions controlled by someone else: when and what to eat, how to act, whom to socialize with, whether or not to reproduce. If the situation were offered to humans, we'd call it slavery.

linkage between sexism and speciesism, between the oppression of women and the oppression of animals. Speciesism is defined as the oppression of one species by another, first defined by Peter Singer as "a prejudice or attitude of bias toward the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of the other species."<sup>1</sup> Feminists and ecofeminists alike have noted the ways that animal pejoratives are used to dehumanize women, pointing to the linguistic (and thus conceptual) linkage of women and animals in such derogatory terms for women as "sow," "bitch," "pussy," "chick," "cow," "beaver," "old bat," and "bird-brain." Linguistic association with animals has also been a method of demeaning Jews and people of color, as Nazi propaganda equated Jews with "vermin," and Blacks have been called "coons" or "jungle bunnies." Some ecofeminists have investigated the ways that nonhuman animals function as an exploited underclass of workers whose "jobs" end up costing them their lives, and thereby uncovered the connection between speciesism and classism. Still other ecofeminists have addressed the way that gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered persons (GLBTs) have been seen as animals, their "deviant" sexuality being their most salient feature in a homophobic society.

From an ecofeminist perspective, speciesism is a form of oppression that parallels and reinforces other form of oppression. These multiple systems — racism, classism, sexism, speciesism — are not merely linked, mutually reinforcing systems of oppression: they are different faces of the same system.

According to feminist philosopher Iris Marion Young, oppression is a condition of groups. Young defines five conditions — exploitation, marginalization, power-

lessness, cultural imperialism and violence — any one of which is enough to consider those experiencing it to be oppressed. Although Young's analysis was developed in terms of human groups, ecofeminists Lori Gruen and Ronnie Zoe Hawkins have both demonstrated how this analysis describes the oppression of nonhuman animals as well.

Exploitation, according to Young, "consists in social processes that bring about a transfer of energies from one group to another to produce unequal distributions,"<sup>2</sup> and surely the labor of wild and domestic nonhuman animals, their reproduction and their bodies as well have been exploited by humans. "Intensively reared dairy cows are so overworked that they begin to metabolize their own muscle in order to continue to produce milk, a process referred to in the industry as 'milking off their backs,'" writes Gruen, while sows are confined their entire lives and "repeatedly artificially inseminated so as to produce pigs for consumption."<sup>3</sup> Young's second condition is that the injustice of marginalization creates a sense of "uselessness, boredom, and lack of self-respect,"<sup>4</sup> phenomena that are typical of animals confined in cages and in zoos. Zoo animals also experience powerlessness, as do most other nonhuman animals who are powerless at the hands of humans, who hold life-or-death decision-making power over them on multiple levels. Cultural imperialism, as defined by Young, means experiencing "how the dominant meanings of a society render the particular perspective of one's own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one's group and mark it out as the Other."<sup>5</sup> As Gruen explains, the condition of domesticated "pets" is one in which "animals are forced to conform to the rituals and practices of the humans.... Cats and dogs are often denied full

expression of their natural urges."<sup>6</sup> Finally, violence clearly applies to humans' relationships with nonhumans, through such institutions as factory farming, hunting, experimentation. According to Young, any one of these experiences would be sufficient to indicate a group's status as oppressed. Nonhuman animals experience all five aspects of oppression.

Bella's confinement, isolation, and powerlessness made her oppression clearly visible; were her owners analogously, though invisibly, trapped as well? Surely all were contained within an economic system that made the humans believe their own economic interests stood in opposition to Bella's well being: that giving her a large cage to fly in, fresh water and tree branches, a companion and a cage cover at night would all be too much work, too much time and money.

I investigated. Buying another parakeet would cost \$15.99 (U.S.). Buying a larger cage, where the two birds could fly around and swing on some perches, would cost \$45.00. Placing the birds in sunlight, with fresh branches, water, diverse foods and toys would take little to no money, but would require some thoughtful consideration.

The store-owners' reasons for not providing for Bella's basic needs could not be solely financial.

### Who am I, to care about you?

When Bella looked at me, there was a connection, a recognition of commonality between us. Feminism explains such connections in terms of women's relational self, a self-identity that is constructed in terms of our relationships to others. In the West, dominant males' self-identity is socially constructed as separate, and in Western cultures, psychological maturity is defined solely in terms of the separation, individuation, and autonomy that



*Flight* by Zella Bardsley, 1998. Printed in *WE' Moon '00*.

characterizes male self-identity. From these two very different constructions of self-identity, different ethical systems emerge: an autonomous self-identity gives rise to a rights-based ethic, while a relational self-identity produces an ethic of care. Many feminists have rightly criticized this ethic of care as being both a product and a vehicle of women's subordination — particularly as it interacts within the context of rights-based ethics — and have argued that feminists must not uncritically champion relational ethics. Admittedly, the feminine caring ethic feminists criticize does not include the caregiver as an equal to those she cares about. Equally important from an ecofeminist perspective, is the fact that the relational self theory as originally constructed is entirely anthropocentric; it fails to account for trans-species relationships with non-human animals, with plants and with place, relationships that also shape self-identity. But this separate self-identity is not confined to the dominant male: many people have come to believe that their well-being can be attained and enjoyed independently of — and even, at the expense of — the well-being of others, both human and non-human. It's easy to recognize the social, economic and political results of acting on this belief in

autonomous individualism: we see it in the ways that most corporations make a profit for stockholders, that factory owners profit from the labor of sweatshop workers, landlords profit from tenants, agribusiness profits from pesticides, growth hormones, and the labor and bodies of animals — in virtually every situation where one group oppresses another.

### **Ecofeminism and the Keeping of Pets**

It's hard to say whether the most common site for human-animal relations occurs at the dinnertable, where humans consume other animals (but not other humans), or below the dinnertable, where humans feed one oppressed animal species to another. For centuries, "pet" species have been socially constructed to create animal bodies and behaviors most serviceable to humans, providing companionship and protection, assisting humans (mostly men) in their domination of other animals through activities such as hunting (retrievers), shepherding (collies) or killing mice (cats). To be a pet is to have all one's life decisions controlled by someone else: when and what to eat; when and where to urinate and defecate; how to act; whom to socialize with; whether or not to reproduce, or how often to reproduce, and with

whom; whether or not to remain in the company of one's offspring, or for how long, or which ones; whether to keep or surgically alter one's body for the pleasure of others (the ears, the tail); when, where, and how to die. For all this, pets are offered room and board, and the possibility of affection. If the situation were offered to humans, we'd call it slavery.

The human-animal "pet" relationship also constructs the owner. No matter how much we love the animals we take into our homes and into our hearts, our relationship with them is always unequal. We have too much power, and it's power we cannot shift or give away. The pet-owner relationship constructs humans as masters in a way that few people would be comfortable treating other humans; we appropriate the identities of our pets along with their labor, their bodies and their freedom, and this appropriation diminishes us as well.

The trend to keep more exotic animals captive as pets — tropical birds, ferrets, rabbits, various snake species — is a clue to the attraction of owning pets overall. These species aren't as readily trained to the human will; a larger dose of wildness remains intact, allowing the owners greater access to wildness than with other pets. And in owning such pets a certain kind of transference takes place, such that the person who keeps a more wild or unusual pet is also seen to be more wild or unusual himself: the pet's identity accrues to the owner along with its freedom, and this freedom lies at the core of wildness. For wildness is not just a property inherent to a being or a place; wildness involves a series of relationships among beings and place. In the pet-owner relationship, wildness can be captured and destroyed, but never maintained.

By keeping pets, we strive to shield ourselves from recognizing our own complicity in a system of inter-species domination. As long as we keep captive and show kindness to one or two token species of animals, the others can be experimented on, caged, tormented, eaten. In the pet-owner relationship, the owner struggles to reestablish inter-species relationships and to heal a fragmented self-identity through an oppressive insti-

tution that only furthers and reenacts the owner's alienation.

What about those who rescue strays, work to end factory farming, strive to raise awareness about animal confinement in zoos, pet shops and laboratories, and also respect the animal companions with whom they share a home? Is there a way to heal the unjust relationships among humans and other animal species? (Can I, ethically, keep my dog?)

We live in paradoxical times. We don't have good choices, choices that allow us to live in this culture and maintain our relationship with other animals without violating their integrity. What we have are a series of imperfect choices, with varying degrees of culpability: we can pick up animals off the streets and highways and find their owners or find them new homes. We can take them into our own homes and ensure that they do not reproduce. In advocating for a contextual moral vegetarianism, feminists who act in solidarity with other animal species achieve not a moral destination, but a moral direction: we can take significant actions that move us in the direction of reducing suffering. We can treat all animals with the same kindness and respect we offer our most cherished human companions. Many peo-

ple in first-world nations can choose healthy vegetarian diets, thereby reducing the suffering of other animal species confined in factory farming operations, and reducing our own suffering of ill health as well. We can limit or forego relationships with other species as pets, and live instead with the longing for wild animal companions. Perhaps that longing will encourage us to create an ecological, radically democratic society where freely-chosen interspecies relationships are possible, and in the process, we'll be able to reclaim a piece of our own wild selves as well.

### Coda: *Bella*

Compassion is the ability to maintain connections with another, to suffer with another, to imagine to the fullest extent possible the experience of another's pain, and to commit oneself to taking action to alleviate that suffering. By choosing to deprive Bella of a companion so that Bella's loneliness could be manipulated to enhance business, the video store owner cut herself off from her own compassion, from the fullness of her own nature.

"Attention to suffering makes us ethically responsible," writes Carol Adams.<sup>7</sup> So, what should I do? An ecofeminist perspective would not advocate "freeing" a

domesticated bird; moreover, parakeets are native to the Australian outback, not the Pacific Northwest. Responding to Bella's suffering means accepting responsibility for my own complicity in a system of inter-species domination, and acting on my commitment to serve as an ally. Responding to the numbness of the video store owner requires compassion for those denied parts of her self-identity as well. To intervene successfully, ecofeminist activists need to bring an awareness of the ways that oppression reduces the humanity of the oppressor at the same time that it subjugates the oppressed.

For the moment, Bella continues to live caged and alone in a video store/pizzeria. Each weekend, I visit her, bring her a new toy, food, branches. I talk with the owners, and strive to reconnect their compassion for justice, which is everyone's birthright. I envision a time, soon, when Bella will have room to fly, fresh air, sunshine, companions of her own species. I envision a time when all humans recognize ourselves as merely one species of animals, and restore right relations with the rest of our extended families. ❧

<sup>1</sup> Singer, Peter (1975). *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals*. New York: Avon Books. p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Young, Iris Marion (1990). *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Gruen, Lori (1996). "On the Oppression of Women and Animals." *Environmental Ethics* 18(4):443.

<sup>4</sup> Young (1990) p. 55.

<sup>5</sup> Young (1990) pp. 58-59.

<sup>6</sup> Gruen (1996).

<sup>7</sup> Adams, Carol J. (1996). "Caring about Suffering." *Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p. 193.

**Greta Gaard** is author of *Ecological Politics: Ecofeminists and the Greens* (Temple, 1998), editor of *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (Temple, 1993), and co-editor of *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism* (Illinois, 1998). She is completing a volume of ecofeminist creative non-fiction essays (imagine if Thoreau had been a queer race-traitor ecofeminist living in the year 2001) titled *Home Is Where You Are*.



## Canadian Urban Institute

The Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) is a non-profit urban "think tank" dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in urban areas in Canada and internationally. Visit our website at [www.canurb.com](http://www.canurb.com) to find out about current events, publications and to download our position paper on Smart Growth.

### Contact:

Glenn R. Miller, MCIP, RPP at [gmill@canurb.com](mailto:gmill@canurb.com)  
Canadian Urban Institute  
100 Lombard St., Suite 400  
Toronto, Ontario M5C 1M3  
tel: 416-365-0816 ext. 284 • fax: 416-365-0650



# Ecofeminism and Environmental Democracy:

## Exploring the Connections

Robyn Eckersley

If there is a central insight of ecofeminism, it is that the subordination of women and the degradation of the environment are connected. My concern is to suggest how we might best understand these connections in order to renegotiate them for the mutual benefit of women and the environment and ultimately men too, although many will need some persuading, which is where democracy comes in.

Much of the early ecofeminist scholarship focussed on the legacy of the cultural associations between women and nature in Western thought. For example, it has been pointed out how, in medieval times, the Judeo-Christian hierarchy of creation had placed women closer to the earth and "beasts" and men closer to heaven and God. This hierarchy has been used to legitimate claims that men are more rational, more fully human, less constrained by the body and "primal" emotions and therefore more fit to rule and decide what is good for men and women (and the environment). However, this is but one of many ways in which "nature" has been made to perform an ideological service for those with the power to define what it is to be human, natural, civilised, rational, normal or whatever it is that bestows social recognition, privileges or a greater sense of human worth on some humans relative to others.

Indeed the ideological enlistment of nature and its cognate terms works backwards and forwards. Gay men and lesbians, for example, are said to be unworthy by homophobes because they perform "unnatural acts" while indigenous peoples have been marginalised, exploited and in some cases decimated by colonial powers on the grounds, among other things, that

they are far too "natural" (meaning primitive and "uncivilised"). Modern environmentalism has played its part in valorising the "natural" as wholesome while the advertising world has mercilessly exploited both the ambiguity and appeal of nature and "the natural" in offering everything from shampoos to four-wheel drive vehicles that promise experiences ranging from cleanliness and primal beauty to freedom and wild ruggedness.

All of this suggests the need for women to proceed with some caution in simply embracing (as distinct from critically renegotiating) women's reputed association with nature. Nature, and the related idea of the "natural," are words that are burdened with multiple and ambiguous meanings that vary across time and place. Of course, this does not mean there is not a "real" nature "out there," a good deal of which we can physically see, touch, and smell. Rather, all it means is that our understanding and valuation of that "reality" are necessarily mediated through human language and changing cultural (including scientific) frames. My argument, then, is that as soon as we historicise our understanding of nature, that is, as soon as we approach it as a complex and shifting social construction rather than as an objective order and unchanging reality, we must ask the question: who gets to define these cultural meanings? Such questions lead us ultimately to questions of democracy and social power.

### Gender, Power, and Environmental Decision-Making

Human relationships with the environment are gendered not only in the realm of ideas but also in material practices, such as leisure activities, paid and unpaid work, and social decision-making in gen-

eral. By and large, women do not have an equal share of social, economic and political power in relation to environmental decision-making. Moreover, there are significant differences across countries between men and women in relation to the environment in terms of levels and types of concern, exposure to risks, and roles and responsibilities. It is widely known that a greater burden of environmental degradation is suffered by the poor, and women tend to have lower levels of income than men, especially women who are single parents. In terms of roles and responsibilities, in Western countries, the majority of health work, nursing, volunteering, single-parenting, domestic responsibilities and early childhood education is still carried out by women with significant implications for environmental decision-making.

Indeed, Simone de Beauvoir's observation from the 1950s that women have traditionally been confined to the sphere of reproduction rather than production still has some purchase on contemporary life, despite significant changes in the division of formal and informal work.<sup>1</sup> She argued that whereas women's activity has usually been perishable, involving "lower level" transformations of nature, men's activity has usually been more lasting, involving major transformations of nature and culture. In Australia, for example, women's environmental decision-making mostly takes place in the household and the supermarket or in local government rather than the military, the boardroom, the national parliament, the scientific establishment or the upper echelons of the bureaucracy.

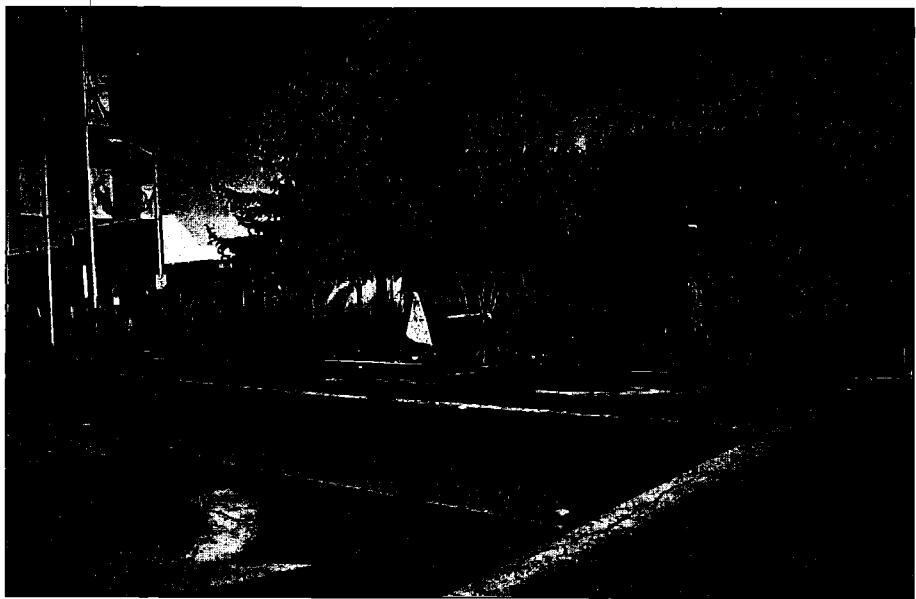
So what are we to make of these differing environmental cultural codings, roles,

responsibilities, and impacts? The ecofeminist point, as I understand it, is not merely for women to continue to march through the power wielding institutions. Nor does it mean that shunning motherhood and/or the more general role of carer are the only ways we can participate more fully in the major transformations of nature and culture (which was de Beauvoir's personal choice). The point is to challenge rather than simply aspire to enjoy a greater degree of the more "heroic" freedoms currently enjoyed by privileged men, while simultaneously exploring how both the home and the factory/office might be "greened."

