



*the* TRUMPETER  
*Journal of Ecosophy*

*Where Philosophy and Culture Meet the Ground*



Alan Drengson

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## FROM THE SENIOR EDITOR

During the last year we have been modifying the format and layout of *The Trumpeter*, including more photographs and illustrations. The new masthead is by Tim Yearington of Woodlawn, Ontario, and Alan Stanley of Almonte, Ontario. The next issue will use a new font which is more open and readable.

The Trumpeter swan was chosen as the masthead icon for this journal because of its rich symbolic and ecological associations. The swan is one of the forms of the Greek nature god Pan. A trumpeter is also a herald. The trumpeter swan heralds the restoration and healing powers of the natural world, with its recovery from the brink of extinction.

Please send all correspondence regarding manuscripts and submissions to David Rothenberg c/o Department of Politics and Social Policy, New Jersey Institute of Technology, University Heights, Newark, New Jersey, USA 07192.

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*The Trumpeter's mission is to provide a diversity of perspectives on human - Nature contexts. It encourages transdisciplinary reflections from scholarly and non-scholarly sources which use art, music, theater, film, literature, philosophy, science and spiritual disciplines to present ways to realize deeper and more harmonious relationships between place, self, community and the natural world. It is dedicated to explorations of and contributions to a deepening ecological consciousness, and the practice of ways of life manifesting diverse forms of ecological wisdom (ecosophies).*

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the **TRUMPETER**  
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# EDITORIAL: *Does 'the Other' Need Defense?*

David Rothenberg

The idea of an *other* suggests that there is a place from which we are excluded. It demands duality. Yet dualistic thinking is so often condemned in ecological circles—and feminist circles as well. A recent article by Martha Nussbaum in the *New York Review of Books* makes a note of this: “We are frequently told that reason and objectivity are norms created by the ‘patriarchy’, and that to appeal to them is to succumb to the blandishments of the oppressor.”<sup>1</sup> And yet, she goes on, it is during eras of respect for reason and objectivity that the status of women has been consistently raised throughout history. In times of mass hysteria and emotional uprising women have been burned at the stake.

And nature? Destroyed in the name of reason more often than in the name of raw emotional carnage. Or desecrated by oversight. Not paying enough attention, following a blind, narrow idea rather than the wealth of experience. Missing the full effect of a human intervention.

Both argument and empathy can stand up for the cause of nature and a human place within it. Should we ask that women think differently about these problems than men? There are tendencies, diversities in the ways any of us will approach the questions. Generalizations seem to smack of sexism, and I am reluctant to make them. I do find that I *want* feminist thinking to be different, not to sound as if it were written by men trained in the mundane methods of academic inquiry. This is why I am so impressed by Susan Griffin, whose poetic style of philosophical history really reads like it was written by a heretofore unheard kind of intelligence. Never mind that it gives my sex the shaft, it is still provocative, and a beautiful and provocative form of literature.

Though I will not demand anger from serious feminism either. It is better without dogma, or self-righteousness. There is no reason for everyone to be a feminist, and it will remain one very useful perspective on the world, but never the only one. Yet the perspective it invites gradually seeps into the culture at large. When its insights have been assimilated, the name will disappear. Like “abolitionist,” and, someday, “environmentalist.”

In the same article, Nussbaum goes on to suggest that doing good feminist philosophy is not much different from doing good philosophy:

...to simply get on with the tough work of theorizing in a rigorous and thoroughgoing way, but without the blind spots, the ignorance of fact, and the moral obtuseness that have characterized much philosophical thought about women and sex and the family and ethics in the male dominated academy. It is in this way and no other, I think, that women in philosophy can go beyond the past achievements of males.<sup>2</sup>

She does not want feminists to hide behind otherness to avoid rigor, depth, or argument. Does she want women to deny difference? I doubt that Prof. Nussbaum would approve of everything we have here in this latest *Trumpeter*, but no doubt she could learn something about expanding the boundaries of philosophy so it may include heartfelt and reflective responses to discovering one’s precise place through identification with the world in the throes of activism, and a spirited discussion of what it means to ‘save the world!’

We need to save emotion from reason, and save reason from emotion, all the while discovering how many different kinds of precision can be enabled through the creative use of words. Philosophy has had a tendency to use language to shut down the flurry of language in the name of truth, and that certainly has got to stop. Disagreement should always be encouraged as part and parcel of diversity, disdain should not be—it closes off possibility without giving it a chance.

Nature is as caught up in our attempts to label it and cordon it off as any other concept in the language. “Nature?”—I resist putting it and any other important quality in “quotes,” for it’s far too easy to hide behind the double claw-marks and refuse to take a stand for what we say.

But it’s clear why we resist. You put a word aside, you can put yourself on the table free and clear. A clear example is the table of medicine, upon which we will all be etherized as patients someday. How dehumanizing, how unnatural, how sickening can the process of getting well become! Several essays below explore the meanings avoided by medicine, and suggest ways to conceive recovery so that true healing will be its result.

It will never become any clearer than the human ability to focus. Men and women had better use all their similarity and difference if we are to make any sense of it, or learn when to stop making sense. I hope we don’t encompass nature, but only become aware of what we are missing. The other surrounds us, but in the best times we are not sure where we end and where the rest begins.

## NOTES

1. Martha Nussbaum, review of *A Mind of One's Own: Feminist Essays on Reason and Objectivity*, ed. Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt, *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 41, no. 17, October 1994, p. 59.

2. *Ibid*, p. 63.

## RELATING TO NATURE: *Deep Ecology or Ecofeminism?*

Freya Mathews

Two of our most seminal philosophies of Nature, deep ecology and ecofeminism, offer alternative accounts of our relationship with the natural world. Deep ecology tends to take a basically holistic view of Nature—its image of the natural world is that of a field-like whole of which we and other ‘individuals’ are parts. It encourages us to seek our true identity by identifying with wider and wider circles of Nature, presenting the natural world as an extension of ourselves, the Self-writ-large. In this view our interests are convergent with those of Nature, and it becomes incumbent on us to respect and serve these common interests.

Ecofeminists, in contrast, tend to portray the natural world as a community of beings, related, in the manner of a family, but nevertheless distinct.<sup>1</sup> We are urged to respect the individuality of these beings, rather than seeking to merge with them, and our mode of relating to them should be via open-minded and attentive encounter, rather than through abstract metaphysical preconception. The understanding born of such encounters should result in an attitude of care or compassion which can provide the ground for an ecological ethic.<sup>2</sup>

Although the tension between these two theories cannot be resolved by merely cutting and pasting them together, I think that a dialectical reconciliation of their respective views of Nature can be achieved, though resulting perhaps in an irreducibly ambivalent ecological ethic. Such ambivalence may in fact be precisely what an adequate understanding of the ecological structure of reality requires.

In this essay, I begin with an examination of the metaphysical axioms of deep ecology. I argue that these axioms generate a fundamental dilemma for deep ecologists. In attempting to resolve this dilemma, I find I have to give up the ethical conclusions to which deep ecology is normally assumed to lead, and draw instead on an ethical perspective more akin to that found in ecofeminist literature.

### The Two Metaphysical Axioms of Deep Ecology

The primary axiom of deep ecology is the thesis of metaphysical interconnectedness. Arne Naess images the natural world as a field of relations. He advocates:

rejection of the man-in-environment image in favour of the relational, total-field image. Organisms as knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations. An intrinsic relation between two things A and B is such that the relation belongs to the definitions or basic constitutions of A and B, so that without the relation, A and B are no longer the same things. The total field model dissolves not only the man-in-environment concept, but every compact thing-in-milieu

concept—except when talking at a superficial or preliminary level of communication.<sup>3</sup>

In an early paper, Warwick Fox identifies as the ‘central intuition’ of deep ecology the idea “that there is no firm ontological divide in the field of existence.... To the extent that we perceive boundaries, we fall short of deep ecological consciousness.”<sup>4</sup> All exponents of deep ecology seem to agree that individuals, to the extent they can be identified at all, are constituted out of their relations with other individuals: they are not discrete substances capable of existing independently of other individuals. The whole is understood to be more than the sum of its parts, and the parts are defined through their relations to one another and to the whole.

The second metaphysical presupposition of deep ecology functions more as a hidden premise—it is not listed as an axiom, as the interconnectedness thesis is, but, so far as I am aware, it is nevertheless taken for granted in all versions of the theory. The presupposition in question is that Nature can best look after its own interests, that it is only our interventions in the natural course of events that give rise to terminal ecological disasters. This assumption is implicit in the injunction to let Nature take the lead in ecological matters, to minimize our interference in it, and to try to shape our own interests to those of Nature. It is neatly summed up in Barry Commoner’s third law of ecology: Nature knows best.

Now let us look at the implications of these two metaphysical assumptions for our relation to the natural world. According to deep ecologists, the fact of our interconnectedness with the rest of Nature implies that we are ultimately identifiable with Nature; the fact of the indivisibility of reality implicates us in wider and wider circles of being. We should accordingly shed our confining ego identity, and gradually open up to Nature at large. The process of achieving the widest possible identification with Nature is equated, in deep ecology, with Self-realization: Self-realization is a matter of enlarging one’s sphere of identification.

Normative implications are taken to follow hard on the heels of this identification thesis, together with the assumption that Nature can and should look after its own interests. For if we are in this sense one with Nature, and our interests are convergent with those of Nature, then we shall be called upon to defend Nature from human interference, just as we are called on to defend ourselves against attack. As activist and deep ecologist John Seed puts it, “‘I am protecting the rainforest’ develops to ‘I am part of the rainforest protecting myself.’”<sup>5</sup> Recognition of

our identifiability with Nature is taken to entail a commitment to ecological resistance.

### The Identification Dilemma

At this point in the argument however, an intractable dilemma raises its head. I shall call it the 'identification dilemma'. If we are identifiable with Nature, as the interconnectedness thesis implies, then whatever we do, where this will include our exploitation of the environment, will qualify as natural. Since Nature knows best how to look after itself, it follows that whatever qualifies as natural must be ecologically for the best, at least in the long run. In short, if we are truly part of, or one with, Nature, and Nature knows best, then our depredations of the natural world must be ecologically, and hence morally, unobjectionable.

To this objection a deep ecologist might reply that although we are ontologically one with Nature, we may not consciously recognize this to be the case. In consciousness we may construct our identity in opposition to Nature. Our actions vis-a-vis the environment will then reflect this false consciousness, rather than the underlying ontological fact: we shall be acting as if we were ontologically detached even though this is not in fact the case. Such action may then be regarded as unnatural, in the sense that it does not testify to our actual interconnectedness with the rest of the world.

This reply however would appear to conflate the natural with the true. It may be perfectly natural for consciousness to belie the ontological facts, for there may be adaptive value in its doing so in certain circumstances. After all, there are many species which, though ontologically interconnected with the rest of life (according to the interconnectedness thesis), nevertheless appear to act out of narrow self interest and exploit the environment to the best of their ability for their own ends. ('Plagues' of locusts and mice spring to mind in this connection; but many species, even in normal circumstances, tread anything but lightly on their lands, relying on the regenerative powers of Nature rather than on their own restraint to ensure the continuing health of their environments. The noble elephant is a case in point.) Such a gap between consciousness and the ontological underpinnings of a species' identity may well serve Nature's own purposes—it may be part of the long-term ecological scheme of things. If this is the case, then such a gap would be ecologically and hence ethically unobjectionable. If we consider it desirable that our consciousness reflect our true ontological estate, then we cannot claim that this is because such fidelity to ontology is natural; we must rather admit that it is because we value truth. But then there is no reason to suppose that the present self-interested, exploitative behavior of humanity is unnatural; and if it is natural—if it is in accordance with the ways of Nature—it cannot, from a deep ecological viewpoint, count as wrong.

In sum, it is plausible to argue, in the light of the interconnectedness thesis, that whatever we do to the environment is natural, and that, since Nature knows best, our present despoilation of the environment must in fact be in Nature's long term interests. We might wish to change our ways on our own behalf, recognizing that we are at present orchestrating our own extinction. But we have no grounds for changing our ways on behalf

of Nature, which is to say, on grounds of ecological morality. To suppose otherwise is in fact to perpetuate the old division between humanity and Nature, and with it the old assumption of human supremacism. For to suppose that we can destroy Nature is to deny that Nature knows best, where this is to admit that we had really better take the rudder after all, and steer Nature through this crisis that we have created for it. In other words, to allow that what we are doing to the environment is natural, and yet to insist that it needs to be changed by us, is to deny that Nature knows what it is doing; it is subtly to re-usurp control. If we are true to the metaphysical premises of deep ecology, if we accept both our oneness with Nature and Nature's fitness to conduct its own ecological affairs without our assistance, then we should allow our own evolution to run its 'natural' course, whatever that turns out to be, on the understanding that by doing so we shall be advancing the cause of life on earth. It may well be that our massive impact on the planetary ecosystem is paving the way for an epoch-making transition in evolution—perhaps analogous to the transition from anaerobic to aerobic life in the early stages of the history of life on earth.

The insistence of deep ecologists that we are one with a Nature which best knows how to look after itself then, does seem directly to imply that we have no ecological nor hence moral grounds for intervening in the spontaneous course of human affairs as these affect the environment. This poses a dilemma for deep ecology, since deep ecologists have no desire so to acquiesce in the present regime of environmental degradation and destruction. If they persist—as I have no doubt they will—in exhorting us to engage in active 'ecological resistance', then we have to conclude that there is an inconsistency at the heart of deep ecology.

### Holistic and Individualistic Readings of the Two Axioms

If, as environmentalists, we are already committed to ecological resistance, the conclusion of the previous section forces us to re-examine the two metaphysical premises of deep ecology. One or both of them will have to be modified, in some way, if deep ecology is to retain its activist appeal. Let us then review each of these axioms in turn.

*The interconnectedness thesis.* Is there anything logically amiss with the idea of interconnectedness that is so central to deep ecology, anything that would account for the counterintuitive conclusion to which, when conjoined with the thesis that Nature knows best, it was found to lead? I think the problem with this thesis, in the present connection, is not that its interpretation within deep ecology is in any way logically flawed, but merely that it is partial.

Deep ecologists have, in the main, given the idea of interconnectedness an holistic reading; they have taken it to mean that Nature, as a metaphysical whole, is logically prior to its parts, and that the identity of each part is functionally determined by way of its relation to the whole. They concede a degree of autonomy to individuals, but ultimately they view that autonomy as apparent only, without fundamental ontological significance. Different exponents of deep ecology offer slightly different accounts of the ontological status of individuals (and hence of the relationship between self and Nature<sup>6</sup>). However despite

these differences the holistic emphasis remains marked: the viewpoint of the individual must, in one way or other, be given up in favor of the viewpoint of the whole. We and all other individuals are ultimately seen as in some sense 'one with' Nature.

It is arguable however that this reading of the interconnectedness thesis captures only one side of its meaning. If a systems-theoretic approach is adopted, it is possible to see interconnectedness as entailing the identities of both wholes and individuals. From a systems-theoretic viewpoint, the world (particularly the biological world) appears as a field of relations, a web of interconnections, which does indeed cohere as a whole, but within which a genuine form of individuation is nevertheless possible. An individual is, from this viewpoint, an energy configuration or system which maintains itself by way of its continuous interactions with its environment. Since it is only able to maintain its integrity by way of this continuous give and take with the environment, its existence is a function of its relations, its interconnections. But since these interactions do indeed enable it actively to maintain its integrity, it does enjoy a genuine, though relative, individuality. In this way the world may be seen as both a seamless whole and a manifold of individuals.<sup>7</sup>

On this reading then, metaphysical interconnectedness implies an irreducible ontological ambivalence at the level of individuals: individuals are, in this scheme of things, analogous to the 'wavicles' of quantum mechanics. In quantum mechanics light is analyzed in terms of these wavicles: looked at from one point of view, a ray of light manifests as a stream of particles (photons), while from another point of view it manifests as a wave phenomenon (a pattern in a field). Light cannot be reduced to either photons or field. Ontological ambivalence is thus intrinsic to its nature.

Under the sway of the interconnectedness thesis, deep ecology tends to view the natural world from the holistic perspective exclusively, and therefore considers individuals as field-like rather than as particulate. This one-sided reading of the interconnectedness thesis inevitably also affects its reading of the principle that Nature knows best. The principle that Nature knows best will be understood to mean that Nature knows best for itself as a whole; but it is not taken to imply that Nature knows best for the individuals that are its elements. Reading the principle in this latter sense raises obvious questions about its validity. Let us look at the principle in the light of this double reading, and consider whether it can be retained.

*The thesis that Nature knows best.* The principle that Nature knows best implies that Nature is the best servant of its own interests, and therefore that, from the viewpoint of environmental ethics, whatever Nature does is right. It follows from this that the natural order is a moral order, that within this natural order everything ultimately turns out for the best, so far as Nature is concerned. Can this assumption be defended? In order to answer this we need, as I have pointed out, to look at the principle under both its holistic and its individualistic interpretations. I shall argue that under the holistic interpretation, the natural order is indeed a moral order, but that under the individualistic interpretation it is not.

The answer to the question whether Nature knows best, when Nature is viewed under its holistic aspect, depends to some extent on the empirical question of whether or not we or any other particular life form have the capacity to extinguish life altogether on the planet. On current evidence this appears to be unlikely: it is widely believed that even full-scale nuclear holocaust would fail to eliminate microbial life forms, and that the adaptations of these life forms to the new conditions would usher in a new evolutionary epoch. In light of this assumption that the demise of one order of life creates an opportunity for another, I think we can say that, from the viewpoint of the whole, Nature inevitably works towards its own good.

Nature—understood under its holistic aspect—knows best not only in the sense that it is capable of looking after its own interests; it appears to know best in a wider moral sense as well, since the ecological order not only secures its own self-perpetuation, but also appears to exemplify both justice and generosity. Such ecological justice consists, in the first place, in the fact that ecological 'transgressors' pay for their ecological 'transgressions' by being selected out of existence; and it consists, in the second place, in the fact that such self-elimination of actual individuals provides possible individuals with their opportunity to gain entry into the actual world. Such perfect impartiality between the actual and the possible must surely represent the acme of justice! If it is objected that it is scarcely just to condemn an entire ecosystem to extinction on account of the ecological 'transgressions' of one of its elements, it must be remembered that from the holistic point of view there is no absolute distinction between an element and its ecosystem. The various elements of an ecosystem are merely different expressions of its own intrinsic logic or *theine*. It makes no sense, from this holistic perspective, to say that we, as ecological deviants, are endangering our otherwise ecologically viable ecosystems, or the ecologically innocent elements of those ecosystems. For if we are deviant, so are the ecosystems with which we are holistically or internally related, and so too are all the elements of those ecosystems. If we deserve to be selected out for our mistakes, so too does the ecosystem, or even the entire order of life, which defines us.

From the holistic point of view then, the natural order is arguably an order of justice, and as such qualifies as a moral order in a richer sense than that implied in the original maxim that Nature knows best. Lest such a moral order seem too stern for us to countenance however, there is, as I remarked earlier, a second way in which the natural—still viewed from an holistic perspective—is equivalent to the right. The moral significance of Nature, understood in this second sense, resides in its boundless generosity. Etymologically, 'Nature', as Holmes Rolston III points out, is derived from the Latin 'natus', meaning birth. Nature is the source, the wellspring, of life, and life is, after all, an entirely gratuitous gift, owed to no-one. "When nature slays," says Rolston, "she takes only the life she gave... and she gathers even that life back to herself by reproduction and re-folding organic resources and genetic materials, and produces new life out of it."<sup>8</sup> Because Nature does not favor those who have life over those who do not, life is dealt out lavishly; the dispensability of the actual is a necessary condition for this lavishness. Nature is not only just, but infinitely generous. The natural order then,



viewed from the holistic perspective, is moral not only in that it secures the long-term good of Nature, but also in its justice and its generosity.

When Nature is examined from the individualistic rather than the holistic viewpoint however, does it still qualify as a moral order? Is the natural still the right? We have seen that, from the point of view of the whole, individuals are generously given life and justly sacrificed that the gift of life might be passed on. As long as we are (quite properly) identifying with the whole, we can appreciate both the effectiveness and the justice of this arrangement, and concur in the price that is paid for it. When we (equally properly) identify ourselves as individuals however, we are likely to see things differently. Nature no longer appears to know best, if by its 'knowing best' we mean that it is capable of looking after the interests of individuals. Nor does it appear as just: the situation of actual individuals is importantly different from that of possible individuals. As actual individuals we have actual interests, urgent needs and desires; we can suffer, and suffer terribly. There is neither justice nor generosity in trading in actual individuals for possible ones, from this perspective. The stern though admittedly life-giving 'plan' of Nature-as-a-whole then has less to commend it from down here. Nor is it only *our* fate which assumes a larger moral significance from this perspective: that of other actual individuals does likewise. Fellow-feeling for them, familiarity with the imperative which drives them, identification with the shivering vulnerability that their actuality implies, gives rise to concern, to a moral interest in their plight.

Ironically then the impulse to resist the progressive destruction of the present order of life springs not, as deep ecology claims, from our identification with Nature as a whole—though that identification is perfectly proper, in light of the holistic interpretation of interconnectedness—but rather from our commitment to our individuality. It is as individuals that we feel concern for other individuals. In defending non-human beings against human depredations we may even in a sense be resisting the greater moral order, the grand order of ecological justice. The compassion which forms the basis of our environmental ethic, from this individualistic point of view, is a function of our finitude rather than of our cosmic self-realization. In securing the conditions for the ongoing unfolding of life, Nature (in its holistic aspect) is morally more far-sighted than we; in the name of compassion we seek to block that unfolding by clinging to those individuals which already exist, out of a sense of solidarity with them. As individuals we give our allegiance to individuals, if necessary even against the moral requirements of Nature-as-a-whole.

### **Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism: Complementary Perspectives?**

This view of the basis of environmental ethics is much closer to ecofeminism than to deep ecology. Ecofeminism is by no means a position or a theory, but simply a fairly open field of inquiry, but it could nevertheless be taken to subscribe to the interconnectedness thesis.<sup>9</sup> It tends to interpret interconnection in the individualistic rather than in the holistic sense: Nature, from the ecofeminist perspective, is a community of beings,

related, in the manner of a family, but nevertheless distinct. We are urged to respect the otherness, the distinct individuality of these beings, rather than seeking to merge with them, in pursuit of an undifferentiated oneness.

Since ecofeminism does not identify us directly with Nature-as-a-whole, it does not fall foul of the identification dilemma. In other words, since it does not define us as identifiable with a monolithic Nature, it does not have to see our destruction of the environment as a case of Nature 'destroying' itself, where seeing our action in this way renders it morally unobjectionable. On the contrary, since it sees us as related to Nature as to the members of a community or family, to whom the proper attitude is one of familial consideration and care, born of an empathetic understanding made possible by our common origins, or our mutually defining relations, ecofeminism is able to condemn our abuse of the environment outright: this is no way to treat one's family! So for ecofeminism concern for Nature is the product of a re-awakening to our kinship with our individual non-human relatives; it is grounded in our individuality, rather than in any kind of cosmic identification, and it springs out of a sense of solidarity with our fellow beings.

It seems to me, as I indicated at the outset, that ecofeminism and deep ecology, with their complementary interpretations of the interconnectedness thesis, each captures an important aspect of our metaphysical and ethical relationship with Nature. For if reality is indeed internally interconnected, if it does consist in a web of relations, then, as I explained earlier, it may be seen as both a whole and as a manifold of individuals. From the viewpoint of the whole it does appear to qualify as a moral order, though from the viewpoint of the individual, it does not. Since I claim both these viewpoints need to be taken into account in our attempt to determine how we should relate to Nature, we find ourselves committed in the end to an irreducible moral ambivalence consisting of compassionate intervention on behalf of Nature on the one hand, and enlightened acquiescence in the natural tide of destruction on the other. In accepting this ambivalence, we discover on the one hand that that it is our humanity—our very finitude and limitation—rather than any grand plan in the stars, that impels us to act on behalf of our embattled fellow creatures. In this way the moral loftiness of deep ecology is brought down to the ground, rendered human. But on the other hand we discover that our compassion—the value taken for granted by ecofeminism—is not beyond moral question either. In light of the grand plan that *is* in the stars, compassion is seen to come down to our love of the familiar, our solidarity with the things that remind us of ourselves.

The recognition that our grounds for ecological resistance lie in our humanity, rather than in our self-writ-large, or in the stars, is particularly important for environmentalists, I think. For many environmentalists, face to face with the heart-breaking consequences of human rapaciousness, become embittered toward humankind, and come to see our species as a curse upon the earth. Out of such a relapse into dualistic thinking, no true healing or affirmation of life can come. To recognize that our humanity is the well-spring not only of a consuming destructiveness but also of the precious compassion which counters it, may be a redeeming thought, which will help to lead us out of the





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moral impasse created by the divorce between humanity and Nature. It is to the roots of this divorce in dualistic patterns of thought that I shall now turn.

#### **Dualism : Deep Ecological and Ecofeminist Responses**

In this final section I would like to explore the ways in which deep ecology and ecofeminism, despite their contrasting (though on my account complementary) ethical perspectives, are inexorably at many points drawn into each other's orbit by the force of their common effort to escape the dualism that grips our Western conceptual framework.

Deep ecologists, as we have seen, assert that we as human beings are identifiable with Nature-as-a-whole, but according to my argument they then generate an inconsistency by insisting that, once we have recognized this identifiability, we should ally ourselves with Nature against humankind. In other words, they re-assert a sharp division between humankind and Nature. If deep ecology is to be consistent, I have argued, it should give up this division and the struggle to which it gives rise, and surrender to the spontaneous course of human affairs. Since I do not think this is a conclusion which most deep ecologists would be prepared to accept, I shall not refer to this position of resignation simply as 'deep ecology', even though it is, according to my

argument, truer to the premises of deep ecology than is the view which normally goes by that name. I shall instead refer to this position as 'cosmic ecology', or perhaps simply 'the cosmic view'. According to cosmic ecology then, our identification with Nature-as-a-whole entails a moral acquiescence in all human action, insofar as it impinges on the environment, since our actions are now seen as manifestations of a cosmic order which is, so far as the environment is concerned, inherently moral.

From the viewpoint of ecofeminism, we as human beings are not identifiable with Nature understood in a monolithic sense; rather we are members of the wider family of life. In recognition of the ties of kinship between ourselves and the other members of this family, we are motivated to treat those others with care and consideration. This may on occasion involve protecting non-human members from their human relatives, but the struggle that ensues will not be of the us-against-them variety, but will rather be many-sided. It will involve resisting the actions of some members in some circumstances, while being prepared to affirm the actions of those same members in others. Such a struggle will resemble the struggle that a mother may face within her family—restraining outbreaks of aggression amongst her offspring, while not allying herself with one family member against another. We who feel loyalty both to our human and to our non-human relatives are in much the same position as this mother; our task is to restore the set of relationships which will enable the family to function as a healthy system.

Cosmic ecology then appears to prescribe quietistic surrender to whatever is the case, while ecofeminism advocates many-sided negotiation for the sake of accommodating all our relations. Despite this contrast in their prescriptive outcomes however, the two views, as I indicated at the beginning of this section, converge in certain vital respects. To see this, let us begin by looking more closely at the implications of the cosmic view.

Can we really accept the idea, implicit in the cosmic view, that human life, however lethal in its intent and its impact on the natural world, is nevertheless tributary to the ultimate moral order? It goes painfully against our grain, as environmentalists, to concede that the bulldozer and its driver are contributing to the moral order just as effectively as the forest is. Nevertheless it is, I believe, important for environmentalists to concede this, since the typical deep ecological reverence for untouched Nature—idealized in the concept of wilderness—is rooted in the very same dualistic understanding of the world that, by setting humankind above and beyond Nature, paved the way for the ecological crisis. If we make a fetish of untouched Nature, then we are implicitly reinforcing this dualistic view. To maintain this division—albeit reversing the values that dualistic thinking has traditionally assigned to Nature and to humankind respectively—is, as I have explained at length, to contradict the basic metaphysical premise of deep ecology, viz. the interconnectedness thesis.

In conceding that Nature is reflected in the bulldozer and its driver just as faithfully as it is in the forest we are in fact transforming the traditional environmentalist image of Nature. For many environmentalists, as I have remarked, true Nature manifests itself in inverse proportion to its proximity to human

activities or interventions. In other words, Nature is in its truest state in wildernesses or remote regions. We can accordingly expect to experience the loss of Nature most acutely in those places where humanity is most concentrated, as in the cities, the great metropolises of the late twentieth century. This assumption of course cannot be sustained in the light of the cosmic view, with its characterization of the human order as an instance of the natural order. The city itself, from this point of view, becomes a teeming locus of Nature, a field of relations inevitably organizing itself into increasingly diverse and complex forms, where this efflorescence of new forms takes place not at a biological but at a cultural level.

Recognition of this suggests the further jolting insight that Nature may not after all be confined to biology—that while it may have invented species as a vehicle for diversity and complexity, other forms of diversity and complexity might express its underlying essence or telos just as well. It is we, rather than Nature, who are fixated on species, just as it is we, rather than Nature, who agonize over the fate of individuals. Maybe Nature can realize itself through emergent levels of culture, perhaps even—who knows?—through emergent levels of computer functioning. Given time, Nature will invariably create the order, the endlessly elaborated and modulated themes, that are so beautifully but perhaps contingently expressed in the biological and ecological life of this planet.

Looking at the city from the cosmic point of view then, we might register an intensification of the pulse of life there. Perhaps here, in the heart of the metropolis, Nature is at its wildest. Certainly life is fast and full and dangerous in these streets, taut with uncertainty and unexpectedness. Perhaps as the wilderness retreats across the continents, its spirit returns, bright and sexy and violent, into our very midst. From this point of view, Nature cannot die at our hands—everything we do merely constitutes its further unfolding. From the recognition that we and all our activities and contrivances are an expression of Nature then, a new image of Nature does indeed emerge. We can expect to discover its underlying tao in the love-and-struggle-and-crime-filled streets of London or Tokyo just as surely as on the Siberian taiga or in the deserts of western Australia.

