

# FEMINISMO/S 22

**Ecofeminismo/s:  
mujeres y naturaleza**  
Lorraine Kerslake  
y Terry Gifford (Coords.)





FEMINISMO/S

Revista del Centro de Estudios sobre la Mujer  
de la Universidad de Alicante  
Número 22, diciembre de 2013

## Ecofeminismo/s: Mujeres y Naturaleza

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## INDEX /ÍNDICE

<i>Lorraine Kerslake and Terry Gifford</i>	
Introducción.....	9
Introduction	
<b>PRIMERA PARTE: Teoría Ecocrítica Feminista ...</b>	
<b>PART ONE: Feminist Ecocritical Theory...</b>	
<i>Esther Rey Torrijos</i>	
Ecofeminist visions: recent developments and their contribution to the future of feminism.....	17
La visión ecofeminista: desarrollo, expansión y contribución al futuro del feminismo	
<i>Lorraine Kerslake</i>	
Entrevista con Alicia Puleo: reflexiones sobre el ecofeminismo .....	47
An interview with Alicia Puleo: reflexions on ecofeminism	
<i>Serpil Oppermann</i>	
Feminist ecocriticism: the new ecofeminist settlement .....	65
Ecocrítica feminista: el nuevo asentamiento ecofeminista	
<i>Carmen Flys Junquera</i>	
«Las Piedras Me Empezaron a Hablar»: una aplicación literaria de la filosofía ecofeminista.....	89
“The Rocks Began to Speak to Me”: a literary application of ecofeminist philosophy	
<b>SEGUNDA PARTE: La Naturaleza, Mujeres y Animales...</b>	
<b>PART TWO: Nature, Women and Animals...</b>	
<i>Greta Gaard</i>	
Animals in (new) space: chimponauts, cosmodogs, and biosphere II .....	113
Animales en el (nuevo) espacio: chimponautas, cosmoperros, y biosfera II	

*Diana Villanueva Romero*  
 “Savage Beauty”: representations of women as animals in PETA’s  
 campaigns and Alexander McQueen’s fashion shows ..... 147  
 «Belleza salvaje»: representaciones de mujeres como animales en las campañas de  
 PETA y en los desfiles de Alexander McQueen

*Serenella Iovino*  
 Loving the alien. Ecofeminism, animals, and Anna Maria Ortese’s  
 poetics of otherness..... 177  
 ‘Amando al Alienígena. Ecofeminismo, animales y la poética de la alteridad de  
 Anna Maria Ortese’

**TERCERA PARTE: Lecturas en Teorías Ecocríticas Feministas...**  
**PART THREE: Readings in Feminist Ecocritical Theories...**

*Patrick D. Murphy*  
 The ecofeminist subsistence perspective revisited in an age of land  
 grabs and its representations in contemporary literature..... 205  
 La perspectiva ecofeminista de subsistencia revisada en una época de  
 acaparamientos de tierras y sus representaciones en la literatura contemporánea

*Margarita Carretero González*  
 Another Cassandra’s cry: Mary Wollstonecraft’s “universal  
 benevolence” and the ecofeminist praxis..... 225  
 Otro grito de Cassandra: la “benevolencia universal” como praxis ecofeminista  
 en Mary Wollstonecraft

*Izabel E.O. Brandão*  
 Reweaving the place of nature: two contemporary women poets..... 251  
 Entretejiendo la naturaleza: dos poetisas contemporáneas

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**RESEÑA**

*Teresa López Pardina*  
 Cabeza Moderna/Corazón Patriarcal (un diagnóstico social de  
 género), de María Antonia García de León. (Prólogo de Celia  
 Amorós). (Editorial Anthropos (Libros de la revista Anthropos,  
 Madrid, 2011, 144 páginas) ..... 269

\*\*\*

Reseña bio-bibliográfica ..... 275

Normas editoriales de *Feminismo/s* ..... 285



## INTRODUCCIÓN

LORRAINE KERSLAKE

Universidad de Alicante / GIECO / Instituto de Franklin

TERRY GIFFORD

Universidad de Alicante / GIECO / Bath Spa University

Tras haber luchado contra el esencialismo de género arraigado en España, el departamento de inglés en la Universidad de Alicante se mostró escéptico cuando, hace diez años, llegó Terry Gifford a dar una charla sobre ecofeminismo. En cualquier caso la relación entre las mujeres y la naturaleza parecía estar lejos de ser una prioridad estratégica, o un campo teórico relevante en comparación con los temas urgentes sobre los derechos de la igualdad de oportunidades, aborto y divorcio que el feminismo en España aún debía transformar. En el ámbito de cuestiones sociales discutidas en términos de roles de género a los que se dedicaban los profesores e investigadores en literatura, cultura, filosofía, sociología y política comprometida, las representaciones ambientales de género parecían menos urgentes que las discusiones recientemente desarrolladas de dimensiones de géneros aplicadas a las expresiones culturales de clase, raza y postcolonialismo. En realidad este también fue el caso de la primera recepción del término *ecoféminisme* dentro del feminismo francés. A principios de los años setenta Françoise d'Eaubonne, quien acuñó el término, escribió una serie de libros, empezando con *Le Féminisme ou la mort* (1974), que reflexionaba sobre los debates dentro del movimiento feminista Front Reformiste el cual dio paso a la adopción de un manifiesto ecológico en 1973, que pronto sería retirado a favor de otras prioridades sociales<sup>1</sup>.

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1. Barbara T. Gates, 'A Root of Ecofeminism: *Ecoféminisme*' en Greta Gaard y Patrick D. Murphy, *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 15-22.

Ahora que la crisis ambiental global ha sido reconocida más ampliamente, cualquier discusión, o intento de abordarla, será contraproducente a menos que haya una conciencia de los antiguos supuestos patriarcales y las estructuras que lo produjeron. El hecho de que hace poco más de veinte años aparecieran, casi a la vez y con algunos de los mismos autores, dos libros colaborativos pioneros en California, nos recuerda el reciente desarrollo de este análisis: *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, editado por Judith Plant (Santa Cruz: New Society Publishers, 1989) y *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, editado por Irene Diamond y Gloria Orenstein (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990). *Emergence* ('Emergencia') y *Promise* ('promesa') ahora han dado paso a los modos sofisticados de análisis y debate llevados a cabo en la colaboración internacional contenida en este número especial de *Feminismo/s*. Nos ha inspirado e impresionado la celeridad con la que reconocidos escritores internacionales han respondido a nuestra invitación de participar junto con el grupo de investigación de ecocrítica español GIECO, haciendo que este número sea un hito para el feminismo y la ecocrítica en España.

Existe una sección sobre el ecofeminismo en el primer manual dedicado a la ecocrítica que apareció en España, *Ecocríticas: Literatura y medio ambiente*, editado por Carmen FLYS Junquera, José Manuel Marrero Henríquez y Julia Barella Vigal (Madrid y Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2010) que incluye antecedentes bibliográficos sobre el ecofeminismo escrito por Esther Rey Torrijos<sup>2</sup>. Para esta edición de *Feminismo/s* Esther ha actualizado el ensayo anterior proporcionando a la vez una introducción histórica y una proyección para el trabajo futuro. En España la ecofeminista más destacada ha sido Alicia Puleo, que ha publicado solamente en español. Nuestro agradecimiento por su generosidad en conceder una entrevista a Lorraine Kerslake para este número, una versión reducida de dicha entrevista ha sido traducida por Lorraine para los lectores en inglés. La primera colección de ensayos literarios en el campo del ecofeminismo fue escrito por Greta Gaard y Patrick D. Murphy: *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), nuestro agradecimiento a ambos por los nuevos trabajos que nos han brindado para este número especial, cada uno a la vanguardia de las nuevas áreas de investigación ecofeminista.

Esta es la primera vez que se ha dedicado un número monográfico de *Feminismo/s* al ecofeminismo. El objeto de este número especial es proporcionar

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2. REY, Esther. «¿Por qué ellas? ¿por qué ahora? Orígenes y Evolución de la Síntesis Ecofeminista», *Ecocríticas. Literatura y Medioambiente*. Eds. Carmen FLYS et al. Madrid: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2010: 135-166.

un estudio introductorio del ecofeminismo y las distintas teorías ecocríticas feministas, enlazando el feminismo con el campo emergente de la ecocrítica. Contiene artículos en español e inglés, escrito por los principales estudiosos y críticos en el campo del ecofeminismo tanto dentro de España como fuera. El título 'Ecofeminismo/s: Mujeres y Naturaleza' hace referencia a la pluralidad de temas que engloba el ecofeminismo literario en los campos de teoría ecocrítica, crítica literaria, ética ambiental y filosofía ambiental. Los artículos que componen este número ofrecen una colección internacional de aportaciones dando una diversidad de perspectivas centrales al debate que se está llevando a cabo actualmente bajo el amplio título de ecofeminismo.

La primera parte comienza mirando a los antecedentes de la teoría feminista eco-crítica. El ensayo de Esther Rey Torrijos ofrece no sólo una introducción a la teoría feminista ecocrítica sino también un excelente panorama de las nuevas direcciones en ecofeminismo. A continuación encontramos la entrevista de Lorraine Kerslake con la ecofeminista principal en España, Alicia Puleo, quien, mientras reflexiona sobre el ecofeminismo ofrece sugerencias prácticas y teóricas para un futuro más sostenible. Desde Turquía, el ensayo de Serpil Oppermann 'Ecocrítica Feminista: el Nuevo Asentamiento Ecofeminista' examina si el feminismo material y la trans-corporeidad pueden ser modelos productivos para conceptualizar la ecocrítica feminista, ofreciendo nuevas vías de ecocrítica para deconstruir los discursos sexistas y homófobos sobre la naturaleza. Como cierre de esta parte nos encontramos con el ensayo de Carmen Flys Junquera, publicado en español, que se basa en las teorías ecofeministas de Val Plumwood y Karen Warren para analizar las diferentes estrategias literarias usadas por escritores como Linda Hogan, Starhawk, Ann Pancake y el escritor español Juan Cobos Wilkins, y sugiere formas en las que los lectores podrían replantear sus actitudes hacia el mundo más-que-humano en el desarrollo de una ética del cuidado.

La segunda sección titulada 'Naturaleza, Mujeres y Animales' se inicia con el brillante ensayo de Greta Gaard sobre 'Animales en el Espacio' que se centra en preguntas como las siguientes: ¿Qué puede contribuir el ecofeminismo a nuestra comprensión de la ideología de la exploración espacial? ¿Cómo se desvelan las narrativas de género, especie y cultura más allá de la Biosfera? Y ¿qué información nos puede aportar estas búsquedas científicas acerca de los problemas ambientales contemporáneos en el 2013? Es seguido por el ensayo innovador de Diana Villanueva Romero '«Belleza Salvaje»: Representaciones de Mujeres como Animales en las Campañas de PETA y en los Desfiles de Alexander McQueen', en la cual Villanueva utiliza el ecofeminismo para analizar la imagen de la mujer como animal en la publicidad, centrándose en las

campañas de PETA y los desfiles de McQueen. Desde Italia, el ensayo que cierra esta sección de Serenella Iovino explora dentro del marco del ecofeminismo cómo la imaginación literaria puede utilizarse como una herramienta para explorar teóricamente la relación entre lo humano / no-humano, examinando diferentes estrategias narrativas utilizadas en el realismo mágico y considerando la novela *La Iguana* de la escritora Italiana Anna Maria Ortese.

La tercera y última parte, 'Lecturas en Teorías Feministas Ecocríticas', ofrece una variedad de diferentes enfoques de lecturas ecofeministas. El primer ensayo es del célebre ecocritico y ecofeminista americano Patrick D. Murphy. Su artículo se centra en la perspectiva de subsistencia en la literatura, una visión alternativa de la economía que se encuentra en análisis ecofeministas, para la cual toma en consideración una variedad de obras literarias de escritoras incluyendo Buchi Emecheta, Leslie Marmon Silko, Ana Castillo y Toni Morrison, analizando su manera común pero a la vez diferente de tratar aspectos de la cultura de subsistencia. El ensayo de Margarita Carretero González plantea si sería posible reclamar la 'benevolencia universal' de Mary Wollstonecraft ahora para la causa ecofeminista a través de una lectura ecofeminista de sus *Cartas* (1796). La ecofeminista y poeta brasileña Izabel F.O. Brandão cierra este volumen presentando dos poetisas contemporáneas, la conocida escritora brasileña Arriete Vilela y la escritora caribeña Grace Nichols, afincada en Gran Bretaña, con el fin de mostrar cómo tratan de diferentes maneras las nociones de espacio y lugar en la naturaleza, a través de la ecocrítica, el feminismo y otras lecturas interdisciplinarias.

Las ideas y reflexiones presentadas en estos artículos nos muestran una diversidad de enfoques ecofeministas en literatura ambiental, cultura y ciencia. El volumen ofrece una colección internacional de nuevos estudios que reúnen una diversidad de perspectivas centradas en los nuevos desarrollos en la ecocrítica, la defensa animal, la integración homosexual, así como estudios feministas y de género.

Como coordinadores, queremos expresar nuestros agradecimientos a todos aquellos que han contribuido a hacer posible este volumen. Es nuestro deseo que estos brillantes e innovadores ensayos cumplan los objetivos y expectativas de nuestros lectores, y que este volumen sea tanto una introducción como una contribución importante a la diversidad del debate ecofeminista internacional actual.

## INTRODUCTION

LORRAINE KERSLAKE

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TERRY GIFFORD

Universidad de Alicante / GIECO / Bath Spa University

Having battled against entrenched gender essentialism in Spain, the English department at Alicante University was sceptical when Terry Gifford arrived and gave a talk on ecofeminism ten years ago. In any case the relationship between women and nature hardly seemed a strategic priority, or a theoretical field of relevance to the urgent issues of equal opportunity, abortion and divorce rights that feminism in Spain had yet to transform. In the range of social issues discussed in terms of gender roles that teachers and researchers in literature, culture, philosophy, sociology and politics engaged, the consideration of gendered representations of environment seemed less urgent than the recently developed discussions of gendered dimensions to cultural expressions of class, race and postcolonialism. Actually this was also the case for the first reception within French feminism of the term *ecoféminisme*. In the early 1970s Françoise d'Eaubonne, who coined the term, wrote a series of books, beginning with *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974), which reflected upon the debates within the feminist movement Front Reformiste that led to their adopting an ecological manifesto in 1973, only to soon renounce it in favour of other social priorities.<sup>1</sup>

Now that the global environmental crisis is more widely recognised, any discussion of it, or attempts to address it, will be counterproductive unless there is an awareness of the long-standing patriarchal assumptions and structures

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1. Barbara T. Gates, 'A Root of Ecofeminism: *Ecoféminisme*' in Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy, *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 15-22.

that produced it. Two pioneering collaborative books that appeared just over twenty years ago from California, almost at the same time and with some of the same contributors, remind us just how recently this analysis has been developed. *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, edited by Judith Plant (Santa Cruz: New Society Publishers, 1989) and *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, edited by Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990). ‘Emergence’ and ‘promise’ have now given way to the sophisticated modes of analysis and debate conducted in the international collaboration contained in this ecofeminist special issue of *Feminismo/s*. We have been heartened and impressed by the alacrity with which leading international writers on ecofeminism have responded to our invitations to join with the Spanish ecocritical research group GIECO in making this issue a landmark publication for feminism and ecocriticism in Spain.

There was an ecofeminism section in the first ecocritical reader to appear in Spanish, *Ecocríticas: Literatura y Medio Ambiente*, edited by Carmen FLYS Junquera, José Manuel Marrero Henríquez and Julia Barella Vigal (Madrid and Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2010) which included a bibliographical history of ecofeminism by Esther Rey Torrijos.<sup>2</sup> For this issue of *Feminismo/s* Esther has updated that earlier essay whilst providing both an historical overview and a projection for future work. In Spain the leading ecofeminist has been Alicia Puleo, publishing only in Spanish, so we very much appreciate her generosity in giving an opportunity for Lorraine Kerslake to interview her for this issue, a reduced version of which Lorraine has translated for readers of English. Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy’s *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998) was the first collection of literary essays in the field of ecofeminism and we are delighted that they have both offered us new work for this issue, each at the cutting edge of new areas of ecofeminist enquiry.

This is the first time that a monographic number of *Feminismo/s* has been dedicated to ecofeminism. The object of this special issue is to provide an introductory survey of ecofeminism and the different feminist ecocritical theories, linking feminism with the emergent field of ecocriticism. It contains articles in both Spanish and English, written by scholars and leading critics in the field of ecofeminism in Spain and beyond. The title ‘Ecofeminismo/s: Women and Nature’ makes reference to the plurality of subject matters that

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2. REY, Esther. “¿Por qué ellas? ¿por qué ahora? Orígenes y Evolución de la Síntesis Ecofeminista”, *Ecocríticas. Literatura y Medioambiente*. Eds. Carmen FLYS et al. Madrid: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2010: 135-166.

literary ecofeminism addresses in the fields of ecocritical theory, literary criticism, environmental ethics and environmental philosophy. The articles that make up this issue offer an international collection of scholarship to the reader bringing a diversity of perspectives central to the debate being undertaken under the broad heading of ecofeminism today.

Part one begins by looking at the background of feminist ecocritical theory. Esther Rey Torrijos's essay offers both an introduction to feminist ecocritical theory and an excellent overview of new directions in ecofeminism. It is followed by Lorraine Kerslake's interview with Spain's leading ecofeminist, Alicia Puleo, who, whilst reflecting on ecofeminism offers practical and theoretical suggestions towards a more sustainable future. From Turkey Serpil Oppermann's essay 'Feminist Ecocriticism: The New Ecofeminist Settlement' examines whether material feminisms and trans-corporeality can be productive models for conceptualizing feminist ecocriticism, and offers new ecocritical pathways to deconstruct sexist and homophobic discourses of nature. Closing the first part is Carmen Flys Junquera's essay, "'The Rocks Began to Speak to Me": A Literary Application of Ecofeminist Philosophy', published in Spanish, which draws on the ecofeminist theories of Val Plumwood and Karen Warren to analyze the different literary strategies used by writers including Linda Hogan, Starhawk, Ann Pancake and the Spanish writer Juan Cobos Wilkins, and suggests ways in which readers might re-think their attitudes towards the more-than-human world in developing an ethics of care.

The second part entitled 'Nature, Women and Animals', opens with American ecofeminist Greta Gaard's brilliant essay on "Animals in (New) Space: Chimponauts, Cosmodogs, and Biosphere II" which looks at questions such as the following: what can ecofeminism contribute to our understanding of space exploration ideology? How do narratives of gender, species, and culture play out beyond the biosphere? And what information do these scientific pursuits tell us about contemporary environmental problems in 2013? This is followed by Diana Villanueva Romero's cutting-edge essay "'Savage Beauty": Representations of Women as Animals in PETA's Campaigns and Alexander McQueen's Fashion Shows', in which Villanueva uses ecofeminism to analyze the use of the woman as animal image in advertising, focusing on PETA's campaigns, and McQueen's fashion shows. From Italy, Serenella Iovino's closing essay explores how in the framework of feminist ecocriticism the literary imagination can be used as a tool for theoretically exploring the relationship between the human/ non-human, by examining different narrative strategies used in magical realism and considering the Italian writer Anna Maria Ortese's novel *The Iguana*.

The third and final part, 'Readings in Feminist Ecocritical Theories', offers a variety of different approaches to ecofeminist readings. The first essay is by the pioneering American ecocritic and ecofeminist Patrick D. Murphy. His article looks at the subsistence perspective in literature, an alternative view of economics that is found in ecofeminist analysis, and considers a variety of literary works by women writers including Buchi Emecheta, Leslie Marmon Silko, Ana Castillo and Toni Morrison, looking at their shared but different treatments of aspects of subsistence culture. Margarita Carretero González's essay 'Another Cassandra's Cry: Mary Wollstonecraft's "Universal Benevolence" and the Ecofeminist Praxis' questions whether it would be possible to claim her now for the ecofeminist cause by conducting an ecofeminist reading of her *Letters* (1796). Brazilian ecofeminist critic and poet Izabel F.O. Brandão's closing essay of the volume looks at two contemporary women poets, the popular Brazilian poet Arriete Vilela and the Caribbean poet living in Britain, Grace Nichols, in order to show how they deal in different ways with notions of space and place in nature, approaching these ideas from ecocriticism, feminism and other interdisciplinary readings.

The ideas and thoughts put forward in these articles present a diversity of feminist ecocritical approaches in environmental literature, culture and science. The volume offers an international collection of new scholarship bringing together a diversity of perspectives which use new developments in ecocriticism, animal studies, queer theory, feminist and gender studies.

As editors, we are truly grateful to all those who contributed to make this volume possible and hope that these vibrant cutting-edge essays will meet the aims and expectations of our readers as well as being both an introduction and a significant contribution to the diversity of international ecofeminist debate today.



# ECOFEMINIST VISIONS: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE FUTURE OF FEMINISM

ESTHER REY TORRIJOS

Universidad Complutense de Madrid/GIECO/Instituto Franklin

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## Abstract

Drawing from some of the leading ecofeminist critical works to date and considering the constant development of new perspectives and future strategies, the aim of my work is to explore some of the predominant vectors of the current ecofeminist theory and praxis. My plan is to review a significant part of the broad contours of the feminist debate since the beginning of the new millennium, proving that there have been substantial advances in both environmental and gender studies, most noticeably in North America, Australia and Europe. Focusing on the new material feminisms, interspecies and animal studies, ecojustice, queer studies, and ecofeminist bioethics, I have concentrated on the work of scholars and activists that are thinking, organizing and planning outside the traditional feminist frameworks and have generated cultural revaluations, have resisted gender injustice and have inspired environmental improvement.

**Key-words:** ecofeminism, new materialisms, animal studies, ecojustice, queer studies, bioethics.

## Resumen

Partiendo de aportaciones críticas de algunas de las figuras claves del movimiento ecofeminista, el objetivo de mi trabajo es explorar el desarrollo actual y las estrategias futuras de las principales líneas de investigación y activismo dentro de esta corriente de feminismo ecológico. Tras una revisión breve de creciente imbricación de los estudios de género y la defensa medioambiental en los Estados Unidos, Australia y Europa, mi objetivo es revisar las tendencias actuales, surgidas a partir del nuevo milenio. La

intención última es trazar los puntos de confluencia del feminismo actual con los nuevos materialismos, así como la implicación feminista en los movimientos de defensa de los derechos de los animales, de justicia ambiental, de integración homosexual y bioética, con la finalidad de destacar los más aptos para combatir la discriminación de género y la injusticia social, y los mejor orientados a preservar el medioambiente.

**Palabras clave:** ecofeminismo, nuevos materialismos, defensa animal, justicia medioambiental, integración homosexual, bioética.

## 1. Introduction

In the late 1970s ecofeminism appeared in North America as a new theoretical feminist perspective where sexism and environmental injustice were first connected and started to be examined together. Based on the premise that men and women do not exist apart from the environment, for the first time some feminist theorists who had concerned themselves with the progressive degradation of life in our planet contemplated and aimed to oppose gender and environmental domination all at once. In general terms, the specific ecofeminist argument was that, since the same social and economic structures that oppressed women were also causing wide-scale environmental damage, it seemed legitimate to think that women are better placed to speak on nature's behalf.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the emergent synthesis of feminist and environmental movements soon started to link the growing natural decline and progressive resource depletion to the various forms of human oppression over other humans, as well as over nonhuman animals.<sup>2</sup> Later, during the 1980s and 1990s, viewed either as a distinct discourse or as an amalgam of feminism and environmentalism, ecofeminism was gradually constructed and enriched by different feminist approaches, most of which challenged essentialism as a way of opposing the influence of social constructions in the relationships between men, women and the natural world. In other words, some feminist theorists started to pose a critique of the essentialist argument that women had a particular connection with nature by virtue of their biology,<sup>3</sup> whereas other

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1. For further reading on the issue of women's right to speak for themselves as well as for nature, see: DALY, Mary. *Gyn/Ecology: the Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, and SPRETNAK, Charlene. "Our Roots and Our Flowering", in *Reweaving the World. The Emergence of Ecofeminism*. Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein eds. San Francisco.

2. Within the animal rights movement, it is common to use the term "nonhuman animals" to imply that animals share a good number of characteristics with human beings, such as the capacity to feel pain and compassion, as well as certain intellectual skills or cognitive functions (i.e. memory). Hereafter, I shall be using the terms "animal" and "non-human animal" indistinctly, depending on the theoretical perspective and specific vocabulary of the theorist or activist that I am referencing.

3. The different degrees of tension between the essentialist and the cultural trends within ecofeminist theory can be traced in: SALLEH, Ariel K. "Deeper than Deep Ecology: The

critical voices from environmentalism and the social sciences questioned the validity of a shared experience between humans and nonhuman others.<sup>4</sup>

Almost thirty years after the dawn of the ecofeminist project and well into the new millennium, North American leading feminist Greta Gaard presents in “New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a More Feminist Ecocriticism”, and in “Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-Placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism”,<sup>5</sup> perceptive critiques of the current state of the ecofeminist phenomenon while openly admitting the gradual decline of the different forms of ecofeminist scholarship and activism. In both critical surveys, Gaard denounces the practical non-existence of analytical frameworks for gender, species and sexuality in the so called “third wave of ecocriticism”,<sup>6</sup> which comprises the latest tendencies in literary criticism on environmental literature and culture, and laments the omissions and misrepresentations of feminist literary criticism in some of the latest ecocritical works of the most prominent ecocritics to date.<sup>7</sup> After acknowledging the even more alarming lack of interest among present feminists in appraising the unquestionable influence of the ecofeminist debate on the humanities and social sciences, Gaard asks “What has happened to ecofeminism?”<sup>8</sup> and immediately proceeds to answer the question herself by offering an extensive overview of the origins and evolution of the ecofeminist movement, from the 1980s to the first decade of the new millennium, offering an enlightening perspective on the fusions and discordances between the feminist pursuits and a variety of ecological causes with which ecofeminists have shared a common

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Eco-Feminist Connection”; MERCHANT, Carolyn. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, and *Earthcare, Women and the Environment*; PLUMWOOD, Val. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*; and WARREN, Karen J. ed. *Ecological Feminist Philosophies*.

4. For a pioneering study of the human association with the nonhuman, see Jim JOHNSON’S “Mixing Humans and Nonhumans Together: The Sociology of a Door-Closer”.
5. GAARD, Greta. “New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a More Feminist Ecocriticism”. Although it was published by ISLE, I shall be referring to the online version henceforth, at <http://gretagaard.efoliomn.com/Uploads/isle.isq108.full.pdf>. Accessed Jan. 2013; see also the online version of “Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-Placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism”, at <http://www.readbag.com/gretagaard-efoliomn-uploads-ecofeminismrevisited2011>. Both of them last accessed in Jan 2013.
6. Mentioned as such for the first time in ADAMSON, Joni and Scott SLOVIC, eds. “The Shoulders We Stand On: An Introduction to Ethnicity and Ecocriticism”.
7. For more specific reference, see GAARD, Greta. “New Directions”. Op. cit., p. 2.
8. GAARD, Greta. “Ecofeminism Revisited”, Op. cit., p. 27.

experience.<sup>9</sup> Deliberately limiting the scope of her study to North American ecofeminism, though generally alluding to the contributions of Canadian, Australian, Indian and Northwestern European theorists and activists, Gaard explains that over the last decade the philosophical synthesis of movements formerly known as “ecofeminism” has undergone a constant process of re-naming, which responds to a need for redefinition and a compulsive tendency to reappraise the essential aspects of its theory and praxis. Her scrutiny clearly exposes the more active forms of feminist and environmentalist resistance to ecofeminist analyses, all of which have considered essentialism and ethnocentrism as the first causes of controversy for being “irrelevant distraction(s) from feminism’s more critical work addressing social injustices”.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, ecofeminism’s excessive tendency to embrace an almost religious spirituality and its constant drift into apolitical inactivity and individual self-contemplation have combined with a lack of appreciation for the materiality of things to prevent ecofeminists from engaging in practical earthly struggles at local, community and global levels, concerning both ecological and social issues. Admittedly, inactivity has proved to be one of the most detrimental causes of the current ecofeminist decline which, in combination with the disparity of approaches and the multiplicity of connections with antiracist, postcolonial, antimilitary, social justice and animal rights activism, have all weighed down the ecofeminist project and made it seem almost irrelevant both for the feminist and for the environmental schemes. As Gaard observes:

Ecofeminism in the 1980s was indeed a broad umbrella for a variety of diversely inflected approaches, some of which were rooted in essentialist (cultural) feminisms, just as others grew out of liberal, social, Marxist, anarchist, and socialist feminisms, and in the 1990s, ecofeminist theories continued to refine and ground their analyses, developing economic, material, international, and intersectional perspectives.<sup>11</sup>

Even though some of the charges against ecofeminism seem “sweeping generalizations, often made without specific and supporting documentation”,<sup>12</sup> the accusations have left indelible marks on the social and academic relevance of the movement and on its future prominence, to such an extent that:

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9. For an overview of the origins and evolution of the ecofeminist movement written for Spanish speakers, see REY, Esther. “¿Por qué ellas? ¿por qué ahora? Orígenes y Evolución de la Síntesis Ecofeminista”, *Ecocríticas. Literatura y Medioambiente*. Eds. Carmen FLYS et al.

10. GAARD, Greta. “Ecofeminism Revisited”. Op. cit., p. 41.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

12. *Ibidem*.

By 2010, it was nearly impossible to find a single essay, much less a section, devoted to issues of feminism and ecology (and certainly not ecofeminism), species, or nature in most introductory anthologies used in women's studies, gender studies, or queer studies.<sup>13</sup>

To further illustrate the present state of affairs in the ecofeminist decline, Gaard describes how a decade ago the editors of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, a leading academic feminist journal, rejected a review essay on ecofeminism that had been commissioned by its managing director a year earlier, on the grounds that:

Ecofeminism seems to be concerned with everything in the world [...] and (as a result) feminism itself seems almost to get erased in the process [...] When ecofeminism contains all peoples and all injustices, the fine tuning and differentiation lose out.<sup>14</sup>

The accusation seemed rightly grounded and, as the academic neglect prospered, similar reviews and articles fared little better and were equally rejected by skeptical journal boards, the outcome being that mistrust and apprehension for the ecofeminist ideal became the norm, not only from feminist advocates but also from deep ecologists, social ecologists, animal liberationists and other environmental movements.<sup>15</sup> It seems only logical that, feeling incapable of rejecting the adverse implications of those charges for the future of the movement, and in order to gain a wider audience and intellectual acceptance in academic circles, most scholars and activists working on environmental and gender issues abandoned institutions and terms that no longer functioned as conduits for critical ideas and continued their work under different academies and labels. Thus, during the first decade of the new century, a good number of new terms were coined to define the new realities of ecofeminist theory - ecological feminism, feminist environmentalism, social ecofeminism, critical feminist eco-socialism and gender and the environment studies are just one part of a longer list - to sidestep ostracism and to counteract the general lack of academic appreciation.<sup>16</sup> Simultaneously, as an outcome of

13. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 32-33.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 27. Further evidence of subtle or open censorship appears in Noël Sturgeon's personal anecdotes: "I was once advised by a prominent feminist theorist [...] to remove the word "ecofeminism" from the title of one of my papers [...] I have been advised by a feminist mentor to leave my editorship of *The Ecofeminist Newsletter* off my vita [...] I have been challenged during a conference presentation to call my position feminist rather than ecofeminist [...]" In STURGEON, Noël. *Ecofeminist Natures. Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action*, p. 6.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

ecocriticism's expansion beyond its multiple and continuous developments, ecofeminist literary criticism stemmed from the North American, Australian and Northwest European ecocritical branches during the late 1990s. Thereafter, after reaching ecocritics in Japan, China and Taiwan, ecofeminist literary criticism finally became a form of activism committed to literary criticism as a strategy for ecodefense.<sup>17</sup>

Coinciding in time and mission with Gaard's perceptive critical work, in the foreword to *Ecofeminism and Rethoric: Critical Perspectives on Sex, Technology and Discourse*, Glynnis Carr notes that, although today few people call themselves ecofeminists, many theorists are working toward the kind of future envisioned by ecofeminist epistemology. Although the sustained lack of critical appreciation seems inconsequential and rather unfair, Carr claims that the public acceptance of the ecofeminist message is nonetheless relevant for the future of the movement because it means that its fundamental ideas are still visible in academic circles, probably the most important sites for the production of knowledge, ideology and culture. It is no secret that scholars in fields outside of feminism - such as posthumanism, postcolonialism and animal studies - are moving forward in their research using ideas initially developed in ecofeminist discourse,<sup>18</sup> and are circulating the message in the academia, making it visible in an increasing number of university departments, as part of both graduate and postgraduate environmental and women's studies programs.<sup>19</sup>

Drawing from Gaard's ecocritical views and considering the latest developments in the feminist perspectives on social justice, feminist psychology and interspecies studies, the aim of this essay is to explore some of the new trends in current ecofeminist theory and praxis<sup>20</sup>. My plan is to review one part of the broad contours of the ecofeminist debate from the start of the new millennium, proving that there have been substantial advances in the US

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17. See GAARD, Greta. "Strategies for a Cross-Cultural Ecofeminist Literary Criticism", *Ecozon@*, vol. 1, p. 47.

18. CARR, Glynnis. Foreword to *Ecofeminism and Rethoric: Critical Perspectives on Sex, Technology and Discourse*. Douglas A. VAKOCH ed., p. 42.

19. An increasing number of North American university colleges are currently offering courses and seminars on ecofeminism and women's studies, many of them closely related to environmental studies. For reference and programs, <http://www.gradschools.com/programs/humanities-cultures>.

20. As this volume went to the press, a very recent publication, which I would have otherwise included in my bibliographical reference, came to my hands. Edited by G. Gaard, S. C. Estok and S. Oppermann, *International Perspectives in Feminism Ecocriticism* offers a variety of views, which add much to the vitality of the future of the ecofeminist project. I thank Serpil Oppermann for forwarding the volume to me.

and Northwest Europe in both environmental and gender studies. Without pretending to present a comprehensive analysis of the diversity of routes, a task which would require much more time and space than the brevity of this essay allows, my intention is to focus my exploration on the most prominent tendencies in new material feminisms<sup>21</sup>, as well as on interspecies and animal studies<sup>22</sup>, ecojustice<sup>23</sup>, queer studies<sup>24</sup>, and some of the groundbreaking studies in ecofeminist bioethics,<sup>25</sup> in the understanding that each advancement is in itself a revision, an interrogation and a step forward for every development that has preceded and inspired it. However, even though each breakthrough owes much to the scope and depth of the ongoing theoretical debate, it is also necessary to bear in mind that most of the theoretical shifts operate within existing structures, something which undoubtedly limits their capacity to create social change. For that reason, my work intentionally concentrates on the contributions of Northamerican and Northwest European feminist scholars and ecocritics who have been thinking, organizing and planning to provoke political and cultural change. The scope and depth of their approaches, either from feminism or from ecocriticism, makes them likely to generate the drastic social shifts and cultural revaluations that seem essential to combat gender injustice and contribute to environmental improvement.

## 2. New material feminisms

Regarding academic attention, material feminism can, in many ways, be considered a critical methodology approaching its peak. Assuming that in the past postmodernist scholars had already analyzed a range of social discourses and cultural artifacts that served to reflect the physicality of the body and the materiality of the natural world, it seems that, when discussing the role of

21. See ALAIMO, Stacy and Susan HEKMAN eds. *Material Feminisms*; DOLPHIJN, Rick and Iris VAN DER TUIN. *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*.

22. See ADAMS, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, and “Why Feminist-Vegan Now?”. See also jones, patrice. *Aftershock: Confronting Trauma in a Violent World*. Finally, for a thorough analysis of anthropocentrism and animal communication, see ARMBRUSTER, Karla. “What Do We Want from Talking Animals”, in *Speaking for Animals. Animal Autobiographical Writing*, Margo DEMELLO ed.

23. For an excellent example of an ecofeminist perspective on reproductive justice, see GAARD, Greta. “Reproductive Technology or Reproductive Justice? An Ecofeminist Environmental Justice Perspective on the Rhetoric of Choice”.

24. See Sarah AHMED’S *Queer Phenomenology. Orientations, Objects, Others*. Also, MORTIMER-SANDILANDS, Catriona and Bruce ERICKSON eds. *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*.

25. See Grace KAO’S “Consistency in Ecofeminist Ethics” and Marti KHEEL’S, Marti. *Nature Ethics. An Ecofeminist Perspective*.



language in the constitution of social reality, the specific feminist interest had exclusively concentrated on the discursive practices that had traditionally molded the social and material realities of women, of racial and ethnic minorities, and of the nonhuman world. However, after admitting that the analyses of social discourse have been extremely productive for the feminist project, the advocates of the new material feminisms now consider that the retreat from materiality has also had its drawbacks, the most obvious being that, by focusing exclusively on representation, ideology and discourse – in search of the linguistic idealism conveyed in Derrida's "there is nothing outside the text"<sup>26</sup> - a whole body of lived experiences, corporeal activities and biological practices have been excluded from academic analyses.<sup>27</sup>

Considering the first stages of the new materialist approach, it was Rosi Braidotti who first coined the term "neo-materialism", provided a genealogy of it and started a radical re-reading of the concept of materialism as had been formerly developed by Canguilhem, Foucault and Deleuze.<sup>28</sup> Neo-materialism emerged as a method, a conceptual frame and a political stand which refused the linguistic paradigm and stressed the complexity of the materiality of bodies immersed in power structures. In Braidotti's groundbreaking view, the postmodern materialist representational method of thinking and its thoroughly linguistic turn soon became utterly outdated and, therefore, in need of redefinition in the light of the recent scientific insights, notably the rise of psychoanalysis and the wide scope of socioeconomic changes caused by capitalism.<sup>29</sup>

As Dolphijn and Van der Tuin have pointed out in *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, Braidotti's modern feminist materialism has two influential theoretical traits, the first being that it goes further than the mainstream philosophy in rejecting partitions of minds from bodies or nature from culture, the second that it does not stop at critical deconstruction, but goes on to provide alternatives. For example, it introduces a break from the humanist inclination to universalism and criticizes it for being disembodied and disembedded, that is, abstract. Relying on Deleuze's theories of alterity and otherness, today feminist materialists place emphasis on processes, dynamic interactions and fluid boundaries when discussing the materiality of

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26. DERRIDA, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*, p. 163.

27. Besides ALAIMO and HEKMAN'S *Material Feminisms*, see also COOLE, Diane and Samantha FROST eds. *New Materialism. Ontology, Agency and Politics*.

28. See an interview with Rosi Braidotti, in Rick DOLPHIJN and Iris VAN DER TUIN'S *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*. 19-37.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

women's bodies and, more generally, of the natural world.<sup>30</sup> In other words, while distancing themselves from the postmodernist sheer concentration on social discourse, emergent groups of feminist theorists have argued for the need to consider the materiality of the human body and of the natural world as active forces that have been denied the relevance they deserve. Working under different labels – material feminism<sup>31</sup> or new materialism<sup>32</sup> –, they have challenged, criticized and drawn inspiration from the productive language of discourse and text studies so actively important for postmodernism, and have tried to recuperate the prediscursive aspects of bodies and matter, the “transversality” - echoing Guattari<sup>33</sup>- of the corporeal relations between bodies and environments, and the relevance of nonhuman actors or “posthuman” beings.<sup>34</sup>

In the introduction to *Material Feminisms*, Alaimo and Hekman insist that the materiality of both the human and the more-than-human world must be taken seriously, and call for an imminent reconceptualization of nature and an appreciation of its agency: “Nature is agentic – it acts, and those actions have consequences for the human and nonhuman world”.<sup>35</sup> Once that is understood, it follows that humans need to find ways of recognizing “the agency, significance and ongoing transformative power of the world”, bringing ourselves to establishing a dialectical egalitarian relationship with the genuinely material aspects of our existence. Drawing from previous feminist conceptions of the human, nonhuman, technological and natural agents that interact and jointly contribute to the construction of the role of women and others in

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-23.

31. Mentioned as such in the title of ALAIMO and HEKMAN'S edited volume (2008).

32. See, for example, SQUIER, Susan and Melissa M. LITTLEFIELD. “Feminist Theory and/of Science”; BARRETT, Estelle and Barbara BOLT eds. *Carnal Knowledge. Towards a New Materialism Through the Arts*. Finally, the same label appears in the title of the aforementioned DOLPHIJN and VAN DER TUIN'S *New Materialism* (2012).

33. In 1989, Félix GUATTARI developed the idea of thinking transversally when conceiving of nature and culture in *Las Tres Ecologías*, p. 33.

34. For further reading on the concept of the “posthuman”, see Nick BOSTROM'S “Why I Want to Be a Posthuman When I Grow Up”, at <http://www.nickbostrom.com/posthuman.pdf>.

35. Karen BARAD proposes the idea of “agential realism”, which allows her to establish that the “so-called subject, the so-called object and the so-called instrument of research are always already entangled”. If matter and meaning are already entangled, there is just one step to the notion that matter “feels, converses, suffers, desires and remembers”, because “feeling, desiring and experiencing are not singular characteristics or capacities of human consciousness” (Introduction to DOLPHIJN and VAN DER TUIN'S *New Materialism*, p. 15). For an interview with Karen BARAD, see DOLPHIJN and VAN DER TUIN, pp. 48-70.

the modern world,<sup>36</sup> the contributors to *Material Feminisms* endeavor to fill the material vacuum in contemporary feminist theory and praxis. Their work articulates what in feminist theory has come to be known as the “material turn”,<sup>37</sup> that is, a reevaluation of the traditional conception of nature as a mere resource for technological progress and social construction, and an appreciation of its agency, significance and transformative power.

Amongst the analyses collected in the above cited volume, Elizabeth Grosz’s reappraisal of Darwin’s evolutionary theory and her reliance on biology to develop new feminist critiques of science in “Darwin and Feminism. Preliminary Investigations for a Possible Alliance” seem congruous with the current feminist need to undertake complex and subtle analyses of what biology is and consider how it has facilitated and made possible the existence of certain cultural patterns. Undoubtedly, a reappraisal of the role of biology seems only coherent if feminism aims to effectively challenge the established positions toward women and science in our modern world.<sup>38</sup> Equally relevant seem Nancy Tuana’s meditations on the devastation caused by the hurricane Katrina in the city of New Orleans. In “Viscous Porosity: Witnessing Katrina” Tuana articulates a material feminist revision of the agency of nature as a basic standpoint, an agency diffusely enacted in a variety of ways within a complex network of social modes and relations where reality is conceived as multiple, porous, dynamic and always interactive.<sup>39</sup> Seeing through the eyes of a category four hurricane makes Tuana understand the porosity of the categories “human-made”, “natural”, “social” and “biological”, and inspires her to develop her theory of “viscous porosity” as a strategy to reflect the sheer transversality of nature and culture, language and reality. Even more inspiring seems Susan Bordo’s “Casey’s Hair”, which provides a practical example of how the biological and the social aspects of human existence interact in multiple ways. Bordo uses the materiality of her biracial daughter’s hair as an example of how the perceptions of physical differences – in this case Afro-Americans’ hair and

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36. See Donna HARAWAY, “The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics of Inappropriate/d Others at <http://www.zbi.ee/~kalevi/monsters.html>. Also Karen BARAD, “Getting Real: Technoscientific Practices and the Materialization of Reality”, and Catriona MORTIMER-SANDILANDS, “Lavender Green? Some Thoughts on Queer(y)ing Environmental Politics”.

37. In ALAIMO and HEKMAN. *Material Feminisms*. Op. cit., p. 6. See also Serenella IOVINO’S rendering of the existence of a material turn in environmental philosophy and ecological humanities, in “Theorizing Material Ecocriticism: A Diptych”, [http://www.academia.edu/Documents/in/Material\\_Ecocriticism](http://www.academia.edu/Documents/in/Material_Ecocriticism).

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-51.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 188-213.

hairstyling - can facilitate our understanding of how the physicality of the body is inextricably linked to the social, the cultural and the racial aspects of human existence.<sup>40</sup>

On the whole, the most significant aspect of the entire issue of materiality seems to be the reappraisal of the concept of matter and, more specifically of nature, not as a blank, silent resource to be exploited by culture, but as an active, signifying agent in its own terms. From now onwards, the ability to feel and desire cannot be restricted to humans, and neither matter, nature nor nonhuman animals can ever again be considered the mirror images of culture, but agents in their own rights. As feminist materialists claim, the act of attending to the materiality of things should be the first tactical step to erase the boundaries between human and nature, body and environment, mind and matter, and the new materialisms seem intent on doing this in much more straightforward ways than the often overlapping fields of environmental philosophy, environmental feminism and green studies have so far dared to envision.

### 3. Interspecies and animal rights feminisms

From the late 1980s, feminist writers attentive to environmental issues have been consistently illustrating the extension of feminist and environmental concerns into animal rights, in the genuine belief that women, nonhuman animals and the environment have shared a tendency to be consigned to a dualistic otherness, a fact which must be understood as one of the multiple aspects of a continuous interconnected system of shared oppressions.<sup>41</sup> A pioneer thinker in this field, Carol J. Adams explained in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* that meat eating has traditionally been associated with power and virility,<sup>42</sup> and has been used to boost feelings of fraternity among individual male consumers who, from generation to generation, have sustained the idea that men should eat meat and women should prepare and serve it.<sup>43</sup> It goes without saying that Adams associates meat consumption with sexism and

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 400-424.

41. For insightful analyses of the perceptions and assumptions that sustain most human relationships to nonhuman animals, see Donna HARAWAY'S *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, and *When Species Meet*; also Joni SEAGER'S "Pepperoni or Broccoli? On the Cutting Edge of Feminist Environmentalism", and Val PLUMWOOD'S claim for a dialogical interspecies ethics in *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*.

42. *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

classism, and suggests that food decisions have traditionally been, and will always be, coded ways of resistance. Considering the connections between food and feminism, Adams suggests that a good number of feminists have become vegetarians because this makes sense as one part of their anti-subjugation attitude, a logical strategy of resistance within the logic of patriarchal culture. For Adams, vegetarianism is pure feminist activism, and so *The Sexual Politics of Meat* establishes that ideas about meat are, in fact, beliefs and convictions about dominance and power, primarily over animals, but more extensively over women and other less favored humans.

As was to be expected, since the first stages of the process, the emergent feminist empathy for animal suffering was soon rejected both by the antifeminist and by the meat eating worlds. Simultaneously, vegetarianism and animal rights activism were feminized and cruelly mocked by male environmentalists and animal rights advocates who, as Adams ironically explains in “Why Feminist-Vegan Now?”, considered it a passing craze among “emotional little old ladies in tennis shoes”.<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, the animal rights movement was catapulted into respectability only when Tom Regan and Peter Singer – appropriately, two white male philosophers - started to theorize about the motives for animal liberation as legitimated either by recourse to animal rights<sup>45</sup> or attention to animal suffering.<sup>46</sup> Curiously enough, their achievements were better valued for the fundamental reason that men’s voices were felt to be more entitled to be heard than women’s voices, even when concerning animals or women’s rights.<sup>47</sup> However, even if ecofeminists distanced themselves from certain aspects of these male philosophers’ deontological theories on animal rights, they shared their underlying desire to submit their ordinary interactions with animals to moral scrutiny, objecting to the culturally accepted treatment of the species consumed as meat, and recognizing how our daily practices annihilate the subjectivity of what Adams calls the “absent referents”.<sup>48</sup> The important fact remains that today most feminists and animal rights defenders understand that all living beings are interconnected, and that there will be no real liberation for women if the world is not liberated from speciesism as well. Following this line of thought, some feminist scholars have gone so far as to undo the line of demarcation between humans

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44. Op. cit., p. 314.

45. See REGAN, Tom. *The Case for Animal Rights*.

46. See SINGER, Peter. *Animal Liberation*.

47. ADAMS, Carol. “Why Feminist-Vegan Now?”. Op. cit., pp. 313-314.

48. In ADAMS, Carol. *The Sexual Politics*. Op. cit., p. 51.

and animals by challenging the animal/human dualism,<sup>49</sup> and by emphasizing how clearly related sexual and animal justice have been and will continue to be in the future. In this sense, Adams still finds reasons to denounce the same process of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption of women's and animals' bodies, a historical process whose implications are more than ever present as part of a long deeply embedded continuum that enables and legitimizes both types of oppression, as it renders them "being-less through technology, language, and cultural representation".<sup>50</sup> In her critique, Adams finds a variety of examples of overlapping cultural images of sexual violence against women and the fragmentation and dismemberment of animals in Western culture, showing that there has traditionally been one unequivocal movement: animals are consistently feminized and women are persistently animalized and, in both cases, the final outcome is objectification, a process legitimized by the use of a dominant type of language in which the meaning of the violent appropriation is negated or transformed into metaphors, often applied to both animals and women.<sup>51</sup>

More recently, the theoretical impulse of the movement has taken a step forward with the publication of a special issue of *Hypatia*<sup>52</sup> dedicated to animal studies, containing contributions of leading animal rights advocates who explore a range of complex issues, such as the various ways to balance conflict between both forms of oppression and, from a bioethical perspective, the question of animal rights as related to meat eating, vegetarianism and veganism. The wide variety of approaches, as posited in the call for papers, illustrates the relevance of the ongoing debate occurring within feminist animal studies, mainly motivated by the effort to explore the mutually reinforcing interconnections among diverse forms of oppression. Interconnections that, as Gaard claims in her contribution to the 2012 *Hypatia* symposium centered on "Speaking of Animal Bodies", are essential because, from an ecofeminist perspective, the reproductive and sexual enslavement of female nonhuman and human bodies has always occurred and has always raised ethical concerns. Moreover, the analysis of such connections should contribute to extend

49. See BIRKE, Lynda and Luciana PARISI. "Animals, Becoming", *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology and Animal Life*, Peter STEEVES ed.

50. ADAMS, Carol. "Why Feminist-Vegan Now?". Op. cit., p. 304.

51. Ibidem. See also how Adams criticizes PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) for using models and celebrities wearing sexy outfits for their campaigns on animal rights, claiming that "at PETA only women are treated like meat". For PETA's current campaigns, see <http://www.peta.org/>. Accessed Jan. 2013.

52. *Hypatia*, 27.3 (August 2012). <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/hypa.2012.27.issue-3/issuetoc>. Accessed Jan. 2013.

the theory from the realm of the purely intellectual to that of the political, exposing the broader implications and deeper roots of the treatment we give to animals, making activism more relevant and illustrating our own role in oppressive structures as consumers of suffering, as contributors to climate change and as sponsors of global food scarcity.<sup>53</sup>

Perhaps most radically, in the January 2005 issue of *Satya*, patrice jones pleaded for meaningful, purposeful coalitions between animal liberationists and feminists, since speciesism and sexism are not separate but overlapping problems. In her words, “women and animals, along with land and children, have historically been seen as the property of male heads of households, who then compete with other men for more power and property”.<sup>54</sup> In the process, women have been cut off from their bodies in different ways, as historically different peoples have embraced philosophies and religious faiths that have asked them to consider female bodies as profane objects to be transcended. As a result, women have come to view their bodies as something other than themselves. From that first division derives the subdivision of the female body into a collection of body parts and, in jones’ words, “experiencing ourselves in such a fragmented manner, it is no wonder that men reduce women to their body parts in pornography or that the everyday butchery of animals into their body parts seems so natural”.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, since early childhood humans have been traumatized by the lies they’ve been told about their relationship to animals, conditioned to be disconnected from nature, and discouraged to feel any empathy for any being that is not human. As a necessary response to such lies and traumas, in *Aftershock: Confronting Trauma in a Violent World: A Guide for Activists and Their Allies*<sup>56</sup>, jones offers a selection of self-care strategies for those social change activists who are in need of support while dealing with the trauma of having been deceived into meat eating for years.<sup>57</sup>

From an altogether different perspective, in “Mortal Love: Care and Practices in Animal Experimentation”, feminist theorist Tora Holmberg renders a diametrically opposed view when discussing the relationship of care that may occur within certain laboratories dedicated to animal experimentation.

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53. For the complete transcript of GAARD’S contribution, see <http://thephilosopherseye.com/2012/07/09/hypatia-symposium-greta-gaard/>. Accessed Jan. 2013.

54. See *Satya*. Jan. 2005, p. 1. <http://www.satyamag.com/jan05/jones.html>. Accessed Jan. 2013.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

56. For specific reference, see previous footnote.

57. For more recent contributions, see jones’ afterword to *Sistah Vegan* (New York: Lantern Books, 2010), which shows further analyses of inter species psychology and ecojustice activism.

Building on previous theoretical work on animal studies and feminist ethics, Holmberg demonstrates that empathy and affection for individual animals are possible, and can be important components of the experimentation ethos, not as mere justification of the harm and killing performed, but as intrinsic dimensions of the human-animal relations.<sup>58</sup>

Focusing on a different side of the prism, sociologist Grace Kao considers that placing much emphasis on animals' sentience causes discomfort among feminists, since the animal rights debate may negatively influence certain aspects concerning women's reproductive rights of choice and, more specifically, may affect the abortion debate. As Kao claims in "Consistency in Ecofeminist Ethics", animal pain is arguably comparable to fetal pain in that we can only reason about either by analogy. Hence the feminist reluctance to embrace the animal rights cause, and the internal division among feminists on whether they ought to champion the interests of animals or concentrate on working exclusively on the different aspects of women's liberation. While some ecologically-minded feminists have advanced contextual moral vegetarianism as a logical outcome of feminism, other feminists are non-committal or even hostile to that view for a variety of reasons, the most important being the well-grounded suspicion that animal advocacy might affect the abortion debate in a manner unfavorable to women's reproductive right of choice. So Kao writes:

Even if vegetarianism were the only morally defensible diet for most global Northerners, it remains unclear whether this view could be defended without incurring "collateral damage" from the perspective of more conventional feminist commitments. By unintended, undesirable, though seemingly unavoidable consequences, I have in mind certain concessions concerning abortion.<sup>59</sup>

In spite of the abundance of differing approaches, the truth is that for some decades ecofeminists have seen their liberation and self-respect as fundamentally connected to the well-being of nonhuman others. This seems a logical connection, since the characteristic topics of reproduction and consumption extensively explored within animal studies have traditionally been considered key issues within feminist epistemology. Feminists are well aware that female bodies do most of the labor in reproduction, and in most human cultures both female human and nonhuman bodies have been historically used either to provide food, or to cook and serve it.

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58. HOLMBERG, Tora. "Mortal Love: Care and Practices in Animal Experimentation", at <http://ity.sagepub.com/content/12/2.toc>. Accessed Nov. 2012.

59. KAO, Grace. *Op. Cit.*, p. 1.



In the last decade, the most controversial question was whether the ecofeminist drive toward moral vegetarianism must come at the expense of more conventional feminist commitments, such as women's self reproductive right of choice, since the arguments used in one context can be readily applied to the other as well. In search of a necessary compromise, relying on bioethical notions of contextual versus universal moral vegetarianism, on theories of animal moral standing, and on the recurrence to an "ethics of care" toward animals, Kao safely confirms that on no account needs the animal liberation movement affect women's reproductive freedom and body integrity, and concludes that both feminism and vegetarianism stand to gain from the integration of both liberating approaches.<sup>60</sup>

#### 4. Ecofeminism and environmental justice

The environmental justice movement has consistently grown in scope since it primarily emerged to denounce a variety of experiences of environmental inequalities based on race, ethnicity and poverty. While to this day ecofeminism has never claimed to be part of the same movement, both schools of thought clearly share a number of characteristics as, from the micro to the macro level, women from the most disfavored races, ethnic groups or social levels have traditionally been more likely than men to be classified as 'in poverty'. Accordingly, in the development of the ecofeminist project, theorists and activists soon realized that they needed to integrate issues of race and class with gender if they wanted to go further in their analyses of the social reasons for women's oppression. Following the lead, the environmental justice literature, previously dominated by poverty and race issues, also began to address gender<sup>61</sup> as there was accumulating evidence that gender has always been disproportionately associated with social disadvantage in a number of ways. Nevertheless, despite the increasing confluences and similarity of creeds, a number of conceptual discordances between both movements have also appeared on the horizon for, as Gaard reveals:

Ecofeminists have tended to be some combination of identities that may include first-world, white, middle-class, vegan or vegetarian, lesbian or bisexual identities. Spokespeople for environmental justice women activists have tended to be women of color, working class, heterosexual, and/or omnivores.

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60. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

61. See BUCKINGHAM, Susan. "Ecofeminism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". Online version: <http://www.studymode.com/essays/Ecofeminism-In-The-21St-Century-414055.html>.

Thus, multi-directional tensions about homophobia, speciesism, classism, and racism have precluded many real, on-the-ground alliances.<sup>62</sup>

It seems that while ecofeminism initially concentrated on gender, species and sexuality, environmental justice movements largely focused on race and class. Even so, in spite of their own idiosyncrasies, both theoretical developments have always been careful to adopt an inclusive perspective capable of resisting the rise of one privileged category over the others. So much so that nowadays it seems safe to say that, beyond those sources of conflict and primary focal points, ecofeminism and environmental justice must be considered complementary theories and movements since, as Gaard pointedly notes, feminists and ecofeminists are the earliest proponents and primary midwives of environmental justice ecocriticism.<sup>63</sup>

More concretely, from the first antimilitarist protests organized by feminist groups during the 1980s – namely, the Women’s Pentagon Action, in the US, and the peace camp at the US Airforce Base of Greenham Common, in England - ecofeminism has traditionally considered militarism as central to the oppression of women and to the destruction of the nonhuman world. Likewise, the ecofeminists of the 1990s blamed military organizations for causing more ecological trouble than any other social institution, denouncing the fact that they have traditionally been assigned massive budgets that otherwise could have been used for socially useful programs, and have generated a culture of violence which is in itself profoundly racist, sexist and environmentally disrespectful. Finding inspiration in those early protests, an increasing number of grassroots networks in the US and Europe have manifested their deep concern for social and environmental issues, using political confrontation and public education as modes of challenge in the public arena. Using more practical strategies than other feminist groups, environmental justice feminists have always located the environment not in some distant or abstract place, but within homes, schools, workplaces and neighborhoods, a pragmatic approach which has promoted the creation of countless women’s groups willing to campaign for gender equality and environmental justice. Amongst the most socially visible, WEDO (Women’s Environment and Development Organization) was founded in the 1990s to advocate for gender equality in global policy. Based in the US, with Wangari Maathai as former board member, WEDO has consistently taken an active part in UN conferences and ensured women’s equality, motivating the inclusion of fundamental

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62. GAARD, Greta. “New Directions”. *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

women's rights in the final documents of Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992).<sup>64</sup> In the UK, WEN (Women's Environmental Network) has been established for over two decades, with more than 38 local groups and over 2,500 participants campaigning for sensible consumption, waste minimization and conscious consumerism, while taking an interest in local food growing, seed saving, and the development of energy-efficient programs.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, WHEN (Women's Health and Environmental Network) started in the late 1990s to protest environmental chemical exposure. Former members of breast cancer associations, its founders have campaigned in different states of the US to protect women's health and ensure a safer environment.<sup>66</sup> Amongst the earliest and most influential publications, Canadian WEI (*Women's and Environments International Magazine*) first issue appeared in the 1970s, and is currently considered one of the longest surviving feminist magazines in Canada. Over the years, its contributors have analyzed women's multiple associations with the environment, from feminist and antiracist perspectives, in issues centered on women and toxins (2008), labor and the environment (2011) and food security (2012). The number and variety of networks and publications makes it impossible to comment on them all, even if it means excluding the equally important activist practices related to long-term women's land projects, newsletters and periodicals, study groups and retreat centers, whose main objectives are to share knowledge about environmental issues and policies relevant to environmental and gender injustice.

Simultaneously, official institutions have progressively engaged in fighting gender inequality. In 2000 the UN Division for the Advancement of Women mandated the preparation of an in-depth study on all forms of violence against women.<sup>67</sup> One decade later, Lakshmi Puri, Deputy Director and Assistant Secretary-General of UN Women pointed out at the National Committee's Meeting in Sydney Sep 2011 that women suffer even more due to natural disasters, climate change, environmental stress, food, fuel, health and economic crises as they bear the burden of care-giving. Although their contribution to economic growth is substantial in both developed and developing countries, the majority of women are in vulnerable jobs and gender wage gaps are still large. In addition, women make up two-thirds of the world's illiterate

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64. See <http://www.wedo.org/>. Accessed Jan 2013.

65. See <http://www.wen.org.uk/>. Accessed Jan. 2013.

66. See <http://www.when.org/>. Accessed Jan. 2013.

67. See the Division for the Advancement of Women (General Assembly 2006, 61<sup>st</sup> session). <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/documents/ga.htm>. Accessed Jan. 2013.

people and still continue to be discriminated against in their rights to have access to education.<sup>68</sup>

At a smaller scale, a good number of ecofeminist scholars have researched women's vulnerability to environmental pollution, largely to provoke national and international debates within academic circles. Examples include biologist Sandra Steingraber's research on industrial and environmental health, which centers on the connections between fetal and environmental degradation through the nine months of pregnancy and, beyond, through breastfeeding. Steingraber's work reveals the extent to which environmental hazards, from industrial poison found in amniotic fluid to the toxic contamination of breast milk, can threaten each crucial stage of the fetal development.<sup>69</sup> Likewise, critiques of reproductive technology, genetic engineering and population control appeared largely discussed in the aforementioned "Reproductive Technology, or Reproductive Justice? An Ecofeminist Environmental Justice Perspective on the Rhetoric of Choice", where Greta Gaard develops an ecofeminist perspective on women's reproductive self-determination, concentrating on the modern affluence of fertility-enhancing technologies. In her own words, apart from concealing information about adverse health effects, the new reproductive technologies are "implicitly antifeminist because they blame the victim by attributing rising infertility rates to middle-class women who delay child-bearing while striving to launch careers, and are forced to solicit egg donation and gestation services from women disadvantaged by economic status, nation and age."<sup>70</sup>

It seems worth noting that, although for years much of the ecofeminist literature on social justice has persistently demonstrated how women's bodies are particularly vulnerable to environmental pollution<sup>71</sup>, historically, safe chemical loads and toxicity levels have tended to be officially calculated on the basis of men's body tolerance to exposure. Exceptionally, the new European legislation on chemicals (REACH - Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemical substances) has very recently begun to draw attention to the vulnerability to chemical exposure of pregnant women and children.<sup>72</sup> But in spite of all these efforts, there are still few instances of

68. For the complete speech, see <http://www.unwomen.org/2011/09/accelerating-gender-equality-worldwide-a-challenge-for-un-women/>. Accessed Jan. 2013.

69. STEINGRABER, Sandra. *Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood*.

70. GAARD, Greta. "Reproductive Technology?". Op. cit., pp. 103-129.

71. For insightful views on women's vulnerability to ecological degradation, see MELLOR, Mary. *Feminism and Ecology*, p. 2.

72. See the 299 issue of the *European Commission on Science for Environmental Policy* (27 September 2012), which highlights that "pregnancy and early life are critical stages for

official recognition in the actual legislation of most countries, which means that there is still significant scope to develop an environmental justice case along the lines that women and children are more vulnerable to toxic exposure due both to their biology and to their social roles, which are more likely to consign them to poverty than men. In contrast, since the last decade, publications on environmental justice have consistently incorporated concerns about women into their analyses, and, more particularly, have included in their studies target groups of women additionally marginalized by their income, occupation, ethnicity or disability.<sup>73</sup> These seem important inclusions since environmental justice issues are becoming widely heard all over the US and Northwest Europe. However, there is still much cause for concern. Social philosopher Iris Marion Young points out that, although in the last twenty-five years there have been significant changes in gendered norms of behavior and comportment with a great deal more freedom of choice now available to members of both sexes, “the basic structures of gender comportment are still implicitly male, and the sexual division of labor nevertheless continues to afford men more privilege and opportunity for access to resources, positions of power and authority.”<sup>74</sup> Similarly, in *The Industrial Vagina* (2008), Sheyla Jeffreys denounces an alarming increase of problems connected to the sex industry, namely “the precariousness of women’s health, their vulnerability to organized crime and corruption, the increasing trafficking and the early sexualization of girls”, and criticizes the opportunistic attitude of governments, sex workers activists and UN agencies which still take the comfortable position of not challenging the right of men to buy women’s bodies for sex.<sup>75</sup>

Conclusively, despite real and potential differences, given the larger framework of postcolonial ecocriticism and considering the existing symmetries between ecofeminism and environmental justice, there seem to be sufficient reasons for both movements to become, once and for all, allies for:

(E)cofeminist values oppose all forms of hierarchy and domination, and environmental justice is a movement challenging the continued colonization of nature and marginalized humans, and powered by women at the

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environmental chemical exposure”, at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research/newsalert/pdf/299na6.pdf>. Accessed Jan. 2013.

73. See AGYEMAN, Julian at al. eds. *Just Sustainabilities. Development in an Unequal World*.

74. YOUNG, Marion. “Structural Injustice and the Politics of Difference”, *Social Justice and Public Policy*, Gary Craig et al. eds., p. 88.

75. JEFFREYS, Sheyla. *The Industrial Vagina. The Political Economy of the Global Sex Trade*, p. 16.

grassroots, though its theory was initially articulated by men in leadership or in academe.<sup>76</sup>

To further the alliance, Gaard suggests concentrating on collaborative work in order to build on the “sexual justice branch” of the environmental justice movement, developing the lesbian ecocriticism deftly started by Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and advancing on reproductive justice and environmental health both at grassroots and at academic levels.<sup>77</sup>

### 5. Queer feminism and ecology

In 1994, in a special issue of the Canadian journal *Undercurrents*, entitled *Queer Nature*, Gordon B. Ingram explicitly recognized the relationship between ecology and queer theory. Using the term “queer” to refer to “lesbian/gay male/bisexual woman or man”,<sup>78</sup> Ingram denounces an over-emphasis on assessing the experience of straight white men and a persistent homophobia in most environmental groups, while at the same time he acknowledges the need to intensify the relationship between environmentalism, ecofeminism and queer theory to expand future activism.<sup>79</sup> In the same volume, Catriona Sandilands questions the heteronormativity that has so far pervaded ecological discourse and further develops queer ecofeminism as a specific project for future research.<sup>80</sup>

Almost simultaneously, in “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism”, Greta Gaard explores the historical, philosophical and religious roots of the connections between the oppression of queers and the domination of nature. Using a broad ecofeminist framework for her analysis, Gaard writes:

All those associated with nature and the erotic continue to experience the impact of centuries of Western culture’s colonization, in our very bodies and in our daily lives. Rejecting that colonization requires embracing the erotic in all its diversity and building coalitions for creating a democratic, ecological culture based on our shared liberation.<sup>81</sup>

76. GAARD, Greta. “New Directions”. Op. cit., p. 6.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

78. INGRAM, Gordon B. “Lost Landscapes and the Spatial Contextualization of Queerness”, p. 8. Online at <http://gordonbrentingram.ca/scholarship/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/ingram-1994-lost-landscapes-and-the-spatial-contextualization-of-queerness.pdf>. Accessed Jan. 2013.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

80. SANDILANDS, Catriona. “Lavender Green?”. Op. cit., pp. 20-25.

81. GAARD, Greta. “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism”, p. 132. Online at <http://gretagaard.efoliomn.com/Uploads/QueerEcofeminism.pdf>. Accessed Jan. 2013.

In this groundbreaking essay, Gaard coins the term “erotophobia”, or fear of the erotic, to explain the relationship between heterosexism and ecological degradation. Revising the long list of dualisms with which ecofeminists have characterized western culture, Gaard demonstrates that the eroticization of nature, in opposition to reason, has largely served to emphasize its subordination. Thus, taking the lead for a consideration of environmentalism as a sexual politics - a form of resistance to the disciplinary logic of heterosexism and patriarchy - Gaard understands that, from a queer ecofeminist perspective, the liberation of women necessarily requires the liberation of nature, of the erotic and of queers, thereby seeding the ground for further research in the fields of feminist materialism,<sup>82</sup> and inspiring new philosophical analyses of heteronormativity and sexual oppression within a whole range of social practices and institutions.<sup>83</sup>

Drawing, among other sources, from Donna J. Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*<sup>84</sup> where the distinction between the human and the other was first consistently blurred, in the introduction to her co-edited volume *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, Mortimer-Sandilands moves consistently forward with her previous work on feminism, culture and sexuality when she claims that the traditional opposition between nature and culture has been one of the causes of prejudiced social attitudes against women, animals and, more importantly, against women and animal queer behavior. As the Canadian feminist environmentalist explains, the first objective for modern queer theorists should be to challenge the split between nature and culture upon which the majority of charges against queers (mostly for being against nature) rest.<sup>85</sup> In so doing, Mortimer-Sandilands explores the modern cultural tendency to boost a closer intimacy between humans and domesticated animals, a tendency which has facilitated the proliferation of studies on animal psychology. Some of these studies have proved the plurality of animal - and therefore human - sexuality, something which has become widely accepted in scientific circles. As a result, a whole array of scientific research conducted on this body of knowledge has served to illustrate the mistaken accusations of queer acts

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82. For example, GROSZ's work on Darwinism and feminism, in ALAIMO and HEKMAN. Op. cit., pp. 23-51.