### Against Parasitical Transcendence

Certainly there is considerable scope for women to take on a bigger share of social and environmental decision-making just as there is plenty of scope for men to take on a bigger share of domestic social and environmental responsibility as part of a more equitable division of labour in the home and community. However, these goals should be part of a much broader ecofeminist protest against what British ecofeminist Mary Mellor has called "parasitical transcendence."<sup>2</sup> This is admittedly a mouthful, but it brings together the wide-ranging and mutually interlocking ideological and material concerns of ecofeminism. The degradation of the environment is a complex phenomenon that has been managed and mediated by privileged social classes and impersonal social and economic systems that have systematically brought benefits to some humans at the expense of others. In effect, a significantly small minority of the human population has been able to deny ecological and social responsibility and transcend biological embodiment and ecological thresholds (e.g., achieve greater physical resources, use more energy, produce more wastes, enjoy more time and more space with more sophisticated technologies) only at the expense of others, that is, by exploiting, excluding, marginalising and depriving human and non-human others.

The confronting notion of "parasitical tran-



Entry median, native grasses by Susan Lebovitz Steinman

scendence" performs both an evaluative and critical task. It rests on a basic recognition of the entitlement of all individuals and communities to flourish in ways that are mindful of differently situated others, human and nonhuman. It draws attention to the gross asymmetries in the size of the ecological and social "footprints" left behind by certain classes, social groups and nations relative to others. And it argues that any form of "parasitism" (living off the back of others, benefiting from the unacknowledged work, social marginalisation or suffering of others) or transcendence (attempting to deny and live beyond our human biological embodiment and ecological embeddedness) cannot be generalised for all of humanity in sustainable and equitable ways.

### Why Democracy Matters

Environmental justice, for ecofeminism, therefore demands a more equitable division of social and ecological entitlements and responsibilities within and among different political communities, along with social recognition and enhanced political participation of a kind that is meaningful and transformative to marginalised social and cultural groups. Moving forward on any one of these fronts usually requires making headway on the others as well. The problems, and the solutions, to our ecological and social predicament are

mutually reinforcing.

However, obstacles abound. This is because the impersonal social and economic systems, and the privileged elites who managed them, have a habit of maintaining themselves, either by explicit and/or implicit coercion or by creating conditions of dependency and generating legitimating discourses that are structured by the very relations of power that sustain them. What is so crucial about democracy for ecofeminists, and environmental justice and radical political ecologists in general, is that it holds the key to breaking the self-confirming character of unequal power arrangements and the "distorted" (in the sense of self-serving) political communication that accompanies them. Indeed, this applies to any relationship of domination and subordination. That is, the dominator knows that the power arrangement is vulnerable as soon as the dominated are given the opportunity to reflect critically and collectively decide, in a free, creative and informed way, whether the arrangement is really mutually advantageous. To put the matter colloquially, women and the environment need all the democracy they can get.

Of course, we are not talking about more of just any kind of democracy, and certainly not more liberal democracy as we know it. Rather, green activists and theo-

rists have consistently called for "stronger democracy" of the more participatory and "deliberative" kind. In green theory, we find a sustained defense of unconstrained egalitarian deliberation over questions of value and common purpose in the public sphere over the more familiar liberal notion of strategic bargaining or power trading between self-interested actors in the political market-place.

### **Ecology and the Deliberative Ideal**

What is "green" about the deliberative ideal is that the conditions of "undistorted" and "other-regarding" communication characteristic of this ideal are defended as more likely to lead to the prudent protection of public goods (such as environmental quality) than the "distorted" and "strategic" political communication that is characteristic of liberal democracies. Such public spirited political deliberation is the process by which we learn of our dependence on others (and the environment) and the process by which we learn to recognise and respect differently situated others (including nonhuman others and future generations) even if we cannot fully anticipate or understand their worlds. It is the activity through which citizens consciously create a common life and future together, including the ecosystem integrity that literally sustains us all.

Ideally, deliberative democracy also prompts reflexivity, self-correction and the continual public testing of claims against experience. Such critical testing and questioning from the perspective of differently situated others is crucial to arresting and reversing the process whereby the lay public cedes ever greater areas of system decision-making to technocratic elites. The continual critical and public testing of political claims, including norms embedded in scientific claims, also makes it possible to expose and subject to scrutiny the assumptions, interests, and worldviews of scientists, policy professionals, politicians, and corporate leaders. In the field of risk assessment, for example, the deliberative model is likely to generate more long range, inclusive and risk averse policies than an after-the-fact damage limitation

approach. Such a posture necessarily arises when one asks the question: Would all those potentially affected by proposed risk generating practices, rich and poor, men and women, citizens and "foreigners," now and in the future, agree to such practices if they were fully informed of the potential consequences?

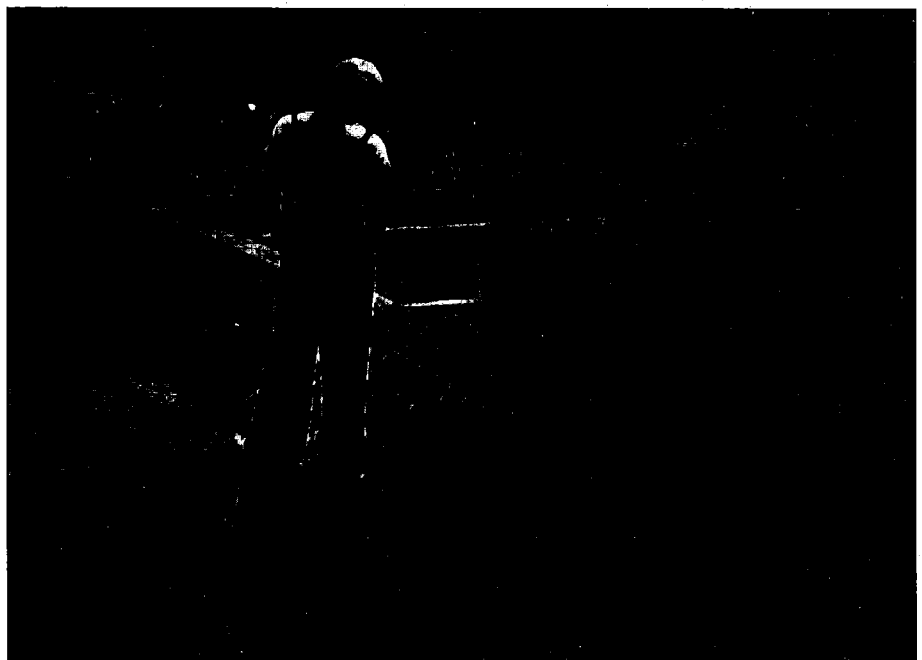
When we reject the idea of a hierarchy of creation, as ecofeminists do, the circle of moral considerability is widened to the maximum to include all potentially affected persons and social and ecological communities such that the very possibility of externalising ecological costs onto innocent third parties is made difficult. Such an orientation provides a welcome move away from the utilitarian framework of cost-benefit analysis (which permits the sacrifice of the interests of minorities and the discounted future in favour of present majorities) towards a more inclusive orientation that at least strives to find ways of mutually accommodating (rather than trading off) the needs of the present and the future, the human and the nonhuman.

### **(Eco)feminist Approaches to Democracy**

Now, this theoretical defense of the ecological credentials of deliberative democracy is not unique to ecofeminism and

certainly did not originate with ecofeminism since it has roots in ancient Greece. Moreover, a specifically ecofeminist understanding of democracy would emerge from a critical encounter between the specifically green and feminist contributions to this debate. So what about the feminist, as distinct from ecological, take on this democratic ideal? Here we can draw on the contribution feminist "difference theorists" have made to the debates about the virtues (or otherwise) of deliberative democracy.

Many of the difficulties with the deliberative ideal emerge when we attempt to translate it into political practice. Once we encounter the messiness of political life, we enter an unpredictable and uneven playing field, not a carefully controlled political laboratory where all the players are respectful, "rational," and concerned to reach a mutual understanding based on publicity, reciprocity and the widest possible moral horizons. Feminist difference theorists (along with postcolonial writers) have pointed out that the deliberative ideal is too "scrubbed and disinfected" (as Edward Said has put it),<sup>3</sup> and too dispassionate, rationalist, disembodied, masculine, and Western/Eurocentric in its orientation in insisting only on certain modes of rational, critical argument in political



Sidewalk bricks engraved with text by Susan Lebovitz Steinman

# Autumn Hike, Above Canmore

- Melody Hessing

Puff-ball spores of dust,  
the pollen of-

September, now seed the  
season's change,

rose hip pomegranates mock  
winter's dull approach.

A solitary grasshopper limps  
uphill, lurches

air-borne in a small  
death-rattle clatter,

the last drunk at the party. A sweet

confetti of aspen leaves shivers  
down to blur the

wind-rush roar of trucks on  
Highway One.

Preoccupied, the valley sings  
its own

economy. Front loaders drone,

nail guns fire.

Semi-automatic homes

to life, while crazed coyote yaps

of yard-leashed dogs

anticipate the kill.

Melody Hessing has a PhD in Sociology and teaches courses on Sociology, Women, and Environment in B.C. universities and colleges. She has published on feminism, ecological economics, and environmental policy, and directs her talents increasingly to creative writing.

discourse. The American feminist theorist Iris Marion Young, in particular, has pointed to a range of different forms of political communication such as greeting, rhetoric, storytelling, testimony, and theatre that appear to be excluded from overly rationalistic ideals of deliberation.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, it needs to be said that this critique is an internal critique, rather than an outright rejection, of the deliberative ideal. Young's point is simply that cultural and social differences (including different modes of political communication, broadly understood) should be considered "a resource for public reason" rather than as divisions which public reason must

ignore or somehow transcend. In any event, deliberative democracy cannot ignore different styles of political communication without threatening the social co-operation that it seeks to engender. The point, after all, is to facilitate non-coercive conversations that seek mutual understanding, which may sometimes simply mean mutual respect for difference, not to enforce unity least of all strict codes of argument.

The adoption of multi-member electoral systems would also increase the likelihood of green parties gaining a formal presence in parliaments. Many challenges necessarily remain in putting the deliberative ideal into practice. But even as a critical tool, the ideal can perform useful work for ecofeminism in unmasking unequal power relations and the political actors who sanctify them; identifying issues and social groups which are excluded from public dialogue; and sifting out genuinely public interest environmental arguments from merely vested private interests. Moreover, if we understand democracy broadly to encompass all

## Women and the environment need all the democracy they can get.

forms of political communication and cultural production (not just that which takes place in formal assemblies) then ecofeminism has a potentially limitless range of arenas in which to air its insights and arguments. While the persuasive "force" of such insights and arguments will always seem precarious when set against more conventional forms of force, in the longer run it is the only way of providing genuine legitimacy to any social order. ❧

Such arguments are encapsulated in the slogan: "Fulsome deliberation demands fulsome representation." Indeed, some feminists have called for special group representation (of women, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities and so forth) in deliberative bodies as a way to give voice to socially excluded and/or marginalised groups. From an ecological and feminist perspective, ensuring the "presence" of minority or disadvantaged groups in legislative assemblies and environmental policy-making communities (via such measures as "balanced tickets" and proportional representation electoral systems or even special veto rights) will go some way towards minimising and preventing the unfair displacement of ecological and social costs onto those minority commu-

<sup>1</sup> de Beauvoir, S. (1982). *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

<sup>2</sup> Mellor, M. (1997). *Feminism and Ecology*. New York: New York University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Said, E. (1989). "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors." *Critical Inquiry* 15: 205-225.

<sup>4</sup> Young, I. M. (1997). "Difference as a Resource for Democratic Communication." In J. Bohman and W. Rehg (Eds.), *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

**Robyn Eckersley** is based at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia and has published widely in the fields of environmental politics and political theory. She will shortly be taking up a new appointment in the Department of Political Science at the University of Melbourne.



# Of Mice and Women:

## EARLY MODERN ROOTS OF ECOLOGICAL FEMINISM

Sylvia Bowerbank

*He says that woman speaks with nature. That she hears voices from under the earth. That wind blows in her ears and trees whisper to her. But for him this dialogue is over. He says he is not part of this world, that he was set on this world as a stranger. He sets himself apart from women and nature.*

*We are the bird's eggs. Bird's eggs, flowers, butterflies, rabbits, cows, sheep; we are caterpillars, oyster and pearl, we are girls. We are women and nature. And he says he cannot hear us speak.*

*But we hear.*

— Susan Griffin

Susan Griffin creates a gendered view of modern history characterized by an ongoing debate between “scientific man” and “ecological woman.”<sup>1</sup> In her poetic-political ecofeminist narrative, modern man speaks with authority and detachment, declaring the mastery of woman and nature as his destiny, while woman speaks in an embodied, rhapsodic voice, commingling her fate with that of the earth. The history of the West, conventionally, places the rise of scientific man in seventeenth-century Europe. To what extent can it be said that ecological woman, the naturalized and subaltern link between man and his animal nature, emerged as a *counterpart* to scientific man?

In this short piece, I present some of the research I am doing for my book *Speaking for Nature: Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England*. My aim in the book is to explore how seventeenth and eighteenth-century English women thought about woman's positioning as “closer to nature” in the shifting hierarchy of conditions. For this paper, rather than speak about nature as a whole,

I ask: How did early modern English women speak of the mouse? The mouse can be used as a telling index of the gender politics that informed early modern ecologies.

I have compared ideas of the mouse found in the writings of two siblings, Robert Boyle (1621-91) and Mary Rich (nee Boyle), Countess of Warwick (1624-78).<sup>2</sup> Robert Boyle, well known as the father of chemistry, not only invented the material technology of the air pump but also developed the corresponding cultural technologies of collaborative science and the experimental essay, the forerunner of the lab report. Mary Rich, in contrast, is not well known. When her chaplain Anthony Walker gave the address at her funeral, he assessed the worth of her life by saying she was “great by being the greatest Mistress and promotress, not to say Foundress and Inventress of a new Science — the Art of obliging.”

In Rich's writings, we find a deliberate regimen for cultivating “good nature” in

records an everyday incident in which she spots a mouse darting among her little glass jars of cordials, and immediately orders her servants to set a trap with her strongest cheese:

[the mouse] had no sooner got its teeth into the Cheese, but before it had swallowed it, the trape fell downe and keachte it by the necke, and thus dead with its teeth in the Chise was it by my Servant for the odness of the maner of its being taken brought me to see which instantly made me Consider how aptly this might be compared to the grande enemy of mankindes traps, which he is continually baiting (pp. 57-58).

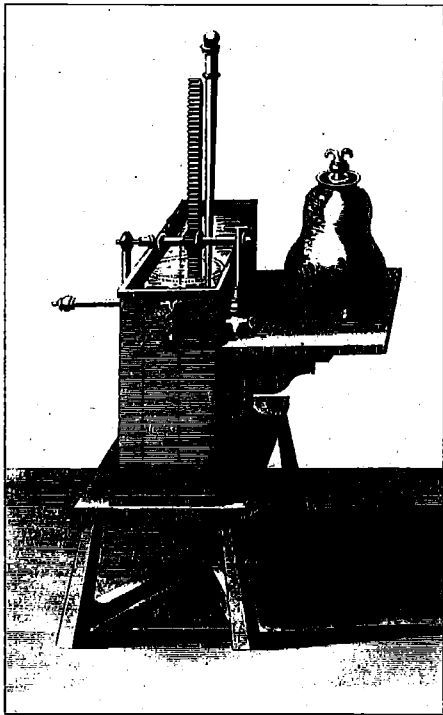
Here we have the familiar mouse, a transgressive creature, delighting in its nocturnal crossings of the threshold, upsetting our ideas and practices of cleanliness, health and thrift, often outwitting our most ingenious traps. Here too we have the good homemaker, who has preserved her cordials for the providential care of her household. In killing the mouse, Lady Warwick is able to avoid bloodying her own hands and normally, the servants would have discarded the body without disturbing her grace. But in the last line of Mary Rich's mouse meditation, an alien discourse of nature disrupts the domestic economy. This particular mouse is memorialized because it was caught with the

To what extent can it be said that ecological woman, the naturalized and subaltern link between man and his animal nature, emerged as a counterpart to scientific man?

herself and in correspondence to abstract nature. As I argue in my book, the gendered principle of “complementarity” is embodied in the lives of Boyle and Rich. The brother advances knowledge about nature; the sister harmonizes his discoveries to the divine economy, understood as an ethical hierarchy. He has the potential for great genius, she, for good nature.

To illustrate, in her *Occasional Meditations of Lady Warwick, 1663-1677*, Mary Rich

cheese in its teeth, thus giving evidence against itself. The mouse is suddenly read as a *sign in the Divine economy* (Nature becomes God's book). As in the medieval bestiaries, the mouse becomes a metaphor by which Rich reads herself as engaged in the grand struggle with Satan, whose cheese is so seductive and whose devices are so cunning. What we have here is not so much a reenchantment of nature as a deliberate injection of piety into the busi-



Mouse in air pump experiment from Robert's Boyle's *A Continuation of New Experiments Physico-Mechanical Touching the Spring and the Weight of the Air, and their Effects*. Credit to Research Collection, Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University.

ness of the day. According to the due order of the universe, a mouse among the cordials is judged to be out of place and to merit its fate.