The same argument can be applied in relation to our artefacts, our technologies. The instruments of ecological destruction—the bulldozers, oil drills, missiles, H-bombs—are generally abhorred, even demonized, by environmentalists. To adopt the cosmic view however, and to recognize our true identity with Nature, is to recognize that these technologies are all instruments of the natural order, on a par with tusks and venom, cyclones, landslides and ice ages. They are fashioned out of terrestrial materials by one of the earth's species, and set in motion by that species' telos. If we truly honor the earth, we should honor these forms that have always been latent within it, we should honor these emerging potentialities of its nature. Besides, since it is our technology which mediates our relationship with the world, we cannot honor the world if we despise our technology. In spiritual terms, we need, like the primal peoples so admired by deep ecologists, to locate the sacred not merely in the cosmos, but in the technology which discloses the cosmos to us.<sup>10</sup> Many of those primal peoples attributed an indwelling

spirit to their artifacts. The latter were enchanted, charged with a life and destiny of their own, just as the wider world was. From the cosmic point of view, we need urgently to sacralize our own dangerously secular technologies, if we are to respect the world that these technologies open up to us.

To be prepared to accept as natural and hence to respect—perhaps to sacralize—our cities and our technologies of destruction, is to respect and re-enchant the Nature that we actually inhabit—as opposed to the Nature that exists in some remote region which we may never visit, some world locked away in a reserve or fenced against human intrusions. It is within our own everyday world that we must forge our relationship with Nature, and perhaps rediscover the sacred.

As it happens, these implications of cosmic ecology echo certain of the sentiments that ecofeminists have recently been expressing. Irene Javors, for instance, has said, in the idiom of feminist spirituality,

The Goddess lives in the city. She is present in all her manifestations. However, we have great difficulty dealing with her as Hecate/Kali, the destroyer/crone. We fear the “gifts” that she brings us—age, change, deterioration, decay, death. She is an alchemist who finds the seeds for new life within the compost heap of decomposing forms. We fear her and run from her dark side; by so doing, we blind ourselves to her holiness.<sup>11</sup>

And another ecofeminist writer has recommended the resacralization of our technologies in the following terms:

I believe it is time to create new songs of acknowledgement as well as ceremonies that include metals, petrochemicals and fossil fuels, electricity, modern solar power systems, and water power systems. I also believe it is very important to make sacred, to acknowledge the new ways and elements in our lives—from nuclear power (which is buried in our earth and activates our Sun) to plastics to computers. It is time now, again, for the entire world to honor these Spirits, these new molecular forms, to restore harmony and balance to our out-of-control systems and in particular, to our modern technologies.<sup>12</sup>

Why is it that ecofeminists are beginning to enter the same spiritual terrain as the cosmic version of deep ecology? The argument behind these ecofeminist sentiments is quite different from the argument that leads to the cosmic view, but the two arguments are to some extent convergent. The argument which led to the cosmic view was, as we have seen, that overcoming the dualistic division of humankind and Nature entailed accepting human destructiveness as natural and therefore as morally unobjectionable. The ecofeminist argument centers on dualism too, but ecofeminists offer a much more systematic analysis of dualistic patterns of thought than deep ecologists do. From the ecofeminist point of view, dualism constitutes a full-blown ideology which interprets the world in terms of dichotomous pairs of qualities, such as active/passive, light/dark, mind/body, reason/emotion, and Culture/Nature. Not only are the qualities that appear in these pairs of opposites dichotomized, in this dualistic scheme of things; they are also hierarchically ordered: within each of the above pairs of opposites, the left-hand term is

invariably regarded as ‘higher’ than the term on the right. The reason for this, according to the ecofeminist analysis, is that the terms on the right are defined via their association with the feminine, while those on the left are identified with the masculine. The entire system exists for the purpose of legitimating the inferiorization of the feminine and all things traditionally associated with it.

From the ecofeminist perspective then, the split between humanity and Nature that deep ecology seeks to heal is only one instance of a system of dualistic constructions that are psychosexual in origin and political in purpose. Hostility to Nature is built into the very foundations of this patriarchal ideology, and the entire ideology must be dismantled if humanity and Nature are to be re-integrated. In other words, we cannot set about uniting humanity with Nature without at the same time effecting the demolition of this entire system of dichotomizations, including the original dualistic construction of masculine and feminine.

The ecofeminist critique of dualism then has been more concerned with rehabilitating—re-honoring—all the repressed terms in this entire system of pairs of opposites than with simply demonstrating the inextricability of humankind from Nature. Within the dualist framework it has of course been primarily the body, the emotions, eros, Nature, and the feminine that have been repressed. For this reason ecofeminists have typically been concerned to celebrate these ‘earthy’ things. But death, decay and destruction are further aspects of ‘earthiness’, and have accordingly also been repressed. Ecofeminists are on the verge of pointing out that most environmentalists perpetuate this form of repression in their refusal to accept either the destruction of the non-human world, or the human instruments and centres of this destruction, where this still really amounts to a refusal to accept the dark side of Nature itself. I am not sure that any ecofeminist has actually said that overcoming dualism involves embracing the destruction of the natural world, but this may in fact be a logical conclusion of the ecofeminist critique of dualism. By way of this rather different route then, ecofeminism appears to converge with the cosmic view in its conclusion that the destruction of the natural world at human hands cannot be regarded as an absolute evil.

In these different ways ecofeminism and the cosmic version of deep ecology appear to be pointing to what might be an important truth for environmentalists, namely that we cannot save the world without first acquiescing in its loss. The belief that we can save the world rests on the very same assumptions that underlie our attempts to destroy it, these being the assumptions that, in the first place, we are in some sense bigger than the system (and are therefore capable of both destroying and saving it), and that, in the second place, death, destruction and extinction are in any case wrong, and not to be tolerated. Only when we accept the dark side of Nature, and see it exemplified in our own destructiveness, can we truly begin to honor Nature. And only when we honor it, understanding its dark side, will we be capable of approaching the world in a spirit of receptive encounter, for it is presumably, as many feminists have argued, our fear of this dark side, particularly the prospect of our own mortality, which underlies our drive to conquer, control, dominate and even destroy the world. Ironically then, it is by accepting and honoring

the forces of destruction that we are freed from the impulse to destroy.

If strands not only of deep ecology but also of ecofeminism lead to an acquiescence in human destructiveness, an acquiescence that is ultimately the key to transcending that destructiveness in ourselves, does it follow that no grounds remain for ecological resistance, for the protection of non-human life from human exploitation? I think not. The ecofeminist rehabilitation of the dark side of Nature has to be set in the context of its ethic of care and kinship. We may accept the dark side, the inevitability, even sacredness, of death and destruction, and yet continue to look out for our kin, continue to protect those for whom we care, in the way that I explained at the end of the previous section. To stand vigilant guard over those whom we love is not necessarily to try to cheat death, nor does it necessarily involve the repression of 'the dark face of the goddess'. A balance must be found between the cherishing of life and the honoring of death. To cherish life need not entail subduing and taking control of Nature, and to honor death need not entail abandoning ourselves and all our loved ones to the winds of chance. Our task is to maintain—and perpetually to renegotiate—the dynamic ambivalence which is the lifeblood of a healthy morality, a living spirituality. Our acquiescence in mortality may thus lead us to a deep attunement to the terms of life, without in the process committing us to quietism. We need only concede that our interventions on behalf of our fellow beings spring not from enlightenment but from a homely and humble and all-too-human love of kin. 'Enlightenment' consists in the ability to tolerate without bitterness and despair the failure of these interventions, should they indeed fail; for it is only when we are truly capable of this that we will have rooted out our own impulse to conquer and control the world, our impulse to reshape the world closer to the heart's desire.

## NOTES

1. Jim Cheney brought this point out very clearly in his article "Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology," *Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1987. It is also explored extensively in Val Plumwood, "Nature, Self and Gender," *Hypatia*, Vol 6, No 1 (Spring 1991). However as ecofeminism is not typically expounded systematically as a philosophy, other views of Nature are also represented in ecofeminist works. Conversely, the view of Nature that I have here identified as ecofeminist is also espoused by writers who make no reference to feminist theory at all. See for instance J. Baird Callicott's account of American Indian views of Nature in "Traditional American Indian and Western European Attitudes Toward Nature: an Overview," *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989). See also Callicott's recent book on multicultural environmental ethics, *Earth's Insights*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). Both Callicott and Aldo Leopold, the architect of the land ethic Callicott is concerned to defend, tend to view Nature as a community of natural elements and beings, but both also seem to adopt an holistic interpretation of community for ethical purposes, where this would run counter to the ecofeminist tendency. I am not really concerned to discuss deep ecology and ecofeminism per se here, but rather a certain complex of

issues which are central but not exclusive to these two positions. The issues in question concern the relative merits of the individualistic and holistic views of our relationship to Nature. An author who has recently addressed these issues without reference to either deep ecology or ecofeminism is Robert W. Gardiner, "Between Two Worlds: Humans in Nature and Culture," *Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 12, No.4, 1990.

2. Evelyn Fox Keller develops a sophisticated argument along these lines in *Reflections on Gender and Science*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

3. Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement," *Inquiry*, 16, 1973.

4. Warwick Fox, "Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy of Our Time?" *The Ecologist*, 14, 1984. In his later work, Fox has made more room for a relative form of individuality in his ecological metaphysic. See *Towards a Transpersonal Ecology*, (Boston: Shambhala, 1990).

5. John Seed, "Anthropocentrism" in B. Devall and G. Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as If Nature Mattered*, (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1985).

6. Val Plumwood identifies three versions of the deep ecological account of the relationship of self to Nature. She calls them the 'indistinguishability account', the 'expanded self' account, and the 'transcended or transpersonal self' account. Although there are indeed certain distinctions to be made amongst these three positions, it seems to me that they all involve basically holistic interpretations of interconnectedness, since they all point to the substitution of a greater Self for the normal self understood as ego or individual. See Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, (New York: Routledge, 1993).

7. This argument that the relational nature of systems entails both individuality and holism is developed in my book, *The Ecological Self*, (London: Routledge, 1991).

8. Holmes Rolston III, "Can We and Ought We to Follow Nature?" in *Environmental Ethics*, Vol.1, 1979.

9. This is evident in the web imagery which is so central to ecofeminism, and which appears in a number of ecofeminist titles, for example, J. Plaskow and C. Christ (eds), *Weaving the Visions*, Harper and Row, New York, 1989, and I. Diamond and G. F. Orenstein, *Reweaving the World: the Emergence of Ecofeminism*, (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990). In the latter work the editors, in their Introduction, characterize the early ecofeminists as those feminists who "affirmed and celebrated the embeddedness of all the earth's peoples in the multiple webs and cycles of life."

10. The comparatively easy-going attitude of certain native peoples in this respect, unfettered as they are by hard-and-fast (dualistic) distinctions between what qualifies as natural (and hence sacred) and what does not, is illustrated by a point made by my colleague at LaTrobe, Raj Bessarib, concerning a 'dreamer' of the Bardi people in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. This story-teller of the dreamtime, Billy Ahchoo, includes a 'dance of the motorboat' in his repertoire of dreaming dances.

11. Irene Javors, "Goddess in the Metropolis: Reflections on the Sacred in an Urban Setting" in I. Diamond and G.F. Orenstein, op cit.

12. Carol Lee Sanchez, "New World Tribal Communities" in J. Plaskow and C. Christ, op cit.

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# POLITICAL ANIMALS: *The Paradox of Ecofeminist Politics* 1

Catriona Sandilands

## Introduction: Between a Rock and a Wild Place

Recently I had the pleasure of returning to my childhood home on Vancouver Island, visiting the house in which I grew up. Whenever I go home, I get caught between two conflicting sets of emotions. On the one hand, the space of my parents' garden is the enchanted realm of my earliest memories. There is a 400 year-old garry oak tree, for example: one branch was tied to the ground in its youth to signify two nations' peaceful relations; more recently, the tree provided the most ideal climbing situation for a young girl's adventures and retreats. The tree could speak volumes about both the region's history, and mine, if only we knew how to listen to it. There is my father's unbelievably complicated system of compost piles, the provider of the enormous earthworms that I used to unceremoniously displace into my mother's little garden, now overrun with thyme and lavender. My childhood memories are filled with grasshoppers, quail, the colors of camas and the smells of cedar, and, perhaps best of all, the delightful sensation of mud oozing up between toes as I ran barefoot on the rain-drenched earth. This was a space of wonder.

On the other hand, whenever I go home, I am also struck by how fragile these memories are, how slim was the possibility of my experience, and how threatened is the chance of anyone having such a childhood again. The garry oak ecosystems are being devastated; we don't hear about this old growth forest nearly as often as we do about Clayoquot Sound, the Carmanah, and the Walbran, but these magnificent ancient trees are, if anything, more threatened by the gradual incursion of condominiums up the east coast of the Island than the western giants are by Macmillan Bloedel or InterFor. My father's compost piles are considered an eyesore by the *nouveaux riches* who would rather see streetlights and paved roads than stars and wild lilies. Even the mud seems rarer; while the last couple of years of warm, dry Springs on the South Coast have been great for tourism, the precious rain that has historically given us the unofficial title "wet" coasters seems to be threatened by global climate change.

There is a moment of tension in me that exists through the paradox itself, and that is the space from which this paper has emerged. This is the part of me that recognizes the value of both politics and awe, the rock and the garry oak, the distinction between them, and the desire to live them both. This is the part of me that would wish to live and foster the contradictory possibilities of the phrase "political animal," without subsuming the one half into the other: without eroding a desire for social justice on the one hand, and without eclipsing a desire for wildness on the other. This is the part of me concerned with ecofeminism, a movement and philosophy that, in many places, tries to blend politics with wonder as a way of valuing and vitalizing both.

What I want to do in this essay is offer an analysis of the paradox between these two moments. In ecofeminism, I see a convergence between both of these parts of my thought and experience: both the careful work of rigorous political analysis and philosophy, *and* the desire for mystery, for the experience of awe and wildness, for a type of relation that demands that I put aside careful reasoning and sense nature in an altogether different way.

## I. Speech and the Nature of Politics

Contemporary social movements have challenged hegemonic forms of political discourse while remaining committed to the democratization of speech. Environmentalism is part of this process. As many environmental theorists have pointed out, there is a need to challenge hegemonic representations of nature as object or resource, and to foster other political versions of nature. (Think of Murray Bookchin, for example, for whom nature is not a realm of objects to be exploited en route to human transcendence, but is rather a realm of freedom, of which humans are a part and through which humanity can be expressed.) The point is to involve nature in politics in a way that counteracts its historical objectification.

Much contemporary environmental thought has concerned itself with the construction of alternative modes of speaking nature to challenge these hierarchical constructs, to have nature appear in politics in a more emancipatory light, and to foster alternative experiences of nature. To paraphrase Sheldon Wolin, "diversity is the nightmare of hegemony": the act validating a variety of experiences of nature authorizes new forms of political speech about nature, new ways in which nature can appear in the various realms of human life.

But speech is always already social. All environmentalist discourse contains some moment of *filtration*, some point where nature is made socially meaningful, some point where nature represents more than itself. One could argue that ecology (that branch of biology dealing with living organisms' habitats, modes of life, and relations to their surroundings) should thus be particularly influential in defining the nature of environmental crisis. Only with such specific knowledge, it could be argued, can nature be seen to speak its truths, and only with this ecology inserted into politics can hegemonic ideas of nature-as-resource be overcome en route to a more enlightened, ecocentric, humanity.

Unfortunately, as Neil Evernden notes, ecologists read nature through a number of conflicting versions of what the human species should be doing. He writes:

We have [at least] three forms of belief about the action proper to human beings, all apparently justified by the insights of

ecology. We can live in harmony with nature, which to some is clearly the natural thing to do; or we can expand our domain by direct competition with other species, which certainly seems (since Darwin) a natural enough thing to do; or we can [following the example of the spruce budworm] endorse the overexploitation of nature in certain knowledge that through our destruction we are doing nature's work, just as we were naturally meant to do.<sup>2</sup>

The idea that the wanton devastation of nature could be *vindicated* by the insights of ecological science gives environmentalism a strong message: "Nature justifies nothing, or anything." Models for human behavior are not given in nature; our understanding of ourselves as a species cannot be derived from ecological inquiry. Instead, Evernden suggests, ideas of nature tell us far more about social ideals than they tell us about nature itself. This insight is not simply a shortcoming of science, but does suggest that science's pose as the truth-teller of nature is suspect.

Thus, against authors such as Robert Paehlke, who might argue that environmental politics are somehow free from political location on a left/right continuum,<sup>3</sup> I would suggest that environmentalism must include a radical, democratic dimension. It is vital that ideas about environmental justice be produced through analyses of social justice. Otherwise, as Slavoj Žižek has written, "it is quite possible to imagine an ecological position which sees the only solution [to be] a strong anti-democratic, authoritarian state resuming control over the exploitation of natural resources."<sup>4</sup>

*Radical* ecologies are located within a what Laclau and Mouffe call a "chain of equivalences," a discursive construction that emphasizes the relatedness of a variety of forms of oppression and liberation.<sup>5</sup> Radical notions of speaking nature have been conditioned by notions of democracy already present in the other social movement struggles with which environmentalism is articulated. These notions of democracy have been strongly shaped by a felt need to value those identities repressed by the dominant culture, and to create new modes of speech from these oppressed identities to represent liberatory ways of being in the world. Democracy is thus contingent on the ability to speak alternative truths, and the truth of nature is no exception.

Given that the project of many contemporary social movements has been to empower a speaking subject that can become an authentic voice for a set of oppressed experiences, the quest for a speaking subject in environmental thought and politics represents a radical move in the direction of democracy: the construction of a voice speaking for a distinct subject/position called nature.

This process of finding a voice for nature is perhaps most obviously displayed in deep ecology. The speech of human beings *as* nature, as not over-and-above other species but as part of the ecosphere is a way of reconnecting both to the nature outside and to the natural parts of ourselves that have been suppressed through centuries of their degradation. For example, Theodore Roszak writes:

The core of the mind is the ecological unconscious. For ecopsychology, repression of the ecological unconscious is the deepest root of collusive madness in industrial society;

open access to the ecological unconscious is the path to sanity....<sup>6</sup>

The ecological unconscious is the moment that natural speech is found. To give a dramatic example, John Seed has said, "I try to remember that it's not me, John Seed, trying to protect the rainforest. Rather I am part of the rainforest protecting myself, I am that part of the rainforest recently emerged into human thinking."<sup>7</sup> Through a philosophy that emphasizes our continuity within it, nature can emerge as a democratic actor for political conversation.

The quest for a speaking, environmental subject is ...y problematic. What the project overlooks is the impossibility of finding a nature deep enough to appear in politics that is unaffected by processes of social construction. The quest for an alternative way of living in nature that is not characterized by hierarchical constructions of humanity *over* nature is a vital aspect of new *constructions* of nature; however, it can never be a pre-social nature that speaks. Specifically, the nature that we may find in deep ecological searches for empathy is always seen from the point at which we appear to *ourselves* as natural. Finding a speaking subject for nature is a linguistic project.

To suggest that there is an ecological *self* that can be tapped and translated into a political speech that represents nature is to suggest that language has the power to speak the *truth* of nature. I disagree, and what I would argue is this: Nature defies representation as discourse. The moment where nature emerges into discourse is always already a moment of its social construction, a moment where it becomes something else.<sup>8</sup> The signifier overflows the signified—nature cannot be captured and condensed into a fundamentally human construction. Nature always overflows its social container.

As Alan Wittbecker writes, "the earth has innumerable modes of being that are not human modes. Our direct intuitions tell us that the earth is infinitely strange—it is alien, even where gentle and beautiful."<sup>9</sup> I would argue that this strangeness, this moment of the linguistic unknowability of nature, must be *preserved and fostered*. Not only is it a moment of human humility, but it is an instance that valorizes human incompleteness, a limitation of the social, a moment where the so-called rational mind has not completely colonized the impulse, the spirit, or the body.

Perhaps we might follow Gary Snyder and name this moment *wild*: it is, he writes, "artless, free, spontaneous, unconditioned. Expressive, physical, openly sexual, ecstatic."<sup>10</sup> It is a moment of human and nonhuman existence that defies rigid compartmentalization into specific notions of place or linear time. This wildness is unspeakable, and calls our attention to the limits of speech itself.

To argue for this version of wild nature is to suggest that there is an aspect of nature that cannot be apprehended in political discourse. This step has been a difficult one for me to take. Indeed, if the truth of nature is unspeakable, then it is even more important to link struggles over nature with struggles for social justice, and to think carefully about the appearance of nature in discourse, as any authorization we might look for in the truth of nature is epistemologically and politically suspect.



But by arguing in favor of wildness, I am necessarily led to rethink how experiences of nature might inform a political project. The nature of politics is not, and can never be, a transparent representation of its truth. There is always something else, and that existence underscores the paradox I mentioned earlier: How do we conceive of an environmental philosophy or politics that does not immediately *colonize* the wild?

## II. The Paradox of Subordination and Mystery

There are thus two simultaneous and paradoxical trajectories here. One is to articulate liberatory discourses around nature within struggles for social justice as a way of deepening a democratic and emancipatory project; the other is to show the limits of that project as a way of fostering forms of experience that are not readily absorbable by an anthropocentric reliance on speech.

I am impressed by some of ecofeminism's insights into these tensions between articulation and wildness. Although I will argue that ecofeminism's respect for the paradox is somewhat tenuous in the next section, I would like to show the promise in ecofeminism first.

Perhaps it is useful to think of the paradox this way: ecofeminist thought places a heavy analytic emphasis on the ways in which dualism works to bifurcate and lobotomize aspects of human experience. To many ecofeminists, it is this process of alienation of humanity from the natural aspects of itself that lies at the basis of humanity's domination of nonhuman nature. The political and philosophical project is to show the actual integration of what has historically been polarized and hierarchically valued. To heal the wounds between nature and culture, between men and women, between mind and body, and between reason and emotion, it is necessary to challenge dominant dualistic traditions of Western thought and replace them with a more integrated understanding, emphasizing the interconnections among various aspects of human and nonhuman life.

In broad terms, there are at least two routes in ecofeminism to resolve such problems. One stream emphasizes the ways in which the domination of nature is similar to social oppressions like sexism, racism, classism, and heterosexism. As Janet Biehl puts it,

the idea of dominating nature stems from the domination of human by human. Only ending all systems of domination makes possible an ecological society, in which all aspects of human nature—including sexuality and the passions as well as rationality—are freed.<sup>11</sup>

Here, solutions to alienation involve bringing nature into feminist discourse. By conceptualizing the domination of nature as a hierarchical process of oppression, nature becomes a social problem, linked to and interstructured with other forms of oppression. The liberation of nature is thus only attainable through struggles for social justice.

This move is a profoundly anti-dualistic one: it shows the interconnections among natural and social processes by pointing to the ways in which nature is always already implicated in social relations. It breaks down the supposedly rigid barriers between

nature and culture by showing the political character of struggles over nature. One of the best statements about the democratic moment in ecofeminism comes from Chaia Heller, who argues for *erotic democracy* as a way of capturing the need to include a plurality of human and nonhuman experiences into social struggle:

we must create an erotic democracy that decentralizes power and allows for direct, passionate participation in the decisions that determine our lives. We must establish a municipal economy that addresses the needs of all citizens by creating systems that include barter and worker cooperatives. We must rethink technology as a creative art form that can add to the splendor of both the social and natural worlds.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, one moment of ecofeminism would have nature appear in political discourse through democracy. Opening up nature to multiple interpretations means that experiences of nature can be democratized as the core of a transformative feminist project.

On a subtly different note, there is another moment in ecofeminism that emphasizes the specificity of nature, where it is not fully assimilable into feminist discourses on social justice. Although this moment similarly stems from a desire to reconcile nature with culture, it concentrates on the particularity of our relations to nature.

One might name this second moment *mystery*, as a number of more spiritually-oriented ecofeminists have done. I will continue to name this moment wildness, and suggest that ecofeminism recognizes the need to reevaluate the direct experience of wild strangeness that fosters human humility. This implies a respect for the unknowable otherness of nature as an *act of nature*. Let me offer you a quote from Catherine Keller:

At any moment we meet an infinite plurality, most of which we do indeed screen out, bundle and reduce into manageable perceptual and cognitive categories. To attune ourselves to this plurality means to live with the untold, indeed unspeakable, complexity it poses for us. For as we take in the many, we ourselves are many.<sup>13</sup>

Here is a recognition of a moment in nature that overflows our ability to describe it. It is not simply the diversity of nature, or our diversity *as* nature, but an unspeakable complexity: a wild web of relations and experiences so complicated and diverse that it defies linguistic appropriation and can only be experienced as *strange and wonderful*. Nature here embodies both the otherness out there and the otherness in ourselves. Closure of human identity becomes impossible, and there is always a stranger within us.

This is also a profoundly anti-dualistic move. *Although nature might be specific, it is always part of humanity*. In its resistance to discursive construction, it is like a representational vortex around which language spins, but which is actually inaccessible. The rational is always already pierced by mystery, showing the necessity of wonder to our own movement. Charlene Spretnak has this to say about this wonder:



I feel that various intensities of mystery are revealed to us during the postorgasmic state and during certain kinds of meditation and... ritual, but the grandeur and majesty I have found only in nature.<sup>14</sup>

Here, we see a desire for bodily openness, for nonlinguistic receptivity. This is a moment that invites a nonlinguistic relation between strangers, produced through awe rather than careful political analysis, to a rhythm far different than that of customary democratic pulses. The social world can never be enclosed unto itself: there is always something else that prevents society from self-completion. The defense of this moment in ecofeminism is thus a form of resistance to the potential colonization of nature through language, demonstrating the limits of the social.

So there are two, distinct moments in ecofeminist thought, one concerning the points where nature is made known through a commonality with other struggles for social justice, and another concerning the points where nature *cannot* be known socially. The two together enable movement, not from one pole to another, but across a varied and textured field of experiences that encompass both politics and wonder.

The tension of this paradox is magnificent.

### III. Problems of Domestication

Ecofeminists have not, however, accepted the tension between the two moments unanimously. There is a strong tendency in some ecofeminist thought to try to rectify the paradox, rather than work with its potential dynamism. The two streams converge in many places into a river that muddies both. In this section, I would like to outline how a desire for integration produces—mistakenly—a project of *sameness*, an erasure of the specificity of nature, a loss of its otherness, and a resulting blunting of the political potential of ecofeminism.

In the ecofeminist quest for integration—between man and woman, culture and nature, politics and mystery—there has been *both* a reevaluation of each moment *and* a tendency to suggest that the two are not just contingent, but actually parts of the same thing. Such a holistic perspective may underscore the arbitrariness of dualistic separations, but it also tends to erase the specificity of different forms of knowledge.

There are various constructions of nature in ecofeminism that suggest a stance in which nature is somehow represented by *women's* nature. While it is valuable to suggest that ecofeminism constructs nature through feminist discourses on social justice, the conflation of these constructions with the truth of nature obscures the moments where nature must be seen as an unrepresentable other. In ecofeminism, the moment of wildness is frequently undermined by a construction of nature as unproblematically *within* the terrain of women's experiences. Such constructions turn attention away from the specificity of nature.

Insofar as nature requires a representative for political advocacy, some ecofeminists suggest that women, by virtue of their special location vis a vis natural processes, are better able to speak the truth of nature than men. As a result of women's particular experiences of dualism through reproduction, early-childhood ego-development, or sensitivity to others' needs,<sup>15</sup> women are somehow able to channel nature, to give it speech,

and to bring natural life into politics without the distorting mirrors of (patriarchal) social construction. Such a stance is indicated in this passage from Judith Plant:

Historically, women have had no real power in the outside world, no place in decision-making and intellectual life. Today, however, ecology speaks for the Earth, for the other in human/environmental relationships; and feminism speaks for the other in female/male relationships. And ecofeminism, by speaking for both the original others, seeks to understand the interconnected roots of all domination as well as ways to resist and change.<sup>16</sup>

Apart from the impossibility of speaking nature mentioned earlier, this stance is notoriously essentialist: women and nature are other in relation to male culture, thus women are closer to nature than men. Try as ecofeminism might to argue that this position of closeness is socially, rather than biologically, produced, any suggestion that women, by virtue of their femininity, occupy a unique place in relation to nature is to argue that "women" is a coherent entity with discernable qualities that happen to closely resemble the ones given in the patriarchal dualistic constructs that ecofeminism is supposed to be struggling against in the first place!

This may seem an obvious problem, and many ecofeminists have gone to great pains to reject what is (justifiably) perceived as gross reductionism. However, the discursive conflation of the truth of nature with feminist politics happens in more subtle ways as well. The idea of the Earth as female, for example (Mother Earth, Sister Volcano, etc.), bears traces of a desire to meld feminist politics with natural experience. Earth-as-female discourses are born from a desire to foster respect for nature and to link the reinvention of nature with the reinvention of femininity. When nature becomes a mother, all of those qualities we associate with human motherhood are invoked to appear in our dealings with the Earth (presumably, love, caring, recognition of dependency, intimacy, etc.). When nature becomes a sister, a related but different feminization occurs: if we want to downplay the cultural baggage associated with motherhood (not to mention some very bad experiences), we can supposedly count on a more egalitarian, sisterly relationship, keeping the sense of family and intimacy and adding solidarity in place of dependency.<sup>17</sup>

The emphasis on nature as intimately knowable in both of these representations tends to obscure the otherness of nature, the moment where nature is not female, is not human mother or sister (or, for that matter, Gaia). It also reinforces the idea that struggles for nature by women must be made through some representation of identity, here, identity in the sense of sameness. For nature to appear in feminist politics, it must become a feminist itself, and thereby be known not just as an ally but as a female person whose interests are, in fact, met completely by feminist politics.

The idea of nature as home similarly suggests a sense of intimacy between women and nature. Here, nature is not a familiar person, but a familiar landscape. Home imagery is intended to emphasize both safety and intimacy, the possibility of developing long-term family relationships with other species in a well-known terrain, and the necessity of not dirtying your

own nest. Of course, home is also supposedly the place women know best (even if the private sphere is a disempowered and isolated place), which suggests a particular respect, a particular intimacy, even a particular set of domestic behaviors.