83. See, for example, chapters 4 and 5 of Adelle MCWHORTE's *Bodies and Pleasures. Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalization*.

84. In *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Online at <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/Haraway-CyborgManifesto.html>. Accessed June 2013.

85. Op. cit., pp. 31-32.

and behavior as being against nature.<sup>86</sup> However, contrary to what might be expected, modern queer theorists have not chosen to reclaim the naturalness of queer activity but, more ambitiously, have insisted on delegitimizing the binary constructions of animality and sexuality that have so far informed the scientific and cultural discussion of sex,<sup>87</sup> challenging the pairing of (hetero) sexuality and nature by developing deconstructive, reverse discourses that contest the dominant understandings of what society considers to be natural sexuality.<sup>88</sup>

Very possibly, the future of queer ecology lies in the design of new strategies to challenge the hegemony of heteronormativity, resisting the exploitation of nature as economic resource and public spectacle, and defying the obsession with queer consumerist lifestyles among popular artists, filmmakers and fashion designers. As Mortimer-Sandilands has put it, “the future of a green queer philosophy is to embrace deviation and strangeness as a necessary part of biophilia, considering sexual pleasure and cultural transgressions as foundational elements to a necessary environmental ethics and politics of resistance.”<sup>89</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

Although significant achievements toward incorporating gender issues within some policy areas at local and global levels have been obtained, there is still a long way to go. In the above mentioned UN annual meeting speech, Lakshmi Puri challenges poor and rich, underdeveloped and fully developed, nondemocratic and democratic countries to respect women’s rights and promote gender equality, and denounces situations of inequality in both nondemocratic and democratic countries, where women’s voices are stifled under the burden of social, cultural and religious taboos and prejudices. The reality is that, to this day, only 28 countries in the world have achieved or surpassed the 30 percent critical mass for women’s representation in parliament or in similar political institutions of power.<sup>90</sup> Too many questions posited by feminist scholars still remain unanswered as much toxic waste and harmful chemicals continue

86. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

88. For an in-depth analysis of animal sexuality, in the same volume, see Noël STURGEON’S “Penguin Family Values: The Nature of Planetary Environmental Reproductive Theory”, pp. 102-133.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

90. See <http://www.unwomen.org/2011/09/accelerating-gender-equality-worldwide-a-challenge-for-un-women/>. Accessed Jan. 2013.



to affect women's and children's bodies, crimes are committed against men and women because of their sexual orientation, women's flesh is used to nurture phallogocentric imaginations, reproductive injustice is practiced on human and nonhuman females, all this in a world where climate change is not only a believable possibility, but a palpable truth that affects the poor and the racially prejudiced more than anyone else.

In the present environmental state of affairs and considering the global economic crisis, ecofeminist activism asserts that women are better able to re-orient the nature of the mainstream, but they can only be effectively integrated into mainstreaming initiatives if more of them are included in decision-making institutions, creating the possibility that other women take part in the allocation and control of economic resources. For ecofeminist activism to advance, it must draw on the work of feminists, ecofeminists and environmentalists from around the world who can further cross-cultural dialogue and engage in local and global politics.<sup>91</sup> Grassroots activism must expand its objectives and advocate for sexual justice for women, queers and nonhuman species, and ecofeminist theorists must contribute to influence local governments to build sustainable economies, affecting "the development of sustainable transportation, affordable housing, community-owned banks, systems and structures for agricultural and inter-species justice, pursuing socially responsible investment opportunities as well as equal marriage rights, and safe and affordable healthcare for all."<sup>92</sup>

Greta Gaard and Carol J. Adams, like the theorists previously mentioned, have successfully demonstrated that all forms of oppression function as interconnected and mutually reinforcing systems of culture which oppress women, animals and the environment in strikingly similar ways. The categories of "woman", "animal" and "nature" function in symbolically similar positions in patriarchal societies as dominated, objectified, consumed, and silenced referents.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, Gordon B. Ingram considers that "an understanding of the

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91. Apart from the ecofeminisms of the south, pioneered by Vandana Shiva and Bina Agarwal, in India, and Ivonne Guevara in South America, I would like to draw attention to the future possibilities of a rising ecofeminist branch of Spanish feminist philosophy which, initiated by M<sup>a</sup> Xosé AGRA (*Ecología y Feminismo*), is currently led by feminist philosophers M<sup>a</sup> Luisa CAVANA, Cristina SEGURA and Alicia PULEO (*Mujeres y Ecología*) and, most recently, by Alicia PULEO's *Ecofeminismo para otro Mundo Posible*. These feminist scholars are actively contributing to raise public concern for the ecofeminist cause amongst the general public, as well as amongst the members of the academia.

92. GAARD, Greta, "New Directions". Op. cit., p. 17.

93. See ADAMS, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. Op. cit., p. 51. For GAARD's contribution to the 2012 *Hypatia* symposium centered on "Speaking of Animal Bodies", see footnote no. 53.

intensifying juncture of environmentalism, radical ecology, ecofeminism and queer theory is becoming crucial for the expansion of political activism in the coming decade.”<sup>94</sup> For, although, as Timothy Morton explains, “ecofeminism arose out of feminist separatism, wedded to a biological essentialism that is grounded on binary difference,”<sup>95</sup> the fact is that modern ecofeminist vectors point to a concept of nature as a number of interactive processes, never products, their main objective being “the sheer, open appreciation of otherness, beyond tolerance, free to experience intimacy with other beings.”<sup>96</sup> Patrick D. Murphy has pleaded for the validity of ecofeminist analysis and “the ethical necessity to extend ecofeminist rhetorical critique in the long emergency of the climate change crisis.”<sup>97</sup> More specifically, ecofeminism’s interest in exploring the inclusiveness, transversality and porosity – to borrow the words of some of the aforementioned theorists - of the human relationships with nonhuman others, and its emphasis on processes, fluid boundaries and dynamic interactions preclude the future relevance of a wide range of “intersectional analyses” – echoing Murphy again - within ecofeminist rethorics, a critical methodology which is becoming increasingly important in the widening range of ecofeminist concern. In spite of the real obstacles that remain in the horizon, it seems plausible that modern ecofeminist theoreticians will find the right strategies to cause real structural reforms in the existing social systems. Even more arduous seems the ecofeminist activists’ challenge to create the necessary coalitions that can provoke change in the fastest and most effective ways.

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94. Op. cit., p. 5.

95. MORTON, Timothy, “Queer Ecology”, p. 274. Online at [http://www.academia.edu/1050754/Queer\\_Ecology](http://www.academia.edu/1050754/Queer_Ecology). Accessed Jan. 2013.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 280.

97. See MURPHY, Patrick D. Afterword to Douglas A. VAKOCH ed. *Ecofeminism and Rethoric*. Op. cit., p. 145.

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# ENTREVISTA CON ALICIA PULEO<sup>1</sup>: REFLEXIONES SOBRE EL ECOFEMINSIMO

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## Introducción

Desde principios de los años ochenta la crítica ecofeminista ha señalado cómo el modelo de explotación patriarcal-capitalista que nos ha llevado a la crisis ecológica actual, se desarrolla de espaldas a la Naturaleza y es manifiestamente ajeno a la ética del cuidado. En la actualidad es necesario repensar los parámetros socio-culturales que han cosificado la naturaleza y la han subordinado a una lógica de explotación meramente economicista en un contexto neo-liberal. Sin embargo, no nos podemos limitar a reflexionar sobre los cambios climáticos y la crisis ecológica que estamos viviendo considerándolos simplemente como un problema de 'estilo de vida'; hay que ir más allá y cuestionar los niveles de producción y consumo que se siguen promoviendo dentro de la burbuja capitalista de la (post) modernidad y proponer soluciones urgentes.

En este sentido, el libro de Alicia Puleo, *Ecofeminismo para otro mundo posible*, resulta imprescindible. Puleo nos presenta una nueva Ariadna, hija de las teorías feministas y la ecología. El ecofeminismo crítico que propone Puleo responde a una reflexión no sólo ética, sino también socio-política sobre

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1. Alicia Puleo es doctora en filosofía y directora de la Cátedra de Estudios de Género de la Universidad de Valladolid. Pionera en el ecofeminismo, es la máxima representante del ecofeminismo en España. Es autora de numerosos artículos y libros, incluyendo *Dialéctica de la sexualidad. Género y sexo en la Filosofía Contemporánea*, Cátedra, Madrid, 1992; *El reto de la igualdad de género. Nuevas perspectivas en Ética y Filosofía Política*, Editorial Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 2008. Su último libro es *Ecofeminismo. Para otro mundo posible*, Cátedra, Madrid, 2011.

las relaciones de los seres humanos con la Naturaleza. Es un ecofeminismo que reivindica los principios de la igualdad y que propone fomentar la universalización de la ética del cuidado no sólo en relación con el ser humano, sino también con los animales y la Naturaleza a la vez que se abre a un diálogo intercultural y afirma un sentimiento de compasión como vía hacia una nueva cultura ecológica. Puleo critica con inteligencia y rigor la globalización neoliberal, denunciando las injusticias sociales y desigualdades, pero también nos propone unas claves teóricas y prácticas para labrar un futuro más sostenible: defiende su afirmación de que otro mundo es posible mientras reflexiona sobre conceptos como la libertad, la igualdad o la sostenibilidad.

Sin embargo, quedan pendientes varias preguntas: ¿necesitamos con urgencia una catarsis social radical? ¿Es realmente posible una teoría feminista que piense y trate los problemas de nuestra época? Y en ese caso, ¿cuáles serían los principales rasgos de un ecofeminismo crítico? En la siguiente entrevista Alicia Puleo nos responde a estos interrogantes a la vez que nos explica los rasgos fundamentales del ecofeminismo crítico como corriente de pensamiento y movimiento social.

### ¿Qué significa 'ecofeminismo' para ti?

Entiendo el ecofeminismo como el reconocimiento de dos asignaturas pendientes de la ética y la filosofía política. Por un lado, tenemos la tarea iniciada pero no culminada de llegar a una sociedad y a una cultura que sean realmente igualitarias y no androcéntricas; por otro, la certeza de que es necesario hacer algo para detener la cuenta atrás del cambio climático, de la contaminación ambiental y de la destrucción de la biodiversidad. El *feminismo* es una filosofía y una práctica con una larga historia. Como teoría articulada se remonta al siglo XVII, como movimiento social, al sufragismo del XIX. Desde las últimas décadas del siglo XX, tiene un impacto enorme en las ciencias humanas y sociales. Ha cambiado la faz de las democracias modernas. Llamamos *ecologismo* a un movimiento y un tipo de pensamiento mucho más recientes, con menos trayectoria, pero muy potentes también. Se basa en conocimientos de la Ecología y la Economía Ecológica y en perspectivas filosóficas que pretenden superar ese antropocentrismo extremo que ve a la Naturaleza como un simple recurso, como un mero instrumento para el ser humano. La hermenéutica ecofeminista articula, de una manera propia, conceptos, análisis y modelos aportados por el feminismo y el ecologismo, señalando las conexiones entre la subordinación del colectivo femenino y el modelo del dominio sobre la Naturaleza. Pienso que esta articulación no ha de hacerse en detrimento del



feminismo ni del ecologismo, sino, por el contrario, reforzando a ambos en su tarea de alcanzar un mundo mejor.

En cuanto a mi propia posición ecofeminista, tal como la he desarrollado en detalle en el libro *Ecofeminismo para otro mundo posible*, la he llamado *ecofeminismo crítico* para señalar la necesidad de conservar, debidamente revisado y actualizado, el legado ilustrado de lucha contra el prejuicio y de igualdad y autonomía de las mujeres. Para resumir sus grandes líneas en un par de frases, diré que asumo una conceptualización nominalista del género, llamo a un diálogo intercultural, en especial con las culturas latinoamericanas, propongo una aceptación prudente de la ciencia y la técnica, una universalización de las virtudes del cuidado aplicadas a los humanos y al resto de la Naturaleza (universalizar en el sentido de enseñar las actitudes del cuidado a los varones y no esperarlas sólo de las mujeres) y una ética de la justicia y la compasión más allá de nuestra especie.

**¿Existe un único ecofeminismo o, por el contrario, deberíamos hablar de «ecofeminismos»?**

Se ha dicho que existen tantos ecofeminismos como teóricas ecofeministas. Lo que justifica el uso del término «ecofeminismo» en singular es que todos tienen en común ese acercamiento y esa articulación de aportaciones del feminismo y del ecologismo a la que me he referido para definirlo. Pero cuando nos detenemos a examinar las distintas propuestas ecofeministas, vemos grandes diferencias. Algunas de ellas pueden explicarse por los intereses y la formación inicial de las pensadoras puesto que ponen el énfasis en aquello que conocen bien. Por ejemplo, las teólogas se han interesado por el papel de las narrativas religiosas monoteístas en el sojuzgamiento de las mujeres y la Naturaleza. Algunas han propuesto relecturas de la religión ginecocéntricas; otras, un retorno de Dios a la Tierra que evitara el profundo dualismo y jerarquización inherentes a los conceptos de Naturaleza y Espíritu, cuerpo y alma, mujer y hombre. Algunas sociólogas, por su parte, se han decantado por un abordaje socioeconómico gracias al cual han logrado hacer visible la similitud entre el trabajo doméstico no remunerado de las mujeres y los servicios de la Naturaleza que no son computados en el coste de la producción. Activistas altermundialistas y anticolonialistas como Vandana Shiva ponen de relieve las injusticias Norte-Sur y denuncian el «mal desarrollo» exportado por las multinacionales, un mal desarrollo que causa miseria, deslocalización de las poblaciones originarias, hambre, enfermedades, pérdida de la biodiversidad y desaparición de la diversidad cultural, aplastada por el modelo único del capitalismo neoliberal. A partir de los noventa, algunas filósofas

hemos atendido, como es lógico, a lo que nuestra disciplina ha dicho sobre las mujeres y la naturaleza y, partiendo de enfoques constructivistas, hemos extremado el cuidado en la conceptualización de los sexos con el fin de evitar cualquier esencialismo que adjudicara a hombres y mujeres una naturaleza opuesta irreductible. Independientemente de estas características debidas a la formación e intereses de cada una, se puede también, por supuesto, diferenciar tendencias. Esquematisando de una manera, quizás, demasiado sumaria, distinguiría entre ecofeminismos con componentes místicos y otros de que se orientan a una perspectiva materialista.

**Históricamente las raíces del ecofeminismo provienen de la unión entre la militancia feminista con la ecologista, y el papel de la mujer como mediadora entre naturaleza y cultura. Sin embargo, en tu libro sostienes que ser ecofeminista no implica afirmar que las mujeres estén de manera innata más ligadas a la Naturaleza y a la Vida que los hombres. ¿No es esto contrario a las voces promotoras del ecofeminismo como Vandana Shiva?**

Voy a remontarme un poco al origen de la cuestión. Simone de Beauvoir en *El Segundo Sexo* denunció que la legitimación patriarcal de la exclusión de las mujeres de la Cultura se había hecho a partir de su designación como Otro, como Madre Tierra, como Naturaleza. Esta idea fue desarrollada en el terreno de la antropología por Sherry Ortner. Ortner sostuvo que todas las culturas veían en La Mujer una mediadora entre la Naturaleza y la Cultura por sus tareas de crianza y de preparación de los alimentos. A partir de esta constatación, algunas ecofeministas de finales de los años setenta del siglo XX desarrollaron un pensamiento esencialista, aceptando la tradicional bipolarización de los sexos. Las mujeres, desde su punto de vista, eran realmente seres más cercanos a la Naturaleza, eran dadoras y cuidadoras de la Vida mientras que los varones eran seres agresivos biológicamente destinados a la guerra. En los ochenta, este ecofeminismo «clásico» fue criticado por Vandana Shiva que, como seguidora de las ideas de Mahatma Gandhi, recordó oportunamente, valiéndose de la figura del célebre pacifista, que no todos los varones responden a semejante esencia destructora. Pero la misma Shiva fue acusada por algunas feministas de su país de proceder a una esencialización e idealización de «la mujer de la India», olvidando los factores de clase y de contexto rural o urbano. No voy a entrar en esta compleja polémica sobre la obra de Shiva. Sólo diré que las obras ecofeministas de corte filosófico que se han ido elaborando a partir de los años noventa del siglo XX han evitado caer en una visión estereotipada de los sexos. Mi propio trabajo se enmarca en esta voluntad de análisis de la cultura y confianza en su transformación.

### ¿Es posible un ecofeminismo sin perspectiva de género?

La perspectiva de género es una poderosa herramienta de análisis para comprender los procesos culturales que construyen las identidades sexuadas. Ha servido y sirve para percibir y hacer visibles la desigualdad, la discriminación y los prejuicios de sexo, siempre que se le otorgue un contenido crítico, por supuesto. Ya que el concepto de género y de sistema de sexo-género también son en algunos casos utilizados por las ciencias sociales con un carácter meramente descriptivo como cuando se dice, por ejemplo: en tal sociedad, las mujeres se ocupan de esto y los hombres de aquello, las normas para el colectivo femenino son éstas y para el masculino son estas otras, etc. Al incorporar el concepto de género en el último tercio del siglo XX, el feminismo le dio un uso y un significado éticos, referidos a valores y a lecturas de filosofía política que trascienden con mucho el simple uso descriptivo. Nociones como la de justicia, igualdad o no discriminación pertenecen a este registro. Cuando hablo de género en mis escritos ecofeministas, asumo el concepto en esa doble acepción descriptiva y crítica propia del feminismo. Hay feministas que prefieren no utilizar este término, no es mi caso.

**En tu libro afirmas que «Necesitamos pensar la realidad de nuestro mundo actual con las claves que nos proporcionan el feminismo y el ecologismo». (Puleo 2011: 403) ¿Cuáles serían esas claves?**

No puedo en el espacio de esta entrevista profundizar todo lo necesario en esta cuestión pero al menos daré algunas pistas. Esta pregunta conecta con la anterior ya que considero que la perspectiva de género, en tanto revela características adscriptivas de las identidades, puede ser utilizada para desmontar mecanismos destructivos basados en la dominación de la Naturaleza. Para darte algunos ejemplos sencillos, figuras como el cazador, el torero, la seductora con abrigo de pieles, la chica de la publicidad que parece ser vendida junto con el coche más potente del mercado son algunos de los esperpentos patriarcales contrarios a esa necesaria nueva cultura ecológica del siglo XXI. El patriarcado en tanto sistema de socialización, siempre ha creado identidades de género. La virilidad tiene una larga historia como modelo de dominación y la femineidad como su complemento de placer, reproducción de la vida a través del invisibilizado trabajo doméstico y apoyo emocional para el ego. Estos estereotipos funcionales para la organización patriarcal subsisten hoy en alianza con el capitalismo de consumo.

El ecologismo nos aporta la perspectiva holística para comprender que vivimos en ecosistemas en los que todos los elementos están interrelacionados

y dependen unos de otros. Nos advierte que caminamos hacia un abismo sin retorno y que es hora de descubrir formas más agradables de vivir, desde la alimentación a la administración de nuestro tiempo (lo cual no significa volver a una sociedad primitiva, ni mucho menos). También nos brinda una visión superadora del antropocentrismo, de esa mirada narcisista e ingenua de nuestra especie que piensa al *anthropos* como centro del mundo, como dador de sentido de todo lo existente.

Al denunciar el subtexto androcéntrico de dominio sobre el mundo natural no humano propio del paradigma del guerrero y del conquistador, al mostrarnos otras formas de relacionarse con la Naturaleza a través del cuidado, el ecofeminismo nos permite tomar distancia con respecto a la sociedad consumista, devastadora e individualista que nos rodea.

### **¿Crees que es realmente posible construir una sociedad justa donde prime la igualdad y sostenibilidad?**

Hay algo absolutamente seguro y es que no avanzaremos hacia un mundo mejor si carecemos de un horizonte regulativo hacia el que dirigirnos. En nuestra época, tras el final de los Grandes Relatos, ya no tenemos el consuelo de una Filosofía de la Historia optimista, ese tipo de relato proveniente de la religión, de la fe positivista en la ciencia y la técnica o de la confianza en el poder del sujeto revolucionario. Hoy vivimos en la incertidumbre. Año tras año, a principio de curso, pregunto en la Universidad a mis estudiantes cómo ven el futuro de la humanidad y constato en general un gran pesimismo. Es una especie de test informal que vengo haciendo desde hace unos quince años. Sus respuestas no son, por lo tanto, algo que tenga que ver con la crisis económica actual, sino con un proceso mucho más hondo y complejo. Es, probablemente, para decirlo en términos frankfurtianos, la culminación de la dialéctica de la Modernidad. A tu pregunta sobre si creo en la posibilidad de construir una sociedad justa y ecológicamente sostenible, contestaré, pues, con una frase de Gramsci que me parece realmente afortunada: «pesimismo del intelecto, optimismo de la voluntad». Dicho esto, agregaré que advierto también avances realmente asombrosos en algunos frentes transformadores. La creciente extensión de la lucha en defensa de los animales no humanos, por la igualdad más allá de la humanidad, me parece un signo de generosidad y voluntad de justicia que me devuelve la fe en nuestra especie. Y los mismos medios tecnológicos por los que tiene hoy lugar una globalización neoliberal que explota y destruye a un ritmo que nunca había sido posible antes, pueden ser utilizados para luchar por ese otro mundo posible. Un ejemplo sencillo: actualmente, participamos en recogidas de firmas en campañas que

se interesan por humanos, animales y ecosistemas lejanos que probablemente no conozcamos nunca y que, sin embargo, suscitan nuestra empatía, nuestra indignación, nuestra acción. Internet y sus redes sociales constituyen un ámbito virtual que nos permite conocer hechos que, muchas veces, los medios de comunicación silencian. Y no se trata sólo de recibir información sino de intercambiarla y actuar en consecuencia como una sociedad global que se preocupa por una Tierra común.

### **¿Qué papel tendría que jugar el ecofeminismo dentro de la Ecología política?**

He sostenido que el ecofeminismo es, por su mismo punto de partida feminista, un ecologismo social, que se pregunta por las conexiones existentes entre la explotación que se ejerce sobre la Naturaleza y la que sufren los seres humanos. El ecofeminismo es la conciencia de género de la Ecología Política. Esto no significa que sea una sección especial de la Ecología Política y que se subsuma en ella. El ecofeminismo, como el feminismo en general, es múltiple y conviene que conserve su independencia y su diversidad. Pero como compañero de ruta de la Ecología política, ha de advertir sobre los sesgos sexistas, sobre las inercias patriarcales dentro de la misma Ecología política. Así lo vio Petra Kelly, la co-fundadora de los Verdes alemanes, que recordaba a sus compañeros que debían superar las actitudes patriarcales y tratar a las mujeres del movimiento con camaradería y espíritu de igualdad. Algunas estudiantes que han participado en movimientos de jóvenes ecologistas me han comentado que, en algunos casos, se encontraron con patrones similares a los del resto de la sociedad: se les encargaban tareas anónimas y cotidianas pero cuando se trataba de ir a representar al grupo en algún medio de comunicación, casi siempre se elegía a un varón. Vemos, pues, que el ecofeminismo tiene un papel muy importante para evitar que se reproduzcan los antiguos prejuicios y mecanismos discriminatorios de género en el interior de uno de los movimientos más vanguardistas que conocemos.

### **¿Qué hay que hacer para ser una verdadera ecofeminista del siglo XXI?**

¡No pretendo dar normas! Creo que hay muchas maneras de ser ecofeminista del siglo XXI y que, en cierta medida, dependen de nuestro contexto (rural o urbano), de nuestras creencias (religiosas o ateas), de nuestras actividades, (profesionales, familiares, políticas, culturales, etc.). La agenda ecofeminista no está cerrada, está, por el contrario, en plena elaboración. No obstante, puedo señalar algo que sería básico y común a todas las posibles formas:

autenticidad en el sentimiento, más allá de las modas pasajeras, y voluntad de cambio social. El ecofeminismo no puede quedarse en una práctica solitaria de perfeccionamiento personal o en un *trend* que se abandone en cuanto una revista dicte reglas antifeministas y antiecológicas para alcanzar un supuesto *glamour* y estar en la cresta de la ola. El ecofeminismo es razón y pasión transformadoras. Considero que puede llamarse praxis ecofeminista aquella que permita avanzar hacia un mundo más igualitario, no sexista, no androcéntrico, orientado a la sostenibilidad y menos antropocéntrico. Numerosas personas conscientes en el mundo buscan estos objetivos del ecofeminismo, aunque no se autodenominen ecofeministas. Reciclando, educando para el cuidado medioambiental, practicando distintas formas de activismo ecológico y decrecentista, defendiendo a los animales no humanos, produciendo según métodos de la Agroecología, organizando redes de distribución y consumo ecológicas y de comercio justo, luchando contra la pérdida de los territorios y los bienes naturales. En un sentido amplio, todas estas formas de acción, desde el plano local hasta el ciberactivismo, pueden ser consideradas ecofeministas si se acompañan de una visión no sexista y llevan a la creación de una nueva cultura de la igualdad y la sostenibilidad.

**A pesar del desarrollo del ecofeminismo en otros países europeos o en EEUU, parece ser que el ecofeminismo no ha alcanzado las mismas cotas de participación en países como España o en América Latina ¿A qué factores crees que se debe?**

Me he preguntado muchas veces sobre esta cuestión. La respuesta más inmediata es, indudablemente, que su desarrollo depende del grado de extensión de las ideas ecologistas entre la población en general y en los medios intelectuales. Ahondando un poco más, podemos decir que, en el mundo anglosajón, se dio antes un desarrollo industrial que facilitó a su vez el descubrimiento temprano de la cara menos amable de la sociedad química: los efectos de la contaminación en la salud humana y la desaparición de la biodiversidad. Remontándonos más aún en el tiempo y en las series causales, encontramos una diferencia sociocultural aparentemente ajena a la pregunta que me planteas: la Reforma protestante como interiorización de la relación con lo trascendente, motor del capitalismo inicial (y, por lo tanto, del desarrollo tecnológico moderno), como apuntara Max Weber, y punto de partida del posterior ideal de autonomía de la Ilustración. La actitud escéptica frente al ecologismo que puede observarse en tantas personas de los países fuertemente marcados por siglos de catolicismo puede relacionarse con la costumbre de asociar todas las normas, sean racionales o irracionales, a una imposición exterior. Frente a las

normas, en especial frente a las nuevas como es el caso de las exhortaciones ecologistas, en vez de practicar el juicio crítico, tal como lo aconsejaba Kant con su *sapere aude* y decidir si deben ser aceptadas o rechazadas, el individuo adopta una posición de incredulidad sistemática que, a la postre, revierte en un conformismo paralizante. La expresión «de algo hay que morir», que he oído tantas veces cuando se intenta concienciar sobre la toxicidad de ciertas sustancias que se están introduciendo en el medio ambiente a expensas de la salud, es un ejemplo de esta actitud transgresivo-conformista. Otro factor a tener en cuenta es la relación con el paisaje. Se ha señalado que el ecologismo ha tenido una implantación más rápida y profunda en aquellos pueblos que admiran y respetan a los bosques hasta el punto de asociar su identidad con ellos. En culturas en las que el árbol es visto como un obstáculo que hay que suprimir para alcanzar el desarrollo moderno, el camino al ecologismo y al ecofeminismo es mucho más pedregoso (y la metáfora es aquí doblemente pertinente).

**¿Cuáles crees que son los principales retos a los que se enfrenta el ecofeminismo hoy en día?**

Son muchos más pero destacaré tres: desafiar la falta de información sobre la cara oculta de la sociedad de consumo y ofrecer modelos alternativos, combatir los estereotipos sobre el ecofeminismo y enfrentarse a la Contrarreforma Patriarcal en marcha.

El primero lo comparte con el ecologismo. Gracias a Internet y a sus redes sociales, actualmente se puede tratar de contrarrestar el silencio sobre la faz perversa de la sociedad de consumo. ¿A qué me refiero al hablar de «faz perversa»? A todos los aspectos ligados a la aceleración de la producción y del beneficio de unos pocos que redundan en muchos males para el resto: la deslocalización de la producción a países en donde es posible explotar y contaminar sin trabas para producir a bajísimo coste para el Primer Mundo (de vez en cuando los medios de comunicación también se hacen eco de esta infamia, por ejemplo, tras el derrumbe de la fábrica textil de Bangladesh que mató a más de 600 obreros, en su mayoría obreras), la inimaginable tortura sufrida en criaderos y mataderos por millones de animales destinados al consumo humano, el aumento de las enfermedades causadas por la contaminación (sobre todo en mujeres debido a sus características hormonales y en niñas y niños por ser cuerpos en formación), desde la hipersensibilidad química múltiple a distintas formas de cáncer, la acelerada desaparición de especies animales y vegetales, el cambio climático que los telediarios se esfuerzan por banalizar con frases como «estos datos no son normales para la estación pero se

dio un fenómeno similar hace 40 años», etc., etc., la lista sería interminable. Informarnos sobre esta cara perversa es una obligación moral y una responsabilidad política. A partir de esta toma de conciencia, buscar y probar modos alternativos de vida más sanos, solidarios y satisfactorios.

El segundo reto es específico del ecofeminismo. Hay que combatir los lugares comunes sobre lo que es el ecofeminismo. Este es uno de los retos que tenía en mente al elaborar una teoría ecofeminista que no renegara del legado feminista de la Modernidad, es decir, de la reivindicación de la autonomía e igualdad para las mujeres. Hasta hace unos años, aún ahora incluso, muchas feministas creen que el ecofeminismo es sinónimo de identificación de mujer y maternidad. Lo imaginan como una utopía primitivista, como un retorno a comunidades tradicionales. Creen que promueve estereotipos femeninos patriarcales. Indudablemente, puede haber ecofeminismos que sean así, pero, desde luego, no lo son todos, ni es así el ecofeminismo crítico que yo propongo.

Finalmente, el tercer reto es afrontar lo que he llamado Contrarreforma Patriarcal. Cada vez que se han producido avances emancipatorios para las mujeres en la Historia ha tenido lugar una reacción sexista y hasta misógina. Así fue tras la primera y la segunda ola del feminismo, como lo ha demostrado Susan Faludi en *Backlash*. Veo signos de que se está produciendo un nuevo ciclo reaccionario hasta en países que han sido pioneros en políticas de igualdad, como los nórdicos. Un indicio de este proceso es, por ejemplo, el escandaloso caso del nuevo programa de la televisión danesa en que las mujeres deben desnudarse en silencio mientras dos varones juzgan las distintas partes de sus cuerpos y hacen comentarios degradantes sobre ellos. Quizás las protestas logren que se deje de emitir, pero, en todo caso, el intento de cosificar y denigrar ya se ha manifestado. Las cifras de violencia de género en la pareja en todo el mundo y los feminicidios en ciertas zonas de América Latina son, asimismo, elocuentes fenómenos de reacción ante mujeres que se independizan o ya no se pliegan fácilmente a las exigencias patriarcales. Los fundamentalismos religiosos son otro motor de la Contrarreforma Patriarcal. En nuestro país, por ejemplo, se expresa en una propuesta de ley de interrupción del embarazo que es un retorno al pasado y una negación de las mujeres como sujetos autónomos capaces de una maternidad consciente. Hasta en ciertas tendencias del ecologismo se puede percibir un intento de devolver a las mujeres al hogar y a su función de madres a tiempo completo en nombre de lo natural. Frente a esta Contrarrevolución Patriarcal que nos reduce a cuerpos para el placer o para la crianza, el ecofeminismo tiene que afirmar, alto y claro, que las mujeres somos personas y que no vamos a renunciar a los espacios de libertad conquistados por la lucha feminista de las que nos precedieron.



# AN INTERVIEW WITH ALICIA PULEO<sup>1</sup>: REFLECTIONS ON ECOFEMINISM

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## Introduction

From the beginning of the eighties ecofeminism has revealed how the model of patriarchal capitalist exploitation that has brought us to the present environmental crisis, had turned its back on nature and remained clearly alien to an ethics of care. Nowadays it is necessary to re-think the socio-cultural parameters that have objectified nature subordinating it to the logics of an economy-focused exploitation inside a neo-liberal context. However, it is not enough to think that climate change and the present ecological crisis can be dealt with as a simple problem of our 'life style'. It is necessary to go beyond questioning the levels of production and consumption that are instigated by the capitalist bubble of (post)modernity in which we live to propose solutions that are urgently needed.

In this sense Alicia Puleo's book, *Ecofeminismo para otro mundo posible*, presents us with a new Ariadne, daughter of feminist theories and ecology. Puleo's ecofeminism responds not only to an ethical reflection but also to a socio-political consideration of the relationship between human beings and nature. She proposes a critical ecofeminism that lays claim to the principles of

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1. Alicia Puleo is a pioneer in ecofeminism and its main representative in Spain. She has a Ph.D. in Philosophy and is Professor of Ethics and Political Philosophy at the University of Valladolid (Spain). She has written many articles and books on Feminist Philosophy and Environmental Ethics including *Dialéctica de la sexualidad. Género y sexo en la Filosofía Contemporánea*, Cátedra, Madrid, 1992; *El reto de la igualdad de género. Nuevas perspectivas en Ética y Filosofía Política*, Editorial Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 2008. Her latest book is *Ecofeminismo. Para otro mundo posible*, Cátedra, Madrid, 2011.

equality, proposing the universalization of an ethics of care, not just towards human beings but also towards animals and nature, at the same time as she takes on an intercultural dialogue and affirms a sense of compassion as a path towards a new ecological culture. Puleo skilfully criticizes neoliberal globalization, condemning social injustices and inequalities. But she also proposes practical and theoretical solutions to create a more sustainable future, defending her claim that another world is possible whilst considering concepts such as freedom, equality and sustainability.

However, certain questions remain unsolved. Do we urgently need a radical social catharsis and what form would it take? Is it really possible to conceive an ecofeminist theory that might realistically challenge dominant neoliberalism? And, in this case, what would its main characteristics be? The following is a summary of the interview carried out with Alicia Puleo in which she responds to these questions, as well as defining the main characteristics of critical ecofeminism as a philosophical challenge and a social movement.

#### **What does ecofeminism mean for you?**

I understand ecofeminism as the recognition of two unresolved subjects of ethics and political philosophy. On the one hand, we have already begun but have not yet achieved the task of becoming a society, a culture, that is really egalitarian and not androcentric. On the other hand, we believe that it is necessary to do something to stop the progress of climatic change, environmental contamination and the destruction of our biodiversity [...]

As for my own position as an ecofeminist, which is described in detail in the book *Ecofeminismo. Para otro mundo posible*, I have called it 'critical ecofeminism' in order to underline the necessity to conserve, whilst duly reviewing and updating, the enlightened legacy against prejudice as well as addressing the equality and autonomy of women.

#### **Do you think there is a unique 'ecofeminism' or, on the contrary, should we speak of 'ecofeminisms'?**

It has been said that there are as many types of ecofeminism as there are ecofeminists. What justifies the use of the term 'ecofeminism' in the singular is that they all share the same approach and are able to articulate different contributions from feminism and ecology [...]

Historically speaking, the roots of ecofeminism come from the union of feminist activists with ecologists, and the role of women conceived as mediators between nature and culture. In your book however, you claim that to be an ecofeminist does not necessarily imply that women are more connected to nature or to life than men. Surely this idea goes against the voices of some promoters of ecofeminism like Vandana Shiva?

I'd like to go back to the ideas that underpin this question. Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* condemned the fact that the patriarchal legitimization of the exclusion of women from Culture came from their designation as the Other, as Mother Earth, as Nature. Sherry Ortner held that all cultures saw the Woman as being a mediator between Nature and Culture due to their responsibilities of upbringing and preparing food (1974). Following this, during the late seventies of the last century some ecofeminists developed an essentialist line of thought, accepting the traditional bipolarization of sexes. Women, from their point of view, were closer to Nature, as they were both givers and carers of Life, whilst men were considered aggressive beings biologically destined for war. In the eighties this 'classical' ecofeminism was criticised by Vandana Shiva who, as a follower of Mahatma Gandhi's ideas, appropriately pointed out, using the figure of the famous pacifist, that not all men responded to this prototype of destructive essence. But even Shiva was accused by some feminists from her own country of conducting an essentialization and idealization of 'the Indian woman', by forgetting factors such as class and rural or urban context. I'm not going to enter into the complex polemic on Shiva's work. I will, however, state that the ecofeminist works of a philosophical nature that have developed from the nineteen nineties onwards have avoided falling into a stereotyped vision of gender. My own work can be seen inside this framework of aspiration to analyse culture and the conviction of its possibilities for transformation.

**Is it possible to talk of ecofeminism without any consideration of gender?**

The perspective of gender is a powerful tool of analysis to understand the cultural processes that have constructed sexual identities. It has served and serves to perceive and make visible the inequality, discrimination and prejudices of sex, as long as it is bestowed with a critical content, of course. The concept of gender and the system of sex-gender are also, in some cases, used by social sciences with a merely descriptive character: for example, when it is said that women in such and such a society are in charge of this, and men are in charge of that, or that the rules for the female group are these and those

for men are these others, etc. By including the concept of gender in the last third of the twentieth century, feminism gave it an ethical use and meaning, referring to values and readings of political philosophy that go way beyond the simple descriptive use. Notions like those of justice, equality or non-discrimination belong to this register.

When I speak of gender in my ecofeminist works, I assume the concept of this double descriptive and critical meaning that belongs to feminism. There are feminists who prefer not to use this term, but this is not my case.

**In your book you claim that ‘We need to think of the reality of our current world with the keys that feminism and ecology have given us’ (Puleo, 2011: 403). What are these keys?**

In the space of this interview it’s impossible to go into detail, but I’ll at least try to give some clues [...]

Environmentalism provides us with the holistic perspective necessary to understand that we live in ecosystems in which all the elements are inter-linked and depend on each other. It warns us that we are heading towards an abyss without return and that it is time to discover more satisfying ways of living, from our diet to the administration of our time (which by no means implies going back to a primitive society). It also offers us a vision which transcends anthropocentrism, going beyond that narcissistic and guileless look of our species that thinks that the *anthropos* is the centre of the world, the bearer of the meaning of all existence.

By condemning the androcentric subtext of control over the natural non-human world, typical of the model of the warrior and the conqueror, by showing us other ways of being in contact with Nature, through caring for it, ecofeminism allows us to take a step back from the devastating and individualistic consumer society which surrounds us.

**Do you really think it is possible to build a society where equality and sustainability are prioritized?**

If there is something we can be absolutely sure of, it is that we will not be able to progress towards a better world without having a regulative horizon to head towards [...]

To answer your question about whether I believe in the possibility of building a fair and ecologically sustainable society I will answer with a phrase from Gramsci that I feel is particularly appropriate: ‘pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will’. Having said that, I would also like to add that there are

certain fields undergoing change that are making really surprising progress. The growing extension of the notion of rights to include nonhuman animals - for equality going beyond humanity - seems to me to be a sign of generosity and willingness to do justice that gives me back faith in our species. And the same technological means, by which today a neoliberal globalization is taking place, which exploits and destroys at a rhythm which had not been possible before, could be used to fight for that other world which is possible. A simple example: nowadays we collect signatures in campaigns which are concerned with human beings, animals and remote ecosystems that we will probably never even know, and yet they still provoke our empathy, our indignation, our action. The internet and its social networks form a virtual realm that allows us to know facts that are often silenced by the mass media. And it's not just about receiving information but also exchanging it and acting in consequence as a global society that cares for a common Earth.

#### **What role should ecofeminism play in that of political ecology?**

I have held that ecofeminism is, because of its feminist starting point, a social environmentalism that questions the existing connections between the exploitation of Nature and that which human beings suffer. Ecofeminism is the gender awareness of Political Ecology. This doesn't mean that it is a special section of Political Ecology or that it can be classified inside it. Ecofeminism, like feminism in general, is multiple and it is advisable that it keeps its independence and diversity [...]

#### **What does it take to be a real ecofeminist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?**

I'm not trying to lay down rules! I think that there are many ways of being an ecofeminist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and that, in a way, it depends on our context (rural or urban), our beliefs (religious or atheist), and our activities (professional, family, political, cultural, etc.) The ecofeminist agenda is not closed; it is, on the contrary, in the process of being created. However, I would like to point out something that is both basic and common to all the forms possible: it requires authenticity in its feeling, beyond being a passing fad, and the will for social change. Ecofeminism cannot remain a solitary practice of personal development or a trend that is abandoned as soon as a magazine dictates antifeminist and anti-ecological rules in order to become supposedly glamorous and be on the crest of the wave. Ecofeminism is both reason and passion transformed [...]

**Despite the development of ecofeminism in other European countries and in USA, ecofeminism does not appear to have taken the same path in countries such as Spain or Latin America. What do you think are the main reasons for this?**

I've asked myself the same question many times. The most immediate answer is, undoubtedly, that its development depends on the degree of expansion of environmental visions amongst both the population in general and the intellectual media. Looking at this in more depth, we can say that in the Anglo-Saxon world industrial development took place before allowing at the same time for an earlier discovery of the less affable side of a chemical society: the effects of contamination in human health and the disappearance of biodiversity. If we go back even further in time and look for the causes, we can find a socio-cultural difference that would appear to be alien to the question that you have just asked me: the protestant Reformation as an interiorization of the relation with what is transcendental, the engine of initial capitalism (and, therefore, of modern technological development), as Max Weber would state, and the starting point of the later archetype of autonomy of the Enlightenment. This sceptical attitude towards environmentalism can be observed in many people from countries strongly marked by centuries of Catholicism and can be related to the custom of associating all the codes of behaviour, whether rational or irrational, with an external imposition [...] Another factor to bear in mind is our relationship with landscape. It has been proved that environmentalism has had a faster and deeper implementation in nations which admire and respect their forests to the point that they associate their identity with them. In cultures in which the tree is seen as an obstacle that must be suppressed in order to achieve modern development, the road to environmentalism and ecofeminism is far more rocky (and the metaphor is doubly pertinent here).

**What do you think are the main challenges that ecofeminism faces today?**

There are many, but I will highlight three: defy the lack of information about the dark side of our consumer society and offer alternative models, fight against stereotypes related to ecofeminism and confront the existing Patriarchal Counter-Reformation.

The first is common to environmentalism. Thanks to the internet and social networks, today we can try to counteract the silence about the perverse side of a consumer society [...] To inform ourselves about this perverse side is a moral obligation and a political responsibility. Once we have begun raising awareness, we can look for and undertake healthier, more caring and more satisfactory alternative ways of life.

The second challenge is specific to ecofeminism. It is necessary to go beyond the common spheres of what ecofeminism is. This is one of the challenges that I had in mind whilst elaborating an ecofeminist theory that would not reject the feminist legacy of Modernity, that is, the recognition of the autonomy and equality for women [...]

Finally, the third challenge is to tackle what I have called the Patriarchal Counter-Reformation. Each time that there has been emancipatory progress for women in history there has been a sexist and even misogynist reaction. This was the case after the first and second wave of feminism, as Susan Faludi has demonstrated in *Backlash* [...] Religious fundamentalism is another engine of the Patriarchal Counter-Reformation. In Spain, for example, this can be found in a proposed law against the termination of pregnancy that is a return to the past and a denial of women as autonomous subjects capable of a conscious motherhood. Even in certain branches of environmentalism an attempt to send women back to the domestic sphere and to their function of being full-time mothers can be seen as an appeal to what is 'natural'. Alongside this Patriarchal Counter-Reformation that reduces us to bodies for pleasure and for breeding, ecofeminism has to affirm, loud and clear, that women are people and that we are not going to surrender the spaces of liberty conquered by the feminist struggle of those who came before us.







# FEMINIST ECOCRITICISM: THE NEW ECOFEMINIST SETTLEMENT

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## Abstract

Taking into account the material feminist theories of “agency,” “matter,” and “body,” this essay examines to what extent material feminisms and trans-corporeality can be productive models for conceptualizing feminist ecocriticism, an anti-phallogocentric ecocritical theory that analyzes the complex dynamics of material agencies across human and nonhuman bodies. By contesting gendered dualities and bodily boundaries, it opens up new ecocritical pathways to deconstruct the sexist, speciesist, and homophobic discourses of nature which served as a rhetorical strategy to associate female and queer human beings with animals/nature. Feminist ecocriticism is also a form of literary criticism that examines these issues in literary texts. Richard Powers novel *Gain* provides a palpable example as it highlights the permeability of bodily natures

**Key-words:** ecocriticism, feminist ecocriticism, ecofeminism, animals/ nature, Val Plumwood, Karen Warren, Greta Gaard, Richard Powers.

## Resumen

Teniendo en cuenta las teorías del feminismo material sobre “agencia”, “materia”, y “cuerpo,” este ensayo analiza hasta qué punto el feminismo material y la transcorporeidad pueden ser considerados como modelos productivos para conceptualizar la ecocrítica feminista, una teoría ecocrítica anti-falocéntrica que analiza la compleja dinámica de las agencias materiales a través de cuerpos humanos y no humanos. El hecho de cuestionar las dualidades de género y las fronteras corporales abre nuevos caminos ecocríticos para deconstruir los discursos sexistas, especistas y homófobos de la naturaleza que sirvieron como estrategia retórica para asociar a las mujeres y los homosexuales con seres animales/ naturaleza. La ecocrítica feminista es también una

forma de crítica literaria que examina estas cuestiones a través de los textos literarios. La novela *Gain* de Richard Powers ofrece un ejemplo palpable que pone de relieve la permeabilidad de las naturalezas corporales.

**Palabras clave:** ecocrítica, ecocrítica feminista, ecofeminismo, animals/ naturaleza, Val Plumwood, Karen Warren, Greta Gaard, Richard Powers.

Although ecocriticism has been slow to respond to the ethical and ideological questions raised by ecofeminism, which has in the first place subverted the masculinist matrix of ideological formations within Western cultures, the political, ethical, and the theoretical import of ecofeminist positions have recently been reconfigured within a new mode of ecocritical inquiry, called *feminist ecocriticism*. Instead of drawing a distinction between ecocriticism and ecofeminism, which would imply pitting one against the other, Simon Estok suggests that “building on the strengths of each approach, looking at ways they complement each other, and working toward defining more fully what each approach envisions,”<sup>1</sup> would be far more productive. This promise is inaugurated by Greta Gaard in her 2010 essay, “New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a More Feminist Ecocriticism,” where she announces the emergence of feminist ecocriticism, and perceptively notes that:

the intersectional analysis of nature, gender, race, class, species, and sexuality is not confined to an essentialist definition of feminism or ecofeminism, but rather offers a strategic conceptual approach toward bringing about the social justice, economic and ecological democracy needed to solve environmental crises in the present moment.<sup>2</sup>

Following Gaard, I will argue that feminist ecocriticism brings a more pronounced feminist dimension to ecocritical studies, expanding ecocriticism’s scope and critical trajectory toward environmental and women’s reproductive justice, trans-corporeality of bodily natures, material feminisms, animal studies, and queer ecologies. Incorporating such diversity of perspectives in terms of gender, sexuality, race, identity, and species’ rights, feminist ecocriticism affirms the necessity of a new theoretical feminist perspective in environmental literatures, cultures, and science studies. Feminist ecocriticism also adopts a posthumanist ethical stance which, as Stacy Alaimo contends, “allows us to forge ethical and political positions that can contend with numerous late

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1. ESTOK, Simon C., “Bridging the Great Divide: Ecocritical Theory and the Great Unwashed,” *ESC* 31.4 (December 2005), pp.197-209. 199.

2. GAARD, Greta, “New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a More Feminist Ecocriticism,” *ISLE* 17.4 (Autumn 2010), pp. 643-665. 659.

twentieth/early twenty-first century realities in which ‘human’ and ‘environment’ can no longer be considered separate.”<sup>3</sup> From this perspective, feminist ecocriticism can be defined as the new ecofeminist settlement specifically in the fields of ecocritical studies and environmental humanities. Drawing selectively upon previous paradigms proposed within diverse branches of ecofeminist theory,<sup>4</sup> which posited various “analyses of the connections among racism, sexism, classism, colonialism, speciesism, and the environment,”<sup>5</sup> feminist ecocriticism discloses an ecofeminist vision that includes a broader scope of embodied materialist analyses of posthumanist conceptions of corporeality, and their literary permutations in the intersections between ecofeminism and ecocriticism. Modeled upon Latour’s concept of “the new settlement,”<sup>6</sup> which he has proposed to contest the dualistic logic of modernity, I will frame my argument around the concept of a new ecofeminist settlement with a more reciprocally transformed sense of the human and nonhuman worlds. In a more specific sense, the new ecofeminist settlement can be read as an emergent configuration that debunks the objectification of the natural world, women, matter, bodily natures, and nonhuman species, and opens new eco-vistas into exploring the dynamic co-extensivity and permeability of human and non-human bodies and natures. Feminist ecocriticism is the paradigmatic form of this new approach that attempts to bring sustaining meanings in the realm of materiality, discourse, and cultural imaginary for the purpose of dismantling dualistic otherness framed by “the gendered and dualistic symbolism”<sup>7</sup> in Western thought. Like Timothy Morton’s “ecology without nature,” feminist ecocriticism offers a vision of ecology without gender. This is not to say that the human is reduced into a neutral category. On the contrary, the human (also the nonhuman) is a highly gendered and sexed category, but must be thought outside the confines of gendered dichotomies, and thus outside of their abductive power imbricated in heteronormative expectations, language, and what some theorists call heteropatriarchy. Feminist ecocriticism is, thus,

3. ALAIMO, Stacy, “New Materialisms, Old Humanisms, or, Following the Submersible,” *NORA: Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*. 19.4 (December 2011), pp.280-284: 282.

4. Such as liberal feminism, cultural ecofeminism, social ecofeminism, socialist ecofeminism, vegetarian or animal ecofeminism.

5. GAARD, Greta, “Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-Placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism,” *Feminist Formations* 23.2 (Summer 2011), pp. 26-53. 27.

6. See LATOUR, Bruno, *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1999.

7. PLUMWOOD, Val, *Environmental Culture: The ecological crisis of reason*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 31.

an anti-dualist, anti-phallogocentric theory, contesting anthropocentric and phallogocentric epistemologies, and subverting all gendered associations. It sheds light on the complex interconnections of gender, sexuality, ecology, and ideology that have impacts beyond women's bodies.

On that basis, it can be said that feminist ecocriticism proceeds from the perspective of a "posthumanist ethic of the respectful encounter with 'difference'/the Other."<sup>8</sup> The posthumanist vision is characterized by its emphasis on the differential constitution of humans and nonhumans. That is, differences and distinctions matter in the interconnections of human and nonhuman spheres, not in the sense of accepting the superiority of the human and the devaluation of the nonhuman or of privileging the nonhuman at the expense of the human, but in terms of their complex entanglements. In "Nature's Queer Performativity" Karen Barad lucidly explains why difference matters by stating that

the 'posthumanist' point is not to blur the boundaries between human and nonhuman, not to cross out all distinctions and differences, and not to simply invert humanism, but rather to understand the materializing effects of particular ways of drawing boundaries between "humans" and "nonhumans."<sup>9</sup>

Barad's argument is premised upon the materializing practices of differentiating, and materializing effects of boundary-making practices. These practices produce "crucial materializing effects" that need to be accounted for without taking differences and distinctions between cultural and natural forces, and human and nonhuman actors, to be foundational.<sup>10</sup>

This vision that ostensibly highlights the concurrence of corporeal practice and production of social discourses, animates the new materialist theoretical discussions and standpoints of material feminisms that encourage us "to think transversally."<sup>11</sup> In other words, the interactions between nature and culture, language and reality, between ecosystems and the social and cultural structures are so entangled that disregarding this fact leads us to more fragmentary thought which, as David Bohm would say, will bring more pollution,

8. See "The Posthumanities Hub," a platform at Tema Genus (Department of Gender Studies, Linköping University) for a critical framework of posthumanities and feminist networking: <http://www.tema.liu.se/tema-g/Posthuman?l=en>

9. BARAD, Karen, "Nature's Queer Performativity," *Qui Parle* 19.2 (Spring/Summer 2011), pp.121-158: 123-124.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

11. GUATTARI, Felix, *The Three Ecologies*, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton. London: Continuum, 2000, p.29

disorder, and “destruction of the balance of nature.”<sup>12</sup> Thinking transversally, then, closes not only the Cartesian gap between mind and matter, but also allows us to recognize the ideological associations between speciesism and heterosexism, and intersecting issues of gender, sexuality, and the nonhuman world. Exemplifying this mode of liberatory thinking, Greta Gaard in her 2010 essay, “Strategies for a Cross-Cultural Ecofeminist Literary Criticism,” concedes that such connections create “linked valuations” (such as associating masculinity with activity, rationality, and culture, and equating women and femaleness with nature and passivity) which in turn lead to a system of hierarchy. Consequently, Gaard observes, this kind of hierarchy is “used to justify the domination of women, nature, and all those so associated.”<sup>13</sup> Emphasizing the importance of “the centrality of social diversity and biodiversity as necessary foundations to our survival on this planet,”<sup>14</sup> she draws attention to the necessity of a deep critique of “the many forms of alienation, hierarchy, and domination (including but not limited to speciesism, sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, and anthropocentrism).”<sup>15</sup> As many ecofeminist thinkers have previously argued, the so-called naturalized forms of othering, speciesism, sexism, instrumentalism, and domination have entailed an almost exclusive emphasis on interconnected anthropocentric and androcentric assumptions concerning the intersections of sex and nature. Val Plumwood, for example, claims that dualisms, though not immediately seen as “variants of a gendered reason/nature contrast”<sup>16</sup> are derived from this basic link between sex and nature. In *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action*, Noël Sturgeon also deliberates over how nature is raced and gendered through such concomitant postulates.<sup>17</sup> The political and ethical import of the relations between sexuality and nature has been widely discussed in a similar way and summed up by Karen Warren who has provided a theoretical space and conceptual framework for what she calls a

12. BOHM, David, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. 1980. London: Routledge rpt. 1980, 1995, p. 2.

13. GAARD, Greta, “Strategies for a Cross-Cultural Ecofeminist Literary Criticism,” *Ecozon@ 1.1* (2010), pp. 47-52. 48

14. *Ibid.*, p. 48

15. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

16. PLUMWOOD, Val, *Feminism and the Mstery of Nature*. Rpt. 1993. New York: Routledge, 1997, p.45.

17. STURGEON, Noël, *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action*, New York: Routledge, 1997, p.133.

“transformative feminisms” in challenging anthropocentric and patriarchal systems of domination, including sexism, racism, speciesism, and naturism.<sup>18</sup>

It is imperative that feminist ecocriticism foreground more theoretically “the intersections of sex and nature” which, as Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson note, “exist institutionally, discursively, scientifically, spatially, politically, poetically, and ethically.”<sup>19</sup> But it goes beyond mere theoretical foregrounding. It expands these intersections by theorizing the co-extensivity of and complex entanglements between bodies, natures, and discourses. The ideological implications of this move are such that our social and cultural meanings, and all political decisions, to quote Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, “are scripted onto material bodies.”<sup>20</sup> Materiality is literally written onto the very flesh of our bodies, and our hazardous substances that are released daily in unimaginable quantities all around the planet are mapped onto all bodily natures leading, as Serenella Iovino points out, to significant “consequences of the entanglement of matter and meaning for ecocriticism.”<sup>21</sup> Understanding such interactions, or in Alaimo’s conceptualization, “trans-corporeal” relations is, in Iovino’s words, “essential to a process of emancipation and liberation.”<sup>22</sup> Understanding that environmental toxins are feminist issues helps one understand and seek solutions for women’s predicaments in different cultures, but also the interactions of sexuality and nature, of bodily natures, and of social and environmental forces and processes.

What is fundamental to feminist ecocriticism in this regard is to critically engage with the new materialist conceptualizations of matter (such as human and nonhuman bodies, and organic and inorganic substances and forces) as an active agency, and its biocultural constitutions. As Sandilands and Erickson put it, “sexual relations organize and influence both the material world of nature and our perceptions, experience and constitutions of that

18. WARREN, Karen, “Feminism and Ecology: Making Connections,” *Environmental Ethics* 9.1 (1987), pp.13-20. 8-20.

19. SANDILANDS, Catriona-Mortimer and Bruce ERICKSON, “Introduction: A Genealogy of Queer Ecologies,” in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, eds. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010, p. 5.

20. ALAIMO, Stacy and Susan HEKMAN, “Introduction: Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory,” in *Material Feminisms*, eds. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008, pp.1-19: 8.

21. IOVINO, Serenella, “Steps to a Material Ecocriticism: The Recent Literature about the ‘New Materialisms’ and Its Implications for Ecocritical Theory,” *Ecozon@* 3.1 (2012), pp.134-145:136.

22. *Ibid.*, p.135.

world.”<sup>23</sup> Many new materialist feminists endorse this emerging paradigm with interesting accounts of how sexual diversity, sexual relations in both the human and the nonhuman world, and material agency transform our biocultural formations and our still persistent anthropocentric conceptions of nature, culture, sex, gender, and matter. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman’s *Material Feminisms* (2008) is perhaps one of the most critically acclaimed collection that heralds the “transgressive, progressive potential for theoretical engagement with materiality.”<sup>24</sup> Material feminisms could be useful in developing feminist ecocritical models that are more inclusive of social, sexual, and biodiversity and provide guidance in a world of increasingly detrimental and acute ecological crisis where, as Val Plumwood has incisively argued, “human-centered conceptual frameworks are a direct hazard to non-humans, but are also an indirect prudential hazard to Self, to humans, especially in a situation where we press limits.”<sup>25</sup> This awareness has resulted in the new materialist rethinking of bodies and natures, which can be the driving force behind feminist ecocriticism’s aim of building the new ecofeminist settlement.

The new materialists (and material feminists) perceive nature as “an active, signifying force; an agent in its own terms; a realm of multiple, inter- and intra-active cultures.”<sup>26</sup> Being thus liberated from its previous conceptualizations as a “blank, silent resource for the exploits of culture,” and from being considered as a “repository of sexism, racism, and homophobia,”<sup>27</sup> nature is discussed as a significant participatory force field in the entanglement of meaning and matter. The very materiality of nature’s bodies, forces, and substances is deliberated over their interconnections with discursive formations in social, cultural, political, literary, and philosophical fields. The intersections of materiality and discursivity create agentic fields of mutual emergence of all life forms, and connect human knowledge practices with biosemiotic emergences, where “culture is emergent in nature, and mind is emergent in body/environment.”<sup>28</sup> To elucidate this point, and the co-emergence of natural and

23. SANDILANDS, Catriona-Mortimer and Bruce ERICKSON, “Introduction.” p.5.

24. See note 9 in Stacy ALAIMO’s chapter “Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture, and Pleasure of ‘Queer Animals,” in *Queer Ecologies*, p.69.

25. PLUMWOOD, Val, “Nature in the Active Voice,” *Australian Humanities Review* 46 (May 2009), pp.113-129:117.

26. ALAIMO, Stacy and Susan HEKMAN, “Introduction: Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory,” p.12.

27. *Ibid.*

28. WHEELER, Wendy, “The Biosemiotic Turn: Abduction, or the Nature of Creative Reason in Nature and Culture,” in *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches*, eds. Axel GOODBODY and Kate RIGBY, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011, pp. 270-282: 271.



cultural evolution, Wendy Wheeler writes in her Introduction to *Biosemiotics: Nature-Culture-Science-Semiosis*, one of the “Living Books About Life,” that

questions raised by biosemiotically informed understandings concern not only the ways in which cultures rearticulate patterns in nature within their own historical cultural Umwelten, and the understanding of ‘mind’ as embodied and enworlded distributed intelligence, but also the relationship between living and nonliving nature. That the material world is legible both cenoscopically (for everyone) and idioscopically (via science) raises the topic of physiosemiosis – the fact that, for living things, matter is lively and potentially legible in living body-mind-Umwelten. Peirce himself thought that matter was ‘effete mind’ (Peirce, 1992: 293) in a ‘universe [...] perfused with signs’ (Peirce, 1998b: 394).<sup>29</sup>

The biosemiotic attestation that matter is agentic, lively, and perfused with signs, and that the material world is legible, recalls not only Jane Bennett’s theorization of matter’s vibrancy and vitality, but also Karen Barad’s conceptualization of the complementarity between matter and discourse, and matter and meaning. Thus, from a perspective that conflates materiality and discursivity, and a vision that cultivates the co-emergence of “naturecultures,”<sup>30</sup> the new materialist stance creates an interesting critical impulse toward an epistemic shift in social sciences, environmental humanities and feminist theory. This radical vision is foremost premised upon the critically acknowledged agentic capacity of “vibrant matter.” Theorizing “a vitality intrinsic to materiality,” and identifying the “human-nonhuman assemblages as a locus of agency,”<sup>31</sup> Jane Bennett, for example, proposes a shift from “environmentalism to vital materialism, from a world of nature versus culture to a heterogeneous monism of vibrant bodies.”<sup>32</sup> This conceptual shift is articulated in such metaphorical terms as Andrew Pickering’s concept of the mangle, the “constitutive *inter-twining* ... between material and human agency;”<sup>33</sup> Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory, a network in which both human and nonhuman actors are semiotically and materially interrelated; Stacy Alaimo’s “trans-corporeality;” and Deleuze and Guattari’s “assemblages.” Taking her cue from the concept of

29. WHEELER, Wendy, “Introduction,” *Biosemiotics: Nature-Culture-Science-Semiosis*, Living Books About Life, Open Humanities Press, JISC, 2011, n.p. <http://www.livingbooksaboutlife.org/books>

30. ‘Naturecultures’ is Donna HARAWAY’s conceptualization of the integrative vision of nature and culture.

31. BENNETT, Jane, *Vibrant Matter: A political ecology of things*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. xiii, 37.

32. *Ibid.*, p.121.

33. PICKERING, Andrew, *The Mangle of Practice: Time, Agency, & Science*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, p.15.

assemblage to indicate how the human is always already intertwined with the nonhuman, Bennett invokes “bacteria colonies in human elbows,” and thus shows “how human subjects are themselves nonhuman, alien, outside, vital materiality.”<sup>34</sup> According to Bennett, the “human agency is always an assemblage of microbes, animals, plants, metals, chemicals, word-sounds, and the like—indeed, that insofar as anything “acts” at all, it has already entered an agentic assemblage.”<sup>35</sup> The interchanges of “humans and their (social, legal, linguistic) constructions,” and “active and powerful nonhumans: electrons, trees, wind, fire, electromagnetic fields”<sup>36</sup> are theorized in a horizontal way. Donna Haraway refers to such mingling of diverse entities both human and nonhuman as “the partners in infoldings of the flesh.” Similar to Bennett’s view of entanglements, Haraway considers all material “things” to be “composed of diverse agents of interpretation,” and conceives them as “conjoined forces.”<sup>37</sup> The way she elaborates on this conjunction foregrounds a possibility not of coherent and harmonious blend of human and nonhuman natures, but one that blatantly exposes the problematic “motley of associations” (such as enclosure) and their effects in the compounds:

Never purely themselves, things are compound; they are made up of combinations of other things coordinated to magnify power, to make something happen, to engage the world, to risk fleshly acts of interpretation.

Technologies are always compound. They are composed of diverse agents of interpretation, agents of recording, and agents for directing and multiplying relational action. These agents can be human beings or parts of human beings, other organisms in part or whole, machines of many kinds, or other sorts of entrained things made to work in the technological compound of conjoined forces. Remember also, one of the meanings of compound is “an enclosure, within which there is a residence or a factory”—or, perhaps, a prison or temple. Finally, a compound animal in zoological terminology refers to a composite of individual organisms, an enclosure of zoons, a company of critters infolded into one. Connected by Crittercam’s stolon—that is, the circulatory apparatus of its compounded visualizing practices—zoons are technologies, and technologies are zoons.<sup>38</sup>

In their introduction, Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, the editors of the much acclaimed volume, *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* also discern matter as “active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable,” with

34. *Ibid.*, p.120.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

36. *Ibid.*, p.24.

37. HARAWAY, Donna, J. *When Species Meet*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. 250.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 250.

“emergent, generative powers,” which can only be properly understood in what they call “choreographies of becoming.”<sup>39</sup> The diva of the new materialist theory, quantum physicist Karen Barad, however, provides the most elaborate theoretical framework for this new paradigm by proposing a “*post-humanist performative* approach to understanding technoscientific and other naturalcultural practices that specifically acknowledges and takes account of matter’s dynamism.”<sup>40</sup> This dynamism, she argues, is agency. “Agency is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfigurings of the world. The universe is agential intra-activity in its becoming.”<sup>41</sup> Barad coins the term “intra-action” to explain “*the mutual constitution of entangled agencies.*”<sup>42</sup> Intra-action does not assume separate agencies that precede their interaction. Rather distinct agencies, Barad claims, emerge through their intra-action. Barad’s posthumanist approach, as I have argued elsewhere, has significant implications for feminist ecocriticism, because it provides

a solid foundation for feminist discussions of the body that transcends the dualism of discourse and matter, as well as biological sex and gender as categories of cultural analysis. The gendered bodies are no longer disembodied discursive subjects, but emerge through their differential becoming as embodied subjects intra-acting with myriads of visible and invisible agents of the material world (bacteria, viruses, toxic chemicals, food, water, energy).<sup>43</sup>

In a categorical compliance with the insights of the new materialisms, feminist ecocriticism’s conceptual horizons rest on the assumption that the gendered dichotomies hidden in the phallogocentric Western thought can be surmounted by adopting a relational ontology emerging from what Karen Barad calls “material-discursive practices.” According to Barad, the “relationship between the material and the discursive is one of mutual entailment.”<sup>44</sup> Accommodating this integral vision, feminist ecocriticism considers gendered bodies, not as purely cultural or discursive constructs, but as differentially constituted material-discursive subjects, enmeshed in the material world of powerful volatile agents, such as toxic chemicals, radioactivity, and viruses.

39. COOLE, Diana and Samantha FROST, “Introducing the New Materialisms,” in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, eds. Diana COOLE and Samantha FROST. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 1-43: 9-10.

40. BARAD, Karen, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2007, p.135.

41. *Ibid.*, 141.

42. *Ibid.*, p.33.

43. See OPPERMAN, Serpil, “Feminist Ecocriticism: A Posthumanist Direction in Ecocritical Trajectory,” in *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism*, eds. Greta GAARD, Simon C. ESTOK, and Serpil OPPERMAN, New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 19-36: p.25.

44. BARAD, Karen, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, p. 152

It investigates the embodiment of gendered bodies in earthly processes, and how our bodies interact with myriad forms of agentic matter and especially poisonous substances. These are agentic lethal entities Stacy Alaimo labels as “deviant agencies of xenobiotic chemicals,”<sup>45</sup> which co-constitute much of bodily natures in highly toxic environments both humans and nonhumans inhabit today. The human body, Alaimo writes, “is permeable and thus vulnerable to particular locations and substances,” and “the very substance of the self is interconnected with vast biological, economic, and industrial systems that can never be entirely mapped and understood.”<sup>46</sup> In this sense, the social and the biological compose what Nancy Tuana calls “viscous porosity” of human and nonhuman realms just as “the porosity of entities”<sup>47</sup> does in her understanding of the interchanges between human and nonhuman bodily natures. Tuana discusses hurricane Katrina as “emblematic of the viscous porosity between humans and our environment, between social practices and natural phenomena.”<sup>48</sup> Viscous porosity explains the interweaving of human agency with the more-than-human world in ways that illuminate how we are co-constituted; how, for example, the water we drink, the food we consume, and the mite we sleep with in our beds become part of our flesh, making all ontological divides between the human and the environment untenable. Trans-corporeality is another significant new materialist concept that explains the inseparability of human corporeality from nonhuman environments. By emphasizing the movement across bodies, trans-corporeality “reveals the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures.”<sup>49</sup> In her important essay “Trans-Corporeal Feminism and the Ethical Space of Nature,” Stacy Alaimo defines the concept as a theoretical site, “a place where corporeal theories and environmental theories meet and mingle in productive ways.”<sup>50</sup> Like viscous porosity, trans-corporeality designates ethical, social, biological, and cultural meanings that emerge from what Alaimo calls the “literal contact zone between human corporeality and more-than-human nature.”<sup>51</sup>

45. ALAIMO, Stacy, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2010, p 139.

46. *Ibid.*, p.23.