The mouse is constructed differently in the scientific essays of Robert Boyle. In "Experiment XLI" (*Works*, I, pp. 175-182), Boyle describes his method for using the air pump to study the mechanisms of respiration. Before settling on the mouse as ideal specimen, he tries a lark that had been shot — winged, but not killed — and then a hen-sparrow, caught with birdlime. Both birds proved inconvenient objects of study because of their frantic and (too) quick deaths. Science, then as now, required patronage to support its research, so the Royal Society staged entertainments to display their more showy and successful experiments. Boyle does not name the great persons who witnessed his experiments but, on occasion, he does indicate their reactions. In one case, as the air was being drawn out of the receptacle, the violent convulsions of a bird struggling for dear life provoked pity in the fair ladies watching the experiment; they "made me hastily let in some air at

the stop-cock, the gasping animal was presently recovered, and in a condition to enjoy the benefit of the ladies compassion" (*Works*, I, pp. 106-107). Robert Boyle might be credited too with designating the mouse as the preferred laboratory animal. After describing the lark and sparrow trials, Boyle goes on to explain why he chose the mouse for his air-pump experiments; he expected that an animal who "used to live in narrow holes with very little fresh air, would endure the want of it better than the lately mentioned birds: but though, for a while after the pump was set to work, he continued leaping up as before; yet, it was not long ere he began to appear sick and giddy, and to stagger: after which he fell down as dead, but without such violent convulsions as the bird died with" (*Works*, I, p. 98).

Thus, Boyle reasons that the mouse is naturally designed (as it were) for the narrow environment of the experiment. Unlike the bird, the mouse does not signify freedom in the open air; it suffers less dramatically and sympathetically, and thus it proves a better research device. As Simons and Brick write in *The Laboratory Mouse*, because of its smallness and low cost of maintenance, the mouse makes an "economically feasible" surrogate for mammals; it is an "excellent scientific 'tool.'" Along with its relative, a rat in the cage, the lab mouse has become the popular sign of animal under the domination of scientific man.

With the exception of attending such scientific entertainments, women were denied access to the Royal Society. Although a few were able to contribute to science in ancillary roles, women did not shape the fundamental practices of early modern science. We can see from Boyle's text, however, that they did raise ethical issues from the sidelines, but that their protests were only able to divert the scientist momentarily from his great enterprise. In books popularizing science, such as Fontenelle's *Plurality of the Worlds* (1686) and Algarotti's *Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy Explain'd for the Use of the Ladies*, early modern women's very resistance to man's expanding empire over nature was appropriated for entertainment

and educational value; typically, these books were structured as dialogues in which a male expert explains scientific discoveries, while a charming lady protests, but finally acquiesces, to his arguments.

Based on the principle of complementarity, some early modern women granted themselves compensatory powers and laid claim to a distinctive intellectual position, mediating between man and nature. Accordingly, late eighteenth-century women developed a new educational technology, "the study of nature," which aimed to bring compassion into everyday practice. Numerous books teaching the study of nature were structured as conversations between children and their mother (or her surrogate) as they undertook various outdoor exercises: observing the habits of insects; rescuing birds from bad boys; telling animal stories; and praising the beauty and blessings of nature. The study of nature was, admittedly, a gendered practice, explicitly differentiated from the serious study of natural philosophy (or science), said to be beyond the comprehension of girls and small boys. The moral stories told on the nature walks feature terrorized, needy, suffering animals, requiring the stewardship of good-willed girls or, infrequently, boys.

In Sarah Trimmer's *Two Farmers* (1788), the good Mrs. Simpkins leads her children around the neighborhood in order to denounce cruelty against brute nature.<sup>4</sup> They meet a sadistic boy who has tied up a mouse in order to pull out all of its teeth. Mrs. Simpkins "could not help chiding the boy for his barbarity, telling him, that if he were a son of hers she would send for a doctor to draw out all his teeth for him, and then he would know what he had made a poor little mouse suffer" (p. 31). At the end of the passage, the declared intention of establishing a compassionate society is disrupted by a barbarous code of retaliative nature — literally, a tooth for a tooth.

In general, though, the new practice of the study of nature began to instill a new ecological sensibility and to advocate the humane treatment of animals. A critique of compassion as condescension began to



"Look what a fine morning it is. Insects, Birds & Animals are all enjoying existence." Mrs. Mason teaches the girls to love nature in William Blake's frontispiece for Mary Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life*. Credit to Research Collection, Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University.

emerge, for example, in the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft and Catherine Macaulay. Macaulay's *Letters on Education* (1790) sets up a dialogue in which the speaker asks her niece: "If brutes were to draw a character of man, Hortensia, do you think they would call him a benevolent being? No; their representations would be somewhat of the same kind as the fabled furies and other infernals in ancient mythology. Fortunately, for the reputation of the species, the brutes can neither talk nor write; and being our own panegyrists we can give ourselves what attributes we please."<sup>5</sup>

Early modern women began to dispute the very hierarchy of "nature" that deemed man to be "lord of creation," and to resist science, in so far as it was understood as the pursuit of dominance over nature. The strategy of "speaking for animals" was advanced not merely to plead sweetly, but to question the very system of nature by which women, as well as men, credited themselves as the stewards of the earth. We find in early modern women's writings a search for an alternative orientation based on the integrity and affinity of all of

earth's beings. Thus began the historical enterprise of working through the far-reaching implications of radical compassion, a patient labour that continues to be at the centre of ecofeminist politics. ❧

<sup>1</sup> Griffin, Susan (1982). *Made from This Earth: An Anthology of Writings by Susan Griffin*. New York: Harper & Row.

<sup>2</sup> Boyle, Robert. *The Works of Robert Boyle*. Ed. Thomas Birch. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1965: Volume I; Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick. *Occasional Meditations of Lady Warwick, 1663-1677*. British Library. Add. Ms. 27, 356.

<sup>3</sup> Simmons, M.L. & J.O. Brick (1970). *The Laboratory Mouse: Selection and Management*. Englewoods, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, p. vii.

<sup>4</sup> Trimmer, Sarah (1788). *The Two Farmers, An Exemplary Tale: Designed to Recommend the Practice of Benevolence towards Mankind, and all other Living Creatures*. 3rd ed. corrected. London: T. Longman.

<sup>5</sup> Macaulay, Catherine (1974). *Letters on Education: With Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects*. (1790) Facsimile ed. Intro. Gina Luria. New York: Garland Publishing.

**Sylvia Bowerbank** is an Associate Professor in the Arts & Science Programme at McMaster University, Canada. She has co-edited (with Sara Mendelson) *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader* (Broadview 2000) and has just completed a book, *Speaking for Nature: Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England*.

## Are you thinking of taking studies in gender and environmental issues?

Consider enrolling at Michigan State University for a graduate program of your choice and get an opportunity to also earn a specialization in Gender, Justice, and Environmental Change. For more information on this specialization please visit our website at [www.msu.edu/~gendenvr](http://www.msu.edu/~gendenvr) or send an e-mail to [gendenvr@msu.edu](mailto:gendenvr@msu.edu). Also feel free to write to:

**Gender, Justice, and Environmental Change**  
 C/O Women and International Development  
 202 International Centre  
 Michigan State University  
 East Lansing, MI 48824, U.S.A.

## Women and "Sustainable Development" in the Costa Rican Rainforest:

### Questioning the Politics of Corporate Environmentalism

Ana Isla



*Most Precious Jewel* by Dominique Mazeaud

ONE OF THE MAJOR SOURCES OF social tension today is the incompatibility of the demands of corporations and "national" governments for global economic growth and the needs of local communities for security and livelihood. Sustainable development (SD) is commonly believed to resolve these tensions by reconciling global economic interests with ecological interests.

One of the core mechanisms of SD is debt-for-nature investments (DFNI) in which debt instruments held by creditors are exchanged for the debtor's natural resources. DFNI were proposed by corporate environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) traditionally involved in identifying ecologically-sensitive areas and negotiating commitments for research and scientific data collection in Third World Countries. Today, DFNI also include the establishment of eco-

tourism and micro-enterprises. Supporters of DFNI argue that this approach addresses both the environmental and debt (or poverty) crises. They claim that the environmental crisis is addressed through the establishment of Conservation Areas that protect vulnerable eco-systems while the poverty crisis is relieved through micro-enterprises. However, my research on the impact of a Canada/Costa Rica DFNI project on women in three Costa Rican communities reveals that this is very far from being the case.

In my doctoral work, I document the processes by which the Canada/Costa Rica debt-for-nature investment, used by The Arenal Project in the Arenal Conservation Area, is radically altering ownership claims and the regulation of forest access. The Arenal Project, carried out by the World Wildlife Fund-Canada (WWF-C) and the Costa Rican Ministry

of Environment and Energy (MINAE), involved the development of a Land Plan for SD. In the plan, approximately half (116,690 hectares) of the land was declared as a protected area within the Arenal Conservation Area (250,561.5 ha.). Of these, about 35% (76,707 ha.) was reserved for biodiversity research purposes only. Although the Land Plan affected the resource use of 108 communities in the area, the local residents were neither informed of the process nor included in the decision-making that was to significantly change their lives and livelihood. These changes not only raise ethical and social justice questions but also cast doubt on the effectiveness for ensuring environmental protection.

In general, the Land Plan has resulted in the following changes:

- Biodiversity has been redefined as "natural capital." Once ecologically, socially, and culturally embedded in local communities, "nature" has now become a resource for free appropriation by industries and corporations;
- Wildlife has been appropriated as a mere resource for scientific research and for the exclusive use of researchers to maximize the exploitation of genes;
- Land has been confiscated and separated from people's intimate knowledge. This separation of people from nature has created a sense of disorder, alienation, fragmentation, and uncertainty among the poorer members of the community;
- Local economic livelihood has been undermined. Land enclosure has destroyed the rights of the communities to their own territory and resources, and thus, transformed community members into criminal intruders.

In my fieldwork I saw how the people in three of these communities — the Arenal Basin of La Fortuna Area, Z-Trece and Abanico — have been affected by this Plan. In La Fortuna and Z-Trece areas, for example, land was enclosed for the exclusive use of research and eco-tourism. However, deforestation continues as a result of a clandestine economy that includes agriculture, cattle ranching, and rural tourism. In those communities, poor women and men have a common interests in resisting the Land Plan effects.

Significant from an ecofeminist perspective, the appropriation of the means of survival in the rural areas also has powerful effects on the sexual division of labour. Poor rural women have common interests in resisting patriarchal oppressions. As part of the Arenal Project, rural women in Albanico get loans to develop biodiversity related micro-enterprises (e.g., medicinal plant and organic agriculture) which have come to be considered by SD advocates as the “gender equity and environment” model. Forest-dwelling women who use the land of their fathers or in-laws are the preferred workforce in organic agriculture as a result of their

knowledge of traditional agricultural methods, their location in strategic zones, and the devalued economic status of women’s work. Micro-enterprises have favoured women’s incorporation into paid productive activities and thereby increase their participation in the market. However, while the ten women involved in the micro-enterprise project I studied have experienced some increased status and agency in their community, my research suggests that there was a greater trend toward the reduction of their economic and social status. My analysis of the Arenal micro-enterprise project reveals that:

- The women’s personal and collective indebtedness has increased. Loans using debt-for-nature funds ranged from 20% to 33% interest rates;
- The women earn well below the minimum agricultural wage. The earnings are too small to cover the survival of even one family member;
- The women have a very heavy work load. Their workload typically consists of an average of nine hours tending to their medicinal plant plot and endless hours in household and community work.

•There is increased dependence on NGOs. The aim of micro-enterprises is to earn income from the export of products and so, to be successful, the projects must meet the demands of the international market. The women have become dependent on NGOs because they do not have the skills or resources to negotiate within the international market themselves.

Findings such as these challenge the assumption that sustainable development, using debt-for-nature investments, is an effective means of redressing environmental and economic crises in developing countries. Instead, as my research has shown, the practice of sustainable development as a framework for international donor and NGO intervention can lead to the intensification of women’s subordination and to the suppression of the human rights of local communities in favour of the rights of corporations. ❧

**Ana Isla**, Ph.D, is currently working at York University where she holds a Post-Doctoral Research Fellowship awarded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

#### Further Reading

Cuoto Suarez, Maria Clara (1992). “A Sustainable Development: From Economics to Politics.” In M. C. Cuoto Suarez (Ed.), *Debt Swaps, Development and Environment*. Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Brasileiro de Analises Sociales e Economicas.

Isla, Ana (2000). *An Environmental Feminist Analysis of Canada/Costa Rica Debt-for-Nature Investment: A Case Study of Intensifying Commodification*. PhD dissertation. Ontario Institute for the Study of Education/University of Toronto.

Mies, Maria (1986). *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale. Women in the International Division of Labour*. London: Zed Books.



**Marshall  
Macklin  
Monaghan**

PROJECT MANAGERS • ENGINEERS • SURVEYORS • PLANNERS



# PESTICIDES AND WOMEN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA:

## A Question of Social Justice

Leslie London

THE IMPACTS OF GLOBALISATION on the lives and livelihoods of rural women in the South are clearly illustrated in the agricultural sector, where women's marginal status at work and in the domestic arena ensure that they carry the burden of pesticide-related illness and injury. Indeed, globalisation accentuates many of the contradictions that give rise to women's exposures to hazardous chemicals.

### Women in Commercial Farming

The commercial farming sector is a key contributor to South Africa's economy, largely due to articulation with the global market. Commercial agriculture is also one of the largest sources of seasonal or casual employment for women in South Africa. However, working conditions on these farms are characterised by low remuneration, lack of health and social services, and uneven provision of housing and sanitation. Moreover, to gain employment at all most women have to be in a relationship

have driven increasing externalisation of the workforce, there has been a 25% decline in employment in the sector, which has particularly impacted adversely on women farm workers' ability to gain secure employment. Thus, despite South Africa's transformation from apartheid to democracy in 1994, most farm workers continue to labour and live in a private domain, largely beyond the reach of regulatory enforcement, and with little prospect of effective unionisation. This situation is particularly pernicious for women in the sector.

### Pesticide Usage and Women's Exposures

South Africa is the largest market for pesticides in sub-Saharan Africa and pesticide usage is particularly intense in export-oriented sectors. Opportunities for exposure to pesticides are widespread and multiple, resulting both from workplace and domestic exposures.

The consequences of exposure to pesticides may be both acute poisoning and

mented, 61% of all poisonings involved women amongst whom workplace exposures were most common. Thus, routine reporting hides the burden of pesticide-related disease affecting women as well as that arising from occupational exposures.

The disproportionate involvement of women in piecework and as seasonal labourers is key to explaining women's increased exposures. Unfavourable conditions of employment associated with such work (e.g., no training or provision of protective equipment) elevates their risk for exposure. Indirect exposures are also significant potential causes of poisoning undetected amongst women workers. Women carrying out routine activities (e.g., weeding) and supposedly not exposed to pesticides, continue to be poisoned as a result of drift from adjacent fields or orchards, but fail to be reported. South African legislation does not mandate re-entry intervals that could protect these women.

Moreover, because of the gendered nature of risk perceptions, women's ability to control potentially hazardous chemical exposures are constrained, with adverse impacts on their health and well-being.

### Social Conditions and Pesticide Toxicity

One of the particularly indefensible features of South African agriculture is the practice of farmers paying their workers with alcohol rations, known as the DOP system. Initially introduced in the seventeenth century as a method to induce indigenous people to work for Dutch settlers, the DOP system gradually became established as a powerful form of labour control in agriculture. The DOP system has enmeshed farm workers over generations into a cycle of poverty in which alcohol dependence, inter-personal violence and poor self-esteem are interconnected.

There is widespread under-reporting of pesticide poisonings in South Africa, most evident when women are affected.

with an employed male farm worker. Women farm workers are thus largely dependent on the continued employment of their male partner for work, housing (most farm workers live on the farms where they work) and other amenities. Loss of a job by a male partner usually means loss of work and accommodation for the woman (and children, if any) as well.

In addition, in recent years, as macroeconomic pressures on the agricultural sector

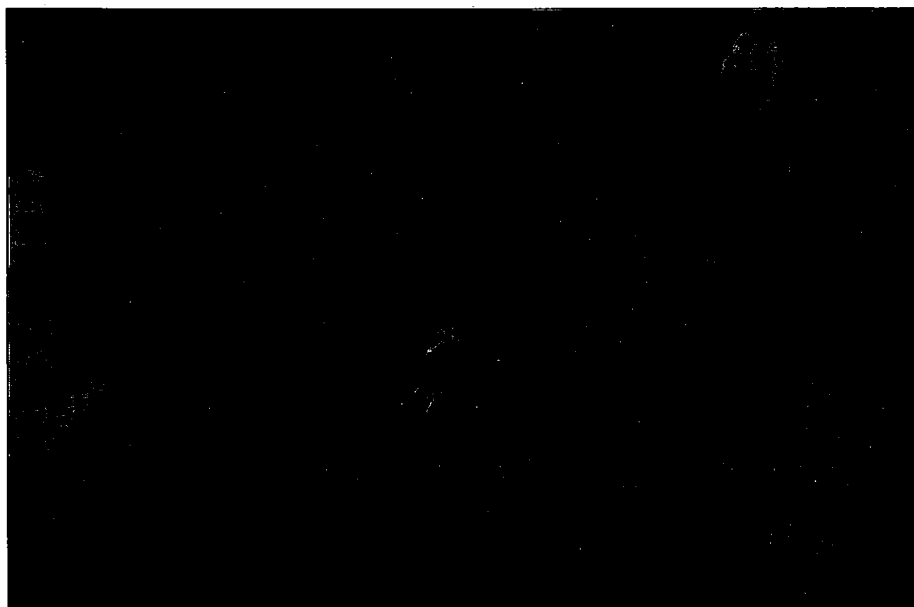
chronic disease. Of the 100 to 200 cases of acute pesticides poisoning reported to the health authorities each year, the majority (66%) is reported to be men. However, there is widespread under-reporting of pesticide poisonings in South Africa, most evident when women are affected. The problem appears to stem from a reliance on deeply flawed and gender-blind routine surveillance data. In one study where more rigorous reporting methods were imple-

Although no longer practiced to the same extent as in previous decades,<sup>1</sup> the legacy of widespread alcohol dependence and abuse continues to this day.