In home imagery, we have again the sense that nature must be produced through discourses of similarity if it is to appear politically. The home metaphor invokes female expertise. The domestication of nature apparent in the representation should not be mistaken for the truth of nature, a truth that I have argued to be much more wild than even the most liberatory and inclusive construction of home would allow.

It is clear that there is the possibility for an uncritical usage of both femininity and home in ecofeminist discourse: Motherhood, sisterhood, and home are all idealized representations of persons and spaces not necessarily benign, not necessarily friendly, not necessarily safe or intimate. All of these representations of nature would have us consider nature to be a familiar terrain that women know intimately. Nature becomes women's nature, meaning either a nature *of* women or a nature known intimately *by* women. Consider that there is part of nature that *cannot* be apprehended in feminist discourse, *cannot* be known, but must be preserved nonetheless. Strangeness is eradicated in this domestication. Mistaking the metaphor for the truth of nature makes the representation an essence, an idealized template of social behavior transposed illegitimately to a guide for a natural course of action.

The trend toward domestication in ecofeminism may be seen as part of a desire to make nature knowable through feminist insights. The trend in ecofeminism to make nature *familiar* is certainly born from a recognition of the need to create nature in a way amenable to feminist analysis and struggle, showing affinities between feminist and environmentalist struggles. But the affinities, as Donna Haraway has told us, are always already partial.<sup>18</sup> The only way to prevent the authoritarian colonization of the wild specificity is to create space within ecofeminism for *strangeness*.

This strangeness is certainly present in ecofeminism, as mentioned in the previous section, but the trend toward familiarity seems to be gaining strength, and will win out if some of the metaphors I have mentioned become solidified as statements of essence. Desire for integration cannot become identity, or the paradox will be lost in the conflation of nature in itself with feminist *constructions* of nature. What is necessary is, I think, a discursive construction of nature that intentionally opens up spaces for the experience of nature as other, as *not* familiar, as *not* always already within the confines of women's—or anyone's—discursive construction. In this last section, then, I would like to offer a metaphor to counteract the loss of strangeness.

#### IV. Political Animals: Toward a Wild Justice

This paper clearly represents a convergence where various theoretical and experiential streams come together, including feminist critiques of identity politics, poststructuralism and psychoanalysis, along with a deep love of the moments of grandeur and majesty that I can only find in nature. It isn't just a moment where my desire for democracy meets my desire for wildness in

abstract terms; it is also the lived space where I am a feminist-environmentalist-theorist-sociologist walking through the woods or contemplating the lifeworld of a beloved garry oak tree—and yes, I did climb it while I was in Victoria. The paradox is quite real, both personally and politically: The question is, how do I work in a way that is genuinely inspired by its irreconcilable openness? How do I do ecofeminist politics in a way that allows both the wild and the democratic to appear, for me and for others? How can I explore, and perhaps even foster, the contradictions between the persistent feminist-ness of my political constructions of nature, and the moment where the inevitable otherness of nature signals the limits of my democratic desire? How can I *not* repeat the tendency in ecofeminism to essentialize women and domesticate nature through a claim that nature is equivalent to women's nature, or that nature is so familiar to me that I do not need to confront the limits of my knowledge?

I find part of my answer in the phrase "political animal," an underutilized metaphor, I think. To me, the phrase signals the sociality of our animal-ness, the place where nature—ours and others'—appears in political discourse. It *also* signals the animality of our politics, the place where political discourse finds its limits in nature's strangeness, the place where we *are* animals, and not simply representations of animals to ourselves. Neither "political" nor "animal" contains the irreducible truth of the other. *Political is the moment where our animal desires are produced discursively, and animal is the equally productive moment which politics cannot apprehend.*

The double-movement "political animal" captures my attention, and the ambiguity leads me to ask further questions. This is the first step of any politics or philosophical inquiry. I think it also leads us to consider how *the moment of wildness is a crucial part of a democratic project*, and I would like to end by briefly describing that project as a hint toward an alternative political vision for nature.

I am committed to democratic politics. One of my biggest concerns has centered on how nature can appear in the polyvocal democratic array that I desire. The idea of speaking as nature is inadequate. Also, articulation of environmental with social justice is vital, but to forget the independent presence of nature through the perpetual linkage of environmental with social concerns is, I think, to risk forgetting its precious specificity.

But to recognize that political speech can never approximate the truth of nature is also to recognize the reticence of the social, a guard against the possible claim that nature's interests are perfectly served in human discussion. To respect the limits of discourse is to avoid the authoritarian and totalizing claim that we have got it right; it is to keep different forms of conversation going, to preserve the lack of closure that democracy requires. At the same time, I think, such a recognition kindles in us the desire to experience the something else, the wild strangeness of nature, through other routes, whether that be by hiking in Northern Ontario or by being in a backyard tree or, perhaps, by experiencing a moment of otherness in the self through "postorgasmic openness" as Spretnak does. Perhaps this wonderful strangeness also fosters in us the desire to make this experience possible for others, through greening urban areas or protecting relatively undisturbed ecosystems while we still can.

The political animal is also not confined to living through a static bifurcation of these moments; the two are contingent and mutually-constitutive, not polarized and dualistic. Experiences of wildness might enrich our political discourses. In turn, democratic politics might create the possibility of the experience of wildness by preserving and enriching ecosystems, by recognizing the limits of the social and taking up a less arrogantly exploitative stance. Wildness and politics are not stagnant realms of life, demarcated by clear and impermeable boundaries; they are characters of diverse possibilities, each enhancing the other. That, I think, is the democratic promise of the paradox: essence eludes us, and openness is preserved in the contingent specificity of two, interdependent moments.

My desires as a political animal are thus both wild and democratic; neither is the singular truth of my being, and both provide the tension through which I continue to explore and think and act. My movement between oak tree and Provincial Legislature is not an either/or choice, but a process in which each moment makes the other possible. In their combination, both enrich my ability as a political representative of, and participant in, nature.

## NOTES

1. A portion of the argument presented in Section I of this paper also appears in the article "On the Subject of Environmentalism: From Natural Identity to Radical Democracy," forthcoming in *Environmental Ethics* (dates unknown). An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association Annual Meetings, Ottawa, Ontario, 1993.
2. Neil Evernden, *The Social Creation of Nature*, (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, 1992), p. 15. The spruce budworm population explodes periodically, decimates the balsam fir that is the budworm's favorite food (not to mention the favorite resource of the Eastern softwood forest industry), and permits an increase in spruce and birch, thus restoring a more "balanced" spruce-birch-fir forest. Evernden entertains the entirely plausible idea that ecologists might paint human beings as "global budworms" (renewing "balance" through our devastation), as a way of showing the ambivalence of nature.
3. Robert Paehlke, *Environmentalism and the Future of Progressive Politics*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).
4. Slavoj Zizek, "Beyond Discourse-Analysis," in Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, (London: Verso, 1990), p. 251.
5. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, (London: Verso, 1985). On the diversity of possible articulations, see Carolyn Merchant, *Radical Ecology*, (New York, Routledge, 1992).
6. Theodore Roszak, "The Voice of the Earth: Discovering the Ecological Ego," *The Trumpeter*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Winter, 1992, p. 9. The title alone is telling.
7. Quoted in Joanna Macy, "Awakening to the Ecological Self," in Judith Plant, *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989), p. 202.

8. Many "nature writers" have expressed this part of my paradox through statements about the places where language fails to capture nature, or about a sense of loss in translation, or about a different sense of time between nature and language. One of my favorite examples comes from Annie Dillard, who writes of the loss of the present: "the second I verbalize this awareness in my brain, I cease to see the mountain or feel the puppy," *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 79. What I particularly like about this passage is that her wonder at the present occurs at a Virginia gas station, and not in a traditional wilderness venue. "Wild" and "wilderness" are not the same thing.

9. Alan Wittbecker, "Nature as Self," *The Trumpeter*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1989, p. 80.
10. Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild*, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), p. 10.
11. Janet Biehl, quoted in Carolyn Merchant, *Radical Ecology*, p. 194. Biehl's position is laid out more extensively in her book *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics*, (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1991).
12. Chaia Heller, "For the Love of Nature: Ecology and the Cult of the Romantic," in Greta Gaard (ed.), *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), p. 240.
13. Catherine Keller, "Women Against Wasting the World: Notes on Eschatology and Ecology," in Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein, eds., *Reweaving the World*, (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990), p. 258.
14. Charlene Spretnak, "Ecofeminism: Our Roots and Flowering," in Diamond and Orenstein, *Reweaving the World*, p. 8.
15. For a good overview, see Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, (New York: Routledge, 1993).
16. Judith Plant, "Searching for Common Ground: Ecofeminism and Bioregionalism," in Diamond and Orenstein, *Reweaving the World*, p. 156.
17. Greta Gaard has written an excellent critique of "Mother Earth" imagery in her essay "Ecofeminism and Native American Cultures: Pushing the Limits of Cultural Imperialism?" in Gaard, *Ecofeminism*, p. 301-305. On the earth as "sister," see Ursula Le Guin, "A Very Warm Mountain," reprinted in Karen Knowles, *Celebrating the Land: Women's Nature Writings 1850 - 1991*, (Flagstaff, Ariz.: Northland Publishing, 1992).
18. See Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," in Linda Nicholson (ed), *Feminism/Postmodernism*, (New York: Routledge, 1990); "Overhauling the Meaning of Machines" (interview with Marcy Darnovsky), *Socialist Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2, April-June, 1991.

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# THE RAPE OF MOTHER NATURE? *Women in the Language of Environmental Discourse*

Tzeporah Berman

For several decades many linguists, sociologists, philosophers and other theorists have advanced the thesis that human reality is a social construct, and that our language is therefore not an objective system of categorization but a reflection of how reality is named. Feminist theorists such as Dale Spender, Mary Daly and Dorothy Smith have extended these concepts to propose that our reality is therefore "man-made," as within Western patriarchal society men have historically, (and continue to) held positions of power and dominance through which meaning is controlled. As such, language is, in itself a political microcosm which sets up and reproduces predominant power relationships.

Dale Spender argues that since language is man-made (encompasses the meanings of men who have arrived at the definition of the world through a position of dominance), it is through patriarchal language that women's subordination is structured. Within this paper I will extend this critique to argue that the subordination and oppression of women and Nature is structured and perpetuated through language. This will be illustrated through an examination of several common idioms and metaphors used to describe Nature and the environmental crisis within environmental discourse. I conclude that many common expressions such as 'rape of the land', 'virgin forest', 'Mother Earth' and the re-appropriation of the term 'Gaia' to represent the Earth, reinforce patriarchal dualisms and hierarchical traditions which continue to objectify women and Nature, and perpetuate the separations of humans from each other and the non-human world. As such, the use of this language would seem to be at odds with the aims of the environmental movement to achieve progressive social change. Is the environmental movement replicating the language of dominance and reinforcing the hegemonic traditions it seeks to destroy?

Before embarking on this journey I believe it is important to situate myself in this paper. I am a white woman, and an ecofeminist and environmental activist. I recognize that our language denies the experience of, and is oppressive to, (what the dominant white male culture has deemed) 'minorities', or more specifically cultures and races which are marginalized by the dominant white male western paradigm. In addition I believe the language of the dominant paradigm reinforces class oppression. However, due my class, educational and skin privilege, I have less of an understanding of class and race oppression. In addition, due to the scope and limitations of this paper, it is not possible to give full treatment to all of these issues. This is not however, to suggest a hierarchy of importance.

One of the arguments made in this paper is that the structure of our language reflects and reproduces the dominant paradigm, and reinforces many of the dualistic assumptions which underlie

the Cartesian worldview—the separation of male and female, nature and culture, mind from body, emotion from reason and intuition from fact. I do not believe in objectivity, even my own. As such, I cannot/will not attempt to separate my emotions from my analysis. This paper is interspersed with personal observations, prose and poetry to give it power, to make it real and to honor the traditions of famous feminists scholars who boldly set out to take back, re-create, re-weave and spin a language of feeling and experience.

Finally, this paper is written in first person because I refuse to be invisible. *I am not an object. I am a real person, with real feelings, values and intuitions. I eat, I sleep, I sweat, I menstruate, I cry, I rejoice, I celebrate. I feel fear, I feel anger, I feel wildness, I feel power.*

## What is Ecofeminism?

Ecofeminism is a theory and movement for social change that combines ecological principles with feminist theory. While there is much controversy over the term 'ecofeminism' and ecofeminist insights are expressed in a myriad of diverse ways, there is general agreement that the basis of ecological feminism is a recognition that the oppression of women and the domination of Nature in patriarchal society is interconnected and mutually reinforcing. In addition ecofeminists argue that human beings are only one constituent of a much larger community; a community that includes all life and living systems.

While some ecofeminists believe that women are biologically closer to Nature than men, many others argue that women may be closer to Nature due to the lived experience of oppression and domination, and the mutual devaluation of women and Nature within patriarchal society. In contrast, other ecofeminist scholars argue that the question of whether women are closer to Nature than men is inherently flawed, as both gender and Nature are social constructions. This position does not however, deny the historical associations between women and Nature and their mutual subordination. Rather, a more appropriate question might be: how has the relationship between humans and Nature been structured by the dominant paradigm and how are these relationships perpetuated? While it may be valuable to look at how women and men have been associated with and relate to Nature, questioning whether one sex or gender is closer to nature reinforces the dualistic assumptions in our society. My analysis of environmental discourse in this paper is informed by the latter position. I argue that language is indeed a cultural artifact invented by humans in the interest of the dominant male paradigm. As such, our language maintains and perpetuates dominant social

structures and therefore reinforces the interconnected and mutually reinforcing oppression of women and Nature. I conclude that if interested in a more harmonious relationship with the natural world it is imperative that the language of environmental discourse be critically examined.

### Language and Otherness

Many environmental theorists have noted that our language is representative of the predominant anthropocentric world view in western society—a fundamentally human centered view which sees animals, plants and natural systems as objects for human use. This anthropocentrism is illustrated through the use of terms such as ‘timber’ instead of trees, and phrases such as, ‘harvesting of natural resources’ and ‘wildlife management’ to describe and justify the exploitation of Nature and natural systems by humans.

As previously noted, it is through language that we ‘create’ the world we live in—language determines the limits of our world through the creation of categories which act as boundaries. The distinctive feature of feminist analysis of language, thought and reality, is that women did not create these categories. Dorothy Smith argues that men have been primarily responsible for producing cultural images which has resulted in effectively separating women from men, and universalizing male experience. Women have been placed at a disadvantage as language users and as equal members of society because ‘male’ language falsifies women’s experience and perceptions. This analysis has led feminist scholar Adrienne Rich to comment that, objectivity “is nothing more than male subjectivity.” And that patriarchal order has legitimated and made male experience and subjectivity unquestionable by conceptualizing it as ‘objective’. (quoted in Spender 1980) Radical feminist theorists have thus concluded that our language is androcentric (male centered) and therefore does not merely filter and name our reality, but distorts it, creating what Mary Daly calls a monodimensional reality. (Quoted in Cameron 1992)

Elizabeth Dodson Gray offers that this distortion of reality and the universalization of male experience stems from a conceptual hierarchy embedded in Western culture which is the result of Judeo-Christian thought. (Gray 1981) Within this hierarchy God is seen as the supreme being, closely followed by men, after which women, children, animals, plants and Nature follow as lesser beings. She offers that from this pyramid of dominance further philosophical dualistic divisions follow: the separation of mind/body, spirit/flesh, nature/culture. While this recognition of patriarchal systems is not new to many of us, it is unlike many feminist analysis in that Gray explicitly notes the subordination of animals and Nature.

Andree Collard posits that the rejection of human identification with nature and the rise of the male/female and nature/culture dualisms is a result of the adoption of Sanskrit language which coincided with the recorded appearance of god-worshipping males in the Middle East some 6000 years ago. In the new language, women and Nature were reduced from positions of importance. Therefore while many believe the turning point in Western thought towards ‘scientific objectivity’ and the rise of mechanism was the seventeenth century, Collard argued that this

world view evolved out of the power relationships and devaluation of nature inherent in Sanskrit. (Collard and Contrucci 1988)

Regardless of the origins, it is clear that within patriarchal culture male hierarchy is maintained through cultural dichotomies which legitimate the logic of domination. Ecofeminist Val Plumwood defines dualism as “the process by which contrasting concepts are formed by domination and subordination and constructed as oppositional and exclusive.” (Plumwood 1992) Through these conceptual dualisms women have traditionally been associated with Nature, men with culture and masculinity and femininity have been constructed as oppositional. This cultural polarization leads to a devaluation of one side of the dualism and the distortion of both. Catherine Roach notes that, “when women are seen as closer to nature than men, women are inevitably seen as less fully human than men.” (Roach 1991) It is therefore through these dichotomies that the concept of the ‘other’ is created. Ecofeminist Judith Plant notes that, “the other, the object of patriarchal rationality, is considered only insofar as it can benefit the subject.” (Plant 1989) Both women and Nature become objects for man’s use. As mothers our identity is constructed through a role of caregiver, as wives we take on our husband’s name (a tradition which stems from a time when women were overtly treated as objects through the legal system), as prostitutes we become sex-objects and in the natural world animals are meat, experimental objects or prisoners in a freak show, while plants, trees and minerals become dollars. This objectification stems from the internalization of hierarchy and dualistic assumptions prevalent in Western society. Many ecofeminists argue then, that the creation of hierarchy and the process dualism provides an intellectual basis for the domination of women and Nature.

However, it is a mistake to assume that the dualistic assumptions which underlie Western thought are unidimensional and create absolute associations. Kate Sandilands notes that polarity has never been completely dominant in Western conceptions of gender (Sandilands 1991), while Carolyn Merchant notes that although women have historically been associated with Nature, the nature of this association has differed considerably and at times been a source of empowerment. (Merchant 1983) While I think it is important to note that these categories and dualisms are complex and not stagnant, I also believe that the polar associations between men and women, rational and intuitive modes of thought, mind and body, nature and culture are readily apparent in our language, socio-political and economic systems. I believe the perpetuation of these categories is detrimental to achieving an egalitarian society and a more harmonious relationship with the non-human world.

Deborah Cameron offers an insightful analysis of how dualism and the social construction of gender categories is manifest in our language structure. She calls the tendency to attribute gender specification to inanimate objects and other beings with no knowledge of their sex a “pervasive cultural phenomena.” She argues that the imposition of gender categories on every aspect of life creates the illusion of ‘natural’ categories which are unequal and restrictive constructs. Cameron cites the Rosenthal experiment during which people were asked to identify objects (knife/fork, salt/pepper, vanilla/chocolate,

Ford/Chevrolet) as masculine or feminine. Oddly enough there was almost total agreement on the gender classifications: knife, Ford, pepper and chocolate were identified as masculine while fork, Chevrolet, salt and vanilla were identified as feminine. The most important conclusion Cameron draws from this is "that the concepts of 'masculine and feminine' are infinitely detachable from anything having to do with 'real sexual difference.'" (Cameron 1992) Though I question what real sexual difference is, I think the point made here is clear: that gender categories (and I believe sex categories to a certain extent) are socially constructed and that these categories are perpetuated by the engendering of other beings and objects. While environmental theorists have often noted the tendency in human societies to anthropomorphize other beings, I would extend this critique to include the 'andropomorphizing' of other beings.

*While observing logging operations on Vancouver Island, I witnessed a logger approach a massive ancient Sitka spruce which reached a majestic height of around two hundred feet. "He's a big one," he noted gazing in awe at the tree. The crew proceeded with their work and within minutes the tree was crashing down to the ground. Before it hit the ground I distinctly heard the same man say, "she's coming down fast." At what point did that spruce become a woman? I can only conclude that the projection of the male gender on the spruce as it stood towering above the men denoted respect and possibly a subconscious equality. The transformation to female gender occurred when the men had dominated the tree. It no longer had power. Its roots had been severed, its majesty conquered, it lay prostrate on the ground, ready to be 'stripped' and 'used'.*

Cameron posits that the genderization of objects only makes sense if the person is consciously or unconsciously comparing genders. For example, asking whether or not salt is female or male makes no sense unless you are asked to compare salt with pepper. If the comparisons change, the gender may change.

Cameron uses the example of a spoon and fork versus a knife and fork. People might call the fork masculine in the first instance and feminine in the second. This example illustrates the sheer subjectivity of gender classification. Gender classification builds on many patriarchal assumptions and socialized characteristics through which the gender oppositional categories are created. Through our use of these gender categories we perpetuate oppositional and oppressive hierarchical thinking. It is therefore useful to explore the use of the term 'Mother Earth' and the female personification of

Nature within environmental discourse. Do these terms and categories perpetuate oppositional thinking and oppression of both women and Nature? Or can they be used to provide a means of identification for humans with Nature and a source of empowerment for women?

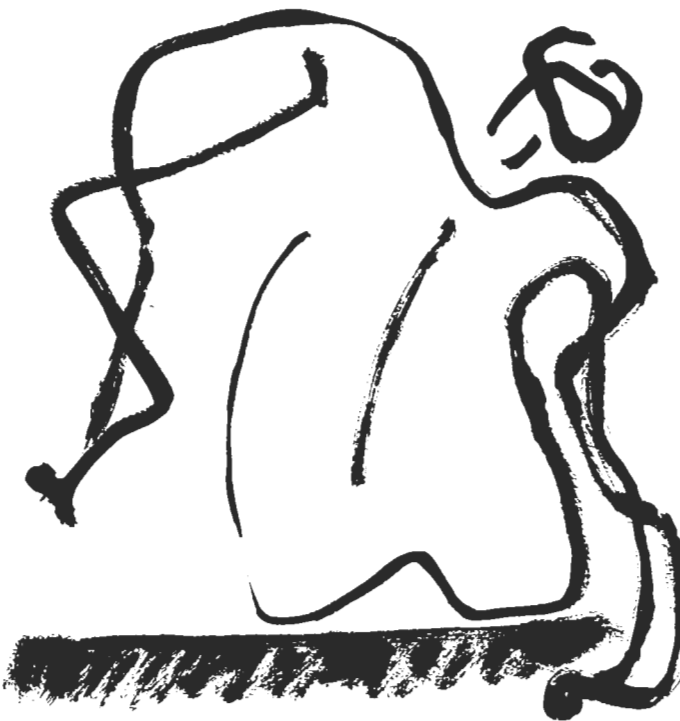
### Mother Earth and Father Who?

The use of the terms 'Mother Earth' and 'Mother Nature' in environmental discourse is widespread and generally accepted without question. Given the strength of the feminist movement in North America and widespread questioning of women's role as primary care-givers, I find this quite surprising. I think that this cultural phenomena is indicative of the strength of the historical associations between women and Nature. In addition, I believe that the personification of the Earth as a woman, particularly as your 'mother' deserves critical study and is a of questionable value to the environmental and feminist movements.

Andree Collard notes that, "it is precisely the projection of cultural values upon the external world that determines the treatment meted out on it." (Collard and Contrucci 1988) When we name the earth as our mother we bring with the name our associations of motherhood and within patriarchal society our devaluation of mothering, of 'women's work', and the private sphere. This process of personification creates a way of looking at the world which sets up an object or other being (in this case, the Earth or Nature) with recognizable human characteristics. Personification allows us to "make sense of phenomena in the world in human terms—terms that we can understand on the basis of our own motivations, goals, actions, and characteristics." (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) From this understanding of personification and the use of the term 'Mother Earth', two

important questions arise—(1) Can we forge a new and progressive relationship with Nature given the cultural baggage we bring with the term 'mother'?; and (2) Is it possible to recognize the inherent value of other beings and living systems and the diversity of the natural world if we continue to represent Nature in a fundamentally anthropocentric (and I will argue androcentric) way in our language?

Within patriarchal society, women have been traditionally associated with motherhood, and therefore responsible for nurturing, caring and giving. Mother's work in turn is unpaid and often unrecognized and devalued in capitalist society. In patriarchal culture it is our mother who satisfies all our needs, takes away waste, cleans



Ingrid Scheibler



and feed us without any cost to us. While it is true that we have a certain dependence on our mother, we also have many expectations—it is unlikely that your mother will hurt you. As such, viewing the Earth as our mother perpetuates the notion that humans can take without being expected to give back, that the earth is limitless and for human use. This concept is reflected in our economic systems in which Nature is a natural resource or an externality. Dorothy Dinnerstein notes that women are perceived as, “a natural resource, as an asset to be owned and harnessed, harvested and mined, with no fellow-feeling for her depletion and no responsibility for her conservation or replenishment.” (Dinnerstein 1976) While we view Nature as our mother and therefore giving, kind and somehow inexhaustible we will view women as ‘Earth Mother’, nurturing, caring and relegated to traditional roles of primary care-givers.

Another prominent image of the earth as female in environmental discourse is the revival and reinterpretation of the Greek Goddess, ‘Gaia’. This term has become popularized through the work of James Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis in which he postulates that the earth is a living system. Patrick Murphy points out that in Greek Mythology Gaia becomes subservient to her son-husband Uranus. He argues that the objectification of the earth as something separate from men reinforces hierarchical dualisms. Murphy notes a telling passage in Lovelock’s early writings in which it is noted that man must attain knowledge to assure “her” (Gaia’s) survival. Therefore, “Man” functions as the intellect and protector of his mother and mate; he ensures her survival. (Murphy 1988) This separation of men from women and Nature reinforces hierarchical dualisms and perpetuates the oppression and subordination of women and Nature.

However, the consideration of Gaia imagery is incomplete without considering the important aspects of empowerment that Goddess imagery brings to ecofeminism. Goddess imagery and religion has become an important means to recognize and understand the links between the liberation of women and nature and the revaluing of the feminine principle and the earth. While the challenge that Goddess worship presents to mainstream Judeo-Christian religions is important and valid work, replacing a patriarchal religion with a similarly hierarchical matriarchy will do little to solve the problems of separation and dualism. However, my critique of hierarchy and Gaia imagery is not meant in any way to negate the revaluation of feminine characteristics and female power or the important quest to carve out a positive place for women’s spirituality.

The Gaia and Mother Earth image limits our imagination, giving us an image of the Earth as human and female, limiting the image we could create. It is essential for humans to forge a new understanding of the Earth as a powerful sacred entity of which humans are but one constituent. Engendering the earth as female limits this possibility and reinforces the subordination and oppression of women and Nature and perpetuates the patriarchal ideology of domination.

### **The Absent Referent**

The concept of the absent referent has important implications for environmental discourse and aptly illustrates the construction of arbitrary social categories in our language. Carol

Adams notes that, “animals are made absent through language that renames dead bodies before consumers participate in eating them.” (Adams 1990) From pig, to corpse, to meat, to ham: violence is absent, death is absent and the pig has become an object for consumption. Adams notes that, “the absent referent permits us to forget about the animal as an independent entity; it also enables us to resist efforts to make animals present.” This concept is readily apparent in our life experiences in industrialized society—I remember the day I found out that veal was a baby cow. I felt thoroughly repulsed and betrayed. How had this been kept from me for so long? I looked down at the white styrofoam container which held the pale piece of veal neatly wrapped in plastic. How was I to know?

Recognizing the absent referent reveals the contradictions in our language and actions. Generally, cruelty to the animals we call pets is considered socially unacceptable. However, the violence and abuse inherent in factory farming and the slaughter of animals we call ‘meat’ is acceptable. The first time these contradictions became blatant I was working in the Carmanah Rainforest studying the marbled murrelet, an ancient seabird. The ornithologists who I was working with came back from a day of bird watching and cooked a chicken for dinner—gnawing on the wings, oblivious to the contradictions apparent in these actions. One bird is labeled food while the other is ‘a being in Nature’. One is studied and its natural habitat is fought for while the other is force-fed, injected with chemicals, contained in small cages and brutally murdered and wrapped in cellophane to be purchased by our Nature watchers. No ornithologist would deny that a chicken was a bird. However, these contradictions are entrenched in our culture through our language. This is aptly illustrated through a simple exercise of creative re-naming which dramatically changes the way we view our relationship with animals: pet/captive, meat/corpse, ham/sliced pig, work animal/slave. It is questionable whether as many people would willingly eat meat if it was referred to as corpse.

The absent referent can be found in many metaphorical sayings which link animals and women—women have been referred to as cows, dogs, bitches, beavers, bunnies and finally ‘pieces of meat’. What is absent in these sayings is the woman herself and the violence that underlies these derogatory terms. Through the absent referent the subject is objectified and patriarchal values are institutionalized. For example, with the rape metaphor, violence against women is legitimized. The act of rape is common, so is it somehow acceptable? In descriptions of cultural violence both women and animals are the absent referent: in the “butchering of women” animals as meat are the absent referent, in “the rape of the wild,” women are the absent referent. Through these metaphors and sayings the absent referent is somehow assumed, constructed in our subconscious, objectified and subsumed.

The language that makes animals absent from the dinner table, makes women absent from the political forum. For example, beating, raping or hitting a women partner has become ‘family or domestic violence’. Not only is the woman absent and objectified as an object of violence but the perpetrator is separated from responsibility of the act through the creation of the benign and rather vague term ‘family violence’. Carol Adams



argues that physical oppression depends on the absent referent to legitimize violence and domination and distance the act from the responsibility for the act. This analysis calls into question the use of the rape metaphor to refer to environmental degradation in environmental discourse.

### The Rape Metaphor and the Importance of Naming

*They tell me there's no connection... But I hear them talk about the rape of the land and I feel like I've been violated. They tell me there's no connection... But a 'virgin' forest says something to me.*

In their book *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson posit that humans think metaphorically, and therefore, our conceptual systems are fundamentally metaphorical. In addition, Lakoff and Johnson argue that,

Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980)

By extension then, metaphors play a role in structuring our thought, actions and possibilities. Lakoff and Johnson note that, "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another." And further that if a concept is metaphorically structured, "the activity is metaphorically structured, and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured." The framework these authors set up is useful when considering the rape metaphor which is widely used in environmental discourse. This metaphor manifests in such sayings as, "the rape of the land," the "virgin forest" and "penetrating the wilderness" or more obviously "penetrating Mother Earth." Since the essence of metaphor is understanding one experience in terms of another, we see that the rape metaphor sets up the exploitation of Nature as akin to the rape of a woman. If metaphors are not just arbitrary language use but a reflection of our physical, cultural and social realities which in turn structure our activities, the use of the rape metaphor has grave implications.