47. TUANA, Nancy, “Viscous Porosity: Witnessing Katrina,” in *Material Feminisms*, eds. Stacy ALAIMO and Susan HEKMAN. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2008, pp. 188-213.191.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 193.

49. ALAIMO, Stacy, *Bodily Natures*, p.2.

50. ALAIMMO, Stacy, “Trans-Corporeal Feminism and the Ethical Space of Nature,” in *Material Feminisms*, eds. Stacy ALAIMO and Susan HEKMAN. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2008, pp.237-264. 238.

51. *Ibid.*, p.238.

Being corporeally enmeshed with heterogeneous agencies that comprise the bodily natures of often unpredictable “nonhuman creatures, ecological systems, chemical agents, and other actors,”<sup>52</sup> brings multiple risks in the form of incurable illnesses and viral diseases such as metastatic cancer, birth defects, mad cow disease, or avian influenza endemic to birds, known as the deadly chicken flu, as well as contamination of landscapes and waterscapes, extinction of species, biodiversity loss, and climate change. Trans-corporeality also discloses the political and cultural dimensions of toxic human and animal bodies. Environmental historian Nancy Langston highlights this dimension in *Toxic Bodies: Hormone Disruptors and the Legacy of DES*, and makes a clarion call for a new ecology of health. She calls the bodies of American women toxic waste sites, who are exposed to synthetic chemicals, such as the hormone disruptor diethylstilbestrol (DES) prescribed by doctors to women initially for menopause and used by American farmers on cattle to promote rapid weight gain. Although DES is no longer used, “livestock continue to be treated with steroids,” Langston contends, “while pesticides continue to proliferate in the food supply.” She also points to the dangers of plastics such as bisphenol A, which seep into drinking water, and “every month brings new reports of intersex fish and cancer-ridden whales.”<sup>53</sup> Langston’s compelling argument reveals how such synthetic chemicals poison the bodies of livestock, human and wildlife bodies, and disrupt the ecosystems. DES is a palpable example of trans-corporeality, with disturbing political and economic reverberations. As Langston elaborates: “Toxic chemicals have the potential to cross the boundaries between species and generations, altering the hormone systems that shape our internal ecosystems of health, as well as our relationship with the broader ecosystems around us.”<sup>54</sup> In a feminist ecocritical context, women’s bodies as the very material sites perlocated through dangerous nonhuman material agencies, are also complex sites of ideological, ecological, and discursive power relations whereby we are encouraged to rethink the materiality of bodies interconnected with their discursive formations.

*Toxic Bodies* can be read as a profound contestation of women’s bodies as a matrix for phallogocentric imaginary. Evidently, toxic bodies signify a denaturalization of the logic of patriarchal categories, which relegate the female body (along with queer bodies human and nonhuman) to radical alterity. Trans-corporeality in this regard enables us to envision bodies, both

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52. Ibid., p. 238.

53. LANGSTON, Nancy, *Toxic Bodies: Hormone Disruptors and the Legacy of DES*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010, pp. xi-xii.

54. Ibid., p. 2.

human and nonhuman, as “empirical actors” or “significant players” not only in “games of power”<sup>55</sup> as Diana Coole and Samantha Frost claim, but also in bioethical, biopolitical and biotechnological practices, policies, regulations, and their theoretical imbrications.

The complex dynamics of interdependent material agencies across human and nonhuman bodies animates much of the discussion in material feminisms, a discussion that has centered on the epistemological reconfigurations of the material-discursive landscapes and bodies, often infused with unpredictable agentic forces. How can we express these phenomena in ways that would rescind polarized logic? Or, as Val Plumwood asks in “Journey to the Heart of Stone”: “How can we re-present experience in ways that honour the agency and creativity of the more-than-human world?”<sup>56</sup> Writing about the stone as an active and responsive partner in daily experience, Plumwood’s answer is to be radically open to the Other<sup>57</sup>—in this case the stone as the alleged dead matter—so that we can really recognize “the speaking and acting stone that is all around us.”<sup>58</sup> If we can acknowledge the narrative voices of the stone, we can more easily deconstruct the sexist, speciesist, and homophobic discourses of nature (such as animality), which served as a rhetorical strategy to associate female and queer human beings with animals/nature. This approach basically challenges the exceptionalism that has been attributed to human agency (always male), and subverts “the conventional sense that agents are exclusively human who possess the cognitive abilities, intentionality, and freedom to make autonomous decisions.”<sup>59</sup> This conceptual expansion of agentic boundaries opens new feminist pathways to build anti-phallogocentric discourses, because the new materialist concept of agency signifies liberation from objectification process whereby nature and materiality (and everything associated with these categories, including women, animals, minerals, etc.) get reduced to being mere objects of knowledge and exploitation.

The conceptualization of agency in terms of creativity, generative power, action, and effectivity, rather than in terms of its human attributes of intentionality, purposive behavior, rationality, and moral will, opens up an understanding of freedom consonant with feminist ecocriticism’s vision in

55. COOLE, Diana and Samantha FROST, “Introducing the New Materialisms,” pp.19-20.

56. PLUMWOOD, Val, “Journey to the Heart of Stone,” *Culture, Creativity and Environment: New Environmentalist Criticism*, eds. Fiona Becket and Terry Gifford. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007, pp.17-36: 19.

57. *Ibid.*, p.22.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 34

59. COOLE, Diana and Samantha FROST, “Introducing the New Materialisms.” p.10.

that, to quote Elizabeth Grosz, freedom is “always and only enacted within and through the materiality that life and the nonliving share.”<sup>60</sup> Elucidating Bergson’s concept of freedom, that she claims coheres readily with feminist conceptions of liberation, sexual justice, the right to self-making, and struggle for autonomy, Grosz maintains that freedom is primarily to be understood as a capacity of the body. “It is linked to the body’s capacity for movement, and thus its multiple possibilities for action.” Freedom, according to Grosz, “is attained only through the struggle with matter, the struggle of bodies to become more than they are, a struggle that occurs not only on the level of the individual but also of the species.”<sup>61</sup> Since freedom functions through activity Grosz observes, gayness, for example, becomes “the enactment of freedom that can refuse to constrain sexuality and sexual partners to any given function, purpose, or activity.”<sup>62</sup> A more striking example of how freedom functions through activity can be given from more than 1500 animal species with sexual diversity, or homosexuality, which can “transform our conceptions of nature, culture, sex, gender, and other fundamental categories.”<sup>63</sup> Queer animals’ same-sex behavior is documented in such publications as Bruce Bagemihl’s *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity* (1999), Volker Sommer and Paul L.Vasey’s edited volume, *Homosexual Behaviour in Animals: An Evolutionary Perspective* (2006), and Aldo Poiani’s *Animal Homosexuality: A Biological Perspective* (2010), which point to the performative enactment of freedom from an evolutionary perspective. A performative understanding of this behavioral pattern seen in “hundreds of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, insects, spiders and other invertebrates”<sup>64</sup> clearly contests the persistent heteronormative perception of natural agencies that are believed to lack autonomy. The same-sex behavior in numerous animal species illustrates the posthumanist performativity of material bodies in their intra-active becoming.

60. GROSZ, Elizabeth, “Feminism, Materialism, and Freedom,” in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, eds. Diana COOLE and Samantha FROST, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 139-157: 142.

61. *Ibid.*, p.152.

62. *Ibid.*, 153.

63. ALAIMO, Stacy, “Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture, and Pleasure of ‘Queer’ Animals,” in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, eds. Catriona MORTIMER-SANDILANDS and Bruce ERICSON, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010, pp. 51-72: 59.

64. SOMMER, Volker and Paul L.VASEY, “Introduction. Homosexual behavior in animals: topics, hypotheses and research trajectories,” in *Homosexual Behaviour in Animals: An Evolutionary Perspective*, eds. SOMMER, Volker and Paul L.VASEY, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 3-44. 5.

Employing this renewed sense of freedom, feminist ecocriticism recasts the ethical concerns about the experience of queer animals and trans-gendering in more-than-human environments to make a central place for post-human ethical values. This particular feminist focus on queer elements in nonhuman nature, for example, not only provides “better accounts of the sexual diversity of natural creatures”<sup>65</sup> as Stacy Alaimo deftly notes, but also provokes a rethinking of “our most basic sense of what nature and culture mean.”<sup>66</sup> The enactment of freedom is closely associated with agency, which Barad consolidates as “‘doing’ or ‘being’ in its intra-activity.”<sup>67</sup> That means, the acts of nature are emblematic of nature’s intra-activity, its queer performativity. It is through such dynamics that the interplay of agential bodies and the environment constitutes “the ongoing materialization of the world in its intra-active becoming.”<sup>68</sup> Intersex animals instantiate one of the many dimensions of this ongoing process.

This compelling reconceptualization of bodily natures in action, especially the emphasis on the interchanges between human or nonhuman corporeality and the environment, and the theorizing of the permeable boundaries between the human and the nonhuman clearly indicates the infallible trans-corporeal proximity of intermingled bodies and horizons, consonant with feminist ecocriticism’s objective of eliminating naturism, sexism, speciesism, and homophobia as dualistic othering processes. Charting the intersections of human bodies, environmental risks, toxic landscapes, health, and cultural practices within this new ecofeminist settlement, feminist ecocriticism encourages new knowledge practices that would “foster ecology of literary knowledge ... not stigmatized by gendered natures.”<sup>69</sup> Being attentive to social, political, and cultural matters, and effectivity of matter in its various forms and processes, feminist ecocriticism aims at producing a more capacious sexual and environmental understanding, and at paving the way to new ecocritical interpretations of literary and cultural narratives that are more encompassing of intersections of sexuality and nature, bodies and the environment, and their materializing effects. To put it briefly, feminist ecocriticism suggests an emancipatory stance that proceeds in a dialectical relation to practice. Exploring literary and cultural texts where female corporeality and nonhuman bodies are problematized, contested and disrupted, feminist ecocriticism discloses

65. ALAIMO, Stacy, “Eluding Capture,” p.54.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

67. BARAD, Karen, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, p.178.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

69. OPPERMAN, Serpil. “Feminist Ecocriticism: A Posthumanist Direction,” p. 31.



how literature intersects with life itself. The body, here, as the site of theoretical considerations, and as a cultured gendered subject intra-acting with other bodies (animals, plants, chemicals, food, bacteria, etc.) as material agents suggests the possibility of a politics and poetics of nature through a broader perception of reality that includes ethics, genetics, chemistry, politics, and biotechnological advances. Furthermore, exploring “the challenging of the human/machine (nature/culture) boundary” in contemporary literary imagination, “both theoretically and practically with advances in biotechnology,” or “discourses defining the ‘posthuman’ condition”<sup>70</sup> as Laura Bartlett and Thomas B. Byers put it, has significant implications in the critical challenge of patriarchal ideologies, suspicious biotechnological developments, and medical practices.

To exemplify such a feminist ecocritical analysis, Richard Powers’s novel *Gain* can be taken as a palpable literary instance. *Gain* presents the intertwined stories of an international conglomerate, Clare, that starts out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a soap company in Boston and grows into a mega-corporation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and of an estate agent in Lacewood, Illinois, Laura Bodey, whose body is taken over by ovarian cancer just as her town is polluted by the toxic waste released by its Clare factory that produces soap, fertilizers, pesticides, bleaches, agricultural chemicals, floor wax, pharmaceuticals, artificial cheese, and house siding. Clare is built by the efforts of three brothers, Samuel, Resolve, and Benjamin, who follow in the footsteps of their father Jephthah Clare’s shipping business in the early Republic protectionist tariffs. Becoming successful soap and candle manufacturers, the brothers carry Clare from household production to mass production, and developing a new conception of cleanliness, they cleverly necessitate the consumption of soap: “The mass hygiene movement also turned out in force, ready to convert soap from an incidental indulgence to a cornerstone of rectified living.”<sup>71</sup> During its speedy growth throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the company uses its invention of packaging and product name recognition, with a trademark stamp of an Indian Brave on its Native Balm soap, “the perfect cure for the country’s growing ablutomania, a cleanliness craze Clare had helped to cause.”<sup>72</sup> The standardization of production, enforced by international competition, however, results in an impersonalization process and the unionization efforts of its workers. Clare also implements technological advances when

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70. BARTLETT, Laura and Thomas B. BYERS, “Back to the Future: The Humanist *Matrix*,” *Cultural Critique* 53, *Posthumanism* (Winter, 2003), pp. 28-46: 29.

71. POWERS, Richard, *Gain*, New York: Picador, 1998, p.222.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

Benjamin develops a laboratory that helps expand Clare from simple soap to diverse chemical production. The Clare laboratory turns “soda and animal waste to balm. Sulfur and soda to bright bleaches and colors. Gaslight waste to fertilizer. Medicaments from bicarbonate and lime.... All things chemical came from some other chemical thing. Man might learn to become matter’s investment banker.”<sup>73</sup> This historical narrative that dominates the first half of the novel is intertwined with Laura’s present-day story when the company is producing “super-pesticides.”<sup>74</sup>

Laura’s cancer and Clare become more closely correlated in the second part of the narrative which progressively underlines the environmental consequences of Clare’s work on chemical change, of properties of fat transmogrified to soap, for example, and the change of Laura’s cells to cancerous ones. The transformation of matter is mapped onto Laura’s body as well as onto the town’s environment, its soil and water. In the second half of the book, Laura’s story dramatically overtakes that of Clare, revealing the bodily effects of the medical industry, the appalling effects of chemotherapy, which ravages around Laura’s body and mind, as well as her environment. Like other houses in Lacewood, Laura’s house is full of Clare products that are present as invisible ecological contaminants. “Floor by Germ-Guard. Windows by Clare-Thru. Table by Colonial-Cote.” As Laura shockingly recognizes, “Clare hiding under the sink, swarming her medicine chest, lining the shelves in the basement, parked out in the garage, piled up in the shed.”<sup>75</sup> It is suggested in the narrative that these contaminants may have accumulated over time in Laura’s body tissues finally resulting in ovarian cancer. Laura also realizes that this is a kind of epidemic she had failed to see before:

Not just that packed cancer room at the hospital, the ring of bodies circled around their IV’s, a new batch each time she visits. Not just the neighbor’s sister-in law’s father. It is everywhere. She cannot turn around without running into someone else. Everybody is battling cancer. Why did she never see these people before?<sup>76</sup>

Depicting her everyday routine of gardening, showing houses to her clients, taking care of her children Ellen and Tim, and dealing with her ex-husband Don, and her lover Ken, Laura’s story gradually focuses on the materializing effects of her ovarian cancer and thus the deterioration of her body. Laura is tested for and diagnosed with cancer upon a routine medical exam, which,

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73. *Ibid.*, p.203

74. *Ibid.*, p.293.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 345.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

the novel hints, is caused by environmental pollution from Clare. During the course of her progressive sickening, Laura realizes that nothing is safe:

We are all surrounded. Cucumber and squash and baked potato. Fish, that great health food she's been stuffing down the kids for years. Garden sprays. Cooking oils. Cat litter. Dandruff shampoo. Art supplies. Varnish. Deodorant. Moisturizers. Concealers. Water. Air. The whole planet, a superfund site. Life causes cancer.<sup>77</sup>

Indeed, as the company deals with such substances ranging from nitrogen tetroxide, polyethylene plastic, to "aluminum sulfate, aluminum silicate, titanium dioxide, hydrated silica, hydrated alumina, tale, barium sulfate [...] polyacrylamide resins [...] and asbestos"<sup>78</sup> among many others, their environmental effects become inevitable. The powerful agency of these substances beyond human control becomes manifest in Laura's tragic descent into death. The material entanglements between Laura's body and Clare entail that the relationship between bodies and the pervasive presence of xenobiotics is much more intimate than accidental exposure to toxins around. Laura's toxic body in its deterioration becomes indistinguishable from the equally deteriorating surrounding landscape polluted by Clare's chemical products. Therefore, environmental illness and bodily disease conflate in their permeable boundaries blurring the line between inside and outside, biological and social.

In general, the novel implicitly suggests that the body is reconfigured through an intra-active engagement with toxic nonhuman forces produced through technoscientific, medical, and biotechnological practices. The materialization of toxic bodies, then, is depicted in a field of material agency, which cannot be captured or eliminated by any means. As the novel expatiates on it in painstaking detail, the idea that we can control the uncontrollable has, in ecological contexts, to borrow Katherine Hayles's words, "proven to be a tragic illusion."<sup>79</sup>

In this current situation that the novel depicts with accurate detail, human and material agency are reciprocally entangled to form agentic assemblages in "toxic, trans-corporeal, material places."<sup>80</sup> The material effects of such corporeal interchanges are not only manifest in diseases like cancer, but also in anthropogenic changes in the more-than-human world, like climate

77. *Ibid.*, p.323.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 393.

79. PIPER, Arthur. "How We Became Posthuman: Ten Years On: An Interview with N. Katherine Hayles," *Paragraph* 33.3 (2010), pp. 318-330: 325.

80. ALAIMO, Stacy, "Trans-Corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature," p. 261.

disturbances (extreme weather conditions are also highlighted in the novel) as well as in power relations. Laura's example shows how the female body is infiltrated and thus disrupted by hazardous material agency and how it becomes a symbolic site of political contestation and power struggle between the law firm that files a lawsuit against Clare and the company's fight against the resulting decline in its shares. Recounting how the body is enmeshed, not only materially but also socially and politically in the risky world of material agencies in socio-material, historical, and ecological contexts, *Gain* conveys the idea that corporeality is always imbricated in "networks that are simultaneously economic, political, cultural, scientific, and substantial."<sup>81</sup>

What makes this novel especially compelling for feminist ecocriticism is its ambivalent stance on the effect of corporate bodies, like Clare, on female bodies that are entangled with lethal substances, and their social, ecological, economic, ideological, and gendered dimensions. The tragic descent of Laura's body framed within the industrial ascent of Clare's history provoke ethical dilemmas, such as the question of how to deal with chemicals used in production of soaps, cosmetics, detergents, food, bleaches, fertilizers, pharmaceuticals and similar materials that perfuse our daily lives, providing material comforts while endangering our lives, and in a fundamental sense, defining our mundane experiences. As such, *Gain* represents the materialization effects of capitalist production and consumption through modern corporate production, which becomes a correlative to Laura's cancer, and also causes environmental devastation. To put it another way, while Clare grows through controlling natural resources, Laura's cancer grows through uncontrollable forces that result from tampering with nature's processes. This is the central motif of the novel, the mangle of material gain and cancer in a world of deviant material agency.

From the feminist ecocritical perspective cancer is a concrete invocation of toxic material agencies. It emerges from a reality in which chemical agents seem to "dictate where and how they find sustenance..."<sup>82</sup> Confronting such "pressing bioethical and biopolitical questions"<sup>83</sup> as those ambiguously raised in *Gain*, feminist ecocriticism investigates the dynamics of bodies and environments in their material-discursive, textual, and cultural forms. Reading literary texts in this specific way, and interpreting posthuman ecological environments, bodies, and texts using the conceptual models of the new materialisms, feminist ecocriticism creates a vision of interrelated forces that

81. ALAIMO, Stacy, *Bodily Natures*, p. 20.

82. COOLE Diana and Samantha FROST, "Introduction," p. 19.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

shape contemporary life, knowledge practices and discourses, and insists on new ethical considerations, standpoints, and transformative moral vistas. It takes the emerging “posthuman players” to quote Iovino, in their “alien materiality that interferes and co-acts with the bodies of living organisms and living land, exposing – by way of its dynamics of material permeability and trans-corporeality – the social and ethical blind spots of social constructs and political practices.”<sup>84</sup> The emerging posthuman understanding of the agency of such players prompts a theoretical space for a new settlement that can account for the ways in which the human is imbricated in medical, technical and economic networks. This is what feminist ecocriticism endorses in its commitment to change our “thinking about the relationship of culture and society to the natural world.”<sup>85</sup> What it brings as a new dimension is the posthumanist accounts of these relations. In this regard, the contemporary posthumanist logic of human-nonhuman relations is also the logic of feminist ecocritical studies where difference and otherness are indexed on a non-hierarchical ideology, and where otherness is not “defined on a hierarchical scale of pejorative differences.”<sup>86</sup> Otherness instead marks “the sexualized bodies of women; the radicalized bodies of ethnic or native others and the naturalised bodies of animals and earth others.”<sup>87</sup> Posthumanism in this sense is, as Rosi Braidotti claims, “a fast-growing new intersectional feminist alliance. It gathers the remains of post-structuralist anti-humanism and joins them with feminist re-appraisals of contemporary genetics and molecular biology in a non-deterministic frame.”<sup>88</sup> And feminist ecocriticism is its new ecofeminist settlement.

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86. BRAIDOTTI, Rosi, “A critical cartography of feminist post-postmodernism,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 20: 47 (2005), pp. 1-14: 3

87. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

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# «LAS PIEDRAS ME EMPEZARON A HABLAR»: UNA APLICACIÓN LITERARIA DE LA FILOSOFÍA ECOFEMINISTA<sup>1</sup>

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## Resumen

Este artículo parte de ciertas propuestas de la filosofía ecofeminista, en particular de las filósofas Val Plumwood y Karen Warren. Valores como la ética del cuidado, la mirada «afectuosa» y la relación dialógica con todos los seres de la tierra centran este pensamiento. El artículo, valiéndose de teorías de crítica literaria como el multivocalismo Bajtiniano o la imaginación empática de Randy Malamud, analiza diversas estrategias literarias de varios autores, entre ellos Linda Hogan, Ann Pancake, Starhawk y Juan Cobos Wilkins, para demostrar que estos textos literarios muestran al lector otra forma de relacionarse con el entorno, el cual puede sugerir un cambio de paradigma cultural hacia una actitud más justa y sostenible.

**Palabras clave:** ecofeminismo, Val Plumwood, Karen Warren, ética del cuidado, dialogismo, imaginación empática, Linda Hogan, Ann Pancake, Starhawk, Juan Cobos

## Abstract

This article is based on ecofeminist thought, particularly that of Val Plumwood and Karen Warren and the importance of an ethics of care, a «loving eye» and dialogical relationships with the more-than-human. Stemming from critical ideas such as Bakhtin's multivocalism and Randy Malamud's empathetic imagination, the article analyzes the literary strategies of several authors, among them Linda Hogan, Ann Pancake,

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Starhawk and Juan Cobos Wilkins to show how these texts can illustrate to the reader a different way of relating to the environment. This dialogical relationship could suggest a change of our cultural paradigms that would contribute to a more just and sustainable attitude.

**Key Words:** ecofeminism, Val Plumwood, Karen Warren, ethics of care, dialogism, empathetic imagination, Linda Hogan, Ann Pancake, Starhawk, Juan Cobos Wilkins.

La filosofía ecofeminista ha experimentado un gran desarrollo en las últimas décadas proporcionando una perspectiva innovadora y revolucionaria que relaciona la experiencia de las mujeres con la de otros seres que tradicionalmente han sido marginados por el patriarcado eurocéntrico, como pueblos indígenas, grupos raciales, seres no-humanos y naturaleza. Como Karen Warren afirma en su artículo señero «El poder y la propuesta del ecofeminismo»: «cualquier teoría feminista y cualquier ética medioambiental que no considere la interconexión entre la dominación de la mujer y de la naturaleza es, en el mejor de los casos incompleta y, en el peor de ellos, simplemente inadecuada.»<sup>2</sup> Los análisis realizados por filósofas como Karen Warren y Val Plumwood sobre el pensamiento dualístico y la lógica de la dominación hacen valer esta afirmación, y podemos encontrar filósofas españolas como Alicia Puleo haciendo amplia referencia a este modelo. No obstante, este artículo no pretende ahondar en las bases generales del ecofeminismo. Esther Rey ya realiza un repaso a la evolución del ecofeminismo,<sup>3</sup> como Alicia Puleo, que analiza con esmero dicha trayectoria con sus luces y sombras.<sup>4</sup> El objetivo está en desarrollar unos aspectos concretos de la filosofía ecofeminista, en particular la ética del cuidado y las relaciones dialógicas, y aplicarlas a la crítica literaria.

El ecofeminismo, como señala Rosemary Radford Ruether, exige «transformar aquella visión del mundo en la que subyace la dominación y sustituirla con otro sistema de valores.»<sup>5</sup> Esta transformación es bastante más radical de lo que parece y trasciende de forma importante las cuestiones de género. Karen Warren ya afirmaba en su artículo, que la ética ecofeminista era inclusivista<sup>6</sup>:

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2. WARREN, Karen, ed. *Filosofías ecofeministas*. (1996). Trad. Soledad Iriarte. Barcelona; Icaria, 2003: 62. En la medida posible, utilizaré traducciones publicadas de las fuentes.

3. REY TORRIJOS, Esther. «Por qué ellas? ¿Por qué ahora? La mujer y el medio natural: orígenes y evolución del ecofeminismo». *Ecocríticas. Literatura y medio ambiente*. Eds. C. Flys Junquera, J.M. Marrero Henríquez y J. Barella Vigil. Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2010.

4. PULEO, Alicia. *Ecofeminismo. Para otro mundo posible*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2011.

5. RUETHER, Rosemary Radford. *New Woman, New Earth. Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation*. New York: Seabury Press, 1975: 204. (Traducción propia).

6. La traducción de Iriarte de la obra de Warren citada utiliza los términos «inclusivista», «antinaturista» o «contextualista» que figuran a continuación, aunque sean anglicismos.

aunque nacía de las voces de las mujeres que habían sido marginadas al igual que los indígenas, fomentaba «la inclusividad y la diferencia», sin marginar ni excluir a nadie. El ecofeminismo «requiere una reconcepción de lo que significa ser humano, y en qué consiste el comportamiento ético humano.»<sup>7</sup> Por tanto, en ningún momento excluye a los hombres ni considera a las mujeres como superiores, sino que exige un replanteamiento de aquello que implica ser humano. Warren traza ocho características para la ética ecofeminista: 1) es antinaturista (en el sentido que está en contra de cualquier esencialismo o exclusión como el sexismo, racismo, etc.<sup>8</sup>; 2) es una ética contextualista ya que no es una posición abstracta ni de principios pre-determinados, sino que tiene en cuenta las circunstancias del momento; 3) es una ética estructuralmente pluralista al presuponer y mantener las diferencias; 4) se concibe como una teoría en proceso que puede cambiar con el paso del tiempo; 5) es una ética inclusivista; 6) no pretende ofrecer un punto de vista objetivo sino que es más afín a una ecología social; 7) valora la ética del cuidado; y 8) implica una reconcepción de lo que significa ser humano y del comportamiento ético humano.<sup>9</sup> Estas características hacen que el ecofeminismo sea una filosofía bastante distinta a las escuelas tradicionales.

Val Plumwood, en su libro clave, *Environmental Culture*, mantiene la importancia de los orígenes del ecofeminismo en la lucha feminista y afirma que esta lucha ha sido necesaria y útil pues llevó al análisis de la lógica de la dominación. Sin embargo, su análisis trasciende el tema del género, centrándose en la excesiva valoración del raciocinio en nuestra cultura, la falacia del *human-centredness* (centralidad de lo humano) y nuestra incapacidad de situarnos como seres ecológicos. Plumwood aboga por un cambio de paradigma cultural que lleve a los seres humanos a entablar una relación de socios, una relación dialógica y recíproca con la naturaleza, devolviendo así a los seres no-humanos una consideración ética.<sup>10</sup> Así pues, para Plumwood las cuestiones de género dejan de ser centrales en pos de la búsqueda de algo mucho más transcendental como replantear lo que significa ser humano y cambiar nuestra ubicación dentro del ecosistema planetario. Este aspecto hace cuestionar hasta qué punto el nombre de la tendencia filosófica es ya

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Puleo critica esta traducción de Iriarte del inglés «anti-naturist» por confundirse con el naturismo. *Ecofeminismo*: pp. 80-81.

7. WARREN, Karen. Op. cit., pp. 86-87.

8. WARREN, Op. Cit., p. 83.

9. WARREN Ibid., pp. 83-86.

10. PLUMWOOD, Val. *Environmental Culture. The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. London: Routledge, 2002: pp. 238-239. (Traducción propia).

adecuado. Margarita Carretero, entre otras, alerta sobre el peligro de entender el ecofeminismo como un movimiento esencialista y reduccionista, haciendo notar que precisamente las ecofeministas de «integración crítica»<sup>11</sup>, entre ellas Plumwood y Warren, reivindican una igualdad y rechazan el esencialismo.<sup>12</sup> Si bien los orígenes de la tendencia en el feminismo están claros, su desarrollo va más allá de temas de género o planteamientos raciales o postcoloniales para cuestionar la misma condición humana. Particularmente en este país, donde el término «feminista» aún despierta recelos en muchas personas por considerarse como una perspectiva radical que sobrevalora a la mujer por encima del hombre, el término «ecofeminismo» se plantea como algo mucho más radical, y por ello, algo negativo, provocando cierto rechazo. Quizás es hora de buscar otro término que refleje ese cambio de paradigma cultural.

De cualquier modo, el objetivo de este artículo es centrarse en algunos aspectos de esta perspectiva, recogiendo las implicaciones de la ética del cuidado ecofeminista y esa propuesta de una relación dialógica con todos los seres (humanos o no) que comparten este planeta. En primer lugar, resumiré brevemente estos dos aspectos del ecofeminismo para luego ilustrar cómo ciertos textos literarios pueden representar estas actitudes de forma más visible y práctica, permitiendo al lector replantearse sus actitudes culturales y su propia ubicación moral en el mundo.

Una de las características más importantes del ecofeminismo es la ética del cuidado. Alicia Puleo<sup>13</sup> dedica una sección de su libro al debate suscitado por esta reivindicación, ya que tradicionalmente se ha considerado que la moral debía partir de una actitud neutral, basada en la razón, mientras que la ética del cuidado, basada en valores tradicionalmente (aunque no exclusivamente) femeninos, como el cuidar, nutrir, mostrar afecto, ni son, ni pueden ser neutrales. Al contrario, la ética del cuidado subraya la importancia de los sentimientos y las emociones. Warren describe la séptima característica de la ética ecofeminista como una que «ofrece una posición central a los valores de respeto, amor, amistad, confianza y reciprocidad, valores que presuponen que nuestras relaciones con otros son cruciales para entender quienes somos.»<sup>14</sup> Esta es la ética del cuidado. La feminista Marilyn Frye ya distinguía entre una «mirada arrogante» y una «mirada afectuosa.» La mirada

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11. Término de Alicia Puleo: *Filosofía, Género y Pensamiento Crítico*. Valladolid: Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Editorial de la Universidad de Valladolid: 2000.

12. CARRETERO, Margarita «Ecofeminismo y análisis literario» en FLYS JUNQUERA et al., p. 183.

13. PULEO, Alicia. *Ecofeminismo*. Pp. 53-64.

14. WARREN, Karen. Op. Cit., pp. 86.

arrogante, característica de la lógica de la dominación y de todas las empresas colonizadoras, ve al *otro* como algo consumible o útil que debe ser asimilado o conquistado. Por otro lado, la mirada afectuosa reconoce la diferencia e independencia del *otro* y pretende llegar a conocerlo, entenderlo y apreciarlo. Intenta distinguir entre los intereses propios y los posibles intereses del *otro* y su complejidad. Reconoce la relación entre ambos, pero es una relación de complementariedad y no una fusión.<sup>15</sup> La ética del cuidado bebe de esta mirada afectuosa, dirigida tanto a otros seres humanos como a los no-humanos. De hecho, Karen Warren aplica este concepto de Frye a la escalada de una montaña y habla de la mirada afectuosa a la roca.<sup>16</sup>

La ética del cuidado también cuestiona el discurso de los derechos puesto que estos tienden a otorgar derechos a los seres no-humanos en base a su similitud con los seres humanos (capacidad de sentir o sufrir), y en ese sentido, niegan la diferencia e independencia del *otro*, limitando los derechos a ciertas especies, como los primates o los mamíferos. De hecho, como afirma Cary Wolfe, este modelo de derechos acaba reforzando precisamente el humanismo y especismo que pretende eliminar.<sup>17</sup> Por otra parte, Deane Curtin aboga por una ética del cuidado politizada en vez de la perspectiva de los derechos ya que ésta última tiende a enfatizar los procedimientos formales, la identidad de los intereses morales y el entendimiento adversativo del discurso moral. En cambio, como señala Curtin, las experiencias morales de las mujeres reflejan la pluralidad de sus intereses morales, la importancia del contexto en la toma de decisiones, la tendencia a combinar diversos intereses de forma no-adversativa y el hecho de considerar a las personas como agentes morales, caracterizados tanto por sus relaciones como por sus cuerpos.<sup>18</sup>

15. FRYE, Marilyn. «In and Out of Harm's Way: Arrogance and Love» en *The Politics of Reality*. Trumansburg, N.Y.: The Crossing Press, 1983; pp. 66-72.

16. WARREN, Karen. Op. Cit., pp. 77-79.

17. WOLFE, Cary. *Animal Rites. American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003; p. 192.

18. CURTIN, Deane. »Hacia una ética de respeto por la naturaleza» en WARREN Op. Cit., p. 136. Soledad Iriarte traduce «ethics of care» por «ética de respeto» en su traducción del libro de Warren. Sin embargo, Puleo usa la expresión «ética del cuidado.» Prefiero este último término pues aunque suene algo disonante en castellano, pienso que trasmite mejor el concepto del afecto que la palabra «respeto». Al igual, en esta página Iriarte traduce «personhood as relational» como «la persona como ser racional»; traducción con la que estoy en desacuerdo y por tanto transmito como «seres caracterizados por sus relaciones», dado que para las ecofeministas, nuestra identidad no es individual sino relacional: la octava característica de Warren es precisamente la negación del individualismo abstracto a favor de una identidad «en virtud de los contextos históricos y sociales en los que viven y de sus relaciones incluyendo la relación con la naturaleza. Las relaciones no son extrínsecas a nosotros, ni un rasgo 'añadido' a la naturaleza

Esta consideración de identidad relacional implica la disposición empática para entrar y compartir el mundo del *otro*, de escuchar y buscar una relación recíproca con los seres no-humanos, aunque sea intuitiva o imaginativa y no racional. Plumwood muestra su cansancio con los discursos filosóficos abstractos acerca de valores éticos y su posible aplicación a la naturaleza y exige que se dé un paso adelante, cruzando el umbral del discurso para abordar la forma concreta de desarrollar respuestas éticas adecuadas hacia el mundo no-humano.<sup>19</sup> Como afirma Roger King, la ventaja del discurso de la ética del cuidado es que no solo señala la dificultad de establecer relaciones significativas y morales con el entorno en nuestra cultura, sino que nos insta a ser creativos y buscar soluciones cambiando nuestra imaginación moral, percibiendo e interpretando la naturaleza; si las personas no aprecian o sienten la naturaleza, si ésta constituye una gran ausencia en sus vidas, difícilmente podrán respetarla o cuidarla<sup>20</sup>. Precisamente, las culturas indígenas han mantenido viva en su imaginario colectivo la presencia de la naturaleza como parte integral de su identidad y han mantenido esas relaciones vivas tanto en su literatura oral como escrita, así como en sus rituales. King concluye que la ética del cuidado nos ofrece un valioso punto de arranque alternativo al discurso abstracto de derechos, centrándose en las relaciones particulares y concretas en vez de recurrir a abstracciones. Este apego emocional y personal a determinados lugares o seres llevan a una realidad moral.<sup>21</sup>

Como ya hemos señalado, Plumwood sugiere que nos replanteemos nuestra respuesta ética hacia la naturaleza. Esta actitud implica el desarrollo de una ética así como de respuestas narrativas y comunicativas hacia el *otro*, desarrollando la ética del cuidado, a la vez que nuevos conceptos de virtud humana que incluyan el cuidado del mundo no-humano. Esta respuesta se podría dar al desarrollar una actitud de apertura y atención al mundo natural así como al establecer relaciones dialógicas y comunicativas de sensibilidad, negociación y adaptación mutua.<sup>22</sup> A tal efecto habría que cambiar nuestro discurso y eliminar cualquier exceso de raciocinio e intelectualismo y sustituirlos con una posición intencionada de reconocimiento de los seres no-humanos como agentes y sujetos narrativos. Esta actitud de apertura nos

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humana; tienen un papel esencial en la configuración de o que es ser humano. Las relaciones de los humanos con el medio no humano constituyen, en parte, lo que significa ser un humano». WARREN, Op cit., pp. 86-87.

19. PLUMWOOD, Val. Op. cit., p. 169.

20. KING, Roger. «Respetando la naturaleza: éticas feministas y medio ambiente» en Warren, Op. Cit., p. 164.

21. Ibid. 165-166.

22. PLUMWOOD, Val. Op. cit., pp. 169-170.

permitiría reconocer el potencial actante y dialógico de los seres naturales<sup>23</sup> y nos llevaría a volver a re-animar a la naturaleza, ya que hoy en día nuestra cultura la ha llevado a la condición de objeto pasivo.<sup>24</sup> Otra filósofa, Freya Mathews, que desarrolla una teoría panpsiquista contemporánea, también considera imprescindible buscar la forma de devolver la vida a un mundo que ha sido brutalmente silenciado<sup>25</sup> y que es necesario devolver la mente/espíritu al mundo material, de forma similar a las culturas panteístas.<sup>26</sup> Ambas insisten en reconocer la capacidad actante de los seres no-humanos. Precisamente una de las tendencias más recientes dentro del feminismo es el feminismo materialista, donde varias filósofas feministas pretenden desligar el concepto de agencialidad de la intencionalidad humana. Así pues, Karen Barad, filósofa y física cuántica, nos propone el concepto de realismo agencial, en el cual el universo consiste en una interactividad agencial por el mero hecho de su ser. Afirma que las «unidades ontológicas primarias no son cosas sino fenómenos—relaciones/reconfiguraciones/enredos/re-articulaciones topológicas y dinámicas». Consecuentemente, afirma que tanto los humanos como los no-humanos tienen capacidad actante meramente por el hecho de estar o hacer en el mundo y están inextricablemente enredados y enmarañados juntos.<sup>27</sup> Así pues, muchas de las últimas tendencias filosóficas reconocen cierta capacidad actante de la naturaleza y por tanto no es difícil plantearnos esa actitud abierta que sugiere Plumwood. Aquí es precisamente donde la literatura, a través de su imaginación, puede dar una respuesta narrativa que considere la capacidad comunicativa de los seres no-humanos y que, por tanto, sirva para devolverles la consideración ética que nuestra cultura les ha denegado, tema que abordará el resto de este artículo.

Patrick D. Murphy, crítico literario ecofeminista fundacional, que además participa en este volumen, señala que el método dialógico Bajtiniano de la multivocalía nos proporciona una forma de abordar las distintas perspectivas

23. Al usar el término «seres naturales» me refiero a los seres no-humanos (animados y no-animados) de la naturaleza que cohabitan en el planeta con los seres humanos. Soy consciente de la polisemia de la palabra «natural» pero en este contexto me refiero a los otros seres bióticos, sin entrar en la discusión de lo que es natural o no natural. En inglés con frecuencia se usan los términos «earth others», more-than-human, non-human pero no siempre son traducibles al castellano.

24. PLUMWOOD, Val. Op. Cit., p. 177.

25. MATHEWS, Freya. *For Love of Matter. A Contemporary Panpsychism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003: 8.

26. Ibid. 27.

27. BARAD, Karen. «Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter» en *Material Feminisms*. Eds. S. Alaimo y S. Hekman. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2008: 135. (traducción propia).



de todos los seres que compartimos este planeta, llegando a un nuevo entendimiento de nuestras relaciones. El concepto de tensiones centrípetas y centrífugas de Bajtin nos proporciona un medio para evitar tendencias totalitarias a la vez que expone la falacia inherente de la dicotomía centro/margen.<sup>28</sup> Esta perspectiva bajtiniana nos permite aprehender las distintas voces y contextos que se producen en el día a día, otorgando importancia a todas sin privilegiar a una en concreto. Así pues, en los ejemplos que vendrán a continuación, la multivocalía bajtiniana constituye un elemento central ya que los autores no privilegian exclusivamente la voz y perspectiva de los seres humanos sino que procuran dar voz a los seres no-humanos también. El ser humano deja de ser el único sujeto actante y se produce una interacción entre el antropocentrismo hegemónico y las distintas especies que han constituido los márgenes en nuestro discurso. Otro crítico literario, Randy Malamud, nos presenta su teoría de la imaginación empática. En su estudio de literatura sobre los animales, nos muestra que la imaginación literaria puede hacernos conscientes de las afinidades sentientes, cognitivas, éticas y emocionales entre las personas y los animales.<sup>29</sup> Así pues, el objetivo del resto de este artículo es mostrar diversas estrategias y ejemplos literarios que ilustran esa respuesta ética narrativa y comunicativa hacia los seres naturales que Plumwood reclamaba.

En principio, como ilustración utilizaré las novelas de cuatro autores contemporáneos, tres mujeres norteamericanas y un hombre español: Starhawk, Linda Hogan, Ann Pancake y Juan Cobos Wilkins, aunque haré alguna mención a otros textos literarios ocasionalmente. Deliberadamente he querido incluir un autor español, quizás más cercano al público lector ya que ni Starhawk, ni Hogan ni Pancake han sido traducidas al castellano.<sup>30</sup> Además, la selección de un hombre también es deliberada, ya que desde el principio del artículo he mostrado mi convencimiento que la filosofía ecofeminista no es exclusiva de las mujeres. Y, finalmente, también quería dejar claro que la elección es personal pero pretende ilustrar la diversidad de voces dadas las características de los autores y el tipo de obras que escriben.

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28. MURPHY, Patrick D. «Levantando vuelo: teoría ecofeminista, dialógica y práctica literaria.» en WARREN Op. cit., pp. 357-362. Para un análisis más detallado de las dicotomías que se forjan en el pensamiento dualístico occidental y sus consecuencias ver Plumwood, Op. Cit.; Warren Op. Cit. y Flys Junquera, Carmen. «Dissolving the False Divide: Literary Strategies for Re-situating Humans Ecologically and Non-Humans Ethically» *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 63 (2011): pp. 21-38.

29. MALAMUD, Randy. *Poetic Animals and Animal Souls*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003: 9.

30. Todas las referencias y citas de las novelas americanas son traducciones mías.

Starhawk (1951–) se declara feminista, pacifista y ecofeminista y ha escrito tanto ficción como ensayos acerca de una espiritualidad basada en la tierra. La novela de la que hablaré, *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1993) [La quinta cosa sagrada]<sup>31</sup> es una novela futurista cuya acción transcurre en 2048 en California. La creciente desertización ha provocado cambios sociales y permitido el auge de sectas cristianas fundamentalistas y belicistas. Sin embargo, la gente de San Francisco (con grandes reminiscencias de la época hippy de los sesenta) se ha rebelado y ha construido una comunidad utópica, basada en principios pacifistas y ecologistas y con una amplia mezcla de religiones y creencias diversas.

Linda Hogan (1947–), perteneciente a la tribu Chickasaw y que recoge muchos valores indígenas, no era conocedora de la filosofía ecofeminista cuando escribió sus novelas. Mencionaré principalmente tres de ellas: *Mean Spirit* (1990) [Espíritu maligno], *Solar Storms* (1995) [Tormentas solares] y *Power* (1998) [Fuerza].<sup>32</sup> Las novelas son realistas, aunque muy líricas y con un cierto toque de realismo mágico, particularmente en su uso de los sueños y visiones. Cada novela transcurre en diferentes partes de los Estados Unidos, teniendo como protagonista a una tribu nativo americana distinta, todas ellas ficticias, pero abordando hechos y conflictos reales. En el caso de *Mean Spirit* plantea los problemas surgidos de la expropiación de terreno de las reservas indias en Oklahoma durante la década de los 1920 para explotar el petróleo. En *Solar Storms* aborda la dislocación tanto de personas (principalmente diferentes tribus indias) como de la naturaleza (animales y ríos) a raíz del proyecto hidroeléctrico de la Bahía James en Quebec. Tras un gran huracán en Florida, que literalmente pone el mundo del revés, la novela *Power* muestra la falta de adecuación de dos concepciones institucionales de cómo regular problemas medioambientales—la legal norteamericana y la de la tribu india. La novela dramatiza los dilemas éticos y como los mismos deben basarse precisamente en la experiencia y no en argumentos racionales y abstractos, muy en sintonía con los principios ecofeministas.

Ann Pancake, ensayista y novelista, retrata principalmente la cultura de la región minera de los montes Apalaches, en el este de los Estados Unidos. Sus obras, de corte realista, abordan temas sociales, feministas y ecologistas actuales, y usa el dialecto local en su narrativa. Desconozco su conocimiento o actitud ante el ecofeminismo. La novela analizada en este artículo es *Strange*

31. STARHAWK, *The Fifth Sacred Thing*. New York: Bantam, 1993 (Kindle e-book).

32. HOGAN, Linda. *Mean Spirit*. NY: Ivy Books, 1990; *Solar Storms*. NY: Scribner, 1995; *Power*. NY: Norton, 1998.

as *This Weather Has Been* (2007) [Lo raro que ha sido este clima].<sup>33</sup> Esta novela denuncia la práctica de la minería de extracción de carbón al cielo abierto basada en dinamitar las cimas de las montañas y contaminar las aguas.

Finalmente está el poeta y escritor onubense, Juan Cobos Wilkins (1957), y su novela *El Corazón de la Tierra* (2001).<sup>34</sup> Esta novela, también de corte realista, transcurre en la España en la década de los cincuenta aunque haciendo referencia a los enfrentamientos de Riotinto de 1888. Cobos Wilkins tampoco conocía el ecofeminismo ni la ecocrítica. A pesar de las diferencias entre los autores, todas las obras muestran una ética del cuidado y unos valores, en diversos grados, coherentes con la filosofía ecofeminista que he expuesto aquí.

La primera estrategia que los diversos autores utilizan es sencillamente el hecho que sus personajes muestren esa ética del cuidado hacia todos los seres. Esa mirada afectuosa reconoce la complejidad del *otro* y reconoce que el *otro* siempre ofrecerá nuevos aspectos que descubrir.<sup>35</sup> Precisamente señala Warren que un aspecto importante del ecofeminismo, un aspecto que está ausente en el discurso ético tradicional, es la «sensibilidad de concebirse a uno mismo fundamentalmente ‘en relación con’ otros, incluyendo a la naturaleza no humana».<sup>36</sup> Obviamente, dado el posicionamiento de Starhawk, esta postura es recurrente en su novela. Una de las protagonistas, Maya, cuando realiza un discurso para celebrar «*El Tiempo de la Segadora*» (en cursiva y castellano en el original), recuerda a los habitantes que la cosecha solo será abundante si es compartida y que las lluvias no vendrán si el agua no se conserva, respeta y comparte, ya que creen que solo se puede seguir viviendo si todos cuidan de todos los demás, y que todos son parte de la tierra, del aire, del fuego y del agua, los unos son parte de los otros.<sup>37</sup> De forma similar, en la novela *El corazón de la tierra* de Juan Cobos Wilkins, la protagonista Blanca, que vive en la ladera de la montaña, niega sentirse sola porque

son compañía [sic], el viento entre las hojas, las nubes con su código de sombras sobre las laderas ... miro y escucho, me hablan, de mis padres, de

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33. PANCAKE, Ann. *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. Berkeley, CA: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2007. (Kindle e-book).

34. COBOS WILKINS, Juan. *El Corazón de la Tierra*. Barcelona: Random House Mondadori, 2001. Para un análisis más detallado de esta novela, ver FLYS JUNQUERA, Carmen. «Blanca Bosco's 'Loving Eye': An Ecocritical Approach to Juan Cobos Wilkin's *El corazón de la tierra*» en *Literature, Ecology, Ethics: Recent Trends in Ecocriticism*. Ed. Timo Müller and Michael Sauter. Heidelberg, 2012.

35. FRYE, Marilyn, Op. Cit., p. 76.

36. WARREN, Karen. Ibid 74.

37. STARHAWK, Op.Cit., pp. 495-497.

Maximiliano, también de tu abuelo. Llevan muchos años ahí, los reconozco y ellos saben quién soy. No necesitamos explicarnos. ¿Sola? No [...]»<sup>38</sup>

Para ella, el paisaje es una parte más de su existencia y tanto el viento como las nubes le hablan y conocen su vida, haciendo que ella se sienta parte de ese entramado. En la novela de Ann Pancake, *Strange Has This Weather Has Been*, Bant (hija de una de las protagonistas, Lace) se siente unida a la tierra y a la montaña y su contacto le permite re-establecer una armonía y bienestar. Conforme sube la ladera siente

la distancia cerrándose. Me paré para asegurarme, tirando de mi aliento, los mosquitos arremolinándose y la distancia se cerraba. Una sensación de proximidad a los árboles por todas partes. Salí disparada otra vez, realmente corriendo, la curva y hondonada de la tierra formada por el eco de la curva y hondonada de mi cuerpo, algo que una carretera plana nunca podía emular, y cuanto más la distancia se cerraba, más rápido desaparecía el mal.<sup>39</sup>

Desde antes de nacer, su madre le «enseñó a dejar entrar a [sus] entrañas lo real de este lugar. De ella aprendí lo profundo de aquí»<sup>40</sup>. Durante el embarazo, Lace se paseaba por las montañas y Bant recuerda que había

empezado a correr este camino antes de nacer. Había empezado a correr por la montaña cuando todavía estaba dentro de Lace... Lace diría que no podía acordarme, pero podía, la tierra moviéndose debajo de mí, los colores de hojas muertas, cuántos tonos de marrón. El olor de la lluvia de noviembre sobre hojas que empezaban a pudrirse<sup>41</sup>.

En el caso de Linda Hogan, casi toda su obra muestra esta mirada afectuosa. En la novela *Solar Storms*, las cuatro protagonistas salen de viaje en canoa hacia el norte en la zona de las «boundary waters»<sup>42</sup>. Las mujeres se pierden ya que el mapa que llevan no corresponde a la realidad y se ven obligadas a «leer» las señales naturales, afirmando que «la tierra se niega a tomar la forma de los que hacen los mapas. La tierra tenía su propia voluntad» y aprenden a tomar en cuenta «la malicia y travesura de la tierra desafiante»<sup>43</sup>. Vemos en estos ejemplos que todas las protagonistas de estas obras, consideran la tierra

38. COBOS WILKINS, Juan. Op. Cit.: 46.

39. PANCAKE, Ann. Op. Cit., pp. 544-547. Hay que tomar en cuenta que el inglés en la obra refleja el dialecto de los Apalaches y por tanto no es un inglés estándar. Las traducciones son más bien literales, aunque intentando dar algo de sentido y estilo del original.

40. PANCAKE Op.cit. 256.

41. Ibid. pp. 501-504.

42. «Boundary waters» [aguas fronterizas] se refiere al complejo y fluctuante sistema de lagos y ríos que existe en la frontera del estado de Minnesota, el Lago Superior y Canadá. La zona fue también afectada por el cambio del curso de numerosos ríos por la construcción del proyecto hidroeléctrico de James Bay.

43. HOGAN, Linda. *Solar Storms*: 123.

y los elementos como seres con voluntad propia. Reconocen su condición de sujeto y respetan su complejidad.

Vemos casos donde los humanos sienten ser objetos de la mirada de la naturaleza. Por ejemplo, cuando la protagonista de *Solar Storms*, Angela, llega a la península, ella observa que «los pálidos troncos de los abedules estaban erguidos; estaba segura de que los ojos oscuros de sus troncos me miraban.»<sup>44</sup> O bien cuando Omishto, protagonista de *Power*, entra en las marismas se siente observada por la naturaleza: «Es lo que sentí que me observaba todo el tiempo. Nos conoce. Nos observa. Los animales tienen ojos que nos ven. Los pájaros, los árboles, todos saben lo que hacemos.»<sup>45</sup> En nuestra cultura, tradicionalmente somos los seres humanos quienes observamos a la naturaleza, sea en zoológicos, en documentales, al leer mapas e interpretar la tierra. John Berger denuncia que cuando nuestro «ojo imperial» observa lo no-humano, estamos ejerciendo nuestro poder sobre la naturaleza.<sup>46</sup> Olvidamos que la naturaleza puede observarnos a nosotros y de esta forma, negamos su capacidad actante. Estos ejemplos obligan al lector a recordar que la observación es recíproca y que los seres no-humanos también tienen esa capacidad. Nos obligan a reconocer su condición de sujeto, su complejidad y su perspectiva, anulando nuestra supuesta posición central hegemónica. En sus novelas, Linda Hogan presenta continuamente a la naturaleza observando a los seres humanos, lo que supone un cambio significativo de percepción en el discurso dominante de la representación, en el cual solamente el ser humano tiene capacidad actante y lenguaje. Si permitimos y aceptamos que los animales y las plantas pueden devolvernos la mirada, estamos reconociendo su agencialidad y condición de sujeto. Estos personajes sienten la naturaleza no-humana como una presencia importante en sus vidas, algo con lo que tienen una estrecha relación. No hay ninguna mirada arrogante o de superioridad, característica de nuestra cultura occidental antropocéntrica, en la cual el ser humano se considera superior a los seres no-humanos en virtud de su capacidad racional, actitud rechazada de plano tanto por Plumwood como por Mathews.

Plumwood aboga por una nueva espiritualidad ecológica que sea tanto materialista,<sup>47</sup> en el sentido que se fundamenta en las bases materiales y ecológicas de la vida, como dialógica en el sentido que sea «comunicativa, abierta

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44. Ibid. 22.

45. HOGAN, Linda. *Power*: 59.

46. BERGER, John. *About Looking*. London: Penguin, 1980: 14.

47. En las discusiones del ecofeminismo se hace referencia frecuente al materialismo, refiriéndose a lo material, a la materia física de la vida. En ningún momento tiene relación con el materialismo en el sentido sociológico, económico o histórico.

al juego de las fuerzas de lo no-humano y atenta a las voces ancestrales del lugar y de la tierra». Nos urge a ver «el mundo como otro agente o jugador en la partida de la vida»<sup>48</sup>. De esta forma, si nuestra aproximación a un lugar es dialógica, nos embarcaremos en un proyecto comunicativo con el objetivo de «explorar lo no-humano como fuente de asombro y sabiduría.» Nuestra actitud será fruto de una predisposición al descubrimiento y revelación mutua y recíproca con los seres naturales.<sup>49</sup> Linda Hogan, en su libro de ensayos *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World* (1995) [Moradas: Una historia espiritual del mundo vivo] afirma que si escuchamos a la naturaleza, podemos llegar al mismo conocimiento que se logra a través de la ciencia y el intelecto.<sup>50</sup>

En los ejemplos anteriormente citados esta actitud está clara. Los personajes están, o bien aprenden en el transcurso de la novela, abiertos a escuchar, abiertos a percibir el mundo natural, reconociendo su capacidad actante, sus voces ancestrales y lo que pueden aprender de la naturaleza. En la novela de Starhawk, vemos que a todos los niños de la comunidad se les enseña a escuchar. Otra de las protagonistas, Madrone, recuerda cuando su madre le llevó al monte para recolectar plantas y le dijo que «no tuviera miedo a las serpientes, que se sentara quietecita a escuchar la los animales y las plantas y que intentara entender lo que le estaban diciendo.»<sup>51</sup> En todas las novelas de Linda Hogan nos encontramos con personajes que han experimentado algún tipo de alienación, fruto de la cultura hegemónica estadounidense, y que vuelven a sus raíces en su comunidad indígena para intentar sanar. Por ejemplo, la protagonista de *Solar Storms*, Angela, se había criado en hogares de acogida. Cuando cumple la mayoría de edad, y sin tener lugar a donde ir, decide volver a la tierra remota al norte de los EEUU donde aún viven su abuela y bisabuela y donde «todo estaba vivo» incluso las piedras y las ortigas.<sup>52</sup> Allí, su madrina se la lleva a una isla y empieza su aprendizaje para comunicarse con la naturaleza. Allí «donde la voz del agua decía cosas que solo los más viejos entendían,»<sup>53</sup> empieza a escuchar y oír: «Creí oír las voces del mundo, de todo aquello que nos rodeaba—las piedras, las aguas fluyendo hacia su desembocadura, las águilas pescadoras con sus garras en un pez, incluso los pececillos y

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48. PLUMWOOD, Val. Op cit., pp. 227-229.

49. Ibid. 233.

50. HOGAN, Linda. *Dwellings. A Spiritual History of the Living World*. New York: Touchstone, 1995.:19.

51. STARHAWK. Op Cit., 3973.

52. HOGAN, Linda. *Solar Storms*. 81

53. Ibid. 73.

huevas. Oía los árboles con sus raíces agarrando el suelo.»<sup>54</sup> Este aprendizaje empieza precisamente con esa actitud abierta, con una mirada afectuosa y con reconocer la posibilidad de que la naturaleza pueda comunicarse, como señalaba Plumwood. De la misma manera Bant aprende a escuchar. Dedicó horas a escuchar al lugar, «todas esas horas silenciosas no podía remediar prestar atención. Empecé a escuchar de otras formas.»<sup>55</sup> E igualmente, Blanca escucha y mantiene una relación con su entorno. Blanca le enseña a Katherine, una inglesa que la visita, su huerto de árboles:

Aún son pequeños, pero crecerán. Cuando yo no esté, seguirán creciendo. Esto—esbozó una sonrisa que no llegó a cuajar del todo—es más que un árbol genealógico, en estas hojas, como en un libro vivo que muda, cambia, renace con las estaciones, están escritos mis recuerdos. Sin necesidad de tinta ni papel, y mejor, porque así no caen borrones en la memoria. [...] Aquí, el retorno de la muerte es fértil. Aquí, el recuerdo, al tiempo que se ahonda, se eleva; mientras más entra en la tierra, más alto busca la luz. Árboles, nombres. Rojizos, dorados en otoño; desnudos en invierno; florecidos como ahora que tú los has reavivado esta primavera. No hay ser más generoso. Purifican, cobijan, nutren, y se consumen en fuego para ofrecernos calor. ¿Cómo no iba a tener en ellos mis nombres? ¡Árboles! Cuántas veces palpo sus troncos, aspiro profundamente, los abrazo: y los siento recorridos de una secreta fuerza honda, de un cálido y poderoso fluir. Al retirarme, me noto fortalecida, reconfortada, serena y como purificada. De su abrazo salgo más viva. No hablo sola si hablo con ellos.<sup>56</sup>

No solo los personajes están abiertos a ese potencial comunicativo, sino que aceptan que sea recíproco, así que mientras ellas aprenden de su entorno, su entorno les revela cosas acerca de ellas mismas. Así pues vemos que Blanca saca fuerzas y consuelo de sus árboles. Bant aprende a sentirse cómoda en el bosque, más que con la gente:

Lo torpe que me sentía alrededor de la gente y edificios y el pavimento, me despojaba de ello en el bosque [...] Podía sentir lo que estaba cerca, su tamaño, su cercanía, su [...] haya álamo nogal pacana cicuta laurel, tocando nada, tropezando con nada, lo que Mogeys siempre decía acerca del murmullo. El olor de octubre en mi cabeza, [...]<sup>57</sup>

En *Power*, después del huracán, las protagonistas siguen a una pantera, animal totémico de la tribu y también especie protegida. La mentora de Omistho, Ama, llama a la pantera y «el gato mira y ella me muestra al gato, y lo que hace es que me presenta al gato y el gato a mí. Dice mi nombre al mirarme,

54. Ibid. 181.

55. PANCAKE. Op. Cit., 2030.

56. COBOS WILKINS. Op. Cit., pp. 137-138.

57. PANCAKE. Op. Cit., pp. 5166-5169.

como si fuera tanto una ofrenda como una amiga.»<sup>58</sup> En este ejemplo, sin llegar a usar el lenguaje, el gato es tratado como un igual, capaz de una relación recíproca con los seres humanos. Angela se da cuenta que el mundo occidental ha puesto barreras racionales entre lo humano y la naturaleza y que esas fronteras dificultan una comunicación que antes existía pues «la división entre humanos y animales era falsa. Hubo tiempos cuando incluso hablaban el mismo idioma.»<sup>59</sup> Esta sensación de Angela no es solo fruto de la imaginación de la autora. El célebre biólogo y Premio Pulitzer de Harvard, E. O. Wilson, desarrolló la teoría de la biofilia, siendo esta la afiliación emocional innata de los seres humanos con todos los organismos vivos. Es algo que considera hereditario y genético, parte de nuestra naturaleza. Sin embargo, también afirma que este comportamiento complejo se rige por normas aprendidas que pueden ser desarrolladas o negadas según determinadas culturas. Así pues lamenta que en la cultura occidental esta afiliación haya sido desaprendida y relegada al ámbito del mito, mientras que en muchas culturas indígenas se desarrolle activamente.<sup>60</sup> La biofilia, aun siendo una teoría biológica, es una forma más de expresar esa ética del cuidado y la mirada afectuosa, y es algo que los personajes de estas novelas recuperan. Si bien los seres humanos nos comunicamos mediante el lenguaje también es cierto que las palabras pueden distorsionar la comunicación y levantar barreras. Omishto comenta que las

palabras son tan ruidosas y el silencio es algo al que tienes que escuchar y cuando lo haces, te lleva de la mano, te agarra. Te dice como llegar a conocer las cosas, como la forma que tiene el sonido de viajar, desde donde llama un pájaro.<sup>61</sup>

Angela no solo aprende a escuchar, sino también se da cuenta de la distorsión de las palabras. Inicialmente se esconde tras su melena y sus cicatrices, ya que su cuerpo era el mapa de los abusos que sufrió. En la isla aprende a leer su mapa corporal de otra forma, reconociendo la unidad y belleza de toda la creación. Al darse cuenta de esto:

Empecé a sentir que si no tuviéramos palabras separadas para indicar dentro y fuera y si no hubiera fronteras entre ellas, ningunas paredes, ningún cielo, podrías verme a mí. Lo que tus ojos encontrarían no sería la máscara de lo que me había ocurrido, no la evidencia de la violencia, ni siquiera como había cerrado las puertas a las habitaciones de la ira y el miedo. Algunos días verías fuego; otros días, agua. O la tierra. Verías cómo soy como el cielo nocturno

58. HOGAN. *Power*. 65.

59. HOGAN. *Solar Storms*. Pp. 81-82.

60. WILSON, E. O. «Biophilia and the Conservation Ethic». *The Biophilia Hypothesis*. Ed. Stephen Kellert and E.O. Wilson. Washington D. C.: Island, 1993. 31.

61. HOGAN, Linda. *Power*. 19.



con sus estrellas que caen a través del tiempo y espacio y llegan aquí como los lobos y peces y gente, todos nosotros alimentados por ellas. Verías el polvo del sol, el giro de la creación transcurriendo. Pero la noche que rompí mi cara, aun había fronteras y aun no sabía que era tan bella como el mundo, o que era un nuevo orden de átomos.<sup>62</sup>

El tema de la comunicación interespecies es clave pero también trae consigo su problemática. ¿Pueden los seres no-humanos comunicarse con nosotros? Está claro que muchos animales sí—casi todo el mundo tiene experiencia con los animales domésticos, pero ¿y con los demás? ¿y las plantas? ¿y la tierra? Precisamente el lenguaje es uno de los factores que los seres humanos han utilizado para justificar su superioridad sobre los no-humanos, y se ha considerado que la única forma de producir una comunicación significativa es a través del lenguaje. Precisamente la escritora Ursula LeGuin (1929) ilustra la barrera que puede crear el lenguaje, y en particular los nombres, en su relato «She Unnames Them» (1987) [Ella les quita el nombre]. En este relato, con referencia directa a Génesis, Eva quita los nombres a los animales y le devuelve el suyo a Adán. Como resultado de su acción comenta que

Parecían mucho mas juntos que cuando sus nombres habían actuado de barrera: tan cercanos que mi miedo frente a ellos y su miedo de mi se convirtió en un solo miedo. Y la atracción que muchos de nosotros sentíamos, el deseo de oler los olores de los demás, tocar o frotar o acariciar las escamas o piel o plumas o pelo de los demás, probar su sangre o carne, mantenernos calientes,—esa atracción se mezclaba con el miedo y el cazador no se distinguía de la presa, ni el comensal de la comida.<sup>63</sup>

Con este relato LeGuin desmonta el dualismo humano/animal, recordándonos que hemos utilizado el lenguaje para justificar nuestra superioridad cuando en la realidad somos todos animales, sencillamente de distintas especies. Conforme a los avances de la ciencia, sabemos que muchas especies tienen la capacidad de comunicarse entre sí con mensajes significativos. Según Plumwood, el problema yace en los modelos racionales que perciben la comunicación como algo intelectual, un ejercicio abstracto de la razón, menospreciando otros modelos de comunicación más emotivos o corporales. De esta forma se valora menos tanto a los seres humanos analfabetos como a los seres no-humanos<sup>64</sup>. Donna Haraway afirma que en cualquier estudio sociológico, todo tipo de seres se consideran actores, aunque solo algunos sean seres humanos con lenguaje, pero que hay que considerar todo tipo heterogéneo

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62. Ibid. 54.

63. LE GUIN, Ursula. *Buffalo Gals and Other Animal Presences*. 1987. New York: New American Library, 1988: 235.

64. PLUMWOOD. Op Cit. 191.

de entidades como actores que influyen en los hechos. No solo aquellos con lenguaje tienen una capacidad actante<sup>65</sup>. Haraway concede que la naturaleza no tiene voz, ni un lenguaje tal y como lo entendemos, pero que la naturaleza sí tiene la capacidad de articular ya que el discurso es tan solo una forma de enunciación<sup>66</sup>.

Aquí el papel de la literatura es clave. Con esa «imaginación empática» de la literatura, un texto puede dar voz a la naturaleza e ilustrar esa multivocalía donde ninguna especie tiene la exclusiva comunicativa. Obviamente en este tema nos encontramos con problemas éticos, empezando con la expresión «dar voz» que parte de la base de que nosotros, seres humanos, somos quienes tenemos la capacidad de «dar» voz a la naturaleza. Como afirma Plumwood, cualquier representación de voces o intenciones de los animales siempre, necesariamente, implica una traducción y una interpretación de un sistema a nuestra cultura y lengua. Pero mantiene que el representar la comunicación de los animales, aunque difícil, no es imposible<sup>67</sup>. Debemos tener claro que nuestra traducción puede ser interesada, pero, también es cierto que los seres humanos entendemos las cosas, vemos el significado precisamente a través de palabras y que sin ellas, no sabemos expresarnos. Por tanto, necesitamos palabras para dar sentido a la comunicación. Así pues, como señala Malamud, un texto literario puede presentar una versión aceptable, aunque quizás incompleta y llena de fallos, de lo que puede significar ser un animal distinto al animal humano<sup>68</sup>. La consideración ética de dicha «traducción» estaría en el mensaje que ese texto pretende atribuir al animal—si se encuentra dentro de aquello que el conocimiento nos permite imaginar que pueda estar dentro de las necesidades y sentimientos de esa especie. Murphy sugiere que para aquellas especies que no poseen un lenguaje humano que podamos entender, no nos queda más remedio que aceptar que un ser humano les dé voz, les traduzca, y los muestre como sujetos actantes en vez de su representación reificada y silenciada<sup>69</sup>. En la novela *Mean Spirit* de Hogan, su personaje Lila Blanket era «escuchadora de la voz del agua, una mujer que interpretaba la historia del río

65. HARAWAY, Donna. «Cyborgs at Large: Interview with Donna Haraway». *Technoculture*. Ed. Constance Penley and Andrew Ross. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991. 5.

66. HARAWAY, Donna. «The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others». *Cultural Studies*. Ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler. New York: Routledge, 1992: pp. 295-337. 324.