Alcohol abuse increases risks for pesticide poisoning both in its short-term inebriating effects and in its long-term potential impacts on learning skills. Further, the DOP system impacts differentially on women who are often the recipients of the consequences of alcohol abuse, such as domestic violence, by their male partners and/or male children.

Clearly, where pesticide exposures and poisoning occurs, those who bear the brunt are farm workers and rural populations. However, even amongst these marginal groups, gender inequities strongly underpins differential impact of pesticides exposures on women.

The current South African Constitution provides for the building of a human rights culture through the establishment of a Human Rights Commission, a Commission for Gender Equality and the promotion of human rights institutions in civil society. A human rights approach to pesticide policy and practice may go some way to addressing the powerlessness that underlies pesticide exposures as well as the gender imbalances that modify



*Most Precious Jewel* by Dominique Mazeaud

its impact. However, progressive organisations of civil society, especially women's movements, are key to making social justice part of the solution, especially if gender equity is afforded high priority and effectively addressed.

On a more global level, the potential benefits for South African women farm workers of international consumer pressure for pesticide-free produce or for Fair Trade will be minimal unless initiatives specifically address the gender discrepancies that exist within global systems of production, including gender inequities within developing countries. An ecosystems approach to pesticides, social justice and women agricultural workers in South Africa needs to ensure that all stakeholders are able to make the links between South African real-

ities and the global context driving inequities, including gender inequity, and injustice in the environmental field. ❧

<sup>1</sup> The prevalence in one district near Cape Town declined from over 80% of farms to less than 9% in 1998.

**Leslie London** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Public Health and Primary Health Care at the University of Cape Town in South Africa and Associate Director of the Occupational and Environmental Health Research Unit.

#### Further Reading

Alli B.O. (1999). "Women at the Workplace." *African Newsletter on Occupational Health and Safety*, 10 :29-33.

London, L. and R. Bailie (2001). "Challenges for improving surveillance for pesticide poisoning: Policy implications for developing countries." *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 30: 564-570.

Messing K. (1997). "Women's Occupational Health: a critical review and discussion of current issues." *Women and Health*, 25: 39-68.

Rother H.A. (2000). "Influences of pesticide risk perception on the health of rural South African women and children." *African Newsletter on Occupational Health and Safety*, 10: 42-46.

Sunde J. and K. Kleinbooi (1999). "Promoting equitable and sustainable development for women farmworkers in the Western Cape." *Centre for Rural Legal Studies*, Stellenbosch: July.

# A MATTER OF INTERPRETATION:

## On The Place of "Lived Experience" in Ecofeminist Research

Sherilyn MacGregor



*Most Precious Jewel* by Dominique Mazeaud

A METHODOLOGICAL ISSUE THAT IS of great significance to ecofeminist researchers, especially researchers who study grassroots activism, is the interpretation and presentation of women's "lived experience." Some ecofeminists view women's everyday experiences as a fundamental source of knowledge about human-nature relationships and as inspiration for their eco-activism. Greta Gaard, for example, includes "the path of lived experiences" as part of the geography of ecofeminism. Even though they are different for every woman, she writes, lived experiences "are just as strong as the streams of feminist theory that have shaped the intellectual and philosophical aspects of ecofeminism."<sup>1</sup> Other ecofeminists make much of the role of mothering experiences and women's (and their children's) experiences of environmentally related health problems in women gaining a sense of environmental concern. A central goal of ecofeminist scholarship has been to foreground women's experiences with/in

"nature" as an alternative to established (read: theoretical, masculine, Western) ways of knowing.

Certainly, ecofeminist scholarship in which particular experiences of grassroots activists are highlighted provides an important corrective to the absence of women in masculinist ecopolitics. Feminists have for many decades argued that theories that ignore or discount women and the ways in which their experiences are different from men's are inadequate. But what does it mean to give "lived experience" such a privileged place in ecofeminist thought and is it wise, on the whole, to do so?

In thinking about this question, I take instruction from Jean Grimshaw's analysis of the relationships between experience, reality and theory in which she raises questions about how feminists have typically viewed women's experience. Grimshaw is critical of those feminists who assume, rather naively in her view, that "female experience simply needs 'naming,' and that it is always 'valid' — a final court of

appeal — and that experience should be contrasted not just with particular theories but with the notion of theory in general."<sup>2</sup> Lorraine Code is also wary of the tendency of some feminists to take women's experiences as uncontested truth. In fact she warns of "the risk [of] replacing the old tyranny of an expertise deaf to experience with a new tyranny of experience hermetically sealed against criticism and interpretation."<sup>3</sup> She argues for a more tentative and provisional approach to things like "reality" and "experience," one that does justice to the "variegated nature of female experience" and the many ways it intersects with male experience. At the same time such an approach must contribute to the development of *theories* (not just "realities") that allow us to analyze and conceptualize oppression, exploitation, and domination on a grand scale.

There are problems associated with taking women's lived experience to be an unmediated path to the truth: we may fail to see that these experiences are filtered through and situated in specific contexts, ideas, and interpretations, as are the theorists'. Furthermore, studying women's lived experiences alone will not necessarily lead us to superior analyses. Women's experiences in one small corner of the world will not help us to address all of the interrelated factors that contribute to the complex problems of gender inequality or environmental degradation. It is questionable whether lived experience will provide sufficient insight into geo-political, economic, and cultural problems like war or global ecological developments like climate change. In my view, and in disagreement with ecofeminists like Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, it simply does not follow that because women have personal experiences of caring for children or tending the earth they therefore *know* how to solve the global ecological crisis.<sup>4</sup> The problem of environmental unsustainability is best considered in conjunction with other kinds of knowledges besides and in addition to the everyday lived experience of women, and those knowledges include theoretical, scientific, and policy analyses.

In my view, ecofeminist research ought to strike a delicate balance between a desire to present the hitherto invisible experi-

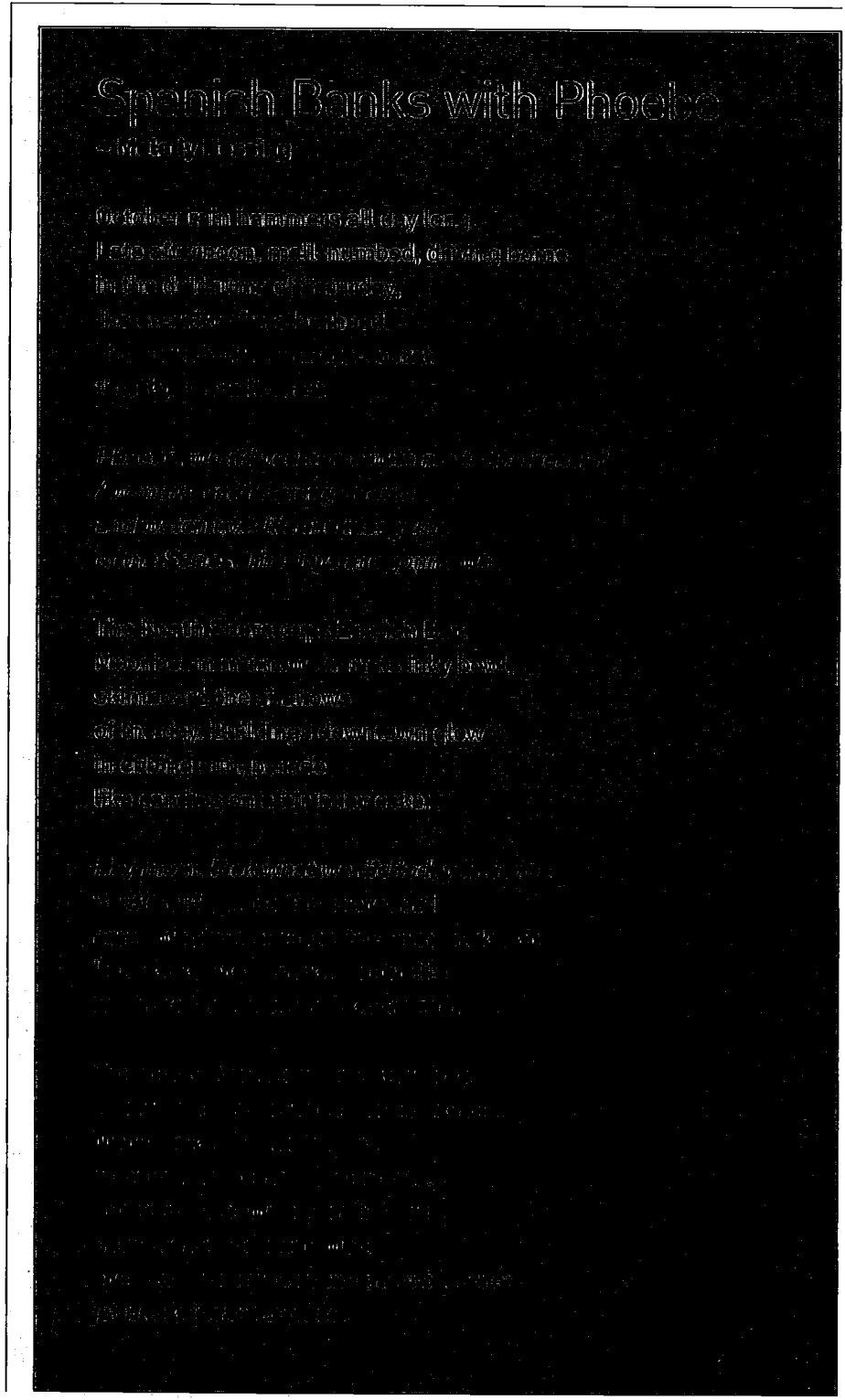
ences of women as valid and a desire to construct valid feminist theories about the place of women in heterosexist, patriarchal, capitalist and white supremacist societies. Researchers need to employ methods that allow them to listen to the voices of women engaged in local campaigns, to ask for their interpretations while retaining the option of respectfully offering their own arguments and alternative interpretations. To treat women's experiences otherwise — to refrain from debate — is extremely patronizing. Taking this notion seriously, Cecile Jackson presents what I think is a very important suggestion to ecofeminists: that instead of taking women's experiences as "truth" they need to rely on standard techniques of social research such as "scepticism, 'triangulation,' ...secondary sources, and objective indicators" as well.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, they may be able to represent the women with whom they conduct research in a more honest way: to co-theorize rather than reify their experiences and to avoid the temptation to draw firm conclusions that help to support their own theoretical aims. Code summarizes this approach succinctly when she writes: "[a] theorist cannot always take experience at face value if she wants to construct an emancipatory analysis of its sources and structural location. Hence feminist inquirers have at once to resist treating experience as an inviolable, unconditional datum and to resist claiming a position of theoretical expertise that exempts them from the need to understand."<sup>6</sup> Like Code, I think there may be other kinds of stories to tell and different ways of telling them. Moreover, "the rejection of the idea that experience simply speaks for itself should not be taken to deny the importance of listening."<sup>7</sup> ❧

<sup>5</sup> Jackson, Cecile (1993). "Doing What Comes Naturally? Women and Environment in Development." *World Development* 21(12), 1947-63.

<sup>6</sup> Code, Lorraine (1991). *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 291.

<sup>7</sup> Grimshaw (1986), p. 102.

\* This article is an excerpt from my dissertation titled *Beyond Mothering Earth: Ecological Citizenship and the Gendered Politics of Care*. I used this methodological approach when I conducted interviews with 30 women grassroots activists (who are also mothers) from the greater Toronto area.



<sup>1</sup> Gaard, Greta (1998). *Ecological Politics: Ecofeminists and the Greens*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 29-31.

<sup>2</sup> Grimshaw, Jean (1986). *Philosophy and Feminist Thinking*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> Code, Lorraine (1995). *Rhetorical Spaces: Essays in Gendered Locations*. New York: Routledge, p. 115.

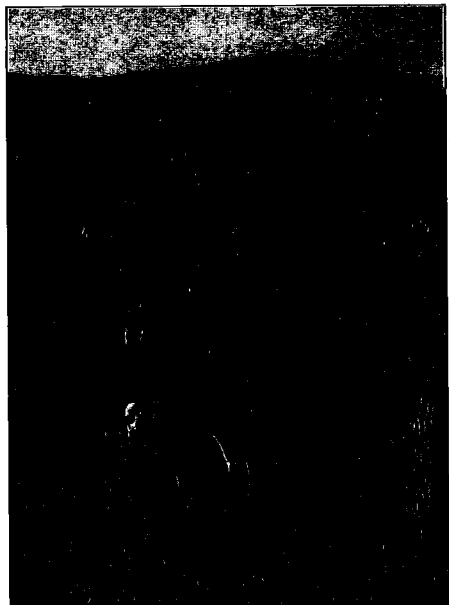
<sup>4</sup> Mies, Maria and Vandana Shiva (1993). *Ecofeminism*. London: Zed Books. See also Ariel Salleh's (1997) *Ecofeminism as Politics*. London: Zed Books for examples of this kind of argument.

# In the Field

## What to think?

### ECOFEMINISM AND ECO-AGRICULTURE IN IRELAND

Martha McMahon



Cows grazing on the Slieve Miskish Mts.  
Photo: Sheryl MacGregor.

I SPENT LAST FALL TALKING TO women organic farmers in the South West of Ireland. It was part of an ecological feminist research project on women organic farmers and sustainable agriculture. Research that starts from women's experiences helps us see how potentially transgressive movements like organic farming can, in fact, risk being reinscribed by the non-ecological, gendered and productivist notions of food and farming they seek to resist.

Despite the centrality of livestock farming in Ireland, most of the women organic farmers I interviewed grew organic vegetables for local markets.<sup>1</sup> Some also kept some livestock; a minority were primarily livestock farmers. Growing has distinct advantages and presents fewer entry barriers for women farmers. It allows them to make a living or part living on a relatively small acreage. It allows them to combine income-generation goals with fulfilling

their desire to feed their families healthy food. On a small scale, it requires less capital investment in machinery and buildings, a distinct advantage to women who are less likely than men to acquire land through inheritance and are who are less able to borrow capital. It also offers a return directly to skill and hard work rather than to capital. Indeed, if the farmer chooses to direct-market the produce, it offers a local economic and social return by increasing the quality of the social relationships generated. It builds community. The higher price available for organic produce promises to make small scale farming more economically viable at a time when it is being dismissed as inefficient and non-viable by government policy.<sup>2</sup> It also offers to loosen the link between farming and patriarchal inheritance systems.<sup>3</sup> It even holds the possibility of totally transforming the very foundation of the kind of agriculture established in colonial times.

I did not set out to interview growers. Indeed, growing of vegetables has been relatively marginal in Irish agriculture.<sup>4</sup> I should have known that women would be "over-represented" among organic growers and growers would be over-represented among organic farmers; thus the decision to centre on women's experiences was also a decision to centre on growers' experiences.

Encouraged by the European Union (EU)-funded Rural Environment Protection Program (REPs) more livestock farmers are converting to organic farming and thus changing the social profile and composition of organic farming in Ireland.<sup>5</sup> The REPs program can be understood as a stewardship payment to farmers who farm ecologically. It includes provision for additional financial support for farmers in

conversion to certified organic farming. It caps payments at approximately 100 acres, thus benefiting the average-sized Irish farm which is about 70 acres, rather than large industrial ones,<sup>6</sup> as the ecological stewardship payments are acreage based. Thus, organic growers who typically farm small acreages will receive far smaller payments than livestock farmers, who are typically larger. A hundred-acre drystock farm will receive twenty-times the income support that a five-acre vegetable or mixed farm will get, and farmers under five acres receive no government support at all. Sadly, small farms of under twelve acres are now rapidly disappearing in Ireland.

Organic growing had been particularly important in the evolution of the organic movement in Ireland in a way I suspect will not continue and which will have gendered consequences. The REPs program has a great deal of merit. However, through it, most new Irish organic farmers will be drawn from existing livestock farmers who convert. One can reasonably expect that they will be men rather than women, that the Irish State (or the EU) will play a powerful role in the development of Irish Organic Agriculture, and that the State's historical and questionably close relationship with the meat industry and interests associated with the export of meat will matter.<sup>7</sup> One of the unforeseen consequences of Irish programs to support organic farming may be that of inscribing the dominance of both male farmers and livestock farming within Irish organic farming while at the same time, consolidating the power of bureaucratic national and supra-national State-like organizations to shape organic farming.

The gender analysis I am focusing on here, however, is not primarily one that



sees women organic farmers being over-concentrated in growing organic produce and male livestock farmers dominating organic farming. Rather, it is a gender

tech-driven, export-oriented, rapidly modernizing State. How fitting for the Celtic Tiger Irish State that the EU REPs program pays them to "take care of nature."

## Many women farmers are re-defining the meaning of farming away from a masculinist and productivist understanding to one of respectful and caring relationships among people, land and non-human others.

analysis of the cultural inscriptions of emerging organic farming and the dangers that it will be reinscribed by traditional associations of masculinity and meat, of "real" farmers and livestock farming. It is an analysis of state power and meat exports, of food as primarily a commodity, and of the privileging of export-oriented agriculture over local food security. This kind of modernist, masculinist, managerial attitude to farming was, according to Vandana Shiva, implicated in the Green Revolution in many developing countries, with devastating consequences for local food security and women farmers in particular.<sup>8</sup> The commodification of food, as Maria Mies argues, destroys local food security because it eliminates or renders valueless the work of women and other small farmers and subsistence production.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Mona Domash and Joni Seager remind us how deeply the association of meat and masculinity runs in most Western cultures.<sup>10</sup>

In other ways, gender transgresses sexed identities. Small farmers, whether they be vegetable growers or livestock farmers, men or women, are themselves often "feminized" in Irish agricultural policy and even public discourse. Where once small farmers held symbolic significance in the iconography and anti-colonial nationalism of the Irish Free State and the early years of the Republic they are now seen as non-economically viable and thus "de-masculinized" by their "dependency."<sup>11</sup> Their traditional low-input farming does not fit with the ambitions of a high

Organic farming is a movement that promises to help people think very differently about their relationship with food and, through food, with "the land." For many it is an opportunity for resistance to the dominance of agri-business. Thus while pressures within or working through the Irish State bureaucracy are actively establishing organic food, and meat in particular, as a conventional agricultural commodity with significant export potential, many of the women farmers I spoke to were realizing the more transgressive potential of organic farming. These women were re-defining the meaning of farming and agricultural products away from industrial, masculinist and productivist understandings of farming and food to one of local, respectful and caring relationships among people, land and non-human others. Ambiguously positioned in terms of gendered modern identities, one wonders what way organic farmers in Ireland will go. ❧

<sup>1</sup> I use the term "grower" to refer to farmers who primarily grow vegetables.

<sup>2</sup> *Agri Food 2010(a)*. Main Report; *Agri Food 2010 (b)*. Annexes. Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Dublin Ireland: Government Publications, Dublin Ireland, March 2000.

<sup>3</sup> The two major Organic Training Centres train many young people who come from non-farming backgrounds, but access even to the small amounts for growing is difficult. Irish farmers normally inherit their land. This link is also being weakened because many farmers' sons don't want to become full time farmers.

<sup>4</sup> Census figures describe 23% of total farms as specialist dairying, 49% as specialist beef, 15% as mixed grazing livestock but only 3% as mixed crops and livestock (*Agri Food 2010b*, p.6)

<sup>5</sup> 44,000 Irish farmers participated in the REPs program in 1990. About 1000 of these were also certified organic farmers.

<sup>6</sup> Average farm size has increased from 26.8 ha in 1992 to 29.3 ha in 1999 (*Agri Food 2010b*).

<sup>7</sup> O'Toole, Fintan (2001). *Meanwhile Back at the Ranch: The Politics of Irish Beef*. London: Vintage

<sup>8</sup> Shiva, Vandana (1989). *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development*. London: Zed Books.

<sup>9</sup> Mies, Maria (1996). "Women, Food and Global Trade: An Ecofeminist Analysis of the World Food Summit, Rome, 13-17 November 1996." Institute for Theory and Practice of Subsistence. Bielefeld, Germany.

<sup>10</sup> Domosh, Mona and Joni Seager (2001). *Putting Women in Place: Feminist Geographers make Sense of the World*. New York: The Guilford Press.

<sup>11</sup> Nash, Catherine (1994). "Remapping the body/land: New cartographies of identity, gender and landscape in Ireland." In Allison Blunt and Gillian Rose (Eds.), *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies*. New York: Guilford Press, pp. 227-250.

\* I would like to acknowledge the support of the Centre for Studies on Religion and Society at the University of Victoria.

**Martha McMahon** is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. She was a full time farmer in Ireland for many years and now farms part-time in BC.



Celebrating 25 years of working with women.

MATCH International Centre supports women's groups in developing countries which are striving to enhance the status of women and to eliminate violence. You can read about this year's projects and the issues women are dealing with by going to:

[www.web.net/~matchint](http://www.web.net/~matchint)  
or by calling (613) 238-1312  
1102-200 Elgin St. Ottawa,  
Ontario, K2P1L5, Canada

# Putting A Feminist Face into Practice: CONTRADICTIONS IN THE FRENCH GREEN PARTY

Andil Gosine



Photo: Andil Gosine

MY VERY FIRST INTRODUCTION TO France's Green party, *Les Verts*, was in the summer of 1999. It came in the way of a feminist-minded poster mounted at the entry to their Paris headquarters. Boasting a tagline that claimed that the Green Party was the party for France's women, the poster featured photos of three women, in solidarity with each other, and all of them beaming full, cheek-to-cheek smiles — happy, no doubt, to be in clean, fresh air, outdoors.

That poster and the fact that the very next image of *Les Verts* I encountered was another — also featuring a woman — advocating immigrant rights, immediately fixed the idea in my head that theirs was a movement confidently eager to identify feminist and anti-racist politics as central to an environmental platform.

But later that same day I would attend a meeting of the young Greens, then called *Chiche*, where an entirely different story presented itself. Sure, *Chiche* would be represented by a woman on the party's electoral list for the upcoming European parliamentary elections, but at this meeting the boys were in charge. Not only was

I the only non-white person present, but most of the people in the room were also young men. Within an hour and a half of being at the meeting it became clear that the group was run by a few dominant personalities, all of them men. In fact, by the time the meeting was over nearly three hours later, only one young woman had spoken, and just very briefly.

Still boosted by the messages of the posters (and new information that American anti-poverty icon Susan George was on their electoral list), my hopes persisted; this may have just been an odd session out. But the next week proved to be a repeat of the last. The group was preparing the launch of the first Ecology parade and while the boys did most of the talking the girls mostly did the work, making and sewing flowers out of craft paper. Week after week that summer, meetings followed very similar formats. One of the group's dominant personalities turned out to be a woman — the one representing *Chiche* on *Les Verts*' electoral list — but for the most part, the youth wing party "pour femmes" was a boys' club.

Contradictions continue in *Les Verts*' politics today. When final votes were tallied in France's municipal elections held in March 2001, *Les Verts* had won a record 33 mayoral races. This was a stunning achievement that built on their breakthrough federal and European election successes in 1997 and 1999. But these gains came with a sobering footnote. Of the 33 mayoral posts won, not a single Green victor was a woman. And this, media commentators were quick to point out, from the party that had pushed most for new gender parity legislation, introduced for that very election to positively discriminate for women on electoral lists as a way of ameliorating France's spectacularly low levels of female representation in local legislatures.

When those results came up for discussion at the young greens meeting, the analysis was not particularly perceptive. When one young woman asked about the absence of Green women in the mayoral contests, a man retorted, "There just probably aren't any qualified women." Another surmised, "not enough attention was paid to the heads of the lists." "Well," the woman responded, "it was necessary to pay more attention."

As they make more gains, *Les Verts* are finding that they need to be more attentive to process issues and the practical delivery of their ideologies. Three young women activists I interviewed for this piece all agreed that the party has not yet succeeded in living up to its feminist ideals, but was making progress. And, besides, they all noted, it's much better than anything else.

Catherine Bourgain, the 25 year-old genetics student who two years earlier represented the party's youth wing on *Les Verts*' electoral list for elections for the European Parliament, believes that the high profile of the de facto party leader, former Environment Minister Dominique

Voynet, has provided young girls with a new reality in French politics. Voynet's presence, she argues, "says to younger women 'women can do that!'" But, she adds, "it's not enough! If you just change who's at the head of the system, you don't change the habits of the system. It's one thing to see women in politics on T.V., but to inspire young women to get more involved, that's different."

Apparently more young women, at least in Paris, are being drawn to environmental politics. When I returned to the meetings of the young Greens in 2001, two years after my first outing, they had been through some internal struggles and emerged with a new name — *Les Jeunes Vertes* — and new leadership. The meetings I attended that spring and summer were a striking contrast to the earlier ones. There were more people of color — a consequence of the party's work with immigrant associations — and far greater gender equity. And while dominant personalities still led the show, very many more of them were women, including the group's diligent leader, Aurelie Bleton.

Bleton's sharp instincts were put to action at an important moment this past summer which epitomized some of the feminist challenges facing the French Greens. Realizing that photographers snapping the banner carriers at the front of this year's Ecology parade were faced with an almost exclusively all-male line up, Bleton quickly pulled another young woman activist from a float at the back and rushed her to the front. French T.V. viewers that night saw *Les Verts* presidential candidate Alain Lipietz flanked by two young women, a message about *égalité* that the party likes to advocate. But it's not one fully put into political practice. Not yet, anyway. ❧

**Andil Gosine** pursues a discursive analysis of images used by the French Green Party and other environmentalist organizations. He is completing his dissertation on "race" - racism and popular environmentalism at York University, where he holds a SSHRC doctoral fellowship.

## Interview with Franziska Bratner

*Franziska Bratner, 23, came to Paris in 1999 after serving on the Federal Executive of the German Young Greens, where she coordinated Women's and European Affairs. Andil Gosine interviewed her in June, 2001.*

### **AG: How does the Green Party support and encourage young women?**

**FB:** There are two things. There are the institutional advantages: the [French and German] Greens are the only party with a quota system so there must always be 50-50 male-female representation on lists and committees, which is great. But then there are also the everyday practices... why would Green men be any different from any other men in political parties? You still have to deal with a lot of macho men who talk a lot, who like to listen to themselves speak, and who sometimes don't let you speak. But because of the institutional advantages, and because of the different politics, we have a better place to start from. We can say, "look guys, you've been speaking for 10 hours, please shut up and give us a chance." And they respect that, and they become more sensitive to the problem, even if they say, "well, so what? Speak up then!"

### **AG: Given these gender politics in everyday practices, then, is the quota system enough?**

**FB:** No. When I joined the Federal Executive, after some bad experiences [in another committee], I wanted to push for rules, to have a limit on how long to speak, to take turns... We even had a rock, and only [the person] who held the rock could speak. That really made a difference. Men also have a network system that women didn't have. Men will find and recruit other young men, and support them and train them, introduce them to the right people... It took women in the Green Party a long time to realize that the institutional part is not enough, that the network part is even more important, to meet the right people, to know about things at the right time.

### **AG: How do you build that kind of support for young women?**

**FB:** Two years ago, a friend and I developed a mentoring project in Germany. A younger Green woman and an older experienced Green woman would be matched up, and there would also be opportunities to meet other Greens, and get special training...it's wonderful! I tried to encourage the French Greens to start it up but I think they don't realize how important it is yet.

### **AG: Are feminist politics important to you, to other young Greens?**

**FB:** I think it's for very few a priority issue... Things have changed. For young women now, it's more important to talk about quality of life and environmental and work conditions. But many have incorporated the feminist perspective into other things, even if they don't call themselves feminists... When there's a discussion about transportation, a woman will ask, "what about mothers with children, how will it be safe for them to get on the bus?" or they will ask about equality at jobs, better conditions for bad jobs [held by women]. But when you ask them about joining the feminist working group, they are not interested. But, in what I consider to be feminism, they are feminists. ❧

# A New Biotechnological 'Fix' for Environmental Health?

## EXAMINING THE ENVIRONMENTAL GENOME PROJECT

Giovanna Di Chiro

THE LATEST ADVANCES IN GENETIC research and the development of new genetic technologies promise to revolutionize our approach to understanding and improving environmental health. Drawing on these new scientific achievements, many public health scientists and policy-makers in the U.S. have called for a redoubling of research efforts on the mechanisms underlying how our genes respond to exposures to hazardous substances that we might encounter in the home, the workplace, or the environment. At the same time, a growing number of women environmental justice activists are turning a critical eye to the flurry of activity and excitement surrounding the sequencing of the human genome. Central to their concerns is a thorough examination of the real benefits and potential liabilities of genetic research for those communities most seriously burdened with the health hazards of living and working side by side with polluting facilities and industrial wastes.

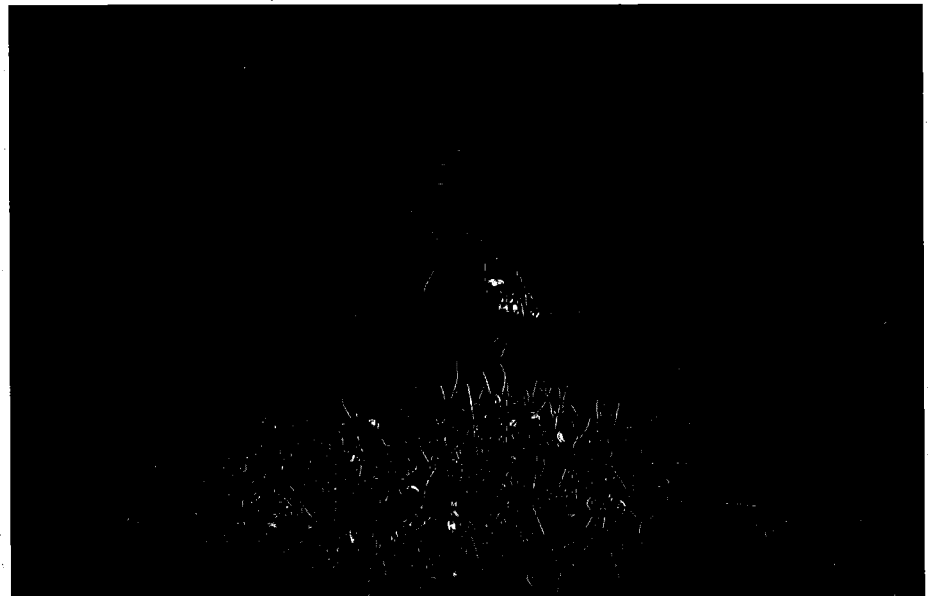
This article discusses a new human genomic research initiative that claims to be on the path to solving environmental health problems at their core: the Environmental Genome Project (EGP). Launched in 1996 and sponsored by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), the EGP aims to identify the "environmental disease genes" that, when defective, may increase a person's susceptibility to environmental diseases such as breast cancer, asthma, and Lupus, or may increase a woman's chances of suffering miscarriages or birth defects. Women environmental justice activists such as Debra Harry from the Indigenous People's Council on Biocolonialism (IPCB), Rose Marie Augustine from Southwest Network for Economic and Environmental Justice

(SNEEJ), and Julie Sze from West Harlem Environmental Action (WE-ACT), express misgivings about the rhetoric and scientific practices already underway in the EGP. A number of concerned geneticists and developmental biologists also add to the chorus of voices raising questions about this most recent foray into high-tech solutions to environmental problem solving.<sup>1</sup> The essential issue for these activists and scientists is whether the quest for the "flawed gene" is the most useful research direction to pursue in the interests of solving environmental health problems, many of which, like breast cancer, have assumed epidemic proportions.<sup>2</sup> For these critics, the logic of "genetic reductionism," that is, the single-minded focus on the defective gene as the *root cause* of environmental illness, obscures other factors that cause disease, such as exposures to dangerous chemicals and other environmental toxins. Moreover, critics argue, a significant pro-

portion of these exposures to hazardous substances can be *prevented* through more effectual environmental regulations and precautionary practices. So, why then, the preoccupation in environmental health research with developing the high-tech biotechnological "fix"?

### Cataloguing Genetic Disadvantage:

The EGP seeks to understand at a precise level human variation in sensitivity or resistance to disease.<sup>3</sup> Researchers are developing a catalogue of all the genetic variances, or what are known as single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs), that exist in human populations, and that make some of us susceptible to environmental toxins and others of us resistant to the harmful effects of those toxins. To determine the range of variations and frequencies of the so-called "environmental disease" genes in the U.S. population, researchers in Phase I of the EGP have



Returning the Bones by Erica Fielder

begun to collect blood samples from American citizens representing what are referred to as the five racial/ethnic subpopulations in the country; Asian American, African American, Hispanic, Caucasian, and Native American. NIEHS director, Kenneth Olden asserts that this path-breaking research will help his office identify so-called "susceptible subgroups" and will "provide more precise information for regulators, such as the Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency...to permit the best protection at the least cost,"<sup>4</sup> and make possible more cost-efficient environmental regulatory policy.

From these human blood samples EGP scientists have targeted approximately 500 environmental response genes that appear to be associated with increased risk for disease including, for example, DNA repair genes and the Cytochrome P450 family of

Paiute Reservation in rural Nevada, to identify whether or not samples of their genetic material display evidence of these disease-causing polymorphisms.

By collecting information on the genetic basis of environmentally-associated diseases and increasing our knowledge of gene-environment interactions, the EGP's environmental health goals are to help with more accurate assessments of disease risks, thereby increasing multi-fold the explanatory and predictive power of environmental health risk assessment and epidemiology. The EGP scientists argue that our standard epidemiological studies are largely based on educated (and sometimes "black box") guesses about disease causation and so government agencies tend to either under-regulate or over-regulate. By linking the power of molecular studies to epidemiology, regulators can increase the scientific *validity* of our environmental health poli-

ing in aeronautics, nuclear weapons, or computer manufacturing plants because of the high levels of beryllium used in these industries. This is what is known in environmental regulation parlance as an "end of pipe" solution – not in fact what most environmentalists would consider *prevention*, which usually means not producing the pollution in the first place.

Prevention, as defined by the EGP scientists, also means developing more effective environmental regulation, which may protect "susceptible" individuals. It would, however, be the role of the government, not the researchers, to decide whether or not the scientific fact that, say, five % of the population is susceptible to a particular chemical, warrants that chemical being taken off the market. Of course, this begs the question, what in fact does it mean to be "susceptible" if you are not exposed to the harmful contaminant in the first place? The discourse of susceptibility assumes that we *will* live with environmental toxins; it *naturalizes* environmental toxicity, and *pathologizes* some genomic subsets of the human population. Fix the people through pharmacogenetics, rather than fix the source of the problem by preventing the dumping, incineration, or release of industrial contaminants into a particular community's environment. The discourse of "susceptible subpopulations" which lies at the heart of the EGP, suggests that it is genetic disadvantage that explains epidemic rates of breast cancer, not pollution-producing industries bolstered by an ineffective or negligent regulatory system. The EGP becomes the ultimate bio-technological fix allowing the business of modern industrial development to proceed as usual.

## Most environmentalists consider *prevention* to mean not producing the pollution in the first place.

genes, which are those genes that produce enzymes that metabolize or detoxify chemical toxins. Polymorphisms in these environmental response genes are thought to play a role in causing disease or in increasing susceptibility to disease, especially when the individual is exposed to particular environmental contaminants.

Phase II of the project will determine how, if at all, variations in these environmental response genes are involved in disease pathways. For example, if someone has a SNP in a P450 gene that produces a reduced quantity of the enzyme that metabolizes the toxic element beryllium, will that individual, upon exposure, be more susceptible than someone else to contracting berylliosis, a deadly lung disease? Finally, Phase III of the EGP will conduct population-based studies investigating "subpopulations," perhaps children living in north Manhattan or residents of the Northern

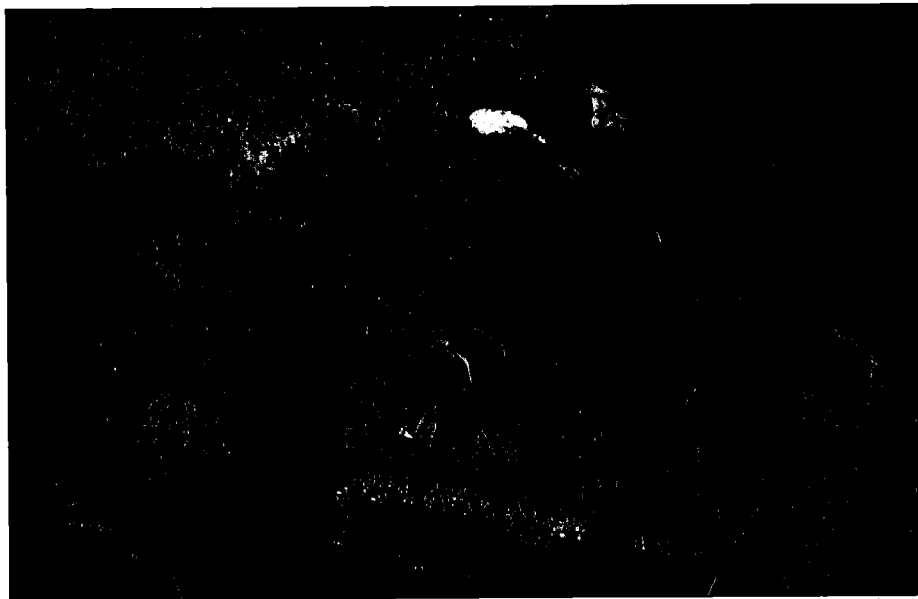
ciens. Furthermore, the EGP's SNP catalogue will provide information to the pharmacogenetics industry which, when armed with this new knowledge of susceptible subpopulations, can design action-specific drugs. A drug may be designed, for example, to manufacture more of the beryllium-detoxifying enzyme of which the aforementioned hypothetical subpopulation doesn't produce enough.

The EGP also hopes to aid in earlier diagnosis of disease or to screen populations at higher risk of disease. Armed with this new monitoring tool, regulators would be able to design better preventative measures. The "preventative" measures most often cited by project scientists consist of pre-cautioning people who are at risk that they should keep themselves out of harm's way. For example, those individuals or groups who have the polymorphism that makes them sensitive to beryllium should avoid work-

### Environmental Justice Meets the Biotech Century:

Environmental justice advocates such as Harry and Augustine voice concerns about the goals of collecting genetic variation information on the different "races," and specifically, they question the quality of participation in this research.<sup>5</sup> Harry, a Northern Paiute woman from Nevada, asserts that participation in genetics research, which most often is limited to a





Returning the Bones by Erica Fielder

particular community donating blood or other body parts for a scientist's study, must be predicated on the return of the benefits of the genetic research to the donor community. Augustine, a Latina from Arizona, questions the validity of trying to find the "bad genes" in communities of color who are suffering disproportionately from environmental illnesses, when the problem is "bad" industrial practices and unequal environmental protection. Participation as "body parts donation" for genetics research is unacceptable to these environmental justice activists, but what would meaningful participation look like?

To address issues of participation and privacy, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) allocates approximately 5% of the budget of the Human Genome Project (HGP) and the EGP to fund a program called ELSI. This program studies the ethical, legal and social implications of genetic variation research on Native American, African American, and Latino communities in the U.S. Most of the concerns raised by participants in these studies are about how they can protect themselves from stigmatization and discrimination assuming the *inevitability* of the advancement of this genetic research. Given that ELSI is funded by the very institution that is conducting the genetic variation research, there is little opportunity for participants in the ELSI studies to raise questions outside

the rhetorical universe of the forward motion of this research. Questions, for example, of how genetics research might help in reducing air pollution in poor communities of color where asthma and other respiratory illnesses have become epidemic, are not askable. Harry argues that ELSI studies are essentially rigged to get communities of color to rubber stamp the research and provide the consent required to proceed legally with the genetic variation studies. To address this problem, Sze is co-organizing a conference, "Human Genetics, the Environment, and Communities of Color: Ethical and Social Implications" to be held in New York City in February, 2002.<sup>6</sup> The conference aims to bring together activists, scientists, and public health officials to exchange ideas and create a dialogue on the environmental health problems of communities of color and the role genetics research can and cannot play in solving them.

For women activists like Harry, Augustine, and Sze, the genetic research undertaken by the EGP represents a tactic by government to divert attention and resources away from issues that are truly important to low-income communities and communities of color who receive few of the benefits but bear the lion's share of the costs of modern industrial society. These women activists instead call for research on how to remove pollutants from the environment and from

people's bodies, on how to provide communities with adequate healthcare, nutrition, and clean air and water, and on sustainable forms of development that are based on the precautionary principle rather than risk assessment. To these environmental justice activists, the EGP is asking all the wrong questions.

As long as the EGP continues to invoke the discourses of *inevitability* (of both the advancement of the research itself and the existence of hazardous toxins in the environment), of *susceptibility* and genetic disadvantage, and of *resistance* and adaptive genetic advantage, the hegemony of the flawed logic of genetic reductionism holds sway. In addition, the rhetorical space available to ask other questions about solving environmental health problems takes a back seat. Activists like Debra Harry, Rose Marie Augustine, and Julie Sze persuasively argue against reductionism and the ways it forecloses on and erodes commitment to solving environmental problems that are the result of social and economic injustices, not faulty genes. Creating the conditions for genuine environmental democracy means responding to these women activists' critique of the EGP and heeding their call for meaningful participation in environmental health research. ❧

<sup>1</sup> For example, Dr. Paul Billings from the IPCB, Dr. Stewart Newman from the CRG, and Dr. Jose Morales from Public Interest Biotechnology.

<sup>2</sup> Janelle D. Sherman (2000). *Life's Delicate Balance: The Causes and Prevention of Breast Cancer*. New York and London: Taylor and Francis.

<sup>3</sup> See the EGP website, [www.niehs.nih.gov/envgenom/home](http://www.niehs.nih.gov/envgenom/home)

<sup>4</sup> *NIH News Advisory*, (October 10, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> See, Debra Harry, Stephanie Howard, and Brett Lee Shelton (2000). *Indigenous Peoples, Genes and Genetics: What Indigenous Peoples Should Know About Biocolonialism*. Wadsworth, NV: IPCB.

<sup>6</sup> For more information, contact West Harlem Environmental Action, [www.weact.org](http://www.weact.org)

**Giovanna Di Chiro** is Assistant Professor of Environmental Science at Allegheny College in Pennsylvania. She is writing a book, *Uncommon Expertise: Women, Science and Environmental Politics*, which examines how women's grassroots activist networks produce environmental knowledge to help improve the conditions of their local communities and to transform environmental policy.



## Interview with Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg

*Dr. Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg is an educator, activist, mother of two and grandmother of three who lives in Toronto. For the past three decades, she has been associated with professional and activist organizations working towards equality, social and economic justice, disarmament, safe energy policies, and increasing public awareness of the effects of environmental contamination on human health. She is currently the education coordinator of the Toronto-based Women's Healthy Environments Network (WHEN) and teaches a course on environmental health, transformative learning and policy change.*

*With a background at the National Film Board of Canada, Dr. Goldin Rosenberg uses film as a catalyst for education and policy change on a variety of global concerns. Most recently she was the principal research consultant and associate producer of the documentary *Exposure: Environmental Links to Breast Cancer*. Sheryllyn MacGregor interviewed her for WE International in November 2001.*

**WE:** *Exposure* has been an important tool for raising awareness of the harmful effects of the pesticides, plastics, and organochlorines on women's health, specifically their relationship to breast cancer. Why do you think the film has been so successful in getting this message out?

**DGR:** The film starts where people are. Many women have personal experiences with breast cancer, either as survivors themselves or as friends and loved ones of women with breast cancer. It not only highlights these experiences but also provides a much needed critical analysis of the way research is done on breast cancer. At the same time, the film is not only about breast cancer, it's also about the effects of toxics on human health and the health of the environment. It speaks to people on a variety of levels. People have told me that it has opened their eyes because it presents a political analysis that is not mainstream. It challenges ideas about "prevention" that we have been trained to believe by looking at the larger context. Related to peace, justice, equality, poverty, and debt, health needs to be seen as a human right.

The response to the film has been incredibly rewarding. It has taken off as a teaching tool that can be used in workshops to generate discussion among women. Often when women see it at conferences they approach us to find out how it can be translated into their language. Through international networking, the film has been translated into Cantonese, Bahasa Indonesian, Spanish, French, and Hebrew. Efforts are now being made to version it into Russian, Arabic, Amharic, Mandarin, Japanese, and Serbo-Croatian. It is a big project to maintain!

**WE:** You are in the midst of preliminary filming for a new documentary on health and the environment. What specific themes is the film addressing?

**DGR:** This film, with the working title *Early Exposures: Children's Health and the Environment*, looks at cancer and other children's health concerns where they start and explains how environmental toxics cause damage even before conception by altering the genetic makeup of eggs and sperm. In *Exposure*, when you see the interview with a woman diagnosed with breast cancer when she was 20 yrs old, it seems clear that something happened to her early in life or perhaps *in utero* or even in the egg stage. The medical and environmental discourse has largely focused on children's health after they are born, so we are going to examine what happens in earlier stages. Many women are concerned about the effects of pesticides, organochlorines, and radiation on their children. Unfortunately, however, many environmental groups don't want to take up the nuclear issue because it's too controversial, it goes to the heart of big business, the military, the energy industry, even cell phone use (by promoting so-called controversy over electromagnetic fields). But, following the lead of women like Rachel Carson and Rosalie Bertell, we insist that this must be part of the analysis, that we need to understand how all of these toxics work together to affect women's and children's bodies. Our underlying theme for the film is "a woman's body is a child's first environment."

**WE:** Are you worried that focusing on environmental health issues specific to women will foster individualistic responses to a much larger social and political problem or perhaps even reinforce the idea that it is largely women's responsibility to protect children?

**DGR:** How do you touch people at their core? I think health issues are a good way to reach people. Women, as mothers and grandmothers, are especially concerned about children's health and future well-being. They are nurturers, right? I know that there is a tendency in some circles to take a very individualized approach to health and that there are many men who have been trained not to think about children because they need to be competitive and fit into the patriarchal world. But we should not leave it at that.

As a transformative adult educator, I really believe that we have to start where people are. If focusing on health helps to raise awareness of the larger issues and how they are interconnected, then I think that is very important. If we present the ideas as simultaneously personal and political, then people will realize that they can't only take care of themselves. Major structural change needs to occur in gender relations, in economic systems, and in the way we treat the earth. At some level people need to be helped to understand this, and that is our job as educators and activists. It will be a long term process of social change and it's hard to keep up the energy and not get discouraged, especially now in the face of war. I feel like saying "here we go again." It is a high price to pay, but there are windows of opportunity due to the events of September 11. It brings it all home in a new way, even though people on every continent have been suffering forms of brutal violence and this kind of advanced technological warfare on a daily basis for the last century. On this issue I highly recommend Rosalie Bertell's new book *Planet Earth: The Latest Weapon of War* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2001).

**WE:** Is ecofeminism useful to you in your work?

**DGR:** Yes, as a foundation for activism. As a theoretical analysis that deals with power and difference, and the links between many forms of violence, ecofeminism is important. It provides a way of understanding the continuum of patriarchal power that is killing the planet and all species on it. We need an analysis of the interconnections between different acts of destruction. The bombing in Iraq and the destruction of the World Trade Centre and now the war in Afghanistan may be happening in distant places but we have to see that these things are killing us all. ☸

*Exposure: Environmental Links to Breast Cancer*

is available from:

**WHEN**  
24 Mercer Street, Suite 102  
Toronto, ON M4L 2Y6  
416 928 0880  
when@web.ca  
www.web.net/~when

# In Print

## THE LEGACY OF LUNA: THE STORY OF A WOMAN, A TREE, AND THE STRUGGLE TO SAVE THE REDWOODS.

Julia "Butterfly" Hill. San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000.  
256 pp. CDN \$21.95 (pb).

Review by Audrey Vanderford

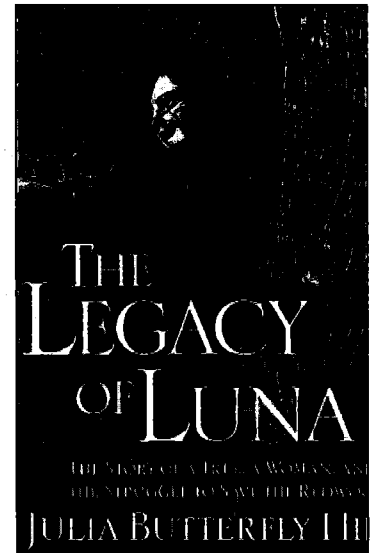
For nearly twenty years, Earth First! and other radical environmentalists have used the tactic of treesitting to defend forests in danger of being cut. From platforms a hundred feet or more high, treesitters weave a network of ropes through the canopy to both *prevent* and *protest* the trees being felled. Drawing on radical environmentalism's long tradition of monkeywrenching and guerilla theater, treesitting protects the ancient forests while calling attention to their destruction. These political performances are invested with the movement's ideology and symbolism. Treesitting embodies biocentrism, for example, by demonstrating that the non-human world has "worth" beyond a market value. Treesitters are willing to risk their lives to prove that the forest should live "wild and free." Furthermore, the "irrational" act of treesitting exemplifies a rejection of "rational" political discourse and a refusal to participate in the mainstream environmental struggle.

Undoubtedly the world's best known treesitter, Julia "Butterfly" Hill spent two years atop "Luna," a 1000-year-old redwood in danger of being "harvested" by Pacific Lumber Company. Hill's brave act of civil disobedience generated much media attention for the destruction of the ancient redwoods, but Hill's story has also generated much attention for Hill herself. Her tiny six-foot platform was visited by both journalists and celebrities, and she spent much of her time on the cell phone to reporters from magazines, newspapers, radio, and television. As Hill was elevated into superstardom, the plight of the redwoods and other old growth forests was reduced to the story of one tree; the efforts of Earth First! and other treesitters became the struggle of one woman. Although the media frequently select and exalt spokespeople from social movements — often to their detriment — Hill actively participates in her alienation from radical environmentalism. Published only a few months after her descent in December of 1999, Hill's autobiography *The Legacy of Luna* chronicles her stay in the giant redwood. From the opening chapter, she is quick to distance herself from radical environmental politics and from other forest activists, appropriating their tactic of treesitting but ignoring their corresponding political critique. "If this is the voice for the forest," laments Hill after her first interaction with the Headwaters Forest campaign, "it's no wonder we're losing them" (p. 12).

According to the movement's own history, Earth First! was founded by a group of individuals frustrated with mainstream environmentalism's inability to protect the wilderness. Opting to remove themselves from the "legitimate" but largely ineffectual negotiations with government and corporations, Earth First! turned to the radical and "illegitimate" tactics of civil disobedience and direct action. In addition to these acts of individual heroics, many Earth Firsters, particularly those influenced by Judi Bari, have become collectivist- and community-oriented.

Unlike the dominant Earth First! narrative, Julia "Butterfly" Hill did not come to her ecological consciousness through a disillusionment with the mainstream environmental movement. Never having participated in any political activism prior to her stay in Luna, Hill's autobiography portrays her entry into forest activism as a series of spiritual conversion narratives. The ecological "truth" is revealed to her as she first walks into the redwoods, later, as she first sees Luna, after a savage winter storm, and so on. These spiritual narratives grant Hill sole authority to speak for the tree. The narratives also affirm that Hill's two years atop Luna were undoubtedly a personal journey of spiritual transformation.

Throughout her autobiography, Hill emphasizes the personal and the individual, at the expense of any larger environmental group or movement and specifically at the expense of Earth First!. Significantly, Hill does not frame her complaints about Earth First! in terms of their macho, "redneck in the woods" image. Instead, her conflicts seem to stem from her unwillingness to work with others. "Earth First! is a diverse group that operates under the rule of consensus," she explains. "I didn't abide by that. I didn't ask anyone's permission to stay in Luna, I just did it" (p. 84). Repeatedly condemning Earth First! "rules and regulations" about treesitting — somewhat of a stretch considering the group's explicit anti-bureaucratic and anti-hierarchical tendencies — Hill portrays herself as the only person willing to stay in Luna. Insisting



she can protect Luna without Earth First!'s help, Hill diminishes the indispensable role of those who bring food and water to and to carry waste from a treesit. Despite the fact that Earth First!ers found the tree, and Earth First!ers named the tree, and Earth First!ers built the sit, and despite the fact that, initially at least, Earth First!ers paid the bills and provided the groundsupport, Hill's autobiography proclaims that this was her tree.

While Hill is critical of Earth First! throughout her stay in Luna, her autobiography sidesteps the issues surrounding perhaps their most important conflict: the circumstances of Hill's descent. While the motto of Earth First! is "No Compromise in Defense of Mother Earth," Julia "Butterfly" Hill compromised: she agreed to pay a \$50,000 (U.S.) "fine" to Pacific Lumber to save Luna and the surrounding twenty feet of trees. The "sale" of Luna outraged many radical environmentalists as it undermines their tactic by countering their demand that the natural world not be commodified. However Hill entirely omits the payoff and its repercussions from her autobiography. There is no mention of the money. None. In the closing eighteen pages of the book, Hill relates "the deal" so hurriedly and unconvincingly, one might question her involvement in the actual negotiations, something startling for a person who has demanded control over the future of the tree throughout the rest of the book. Conflict with other treesitters is noticeably absent as Hill portrays a triumphant closure to her two-year saga.

Despite this happy ending, many radical environmentalists are less hopeful about "the legacy of Luna." How will other treesits be impacted by Hill's high profile image, for example, or by her remunerative relationship with the timber industry? Treesits do continue in the forests of the Pacific Northwest and California, as the ancient forests continue to be logged to extinction, but these stories are not found on the bookstore shelf. Unfortunately, these forest actions are distorted or overshadowed by Julia "Butterfly" Hill, and the politics of radical environmentalism are lost to celebrity hype.

**Audrey Vanderford** is currently a doctoral student in Comparative Literature at the University of Oregon. Her work examines performances of political protest in radical environmentalist and anarchist movements.

#### **UNDOMESTICATED GROUND: RECASTING NATURE AS FEMINIST SPACE**

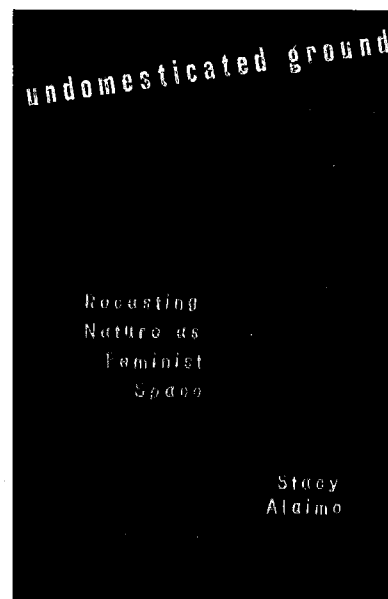
Stacy Alaimo. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000. 225 pp. CDN \$26.95 (pb).

Review by Constance Russell

"Woman" and "nature" have often been closely and negatively associated in Western cultures and this relationship has been implicated in a wide range of cultural practices from the persecution of women labeled witches to the relegation of women to the domestic sphere. Not surprisingly, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (and continuing today in some circles), there was a "feminist flight" from nature. More recently, however, some early ecofeminists, influenced by New Age goddess worship, celebrated these perceived connections as a source of inspiration and empowerment. In this well-written book, Stacy Alaimo traces such changes and illuminates the possibilities of a more complex and playful understanding of this relationship

As a professor of English, Alaimo uses a literary approach to argue her case, offering analyses of the works of a small group of North American women writers whom she argues helped reimagine and renegotiate women's relationships with nature. Structured chronologically, Alaimo begins with Catherine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* (1827) and continues with an eclectic mix of writers such as Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Mary Austin, Toni Morrison, Leslie Marmon Silko, Jane Rule, Margaret Atwood and Marian Engel. She also analyzes journals such as Emma Goldman's *Mother Earth* (1906-1918), issues of *Birth Control Review* from the 1920s, a 1990 Earth Day television special featuring Bette Midler as "Mother Nature," and the promotional material of the Whale Adoption Project. Throughout the book, she pays close attention to the historical contexts of these texts, particularly dominant and subversive ways in which nature was and is used to construct gender, race, class and sexuality. Alaimo favours a constrained constructivist approach to the woman/nature question, for she maintains that "[e]ven though postmodern feminism works to denaturalize the concept of woman, it need not culminate in the severing of woman from nature" (pp.135-6).

As with much literary criticism, it is a more engaging read if you are familiar with the original texts. I was impressed with her insightful comments on Atwood's *Surfacing* and Engel's *Bear* partially because I was able to compare her analysis





to my own reactions to these novels, whereas I found myself less able to assess, for example, the section on Sedgwick whose writing I had not read. For this reason, the last chapter which focuses on contemporary popular culture will likely have the widest appeal. Alas, I found this chapter only began to scratch the surface and was disappointingly short. This is not a criticism, however, but rather points to my desire to read a future book by Alaimo in which she devotes her considerable skills to an ecofeminist analysis of popular culture artifacts, particularly the words and images environmentalists themselves use to sway public opinion and encourage participation.

**Constance Russell** is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University who can be found on whalewatching boats and hiking along the Canadian Shield with secondary school students enrolled in an interdisciplinary environmental studies program.

### **SISTERS IN THE WILDERNESS: THE LIVES OF SUSANNA MOODIE AND CATHARINE PARR TRAILL**

Charlotte Gray. Toronto: Penguin Books, 1999. 379 pp. CDN \$18.99 (pb).

Review by Cheryl Lousley

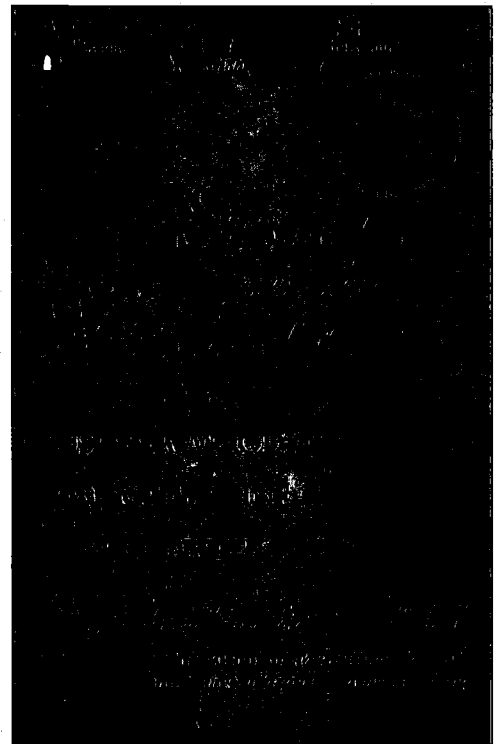
This double biography is a highly readable and refreshing account of the challenges and choices facing the two women whose names virtually define nineteenth century Canadian literature and its relationship with the Canadian landscape. Born into English gentry, Catharine and Susanna Strickland enjoyed a privileged, pastoral childhood in Suffolk, England, two among an entire family of talented, imaginative sisters, five of whom would go on to be writers. Each sister had her own forte and preferred genre, but constrained financial circumstances and gender significantly shaped the writing and life choices of each. Gray explores in particular how the most famous of the sisters, Agnes Strickland, author of *The Lives of the Queens of England*, chose not to marry in order to better advance her career. Equally ambitious, Susanna once broke off her engagement to John Dunbar Moodie as she realized the sacrifices it would impose on her writing. Both Catharine and Susanna emigrated to the colony of Upper Canada because their husbands, lacking property, had limited sources of income in England.

Despite the upbeat, practical tone of Catharine Parr Traill's *The Backwoods of Canada* especially, Charlotte Gray exposes how both the Moodie and Traill families were failed settlers, absolutely lacking in the skills, strength, and practical sense required to clear and farm in the Canadian woods. Both sisters turned to writing both as relief from their arduous work and annual pregnancies and to raise money for their families. With John Moodie's failed land and business speculations and Thomas Traill's debilitating depression, Gray demonstrates how the families' survival was largely dependent on the writing and resourcefulness of the sisters. Catharine Parr Traill developed close relationships with a nearby Chippewa nation and adopted much of what she learned from the Native women into her domestic practices and written advice to future emigrants.

Gray does an excellent job of outlining the rigid class and race hierarchies Catharine and Susanna brought with them to Upper Canada and how their perspectives changed — and did not change — over time. For instance, Gray notes how the "noble savage" tradition of Romanticism led Susanna, in particular, to be much more accepting of her Indian neighbours than of the Jewish and Irish settlers. "She allowed any Indian visitor to sit at the table with her," Gray explains, "although she still wouldn't permit her Irish servants the same privilege" (p. 110).

Drawing on these intimate details revealed in their letters and sketching a vivid picture of the social and natural environment of nineteenth century Upper Canada, Charlotte Gray successfully brings Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill to life for contemporary readers. Her book would be enjoyed by anyone with an interest in women, writing, and the colonization of Canada. For a better sense of the relationship of these women with their natural environments, however, it is best to return to the books themselves. Their most famous texts, Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852) and Catharine Parr Traill's *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836), remain in print today.

**Cheryl Lousley** is a Ph.D candidate in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University doing research on cultural studies, literature, and environmental politics.



# On Video

## SILA ALANGOTOK: INUIT OBSERVATIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2000.  
The full-length (42-min) video is CDN\$14.95 + shipping.  
The summary version (14-min) is CDN\$9.95 + shipping.  
Both versions are available in NTSC (North American) or PAL formats. It can also be viewed in streaming video.

Review by Ellie Perkins

This 14-minute video documents the results of a year-long research project carried out with the residents of Sachs Harbour, a small Inuvialuit community on the coast of Banks Island in the Western Canadian High Arctic, and sponsored by the Winnipeg-based International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). The film documents the effects of climate change on the Arctic environment and the local people's way of life, using footage of community meetings, individual interviews, and guided field observations. Sachs Harbour native Rosemarie Kuptana, the former president of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada and former president of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, worked with the project as community liaison. The video has been viewed around the world after its stirring release in November, 2000 at an international conference in The Hague on the implementation of the Kyoto climate change accords.

*Sila Alangotok* explains that warming temperatures are causing the sea ice to crack even in mid-winter, and to melt entirely in summer, driving away seals which the Inuvialuit hunt for food, melting permafrost causes subsidence and sloughing of the earth, threatening the buildings and beaches of Sachs Harbour itself. Subsidence caused the banks of one fresh-water lake to collapse, draining the lake into the sea. Unfamiliar species now seen near Sachs Harbour include robins and barn swallows, more mosquitoes than before and for a longer season, beetles and sand flies, salmon and herring, new types of fox. Caribou herds are smaller than before. Thunderstorms with lightning, previously unheard-of in the Arctic, now occur, and there are unusual weather fluctuations.

Kuptana and other Sachs Harbour leaders have traveled widely to advocate stronger climate change policies. As the video shows, the results of global warming are already dramatically evident in the Far North. Due to its educational value — for Canadians and everyone — regarding climate change and its effects on people's lives, this is an important and timely film. The film is also valuable, moreover, for its description and presentation of an apparently successful community-based and participatory research process. In conjunction with other IISD publications about the project, the video shows how to do this kind of culturally-engaged ecological research that draws on the knowledge, skills, and needs of local people to focus and direct the research and to assure its relevance. *Sila Alangotok* is a powerful and impressive achievement.

For more information contact:

International Institute for Sustainable Development  
161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R3B 0Y4  
Tel: 204-958-7700 Fax: 204-958-7710  
E-mail: [info@iisd.ca](mailto:info@iisd.ca)  
<http://iisd1.iisd.ca/casl/projects/inuitobs.htm>

**Ellie Perkins** teaches ecological economics and environmental economics in the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University. She has conducted research and written on Arctic environmental issues including the long-range transport of pollutants to the North, the environmental effects of northern mining, and international policy measures to stem Arctic pollution.



Rosemarie Kuptana arranges climate change observations during the first planning workshop. Photo: Graham Ashford.

## FURY FOR THE SOUND: THE WOMEN AT CLAYOQUOT

A film by Shelley Wine, TellTale Productions, 1997.

Two versions are for sale: 86 or 52 minutes

Review by Sherilyn MacGregor

Shelley Wine decided to make this film while sitting in jail. She was one of over 800 women and men who were arrested for blockading the logging road leading to Clayoquot Sound, B.C. in the late summer of 1996. In the House of Commons right-wing MPs expressed outrage that a "criminal" like Ms. Wine should be given Canada Council funds (i.e., taxpayers' money) to "foster the destruction" of the Canadian way of life. But she got the money and she made the film. *Fury for the Sound* tells the story of women's involvement in the two month "peace camp" that helped to stop the clearcutting of an ancient forest and secured a place for rainforest protection on the Canadian political agenda.


Wine's film is as much a recounting of personal experiences with political protest as it is a history of the events. It features a diverse array of women participants discussing their motivations, their fears and triumphs, and the political analyses that compelled them to "put their bodies on the line to save the trees."

What I like most about *Fury for the Sound* is that, by asking women to reflect back on their activist involvement at Clayoquot, it portrays them as whole people rather than merely "protesters" (a one-dimensional picture that is all too often used in the mainstream media). As whole people, the women experienced many gender-, race-, class-, and age-related obstacles to participation that are rarely discussed in accounts that simply celebrate or condemn only the public aspects of activism. The film provides a glimpse into these kinds of obstacles; women describe feeling fear for their personal safety and their struggles with ageist stereotypes associated with being grandmothers or teenaged girls. Native women recall feeling vulnerable around the mostly white men and women wearing uniforms and wielding truncheons. Also interesting are the accounts of how motherhood (often held up as a source of authority and strength for women environmentalists) was used against the women by officials who threatened to place their children in foster care if they did not give up and go home.

Although *Fury for the Sound* focuses on women's special contributions to the protests (complete with footage of Vandana Shiva giving her standard explanation for why it is so "special"), it is also an inspiring portrayal of non-violent and *egalitarian* eco-politics. Non-hierarchical and collective forms of decision-making were practised at the peace camp, and men, children, and elders were included as equal participants. Activists of all descriptions attempted to discuss, as citizens, their opposition to clearcutting with the police who came to arrest them. Leaders and followers alike were willing to go to jail for their beliefs. Are all of these things to be attributed to the particular, gendered way that women organize, act, and think? I'm not sure. But I do value the fact that this film provides a chance to ask this question. And I am glad that *Fury for the Sound* exists as a monument to an important moment in the history of Canadian environmental politics.

**A DOCUMENTARY FILM**

**How do you  
feel about  
what's  
happening  
to the  
EARTH?**



**FURY** *for the* **SOUND**  
**The Women at Clayoquot**

This dramatic, award-winning film delineates with passionate clarity how a small group of dedicated activists came together to protest the clearcutting of the local rainforest, and 15 years later found themselves in the midst of the largest civil disobedience movement in Canadian history.

**1.877.239.7754**  
**furyforthesound.org**

women + nature + political action

**Caught in Glow**  
- Helen Laurence

She hugs and strokes  
the slim madrone shining  
golden wet where red-brown  
bank has peeled

Here along the jutting edge  
where cliff makes a point  
she weeps for a lover  
to soften

Her grieving eases  
even though madrone woman  
curves above steep erosion  
unswerving

3/30/98

## Ecofem.org

Includes featured ecofeminist book of the month, an ecofeminism e-journal, and extensive links to journals on women and environment.  
[www.ecofem.org](http://www.ecofem.org)

## Feminista

The On-line Journal of Feminist Construction: Art, Literature, Social Commentary, Philosophy, Wit, Humour and Respect. Explore present and past issues of this stimulating on-line journal at:  
[www.feminista.com](http://www.feminista.com)

**Eve On-line** — for a Spiritual Politic and a Political Spirituality  
Eve was founded as an organization for women to explore ecofeminism from on a cerebral and spiritual level. The website features links to "What is Ecofeminism?", community forums, grassroots activism, ecofeminist writings and resources.  
<http://eve.enviroweb.org>

## Erratic Impact

Comprehensive links and resources on ecofeminism, gender studies, and environmental philosophy. Includes new and used texts searches, and ecofeminist thinkers with links to online resources.  
[www.erraticimpact.com/~ecofeminism](http://www.erraticimpact.com/~ecofeminism)

## ORGANIZATIONS

**Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)**  
An international advocacy organization that seeks to increase the power of women worldwide as policymakers at all levels in governments, institutions and forums to achieve economic and social justice, a healthy and peaceful planet, and human rights for all.  
[www.wedo.org](http://www.wedo.org)

## Silent Spring Institute

A research organization working on identifying the links between environmental contamination and women's health problems, especially breast cancer.  
<http://www.silentspring.org>

## Center for Environmental Philosophy

Provides access to Internet resources on environmental ethics and environmental philosophy. Includes professional development activities, upcoming events, links to grad programs, associations, publications, funding opportunities, and a bibliography.  
[www.cep.unt.edu/default.html](http://www.cep.unt.edu/default.html)

## Green Parties Worldwide

Extensive links to Green parties throughout the world.  
[www.greens.org](http://www.greens.org)

## EDUCATION

### Institute for Social Ecology

Offers interdisciplinary programs on social change including a B.A. in Social Ecology and courses in Ecology and Community.  
[www.social-ecology.org](http://www.social-ecology.org)

### Winter School of Ecofeminism

The Findhorn Foundation, in association with the Women's World Summit Foundation, offers an international programme on women's empowerment, spirituality, and culture of peace. Modules include: The Dual Origin of the Universe; Return to the Goddess, Earth Care, Self-reliance and Sustainability, A Paradigm Shift: From Power Over to Power With, Transcultural Rites for Contemporary Women. Offered in January 2002.  
[www.findhorn.org/events/ecofeminism](http://www.findhorn.org/events/ecofeminism)

## FILMS/MEDIA

### Ecofeminism Now!

A clear, visual introduction to the theory and practice of ecofeminism. Topics include: redefining the environmental movement to include women's activism and insights; the word "ecofeminism," its origins and reception; paths of activism, experience, and study which have brought women to ecofeminism; ecofeminist roots in feminism and environmentalism; varieties of perspective within ecofeminism; examples of ecofeminist activism; paths and strategies for the future.

VHS 37 minutes

### Thinking Green: Ecofeminists and the Greens

A succinct introduction to the ecofeminist and Green movements in the United States. The film is intended for activists and educators alike, to stimulate discussion and to provide a wider sense of community.

VHS 35 minutes

Both videos produced by Greta Gaard (1994)

<http://www.cep.unt.edu/news/gaard.html>

For more information: [gaard@cc.wvu.edu](mailto:gaard@cc.wvu.edu)

## ON-LINE BIBLIOGRAPHIES OF ECOFEMINIST WRITING

### Journal articles on ecofeminism

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/fallinlight/journ.html>

### Ecofeminism Bibliography

<http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~jdingler/ecofem.html>

### Women Writers and the Environment

<http://www.uoregon.edu/~audreylv/biblio.htm>

### Bibliography for Ecofeminism and Environmental Philosophy

<http://www.macalstr.edu/~warren/ecoph/biblio.htm>

### Queer Ecofeminism

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/fallinlight/queer.html>

## INTRODUCTORY READINGS ON-LINE

Karen J. Warren, "Introduction: What is Ecofeminism?" in Michael E. Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, George Sessions, Karen J. Warren, and John Clark (Eds.), *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1993), 253-267  
[www.greeninformation.com/what%20is%20ecofeminism.htm](http://www.greeninformation.com/what%20is%20ecofeminism.htm)

Charlene Spretnak, "Critical and Constructive Contributions of Ecofeminism," in Peter Tucker and Evelyn Grim (Eds.), *Worldviews and Ecology* (Philadelphia: Bucknell Press, 1993), 181-89  
[www.greeninformation.com/spretnak.htm](http://www.greeninformation.com/spretnak.htm)

Cathleen McGuire and Colleen McGuire, "Grass-Roots Ecofeminism: Activating Utopia," in Greta Gaard and Patrick Murphy (Eds.), *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy* (University of Illinois Press, 1988). (excerpt)  
<http://www.eve.enviroweb.org>



**Women &  
Environments**  
international

**Come visit us at [www.weimag.com](http://www.weimag.com)**

# An Ecofeminist (Further) Reading List

- Adams, Adams (1990). *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York, Continuum Press.
- Agarwal, B., (1994). *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bryld, Mette and Nina Lykke (2000). *Cosmodolphins: Feminist Cultural Studies of Technology, Animals and the Sacred*. London: ZED Books.
- Cuomo, Chris J. (1998). *Feminism and Ecological Communities: An Ethic of Flourishing*. New York: Routledge.
- Eckersley, Robin (1992). *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Gaard, Greta (Ed.) (1993). *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Gaard, Greta (1998). *Ecological Politics: Ecofeminists and the Greens*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Gaard, Greta and Patrick Murphy (Ed.) (1998). *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press
- Haraway, Donna J. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge.
- Heller, Chaia (1999). *The Ecology of Everyday Life: Rethinking the Desire for Nature*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.
- Mellor, M. (1997). *Feminism and Ecology*. New York: New York University Press.
- Merchant, Carolyn (1996). *Earthcare: Women and the Environment*. New York: Routledge.
- Mies, Maria and Vandana Shiva (1993). *Ecofeminism*. London: Zed Books.
- Narayan, Uma (1997). *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism*. New York: Routledge.
- Noske, Barbara (1997). *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.
- Okin, Susan Moller [with respondents] (1999). *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Edited by Joshua Cohen, Matthew Howard, and Martha C. Nussbaum. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Plumwood, Val (1993). *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. New York: Routledge.
- Rocheleau, Dianne, Barbara Thomas-Slayter and Esther Wangari (Ed.) (1996). *Feminist Political Ecology: Global Issues and Local Experiences*. New York: Routledge.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford (Ed.) (1996). *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Sachs, Carolyn E. (Ed.) (1997). *Women Working in the Environment*. Washington, DC: Taylor and Francis.
- Salleh, Ariel (1997). *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx and the Postmodern*. London: Zed Books.
- Sandilands, Catriona (1999). *The Good-Natured Feminist: Ecofeminism and the Quest for Democracy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Seager, Joni (1993). *Earth Follies: Coming to Feminist Terms with the Global Environmental Crisis*. New York: Routledge.
- Shiva, Vandana (1989). *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development*. London: Zed Books.
- Shiva, Vandana (Ed.) (1994). *Close to Home: Women Reconnect Ecology, Health and Development Worldwide*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.
- Singh, A. and Burra, N. (Ed.) (1993). *Women and Wasteland Development in India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Sturgeon, Noël (1997). *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action*. New York: Routledge.
- Warren, Karen J. (Ed.) (1994). *Ecological Feminism*. New York: Routledge.
- Warren, Karen J. (Ed.) (1997). *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Warren, Karen J. (2000). *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What it is and Why it Matters*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) (1992). World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, Official Report, including Women's Action Agenda 21, and Findings of the Tribunal, Women's Environment and Development Organization, New York.
- Women's Studies Quarterly*, Special Issue: "Earthwork: Women and Environments" Vol. XXIX, Nos. 1 & 2, Spring/Summer 2001.

# Announcements

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### February 14 -16, 2002, Copenhagen, Denmark - Environmental Justice and Global Citizenship

This inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary conference project aims to explore the role of ecology and environmental ideas in the context of contemporary society and international politics, and assess the implications for our understandings of fairness, justice and global citizenship. The conference is the first in an annual series of research projects, run under the general banner 'Probing the Boundaries'. It aims to create working 'encounter' groups between people of differing perspectives, disciplines, professions, and contexts. Submission Deadline for papers - January 17, 2002.

For more information: <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/e1.htm> or e-mail: [rf@inter-disciplinary.net](mailto:rf@inter-disciplinary.net)

---

### May 9 -11, 2002, Montréal, Canada - 1st International Seminar on Women's Safety Making The Links

This seminar will bring together women's groups, community organisations, cities and local governments, national and international agencies actively involved in increasing women's safety in cities and communities. The goal of this seminar is to review current knowledge and practices and to consolidate international exchanges in this field. This seminar is affiliated with the 6th world conference on injury prevention and control (May 12 to 15 2002)

For more information: [www.trauma2002.com](http://www.trauma2002.com) or e-mail: [cafsu@gc.aira.com](mailto:cafsu@gc.aira.com)

---

### May 26 - May 28, 2001, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada - CWSA (Canadian Women's Studies Association) Conference

Conference theme: "Designing Women".

For more information: [http://www.yorku.ca/cwsa\\_acef](http://www.yorku.ca/cwsa_acef) or e-mail: [cwsaacef@yorku.ca](mailto:cwsaacef@yorku.ca)

---

### May 28 - 30, 2002, University of Toronto, Toronto Canada - Environmental Studies Association of Canada/L'association canadienne d'études environnementales - 9th Annual Conference

The ESAC/ACÉE Annual Conference is a meeting point for scholars, professionals, and activists from across Canada and beyond who work in areas of environmental concern. It is held as part of the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities, the largest academic gathering in North America.

For more information: <http://www.yorku.ca/esac/>

---

### May 31 and June 2, 2001, Toronto, Canada - Placing Gender/ Making Policy

A three-day IGU Gender and Geography Commission workshop co-sponsored with the Canadian Women and Geography Study Group. There will be a one-day overlap with the annual meeting of the Canadian Association of Geographers. The workshop will explore place-specific aspects of creating gender-inclusive public policy. 'Gender-inclusive' recognizes that women and men's experiences emerge from the intersections of gender with 'race', class, ability, sexual orientation and other markers of identity. Social, economic, cultural, and political processes affect public issues and policy-making in different ways at various geographical scales. Submission deadline for papers: December 1, 2001.

For more information: Ebru Ustundag: [geogendr@yorku.ca](mailto:geogendr@yorku.ca)  
Fran Klodawsky: [fran\\_klodawsky@carleton.ca](mailto:fran_klodawsky@carleton.ca)  
Valerie Preston: [vpreston@yorku.ca](mailto:vpreston@yorku.ca)

---

### June 10 -21, 2002 - Ninth Women's Global Leadership Institute

An intensive two-week program at Rutgers University for 25 women to become more effective women's rights leaders in policy and practice. It will bring together leaders who have been working on issues of women's human rights including local and national organizers, policy makers, researchers and activists. Applications are welcome from women in all regions of the world that have taken leadership in various fields to make the abuses of female human rights visible and unacceptable. Deadline for applications: January 4, 2002.

For more information: [www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/leadership.html](http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/leadership.html) or e-mail [cwgl@iqc.org](mailto:cwgl@iqc.org)

---

### August 12 -16, 2002, York University, Toronto, Canada - International Women and Health (IWHM) Meeting

The 9th IWHM will provide an international forum for health activists to advocate for essential health resources and the rights of women and girls. The program includes workshops, presentation, discussion groups and information fair. Women who are involved in the women's health movement, by activism or who represent their community groups offering health and social services are invited to submit a Proposal. Submissions must be received by February 15, 2002.

For more information: <http://www.iwhm-rifs.org/eng/index.htm> or e-mail: [iwhm@lefca.com](mailto:iwhm@lefca.com)

---

### September 2 - 11, 2001, Johannesburg, South Africa - World Summit on Sustainable Development

For more information: [www.johannesburgsummit.org](http://www.johannesburgsummit.org)

---





**REPLY AND GET A FREE DOUBLE ISSUE  
ADDED TO YOUR SUBSCRIPTION!**

# Reader Survey 2002

Your thoughts about the magazine will help us to better reflect and respond to your expectations. Please take a minute to fill out this questionnaire and send it back today. The results will be published in the Network Directory and Index planned for 2002.

How long have you been a reader of WE? \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you get your copy of WE?

- I am a subscriber   
  I found it in a university library   
  I found it in a public library   
  I purchased it in a store  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate the following main sections of WE on a scale of 1 (like very much) to 5 (dislike very much). Circle the number that best represents your opinion.

Feature Articles	1 2 3 4 5	WE Research	1 2 3 4 5
In the Field	1 2 3 4 5	Book Reviews/In Print	1 2 3 4 5
WE Focus (featured artist)	1 2 3 4 5	Network Directory/Index issue	1 2 3 4 5
Information Items (WE Globetrot, WE Surf, petitions, announcements, calendar.)	1 2 3 4 5	Other Comments: _____	

What sections would you like to see added, changed, or deleted from the magazine? \_\_\_\_\_

What specific topics would you like to see covered: \_\_\_\_\_

WE seeks to maintain a balance between academic discussions of issues and the diverse experiences of activists and professionals in their communities. Tell us how you feel about this balance:

- I would like to see more academic content                       I would like to see more activist content  
 I would like to see more professional content                       I think the current balance is just right

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

WE tries to promote dialogue on a wide range of issues affecting women and their environments. Issue themes address women's relations to the **built** (housing, transportation, services, community planning), **natural** and **social** (economic, cultural, political) environments. Which environments are you most interested in, on a scale of 1 (like very much) to 5 (dislike very much)? Circle the number that best represents your opinion.

Built Environment    1 2 3 4 5                      Social Environment    1 2 3 4 5                      Natural Environment    1 2 3 4 5  
 Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Please tell us about yourself:

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

First language: \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Education: \_\_\_\_\_ Highest degree/diploma/program completed): \_\_\_\_\_

Field of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you see yourself as an:

ACTIVIST          STUDENT          ACADEMIC          PROFESSIONAL          ENTREPRENEUR/FARMER  
OTHER EMPLOYED          RETIRED          OTHER (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle your primary and bracket your secondary vocation.

### List yourself & other great women or women's groups in the Network Directory and Index.

(if needed, please attach separate sheet)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Institutional Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province/State: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal/Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list your, or your nominee's, professional, community involvement or areas of interest related to women and their environments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*A \$10.00 contribution towards publishing the issue (which receives no other outside funding) would be appreciated.*

### Become a Bureau Chief

Would you like to become a regional or national correspondent or Bureau Chief for the magazine? This would involve reporting on events, issues, activities, and organizations related to women and environments in your area. You would let friends, libraries, and bookstores in your area know about us. In return you will receive a free subscription, extra copies, promotional material, and a listing in our upcoming Network Directory/Index Issue.

Yes           No

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The information you have provided will allow us to make upcoming issues of the magazine more reflective of your interests and concerns. Please mail this survey in the attached envelope to:

Women & Environments International Magazine  
Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies  
New College, University of Toronto  
40 Willcocks Street, Rm. 2042  
Toronto, ON, M5S 1C6, Canada

# FES



Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University

## INTERDISCIPLINARY, UNIQUE, INDIVIDUALIZED

With nearly 325 undergraduate, 350 Masters, and 40 PhD students currently enrolled, the Faculty of Environmental Studies (FES) at York University is internationally renowned as a place to learn, explore, discover and lead environmental change. A small, non-departmentalized Faculty in a large urban university, York's FES provides unsurpassed opportunities for students and Faculty members to pursue research areas and interests in combinations that are not possible in traditional disciplinary graduate studies. FES's graduate students and Faculty are involved in interdisciplinary teaching, learning and research about social, natural, built, and organizational environments and the relationships among them. Our definitions of 'environment' and 'learning' are deliberately broad to ensure that students have the flexibility, insight and skills to respond to evolving 21st-century priorities.

## Bachelor in Environmental Studies

The BES Program combines breadth and focus to meet students' individual interests while providing academic structure. Areas of inquiry include: Nature, Technology and Society; Environmental Policy and Action; Global Development, Peace and Justice; and Human Settlements. BES students can choose to study towards Certificates in Environmental Landscape Design, Geographic Information Systems and Remote Sensing, or Refugee and Migration Studies. Or, they can pursue a Joint Program with a community college, in the areas of International Project Management, Urban Sustainability, or Ecosystem Management. Further options include majors or minors in a related field.

## GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

FES offers unique, interdisciplinary opportunities for those interested in graduate work leading to a Masters or PhD degree. Students pursue their own academic objectives, building on past experience and exploring ideas in the broad spectrum of natural, social, built and organizational environments. Individualized and flexible programs cover a wide range of areas, including:

- gender, environment and development
- environmental education and critical pedagogy
- ecofeminism
- health and environment
- sustainable food systems
- non-profit and voluntary sectors
- environmental thought and ethics
- biotechnology regulatory policy
- animal welfare, human-animal relationships
- communication, advocacy and social change
- "traditional" Aboriginal healing ways
- planning processes & habitat creation/re-creation
- environment and literature, cultural studies
- housing and human settlements

## PhD in Environmental Studies

York's FES offers the only doctoral program in environmental studies in Canada and North America. Our PhD students are actively involved in interdisciplinary research activities while simultaneously defining and questioning the broad field of environmental studies. Doctoral students at FES come from diverse backgrounds in the social and natural sciences and the humanities, yet form a close-knit community of interacting scholars. Further information about the PhD program and current student profiles is available at [www.yorku.ca/fes/grad/phd/](http://www.yorku.ca/fes/grad/phd/)

## Master in Environmental Studies (MES)

Initiated in 1968, our MES Program is one of the oldest and most diverse in the field, with students from a wide range of backgrounds. Each of our 350 Masters candidates designs a Plan of Study in consultation with a faculty advisor and focuses on an individualized Area of Concentration. A list of current and recent MES Areas of Concentration is available at [www.yorku.ca/fes/mes/mes\\_aofc.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/fes/mes/mes_aofc.htm)

## Professional and Graduate Diploma Programs

- Joint MES/LLB program with Osgoode Hall Law School
- Professional planning program (MES) through FES and the Canadian Institute of Planners
- Graduate Diplomas in areas such as Business and Environment, or Refugee and Migration Studies



Contact us for more information:  
Faculty of Environmental Studies  
York University  
4700 Keele Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
Canada, M3J 1P3  
tel: 416-736-5252  
fax: 416-736-5679  
e-mail: [fesinfo@yorku.ca](mailto:fesinfo@yorku.ca)

WWW.YORKU.CA/FES

# Heather Rigby

This sculpture is one piece of an installation called *Two Lips Touching*. "Clit," a carved marble section of female genitalia is placed next to a thin skin-like column that is connected to a large screen showing a video of a woman's bright red lips speaking of daily environmental concerns in a barely discernable monologue.

"Women rarely have an opportunity to honour their own 'private' parts in ways not dictated by the opticality of the patriarchal gaze. 'Clit' is a celebration of the embodied power in woman through an image normally relegated to the realm of taboo and made invisible other than in porn. I want to honour the utter beauty of female genitalia, although I hesitated to use such a loaded historical material such as marble. Too often, women have been completely disenfranchised through this kind of objectification yet I want the work to be critiqued outside of an essentialist frame. If this is a realization of the Electra or an aspect of the Medusa myth where the negative feminine (as witch) turns others into stone, then it could be said that this is where the narrative stops. But it doesn't stop here. I am raising the question of why the female cannot stand her own ground in the fiction of history. How do women reconnect/re-embodiment beyond the production/reproduction motif that we are living in? Art has the ability to raise good questions like these." ~ Heather Rigby

---

**Heather Rigby** is an installation/performance artist presently working on a doctorate in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University in Toronto. Her research includes feminism, art, and environment. She has been a guest lecturer and instructor at several universities and colleges including Arctic College in Baffin Island and the University of Dundee in Scotland. Rigby has had many solo exhibitions at public galleries across Ontario and currently has a video of a ritual performance being screened in a travelling exhibition in Japan. Over the last thirty years she has travelled extensively in pursuit of a deep interest in Eastern philosophy, meditation practice, and ritual. She is represented by the DeLeon White Gallery in Toronto.