With regards to human behavior, rape is generally understood to mean the violent, illegal, forcible sexual penetration of a woman by a man. While many believe rape to be a universal phenomena, and an act committed by insane or deranged men, it is far from either. Susan Griffin notes that many studies of rapists reveal that these men do not appear 'mentally unbalanced'. Further, Margaret Mead and Helena Norberg-Hodge note that many other cultures, specifically ancient cultures with little Western contact have no concept of rape in their societies. Rape is a learned act. A part of the socialization process which sets men up as dominant, powerful and strong, and sees women (and Nature) as passive—as objects for man's use. Whether it is forcibly penetrating the wilderness, or penetrating a woman, rape is a manifestation of a much larger political and social illness. Lurking behind the Western concept of rape as illegal is a recognition that it is somehow an understandable form of sexual behavior. "She asked for it." "What do you expect when a woman dresses like that." These common statements reflect an understanding that men have "uncontrollable" sexual desires and

needs which can easily manifest themselves in violent anger. And further, that women have a subconscious desire to be raped. Andree Collard notes that the perceived desire to be raped is projected onto Nature as well.

Nature has been blamed for being either seductive (and dangerous) or indifferent to man. Siren-like, she beckons and invites hooks and guns in the same way women are said to lure men and ask for rape...we know that women want to be raped as much as deer and lions want to be shot and the earth, sea and skies are asking to be gouged, polluted and probed. This tendency to 'blame the victim' is also readily apparent in forestry literature in which a 'virgin' forest is considered 'overmature' and therefore needs to be harvested. (Collard and Contrucci 1988)

The use of the metaphor "rape of the earth" in mainstream culture, represents a recognition and acceptance of the violence and domination inherent in humanities treatment of the natural world and man's role in that abuse. The use of the rape metaphor also assumes that in some instances Nature, as a woman, might willingly cooperate with men. This metaphor then, reinforces and legitimizes the domination of women and Nature by men.

When the word 'rape' is used metaphorically the experience of women becomes an acceptable metaphor, draining the term and the act of its violent and abusive connotations for women. Women become the absent referent. Dale Spender notes that the word 'rape' does not reflect a woman's experience but only her silence and thus, reflects a male understanding and 'naming' of the act. (Spender 1980) She notes that there is an absence of force in the name 'rape' which does not reveal it as a vicious sexual act. This in turn is one of the reasons it can be used metaphorically without distaste. The use of the metaphor reinforces the legitimacy of the term and of the act, therefore perpetuating the conscious or unconscious acceptance of 'resourcism'—the view that both Nature and women can be managed for man's use.

The extension of the rape metaphor is most commonly found in literature that refers to 'wilderness'. A forest that is untouched by man is a 'virgin forest' while the exploration and domination of a wilderness area is often referred to as 'penetrating the wilderness'. Interestingly enough these terms are used by many issue stakeholders—industry, government and environmentalists. The prevalence of these sayings points to the deep seated understanding of 'wilderness' and women as objects which can be conquered by men. Susan Griffin eloquently illustrates the frontier mentality that surrounds the virgin conquest. "He is the first to tread here. Only the mark of his shoes effaces the soil. Pine. Otter. Canyon. Musk Ox. She gives up her secrets. He is the first to know, and he gives names to what he sees." The use of the terms 'virgin' and 'penetrate' in relation to wilderness areas perpetuates the notion of ownership and conquest—once you have penetrated her, she is yours. In addition, these sayings graphically illustrate and perpetuate the male bias in environmental discourse and the importance of 'naming'. Grace Paley has noted that, "men of science have believed for hundreds of years that naming preceded owning, that owning preceded using, and that using naturally preceded using up." (In Diamond and Orenstein 1990)

By naming other beings, objects and actions, male culture has excluded other ways of knowing through the creation of categories which serve as boundaries. As such, Dale Spender argues that, "those who have the power to name the world are in a position to influence reality." A simple example will be useful to illustrate the universalization of male experience. Picture if you will the continuum of human evolution. If you have been brought up in Western society you probably pictured a continuum that reflects an ape or monkey turning into a young white man. It is highly unlikely that the continuum you pictured showed an ape turning into a woman, let alone an aboriginal woman or other woman of color. This exercise illustrates the pervasive nature of our socialization within patriarchal society.

### Conclusion: Towards A Progressive Environmental Language

In this paper I have argued that the naming of a social phenomena reflects how society will perceive it and interact with it. By extension, Nature and gender are not what we see, but how we see it. Our experiences of the natural world are socially and culturally constructed. Our language plays a significant role in constructing these experiences, our reality and therefore our actions. As such, the way we conceive of Nature and portray Nature through our language has serious implications for our relationship with the natural world and with each other. The association of women and femininity with Nature in environmental discourse perpetuates patriarchal traditions and domination. It can therefore be seen that uncritical engendering of Nature and the use of the rape metaphor recreates the dominant ideology of oppression and sustains hegemonic traditions. For the environmental movement this is a problematic conclusion as, in the words of feminist scholar and poet Audrey Lorde, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."

Therefore, it becomes obvious that it is necessary to creatively employ new metaphors and idioms to represent Nature and our relationship with the natural world. There is also a great need to create a positive semantic space for marginalized people's, other beings and natural systems. As such, Mary Daly has called for a castration of language—the metaphorical cutting away of phallogocentric value systems imposed by patriarchy.

Language is a powerful human tool and we must examine what role it plays in maintaining and perpetuating existing social structures, what contribution it makes to our hierarchically ordered classist, racist, sexist and anthropocentric world view. I believe it is necessary to continually question the language that we use and to find creative ways to challenge the deeply entrenched androcentric bias in society. This questioning will in turn create a progressive dialogue through which imaginative ways can be conceived to express the diversity and wonder of a natural world which includes egalitarian human communities.

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# DEFENDING DAUGHTERS

Heather Benson

The following article, which I thought about calling "Young Ecofemmes," is a collection of interviews of four inspiring young women. Each is, in her own unique way, dedicated to action of healing Earth, and healing all who suffer in our present patriarchal society. Their actions range from the messages on a canvas to voluntary imprisonment in order to highlight the suffering of other species in captivity.

Driving through the razed mountains of rainforest on the west coast of this country, I stopped at a convenience store. Glaring down from a shelf were car fresheners in the shapes of nude women. The common theme of degradation and violence running between the images of the mountain and the fresheners connected in my mind. Between the young women who act to protect this Earth, their Mother Earth, there is a common theme as well. These are the stories of four young women who are committed to healing. In different capacities, they spearhead a movement away from the destructive values of our present patriarchal society. In this society in which one in two people are sexually abused and the ancient, sacred forests are raped each day for the instant profit of multi-nationals, women like the four whose stories follow, strive to heal. They share strong spiritualities, strong commitments to their convictions, and brave actions. These are the inspiring women who healed themselves in a dysfunctional world enough to work toward its recovery.

## **Sara: Fasting for Forests (age 18)**

She knew at the age of four that she wanted to study gorillas in Africa. Indeed, one of her early inspirations, at the age of twelve, was meeting Jane Goodall. Sara professes that anything she did at a young age was related to her love of animals; whether public speaking contests, reading or watching television. In high school, she helped formulate one of the most active environmental groups in Victoria—the Environmental Youth Alliance.

An event that concretized Sara's commitment to her environmental action was a trail-building expedition into the Walbran Valley when she was fifteen. "After driving for hours upon hours through clearcuts, to come upon this enchanted ancient rainforest was a very emotional experience."

She describes herself as having always been opinionated concerning issues such as animal rights and racism, so sympathy for the plight of the Walbran, one of the last remaining ancient rainforests of Vancouver Island, was natural.

Her action took the form of a forty-seven day fast, to draw attention to the plea for the protection of the Walbran. She and nineteen other high school students of Victoria kept their vigil on the lawn of the Legislature Building many of these days. In

reward for her effort, the incoming NDP government promised to respect the youth voice when they came to power.

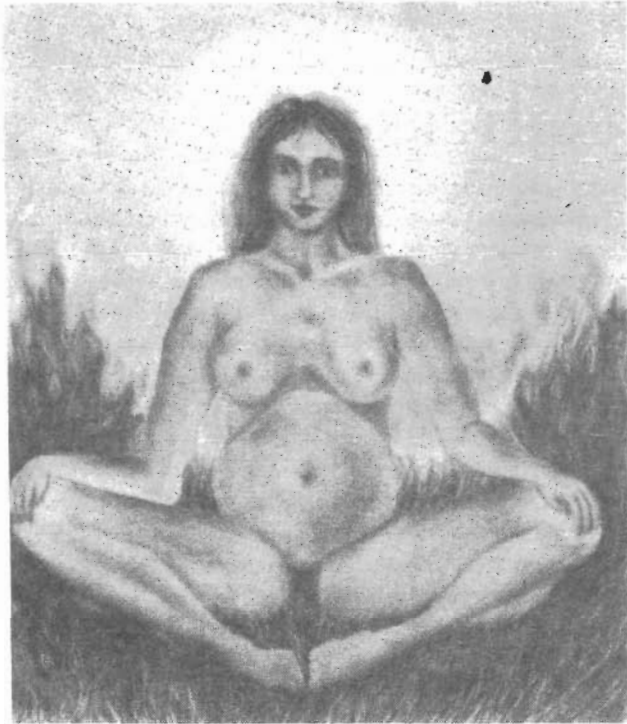
Back in the Walbran a few weeks later, Sarah was arrested when she voiced her outrage by chaining herself to the bottom of a logging truck in order to impede the punching of a logging road into the pristine wilderness. It was not her first arrest in the name of protection of the forest. Earlier the same year, she and other young activists staged a sit-in at the Ministry of Forests demanding answers from the Minister on plans for the Walbran. That time the charges were dropped.

Sarah is not your stereotypical criminal with two arrests to date. She is an eighteen year high school student, on the honor roll and in her school's Challenge program. Unfortunately, actively protecting the Earth and the abilities of future generations to live on this planet is a criminal offense in this country.

## **Jessica: Artful Action (age 17)**

Jessie is an artist. As a child in Victoria, she found inspiration in the forests and the magic beings of the underworld: the gnomes and fairies of her imagination. She attended an alternative school whose theme was sharing, caring, respect, peace and awareness. Probably her first environmental action was at the age of five. When the willow tree field behind her yard was being





Earth are depicted in the facade of the figure. Jessie explains: "I believe the ignorance of these ways is soon to shatter and the power of nature, as the four elements symbolize, will overcome and heal from the wounds of our mistakes. I hope to show a shocking reality to the viewer and create a reaction that will spur environmental action."

Another work of Jessie's, "Nude Woman" [see photo 2] portrays her feelings of a strong connection between *we'moon* (women) and Earth. Jessie describes the work: "This drawing is a statement of the divinity of Earth Mother, her power and balance. This can be seen by the glow around her head and the balanced meditation position she sits in on the grass. Her pure connection to Earth, which surrounds her fertile body, reflects this unity." Jessie conveys a deep understanding of the cycles of death and rebirth, which she says, "...are not separate from my mind, body and spirit."

The messages of her art, the blockading of a logging road, or a sit-in at the Ministry of Forests, Jessie says, "...comes from my truth, what I see, hear and feel, and my loyalty to my heart, to my Earth Mother and to those lives yet to come."

### Donna: Bearing Witness (age 26)

From Pollution Probe to Greenpeace to the Sierra Club, Donna has devoted herself over the past five years to the non-profit sector. She was inspired by Helen Caldecott many years ago in Toronto, where for the first time she felt there was a forum for her activist energies. She was empowered. Much of this empowered energy was channeled into "direct action", or events of "bearing witness" while at Greenpeace, an organization dedicated to speaking out. For Donna, direct action is "very important to my spirituality and in order to be healthy, I cannot

developed, Jessie voiced her outrage by stealing marking pegs and the worker's lunches. Her story is repeated many times over as a youth, having no avenue for protection of her world offered but public protest and civil disobedience. Indeed, ten years later when she became a protector of the Walbran Valley, her action was through fasting and blockading of logging roads. According to Jessie, she is as responsible for her non-actions or passivity as she is for her actions.

Jessie uses her art to "contribute to a movement away from a patriarchal society whose motivation is for power-over and money, one whose vision is not long term and does not care for Earth or the future." Her painting entitled "Nature vs. Destruction" [see photo 1] is a strong environmental statement. The businessman represents the destructiveness of the patriarchal society, caused by greed and shortsighted visions of power. The work illustrates how this society has walked through time (i.e. the corridor of green) leaving a shadow of destruction. The many means of killing



Heather Benson

be silent concerning things which I feel strongly about." At Greenpeace, she learned the difference between a "hard" and a "soft" action. Donna describes a hard action as "the boys in boats," or the more aggressive or confrontational actions, like putting a zodiac boat in front of a whaling harpoon. According to Donna, it is the soft actions, the sit-ins or guerrilla theater on the streets that are the most effective. In her experience these soft actions ask for understanding, and are therefore more likely to positively affect people. Donna cites the example of an action where she did a hunger-fast in a cage for 36 hours at the Vancouver aquarium [see photo 3]. The purpose was to bear witness to the capture of two more Beluga whales. Donna did 24 media interviews in those 36 hours:

We wanted people to think about why we put other creatures in cages. Even if we say it is for educational reasons, is that the education we want to give our children- that it's o.k. to take away the freedom of another creature, and that it's o.k. to objectify another creature.

The soft action of guerrilla theater is an example of what Donna describes as the addition of the feminist vision, the "nurturing empowerment of feminist writing which deeply colored my view of deep ecology." This non-patriarchal activism, in her experience often clashes with other more academic elements of the environmental movement.

From direct action, Donna has recently immersed herself in a governmental process on Vancouver Island, the Commission on Resources and Environment. The Commission has invited all concerned with land-use issues on Vancouver Island to a round table. Donna has spearheaded the involvement of the Youth sector. She began as a participant in the Conservation sector, but found that even though eighty percent of those being arrested for the environment were under thirty, these same people were disempowered by the older, more academic environmentalists within this sector. What formed was the Group Representing Youth for Future Interests Now or GRYFIN. The group's mandate is to be nurturing, empowering, innovative, inclusive and visionary. GRYFIN allows those youthful activists an alternative action to barricades and fasts. According to Donna, "youth should not have to feel so desperate that their only option is to go to jail."

#### **Kirsten: Healing Ourselves, Healing Earth (age 21)**

Kirsten lives in Tofino, on the west coast of Vancouver Island, in the heart of Clayoquot Sound. Clayoquot Sound is a 200,000 hectare area, the largest extent of ancient rainforest left on the island. It is the center of a controversy over multi-national's short term profit and the loss of a stable community, biodiversity and long-term jobs in forestry.

Kirsten is a witch and a protector of Earth. Her life is one of spirituality and healing. Kirsten believes it is nurtured and healed people who will heal Earth. She lives in a one room cabin with a woodstove and no plumbing, across the highway from a clearcut. "This vantage point allows me to relate to both the 'hippie' and 'redneck' points of view." This evening, she is doing a ritual. It will be a vision for the future and a prayer for

friends facing sentencing for protecting Clayoquot Sound. For Kirsten, rituals are "a weaving of consciousness; changing my inner world and watching the world outside me change. This way of living is ancient and its history seems to have been forgotten in modern times."

Kirsten describes her mother as having been a strong feminist, who brought her to her first protest at the age of twelve. It was a protest against pornography as violence against women. For Kirsten, her mother was her mentor; "My mother is a courageous woman who chose to break the stereotypes for women in her time."

On being a woman; Kirsten says,

It is a challenge to remember your instincts as a human being when the mainstream media dictate the scripts and decides on the good guys and the bad guys. In the eyes of the media I'm an eco-terrorist, but I'm not an eco-terrorist. I am a woman who cares about my life and the survival on the planet.

It was trips to the wilderness up to the age of seventeen that intensified Kirsten's need to protect Earth. In the summer of 1992, she was arrested for lying in the path of logging trucks in Clayoquot Sound. Kirsten describes her evolution towards action:

I watched for four days as people got arrested (for blockading a logging road), and all day long we'd watch as trucks loaded with huge trees drove out on that road. After awhile that image got in pretty deep. My decision to get arrested came about one evening when it was suggested to do a youth action. The next morning a bridge was blockaded with logs, and I lay down in front of those logs to stop the trucks. I cried when the policeman carried me off the road and into the paddy wagon, and I noticed one of the loggers with watering eyes.

For Kirsten, there is a strong connection between her pain and the pain of Earth. Reflecting on this action, she feels "great, even though I only stopped them for maybe an hour." The key to liberation for Kirsten, "I acknowledged the voice inside me and followed what my heart told me to do and nothing could stop me from feeling I had done the right thing."

Kirsten advocates healing the self, "because as long as we avoid the feelings inside of us, no matter where we stand on environmental issues we will only be creating situations where we feel alienated and unsatisfied, and our actions will stem out from there."

Women of action are being born each day. They gather to dance, to plan actions and to share their beautiful spirits of healing and creation. They can be found in rape relief centers, at protests, at negotiating tables, everywhere. Always, they are creating new ways to express the need to love each other and Earth.

**Heather Benson** has been politically active since sixteen, starting in Amnesty International while in high school. Over the past two years she has campaigned with Greenpeace and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee. Currently she is involved in the Commission on Resources and Environment, negotiating land-use on Vancouver Island with the Youth Sector.

## POSTMODERN BIOETHICS THROUGH LITERATURE

Daniel Goldstein

### Medicine in Contemporary Culture

The institution of medicine plays a formative role in contemporary culture. It is at once a testament of our technological successes and a poignant reminder of the fragility and finitude of our lives. As a powerful institution, it constantly informs the surrounding culture. The medical establishment, like other cultural institutions, sets forth a perspective on the world. Adherence to this perspective is required as we risk the charge of heresy if our views depart too radically from the accepted ones.

The media attention that medical events receive attests to medicine's power. Sensational reports of xenographic transplantations grab our attention as do ethically perplexing accounts of dead, pregnant women being sustained by and as medical machinery. These stories hold public interest; they intimately touch upon life and death as they show medicine's vision of the future.

The power relationship that exists between citizen and institution is a public matter. With medicine it arises, in part, with the privilege received from the obligations that ensue from a monopolistic profession that is self-regulating. The relationship of power is maintained and perpetuated through a dependency fostered by a promise to power but with institution of interpretation, care and a hope for a cure. Sensational headlines affirm that with this explicit relationship comes other, more subtle ways in which the medicine reaches into our lives. This occurs at the level of interpretation.

### Interpreting Medicine through Literature

Interpretation is, and always has been, an essential feature of medical practice. In the second century Galen postulated the four underlying humors knowable only through rational logical reasoning, as the basis for medical interpretations. Europe in the Middle Ages saw medicine so thoroughly identified with the Church that the bubonic plague of the fourteenth century was dubbed the "Great Morality." The seventeenth century focused on the "anatomically disclosed cadaver" as the guiding feature of medical interpretations. This was the beginning of modern medicine where the question first changed from "How do you feel?" to "Where does it hurt?"<sup>1</sup>

Today, a modern interpretation holds sway and the sciences of physiology, anatomy and biochemistry form the cornerstone of caregiving. Disease is now often understood solely through these strict and limiting parameters. Modern medical science does provide much information for understanding human health but this information is not neutral. It comes with an implicitly supported ontological agenda. Medicine is a human science and

as such, an understanding of the human agent necessarily accompanies its theoretical reflections. Concomitant with a view that reduces well-being and suffering to physiological, anatomical or biochemical processes is a diminished view of human being. Modern medicine omits certain features that are fundamental to human experience, and body is only one of the more obvious omissions. The connection between mind and body is only one of the more obvious omissions.

In the attempt to widen our interpretations, literature has risen to the challenge issued from the medical profession. The new discipline of 'Literature and Medicine' reconnects what modern thought has pulled apart. The use of stories to represent medical and moral issues follows the advice of Aristotle who says that for practical wisdom or phronesis, we must look to examples rather than to universal statements. It is the particulars that have the most truth in them he says, and the narratives presented as literature, give a wide array of particulars from which to learn.

The short story is one of the most useful genres of literature for a glimpse into a human-centered experience of medicine. This is the case not only because the form lends itself readily to phronetic analysis but because many writers of this genre were and are physicians. "Cardiac Suture"<sup>2</sup> by Ernst Weiss, a German physician and ship's doctor, is one such story. Written in the early twentieth-century, this narrative satirically depicts the practice of medicine as corpo-centric, as that which emphasizes treatment based primarily on the body. We are introduced to a prominent surgeon who, because of his "military bearing and imposing presence," is known as 'The General'. During a lecture, he parades several of his successful operations in front of an auditorium full of students:

The General reveled in surgical optimism. He compared the recovered patients' fate with that of others stricken with the same disease and now resting in the cool earth. He held the shoulders of a frail, elderly woman between his huge arms and moved her about, right and left, like a little doll. [p. 90]

He continues lecturing and forgets the eight patients left standing there when all at once, an associate bursts in with news of an emergency. A young woman, suffering from a broken heart, has tried, unsuccessfully, to take her own life. The lecture hall, which doubles as an operating theater, is quickly transformed. "Bring her right in to us" says the General,

formalities and red tape are unnecessary; I operate even without the consent of the patients—often dazed in such



cases—or relatives, who haven't the faintest notion. All that doesn't matter here. Up and at 'em... [p. 92]

A war motif is prevalent in this story as the General "engages the enemy" even against the fruitless protests of the "clear minded," seemingly competent patient. Waiting for the anesthetic to take effect, the General reveals his approach to the practice of care:

All right, we'll start anyway. Is she asleep? Not yet?  
Doesn't matter. Life is primary, anesthesia secondary. War is war. Up and at 'em. [p. 96]

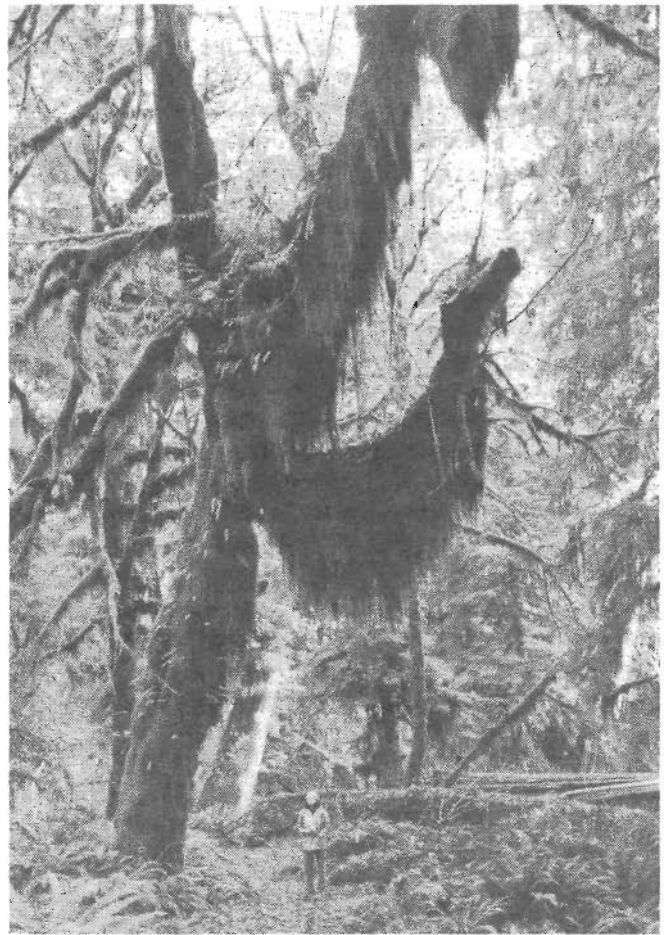
Embodying an idea rampant in typically modern medicine, the General, with a *tour-de-force* performance in the operating theater, passes on a mode of interpreting to a new generation of caregivers. The institution of medicine is thus maintained and a long-established tradition is perpetuated, with medical educators like the General leading the way.

Medical students learn a great deal of their medical skill from example and come to see the medical world (at least at first) with their teacher's eyes. Prejudgments and preconceptions arise for the students, not as hindrances to knowledge but rather as preconditions of it. From an interpretation of their teacher's biases and prejudices, the students form their own modes of interpreting. When the example is someone like the General, the students' view of the nature of medicine is severely compromised. Methods of diagnosis are also passed on this way and as diagnoses are themselves interpretive events, each diagnosis shows level upon level of interpretation. This is what has led some to claim that medical practice is more akin to literary criticism than to the hypothetico-deductive model suggested by the natural sciences.<sup>3</sup> All methods of diagnosis arise from an embedded cultural perspective and as interpretive events, they reinforce a particular understanding of the world.

From state of the art technology to simple conversation, the caregiver comes to an understanding of the patient's situation and this understanding is the result of many interpretive events. Conversation may provide as much information as technology, but again, it is through an interpretation of their own body that the patient relays this information. It is then interpreted again by the caregiver trying to make sense of an ache here and a swelling there. The caregiver is always interpreting when treating a patient as it is a necessary feature in both the science and the art of medicine.

### Medical Hermeneutics in Chekhov

Interpretation is also an art. Now recognized as an academic discipline, the art of interpretation, or Hermeneutics, came into being with the more puzzling creations of humankind. In its early days, the interpretation of theological and literary texts as well as interpretation regarding the application of law were the hermeneutical concerns. During the course of its history, a scientization of hermeneutics was developed with techniques and methods for the art of interpretation. These methods were in turn deconstructed as the art of interpreting texts developed with an ever-widening understanding of what a "text" might encompass—wide enough to include the dramatic narrative that



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is human experience. Although Friedrich Schleiermacher, of the eighteenth-century, is said to be the first hermeneut in a disciplinary sense (concerned with interpretation as such), Wilhelm Dilthey, a nineteenth century hermeneut, has traced the roots of this art back to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Affirming the universality of hermeneutics, Tullio Maranhao points out that it is "a subject surfacing and re-surfacing throughout the centuries in rhetoric, dialectics, philosophy, theology, aesthetics, and more recently, in literary criticism, psychoanalysis and social philosophy."<sup>4</sup>

The practice of medicine is unique as an art of interpretation. The subject of interpretation here is not some dusty forgotten tome or an enigmatic rule of conduct. It is a social, temporal, and embodied human being who requires care. The shape that this care takes is influenced by many surrounding factors which help to define the relationships between receivers and administrators of care and forms the nature of medical practice. These influences are our (implicitly) agreed upon ways of doing things. Distinctive cultural prejudices guide interpretations and allow one kind of meaning, or range of meanings, rather than another, to come into being.



The institution of medicine is an integral part of our established cultural order. Its power is ominous as it controls birth and death, arguably the two most important experiences in life. Medicine obtains its power from those it serves and dictates the conditions and limits of that service. The professions have recognized the awesome responsibility that is concomitant with this power and have devised codes of ethics to delineate specific rules of behavior. They have yet to recognize, however, that sanctioning modes of understanding is an inherently political act.

The individual members use the tradition that is established by the institution, to fulfill their professional and sometimes personal obligations. The conceptual framework that informs the institution and the practice of modern medicine also contributes to the meaningfulness in the lives of many of its members.

Anton Chekhov, the Russian dramatist and doctor of the late nineteenth-century, gives a vivid portrayal of the connection between the medical institution and one of its individual members. In "A Dull Story,"<sup>5</sup> the Honored Professor Nikolai Stepanovich is coming to terms with having six months to live. His odyssey with the Socratic "Know thyself" takes him from his thirty-year refuge in the medical establishment to an exposed vulnerability in the face of death. It is a tale of a disintegration of a conceptual framework. "Even as I breathe my last," says Nikolai at the beginning of the story,

I shall go on believing that science is the most important, most beautiful, most essential thing in the life of man, that it always has been and always will be the highest manifestation of love, that by means of it alone will man conquer nature and himself. [p. 174]

The scenes that follow result in him becoming increasingly cynical towards the institution and his fame within the profession. The security of his conceptual framework crumbles in the face of the chaotic spontaneity that lurks in and around the Professor's foundations for knowledge. Katya represents the chaos that begins peeking through Nikolai's structured framework. The daughter of friend who died leaving her in his charge, Katya is the antithesis of the professor: a theater lover opposed to his science lover; a free-spirited, young, single woman in contrast to the old, routinized, married professor. She goes on tour with a theatrical company and corresponds with Nikolai. He notes her lack of grammatical structure and absent punctuation and describes her letters as containing,

so much youth, purity of spirit, and blessed innocence, combined with a subtle, practical judgment that would have done credit to a first-class masculine<sup>6</sup> mind. [p. 181]

As the story progresses, Katya moves from youthful folly, from surfing the waves of spontaneous chaos to a frantic search for the security of a framework. At the same time, Professor Stepanovich's encounter with death is slowly chipping away at his foundation for understanding. After a reflective night in Kharkov he comes to the conclusion that there is no common thread in his life for "each thought and feeling exists in isolation..."[p. 216] and admits the lack of a solid foundation. Katya tracks him down and pleads with her adopted father for some solidity for her life: "I cannot go on living like this!...what am I

to do? Tell me, what am I to do?"[p. 217] And Nikolai responds, seeing through the illusion of security brought forth by an entrenchment in a framework: "There is nothing I can tell you." After a heated exchange, Katya turns a cold shoulder and gets ready to leave. Says Nikolai,

Looking at her I feel ashamed of being happier than she is. I have discovered in myself the absence of what my philosophic colleagues call a general idea only recently, in my decline, and in the face of death, but the soul of this poor creature has never found and never in her life will find refuge...never in her Life! [p. 218]

Nikolai had refuge in his work and only later realized that this refuge was an illusion. The institution of modern medicine, with its strict reliance on the natural sciences, structured the world for the Honored Professor Nikolai Stepanovich. As he rose in the ranks of his profession, the illusions of the institution became more transparent until finally, confronting death, they fell away completely leaving only indifference. "I have no love for my renown," says Nikolai, "It appears to have betrayed me." [p. 214] The Professor's identification with his profession was so complete that his love for Katya was first kindled by her relationship with another doctor. The earliest memory he has of her is a trust she shows "in allowing herself to be treated by doctors—a trustfulness that always lit up her little face." [p. 178] Her acceptance of doctors is understood by Nikolai as an acceptance of him.