67. PLUMWOOD. Op. Cit., pp. 58-59.

68. MALAMUD. Op. Cit. 7.

69. MURPHY, Patrick. *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995: 24.

para su pueblo. Un río nunca mentía. A diferencia de los humanos, no tenía necesidad de distorsionar la verdad, y ella oía la voz del río susurrando como su agua fluyendo por encima de la tierra»<sup>70</sup>. En la novela *Power*, también de Hogan, la protagonista Omishto observa una pantera y comenta:

El gato nos mira. No corre. En la oscuridad sus ojos brillan y eso es lo que veo. Ojos. Parece atravesarnos con la mirada. Mira a través de nosotros. Entonces, con tranquilidad, como si estuviera seguro que le seguiremos, se aleja despacio. Nos está llamando [...] Ese brillo de ojos es su testimonio. Su voz, sus palabras.<sup>71</sup>

En estos textos, Lila y Omishto interpretan el lenguaje de los seres no-humanos, sin ponerles palabras directamente. Pero la novela deja claro que estos seres tienen una voz y una agencialidad. De la misma forma, en *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, Bant siente que la montaña «debe ejercer cierto poder sobre nosotros. No la avaricia del carbón, no ese tipo de agarre, nunca habíamos sacado beneficios de eso. No. Pero la atracción, la fuerza de tanto poder en la tierra y el tipo de vínculo que eso crea.»<sup>72</sup> Es la tierra la que llama a Blanca, para que vuelva a Riotinto. En aquella época vivía en Huelva pero «la llamada de la tierra, golpeó con sus nudillos en mi puerta y me dijo ‘vuelve, vuelve’ y yo, igual que el animal que escucha la voz antigua de la especie, y la sigue, sin pensármelo más, obedecí, ...»<sup>73</sup>. Todos los personajes de estas novelas interpretan la voz de la naturaleza y esa voz les afecta de alguna forma. En *The Fifth Sacred Thing* el entender la voz de la naturaleza implica pasar a tener otra consciencia. Vemos el caso de Maya cuando se recluye en las montañas:

Las piedras son preciosas allí arriba, un granito limpio, blanqui-grisáceo con motitas oscuras y pequeños destellos de cuarzo. Cuando llevaba un tiempo sola, me empezaron a hablar. Todo cobró vida y tenía su propia voz, y lo podía oír. La Diosa me llamaba, aunque aún no conocía sus nombres. Sin conocer las palabras, me había convertido en Bruja<sup>74</sup>.

Este escuchar a las piedras nos recuerda esa mirada afectuosa de la que hablaba Karen Warren, antes mencionada. En esta novela, las abejas ayudan a curar a las personas tanto con el propóleo como estimulando la energía del cuerpo. Hay un momento en el que Madrone ve miles de abejas en torno a un hombre enfermo, pero le avisan de que no se acerque ya que «no te conocen todavía». Ella queda atenta y oye que «su zumbido es como un tarareo, como

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70. HOGAN. *Mean Spirit*. 5,

71. HOGAN. *Power*. 64.

72. PANCAKE. Op. Cit. 4564.

73. COBOS WILKINS. Op. Cit. 43.

74. STARHAWK. Op. Cit. 4114.

un cántico. El aire parecía vibrar con la armonía, y Madrone lo sintió traspasar su cuerpo como un golpe de intoxicación»<sup>75</sup>. En la novela advierten a Madrone que tenga cuidado, pues las abejas «tienen un horror a la enfermedad. En la colmena matan a las abejas enfermas [...] a lo largo de los años les hemos enseñado a trabajar con nosotros con las heridas con tal de no infectarlas»<sup>76</sup>. Debe respetar las necesidades e independencia de las abejas. Aquí también vemos esa reciprocidad con los seres no-humanos, que observan y extrañan a las personas, que tienen una voz y ciertas capacidades aunque sin la necesidad de dotarles de un lenguaje humano. Más adelante en la novela, Madrone aprende a escuchar y comunicarse mentalmente con las abejas que vienen a socorrerla algunas veces. En esta novela futurista hay muchos elementos de curanderismo, basados en elementos naturales. Es cierto que en ocasiones algunos elementos resultan forzados, pero hay que recordar de qué género literario se trata. La conclusión, que muestra la victoria de una comunidad ecológica y pacifista sobre unos ejércitos bien formados, puede ser algo exagerada, claramente utópica. No obstante, todo lo que aparece, como en muchas novelas de ciencia ficción, son extrapolaciones de temas sobradamente conocidos, como remedios naturales y elementos de la medicina alternativa y oriental como el chi, la energía y los meridianos corporales, el aura o la sanación mediante las manos.

Por otra parte, nos encontramos con algunos textos literarios que directamente dan voz a los animales, aunque esto no se da en los cuatro autores que he seleccionado. Pero la cuestión que plantean es de qué forma y con qué intención. Si los animales hablan acerca de valores sociales humanos (como en las fábulas o muchas novelas infantiles), esa voz como voz del animal es ciertamente cuestionable. Pero un autor puede intentar transmitir los sentimientos probables de los animales para que el lector intente entender las necesidades del animal y se cuestione sus valores éticos y su comportamiento. Por ejemplo, la autora puertorriqueña Aurora Levins Morales (1954–), tiene un texto que comienza con una copia de la noticia difundida por Reuters acerca de unas ballenas varadas en 1985. A continuación, desarrolla su texto creativo:

Tropiezo, me varo, me empujo hacia delante, pero el océano está detrás, no delante. Ellos creen que no entendemos esto, que somos bestias tontas. Esas pequeñas figuras erguidas de dos patas que están de pie haciendo sombra a la luz del cielo hacen ruidos de preocupación [...]. Nosotros hemos venido

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75. *Ibid.*, pp. 5080-5085.

76. *Ibid.* 5117.

aquí adrede: a morir, a posar nuestros cuerpos enfrente de vuestras narices, a pudrirnos delante de vuestros ojos. *El mar, el mar se muere.*<sup>77</sup>

La clave está en cómo comprobar si esa voz realmente corresponde a los «deseos» del sujeto no-humano. Murphy afirma que la prueba de autenticidad debe estar basada en las acciones que uno ha de suponer que los seres no-humanos solicitan que los humanos lleven a cabo. Esa voz debe ser dirigida a nosotros como sus tutores o representantes.<sup>78</sup> La escritora Ursula LeGuin también lleva años trabajando en la forma de dar voz a los seres no-humanos, particularmente en su colección de relatos y poemas *Buffalo Gals and Other Animal Presences*, donde presenta el mundo natural como un conglomerado de sujetos con voz. LeGuin mantiene que hay que «re-imaginar» las relaciones entre los seres humanos y los no-humanos, modificar las actitudes hacia el *otro* y adoptar un cambio de perspectiva<sup>79</sup>; colocarnos en el lugar del *otro*. Así, en sus cuentos, tenemos animales y bosques que observan el mundo y reaccionan perplejos y con miedo ante las acciones de los humanos. En este fragmento de Morales podemos observar esta reubicación: el narrador en primera persona toma el punto de vista de las ballenas, y se dirige a los humanos en la playa, puesto que son los humanos los que necesariamente deben tomar medidas. La autenticidad de su voz queda corroborada en los hechos que realmente suceden a los animales, que se ven obligados a actuar, a reaccionar o interactuar con los elementos; su agencialidad se expresa en esa interacción en vez de palabras. Sus acciones son en realidad mucho más elocuentes que cualquier palabra, y lo extraño es que los humanos seguimos sin querer entenderlas. Un texto literario de este tipo puede llegar a impactar al lector y llevarle a plantearse el porqué de esas ballenas varadas.

Estos ejemplos literarios nos muestran esa imaginación empática a la vez que unas estrategias que hacen al lector reconocer la condición de sujeto de los seres no-humanos. Vemos que todos estos textos muestran una ética de cuidado y respeto a los seres humanos y no-humanos, considerándonos a todos parte de un todo, distintos pero igualmente dignos de consideración ética. Los autores utilizan la multivocalía bajtiniana, dando un tipo de voz a todos los seres, sea con un lenguaje humano o de otra forma y se establece una relación dialógica donde todos los seres interactúan y se afectan. La reciprocidad no es cuestión de medida, ni un *quid pro quo*, sino que está en el reconocimiento mutuo de la condición de sujeto actante: la naturaleza no es pasiva ni

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77. MORALES, Aurora Levins y Rosario Morales. *Getting Home Alive*. Ithaca: Firebrand, 1986. 66. (Traducción propia).

78. MURPHY, Patrick. Op. Cit. 24.

79. LE GUIN, Ursula. Op. Cit. 75.

un objeto. La mirada afectuosa es una constante, una mirada que respeta al *otro*, que intenta entenderlo y apreciar su diversidad y complejidad. Si bien se reitera que todos somos seres habitantes del un mismo planeta, no se exige a los seres no-humanos que sean como nosotros sino que cada uno tiene valor en sí. Los personajes muestran una actitud ética hacia la naturaleza y muestran cómo puede ser esta actitud para el lector. Aunque las novelas son muy distintas, las actitudes de los protagonistas son similares. Todos muestran esa mirada afectuosa y una ética de cuidado hacia todos los seres, humanos y no-humanos. Todos los protagonistas tienen una actitud abierta al potencial comunicativo de lo no-humano y se muestran dispuestos a establecer una relación dialógica con ellos. De esta forma, los autores nos dan esa respuesta ética narrativa que sugería Plumwood. Esta actitud puede ser apreciada por los lectores y puede sugerir un cambio de paradigma cultural ya que con solo aceptar la posibilidad de una comunicación, la mirada arrogante antropocéntrica de nuestra cultura se desvanecería. Así pues, estos valores ecofeministas implican un cambio de paradigma muy necesario tanto para un mundo más justo como sostenible y a través de textos literarios estos valores pueden llegar a un amplio público, sugiriendo ese cambio necesario.

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# ANIMALS IN (NEW) SPACE: CHIMPONAUTS, COSMODOGS, AND BIOSPHERE II

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## Abstract

Like many baby-boomers, I grew up with visuals of chimpanzees being shot up into space as part of NASA's program for space exploration; I read about Laika, the Russian dog who perished on her first space mission, involuntarily recruited from the streets of Moscow where she had lived as a stray. Biosphere II—the failed attempt to re-create earth's ecosystems in an enclosure outside of Tucson, Arizona—similarly instrumentalized animals, this time for food, as part of a larger project investigating the possibilities of human life beyond earth. Now, NewSpace entrepreneurs pursue techno-solutions and space escapes for elites seeking adventurous enclosures beyond earth's climate-changing surface. An ecofeminist perspective enriches our understanding of space exploration ideology by examining how cultural narratives of gender, species, and culture play out both here on earth and beyond our biosphere. Interrogating these techno-scientific pursuits in outer space augments our understanding of contemporary environmental problems such as climate change, environmental justice, and human-animal relations.

**Key-words:** ecofeminism, animals, gender, climate change, environmental justice, human-animal relations. Laika, Biosphere II.

## Resumen

Como muchas de las personas nacidas durante la posguerra, crecí con imágenes de chimpancés catapultados al espacio como parte del programa de la NASA para la exploración espacial; también había leído acerca de Laika, la perra rusa que murió en su primera misión espacial, involuntariamente reclutada en las calles de Moscú, donde había vivido como un perro callejero. La Biosfera II —el intento fallido de volver a crear

ecosistemas de la tierra en un recinto a las afueras de Tucson, Arizona– también se valió de animales, esta vez convertidos en alimento, como parte de un proyecto más amplio que investigaba las posibilidades de la vida humana más allá de la tierra. Ahora, los empresarios de NewSpace se dedican a buscar tecno-soluciones y viajes espaciales para élites en búsqueda de aventuras en recintos más allá de la superficie terrestre que cambia constantemente debido al cambio climático. Una perspectiva ecofeminista puede enriquecer nuestra comprensión de la ideología de la exploración espacial analizando cómo las narrativas culturales de género, especie y cultura se manifiestan tanto aquí en la tierra como más allá de nuestra biosfera. Cuestionar la investigación tecno-científica en el espacio exterior puede mejorar nuestra manera de comprender los problemas medioambientales contemporáneos tales como el cambio climático, la justicia ambiental y las relaciones entre humanos y animales.

**Palabras clave:** ecofeminismo, animales, género, cambio climático, justicia ambiental, relaciones entre seres humanos y animales, Laika, Biosfera II.

*There is nothing transcendent about the values that motivated NASA to have astronauts lodge an identification plaque on the moon indicating that men had landed there. This gesture grates as much as coming upon a tree or a rock defaced with 'John loves Mary' or some similar nonsense in a supposedly wilderness area. ... There is really no difference between the 'humanisation' of space and the colonization of Africa or Latin America.*

Collard & Contrucci, *Rape of the Wild*<sup>1</sup>

The term “anthropocene” popularized by Dutch chemist and Nobel Prize-winner Paul Crutzen refers to an era of human-induced atmospheric warming that can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution, when specific communities of humans began increasing carbon dioxide emissions by burning coal and oil, building larger and larger cities, cutting down forests, acidifying oceans, and prompting massive species extinctions.<sup>2</sup> Despite numerous warnings from scientists and scientific organizations around the world, responses to climate change among the most industrialized nations have been slow to put long-term ecological sustainability and health ahead of short-term corporate profits. Instead, like Bill Peet’s children’s book, *The Wump World* (1970), global elites, politicians and business leaders are behaving like The Pollutians, assuming that they can travel from continent to continent, and planet to planet, polluting and then moving on to new pristine environments without changing their ecological and economic behaviors.<sup>3</sup> Ideologically fueled by literal interpretations of transcendent theologies which locate heaven and the sacred in the skies above earth, and by western techno-science’s quest to control nature, space programs in both the United States and Russia appropriated

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1. COLLARD, Andrée, with Joyce CONTRUCCI. *Rape of the Wild: Man’s Violence against Animals and the Earth*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 166.

2. “Anthropocene” was popularized by Crutzen, but its origin is attributed to biologist Eugene F. Stoermer; see REVKIN, Andrew. “Confronting the Anthropocene.” *The New York Times*. May 11, 2011. Accessed at <http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/05/11/confronting-the-anthropocene/> on 12/10/2012.

3. PEET, Bill. *The Wump World*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970.

public monies to fund their search for otherworldly escapes available only to earth's elites, diverting public funds that would otherwise be used to meet real material needs (housing, healthcare, education, food security) or fund research and infrastructure for promoting sustainable energy production, transportation, and agriculture on Earth, the only human-habitable planet in our solar system. What can feminist ecocriticism contribute to our understanding of space exploration ideology? How do narratives of gender, species, class and culture play out beyond the biosphere? And what information do these scientific pursuits of the twentieth century have to tell us about contemporary environmental problems and solutions for the future?

To explore these questions, I juxtapose three parallel narratives testing the limits of extra-terrestrial exploration and survival: the use of non-human animals in space exploration as a precedent to sending humans into outer space; the conception, missions, and ultimate failure of Biosphere 2, a facility constructed to replicate five of Earth's biomes, and test the possibility of indefinite human survival within a sealed enclosure; and the current ventures of NewSpace corporations in cultivating space tourism and settlements. Drawing on feminist philosophy of science, feminist animal studies, and ecofeminist theories, I explore the intersections of gender, species, class, and culture in space exploration narratives.

### 1. "Under My Thumb": Crash Test Dummies and One Small Step for (a) Man

It suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. I didn't feel like a giant. I felt very, very small.

Neil Armstrong, first man on the Moon.

The fact that just from the distance of the Moon you can put your thumb up and you can hide the Earth behind your thumb. Everything that you've ever known, your loved ones, your business, the problems of the Earth itself—all behind your thumb. And how insignificant we really all are, but then how fortunate we are to have this body and to be able to enjoy living here amongst the beauty of the Earth itself.

Jim Lovell, Apollo 8 & 13 astronaut.

Notwithstanding arguments that space travel has produced greater environmental awareness via Apollo 8 images of *Earthrise from the Moon* and Apollo

17's image of the *Whole Earth*,<sup>4</sup> in this section I argue that space exploration is advanced within a framework of masculinist ideology that values a type of holism over specific individuals, heroic feats of conquest amid risk-riddled adventure, and technoscientific solutions to the eco-social problems produced by runaway capitalist imperialisms now warming the earth. The astronauts who suddenly discover a deeper respect for the earth when they are able to blot it out with their thumbs—a gesture of dominance reminiscent of Mick Jagger's "Under My Thumb," a 1966 lyrical celebration of his "squirring dog," "siamese cat" girlfriend-now-turned-pet—do not offer a pathway to environmentalism that can (or should) be widely duplicated, even via the pervasive Whole Earth images commodified on calendars, keychains, and coffee cups. Instead, it is the particular relations of animals, places, and cultures that require our environmental and climate justice concerns, bringing us to the roots of contemporary eco-justice crises rather than striving for ever-greater techno-science explorations of space.

Feminist philosophers of science have amply noted the gendered features of the "scientific method" which requires a cutting-off of feelings to produce the "detached eye of objective science" and the distancing of the scientific researcher from the experimental subjects.<sup>5</sup> Donna Haraway's *Primate Visions* demonstrates that western science's construction of the scientific standpoint is inflected by race, gender, and species supremacy, controlling not only scientific rhetoric and investigations, but also western culture's relationship with nature and other animal species.<sup>6</sup> In *Nature Ethics: An Ecofeminist Perspective*, Marti Kheel identifies features of masculinism that are not only inflected with race and species supremacy, but are also embedded in "the broader concepts of rationality, universality, and autonomy."<sup>7</sup> These features are also evident in the rhetoric justifying space exploration, including the belief that humans (particularly those gendered masculine) are propelled by aggressive, self-centered biological drives that must be given controlled, rational expression; the (racist

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4. Such arguments are advanced by HENRY, Holly and Amanda TAYLOR. "Re-thinking Apollo: Envisioning Environmentalism in Space." *Sociological Review*, 57: s1(2009), pp. 190-203.

5. See HARAWAY, Donna. *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science*. New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 13, and FOX KELLER, Evelyn and Helen LONGINO, eds. *Feminism & Science*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, respectively.

6. Haraway's understanding of species dominance is limited by her own humanism, and this limits her theorizing considerably; see WEISBERG, Zipporah. "The Broken Promises of Monsters: Haraway, Animals, and the Humanist Legacy," *Journal of Critical Animal Studies* 7:2 (2009), pp. 21-61.

7. KHEEL, Marti. *Nature Ethics: An Ecofeminist Perspective*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.

and imperialist) idea that nations must preserve the “frontier” experience as a legacy for future generations, especially boys; and the notion of adventure (especially high-risk) as counter to and not found in the repetitive realm of biological nature. As Kheel explains, masculinism is inherently anti-ecological for the ways it “idealizes transcending the biological realm, as represented by other-than-human animals and affiliative ties,” and subordinates “empathy and care for individual beings to a larger cognitive perspective or ‘whole’”.<sup>8</sup> Across the disciplines, men’s movement writers, animal studies and environmental studies scholars expand Kheel’s critique, identifying numerous constructs of masculinity as predicated on themes of maturity-as-separation, with male self-identity and self-esteem based on dominance, conquest, affects (work ethic and emotional stoicism), occupations (valuing career over family and housework), physical strength, sexual prowess, animal “meat” hunting and/or eating, and competitiveness—all developed in opposition to a complementary and distorted role for women: white hetero-human-femininity.<sup>9</sup> As the conflicted histories of chimpanauts and astrodogs demonstrate, narratives of space exploration are constructed within this larger narrative of masculinist gender ideology that has shaped definitions and practices of science itself.

More than a decade before the United States’ National Aeronautics Space Administration (NASA) produced Neil Armstrong’s famous moonwalk on July 20, 1969, American and Russian scientists used non-human animals—mostly monkeys, chimpanzees, and dogs—to test the effects of rapid acceleration, prolonged weightlessness, atmospheric re-entry, and other hazards of space travel. To obtain these animals, the U.S. funded the capture of young and infant chimpanzees from Africa for space exploration tests at the Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo, New Mexico; some sources say the chimpanzee mothers were killed in order for their babies to be taken.<sup>10</sup> In Russia, Soviet scientists took stray dogs off the streets of Moscow. In the cultural ideologies of both nations—intensified by the Cold War—space colonization became a matter of nationalist pride, and the “sacrifice” of non-human animals was seen as a necessary precedent to “manned” flights.<sup>11</sup>

8. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

9. See ADAMS, Carol. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York: Continuum, 1990; CONNELL, R. W. *Masculinities*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995; PLUMWOOD, Val. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. New York: Routledge Press, 1993.

10. CASSIDY, David with Kristin DAVY. “One Small Step: The Story of the Space Chimps.” (57:00). Distributed by Victory Multimedia, Inglewood, CA. 1989.

11. Marti Kheel offered one of the first ecofeminist perspectives on the rhetoric of animal sacrifice in patriarchal culture and sciences: “Significantly, researchers do not ‘kill’

Beginning June 11, 1948, when the first mammal in space, a Rhesus monkey named Albert I was launched at the U.S. White Sands Proving Ground in New Mexico, a series of Rhesus macaques named Albert 1 through VI were launched and either died on return impact or died from heat prostration following recovery. In 1959, the first U.S. monkeys to survive, Able (a rhesus macaque) and Baker (a squirrel monkey), were soon followed by flights with chimpanzees, Ham (January 31) and Enos (November 29) 1961. Originally nicknamed “Chop Chop Chang,” chimpanzee #65 wasn’t given his official name—an acronym dubbed after the Holloman Aero-Medical Research Laboratory where the space chimps program developed—until it was clear he had survived his 17-minute flight. His name, Ham, also “inevitably recalls Noah’s youngest and only black son,” exemplifying the “stunning racism” in the language of the space program, constructing the paternalistic identity of the scientist as well as the scientific endeavor.<sup>12</sup>

While space race fans have claimed that Ham’s flight was a necessary precedent to the first “manned” U.S. suborbital flight of Alan Shepard in 1961, and Enos’ over three hours and two-orbits demonstration was a precedent for John Glenn’s first U.S. orbital flight in 1962, these heroic human volunteers were simply following in the involuntary handprints of their chimpanzee predecessors. Indeed, one wonders how the space race would have proceeded if non-human animals were not available as “crash test dummies,” and each test flight would have had to be piloted by computer, by a human model, or by a sacrificial and highly-trained human volunteer.<sup>13</sup> The fact that the animal lives

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animals in laboratories; the word ‘sacrifice’ is still employed. Behind the sacrifice of animals at the altar of science lies the ancient and tragic belief that somehow, if animals are killed, human beings will be allowed to live”; see KHEEL, Marti, “From Healing Herbs to Deadly Drugs: Western Medicine’s War Against the Natural World,” pp. 96-114 in PLANT, Judith, ed. *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Press, 1989: 104. Kheel is critical of patriarchal religious myths of a Father-God who offers his son to die in exchange for others’ redemption, or who asks his followers to kill their most precious son as proof of their devotion—but will be appeased by the killing of another animal’s offspring instead. For an overview of the linguistic battles between vivisectionists and animal advocates, see GRUEN, Lori, “Experimenting with Animals,” pp. 105-129 in *Ethics and Animals*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

12. HARAWAY, op cit., pp. 137-38.

13. One notable exception was provided by US Air Force Surgeon Major John Paul Stapp, who created the “Gee-Whizz” sled in 1947, and following test runs with 185-pound mannequins (later dubbed “crash test dummies” by the auto industry, which used these in safety tests after being compelled to do so by the federal government), rode the sled himself with acceleration forces of 45 g’s and survived without lasting injuries; he went on to test the sled on chimpanzees a total of 88 times, with some at a “crushing

used and often destroyed in space exploration were treated with some indifference can be read in the documents describing their deaths: the sacrificial rhesus monkey Albert VI was nicknamed “Yorick” (alluding to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and his graveyard soliloquy with the court jester’s skull<sup>14</sup>) and a US Air Force photo shows a small memorial, complete with three rubber mice, plastic flowers and a flower vase, with a card that reads “Sincerest condolences to Thee, our departed friends of Discoverer III, from the Army Monkey.”<sup>15</sup> Testing the effects of high gravity forces (“g-forces”), acceleration and rapid deceleration that might occur on rocket flights, chimpanzees, bears, and hogs were strapped in various positions (sitting up or lying down, head-first, facing forward or back), with and without safety harnesses, on sleds titled “Gee-Whizz,” “Sonic Wind,” “Project Whoosh” and the “Daisy Track,” whimsical names constructed from the standpoint of those who did not ride the tracks at lethal rates. One hog photographed in a crash simulation harness (sitting up, facing backwards) albeit with the head lolling to one side (it’s not clear whether the animal photographed is dead or alive, before or after the test) has a sign resting beneath the beltstrap and between the legs, reading “Project Barbecue, Run #22, 5 August 1952” referencing the fact that after the hogs had suffered, died, and been autopsied, they were cooked and eaten by the Air Force scientists.<sup>16</sup> The rhetoric of these aeronautics scientists’ treatment of animals reinforces the dominance, the adventure, and the unfeeling identity of the scientists and the scientific project at hand.

While the United States was experimenting with monkeys, the Soviet Union was experimenting with dogs. Scientists preferred the small female strays taken from the streets of Moscow since females needed less room to urinate, and could be more easily trained for space flight. Upon capture, the dogs were confined in small places, subjected to extremely loud noises and vibrations, and made to wear newly created space suits, all tests designed to condition the dogs to the experiences they would likely have during the

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270 g’s” of force, leaving the animal’s body “a mess” (See BURGESS, Colin and Chris DUBBS, *Animals in Space: From Research Rockets to the Space Shuttle*. Chichester, UK: Springer/Praxis Books in Space Exploration, 2007, p. 103).

14. The actual lines from *Hamlet* read thus: “Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy; he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? Your gambols? Your songs? Your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? (*Hamlet*, V:i) The correlation of a court jester and a space chimp most likely sent to his death underscores the “scientific” mockery that was made of these animal lives.

15. BURGESS and DUBBS, op cit., p. 186.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 105.



flight. The first dogs launched, Moscow's Tsygan and Dezik, reached space on July 22, 1951, but did not orbit; however, they were the first mammals successfully recovered from spaceflight. In the next few years, Russia launched numerous dogs into suborbital flight with at least four fatalities, but Soviet scientists were eager to make some "sacrifices" in the Cold War race to beat the U.S. in moving toward outer-atmosphere orbits.<sup>17</sup> At the request of Premier Nikita Khrushchev and the orders of Chief Engineer Sergei Pavlovitch Korolev, on November 3, 1957, to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian Revolution, a thirteen-pound, three-year-old female stray dog was launched into Earth orbit in Sputnik 2. Originally named Kudryavka ("little curly") and later renamed Laika ("Barker"), the little Samoyed-husky dog had been selected for her obedience and calm disposition. Sputnik 2 was an impromptu mission built only a month after the internationally-acclaimed success of Sputnik 1, leaving the Soviet engineers no time to design provisions for the dog's return from space.

Evidence that the Soviet scientists were conflicted about their duties is recorded in events leading up to Laika's launch, when one of the dog's trainers, Vladimir Yazdovsky, took Laika home to play with his children; later, he wrote in his own account of the mission, "I wanted to do something nice for her. She had so little time left to live."<sup>18</sup> A full three days prior to launch, Laika was strapped into the space capsule on October 31, 1957 to monitor her vital systems. On launch day, November 3, Yazdovsky and the medical staff persuaded the engineers that Laika's capsule must be de-pressurized—and then used this change as an opportunity to give Laika her last drink of water.<sup>19</sup> Their actions suggest an emotional turmoil produced by the conflict of "entangled empathy" repressed under obedience to Cold War nationalism and the cultural constructions of masculinized science.<sup>20</sup>

But the international viewing public was less obedient. As soon as Laika's launch aboard Sputnik 2 was announced to the press, animal-welfare groups around the world expressed outrage and sorrow: in Britain, protesters

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17. KEMP, Martin. "A Dog's Life: Laika, the Doomed Stray, Has Achieved a Kind of Immortality." *Nature* 449 (October 4, 2007), p. 541.

18. OULETTE, Jennifer. "Space Dog Laika Finally Gets a Happy Ending." *DiscoveryNews*, July 12, 2011. Accessed at <http://news.discovery.com/space/laika-the-russian-space-dog-finally-gets-a-happy-ending-110712.html> on 11/17/2012.

19. BURGESS and DUBBS., op cit., p. 159.

20. "Entangled empathy" is developed in GRUEN, Lori. "Navigating Difference (again): Animal Ethics and Entangled Empathy." pp. 213-234 in SMULEWICZ-KUCKER, Gregory, ed. *Strangers to Nature: Animal Lives & Human Ethics*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012.

assembled at the Russian embassy, and the National Canine Defense League called for a minute of silence each day that Laika was presumed to be in orbit. The initially deceptive Russian news releases soon had to acknowledge that there were no plans for Laika's return to Earth, and though they suggested she remained healthy for several days, over forty years later Dimitri Malashenkov from the Institute for Biological Problems in Moscow finally admitted that Laika became stressed (her heart rate accelerated to three times its normal rate) and overheated, most likely dying a painful and terrifying death. In 1998, Oleg Georgivitch Gazenko, one of the Soviet scientists responsible for the dogs' training, admitted "the more time passes, the more I'm sorry about it. We did not learn enough from the mission to justify the death of the dog."<sup>21</sup>

In the immediate wake of Sputnik 2, Soviet nationalists attempted to construct Laika's capture, confinement and death as an act of heroism: photographs issued by the space agency, with Laika exuding "an air of bright courage," were used on Mongolian and Romanian postage stamps and souvenirs. A Monument to the Conquerors of Space was built in Moscow and inaugurated on 4 October 1964, featuring Laika's turned head and a trace of the space harness.<sup>22</sup> Even the U.S. space program was not indifferent, with NASA naming a soil target on Mars after Laika. But on both sides of the space race, the nationalist gratitude for animal lives lost in space exploration has been oddly expressed: taxidermists have stuffed Strelka and Belka, the first animals to orbit the Earth and return alive, and they are now on display in the Memorial Museum of Astronautics in Moscow; Ham's remains are buried at the entrance to the International Space Hall of Fame in New Mexico. And after the space race ended, the U.S. Air Force began leasing the remaining chimpanzees at Holloman Air Force Base to medical labs in the 1970s, and in 1997 "retired" the space chimps to a biomedical testing facility, The Coulston Foundation, which had a known and horrific track record of abusing chimps. Over the years, USDA investigations had found Coulston in violation of numerous animal welfare codes, and at one point confiscated 300 of their chimps. Finally, Dr. Carole Noon, with the backing of Drs. Jane Goodall and Roger Fouts, worked to bring these chimpanzees to sanctuary.<sup>23</sup> These post-mortem heroic

21. OULETTE, *op cit.*

22. KEMP, *op cit.* Forty years later, a website devoted to Moscow's homeless animals still tells the story of Laika; see <http://www.moscowanimals.org/index.html> Accessed on 11/26/2012.

23. After the Air Force denied Noon's requests, awarding even more space chimps to The Coulston Foundation, Noon sued the Air Force for custody and raised funds to build Save the Chimps Sanctuary in Florida, where these chimps can enjoy a life free of testing in an outdoor refuge with islands, play areas, and fresh healthy foods. (See <http://>

narratives fail to conceal the speciesism and animal suffering produced under the name of science.

Illustrating many people's discomfort with the treatment of Ham, Enos, and Laika, recent retellings of these stories in children's literature and media have attempted to explore and make palatable this anguished past.<sup>24</sup> In 2007—the fifty-year anniversary of Laika's "one-way" flight—James Vining's *First in Space* appeared, a graphic novel detailing the life of Ham, along with two other children's books about Laika using the dog's own viewpoint as part of the narrative: both Nick Abadzis' *Laika* and Jan Milsapps' *Screwed Pooch* detail the historical events of the Cold War and the Space Race that led up to the capture, training, and selection of Laika as the first and (allegedly) only creature knowingly sent into space to die.<sup>25</sup> As Abadzis' novel clearly portrays, the founder of the Soviet Space Program, Sergei Pavlovich Korolev agreed to sending a dog in Sputnik II in order to prove his patriotism to Premier Khrushchev: after spending nearly eight years in Stalin's concentration camps under false allegations of sabotage, Korolev had worked his way up in the Soviet space program and gained respect for his energy, intelligence, and ambition, but was not yet pardoned for the false charges against him. In a particularly insightful scene, Abadzis draws Korolev into the space dogs' caged enclosure for a soliloquy with Laika, where Korolev reflects on his own imprisonment, and recognizes the parallels with Laika's confinement, but concludes that he cannot set her free: still on parole, Korolev believes his freedom might be achieved through her death. In return, he promises to make her "the most famous dog in history"—a reputation that matters very little to dogs.<sup>26</sup> The scene is immediately followed by and contrasted with Abadzis'

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[www.spacechimps.com/theirstory.html](http://www.spacechimps.com/theirstory.html)) But animal aerospace testing did not end. The American Anti-Vivisection Society reports that through 1996, NASA was still conducting a multi-million dollar research project called Bion that involved sending monkeys whose tails were cut off and who were placed into apparel similar to straight-jackets with restraining rings screwed into their skulls and various electrodes implanted throughout their bodies into space for 14 days. The purpose of Bion was to study the effects of microgravity and radiation in living beings. These flights ended through a confluence of forces involving the deaths of some space monkeys and the persistent efforts of animal rights groups pressuring Congress and NASA.

24. At the same time, heroic and comic narratives continue to be produced as attempts to obscure these historical facts: Richard HILLARD. *Ham the Astrochimp*, Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 2007, and the Disney movie, "Space Chimps" (2008), are two such examples.

25. VINING, James, *First in Space*. Portland, OR: Oni Press, Inc., 2007; ABADZIS, Nick. *Laika*. New York: First Second, 2007; MILSAPPS, Jan. *Screwed Pooch*. Booksurge Publishing, 2007.

26. ABADZIS, op cit., p. 132.

fictional character, Yelena Dubrovsky, the dogs' trainer, who articulates the story's ethical concerns: urging Korolev to choose a different dog, she offers to do "anything," an innuendo that is not lost on him. As a woman being used in a male-dominated system of masculinist science, Yelena exhibits the conflict between nationalist loyalty and entangled empathy, which Lori Gruen defines as an empathy that "requires gaining wisdom and perspective and, importantly, motivates the empathizer to act ethically."<sup>27</sup> Through the fictional character of Yelena, and through his thematic treatment of the cycles of abuse that converge in Laika's death, Abadzis opens the dog's story for a feminist ecocritical reading of space exploration science and its cultural ideology.

Half a decade after these events, it's easier to see how the real lives of these specific, individual animals—their capture, confinement, training, and deaths—were backgrounded<sup>28</sup> by the dazzling material and discursive rhetoric of space exploration, as even the co-authors of *Animals in Space* recall:

One November night in 1957 our rowdy [Boy Scout] cub pack had been herded out of the scout hall at a certain time and made to stand under the crystal clear night sky while our cubmaster patiently told us about Laika and Sputnik 2. Suddenly he pointed with excitement above the darkened horizon, and we quickly fell into an awed silence as we watched a small, bright pin-prick of light silently and majestically traverse the star-spangled firmament over the east coast of Australia (Burgess, xvii-xviii).

I cannot overstate how indelibly the image of a dog in a satellite burned into my youthful imagination. For me, at the age of 11, there was simply no way to comprehend it. It was too novel, too extraordinary an achievement, that it did not fit within any knowledge base that I possessed. It was mythic. . . . *I marveled more for the extraordinary experience given to Laika than I agonized over her fate* (Dubbs, xix; italics mine).

Like fireworks, the space capsules streaming through the skies offered a visual and material narrative of celebration and heroism especially suited to Euro-western constructions of dominant masculinity—with images that appealed to little boys and Air Force scientists alike. From the chimps' diets of baby cereal and baby diaper clothing to the "team of tender technicians" who put Enos into "a fitted contour couch that looked like a cradle trimmed with electronics," the visual contrasts between tall, white laboratory-coated human men and the small, diapered, and telemetrically-implanted young mammals

27. GRUEN, op cit.

28. Backgrounding is one of the five operations of dominance constructing the Master identity; see PLUMWOOD, Val. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1993. The other operations include hyperseparation, incorporation, instrumentalism, and stereotyping.

reinforced the masculinity of Cold War science and the “Father Knows Best” authoritative stance of white patriarchs from the U.S. to Russia.<sup>29</sup> As one of Laika’s trainers, Oleg Georgivitch Gazenko, acknowledged forty years after her death: “We treat them like babies who cannot speak.”<sup>30</sup>

Experiments involving other animals’ bodies and lives to obtain information of primary interest to humans have long ago been exposed through well-developed critiques in animal rights theories of the 1970s and animal ecofeminisms of the 1980s as experiments that are often repetitive, painful, frightening, and unnecessary, given the less-expensive non-animal alternatives; two decades later, such acknowledgements are finally appearing in academic theory as well.<sup>31</sup> Powering and legitimating such scientific experimentation are certain beliefs about what “counts” as scientific research methods, methodologies, and epistemologies.<sup>32</sup> Feminist approaches to science differ from traditional (androcentric) science not merely by “adding” women to science, whether as researchers or as subjects worthy of study, but in the ways feminists approach these core beliefs. Feminist methodology requires praxis, an activist approach to scientific research that seeks information to increase understanding and improve real material conditions for marginalized individuals and communities, particularly those under study. Thus, feminist methods require “listening carefully” to women and other marginalized beings for the data provided through their experiences and perspectives, and listening “critically” to how traditional scientists describe this data, seeking out information that traditional scientists “have not thought significant.”<sup>33</sup> Finally, feminist scientists ask questions about what counts as knowledge, who can be a “knower” or “agent of knowledge,” and effectively reconstruct the very identity of the scientist: rejecting the detached, authoritative

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29. See “Meditative Chimponaut,” *Time* 78:23 (December 8, 1961), 52-53, and “The Nearest Thing,” *Time* 77:7 (February 10, 1961), 60-61, respectively. In his excellent study of fatherhood across species, Jeffrey MOUSSAIEFF MASSON argues persuasively for nurturance as a crucial characteristic for human fathers, observing the many varieties of fatherhood behaviors across species, and the ways that the behaviors and norms for patriarchal fatherhood (exaggerated in the scientists’ treatment of animals used in space exploration) are culturally distorted and enforced by social institutions. See *The Emperor’s Embrace: Reflections on Animal Families and Fatherhood*. New York: Pocket Books, 1999.

30. ABADZIS, op cit., p. 201.

31. For a critique of this delayed uptake, see GAARD, Greta, “Speaking of Animal Bodies,” *Hypatia* (Summer 2012). Available at <http://thephilosopherseye.com/2012/07/09/hypatia-symposium-greta-gaard/>.

32. HARDING, op cit.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

“context stripping” objectivity of rationalist science, and its reason/emotion value dualism, feminists emphasize the inseparability of subjectivity and objectivity, locating the researcher on the same critical plane as the subject and cultivating the “authority” of both standpoints in the research project.<sup>34</sup> Feminists regard as research assets the fundamentally relational character of human inter-subjectivity, reason, and emotions.

Ecofeminists have long ago rejected the highly gendered reason/emotion dualism and the elevation of groups over individuals that characterizes not only Peter Singer’s utilitarian ethics, but also the environmental ethics of “holism” that subordinates empathy and care for individual beings to a larger cognitive perspective or “whole.”<sup>35</sup> Instead, ecofeminists and feminist animal studies scholars base ethics on the feelings and reasons that emerge from our relational inter-identities, using the language of care, compassion, sympathy, and empathy.<sup>36</sup> They note the linkages among diverse systems of oppression, whether these be the abuse of women, children, and non-human animals; among racism, sexism, and speciesism; or among the oppression of indigenous people, non-heterosexual behaviors, and nature.<sup>37</sup> Finally, they reject the elisions of evasive language that background the suffering and death of non-human animals (i.e., “veal”), and the emotionally distancing language of traditional science’s particular brand of humanism that can be seen in

34. See BIRKE, Lynda. “Exploring the Boundaries: Feminism, Animals, and Science.” Pp. 32-54 in Carol J. ADAMS and Josephine DONAVAN, eds. *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995, and HUBBARD, Ruth. *The Politics of Women’s Biology*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990.

35. KHEEL, *Nature Ethics*, op cit.

36. See DONAVAN, Josephine and Carol J. ADAMS, eds. *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007; GRUEN, Lori. “Empathy and Vegetarian Commitments” pp. 333-344 in ADAMS and DONAVAN, eds.; CURTIN, Deane, “Compassion And/As Being Human,” in ADAMS and Lori GRUEN, eds. *New Ecofeminisms* (forthcoming); DONOVAN, Josephine. “Participatory Epistemology, Sympathy, and Animal Ethics,” in ADAMS & GRUEN, eds.; DONAVAN, Josephine, “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory” *Signs* 15:2 (1990), pp. 350-375.

37. See ADAMS, Carol J. “Woman-Battering and Harm to Animals.” pp. 55-84 in Carol J. ADAMS and Josephine DONAVAN, eds. *Animals & Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995, and GARBARINO, James. “Protecting Children and Animals from Abuse: A Trans-Species Concept of Caring.” Pp. 250-58 in DONAVAN, Josephine and Carol J. ADAMS, eds. *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007; BREEZE HARPER, A., ed. *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society*. Brooklyn, NY: Lantern Books, 2010, and KEMMERER, Lisa, ed. *Sister Species: Women, Animals, and Social Justice*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011; and GAARD, “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism,” *Hypatia* 12.1 (1997), pp. 114-137, respectively.

the terms of “payload” for the living animal trapped aboard a space shuttle; “Chop Chop Chang” and “#65” for a chimpanzee who might not survive the space flight; “sacrifice” for the capture, confinement, training, vivisection and deaths of animals used in science; and Laika’s “fate” or “destiny,” as if her death was something inherent in her being, and not something produced through the agency of the Soviet space scientists.

The anti-feminist, anti-ecological characteristics of space exploration as it has been practiced are amply evident in the economics, methodology, and ethics of the space programs described here. Post-World War II funding for space exploration diverted government funds away from other public projects,<sup>38</sup> all the while arguing that the benefits of space exploration would apply to all of humanity. But the Cold War space race between Russia and the U.S. belied those claims, suggesting that masculinism, nationalism and colonialism were stronger motivations than humanitarianism.

## 2. Biosphere II: Escape to Inner Space

“... Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things...”

Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Ozymandias” (1818)

To link Russia’s “cosmodogs” and NASA’s “chimponauts” with Biosphere II, one needs to consider not only the themes of space exploration and the colonizing drive to be “first”—first in space, first to orbit the earth, first to send a man into space, first on the moon, first woman in space—but also the question of enclosing animals in space missions. None of the dogs or chimpanzees sent into space cared anything about “firsts” or fame; nor did the animals confined in Biosphere II to nourish the human animals also confined there care or benefit from the multi-million dollar experiment going on in Oracle, Arizona. Renowned primatologist Jane Goodall has spoken to both ventures, explaining that Ham’s apparent grin of happiness upon his return to Earth actually signified “the most extreme fear” through his baring of teeth,

38. Though NASA’s budget has remained at or below 1.0% of the U.S. federal budget since 1958, with the exception of the moon-race era, 1962-1972, that 1.0% amounts to billions of dollars. See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/feb/01/nasa-budgets-us-spending-space-travel> accessed 1/20/2012.

and admonishing the biosphereans midway in their two-year enclosure that their confinement was far less than that experienced by caged chimpanzees, who “do not have the mental capacity to understand what is occurring or how to deal with it.”<sup>39</sup> But when Goodall returned almost a year later to deliver the final remarks concluding the biosphereans’ two-year enclosure (and extended their mission by twenty minutes) at least one biospherean fumed, “Jane, let us apes out of the cage!”<sup>40</sup> Goodall’s instruction in the differences between voluntary and involuntary confinement had been lost on the humans, but the parallels of confining animal bodies to serve humancultural conceptions of masculinized astro-science are well worth exploring.

Envisioned in continuity with the space shuttle missions of the 1960s, Biosphere II was built with the two-pronged intention of developing an earth-based shelter for humans—anticipating an uninhabitable future on earth—and providing “the first model and the data ... that will allow the successful building and operation of the Mars settlement.”<sup>41</sup> The charismatic leader of the Synergia Ranch community and visionary for Biosphere II, John Allen envisioned biospheres as “refuges for a small elite from nuclear war or other disasters,” believing “higher forms of life” could survive on “their own energy resources in mountain caverns” and “release full-scale life” back to Earth “after the skies began to clear.”<sup>42</sup> In Allen’s book *Space Biospheres* written with “biospherian” Mark Nelson, they explain that “the major motivation behind creating Biosphere 2... is to assist the Biosphere [meaning, ‘Biosphere I,’ our global ecosystem] to *evolve off planet earth* into potential life regions of our solar system.”<sup>43</sup> The metaphors describing Biosphere II tended to naturalize the project—i.e., “Spaceship Earth” becoming “Biosphere I” and Biosphere II becoming another spaceship like earth—and reveal the hubris of its creators. Roy Walford, the doctor involved in the project, called it “the Garden of Eden above an aircraft carrier” and *Time* magazine even called it “Noah’s Ark: The Sequel” both metaphors referencing the grandiosity of divine creatorship

39. See CASSIDY and DAVIS, op cit., and Jane POYNTER. *The Human Experiment: Two Years and Twenty Minutes Inside Biosphere 2*, New York: Avalon Publishing Group/Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2006, p. 242.

40. POYNTER, op cit, vii.

41. ALLEN, John. *Biosphere II: The Human Experiment*. New York: Viking/Penguin Books, 1991, p. 75.

42. BROAD, William J. “As Biosphere is Sealed, Its Patron Reflects on Life,” *The New York Times*: Science section, September 24, 1991. Accessed online 11/5/2012.

43. ALLEN and NELSON, op cit., p. 3.



assumed by both Allen and his followers.<sup>44</sup> Thus, despite any professions to the contrary, Biosphere II was a deeply anti-ecological project: instead of seeking ways to nourish living ecosystems by balancing human populations, consumption and waste behaviors, and challenging the economic and political forces affecting those ecosystems, Biosphere II exemplified the “truncated narrative”<sup>45</sup> obtained from the conjunction of heroic masculinist ideology, technology and the environmental *sciences*, operating in a neoliberal framework without the benefit of knowledge and perspective from the environmental humanities—i.e., environmental economics, environmental ethics, critical animal studies, environmental justice, climate justice, food justice, ecopsychology. Biosphere II offered “a glimpse of where ‘sustainable development’ might lead,” wrote Timothy Luke, “if ‘sustainability’ is viewed as a purely technical and managerial problem.”<sup>46</sup>

From the start, the project’s vision was powered not by science but by ideology and money—namely, Ed Bass, a Texas billionaire and heir to an oil and real estate fortune, who eventually funded the project with \$200 million, more than any governmental agency could afford. In 1984, he formed Space Biospheres Venture (SBV) with Margret Augustine and John Allen, the charismatic leader who had already founded the Institute of Ecotechnics, inspired by 1960’s values of communal living, meditation, theater, and Buckminster Fuller’s concept of synergy and his view of “spaceship earth.” Housed above an art gallery in London, the Institute of Ecotechnics (IE) became involved with projects around the world—not just Synergia Ranch near Santa Fe, New Mexico, but an ocean-going “research” vessel the *Heraclitus*, a cattle station in the Australian outback (Quanbun Downs), and The Caravan of Dreams, a performing arts center in downtown Fort Worth. Eventually, the Institute of Ecotechnics granted “degrees” to many of the Biosphere 2 staff, who otherwise had no college education; for example, the “co-architect” for Biosphere 2, Margret Augustine, was discovered to have no architectural training at all, apart from the IE diploma.<sup>47</sup> Part of their theater training in the Caravan

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44. JORDAN FISHER SMTH, “Life Under the Bubble.” *Discover Magazine*, October 20, 2010. Accessed online at <http://discovermagazine.com/2010/oct/20-life-under-the-bubble> on 11/5/2012.

45. KHEEL, Marti. “From Heroic to Holistic Ethics: The Ecofeminist Challenge,” pp. 243-271 in GAARD, Greta, ed., *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1993.

46. LUKE, Timothy. “Reproducing Planet Earth? The Hubris of Biosphere 2,” *The Ecologist*, 25:4 (July/August 1995), pp. 157-161. 159.

47. SIANO, Brian. “The Skeptical Eye: Captain Future’s Terrarium of Discipline,” *The Humanist*, March/April 1992: pp. 41-42. Phil Hawes (“T.C.”) was the only licensed

of Dreams, the biosphereans were well aware of the theater of Biosphere II. John Allen's co-author and staunch Synergist, Mark Nelson, reportedly told a colleague, "We do whatever we need to do, and play what roles we need to play, to get done what we need to get done"; according to Jane Poynter, this approach is "liberating" because "one does not get hung up on how credentialed a person is, but instead focuses on how competent he or she is in the role."<sup>48</sup> In Biosphere II, Synergists played roles as "captain, head of the Agriculture, doctor, or analytical chemist" performed a NASA-like theater, complete with terms like "launch date" and "Mission Control," and costumes of coral-red space jumpsuits with matching boots.<sup>49</sup>

To prepare—and qualify—for their journey inside Biosphere II, a number of people associated with the assembled Synergia community underwent journeys on the *Heraclitus*, spent time in the Australian outback at the cattle ranch, and otherwise lived as invited (or directed) by the leadership team of John Allen and Margret Augustine.<sup>50</sup> These eager contestants gathered token species from across the globe, all selected for their usefulness to human life and energy conversion processes, to create their Noah's Ark of six biomes: a tropical rainforest, an ocean with artificially-generated waves and a sub-real coral reef, a marsh estuary bridging the ocean and a fresh-water pond, a savannah with plants from three different continents, a desert with plants from four continents, and an agricultural zone which included both plants and animals--fish, goats, pigs, and chickens. The human zone contained both public and private spaces, a library and a kitchen above ground, with the "technosphere" below ground, where all the motors and the "lungs" of the system operated.

Ostensibly intended as a two-year project testing the viability of a self-contained system that recycled air and wastes alike, Biosphere II quickly ran into barriers that were both material and scientific, as well as social

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architect on the project, and the community's climate of intimidation and abuse prompted him to pack his bags a year before he quit, waiting that long only because he knew that without his license, the group would not be able to finish the project.

48. POYNTER, op cit., 237.

49. COOPER, Marc. "Take This Terrarium and Shove It," *The Village Voice*, April 2, 1991: pp. 24-33.

50. Margret Augustine was pregnant with John Allen's child during the nine months prior to Biosphere II Closure. The charisma of Allen extended to his love life, of course, involving his wife Marie Harding, who cashed in her entire inheritance to provide the down payment for Synergia Ranch, and later Cathleen Burke, Allen's lover for the ten years she spent in his group, and who reported "beatings" in which Allen "beat mostly the core members of the group" as well as Burke and even his funder, Ed Bass. See SIANO, op cit.

and psychological: after just twelve days, one of the eight “bionauts,” Jane Poynter had to be evacuated for 6.5 hours to receive medical treatment when a fingertip was accidentally cut off in one of the threshing machines. Even in the week-long simulation before “Closure,” the CO<sub>2</sub> low was 554 ppm, eerily simulating global warming phenomena occurring in Biosphere I. But John Allen downplayed this problem, with an adamant insistence on the project’s success, amounting to a “reign of terror” that also included rejecting the research projecting that only 80% of the food needed by the bionauts could be grown inside the Biosphere.<sup>51</sup> After 16 months, with carbon dioxide levels rising up to a high of 4,500 ppm, seven tons of oxygen “missing,” and oxygen levels falling under 15%, causing the resident medical doctor becoming unable to add up simple columns of numbers, an emergency situation was declared and additional oxygen was pumped back in.<sup>52</sup> Despite working 66-hour weeks to produce food and maintain Biospheric operations, the eight biosphereans were able to produce only 80% of the food needed for their subsistence, as predicted (and suppressed) prior to closure, and although their nutrient levels remained sufficient, their bodies lost weight, sleep, and strength. The biosphereans fell into two warring groups before the first year was out: one group insisted on reporting and responding to the real scientific data, while the other group remained loyal to John Allen and his vision, regardless of the material, biological data from scientific instruments and their own animal bodies. Tensions between the two factions ran so high that from month 10 through the remaining two-year enclosure, biosphereans passed one another in the narrow hallways by averting eyes and hugging the wall.<sup>53</sup> Tensions persisted to such a degree that when a second “mission” for a six-month enclosure with seven “bionauts” was launched on March 6, 1994, two members of the first mission travelled from Japan to Oracle, Arizona to break the seals of Biosphere II at 3:00 a.m. on April 5. Their break-in occurred three days after Ed Bass seized control of the project from John Allen and Margaret Augustine, who had been running Biosphere II by mismanaging finances by millions of dollars, and rejecting scientific advice. As of June 27, 2011 the University of Arizona has taken over management of Biosphere II, now termed “B2, Where Science Lives.”

What evidence suggests Biosphere II was anti-ecological? First, the purpose of the mission was colonizing and capitalizing on outer space, not

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51. POYNTER, *op cit.*, pp. 115-116.

52. COOPER, Marc. “Faking It: The Biosphere Is a Model of the Earth After All—It’s Suffering From Runaway Greenhouse Effect,” *The Village Voice*, November 12, 1991. pp. 19-21.

53. *Ibid.*

solving environmental problems here on earth. In their introductory chapter of *Space Biospheres*, Allen and Nelson explain that their purpose is “to assist the Biosphere [earth’s ecosystems] to evolve off planet earth into potential life regions of our solar system” and respond to the “historic imperative” of colonizing Mars, given the “inevitable doom” of the Earth.<sup>54</sup> An odd part of that imperative, months prior to closure of Biosphere II, appeared on May 15, 1991, when plans for commercial development of the 3,600 acres around Biosphere II were submitted to local planning officials and included opening up RV parks, shopping centers, gas stations, offices, schools, hotels, apartments, and a golf course.<sup>55</sup> The proposed community would include areas for research and development (the Biosphere II building) and ecological public education that would include environmental interpretive centers, learning institutions, technical schools, and accommodations for students, scholars, individuals, and families. The unmasking of technoscience as capitalist commercial venture is seldom so clear.

Second, the mechanistic approach to recreating Biosphere I—tokenism guided by anthropocentrism, selecting the nearly 4,000 species for inclusion based primarily on their functions that benefit humans—is fundamentally anti-ecological and unsustainable (as outcomes from the two enclosures demonstrated). Our planet’s ecosystems and inhabitants interact in ways and on scales still not fully understood by human scientists or material philosophers alike, whose theories about “vibrant matter” and the earth’s “dense network” of agencies have yet to distinguish *right relations* (i.e., ecologically sustainable and socially just) among those agencies, and who tend to ignore inter-species relations (especially between humans and other animal species) altogether.<sup>56</sup> Attending to the sustainability of these diverse ecological “intra-actions” is crucial, for as even its critics agreed, Biosphere II’s most important lesson is that there is no alternative to earth.

Another lesson involved food: despite attempts in advance planning, the food systems in Biosphere II assumed the deaths of non-human animal species were a requisite part of the human diet. One source reported being surprised at the “belated realization that we had to farm organically” because such a closed system would be “required for permanent bases in far-away places such as Mars”; the agriculture was going to eschew “green revolution” technologies

54. ALLEN and NELSON, op cit., p. 3.

55. COOPER, Marc. “Profits of Doom: The Biosphere Project Finally Comes Out of the Closet—As a Theme Park,” *The Village Voice*, July 30, 1991. pp. 31-36.

56. See BENNETT, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

and go organic, in recognition of how foundational organic agriculture is to ecological sustainability.<sup>57</sup> But human-nonhuman animal relations were given no consideration in the biospherean diet, and were not seen as relevant to a new ecological vision; hence, the repeated slaughter & consumption of animals whom the biosphereans had regarded as friends clearly diminished their ecological ethics. Poynter recalls, “When in the animal bay, I often thought about how we received all this wonderful milk, eggs, and meat essentially for free. The miniature chickens, pigs, and goats lived off stuff we could not eat.”<sup>58</sup> It never occurs to her (or the other Synergists) to consider the cost of the animal’s life to that animal was far from “free,” nor did these animals choose to enter the Synergists’ experiment (theater) of Biosphere II. As the biospherean in charge of animal agriculture, Poynter found it “harder and harder to butcher the animals” as she began “living on a mostly vegetarian diet,” because she “felt even more connected to the [animals] once [she] knew [she] would not be eating them.”<sup>59</sup> Once the food shortages became evident, the biosphereans decided to eat the pigs that had been their companions, as Poynter reports: “I was sad to see Zazu and Quincy go. It felt like a betrayal to eat them. They had been with us for several years, and it was like eating a friend.”<sup>60</sup> These insights were short-lived.

A fourth anti-ecological feature was that human social culture was given insufficient consideration: the fact that all the biosphereans were white, heterosexual (or celibate), and largely from privileged backgrounds was not seen as a concern, nor was the concern that future biospheres would also be available only to a small group of (presumably elite) humans, as *Space Biospheres* explains: the “first Mars Base... will be corporate in form... the population can range from 64 to 80 people. If more population arrives they will have to begin their own communities”<sup>61</sup> Where these newcomers will find another billionaire to finance their personal Biosphere is not stated. Interpersonal relationships were expected to be subsumed to the group, placing holism over individuals, an ethical strategy strongly criticized by feminists for the ways that it devalues loving partners, children, families, friendships, and individuals as well. Children were not built into the plans for time, energy, or nurturance in the Synergia community that preceded Biosphere II, and

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57. POYNTER, op cit., 95, 182.

58. Ibid., 183.

59. Ibid., 184.

60. Ibid., 228.

61. ALLEN & NELSON, op cit., 7.

couples in both communities were expected to maintain their relationships outside of the times allotted for community work and activities.<sup>62</sup>

Given all these flaws, why did Biosphere II succeed to attract attention and credibility as long as it did? Certainly the millions of dollars in funding from Ed Bass, along with the purchase of scientific individuals and organizations gave the project visibility and credibility.<sup>63</sup> The people behind the project took cover behind a diversity of international, incorporated entities—Synergia Ranch (New Mexico), Institute of Ecotechnics (London), Caravan of Dreams Theater (Texas), Space Biosphere Ventures (Arizona), Decisions Investment Team—all staffed by the same people and controlled by the same core group. The group also managed the public media very effectively, and hired lawyers to use threats of litigation when the media coverage was unfavorable. But all these strategies would not have succeeded outside of the encompassing cultural ideologies of masculinist technoscience (notably its corollary beliefs that science and technology will save humanity from any crisis, even providing alternatives to this world if we end up trashing the planet) and neoliberal economics (encapsulated in the slogan that “What’s good for GM is good for the country”, i.e., what is good for an elite few/corporation is good for the nation, and the earth as well; moreover, if a project / person / organization has a lot of money, he/it must have “done something right” and thus be credible and trustworthy). In sum, Biosphere II’s experiment confined animals of diverse species (including humans) in a two-year “spaceship” demonstrating that our animal “entanglement” with earth’s ecosystems cannot be mimicked without severe damages to animal and ecosystem health. Confronting the causes of global climate change, we need to learn from and reject these anti-ecological beliefs.

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62. See POYNTER, op cit., and Lawrence VEYSEY. *The Communal Experience: Anarchist and Mythical Counter-Cultures in America*, New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

63. Research funding was given to Dr. Ghilleen Prance, director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, England, for setting up the rain forest in Biosphere II; the Yale School of Forestry and Ecological Science was given \$20 million to create the Yale Institute of Biospheric Studies, and \$40,000 to work with Biosphere II on ‘carbon budgeting’; the National Center for Atmospheric Research, funded through U.S. taxpayers via the National Science Foundation, directed \$100,000 into Biosphere II (matched by the Biosphere funders); the Smithsonian Institution received at least \$400,000 for the consultancy of Dr. Walter Adey and Dr. Thomas Lovejoy; and the Environmental Research Laboratory (ERL) at the University of Arizona was paid \$5 million to participate in research leading up to Biosphere II. See COOPER, Marc. “Take This Terrarium and Shove It,” op cit.

### 3. Masculinist Cults, Space Escapes, & Other Techno-Solutions for Climate Change

Taxes takin' my whole damn check,  
 Junkies makin' me a nervous wreck,  
 The price of food is goin' up,  
 An' as if all that shit wuzn't enough:  
 A rat done bit my sister Nell.  
 (with Whitey on the moon)  
 Her face an' arm began to swell.  
 (but Whitey's on the moon)

Was all that money I made las' year  
 (for Whitey on the moon?)  
 How come there ain't no money here?  
 (Hmm! Whitey's on the moon)  
 Y'know I jus' 'bout had my fill  
 (of Whitey on the moon)

Gil Scott-Heron,  
 "Whitey on the Moon" (1970)

After the space race of the 1950s and 1960s, and the experiments with Biosphere II in the 1980s and 1990s, huge amounts of money—both government funding and private investments—in conjunction with a masculinist conception of technoscience have continued to power space exploration. As early as 1967, Barron Hilton, president of Hilton Hotels, envisioned putting hotels in space, and similar proposals in the 1970s from Princeton physicist Gerry O'Neill for human habitations in space are now cited by NewSpace proponents as prescient inspirations.<sup>64</sup> Coined by the Space Frontier Foundation (SFF) in 2006, the term "NewSpace" primarily refers to wealthy entrepreneurs who have launched corporations with names like SpaceX, Virgin Galactic, XCOR, and Bigelow Aerospace, with the primary purpose of designing and promoting space tourism independent of NASA. Their success seems immanent: in late 2010, Virgin Galactic conducted its first landing of WhiteKnightTwo at Spaceport America in New Mexico, with plans to fly customers to suborbital space by 2013; SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket with its Dragon Space Capsule was

64. See DICKENS, Peter, "The Cosmos as Capitalism's Outside," *Sociological Review*, 57:s1(May 2009), pp. 66-82. 71; and David VALENTINE, "Exit Strategy: Profit, Cosmology, and the Future of Humans in Space," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 84:4 (2012), pp. 1045-1068. 1053.

launched in 2010 and on May 25, 2012, the Dragon successfully docked at the International Space Station.<sup>65</sup>

What motivates these NewSpace advocates? According to Peter Dickens, the cosmos has become capitalism's new "outside," and these "outer space imperialisms" are now seeking "outer spatial fixes"—investments in outer space—to solve the crises of capitalism.<sup>66</sup> President Eisenhower's neologism of the "military-industrial complex" has become the "military-industrial-space complex" inventing new enemies that require increased surveillance and funding for defense contractors such as Raytheon, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and Northrop Grumman. The inter-imperialist rivalries from the Cold War have expanded the world into three power blocs competing for outer space: the USA (whose Department of Defense philosophy is called "Full Spectrum Dominance"), Europe, and China. According to Dickens, three arguments are used to legitimate "outer spatial fixes": appeals to the "pure, universal, scientific knowledge to be supposedly gained" by outer space exploration; benefits to the global environment and world population, including "monitoring" of ecological conditions, collecting solar energy for a world running out of resources, and "protecting" citizens' freedom; and fulfilling the biologically-engrained need of humanity to "explore," and "conquer new horizons," releasing the "human potential" that enabled earlier colonialist ventures.<sup>67</sup> The gendered and colonialist rhetoric of these arguments needs little commentary: they present science as value-free and acontextual, and scientific knowers' identities are constructed via rugged individualism and conquest, all features of masculinism; and these arguments appeal to fear, satisfying a false need for more "monitoring" when global monitoring already confirms the ecological conditions of a climate change crisis (i.e., melting polar ice, increasingly severe weather events, record-breaking heat, drought, species migrations and extinctions, etc.).

Moreover, using outer space to collect solar energy for a world running out of resources presumes we have exhausted our capacities to collect solar energy here on earth, when this is far from accurate; however, this assumption does express the ideology of NewSpace in its rejection of "limits to growth" positions popular since the 1970s. According to NewSpace advocates, space has boundless amounts of energy, fuel, minerals and land mass; it can provide space-based solar power, metals from mining asteroids, and expanded free

65. VALENTINE, op cit., p. 1054, 1046.

66. DICKENS, op cit., p. 68.

67. Ibid., pp. 78-79.



markets.<sup>68</sup> Attending the conferences of NewSpace advocates, David Valentine found three sub-groups, each with a different perspective on the purposes of space exploration. At the Space Investment Summits conference, Valentine heard frequent iterations of “space is expensive,” from investors primarily interested in the “exit strategy,” or point at which a business can be sold and investors can reap their profits.<sup>69</sup> But at the National Space Society’s International Space Development Conference (ISDC), the slogan was “Space is a place, not a program”: here, advocates see space as a “privileged destination” because “the species depends on it.”<sup>70</sup> This view leads to Valentine’s third group, which measures the success of NewSpace by the point at which “humans don’t have to return to Earth.”<sup>71</sup> These suggestions are eerily resonant with images of Laika in Sputnik 2’s no-return voyage of 1957, or Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) concluding image of a human fetus floating in outer space, without mother or womb or earth for food, warmth, nurturance. Such images of the future are not “astroenvironmentalisms”<sup>72</sup> but Icarian, hubristic anti-environmentalisms infatuated with the sublime, defined by Edmund Burke as vastness, darkness, infinity, vacuity, difficulty and danger, confronting us with our mortality and our insignificance in relation to something much greater than ourselves.<sup>73</sup> As Patrick D. Murphy has ably argued, the sublime is antithetical to an ecofeminist environmental ethic.<sup>74</sup>

Here on earth, technoscientific attempts to mitigate the pace and effects of climate change are being undertaken by heroic entrepreneurs operating outside the bounds of government. Geoengineering is now attempting to substitute for the real and difficult work of reducing emissions; bringing corporations

68. VALENTINE, op cit., p. 1052.

69. Ibid., p. 1056.

70. Ibid., p. 1050, 1057.

71. Ibid., p. 1058. Valentine’s article advocating that the NewSpace adherents be taken seriously—“How do we take this cosmology seriously without thinking that we already know the answer?”—was funded, in part, by the National Science Foundation; see pp. 1064-1065.

72. This term is used in HENRY and TAYLOR, op cit., p. 200. Their idea that we must extend environmental ethics to include and address “space junk” and other polluting particles fits well with a feminist eco-ethic; my concern here is that until we enact genuine environmental justice here on earth, we cannot pretend to be achieving such environmentalisms in space, or to propose those as a replacement or negation of the need for such actions on earth.

73. SMITH, Warren, “To Infinity and Beyond?” *Sociological Review* 57:s1 (2009), pp. 204-212. 209.

74. MURPHY, Patrick D.. “An Ecological Feminist Revisioning of the Masculinist Sublime.” *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* 64 (Summer 2012), pp. 79-94.

and governments in line with real climate science facts, and creating policies affecting the behaviors and economics at all levels (governments, corporations, communities, individuals); and ultimately adapting to and seeking to mitigate the unavoidable effects of climate change already occurring. After the NASA space race and Biosphere 2, huge amounts of money are still deciding national and international responses to climate change. Who benefits from such denials of ecological science and the ecological humanities, and who pays for those benefits?

As Naomi Klein explains, geoengineering involves “high-risk, large-scale technical interventions that would fundamentally change the oceans and skies in order to reduce the effects of global warming.”<sup>75</sup> The strategies being considered include “pumping sulfate aerosols into the upper atmosphere to imitate the cooling effects of a major volcanic eruption and ‘brightening’ clouds so they reflect more of the sun’s rays back to space.”<sup>76</sup> Today, backed by the U.S. House Committee on Science and Technology, the British Government, and billionaire Bill Gates, scientists are preparing to “actively tamper with the complex and unpredictable natural systems that sustain life on earth — with huge potential for unintended consequences.”<sup>77</sup> The most frightening features of geoengineering are that earth’s systems are connected in ways scientists still do not fully understand (witness Biosphere II) so that geoengineering efforts in one part of the globe could trigger disastrous outcomes in another part of the globe—and there’s no oversight mechanisms in place. Unlike the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, which proposes a community-wide, nation-by-nation commitment to lower greenhouse gas emissions, any individual or group with the will and the funding can attempt a geoengineering “solution.”

