

ON PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION, IDENTITY AND NONIDENTITY IN ECOFEMINIST THEORY

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This is an exchange between Ariel Salleh, author of *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx and the Postmodern* (1997) and Meira Hanson, a postgraduate researcher in Political Science at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. It touches on themes such as the body, reproductive labour, globalisation, science, social movements, nature, and nonidentity.

MH: Our dialogue began last June, following my review of *Ecofeminism as Politics* in the newsletter published by the Standing Group on Green Politics in the European Consortium for Political Research (Hanson, 1998). At the time, I had a basic knowledge of issues raised by ecofeminist writers but was new to a materialist ecofeminist analysis. While as a feminist I agreed with much of Salleh's critique of capitalist and patriarchal systems, as someone interested in Green political theory I remained doubtful as to whether what she calls a 'womanist' approach was anything more than a reconstruction of socialism. My skepticism was also directed at Salleh's use of 'nonidentity' as a source of ecofeminist theory and linkages with postcolonial struggle by means of her 'barefoot epistemology.' I was bothered by what seemed like a reduction of women's experience in the attempt to universalise connections between women's biological embodiment, reproductive work, and how these are ecologically embedded. Ariel responded to my review, providing some answers and raising more questions with me. Our e-mail discussion ran over several months, and the following is an attempt to relay that exchange to a wider group of readers. In doing this, we are grateful to *O&E* reviewers for suggesting how we might amplify and document the dialogue.

MH: One can point to common themes in the subordination of women and nature—their inferior positioning in Western thought and their common exploitation by the capitalist economy, but I do not see how this gives women a better capacity to understand these problems.

AS: Ecofeminists like to explain this in various ways. My own background is critical theory so I am interested in the dialectical phenomenology by which



people's experiences in the world shape their perceptions and knowledges. In contrast to the postmodern trend which sees everything determined by discourse, I believe—along with Marx (1973)—that while people find themselves living in conditions that are not of their own making, they also have a capacity to remake the world around them. Like Marxists, I call the process *labour*, but place emphasis not just on factory work, for example, but on the deeper anthropological sense of labour as a 'socially reproductive' metabolic exchange with the environment.

The historical reality is that a majority of human beings globally speaking, are engaged in work of this kind, subsistence and care-giving activities at the interface with 'nature,' so called. As such, they constitute a hitherto unrecognised 'meta-industrial class.' My book contends that this class holds insights and skills which we need to learn from to find our way out of the 20th Century industrial catastrophe. This is both an acknowledgement and a defiance of Marx, who privileged the predominantly male industrial working class as agent of social transformation. Most meta-industrials are women, though not exclusively so.

MH: Central to your picture of domination is the dualistic logic of identity and difference which negates object to subject—a 1/0 relation—and along which lines the classic Man/Woman = Nature divide is fashioned and perpetuated as instrumental reason.

AS: In *Ecofeminism as Politics*, I create this Man/Woman = Nature equation to parody the reductive, dualist, and positivist mindset that prevails in the West. It summarises how the dominant Eurocentric culture has for centuries seen masculine identity as belonging to the sphere of culture and the feminine as identical with 'nature.' So, men have established institutions which secure their status over and above 'natives,' women, children, animals, and the rest of 'nature.' Knowledges too, from religion to science, are contaminated by this polarised 'body logic' and used to conserve masculine superordination. One side of the M/W = N formula is accorded value as a properly human presence (1) and the other is merely objectified as a labour and sexual resource (0). The ongoing difficulties women face, even in our universities, are due to this deep structural attitude which so many individual men unconsciously bear.

While deconstruction of binarisms is associated with Derrida (1977) and French poststructuralism, feminists have always perceived oppositional thinking as typically patriarchal (Irigaray, 1985; Lloyd, 1984). Postcolonial scholars observe a similar set of structural relations creating 'difference' by race. Hau'ofa (1994), for example, comments on the conceptualisation of Oceania (Pacific Islands) as either 'pre- or postcontact' 1/0. Marxist development researchers innocently substituted the sexualised term *penetration* for the colonial encounter. Mahina (1992) too, notes that colonised peoples are relegated passive roles as 'spectators and objects' 1/0, having 'no history' or science, only oral traditions. The 1/0 thought habit is intrinsic to masculine identity in the West. It enables capital accumulation by nullifying the worth of those who possess what the entrepreneur wants. By this instrumental reasoning, the 'other'—'woman,' 'native,' 'animal'—is reduced to 0, an object of White middle-class ends. The Eurocentric sense of control is massaged further by media portrayals of Third World populations as victims of disaster—flood, famine, tribal conflicts.

MH: You argue that this instrumental logic underpins Marxism too and is its main failing. Women almost universally reproducing the conditions of production become a sort of taken for granted 'natural infrastructure,' sustaining production, but treated as 'externalities' (0) whose value is omitted from Marx's calculations.

AS: Economic calculations based on the mathematised logic of identity (1), no less. . . . By the way, the notion of instrumental rationality was made popular by Frankfurt School neo-Marxists, particularly Marcuse (1964). And while their critical theory and poststructuralism are usually read as competing paradigms, the latter can help explicate political economy. Baudrillard's (1979) ideology critique demonstrated this. But getting back to your main point: True, I do see this 'nature-woman-labour nexus' as the deepest contradiction of capitalist patriarchal societies and a contradiction infecting Marx's analysis as well. Based on this assumption, ecofeminism promises to become a political economy in its own right and nothing less than a fundamental rethink of socialist, environmental, and postcolonial politics will do. But, while there has been a lot of debate among our brothers in the ecosocialist community about what should constitute the first and second contradictions in a revised ecology sensitive Marxism, none of them have yet brought gender into the mix.

I floated the 'nature-woman-labour nexus' as primary contradiction back in O'Connor's anthology *Is Capitalism Sustainable?* (1995), but not even book reviewers picked up on it. Things change very slowly. You might say that we women are 'externalised' in theoretical production, too! At least the appearance of Barry's (1998) review essay on the emergence of ecofeminist political economy gives hope that men on the Left are now paying attention to women's ideas.

My book is subtitled *Nature, Marx and the Postmodern* because it affirms the need for analysis of global capital on the one hand, but also, the need to make shortcomings of the Marxist labour theory of value more explicit. As I point out in Chapters 5 and 10, in conventional economic theory the negative term in the 1/0 regime really represents libidinal energy, whose contribution is 'silenced by the / stroke.' Masculinist notions of value, capitalist and socialist alike, have always placed women's restorative activities on the unproductive side of the $M/W = N$ equation. An ecofeminist theory of value will use a libidinally informed economics joining together socialist, feminist, indigenous, and ecological concerns. It will pivot on the body and its metabolic exchange with/in 'nature': this is the implication of my phrases 'as energy/labour flows' or 'working men, like nature need time to heal.'

MH: You write that the objectivisation of ecospheres in Western economics is a form of terra nullius, 1/0, ignoring the dissipative structures which sustain them. This is epitomised in the capitalist patriarchal project of bio-prospecting and genetically engineering plant, animal, and human bodies.

AS: Yes, the exploitation of indigenous peoples, women's bodies, and other 'nature' which is the basis of contemporary economics is assisted by Western science and engineering—mechanical and genetic. This is why political economy begs a psychosexual analysis that understands the social—and

indeed, bio-energetic—function of 1/0 thought habits. Tech fixes are not going to work when our institutions are libidinally overdetermined at a very deep structural level. But, the men who are our politicians, corporate decision makers, scientific researchers, have a huge personal stake in keeping the system running along the way it is. If it is hard to shift the gender complacency of radical comrades, it is even more of a challenge to get under the skin of the brotherhood in suits.

Ecofeminists try to help people see how political practices are fundamentally cathected by body energies and drives. Acknowledging the dissociation of human identity from 'nature' is a first step. I think this dissociation is what drives the compulsively linear epistemology of the West—a civilisation in constant flight from itself. Ecofeminists such as Merchant (1980) or Mies and Shiva (1993) eloquently expound the violation of natural cycles that follows from technology transfer. Dissipative processes cannot survive crudely engineered techniques designed to make efficient only one factor in a complex relational web of energy exchange. The resulting mess is not only biological, it is cultural. Look at the outrageous attempt to patent DNA from a person of the Hagahai tribe, which would effectively render that New Guinea people the property of the U.S. Patents Office.

MH: But what is the point of reference for women seeking a common identity without the background of Western thought? In other words, what is the step that allows you to connect the ecofeminist project to a postcolonial agenda?

AS: In dealing with socially reproductive labour, I start out by revaluing mothering practices—since part of why I wrote my book is to validate and honor real live women now. But, the argument is then broadened using the more generic term *holding* which lets us talk about kinds of sustaining labour regardless of gender role. To suggest that this focus on meta-industrial activities turns the clock back, as some urban based feminists, Leftists, and Third World elites like to do, reveals how implicated their politics is with Eurocentric technological domination and its evolutionist notion of progress.

For decades now, women from a diversity of cultures have been drawing very similar political conclusions on the taboo topic of our human identity with 'nature.' This insight arrives without any need for reading Western thought or ecofeminism, for that matter. From my own participation in political movements and observation of other's experiences, I judge this point of reference to be the moment of crisis when women find themselves thwarted in their socially reproductive labours for survival. Political awareness is born out of this critical disillusionment; a moment of 'bifurcation,' nonidentity, and disengagement with 'what is'—a turning point leading to the search for something that 'can be.' Consider how the women of Long Island moved from discovering themselves to be individual breast cancer victims to taking on Congress over corporate interference in science. Women in Bhopal went through a parallel consciousness raising and mobilisation. Bio-politics cuts across race, class, or age differences—and the postmoderns are wrong to fear universal terms

The sharing of this 'embodied' commitment to political change is a very 'grounded solidarity.' Of course, the degree to which activist women or men may think about what is happening to them in terms of abstract social processes such as capitalist patriarchal economics or the Eurocentric schism

between humanity versus 'nature,' will vary enormously. Some people have a taste for reflection, others not. But, at the Earth Summit in Rio for instance, I certainly encountered indigenous people from the Amazon challenging this Western dichotomy from their own world view, just as Aboriginal Australians do.

MH: So what does it really mean to talk about reconstructing our historically deleted human identity with/in nature?

AS: Ecofeminists go beyond dualistic structures by recognising that ecology and society form a relational web where everything flows bio-energetically in/out of everything else. This ontology of internal relations implies a both/and logic, which means that our epistemology will be a dialectical one dealing with process and contradiction. The terms *identity* and *nonidentity* refer to moments in the ongoing transformations of 'nature's'—always including our own—material embodiment. Asking people to place themselves in a field of internal relations like this, may get them thinking through the historical contradictions that cross their lives.

To take one such contradiction: the phrase 'our historically deleted human identity with nature.' This 'our' refers to the humanity versus 'nature' divided West in general, not women in particular. The humanist identity is implicitly masculine and depends on being nonidentical with 'nature.' Nevertheless, liberal or 'equality' feminists choose to join men in deleting their material embodiment and embeddedness in 'nature.' On the other side, are ecofeminists and some indigenous peoples, who perversely seem to embrace their socially constructed identity with 'nature'—of course women in the North and peoples of the South come at this from historically different niches. But nevertheless, both, as colonised subjects of White middle class men, carry the discursive slur of being 'closer to nature' (1/0).

Deep ecologists like Devall (1988) or Naess (1989) also move to identify with 'nature.' Here is a grouping of radical White men who say they will give up their privileges as former members of the 'humanity over nature club.' Indigenous men, on the other hand, have never been fully accorded club membership in humanity. This status is just beginning to be negotiated now through various U.N. conventions. Even so, hopefully indigenous leaders will continue to assert their unique cultural ties to land, keeping a distance from the gender and 'nature' oppressive baggage that comes with the discourse on human rights.

Liberal equality feminists of the NOW variety move in the opposite direction from deep ecological men. However, in a time of ecological crisis, the feminist dilemma is that in forging a new 'fully human' identity with the Eurocentric hegemony, these liberated women end up joining men at the cost of validating very rapacious economic and political systems. Alternatively, ecofeminists argue that by daring to maintain an identity in/with 'nature,' we can widen notions of emancipation and find common political voice with other classes, races, species. Ecofeminists thus carry the remaking of history further than mainstream feminists.

MH: Can a feminine identity constructed in social circumstances of oppression and exploitation be compatible with a point of reflection detached from these socially constructed circumstances? How do we move from a contingent and

diverse embodied materialism to a point of nonidentity? What knowledge/experience can we draw on?

AS: Are you implying a kind of conceptual leap in my argument between women's lived embodied materialism and the critical turning point of nonidentity? In *Ecofeminism as Politics*, this dialectic is explored under the rubric 'agents of complexity,' though probably nowhere near adequately. Perhaps I should back track a bit . . . During the '80s, as an activist and teacher of 20th Century European thought, I found Adorno's (1973) work on the 'negative dialectic' a great help in making sense of my contradictory life as feminist/mother, worker/environmentalist. My ecofeminist thinking grew intertwined with German critical theory and Kristeva's (1984) unique post-structuralism to a lesser extent. One can argue that Adorno's philosophy was the first embodied materialism—as I did in an early *Thesis Eleven* article (Salleh, 1982) comparing him with Kristeva.

An interest in questions of identity/nonidentity means a rejection of both dualist and positivist thinking. Activists need to comprehend their subjectivities as forming and transforming in time. To take an example: In the West, a socially constructed feminine gender prescription has meant women inhabit a no-man's land between humanity and 'nature'—the primary contradiction again. We women live our days always falling between two nonidentical stools, so to speak, and all the abusive practices which fix our position as reproductive resources testify to this. The felt contradiction is sharpened, when as women at the interface with so called 'nature,' we become sensitised to our thwarted place in humanity.

This heightened sense of living in the fork of a contradiction creates an experience of non-identity. It may be painful but also thoroughly liberating. It is the kind of liminality that can happen when as feminists we become milch cows, when as indigenous communities we are dehumanised by slavery, when as urban workers we are literally treated like dirt on the receiving end of toxic contaminants. Nonidentity is the point at which we withdraw energy and commitment from the hypocritical totality. Even so, our lives continue to be materially embedded in its hegemony and it can be a daily struggle to maintain political focus.

The notion of nonidentity is not detached from embodied material oppression at all, but exists in it. The experience of contradiction creates anguish, but it is also the ultimate epistemological moment. Adorno talked about 'the somatic unrest that makes knowledge move' (1973, p. 203). He, Kristeva (1984), and radical feminists, have each tried to bring the body back into thought in defiance of the Eurocentric canon. In addition, what this dialectical reasoning enables us to do is investigate the space that exists between idealised hegemonic constructs, facts, 'positivities' and the raw phenomenology of our days. Discourse analysis alone is too one dimensional, too blunt a tool for this.

MH: It is still not obvious to me how you reconcile this universal viewpoint that you claim for ecofeminism with your denial of essentialism and assumption of a fixed female nature.

AS: By definition, a materialist argument is nonessentialist. My thinking about ecofeminism is informed by activism and framed as an 'embodied material-

ism.' As Mellor sagely points out in her recent book *Feminism and Ecology* (1997), ecofeminism must be materialist because the body is so central to its political agenda. The body is after all, the living link between an artificially idealised humanity and 'nature.' The ongoing rejection of ecofeminism as 'essentialist' is a kind of knee-jerk response, an excuse not to have to think about things that disturb the comfort zone. But the knee jerk is really a response not to ecofeminism, but to old and oppressive masculinist discourses about an idealised 'essential femininity' (M/W = N). It has nothing to do with the ecologically creative material practices by which women continually remake their lives. This is why ecofeminists use the 1/0 code with irony. It typifies a world that most men take seriously, yet which women know has little to do with the energetic reality of their days.

What is all but universal is that women across cultures are delegated responsibility for the daily reproduction of social conditions. To lapse for a moment into the dualism of academic speak: This is a 'social fact,' but since it may also involve childbirth, it can have a 'biological' aspect as well. Nevertheless, my argument has always been that this all but universal yet historically contingent positioning as 'reproductive labour,' affects women in two contradictory ways. They are disadvantaged in the formal economic system, yet empowered by alternative knowledges and skills. Such an approach to ecofeminism asserts that women globally tend to make up a specific economic or class base—a meta-industrial one. This is a site of 'difference' that is shared with postcolonial others. As such, it constitutes a new agenda for 'equality' politics.

Women's socially reproductive labours are exploitively resourced at many levels in the capitalist patriarchal system. At a domestic level and in subsistence farming, they are unpaid. This, in turn, is used to justify low wages when they enter the industrial work force. Women's daily regeneration of the conditions of production and their role in production of a surplus is socially invisible. In the global economy, most women's status remains prehuman, object, resource. Despite the emergence of a handful of professional women, this 'closer to nature' meta-industrial status exists in both high-tech and so called Third World societies, and it is intensified by free market globalisation. To repeat: the catch phrase 'closer to nature' describes a material outcome of masculinist practices. It is not an 'essentialist' statement about some innate characteristic of women—to assume this would be to take the going 1/0 gender ideology at face value, which is exactly what ecofeminism is not about to do! Thinking through this is like discursive tightrope walking: a dialectic in which analytically trained philosophers writing about ecofeminism, for example Warren (1994), sometimes falter.

MH: I agree that a materialist critique can relate to biological embodiment which is not an essentialist discussion of women's biological nature. However, though my terminology may be wrong, I still have a problem identifying the universal appeal of your critique. Upon reflection though, I think a conceptual distinction should be made between biological embodiment and ecological embeddedness for this purpose. . . . It would seem self-evident that a materialist critique be focused on our biology and how this figures in an analysis of production and reproduction, that is, the biological nature of the conditions of production. In addition to this, one has the further element of the ecological embeddedness of production, that is, the place of ecological

resources and their use in a theory of production. This too should be recognised as a universal condition of production which has been ignored to date.

If amplification of this is your purpose, then it is a case of correcting mistakes in socialist theory, perhaps adding a dimension to the work of socialist feminists. This indeed would command a universal appeal as the conditions of production are universal phenomena as such, though they appear differently in different societies . . . But, if all this goes to show that a socialist critique offers a less than complete analysis of the conditions of production, it does not suggest how ecofeminism can serve as more than critique, that is, as a source for reconstructing socialist theory and theory in general from a feminist or 'womanist' perspective.

AS: In terms of offering more than critique, Shiva's (1989) forest dwellers or the housewives at Harlem's community gardens described by Hynes (1993) already model practical ecological alternatives. The issue is whether these actions are visible and nameable in mainstream political discourse. Meanwhile, a reformulation of the labour theory value using a bio-energetic lens as suggested in *Ecofeminism as Politics* might add grist to a theorisation of economics beyond that provided by socialism and socialist feminism. Certainly, a revised theory of value has to resonate with ecological, indigenous, and feminist sensibilities, not just socialist ones.

MH: Well, it might be that meta-industrial workers currently do the majority of reproductive work and their contingent situation makes them the class base for an embodied materialist critique. Or, putting it another way: it might be that their class interests contribute to the true interests of society in general. However, while repoliticising the body as biological could be an issue for feminist theory, the question is to what degree does it come to bear on eco-political theory, that is, how does a focus on biological identity contribute to the reconstruction of institutions which are ecologically embedded?

AS: The reason why ecofeminism goes further than already existing socialisms and feminisms is that those paradigms remain pre-ecological. They are based on the classic assumption of humanity as somehow distinct from 'nature,' and the body as somehow distinct from its environment. It is important to challenge the Western reductionism which would have these movements representing distinct 'levels' of reality. We need to start thinking socialism, feminism, ecology, etc., as one 'enfolding' politics.

MH: I follow your point on making feminism ecological, but I am still bothered by the degree in which your reconceptualisation of 'a barefoot epistemology' draws on knowledge of an eco-political kind. What is the focus: is it specific environmentally sustainable practices or is it your idea of reconceiving an historically deleted identity based on the biological character of mostly women's reproductive work?

AS: Both theory and praxis are implicated.

MH: But, if an alternative epistemology is to be based on knowledge acquired through reproductive work, merely affirming it says nothing about its qualities. It might be that as suppliers of the conditions of production women bear

the brunt of health and ecological hazards, both in the 'North' i.e., asthma in children, and the 'South' i.e., polluted water supplies, but this does not say that there is something in the 'knowledge' acquired in the process which is necessarily suitable for an alternative, ecologically benign, epistemology.

AS: If we assume that good theory grows out of practical engagement with the world, then I think it does. My epistemological analysis of 'holding practices' spells out how the temporal frameworks of hands-on labours dovetail more sensitively and appropriately with complex ecosystemic processes than mechanised labours can. The latter are distorted by highly abstract instrumental reasoning and reductive I/O technologies.

MH: Can you say a bit more about this meta-industrial wisdom?

AS: In *Ecofeminism as Politics*, the eroticised notion of 'holding' resonates at many levels. In its most abstract sense, I have in mind an image of ecosystems as holographic cycles of energy, in which fields we as material beings are embedded. People who provision themselves through subsistence farming or hunter gathering, manage the human interface with our wider 'nature' in ways that 'optimise' sustainability for future generations. Compared to the 'inconsequential' blundering of our high tech civilisation, this is no mean achievement—and it is one to learn from. In industrialised societies, I see similar kinds of holding skills reflected in domestic reproductive labours.

Readers who impatiently skim my book may assume the account of mothering practices is straight biological determinism. Whereas I take pains to talk about men's lot as a socially constructed role and to de-link care giving and other meta-industrial skills from gender. Viz. 'a woman or a man'; 'rural workers,' 'subsistence dwellers,' 'peasant and indigenous men,' 'Aboriginal peoples.' More of the same in Chapter 11 where the argument unfolds from 'As every campesino knows.' I like the generic term *holding* better than the particular term *mothering* to describe the quintessential skills of socially and ecologically reproductive work. In principle, holding labours are carried out across species, races, and classes. In principle, these are ungendered activities. But historically, the human sustaining function has mostly fallen to women. To ecofeminist political organisers, that empirical contingency is relevant to building a truly international grassroots movement.

This is a materialist argument and so reaches deeper than the 'ethic' of care which has interested some ecofeminists (Warren, 1994). The notion of holding labour bridges the 'ecological and biological,' usually treated as separate spheres following the Man/Woman = Nature opposition. Here ecological time is biological time is economic time. And that is the epistemological nub of my objection to the Marxist labour theory of value.

MH: But surely, the work and knowledge of indigenous cultures and many women in the 'South,' focused as it is on a local, subsistence economy, differs in its 'ecological footprint' to the consumption focused household of the 'North.' In fact, it is likely that in many cases women in the 'South' mediate nature through their reproductive activities for women in the 'North.' I also do not see how knowledge say of subsistence farmers can be universally applicable with material and ecological conditions being everywhere so different. Is not the issue for subsistence farmers one of having a greater control of their

means of survival, whereas the issue for industrialised countries is limiting their impact on the former?

AS: Agreed. Although I think you may be slipping inadvertently from an argument about 'reproductive' to productive structures in making these points. Compared to the South, the reproductive activities of most women in the North are much more intensively colonised by industrialisation with refrigerators, microwaves, etc. Though interestingly, as Schwartz Cowan's (1983) research has made clear, these gadgets do not save reproductive labour time for women. They only make more profit for capitalist patriarchal men!

MH: What I am suggesting is that analysis of the 'South' might require focusing on women's right to land and improved economic and social status as contributing to sustainable development (Sontheimer, 1991). Whereas in 'Northern' countries, this might require that work—reproductive or other—be decoupled from its income generating purpose and that necessary reproductive work be shared equally by all as Ekins (1986) proposes. This would also imply disconnecting reproductive work from mothering and making it the basis of the human economy rather than merely the household.

While this requires that the importance of both biological and ecological reproductive work be recognised, it is not enough to base an alternative epistemology on the politicisation of what has been historically deleted as biological. Rather, should we not focus on those specific aspects of these biological roles which might underpin human basic needs, and note how these fit into an alternative political economy which is socially just, feminist, and environmentally sustainable?

AS: Yes, and it is just this public transvaluation of reproductive labour that an ecofeminist political economy is aiming for.

MH: But not all reproductive work is necessarily benign in terms of environmental sustainability—a distinction between production and consumption is one point to reckon with.

AS: I think we may have to agree to disagree about the extent to which class and other sociologically labelled 'differences' in the experience of so called First and Third World women are fundamental or superficial. Even emancipated career women spend part of their lives as domestic or meta-industrial labour, and many are also carers of young children or elderly parents. The shared values created by these all but universal holding labours surface at international gatherings of women—Habitat, Earth Summit, Beijing—despite variations of language and culture. One thing that has to be taken on by ecofeminists is the ongoing patriarchal tendency to divide and rule women which undermines their solidarity by promoting differences between them. The oldest trick in this book is age differences between women, but class and ethnicity, or North versus South, are others. Postmodern feminism plays right into this demoralising strategy.

Moreover, in a world where only 8% of humans own a car, women 'as consumers' turn out to be a relatively small and atypical grouping. The conventional economic analysis used by Western academics is not sufficient to understand the invisible structural status of women as 'conditions of produc-

tion.' This peculiar status will cut across categories like production/consumption. Then again, an ecofeminist sociologist might ask: Who designs how socially reproductive labours are carried out? And what are the class, race, gender, and species characteristics of those who benefit from that design? This inequitable situation is precisely what ecofeminists seek to destabilise.

MH: So, it is at this point that you see ecofeminists contributing as an ecopolitical movement—by providing a common framework to environmental, peace, gender, socialist, and postcolonial concerns?

AS: Just so. Yet, a lot of people are simply unaware of women's contribution to ecopolitics, others have old ideological ties to socialism or whatever and so are resistant to the ecofeminist analysis as new kid on the block. This is a shame, because in a time of global crisis, it is urgent to pull the social movements together. Ecofeminism provides a common denominator for contemporary radical politics and in particular the opposition to neoliberal globalisation because women's ecological actions simultaneously challenge exploitations of class, race, gender, and species.

It shocks me that three decades after the advent of Second Wave feminism in the late '60s, academics and movement theorists such as eco-socialists, social ecologists, deep ecologists, for the most part speak as if the problems facing us were ungendered ones. Besides, in practical terms, women make up 52% of the world's population, so they can be a force for change far more powerful than the constituency of any single issue movement.

MH: Summing up: In what way does ecofeminism provide a contribution beyond socialist feminism?

AS: As I said earlier, I think most other movements including socialist feminism are framed by the Eurocentric 1/0 and so remain pre-ecological. But, the history of ecofeminism is a spontaneous emergence of global political agency from a diversity of women across continents. It speaks a 'womanism' no longer constrained by the tunnel vision of Eurocentric theories like class analysis. As against earlier socialist feminist formulations, ecofeminism shifts attention from 'the meaning of domestic labour' under industrial production, to socially and ecologically generative 'meta-industrial labours' that transcend class, race, gender, and species differences. In terms of feminism, the unique theoretical contribution of ecofeminist women has been to risk embracing the highly contentious notion of our human—material and discursive—identity in/with 'nature.' Meanwhile, the work of ecofeminists in bringing gender awareness to ecology is slow but sure: a new take on the libidinally loaded 'population question' being one very specific gain.

Shared ecopolitical understandings could develop around the concept of 'holding' and a bio-energetic reformulation of economic value. But then again, some of us are old enough to remember high hopes at the time of the emerging Green parties. As ecofeminists say, 'you can lead a man to water, but . . .' The readiness of indigenous peoples, feminists, socialists, and ecologists to open out their single issue agendas into a big round reflexive politics like ecofeminism is yet to be seen. Although I must say that the holistic attitude of the People's Global Alliance in response to neo-liberalism and globalisation looks very promising.

Beyond politics, 'holding' as epistemology and ethic nudges forward some foundational rethinking of disciplines like economics, ethics, the philosophy of science . . .

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