"A Dull Story" exposes the power that the medical institution has over the Lives of its members. It reveals how the institution provides refuge in exchange for an adherence to its prescribed modes of understanding. This story demonstrates half of the hermeneutical relationship that occurs between whole and part; that Chekhov himself was a doctor shows the other half.

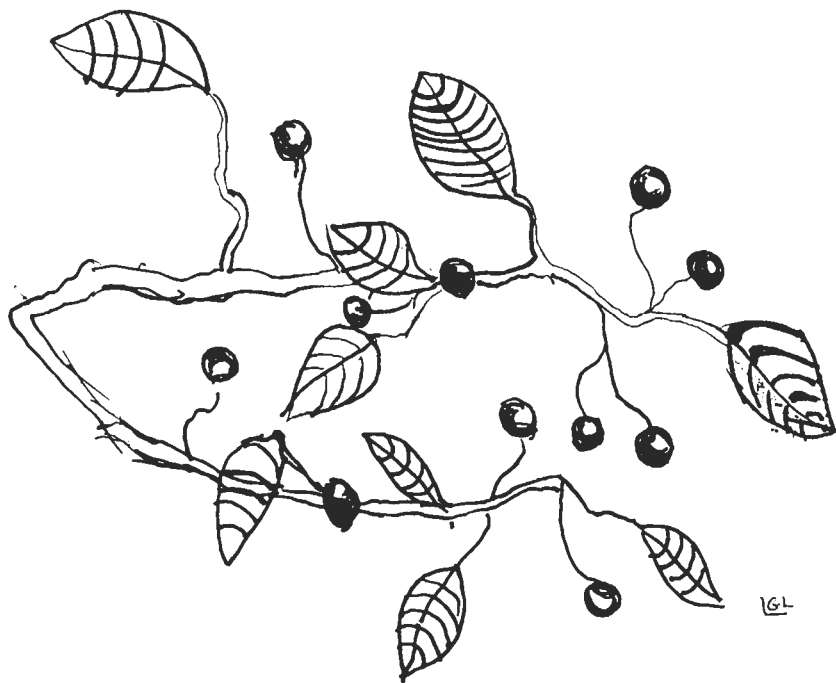
The hermeneutical event that is shown in the part/whole relationship is not limited to professional groups and professionals, although it is these that seem to wield the most power. This relationship occurs with society and citizens, culture and institutions, gangs and gang members. This relationship is not linear, from group to individual member. It is a circular relationship that ebbs and flows and with the actions of the members of the group, the group as a whole, either expands its horizons or reaffirms the status-quo. The individual members inform, and are informed by the whole of which they are a part.

### Bioethics and Moral Certainty

Scientific medicine has narrowed the scope of interpreting in giving care. The call for a "new medical model" is a familiar cry as practitioners of medicine recognize the need for a broader understanding than the principles of anatomy, physiology and biochemistry allow. This typically modern interpretation of medical practice is largely recognized as incomplete. The incorporation of human-centered ideas such as the concept of patient as person and quality of life criteria, have served to widen the scope of interpreting in the service of care.

Raising questions of interpretation in medical practice allows a unique insight into the politics of understanding and provides an entry into the realm of bioethics. If medicine is

indeed an inherently ethical endeavor and if the practice of medicine is an interpretive event, then interpretation must be fundamental for bioethics. Coming to see the relationship that interpretation enlightens suggests a foundation for understanding ethical practice. The foundation envisaged here is not Archimedean in nature. I am not suggesting some immovable point of reference, nor am I promoting a normative foundation from which, once and for all, determinations of moral worth may be made. A hermeneutical foundation for bioethics incorporates both the order and the chaos that we find in the world of human experience. Unlike the principle-based approach to bioethics that attempts to emulate typically modern medicine with a strict appeal to principles, a hermeneutical perspective remains open. It does not deny the ambiguity and uncertainty that pervades moral experience, rather it embraces the complexity and richness that informs the moral decision-making that is the essence of medical care.



Principles of biomedical ethics form the modern foundation for ethical reflection in health care and provide a set of guiding factors to identify our actions. Interpretation of action in terms of these fundamental ethical principles sustain a landscape of competing ethical principles and irreconcilable ethical theories. This mode of interpretation allows the identification of ethical action in terms of a philosophical language which systematizes and orders that which at first appears chaotic and unruly. Since Plato we have been admonished to flee from our experiences of the life world into an intellectual realm where order reigns. This flight from appearances, from that which we encounter in human

experience, is well established in Western history. Complex human experiences are interpreted in ordered terms which are less revealing of the chaotic spontaneity that lurks behind our interpretations, threatening to expose the weaknesses of our intellectual constructions. Plato goes so far as to say that our lives need to be saved from unruly experiences and chaotic appearances. Tom Beauchamp and James Childress echo this ideal in their *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, when they suggest that we are to reconsider our ordinary actions, judgments and justifications in terms of ethical principles. This, they say, is the only way that order and coherence may be brought to discussions of ethical problems. They don't stop to question the implications of an "ordered" ethical life.

W. Somerset Maugham's "Rain"<sup>7</sup> provides one implication in its portrayal of two distinct approaches to ethics. The principle-based approach is contrasted with a somewhat interpretive approach in the characters of Reverend Davidson and Doctor Macphail respectively. The story also exposes how moral certainty can become a precarious ethical position.

Dr. and Mrs. Macphail meet the Reverend and Mrs. Davidson on a voyage in the South Pacific. Davidson is a staunch missionary returning to his district after a year's absence. Macphail is spending the next year at Apia with a stubborn war wound after two years at the front. Both are medical men but differ significantly in their moral postures. The wives are dutiful spouses. Interestingly, Mrs. Macphail becomes the voice of her husband in their dealings with the Davidsons while Mrs. Davidson attempts to explain away her husband's single-mindedness, each balancing their husband's moral character.

Dr. Macphail's morally uncommitted attitude is contrasted with Rev. Davidson's commitment to strict ideas of good and evil and right and wrong. This contrast emerges with the introduction of a fifth character, Sadie Thompson, a convicted prostitute escaping from San Francisco and making her way to Australia.

The ship stops ten days before their destination, they are informed of a measles epidemic and are forced to remain in Pago-Pago. All five travelers stay at the only place in town with rooms to rent. As they settle in, the rain begins and continues throughout the story. Miss Thompson plays loud music and shares drinks with sailors in her room, which is right below the Davidson's. The Reverend discovers her sordid past and single-mindedly takes it upon himself to save her soul. He decides she must be sent back to face her punishment in the United States. He becomes obsessed with her damnation and wields his power throughout the (American) colony forcing the governor and the innkeeper to comply with his wishes. As his obsession becomes greater and greater, he stays up all night praying for and with the fallen Miss Thompson. We eventually

get the impression that something other than praying is going on between the two. The night before Miss Thompson's ship is to depart, Reverend Davidson is found dead on the beach, his throat slit- with the razor still in his hand. Sadie Thompson is given the last word: men are pigs.

The contrast between the Reverend and the Doctor is what makes "Rain" an important story from an ethical point of view. The Reverend takes action: he storms downstairs to put a stop to the carrying-on, while the Doctor looks to his wife and Mrs. Davidson to see what they expect of him. The Doctor suggests giving Miss Thompson another chance where the Reverend is interested only in the letter of the law. Other incidences of Dr. Macphail's moral timidity are contrasted with Rev. Davidson's moral certitude and we eventually see the demise of a person committed to an ideal of inambiguity. The extent of commitment to moral certitude is exposed in a revealing scene when they first land in Pago-Pago. Scanning the crowd, the Doctor sees the native children with the eyes of a caregiver and comments on their "disfiguring sores like torpid ulcers," the Davidsons, conversely see only their "indecent costume." As Mrs. Davidson says,

Mr. Davidson thinks it should be prohibited by law. How can you expect people to be moral when they wear nothing but a strip of red cotton round their loins?[p. 128]

Maugham's story represents the moral posture of two professional men. He explores the folly of unbending moral rigidity as well as the timidity that comes with an acceptance of moral ambiguity. We are left with the feeling that this timidity is the more appropriate posture. We come to understand why Macphail appropriated this stance and we forgive his moral fence-sitting. Returning from an experience of war, where moral certitudes often turn into death and destruction, the character of Macphail suggests that pause and reflection in matters of action are more desirable than head-long rushes based on moral certitude.

The disparity of worlds in the characters of Macphail and Davidson demonstrates how modes of interpreting influence two distinct lives. W. Somerset Maugham, again a writer who has "black-bagged" his way through literature, shows that by emphasizing the primacy of principles, by reducing human experience to prescribed moral rules, we bring forth a diminished view of human agency.

In our increasingly complex and diverse culture, it becomes fundamentally important to address the questions that the primacy of interpretation raises. One of these questions revolves around the selection of modes of interpretation. By postulating that there are healthy and unhealthy ways of interpreting, we become open for the exploration of our modes of questioning. If interpretation holds the primary position that I am suggesting, then it is necessary to avail ourselves to an understanding of the way it shapes our ideas, our culture and our identities.

### The Story Makes the Cure

Good medical decision-making requires interpretation and bioethics will be well served by incorporating this interpretive

element. An exploration of the ground of interpretation provides a significantly superior position to confront those times when interpretations lead us into problems. Ethical difficulties can often be traced to problems of interpretation as different worlds vie for existence. In the all too human practice of care, interpretation is the key to understanding our application of knowledge. In both medicine and bioethics, the primacy of interpretation allows us to participate more fully in the narratives humans experience.

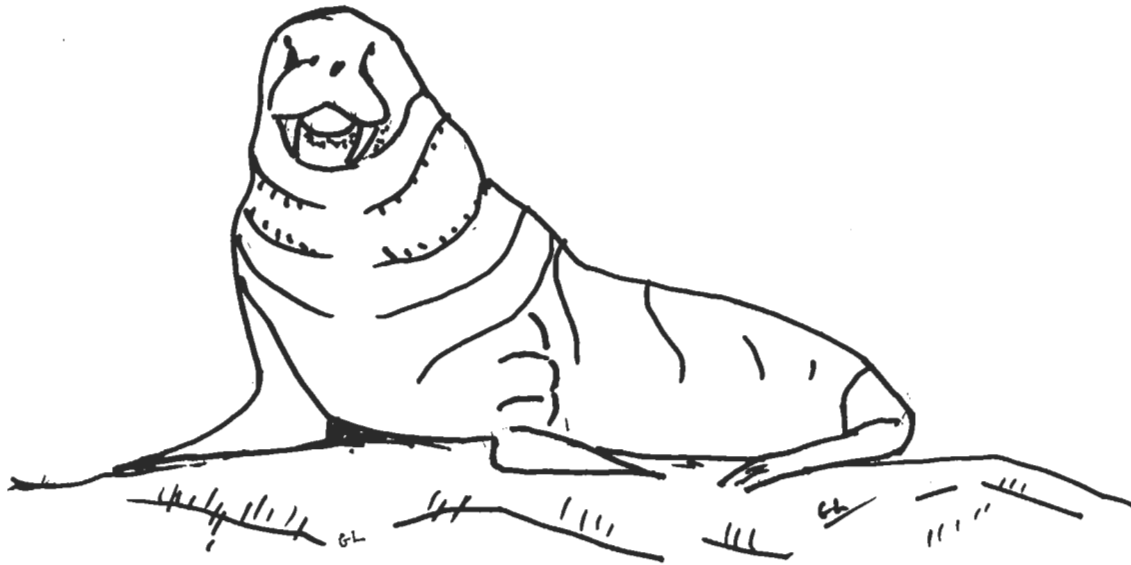
A closer look at the way meaning comes into being affords a view of some of the elements that contribute to the meaningfulness in and when these elements are open for questioning, what is at risk then is our self-understanding. "An Infected Heart"<sup>8</sup> by John Stone is a story which demonstrates the questioning of basic assumptions. The hero, Robert, is a young man of twenty-five, who is hospitalized and receiving treatment for severe burns. After four months of painful skin grafts, he is now being looked at by a team of cardiologists as heart disease is suspected. The patient tells the specialists that he was burned rescuing a small child from a blazing building and the heroic roots Robert's predicament remain with us throughout the story.

The team diagnoses a heart infection and prescribes round after round of antibiotics, each more toxic than the last. During the course of treatment, narrator/specialist suggests a connection with the patient; quality of life criteria questioned, optimism is added to the disappointing news and consideration for Robert's autonomous desires are all part of this relationship. Robert finally dies of an infected heart—"Robert had had a seizure, then his heart beat skipped, shuddered, and stopped. Despite our efforts, there was no way to save him." [p. 80]—and we discover the metaphorical infection that accompanied the literal one.

At the end of the story we find out that Robert was not the hero that he claimed to be. A deputy sheriff, waiting outside his room informs the team that Robert was really an arsonist who became trapped in one of the fires he had set. The narrator ends the story with an important question:

We shrugged out of our gowns, shaking our heads in disbelief. We'd been had, all right. Robert must of figured that things would go better for him medically if his doctors thought he was a hero and not an arsonist. I like to think that knowing the truth about Robert wouldn't have affected our efforts to save him. But who could be sure of that? Robert couldn't. [p. 80]

The idea that someone might be treated differently depending on whether they were friend or foe, hero or villain, raises an uncomfortable question for the narrator. This question shakes the foundation of a supposedly objective medical practice and we are left with the impression that while *what* was done to Robert might have been the same, *how* it was done may indeed have been different. An assumption that is taken for granted in the practice of care is exposed in "An Infected Heart," and with this revealing, we turn to our own modes of interpreting for a quick comparison. Stone's story is successful in that it makes its readers question themselves and demonstrates just how malleable our interpretations may be.



### Conclusion

The stories presented here illuminate important features of human being that might otherwise remain hidden from our overly intellectualized gaze. These narratives prepare the way for us to ponder the Socratic dictum. This is important because confronting the way we understand is an endeavor that we must embark upon with some degree of trepidation. The ways that we have of making sense of the world around us belong to an intimate part of who we are and delving into this region comes with many risks. When we open ourselves to epistemological concern, our ontological security is called into question. The foundation that has been built over the course of our lives is suddenly brought under scrutiny with a questioning of basic assumptions. Each time we authentically confront questions of meaning, we look directly into the abyss, then we recreate the world.

Self understanding shapes the way meaning comes into being. This understanding remains for the most part, on a pre-reflective level, hidden from our daily activities as the laws of physical motion are hidden in the arc of a baseball. Self understanding arises, in part, from the world we inhabit and the meanings that we allow, and we direct our world through these meanings. By either affirming or denying the status-quo, we contribute to the meanings that we share, the meanings we call culture.

The hermeneutic element of the practice of medicine empowers both the patient and the provider of care. When interpretations are stressed over cold, hard medical facts, barriers to participation are weakened and patients may give a more fully informed consent. A true, fiduciary relationship may be fostered. Incorporating interpretation allows providers of care to recognize their humanness and to become more accepting of the uncertainty and ambiguity that pervades human experience, especially the experience of illness. It also forces caregivers to recognize their world-making influence as members of a powerful cultural institution.

Hermeneutics, as the art of interpretation, allows the incorporation of certain unavoidable and undeniable features of being

human. Rather than fleeing from the unpredictable life world into the world of objectivity or immutable principles this perspective allows us to remain where we are and to be content participating in the dramatic narrative that is human experience. Ethical experience is an integral part of our lives and by stressing the interpretive nature of ethical decision-making and by implication, medical decision-making itself, we open ourselves to our own interpretive natures, to the way we allow meaning to come into being. This is the foundation for a postmodern bioethics.

### NOTES

1. Richard M. Zaner, *Ethics and the Clinical Encounter* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1988) p. 135.
2. Ernst Weiss, "Cardiac Suture" trans. E. B. Ashton, *German Stories and Tales*, ed. R. Pick. (New York: Washington Square Press, 1972) pp. 89-102.
3. K.M. Hunter, "Literature and Medicine: Standards for Applied Literature" eds. D. Callahan et al. *Applying the Humanities* (New York: Plenum Press, 1985) pp. 289-304.
4. Tullio Maranhao, "The Hermeneutics of Participant Observation," *Dialectical Anthropology* 10 (1986) p. 291.
5. Anton Chekhov, "A Dull Story" trans. A. Dunnigan, *Ward Six and Other Stories* (Toronto: New American Library, 1965) pp. 163-218. Page references refer to this edition.
6. Chekhov's views on the feminine mind point to a mode of interpretation that is the subject of important feminist scholarship.
7. W. Somerset Maugham, "Rain," *A Pocket Book of Short Stories*, ed. M. E. Speare (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969) pp. 124-164.
8. John Stone, "An Infected Heart," *In the Country of Hearts* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1990) pp. 77-80.

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# MY MOTHER, THE MIRROR

Laura Duhan Kaplan

No single perspective on a person can completely reveal their realities and possibilities, as Gabriel Marcel once said. This mysterious quality of persons can set the agenda for self-knowledge, defining it as a search for and synthesis of perspectives on one's self. However, the pursuit of self-knowledge can be self-sabotaging if a reigning perspective filters experience. Sometimes, therefore, a seeker needs a little help from outside events. But as this help often comes in disguise, the challenge is not to overlook it. This essay is a diagnosis of and prescription for such lost opportunities. Martin Heidegger's definition of the work of art is the theoretical lens through which I analyze the potential of interpersonal conflict to open new perspectives on ourselves. By exhausting the resources of a reigning perspective on the self, interpersonal conflict can motivate us to draw upon possibilities which have not yet been charted. Below I shall present Heidegger's definition of art as that which calls upon us to recreate the world, speak by analogy of interpersonal conflicts which call upon us to recreate our personal worlds and comment on the image of a world in Western epistemology.

## Heidegger's Definition of Art

I have an office at the university. It has a desk, bookshelves, a filing cabinet, a table, carpeting. It reeks of utilitarianism, of wholesale office supply, of the bottom of the line in a state bureaucracy. I also have an office at home. It has a desk, bookshelves, filing cabinets, a table, a rug. It exudes warmth, wealth, dignity and a stately regard for the history of ideas. When I am at the university, I pay no attention to my office. I don't admire it, nor does it disgust me. I simply work in it. It is, as Heidegger would say, a piece of "equipment." I focus on those aspects of it which enable me to do my work. As long as I have access to the desk, phone and file cabinet, I can work amid piles of unfiled memos, unread mail and unclaimed student papers from semesters past. But I cannot work that way at home. My home office commands my attention. Each time I enter it (365 days a year, ten times a day?) I am reminded of the first time that Mr. Moore of Moore Cabinets in Huntersville, North Carolina looked at the empty room with the eyes of forty years experience and conceived a library filled with tall shelves, hidden file cabinets, and elegant flourishes along the ceiling. Daily I marvel at Mr. Moore's ability to transform a formal dining room, with its ornate chandelier and its fading ecru walls, into a rich baritone of a room that vibrates with love for scholarly tradition. Mr. Moore has taken a room that once meant one thing—respect for the social conventions of entertaining guests, perhaps—and made it mean something else. He has taken wood and metal, polyurethane and glue—neutral, natural things—and made *meanings* with them. Working with things whose nature he

could not change, he created an object whose nature was entirely under his control, an object whose nature expressed his.

For Heidegger, the fact that my home office calls my attention to the contrast between the untameable and the tamed defines my home office as a work of art. He says that a work of art thrusts our attention towards the eternal conflict between the historical human "world" of meanings in which we live and the "earth" which we cannot penetrate, change or understand. The conflict cannot be resolved, but a work of art creates an "Open[ing]" between the terms of the conflict. When Heidegger speaks of the "world" he means what phenomenological philosophers mean: the environment we create for ourselves through our beliefs. When Heidegger speaks of the "earth," he refers to the physical environment in which we live. The eternal conflict between "world" and "earth" can be understood as a recurring conflict between the way we think things are and the way things are. Art creates an "opening" by inviting us to recreate the world in response to the conflict. On this definition, what gets called "art" is not restricted by conceptions of performances, exhibits or disciplines. I shall speak below of persons who function as works of art, who challenge us to recreate our worlds.

## My Mother the Mirror: A Work of Art

Recreating a "world" is no mean feat, as it involves changing the very ways we see ourselves and other people. A world is founded on a self-concept. "I am a ——" is the first premise in a network of syllogisms whose conclusions are our choices in life. "I am an intellectual," "I am a caretaker," "I am a mother," lead to very different choices of friends, leisure activities, reading materials. These different founding premises lead to different attitudes towards people, different ways of weaving them into our worlds. And their responses become premises which circle back to conclude the founding premise, enabling us to affirm again and again, "I am an intellectual," "I am a caretaker," "I am a mother."

When we try to fold people into our worlds we treat them as equipment, in Heidegger's sense, and they fade into the background of the task at hand. The task at hand is to actualize and affirm our self-concept, that is, to do our work in the world. We notice those aspects of people which enable us to do our work. For example, if we are caretakers, then we notice how each person needs to be taken care of. We might not notice their dignity, their refusal of our care. Or we might not notice their meanness, that their behavior is a calculated physical or psychological assault on us. Much of the time we are able to carry on our work in the face of these difficulties, using them as an opportunity to remind ourselves that our work is as arduous as it is worthwhile. Sometimes, however, we are confronted by per-

sons whose refusal to be seen from the perspective of our work makes it impossible for us to work. Those persons leave us with three options: to cut off entirely our relationship with them, to try to force them to see themselves as we wish them to, or to revise the founding premise which causes the conflict. Viewing a person as a work of art results in the third option. We recognize that the person turns our attention towards the gap between our world, i.e. our self-concept and its implications, and the earth, i.e. our real nature, apart from any self-concept. Our real nature is, as Marcel implies, a mystery. But a self-concept offers a perspective from which to understand ourselves and begin to act. And, as Heidegger says, we cannot penetrate, change or understand the earth, but we can confront it as the first step in creating a new world.

Let me explicate by example. My brother's girlfriend's founding premise, "I am a caretaker," leads her to noble and worthwhile work. She would like to extend her activities to take care of my eighty-one year old aunt. To do that, she needs my mother's cooperation. But my mother actively resists being used as a tool for carrying out anyone's work, for building anyone's world, for maintaining anyone's founding premise. My mother's founding premise is "I am a mirror." Camouflaging herself by chattering continuously, she carefully observes other people to find the ways in which they do not meet their own expectations, the times when their founding premises cannot be deduced logically from events. And she calls their attention to these times. In other words, she finds and pushes people's buttons! The rare flexible persons who do not identify their full natures with their founding premises can recognize what she is doing and reluctantly reflect on the truth she has revealed. But most people, unwilling to look at the weak links in their worlds, take her lighthearted jibes as simple-minded jokes and her angry declarations as hysterical, irrational babblings.

When my brother's girlfriend pressed my mother to find a senior citizens' residence for my aunt, my mother shouted, "I don't want to help! I'm selfish! I don't want to give up my tennis!" My brother's girlfriend was shocked: how could my mother so boldly flaunt her own moral failures? "Your mother reacted completely irrationally," my brother's girlfriend told me. And in the context of the world of the caretaker, my mother's response was indeed "irrational," following no available logical path to or from the founding premise. My mother was attacking the founding premise, shouting in code, "Caretaking is not an absolute value! It does not supersede everything else in *my* world!" But my brother's girlfriend would not attend to my mother. To her, my mother was a recalcitrant piece of equipment, who must be made to see the crude hurtfulness of her attitude.



My brother's girlfriend failed to notice that my mother had *deliberately* shouted that which would shock and hurt the most. She failed to attend to my mother's demonstration of the gap between world and earth. She did not recognize that my mother was offering her an opportunity to re-examine her founding premise. My mother's refusal to cooperate was an invitation to my brother's girlfriend to call upon personal resources which fall outside of her world, and which can be used to deconstruct and reconstruct worlds. My mother's incomprehensibility offered my brother's girlfriend an opportunity to find herself in a larger sphere of possibilities. But my brother's girlfriend is so moved by her mission as caretaker that she is not able to recognize that questioning it holds the potential for self-knowledge.

My mother, of course, is an extreme case. It is easy to see how she is like Heidegger's art that bursts between "world" and "earth." Her very presence, if you allow it to, creates new meanings. And *you* are her medium. She is a mirror; she reflects you back to yourself in inverted form. One day, years ago, I wandered into the junk room in her semi-finished basement. I found a chalkboard on which my mother had drawn a silly-looking stick figure and written, "This is you in the mirror. What mirror?" When I confronted her with the chalkboard, she giggled uncomfortably, shrugged and explained, "Dave borrowed a mirror from me to hang down here and he never hung it." Close call for her! I'd almost articulated her work in the world, which depends upon secrecy for its efficacy.

#### The Doctor-Patient Relationship: Ignoring Art

But other persons, ordinary persons, even powerless persons, who have no intention of forcing others to face themselves can nonetheless have that effect. In particular, I am thinking of the physician-patient relationship.

Tales of a recent experience: We are at the Mayo clinic, a world-class medical research institute where patients with incurable diseases come hoping to be told they have the right combination of symptoms to qualify for clinical trials of some new drug or surgical procedure. The physicians are at the cutting edge of technology, and the patients are at the cutting edge of hope. It's a strange intersection—the patients seeking salve for their decaying souls, the physicians trying to extract the bodies from those souls.

The physicians are not, strictly speaking, unethical. They define the research studies, present their rationales, spell out both physicians' and patients' responsibilities, freely admit "I don't know" when they don't, seek consultation from other physicians when they need it, refrain from making false promises and clearly answer all of the patient's questions. But when the patient brings up matters of the soul—her or his fraying emotions or dissolving faith, the physician briefly acknowledges the patient's pain with an inflection suggesting the physician is reading from a dictionary. The physician then steers the conversation quickly back to matters of the body—the patient's symptoms and their fit with the available medical procedures.

The physician's behavior is, of course, an expression of some obvious truths. Researchers at this institute are hired to develop new bodily cures and they see themselves accordingly. Daily they are deluged with new hopefuls as their patients, and they could not save humanity as they have been charged to do if they took time to counsel each patient. I am not being facetious—the physicians have important work in the world to do, and they genuinely want to do it. But what other, less obvious truths underlie this behavior? Is the physician afraid to hear about and see the patients' emotions? If so, why? Is the physician afraid of feeling the despair, the fear, the frustration, the hope of each and every patient, afraid that the compounded weight of all those feelings would wear the physician daily to a frazzle? That all of the physician's non-work time would be spent healing the physician's own soul? I am sure that these fears lick at the edges of a physician's composure. However, I do not think it is the only fear that distances the physician from the patient.

The research physician's work in the world focuses exclusively on the human body. To attend as well to the human soul would remind the physician that humans are not merely bodies. That reminder would call into question the validity of the physician's work in the world. If people are not primarily or exclusively bodies, then how well is the physician serving humanity by studying the body alone? The physician's fear, I think, is not only a fear of confronting or facing the patient, but a fear of confronting the physician's own self.

### Western Images of World and Earth

As I try to insert my imagination into the physician's psyche, I picture myself sitting on a swiveling throne in the center of a frosted glass bubble. Within the bubble, I can see myself and my patients clearly. I can see shapes moving about outside the bubble, but as they rarely come close, I do not attend to them. But suddenly a shape rushes towards the glass and its details become clear. It is a patient's face, pressed up against the glass,

grotesquely distorted. The patient bangs on the glass insistently, pathetically. I am afraid that if I give the patient any encouragement, she will bang more loudly, and, with one sharp fist, shatter my bubble. I swivel away, turning my back.

This image of the thinking subject at the center of a circle or sphere representing a known world, with an unknown earth outside the circumference, is a recurring theme in the Great Books of Western Philosophy. For example, in Plato's Allegory of the Cave, prisoners chained to a cave wall see only shadows because of the odd location of the cave's only light source. Prisoners must free themselves before they can climb outside to see the sun illuminating the world as it really is. In Immanuel Kant's epistemology, what a person can know is circumscribed by the human conceptual and perceptual apparatus. Outside the sphere of knowable phenomena lie the unknowable "noumena," things in themselves. But for Kant, no light is bright enough to reveal to us the noumena.

The later epistemology of Heidegger shares Plato's optimism. For Heidegger, our usual automatic, unreflective attitude towards living settles us comfortably in a known region of objects and persons. Outside this region is "that which regions," the possibilities from which the knowledge that becomes crystallized in and through the habits of daily living is drawn. That which regions calls to us. To hear its call, we have only to think, i.e., to wander off the well-paved highways of the mind and dwell in what we discover.

But, as I have been shouting in this essay, this type of thinking is not easy. In this essay, I have applied epistemology's image of the sphere to self-knowledge. Inside the sphere, the self we know spreads out, making itself comfortable in familiar intellectual and emotional surroundings. Beyond the sphere dance other possibilities for who we could be, what we could think, feel and do. For Marcel, for Plato, for Heidegger and for me, the true self lies in those possibilities. But that self is mysterious, for while unrealized possibilities may draw a life forward in hope or backwards in regret, unrealized possibilities are not the tangible currency of everyday life. We can only think of the true self as a well, from which we regularly draw possibilities that illuminate and rehabilitate our lives. When others come knocking on the sphere of our known selves, when their knocking threatens to shatter and crumble the known self, we should recognize them as emissaries from "that which regions" and risk confronting the mystery of the true self.

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## POEMS

*Inna Ososkov*

It is the mood of blues that spreads  
like smoke across the bar.  
A lonely dentist pools the nerves  
of his upset guitar.  
My mind is like a forest, lacking iron,  
a dreamlike state,  
but not as sullen.  
I search deep pockets. All in vain.  
The keys and horrors have been stolen  
by some wrecked man.  
So let him have my fears,  
they are treasures that were long enough  
preserved and cherished.  
I hope he doesn't lose them...

Then, that dream...  
It reappears even now.  
I saw a naiad once in a silky gown.  
Her lips,  
They were mirrors of the sinking sun.

It wasn't me,  
my shade was lurking there.  
Dried like an old snake's skin  
on wrinkled earth in dusty air.  
But when I dared to look up  
and gulped of Her,  
I sensed the tender tentacles of water  
crawling up the shore.