Like shooting chimps into space, confining Biosphereans and their “food animals” inside a glass dome, or creating hotels and shuttles for tourists in NewSpace, geoengineering follows the same misguided assumptions that have brought us to the current climate crisis: the belief that humans are somehow separate from and above nature, and humans must control nature. This cultural belief is a deeply Euro-western articulation of heteromascularity whose key characteristic is dominance—physical, economic, political, military, ecological, psychological, emotional, and sexual dominance. Feminists

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75. KLEIN, Naomi. “Geoengineering: Testing the Waters,” *New York Times*, October 27, 2012. Accessed online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/28/opinion/sunday/geoengineering-testing-the-waters.html> on 11/6/2012

76. *Ibid.*

77. *Ibid.*

and anthropologists have described these colonialist Euro-western cultures as “warrior *cults*” shaped and inflected by the assumptions and ideology of cultural heteromascularity. If “we” are not above and in control of nature—whether via imperialism of other non-dominant people, places, and species, or via techno-scientific animal experimentation under the guise of space exploration—then “we” cease to be “real men” and thus cease to be human, becoming not just “humanimals” (Haraway’s term) but more specifically, *earthanimals*. As this essay demonstrates, animals in space are, ultimately, dead animals. Rather than face our *entanglement* with the rest of nature,<sup>78</sup> and the strengths and limitations of our own *earthanimalities*, outer space advocates pursue techno-scientific solutions in the anthropocene when our future depends on confronting and reducing the causes of climate change itself: industrial, agricultural, and transportation processes and productions, including deforestation and animal-based food production, that are increasing greenhouse gases via first-world overconsumption habits, as climate justice activists from Doha to Detroit agree.

#### 4. Conclusion: Toward Eco-Masculinities on Earth

In *Nature Ethics*, Marti Kheel argues that the social construction of dominant masculinity is inherently anti-ecological for the ways it “idealizes transcending the [female-imagined] biological realm, as represented by other-than-human animals and affiliative ties” and “subordinate[s] empathy and care for individual beings to a larger cognitive perspective or ‘whole.’”<sup>79</sup> Of major significance is Kheel’s insight that *all environmental ethics are constructed through the lens of gender*. If environmental ethicists and activists want to make more conscious choices about that lens, particularly in the ways that it influences the environmental sciences and humanities, economics and politics, then we’ll need to envision more sustainable, just, and diverse expressions of eco-genders, eco-masculinities, and eco-sexualities.<sup>80</sup> Already, the climate justice movement has benefitted from the new social movements and radical environmentalisms of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, but as even the internationally-acclaimed 350.Org shows, there’s still room to grow.

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78. If developed in conjunction with the insights of feminist animal studies, material philosophy (and its use of the term “entanglement”) has the potential to aptly describe our animal embeddedness with earth’s vibrant matter.

79. KHEEL, *Nature Ethics*, op cit., p. 3.

80. For a discussion of ecomasculinity, see GAARD, Greta, “Toward New Eco-Masculinities, Eco-Genders, and Eco-Sexualities,” in ADAMS, Carol and Lori GRUEN, eds., *New Ecofeminisms: Intersectionalities with Animals and the Earth* (forthcoming).

On November 30, 2012, Bill McKibben's "Do the Math" tour made a stop in Minneapolis to update our branch of climate justice activists, MN350.Org, on the challenges and next steps for the climate justice movement. Introduced by folk singer Mason Jennings, with presentations from Marty Cobenais of the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN), Polar explorer Will Steger, and Winona LaDuke of the White Earth Land Recovery Project (WELRP), Bill McKibben's talk featured Minnesota-based video of our grassroots activists, complemented with video of the global 350.Org movement, beginning in 2007 with "Step It UP" through the Copenhagen Convention and beyond. To save transportation costs, McKibben interspersed his talk with taped interviews from Van Jones of Green For All, an organization to develop a green economy that lifts people out of poverty; the producer of "Gasland" documentary, Josh Fox, describing the human and ecological effects of fracking, and the inadequacy of "backyard" or local eco-activisms without an end to climate change; and Archbishop Desmond Tutu from South Africa speaking about apartheid and the divestment strategies of the 1980s. Contrasting the global warming evidence provided by NASA scientist James Hansen, versus the global warming deniers' pseudo-science funded by oil companies and their think-tanks, McKibben demonstrates a more feminist *eco-masculine* approach to scientific knowledge-construction in his methods of building a grassroots and global environmental movement with racially and nationally diverse leaders (though the 1:7 ratio of his selected speakers in Minneapolis shows that simple gender balance is still lacking), his methodologies of encouraging a strong sense of participatory democracy, and his passionate epistemology, which involves listening to and creating community conversations among all those involved in a climate justice movement that benefits all participants. McKibben's "math" equation is simple:  $CO_2 + \$ =$  a burning planet.<sup>81</sup> Accordingly, the next step is subtraction: 350.Org plans to encourage international strategies of divestment, withdrawing college and university investments from global oil corporations like ExxonMobil, Shell, ChevronTexaco, BP, and ConocoPhillips.

But where is the awareness of animals, and the intra-action between species justice and climate justice? Though McKibben mentioned "and other species" several times in his talk, his agnostic position on human-other animal relations was articulated in a 2010 essay published in *Orion Magazine*,

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81. See MCKIBBEN, Bill. "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math." *Rolling Stone Magazine*, July 19. Accessed at <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719> on 12/3/2012.

and in e-mails from 350.Org.<sup>82</sup> McKibben and his organization acknowledge that while it's "pretty clear" that eating less meat is a good idea, "we don't really take official stances on issues like veganism," an omission that seems ludicrous to James McWilliams, author of *Just Food: Where Locavores Get It Wrong and How We Can Eat Responsibly*.<sup>83</sup> As McWilliams speculates, there are at least three reasons for McKibben's omission, and they aren't flattering: first, getting arrested in front of the White House for opposing the Tar Sands Pipeline models an eco-heroic (and masculinist) stance that garners headline coverage and is "a lot better for 350.org's profile than staying at home, munching kale, and advising others to explore veganism."<sup>84</sup> Moreover, pipelines provide the media with clear victims, perpetrators, and a narrative of ecological decline that is less visible than the ongoing first-world overconsumption of intensely-farmed animals and their associated ecological impacts—another example of "slow violence" that is harder to make visible.<sup>85</sup> Second, meat-eating environmentalists who argue that we must replace feedlot farming with rotational grazing, as McKibben does, nostalgically refer to a pre-industrial and pre-agrarian past, implying that nature is more natural in the absence of human beings. In doing so, they reiterate an entrenched human/nature dualism that persists among diverse branches of environmentalisms, despite incisive critiques from posthumanist, ecofeminist, material feminist and other philosophies. Finally, as McWilliams argues, meat-eating seems to represent "personal freedom" and individual choice, while oil pipelines and coal power plants offer more visible and collectively-shared images of environmental impact, a contrast that articulates differences between rights-based ethics and the more feminist relational ethics of care and responsibility. But the effects of animal-based food consumption as well as unsustainable energy and transportation are all contributing to climate change, and some scientists suggest that a change in diet may be as crucial as stopping an oil pipeline. According

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82. See MCKIBBEN, Bill. "The Only Way to Have a Cow." *Orion Magazine*, March/April 2010. Accessed at <http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/5339> on 12/12/2012.

83. For the 350.Org e-mail, see MCWILLIAMS, James, "Agnostic Carnivores and Global Warming: Why Enviros Go After Coal and Not Cows," *Freakonomics.com*, 11/16/2011. Accessed at <http://www.freakonomics.com/2011/11/16/agnostic-carnivores-and-global-warming-why-enviros-go-after-coal-and-not-cows/> on 12/12/2012. See also MCWILLIAMS, James. *Just Food: Where Locavores Get It Wrong and How We Can Eat Responsibly*. New York: Little, Brown, & Co., 2010.

84. MCWILLIAMS, "Agnostic Carnivores and Global Warming," op cit.

85. Rob NIXON coined the term "slow violence" to describe the persistent and degrading effects of environmental injustices in his book *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2011.

to World Preservation Foundation scientists, publishing in the *International Journal of Climate Change*, steep reductions in livestock production, along with returning the world's pastures (a quarter of the land surface) to grow trees, woodland and native perennial grasses, will soak up at least 20 years of carbon emissions.<sup>86</sup> Why would McKibben and 350.Org overlook this complement to their climate justice eco-activism? In other words, why would they overlook the influence of gender and species on environmental ethics and activism?

In the necessary move to replace anti-ecological masculinist approaches to the environmental sciences and humanities with more ecological masculinities, we can even find seeds of this transition in even the masculinist hunter-environmentalists Kheel has criticized. As Aldo Leopold wrote in *A Sand County Almanac*, "a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it," a change Leopold urged because "the conqueror's role is eventually self-defeating."<sup>87</sup> In the role of conqueror, science claims to know "what makes the community clock tick," but in fact "the biotic mechanism is so complex that its workings may never be fully understood." Leopold's land ethic defines a set of paradoxes, and offers humans the linked choices that involve our identity, our use of science, our environmental ethics, and our society's rejection of racism and classism: will our culture be "man the conqueror," or "the biotic citizen"? Will science be "the sharpener of [the conqueror's] sword" or "the searchlight on [the] universe"? And will the earth itself, its interdependent ecosystems, plants, animals, and human communities, become the conqueror's "slave and servant" or "a community to which we belong"?

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86. See WEDDERBUM-BISSHOP, Gerard and PAVLIDIS, Lefkothea. "Shorter Lived Climate Forcers: Agriculture Sector and Land Clearing for Livestock." *The International Journal of Climate Change* 3:2, pp. 129-144; STEHFEST, Elkie, et al. "Climate Benefits of Changing diet." *Climatic Change* 95:1-2 (July 2009), pp. 83-102.

87. LEOPOLD, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1949. Marti KHEEL provides a strong and well-supported critique of Leopold's masculinism (which involved lifelong hunting) in her *Nature Ethics: An Ecofeminist Perspective*, op cit. At the end of his life, Leopold continued to evolve his environmental ethics, and in "The Land Ethic" his writing contains implicit acknowledgements of the links among diverse kinds of oppression—gender, sexuality, race, class, nation. Leopold was radically ahead of his time in challenging the very nature of human identity as linked to environmental behaviors and relationships, although such ideas and language were not available to him in 1948.

If we “do the math,” the relevance of these questions to climate science, climate justice and inter-species relations alike become evident.<sup>88</sup>

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88. Special thanks to Lori Gruen for early conversations and resources on chimpanzees in space exploration, and for her reading of this essay’s penultimate draft.

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# “SAVAGE BEAUTY”: REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN AS ANIMALS IN PETA’S CAMPAIGNS AND ALEXANDER MCQUEEN’S FASHION SHOWS

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## Abstract

Ecofeminism has denounced the animalization of women in advertising as perpetuating the oppression of women and animals. However, this identification is not only found in advertising. In 1990s PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) initiated a campaign against the fur industry featuring famous *Playboy* playmates. This provoked the reaction of some feminists who described it as pornographic. In a different vein, in 2011 the Metropolitan Museum of Art inaugurated the exhibition “Savage Beauty” dedicated to fashion designer Alexander McQueen. This exhibition features McQueen’s taste for turning his female models into animals in his fashion shows by dressing them in feather costumes or topping their heads with antlers.

This article aims at analyzing the use of the woman as animal image in advertising, in PETA’s campaigns, and in McQueen’s fashion shows in order to argue that sometimes it can serve as an instrument of empowerment for women.

**Key-words:** ecocriticism, ecofeminism, women and animals, animal ecofeminism, PETA, Alexander McQueen.

## Resumen

El ecofeminismo ha denunciado la animalización de las mujeres en la publicidad porque perpetua la opresión de las mujeres y de los animales. Sin embargo, esta identificación no solo aparece en la publicidad. En 1990 PETA (Personas por el Trato Ético para los Animales) inició una campaña contra la industria peletera en la que aparecían famosas *playmates* de *Playboy*. Esta campaña provocó las críticas de algunas

feministas que la calificaron de pornográfica. Por otro lado, en 2011 el Museo Metropolitano de Arte inauguró la exposición “Belleza salvaje” dedicada al diseñador de moda Alexander McQueen. Esta exposición muestra el gusto de McQueen por convertir a sus modelos femeninas en animales al vestirlas con plumas o ponerles astas de ciervo a modo de tocado.

Este artículo pretende analizar el uso de la imagen de la mujer como animal en la publicidad, las campañas de PETA, y los desfiles de McQueen con el fin de defender que a veces puede servir como un instrumento de empoderamiento de la mujer.

**Palabras clave:** ecocrítica, ecofeminismo, mujeres y animales, ecofeminismo animal, PETA, Alexander McQueen.

## 1. Introduction

Given Greta Gaard's claim that critical movements such as posthumanism, postcolonial ecocriticism and animal studies have forgotten to acknowledge their intellectual debt with ecofeminism,<sup>1</sup> in this study I am interested in signaling animal ecofeminism<sup>2</sup> as the kind of ecofeminism that still best informs the analysis of cultural artifacts which revolve around the woman-animal identification. As it will be shown, such identification is still rampant in today's society as the material I use illustrates. This mainly ranges from some of the ads compiled by Scott A. Lukas in his GenderAds Project<sup>3</sup> to PETA's (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)<sup>4</sup> use of the female body in some of its campaigns. Such visual input will be contrasted with the sophistication of some of British fashion designer Alexander McQueen's catwalk shows where the woman-animal pair feature prominently. With this analysis I intend to support Greta Gaard's defense of ecofeminism as the logically honest way to analyze the oppression to which both women and animals are subject in Western consumerist society, in a time when animal studies seems to have forgotten its intellectual debt to a critical movement with three decades of history. This claim is grounded on the fact that ecofeminism, and more specifically animal ecofeminism, was the critical position which really launched the study of the connections between women and animals, and their related structures of oppression, sexism and speciesism.

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1. GAARD, Greta. "Speaking of Animal Bodies." *Hypatia* 27.3 (Summer 2012), pp. 519-526; "Feminist Animal Studies in the U.S.: Bodies Matter." *DEP Deportate, Esuli e Profughe Rivista Telematica di Studi Sulla Memoria Femminile* 20 (2012), pp. 14-21.

2. As Greta Gaard explained to me in an e-mail message (4 Dec 2012), her choice of the term "animal ecofeminism" over "vegetarian ecofeminism" which she had used in her review essay on this matter published in 2002, is derived from the fact that, after a decade of "animal studies," "it seems clearer to use the term 'animal ecofeminism' referencing the thirty-year history of ecofeminists examining the sex/gender/species/race/class connections."

3. <<http://www.genderads.com>>

4. <<http://www.peta.org>>

As her articles demonstrate, since 2003 Greta Gaard has been by far one of the most vocal authors in tracing the roots and describing the significance of the woman and animal connection in the formation of animal ecofeminism. Although it is true that Carol J. Adams was the first one to analyze this connection in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990) where she dealt with the oppression of women as derived from patriarchal values, and put it in relationship with the suffering of animals in the meat production industry, Gaard was fundamental in the inauguration of the field in 1993 with the publication of her *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*. Here the woman-animal connection was for the first time articulated as part of the ecofeminist movement which, as Gaard explains, has had a “contentious relationship with the idea of animal liberation” from its beginning.<sup>5</sup> Gaard also mentions that prior to her book only two anthologies had touched, in a marginal manner, the role played by animals in ecofeminist theory.<sup>6</sup> These were Léonie Caldecott and Stephanie Leland’s *Reclaim the Earth: Women Speak Out for Life on Earth* (1983) and Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein’s *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (1990). Today animals are already recognized as a suitable academic topic in the humanities as is shown by many of the conferences, associations, journals, graduate programs and books mentioned in review works by Kenneth Shapiro, Marion W. Copeland, Margo DeMello, and Kathleen Gerbasi. However, as Gaard repeatedly mentions, when it comes to connecting women and animals, scholars working in critical animal studies prefer to be cautious, and avoid using labels such as ecofeminism due to the peril of being accused of essentialism. In actual fact, partly as a consequence of this need to claim the role both feminism and ecofeminism have played as theoretical foundation of animal studies, a special issue of the journal of feminist philosophy *Hypatia* under the title of *Animal Others* was published in the summer of 2012.

From a theoretical point of view, ecofeminism explores the oppression of women and connects it to that of nature, thus it would have been only logical to expect that it would have also dealt with the oppression of animals from its beginning, but this was not the case. So, although since its birth in the late 1970s, ecofeminism had analyzed the workings of other systems of oppression outside of the sphere of sexism and naturism — racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, and disability — it had to wait until 1990 to include speciesism. Nonetheless the question of the animal remained an uncomfortable one due

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5. GAARD, Greta. “Vegetarian Ecofeminism: A Review Essay.” *Frontiers* 23.3 (2002), p. 117.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

to the risk of essentialism and animalization of the objects of oppression. This was so much so that some ecofeminists even rejected having to include this issue in their explorations. But, as Gaard explains, when no one cared about the animal in academia, at least a few ecofeminists dared to bring up the nonhuman as a subject of exploration, meeting with the rejection of their colleagues who discouraged the lack of seriousness of such endeavor.<sup>7</sup> Today however, thanks to the development of animal studies under the protective umbrella of continental philosophy, animal studies has acquired the mark of respect required by academia to consider it a proper field of enquiry. Nevertheless some attention needs to be given to the reasons why very few animal critics acknowledge the enormous contribution of the work done by ecofeminists to the deconstruction of binaries such as the human/animal.<sup>8</sup> This is especially significant because today’s consumerist society offers examples that indicate that such binaries are still alive, and that, when it comes to the woman-animal association, they penetrate linguistic expression as well as advertising and the visual arts.

In order to understand why animal ecofeminism is still current, I want first to take a look at Gaard’s explanation of its conceptual basis and look at other works that inform animal ecofeminism today. After that I will pay attention to advertising images where the bodies of women and animals are used as interchangeable objects of abuse, to finally conclude by paying attention to the challenging visions of Alexander McQueen’s fashion shows produced between 1992 and 2010. The exploration of these images will finally allow me to prove how animal studies cannot efficiently deal with the animal question without considering related forms of oppression such as those pinpointed by animal ecofeminism.

## 2. Animal Ecofeminism Revisited

To begin with, it is interesting to observe how the same forces that motivated the appearance of animal ecofeminism are still at play making this philosophical movement alive. These forces are, according to Gaard, the experience of sympathy for nonhuman animals, the development of animal liberation theories, the countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as feminism.<sup>9</sup>

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7. GAARD, Greta. “Speaking ...” Op. cit., p. 522.

8. In this respect Val Plumwood’s dismantling of the master mentality in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993) deserves special attention.

9. GAARD, Greta. “Vegetarian ...” Op. cit., p. 118.

The importance of sympathy and compassion is present in much of what has been written on the human-animal relationship in the last decade. Sympathy is at the root of a paradigm shift that has led to new and groundbreaking ways of looking at the animal from an ethical, a philosophical, a scientific, and a literary point of view. Marc Bekoff has been probably one of the most daring examples of a scientist withdrawing from the hyperactivity of mainstream forms of Western science and arguing for a compassionate science, which he calls “deep science”.<sup>10</sup> He, for instance, in *The Animal Manifesto* (2010), inspired by the rhetoric of the fight against climate change, proposes taking stock of our level of compassion towards nonhuman animals in order to become aware of the ways in which we can expand our “compassion footprint”. Interestingly, he does not say a word about some of his predecessors in this attempt at creating a compassionate science, nineteenth-century women physicians like Elizabeth Blackwell and Arabella Kingsford, nor does he consider the impact that the feminist care tradition has had in developing a more compassionate approach to animals in science. This is precisely one of the issues that Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams explore in their book *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader* (2007) with articles such as Deborah Slicer’s “Your Daughter or Your Dog? A Feminist Assessment of the Animal Research Issue” about compassion and animal experimentation. However, other authors with an interest in feminist studies have not omitted such a contribution when speaking of new epistemological ways of approaching animals. Traci Warkentin, for example, in “Interspecies Etiquette: An Ethics of Paying Attention to Animals” (2010) calls attention to the importance of compassion and relationship in the ecofeminist approach proposed by Donovan<sup>11</sup> as well as feminism in general.<sup>12</sup> On a more practical level, G. A. Bradshaw, a practitioner of trans-species psychology, a field she developed as a result of her discovery of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in elephants, promotes fusing sensibility and science for the enhancement of trans-species dialogue. In the humanities, Marion W. Copeland, who set herself to the task of reviewing the latest developments in animal literary studies in “Literary Animal Studies in 2012: Where We Are, Where We Are Going”, draws attention to the crucial role of the imagination for knowing animals and suggests

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10. BEKOFF, Marc. “Redecorating Nature: Deep Science, Holism, Feeling, and Heart.” *Bio-Science* 50.8 (2000), p. 635.

11. WARKENTIN, Traci. “Interspecies Etiquette: An Ethics of Paying Attention to Animals.” *Ethics and the Environment* 15.1 (2010), p. 104.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 105.



that sympathy is the engine behind the literary imagination of those writing animal stories or analyzing them.

Regarding animal liberation theories, the debate between welfarists and rightists initiated by Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation* (1975) and Tom Regan’s *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983) is still alive. However, it can be said that in 1994 a point of convergence was reached between the two with the foundation of the Great Ape Project, an initiative that led to the publication of a book edited by Peter Singer himself, former leading voice of the welfare-oriented approach, and Paola Cavalieri. In this book thirty-four authors coming from very different fields promote a defense of three basic rights for great apes: the right to life, protection of individual liberty, and prohibition of torture. Ecofeminists in Spain,<sup>13</sup> where the project was presented by Peter Singer and Paula Casal in a special issue of the journal *Laguna*, and elsewhere<sup>14</sup> have argued against this proposal considering it a reformulation of an ethical pyramid where only humans’ closest animal relatives are granted rights. It is seen therefore as too human as well as too intellectualized because of its appreciation of those characteristics that situate animals close to humans. Animal ecofeminists offer more imaginative and comprehensive solutions. Kelly Oliver, for instance, thinks that the rights discourse is limited when applied to animals. She believes that instead of focusing so much on Bentham’s question “Can they suffer?” which guides Singer’s and Regan’s theories of rights, more attention should be given to our capacity to respond to the suffering of the Other.<sup>15</sup>

Regarding social awareness, the countercultural movement of the 1960s and 1970s still resonates today in causes raised as a consequence of the risks posed by climate change and overpopulation. Scientists have demonstrated the connection between diet and global warming. Anthony J. McMichael, John W. Powles, Colin D. Butler, and Ricardo Uauy have shown that a fifth of total greenhouse-gas emissions is produced by agricultural activity, especially livestock production.<sup>16</sup> Taking into account the complex relations between

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13. PULEO, Alicia H. “Derechos versus contextualismo: personas, simios y la ética ecofeminista.” *Laguna, Revista de Filosofía*.7 (2000), pp. 353-7.

14. DONOVAN, Josephine. “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory.” In Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams (eds.). *Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals*, New York, Continuum, 1990, pp. 34-54.

15. OLIVER, Kelly. “What Is Wrong with (Animal) Rights?” *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 22.3 (2008), p. 222.

16. MCMICHAEL, Anthony J., John W. Powles, Colin D. Butler, and Ricardo Uauy. “Food, Livestock Production, Energy, Climate Change, and Health.” *The Lancet* 370 (2007), p. 1253.

energy, food, and health they propose reducing meat production and consumption as one of the measures that could increase a more sustainable world. These and other scientific considerations have been taken into account by the United Nations which recently published as one of its top climate change publications the *Integrated Assessment of Black Carbon and Tropospheric Ozone* where it points out the need to efficiently manage livestock manure, one of the main sources of CH<sub>4</sub> emissions.<sup>17</sup> As a consequence some argue in favor of more sustainable agricultural practices<sup>18</sup>—like letting cows graze on pasture instead of feeding them maize—that will improve the life of cattle, as well as shifting to a low meat diet and, if possible, to vegetarianism or even veganism.<sup>19</sup> In this sense, it is meaningful to find that the work once considered the vegetarian “bible” for countercultural activists, Francis Moore Lappé’s *Diet for a Small Planet* (1971),<sup>20</sup> has been followed by a sequel written by Lappé’s daughter. In *Diet for a Hot Planet: The Climate Crisis at the End of Your Fork and What You Can Do about It* (2010) Anna Lappé exposes the environmental risks involved in current food production and proposes a “climate friendly diet”. This coincides with the defense of a vegetarian diet, or at least a conscious diet, by animal ecofeminists, although it is true that the reason for change is not so much the eradication of the suffering of animals as the mitigation of a problem caused by an anthropocentric world system.

Finally, as a last factor, Gaard acknowledges the long history of women’s activism on behalf of animals and the impact it has had on the development of animal ecofeminism.<sup>21</sup> Josephine Donovan paid attention to this tradition in her article “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory” (1993) and two years later Linda Hogan, Brenda Peterson and Deena Metzger compiled a series of literary texts that reflected the special relationship between women and animals in *Intimate Nature: The Bond Between Women and Animals*. This became the first literary anthology to consider animal literature written by women, and it showcased how the literary imagination of women has always been potently inspired by animals. Gaard also mentions how feminists have found in language one of the main instruments for the objectification of both

17. UNEP/WMO. *Integrated Assessment of Black Carbon and Tropospheric Ozone: Summary for Decision Makers*. <[http://www.unep.org/dewa/Portals/67/pdf/BlackCarbon\\_SDM.pdf](http://www.unep.org/dewa/Portals/67/pdf/BlackCarbon_SDM.pdf)> p. 21.

18. For more information on these kinds of initiatives see <http://smallplanet.org/>

19. MCKIBBEN, Bill. “The Only Way to Have a Cow.” *Orion Magazine* March/April (2010). <<http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/5339>> Accessed 7 Dec 2012.

20. GAARD, Greta. “Vegetarian...” Op.cit., p. 124.

21. Ibid., p. 125.

women and animals.<sup>22</sup> In this respect, in 2001 Joan Dunayer paid attention to this topic and explored the ways in which language works as an instrument of oppression for animals. She also connected the workings of such linguistic oppression with that suffered by other groups among which she included women and people of color in *Animal Equality: Language and Liberation*. In general, it can be said that today there is still a strong intellectual and emotional connection between women and animal liberation activism which was born in the late eighteenth century and is attested today in recent books such as *Sister Species: Women, Species and Social Justice* (2011) by Lisa A. Kemmerer and *Women and the Animal Rights Movement* (2011) by Emily Gaarder.

### 3. The Woman-Animal Association in Images

This brief review of recent ecofeminist publications shows that animal ecofeminism is still alive and contributes to the debate about women and animals with new and provocative ideas that need to be taken into account if there is a true intention to end animal oppression. In order to prove that animal ecofeminism is essential for questioning the role that traditionally has been assigned to women and animals by a Western mentality, I now intend to analyze images that still convey the long-held association between women and animals. These images come from the world of advertising, animal activism campaigns, and fashion. They reflect how the expression of this association in visual form can sometimes serve as an instrument of liberation whilst at other times it fosters the oppression of one of the groups involved.

Traditionally, talk about the woman-animal association has been met by accusations of essentialism. However, the association between the two has been present in the Western world since antiquity. In Greece, for example, goddess Artemis was connected to wilderness and hunting. Homer refers to her as *Artemis Agrotera, Potnia Theron*, that is, "... forest goddess Artemis, / queen of all wild beasts ..."<sup>23</sup> More recently, psychoanalyst Clarissa Pinkola Estés published her book *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype* (1992) in an attempt to retrieve what she calls "the wild woman," a highly capable woman inspired by an inner force coming from her natural instincts. This idea caught on in the minds of her readership and the book remained for two years in the *New York Times* selling list. As Mary Midgley explains, such identification with wild nature is rooted in the association of women with what is irrational, with materiality and the corpo-

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22. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

23. HOMER. *Iliad*. Trans. Ian Johnston. Arlington, VI, Richer, 2006. Lines 565-566, p. 467.

real: “The fear of women is a fear of the impulses they arouse and the forces they stand for.”<sup>24</sup> It is therefore unlikely that this association will disappear from contemporary cultural artifacts, but it deserves special attention since, as animal ecofeminists have shown, it has often contributed to the normalization of the oppression of both animals and women. In this respect, animal ecofeminists, have analyzed the ways in which forms of aggression affecting women—battering, pornography, rape—and animals—animal abuse, animals as food and entertainment, hunting—often run parallel to each other (see Figure 1).<sup>25</sup> In all these instances both women and animals are turned into objects of consumption. This consumption adopts different forms. In the case of animals the most obvious example is that of eating their meat, to which Adams has paid attention. By being classified as food, animals lose their status as sentient beings and are commodified as meat. They become “the absent referent in the act of meat eating.”<sup>26</sup> They lose their specificity as individuals because they are transformed into objects by the literal and figurative processing of the meat industry. This becoming meat implies an erasure of subjectivity, of which there is even linguistic proof. In many languages, for example, the words used to describe the living animal are different from those used to describe the dead animal that is served as food. This is so in English in the case of the *cow* that is turned into *beef*, the *pig* which is turned into *pork*, or the *sheep* which is referred to as *mutton*. But animals do not necessarily need to be eaten in order to be spoken of as objects of consumption. They can also be consumed as objects of entertainment in races, circuses, rodeos or fighting events. Likewise women are often turned into consumable bodies in patriarchal societies. Their individuality is then erased and they become animalized by being designated as *chicks*, *bitches* or *bunnies*. Furthermore their supposedly animal nature translates often into the sexualization of images of women that describe them as subservient to men, innocent and helpless creatures, or else as ferocious women waiting to be tamed or hunted.

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24. MIDGLEY, Mary. *Animals and Why they Matter*. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1983. p. 78.

25. In-depth exploration of this topic can be found in *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*. Eds. Carol Adams and Josephine Donovan. Durham, NC and London, Duke University Press, 1995.

26. ADAMS, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. 20th anniversary ed. New York and London, Continuum, 2010, pp. 14.

WOMEN	ANIMALS
Battering	Animal abuse
Pornography	Meat industry Animals in entertainment
Rape	Hunting

Figure 1

Adams has paid special attention to the interchangeable role of women and animals as consumable bodies in advertising and highlighted how in the case of women this objectification coincides with their portrayal as sexual objects. She points at a series of signals she describes as “cues of violability” that are generally present in such kind of depictions.<sup>27</sup> As a case in point she uses the analysis of a 1980s Versace advertisement where a female model is photographed showing what Adams thinks to be signs of being ready to accept the male’s sexual advances. This “high prostitute style” consists in a series of cues that arise through appearance, gestures and ornamentation (see Figure 2).

Carol J. Adams’s Cues of Violability	
Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small waist</li> <li>• Accentuated breast</li> <li>• Smooth legs</li> <li>• Eyelashes curl</li> </ul>
Gestures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casting hips or pelvis rolling</li> <li>• Arching the back</li> <li>• An exposed and unstable stance that telegraphs “I cannot hold my ground”</li> <li>• Arm signals</li> <li>• Eyebrow signals</li> </ul>
Ornamentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garter and bra—a fetish of underclothes</li> <li>• Earrings</li> <li>• Bracelets</li> <li>• Heels or painted toes</li> </ul>

Figure 2

### 2.1. Advertising

A look at some of the ads compiled by Scott A. Lukas in his website Gender Ads Project demonstrates that this “prostitute style” is present largely in publicity where women feature as main protagonists.<sup>28</sup> Interestingly in some of

27. ADAMS, Carol J. *The Pornography of Meat*. New York, Continuum, 2003, p. 106.

28. LUKAS, Scott A. “The Gender Ads Project.” 2002, South Lake Tahoe, California. Accessed on Nov 2012 <<http://www.genderads.com>>

these ads women are literally identified with animals. Such identification is conveyed in two ways: either they are stand-ins for animals (see Figure 3) or they pose with animals as if belonging to their class (see Figure 4). Hence, for instance, in Figure 3 the model is posing on all fours and her tongue is out. She seems to be licking the floor as if she were a cat drinking milk. She shows Adams's violability signals: her buttock sticks out and her clothing shows off her breasts, plus her face expression—tongue out—can be interpreted as lustful. In Figure 4 female subjectivity is erased from the woman who is placed as the center of a group of three—two Dalmatians and herself. She is dressed in black and white spotted clothes that match to perfection the dogs' pelts and make her undistinguishable from them. Her countenance is that of an expressionless doll—sucked in cheeks and protuberant lips—and her posture complies again with Adams's cues. Moreover the sentence on the right hand-corner that reads "I'm the best thing since dog food" only serves to reinforce her commodification as sexualized consumable body.

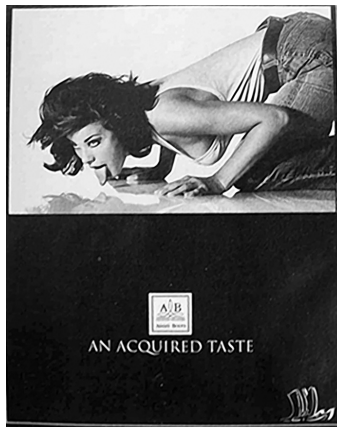


Figure 3

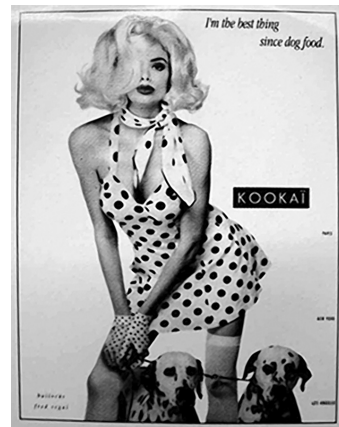


Figure 4

These two ads are examples of how publicity can disempower women by animalizing them. This is made possible because in these two cases the animals chosen as terms of comparison belong to the category of pet. A different outcome results when women are compared to wild animals as in Figures 5 and 6. These pictures were part of the Spanish jewelry brand "Uno de 50" 2012 advertising campaign which revolved around the image of woman as, or in control of, a wild animal. These ads are open to two possible interpretations regarding the woman-animal connection. In both of them the model-animal pair can be read as one and the same, especially due to the disposition and

hue of the woman’s hair which seems to be the same as the animal’s fur. Nevertheless they can also be interpreted in a more anthropocentric way as a “beauty and the beast” narrative where the woman seduces the wild animal who can be read as the male of the story. Either interpretation makes it possible to say that in this case the woman-animal identification empowers and does not objectify women. Interestingly, in this case, the wild animals chosen for the ads—a wolf and a lynx—are both endangered species representative of Spain. Obviously, the intention behind choosing two of the endangered species of Iberian fauna is that of highlighting the exclusivity of this jewelry brand. Another important characteristic of this group of ads is that the cues of violability are not present. They are replaced by what can be called “cues of empowerment.” In the two ads attention is placed on the hands that rest on the animal in a protective manner as well as in the woman’s hair which blends with the animal’s pelt. On top of that, emphasis is also put on the look of both the woman and the animal as if their eyes coincided in their expression of defiance and confidence. These ads belong to a different category from that of those previously analyzed which identify domestic animals with women, and which tend to be diminishing for both. This second category, instead of objectifying women, empowers them. Besides, animals are also vindicated as powerful and worthy of respect, although not the actual ones used in the ads who are obviously stunt animal and therefore captives.



Figure 5



Figure 6

## 2.2. PETA’s Campaign Ads

All the ads commented so far are aimed at marketing a product. Curiously the largest animal rights organization in the world, People for the Ethical

Treatment of Animals (PETA),<sup>29</sup> uses the same techniques to sell not a product but an idea: the liberation of animals from human practices that entail their transformation into meat, fur, leather, or objects of experimentation. However, although its cause is a legitimate one and one that deserves praise, it often does so at the expense of women by victimizing them or exposing them as consumable bodies in place of the animal. Animal ecofeminists would expect otherwise from an organization that, as Maneesha Deckha recalls, prides itself to be “staffed in part by self-identified feminist women.”<sup>30</sup>

As it has been explained before (see Figure 1) there is a close correspondence between the commodification and the victimization of women and animals. PETA demonstrates that it is well aware of this by often portraying women in images that conform to the codes typical of the pornography industry. At other times it reinforces the role of women as victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse. It seems that PETA’s strategy is that of “playing the game from within the system”, not that of breaking with it as her co-founder and President Ingrid Newkirk declared in an interview.<sup>31</sup> However, as will be shown, PETA also uses in its campaigns images that are more in line with the second category of the ads previously analyzed, the ads of empowerment, although this can also incur a certain degree of essentialism.

PETA is well known for having some of *Playboy*’s celebrities featuring prominently in some of its campaigns. Since the 1990s this has been the case in some of the controversial ads for the “I’d Rather Go Naked than Wear Fur”<sup>32</sup> campaign where Holly Madison, Patty Davis and Joanna Kruppa among others have been shot nude to promote the end of the fur industry. This has not been received with much satisfaction by either most critical sectors of the animal liberation movement or by ecofeminists. Gary L. Francione acknowledges this situation in *Rain Without Thunder: The Ideology of the Animal Rights Movement* (2008) when he says that “...in recent years, the promotion of animal causes has increasingly relied on sexist and racist imagery.”<sup>33</sup> This, according to him, is due to the fact that most welfarist and rightists—the two positions in which the animal liberation movement is divided—have never acknowledged the connection between social progressive movements

29. <<http://www.peta.org>>

30. DECKHA, Maneesha. “Disturbing Images: PETA and the Feminist Ethics of Animal Advocacy.” *Ethics and the Environment*. 13.2 (2008), p. 56.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

32. <<http://www.peta.org/mediacenter/ads/print-ads-skins.aspx>>

33. FRANCIONE, Gary L. *Rain Without Thunder: The Ideology of the Animal Rights Movement*. Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1996, p.75.



in favor of women, people of color, and the animal liberation front. This lack of recognition, which precisely features at the core of animal ecofeminism, is what, according to him, underlies the frequent use of sexual imagery by PETA. Women are reduced to their bodies which are not simply shown naked in what at times are aesthetic snapshots of nudity (see Figure 7), they are also featured following *Playboy*’s pornographic style and consistently showing therefore Adams’s cues of violability. In Figures 8 and 9, for example, two *Playboy* models, Holly Madison and Joanna Kruppa, pose nude showing these cues previously discussed when speaking of the Versace’s campaign: bottom sticking out, prominent breasts and a doll-like look in the face that seems to act as an invitation for the male. At other times, such as in PETA’s “Be Nice to Bunnies” iPhone app, “Animal Testing Breaks Hearts” campaign, as well as in several of the “I’d Rather Go Naked than Wear Fur” ads, women either feature dressed as *Playboy* bunnies or are accompanied by rabbits. Both types



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

of pictures, those featuring a naked woman shot in pornographic style and those where they are associated with bunnies—innocent, defenseless creatures— only serve to reinforce the stereotype of the woman as plaything for the man, and, thus, do not encourage equality among the sexes since they instrumentalize, objectify and background the female sex.

Besides this category of ads where women are sexualized, in a second category are the ads that work with the victimization of women. This second category can be organized in two groups: a) ads of assimilation where women substitute animals; and b) ads that use violence against women to sell PETA's message.

Within the first group there are ads where women, as stand-ins for animals, become the victims of practices that affect animals such as meat eating, and forms of entertainment like bullfighting or the circus that entail animal abuse and captivity. Figure 10, for example, shows an instance of what can be



Figure 10

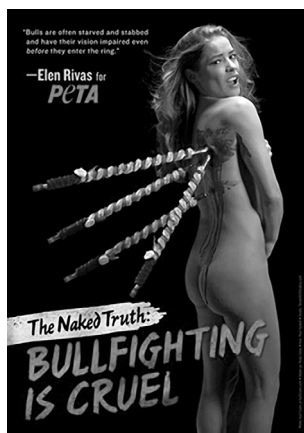


Figure 11

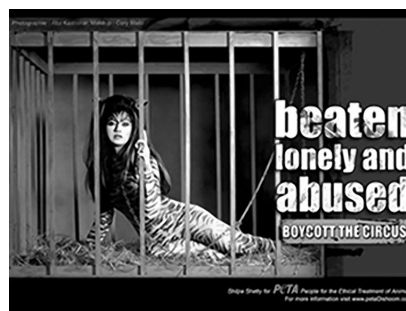


Figure 12

called the “meat cut” ads. Actress Pamela Anderson poses in a mauve bikini offering herself in a sensual pose. She is shown as literally meat, literally consumable. Also remarkable is the ad of Figure 11 showing Spanish model Elen Rivas as a bull that has already received the *banderillas* and whose wounds are bleeding.<sup>34</sup> That she is naked renders her as consumable as the animals used for this kind of entertainment. Finally, in Figure 12, Indian actress Shilpa Shetty poses as a caged animal in PETA’s “Boycott the Circus” campaign. She is pictured wearing a figure-hugging tiger costume that portrays her as an “attractive animal” which, notwithstanding, is “beaten, lonely and abused” like female victims of domestic violence.

In a second group are those ads that play with the issue of violence against women. Some of them portray women and animals as victims, connecting the suffering and degradation to which animals are submitted with that of women in rather shocking ways. In one of PETA’s latest TV ads, BWVAKTBOOM: “Boyfriend Went Vegan and Knocked the Bottom out of Me” (2012), a young woman named Jessica appears at the beginning with a pensive face and wearing a neck brace. Only after a while does the audience learn that this injury is the result of having violent sex with her boyfriend whose sexual potency has increased as a consequence of becoming vegetarian. This ad plays with the idea of domestic violence while objectifying male sexuality, and although it has a supposedly happy ending for Jessica, it unnecessarily sexualizes violence. Animals are not present, but are the ultimate beneficiaries of such use of the female body as site of violence. This ad is as offensive as the 2002 PETA ad of the fur campaign where a woman is assaulted and beaten with a baseball bat by a man who robs her of her fur coat.

But PETA does not always victimize women; sometimes its defense of animals turns into images that empower them. These empowering ads are targeted at a female audience interested in the dictates of fashion and are aimed at dissuading them from the use of fur. They generally, as in the case of the “Here’s the Rest of Your Fur Coat” campaign, feature celebrities elegantly dressed holding the skinned carcasses of animals used by the fur industry. This can be seen in Figures 13 and 14 where the elegantly groomed singer Sophie Ellis Bextor and TV presenter Shirley Manson contrast with the crude image of the dead animals in their hands. The serious look on their faces confronts the viewer with the reality that is often hidden from the consumer—the fashion victim. In these ads women rise as animal defenders and the fashion victim is confronted by those same women whom she admires. In line with

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34. GRANT, Karl. *The Naked Truth: Bullfighting Is Cruel*.

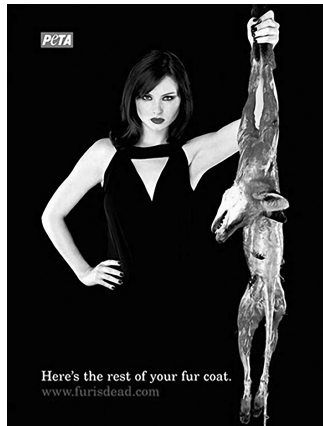


Figure 13



Figure 14

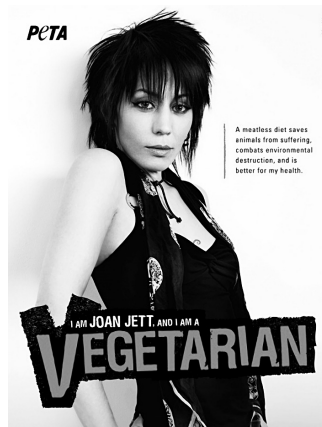


Figure 15

this sort of discourse, some of PETA's "I Am a Vegetarian" ads feature women who convey strength and character like rock singer Joan Jett (see Figure 15). As we can see PETA caters for all tastes.

The analysis of how advertising portrays the woman-animal association and of how PETA uses similar techniques to promote its cause demonstrate that such associations do not always disempower women. However, there is a difference between the ads of empowerment mentioned above and those of the animal rights group. This difference lies in its end result, for while in the latter the animals are vindicated, in the former the animals involved simply respond to the stereotypes ascribed to them, but there is neither literal nor

figurative liberation. The stunt animal stays equally captive, the animals they represent equally endangered. They are yet another victim of fashion.

Eduardo Robredo Zugasti has studied, from an anthropological point of view, the phenomenon of the fashion victim and, as he explains, women and animals figure prominently among the groups that suffer the consequences of the fashion industry.<sup>35</sup> Women are captives of following the dictates of fashion, and many animals die every day to support yet another form of female victimization that has the body as its site of realization. This is why, as a conclusion to this analysis, attention will be paid to fashion as the site where discourses of victimization and objectification meet in a dynamic way with discourses of liberation. As a case in point references to British designer Alexander McQueen’s catwalk shows will be used.

### 2.3. *Alexander’s McQueen’s Fashion Shows*

Alexander McQueen (1969-2010) is one of the most prolific and intriguing designers of all times. He often used in his shows references to the woman-animal identification by turning his models literally into animals through very intricate headgear, fixing bird heads or antlers in their jackets, or using animal print fabrics. He was also known for his very provocative catwalk shows where he often referred openly to forms of violence against women such as witch burning, the Islamic burqa, battering, and rape. These brought him the accusation of misogyny because of what some understood as the glamorization of women’s abuse.<sup>36</sup> However, little or no attention was paid to his use of animal imagery in relationship with his portrayal of women in his catwalk shows.<sup>37</sup> This is why, by having in mind the previous analysis of advertising strategies and PETA’s campaigns, I intend here to shed some light on McQueen’s use of the woman-animal pair to further strengthen my argument that current animal studies cannot disregard animal ecofeminism because it is a critical perspective that can aptly inform an analysis on the multifacetedness of the woman-animal connection.

Lee Alexander McQueen was the son of a cabdriver and a genealogist living in the East End of London. From a young age he was obsessed with

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35. ROBREDO ZUGASTI, Eduardo. “Víctimas de la moda.” *El Catoblepas* 22.4 (2003), p. 3.

36. In her 1993 article on McQueen’s *Taxi Driver* (fall/winter 1993/94), Marion Hume opined that “he [had] a perverse view of women.” In 2010 Joan Smith qualified “his repeated use of images reflecting violence against women” as “shocking from a gay man.”

37. Most of McQueen’s shows can be watched online at <<http://www.alexandermcqueen.com>>

becoming a designer. His dream came true when he finally graduated with distinction from Saint Martin College of Art and Design. He caught the attention of British magazine editor Isabella Blow with his graduation collection presented in February 1992 “based on Jack the Ripper and Victorian prostitutes who sold their hair to be made into locks which were bought by people to give to their lovers.”<sup>38</sup> He inserted locks of his own hair in one of his jackets as if suggesting that his creations were an extension of his own body. Since then, and for a long time, the image of the battered or abused woman was a recurrent element in his collections. In March 1993 he presented a collection based on the film *Taxi Driver* where models were wrapped in plastic film and looked battered and bruised. A little later, in October 1993, he staged *Nihilism* where models wore Edwardian jackets over tops splattered with what looked like blood or dirt. His prolific references to the victimization of women earned him, as Evans points out, the attention of *The Independent* that referred to his show as “McQueen’s Theatre of Cruelty.”<sup>39</sup> McQueen’s art was, indeed, often misread after this, as occurred with his fifth collection *Highland Rape* (fall/winter 1995-96) which was attacked by feminists who saw in it a trivialization of rape, although he later explained that he had just wanted to symbolize the historical abuse of Scotland by England. His unconventional vision, which sometimes veered towards the grotesque, was aimed precisely at criticizing human flaws and paying tribute to the beauty he found in women and nature. He referred to his stage explorations as an attempt to unearth “what goes through people’s minds, the stuff that people don’t want to admit or face up to,” and said that the shows were “about what’s buried in people’s psyches.”<sup>40</sup>

Such a combination led him often to use highly provocative images through which he managed often to dismantle standards of beauty. By doing so and in contrast with some of the images previously commented upon, McQueen managed to evolve towards a criticism of the instrumentalization of women and the desacralization of nature by technological development. He did this by calling attention to the bodies of women as sites of abuse where animals are reflected upon as in a canvas where the two, women and animals, are interchangeable. In this sense, Adams’s explanation of the animal as the absent referent in images of violence against women turns out to be especially interesting since in McQueen’s shows the animal is always present, although often blended in the body of the women thanks to McQueen’s vision. In this

38. EVANS, Caroline. *Fashion at the Edge...* Op.cit., p. 141.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

40. BOLTON, Andrew, et al. *Alexander McQueen...* Op.cit., p. 70.

regard, in his catwalk installations the connection between women and animals can be seen as working in three phases. His first phase, which spans from his graduation collection titled *Jack the Ripper Stalks His Victims* (1992) to his very polemic *Highland Rape* (fall/winter 1995-96), featured images of battered women. In a second phase, which expanded from his *Dante* collection (fall/winter 1996-97) to *The Girl Who Lived in a Tree* (fall/winter 2008-09), women started being represented as human-animal and human-plant hybrids thanks to the use of elaborate headgear. In his third phase, which began with *NATURAL DIS-TINCTION UN-NATURAL SELECTION* (spring/summer 2009) and ended with *Plato’s Atlantis* (spring/summer 2010), this animalization or hybridization of women turned into a wake-up call to raise awareness of environmental problems such as biodiversity reduction and climate change.

It is widely recognized that McQueen’s work was inspired by a multiplicity of historical, artistic, and scientific references as well as by the most pressing events of his time. In this sense, Caroline Evans acknowledges in his work the influences of “the work of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century anatomists, in particular that of Andreas Vesalius; the photograph of Joel-Peter Witkin from the 1980s and 90s; and the films of Pasolini, Kubric, Buñuel and Hitchcock.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, in the catalogue to the exhibition *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* (2011) Andrew Bolton, curator at The Costume Institute at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, relates McQueen’s creative impulse to a profound engagement with Romanticism. He analyzes his work through the concept of the Sublime which he interprets as the engine leading McQueen to go beyond the limits imposed on fashion at his time. Bolton also mentions the importance McQueen conferred to his catwalk shows which he conceived almost as installations of a performance artist:

Through his runway presentations, McQueen validated powerful emotions as compelling sources of aesthetic experience. In equating emotion with aesthetics, he advanced a tradition that emerged in the last decades of the eighteenth century through the Romantic movement. Romanticism associated unfettered emotionalism with the appreciation of beauty. It placed particular emphasis on awe and wonder, fear and terror, emotions closely aligned with the concept of the Sublime. As an experience, the Sublime was both destabilizing and transformative, involving instances that exceeded our capacities for self-control and rational comprehension. These moments of mute encounter describe the experience of McQueen’s runway presentations. Over and over again, his shows took his audience to the limits of reason, eliciting an uneasy pleasure that merged wonder and terror, incredulity and

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41. EVANS, Caroline. *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity & Deathliness*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003, p. 141.

revulsion. For McQueen, the Sublime was the strongest of passions, as it contained the potential for exaltation and transcendence beyond the quotidian.<sup>42</sup>

Certainly McQueen found in the runway, or catwalk, show the best medium to express the peculiarity of his concept of fashion as an art committed to exposing, amongst other things, the cruelty of the world. He turned fashion into a revolutionary statement every time one of his collections was premiered. As he once said: "I'm making points about my time, about the times we live in. My work is a social document about the world today."<sup>43</sup> He was not interested in being politically correct in his shows since he thought the only way in which fashion could turn into an instrument to raise social awareness of the inequalities of the world was by not being so. Perhaps due to this, in *La Poupee* (spring/summer 1997) he dared to show model Debra Shaw chained to a metal frame that restricted her movements on stage and suggested the slavery of black people,<sup>44</sup> and integrate the Paralympic athlete Aimee Mullins with the rest of the models in his *No 13* (spring/summer 1999) show where she wore intricately carved wooden legs in an image that turned the world around.<sup>45</sup> He, in sum, was aware of difference and wanted to show people how "[b]eauty can come from the strangest of places..."<sup>46</sup>

The woman-animal association can be found in the first phase of McQueen's catwalk shows in his development of what Caroline Evans calls "an aesthetic of cruelty."<sup>47</sup> Such an aesthetic is sustained by his portrayal of women as victims of abuse in his first three collections: *Jack the Ripper Stalks His Victims* (1992), *Taxi Driver* (March 1993), and *Nihilism* (October 1993). In the fourth one, *The Birds* (spring/summer 1995), he started using one of his fundamental themes, that of birds.<sup>48</sup> This show revolved around the idea of

42. BOLTON, Andrew, et al. *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*. New York; New Haven, Conn. Metropolitan Museum of Art; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2011, p. 12.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

44. <http://blog.metmuseum.org/alexandermcqueen/video/>

45. <http://www.alexandermcqueen.com/experience/en/alexandermcqueen/archive/?years=1999>

46. BOLTON, Andrew, et al. *Op. cit.*, p. 196.

47. EVANS, Caroline. "Fashion: Alexander McQueen." *032c 7* (Summer 2004), p. 4.

48. McQueen was extremely fond of birds. Since a young age he had been a member of the Young Ornithologists Club of Great Britain. He also confessed his fascination for birds in the program notes of his spring/summer collection of 2009 *NATURAL DIS-TINCTION UN-NATURAL SELECTION*. This fascination is attested by his own words: "Birds in flight fascinate me. I admire eagles and falcons. I'm inspired by a feather but also its color, its graphics, its weightlessness and its engineering. It's so elaborate. In fact I try and transpose the beauty of a bird to women" (qtd. in BOLTON, Andrew, et al. *Alexander McQueen...* *Op. cit.*, p. 172).



roadkill. The models wore tire marks on their clothes to make them look as if they had been driven over. The catwalk was turned into a road and the printed tire marks were combined with frequent references to birds, animals that fascinated McQueen as much as women. As early as 1995 McQueen was already making a connection between the suffering of animals and that of women. He had already depicted women as victims in his previous shows but in *The Birds* he, for the first time, situated women as substitutes for animal victims. From the beginning of his career he was also displaying in his shows another one of his obsessions, death, which he often portrayed as the result of human cruelty. He continued developing this theme, which resonated with romantic and gothic influences, in his next collection which he presented under the very provocative title *Highland Rape* (fall/winter 1995-96). This show stirred a lot of attention and brought him the accusation of misogyny due to the use of the word rape and the imagery of brutalized women stumbling on stage. However, as fashion historian Caroline Evans has contended, his collection was misread as literally dealing with the abuse of women although, as he declared, what he was doing was to play tribute to his Scottish background and provocatively denounce “England’s rape of Scotland” as a “genocide”.<sup>49</sup> This was done precisely at a time when media coverage of the conflicts in Bosnia and Rwanda were vivid images of violence in the eyes of Western viewers. Furthermore, as Evans proves, it also seems that the accusations of misogyny against McQueen were misplaced due to his own personal experience with domestic violence and his own understanding of women. One of McQueen’s sisters had been the victim of domestic violence<sup>50</sup> and this made him aware of the suffering involved in this sort of situation: “I’ve seen a woman get nearly beaten to death by her husband. I know what misogyny is [...] I want people to be afraid of the women I dress.”<sup>51</sup> He, therefore, wanted to create a woman “who looks so fabulous you wouldn’t dare lay a hand on her.”<sup>52</sup> His ideal woman was a strong one and this ambition led him to find his inspiration in iconic women such as Joan of Arc or Marie Antoinette as his collection *Joan* (fall/winter 1998-99) and *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* (fall/winter 2002-3) prove. Perhaps because of this desire to portray a powerful and charismatic woman and also to counteract the accusations mentioned above, he left behind references to the abuse of women in a second phase which began with his collection *Dante* (fall/winter 1996-97).

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49. EVANS, Caroline. “Fashion: Alexander McQueen.” Op.cit., p. 5.

50. Ibid., p. 10.

51. Ibid., p. 11.

52. Ibid., p. 10.

In *Dante*, as Evans explains, McQueen created an image of a feral woman, in line with the nineteenth-century *femme fatale*<sup>53</sup> and the wild woman archetype, by making one of his models wear a headpiece of stag's horn which conferred an unearthly and defiant beauty on her.<sup>54</sup> This image of a human-animal hybrid was a trademark of McQueen's throughout this second phase. It spoke of his concept of women as powerful and not necessarily fixed in the role of victims. His work therefore evolved from a narrative where female domination was predominant to one where the tables were turned repositioning the victim in the place of the aggressor.<sup>55</sup> In this sense, it is especially significant that McQueen uses the animalization of women to convey their force and that, contrary to the images of empowerment studied when analyzing advertising strategies, his choice does not necessarily fall on predator wild animals but on prey animals such as some bird species, deer, and gazelles. In other collections he also identifies women with animals that have often been the object of collectors: birds, butterflies, and mollusks. This choice makes sense in a man who loved art collecting, birds and swimming. He identified the ultimate target of his art, women, with some of his other passions.

Perhaps one of the most meaningful examples of this second phase is constituted by his *It's a Jungle Out There* collection (Fall/Winter 1997-98) based on the theme of the Thompson's gazelle and its vulnerability to predators. In the show the models' makeup and hairstyle as well as their clothes, made of animal skins, transformed them into the animal preys they represented. According to McQueen:

The whole show feeling, was about the Thompson's gazelle. It's a poor little critter – the markings are lovely. It's got these dark eyes, the white and black with the tan markings on the side, the horns – but it is the food chain of Africa. As soon as it's born it's dead, I mean you're lucky if it lasts a few months, and that's how I see human life, in the same way. You know, we can all be discarded quite easily. [...] you're there, you're gone, it's a jungle out there!<sup>56</sup>

In Evans's words, through the image of this defenseless animal, McQueen was dealing with “the idea of animal instincts in the natural world as metaphor for the dog-eats-dog nature of the urban jungle,” but the poses of defiance adopted by the models on the catwalk spoke otherwise, not of acceptance

53. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

54. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LB6ZpJFJSTw>

55. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

56. BOLTON, Andrew, et al. *Op. cit.*, p. 159.

of fate but of rebellion.<sup>57</sup> In this sense, McQueen’s central piece, a jacket with pointed shoulders from which a pair of twisting gazelle horns stood up worn by a black model wearing metallic contact lenses, which made her look otherworldly, reinforces once again his talent at subverting conventional expectations. Moreover his exploration of the prey/predator topic acquired a substantial importance later on in his third phase where he portrays humans as dangerous creatures, not only for each other, but also for the planet.

The oneiric undertones of his transitional collection *The Girl Who Lived in a Tree* (Fall/Winter 2008-09), inspired by an elm under whose shade McQueen liked to rest in his country house near Fairlight Cove in East Sussex, gave way to a new period where McQueen turned his criticism towards concern for the environment and criticism of the fashion industry. The first of these interests can be found in his collections *NATURAL DIS-TINCTION UN-NATURAL SELECTION* (Spring/Summer 2009) and *Plato’s Atlantis* (Spring/Summer 2010), while the second is the subject matter of *The Horn of Plenty* (Fall/Winter 2009-10). Curiously, in all of them the animalization of women is present, although the importance given to the elaborate headpieces of the second phase is substituted by full body animal costumes like the swan-like and the crow-like garments.<sup>58</sup> Both costumes are part of his collection *The Horn of Plenty* presented as a satire of the fashion industry. Models appear transformed into walking objects on stage due to their Philip Treacy<sup>59</sup> hats which this time reproduce items which range from umbrellas and lamps to paint rollers. When they appear as animals their attire does not leave any room for doubt. They are the prisoners of an industry that, taken to the extreme, becomes a grotesque pantomime which incarcerates women with its impossible codes of beauty. Perhaps, in order to symbolize that, McQueen makes one of the models wear a birdcage as a hat, so as to represent women as captives of a materialist industry.

This mockery of fashion is combined around the same phase with a growing interest in the environment. In the Spring/Summer collection of 2009 titled *NATURAL DIS-TINCTION UN-NATURAL SELECTION* McQueen reflected upon Darwin’s theory of evolution producing a collection that was interpreted as “a commentary on humankind’s lack of consideration for the

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57. EVANS, Caroline. “Fashion: Alexander McQueen.” Op. cit., p. 13.

58. <http://www.alexandermcqueen.com/experience/en/alexandermcqueen/archive/?years=2009>

59. Philip Treacy is one of London’s most famous milliners and collaborated with McQueen from his *Dante* collection onwards.

environment.”<sup>60</sup> For the first time he left aside the importance he always gave to tailoring and texture to allow engineered prints derived from the natural world to take over. Models are turned into living organisms easily recognizable as insects while an assortment of stuffed wild animals lined on the catwalk facing the human audience as if questioning them about the state to which humans have led the planet whose giant image presides the scene.<sup>61</sup>

In his Spring/Summer collection of 2010, *Plato's Atlantis*, his last one produced while he was alive, McQueen envisioned a future Earth where the planet, once the ice caps have melted, is transformed into a new Atlantis where humans need to become hybrids in order to go back where they originally came from, water, and be able to survive.<sup>62</sup> He defined it as “Darwin’s theory of evolution in reverse.”<sup>63</sup> At the beginning of the show model Rachel Zimmermann is shown lying naked on the sand experimenting what it seems to be a kind of mutation into a reptile or amphibian. Once the show begins the catwalk is filled with models that look almost like aliens from a science fiction film. McQueen began his career looking at the past, but at this time he was envisioning the future. He turned his last show into a reflection of humankind’s need to reinvent itself and respond to the environmental crisis that McQueen had already commented upon in the Spring/Summer collection of 2009. *Plato's Atlantis* works also as a demonstration of his ability to evolve towards a new conception of his craft—he combined traditional tailoring with new techniques such as laser cutting—and also redefined his way of thinking about the women he dressed by making them resilient to the changing conditions of planet Earth caused by humans.

### 3. Conclusion

This analysis of case studies has given sufficient proof of the ubiquitousness of the woman-animal association as well as of the complications involved in its analysis. There are many difficulties enmeshed in working with a pair long misrepresented by a culture ruled by a master mentality. Often, as in the case of advertising, both women and animals are objectified in images that render them as disposable and fixed into stereotypes of hypersexuality, ferocity, or domesticity that, although empowering to a certain extent, may

60. BOLTON, Andrew, et al. Op. cit., p. 25.

61. <http://www.alexandermcqueen.com/experience/en/alexandermcqueen/archive/?years=2009>

62. <http://www.alexandermcqueen.com/experience/en/alexandermcqueen/archive/?years=2010>

63. BOLTON, Andrew, et al. Op. cit., p. 25.

also strengthen some misconceptions. Curiously, even when in the hands of groups such as PETA, that should be aware of the inequities faced by the oppressed, the woman-animal association becomes more often than not an instrument of subjugation instead of liberation. More perplexing is the use of this association by McQueen who, although a confessed animal lover and champion of women, did use animal skins and fur in some of his collections. However, it is certain that he evolved from a denunciation of the shared oppression of women and animals to a new world inhabited by empowered female human-animal hybrids. It is this late turn towards a cross-species representation of the pairing, where borders are erased between the two, that confers on his work a higher sense of the possibilities involved in a reinvention of this association. Such a reinvention is needed as part of the ecofeminist enterprise to “bridge gaps between reason/emotion, human/animal, man/woman, and self/other.”<sup>64</sup>

Finally, the currency of this pairing supports my initial argument about the need for today’s booming field of animal studies to pay attention to what animal ecofeminists have said thus far. In a fast changing world where theories get dated too soon to grow into a mature construction, recycling the past may be a constructive way of advancing towards interdisciplinary collaborations which can provide the insight needed to explore issues that still intrigue us.

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# LOVING THE ALIEN. ECOFEMINISM, ANIMALS, AND ANNA MARIA ORTESE'S POETICS OF OTHERNESS<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

In this essay, I analyze how literary imagination can be used as a tool for theoretically exploring the notions of otherness, vulnerability, and human/nonhuman relationships in the framework of feminist ecocriticism. In particular, I examine how a precise literary genre, namely, magical realism, can function as a diffracting lens to make the hybridizations and the overlapping of human, nonhuman, and gendered bodies, visible through narrative strategies that facilitate our affective response. Building my theoretical discourse mostly on feminist animal studies, material ecocriticism, and posthumanism, I consider the work of the Italian writer Anna Maria Ortese (1914-1998) and her "creaturely poetics of otherness," as exemplified in particular by her novel *The Iguana*.

**Key-words:** Feminist ecocriticism; Italian Literature; Comparative Literature; Post-humanism; Material ecocriticism; Animals in literature; Magical Realism; Anna Maria Ortese.

## Resumen

En este ensayo, analizo cómo la imaginación literaria puede utilizarse como una herramienta para explorar teóricamente las nociones de alteridad, vulnerabilidad y las relaciones humano/no humano en el marco de la ecocrítica feminista. En concreto,

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1. Except for *The Iguana* (available in English), all the quotes from Anna Maria Ortese's works and from the Italian texts cited in this essay have been translated by me.

analizo cómo un género literario determinado, a saber, el realismo mágico, puede funcionar como una lente de difracción para hacer visibles las hibridaciones y la superposición de lo humano, no humano y las corporalidades de género, a través de estrategias narrativas que faciliten nuestra respuesta afectiva. Mi discurso teórico se construye sobre todo a partir de los estudios feministas sobre animales, la ecocrítica material, y el posthumanismo, y se centra en el análisis de la obra de la escritora italiana Anna Maria Ortese (1914-1998) y su “poética de criaturas de la alteridad, “ utilizando como ejemplo por su novela *La Iguana*.

**Palabras clave:** Ecocrítica feminista; literatura italiana; literatura comparada, posthumanismo; ecocrítica material; animales en literatura; realismo mágico, Anna Maria Ortese.

*This is caught by females bright,  
And return'd to its own delight.  
The bleat, the bark, bellow, and roar,  
Are waves that beat on heaven's shore.*

(William Blake)

*Believing the strangest things. Loving the alien.*

(David Bowie)

## Introduction

Opening her book *Creaturely Poetics* with a quote from Simone Weil (“the vulnerability of precious things is beautiful, because vulnerability is a mark of existence”), the British interspecies ethicist and literary scholar Anat Pick observes how difficult it is to speak “strictly” about the human or “the animal.”<sup>2</sup> It is common wisdom, she notes, that “the distinctions between humans and animals are conceptually and materially indecisive” and “a site of contestation.”<sup>3</sup> Still, in the modern age, the “human-animal distinction constitutes an arena in which relations of power operate in their exemplary purity (that is, operate with the fewest of material obstacles).”<sup>4</sup>

Ever since its appearance, ecofeminism has advocated for the dismantling of the “intersectional oppressions”<sup>5</sup> which encapsulate women, nonhuman animals, “non-normative humans,”<sup>6</sup> and whatever subject has been marked as

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2. PICK, Anat. *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2011, p. 1.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. KEMMERER, Lisa (ed.). *Sister Species: Women, Animals and Social Justice*, Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2011, p. 6. In Kemmerer’s words, “these interlocking oppressions include—to name just a few—speciesism, sexism, racism, and homophobia” (Ibidem).

6. GRUEN, Lori and Kari WEIL. “Animal Others: Editors’ Introduction.” In *Hypatia* 27/3 (Summer 2012), pp. 477-487. 479. Gruen and Weil remind that there is “a conceptual link between the ‘logic of domination’ that operates to reinforce sexism, racism, and heterosexism and the logic that supports the oppression of nonhuman animals and the more than human world more generally, a link that translates into individual

“alien” by dominant systems of power, including the earth. Let us think, for example, of the way feminist thinkers such as Karen Warren, Val Plumwood, Carolyn Merchant, Karen Warren, Carol Adams, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Greta Gaard, theorize difference in ecological terms. In their view, the category of difference is conceived not simply as a gender issue, but as but as a macro-category that includes and structures many forms of otherness. In the failed acknowledgement of the human-nonhuman interdependency (Plumwood speaks of “denied dependency”) an “alienated identity of dominance” is built and “naturalized” by a materially and conceptually oppressive power that “construes and constructs difference in terms of an inferior and alien realm.”<sup>7</sup> Otherness, in this framework, is associated with vulnerability, and it is patent that both the human and the animal are potentially vulnerable and exposed to forms of oppression.<sup>8</sup>

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and institutional practices that are harmful to women, people of color, nonnormative humans, as well as other animals and the planet” (Ibidem)).

7. PLUMWOOD, Val. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 42). From this mechanism, based upon an instrumental exclusion of every form of otherness, Val Plumwood offers an interesting example in her famous “list of dualisms”:

culture	/	nature
reason	/	nature
male	/	female
mind	/	body (nature)
master	/	slave
reason	/	matter (physicality)
rationality	/	animality (nature)
reason	/	emotion (nature)
mind, spirit	/	nature
freedom	/	necessity (nature)
universal	/	particular
human	/	nature (nonhuman)
civilised	/	primitive (nature)
production	/	reproduction (nature)
public	/	private
subject	/	object
self	/	other

(Ibid., p. 43). It is clear here that the metanarrative about the supremacy of the “strong pole” (on the left) is associated to a mastery of the “weak pole” (on the right), like the mastery of male over female in the relation we call “gendered.”

8. On this topic, see GAARD, Greta. *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1993; and GAARD, Greta. “Living Interconnections with Animals and Nature.” *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*. Ed. Greta C. Gaard. Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1993. 1-12. GRUEN, Lori. “Dismantling Oppression: An Analysis of the Connection between Women and Animals,” *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*. Ed. Greta C. Gaard. Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1993. 60-90;

In the recent developments of ecological feminism, these visions have been further articulated, also thanks to the expansion of feminist science studies and the rise of new critical conceptualizations such as posthumanism and the new materialisms, as Serpil Oppermann's essay in this collection vividly shows.<sup>9</sup> A multitude of relevant theorists both in animal and feminist studies have supported the unsettling of the human/nonhuman ontological divide, and a vast scholarship on zoology, affinity studies, and philosophical ethics (with authors such as Donna Haraway, Matthew Calarco, Cary Wolfe, Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Marchesini, and Jacques Derrida) has addressed this issue in terms which are consistent with ecofeminist visions. Arguing that "We have never been human," Donna Haraway, for example, has convincingly emphasized that "becoming with" the nonhuman is "a practice of becoming worldly."<sup>10</sup> Human genomes, Haraway reminds us, "can be found in only about 10 percent of all the cells that occupy the mundane space I call my body; the other 90 percent of the cells are filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such, some of which play in a symphony necessary to my being alive at all." Hence, she concludes, "To be one is always to *become with* many."<sup>11</sup> In a very concrete way, thus, aliens are inside us and enable us to be what we are.

The encounter of ecofeminism with interdisciplinary scientific approaches exhibiting the presence of the "other" in the very core of human materiality has determined, to quote Oppermann, the rise of a "new ecofeminist settlement," one that "opens new eco-vistas into exploring the dynamic co-extensivity and permeability of human and nonhuman bodies and natures." Stressing the material-discursive entanglement of humans and nonhumans in their "differential becoming,"<sup>12</sup> this "new ecofeminist settlement" ushers in a vision that Oppermann has provocatively but insightfully defined an "ecology without gender": an ecology that sees human and nonhuman sexed bodies "outside the confines of gendered dichotomies, and thus outside of their abductive

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and MERCHANT, Carolyn. *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture*. New York & London, Routledge, 2003.

9. Posthuman and neo-materialist trends in feminist studies are epitomized by the essays and authors featuring in ALAIMO, Stacy, and Susan HEKMAN (eds.). *Material Feminisms*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2008.

10. HARAWAY, Donna. *When Species Meet*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. 3.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

12. The expression is Karen Barad's. See her *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Durham & London. Duke University Press, 2007, p. 149 and *passim*.

power.” In other words, ecofeminism is not simply a discourse about debunking systems of power, but most of all it is a discourse focusing on the way the category of “difference” is a founding element of the ontological permeability and ethical mutuality between the human and the nonhuman, the “animal”: our dialectical “alien” *par excellence*. It is therefore almost inevitable for feminist thinkers to bring their diverse angles and approaches to the scrutiny of the “myriad of ways” in which “we touch the lives of other animals and ...] they touch ours,” as Lori Gruen and Kari Weil say in their introduction to the recently published *Hypatia* Symposium on “Feminists Encountering Animals.”<sup>13</sup>

The reverberations of this point on ecocriticism are crucial.<sup>14</sup> Through the understanding of “the linked oppressions of ‘nature,’ non dominant species, sexualities and genders,”<sup>15</sup> and via narratives that appeal to our moral imagination, ecocriticism can shape both a new vocabulary and a new aesthetics for subjugated and vulnerable forms of otherness. Now we can better understand the meaning of Simone Weil’s passage on the vulnerability of precious things, quoted in the beginning. As Anat Pick explains, “If fragility and finitude possess a special kind of beauty, this conception of beauty is already inherently ethical.”<sup>16</sup> Such vision implies a recognition of “the other” which explicitly puts into question the human/animal split since, “the relationship between vulnerability, existence, and beauty necessarily applies across the species divide and so delivers us beyond the domain of the human.”<sup>17</sup> This relationship, in other words, entails an ethical and emotional dimension—one that

13. GRUEN, Lori and Kari WEIL. “Invited Symposium: Feminists Encountering Animals. Introduction.” In *Hypatia* 27/3 (Summer 2012), pp. 492-493. 492.

14. Greta Gaard, for example, has strongly advocated for the articulation of “an interspecies focus within ecocriticism” that would cross-fertilize ecofeminism and critical approaches apt to “understanding the linked oppressions of ‘nature,’ non dominant species, sexualities and genders” (GAARD, Greta. “New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a More Feminist Ecocriticism”. *ISLE*. 17.4 [Autumn 2010], pp. 643-665.) In general, on feminist ecocriticism, see the ground-breaking works by Patrick MURPHY, *Literature, Nature, and the Other: Ecofeminist Critiques*. Albany, SUNY Press, 1995; GAARD, Greta and Patrick MURPHY (eds.). *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. Urbana & Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1998; and GAARD, Greta, Simon ESTOK, and Serpil OPPERMAN, eds. *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism*. London and New York, Routledge, 2013.

15. See GAARD, Greta. “New Directions for Ecofeminism,” *Op. cit.*, p. 651. Among these approaches, Gaard lists Simon Estok’s notion of ecophobia and Timothy Morton’s vision of “ecology without nature.”

16. PICK, Anat. *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

includes awe (as in the ancient philosophical concept of *thaumázein*), respect, and love.

In this essay, I will try to analyze how literary imagination can be used as a tool for theoretically exploring these notions. In particular, I will examine how a precise literary genre, namely, magical realism, can function as a lens to make the hybridizations and the overlapping of human, nonhuman, and gendered bodies, visible through narrative strategies that facilitate our affective response toward nonhumans, enabling our perception of them as bearers of a complex otherness which (silently) asks to be included in our ethical horizon.

Considered in this framework, Pick's discourse about vulnerability, uncertain distinctions, and power relations seems to summarize in a remarkable way the creaturely poetics of otherness of the Italian writer Anna Maria Ortese (1914-1998), as exemplified in particular by her novel *The Iguana*. Analyzing this hybrid female figure, halfway between a reptile and a little girl, and depicted by Ortese as a quasi-human/quasi-animal, namely, a quasi-moral subject in queer and fluctuating forms, I will try to look at the way ecofeminist visions of otherness are delineated in the novel. Here, while the distinctive features of the "alien" become progressively more elusive, a moral bridge between the oppressed human and animal is created in a twofold way: by acknowledging the nonhuman as "exposed" and vulnerable, and by acknowledging the nonhuman other as nestling within the very fragility of the human.

### 'The tiniest creatures of creation'. Ortese's poetics of otherness

In his unparalleled book about Ortese's life and works, the biographer Luca Clerici reports the writer's confession about a dream she used to have as a four-years old child:

When I was a child, I had a recurring dream. I was a little girl like there are many—an absolutely ordinary girl; but I used to be attracted by mysterious creatures, by the tiny ones. Once I dreamt about a [little] dragon. It was almost a prediction, an image of how my whole life would be, the symbol of something I would cherish profoundly. When I was young, a dreaming youth, I used to believe that history is made by men and women. What really counts, though, are the children, the small ones, the tiniest creatures of creation.<sup>18</sup>

18. Quoted in CLERICI, Luca. *Apparizione e visione. Vita e opere di Anna Maria Ortese*, Milan, Mondadori, 2002, p. 42. The dream of the little dragon is also reported in more detailed terms in Ortese's collection of tales *In sonno e in veglia*, Milan, Adelphi, 1987, pp. 168-169. Here the dragon is described as "A kind of crocodile, with a white chest, his

The “tiniest creatures of creations,” whether human or nonhuman, real or fantastic, would be the lasting core of the literary imagination of this autodidact author, a working-class woman from the poor Italian south, now considered to be one of the most prominent Italian writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. “Anti-consumerist, aloof, animalist and ecologist, animated by a non-confessional religiosity and by an irrationalist worldview, and politically a libertarian-anarchist,”<sup>19</sup> Anna Maria Ortese is author of six novels and of several collections of tales and poems, which, although celebrated by critics, never made her a rich person, or a leading protagonist in the cultural scene of her homeland. Like other female intellectuals who flourished in the second half of the 1900s, she belonged to a generation of women that “had to build their own intellectual presence and their own job as writers in a climate of deep isolation (from men, as well as from other women).”<sup>20</sup> This makes Ortese’s work even more unique in her literary panorama: a complex and problematic figure, she was marginalized from the Italian intellectual sphere because of the often polemical stances she took toward the “cultural industry.”

But what makes Anna Maria Ortese particularly inviting for a feminist ecocritical interpretation are the very subjects of her writing: solidarity among living beings (many of her characters are transition-forms or hybrids between the human and the nonhuman), anguish over the human blindness regarding the rights of all vulnerable creatures, a will of redeeming otherness, consideration of nature as a subject and not as an object to possess and to conquer, an insistent interest in landscape and in the world of “the tiniest creatures of creation.” Especially in the last years of her life, Ortese’s commitment for both Earth and earthlings is charged with passionate polemics against human instrumentalism and all the forms of oppression that come from it. The following quotes are taken from *Corpo celeste* [*Celestial Body*] (1997), a short diary to which she entrusted her spiritual legacy, and did it in terms which are amazingly consistent with an ecofeminist vision:

These are the wars lost for mere cupidity: countries with no woods or streams, and cities with no more kids to love or peaceful old people, or women considered above their sheer “use.” [...] When peace and right will cease to be only for *one part* of the living beings, and will cease to mean only the happiness and the right of this privileged part and the pitiless consumption of

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red mouth *wide open*, and with infinitely friendly and meek eyes [...] He resembled a young boy and looked like he knew me” (Ibid., p. 168).

19. CLERICI, Luca. Op. cit., p. 599.

20. ZANCAN, Marina. “La donna.” In *Letteratura Italiana*. Ed. Alberto ASOR ROSA. Turin, Einaudi, 1986. Vol. V, pp. 765-827. 827.



all the rest, only then—when the peace of the river and bird will be possible, too—the peace and safety of the human will be possible, as easy as a smile.<sup>21</sup>

In a creaturely dimension of innocence—of innocence as the ethical complement of vulnerability—all living things, whether human and nonhuman, were for her entitled to exist and to thrive. Like William Blake, Emily Dickinson, Borges, or Melville, authors who “never cease to tell the *unity* of the world,”<sup>22</sup> and who were her constant inspiration sources, Ortese persistently rejected the idea of an ethical or ontological privilege of the human in a discourse about justice and freedom.<sup>23</sup> To be fair meant to her to grant freedom to whatever is vulnerable and “precious”—a silence, a garden, a sleeping animal; it meant to *let* these things *be*, like in a poem by Jorge Luis Borges (‘The just’), which indirectly returns in some of her last pages.<sup>24</sup> Especially noteworthy are therefore some considerations on freedom and mastery, by her expressed in tones that are at once lyrical and resolute:

Freedom is a breath. All world breathes, not only humans. Plants breathe, and so do animals. [...] Seasons, day, night: they are breath. Tides are breath. Everything breathes and has a right to breathe. [...] It seems to me that a concept of freedom as stealing the other's breath is becoming more and more widespread. Freedom as mastery. [...] To destroy fields and forests, to change and twist the seasons' rhythm; to recklessly keep incarcerating and massacring

21. ORTESE, Anna Maria. *Corpo celeste*. Milan, Adelphi, 1997, pp. 52-53.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

23. Besides the mentioned authors, Ortese refers almost exclusively to Anglo-American poets and writers as the roots of her more-than-human “poetic creed.” Such figures include Carroll, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Defoe, Dickens, Poe, the Brontë family, Austen, Hawthorne, Crane. See ORTESE, Anna Maria. *In sonno e in veglia*, pp. 176-177; and *Corpo celeste*, pp. 27, 123, 132, 155 and *passim*. The idea of a “universal benevolence,” such as the one stressed by Mary Wollstonecraft—as shown by Margarita Carretero González's essay in this collection, is also a recurring point in Ortese's poetics.

24. See ORTESE. *In sonno e in veglia*, Op. Cit., pp. 180-181 (check). Borges' poem reads:

A man who cultivates his garden, as Voltaire wished.

The one who is grateful that music exists.

The one who takes pleasure in tracing an etymology.

Two workmen playing, in a café in the South, a silent game of chess.

The potter, contemplating a color and a form.

A typographer who sets this page well, though it may not please him.

A woman and a man, who read the last tercets of a certain canto.

The one who caresses a sleeping animal.

The one who justifies, or wishes to justify, a wrong done him.

The one who is grateful that there is Stevenson on earth.

The one who prefers others to be right.

These people, who go unnoticed, are saving the world.

(BORGES, Jorge Luis. *Selected Poems*. Ed. Alexander Coleman. New York, Penguin, 1999, pp. 454-455. The translation has been slightly modified.)

millions of creatures every day, just in order to eat meat, or wear furs; to freely torture every day, in free laboratories, million of beings, as sentient and unknown as humans, to torture them to death ... all this is presented as a defense of the human's own breath, of the human's own freedom!<sup>25</sup>

Reading these lines, it is not surprising that, especially in the last years of her life, Ortese's engagement for the environment and nonhuman animals became increasingly more explicit and firm, up to the point to nominate Greenpeace as the heir of one third of her limited patrimony. But on her moral horizon there was room for all forms of vulnerable otherness: also significant were, in fact, the battles she carried against the death penalty and for the rights of marginalized humans, especially Native Americans.<sup>26</sup>

In spite of her apparent poetic "irrationalism," it would be wrong, though, to read in her position a rejection of culture or of reason *tout court*. Quite the opposite: reason—a *humane* reason—is for Ortese our only response to the wildness of human mastery. In that it *lifts* our understanding *up* to the nonhuman, reason, she says, "does not subjugate or commodify anything."<sup>27</sup> Like reason, also culture—an inclusive and compassionate culture, not the equivalent of "cultural industry"—is the territory where the human *as human* consciously and committedly encounters the nonhuman, building a bond of kinship and care best symbolized, in her eyes, by the image of Saint Jerome removing the thorn from the lion's paw.<sup>28</sup> In Ortese's works every form of marginalized (and therefore defenseless and vulnerable) otherness is key in a creaturely moral ontology. Seeing existence through this "creaturely prism" assigns culture "to contexts that are not exclusively human, contexts beyond an anthropocentric perspective. It recognizes in culture more than the clichéd expression of the 'human condition' but an expression of something *inhuman* as well: the permutations of necessity and materiality that condition and shape human life."<sup>29</sup> The liberating function of culture is for her coupled to the acknowledgment of the condition of slavery—of being exposed to an alien will—as shared by human, animals, and the Earth. Ortese has therefore

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

26. In her last years, Ortese was also author of many articles on behalf of environmental conservation, both for aesthetic and ethical reasons, and against cruelty toward animals (see e. g. "Poveri animali oltraggiati" ["Poor abused animals"], *La Stampa*, March 28, 1990, p. 3; "Ortese: chi sono io. Amica, ma delle vittime" ["Who I am. A friend to the victims"], *La Stampa*, June 19, 1990, p. 17; "Gli animali sono importanti" ["Animals are important"], *Lo Straniero*, 4, 11-12 (2000), pp. 62-64. See also CLERICI, Luca. *Apparizione e vision*, Op. cit.

27. ORTESE, Anna Maria. *Corpo celeste*, Op. cit., p. 103.

28. *Ibid.*, 132.

29. PICK, Anat. *Creaturely Poetics*, Op. cit., p. 5.

a clear idea of how interconnected the fate of all living beings is, and of how historical memory needs biological memory to be an effective instrument of such a culture.<sup>30</sup>

This point reinforces and completes the perspective of an ecofeminist reading of her work. In other important passages, she explicitly defines “evil” as the pain we inflict upon the vulnerable *others*, “upon the *other* as an animal, as a child, as an old, a stranger, a poor *other*.”<sup>31</sup> Whether in the flesh of women or animals, the poor or children, or the life of nature itself, Ortese clearly suggests that each is threatened by interlocked systems of oppressions, which subjugate all “nonnormative” beings. Indirectly sharing the conceptual premises of thinkers such as Plumwood or Warren, Ortese conceives her literary profession as a revolution of the moral imagination. Writing signifies to her fighting on behalf of the fragile ones, in that feminist liberation struggle which Oppermann names “ecology without gender.” So Ortese:

Let us fight to free the Earth and to include it again in our system of values!  
Let it come first! Let forests and light, waters and mountains come first! All  
beings elastic and shining, spiritual and regal that dwell on the Earth: they  
shall come first. It is man, not the Earth, the one that has to be downsized.  
And when I say “man,” I essentially mean his old culture: an arrogant culture  
which puts him in the center of every system, as a master and torturer, cor-  
ruptor and trader of every soul of Life.<sup>32</sup>

It is important to notice that Ortese’s vision of the Earth and earthlings as “soul(s) of Life” does not have a strictly confessional background, but emerges from a pantheism rooted in her anarchical literary readings as a self-taught girl.<sup>33</sup> This “literary pantheism” also explains the stylistic function of magical realism in *The Iguana* and in many of her other narrative works. Ascribing to (apparently) speechless creatures a power to speak, magical realism is a form of literary pantheism, which sheds light on the inherent vitality, agency,

30. See ORTESE, Anna Maria. *Corpo celeste*, Op. cit., p. 127.

31. Ibid., p. 129.

32. Ibid., pp. 124-125.

33. A discussion of Ortese’s “nature’s religion,” a mix of more-than-human immanence and creaturely transcendentalism, whose most relevant referent is, in my opinion, the poet William Blake, would be the object of a specific essay. The presence of nature in Anna Maria Ortese’s “moral philosophy” is particularly stressed by Monica Farnetti, who sees her “conception of nature intended as a place of exile of painful beings, oppressed by an obscure law which stays at odds with charity and happiness.” Farnetti traces Ortese’s idea of nature back to writers such as Giacomo Leopardi, Checov, Emerson, Thoreau, Milton and Tennyson, rather than to “professional” philosophers. See FARNETTI, Monica. “Introduzione,” in ORTESE, Anna Maria. *Romanzi*. 2 vols. Ed. Monica Farnetti, Milan, Adelphi, 2005, pp. ix-lxvi. xvii.

and communicative capacity of all beings. Revealing unexpected kinships and existential disclosures, it is the aesthetic code which best fits an extended moral imagination. In Ortese's narrative works, God and angels appear in the forms of butterflies, little ghosts, turtles, invisible birds, or a mysterious puma cub, like in *Alonso e i visionari* [*Alonso and the Visionaries*, 1996], her last novel. All of these works, each one of which would certainly deserve a closer analysis, show how literary imagination can be an amazing tool to amplify both the vocabulary of ethics and the ethical insights of feminist and ecological struggles. In Ortese's prose, the "tiniest creatures of creation" are liberated by virtue of a narrative ontology that, lending them word and stories, consigns them to a perfectly horizontal ethical dimension—one which, being contiguous with reality, complements it in the form of *vision*. In this dimension "creature," to quote Pick again, "is not simply a synonym for the material and corporeal," but rather discloses "a religious vocabulary of creation and created, and so attempts a rapprochement between the material and the sacred." (17). Showing the sacredness (or, if you prefer, the intrinsic value) of all bodily natures, this rapprochement is a step toward a shared, namely, an ecofeminist discourse of liberation. Creating narratives in which the ontological settings are remodeled upon these subversive (more inclusive, and thus more *realistic*) ethical sights, Ortese shows her faithfulness to a literature that "never cease[s] to tell us the *unity* of the world." While inviting the readers to abide by *humane* reason and "believe the strangest things," her magical realist representation of otherness creates the premises for the readers to "love the alien," as Bowie's lyrics (borrowed in the opening epigraph and in the title of this essay) charmingly suggested. Showing reality via the weirdest forms of imagination, magical realism becomes a language that speaks on behalf of the world and its creatures, to whose voice "human" reason is most of the time *strangely* deaf.

### 3. Crossing the Alien. A reading of *The Iguana*

*The Iguana* is the epitome of this ontological narrative strategy. Here imagination is used to reveal the systems that oppress vulnerable creatures, and also to indicate, via the figure of the little Estrellita, all the crossings which are ethically relevant for a posthumanist "relational ontology": in her, human is crossed with nonhuman, oppression is crossed with gender, marginalization is crossed with slavery (and thus with instrumentalism), misery with cruelty, and childhood with powerlessness to articulate a discourse in self-defense. Being all these elements concentrated in and around a hybrid character of girl/reptile (a reptile certainly remindful of the dragon dreamt

by the four-years-old Ortese) it is evident that, in this novel, the writer did not simply want to extend moral consideration to nonhuman animals, but to explore how the nonhuman is hidden in the human itself. More or less directly, here Ortese seemed as if she wanted to explore the complex “role of animals, animality, and ‘the animal’ in our fantasies of gender, race, and sex,” as insightfully suggested by Kelly Oliver in a discourse about how to combine the perspectives of feminism and animal studies.<sup>34</sup>

First published in 1965, *The Iguana* has been for decades subject to revisions by its author, and therefore it is not possible to talk properly of a “final version.” The text of the critical edition substantially reproduces the first published version of the novel.<sup>35</sup> My interpretation will be based upon the edition of 1965, which is also the one used for the English translation of the novel. *The Iguana*'s plot is not easy to summarize. Much of the work's difficulty stems not only from complexity of the story itself, but also from the “hispanicity” of Ortese's style, which is visionary and oneiric, in certain points resembling the prose of magical realist South American writers, such as Julio Cortázar, Isabel Allende, or Gabriel García Márquez.<sup>36</sup> But this visionary world of alien creatures, weird encounters, and unexpected revelations is the very cypher of her creaturely poetics of otherness.

Carlo Ludovico Aleardo di Greco of the Dukes of Estremadura-Aleardi and Count of Milan, familiarly called Daddo, is an architect. He travels across the Mediterranean Sea on a twofold mission: purchasing lands for his rich mother and, on the behalf of a publisher friend of his, searching for “something poetic,

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34. In the *Hypatia* Symposium on “Feminists Encountering Animals,” Kelly suggests that, although “associations among objectified others, including women, racialized others, sexual ‘minorities,’ and animals or animality have become commonplace,” scarce theoretical attention has been placed on the complex “role of animals, animality, and ‘the animal’ in our fantasies of gender, race, and sex” (OLIVER, Kelly. “Ambivalence toward Animals and the Moral Community,” *Hypatia* 27/3 [Summer 2012], pp. 493-498. 496.) I believe that Ortese's novel is a perfect case study for such a critical approach.

35. A philologically commented text of *The Iguana* can be found in the second volume of ORTESE, Anna Maria. *Romanzi*. Ed. Monica Farnetti. 2 vols. Milan, Adelphi, 2005. In this volume are also available alternative versions of the novel, which were projected but never published by the writer. Subject to changes in particular is the final part, in which the partial “happy ending” of the 1965 version, is totally overthrown and transformed into a “noir” complete with a closing slaughter perpetrated by the Segovia-Guzman brothers.

36. See BORRI, Giancarlo. *Invito alla lettura di Anna Maria Ortese*, Milan, Mursia, 1988, p. 77; and MAZZOCCHI, Giuseppe. “Anna Maria Ortese e l'ispanità.” *Modern Languages Notes*, 112/1 (1997), Italian Issue, pp. 90-104.

[...] a series of cantos, expressing the revolt of the oppressed.”<sup>37</sup> Daddo finds both things in Ocaña, an imaginary Portuguese island. Not much bigger than a rock and almost deserted, Ocaña is as poor and melancholic as its master, don Ilario Segovia-Guzman, a dilettante poet who lives there with his two brothers. In don Ilario’s house Daddo unexpectedly encounters a small iguana named Estrellita who works there as a servant, mistreated and despised by the whole family. Don Ilario, once her friend and mentor, is now apparently disgusted with her. He “pays” her with little pebbles taken from the shore, which she carefully keeps in a hidden place. In her state of physical and emotional abandon, sometimes connected to forms of hostility, this surreal Cinderella very soon gains Daddo’s sympathy and solidarity. But his solidarity is not limited to the little Iguana.<sup>38</sup> In fact, seeing the state of profound misery of both Estrellita and her masters—a misery at the same time material and emotional—Daddo desires to help them.

While he is hardly trying to build closer ties of confidence with the Iguana on the one side, and the Segovia-Guzman on the other, the island’s immobile situation suddenly changes. One night, a mysterious American heiress arrives in Ocaña as don Ilario’s promised bride. While their wedding is being celebrated, the desperate Iguana throws herself into a well. Daddo saves her, but loses his life as a result. Before dying, he has a deeply symbolic vision: embodied in a dead white butterfly, Daddo sees God and recognizes it as an immensely vulnerable little creature. At this point, in a state suspended between hallucination and cognitive insight, he understands Estrellita’s “truth”: “the Iguana is not an Iguana, but a poor servant, a little girl reduced by misery, passions, and ignorance to a quasi-animal condition.”<sup>39</sup> While he passes on, Daddo feels “that [...] iguanas are warnings. That there are no iguanas, but only disguises thought up by human beings for the oppression of their neighbors and then held in place by a cruel and terrifying society.”<sup>40</sup>

*The Iguana* is a complex work in which the allegorical and poetic motives are interlaced with ethical, social, and historical ones. In the otherness of this reptile-girl, Ortese elicits all the constructs of mastery associated by ecofeminism with the notion of oppressed subjects: she is a woman, an animal, a servant; she lives in a world split into colonized and colonizers; her language

37. ORTESE, Anna Maria. *The Iguana*. Tr. Henry Martin. Kingston and New York, McPherson & Company, 1986, p. 4.

38. “Iguana,” when referred to Estrellita, is always capitalized by Ortese.

39. ORTESE, Anna Maria. “Appendice II. La bestiuccia.” In *Romanzi*. Ed. Monica Farnetti. 2 vols. Milan: Adelphi, 2005. Vol. I, pp. 967-971. 970.

40. ORTESE, Anna Maria. *The Iguana*, Op. cit., p. 180.

is primitive, her behavior passionate and irrational. Moreover, she cannot even count on the consolation of an afterlife redemption: as her masters made her believe, she has no soul, and her life is sheer and mechanical materiality. But, in spite of her complete subjugation, her figure and her presence are dialectically determining in order for her masters to exist *as masters*. In a world dominated by men and by a spirit of conquest and “hyperseparation,” Estrellita is a figure of vulnerable otherness and a *warning*: she *warns* about the “denied dependency” of the world of her oppressors on her own world and on her own existence.

In this context, Ortese's attacks toward the established social hierarchies start with an attack to their underlying cultural vision. Even though it is claimed to be a rehabilitation of the “oppressed” (as in Daddo's “editorial” research and poetical “discoveries”) in the end this kind of “culture” acts as an extension of the logics of capitalism, turning out to be part of a discourse which reinscribes the “oppressed” as such. This becomes clear from the opening lines of the novel. Here a peculiar combination of materialist concerns and bourgeois culture (epitomized by the Milanese well-off society) transforms nature in a twisted image, midway between utopia and economic good. Building an unexpected alliance with the Reader (here, a capitalized noun), addressed by Ortese always in the second-person singular pronoun, the narrator's point of view and implicit irony become patent:

Surely, Reader, you have heard about the springtime travels of the Milanese, on the lookout all around the world for real estate, buying up tracts of land for the construction of villas and hotels, naturally enough, and maybe with working class dwellings to come a little later. But most of all, they hunt for still intact expressions of what they understand as “nature,” believing in a mixture of freedom and passion, with not a little sensuality and a shade of folly, for which the rigors of modern life in Milan seem to make them thirst.<sup>41</sup>

According to Ortese (and here we can recognize the influence of Marxism on her thought), culture, when it is an expression of the dominating classes, is never guiltless, not even when it claims to be on the side of the dominated classes. Feelings of social resistance cannot be expressed or searched for, she writes, “forgetting that not even feelings survive—neither feelings nor any desire to express them—when people have no money (given the world's time-honored conventions), or where money can buy everything, or where penury cohabits with great ignorance.”<sup>42</sup> In fact, “the oppressed don't even

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41. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

exist, or can't, at least, have any awareness of being oppressed when their condition is authentic and a legacy from a distant past."<sup>43</sup>

Because of these opening premises, the novel is thus an attempt to criticize and to subvert the system of mastery implied in this kind of culture, a culture which, as she will repeatedly say in *Celestial Body* and in her other non-fiction writings, is "old" and amnesiac. In *The Iguana*, the "traditional" rationality of this oppressive world is overthrown both by the character of Estrellita, herself an alien, an indefinite "other-than-human," and by Daddo, who constitutes a breakdown in the chain of the oppressors. With their unexpected proximity, the little Iguana and Daddo represent the "side possibilities" which only can crack and dismantle the "oppositive and hierarchical epistemology" inbuilt in the "bottlenecks of patriarchal logic."<sup>44</sup> For this reason the moral background of the novel is an invitation to quit the reassuring framework of dominant categories (whether social, cultural or existential). It is an invitation to see past a privileged status and to move toward an ethic of proximity, an ethics without limits, in which there are not "liminal moral subjects" but full-fledged ethical presences, however alien and *surprising* they might seem.<sup>45</sup> This becomes clear in Daddo's encounter with the iguana:

Daddo's surprise was tremendous. He had taken her for a shrunken old woman, but in front of him was a bright green little beast, about the height of a child—an enormous lizard from the look of her, but dressed in woman's clothes with a dark little skirt, a white corset, old and shabby, and a multi-colored apron clearly patchworked from the family's stock of rags. To hide her ingenuous little snout, which was a sort of whitish green, she wore yet another dark cloth on her head. She was barefoot. [...]

The creature he had addressed as "little grandmother" was not even a full-grown girl! She was still a child iguana no more than seven or eight years old who looked aged and dry only because of the typically wrinkled features of her species and a general decline, caused no doubt by carrying weights, constant serving, and who knows what a state of savage loneliness too much for any youthful creature, even a beast.<sup>46</sup>

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43. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

44. As Cristina Della Coletta wrote in her essay on Ortese and the idea of utopia, "the contact with these side-possibilities which come out from the cracks and fractures of thinking, and are based upon the refusal of an opppositive and hierarchical epistemology, constitutes one of the most powerful ways out from the bottlenecks of patriarchal logic" (DELLA COLETTA, Cristina. "Scrittura come utopia: *La lente scura* di Anna Maria Ortese." *Italica* 76/3 [1999]: 371-88. 380)

45. "Liminal moral subjects" is an expression used by OLIVER, Kelly. "Ambivalence toward Animals and the Moral Community," *Op. cit.*, p. 495.

46. ORTESE, Anna Maria. *The Iguana*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 17-19.



The way Ortese represents this encounter is significant. The strategic use of the magical-realist style is instrumental for a realigning of the ethical priorities in Daddo's perception. Compared to Estrellita's appalling misery (first ethical close-up of the scene), her strange appearance soon becomes a minor detail. The alien character can therefore be translated into the moral vocabulary of a language of kinship ("a *child* iguana," my emphasis), while bewilderment is superseded by feelings of spontaneous closeness and of condemnation of her sufferings ("who knows what a state of savage loneliness too much for any youthful creature, even a beast"). Neither completely a reptile nor a woman, Estrellita is evidently a moral and ontological hybrid. Nonetheless, Daddo's compassion and increasing tenderness (here denoted by the terms "little grandmother," "little beast," "child" and by the descriptive function of diminutive forms of nouns) soon become the leading chords in his encounter with such an apparently odd creature. Masterfully using a rhetorical strategy that makes appear emotionally normal what is logically absurd, Ortese characterizes Daddo as disconcerted not much by Estrellita's appearance, but rather by her fragility and pain, also expressed by the way her clothes and figure are represented. In this respect, the phrase "She was barefoot" nearly creates in the reader a synesthetic feeling of exposure, surprise, intimacy, and discomfort.

In removing Estrellita's constructed "truth," the non-human body of the Iguana acts both as a symbol and as a disguise. In doing this, Ortese stressed the irreducibility of the "other," its being a stranger—also by means of its body—in a world ruled by "sameness." And it is not incidental that in the novel *Estrellita* is the only meaningful female figure in a men's world. Her body is at the same time always an animal body and always a gendered body. As such, the body itself can be interpreted as a vehicle of otherness. In *Estrellita*, the "body as other" is projected on the non-human as absolute otherness, but also as the sign of a fracture with the principle of "sameness" and its structure of domination.<sup>47</sup>

As if Ortese prefigured them some thirty years in advance, in *Estrellita*'s marginalization we can recognize the features of Val Plumwood's famous "list of dualisms."<sup>48</sup> We find here the dualism between male and female, human

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47. On gendered body as essential to the definition of individual identity and on its being a medium in the relationship between the "other" and the "same," see IRIGARAY, Luce. *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*. London, Routledge, 1996, pp. 61-62; and IRIGARAY, Luce. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. Tr. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1993, pp. 95-113.

48. See above in this essay, note 7.

and nonhuman, master and slave; but also the dualism between public and private (where the sphere of private is that of the iguana's semi-reclusion, relegated to live in a dark cubbyhole under the kitchen's stairs and forced to behave as if she were invisible); between subject and object (her identity is a sheer function of her utility); rationality and animality (her masters speak "of animality as necessarily distinguished by its lack of that highest good called the Soul"<sup>49</sup>); universality and singularity (a weird individual, Estrellita is theoretically as well as morally anti-taxonomical, and there are no universal categories in which she could be understood, "assumed" and "redeemed" from her ontological solitude); of civilized and primitive and of culture and nature (Estrellita is illiterate and her language is extremely poor, especially compared to her master's poetic aspirations); of freedom and necessity (after having been repudiated, Estrellita becomes an "animated instrument," almost a mere mechanism).

Among these patterns of mastery, social oppression plays a fundamental role. As Italian critic Giancarlo Borri writes, Estrellita "is the example [...] of a creature taken as an 'economic good', solely considered [...] for its content of utility."<sup>50</sup> The core of such oppression lies in its asymmetric bilaterality: this mechanism in fact "requires the creature itself to be fully aware of—and basically to accept—such a low."<sup>51</sup> That is to say, the experience of oppression is so deeply rooted and internalized to be the only means by which oppressed subjects can form their vulnerable identities. Pebbles are an example: Estrellita accepts and keeps them jealously, even though she knows very well that they do not have any real value. Those pebbles are, in fact, the only means through which she can have an idea of herself, and make herself acknowledged and accepted, although as an "inferior being." This suggests that "in the obscure and unfathomable extraneousness of the universe, conscious life can survive and sustain itself only through the degrading mediations of utility."<sup>52</sup> The passage, "there are no iguanas, but only disguises thought up by human beings for the oppression of their neighbors and then held in place by a cruel and terrifying society,"<sup>53</sup> perfectly expresses the gist of the story. In a world of oppressors the "other," however "similar," is oppressed by definition. In this world, this oppressed is an animal, a woman, a poor, and a child. She is,

49. ORTESE, Anna Maria. *The Iguana*, Op. cit., p. 96.

50. BORRI, Giancarlo. *Invito alla lettura di Anna Maria Ortese*, Op. cit., p. 58.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

53. ORTESE, Anna Maria. *The Iguana*, Op. cit., p. 178.

in other words, one among the innumerable “tiniest creatures of creation,” a vulnerable alien.

This creaturely dimension is reinforced when Ortese introduces other kinds of dualisms, seemingly neglected by Plumwood's list, but crucial in the writer's poetics of otherness: the ethical-eschatological dualisms of good and evil, and of salvation and damnation. For Ortese, spirituality functions at a basic level in the process of subjugation. Taking advantage of Estrellita's ignorance and naïveté, her masters induced her to believe not only that she does not have a soul, but even that she herself is a creature of evil. This constructed arrangement determines for Estrellita an “inconfrontable terror of herself.”<sup>54</sup> Ortese notes that her mind is as simple as the mind of all the “subalterns—especially children and animals, who are defenseless creatures of weakness entirely without resources.”<sup>55</sup>

In order to emphasize Estrellita's feeling of spiritual loneliness—a loneliness, which involves abyssal marginalization and abandon—Ortese once again addresses “you,” the Reader:

But have you ever given a thought to the desperate plight of Perversity or Wickedness itself, deprived for virtually mathematical reasons of all possible struggle with itself, or of flight from itself, and therefore condemned to the constant horror of its own desperate presence, this presence being nothing other than itself? No, that's something you have never thought about.<sup>56</sup>

Like in the dream of the little dragon, compassion for the alien is a keyword here. This is, in Simone Weil's words, “compassion for every creature, because it is far from the Good. Infinitely far. Abandoned. God abandons our entire being—flesh, blood, sensibility, intelligence, love—to the pitiless necessity of matter.”<sup>57</sup> The logic of dehumanization—and in this case, the identification of a human with a reptile, a snake-like creature, in all its overtly symbolical layers—works at the deepest levels of consciousness, creating not only an alienated identity, but also depriving this identity of any further projection in space and in time. Above all Estrellita's spiritual subjection consists not only of her being condemned to embody evil itself, and of her being without soul; it also consists most of all in her being deprived of every right to have a feeling of hope. She is banned from any chance of salvation. Heaven, in whatever form, is denied to her through systematized oppression:

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54. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

57. WEIL, Simone. “Epilogue.” In SPRINGSTED, Eric O. (ed.). *Simone Weil*, New York: Orbis, 1998, pp. 142-143. 142.

—“Do I have to go to hell?”

—“What did you say?” [Daddo] hadn’t understood.

—“I said, do I have to go to hell, I mean when I die, o senhor?”

—“Neither to hell nor to heaven,” replied [Daddo], suddenly cool [...], “if you don’t have a soul.”

Another silence, with the Iguana slightly turning her neck, wary of a returning pain.

—“The Marquis,” she continued, her voice so thin as to seem to have fissured ... “is going to heaven today, right after lunch. He’s going on the boat; and after all the water, there’s the sky and the Holy Virgin, and all the constellations. But I can’t go there. The Virgin won’t allow it.” [...]

[Daddo] felt that the whole world of Christianity had cracked in two and was precipitating into the abyss. His pain was enormous and he asked, “Who... told you that?”

Here again, the creature, slightly stretched her neck, wanting to focus it as the site of all her hurts. [...]

—“Who told you that, little Iguana?”

Her only reply was the sweet, stupid stare of a creature resigned to the uselessness of formulating further noises or bothering to babble them out.<sup>58</sup>

Insisting on her *absolute* exclusion, this passage sheds light on the ideological violence engrained in Estrellita’s subjugation—one based on the fact that animals “have traditionally been perceived as pure necessity, material bodies pitted against human mindfulness and soulfulness.”<sup>59</sup> Additionally, though, the exchange points to another interesting element of Ortese’s creaturely poetics of otherness. In fact, the process of dehumanization and alienation discloses not only a domineering intention, but also a profound inability to understand both the “other” and the “same,” the oppressed as well as the oppressor.<sup>60</sup> Alienation, in other words, is not limited to the weaker pole of the dualism. This appears clearly in the way Ortese characterizes the Segovia-Guzman, Estrellita’s masters. Their endless misery, verging on madness (in don Ilario) and stupidity (in his brothers), shows how they are themselves alienated subjects. To an external and benevolent eye such as Daddo’s, Don Ilario and his brothers are victims (surely not guiltless) of a loss, of a “failed experience of the other,” as Luce Irigaray would say. In them a “failed experience” consists in denying the mutual belonging of different forms of being, both social and natural. In their ignorance, the life of the Segovia-Guzman brothers is rooted

58. ORTESE, Anna Maria. *The Iguana*, Op. cit., pp. 154-155.

59. PICK, Anat. Op. cit., p. 4.

60. To quote biologist Steve Olson: “Denying the humanity of other people has always been a way to justify oppressing and exterminating them, and science has a long, sad history of contributing to these atrocities” (OLSON, Steve. *Mapping Human History: Discovering the Past Through Our Genes*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002, p. 13).

in separation. Unlike Daddo, they will not be able to understand that “among the various species” an “affectionate collaboration and a common effort to rise above the terrestrial” may exist.<sup>61</sup> The undefined time in which don Ilario used to love the Iguana symbolizes, therefore, a past immemorial when there was a form of friendship between human beings and the Earth, a friendship now lost—and with that loss also the oppressors’ decline. And though their decline may be more silent, it is no less tenacious.

With its atypical ideological background (a Marxism neither revolutionary nor teleologically utopian, accompanied by a sort of “Christian animism”), *The Iguana* is a ballad for the redemption of the oppressed; quite paradoxically, however, this redemption reverberates on the oppressors, too. In this context Daddo plays a fundamental role. Daddo tries to redeem the oppressors’ “class,” to which he belongs by birth, becoming himself a mediator between the two poles of the dualism. But, at the end, his attempt of redemption is unsuccessful. With his death, in fact, he completely quits the oppressors’ “terrifying society”: “He himself had been product and expression of such a society, but now he was stepping out of it. This made him content.”<sup>62</sup> Care is the *leitmotiv* of this discourse. By caring for the little Iguana, Daddo’s interest in her—an interest, which is nonetheless implicitly erotic—is justified and sublimated. Daddo’s way of relating to Estrellita reveals a form of love that “lets [her] be.” This “letting one be” is comparable to what philosophers Emmanuel Lévinas and Luce Irigaray had in mind when they spoke about “caressing,” a form of “caring” for another—a form which is also essentially a “becoming place” to another, “receiving” another, making room in order to allow one to have their being according to their nature and potentialities.<sup>63</sup> To paraphrase Borges, the one who “caresses a sleeping animal” and lets her be among all the precious and vulnerable forms of existence, will save the world.

In Daddo, the “love for the alien” includes a vast range of aspects that, passing through a sublimated eros and a maternal-paternal care, culminate in a general process of (ethical and metaphysical) acknowledgement and (cognitive) understanding. In his desire to be at the same time Estrellita’s spouse, father, and mother, in order to offer her freedom and protection (he dreams about taking her to Milan, and giving her a proper childhood and education, and eventually even to marry her), Daddo starts a process of inclusion and

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61. ORTESE, Anna Maria. *The Iguana*, Op. cit., p. 97.

62. Ibid., p. 180.

63. See IRIGARAY, Luce. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Op. cit., pp. 183-91. For a phenomenological interpretation of caressing, see LÉVINAS, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Tr. Alphonso Lingis. Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1980, pp. 257-59.

identity clarification that involves not only the Iguana, but the fundamental order of things.<sup>64</sup> Although in terms of visions and hallucinations, he understands what the mechanisms of oppression are and the fragility of oppressed creatures.

His feverish vision of God in the form of a dying white butterfly (in Italian, a female figure) validates and complements this insight. Here Ortese seems to suggest that the constructs of oppression involve also the dualism of humanity (as the stronger pole) and God (as the weaker pole). In so doing, she can be put in a common conceptual horizon with Dostoevskij's *The Great Inquisitor* and philosopher Hans Jonas' *The Concept of God after Auschwitz*, two masterful expressions of God's impotence in front of human constructs of oppression and power. In her novel, Ortese reports Daddo's vision by directly involving the Reader in the conversation:

Surely you've longed to know the true semblance of this Being whom the centuries have surrounded with fables while leaving us always uncertain of having been faced with the undeniable. What lay there, curled up on a leaf and asleep, was a simple white butterfly.

But what a grace it must have had as it hovered over meadows and flowering shrubs before the tremendous event of its death! A simple weak grub, but with the purest wings—wings still trembling (perhaps fluttering with the breathing of the persons in the hall) in an appearance of life. Golden antennae, and minuscule eyes overflowing with goodness, very pure and very sad.

Wondering that so weak and simple a creature, now robbed of life, could contain the secret, the very origins of the immense astounding universe with all its splendors, gifts, and everything that he and other nobles had possessed and enjoyed, the Count became aware of just how unpardonable that murder would always remain, and that the grief of the Constellations was infinite.<sup>65</sup>

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64. It would be highly interesting, here, to apply Julia Kristeva's extension of Freudian analysis in her notion of "abjection" and in her theorization of "displacement"—a perceptual dynamics meant to cover "the truth of the intolerable" by way of creating a projectual identity in which the animal acts as a substitute of the human (KRISTEVA, Julia. *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Tr. Leon S. Roudiez, New York, Columbia University Press, 1982, p. 129). Abjection, according to Kristeva, is fear of something that we don't clearly know or cannot neatly define. Following Freud, she explains the process of abjection as a projection onto the external world of some internal ambivalence and bewilderment we experience. Kristeva maintains that, in order to recognize ourselves as "clean and proper" human beings, we enact a process of "abjection," through which we separate ourselves from nonhuman animals and project whatever is beastly in ourselves onto animals. I believe that Daddo's missed identification of Estrellita with a human being is clearly inscribed in this dynamics: due to the "intolerable truth" of her oppression (Estrellita is actually dehumanized by her "beastly" masters), Daddo displaces her specific identity onto a nonhuman animal.

65. ORTESE, Anna Maria. *The Iguana*, Op. cit., pp. 174-175.

The choice of representing God as a butterfly in a novel based on the “moral metamorphosis” of a reptile might not be incidental. It is interesting to remember that butterflies (and snakes, taxonomically related to iguanas) were considered as symbols of metamorphosis during the Neolithic age. As such they embodied the “transformative power” of the ancient Goddess, worshipped in matriarchal Crete. In her famous essay *The Chalice and the Blade*, Riane Eisler, for instance, mentioned a “seal impression from Zakro, eastern Crete, portraying the Goddess with the wings of an eyed butterfly. Even the later Cretan double axe [...] was a stylization of the butterfly.”<sup>66</sup> But the butterfly form is also remindful, here, of the quintessential fragility and *innocence* of God's creatures, as splendidly portrayed in William Blake's *Auguries of Innocence* (“Kill not the moth nor butterfly, / For the last judgment draweth nigh.”).

Embodying the coincidence between a transcendent principle, a vulnerable creature, and a nonhuman being, the butterfly-shaped “creaturely” God fashions in *The Iguana* another valence in which *otherness* and *innocence* are superimposable concepts, thus resonating with Blake's poem. In an etymological sense, “innocent” means something which is “not noxious.” This implies necessarily the existence of an otherness, as well as its acknowledgement. Being non-noxious, in fact, requires that, besides me, there are in the world other forms of existence to which my presence is potentially harmful. Innocent, therefore, is the one who abstains from being harmful to other beings—the one who lets the other be, caressing them, listening to their (silent) calls. So conceived, innocence means a shared form of being in the world. It is an act of love. Such innocence is here personified not only by the God/butterfly, but also by Daddo himself. By acknowledging otherness and letting it be as an essential part of the world, he consciously acts as an “innocent”—a *harm-less* creature. In so doing, he rejects the system of oppression, which is at odds with a shared form of being in the world. If we interpret this episode in the light of the closing lines of Blake's *Auguries of Innocence*, another element emerges. After enumerating a series of intersections between creaturely vulnerability and the divine in forms of animals and “oppressed” others, Blake in fact concludes:

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66. EISLER, Riane. *The Chalice & the Blade: Our History, Our Future*. San Francisco: Harper, 1988, p. 18. It is also important to stress that oppressed creatures are, here as well as in other works by Ortese, always the symbol of a transcendental reality. See for example her last two novels *Alonso e i visionari* (*Alonso and the visionaries*) and *The Lament of the Linnet*.

God appears, and God is light,  
 To those poor souls who dwell in night;  
 But does a human form display  
 To those who dwell in realms of day.

With metaphysical irony, the poet suggests that God *fully* appears only to the oppressed ones—the “poor souls” that do not possess the “light” of human reason: the “tiniest creatures of creation,” as Ortese would name them. On the opposite side, only “those who dwell in realms of day,” namely, humans, see God in a “human form,” hence limiting it. Choosing the side of innocence, and thus becoming an alien himself, Daddo no longer needs human codes to see God. Like “those poor souls who dwell in night,” he can see the both the human in a little Iguana and the divine in the luminous innocence of a dead white butterfly.

### Conclusions. A generous ethics and the truth of non-reality

Reflecting on “her” authors in a book of 1987, *In sonno e in veglia* [*In sleep and wake*], Ortese writes: “Nobody has discovered and sung the World, like the British and the Americans once did. Even while *narrating*, they sung the World’s marvelous *Non reality*—a Non reality which is the Truth.”<sup>67</sup>

Literature, like art in general, has the power to reveal the “truth” of the world, Hegel maintained. There are few literary genres that are as able to extend reality while they extend moral imagination as magical realism does. Seeing “the *unity of world*” in the most unpredictable forms, authors such as Wollstonecraft, Borges, Blake, Austen, and Ortese create in their works figures that, acting as “catalyzers” of ideas and emotions, proceed to unexpectedly enlarge the boundaries of ethics and ontology. In so doing, they not only reveal the world but *re-enchant* it. Telling stories of crossings and metamorphoses, the marvelous creatures emerging from their imagination are, as Jane Bennett writes, “like strange attractors, then each is always in a state of becoming; each is not simply a species crossing but a crossing species.”<sup>68</sup> A crossing (and most of all, literary crossings of imagination and reality) is, in other words, able to “bring new things into being,” cultivating “ethical sensibility,” and generating “what might be called a presumptive generosity toward the animals, vegetables, and minerals within one’s field of encounter.”<sup>69</sup>

67. ORTESE, Anna Maria. *In sonno e in veglia*, Op. cit., p. 177.

68. BENNETT, Jane. *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*. Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 17.

69. See *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.



The feminist framing of animal studies is also a chapter of this generous ethics. Its integral “creaturely poetics” conveys a re-enchantment made of crossings, of rediscovered proximities, of cognitive expansions. Taking us from a species-specific moral approach to an interspecies ethics of bodily-affective connections, this vision displaces the ethical emphasis from “the same” to “the other,” whereby otherness is put in the mangle, and encounters of different co-existing beings, included ourselves, are created. Here the other is neither neutralized nor distanced, but rather acknowledged as a fundamental element of our own becoming. The other—and we are ourselves *others*—is already always with *its own* other, dialectically entangled in bodily and emotional relationships with it.

Whether through figures of women, nonhumans, children, dragons, lizards, butterflies, and every other vulnerable creature, a conceptual horizon is here open, which invites us to see the “same” as complemented by the “other” not by way of mirroring, but rather by way of diffraction: an encounter in which differences at the same time *coalesce* and *matter*.<sup>70</sup> Permeability, and not only vulnerability, is the mark of existence. The unity of the world is made by its innumerable stories and crossings.

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70. On diffraction, see BARAD, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, passim.

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# THE ECOFEMINIST SUBSISTENCE PERSPECTIVE REVISITED IN AN AGE OF LAND GRABS AND ITS REPRESENTATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

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## Abstract

The ecofeminist subsistence perspective arises from years of feminist fieldwork and theoretical elaboration focusing on women as producers of life. It is described as a call to consciousness to reorganize societies and renegotiate global inequalities. Its need for implementation is demonstrated by means of the current international land grabs and their deleterious effects on women's lives, knowledge, and local power. Novels by women writers Buchi Emecheta, Leslie Marmon Silko, Ana Castillo, Toni Morrison, Patricia Grace, and Mahasweta Devi are also discussed in terms of their demonstrating the challenges women face and their efforts to address those challenges by means of various instantiations of the subsistence perspective with varying degrees of achievement and repression.

**Key-words:** ecofeminism, subsistence perspective, land grabs, Buchi Emecheta, Leslie Marmon Silko, Ana Castillo, Toni Morrison, Patricia Grace, Mahasweta Devi.

## Resumen

La perspectiva de subsistencia ecofeminista surge tras años de trabajo de campo feminista y elaboración teórica, centrándose en las mujeres como productoras de vida. Se describe como una llamada a la conciencia para reorganizar las sociedades y renegociar las desigualdades globales. Se ha demostrado la necesidad de su implementación mediante las actuales apropiaciones de tierras internacionales y sus efectos perjudiciales sobre la vida de las mujeres, el saber y el poder local. Las novelas de las escritoras

Buchi Emecheta, Leslie Marmon Silko, Ana Castillo, Toni Morrison, Patricia Grace y Mahasweta Devi se han analizado con el fin de demostrar los retos a los que se enfrentan las mujeres y sus esfuerzos para abordar esos desafíos por medio de diversas ejemplificaciones de la perspectiva de subsistencia con distintos grados de éxito y represión.

**Palabras clave:** ecofeminismo, perspectiva de subsistencia, apropiaciones de tierras, Buchi Emecheta, Leslie Marmon Silko, Ana Castillo, Toni Morrison, Patricia Grace, Mahasweta Devi.

## 1. Introduction

With the global capitalist system in disarray and rolling financial crises making daily headlines during the past several years, it is perhaps a good time to revisit an alternative view of economics to be found in ecofeminist analysis: the subsistence perspective. I find this particular type of ecofeminism particularly relevant for challenging violent and far reaching global economic and ecological manipulations, which aligns it with the global environmental justice movement, and to consider literary works that reflect both the transnational onslaught and responses to it. These contemporary novels come from a variety of national literatures, with distinct styles and settings. Yet, when we consider their themes in light of environmental justice demands and a subsistence perspective we discover significant commonalities among them.

## 2. Subsistence perspective

The development of the subsistence perspective comes out of years of field work and theoretical elaboration based on the experiences of women in both the Global North and the Global South. It relies on a foundational claim about women and nature as producers of life. Crucially, the defining of this relationship reflects both a holistic sensibility about biological processes and a reconfiguration of the starting point for economic theory. It does not deny the contributions of men, but squarely foregrounds reproduction as the key to production and inverts a series of hierarchical binaries that define the norms of patriarchal cultures, economies, and governments. As the Indian scientist, environmental activist and author, Vandana Shiva, contends,

There are two implications that arise from the recognition of nature and women as producers of life. First, that what goes by the name of development is a maldevelopment process, a source of violence to women and nature throughout the world. This violence does not arise from the misapplication of an otherwise benign and gender-neutral model but is rooted in the patriarchal assumptions of homogeneity, domination and centralization that underlie dominant models of thought and development strategies. Second, that

the crises that the maldevelopment model has given rise to cannot be solved within the paradigm of the crisis mind.<sup>1</sup>

The subsistence perspective is not only an ecofeminist call to consciousness but also a call to reorganize societies and to renegotiate the global inequalities highlighted by the international environmental justice movement. But, unlike many other such calls to consciousness, social equity is married to ecological sustainability and a systemic approach to the reproducibility of the means for human life without diminishing the lives of other entities.

As Spanish activist Yayo Herrero has made explicit,

... in an ecological perspective, the fundamental contradiction which exists between the present economic metabolism and the durability of the biosphere brings out an important synergy between ecologist and feminist conceptions. The ecological perspective demonstrates the physical impossibility of a society centred on growth. Feminism makes this conflict palpable in our daily lives and denounces the logic of accumulation and growth as being a patriarchal and androcentric logic.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the so-called essentialism of ecofeminism based on the proximity of women's lives to the rest of nature is revealed as being based on the irreducible commonality of the reproduction of life and the means of life. Shiva in *Staying Alive* reframes it by means of the lives and work of women in the Global South: "To say that women and nature are intimately associated is not to say anything revolutionary [...] The new insight provided by rural women in the Third World is that women and nature are associated *not in passivity but in creativity and in the maintenance of life.*"<sup>3</sup>

German environmental researcher, activist and author, Maria Mies, and Shiva write that:

Within a limited planet, there can be no escape from necessity. To find freedom does not involve subjugating or transcending the "realm of necessity," but rather focusing on developing a vision of [...] the "good life" within the limits of necessity, of nature. We call this vision the subsistence perspective, because to "transcend" nature can no longer be justified; instead, nature's subsistence potential in all its dimensions and manifestations must be nurtured and conserved. Freedom *within* the realm of necessity can be universalized to all; freedom *from* necessity can be available to only a few.<sup>4</sup>

1. SHIVA, Vandana. *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*. London, Zed Books, 1989, p. 46.

2. TORTOSA, Juan. "What is Ecofeminism?" Interview with Yayo Herrero." *International Viewpoint Online Magazine* December 2011. <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article2407> Accessed 19-07-2012.

3. SHIVA, Vandana. *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

4. MIES, Maria, and Vandana Shiva, *Ecofeminism*. London, Zed Books, 1993, p. 8.



This viewpoint does not call for everyone to return to a hunter-gatherer or agrarian lifestyle, but rather “Consumer liberation and a changed life-style would mean choosing different satisfiers which are neither pseudo nor destructive, which eschew further deterioration of the relationship between human beings and the ecology.” After all, “A deep human need cannot be fulfilled by buying a commodity.”<sup>5</sup> On this basis, they call for treating nature as a commons to guarantee a minimum foundation for healthy human life: “Without clean water, fertile soils and crop and plant genetic diversity, human survival is not possible. These commons have been destroyed by economic development.”<sup>6</sup> Mies with co-author Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen develops this concept in greater detail in *The Subsistence Perspective*, but this brief outline here will suffice for now.<sup>7</sup>

Numerous other writers, such as Sabine O’Hara, have broached this topic using different terms, such as “eco-sufficiency” or “provisioning,” perhaps avoiding the term “subsistence” because of its atavistic or primitivist connotations. She claims, for instance, that “feminist economists argue that economics should be about ‘provisioning’ including the provision of productive and reproductive needs and wants.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover,

Feminist ecological economists move ecological and social indicators that better reflect sustaining functions and processes to the fore as well. This means that complexity rather than reducibility, variability rather than specialization, diversity rather than homogeneity, provisioning rather than non-satiation, and the ability to cooperate rather than compete, all become indispensable dimensions of a resilient and sustainable economy.<sup>9</sup>

Ecofeminist Mary Mellor also prefers the term “provisioning.”<sup>10</sup> The terminology, however, is not as important as the call for a reorientation of economic ideology and how the subsistence perspective can serve as a heuristic device for analyzing culture and literature.

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5. MIES, Maria, and Vandana Shiva. *Op. cit.*, pp. 255-256.

6. MIES, Maria, and Vandana Shiva. *Op. cit.*, p. 269.

7. BENNHOLDT-THOMSEN, Veronika, and Maria MIES. *The Subsistence Perspective: Beyond the Globalised Economy*. Trans. Patrick Camiller, Maria Mies and Gerd Weih. London, Zed Books, 1999.

8. O’HARA, Sabine U. “Feminist Ecological Economics in Theory and Practice,” in Ariel Salleh (ed.) *Eco-Sufficiency and Global Justice: Women Write Political Ecology*. London, Pluto Press, 2009, p. 182.

9. O’HARA, Sabine. *Op. cit.*, p. 190.

10. MELLOR, Mary. “Ecofeminist Political Economy and the Politics of Money,” in Ariel Salleh (ed.), *Eco-Sufficiency and Global Justice: Women Write Political Ecology*. London, Pluto Press, 2009, p. 264.

A current aspect of global economics, the intensifying competition for access to raw materials and land, provides a clear example to consider the efficacy of this orientation. The global resource race by developed and large-scale developing economies has intensified the deterioration of the natural reproduction of numerous ecosystems and the social reproduction of numerous tribal, ethnic, and subsistence peoples and communities. While the forces behind this race seek governmental and technological ways to control women's fertility worldwide, they also act to eradicate women's decision making and influence over the production of food, the maintenance of communities, and the continuation of cultures, particularly in the Global South. Although there are many resources under threat of total takeover by transnational corporations to intensify the ecological footprint of dominant economies, here I can focus on only one, the current crisis of major land grabs, its negative impact on women, and the challenges being mounted to these land grabs.

But why do we need to consider the specific issues of gender inequality in relation to agriculture, land ownership, crop selection, and land redistribution, and not just the dimensions of class and ethnicity? Esther Vivas, affiliated with the Center for the Study of Social Movements (CEMS) at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, notes that "In the countries of the Global south women are the primary producers of food, the ones in charge of working the earth, maintaining seed stores, harvesting fruit, obtaining water and safeguarding the harvest. Between 60 to 80% of food production in the Global South is done by women." Further, she points out that "There is a notable 'feminization' of salaried agricultural work [...] Between 1994 and 2000 [...] women made up 83% of new employees in the non-traditional agro-export sector." Further, warfare, ethnic cleansing, chronic drought, and erratic weather patterns due at least in part to climate change, as well as the exodus of men from rural communities to seek urban labor and their higher death rates due to AIDS, particularly in Africa, have also placed greater pressures on the women they have left behind.<sup>11</sup>

One need not turn to social activists and feminists for clear statements about differential gendered experiences in agriculture and the disproportionate burden placed on women. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations focused on "Women in Agriculture" in its 2010-11 *The State of Food and Agriculture* report. In the second paragraph of its Foreword, the authors note that "women face gender-specific constraints that reduce

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11. VIVAS, Esther. "Without Women there is No Food Sovereignty." <http://esthervivas.com/english/without-women-there-is-no-food-sovereignty/> Accessed 01-08-2012, pp. 2-3, 4.

their productivity and limit their contributions to agricultural production, economic growth and the well-being of their families, communities, and countries.”<sup>12</sup>

### 3. Land grabs

Dominant economic and military states have engaged in the occupation and theft of land from indigenous peoples for millennia. It was the hallmark of eighteenth and nineteenth-century European colonization, and became a mainstay of twentieth-century imperialism as a means of primitive accumulation (see Basu and Harvey),<sup>13</sup> right on through the post-World War II period of decolonization. Despite gaining nominal political independence many postcolonial states have found themselves remaining exporters of oil, minerals, food, and laborers.

More recently, however, transnational efforts to control agricultural land and through the purchasing or leasing of that land to control water have intensified dramatically (see Pearce). And these actions involve a new range of players, including not only European and American agribusiness conglomerates, but also sovereign wealth funds from Middle East petro states, and private and state owned Indian and Chinese corporations: “land acquisitions for 56.6 million ha [hectares] worldwide—roughly the size of a country like Ukraine—over a period of one year between 2008 and 2009... two-thirds of the land area transacted globally was in Africa, with Southeast Asia also being an important recipient area.” Saudi Arabia has bought about half the land acquired in Sudan; China is the major investor in Cambodia and Laos, and even in eastern Russia; in Ethiopia Indian companies account for 71% of the land area acquired through contracts.<sup>14</sup>

These land grabs, ostensibly planned to increase food security for major economies, increase food insecurity and immediately threaten the economic and cultural lifelines of rural peoples, particularly ethnic minorities and tribals. They also undermine the ecological basis upon which future production will have to be based to feed an increased global population. While a relatively

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12. FAO. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11: Women in Agriculture*. Rome, FAO, 2011, p. vi.

13. BASU, Pranab Kanti. “Political Economy of Land Grab.” *Economic and Political Weekly*, 7 April 2007, pp.1281-1287; HARVEY, David. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003.

14. COTULA, Lorenzo. “The International Political Economy of the Global Land Rush: A Critical Appraisal of Trends, Scale, Geography and Drivers.” *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39.3-4 (2012), pp. 651, 657-658.

small number of rural men benefit in the short term from enhanced wage labor opportunities, the overall impact on the majority of these people, particularly women, are negative and destructive, threatening family and cultural bonds and the relationships of people and their environments.

As Julia Berhman and her co-authors note,

A gender perspective is critical to truly understand the impact of large-scale land deals, because women and men have different social roles, rights, and opportunities and will be differentially affected by any major change in tenurial regimes, especially land transfers to extralocal investors [...] Existing literature on the gender implications of the shift to large-scale commercial agriculture [...] finds that these shifts often lead to changes in household dynamics and roles, income-generation activities, and property rights—often to the detriment of women [...] the rationale for paying attention to gender issues in agriculture derives from a wide-ranging body of empirical evidence that demonstrates the many ways in which women are essential to improvements in household agricultural productivity, food security, and nutrition.<sup>15</sup>

Proponents of the introduction of large-scale agribusiness methods particularly in Asia, Africa, and Amazonia, often cite the benefits of land grabs on the basis of a rise in wage labor opportunities and infrastructure development, but even when the local participants are contract farmers they are wrapped up in long-term lease agreements, credit/debit relationships and the necessity of purchasing expensive fertilizers and pesticides. As Julia and Ben White note, “The establishment of oil plantations on land formerly held and cultivated under customary tenure brings a swift and radical transformation both to the environment and to the social, economic and political structure of local communities.”<sup>16</sup>

Further, the Whites argue that the subsistence system of maintaining a stable supply of community controlled food is supplanted by reliance on cash purchases of food while the palm oil plantations actually serve as an unreliable source of income. And even though women spend more time in the labor of palm oil plantations and shareholder palm oil cultivation, they engage in more unpaid labor with less control over provisioning for their families and less decision making about income. Whether the land grab involves direct purchase of land, leases of large tracts from the state, or contracts with local

15. BEHRMAN, Julia, et al. *The Gender Implications of Large-Scale Land Deals*. IFPRI Discussion Paper 01056, January 2011. <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp01056.pdf> Accessed 27-08-2012. p. 2.

16. WHITE, Julia, and Ben White. “Gendered Experiences of Dispossession: Oil Palm Expansion in a Dayak Hibun Community in West Kalimantan.” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39.3-4 (2012), p. 996.

landowners, a significant loss of biotic diversity quickly occurs in terms of widespread use of pesticides, the introduction of synthetic fertilizers, and the substitution of a single crop for multi-cropping along with the conversion of wild lands and ecotones to cultivated fields. Even local land holders who grow their own palm oil trees and sell the produce remain subject to regional monopsony by the palm oil plantation conglomerates that control processing and international sales.<sup>17</sup>

Lands that are labeled as marginal, and on that basis claimed by the state for sale or lease, are actually vital to women in the Global South, and their loss places additional hardships on them and their families. As Behrman and her co-authors contend, marginal lands are often very important for women for medicinal plants, gathering foodstuffs and firewood, and obtaining clean water, whereas governments often view them as wastelands and encourage their transfer to foreign investors for biofuel production.<sup>18</sup> Thus, sources for the reproduction of life are destroyed in order to feed cars and trucks with biodiesel. Michael Dove notes that “Great losses of indigenous crops and knowledge have occurred in the past-half century because developmental planners either did not take steps to conserve them or because they took active steps to extinguish them.”<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. Literary representations

Before turning to literary representations, it is useful to listen to the words of Indian environmental historian Ramachandra Guha:

A striking feature of environmental movements in modern India has been the crucial role played by women. They have taken to the streets to protest forest felling, unregulated mining, displacement, and overfishing. They have also taken the lead in programs of environmental restoration; in the planting up of bare hillsides, in the conservation of local sources of water supply, and in the promotion of energy-efficient technologies.<sup>20</sup>

My foregoing summation of the subsistence perspective and depiction of ongoing land grabs and their impacts particularly on women provide a context for understanding the resistance and activism of the women Guha describes. Combined, they provide a thematic orientation for consideration of

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17. WHITE, Julia, and Ben White, *op. cit.*, pp. 1002-1004, 1010, 999.

18. BEHRMAN, Julia, et al., *op. cit.*, 15.

19. DOVE, Michael. “The Agronomy of Memory and the Memory of Agronomy,” in Virginia D. Nazarea (ed.), *Ethnoecology*. Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1999, p. 59.

20. GUHA, Ramachandra. *How Much Should a Person Consume? Environmentalism in India and the United States*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 2006, p. 58.

an international set of contemporary novels that either promote a subsistence perspective or encourage a reorientation of economic values in that direction while paying particular attention to the lives and conditions of women.

#### 4.1 *The Rape of Shavi*<sup>21</sup>

*The Rape of Shavi* by Nigerian novelist Buchi Emecheta has been often described as an “allegory,” but more accurately it ought to be considered a parable, intentionally simplistic and stereotypic in its representations of the conflict between a small, remote African village and white British interlopers who crash their plane nearby. Generally dismissed by critics for its one dimensionality and its apparent lack of sophistication compared to her other writing, *Rape* nevertheless lays out a clear trajectory of the destruction of a subsistence-based economy and culture at the hands of western imperialism. It also suggests that the patriarchal structure of Shavi facilitates the community’s domination by the colonizers.

In particular, a westernized prince Asogba returns to Shavi from England during a drought and initiates trade in the extraction of industrial diamond-like stones and he and others encourage the Shavian people to rely on purchasing imported food with the money from their new extractive industry rather than to prepare a sustainable strategy for weathering the next drought. Asogba also plans to import weapons to subdue other tribal peoples in the region. What he does not know is that the market for the Shavian stones has already been saturated and foreign exchange is about to dry up more thoroughly than the desert water holes during a drought. It is the women of Shavi who resist the expansionist plans of the young prince and, after the debacle of his economic conversion of the village and his war against other villages, recommend a return to self-reliance, humility, and subsistence.

At novel’s end, one young man who has survived drought and war says to Asogba, “We should go on living the way we used to live, surviving our droughts, cultivating our land.”<sup>22</sup> Emecheta concludes that self-reliance and putting the cultivation of food for local consumption first is the way forward for Africa rather than relying on one failed western development scheme after another. This emphasis on “cultivating our land” seems a strikingly prescient message in light of the enormous land grabs occurring across Africa and threatening the food security of its poorest people. While the novel does not have the stylistic sophistication of her other work, it serves its purpose well

21. EMECHETA, Buchi. *The Rape of Shavi*. 1983. New York, George Braziller, 1985.

22. EMECHETA, Buchi. *Op. cit.*, p. 178.

as a cautionary tale that is easily understood precisely because of its overtly didactic theme, which is in keeping with the genre of the parable.

#### 4.2. *Gardens in the Dunes*<sup>23</sup>

Native American author Leslie Marmon Silko surprised many readers when she set the action of her third novel in the last decade of the 1890s and devoted as many pages to the travels of a young Native American girl in Europe as those focused on Native American experience in the Southwest. Silko also provides considerable narration reflecting the concerns and interests of Indigo's white patron, Hattie, since such information could not be represented through a child's point of view. Her traditional realist narrative style in *Gardens* breaks with the magic realism of her previous two novels, but continues her reliance on long passages of narrative exposition. The novel's action unwinds with a leisurely pace, which some readers may find tedious, but it seems Silko is mimicking the literary conventions of the time period in which it is set. Some critics initially viewed *Gardens in the Dunes* as an historical novel and found fault with Silko's flagrant violation of chronology, mixing together events that occurred a decade apart and introducing a dam along the Colorado River that was not actually built until three decades after the action of the novel. But *Gardens* is not a historical novel, although it contains historical events.

Rather, it is a novel as much about the present as well as the past, as Silko herself maintains.<sup>24</sup> *Gardens* sets up a contrast between the subsistence economy of the Sand Lizard people, an imaginary tribe near the Colorado River border of California, and the colonizing economy of white settlers. In particular, Silko critiques the biopiracy of empire, whereby European powers stole seeds and plants from colonized people to use for commercial profit and exploitation, replacing localized sustainable agroecology and forestry practices of indigenous peoples for monoculture plantations growing export products.<sup>25</sup> Silko provides several examples of this biopiracy, a practice that can be compared with transnational corporate efforts today, such as those by Monsanto, to patent or replace native seed stocks with commodified hybrids. The failed attempt by Edward, the novel's main bioprospector, to steal *citron*

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23. SILKO, Leslie Marmon. *Gardens in the Dunes*. New York, Simon & Schuster, 1999.

24. LI, Stephanie. "Domestic Resistance: Gardening, Mothering, and Storytelling in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Garden in the Dunes*," *SAIL: Studies in American Indian Literatures* 21.1 (2009), pp. 20-21.

25. PORTER, Joy. "History in *Gardens in the Dunes*," in Laura Coltelli (ed.), *Reading Leslie Marmon Silko: Critical Perspectives through Gardens in the Dunes*. Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2007, pp. 62-63.

*medica* cuttings is the best example. A plant used for millennia for medicinal, religious, and sustenance purposes is trivialized as a commodity that Americans want to use for making candies and cakes.

In contrast, Indigo, the young Native American protagonist of *Gardens*, collects seeds, either given to her as a form of sharing or found in the wild, to cultivate for subsistence combined with aesthetic pleasure. Environmental justice is highlighted through other contrasts as well, such as the decadent, opulent gardens of wealthy New Yorkers, who see no use value in planting and cultivating but design gardens with no attention to environmental suitability as a means of displaying their conspicuous consumption. Further, despite all of the efforts by various forces to the contrary, Indigo, her sister Salt, and other Native peoples manage to return to the Sand Lizard gardens where they lived at the start of the novel to maintain a subsistence economy and rebuild their community,<sup>26</sup> rejecting the commercial economy only available through assimilation and subordination.

The feminism of the novel comes through not only by means of the conflicts between Native American women and white men representative of a patriarchal capitalist system, but also through a white woman of privilege, Hattie. She is the one who takes Indigo on her and Edward's trip to Europe and who explores the matrifocal religious subculture of Europe. Hattie gradually aligns herself more and more with Indigo and native peoples, turning against her husband, Edward, and her own family. Thus, Silko makes it not a matter primarily of racial conflict but one of resistance to gender oppression, economic exploitation of tribals, and ecological exploitation.<sup>27</sup>

Clear parallels can be seen in the environmental justice struggles occurring today against large scale land grabs, biopiracy, tribal exploitation through primitive accumulation, and intensified oppression of women and the conflicts portrayed in a novel seemingly about events at the end of the nineteenth century. Silko's decision to include the building of a dam that floods the local subsistence community may result from her tying in another parallel aspect of contemporary development projects that destroy indigenous communities for the benefit of urban dwellers and transnational corporations. As Terre Ryan argues,

In *Gardens* Silko uses the image of the garden to illustrate imperialism on international, national, local, and domestic levels. She accomplishes this by

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26. MAGOULICK, Mary. "Landscapes of Miracles and Matriarchy in Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes*" in Laura Coltelli (ed.), *Reading Leslie Marmon Silko: Critical Perspectives through Gardens in the Dunes*. Pisa, Pisa University Press, 2007, p. 30.

27. Li, Stephanie, *op. cit.*, p. 20.



pointedly contrasting nineteenth-century American gardening aesthetics and ideologies with the Sand Lizard's subsistence farming [...] Silko describes the ways in which both Native and white women survived by circumventing a system designed to subjugate or destroy them.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4.3 *So Far From God*<sup>29</sup>

While the preceding two novels are set in an imaginary kingdom and another historical period, Chicana author Ana Castillo sets *So Far From God* in a southwestern American border town heavily dependent on laboring in defense industry manufacturing. Castillo uses this setting to provide an overt environmental justice theme to her novel, one focused on resisting and protesting against toxic working conditions and the super exploitation of minority workers (see Platt).<sup>30</sup> At the same time, however, Castillo also promotes the engagement and leadership of women not only in fomenting such protests but also in seeking out alternatives to the economy that poisons them as the price for participation in the money economy. *So Far from God*, although it portrays much pain and sadness, is nevertheless a hilarious novel due to the sophisticated mixture of magic realist techniques and a *telenovela* plotting with a histrionic narrator.

According to Ronald Walter, Castillo, in all of her fiction is concerned to expose what she calls the “double sexism, being female and indigenous,” that is, by the Chicana’s identity as man’s *specularized Other*, a subject-position conditioned by racism and misogyny.” In *So Far from God*, she does this first through the opposition to the toxic factory conditions that kill Sofi’s daughter Fe, the only daughter who completely assimilates into Anglo culture in order to pursue the “American dream.” Beyond that Castillo is engaged in “tracing a state of selfhood that involves *collective* self-definition” as evidenced when Sofi becomes mayor of the town of Tome.<sup>31</sup>

But, as critics have observed, such participation in electoral politics guarantees no change in economic or political status for the community. As Marta Caminero-Santangelo notes, “Though Castillo posits collective agency,

28. RYAN, Terre. “The Nineteenth-Century Garden: Imperialism, Subsistence, and Subversion in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Gardens in the Dunes*.” *SAIL: Studies in American Indian Literatures* 19.3 (2007), p. 116.

29. CASTILLO, Ana. *So Far From God*. 1993. New York, Plume, 1994.

30. See PLATT, Kamala. “Ecocritical Chicana Literature: Ana Castillo’s ‘virtual realism,’” in Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy (eds.), *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1998, pp. 139-157.

31. WALTER, Roland. “The Cultural Politics of Dislocation and Relocation in the Novels of Ana Castillo.” *MELUS* 23.1 (1998), pp. 82, 89.

especially that of women, as an ideal response to the challenges of environmental degradation and economic injustice, her novel is also concerned with potential threats to any sort of effective, active resistance.”<sup>32</sup> Rather, such effective resistance is achieved in *So Far from God* by means of the development of a subsistence oriented co-operative that partially bypasses the money economy through barter and trade and also privileges the provisioning of the local population over the production of goods and services for the capitalist economy.<sup>33</sup>

As Walter notes, “women are the driving force behind the creation of an alternative space of living, thinking and relating based on justice and equality.”<sup>34</sup> Also, both Walter and Caminero-Santangelo emphasize that the depiction of “the cooperative established by the people of Tome—the novel’s most literal scene of collective activism,” and a subsistence based economic system are “described in notably realist terms.”<sup>35</sup> Finally, in language paralleling the ecofeminist subsistence perspective, Carminero-Santangelo recognizes, in relation to the highly political Stations of the Cross in the novel decrying environmental injustice, that

This politicized rendering of environmental consciousness demands that such consciousness not romanticize the “natural” at the expense of the human and calls for understanding how damage to the ecosystem has real, material, physical effects on human lives and on woman and on the poorest first.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, Castillo provides an example of the development of an ecofeminist subsistence perspective and its embodiment in an agricultural and handicraft collective in the midst of a town fully enmeshed in the capitalist mode of production, ethnically oppressed, and initially dependent on wage labor employment in toxic manufacturing work.

#### 4.4 Paradise<sup>37</sup>

Certainly, the same remark that Carminero-Santangelo makes about *So Far from God* could be said to be the case for the women and economic system

32. CAMINERO-SANTANGELO, Marta. “The Pleas of the Desperate’: Collective Agency versus Magical Realism in Ana Castillo’s *So Far from God*.” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, 24.1 (2005), p. 82.

33. WALTER, Roland, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

35. CAMINERO-SANTANGELO, Marta, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

37. MORRISON, Toni. *Paradise*. 1997. New York, Plume 1999.

of the convent in *Paradise*, the 1998 novel by Nobel prize-winning African American author Toni Morrison. This novel contains Morrison's trademark lyrical narration, convincing and clearly articulated dialogue, and history reported in the jumbled fashion that it swirls through an individual's mind. *Paradise* painfully traces the multigenerational trek of African American farmers who settle in Oklahoma seeking to establish an ideal all-black community. Twice the men of this collective establish two new towns, first Haven and then Ruby. But along the way they become rigid and dogmatic, losing their connection to the reproductive foundation of human health to be found in respect for women and for the land, and in the history of the native people who preceded them. As Kristin Hunt puts it,

As the novel progresses, Morrison illustrates how this patriarchal mentality eventually fails to nurture a permanent bond between the townspeople and the land. Trying so desperately to pursue the American dream, the forefathers of the town set up boundaries between themselves, their wives and daughters, and the surrounding land. By choosing to follow the traditional Euroamerican model of being American, the African American settlers separate themselves from the ways of both African cultures and the Arapaho culture [...] But the founders of Ruby are determined to avoid any outside influences that may harm them, including those of nature itself. Ultimately, it is the refusal to accept nature's course and to form bonds with the environment that brings about the demise of the clan's descendants.<sup>38</sup>

The gardens depicted in the town of Ruby demonstrate this disconnection and the complicity of the town's women, in contrast to those of the convent outside the city limits, in a system that severs the bonds between reproduction and subsistence. Hunt points out that these gardens enable the women to compete with each other rather than to reproduce life in order to share and provision, as a result they become another form of conspicuous consumption rather than necessary production.<sup>39</sup> Thus, we can make clear comparisons between these gardens and the two types presented in *Gardens in the Dunes*, as well as the agricultural aspects of the Tome cooperative in *So Far from God*. We can also contrast the disempowerment and alienation of the women in Ruby with their counterparts in *Paradise*, as well as the Sand Lizard and Tome cooperative women.

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38. HUNT, Kristin. "Paradise Lost: The Destructive Forces of Double Consciousness and Boundaries in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*," in John Tallmadge and Henry Harrington (eds.), *Reading Under the Sign of Nature: New Essays in Ecocriticism*. Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 2000, pp. 121-122.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

#### 4.5 *Potiki*<sup>40</sup>

*Potiki* by Maori author Patricia Grace of New Zealand, which won the 1987 New Zealand Fiction Award, portrays a contemporary struggle by an extended Maori family, with the support of their larger community, against the schemes of a land developer who wants to buy them out in order to turn their small farm and fishing settlement into the beach for an international tourist attraction. It is a short deeply moving novel, at times lyrical and mystical, filled with information about Maori spiritual beliefs and rituals, as well as historical information about efforts by Maori communities, such as the Te Ope, to regain lands taken from them by the white settlers of the islands. Throughout, the resistance of the protagonists, Hemi and Roimata, are guided by a subsistence perspective as the foundation for the economic survival of their family and the reintegration and revitalization of the Maori community. Adopting the slogan that Hemi repeats throughout the novel, “Everything we need is here,” they opt for a subsistence form of voluntary poverty and in so doing avoid the self-destruction of becoming disconnected from the foundational features of their extended family and cultural identities. These two, as well as their older children, display a deep commitment to gender equality that is enriched in the course of their struggle for environmental justice and land reclamation.

It is important to realize that their subsistence orientation is not a form of regression, but a progression toward ecological integration and wholeness. As Claudia Duppé remarks, “Māori agricultural practices follow the principles of bio-dynamic farming [...] which the organic food movement considers the most sensible step into a sustainable future.”<sup>41</sup> Grace’s novel epitomizes the threat to communal lands, ethnic communities, and ecosystems resulting from the expansion of tourism located in wilderness and so-called “undeveloped” areas.

#### 4.6 *Mahasweta Devi*<sup>42</sup>

The novels and stories of Bengali activist, essayist, and author, Mahasweta Devi, represent the most sustained fictional representation of the subsistence

40. GRACE, Patricia. *Potiki*. 1986. Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 1995.

41. DUPPÉ, Claudia. “Ecopolitical Ethics in Patricia Grace’s *Potiki*,” in Laurenz Volkmann, Nancy Grimm, Ines Detmers, and Katrin Thomson (eds.), *Local Natures, Global Responsibilities: Ecocritical Perspectives on the New English Literatures*. Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2010, pp. 128-129.

42. DEVI, Mahasweta. *Dust on the Road*. Trans. Maitreya Ghatak. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1997; *Imaginary Maps: Three Stories by Mahasweta Devi*. Trans. Gayatri Spivak. New York, Routledge, 1995.

perspective by any author currently living. The size and scope of her literary production prevent me from undertaking an adequate discussion of her work here. Consistently committed to exposing the plight and the resistance of the poorest of India's poor and the millions of tribals displaced by various development schemes, she has written both historical novels that serve as metaphors for the present, like Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes*, and short fiction of the contemporary period that highlight the oppressive conditions for women, such as *Imaginary Maps*. In all cases, her prose is searing in its intensity, passion, and commitment. She has won numerous literary and humanitarian awards and seen five of her stories turned into films.

Maitreya Gatak comments about one of Devi's essays found in *Dust on the Road*, which treats material similar to that in some of her stories, and focuses on female migrant laborers in West Bengal brick kilns: "Deprived of their land, with growing restrictions on their access to the forests, with little scope of employment even areas where big industrial projects have come up on what was once tribal land, totally marginalized in their homeland, they have to migrate even in the best of years."<sup>43</sup> Gatak here points to the intensification of poverty for tribal women as a result of development schemes that have led to deforestation and land grabs that have turned over agricultural commons to industrial and plantation projects, both of which exclude Indian tribals from traditional subsistence activities and from modern wage labor. A good example of the negative impact of land grabs in West Bengal is seen in the spread of eucalyptus plantations, which Devi criticizes. These plantations cause a substantial loss of biodiversity, in particular the elimination of numerous fruit bearing trees for the production of an industrial crop.

## 5. Conclusion

These literary works, and the subsistence perspective that they implicitly or explicitly represent, have a strong anti-capitalist and anti-transnational globalization orientation. As Yayo Herrero contends,

there exists a major contradiction between the process of natural and social reproduction and the process of accumulation of capital. If social reproduction and maintenance of life were the dominant aspect of the economy, activity would be directed towards the direct production of goods of use value and not exchange value, and wellbeing would be an end in itself.<sup>44</sup>

43. GATAK, Maitreya. "Introduction," in Devi, *Dust on the Road*, p. xxix.

44. HERRERO, Yayo, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

And Terisa Turner and Leigh Brownhill in their analysis of women's movements resisting transnational control of resources, conclude, "This resistance specifically affirms subsistence "commoning," by which we mean the affirmation of social relations that realize all the requirements for life on earth and the full development of human capacities" (22-23). They argue, and I would adopt their claim, that "Subsistence as used here is rooted in the local while also being global, future-oriented and hybrid in that it merges selected aspects of pre- and post-capitalist social relations of communing."<sup>45</sup>

An understanding of the current global competition for resources, including agricultural land grabs, provides a basis for recognizing the utility of revisiting the subsistence perspective promoted by Bennholdt-Thomsen, Mies, Shiva, and others. It can serve not only as a lens through which to view local economic struggles and ethnic resistance in the Global South but also as a lens through which to interpret a specific subset of contemporary literature by an international complement of women writers. Such interpretation further enables us to appreciate, research, and teach the themes explored by these writers.

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45. TURNER, Terisa E, and Leigh S. Brownhill. "We Want Our Land Back: Gendered Class Analysis, the Second Contradiction of Capitalism and Social Movement Theory." *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 15.4 (1006), pp. 21-40.

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# ANOTHER CASSANDRA'S CRY: MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT'S UNIVERSAL BENEVOLENCE AS ECOFEMINIST PRAXIS

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## Abstract

Even before the publication of the *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796) exposed the ecological strain in Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism, earlier works already had presented her as an advocate for the transformation of the power structures through the exercise of universal benevolence towards all creatures. In vindicating the central position that mothers should take in their children's education, Wollstonecraft expresses her hopes that women could actually change the power structures that govern the relationships between genders and species. It is my contention in this paper that Mary Wollstonecraft's works can be termed – using Laurence Buell's favorite metaphor – early palimpsests of ecofeminist thought.

**Key-words:** Mary Wollstonecraft, private affections vs. universal benevolence, discourse of sensibility, capitalist economics, ethics of care.

## Resumen

Incluso antes de que la publicación de las *Cartas escritas durante una corta estancia en Suecia, Noruega y Dinamarca* (1796) dieran a conocer el lado ecologista del feminismo de Mary Wollstonecraft, en sus trabajos anteriores ya se había mostrado como una defensora de la transformación de las estructuras de poder a través de la práctica de la benevolencia universal hacia todas las criaturas. Al reivindicar la función decisiva de las madres en la educación de sus hijos, Wollstonecraft expresa su esperanza en que las mujeres realmente puedan cambiar las estructuras de poder que regulan las relaciones entre los géneros y las distintas especies. Utilizando la metáfora preferida de

Laurence Buell, defiende en este artículo que las obras de Mary Wollstonecraft pueden leerse como palimpsestos tempranos del pensamiento ecofeminista.

**Palabras clave:** Mary Wollstonecraft, afectos privados vs. benevolencia universal, discurso de la sensibilidad, economía capitalista, ética del cuidado.

*Cassandra was not the only prophetess whose warning voice has been disregarded.*

Mary Wollstonecraft's Letter XXIII of *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*

In November 1787, a 28-year old Mary Wollstonecraft was looking brightly on the new prospects opening before her. She had just moved to London to start working for the radical editor Joseph Johnson, who had assured her that she could make a very decent living by writing. Envisioning as a reality the life of independence she had always dreamed of, Mary wrote enthusiastically to her sister Everina, "I am then going to be the first of a new genus – I tremble at the attempt".<sup>1</sup> Exactly what type of genus she saw herself belonging to can only be for us a matter for speculation. Evidently, we assign the individual "Mary Wollstonecraft" to the genus *femina auctor*, yet this was hardly a new – albeit controversial – one in her time. Did she have in mind a particular species of this genus? If that were the case, what would be the *differentia* that distinguished that particular species from the other individuals classified as belonging to the same genus? Did Wollstonecraft envision any of the different labels that became attached to her name with the passing of time in order to mark that difference? She certainly knew Horace Walpole had referred to her as a "hyena in petticoats", but she died a year before she could see herself included as one of the "unsex'd females" of Richard Polwhele's poem, listed as a prostitute in the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, or heralded as a "benefactor of mankind" in the biography written by her husband, William Godwin.

Since Wollstonecraft's death, biographers have recreated her life depending on what every new age needed to vindicate in this extraordinary figure, "from Godwin's 'champion' at the end of the eighteenth century to Mrs Fawcett's heroine for the suffragist Cause, and from Claire Tomalin's outstanding image of the wounded lover to Janet Todd's moody drama queen as seen through the

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1. TODD, Janet (ed.): *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, p. 139.

exasperated eyes of her sisters”.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as a recent biographer observes, even if all these faces are true, they fail to reveal to us another one, “that unnamed thing she feels herself to be”.<sup>3</sup>

This brings us back to my question: what particular type of that “new genus” did Mary Wollstonecraft have in mind when she wrote to Everina? Let us continue reading her letter, intrigued by what made her “tremble at the attempt”. “[I]f I fail”, she continues, “I *only* suffer – and should I succeed, my dear Girls will ever in sickness have a home – and a refuge where for a few months in the year, they may forget the cares that disturb the rest”.<sup>4</sup> Wollstonecraft’s ambition was a practical one: she wanted to make of her passion for reading and writing a profession that would make her independent and useful. Rather than longing for any sort of authorial immortality, she hoped to be able to provide for herself and her sisters. Nothing more – and nothing less. An eagerness to help her loved ones that made her often forget about her own needs was one of the salient features of Mary Wollstonecraft’s personality. With time, that initial ambition became greater: she hoped that her writing would help reform society.

If we look at the nature of her work for any more precise definition of the particular species Mary Wollstonecraft belongs to, she remains even more elusive. “Do we call her a novelist?” Claudia L. Johnson asks, “An educationist? A political theorist? A moral philosopher? An historian? A memoirist? A woman of letters? A feminist?”<sup>5</sup> She was, undoubtedly, all of these, but to opt for only one of these categories to classify her under “would not only diminish the range as well as the wholeness of her achievement, but also impose decidedly anachronistic territorial distinctions on her literary endeavour”.<sup>6</sup> Championed as the mother of feminism by first wavers, modern feminists have been critical of her focus on the role that maternity plays on women’s lives and, “repelled by what they regard as her chilly prudishness,” in her views on sexuality<sup>7</sup>. Would it be too much to claim her now for the ecofeminist cause? After all, like Wollstonecraft’s views on women, ecofeminism

2. GORDON, Lyndall. *Vindication. A Life of Mary Wollstonecraft*. London, Virago Press, 2006, p. 3.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Todd, Janet. *Op.cit.*, p. 139.

5. JOHNSON, Claudia L. “Introduction”, in Claudia L. Johnson (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 1-6; p. 3.

6. *Ibid.*

7. TAYLOR, Barbara. “The religious foundations of Mary Wollstonecraft’s feminism”, in Claudia L. Johnson (ed.): *Op. cit.*, pp. 99-118; p. 112.

conflicts with various other feminisms, by taking account of the connection with nature central in its understanding of feminism. It rejects especially those aspects or approaches to women's liberation which endorse or fail to challenge the dualistic definitions of women and nature and/or the inferior status of nature.<sup>8</sup>

Labels are sometimes helpful, but most of the time limiting; they help us understand the object of study while reducing it at the same time. I will not, therefore, classify Mary Wollstonecraft as an ecofeminist or even a proto-ecofeminist, if only because there are so many faces to ecofeminism. I will contend, however, that her seminal works are consistent with this central ecofeminist postulate: that the oppression of women through history goes hand in hand with their association with nature. At a time when the Scientific Revolution had deprived nature of its soul, its animation, its agency, reducing it "to brute, passive, stupid matter", and transforming it "into a machine, blindly obedient to cause and effect",<sup>9</sup> can we blame Wollstonecraft for wanting to get rid of that pervasive association?

Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796) hints at the new direction her thoughts were taking regarding the relationship between individuals and their environment. It was Mary's most popular work in her lifetime, and the magnificent descriptions of the natural landscapes she encountered affected deeply the English Romantic poets. On the other hand, her manifest concern about the way brutalized commerce was affecting the shape of the country and the role women played in the flourishing of the local economy, point at an ecological turn in Wollstonecraft's feminism. However, I will argue that she deals with issues that are of concern to ecofeminists in the twenty-first century even earlier in her work. From her first book, Wollstonecraft vindicates the role that women – particularly mothers or mother surrogates – should play in changing the power structures that govern the relationships between species, making universal benevolence her guiding principle. From this perspective, her works can be termed – using Laurence Buell's confessedly preferred but unused metaphor<sup>10</sup>– early palimpsests of ecofeminist thought.

Wollstonecraft's opinions on the variety of topics she addressed in her works are far from being those of the theorist observing the world from the

8. PLUMWOOD, Val. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. London, Routledge, 1993, p. 39.

9. DASTON, Lorraine. "The Nature of Nature in Early Modern Europe". *Configurations*. 6.2 (Spring 1998), pp. 149-178; pp. 150-151.

10. GAARD, Greta. "New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a More Feminist Ecocriticism". *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 17.4 (Autumn 2010), pp. 643-665; p. 660.

safe distance of her writing desk and her books. A look at her biography reveals that direct experience informed virtually every single line she wrote. As a daughter, sister, mother, friend, domestic companion, schoolmistress, governess, writer, lover and wife, Mary had access to a range of spheres that entitled her to write with authority on what became her central concern: the fundamental role that education played in rendering women rational, independent citizens who did not need to resort to marriage for economic survival.

Her views regarding the tyranny of marriage must have been formed at a very early age, when she witnessed the violence her often drunken father inflicted on her acquiescent mother, only to be confirmed later on, when she had to rescue her sister Eliza from a calamitous marriage which threatened her sanity. As a daughter, she resented her parents' preference for her elder brother Ned and the unfairness of the girls having to give up their inheritance money in order to pay for the debts their father kept contracting in his recurrent failures to become a gentleman farmer, while Ned inherited everything and overlooked his sisters' needs. Let down by the men in her family, it is not surprising that Mary soon saw the need for a woman to become financially independent.

Her lookout for affection outside her home, Mary also encountered intellectual stimulus in a series of surrogate fathers, mothers and sisters. John Arden, the Reverend Mr. Clare, Richard Price and Joseph Johnson became, at different stages in Wollstonecraft's life, substitutes for a father she could not admire, while acting as tutors (Arden and, even more so, Mr. Clare) and mentors (Price and Johnson). However, there were also pivotal female figures who helped her shape her views on education. John Arden's daughter, Jane, became Mary's first close friend; Fanny Blood, whom she met through the Clares in Hoxton, became more than a sister to her; Mrs. Burgh – the widow of the Revd. Mr. Burgh – suggested the idea and provided the financial support for the school Mary started in Newington Green, Mrs. Burgh's Nonconformist community.

There were also women who, by introducing Mary to the world of the upper classes, indirectly opened her eyes to the pernicious effects of conventional female education. Working as a paid companion to a Mrs. Dawson of Bath, Mary had the opportunity of moving in genteel society, as she visited Bath, Windsor and Southampton. The triviality of female accomplishments she learned to abhor in these fashionable cities would only become stronger during her time as governess to the daughters of Viscount and Lady Kingsborough. Finally, while travelling through Scandinavia, she cleverly observed the way patriarchal capitalist society was flourishing at the expense of women

and nature. Mary Wollstonecraft was an avid reader, but life, more than books, shaped the direction her thoughts took when envisioning the future of society. It soon became very clear to her that a society could not be better or happier until its members were related by the type of "friendship and intimacy which can only be enjoyed by equals".<sup>11</sup> Universal benevolence was vital if this utopia was ever to become a reality.

The age-old philosophical debate concerning the concept of universal benevolence – "the idea that benevolence and sympathy can be extended to all humanity"<sup>12</sup> – and its political implications were particularly intense in Britain in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Among the many names who dealt with the issues of sympathy and benevolence was the prominent philosopher and preacher Richard Price, whom Mary Wollstonecraft had come to meet and admire at the Dissenting community of Newington Green. Wollstonecraft never abandoned her Anglicanism, but she took to the Dissenters' ethos of hard work, openness, logical inquiry, individual conscience and respect towards women.<sup>13</sup> In his sixties when Wollstonecraft met him, Price became for her not only a mentor, but possibly the most caring of her father surrogates. The affection and admiration Wollstonecraft felt for Price is noticeable in the ardor with which she defended him from Edmund Burke's attacks in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, published in November 1790, only weeks after Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

A fervent supporter of the French Revolution, Richard Price insisted on the need for humans to "cultivate to the utmost the principle of benevolence",<sup>14</sup> which he saw as an extension of particular affections, whereas opponents to the concept – Burke, among others – considered that benevolence should be directed exclusively to those inhabiting our closest circles. Extending benevolence indiscriminately to all human beings was, for the likes of Burke, to disregard family and nation.

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11. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men. A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*. Edited with an Introduction by Janet Todd. Oxford & New York, O.U.P., pp. 5-62; p.9.

12. RADCLIFFE, Evan. "Revolutionary Writing, Moral Philosophy and Universal Benevolence in the Eighteenth Century". *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54.2 (April 1993), pp. 221-240; p. 221.

13. TOMALIN, Claire. *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft*. London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974, p. 71.

14. In his *Review of the Principal Questions in Morals* (1758), quoted in RADCLIFFE, Evan. *Op.cit.*, p. 224.

Mary Wollstonecraft's life experience turned her into the perfect champion of universal benevolence. She had performed the role of a caring mother, even before she gave birth to her first daughter, to her own mother, to her sisters, and to Fanny Blood – even if Fanny was two years her senior. It was in her nature, she admitted, to love “most people best when they are in adversity – for pity is one of my prevailing passions”.<sup>15</sup> If benevolence was “the top virtue in eighteenth-century England; in Mary it shed the tone of a patron, and took the warmth of affection”.<sup>16</sup> Her views on the universality of benevolence coincided entirely with those expressed by Price, as her earliest work, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) evinces. In one of the final chapters, devoted to “Benevolence”, Wollstonecraft expresses her conviction that

[g]oodwill to all the human race should dwell in our bosoms, nor should love to individuals induce us to violate this first of duties, or make us sacrifice the interest of any fellow-creature, to promote that of another, whom we happen to be more partial to.<sup>17</sup>

The complete title of her *Original Stories from Real Life*<sup>18</sup> is also indicative of Wollstonecraft's firm belief that not only the mind, but also the affections, required education. Her adherence to the doctrine of universal benevolence also informs the main thesis defended in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*: the need to abolish inherited honors and property and to instate a system of education that would give every single human being the same opportunities of succeeding in life. Two years later, she wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, to clarify that her views concerning this new system of education also included women.

Wollstonecraft's stand on the universality of benevolence is made explicit in the reasons she offers Burke for her rejection of inheritance:

The perpetuation of property in our families is one of the privileges you most warmly contend for; yet it would not be very difficult to prove that the mind must have a very limited range that thus confines its benevolence to such

15. Letter to George Blood, in TODD, Janet (ed.): *Op. cit.*, p. 54. Similarly, she later wrote to her sister Everina: “I wish to be a mother to you both [Eliza and Everina]”; “I only live to be useful – benevolence must fill every void in *my heart*”; and to Joseph Johnson: “So reason allows, what nature impels me to – for I cannot live without loving my fellow creatures” (Ibid., pp. 139, 141 and 159).

16. GORDON, Lyndall. *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

17. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: With Reflections on Female Conduct, in the More Important Duties of Life*. London, Joseph Johnson, 1787.

18. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Original Stories from Real Life; With Conversations, Calculated to Regulate the Affections, and Form the Mind to Truth and Goodness*. London, Joseph Johnson, 1796 [1788].



a narrow circle, which, with great propriety, may be included in the sordid calculations of blind self-love.

A brutal attachment to children has appeared most conspicuous in parents who have treated them like slaves, and demanded due homage for all the property they transferred to them, during their lives. It has led them to force their children; to break the most sacred ties; to do violence to a natural impulse, and run into legal prostitution to increase wealth or shun poverty; and, still worse, the dread of parental malediction has made many weak characters violate truth in the face of Heaven; and, to avoid a father's angry curse, the most sacred promises have been broken.<sup>19</sup>

In presenting the perpetuation of property as an instance of "blind self-love", illustrating the negative effects it has on potential heirs, Wollstonecraft was giving a negative answer to the question of whether private affections should have priority over universal benevolence, a question that had become even more politically loaded in the aftermath of the French Revolution, particularly once Britain declared war on France in 1793. According to Evan Radcliffe, "nearly every supporter of the Revolution spoke in favor of universal benevolence", which they saw as a necessary extension of private affections.<sup>20</sup> For Edmund Burke, universal benevolence destroys everything that civilization depends on: "all our social feelings and attachments, beginning in the family and ending in the nation".<sup>21</sup> Richard Prince, in contrast, insisted that love of country should never prevail over a universal love of mankind; on the contrary, it should be "limited and governed by universal benevolence"<sup>22</sup> in order to prevent our personal affections from distorting our judgment and allow us to condone any injustice committed by our country.

Wollstonecraft seems to have taken good notice of the subversive potential of the principle of universal benevolence, which could effectively do away with tradition, hierarchy and the established order, precisely the reason why conservatives saw it as a threat and distorted its meaning to render it despicable:

Universal benevolence had represented the stance most opposed to self-love; thus it occupied a morally strong position. But the conservatives' view made it into the stance that opposed domestic affection and thus gave it a much

19. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Rights of Men...* Op. cit., p. 21.

20. RADCLIFFE, Evan. *Op. cit.*, p. 229. A few pages later, Radcliffe continues, "Is private affection inconsistent with universal benevolence?", a question often debated at a meeting of the Royston book club, a well-known group in which dissenters were prominent, and asked in the *Monthly Magazine* by the "Enquirer" (William Enfield)" (*Ibid.*, p. 232).

21. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

22. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 229.

weaker moral position. They buttressed this view by portraying believers in universal benevolence not as opponents of egoism but as consummate egoists who used universal benevolence simply as a tool to achieve their selfish aims.<sup>23</sup>

This was, in fact, the central argument of James Mackintosh's influential *Discourse on the Study of the Law of Nature and Nations* (1799), in which he condemned "every system that would sacrifice the particular affections to general benevolence" and stress[ed] that the 'duties of private life' arise 'almost all from the two great institutions of property and marriage'.<sup>24</sup> Property and marriage were precisely the "great institutions" that had been under Wollstonecraft's scrutinizing eye.

Indeed, universal benevolence also informed the purpose of reform in Wollstonecraft's feminist cause, since she was convinced that "women (or anyone) can be virtuous and perform their duties to society only when their interests are broad and include 'the love for mankind'".<sup>25</sup> When she explains in the prefatory letter to M. Talleyrand-Périgord, that she had written *Rights of Woman* moved by "an affection for the whole human race",<sup>26</sup> Wollstonecraft was putting universal benevolence at the forefront.

In pointing out in *Rights of Men* the situation of heirs who had to sacrifice their individual happiness in their choice of a life partner in order to satisfy their parents' wishes, Wollstonecraft had laid bare the evils inherent to the narrowness of an affection that is only directed to the private sphere. This becomes the central issue in chapters 10 and 11 of *Rights of Woman* – "Parental Affection" and "Duty to Parents" – and is taken up again in some sections of the last chapter. From her point of view, the result of a private affection that is not informed by universal benevolence deforms family relationships. In such cases, she insists, parental affection ends up being "perhaps, the blindest modification of perverse self-love", because many parents, "for the sake of their *own* children [...] violate the most sacred duties, forgetting the common relationship that binds the whole family on earth together".<sup>27</sup> Similarly, she ranks as narrow the "exclusive affection" that some women feel for their husbands, because "justice and humanity are often sacrificed".<sup>28</sup>

23. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

24. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 236.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

26. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men. A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*. Op. cit., pp. 63-283; p. 65.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 232-233.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

It was a central tenet of Wollstonecraft's creed that natural affections are weak, that they should be exercised and nourished if they are to be of any value, always with the goal in mind of extending them to ever-widening circles. Otherwise, they remain simple expressions of extended self-love, even if they appear to be something else. The education of the affections, she believed, was "the only way to expend the heart; for public affections, as well as public virtues, must ever grow out of the private character, or they are merely meteors that shot athwart a dark sky, and disappear as they are gazed at and admired".<sup>29</sup> In the particular case of women, a proper education – not the "false system" she condemns in *Rights of Woman* – ought to provide them with "a chance to become intelligent; and let love to man be only a part of that lowing flame of universal love, which, after encircling humanity, mounts in grateful incense to God".<sup>30</sup>

Having reached this point in an essay on ecofeminism, it is time to examine the exact degree of universality of the benevolence Mary Wollstonecraft defended. For benevolence to be truly universal, should it not encompass all life forms rather than being circumscribed to humankind? Wollstonecraft was certainly speaking for all forms of oppressed humanity but, to borrow from Sylvia Bowerbank's book title, was she speaking *for* nature?<sup>31</sup> She certainly was in *A Short Residence*, but she remains conspicuously ambiguous in her two *Vindications*. It is difficult to classify Wollstonecraft as an ecologist, and yet the voice of the ecologist that had begun to speak in her journey through Scandinavia might very well have become a shout if only she had lived longer. We shall never know, but we can speculate by looking at the way her thoughts evolved through her writings, which at least present her as an advocate for universal benevolence towards all forms of sentient life.

The age in which Scientific Revolution *dis-animated* nature was also the time in which the science of ecology originated. Even if the term was not officially coined until 1869<sup>32</sup>, ecological ideas in the eighteenth-century were articulated from two broadly defined positions: an "arcadian", which advocated "a simple, humble life for man with the aim of restoring him to a peaceful coexistence with other organisms", and an "imperial" position – of which Linnaeus was an outstanding representative – which aimed at establishing

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29. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

31. BOWERBANK, Sylvia. *Speaking for Nature. Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England*. Baltimore and London, The John Hopkins University Press, 2004.

32. WOSTER, Donald. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 2.

“through the exercise of reason and by hard work, man’s dominion over nature”.<sup>33</sup> Were we forced to describe Wollstonecraft as an ecologist of any sort, we would have to include her as belonging to the “imperial” category, at least until *A Short Residence*.

When the Wollstonecraft of *Rights of Men* speaks about nonhuman nature, it is to express her discontent when it is prevented from being of use to humankind:

Why are huge forests still allowed to stretch out with idle pomp and all the indolence of Eastern grandeur? Why does the brown waste meet the traveler’s view, when men want work? But commons cannot be enclosed without acts of parliament to increase the property of the rich! Why might not the industrious peasant be allowed to steal a farm from the heath?<sup>34</sup>

For the sake of fairness, Wollstonecraft’s demands need to be placed in the context of two clashing ideological perceptions of the forest coexisting in the eighteenth century. From the Middle Ages until the seventeenth century, when forest laws progressively fell into disuse, the forest had been,

a political structure that pitted the people against the king, and by extension, against the forest. Seeing from an ideological point of view, it was also a system that – with the important exceptions of limited and licensed hunting – protected the great forests and their nonhuman inhabitants from human development.<sup>35</sup>

By the end of the eighteenth-century, however, a new definition prevailed: “a forest came to be understood as an area of land designated for the production of timber and other forest products”. The emphasis was on “utility, on the economic and aesthetic benefits of trees for humankind”.<sup>36</sup> The ideological perception of the forest as an aristocratic space is discernible in Wollstonecraft’s choice of words in the passage quoted above: forests, like aristocrats, “stretch out with idle pomp”, producing nothing, stationary in their “indolence”. As Mary Favret observes, “[i]t was common for radicals of the middle class to picture the aristocracy as especially languid, lethargic figures, ensconced on their sofas and sated with pleasure”.<sup>37</sup> As a political space, the forest represents

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33. Ibid.

34. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Rights of Men...* Op. cit., pp. 58-59.

35. BOWERBANK, Sylvia. *Speaking for Nature...* Op. cit., pp. 15-16.

36. Ibid., p. 16.

37. FAVRET, Mary A. “Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark: Traveling with Mary Wollstonecraft”, in Claudia L. Johnson (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft...*, pp. 209-227; p. 211. Further down on the same page, Favret: “The desire to move forward and outward was thus inextricably

the static status quo that contrasted with the middle-class ethos of movement in which Wollstonecraft inscribed herself.

Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft was not one to stick stubbornly to her cherished opinions whenever experience opened her eyes to a new reality; this would have been extremely out of character for her. Virginia Woolf described her open-mindedness most eloquently: "Every day she made theories by which life should be lived [...]. Every day too – for she was no pedant, no cold-blooded theorist – something was born in her that thrust aside her theories and forced her to model them afresh".<sup>38</sup> Thus, although admitting to the liberating effects of capitalist economics, Wollstonecraft also warned against its dangerous upshots. The invectives on the immorality of wild commerce scattered through the pages of *A Short Residence* are particularly relevant in the midst of the crisis currently affecting the capitalist world economy, revealing Wollstonecraft as a Cassandra of sorts: "England and America owe their liberty to commerce, which created a new species of power to undermine the feudal system. But let them beware of the consequence; the tyranny of wealth is still more galling and debasing than that of rank".<sup>39</sup> Bowerbank considers Wollstonecraft an "astute ecocritic" because "in her observations on the Scandinavian environment, she comes to understand the ongoing reciprocal relationships between human settlements and nonhuman life, both animate and inanimate, that makes civilization possible".<sup>40</sup> Until then, such reciprocity had gone unnoticed by her.

Some of Wollstonecraft's opinions regarding animals also stem from the ideological perception of the forest as the political space of the aristocracy. Thus, when she expresses her outrage at the arbitrariness of the penal law "that punishes with death the thief who steals a few pounds; but to take with violence, or trepan, a man, is no such heinous offence", she is invoking the poaching laws designed to protect the aristocracy: "For who shall dare to complain of the venerable vestige of the law that rendered the life of a deer more sacred than that of a man?"<sup>41</sup>

Following this same line of argument, the excessive fondness that genteel women display toward their dogs also deserves Wollstonecraft's censure, in

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linked, for writers in Wollstonecraft's milieu, with work and economic status as well as political reform".

38. WOOLF, Virginia. *The Second Common Reader*. San Diego, New York and London, Harvest, 1986, p. 41.

39. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. London, Joseph Johnson, 1802, p. 170.

40. BOWERBANK, Sylvia. *Speaking for Nature...* Op. cit., p. 211.

41. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Rights of Men...* Op. cit., p. 14.

tune with contemporary literary representations of delicate ladies and their dogs, which became an ever more frequent sight as the middle classes started to imitate the aristocratic practice of pet-keeping. The image of “the Lady and the Lapdog” soon became the subject matter of eighteenth-century moral censure and satire.<sup>42</sup> Thus, for the philanthropist Jonas Hanway, “an immoderate love of a brute animal, tho’ it may not destroy a charitable disposition, must weaken the force of it”<sup>43</sup>, while Alexander Pope and Henry Fielding – among others – contented themselves with mocking this type of attachment in the characters of Belinda and Lady Coquette in, respectively, *The Rape of the Lock* (1717) and *The Modern Husband* (1732). Frequently in the satirical works of the first half of the eighteenth century, the lapdog is presented as a substitute for a human, sexual partner. In this context, according to Brown, “[t]he lady and the lapdog [...] serves as a synecdoche for the triviality and amorality of the fashionable female”.<sup>44</sup>

Wollstonecraft does not partake of the misogynist discourse of Pope and Fielding. Rather, she is concerned about the misplaced intimacy which could make a mother fonder of her pet than of her own children, a reality she had directly witnessed while working as a governess for Lady Kingsborough’s daughters. Wollstonecraft would have agreed with Brown’s reading of Susan Ferrier’s *Marriage* (1818) that the kiss the fashionable lady bestows on her dog instead of her child becomes “[a] transgression of kin as well as kind”<sup>45</sup>. Given Wollstonecraft’s manifest lack of hope for the improvement of aristocratic women, her views on ladies and their lapdogs are only marginally useful for my purposes here. I will deal with them towards the conclusion of this essay but, for the moment, in order to explore the degree of universality of her benevolence, it is worth turning our eyes to the much more valuable material her earlier works have to offer.

When comparing her views on animals with the more radical opinions of early modern women writers, Sylvia Bowerbank finds Wollstonecraft “conventional and condescending”.<sup>46</sup> She illustrates her contention by referring to

42. See BROWN, Laura. “The Lady, the Lapdog, and Literary Alterity”. *The Eighteenth Century* 52.1 (Spring 2011), pp. 31-45.

43. Quoted by *Ibid.*, p. 37.

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

46. BOWERBANK, Sylvia. “The Bastille of Nature: Mary Wollstonecraft and Ecological Feminism”, in Anka Ryall and Catherine Sandbach-Dahlström (eds.): *Mary Wollstonecraft’s Journey to Scandinavia: Essays*. Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003, pp. 165-184; p. 178. Bowerbank explicitly mentions Margaret Cavendish, Anne Conway and Catherine Macaulay, but extends her catalogue in her later *Speaking for Nature*.

Wollstonecraft's comments on forest management discussed above, but does not provide any example of her alleged conventionality and condescendence towards the animal kingdom. In her later *Speaking for Nature*, Bowerbank includes and studies the *Original Stories* among the educational texts designed "not only to teach children the physical properties of nature, but also to inculcate an ecological ethic of caring for nature",<sup>47</sup> so I must admit to being a little mystified as to the grounds for Bowerbank's earlier opinion. To be sure, concerning animals, Wollstonecraft was not a radical thinker. She did not, for instance, expressly advocate for animal rights or enter the debate on vegetarianism that had spread all over Europe in the early modern period;<sup>48</sup> yet, even if not radical, her views are decidedly not conventional.

Animals become a topic for discussion very early in Wollstonecraft's work, exactly in the second chapter of her first book, *Thoughts of the Education of Daughters*, which she dedicated to "Moral Discipline". Aware of the fascination animals exert on children, Wollstonecraft recommends the reading of amusing and instructive animal stories which will have "the best effect in forming the temper and cultivating the good dispositions of the heart".<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, true to the Rousseauian creed, she encourages the cultivation of "a taste for the beauties of nature" at a very early age.<sup>50</sup> It can be argued that this stance is closer to the Kantian ethics that assesses our treatment of animals in terms of how it can affect our duties to other human beings than to the Rousseauian or Benthamite approaches that took animal sentience as the root of their argument. Yet, a reader familiar with the totality of Wollstonecraft's works will not fail to position her with the latter philosophers.

It is worth noticing that she chose to start her *Original Stories* with three chapters exclusively dedicated to illustrating the different ways in which children can be educated to treat animals with the respect due to every sentient being. Through the stories that Mrs. Mason tells her young pupils, Wollstonecraft conveys the message that an animal's life and welfare is a good in itself, even if some of them are, as one of the girls observes "of little

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47. BOWERBANK, Sylvia. *Speaking for Nature...* pp. 142 and 147-148.

48. See THOMAS, Keith. *Man and the Natural World. Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800*. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1984 and STUART, Tristram. *The Bloodless Revolution. Radical Vegetarians and the Discovery of India*. London, HarperPress, 2006. Thomas's was a seminal study of the way attitudes to animals changed in Early Modern England, dealing with vegetarianism in the last pages. To date, Stuart's *Bloodless Revolution* remains the most thoroughly researched and brilliantly written account of the way the encounter with Indian vegetarianism has affected Western culture.

49. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters...* Op. cit., p. 16.

50. Ibid., p. 22.

consequence to the world”.<sup>51</sup> When explaining to the children “the meaning of the word Goodness”, Mrs. Mason reveals herself as an advocate of universal benevolence:

It [goodness] is, first, to avoid hurting any thing; and then, to contrive to give as much pleasure as you can. If some insects are to be destroyed, to preserve my garden from desolation, I have it done in the quickest way. The domestic animals that I keep, I provide the best food for, and never suffer them to be tormented; and this caution arises from two motives: - I wish to make them happy; and, as I love my fellow-creatures still better than the brute creation, I would not allow those that I have any influence over to grow habitually thoughtless and cruel, till they were unable to relish the greatest pleasure life affords, - that of resembling God, by doing good.<sup>52</sup>

Through Mrs. Mason, Wollstonecraft exposes the principle that universal benevolence is a necessary extension of private affections. In this case, her argument is a speciesist one: our first affections towards individuals or our same species are then expanded into benevolence towards all sentient beings. However, she contemplates occasions where our affections are first directed towards individuals of different species that either come earlier into our lives or live in our vicinity, and only later in life are these affections extended to other individuals of our own species that happen to cross our path:

When I was a child, [...] I always made it my study and delight to feed all the dumb family that surrounded our house; and when I could be of use to any of them I was happy. This employment humanized my heart, while, like wax, it took every impression; and Providence has since made me an instrument of good – I have been useful to my fellow creatures. I, who never wantonly trod on an insect, or disregarded the plaint of the speechless beast, can now give bread to the hungry, physic to the sick, comfort to the afflicted”.<sup>53</sup>

Particularly interesting is the use Wollstonecraft makes of Mrs. Mason to stress the importance of avoiding false sentimentality in the way children are taught to interact with animals. Sentimentality reduces the animal to a projection of our own self-love, rendering it effectively mute and us deaf to its real needs. In the course of their walk, a boy shoots at a pair of larks, leaving the male badly hurt. The girls are taught not to avert their gaze but to look at the bird and understand his suffering in order to decide what is best to do:

Look at it, said Mrs. Mason; do you not see that it suffers as much, and more than you did when you had the small-pox, when you were so tenderly nursed. Take up the hen; I will bind her wing together, perhaps it may heal.

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51. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Original Stories...* Op. cit., p. 4.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 14.



As to the cock, though I hate to kill any thing, I must put him out of pain; to leave him in his present state would be cruel; and avoiding an unpleasant sensation myself, I should allow the poor bird to die by inches, and call this treatment tenderness, when it would be selfishness. Saying so, she put her foot on the bird's head, turning her own another way.<sup>54</sup>

The two birds are in pain but the female can be restored to health; despite her present suffering, her life is worth preserving. This is not the case with the male, whose suffering will only be prolonged till his inevitable death if let alone; therefore, the benevolent thing to do is to shorten his suffering by putting an end to his life. In doing so, Mrs. Mason explains, she is placing the bird's welfare before her own, since she finds the act of killing him hateful. To bring the message home to her readers, Wollstonecraft avoids any use of sentimentalized language in her account of the bird's piteous condition and death, and not omitting to account for the method Mrs. Mason chooses to put an end to his suffering. "Cool, certainly", Alan Richardson concedes, "but also an unforgettable lesson in overcoming empty sentiment and weak-minded fastidiousness with rational (if unavoidably fatal) kindness".<sup>55</sup>

Wollstonecraft found much to blame for the contemporary condition of women in the discourse of sensibility. As Mitzi Myers pointed out, she had ample opportunity to immerse herself in sentimental fiction while working as a reviewer for the *Analytical Review* and saw in it a powerful weapon for female oppression.<sup>56</sup> This was the discourse that was fed to women not only in the sentimental novels they read, but also from the pulpit and conduct books, so that they assimilated as natural an ideology that was designed to perpetuate their dependence on men, while rendering them blind to the narrowness of their affections and, accordingly, incapable of practicing universal benevolence:

The lady who sheds tears for the bird starved in a snare, and execrates the devils in the shape of men, who goad to madness the poor ox, or whip the patient ass, tottering under a burden above its strength, will, nevertheless, keep her coachman and horses whole hours waiting for her, when the sharp frost bites, or the rain beats against the well-closed windows which do not admit a breath of air to tell her how roughly the wind blows without.<sup>57</sup>

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

55. RICHARDSON, Alan. "Mary Wollstonecraft on Education", in Claudia L. Johnson (ed.): *Op. cit.*, pp. 24-41; p. 30.

56. MYERS, Mitzi. "Mary Wollstonecraft's Literary Reviews", in Claudia L. Johnson (ed.): *Op. cit.*, pp. 82-98.

57. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Rights of Woman...* *Op. cit.*, p. 258.

As both Myers and Stuart have observed, Wollstonecraft was not at war with “sensibility, passion, imagination, or fiction *per se*, and certainly not with narrative that feelingly renders female experience”,<sup>58</sup> her objections were directed against “the system of sentimental education which encouraged women to exhibit a ‘parade of sensibility’ (what Coleridge called ‘a false and bastard sensibility’) by fawning over their pets, while ignoring the acute suffering of humans *and other animals* [emphasis in the original]”.<sup>59</sup> It was, therefore, vital to put an end to a system that treated women “as a kind of subordinate being, and not as part of the human species”.<sup>60</sup>

In this light, the standpoint of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* becomes an ecofeminist one, since Wollstonecraft observes that the deplorable state in which women are forced to live stems from their degrading association with nature. A very dramatic experience may very well have contributed to imprinting this idea in Wollstonecraft’s mind when, as a child, she used to witness her father treating his wife and his dogs with the same brutality. Biographer Lyndall Gordon reads from William Godwin’s *Memoirs*: “Once, hearing a dog’s howls of pain, Mary’s abhorrence became, she said, an agony. ‘Despot’ resonates like a repeated chord in the opening pages of Godwin’s memoir of her childhood”.<sup>61</sup> More insidious than the brutal force, the “false system of education” she denounces perpetuates this association and renders women fragile and dependent: “like flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty”.<sup>62</sup> It is the central argument of *Rights of Woman* that women must take back the position God gave them when making them rational beings.

In *Rights of Men*, Wollstonecraft had already hinted at the direction she would take in her second *Vindication*, when she insisted on the need to defend the rights that human beings “inherit at their birth, as rational creatures, who were raised above the brute creation by their improvable faculties”.<sup>63</sup> Any system of education that failed to nourish this exclusively human faculty was

58. MYERS, Mitzi. *Op. cit.*, p. 90

59. STUART, Tristram. *Op. cit.*, p. 594n15.

60. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Rights of Woman...* *Op. cit.*, p. 71.

61. GORDON, Lyndall. *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

62. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Rights of Woman...* *Op. cit.*, p. 71. Wollstonecraft criticizes the way Anna Laetitia Barbauld compares women to flowers in *To a Lady, with some painted Flowers*, to make the poem conclude that, like theirs, women’s “BEST ... SWEETEST empire is—TO PLEASE” (Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 123). The comparison of women with “smiling flowers”, “sweet flowers that smile” or “fairest flowers” (an instance of degradation rather than praise for Wollstonecraft) is found on several pages in the *Rights of Woman* (pp. 71, 122-123, 132 and 230).

63. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Rights of Men...* *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

degrading to the species. Thus, she accused Burke of considering the poor as "the live stock of an estate",<sup>64</sup> and protested that a woman is, indeed, "[...] but an animal, and an animal not of the highest order' [...] if she is not more attentive to the duties of humanity than queens and fashionable ladies in general are".<sup>65</sup>

Barbara Taylor has observed that "[f]eminism [...] has for most of its history been deeply embedded in religious belief. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century western feminists were nearly all active Christians".<sup>66</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft was certainly an active Christian, but not one who allowed the centrality of religion to her worldview to turn her judgment off. In tune with the Unitarians' emphasis "on private reasoned judgment as the foundation of true religion",<sup>67</sup> Wollstonecraft felt the need to expose her views on the way patriarchal discourse had used religion as another powerful instrument to subdue women:

Probably the prevailing opinion, that woman was created for man, may have taken its rise from Moses's poetical story, yet, as very few, who have bestowed any serious thought on the subject, ever supposed that Eve was, literally speaking, one of Adam's ribs, the deduction must be allowed to fall to the ground; or, only be so far admitted as it proves that man, from the remotest antiquity, found it convenient to exert his strength to subjugate his companion, and his invention to shew that she ought to have her neck bent under the yoke, because the whole creation was only created for his convenience or pleasure.<sup>68</sup>

Like the language of sensibility, religious discourse has effectively contributed to the demotion of women from their equal position as man's companion to their assimilation with the natural world that men have to tame and control. It is worth taking a cursory look at the animal imagery chosen by Wollstonecraft to illustrate her argument. Thus, a woman's dependence on her husband debases her from her natural position as his equal since it "produces a kind of cattish affection which leads a wife to purr about her husband as she would about any man who fed and caressed her".<sup>69</sup> Women are praised for the cardinal virtues of "[g]entleness, docility, and a spaniel-like affection",<sup>70</sup> while

64. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

66. TAYLOR, Barbara. *Op.cit.*, p. 103.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

68. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Rights of Woman...* *Op. cit.*, p. 92.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 100. Like the comparison of the woman to a flower, Wollstonecraft resorts on another occasion to the same collocation "spaniel-like affection" to refer to the feeling that binds many married women to their husbands (*Ibid.*, p. 222). She understands

in their excessive attention to their physical appearance, they resemble caged birds: “Confined then in cages like the feathered race, they have nothing to do but to plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch”.<sup>71</sup> Finally, Wollstonecraft considers, it is understandable that some women become easy prey for the alluring powers of rakes, because “[t]he poor moth, fluttering round a candle, burns its wings”.<sup>72</sup>

Bearing this in mind, I think it is necessary to revisit the image of the lady with her lapdog, who appears to us now as an object of pity, rather than censure and ridicule. Trapped in the narrowness of her affections, she is unable to express – or even feel – any sort of tenderness outside her dear pet. She begs our sympathy, but somehow Wollstonecraft, even though highlighting where the problem resides, failed to express it in a sympathetic language. Like the woman insensible to her coachman and horses, she observes, the one “who takes her dogs to bed, and nurses them with a parade of sensibility, when sick, will suffer her babes to grow up crooked in a nursery”.<sup>73</sup> Taking into account the conditions into which ladies like this one were raised, it is only fair to ask if she had any real choice to have acted otherwise. Separated from her children almost automatically after giving birth to them in order for them to be suckled by a wet-nurse and brought up by governesses, is it not possible that the only realm where this same lady could give free vent to her affections was precisely in her relationship with her dog? “In literary culture”, Brown observes, the pet comes to fill an emotional void that is “often highlighted as a lost or alienated familial connection”.<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, these cases were not exclusive to literary culture, but very common in real life. This same lady, unable to manifest any tenderness towards her children, most certainly did not receive any from her mother, so it is only to be expected that her daughters will behave in the same fashion towards their own offspring, thus perpetuating this emotional trap.

Even if she failed to expressly manifest any sort of sympathy for this kind of woman, Wollstonecraft did provide the solution when she vindicated the decisive position of women in the system of education, arguing that the most

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that this should be so, given that they are both similarly educated: “Considering the length of time that women have been dependent, is it surprising that some of them hug their chains and fawn like the spaniels? ‘These dogs,’ observes a naturalist, ‘at first kept their ears erect; but custom has superseded nature, and a token of fear is becoming a beauty’” (Ibid., p. 155).

71. Ibid., p. 125.

72. Ibid., p. 203n1.

73. Ibid., p. 258-59.

74. BROWN, Laura. *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

important education of all began at home "with a baby's mouth on the mother's breast, responding to 'the warmest glow of tenderness'".<sup>75</sup> Wollstonecraft recommended women to breastfeed their children as early as *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, and came back to the issue in *Rights of Men*, when urging for the need of women to act "like mothers". When that happens, "the fine lady, become a rational woman, might think it necessary to superintend her family and suckle her children, in order to fulfill her part of the social compact".<sup>76</sup>

Wollstonecraft focused her attention on female education, but she was not blind to the flaws in the way males were raised. A short stay at Eton on her way to Ireland was enough to show her that the education boys received was as emotionally crippling as the girls'. Just as much as women had been taught from their most tender age to cultivate a distorted sensibility, boys were trained to block tenderness from their infancy, since it was considered a form of weakness. The only emotion they were encouraged to cultivate was patriotism, a love of nation which, uninformed by the greater principle of universal benevolence, remained for Wollstonecraft just another narrow form of affection. This "domestic atrophy: the disempowering and exclusion of the mother"<sup>77</sup> from the sphere of education, was certainly successful for a "predatory nation" that had designed a perfect system for "molding an elite of fighters and colonisers".<sup>78</sup>

In stressing the vital role that mothers played in their children's education and in her belief that "nursery instincts, like tenderness, if empowered by

75. GORDON, Lyndall. *Op. cit.*, p. 45. Gordon is quoting Wollstonecraft's words in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*: "The suckling of a child also excites the warmest glow of tenderness – Its dependant, helpless state produces an affection, which may properly be termed maternal. I have even felt it, when I have seen a mother perform that office; and am of the opinion, that maternal tenderness arises quite as much from habit as instinct". (WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters...* *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

76. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Rights of Men...* *Op. cit.*, p. 23. Tristram Stuart has also studied the political connotations of breastfeeding, which he traces back to Rousseau: "The front page of the *Discourse of Inequality* – as if symbolizing his [Rousseau's] manifesto – depicted a woman, broken free from her chains, with one breast fully exposed. This enthusiasm caught on. By 1783 the first portrait of a woman breast-feeding was displayed in public; in 1794 Prussia legally required every fit woman to breast-feed her baby; and the bared breast of Liberty – symbol of egalitarian sympathy freed from its misguided social fetters – became the mascot of the French revolutionary public" (STUART, Tristram. *Op. cit.*, p. 197.)

77. GORDON, Lyndall. *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

the right training to think and act, could one day redeem the world”,<sup>79</sup> Wollstonecraft was anticipating the feminist ethics of care articulated by, among others, Gilligan, Noddings, Robinson, Ruddick or Held.<sup>80</sup> The educator in her had observed that tenderness was a key element in bringing up a mentally and emotionally healthy child, who would one day become a responsible, independent citizen. Not only did she theorize about it, but she put it in practice during the time she worked as a governess and in her own school at Newington Green. Margaret, the elder of Lady Kingsborough’s daughters, wrote down in middle age a record of her youth that reveals Wollstonecraft as her only source of instruction and affection:

[T]he society of my father’s house was not calculated to improve my good qualities or correct my faults; and almost the only person of superior merit whom I had been intimate in my early days was an enthusiastic female who was my governess from fourteen to fifteen years old, for whom I felt an unbounded admiration.<sup>81</sup>

True to her conviction that private affections are limited, Wollstonecraft also believed that children had to experience education outside the domestic sphere. However, she resented the common practice of the middle classes of sending their boys to boarding schools, away from the family, and insisted on the benefits of a day school, where children were able to interact with their equals in an external environment but could go back every day to the warmth of the family household, the primal site of affection. “Few”, she believed, “have had much affection for mankind, who did not first love their parents, their brothers, sisters, and even the domestic brutes, whom they first played with”.<sup>82</sup> Not only did she include nonhuman animals in this family circle where love is first experienced, but she also defended that “[h]umanity to animals should be particularly inculcated as part of national education [...]”.

79. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-6.

80. See, for instance, GILLIGAN, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development*. Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press, 1982; NODDINGS, Nel. *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Berkeley, CA., University of California Press, 1984; RUDDICK, Sara. *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*. Boston, MA., Beacon Press, 1989; ROBINSON, Fiona. *Globalizing Care: Ethics, Feminist Theory, and International Relations*. Boulder CO., Westview Press, 1999; NODDINGS, Nel. *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy*. Berkeley, CA., University of California Press, 2002; and HELD, Virginia. *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*. Oxford, O.U.P., 2006.

81. Quoted in GORDON, Lyndall. *Op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.

82. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Rights of Woman...* *Op. cit.*, p. 246.

Justice, or even benevolence, will not be a powerful spring of action unless it extend to the whole creation.<sup>83</sup>

Virginia Woolf observed that the originality of the theories Wollstonecraft expressed in her two *Vindications* "has become our commonplace".<sup>84</sup> She might as well have extended her opinion to those included in *A Short Residence*. In her last completed book, Wollstonecraft had compared herself to an unheard Cassandra, lamenting "the baleful effect of extensive speculations on the moral character":

A man ceases to love humanity, and then individuals, as one clashes with his interest, the other with his pleasures: to business, as it is termed, everything must give way; nay, is sacrificed, and all the endearing charities of citizen, husband, father, brother, become empty names.<sup>85</sup>

The tides of time have proven Wollstonecraft right; like doomed Cassandra, her warning prophecy has remained largely unheard. She foresaw the power of the capitalist ethos to destroy the bonds that unite human beings, while she witnessed the devastating effects on the natural environment. Wollstonecraft identified where the problem resided but also pointed at the solutions; they bear a striking resemblance to those coming from later ecofeminist theoretical positions and from the grassroots activists that daily put them into practice. Her originality has, indeed, become our commonplace.

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83. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

84. WOOLF, Virginia. *Op. cit.*, p. 158.

85. WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary. *Letters Written During a Short Residence...* pp. 255-56.

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# REWEAVING THE PLACE OF NATURE: TWO CONTEMPORARY WOMEN POETS<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article examines two women poets, the Brazilian Arriete Vilela and the Caribbean poet living in Britain, Grace Nichols, with the aim of showing the way they deal differently with notions of space and place in nature, approaching these notions through ecocriticism, feminism and other interdisciplinary readings.

Their poems present an understanding of nature that involves an interconnection between human and more-than-human in a relationship that may be seen as harmonious and problematic. Videla's use of "nature imagery" provides both resistances and potentialities to be revealed in her Brazilian poetry. Grace Nichols begins from a discontinuity in her view of Caribbean landscape and culture where a touristic colonizing industry frames even gendered bodies. These two poets explore the dialogue between external nature of the female human being, in a body of work through which such dialogues and conflicts can be poetically resisted and celebrated.

**Key-words:** contemporary women poets; place/space of nature; ecocriticism; feminism; interdisciplinarity.

## Resumen

Este artículo analiza la obra poética de la escritora brasileña Arriete Vilela y de Grace Nichols, escritora caribeña afincada en Gran Bretaña. El objetivo es mostrar las

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1. A shorter version of this article was first published in Portuguese in the Brazilian journal <http://www.tanianavarrosain.com.br/labrys/labrys11/ecrivaines/izabel.htm>, Accessed January-June 2007. The title is "Retecendo o lugar da natureza em poemas de autoras contemporâneas" ("Reweaving nature's place in poems of contemporary writers").

diferencias en el tratamiento de las nociones de espacio y lugar en la naturaleza, a través de la ecocrítica, el feminismo y otras lecturas interdisciplinarias.

Sus poemas presentan un modo de comprender la naturaleza que implica una interconexión entre lo humano y lo más-que-humano en una relación que puede considerarse tan armoniosa como problemática. El uso que hace Vilela de “la imaginería naturalista” nos evoca las resistencias y, a la vez, potencialidades que pueden encontrarse en su poesía brasileña. Grace Nichols comienza desde la discontinuidad en su visión del paisaje y la cultura caribeños, donde una industria turística colonizadora prevalece incluso por encima del género de los cuerpos. Ambas autoras inician el diálogo entre la naturaleza externa y la naturaleza de la mujer, en obras en donde diálogos y conflictos pueden ser rechazados y celebrados a través de la poesía.

**Palabras clave:** poetisas contemporáneas; lugar/espacio de la naturaleza; ecocrítica; feminismo; interdisciplinariedad.

## 1. Literature and nature: the site of theoretical connections

What may be surprising to readers outside the context of Brazil is that it is necessary to start this essay with the fundamental question that addresses the relationship between literature and environment. For most Brazilian literary scholars the connection is still far from obvious. If one were to search for a possible answer one need look no further than this very page in the printed journal that you are now reading. A “real” material journal, that is not delivered online, out of virtual space, provides a first answer in the very material you hold in front of you between your fingers. How many trees, one could ask, were needed for the paper production prior to the printing of the ecofeminist special issue of this journal? Once this connection is established we must consider deforestation, or we could think of the so-called “sustainable exploitation of natural resources” that makes use of reforestation for the production of cellulose. Thus, in front of our eyes is an ecofeminist journal that may be collaborating in the destruction of nature, or a journal that escapes such a condition. For us in Brazil this is more than a local or national consideration, but one with global implications, especially for these who do not live in the “First World” and daily confront the consequences of global environmental actions and attitudes.

This is an example of one of the many questions posed by ecocriticism, a field of contemporary literary criticism that has been renewing the air of academic research in literature for the past three decades in America and Europe, and is only now renewing literary studies in Brazil. One of the critics whose thinking about the relevance of such a discussion has inspired the beginning of this article is Glen Love, in his *Practical Ecocriticism*, published in 2003 but still, like so many key texts, with no translation into Portuguese.<sup>2</sup> For him, teaching and research in the field of literature are cultural activities that take place within the context of a biosphere, “the part of the earth and its atmosphere in which life exists”.<sup>3</sup> Thus, there is a direct relation between

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2. See LOVE, G. *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment* Charlottesville and London, U. Virginia Press, 2003, p.16.

3. LOVE, Op. Cit., p.16.

literature, nature and ecocriticism, which is embedded in the printed paper of the page we read. Such a perception helps in translating an implicit dialogue between the literary text and the environment that surrounds us, as Love suggests. However, there are obstacles, for “Ecocriticism is developing as an explicit critical response to this unheard dialogue, an attempt to raise it to a higher level of human consciousness”.<sup>4</sup> Then it is possible to say that studying and teaching literature cannot ignore “the natural conditions of the world and the basic ecological principles that underlie all life”, for this would become “short-sighted, incongruous”.<sup>5</sup> A similar understanding is posed by ecofeminists such as Diamond and Orestein<sup>6</sup>, Gaard and Murphy<sup>7</sup>, and other ecocritics such as Glotfelty and Fromm<sup>8</sup>, who propose an interdisciplinary connection between the varied fields of knowledge, as in nature, as ecology teaches us.