*First written in Russian, January 92, on my seven-  
teenth birthday. Translated and revised June 94.*

Flying away on the giant air balloon  
I saw many things.  
I was a topographer trying to map out  
the huge continents of clouds,  
a sailor, I sailed through the enormous  
sapphire oceans with all the dangers  
of storms, undercurrents of the unpredictable  
and the vertigo of the unseen.  
But still with all the amusement around me

I could not refuse to look down.  
I saw the wings of the hawk  
and his shadow sliding through the forest,  
just behind him.  
I saw the flow of rivers:  
their arms were tender and lovely  
embracing the shores  
in bracelets of bridges and  
gorgeous puffs of vegetation.  
I saw little towns with colorful roofs,  
from above they looked like  
stained glass in the church  
where I went on Sundays.  
Behind the towns there were meadows  
with flocks of sheep and  
deep, deep lakes.  
All landscape looked like a huge tray  
with many wonderful things laid out on it,  
and, as if on the market,  
I wanted to taste a bit from each one.

*June 94*

Another revolution is completed.  
One without bloodthirsty prophets, leaders,  
a quiet revolution of a rough old planet  
around the middle-aged star.

When the fan of time is unfolded  
People fall out, colors moulder,  
and whatever is left of order  
is a calendar,

which is hung like a lamp within us,  
where memory insists on persistence.

*September 94*

**Inna Ososkov** was born in Odessa, Ukraine. She studies social sciences and biology at the New Jersey Institute of Technology and Rutgers University.

## LETTER FROM THE FAR TERRITORIES

D. L. Pughe

*For Kathleen Doerr*

Things are getting better after a summer of uncertainty. When I awoke from abdominal surgery in July I knew the pain would be fierce, but was so relieved I wasn't facing a fatal corridor. Then it felt like a bullet had lodged in my neck and I've been unable to move and use my left arm, apparently an allergic reaction to the anesthesia and a possible spinal damage when they pulled back my head to put a tube down my throat. In between visits to various neurosurgeons and neurologists I have been in traction and physical therapy for two months with some improvement. The neurosurgeons have cheerfully suggested another operation to fix me right up, including slitting my throat and fusing my neck vertebrae. Now there's a temptation! I have resisted their eager offers to cut me open again, and am trying to gain a little perspective. To date, my physical therapist has been the only person imagining hope on my horizon.

Being injured or ill embarrasses me more than anything I know. Unable to participate in things I enjoy, I feel grounded by some ugly parent of fate. What did I do wrong? Then, when I discuss the symptoms, I bore myself more profoundly than I thought possible. The words hunch over into lame sheep lying in the road. If there is an incentive to get well, it is first to rid myself of these snarling ropes of invalidity and move again with music in my step.

Or to swim again in the ocean, the thing I miss now the most! It is the only way of moving that helps me feel whole.

Lately I have been given strength by a recurring dream of swimming the Bering Strait, heading out from Alaska to the Russian shore. Pushing chunks of ice out of the way with the arm that doesn't work now, stroking masterfully with the other. Kicking up a lather of waves behind with my fins. Since I have just had to lay off over half of my 21 employees due to the economic plight of the Museums, I've added a large inflatable raft pulled by a rope in my teeth, with all the folks on board laughing and calling to the seals.

When I reach the Russian side, perhaps a photograph to send to the neurosurgeons would be appropriate, with a short note: "Apparently I did not need surgery after all!"

In waking life, the dream is helping me progress. I can lift a can of baked beans and was able to float in Lake Anza on Sunday. I am not able to wave gaily yet, but I am determined to overcome the odds and swim, if not the Bering Strait, at least across Lake Louise. I'll even be reasonable and try it in the summer.

Of the few interesting things I have discovered during this test, one is that neurosurgery is thought an art not a science. Neurosurgeons are pianists looking for a piano to play. I have

chosen not to become their clavichord. In diagnostic sessions they also speak of my 'pictures,' those shadowy films of my interior, as damaged paintings they can restore. They base their success on subtle changes in dark and light zones in the 'after' images, impressing colleagues with their accurate cuts. But these monochrome X-rays leave no record of the pigment of pain before and after. The tangle of nerves is invisible, the clotted scars are not recorded. Both are what compel and determine your suffering, your sense of being alive and your capacity for hope. Your biological machine may be restored to normal 'looking' black and white cogs but has no relation to how you feel.

You are forced instead to find your place and define yourself in the spectrum of malady. Noting you're worse off than a colleague with a nosebleed, you are facing nothing when compared with that friend receiving drips of morphine every 15 seconds, dying of AIDS. While offering slim consolation, it gives you back a relationship to a social world, one that has been stolen from you for too long. Shakespeare suggests that "Pain pays the means of each precious thing;" "That which does not kill us makes us stronger," Nietzsche claims. We wander furtively avoiding personal suffering and then ache to dignify it when it appears as an act enlarging our soul. Instead, we find an abyss without meaning, without purpose, and most certainly without conscience.

Injury means everything in your life is given a new range of value. Pain becomes relative, in therapy you must report each week where it lies between the poles of painlessness and the most painful thing you have ever known. But you cannot remember what it was like to be without pain, nor are you inclined to recall pain of the past. Your memory thankfully sets aside only a crawl space for agony.

Unconsciously you compare your current pain to when it is worse or better than its own bad self. And you find you silently define the numbers you are asked to give:

1 is a tweak or pull, unpretentious and fleeting. It nearly always goes unremarked.

A 2 twists into a pinch. You absently touch it throughout the day. You are surprised when it lies down with you at night, uninvited.

In 3 it spreads to a pang, it provokes a lament. You shift your step and lower your head in an attempt to dodge it. You're able to sleep but find knife-wielding thugs catapulting toward you in dreams.

At 4 you testify to an incendiary pierce or barb that scuttles off quickly after an attack. You forget it on occasion, but in an unguarded moment it causes you to swear. As you toss and turn it wraps tighter around you.

In 5 it becomes more persistent, adding a steady whine of ache and burn to the sorties. It wakes you once or twice in the night with a short cry and when you can sleep, you whimper.

A 6 extends your night with large chunks of free time to consider parts that are wringing and throbbing and others waiting in line. Daytime finds you eyeing each person warily in case they bump against you, and you scan every room for a place to fling yourself down.

At 7 you are certain the grating and grinding are loud enough to trouble the neighbors; you pace in the dark. Still able to move you try to fool it by remembering something more horrible, by hurting something else. Then you curl into a helpless ball and it smiles inside, cradled and chewing.

In 8 the gnaw leaves you bulging and wide-eyed, relieved only by the shift from tearing to burning, stabbing to wringing, shooting to screaming. Minutes become hours, hours smear together, a single second sometimes lasts a day. You have no clue how often your face is wet with tears.

At 9 you're knocked down, pinned flat, unable to wriggle, assaulted from all sides. You beg for mercy and are kicked in the teeth. Every remaining muscle, nerve, voice, organ turns against you, and your rage of betrayal tries to suffocate you in its own bitter foam.

In 10, with nothing left to muster, you pray for someone to shoot you Defenseless, in a purgatory of time, your last hope: if it wins, it will leave you alone. You play dead but it sees through you. A dark menacing laughter intent on entirely robbing you of your soul chatters louder and louder in your bones. Unrecognizable screams force their way out of your throat and begin to circle in the air above you.

Then someone shines a light into your pitch black corner. A beautiful woman with sparkling eyes and a warm smile leads your smoldering battlefield of pain toward a cool calm pool. She explains things along the way. Instead of swinging information over your head like a guillotine as the surgeons do, she makes it palpable and presses it into your hands. You're astonished to find someone addressing you as a breathing person capable of change. She slowly raises you from the hierarchical pit of pain into a new scale, one of strength. She tells you what can be done. At each turn she gives you the power to continue on without her. When the surgeons score every improvement against you and insist only they can fix what's wrong, she restores your dignity. When you return to her all humped over and desperate she helps you face the depths of nothingness and begin again:

At zero level of strength you find that someone, in a cruel joke, has substituted another person's limb for your own. You look at the numb foreign thing dangling there and, out of polite-

ness, refrain from commenting on its appearance. Who knows whose it could be. You wonder when yours will make a prodigal return.

You reach 1 only as you are being lifted and realize a faint part of you is invisibly clinging back.

In 2 you manage to use this alien body to wobble toward a common tool, a pencil or a spoon, and are terrified its weight will crush you. You imagine with pleasure a time when you will finally be able to detect an itch, and look on enviously as someone scratches theirs, wondering how it's done.

In 3 you fight to raise a tin can to your heart and are overjoyed when you bring a cup of tea as far as your lips without spilling more than half. When a curtain flaps against you, you masterfully push it away. In sunlight you feel a desire rising deep from within you to punch the sky.

At 4 you can move without hunching or jerking and suddenly recognize certain muscles as former friends. They complain loudly at each new weight you shoulder and kick and lob, but then smile happily and beg for more. They find most of the tests of the surgeons entirely resistible.

In 5, miraculously, your whole vocabulary is restored. You can not only walk but amble, not only sprint but run in a carefree trajectory. Though your energy is impressive, it proves not nearly so great as the act of threading a needle.

Beyond 5 I have no idea, is there a limit to the possibilities? The spirit cavorting with its corporeal self in a way I can now only dream of:

Rowing a handsome blue boat down a lush tree-lined stream that winds for miles and straightens out into the sea. An island far in the distance has a small steep peak and I easily swim through the white caps to its nearest shore with a bow and quiver in my teeth. In the forest I find a course of targets, each down a corridor of grass tucked into the trees, each with a mysterious and provocative painting that begs for an arrow of sight. They lead in a spiral to the mountaintop where I fling myself down, able to feel every tired muscle and limb and the sun. Then, remembering nothing of surgeons and pain, I recall the warm encouragement of her smile. My secular bones agree to avert their eyes for a moment to acknowledge an angel. And give thanks and thanks and thanks.

**D.L. Pughe**, a writer and artist, usually prefers to conceal her identity when her words appear. In the spirit of the possibility that others may learn from this account of her pain and its disappearance, she has let this report appear under her own name. It is dedicated to her physical therapist.

## GROWTH RINGS

Todd Schongalla

### Back to the Garden

I believe we are all born at home with nature. But Western culture has cast itself out of the Garden of Eden, and it demands that each of us leave as well. Although Americans enjoy personal freedoms not found in most cultures, our society has exalted the pursuit of wealth, power, and fame to the status of a religion.

Most parents and schools teach children how to conform to the demands of our society. To achieve this, kids are weaned from their direct connection with nature and given a television or toys instead. Each generation repeats this process with the next, raising them with the infant formula of rationality in place of the milk of mother earth, teaching their children to prefer the cheap trade goods of materialism and self interest over the riches of a spirit grounded in nature and community.

We need the myth of virgin wilderness as adults because the unprecedented pace of change in our society has left us numb and hollow inside. For all our technological and economic "progress," we still need places which are independent of human control and interference. But we have become so greedy and arrogant that we find it difficult to protect the tiny remnant of wilderness that still exists. Many environmentalists seek to protect wilderness for its own sake. But our survival as a species may depend on saving places where people can recover their sense of wonder, awe, and sanity.

Spending time in wild places helps us re-experience the unmediated response to nature we enjoyed as children. Wild places have a special magic that can help us reconnect with the time before rational thinking and entrenched attitudes controlled our perception of the world around us.

For many people, wilderness is the most effective balm for the absence of wonder and joy that characterize modern life. The delight which young children, and sometimes adults, *feel* when they discover a wildflower is like that of an animal at play in the wilderness. There is no fear, and hence no need to erect boundaries between oneself and the object perceived. In *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood*, Edith Cobb attributes this to a direct overlapping of the systems of nature with the perceiving nervous systems of young children, an overlapping that precipitates "the sheer unbounded psychophysical experience of nature as cosmos."

A few childhood stories reveal my own desire to explore nature with open arms. Because I have only vague memories of these incidents, they feel slightly apocryphal to me. Yet, repeated tellings by my family proves their authenticity.

When I was four years old I went on my second summer camping trip around the country. In Yellowstone we had the thrill of a close encounter with a bear. Everyone locked their doors and rolled up the windows of our station wagon—everyone that is, except me. I was blissfully rolling my window *down* so I could pet the bear. I became angry when my sister Susan saved me by rolling the window back up, seconds before the bear took a less than pacific swipe at my window.

I received a stern lecture about panhandling bears being different from Yogi and Winnie the Pooh. My family was probably right. Susan was bitten by a chained bear on another trip to the Great Smoky Mountains. And feeding (or chaining) animals is no longer allowed in National Parks because it makes wild animals depend on people for their survival.

I would roll up the windows if a bear came towards me today. But I still feel a little angry when I hear this story because I felt the bear was a kindred soul. I will always wonder if my family's fearful reaction provoked the bear or if begging for marshmallows and potato chips had already made him hate people.

Around the same age I had another close call when my family visited Cape Cod. I was accustomed to swimming in the placid waters of Long Island Sound. On the Cape we visited a beach of round black cobble stones with waves that towered over my head. The crash of the waves and the roar of cobbles rolling up and down the beach mesmerized me. Lured by the sheer thrill and clatter of it all, I chased a retreating wave too far. The next wave swept me off my feet and rolled me in the surf. As the undertow dragged me out to sea I gulped for air and choked on saltwater. At the last second, my father yanked me out of the surf and saved me from drowning. It took me a year to fall back in love with the sea, and I have never forgotten that the sea kills people who foolishly underestimate its power.

My memory of these events is more of a series of images and feelings than a coherent narrative. These stories really belong to my family's collective memory. They are part of a canon of cautionary outdoor parables that have been told over and over again through the years.

For example, once while climbing to see a herd of deer on a mesa in Utah, my sisters got cornered by rattlesnakes on a ledge at sunset. Another time on a peak in Colorado, everyone's hair stood on end as a storm approached. We ran down the mountain to shelter only a few seconds before a bolt of lightning rocked the summit. On a canoe trip in Quetico, my father nearly lost his fingers when he reached for a perch my sister had reeled in. A

three-foot pike swallowed the perch in one gulp and my father nearly tipped the canoe, yanking his hand out of the way.

The emotional imprint of experiencing my family's reaction to these events and the manner that the stories were told afterwards set the stage for the first major shift in my relationship with nature. Like all children, I was born trusting in the natural world, without fear of bears or the sea. But these stories and my residual memories of these experiences gave me a new conception of nature as a dangerous place.

Frightened by knowledge of my own frailty in a newly dangerous world, I took refuge in the myths and lore of hunting and fishing. Instead of being nature's victims, hunters and fishermen made nature their prey. I followed their lead in denying my own mortality and frailty by killing other animals.

I grew up listening to hunting stories and accompanied my father on hunting trips from the age of five. I can still remember how excited I was on my first day of squirrel hunting. I believed the squirrels we hunted were a different species than the ones in our suburban neighborhood. And once the first shot was fired, they were.

My obsession with hunting and fishing was due to their identification with manhood and their promise of mastery over nature. We weren't just killing fish or deer but part of nature herself. In the corrupt version created in my little boy's mind, killing nature would help me grow up to be a man. But killing didn't turn out to be so easy. I started going along on squirrel hunts at the age of five. On one of my first trips, my next door neighbor, Joe, wounded a red squirrel. As the squirrel writhed on the ground, he calmly smashed its skull with the butt of his shotgun. Seeing the squirrel's brains on the oak leaves and Joe smiling as he wiped the blood off his gun made me sick to my stomach. I didn't understand why he shot it in the first place, since the squirrel was too small to eat, anyway.

I gradually realized that killing animals for sport is not the same as killing them because you need food to eat. The more I hunted and fished, the more I felt like a criminal. The "This Happened to Me" section in *Outdoor Life Magazine* was a continuing chronicle of those who transgressed and bore the scars of nature's fangs. Many years later, Joe shot himself in the stomach when he was cleaning a pistol. And the fact that my grandfather died in a hunting accident proved that I could too.

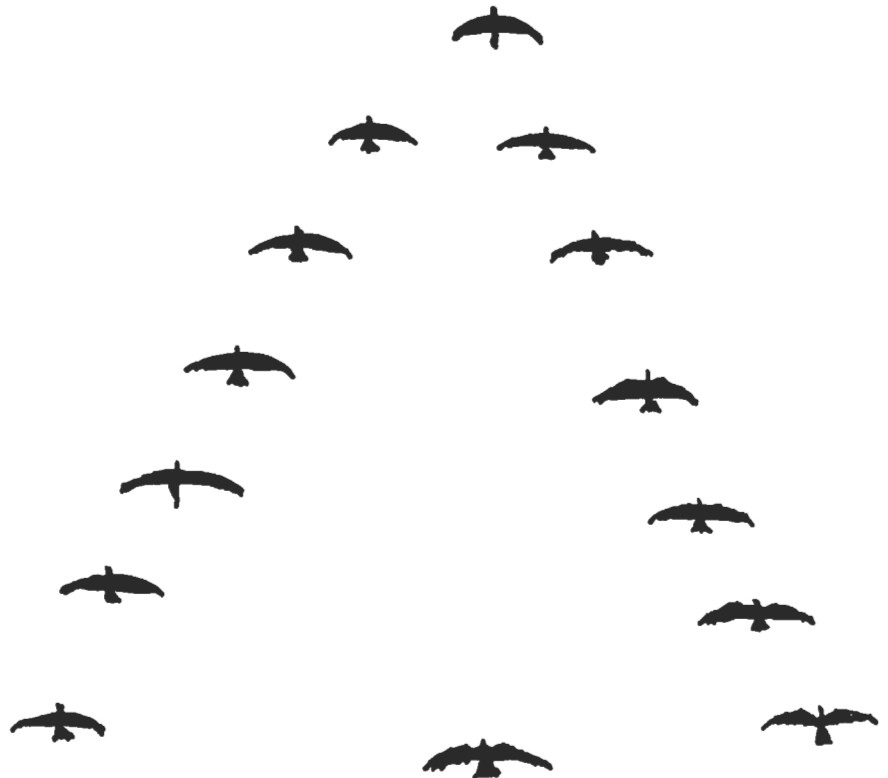
After several years, I recognized my father was less interested in hunting than I originally wanted him to be. Tracking a wounded deer and encounters with other dying creatures killed the fanatic in me. The Bible says, "Those who live by the sword shall die by it." I did not want to die with a broadhead in my side. A third experience changed my attitude toward the hunt forever.

## Still Hunt

My father and I froze and looked at each other in the same instant. There were two does browsing in the woods below us. They were eating shrubs and ferns as they walked into the wind. We were behind them, so unless the wind changed, they would not smell us.

My father never drew an arrow unless he thought he could make a clean kill with the first shot. The does were more than fifty yards away, nearly out of range. And downhill shots like this one are tricky, you always have to aim much lower than you think. There were lots of trees and branches in the line of fire that could deflect the arrow.

I knew that bad shots led to unacceptable suffering for deer. But I was an impatient eleven year old. I didn't want to come



✍

home empty-handed for the fifth year in a row. My father had shot deer before with my older brothers, when I was too young to go with them. I could only listen to their stories and wait for my chance. Now I thought it was high time we came home with a trophy and a few stories of our own. How could I brag to my friends about being a good hunter when we never killed anything?

Sitting around the fire the night before, I didn't have the tired feeling of contentment that usually came after a day on uncle Jim's mountain. There was just one day left and I wanted a buck so badly it hurt. My eyes locked on the trophy buck mounted over the mantel, and I counted the tines for the hundredth time—a twelve point buck! According to the *Boone and Crockett Charts* it wasn't a record, but I knew it was quite a trophy for a deer shot in the Catskill Mountains.

My father only shrugged when I mentioned how nice it would be to have a trophy like that over our fireplace at home. I wanted to talk about where we would hunt the next day. He said, "We can worry about tomorrow when it gets here." But my sense of urgency stayed with me as I slept.

In my dreams that night, enormous bucks the size of elephants chased us all over the mountain until I got separated from my father. I wasn't old enough to carry a bow yet, so I reached for my hunting knife as the bucks cornered me in front of a big boulder. Drawing my knife from its sheath, I felt hot breath and an antler gently rub the back of my neck. I tried to strike with my knife, but I was paralyzed with fear. The knife started to burn my hand. Only when I dropped the knife was I able to turn my head and stare into the brown depths of a giant buck's eyes. I thought he would stab me with his antlers, but his eyes told me a different story. Like a Native American counting coup, the buck had tested his courage by stalking close enough to touch his enemy.

Before I understood the rest of the buck's message, I awoke with a start. The sound of the men snoring in the bunk beds around me was comforting. But I was haunted by the buck's eyes. Just before the sun rose, I remembered where I had seen them before. They reminded me of my grandfather William's photograph, taken before he died in a hunting accident near the cabin some thirty years before.

My father nudged me out of my trance. "Damn," I thought. "Our big chance and I was daydreaming about the night before." I didn't see any antlers on their heads, but most bow hunters shoot does, anyway.

I wondered why these deer were browsing in the middle of the day, when most deer take it easy. Deer mostly feed during the early morning and late evening. They weren't eating much. I decided they were probably looking for bucks. They had come to the right place. A few minutes before we had noticed the remains of a small ironwood sapling, mutilated by a buck rubbing the velvet off his antlers. He had ripped up the leaves at the sapling's base and defecated there to mark his territory.

These thoughts raced through my mind as we thought about our next move. The easiest shots in bow hunting come from sitting still and letting the deer come to you. This works best in the early morning and late evening when deer are feeding. But seeing deer from a stand during the day, when most deer bed down, takes a lot of patience and luck. We had been still hunting, moving slowly into the wind, stopping often in the hopes of seeing deer before they saw or heard us. Most days they sensed us first and fled, but not this time.

For the moment, our best bet was to stay still. Deer have sharp eyes for anything that moves in the forest. But since they are color blind, they can't tell the difference between a hunter that stays still and a rock. The side of the mountain we were on has steep slopes that alternate with flat areas called "benches." The does were on the bench below ours, moving slowly towards a circle of rocks on the edge of their bench.

As the does reached the rocks they looked around in all directions, sniffing the wind for the scent of enemies and bucks. I held my breath as one looked directly at us, even though

experience told me that unless we moved, they wouldn't know us from tree stumps.

The does stepped into the middle of the rocks and lay down next to each other facing opposite directions. They must have been happy with their beds for the moment. They were surrounded and partly hidden by rocks, and they were lying on leaves and ferns. The spine of the deer furthest away was the only vital area exposed, but that would have required a perfect shot with a rifle.

I was stumped, but my father knew what to do. My heart started to pound as he explained his plan. I usually stayed close by his side; but this time my father wanted me to circle around the does and drive them towards him.

"Study those rocks and remember how they look, then go back the way we came and cut downhill..." He stopped whispering as one of the does popped her head up for a look around. "I want you to go below the bench they are on," he continued as the deer knelt down. "If you sneak up on them from below and a little ahead, they'll move straight up the hill towards me. But take your time and move slowly. You'll need to surprise them a little to push them uphill in my direction."

I picked my way back down the trail keeping an eye on the rocks where the does were bedded down. I stepped on rocks as much as possible. I didn't want breaking twigs or crunching leaves to give me away. I also avoided the frequent outcroppings of Catskill slate. Gray and flat, it tips from side to side, unless it is firmly supported from below. I stalked the way my father had taught me, planting my weight slowly with each step, especially where leaves covered the ground. I tried to feel the branches that might break through the thin rubber soles of my Maine hunting shoes.

I froze in mid-step when my father motioned to his ear. I moved my eyes towards the rocks, remembering not to move my head. Both deer were on their knees. I thought they must have heard me, but they sank back onto their warm beds.

After a little more backtracking, my father motioned for me to head downhill. The slope below me was a steep tangle of slate outcrops and downed trees. Now I avoided stepping on rocks altogether. They slid too easily on the slope. Luckily, the leaves were a little wet from a recent rain. They rustled but didn't crunch too loudly. The trick was to shift my weight slowly with each step so I could feel a stick underneath the leaves before it broke. Sliding rocks and snapping sticks happened for a reason, and the deer knew it.

A storm had uprooted a large tree on the slope. The does could not see me while I snuck behind its tangled branches. I relaxed and a few steps later a stick snapped under my front foot. I froze in place, afraid that I had spooked the deer. I couldn't see the does any better than they could see me. And I couldn't see my father. It took forever to count to two hundred before I resumed my halting steps.

Finally, I reached a gap in the branches of the downed tree. I saw my father was still looking intently towards the rocks. I had nearly reached the bench the deer were on. I decided to wait until they looked up again. I wouldn't have much cover crossing the bench.



I was afraid for a moment as the closest doe poked her head up to sniff the air in my direction. Then I felt the breeze on the back of my neck and knew it had not turned against us. The doe's head disappeared and I started to cross the bench. Aside from tree trunks, there wasn't much cover. If I was moving when the does looked along the bench, they would see me. I dropped to my hands and knees and started to move on all fours. I could move faster and more silently that way. It probably only took a few minutes to cross the bench, but it felt like hours.

I reached the slope at the far side of the bench and glanced at my father. He gave me the thumbs up signal, to indicate the deer were still bedded down. Now it was time to really stalk the deer. I crawled about two-thirds of the way down the slope. The bench below would also be exposed to the does' eyes, but it would be harder for them to see me on the slope in between. I carefully worked my way across the slope into the wind. I realized too late that I couldn't see the rocks where the deer were anymore. I could only see the rocks on the edge of the bench above me. I stood up slowly and watched my father move carefully to a better position for a shot. I followed the line of his gaze and decided to head for the big rock in the middle of the rocks above me.

I began to crawl uphill, hoping I had chosen the right group of rocks. I closed to within ten yards of the big rock. Every time I inched forward, the leaves rustled and I expected to see the deer bound away. I didn't see the bare mud of a well-worn deer trail until I put my fingers in it. I followed the trail to where it skirted around the base of the big rock.

The moss and lichen encrusted rock loomed over me as I crouched at its base. The trail went around the rock to the left. I wondered if I should follow the trail or look over the rock. I wasn't sure I wanted to be on the trail if that was the only way in and out of the rocks. Then I noticed that the brown leaves on a beech tree weren't moving, but I could hear the sound of wind.

I stood up slowly and peered over the rock. For a long moment, I stared deep into the nearest doe's eyes. Her eyes grew wider and wider as she tried to figure out what I was. I was close enough to touch her but too scared to try. She finally caught my scent and shot to her feet with a great snort. Adrenalin took control of my body; I began to jump and shout.

The does bounced and crashed their way uphill. There was no grace in their flight, just sheer panic. They ran over small trees without breaking stride. One doe nearly fell as it crossed an outcropping of slate. Then they disappeared over the hill with only a scattering of leaves and broken branches to mark their passage.

My father shook with laughter. I began to trudge uphill towards him thinking that I really blew it this time. "Why didn't you shoot?" I asked. He laughed even harder.

"Shoot? Shoot the wind?," he sputtered. "I couldn't have hit them with a machine gun. But what a show—I've never seen anything like it. You sure scared the hell out of them, and they seem to have scared the hell out of you!"

"I'm sorry," I said with a sinking heart. "I didn't know they were on the other side of that rock. I never meant to scare them so much."

My father finally stopped laughing and patted me on the back. "I never imagined you'd get so close to those does," he said. "You stalked them like an Iroquois Indian. If you can get that close to deer you won't need a bow. You can carry a club!"

"But now we won't get a deer," I moaned.

My father looked straight into my eyes, suddenly quite serious. "Any fool can kill a deer," he said. "I'd give a hundred of them just to see you stalk those deer and make them run like hell, all over again."

As I looked into his brown eyes, I remembered the buck in my dream the night before.

As we drove home that night, I asked my uncle Jim to tell me about the story of the buck over the fireplace. He had been hunting for twenty years before he shot that buck with a rifle.

It wasn't long after that trip that I began to hunt with my own bow and arrow. For many years I looked for the sons and daughters of those two does each fall, but I never shot one. Somehow, it no longer seems to matter.

**Todd Schongalla**, a graduate of the Antioch/New England M.S. program in environmental studies, is director of circulation at *Orion Magazine* in New York. This essay is from a book-in-progress, *Growth Rings: Stories of Ecological Identity*.



# WHEN ROOTS GROW BACK INTO THE EARTH

Heather Menzies

*I've always been skeptical about loving the whole planet earth. For me, you can love it best when you love a particular place, and even then, you can't do it in a moment, but only as you know that place and are involved in it over a long period of time. So I dateline this essay very specifically: 1st. Concession, Locheil Township, Glengarry County, Ontario. Spring, 1994.*

I've read that the first women of North America went off by themselves when it was their bleeding time of the month. In sacred menstrual huts, they sat on the ground, on beds of moss. They rested, meditated and visited with each other while their blood seeped out of their bodies and into the living earth.

I think of this as I walk between the trees I helped to plant as a girl. Every Spring, beginning when I was eight, we planted trees here, in the thin, hard soils of Eastern Ontario, on a run-down little farm my parents had bought in the 1950s, in lieu of a summer cottage. Armed with shovels and buckets, we tramped the land where it slopes up from the river, digging hopeful seedlings into the inhospitable ground.

I worked the ground with my bare hands: scratching among gravel and stones, finding the edge of rocks and prying them out; then foraging around for handfuls of precious soil, sweet black humus with which to cover the roots of the 10-inch nursery trees. The idea was to re-forest the land, land which probably should never have been cleared in the first place. The soil is, or had become, too poor for farming. "Barren," they called it in the soil-testing lab: Leached and eroded from having been used too hard, then left open and exposed to the elements. The 200-acre farm had been abandoned like so many others around here after the Second World War when mechanization imposed its implacable choice: get bigger or get out.

The trees came through a government reforestation program. Red pine, white pine and spruce, they arrived in bundles of 25 packed in peat moss in slapped-together wooden boxes made of spruce lathe. Once, the year we planted 13,000 and my mother carried a solution of soda and water in a screw-cap bottle to keep herself from throwing up, there were 10 boxes. Each was five feet long and three feet deep. When the last tree had been taken out and planted, my brother and I made forts with the empty boxes, our hands too tough to catch the splinters.

It's my hands in the ground I remember the most: eight-year-old, nine-year-old, ten-year old hands. And the ground perpetually cold, with frost still glinting amongst the stones. I'd bang away with my shovel, trying to find a way in for the trees, and hitting rock after rock under last year's withered weeds. The reverberations jarred my head, and I threw the shovel aside.

On one side of me, I sensed my older brother and sister moving steadily ahead. On the other side, my mother kept an eye on my little brother while working her own row of trees. She worked doggedly, stooping but never once getting down on her hands and knees—a girls' school product even here. My father was as usual, way on ahead, never stopping, never even slowing down. But he'd double back I knew, then help me catch up. He had a shiny round-mouthed shovel, which he sharpened regularly so it would cut fast and neat.

My hands are stiff with cold, and puffed up pink like sausages. I know this, but I don't really notice as I work. In a universe reduced to impenetrable earth riddled with stones and rough-edged gravel. I've pulled or shovelled aside a scruffy brown patch of last year's twitch grass, along with the collapsed seedhead of a burdock plant. The burr barbs are lodged in the skin between my fingers. My fingers are caked in half-dried mud as I rake through the ground, seeking passage for the tree roots. The stones here are a mix of shale and granite, the tag end of the Precambrian Shield littered like bones beneath the surface. I find the edge of the stone I'm up against, and yank to pull it out. Nothing happens. I scratch for a fingerhold deeper underneath, feel the dirt drive farther beneath my nails, the nails separating a little from the skin. Still I push, past gravel and frost crystals hard as diamonds. I get a grip and brace myself, knees apart, on the thawing ground. I pull hard, shoulder and stomach muscles straining. My fingertips burn as they slip from under the unyielding stone. Tears run down my face. The rock's too big. I'll have to dig another hole. Warm salt water drops onto the backs of my hands, moistening where the dirt has dried. My head throbs as I dig again, then kneel again, and struggle with the stones.

I plunge my hands into the bucket. Sweet release. The water's cold, yet seems warmer than the ground. And the wetness soothes my fingers. I pull out a tree. A seedling with its spritely main shoot, its tentative side branches, and its prodigious roots.

I hold the tree by the stem, my swollen fingers tingling. I tuck the root filaments carefully into the hole. I curl them around so they all fit in, and push the tips down into the fertile hole. I do this with every tree, an extra boost so they're sure to take root here, and survive. The root tendrils lie there like a hank of my own fly-away tangled hair, kept in place only by my 12-year-old hand. Still holding, I pile the precious black soil in on top of them. Crumbs of still-fecund living earth for them to cling to, draw nourishment from.

*Take, eat. This is my body...I scoop a handful of muddy water out of my pail, pour it off the tips of my fingers, and watch it seep into the ground, down among the root hairs.*

I rake last bits of dirt into the hole, then plunk the patches of turf back on top, and press them in place with my hands. One tree planted. One out of thousands and thousands and thousands. And now they blanket the slope, a skein of green in infinite tones and variations, with the wind sighing through them light or heavily depending on the weather.

Now their trunks are thicker than my body. Their roots are gnarled fingers worrying the edges of the few still-protruding rocks. Whether it's new soil building up or the rocks themselves subsiding, I don't know. But now only the boulders are visible.

The biggest boulder we pulled out of the fields, a fistful hunk of pink-tinged granite, is now a sort of family monument. It's parked along the path between the hayfields in the lowlands close to the river and the higher ground where we planted the trees. My father hired a stone mason to write on the rock, beginning with the phrase: "They cared for this land." He listed all our names, and our birth dates. Then, at the head of the list, he put the name of Duncan "the Night" Macmillan. Some research I'd done in the archives established that he was the first to clear this land. And that's how my father counted things.

The man was nicknamed "the Night" because he was such a fine, hard-working Presbyterian that he worked at night if there was a moon to see by. He cared that much for his family: children of emigrant Scots seeking a better life in the New World. I can imagine him out there day and night, hectoring his workhorses as they strained to pull out the deep, resisting tree roots. I can imagine his relentless labor, and the faith that kept him at it—until he'd broken the land to the plough and the discipline of crops.

It never occurred to me while planting those trees every Spring that it was his diligence I was covering up for. Nor did I consider the compulsion to be productive as anything but admirable. He was hard-working. So were we, pushing ourselves from early morning til nearly dark those cool, sometimes cold and wet, Spring weekends. I have no memory of what we did after we returned, exhausted, to the farmhouse and the stew Mum simmered at the back of the woodstove. We were weekend pioneers, with little time for contemplation.

When my father died, we buried his ashes at the memorial rock, and I visit it often when I'm walking these woods. The rock is overshadowed now by the trees. A thick branch of a spruce droops down and brushes the top. Lichen and moss creep microscopically across its surface, obscuring my father's chosen words.

I gaze at the bough of spruce, its deep dark green turning black in the shadows beyond. I see the buds where new growth will emerge, fragile as seedlings, in the Spring. I see where old needles are sloughing themselves off, cascading across the rock and settling on the ground. I understand these trees, know them as minutely as I know the flesh of my son named after my father and now 12 years old himself.

It's strange I came to love these trees, after all I went through helping to plant, then tend them through their first years of life. Every Spring we walked the still rock-strewn land where we'd dug in the seedlings, trying to find them under the collapsed remains of last year's overwhelming weeds. Spotting a toothbrush bristle of green, I'd pull the grasses apart and frisk the tiny

branches free of entangling debris. It took days sometimes to find all the buried ones, and not all of them in time.

Then it was the snow itself which posed a threat. The red pines got it the worst, with their bushier boughs and thicker needles. The snow took them down, and by Spring, they'd be bent right over, twisted sideways and unable to right themselves. It became our chore as children to scout out these cripples and set them straight, using broken branches from dead elm trees, or hawthorns and other scrub bushes that had infiltrated the long-abandoned fields. It wasn't hard work. In fact, I remember actually enjoying it. At some point too, I crossed over, and continued doing it on my own. For them. For us. I'd encountered the word "pantheism" by then, and I was a pantheist; though still a church-going one.

It was pleasant solitary work, and I used to alternately talk to the trees and sing to them: hymns in the early days, then Beatles tunes about love, love, love.

There's been a little rain, and now the sun is coming out. I walk toward it up the path through the woods, in the direction we moved with our buckets and shovels over 30 years ago. A mellow, thick-honey glow slants through the trees and onto the path, which is spongy with moss and fallen pine needles. The sun comes through the branches of an overhanging pine, and I stop to contemplate a water droplet hanging, like a diamond, at the tip of one of its needles. I duck in under the branches knowing its drier there, and sit on a mound of moss-covered ground.

I think of my mother, busy as ever and still battling headaches. I think of my older brother, my younger brother and my older sister: one's a lawyer, one's a doctor, one's a telecommunications manager. Then there's me, busily writing to meet the next deadline, to have another book in print. A drop of water descends from a branch above me, and lands on the back of my hand. It occurs to me that the whole bunch of us could be out there clear cutting at Clayoquot. It's that much in our blood, the diligence and hard-working spirit. What Nietzsche called the endless becoming with no horizon but the perpetual invention of new objectives: the next tree to cut, the next one to plant, the next cause to write about.

The drop of water slides down my hand where I rest it against the ground. But, I think, it's not the will and the diligence themselves that are so bad. It's their monopoly within us: our hearts, minds, bodies and souls all dedicated to the dynamo of doing, without respite. No time for rest and contemplation. No time for rooting and taking root. No time for remembrance and reciprocity.

I watch the drop of water, now warmed by my skin, roll steadily down my hand, and slip away into the earth. I feel the moss soft beneath me, feel its moisture seep into my jeans.

Around me, shadows drift up like root hairs seeking passage. A breeze whiffles the upper branches, light as surf bubbles caressing a shore. I sit on the moss, enveloped by these trees I helped grow into this ground over so many years. They're in my blood now. I feel them. When I take time to remember.

NOTE

The information about native women's menstrual rites comes from Anne Cameron's *Daughters of Copper Woman*

and from Beth Richard's article, "Blood of the Moon" in *Herizons*. (Vol. 7, No.4).

Heather Menzies is a freelance writer who lives in Neenan, Ontario.

## THE POLITICS OF NATURAL SPACE

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

*Space, the final frontier?* Most often taken as a simple fact of existence, whether it be extra-terrestrial or urban, space needs to be questioned. *UnderCurrents* is looking for critical papers, visual work, and fictions that investigate the problem of space, and in particular, "natural space". What spaces get constituted, defined, and designated as "natural"? What is at stake in the construction of such spaces? How are they put together in the contexts of highly-technologized late twentieth century? And through what codes and practices?

A critical, if not determinate part of urban, cultural, scientific, and environmental politics, the problem of space is a matter of power, desire, and even pleasure. Race, sex, class, gender, nation, and the subordination's these often involve, are all critical to the configuration of natural space. Natural space thus gets defined in a multiplicity of deeply contested ways. This issue of *UnderCurrents* is looking to offer a sense of this multiplicity. We encourage a range of submissions, from scientific configurations of "body spaces" to local struggles over urban park lands to discussions of the global commons. The space is open.

Submission Deadline: 15 December, 1994

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## WORLD WILD WEB

John Clark

**REVIEW OF:** Peter Marshall, *Nature's Web: Rethinking Our Place On Earth* (New York: Paragon House, 1994). 513 pp.

*Nature's Web* is a valuable work for anyone concerned with ecological philosophy, both past and present. It is particularly noteworthy for the broad scope of its inquiry into the roots and development of ecological ideas and values, and is a significant contribution to the study of the history of ecological thought. Peter Marshall's interpretation of the enormous range of theories and ideas covered in the work is often sound and always thought-provoking. As I will point out, there are also a number of cases in which that interpretation is rather questionable and certain fundamental theoretical problems remain unresolved throughout the book. However, as a comprehensive overview of ecological thinking, and as a stimulus for reflection on our relation to nature and on the various attempts to understand that relationship, *Nature's Web* is highly recommended.

### Wisdoms of the Ancients

It is appropriate that Marshall begins his survey of the tradition of ecological thinking with a strong statement of the importance of Taoist thought. He points out that the early Taoist philosophers, Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, expounded in their brilliant and poetic works the kind of non-dominating approach to the natural world that is central to the ecological perspective. "By not imposing their own preconceptions, [Taoists] are able to observe and understand nature and therefore flow with its energy beneficially." (p. 15) Such a viewpoint encourages us to follow the "natural," which is defined by Marshall as that which "exists prior to man's [sic] imposition." (p. 17) This injunction could lead to some conceptual confusion—and perhaps even a quite un-Taoist dualism—if it is taken as a search for some kind of unmediated nature absolutely separate from humanity. However, what the early Taoists meant by it was to allow all beings, human and non-human, to manifest themselves as harmonious expressions of nature.

His interpretation of Hinduism as an ecological perspective is more questionable. A stronger case might have been made by focusing on the often marginal, if not heterodox, nature-affirming strains in the Hindu tradition, rather than on the tradition in general. According to Marshall, "Hinduism admirably illustrates the ecological principle of unity in diversity." (p. 24) However, the mainstream of Hinduism strongly reflects the dualism of the society that shaped it. For example, *bhaktiyoga*, the practice of devotion that is so basic to the Hindu religion, is based on the idea of separation between the religious devotee and

the object of religious devotion. Moreover, it is difficult to find "an ecological vision of God in all things" in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the great devotional work of the Hindu tradition, which affirms dualism both between the self and God, and between the various segments of the hierarchical social order. Furthermore, the most central orthodox philosophy, *Advaita*—though it literally means "non-dualism"—creates a practical duality between Absolute Being [*Brahman*] and the illusionary world [*Maya*] in which we live. Marshall cites an interpretation of the Advaitan view as implying that "all sense-objects, including our body, exist solely as notions, in other words, that they exist only when thought of." (p. 37) While this can be taken as a rejection of a dualism in which mental constructs are misinterpreted as material or objective "objects," it usually implies in *Advaita* an idealistic illusionism. Marshall cites the best of the Vedas and Upanishads in favor of an organicist interpretation, but he also recognizes that often "the natural world has importance only as the manifestation of the Absolute" (p. 33)—a quite un-ecological, and indeed anti-ecological viewpoint.

On the other hand, there certainly are within the Hindu tradition many ecological, nature-affirming currents. In particular, the less dominant schools of "qualified non-dualism," (*visistadvaita*), "difference-non-difference" (*bhedabhedavada*) and "dual-non-dualism" (*dvaitadvaita*) seem to come closer to the "unity-in-diversity" view that Marshall advocates. It would have been helpful, therefore, to hear more of figures like Ramanuja, Nimbarka, and Bhaskara, for example. Marshall, does, however, mention the excellent example of the Bauls of Bengal (well-known for their ecstatic musical rites). A good case can be made for the ecological dimensions of the Bauls, who are much more anarchistic and life-affirming than the mainstream tradition. As Marshall notes, they reject hierarchy, embrace simplicity, and consider all in nature to be sacred. "They are uncompromising free spirits, seeking freedom from all outward constraints." (p. 36)

Marshall's discussion of the Jains—a heterodox (non-Vedic) tradition of India—shows the lack of rigor into which he sometimes lapses when discussing issues of treatment of animals. The Jains, who are famous for their belief in non-violence to all sentient creatures, are praised for their "good thinking and exemplary conduct." (p. 40) We are told that they have set up animal hospitals where they treat animals, but "refuse to put them out of their misery if infirm or wounded" because "nature must be allowed to take its course." (p. 39) But this seems to be far from "good thinking." Either nature taking its course means non-interference, or it means intervening based on some consid-

eration of a good to be attained. If it means non-interference, then why set up animal hospitals at all? If it means considering a possible good, then why not put them out of their misery in some cases? Furthermore, as the anarchist geographer and philosopher Elissée Reclus noted, while the Jains adopted such extreme practices as filtering drinking-water and breathing through a veil to avoid destroying other life forms, their respect for life did not prevent them from “enriching themselves at the expense of the populace” so that they became “a fierce caste, composed of public enemies who were justly detested by the people.” [*L’Homme et la terre*, vol. III, pp. 211-12] The degree to which a group’s conduct is “exemplary” must take into consideration its social context and not only its standpoint toward animals.

Marshall’s interpretation is much more convincing when he turns to Buddhism and presents Zen as both “the most ecological of all schools of Buddhism” and the most “libertarian.” In fact, Zen’s ruthlessly critical approach to all dogma and stereotyped thinking is much more anarchistic than most of what has been called “anarchism” in the European tradition. It is also more dialectical than most of Western dialectical thought, which usually degenerates into a dogma called “dialectics.” The explosively critical nature of Zen makes its ecological dimensions less than self-evident at times. Yet Marshall is right about its ecological implications. The core of Zen ecology is contained in the Buddha’s lotus sutra—to silently gaze on a flower without imposing on it any of our categories. The Zen precept that truth is silence (a teaching usually taught by indirection, but sometimes boldly proclaimed through contradictory precepts) is one of the most powerful statements of the importance of non-violence and non-domination of all beings, and Marshall gives it deserved recognition.

On the other hand, Marshall’s praise for the “ecological wisdom” of ancient Egypt is rather perplexing. The Egyptians may certainly have, as he says, “associated different aspects of the universe with male or female principles,” (p. 58) but in this they resemble most of the cultures that have ever existed. And while they may have advocated on some level a “respectful attitude to animals,” (p. 61) this says little about their actual treatment of beasts of burden, much less the brutal treatment of those humans who were incorporated into what Mumford called the first “Megamachine” to build the Pyramids—those monuments to social domination, human arrogance and death denial. Nor does it take into account the crucial role of ancient Egypt in the development of the idea of controlling and conquering the natural world. Furthermore, Glacken, in *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, makes a good case for the importance of Egyptian thought in the rise in the ancient world of a theistic, teleological, and often anthropocentric view of nature—a monumental achievement, but hardly an ecological one.

Marshall presents a more illuminating account of the development of Greek ideas of nature. He notes the radical break between the more holistic and naturalistic pre-Socratics and the hierarchical dualism of Plato. The ambiguity of Aristotle’s thought, with its organicist teleological elements and its hierarchical anthropocentrism is also aptly pointed out. Interestingly, Marshall sees Pythagoras’ philosophy as a “mystical biocentric”

alternative, rather than the source of an abstract anti-naturalism, as Collingwood argues (I think very convincingly) in his classic work *The Idea of Nature*. While Marshall’s interpretation is also defensible, Collingwood’s uncovering of “neo-Pythagorean” elements in anti-nature philosophy from Plato to the classical modern scientific worldview deserves attention.

### Trickling In or Out of the Mainstream?

Like most contemporary ecological theorists, Marshall chastises the mainstream Judeo-Christian tradition for holding a “dominion over nature” view and seeing the natural world as fallen and corrupt. However, he points out that there always remained within Judaism a more positive image of nature, and compares the holistic, ecological dimensions of the Kabbalah to Taoism. Similar points are made concerning Islam. Marshall also recognizes the diversity within the Christian tradition, which includes views ranging from extreme anti-nature forms of Gnosticism to pantheistic or near-pantheistic forms of mysticism. Strangely, he thinks that “the greatest Catholic thinker to contribute to an ecological understanding of the world in recent times” was Teilhard de Chardin. (p. 117) Actually, Teilhard’s outlook was rather mechanistic and technocentric, and even radically anti-naturalistic in its vision of humanity’s final transcendence of the material world. It is for this reason that such contemporary ecotheologians from the Catholic tradition as Thomas Berry and Matthew Fox have gone in a quite different direction, and made a vastly greater contribution to ecological thought. While Marshall neglects these and similar thinkers, he does recognize the contributions of other important Christian ecotheologians such as John Cobb.

Marshall finds a real affinity between the organicism of alchemist metaphysics and ecological thinking; yet he notes that alchemy also has many “anti-ecological aspects.” (p. 165) This raises certain questions about methods of interpretation of the import of such historical outlooks. Here, as elsewhere, one might be a bit more cautious in judging a phenomenon to be “ecological.” Alchemist metaphysics, like those of Advaita Vedanta, neo-Platonism and Gnosticism, are more than a list of “ecological” and “non-ecological” precepts—they are an interconnected, mutually-determining system of concepts, beliefs, perceptions, ideals and values. A dialectical, and indeed, an “ecological” interpretation must consider not only what individual ideas exist in a system of thought, but also the way in which those ideas cohere, or fail to cohere. Marshall notes that the alchemists’ goal was “leaping clear of all that is corporeal.” (p. 160) This indicates a strongly anti-naturalist dimension in alchemy that seems to pervade its “organicism” so thoroughly that the result can hardly be seen as being “deeply ecological.”

Marshall moves into the modern period with a competent presentation of the rise of the scientific worldview, including a wide-ranging survey of the thought of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Bacon, Descartes and Hobbes, and a summary of the philosophies of the enlightenment period, as exemplified by figures like Hume, Condorcet, Pope, Shaftesbury, d’Holbach, la Mettrie, Hume, Smith, Burke, Bentham and Kant. A discussion of the dissenting tradition includes treatment of thinkers like Bruno, Montaigne, Spinoza, the Cambridge Platonists, Ray and



Locke. The evidence given for their divergence from the mainstream is sometimes rather weak. For example, it is difficult to find anything truly ecological in John Locke's philosophy, including his quite ahistorical and non-naturalistic ideas about a "state of nature." Marshall's contention that "modern social ecologists" have argued that a Lockean state of nature is "precisely" what must be created is rather bizarre, since the invocation of classical liberal, Lockean categories is typical of individualist libertarians, rather than of communitarians of any type.

Marshall gives extensive consideration to the place of romanticism in the development of a modern ecological outlook. In his view, that tradition has a conception of "the world as a living organism" (p. 269) and "forms the basis of a truly ecological sensibility." (p. 268) He makes a good case (following Whitehead and others) for the contribution of romanticism to the movement from a mechanistic to an organicist world view (though as Collingwood pointed out, the world view that succeeded mechanism has been based more on a historical or biographical metaphor than a merely organic one). Marshall comments that "romantics, like modern ecologists, believed that knowledge of oneself and one's natural environment could be achieved through intuition, sensibility, feelings, and, above all, imagination." (p. 271) He focuses on romanticism at its most profound and perceptive in citing, as evidence of the romanticist rejection of "the crude opposition between reason and passion," Blake's typically provocative and brilliant remark that "a Tear is an Intellectual Thing." (p. 271) Marshall, who has already done much to demonstrate the relevance of Blake to anarchist thought, presents him as "an ecological poet *par excellence*." He gives strong evidence for this view in the poet's synthesis of a Taoistic conception of development in nature through the dialectical interaction of opposites with such holistic, ecological concepts as nature's "interdependence, its unity in diversity and its organic growth." (p. 274)

Marshall's extensive discussion of a variety of romantic figures is one of the strongest sections of the book. He cites the importance of Coleridge in uniting a holistic outlook with an understanding of the significance of the imagination. In his discussion of Herder, he makes the important point that the idea of a "Great Chain of Being" does not have only negative implications from an ecological perspective. Such an idea can coexist with an organicist view of nature, an appreciation of diversity, a respect for each being, an appreciation of the interconnections between humans and the rest of nature, and a positive, at times even pantheistic, affirmation of the natural world. (p. 283) He usefully shows that as evolutionary concepts developed, "the cosmic order came to be seen not as a static order of infinite diversity, but as a dynamic process of increasing diversification." (p. 283) Goethe is presented as a fascinatingly ambiguous figure—developing a "holistic approach" in biology and other areas, but remaining "prisoner of the dream of transforming nature which has bedevilled Western civilization." (p. 287) The ecological pros and cons of Shelley, Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, Hegel and other romantic figures are also considered. Marshall concludes that though romanticism "at its worst degenerated into windy vapourings and self-indulgent whimper-

ings" (p. 296) it must be given credit for replacing the mechanistic world view with "a new organic and dynamic vision of the universe." (p. 297) He might have been even more critical of the vaporous side of the movement. At one point he directs our attention to "modern ecologists who lie on ice and imagine they are glaciers in order to understand their nature," and thereby contribute to a romantic tradition "which denies the objectivity of science and the split between the observer and the observed." (p. 285) Imagining that one "is" some object hardly seems worthy of the complexity of the human imagination; however, imagining exactly what one might learn about the nature of a glacier by imagining that one is a glacier seems to pose more of a challenge.

Marshall follows his analysis of romanticism with a generally convincing exploration of the connections between utopianism and ecological concepts in thinkers like Godwin, Fourier, Kropotkin and Morris. While he overestimates the ecological implications of Godwin's utilitarianism, he does a very good job of contrasting the more ecological anarchist and utopian positions to the fundamentally anti-ecological position of Marx. He then presents a concise and informative survey of various links between modern science and ecological thinking. He explores the relationship between Darwinism and ecology, and points out both its mechanistic and its organicist aspects. While many recent commentators have argued for the profoundly ecological nature of systems theory, Marshall rightly stresses the difficulties in assimilating it into ecological thought. He notes that it often promotes a "hierarchical pyramid" concept of nature, and remains mechanistic in its "neutral and abstract view of the living world." (pp. 344-45) On the other hand, he discusses the more significant contributions to ecological thinking of figures like Muir, Schweitzer, Carson, and Leopold (though the latter is inaccurately described as practising a kind of moral extensionism).

Marshall's interpretation of holistic theories in recent eco-philosophy presents some difficulties. He cites J. Baird Callicott, for example, who has developed a holistic position based on Leopold's "Land Ethic," with philosophical underpinnings in moral sense theory and evolutionary ideas. To call this view "rule bio-utilitarianism" seriously misrepresents it. Marshall repeats Tom Regan's attack on holism as being implicitly "a form of ecological fascism," (p. 357) citing Leopold, Callicott and Paul Taylor (who is actually a biocentric individualist) as examples of holistic thinkers. There are serious problems with this view, and Regan, who often parodies the views he attacks, is not a good authority on the nature of holism. While there may be a few "extreme" or "fascist" cases, most holists show convincingly that concern for the whole in no way requires disregard for the parts, but rather obviously demands consideration of their welfare. The term "holistic" can usually be interpreted as it is in the concept of "holistic health," which does not say that if an organ is diseased it should be "repressed" or "liquidated" by the holistic Gestapo, but rather that the state of its health should be related to the health of the whole person.

Marshall is much more circumspect in his treatment of the ecological aspects of the thought of philosophers like Whitehead, Bergson, and Heidegger. He wisely does not see any incipient

fascism in Whitehead's "philosophy of organism," which is recognized as a significant contribution to ecological thought. And despite Heidegger's strongly non-ecological aspects and the fact that he succumbed to actual (though non-"eco") fascism, to the extent that there are ecological dimensions to that philosopher's thought, they are treated quite fairly and sympathetically. Modern physics, chaos theory, evolutionary theory, and the Gaia hypothesis are also examined for their diverse ecological implications.

### The Edges of the Radical

The final part of the book is the most philosophically significant, though it constitutes less than sixty pages of this long work. The central focus is radical ecology, which has, according to Marshall, two main branches: deep ecology and social ecology. In his concern with the debate between these two ecophilosophies, he tends to neglect the third important position, ecofeminism. Ecofeminists will be disappointed not only by this under emphasis, but also by his consistent use of the generic "man," throughout the book. He notes that such usage is "not intended to have any sexist or speciesist overtones." (p. 2) Since the term refers only to human beings, it can hardly be interpreted as "speciesist;" however, as feminists long ago pointed out, the issue of sexist "overtones" can hardly be decided by subjective intention, as opposed to actual connotation. On the positive side, Marshall does more justice to ecofeminism in his unusual but apt choice of Ursula K. LeGuin as the "most persuasive" of ecofeminist writers. While LeGuin is seldom mentioned in academic discussions, her influence is vastly greater than all those who are usually cited. Perhaps her shortcoming is that she writes fiction and has sold tens of millions of books. In any case, her works, inspired by Taoism and anarchism, are not only eco-feminist, but also strongly social ecological and bioregional, express many of the best aspects of deep ecology, and have profoundly moved and provoked reflection in millions.

While Marshall tends to underestimate the contribution of eco-feminists, he sees radical ecology in general as the most important recent development in ecological thinking. He typifies advocates of this position as holistic thinkers. "Reacting against the mechanical and atomistic legacy of the scientific revolution, they argue that wholes are more than collections of individuals, greater than the sum of their parts." (p. 406) He again warns against the dangers of extreme holism, which he says can have totalitarian implications. "What is needed is a moderately holistic view which accepts that we are parts of the whole, in metaphysical, moral and social terms, but at the same time recognizes our irreducible individuality." Of course, this is exactly what social ecology quite explicitly does in its perspective of unity-in-diversity, and many deep ecologists would probably subscribe to similar precepts.

Marshall seems much more familiar with social ecology than deep ecology and usually presents the former more accurately. Though he makes an attempt to be fair to deep ecology, in view of what he rightly sees as Bookchin's one-sidedly negative critique, he nevertheless tends to oversimplify its position and parody it at times, and also exaggerates the opposition between the two outlooks:

Whereas the social ecologists tend to be more humanist, the deep ecologists are more spiritually oriented. Social ecology draws on the European libertarian and utopian tradition and seeks some form of participatory democracy; deep ecology takes inspiration from Eastern religions and Western process metaphysics. For social ecologists, [humans] are agents with special responsibilities; for deep ecologists, [they] are to be seen as nature's pests. The former have sympathy for the poor and the oppressed in human communities; the latter like to retreat to the wilderness and identify with bears, trees and rocks. (p. 404)

While my own sympathies, like Marshall's, are more strongly with social ecology, it seems to me that this kind of depiction, while seemingly descriptive, retards dialogue and indeed, dialectic, by glossing over actual or possible commonalities. After all, what can an "agent with special responsibilities," busily out saving the world, have to say to someone who passes his or her time identifying with a rock?

According to Marshall, the "two ultimate intuitions or norms of deep ecology are 'self-realization' and 'biocentric equality.'" (p. 414) The first means achieving "as expansive a sense of self as possible" (p. 414) while the latter means that all organisms "should be considered equal in intrinsic worth." (p. 415) While many deep ecologists have in fact adhered to the latter principle, there has been a growing awareness of the difficulties of such a position. Many have therefore moved from a "biocentric" to an "ecocentric" approach, which also denies human "superiority" but avoids the absurdities of a biospheric egalitarianism that declares not only bears but also algae the moral equals of human beings (if not as "moral agents," at least as deserving moral consideration). The former "norm" seems to be growing in significance for deep ecologists, in part because of its development by theorists like Naess and Fox (who is incorrectly identified as an American, rather than Australian, writer). I'm not sure why Marshall thinks that defense of wilderness means to "set aside areas for other creatures to enjoy" based on what is "merely a disinterested gesture of good will." (p. 416) Marshall seems to be reading some of his own individualist, moral-extensionist presuppositions into the holistic views he discusses. For the deep ecologists (as, indeed, for many social ecologists, including the writer) defense of wilderness is based not primarily on a concern for "enjoyment" by other individual "creatures," but rather on the need for a sphere of "free" or "wild" nature that permits the larger biospheric whole of which we are a part to continue its processes of evolutionary self-realization.

In some cases, Marshall's criticisms of deep ecology are quite valid, but overgeneralized. It is true that some deep ecologists show a great propensity toward "vague slogans without substance," and exhibit a rather superficial grasp of the relation between social institutions and ecological problems. A detailed analysis of complex social and natural interrelationships is sometimes abandoned in favor of edifying calls for "treading lightly on the earth." Some deep ecologists have disturbingly simplistic conceptions of population issues and "carrying capacity," and a few have lapsed into social Darwinism and reactionary ideology. But ecofascism in the name of deep ecology is fortunately rather rare, and Marshall tends to focus on the atypical worst cases.

Sweeping generalizations that deep ecologists are “philosophically radical” but “do not try to transform existing society,” (p. 418) and that they “prefer cooperation to confrontation, and setting up affinity groups and networks rather than political parties” (p. 419) have limited value in view of the diverse positions on social transformation that one actually finds. Furthermore, such a criticism seems strange coming from someone who is very sympathetic to eco-anarchism, a position that often stresses “affinity groups and networks” rather heavily, and usually criticizes political parties.