But still, such a theoretical development, which I have characterized as a renewal within literature, is relatively recent, and even though we may recognise that it has quickly gathered momentum in “First World” countries, in Brazil, where I live, teach and research in this field, such a development is still far too partial. It is restricted to a few literature researchers, such as Angélica Soares, from Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, a pioneer in the field who started reading literature through the perspectives of ecology in the early 1990s in Brazil. Her book *Ecologia e literatura* (“Literature and Ecology”) dates back to 1992, taking its impetus from the world conference Eco 92<sup>9</sup> on the environment, held in Rio de Janeiro that year.<sup>10</sup> In 1999, she has published *A paixão emancipatória* (“The Emancipatory Passion”), a book about the poetry of contemporary Brazilian women poets which has a chapter dedicated to the relationship between nature and literature.<sup>11</sup>

4. LOVE, Op. Cit., p.16.

5. LOVE, Op. Cit., p.16.

6. DIAMOND and ORESTEIN (eds) *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*. Sierra Book Clubs, 1990.

7. GAARD, Greta and MURPHY, Patrick D. (eds). *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1998.

8. GLOTFELTY, C. and FROMM, H (eds). *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens, The University of Georgia Press, 1996.

9. In 2012, twenty years after Eco 92, Brazil hosted the international Rio + 20.

10. SOARES, A. (ed.). *Ecologia e literatura*. Rio de Janeiro, Tempo Brasileiro, 1992.

11. See SOARES, A. *A paixão emancipatória*. Rio de Janeiro, Difel, 1999. The reference is just to Soares because until recently I have not heard of any other researchers in Brazil who work within the field of ecocriticism (or ecofeminism for that matter). Back in 2003 in my article “Ecofeminismo e literatura: novas fronteiras críticas” (“Ecofeminism and Literature: New Critical Borders”, published in BRANDÃO, Izabel & MUZART, Zahidé [eds]. *Refazendo nós: ensaios sobre mulher e literatura*. Florianópolis/ Santa Cruz do

This article is intended as a contribution to this theoretical and critical renewal, especially in relation to the Brazilian context and, more modestly, for the international reach of *Feminismo/s* within Europe and elsewhere. I have been researching within the field of ecocriticism since 2002, thanks to the influence of Terry Gifford who first introduced me to the field when I was in England doing my doctoral research in the early nineties, and who also introduced to me the work of the Caribbean poet Grace Nichols, whom he considers one of the contemporary “green poets” writing in England since she settled there in 1977.<sup>12</sup> My research takes an interdisciplinary feminist approach in dialogue with ecocriticism and ecofeminism, as well as many other writers whose critical perceptions are useful, such as Bachelard, Foucault and Augé, among others. Such interdisciplinary focus has been reinforced within feminism in Brazil by feminists Claudia Lima Costa and Simone Schmidt<sup>13</sup>, and this is also consolidated as *sine qua non* part of ecocriticism, for no field of study can assume to hold knowledge of all areas, as Glotfelty and Fromm indicate.<sup>14</sup> It is from this perspective that Glen Love argues that literary scholars “for the most part have stayed on their side of the humanist-scientist

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Sul, Mulheres e Edunisc, 2003, p.461-473), besides Soares, I refer to a Masters Thesis on Margaret Atwood, by Luciana Labatti Teixeira, defended at Federal University of Minas Gerais, whose theoretical framework is ecofeminism. In 2005 in the national conference of Abrapui (Brazilian Society for University Teachers and Researchers of English), held in Fortaleza, one of the keynote speakers was the postcolonial ecocritic Graham Huggan, from the University of Leeds, England. In this same conference, my own contribution was about the Caribbean poet Grace Nichols, offering an ecofeminist reading of her poems. This paper was later published in Portuguese in *O corpo em revista*, a book I edited (2005) and in English in the Italian literature Journal *Englisses* (2007). In August 2012, Federal University of Paraíba hosted its First International Conference on Ecocriticism. I understand that the field of research is expanding in Brazil, but the expansion is still slow.

12. GIFFORD, T. *Green Voices: Understanding Contemporary Nature Poetry*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, CCC Press, 2011, pp. 175-177 [Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995].
13. See COSTA, C. L.; SCHMIDT, S. (eds). *Poéticas e políticas feministas*. Florianópolis, Mulheres, 2004.
14. See GLOTFELTY, C. & FROMM, H, *Op. Cit.* The essay “Feminist Ecocriticism: The New Ecofeminist Settlement”, by Serpil Oppermann, in this volume of *Feminismo/s*, discusses in depth the conceptual redefinition of notions such as ecofeminism within the field of study of ecocriticism. I believe that it is desirable that such a discussion of the concept of ecofeminism be associated with a more global understanding of the field. The use of feminist ecocriticism seems to me more open and helpful for those who feel more akin towards a realignment of the concept with contemporary feminist theories, expanding its meaning as Gaard (qtd by Opperman) suggests: “feminist ecocriticism affirms the necessity of a new feminist perspective in environmental literatures, cultures, and science studies”. My thanks to Kerslake and Gifford for sharing other contributions to this journal ahead of publication.

barrier, limiting their focus to metaphor and language while ignoring the exciting interdisciplinary opportunities that beckon".<sup>15</sup>

The second relevant question for this article is in which form nature is being dealt with in contemporary literature? Having poetry in mind, Love attempts an answer:

A wave of new nature poetry has been a response to the age of ecology, as the aspect of an inexhaustible and constant nature is replaced by one of vulnerability and of recognition that our cultural identity rests uneasily upon deeper responsibilities.<sup>16</sup>

If such a question is being dealt with in Brazilian literature this is something yet to be revealed by recent research trends. What it is possible to say, however, is that literature, in a general way, attempts to provide answers to questionings that are provoked by nature, be it human or non-human, to which all of us belong. Focusing upon women's poetry, the two poets chosen for this article, Arriete Vilela and Grace Nichols, Brazilian and Caribbean poets respectively, perceive nature in a very provocative way and interlace the human and non-human by means of a knot of continuity which is revealing of the interconnection of beings, as I hope to demonstrate.

## 2. Arriete Vilela's poetry: dialogues with nature<sup>17</sup>

Arriete Vilela is a Brazilian poet born in Marechal Deodoro, in the northern coastal area of the state of Alagoas, in the Northeast of Brazil. Her style is marked by a strong preoccupation with the word, with the preciseness of suggestibility that can be extracted from it, avoiding what she characterizes as "adornments", "narrow ribbons" and "remnants". Arriete Vilela has established herself as a writer in Alagoas where her work is known and studied since, in 2005, it was launched in the Brazilian literary market through the publication by Gryphos of her first "novel", *Lãs ao vento* ("Wool in the Wind").<sup>18</sup> This "novel", which was awarded the International Literary Prize for Brazil-Hispanic American Literature (Prêmio Internacional de Literatura Brasil-América Hispânica), is a prose narrative, but represents a distinctive effort of connectivity by the writer in maintaining a hybrid kind of work

15. LOVE, *Op. Cit.*, p.32.

16. LOVE, *Op. Cit.*, p.33.

17. A part of this section of the essay was taken from a book chapter titled "A poesia de Arriete Vilela: diálogos com a natureza", published in Portuguese, in 2007. See: MORAES, M. H. M. *Poesia alagoana hoje*. Maceió, Edufal, 2007, p. 119-140.

18. VILELA, A. *Lãs ao vento*. São Paulo, Gryphos, 2005.



through narratives that skirt poetry and are situated on a very thin threshold between one mode and another.

For this article I have selected a number of poems that could represent a Brazilian contemporary writer and poet within the so-called framework of the Anglo-American genre of so-called “nature writing”. Vilela’s poems make use of nature images and metaphors and the term “nature” here indicates not only nature external to the human being. It is also in the tendency of this writer to be forcefully aware that her interconnection with the outside world defines her being and should not be ignored. This is, of course, one of the fundamental laws of ecology, according to the pioneering work of Rueckert as regards literature’s need to engage with the interconnection of all things in nature.<sup>19</sup>

For the Brazilian poet, the presence of the natural world indicates a degree of intimacy that can be characterized as greater or lesser, pending on the state in which feelings are summoned by the poem. Human and non-human are interconnected through a language that builds an equation that might lead to harmony and/or disharmony with the Other. The poetic persona adopted by Arriete Vilela is endowed with clothing that can insinuate animals – somehow going back to what Gaston Bachelard defines as the phenomenology of aggression - proceeding from the use of images of claws, stings, beaks, wings, or of other elements present in nature, such as stones, flowers, fruits, pollen - all pointing to the human’s rich and complex connection with external nature.<sup>20</sup> The images also unveil the interior of the human being, which shows itself through elements which are peculiar to the experience of a child and the poet’s childhood. Her memory often comes to the fore in the poem by invoking scents or secrets which are safely guarded in shoe-boxes from which the memories jump out. Such a connection can also spring from the summoning of passion from her suggestive use of words, and, here, the poet shows her more seductive side, in the sense that she traces in language the echoes of a love relationship, whatever its outcome, for the worst or the best.

From multiple poetic instances, the selected poems for this analysis show, if not a seamless continuity as such, a strongly luxurious relationship between the female human being and the natural world in which a “biodiversity” is created by means of the struggle with (or against) the words themselves.

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19. See RUECKERT, W. “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism”. In GLOTFELTY, C. and H. FROMM (eds.). *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens and London, The University of Georgia Press, 1996, pp.105-123.

20. See BACHELARD, G. *Lautréamont*. Paris, José Corti, 1939.

*A rede do anjo* (“The angel’s hammock”), published in 1992, is Vilela’s second book of poetry.<sup>21</sup> The poems are mostly short and deal with, among other themes, the search for the word that defines the soul, which becomes almost an obsession in the writer’s continuing works.<sup>22</sup> Here she invites her readers to an intimate meeting where she will be divested of her defenses so as to allow a diving into her knowledge of herself, without the help of “haberdashery / striped ribbons / wavy ribbons”.

Having her soul thus destitute of  
[...] adornments  
you may finally  
know it.

(Poem n° 7)<sup>23</sup>

It is possible to note, from these lines, the poet’s successful attempt to make use of a precise, economical language, and it is poems like this that constitute the body of *A rede do anjo*. There are other poems in the book whose number of lines is longer, but still, the language is clean and clear, making the reading agile and quick. It is perhaps only when we go back to the verses that we are able to acknowledge the subtlety of the self-exposure in Arriete Vilela’s economic language.

The poems in *A rede do anjo* are not named. This is a recurring feature in Vilela’s books. Such a tendency towards anonymity may be understood as an attempt to make it difficult to search for meaning, for, if we understand that we only name what we know, which involves a filter of affectivity (either for good or bad), her not naming the poems implies a certain distancing: the poems are just numbers rather than a list of evocative titles. Yet this is an illusion, for the revelation of meaning does not depend on this, despite the poet’s apparent intention. It may be that what provokes “fractures among the words”, according to what Arriete Vilela tells us in *Vadios afetos* (“Stray affects”), in a poetic introduction to the book in the disarming form of a

21. I consider *15 poemas de Arriete* (“15 poems by Arriete”), published by DAC-SENEC-MEC, in 1974, as the poet’s first book of poems. In 1971, she published *Eu, em versos e prosa* (“I in verse and prose”), by Tribunal de Contas do Estado de Alagoas, a mix of essays and poems. As recently as 2010, on her sixtieth birthday, the poet has published her *Obra poética reunida* (“Collected Poetic oeuvre”) with Poligraf.

22. In *Lãs ao vento* (“Wool in the Wind”), the word becomes a character and conquers a body. If one goes back to *Fantasia e avesso* (“Fantasy and its inside out”) from 1986, which is the poet’s main book of prose writing, the word is the body of the narrative, but its context, if one relates it to the “novel” published in 2005, the connoted meaning is different. See my book *Entre o amor e a palavra* (“Between Love and the Word”) where many chapters deal with this narrative.

23. All the translations of Vilela’s poems are mine.

“Quick chat” by the writer with her readers. Such “fractures” leave her “with an uncomfortable feeling of having been cheated within my own writing” (p. 6). The poet being “cheated” is what allows the reader to understand the many unsaid things in the poem printed on the page, whether the reader might identify with it, or deny it as distant from herself.

Poem n° 4 is about the poet’s need (her persona’s need, that is) to be always in constant search inside herself, trying to know herself. Her inner nature – being inside herself for the sake of learning – is the necessary factor for “conferring” with herself: “I confer with myself”. It is in her return from this inner journey that outside nature emerges in order to offer images by which to report the findings concretely for the eyes of those who read her:

and when I emerge,  
I’m a *rock* unveiled  
by the retreating  
*tide*

(my italics)

“Rock” and “tide” are the way the poet found to demarcate without abstraction the result of her incursion within herself. For Bachelard, in his studies about the earth, external surface elements present what he defines as a poetic of the will, of the extrovert imagination, as opposed to caverns and labyrinths, which imply a poetics of intimacy.<sup>24</sup> When we consider the elements associated with the earth, such as the stone, or the rock, we encounter in the actual search itself a recognition of the resistance of matter: “If in the world of symbols the resistance is human, in the world of energy, the existence is material.”<sup>25</sup> Hence, Arriete Vilela finds from her searches in the earth the endorsement of the wish for resistance. The “retreating tide” that discloses the “rock”, shows it as an image of defense hidden in her own being, which only comes to the surface whenever it is necessary. In terms of the poem, her emergence appears from the diving into her being in her search for knowledge, which is presented as stone, a matter of the resisting earth. So, a “concise” poem such as n° 4 reveals itself as an immense metaphor for power, established in the natural world. Such a metaphor is nothing more than an expanded “potency for creation” in the image of the rock that let itself be disclosed by the low tide.

When we consider such an association - the human being = rock; human = non-human - it leads us to consider not only the power found in nature

24. See BACHELARD, G. *La Terre et les rêveries de la volonté* and *La Terre et les rêveries du repos*. The translations into English are mine. Both books are published by José Corti, 1947 and 1946.

25. BACHELARD, G. *La Terre et les rêveries de la volonté*, p.16.

which is transferred to the human being, but also the association between women and nature too, something that brings us back to the old problem of essentialism in the equation.<sup>26</sup> Murphy's article in this volume of *Feminismo/s*<sup>27</sup> quotes Vandana Shiva in relation to this connection, which she properly realigns towards a more meaningful sense that I would like to bring to my discussion of Vilela's poem: "[...] women and nature are associated *not in passivity but in creativity and in the maintenance of life*". The poem discloses a defense mechanism which the human beings - women and men alike - develop in order to find within themselves the way out of difficult situations. The poem shows us an image which discloses a rock in the low tide. This disclosure indicates that once one is "attacked" (in this case referring to a dying love affair), she either strengthens herself by becoming a rock or gets ready for battle - or both. There is no passivity in the association, the relationship, or the organic/emotional processes of which it is part.

In an article published in 2001 about Vilela's poetry, I discussed the poetics of aggression in *O ócio dos anjos ignorados* ("The leisure of the forgotten angels"), from 1995.<sup>28</sup> This book is to date, in my opinion, the core of the *opus* of the Brazilian poet, even if one considers the quality of her poetry books published either before or after *O ócio dos anjos ignorados*. From this book I chose Poem n° 31, because of the connection with the natural world which brings to the fore the theme of passion turned towards the word itself, which becomes the object of the poem; it (in Portuguese the word "poem" is gendered in the feminine; it is a "ela", or a "she") is the beloved being transformed into food and drink. The word becomes a

fried carapeba<sup>29</sup>  
coral crab  
and beer[,]

a tasty combination whose savoring invokes the colors white, from the fish; the energetic orange, from the coral crab; and the golden tone of the cool beer, drunk, obviously, in a scenery of luscious beauty, on the banks of the lagoon

26. My article "Ecofeminismo e literatura: novas fronteiras críticas", *Op. Cit.*, discusses in depth the debate around the essentialist question posed in the association of women with nature.

27. See Patrick Murphy's essay "The Ecofeminist Subsistence Perspective Revisited In An Age Of Land Grabs and its Representations in Contemporary Literature" in this volume.

28. "The poetry of aggression in *O ócio dos anjos ignorados*" is in *Entre o amor e a palavra: olhar(es) sobre Arriete Vilela* (Maceió, Catavento 2001), which I have edited.

29. The *carapeba* is a fish which is quite popular in the area of Marechal Deodoro where the poet was born. Its scientific name is *Diapterus Rhombeus* or *Gerres Cinereus*.

“displaying from the water flowers, the lilac one”.<sup>30</sup> Besides, the alliteration in Portuguese of the “r” which occurs in the stanza calls one to laughter, inviting the reader to the joy of a relaxing moment surrounded by beautiful scenery.

It is helpful to recall here that the erotic is one of the themes of ecofeminism. Gaard asks, for example, how the erotic is shown in the literary text; or how is it approached?<sup>31</sup> In the poem above, the erotic appears as a force that imposes on the word its becoming the body of writing, and as such, it may be “eaten”, “drunk”, “savored”; it is the word dressed as fish-crab-lilac water flower, that, in Bachelard’s terms, “tonalises” the poet’s eyes taking her to this poetic banquet. The beer-word, drunk on the banks of the lagoon, is also fed by the color green, characteristic of the water flowers that border the lagoon as well as the flowers that are characteristic of that wider region.

In this poem, differently from others in the poet’s *oeuvre*, nature does not appear as a space dedicated to loneliness and the acquiescence of passion. On the contrary, the word looks to love for it to be casual, full of good humor and joy, as a newly born passion. As such, it becomes a

delicious banality  
seasoned with lime drops  
malagueta pepper  
and the orgiastic desire  
of nature  
in you.

In sum, the poetic dealing with the word is like a newly-born passionate love and the meeting with it is the seduction that leads it to become the loved body, the desired body “and the orgiastic desire / of nature / in you”. This “you” obviously materializes nature into a person of flesh and bones.

Vilela harmoniously communes with the natural world in her search for a homeopathic healing for herself. A new love – a “free passion” – becomes the balm – parsley and arnica – to heal the “bleeding” of the bygone love. And perhaps it is not too much to note that it is not any love that it heals: this is a wild and tiny parsley, that is, a condensed ointment to heal the deep wounds of love in the past. Such a connectivity with nature here is crucial for the poet.

The poet’s struggle with words leads her to use images of the material and natural world according to the feeling that she evokes in the construction of

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30. The water flowers referred to by the poet are peculiar to the Mundaú lagoon in Marechal Deodoro. They spread around the water and look as though they were put there for decorative purposes.

31. GAARD, G. and MURPHY, P. D. (eds). *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1998.

the poem, in her search for harmonizing and reweaving her knowledge of being. This is a hard struggle: arduous, but also pleasurable. It is like a sunny day, that may shine, may warm one up, but that may also burn. It is a fight that recalls another Brazilian poet, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, whose fight with words is notorious to the point where his critics call it a “Drummondian struggle”, as Vilela herself acknowledges. Or, in her own words: “This clash is akin to / a walk along the sea shore / no breeze / under the midday sun” (Poem 65).

### 3. Grace Nichols’ poetry and nature in the body<sup>32</sup>

Nichols’ poetry is still not well-known in Brazil. Questions of race/ethnicity, class, gender and language are but a few of the prisms through which she may be read. For this article I have chosen the poem “On Receiving a Jamaican Postcard” for, besides the question of race/ethnicity, it also deals with questions related to the body, as well as others related to technology, for example, within her text.

Superficially the poem does not deal with anything particularly related to the body. However, it invites the reader to imagine an idealized space, almost a paradise where any couple may rest, dance, lay on the generously sunny Caribbean beaches, make love (or have sex) and be entertained by the dancing “natives”.

colourful native entertainers  
dancing at de edge of de sea  
a man-an-woman combination  
choreographing  
de dream of de tourist industry

Here the idealized view of the touristic industry is transformed into a political metaphor: the Caribbean country is a place for primitive “natives” who are ready to serve the colonial tourist. The “gentle wit” referred to by Gifford<sup>33</sup> as regards Nichols’ poetry is more than gentle in this poem, for she acidly criticizes the photographer’s colonialist view in “fabricating” a narrative to serve the touristic colonizing industry. Everything is false: from the “man-an-woman combination” to the choreographed dance. The intention is merely to satisfy the commercial interests of an industry whose only purpose is to

32. A longer analysis of this and other poems by Nichols appear in my “Grace Nichols e o corpo como poética da resistência”, a chapter of BRANDÃO, I. (ed.). *O corpo em revista – olhares interdisciplinares*, Maceió, Edufal, 2005.

33. See Gifford, Terry. *Green Voices: Understanding Contemporary Nature Poetry*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, CCC Press, 2011, p 175 [Manchester, Manchester UP, 1995].

attract the foreign visitor to a “primitive” place, where what is advertised – the paradisaical touristic resort – is ritualized, and the body (from the country itself to the tourist men and women) becomes an object to be consumed as goods to be sold and bought by anyone with money. The focus of the poem is, therefore, about the hindrance imposed by the colonizing culture within Caribbean external nature as well as within the human nature of the Caribbeans who are represented by the dancers.

For Gifford, Nichols’ ‘green voice’ is “politicized, witty and exploring what it means to live with the constructions of nature located in two places”.<sup>34</sup> This double construction takes the reader to the ambivalence felt by the poet with what she sees in the Jamaican postcard. As the addressee of this card, she may be thought of as the one who left that country to live in a different one, demarcating thus a diasporic movement.<sup>35</sup> Her feeling of nostalgia can be seen at once in the third and fourth stanzas where the poet uses the politics of a different English (with a small “e”) through the missing sounds such as the “th” that is shown through “de”: “an *de* sea so blue / an *de* sky so blue / an *de* sand gold fuh true” (my italics).<sup>36</sup> Here Nichols demarcates her “Existential Territory”<sup>37</sup>, that is a place where one is free to use one’s own language without the colonizer’s interference. This very feeling can be seen in other verses of the poem: “*wid*” instead of “with”, “*he*” instead of “his”, “*riddum*” instead of “rhythm”, “*lil mo*” instead of “little more”. Thus, language is also a metaphor for the nostalgia felt by the poet in relation to her homeland which she left behind. This leads to the notion of resistance, departing from the “body” of language.

This poem is not exactly postmodern as such, but it is possible to capture in its narrated story elements which originate from the notion of photography as art, which may be seen as social practice, even if related to the selling of an

34. GIFFORD, *Op. Cit.*, p. 177.

35. See ASCHROFT, B., G. GRIFFITHS and H. TIFFIN. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. London and New York, Routledge, 1998.

36. It is possible to associate the longing expressed in the language of the poem with what has been termed by E. K. Brathwaite (1979) as “nation language”, a political use of the language of the colonizer by the once colonized peoples (MCLEOD, J. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester, Manchester UP, 2000, 25). See also BRATHWAITE, E. K. “From History of the Voice” in THIEME, J. (ed.). *The Arnold Anthology of Post-Colonial Literature in English*. London, Arnold, 1996.

37. The concept of Existential Territory is taken from Angélica Soares’ reading of Deleuze and Gattari, which is “um espaço de ressingularização da experiência humana” (*Op. Cit.*, p.56), meaning “a space of re-singularization of human experience” (my translation), or a place of resistance in which the subject locates him/herself. This is the sense which I associate with Nichols’ poetry.

image for ideological or more obscure reasons. For Connor it is possible that a narrative is present or absent in a photograph: any photograph “inescapably implicates a world of activity, responsible for, and to, the fragments circumscribed by the frame: world of causes, of ‘before’ and ‘after’, of ‘if, then...’, a narrated world”.<sup>38</sup>

This “narrated world” is implicit in the poem under analysis: it is a world about which one feels nostalgia (the words are witnesses of this because of their changed sounds), but one may also criticize. The couple symbolize the subliminal objective of the touristic industry, that is to ‘conspire’ to obtain more visitors, and as a consequence, more money. The poem’s representation of colonized nature versus colonizing culture exhibits the open wound of the heritage of colonial exploitation and the chronic poverty of West Indian countries whose “native entertainers” are also an advertisement to attract potential visitors.

The image also shows us that the photographer succeeded in revealing through the dancing couple “a smiling conspiracy / to capture the dream of de tourist industry”. This is a dream of exploitation (“Anything fuh de sake of de tourist industry / Anything fuh de sake of de tourist industry”) and presents more implications than the mere colonizing view of two “natives”: both “man-an-woman” are also there to show their bodies as commodities to be sold along with the landscape.

he staging a dance-prance  
 head in red band  
 beating he waist drum  
 as it he want to drown she wid sound  
 an yes, *he muscle looking strong*  
  
 she a vision of frilly red  
 back-backing to de riddum  
 exposing *she brown leg*  
 arcing like lil mo  
 she will limbo into de sea  
 (my italics)

For this reason, the Jamaican “natives” are there selling a dream for the new look for the neo-coloniser, as defined by the photographer’s eye. This is the narrative which is implicit in this postcard: it is a political narrative that shows nature human and non-human alike being exploited in a double way, for it shows another feature of the exploitation that is in the eyes of the marketing

38. CONNOR, S. *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary*. London, Basil Blackwell, 1989, p.106 (original italics).



industry, whose intention is to attract consumers to live in a world that is false and idealized. The medicine Nichols brings to the body (including the eye) is resistance. Therefore the poem suggests that the politics of resistance seems to be the only way out of our consumer and globalised society.

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To close this article, I would like to go back to the questions raised in the beginning: the relation between nature and literature happens because we cannot separate the world of scholarship from the “real” world as though the literary representation could have an existence apart from everything else. I share with Glen Love (2003) the sense that human beings are unique in nature in their interest in the arts and literature. The questions posed by ecocriticism, and by a feminist ecocriticism especially, propose the problematizing of the nature of the body of writing, of the language that constitutes the literary text.

The choice of the poets briefly studied here was guided by the sense that the literature produced by women in the contemporary world has revealed their contribution to culture in an exemplary way and, ideologically, has also demarcated their place in a critical way, delicately but strongly politicizing the context of their writing in poetry and prose. The natural world appears dialogically with the human, but this is not always a harmonious dialogue, as has been noted in the poems chosen for analysis. If Arriete Vilela, on the one hand, shows joy in the relation between word/nature/passion/conflict, exploring the human being's core as a possible mirror for nature, Grace Nichols, on the other hand, politicizes the debate in her verses, when she confronts the cultural colonizing wish to maintain the people who were once colonized in a condition of permanent exploitation. Hence, these two poets show the interconnection between external nature and the nature of the human being in dialogue with the non-human, which interacts through language in a body of work through which such dialogues and conflicts can be poetically posed, considered, resisted, celebrated.

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## RESEÑA

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**CABEZA MODERNA/CORAZÓN PATRIARCAL.** (*Un diagnóstico social de género*), de María Antonia García de León. (Prólogo de Celia Amorós). Editorial Anthropos (Libros de la revista Anthropos, Madrid, 2011. 144 páginas)

El título de este libro me remitió, en cuanto lo ví, a esos tipos de mujer que juegan en doble tablero de las que habla Simone de Beauvoir en la conclusión de *El segundo sexo*.

Era en 1949; un año antes, las Naciones Unidas habían emitido la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos (ya no «Derechos del Hombre», como las anteriores, gracias a la contribución de Eleanor Roosevelt). Beauvoir ve el futuro con optimismo, y este acontecimiento le hace escribir: «Ya no somos, como nuestras antepasadas, unas combatientes; en términos generales, hemos ganado la partida». Sin embargo, haciendo balance del estado de la cuestión, después de haber analizado el fenómeno de la opresión patriarcal a lo largo del ensayo, observa que todavía no se ha alcanzado, de hecho, esa anhelada igualdad y hace allí una tipología de las mujeres reales clasificándolas en tres grupos: las tradicionales, las modernas y las que juegan en doble tablero. Las primeras reclaman consideraciones propias de un tiempo pasado; las segundas reclaman nueva estima amparadas en sus nuevos derechos y las últimas ambas cosas: unas veces se comportan como «modernas», otras como tradicionales (como Elisab, dice Beauvoir, tomando el nombre del personaje de Jouhandeau en *Chroniques maritales*), unas veces queriendo, otras, sin querer. Pues bien, a estos comportamientos se refiere María Antonia García de León en su último libro de sociología. Casi setenta años después del libro

de Beauvoir, el tipo híbrido cabeza moderna/corazón patriarcal es el más numeroso en nuestras sociedades occidentales; de las Elisás, mejor no hablar.

En definitiva, este tipo de mujeres todavía no ejercen plenamente su libertad, el más humano de los atributos, aquel que nos caracteriza como existentes, según la filósofa francesa. Y no la ejercen porque, tan acostumbradas como están a no ejercerla de frente, sino en sesgado y a medias, ya no saben bien cómo es eso de obrar como seres plenamente humanos. ¿Por qué ocurre esto? ¿Por qué son así las cosas? Porque a las mujeres todavía se les sigue educando mayoritariamente para la subordinación, para ser seres secundarios, como las nombró Beauvoir. No es nada fácil, incluso para las que juegan a dos bandas, cobrar conciencia del fraude de que son víctimas; es decir, del verdadero alcance del poder masculino. E incluso, muchas que son conscientes, repiten, sin embargo, conductas estereotipadas, mezcla de las de sus madres y de las de su estatus, por el que están al mismo nivel de los varones, a los que ahora toman por modelo: son las que forman parte de las élites.

María Antonia García de León lleva años desbrozando el terreno de la diferencia de los sexos en el ámbito social. Este libro es el último de una serie de estudios dedicados a la sociología del género desde los años 90 del pasado siglo: *Élites discriminadas* (1994), *Herederas y heridas* (2002), *Rebeldes ilustradas (La otra transición)* (2008), *Antropólogas, politólogas y sociólogas. Sobre género, biografía y ciencias sociales* (2009). Y aquí, reflexionando sobre lo investigado acerca de las mujeres –en su proceso de llegada al feminismo desde los movimientos sociales feministas de los años 70 y desde la curiosidad del fenómeno social– hace un diagnóstico del presente que enlaza perfectamente –en 70 años de distancia– con el de la Conclusión de *El segundo sexo*, aunque su enfoque es exclusivamente socio-antropológico. Constata María Antonia García de León: primero, que el cambio social de las mujeres ha sido uno de los fenómenos más importantes, a la escala social concreta de nuestras sociedades occidentales y a escala global; segundo, que los obstáculos interpuestos por nuestra sociedad patriarcal no han sido menos importantes, lo cual corrobora la intensidad de la opresión masculina que denunciaba Beauvoir: García de León lo ha estudiado analizando el proceso de ascenso de las mujeres a élites profesionales. Pero, en un tercer momento, la investigadora se topa con el fenómeno de lo que llama la «esquizofrenia social» que muestran los comportamientos de las mujeres y de los hombres– a estas alturas de los tiempos– y hasta de la sociedad toda: ejecutiva de día, femenina de noche; moderna en lo público, tradicional en lo privado. Lo mismo los hombres: a ratos igualitario, a ratos autoritario y dominador. *Cabeza moderna/corazón patriarcal* muestra

la esquizofrenia social que exhiben las conductas de mujeres y hombres; y también la sociedad en su conjunto.

Nuestra autora divide su libro en tres partes. En la primera parte que titula «Habitar desde los arquetipos de género», frase que remite al concepto de *habitus* de Bourdieu, nos muestra hasta qué punto nuestras conductas, revestidas por la marca de género que nos imprime el sistema patriarcal como sistema de dominación de género, están moldeadas por la cultura masculina en la que hemos crecido y vivimos. A la base de todos los códigos que configuran nuestra vida social, las mujeres somos siempre hembras reproductivas con todas las connotaciones de la *mujer objeto* y los varones seres destinados al trabajo y a la vida pública aunque, por encima de su propia naturaleza, individuos. Es decir, la misma ideología que sostenía Rousseau en *Emilio o de la educación*.

Descendiendo a lo concreto, afirma que «habitar un arquetipo de género es estar bajo el dominio de las heterodesignaciones», según el concepto introducido por Amelia Valcárcel para describir el estatuto de las mujeres en nuestras sociedades. De modo que somos el ser que se nos ha forzado a ser, como decía Beauvoir. García de León nos invita, de una forma muy gráfica, a tomar conciencia de esto; remedando a los que practican el yoga, nos dice: «Instálese en el arquetipo de género y vea los fenómenos sociales que suceden a su alrededor y que mismamente usted incorpora» como una experiencia para tomar conciencia de lo que está pasando... todavía hoy.

Estamos ante un fenómeno de poder, del poder masculino o patriarcal sobre las mujeres, basado en el mito de la diferencia esencial entre los sexos. El fenómeno se le hizo especialmente visible en el estudio de las élites profesionales. Como es sabido, las mujeres como élite profesional son minoría en nuestra sociedades democráticas. Y además se da la proporción: a más poder, menos mujeres; a menos poder, más mujeres. Esto es, entre las minorías más restringidas, entre la minoría de los que tienen un poder informal, el poder por excelencia basado en la fuerza (generalmente del dinero), casi el 100% son hombres. Entre los altos profesionales también se detecta la existencia de filtros para las mujeres en el hecho de que responden a ciertas tipologías: las que permanecen en la sombra cual especie de secretaria-confidente-ama de llaves; las «segundas relevantes» que no se atreven a disputar el poder al amo que se lo ha otorgado, etc.

Finalmente, merece la pena destacar el hecho sociológico de que la conducta de muchas mujeres que llegan a la élite con respecto a las que han quedado rezagadas es absolutamente discriminatoria, muestran lo que nuestra autora ha denominado «el síndrome de la abeja reina».

La segunda parte del libro está dedicada a analizar qué tipo de poder tienen las mujeres ahora mismo, cuando las cosas están cambiando pero aún no han cambiado del todo: cuáles son las luces y las sombras de este gran cambio social que tanto tiempo está llevándose por delante. Ya hasta los sociólogos varones (Flaquer, Bourdieu) han reconocido que el predominio del poder masculino no tiene ninguna justificación. Subirats y Castells han definido el mundo de las mujeres como «una cultura propia hecha de observación subordinada y comportamiento estratégico a partir de una información más variopinta que la de los hombres y de los atributos en que tenían ventaja comparativa, desde la seducción hasta el socorro del frágil ego masculino», mientras que «competir es la gran palabra de la masculinidad (...) competir es la versión actual de pelear». Nuestra autora propone como programa feminizar la masculinidad y masculinizar la feminidad, y admitir en el juego de lo social todas las variantes de nuevas identidades de género que emergen».

La tercera parte del libro se titula «Memorias intelectuales de género». Hace aquí la autora una historia sociológica de su generación en nuestro país atendiendo a los dos géneros, masculino y femenino. ¿Cómo hicieron la transición de la dictadura a la democracia? ¿Cómo incidieron los cambios socio-políticos en su conducta social? Sectores de mujeres hubieron de hacer una doble transición: la personal y la política; sectores de hombres hicieron una: la política.

En el apartado titulado «Biografías de científicas» señala la complementariedad de una investigación sobre este tema con respecto a su estudio de las élites femeninas: una reconstrucción de las biografías de las mujeres que han llegado a cumbres de poder social nos permite observar a la individuo en relación con la historia de su tiempo, visualizar las intersecciones de la historia de la vida de las personas con la historia de su sociedad y, en el caso de las mujeres, nos permite ver hasta qué punto «lo personal es epistemológico» expresión que, parafraseando a K. Millett (lo personal es político), nos indica que la trayectoria personal aporta conocimiento, sobre todo en el caso de las mujeres que han tenido que abrirse camino en una sociedad que no les ofrecía modelos emancipatorios femeninos. Por ello, «las biografías de las mujeres científicas pueden constituir una epistemología de género»

La cuarta parte titulada «Leer la sociedad (carnés de género)» contiene reflexiones en torno a la línea de investigación: mujeres y poder. Y también comentarios sobre diferentes obras feministas. Sobre el poder, la autora hace tres apuntes, el tercero de los cuales es una especie de programa: 1) Alcanzar el poder en pie de igualdad con los hombres; 2) Intervenir en la vida profesional y pública; 3) Una vez alcanzado el poder, saber desenvolverse en él,



conservarlo y transformarlo; 4) Evitar el síndrome de la «abeja reina»; 5) Erradicar los aspectos bastardos y execrables del poder; 6) Destacar la vertiente de estreno que las mujeres aportan al caer en la marmita del poder.

Los comentarios son, sucesivamente, de la obra colectiva *El movimiento feminista en España en los años 70*, editado por Cátedra a cargo de Isabel Morant, la biografía de Carmen Laforet escrita por Anna Caballé y la obra de Celia Amorós *Mujeres e imaginarios de la globalización*, obras todas ellas que nos muestran diferentes direcciones de los estudios de género en la actualidad.

Termina el libro con el análisis, desde el punto de vista del género, de tres films significativos en relación con nuestro tema: *Mujercitas*, en sus diferentes versiones, *An education* (2009), dirigida por Lone Scherfig y *Up in the air* de Jason Reitman (2010), y un apéndice sobre «Género y edad». Recordemos que la autora cursó estudios de cinematografía y sus comentarios de estas películas enriquecen las tesis sostenidas en el libro. Un libro asequible al gran público, lleno de sugerencias y rico en datos e itinerarios del campo de los estudios de género que prenderá por su interés a todo el que se acerque a «husmear» más allá de su portada, la cual es absolutamente irresistible.



## RESEÑA BIO-BIBLIOGRÁFICA

### Izabel F.O. Brandão

Izabel F. O. Brandão: es profesora de Literatura Inglesa y brasileña en la Universidad de Alagoas (UFAL), Brasil. Sus líneas de investigación incluyen escritoras contemporáneas, estudios de género y crítica literaria feminista. Ha editado y co-editado varios libros, incluyendo *O teatro e Linda Mascarenhas* (2011), *Gênero e outros lugares* (2009), *O corpo em revista* (2005), *Refazendo nós: ensaios sobre mulher e literatura* (2003) e *Entre o amor e a palavra: olhar(es) sobre Arriete Vilela* (2001). Ha publicado tres libros de poesía: *Ilha de olhos e espelhos* (2003) y *Espiral de fogo* (1998) y *As horas da minha alegria* (2014). Su investigación actual se centra en la obra de la escritora caribeña Grace Nichols además de escritoras brasileñas contemporáneas. Además de Brasil ha publicado en Francia, Inglaterra, Italia y EE.UU.

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Senior Lecture in English Literature at the German and English Department of the University of Granada (Spain). Her research interest on the relationship between individuals and the environment started while working on her doctoral dissertation: *Fantasy, epic and utopia in The Lord of the Rings: a thematic and reader-response analysis*, which she defended in 1996 (*cum laude* with distinction). Since then, she has published extensively on fantasy, children's literature, literature and cinema, ecocriticism and ecofeminism. She is a member of the research groups *Estudios de narrativa en lengua inglesa* (HUM424) and GIECO.

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La mayor parte de sus publicaciones tratan de la literatura contemporánea de minorías étnicas norteamericanas y el sentido del arraigo o lugar, temas de la frontera, subversiones culturales de la hegemonía, mestizaje literario y cultural, ecocrítica, justicia medioambiental y ecofeminismo. Recientemente también está investigando la literatura española contemporánea desde un punto de vista ecocrítico.

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Associate Professor of American Literature in the Department of Modern Philology and member of the board of the Benjamin Franklin Research Institute of American Studies, both of the University of Alcalá, Spain. She has co-edited a number of books devoted to ecocriticism including *Paisajes Culturales: Herencia y Conservación // Cultural Landscapes: Heritage and Conservation* (2010) and *Ecocríticas. Literatura y Medio Ambiente* (2010) as well as special issues of journals: *Nerter*, 15-16 (2010) and *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 64 (April 2012). She served as the President of EASLCE (European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and Environment) for the 2010-2012 term. She founded and coordinates the only formal ecocritical research group in Spain, GIECO ([www.gieco.es](http://www.gieco.es)), and is the General Editor of the journal *Ecozon@. European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment* ([www.ecozona.eu](http://www.ecozona.eu)). She also directs an ecocritical book series, CLYMA, in the Franklin Collection, the first volume being *La realidad y simbología de la montaña* (ed. Juan Ignacio Oliva, 2012). Most of her publications deal with contemporary ethnic American literatures and sense of place, border issues, cultural subversions of the dominant ethos, cultural and literary *mestizaje*, ecocriticism, environmental justice and ecofeminism. She is also doing research on contemporary Spanish literature and the environment.

### Greta Gaard

Greta Gaard es profesora de inglés en la Universidad de Wisconsin-River Falls y miembro del profesorado de la comunidad en Estudios de la Mujer de la Universidad Estatal Metropolitana, St Paul, MN. Fue uno de los fundadores del Partido Verde Minnesota en 1993 y como activista ha organizado movimientos contra la globalización económica; ahora colabora activamente con [MN350.org](http://MN350.org) y Tar Sands Action. Empezando con *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (1993), *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism* (1998) y *Ecological Politics* (1998), entre sus publicaciones más recientes destacan *The Nature of Home* (Arizona UP, 2007) y el volumen co-editado *International Perspectives*

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Greta Gaard is a professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, and a Community Faculty in Women's Studies at Metropolitan State University in St. Paul, MN. She has worked to found the Minnesota Green Party in 1993, and to organize movements against economic globalization through direct action; she is currently active with MN350.org and Tar Sands Action. Beginning with *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (1993), *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism* (1998) and *Ecological Politics* (1998), her more recent books include *The Nature of Home* (Arizona UP, 2007) and a co-edited volume, *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism* (Routledge 2013). She recently served on the Executive Council for the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE).

### Terry Gifford

Terry Gifford es profesor honorario de la Universidad de Alicante, y profesor visitante en el Centro de Escritura y Medio Ambiente, Universidad de Bath Spa, Reino Unido. Es autor de *Reconnecting With John Muir: Essays in Post-Pastoral Practice* (2006), *Pastoral* (1999) y *Green Voices* (1995, 2ª edición 2011), considerada como una de las obras pioneras en ecocrítica. Ha co-editado con Fiona Becket *Culture, Creativity and Environment: New Environmentalist Criticism* (2007) y con Teresa Gómez Reus *Women in Transit through Literary Liminal Spaces* (2013). Ha hecho lecturas ecofeministas sobre D.H. Lawrence y ha escrito exhaustivamente sobre Ted Hughes: *Ted Hughes* (2009); y es editor de *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes* (2011). Es también miembro del grupo de investigación española de ecocrítica GIECO. Para más información consultar [www.terrygifford.co.uk](http://www.terrygifford.co.uk)

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*Environmentalism Criticism* (2007) and with Teresa Gómez Reus *Women in Transit through Literary Liminal Spaces* (2013). He has written ecofeminist readings of D.H. Lawrence and extensively on Ted Hughes: *Ted Hughes* (2009) and edited *The Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes* (2011). He is also a member of the Spanish group of ecocriticism GIECO. For more information see [www.terrygifford.co.uk](http://www.terrygifford.co.uk)

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### Lorraine Kerslake

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Professor and Chair of the Department of English at the University of Central Florida, he has authored *Transversal Ecocritical Practice* (2013), *Ecocritical Explorations in Literary and Cultural Studies* (2009), *Farther Afield in the Study of Nature Oriented Literature* (2000), *A Place for Wayfaring: The Poetry and Prose of Gary Snyder* (2000), and *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* (1995). He has also edited or co-edited such books as *The Literature of Nature: An International Sourcebook* (1998), and *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism and Pedagogy* (1998), with a Chinese translation of it published in 2013. He was the founding editor of *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies Literature and Environment*. His ecocritical work has been translated into Chinese, Danish, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish. He teaches critical theory, modern and contemporary American literature, comparative literature, ecocriticism and ecofeminism.

### Serpil Oppermann

Profesora de literatura inglesa y estudios eco-culturales en la Universidad de Hacettepe, Ankara. Sus ensayos sobre la ecocrítica han aparecido en *The Trumpeter*, *ISLE*, *Critique*, *Tamkang Review*, *Mosaic*, *Anglia*, *Ecozon@*, y *O-Zone*, entre otras revistas, así como en colecciones de ecocrítica tales como *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches* (2011) de Axel Goodbody y Kate Rigby, *Literature, Ecology, Ethics: Recent Trends in Ecocriticism* (2012), de Timo Müller y Michael Sauter, *Ecology and Life Writing* (2013), de Alfred Hornung y Zhao Baisheng, fue co-autora junto con Serenella Iovino del epílogo en *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory Beyond Green* (2013) de Jeffrey Jerome Cohen y *Elemental Ecocriticism* (próximamente 2014). Es co-editor de *The Future of Ecocriticism: New Horizons* (2011), y editor del primer libro turco de ensayos ecocríticos, *Ekoeleştiri: Çevre ve Edebiyat* [Ecocrítica: Medioambiente y Literatura] (2012), y de *International Ecocriticism: Young Voices* (próximamente 2014). Ha co-editado también *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism* (junto con Greta Gaard y Simon C. Estok) (Routledge, 2013), y *Material Ecocriticism* (junto con Serenella Iovino) (Indiana UP, próximamente 2014). Oppermann es miembro del comité asesor de *ISLE*, el comité editorial de

*Ecozon@*, y la revista australiana, *PAN: Philosophy, Activism, Nature*. Forma parte también del grupo «Feminist Task Force» propuesto para ASLE 2015.

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Professor of English literature and ecocultural studies at Hacettepe University, Ankara, her essays on ecocriticism appeared in *The Trumpeter*, *ISLE*, *Critique*, *Tamkang Review*, *Mosaic*, *Anglia*, *Ecozon@*, and *O-Zone*, among other journals, as well as in ecocritical collections such as Axel Goodbody and Kate Rigby's *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches* (2011), Timo Müller and Michael Sauter's *Literature, Ecology, Ethics: Recent Trends in Ecocriticism* (2012), Alfred Hornung and Zhao Baisheng's *Ecology and Life Writing* (2013), and with her Afterwords, co-authored with Serenella Iovino, in Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory Beyond Green* (2013) and *Elemental Ecocriticism* (forthcoming 2014). She is the co-editor of *The Future of Ecocriticism: New Horizons* (2011), and editor of the first Turkish book of ecocritical essays, *Ekoeleştiri: Çevre ve Edebiyat* [Ecocriticism: Environment and Literature] (2012), and of *International Ecocriticism: Young Voices* (forthcoming 2014). She has also co-edited *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism* (with Greta Gaard and Simon C. Estok, Routledge, 2013), and *Material Ecocriticism* (with Serenella Iovino, Indiana UP, forthcoming 2014). Oppermann serves on the advisory board of *ISLE*, the editorial board of *Ecozon@*, and Australian journal, *PAN: Philosophy, Activism, Nature*. She is also part of the «Feminist Task Force» proposed for ASLE 2015.

### Esther Rey Torrijos

Profesora asociada en la Facultad de Filología, Universidad Complutense de Madrid (España), donde ha investigado la obra narrativa de escritoras anglosajonas contemporáneas, especialmente Elizabeth Bowen y Margaret Atwood. Ha publicado artículos relacionados con los estudios de género y el ecofeminismo en las revistas académicas *Canadaria* (Revista Canaria de Estudios Canadienses), *NERTER* y *RCEI* (Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses), así como capítulos sobre crítica literaria ecofeminista en los volúmenes *Ecocríticas: Cultura, Literatura y Medioambiente* (2010), *Glocal Ireland: Current Perspectives on Literature and the Visual Arts* (2011), y *Realidad y Simbología de la Montaña* (2012).

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Associate lecturer at the Faculty of Philology, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain, where she has researched the works of contemporary Anglo-Saxon women writers, focusing on the narrative of Elizabeth Bowen and Margaret Atwood. She has published articles on women's studies and ecofeminism in academic journals, including *Canadaria* (Revista Canaria de Estudios Canadienses), *NERTER* and *RCEI* (Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses), and has contributed essays on feminist ecocriticism to the following volumes: *Ecocríticas: Cultura, Literatura y Medioambiente* (2010), *Glocal Ireland: Current Perspectives on Literature and the Visual Arts* (2011), and *Realidad y Simbología de la Montaña* (2012).

### Diana Villanueva Romero

Profesora de lengua inglesa y de literatura postcolonial en la Universidad de Extremadura (España). Realizó sus estudios de doctorado en Lenguas Modernas en la Universidad de Alcalá (España) en la que también realizó un Máster en Estudios Norteamericanos. En ambos casos eligió escribir su trabajo de investigación sobre dos escritores de la naturaleza norteamericanos: Gary Snyder y Alison H. Deming respectivamente. Le interesan las intersecciones entre la ecocrítica, el ecofeminismo, y los estudios de animales. Esto se refleja en su próximo artículo sobre la novela de ciencia de ficción *Eva* de Peter Dickinson que será publicado en el volumen *International Ecocriticism: New Ecocritical Pathways from the Fringes* editado por Serpil Oppermann. Ha sido un activo miembro de GIECO-Grupo de Investigación en Ecocrítica adscrito al Instituto Franklin de la Universidad de Alcalá desde su fundación y ha colaborado en el pasado con el programa medioambiental de Friends of Thoreau en España. Su interés por la ecocrítica la ha llevado a viajar a Reno (Nevada, EEUU) en dos ocasiones donde pasó varios meses trabajando con el ecocrítico Scott Slovic en varios proyectos como una antología de literatura de la energía y una entrevista sobre los orígenes y la expansión internacional de la ecocrítica que fue publicada en *Ecozon@, European Journal of Literature, Culture, and Environment* en 2011. Actualmente está a punto de terminar su tesis doctoral sobre literatura de primates.

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Teaches English language and postcolonial literature at the University of Extremadura, Spain. She holds a Master's Degree in American Studies from the University of Alcalá (Spain) as well as a Master's Degree in Modern Languages from the same institution. For both of these she wrote theses on American

nature writers: Gary Snyder and Alison H. Deming respectively. She is interested in the intersections between ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and animal studies. This is illustrated in her forthcoming essay on Peter Dickinson's science fiction novel *Eva* to be published in *International Ecocriticism: New Ecocritical Pathways from the Fringes* edited by Serpil Oppermann. She has been an active member of GIECO-Research Group in Ecocriticism at the Franklin Institute, University of Alcalá, since its foundation and has collaborated in the past with Friends of Thoreau's environmental program in Spain. Her interest in ecocriticism has taken her to travel to Reno, (Nevada, USA) twice where she spent several months working with ecocritic Scott Slovic on several projects such as an anthology on energy literature, and an interview on the origins and expansion of ecocriticism internationally which was published in *Ecozon@, European Journal of Literature, Culture, and Environment* in 2010. She is currently finishing a dissertation on primate literature.

La revista *Feminismo/s* se publica semestralmente. Está abierta a las aportaciones del personal investigador que compone el Centro de Estudios sobre la Mujer de la Universidad de Alicante, así como a toda la comunidad académica. La organización editorial se realiza a través de números monográficos, estando prevista en su caso, la publicación de algunos números en los que se presente una miscelánea de artículos. El carácter de la publicación, al igual que la del Centro de Estudios sobre la Mujer, es multidisciplinar.

## NORMAS EDITORIALES DE LA REVISTA *FEMINISMO/S*

1. Los trabajos, que necesariamente deberán ser producto de investigación original, se presentarán en soporte magnético utilizando el procesador de textos Word, y además impresos en la forma habitual.
2. Los artículos serán redactados con letra Times New Roman de 12 puntos y con un interlineado de un espacio y medio.
3. El título del artículo irá centrado y en letra mayúscula de 12 puntos. El nombre del autor del trabajo se pondrá unas líneas debajo del título, a la derecha, en letra de 10 puntos y mayúscula. Justo debajo se escribirá el nombre de la Universidad o, en su defecto, la ciudad a la que el autor/a pertenece, en letra minúscula de 10 puntos.

Un ejemplo sería:

SEXISMO Y VIOLENCIA: LA SOCIALIZACIÓN A TRAVÉS  
DE LOS VIDEOJUEGOS

ENRIQUE J. DÍEZ GUTIÉRREZ  
Universidad de León

4. La extensión de los artículos será entre 15 y 18 páginas.
5. La primera línea de cada párrafo irá sangrada.
6. Las citas en el texto con una extensión superior a tres líneas irán sangradas, sin entrecomillar y en letra de 10 puntos. Las citas de menor extensión se integrarán en el texto, entrecomilladas y con letra de 12 puntos.
7. Los títulos de libros y de revistas citados irán en letra cursiva. Los títulos de artículos o capítulos de libros se consignarán entre comillas.
8. Las notas serán a pie de página, con letra de 10 puntos e interlineado sencillo.
9. Las referencias bibliográficas se harán siempre en nota a pie de página y no en el texto. El modelo para las citas de libros será el siguiente:

ARRÁEZ, José Luis (coord.). *No te di mis ojos, me los arrebataste. Ensayo sobre la discriminación, misoginia y violencia contra las mujeres desde la literatura*. Alicante, Colección Lilith, 2010.

10. Las citas de artículos o capítulos de libros se realizarán según el siguiente modelo:

GORDANO, Cecilia. «Construyendo sentido sobre internet en el espacio de la diáspora: mujeres latinas inmigrantes en Granada». *Feminismo/s* 14 (2009), pp. 143-162.

CRAMPE-CASNABET, Michelle: «Las mujeres en las obras filosóficas del siglo XVIII», en Georges Duby y Michelle Perrot (dirs.): *Historia de las Mujeres*, vol. 3, Madrid, Taurus, 2000, pp. 344-384.

11. Si una obra ya ha sido citada con anterioridad, en la referencia bibliográfica se omitirá el título y se citará de la siguiente manera:

BERENGUER, Elisa. *Op.cit.*, p. 345.

Si se citan a lo largo del trabajo diferentes obras de un/a mismo/a autor/a, se identificará el título del trabajo al que se hace referencia en cada ocasión:

BERENGUER, Elisa. *La investigación feminista...* *Op.cit.*, p. 345.

Si se cita varias veces seguidas la misma obra, se omitirán el título y el nombre del/de la autor/a y se seguirá el siguiente modelo de citación:

BERENGUER, Elisa. *La investigación feminista...* *Op.cit.*, p. 345.

Ibíd., p. 22.

Ibíd., p. 35.

Para citar mismo autor/a, misma obra, misma página: *Ibidem*.

12. Las webs se citarán de acuerdo con el siguiente modelo:  
<[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/ES/2\\_barometros](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/ES/2_barometros)>, consultado el 19-06-2008.
13. Los diferentes apartados del texto se ordenarán siguiendo la numeración arábica (1,2,3,...) y el título de cada uno de ellos irá en letra minúscula y en negrita. Los subapartados se numerarán de la siguiente manera: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc. y sus títulos irán en minúscula y en cursiva.
14. Al final de cada texto se incluirán unas «Referencias bibliográficas». El sangrado de la bibliografía irá en Francesa.
15. Los artículos irán acompañados de un resumen de 10 líneas en español y en inglés, de unas palabras clave en español y en inglés, así como de un breve currículum del autor/ de la autora (8 líneas).
16. Las fotografías e imágenes deben entregarse en formato digital, separadas del texto, en formato tif, con una calidad de 300 puntos por pulgada. Deben ir identificadas convenientemente según sean citadas en el texto.
17. Todos los trabajos serán sometidos a informes anónimos de especialistas de reconocido prestigio externos al Consejo Editorial y a la Universidad de Alicante. Los informes son la base de la toma de decisiones sobre la publicación de los artículos, que corresponde en última instancia al Consejo Editorial.
18. Se ruega acompañar los originales con la dirección postal de la autora o autor, así como su correo electrónico.
19. Los trabajos no aceptados para su publicación serán devueltos a petición de la autora o autor.  
Remitir los trabajos a:  
Redacción de *Feminismo/s*  
Centro de Estudios sobre la Mujer  
Universidad de Alicante  
Apdo. 99 – 03080 Alicante  
e-mail: cem@ua.es





La revista *Feminismo/s* es publica semestralment. Està oberta a les aportacions del personal investigador que compon el Centre d'Estudis sobre la Dona de la Universitat d'Alacant, i també a tota la comunitat acadèmica. L'organització editorial es porta a terme a través de números monogràfics, i també està prevista, si és el cas, la publicació d'alguns números en què es presenta una miscel·lània d'articles. El caràcter de la publicació, igual que la del Centre d'Estudis sobre la Dona, és multidisciplinari.

## NORMES EDITORIALS DE LA REVISTA *FEMINISMO/S*

1. Els treballs, que necessàriament hauran de ser producte d'investigació original, es presentaran en suport magnètic utilitzant el processador de textos Word i, a més, impresos en la forma habitual.
2. Els articles seran redactats amb lletra Times New Roman de 12 punts i amb un interlineat d'un espai i mig.
3. El títol de l'article estarà centrat i en lletra majúscula de 12 punts. El nom de l'autor del treball es posarà unes quantes línies davall del títol, a la dreta, en lletra de 10 punts i majúscula. Justament a sota s'escriurà el nom de la Universitat o, en defecte d'això, la ciutat a la qual pertany l'autor/a, en lletra minúscula de 10 punts.

Un exemple seria:

SEXISMO Y VIOLENCIA: LA SOCIALIZACIÓN A TRAVÉS  
DE LOS VIDEOJUEGOS

ENRIQUE J. DÍEZ GUTIÉRREZ  
Universidad de León

4. L'extensió dels articles serà entre 15 i 18 pàgines.
5. La primera línia de cada paràgraf estarà sagnada.
6. Les citacions en el text amb una extensió superior a tres línies estaran sagnades, sense posar entre cometes, i en lletra de 10 punts. Les citacions de menys extensió s'integraran en el text, entre cometes i amb lletra de 12 punts.
7. Els títols de llibres i de revistes esmentats estaran en lletra cursiva. Els títols d'articles o capítols de llibres es consignaran entre cometes.
8. Les notes seran a peu de pàgina, amb lletra de 10 punts i interlineat senzill.
9. Les referències bibliogràfiques es faran sempre en nota a peu de pàgina i no en el text. El model per a les citacions de llibres serà el següent:

ARRÁEZ, José Luis (coord.). *No te di mis ojos, me los arrebataste. Ensayo sobre la discriminación, misoginia y violencia contra las mujeres desde la literatura*. Alicante, Colección Lilith, 2010.

10. Les citacions d'articles o capítols de llibres es faran segons el model següent:

GORDANO, Cecilia. «Construyendo sentido sobre internet en el espacio de la diáspora: mujeres latinas inmigrantes en Granada». *Feminismo/s* 14 (2009), pp. 143-162.

CRAMPE-CASNABET, Michelle: «Las mujeres en las obras filosóficas del siglo XVIII», en Georges Duby y Michelle Perrot (dirs.): *Historia de las Mujeres*, vol. 3, Madrid, Taurus, 2000, pp. 344-384.

11. Si una obra ja ha estat esmentada abans, en la referència bibliogràfica s'ometrà el títol i se citarà de la manera següent:

BERENGUER, Elisa. *Op.cit.*, p. 345.

Si se citen al llarg del treball diferents obres d'un/a mateix/a autor/a, s'identificarà el títol del treball a què es fa referència en cada ocasió:

BERENGUER, Elisa. *La investigación feminista...* *Op.cit.*, p. 345.

Si se citen diverses vegades seguides la mateixa obra, s'ometran el títol i el nom de l'autor o l'autora i se seguirà el següent model de citació:

BERENGUER, Elisa. *La investigación feminista...* *Op.cit.*, p. 345.

Ibíd., p. 22.

Ibíd., p. 35.

Per a citar mateix autor/a, mateixa obra, mateixa pàgina: *Ibidem*.

12. Les webs se citaran d'acord amb el model següent:  
<[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/ES/2\\_barometros/](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/ES/2_barometros/)>, consultat el 19-06-2008.
13. Els diferents apartats del text s'ordenaran seguint la numeració aràbiga (1,2,3,...) i el títol de cada un d'aquests estarà en lletra minúscula i en negreta. Els subapartats es numeraran de la manera següent: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc. i els seus títols estaran en minúscula i en cursiva.
14. Al final de cada text s'inclouran unes «Referències bibliogràfiques». El signat de la bibliografia serà en francesa.
15. Els articles estaran acompanyats d'un resum de 10 línies en espanyol i en anglès, d'unes paraules clau en espanyol i en anglès, i també d'un breu currículum de l'autor o l'autora (8 línies).
16. Les fotografies i imatges han de lliurar-se en format digital, separades del text, en format tif, amb una qualitat de 300 punts per polzada. Han d'estar identificades convenientment segons siguen esmentades en el text.
17. Tots els treballs seran sotmesos a informes anònims d'especialistes de reconegut prestigi externs al Consell Editorial i a la Universitat d'Alacant. Els informes són la base de la presa de decisions sobre la publicació dels articles, que correspon en última instància al Consell Editorial.
18. Es demana acompanyar els originals amb l'adreça postal de l'autora o autor, i també la seua adreça electrònica.
19. Els treballs no acceptats per a publicar-los seran tornats a petició de l'autora o autor.

S'han de remetre els treballs a:

Redacció de *Feminismo/s*  
Centre d'Estudis sobre la Dona  
Universitat d'Alacant  
Apt. 99 – 03080 Alacant  
A/e: cem@ua.es



*Feminismo/s* is published on a biannual basis, and encourages contributions from researchers at the Centre for Women's Studies of the University of Alicante, as well as from the academic community as a whole. The journal is generally published in issues devoted to a single subject, although occasional issues containing articles on a range of subjects may also be published. Both the journal and the Centre for Women's Studies are multidisciplinary in nature.

## **FEMINISMO/S: EDITORIAL POLICY AND GUIDELINES**

1. All works should be original, and should be submitted both on a CD-ROM or floppy disk containing a Microsoft Word file, and in printed form. The name of the file and its author should be written on the disk label.
2. Articles should be written in 12 point Times New Roman letter font and with 1.5 line spacing.
3. The title of the article should be centred on the page and written in 12 point upper-case letters. The name of the author should appear a few lines below the title and also on the right, in 10 point upper-case letters. The name of the university or city should come just below this and in 10 point lower-case letters.

See the following example:

SEXISMO Y VIOLENCIA: LA SOCIALIZACIÓN A TRAVÉS  
DE LOS VIDEOJUEGOS

ENRIQUE J. DÍEZ GUTIÉRREZ  
Universidad de León

4. Articles should be between 15 and 18 pages in length.
5. The first line of each paragraph should be indented.
6. Quotations in the text of over three lines in length should be indented, without quotation marks, and in 10 point letter size. Shorter quotations should be run on, in quotation marks, as part of the body of the text, and in 12 point letter size.
7. Titles of cited books and journals should be written in italics. Titles of articles and chapters of books should be enclosed in quotation marks.
8. Footnotes should appear at the bottom of the page, in 10 point letter size and with single line spacing.
9. Bibliographical references should always appear as footnotes and not in the body of the text. See the following model for citing books:

ARRÁEZ, José Luis (coord.). *No te di mis ojos, me los arrebataste. Ensayo sobre la discriminación, misoginia y violencia contra las mujeres desde la literatura*. Alicante, Colección Lilith, 2010.

10. Articles and chapters of books should be cited as in the following example:

GORDANO, Cecilia. «Construyendo sentido sobre internet en el espacio de la diáspora: mujeres latinas inmigrantes en Granada». *Feminismo/s* 14 (2009), pp. 143-162.

CRAMPE-CASNABET, Michelle: «Las mujeres en las obras filosóficas del siglo XVIII», en Georges Duby y Michelle Perrot (dirs.): *Historia de las Mujeres*, vol. 3, Madrid, Taurus, 2000, pp. 344-384.

- 11) If a work has already been cited, its title is omitted in subsequent references, as follows:

BERENGUER, Elisa. *Op.cit.*, p. 345.

If different works by the same author are cited, then the title should be given in each reference:

BERENGUER, Elisa. *La investigación feminista...* *Op.cit.*, p. 345.

If the same work is cited several times in succession, both the title and author's name should be omitted and the following model adopted:

BERENGUER, Elisa. *La investigación feminista...* *Op.cit.*, p. 345.

Ibíd., p. 22.

Ibíd., p. 35.

To quote same autor, same work, same page: *Ibidem*.

12. Web references should be given as follows:  
<[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/ES/2\\_barometros/](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/ES/2_barometros/)>, consulted on 19-06-2008.
13. Different sections of the text should be ordered using Arabic numerals (1,2,3, etc.) and section headings should be written in lower-case letters and bold type. Sub-sections should be numbered as follows: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc.; sub-section headings should be written in lower-case letters and italics.
14. A «Bibliographical references» section will appear at the end of each text. This should be indented in French style.
15. Articles should be accompanied by an abstract of about 10 lines in Spanish and English, with keywords in Spanish and English, and a short CV of the author (8 lines).
16. Photographs and graphic items should be submitted on a CD-ROM or floppy disk, separate from the text, in TIF format and with an image quality of 300 dots per inch. They should be clearly labelled according to their position in the text.
17. All contributions are evaluated anonymously by specialists of recognised prestige external to the Editorial Board and the University of Alicante. The reports sent in by these specialists form the basis for decisions concerning the publication of articles, which are ultimately made by the Editorial Board.
18. Contributions should be submitted with the author's postal and e-mail addresses.
19. Works not accepted for publication may be returned to the author on request.  
Please send contributions to:  
Redacción de *Feminismo/s*  
Centro de Estudios sobre la Mujer  
Universidad de Alicante  
Apdo. 99 – 03080 Alicante  
e-mail: [cem@ua.es](mailto:cem@ua.es)





## Números anteriores publicados

- Feminismo/s 1.** *Feminismo y multidisciplinariedad.* Helena Establier (coord.)
- Feminismo/s 2.** *Imagin/ando a la mujer.* Pilar Amador Carretero (coord.) y Mónica Moreno Seco (ed.)
- Feminismo/s 3.** *Mujer y participación política.* Mónica Moreno Seco y Clarisa Ramos Feijóo (coords.)
- Feminismo/s 4.** *Writing, memoirs, autobiography and history.* Silvia Caporale Bizzini (coord.)
- Feminismo/s 5.** *Habitar / escribir / conquistar el espacio.* Teresa Gómez Reus (ed.)
- Feminismo/s 6.** *Violencia estructural y directa: mujeres y visibilidad.* Carmen Mañas Viejo (coord.)
- Feminismo/s 7.** *Hélène Cixous: Huellas de intertextos.* Maribel Peñalver Vicea y Rosa María Rodríguez Magda (eds.)
- Feminismo/s 8.** *Mujeres y derecho.* Nieves Montesinos Sánchez y M<sup>a</sup> del Mar Esquembre Valdés (coords.). Nieves Montesinos Sánchez (ed.)
- Feminismo/s 9.** *Género, conflicto y construcción de la paz. Reflexiones y propuestas.* Eva Espinar Ruiz y Eloisa Nos Aldás (coords.)
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- Feminismo/s 12.** *Mujeres en democracia.* Nieves Montesinos Sánchez y M<sup>a</sup> del Mar Esquembre Valdes (coords. y eds.)
- Feminismo/s 13.** *Mujeres y diversidad funcional (discapacidad): construyendo un nuevo discurso.* Carmen Mañas (coord.)
- Feminismo/s 14.** *Género y nuevas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación.* Eva Espinar Ruiz (Coord.)
- Feminismo/s 15.** *¿Feminismo de la igualdad y feminismo de la diferencia?* Elena Nájera (Coord.)
- Feminismo/s 16.** *Género e imagen del poder en la historia contemporánea.* Mónica Moreno Seco y Alicia Mira Abad (Coords.)

**Feminismo/s 17.** *La arquitectura y el urbanismo con perspectiva de género.*  
María Elia Gutiérrez Mozo (Coord.)

**Feminismo/s 18.** *Salud pública desde la perspectiva de género: Hitos e innovación.*  
María Teresa Ruiz Cantero (Coord.)

**Feminismo/s 19.** *Mirada/s trans/identitarias.* Ángel Amaro (Coord.)

**Feminismo/s 20.** *La Diosa y el poder de las mujeres. Reflexiones sobre la espiritualidad femenina en el siglo XXI.* Angie Simonis (Coord.)

**Feminismo/s 21.** *Mujeres, actividad física, deporte y ocio.* Juan Tortosa Martínez  
y Lilyan Vega Ramírez (Coords.)