It is even more strange that immediately after criticizing deep ecologists for their passivity, Marshall attacks them for extreme forms of direct action and ecotage. He censures in particular the tree-spiking (“in full knowledge of the terrible injuries this can cause to loggers”) that he attributes to Earth First!, which is depicted as an organization of deep ecologists. The confusion at this point is overwhelming. Just to mention a few points: tree-spiking has never been a major tactic of Earth First! members, and an increasing number of them have come to oppose it, in part because it’s nature is so widely distorted; tree-spikers *mark* trees to avoid injuries and, of course, to prevent the tree-cutting in the first place; Earth First! is a very anarchistic, decentralist, activist organization that has been influenced not only by deep ecology, but also social ecology, bioregionalism and even anarcho-syndicalism; and finally, it seems inconsistent to praise eco-anarchism and yet to attack rather indiscriminately one of the few organizations that seems to be strongly influenced by it.

Marshall also claims that deep ecology’s program for change “leaves however the main sources of human domination and hierarchy—private property and the state—intact.” (p. 420) It is true that many deep ecologists do neglect the centrality of the state and private property to social and ecological degradation (though they are not very different from other ecologists in “leaving them intact”—no one else has been very effective yet in overthrowing them). Marshall also makes the valid point such deep ecological precepts as “humans have a right to reduce the richness and diversity of life forms in order to satisfy the ‘vital’ needs” are not very helpful without a thorough inquiry into the nature of needs. In fact, what is needed even more than (in Marshall’s words) “a clear definition of such needs,” (p. 421) is a developed *theory* of needs that encompasses an investigation of their natural, cultural, historical, and imaginary basis.

But, once more, Marshall overgeneralizes. Marshall seems rather condescending in dismissing direct action, legal challenges, changes in ways of life and personal example as means of changing the world. Direct action does not have to remain on the level of isolated protest, and may have a large impact on society. Legal challenges may sometimes prevent irreversible losses and help develop a spirit of resistance that encourages more radical activities. And we cannot focus on institutional change to the exclusion of changes in patterns of living, relationships, and lived values. Marshall obviously agrees with this point in general, since the utopian anarchist tradition, which he admires greatly, is based on the idea that the example of transformative community can ultimately affect the larger society.

Marshall has a more balanced view of social ecology, with which he seems to agree on almost all important issues. He presents a fairly accurate view of Bookchin’s position as a dialectical naturalism that sees nature in a process of development and self-transformation with “an inherent striving towards increasing consciousness, complexity and subjectivity.” (p. 425) He sympathetically presents Bookchin’s explanation of the human quest for domination of nature as rooted in actual human domination of other humans, and his vision of a non-dominating, non-hierarchical ecological society as the precondition for overcoming ecological crisis. In general, Marshall gives Bookchin credit for his enormous contribution to the development of ecological thought in general and eco-anarchism in particular.

However, despite this recognition, he sometimes misrepresents Bookchin’s position rather badly. It is unfair to include, in a relatively short discussion, examples of technological optimism taken from essays written over twenty-five years ago, while entire chapters of recent books that develop a much more critical and sophisticated position are ignored. A mere statement that Bookchin has qualified some of these views is not adequate. The criticism of some points from his recent works is also overstated. It is simply not true that Bookchin advocates in *The Ecology of Freedom* “a landscape totally transformed and dominated by humans.” (p. 427) While Bookchin’s failure to emphasize the need for large areas in which relatively “wild” nature can develop is a major shortcoming, his proposals are nevertheless not for a “dominated” landscape, but rather for a “balanced” relationship between humans and the surrounding natural communities. He has (admittedly, in rare instances) noted the importance of wilderness, he recognizes in the very work cited by Marshall the necessity of sensitivity to the activity of nature itself (as opposed to human action *upon* nature), and he strongly rejects the idea that we can even begin to comprehend the vast diversity in nature, much less seek to control and “dominate” it.

The contention that “social ecologists make no bones about going from a scientific description of nature to a normative prescription for society, from an ‘is’ to an ‘ought’” (p. 423) is much more problematic. I’m afraid that bones must be made, for I have no idea how anyone could make such a leap, despite two centuries of practice in falling on philosophical faces. The division of experience into descriptive and normative realms (“fact vs. value,” “is vs. ought”) exhibits exactly the kind of dualism that social ecology seeks to avoid. Such a division is contrary to actual lived experience, as numerous critiques of naive empiricism have pointed out. Social ecology presents a critique of such assumptions and the Humean ethical scepticism or relativism that results from them. They are appropriate means for legitimating the divisions of modern society (the objective, public world of facts and power vs. the subjective, private world of values and powerlessness), but have nothing to do with the kind of dialectical naturalism that social ecology, at least when it is consistent, proposes.

### Let Nature Go!

Marshall seems to be in general agreement with social ecology, however, when he proposes a “libertarian ecology” that would somehow be a synthesis of deep and social ecology. He

sees the need for a theory that goes beyond the individualistic, non-holistic aspects of rights theory and utilitarianism. Yet he only partially succeeds in developing such a theory, for sometimes his criteria for ethical judgment seem inadequately ecological. For example, he contends that "we cannot live without some killing but, on the principle of minimum harm, we should limit killing to the least sentient organisms and the smallest number of them possible." (p. 440) As has already been noted, this kind of analysis is not really ecological, since it defines harm entirely in terms of individual organisms, as opposed to ecosystems or ecocommunities (not to mention that if we choose to eat the less sentient, we may end up necessarily eating a lot more of them). Marshall concedes something to a more comprehensive, holistic view in accepting the necessity for some cultures to raise cattle or hunt in order for these cultures to survive or maintain their identity. (p. 441) But it would seem that the principle of "minimum harm" itself requires a more ecological (and less ethically individualist) interpretation.

At one point Marshall attempts to base ecophilosophy in a concept of "reverence for life" that means "revering oneself and other life forms as part of an organic whole, and involves a respect for the diversity of life." (p. 441) He rightly suggests that such a reverence should include a positive appreciation of human life, and a rejection of the misanthropy characteristic of some forms of biocentrism (which he mistakenly finds in philosophers like Callicott and Rolston, who are incorrectly placed in the biocentric camp). But although the value of the concept of reverence for life is beyond question, its adequacy as the basis for an ecophilosophy is highly questionable. On the one hand, there is a sense of *being* (related to the sense of wonder underlying philosophical thinking) that is more fundamental than even an appreciation of *life*. On the other hand, there is a valuation of complex, developed, emergent goods that goes far beyond a respect for *life per se*. Reverence for life is inseparable from reverence for (valuing of, respect for, awe of, appreciation of) being, beings, and various forms of being.

The question with which Marshall ends his discussion of "libertarian ecology" is the most basic one. How can we contribute to the emergence of "free nature"? He finds Bookchin's statements on this subject to be "far too interventionist." (p. 446) While Bookchin, as I have pointed out, qualifies the statements that are often pounced upon by hostile critics, it is true that his language often sounds "interventionist." From a dialectical point of view this remains a serious problem. There are no slips of the tongue in philosophy; or, to put it another way, when one's tongue slips, one falls into a theory. Bookchin's conception of "free nature" deserves further development by social ecologists, and the place of human action and refraining from action needs a much more critical analysis than has been given thus far. Furthermore, the extent to which the discourse of some social ecologists has preserved traces of the productionist and technological imaginary needs a critical examination that it has not yet received.

However, Marshall's contention that it is better to "free nature negatively from human constraints" is not very helpful in getting us to the kind of analysis that is necessary. His advice

"Hands off! Let Nature live! Let the Tao be!" poses problems. (p. 447) Such maxims may give us excellent advice in some areas, such as the need to allow evolutionary development in large, relatively undisturbed wilderness preserves. However, it does not help greatly in those areas in which inaction would merely mean allowing certain consequences of previous human action to prevail (erosion, desertification, or as Marshall himself notes elsewhere, starvation). In addition, this sort of generalized analysis seems to imply the exclusion of forms of "intervention" which would constitute beneficial cooperation with nature. Furthermore, a truly ecological approach avoids any concepts which exclude humans from nature. We cannot ultimately keep "hands off" nature, because hands, and all that they touch *are* nature. As Chuang Tzu, the great Taoist philosopher pointed out, our goal should not be to "let the wind be," but rather "to ride on the wind."

The final chapter of the book, "Ecotopia Revisited" argues for a decentralized, communitarian movement aimed at the ecological transformation of society. Marshall proposes that those seeking to create ecotopia "start from the individual, then work through affinity groups and finally to a mass movement which seeks to decentralize power and create in place of the nation state a loose federation of organic communities." (p. 461) This seems like a very social-ecological approach, since it proposes the organic growth of ecological community as a means of regenerating society as a whole. Marshall believes that the creation of an ecological culture will result from such projects as "action groups," cooperatives, self-managed enterprises, alternative communities and book publishing as other possible contributions. (p. 462) A movement for such change would be less "a mass movement" than a movement away from the existing mechanized, atomized mass society through the process of social and ecological regeneration and the gradual growth of an organic communitarian society.

One aspect of such a movement should certainly be a rethinking of the history of ideas from an ecological perspective, which is the laudable goal of *Nature's Web*. While I have pointed out certain theoretical problems in the work and raised issues concerning the interpretation of some thinkers and ideas, this in no way detracts from the magnitude of Peter Marshall's achievement in this comprehensive study. This "rethinking of our place on earth" is a vast undertaking and contributes much to our reflection on humanity, nature and the quest for the liberation of both.

#### NOTE

Much of the material in this review appeared in an earlier review of the British edition of the same work. The author thanks the editors of *Anarchist Studies* for permission to include this material here.

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# REPRESENTATIONS OF NATURE: *Tolerant/Emancipatory vs. Oppressive/Exploitative*

Thomas Heyd

*Report on a workshop of the Canadian Society for the Study of European Ideas, organized by Thomas Heyd, and held in conjunction with the Learned Societies Conference at the University of Calgary, Alberta, June 8, 1994.*<sup>1</sup>

Our representations of nature guide our relationships with nature. This workshop broadly canvassed those conceptions through a great variety of approaches: conventional academic presentations, documentary video, slide presentations, painting, sculpture, poetry, music, and installation art.

Neil Evernden has pointed out that the environmental crisis heralded decades ago is still with us.<sup>2</sup> The 'solutions' offered today, moreover, look much the same as then, though presented in a new vocabulary (that is, today we hear the call 'sustainable development' instead of Pinchot's for 'conservation'). Evernden suggests that, perhaps, the right questions have not been asked. It appears that an answer to the question "what is this thing 'nature' that we hasten to defend?"<sup>3</sup> is of high priority.

Certainly we could not hope to plumb the full depth of the question "what is nature?" in just one workshop. We did, however, sketch some of the many ways in which nature is conceived. During the event, two broad lines of inquiry became evident. Some participants focused primarily on the meaning of the *content*, while others commented mainly on the meaning conveyed by the *form*, of our representation of nature.

In Euro-Canadian and -American culture, nature often has been represented as mere object, as something entirely passive, awaiting human *techné*. In their paintings Norman White and Amy Gogarty made ironic reference to the supposition that nature is something capturable by maps and taxonomic illustrations, respectively. In their joint multi-media installation Diana Sherlock and Rebecca Bourgault complemented this ironic portrayal of nature by drawing attention to the nation-building significance that nature as that-to-be-tamed has had in Canada. Meanwhile, back in the conference room, Peter Miller pointed out that John Locke's theory of property gives wild nature merely the role of something 'to be improved' by appropriation through 'development' and exploitation by human beings; Eric Katz, moreover, noted that this is a form of 'environmental imperialism.'

Conceiving of nature as object rather than subject, divorced from our conceptions of self, was identified by Ari Santos and Michael Kurak, respectively, as the root causes of our exploitative relations with nature. Angus Taylor showed that, although Frederick Engels' nineteenth century-socialism conceives of the natural world as an object of exploitation, William Morris al-

ready finds a conception of nature that allows for a communal, rather than exploitative, relationship with her. Karen Baltgailis, furthermore, argued in her talk and through her documentary video, *A New Leaf*, that nature needs to be conceived as a partner to human beings; she focused on the environmentally and economically wasteful practices common in largescale, industrial forestry, exemplified in the tendency to clearcut extensive areas, and noted that practices more respectful of forest ecosystems are beneficial to both the human and the natural communities affected.

The workshop participants focusing on the meanings conveyed in the form in which nature is represented similarly showed that nature has been conceived as object, as partner to human beings, and occasionally as subject. Joseph Pitt argued that in natural science the conception of nature is of a highly theory-laden object since the development of new technologies in the seventeenth century; the confusing view of nature at the eyepiece of seventeenth century telescopes and microscopes made theory-based interpretation a necessity. Allen Carlson argued that our representations of features in the natural environment often are prefigured due to the associations generated through our exposure to the imagery of the popular media; he illustrated his argument by pointing out how a very earth-bound feature of the land, such as Devil's Tower Mountain, becomes emblematic for the extraterrestrial due to its association with the film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

In her paper/slide presentation, Deborah Pughe pursued the differences in the representation of the horizon in European and Eastern art; she argued that the contrast between the representation of depth and distance through anchoring lines in European art, and the lack of such devices in Chinese art, illustrates the difference in how controllable nature has been conceived in the respective cultures. Jan Zwicky proposed the resonant, lyric order of Heraclitus' aphorisms, which echoes ecological order, indicating a conception of nature wherein human beings are part, and not mere observers, of nature. David Rothenberg's musical interpretation of Chinese koans from *The Blue Cliff Record* similarly illustrated the implication human beings as part of nature; one of the pieces proposes.

Buddhas and the rest of us, we are the same.  
Mountains and rivers and inside the self...  
Why then divide it all up?...<sup>4</sup>

Finally, three contributions to the workshop introduced representations of nature in which nature is featured as subject. Carol Sheehan's paper/slided presentation introduced Native art

that places human beings among the other active beings of nature. Mary Donahue's landscape paintings portray landforms that have assimilated the essence of their former human inhabitants; her paintings present mountainscapes as beings with histories. Jane Baigent's *Rockfaces* are large canvas drawings that constitute the 'presentations' of the power or spirit inherent in certain places; these works are portraits of rocks as they erode, crack, split, fault, shatter.

If it is important to prevent the total dismemberment of the natural environment, it is imperative to determine what we mean by 'nature.' This workshop created a space that allowed a critical, as well as enjoyable, look at some of the various conceptions of nature that circulate in our North American cultures. The excellence in contributions was only equaled by the friendly, searching atmosphere of the discussions, and the sublimity of the nearby Rocky Mountains.

## NOTES

1. The workshop received the co-sponsorship of the New Gallery and the Canadian Society for Aesthetics. The *Representations of Nature* artworks, co-curated by Thomas Heyd and Steven Nunoda, were shown at The New Gallery, Calgary, Alberta, June 8-30, 1994. David Rothenberg's The Concert, *From The Blue Cliff Record* was presented at the New Gallery, June 8, 1994. Karen Balgailis' documentary video *A New Leaf* was presented at the University of Calgary, June 8, 1994.

2. Neil Evernden, *The Social Creation of Nature* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins Press, 1992), p.x.

3. *Ibid*, p.xi.

4. Gates to All Directions," *Poems Based on the Blue Cliff Record* adapted/translated by David Rothenberg, 1994.

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## FROM THE BLUE CLIFF RECORD

David Rothenberg

The Blue Cliff Record is a collection of one hundred koans of words and deeds of the original Chinese Ch'an masters, the roots of the religion that would later become Zen in Japan. Each brief account or koan is followed by pages and pages of often abstruse commentary, delving into the most subtle meanings of these strange scenes of debate. Not reading Chinese or even being an official student of Zen, I have tried another way of reading these moments of spiritual doubt, challenge, and resolution—I have translated them into poetry, more an interpretation than any exact replica of the original. I am after a depiction of the human contact with nature not as poignantly ambiguous as the koan itself, not as explanatory as philosophy usually tries to be. It's somewhere in between. Here are a few of the one hundred cases, some of those in which an unassailable nature confronts a searching humanity:

### Case 13 Snow in a Silver Bowl

Clouds freeze in place over endless plains  
but the world can still be seen.  
Snow conceals the white petals,  
still the flowers are there.

Cold as ice, fine as rice powder  
these reasons are exact:  
pile up snow in a silver bowl

*an outburst of occlusion*

What do you say?  
I'm here in a mouthful of frost  
seeing my breath in the air

Rout out the wind that ripples the flag;  
The white heron walks in the bright night light.

### Case 16 Adrift in the Weeds

Peace awaits through the forest of thorns.  
There is one hand uplifting and one pressing down.

"I will break out, ask the Master to break in."  
(If I weren't alive, they'd all laugh at me.)  
He says: "you too are adrift in the weeds."

Walking the country, each step you break in and break out.  
Traveling through time, marking manifold paths.  
Leaving one place you will enter another.  
Every place has a name, every house is a home.

The chick breaks out, the hen breaks in—  
when the baby awakes, the egg is no more.  
Mother and child both forgotten,  
chirping in harmony on the same branch,  
leading alone, follow alone.

### Case 21 Lotus Flower, Lotus Leaves

to learn the sense of words beyond patterns

the lotus underwater is already the flower  
the bloom on the surface still is the leaves

in the midst of words      *pass through words*  
in the midst of meanings      *pass through meanings*

while gripping a tool pass through the tool  
let yourself be at ease

foxdoubt, foxdoubt, no wonder without regret

(The wild foxes, uncertain, walk across the frozen river,  
listening beneath for the sound of water.  
If they hear nothing, they may cross to the other side.)



### Case 23 *On the Mystic Peak*

If I tell you what this mystic Peak is,  
you'll fall flat on the ground!

With one word, one act, one meeting, one touch,  
you will see whether someone is deep or shallow,  
and know if they're facing forward or back.

They wander endlessly over mountains, and decide:  
"Right here is the top of the mystic peak."  
Oh? And look around—  
Without the sun, we'd have death covering these fields.

The earth goes on so long as it kills people with sadness.  
Whoever you meet you must take care.

"If I tell you what this mystic peak is,  
you'll fall onto flat ground!"  
*Must we all come down from our mountains?*

When you get to the point of merging with nature,  
the eye sees not itself  
the ear hears not itself,  
the hand feels not itself  
the sword cuts not itself  
the flame burns not itself,  
so we need the other world.

Skulls would cover the ground, but who would know?  
They won't live again. They will not look, listen, or touch.  
The blade slices blazes, metal melts away.

roll around in the weeds at the top of the hill  
how far down from the top will you fall?

### Case 24 *Lay Down and Rest*

Well, the sea is calm, the river is clear  
A dog brings the white flag of peace.

Two people are held up by a single staff,  
they call to each other, going and coming together.

days without worry, lie lazy facing blue mountains  
in the heart of the black waves the jade rabbit jumps  
down in the white clouds the gold dragon stirs

and we're high on the bluff beyond demons and villains  
or deep in the sea where the Buddhas can't see us

**arrive to the place, relax, and lie down.**  
There is time now for everything.

### Case 27 *Limbs Exposed to the Wind*

See the rabbit and unleash the falcon  
use wind to fan the flames—  
What's it like to enter a tiger's lair?

What season is this?  
The family breaks up, the people scatter.  
When leaves fall the body is exposed to the air.  
Hold up the sky and carry the earth.  
Clean, pure, even steps through the empty sky.

You feel oncoming winds from the source of unrest.  
These are the questions that use things.  
An arrowhead flies far into the void.  
Do you feel your hair standing on end?

The truth of things is always this obvious.  
Is it subject or object? Quandary or awe?

Limbs left out in the wind,  
no leaves yet to cover them.  
When you fuse all past and present  
fools and sages, sky into earth,  
and everything else, you will see  
how these questions have helped us.

### Case 41 *To Die a Great Death*

Even the wise can't always tell  
where right and wrong are mixed.

A man stands out from the crowd:  
He scratches thin ice like a unicorn's horn  
He burns like a lotus on fire.

Past the great death, how will he come back to life?  
*Only by daylight, never the dark*

There are such things! A thief knows to strike the rich.  
Seeing a cage, he makes a cage.  
A flute with no holes strikes the soundboard of silence.

How is it before the rooster has crowed?  
*The sound does not exist.*  
And how is it after the crow's time has gone?  
*Each knows the time for themselves.*

If you want intimacy, ask no questions.  
The eye blinks in death the same as in life.  
Even the ancients have never arrived.  
I don't know who scatters dust in the sand.  
If it's you, *now is the time to stop.*

**David Rothenberg** hasn't been editing the *Trumpeter* long enough to realize he shouldn't be putting in so much of his own stuff. But he'll stop soon.

## PERIODICALS OF INTEREST

The editors of *The Trumpeter* often come across other magazines or journals that deal with topics which might be of interest to our readers. Here are some that have arrived in recent months:

### **Whole Terrain**

Subtitled "Reflective Environmental Practice," this annual publication is the journal of the environmental studies department of the Antioch/New England Graduate School, an alternative masters' degree program with over 200 graduate students in environmental studies, many working full time as they complete their studies. Each issue has a unifying theme, and the latest is "Environmental Ethics at Work," including reports of ecophilosophy on the job at the EPA, and at the Hanford nuclear reactor! (one of the few whistleblowing stories with a happy ending), along with interviews with Thomas Berry and David Brower. Each issue costs \$5, and they are available from: Dept. of Environmental Studies, Antioch/New England, 40 Avon Street, Keene, NH, 03431.

### **IUCN Ethics Working Group Circular Letter**

Started by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), an affiliate of the World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF—formerly the World Wildlife Fund), this newsletter details the activities of diverse individuals scattered across the globe who are committed to bringing ethical concerns into global policy documents such as the World Conservation Strategy and The Earth Charter. It also tries to gather information about other organizations concerned with ethics in international affairs. A valuable resource. Available in English or Spanish. Contact: IUCN Ethics Working Group, 5701 South Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637. Fax: 312-753-1323.

### **Mesechabe: The Journal of Surre(gion)alism**

You've heard of bioregionalism, now here comes surregionalism, a wild, savvy journey into the ecology of imagination. Edited by the legendary bayou dweller Max Cafard, this free-wheeling journal locates some obscure connection between root-ness in the cajun Francophilia of Louisiana with the raw experimentalism of the original French surrealists. Both primal and literary, this publication eludes description, featuring features such as "Welcome to the End of the World" and "An Anarchist in the Old South." \$3 per copy. \$15 for a five issue subscription. Contact: *Mesechabe*, 7725 Cohn Street, New Orleans, LA 70118. Also available, the Surregionalist Mani-

festo: "Region is origin. It is our place of origin. Where all continues to originate. Origination is perpetual motion. Re-inhabitation means reorigination. We return to our roots for nourishment. Without that return, we wither and die." Etc.

### **The Soundscape Newsletter**

Inspired by the work of Canadian composer and sonic environmentalist Murray Schafer, this occasional newsletter reports on the activities of those who study the surrounding world of sound—musicians, sound sculptors, radio artists, noise pollution activists (pro and con!). What is revealed is a worldwide assembly of sensitive listeners who believe in increased awareness, protection, and celebration of the soundscape, which is like the landscape, except you hear it. A call to listen to the aural ecology, this publication is available from the School of Communication, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada, V5A 1S6. Fax: 604-291-4024. \$25 for a year's membership in the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology, which serves as a clearinghouse for all these ear-based activities.

### **Taproot**

Published by the Coalition for Education in the Outdoors, this thick quarterly newsletter presents a wealth of information on issues in environmental education from a wide perspective. Especially useful are the brief news items on ecological matters which constitute most of the magazine. Also listed are professional opportunities and relevant organizations across the country. An individual subscription is \$25, to Park Center, P.O. Box 2000, Cortland, NY, 13045. Tel. 607-753-4971.

### **Environmental History Review**

Founded by ecohistorian John Opie, this solidly academic journal includes three or four well-researched papers in environmental history per issue, plus a wide-ranging book review section of brief but informative notes on titles relevant to the juxtaposition of ecology and history. Contact: Arlene McKenna, managing editor, Cullimore 501, New Jersey Institute of Technology, University Heights, Newark, NJ, 07102. Tel. 201-596-3291. \$24 a year for four issues.

### **Human Ecology Review**

The new publication of the Society for Human Ecology (SHE), this semi-annual large-format journal contains about

one-half research papers in the relentlessly interdisciplinary field of human ecology, combined with an extremely informative book review section, where titles are really considered in depth. Almost 250 pages an issue! Human ecology seems to be an attitude rather than a discipline, looking for a methodology to study the natural world and include humanity, not spurn it. So it struggles between science and philosophy, searching through all fields of inquiry for assistance. Contact: Scott Wright, editor, 238 AEB, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, 84112, tel. 801-581-8198. \$40 a year to join the Society, which meets at least once a year to discuss human ecology programs at research institutes throughout the world.

### EarthWays

The quarterly journal of the Earth Trust Foundation, an environmental and spiritual center serving the greater Los Angeles area, supporting a variety of local, regional, and international actions, protests, and gatherings of many types. Earth Trust is one of those rare organizations that combines spirituality with practical solutions to environmental quandaries not limited

to immediate protest. Contact Andrew Beath at: Earth Trust Foundation, 20110 Rockport Way, Malibu, CA, 90265. \$35 for a basic membership.

### Ecofeminist BBS

There is an ecofeminist bulletin board service (BBS) on the internet. If you are on the internet (and you probably will be soon, unless you work hard to resist), send a message asking to be on the subscription list to <listproc@csf.colorado.edu>. If that doesn't work try <ecofem@csf.colorado.edu>. The organizers are Priya Kirian in Santa Barbara, <kurian@alishaw.ucsb.edu> and Stefanie Rixecker in Canterbury, New Zealand, <rixecker@kea.lincoln.ac.nz>. If all that is comprehensible, you should soon be online to a flood of information. Like all such services, it is up to you to sift the wheat from the chaff. Otherwise the deluge will get you.

### THREE HAIKUS

*Burt Kimmelman*

as the leaves. descending.  
snow. lightning. water.  
wet  
leaves  
floor  
soft  
ah  
sleep

blackbird, valleys, hills, hawk  
great circles, redbird  
scarlet  
light  
green  
branching

year after year the sun  
squirrels, birds, calling.  
each two trees a gateway.

**Burt Kimmelman** edits the biannual *Poetry New York*. He is the author of a collection of poetry inspired by the viewing of art, entitled *Mosaics* (Sputen Duyvil). Presently, he is at work on a study of the poet William Bronk, which will be published by Twain Books.



Alan Drengson

## CALL FOR PAPERS

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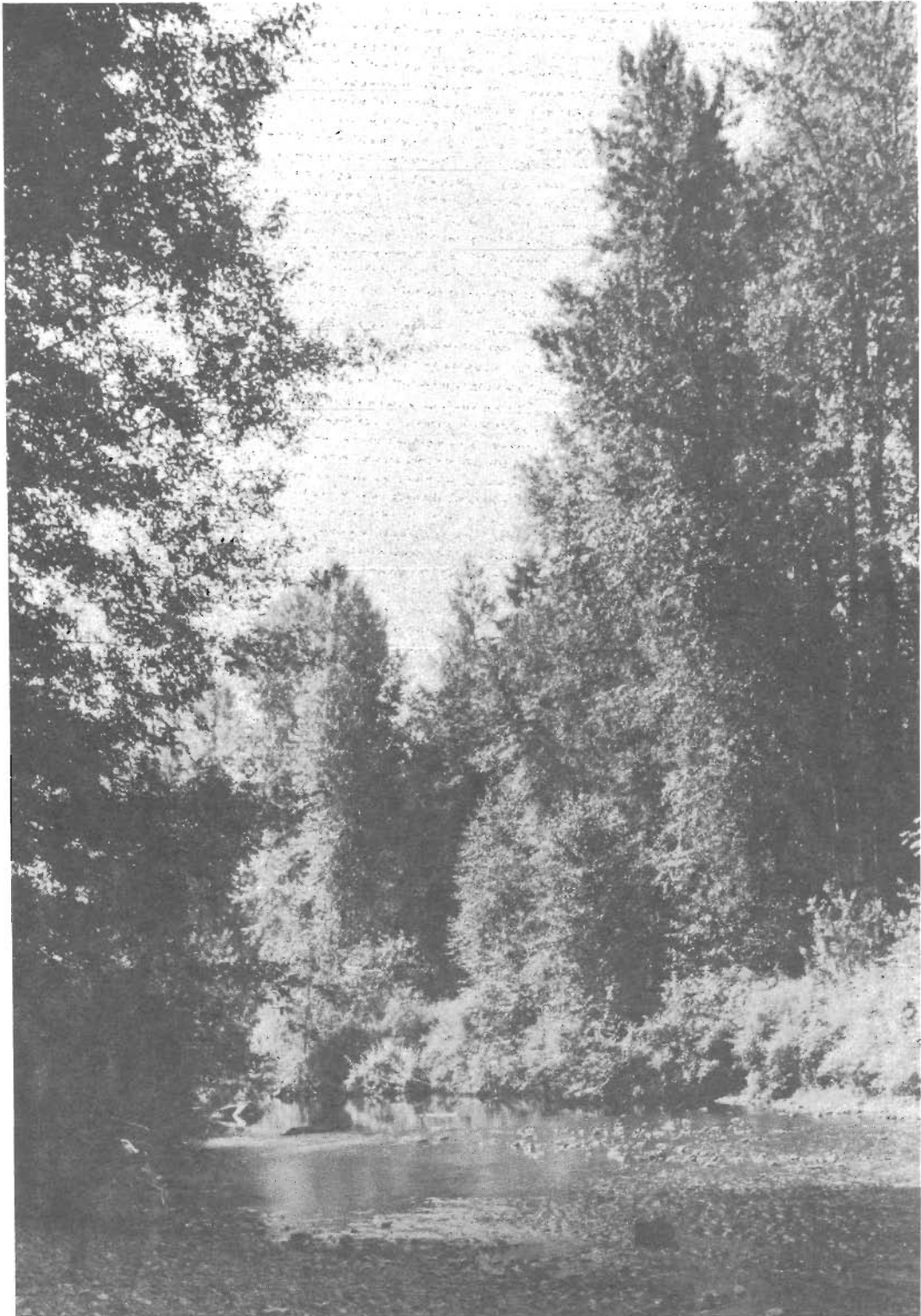
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*Highest good is like water. Because water excels in benefiting the myriad creatures without contending with them and settles where none would like to be, it comes close to the Way.*

—Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching