RETHINKING WESTERN APPROACHES TO ECOFEMINISM

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By
Misty A. Cummings, B.A.

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Master's Examination Committee:
Dr. Cathy Rakowski, Adviser
Dr. Nancy Campbell

Approved by

Adviser

Department of Women's Studies
ABSTRACT

This thesis interrogates how Western approaches to ecofeminism have been constructed. Western approaches to ecofeminism, primarily socialist and cultural ecofeminism, have largely been posed by analysts, such as Carolyn Merchant, as oppositional and mutually exclusive. I explore how socialist and cultural ecofeminist approaches have been posed as such around two particular areas of thought--essentialism/social constructionism and spirituality/politics. The problem with the way socialist and cultural ecofeminist approaches have been posed is that they assume essentialism and social constructionism and spirituality and politics are incompatible frameworks. Moreover, the two approaches do not account for how many ecofeminist analysts actually engage with these frameworks.

I begin my argument by describing how socialist and cultural ecofeminist approaches have been posed as oppositional and mutually exclusive and explore some of the reasons why this is problematic. “Slippage” is a term that I use in order to describe how different ecofeminist analysts escape the either/or approach to essentialism and social constructionism and spirituality and politics that socialist and cultural ecofeminism have been constructed to adopt. I go on to look in depth at how Vandana Shiva, a Third World feminist, engages in such slippage in her use of both essentialism and social constructionism in Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development.. I then look more “comprehensively” at the occurrence of slippage in ecofeminist texts by exploring how several Western ecofeminist authors have, similarly, interwoven spirituality with politics.
conclude that while the various conceptual approaches to ecofeminism can be useful to a certain extent that they must be engaged with carefully. Such engagement ought to occur with an awareness of how such approaches can function in a way that creates limitations for ecofeminist scholarship and ought to allow for the ability to draw on and/or interconnect ideas from multiple approaches to ecofeminism.
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VITA

1995  B.A. Environmental Studies, Hiram College.
1995 - present  Graduate Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I am interested in the either/or choices posed by the various ecofeminist "approaches" that are identified by Western feminist scholars, such as Carolyn Merchant. Some of the questions that feminist scholars ask about the relationship between women and nature are posed as oppositional and appear to be guided by political choices. One question posed as such is: "Is the woman-nature connection natural or socially constructed?" This question assumes that essentialism and social constructionism are oppositional and at the same time creates an either/or choice by posing the two ways of thinking about the woman-nature connection as incompatible with one another and mutually exclusive. Another question about the woman-nature connection that is also posed as oppositional is: "Is the woman-nature connection potentially liberating or a justification for the continued domination of women?" This question not only assumes that the woman-nature connection can only be either liberating or dominating but also implicitly assumes that the two ways of thinking about the woman-nature connection are mutually exclusive. Although these two questions construct choices as oppositional and mutually exclusive, and even though ecofeminist approaches conceptualize the
relationship between women and nature in different ways that seem to be incompatible with one another, I do not think they necessarily have to be. The focus of this thesis, therefore, is a critique of the conceptual approaches that Western feminist scholars have developed to identify and compare those who fall under the broader category of "ecofeminist." My critique is supported by an analysis of the writings of one of the most well known ecofeminist authors, Vandana Shiva and other Western ecofeminists.

My interest in re-reading ecofeminist approaches as interconnected and compatible and moving away from either/or choices was inspired by Ynestra King's essay "Feminism and the Revolt of Nature." Published in 1981, "Feminism and the Revolt of Nature" also is critical of the either/or choices created by the formulation of specific feminist theoretical approaches that foreshadowed approaches to "ecofeminism."

Through a description of the responses various feminisms have had to "the ecology question," King points out the either/or choices they present and the problems this creates.¹ For instance, in response to the oppositional approaches taken by socialist and cultural feminists she points out that "the liberation of women is to be found neither in severing all connections that root us in nature[socialist feminism] nor in believing ourselves to be more natural than men [cultural feminism]."² Instead of accepting the either/or choice created by these two approaches, King points out that "these positions are unwittingly complicit with nature/culture dualism."³ I was immediately attracted to King's perspective since I think posing approaches to feminism or ecofeminism as
oppositional frequently leads to limited, narrow, and incomplete understandings. I discovered her essay at a time when I was searching for my own identity as an ecofeminist.

As formulated, defined, and critiqued by most Western feminist scholars, the various ecofeminist approaches practically demand that ecofeminists position or identify themselves with a single approach. In particular, "socialist" and "cultural ecofeminism" are constructed as highly mutually exclusive. For example, the exclusive association of socialist ecofeminism with social constructionism and cultural ecofeminism with essentialism has posited the two approaches as oppositional. Yet I found both of the ecofeminist approaches appealing. King's essay opened the possibility of avoiding a single narrow, compartmentalized approach. Nonetheless, King appears to stand alone on this issue since most other Western feminist scholars who have both preceded and followed her have reified--or ignored the problems inherent to--the various feminist and ecofeminist approaches. My growing resistance to limited categories was reinforced by readings of ecofeminist authors whose ideas are not easily categorized and who did not identify themselves with any particular approach. This raised an important issue: if the ecofeminists I was reading did not identify with a particular approach, how useful could the various approaches be? I decided to put their usefulness to a test and, at the same time, explore issues surrounding either/or choices and oppositions through an analysis of self-proclaimed and widely read ecofeminist authors. Because the oppositional
approaches are most typical of Western feminist scholarship, it seemed appropriate to select an author who is also a self-proclaimed feminist, an activist as well as a scholar, and a Third World woman educated in Western academia. Vandana Shiva is all of these things.

In the following three chapters and conclusion I will explore the nature of seemingly mutually exclusive ecofeminist approaches primarily through an analysis of socialist and cultural ecofeminist themes in Shiva’s writing and other Western ecofeminist authors. I begin with a brief overview of the roots of ecofeminism, followed by a discussion of cultural and socialist ecofeminism. To facilitate the analysis, I focus on how one author, Vandana Shiva, conceptualizes the woman-nature connection within these two approaches and discuss the need to rework how essentialism, social constructionism, liberation, and domination are posed within the two approaches. I will also explore in a more “comprehensive” manner how multiple other ecofeminist authors also interconnect the themes that are associated with socialist and cultural ecofeminism. Finally, in the conclusion I will wrap things up by explaining in greater detail why I think the various Western approaches to ecofeminism are problematic.
ENDNOTES


2 Ibid., 14-15.

3 Ibid., 15.
CHAPTER 2

THE OPPOSITIONAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF

SOCIALIST AND CULTURAL ECOFEMINISM

In this chapter I am going to provide a brief summary of ecofeminism’s roots and an overview of the most commonly discussed ecofeminist approaches. I will focus my discussion primarily on the themes that have been associated with socialist and cultural ecofeminism by Western ecofeminist authors. I will also describe why I think these two approaches to ecofeminism, which are posed in opposition to one another, are problematic. Finally, I will discuss the issues that arise in my analysis due to my application of Western constructed ecofeminist approaches to a Third World author, Vandana Shiva.

The intersection of various social movements in the United States, the feminist, peace, and environmental movements of the 1970s and early 1980s, inspired the creation of the theoretical approach we now call ecofeminism. The term ecofeminism first emerged in the 1970’s. In 1974, Francoise d’Eaubonne, a French writer who called for an ecological revolution led by women coined the term “ecofeminisme” to describe the connections between women and nature. As Mies and Shiva have noted:

6
Though the term was first used by Françoise d’Eaubonne it became popular only in the context of numerous protests and activities against environmental destruction, sparked-off initially by recurring ecological disasters.\(^3\)

In this quote, Mies and Shiva are specifically referring to the meltdown at Three-Mile Island which inspired large numbers of women in the US to gather together for a conference, held on March 21, 1980 and called: Women and Life on Earth: a Conference on Eco-Feminism in the Eighties, in an effort to not only resist militarism but also to explore the connections between feminism, ecology, and militarism.\(^4\) As others have noted, Ynestra King was a key figure to the organization and inspiration of this conference. Not long after this, while at the Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont, Ynestra King developed the concept “ecofeminism” to describe the connections between women and nature in terms of both theory and practice.\(^5\) She developed and explained ecofeminism as a concept in several groundbreaking essays. One of King’s earliest essays on ecofeminism, “The Eco-feminist Imperative,” appeared in the first ecofeminist anthology, *Reclaim the Earth: Women Speak Out for Life on Earth*, edited by Leonie Caldecott and Stephanie Leland and published in 1983.\(^6\) King’s essay frames a wide range of essays that were included in this anthology. King’s early description of ecofeminism includes the idea that in its emphasis on connecting feminism, ecology, and militarism it “is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice.”\(^7\) King’s broad description of ecofeminism allows for multiple perspectives and entry points into conversations about the connections between women and nature. The anthology includes
contributors from the United States, Canada, England, Japan, Kenya, Italy, New Zealand, Argentina, and India. The geographic diversity of the authors in this anthology seems to prompt the presence of diversity among issues and approaches to ecofeminism. For instance, some of the issues discussed in this anthology include: women’s health, the experience of birth, ghetto ecology, land rights, militarism, spirituality, animal rights, alternative technology, infanticide, and development. The editors themselves concede that “[t]he very diversity of the contributions to Reclaim the Earth shows that this tapestry is not one in which we all subsided to a uniform vision.”

For many feminist scholars the exploration of ecofeminism began in the late 1970s and early 1980s and has since then continued to be an area of interest. The diversity of theories and approaches to ecofeminism is reflected in the collaborative approach ecofeminists have taken to the creation of theory. As Greta Gaard has noted, ecofeminism as a theory “has been articulated largely through the publication of various articles and anthologies.” For a chronology of both anthologies and books published on ecofeminism see Table 2.1 on page 23.

All of the writings on ecofeminism listed in Table 1 come from a diverse range of perspectives in their exploration of the woman-nature connection. In order to make sense of the many perspectives, several Western ecofeminist authors, echoing the approach of many Western feminist authors, have attempted to identify and categorize specific and different approaches to ecofeminism. In Rosemarie Tong’s Feminist Thought: A
Comprehensive Introduction she categorizes various feminist approaches. Several of the feminist approaches Tong identifies such as liberal, socialist, and cultural (radical) have been credited with providing the roots for different ecofeminist approaches. Ynestra King has noted, with respect to ecofeminist categories, that:

[t]he differences derive from unresolved questions in our political and theoretical history, so the connection of ecology to feminism has met with radically different responses from the various feminisms.\textsuperscript{11}

The creation of ecofeminism evolved from a response to “the ecology question” by the different feminisms.\textsuperscript{12} The connections between the various feminisms and the various ecofeminisms are made extremely clear by Carolyn Merchant’s categorization of such ecofeminist approaches as liberal ecofeminism, cultural ecofeminism, and socialist ecofeminism in Radical Ecology. All of the ecofeminist approaches Merchant describes maintain the same theoretical frameworks as their predecessors and all remain grounded in old debates.

For example, cultural and socialist feminism are theoretically constructed in opposition to one another, primarily around the essentialist/social constructionist debate. Essentialism has been both associated with and used by cultural feminists. For example Tong points out that in reference to the nature of men and women

It implies that what is important and real about us is some a priori essence that is as predetermined as our genetic makeup.\textsuperscript{13}

Cultural feminists have theorized that the essential nature of “woman” can be used in a way that will lead to liberation. One example of how this has operated within cultural
eco-feminism is through the notion that “what men do to the planet is bad; what women
do is good” and that re-valuing women’s relationship to nature can lead to the liberation of
nature and women. On the other hand, socialist feminism has rejected essentialism in
favor of social constructionism. Socialist ecofeminists not only argue that the essentialist
association of women with nature has, in part, lead to their domination but also that
“nature and human nature are socially and historically constructed over time and
transformed through human praxis.” Socialist ecofeminism then offers the ability to see
no natural relationship between women and nature. Instead, it allows for that relationship
to be defined on the basis of specificities such as, geographic location, race, ethnicity, and
class.

Many of the critiques of cultural ecofeminism revolve around its tendency to
essentialize about women. Part of the reason for this is that essentialism of any kind has
become a “dirty word” in feminist theory. Jane Roland Martin addresses this issue when
she points out that “At meetings, workshops, and conferences in the 1980s, feminist
scholars became accustomed to hearing women accuse one another of essentialism.”
Additionally, Martin also notes that:

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak said, “What I am very suspicious of is how anti-
esentialism, really more than essentialism, is allowing women to call names and
to congratulate ourselves.”

The condemnation of essentialism has the potential to stunt how the connections between
women and nature are explored. The reason for this anti-essentialist trend in feminist
theory seems to stem from the way in which essentialist claims about women have historically been used to justify and maintain male domination over women. Feminist resistance to essentialism has more to do with how it has been used against women than with the meaning of essentialism. Thus, social constructionism has been an “easy” answer to this problem. Social constructionism makes impossible the project of those who would fix a set of attributes to women that can be used to justify our domination because it refutes the notion that women’s relationship to nature is natural. However, just as there are dangers with essentialism there are also dangers with social constructionism. One is that in its refusal to associate women with nature it has the potential to accept the nature/culture duality and separate women from nature in the same way men have been separated from nature in Western thought. The debate surrounding essentialism and social constructionism, regardless of the potential problems with or value of the two perspectives, seems to be guided more by political climates and concerns than anything else. As Martin claims,

if cultural feminism or some other stance that appeals to essences is dangerous for women, the source of the problem is not the essence talk per se but the uses to which it is put.\(^{18}\)

In response to this debate, I think that whether we use essentialism and/or social constructionism in our writing the choice ought to be dependent on the contexts and purposes of our writing and not simply guided by a total acceptance or rejection of one over the other. This debate has not only led to the positing of essentialism and social
constructionism as oppositional and mutually exclusive but also in posing cultural
ecofeminism and socialist ecofeminism as such. The following discussion elaborates on
how one author has contributed to this tendency.

Carolyn Merchant appears to be the first analyst who clearly outlined what she
identified as different strains of ecofeminism in her *Radical Ecology: The Search for A
Livable World*. *Radical Ecology* is divide into three major sections. The first section is
titled “Problems” and includes chapters on the global ecological crisis, science and
worldviews, and environmental ethics and political conflict. The second section is titled
“Thought” and includes chapters on deep ecology, spiritual ecology, and social ecology.
The last section titled “Movements” is where Merchant places ecofeminism. This
section includes chapters on green politics, ecofeminism, and sustainable development.
The chapter on ecofeminism covers liberal ecofeminism, cultural ecofeminism, social
ecofeminism, socialist ecofeminism, women in the Third World, and women in the Second
World. In the chapter on ecofeminism, she includes a table summarizing the responses of
liberal, Marxist, cultural, and socialist feminism to the “ecology question.” A replication
of this table appears on page 24. Since the focus of this thesis is socialist and cultural
ecofeminism, a detailed overview of these two perspectives follows here.

Socialist ecofeminism calls for a complete restructuring of the market economy,
which is dependent on capitalism and patriarchy, and which is seen as responsible for the
domination of women and nature. The legacy of socialist feminism is reflected in socialist
ecofeminism through their mutual emphasis on both capitalism and patriarchy in their analyses. Carolyn Merchant defines socialist ecofeminism as a perspective that:

makes the category of reproduction, rather than production, central to the concept of a just, sustainable world. Like Marxist feminism, it assumes that nonhuman nature is the material basis of all of life and that food, clothing, shelter, and energy are essential to the maintenance of human life. Nature and human nature are socially and historically constructed over time and transformed through human praxis.¹⁹

Part of the socialist ecofeminist critique involves an understanding that patriarchal arrangements of society are implicated in many women’s role as caretaker of the home and family. Since the maintenance of a home is necessarily dependent on non-human nature for food and shelter and since women are largely responsible for providing these material goods, then it follows that many women have a closer dependence on and understanding of nature. The critique is furthered by an understanding that capitalism “is premised on economic growth and competition in which nature and waste are both externalities in profit maximization, its logic precludes sustainability.”²⁰ Capitalism, in its over-use of the earth’s resources and relationship to “over-development,” has damaged both nature and women. The focus of socialist ecofeminism is on learning how to use resources sustainably for human needs, not wants. The focus on needs rather than wants relates to the idea that there are a limited amount of resources in the world. Sustainable development focuses on the idea that the economy and the environment are connected to one another and that the earth can not sustain the excessive economic growth of overdeveloped nations.²¹ Rather, the earth can only sustain human basic needs over an
extended period of time. The current mode of development which is critiqued by socialist ecofeminism perceives no limits on the use of natural resources, economic growth, and development.

A clear example of this idea follows: the over-developed nations of the North use most of the earth's resources and have established an exploitative and neo-colonial relationship with the nations of the South. As the North depleted its own resources it turned to the South for the natural resources it needed to support its overdeveloped lifestyle. The material luxury that many in the North enjoy can continue only by the export of natural resources from the South. This seems clear when considering that 80% of the world's natural resources are consumed by the overdeveloped nations of the North.22 This unjust global relationship has serious and devastating repercussions for rural, peasant, and indigenous women in the Third World who are directly dependent on the ecological systems they inhabit for the survival of themselves and their families. The particular dependence that women have on their natural environment is shaped by their socially constructed role as caretakers of the home and family. In the socialist ecofeminist perspective this is where patriarchy enters the picture, for it is patriarchy that assigns this role to women. As Annabel Rodda points out in Women and the Environment,

In the developing countries, women have always had a close relationship with the trees and the forest. Traditionally women have gathered products from the trees and other plants, products which have provided them with the basic three 'Fs' of fuel, food, and fodder, and for a variety of other uses. Whereas men consider the forest more in terms of commercial possibilities, women see it as a source of basic domestic needs.23
Thus, as commercial interest in timber leads to forest destruction, rural, peasant, and indigenous women’s work and ability to survive becomes more difficult and in some instances nearly impossible. While the primary interest in timber comes from the North, in terms of accessing timber markets in the South that are nearly obsolete in the North, men in the Third World have also contributed to forest destruction. Shiva points out an extreme example of the division between men and women when it comes to their respective interests in terms of the forest--for men the interest is wages through forest destruction while for women the interest is survival through forest preservation. “The most dramatic confrontation took place when Bachni Devi of Adwani led a resistance against her own husband who had obtained a local contract to fell the forest.”24 For socialist ecofeminists, then, the woman-nature connection is created by the material needs of women that are disrupted by the negative impact that capitalism and patriarchy combined have on the material survival of many women, particularly those in the Third World.

Cultural ecofeminism perceives patriarchy as the primary enemy of women and nature and looks for alternatives to “malestream” views of the world, typically through spiritual traditions empowering to women and nature, that could liberate women and nature. Cultural ecofeminism formed in “response to the perception that women and nature have been mutually associated and devalued in western culture.”25 The historical association of women with nature is based on women’s biology and social role as
caretakers and is accepted and revalued by cultural ecofeminists. Merchant points out that “[t]o cultural ecofeminists the way out of this dilemma is to elevate and liberate women and nature through direct political action.” Such elevation and political action is typically formulated through the celebration of the relationship between women and nature. Merchant claims that:

Often stemming from an anti-science, anti-technology standpoint, cultural ecofeminism celebrates the relationship between women and nature through the revival of ancient rituals centered on goddess worship, the moon, animals, and the female reproductive system. A vision in which nature is held in esteem as mother and goddess is a source of inspiration and empowerment for many ecofeminists. Cultural ecofeminist thinking is interested in inverting the current dominant value system which degrades and devalues both women and nature in favor of men and culture. The primary concern of cultural ecofeminist thinking is to change human patterns of thought about women and nature in a way that creates space for liberation. Spirituality is the most frequent avenue taken by cultural ecofeminists for such change. However, as Merchant points out, attention is also given to environmental hazards that are harmful to women.

Much populist ecological activism by women, while perhaps not explicitly ecofeminist, implicitly draws on and is motivated by the connection between women’s reproductive biology (nature) and male-designed technology (culture). Many women activists argue that male-designed and produced technologies neglect the effects of nuclear radiation, pesticides, hazardous wastes, and household chemicals on women’s reproductive organs and on the ecosystem.

The widespread grassroots environmental movements organized and led by women throughout the world are understood, in cultural ecofeminist thought, as inspired by
women’s concern for how environmental degradation impacts women and their children’s health and ability to survive. Furthermore, the cultural ecofeminist approach claims that the threat to women and their children is caused by male culture and technology.

Of all the branches of ecofeminism cultural ecofeminism has taken the most criticism—for its claims about women’s relationship to nature. While cultural ecofeminism is frequently “attacked,” socialist ecofeminism is typically held in higher esteem. Merchant, a socialist feminists, reflects this tendency in her descriptions of the two kinds of ecofeminism by providing critiques of cultural ecofeminism without counterbalancing them with critiques of socialist ecofeminism. Two of the major criticisms that Merchant points out are that cultural ecofeminism makes essentialist claims about the nature of men and women and, in doing so, simplistically implies that what women do is good and what men do is bad and that it fails to provide an analysis of capitalism.

Merchant continues in this vein by pointing out that cultural ecofeminism “does not deal with the problems of poverty and racism experienced by millions of women around the world.” Furthermore,

[i]n contrast to cultural ecofeminism, the social and socialist strands of ecofeminism are based on a socioeconomic analysis that treats nature and human nature as socially constructed, rooted in an analysis of race, class, and gender.

What is interesting to me about Merchant’s analysis here is that she seems to replicate the “simplistic” analysis she associates with cultural ecofeminism, since she does not offer any critiques of socialist ecofeminism, by implying not only that “what socialist
ecofeminists do is good while what cultural ecofeminists do is bad” but also that the two approaches are oppositional.

While the two approaches to ecofeminism are all too frequently posed in opposition to one another, they are not necessarily incompatible. Cultural ecofeminism is characterized by Carolyn Merchant, in part, by its emphasis on spirituality. In *Ecofeminism*, Mies and Shiva also identify a “spiritual” approach to ecofeminism that they associate largely with the ecofeminist literature in the US. Greta Gaard’s understanding of the broader theoretical roots of ecofeminism is that they have “been developed by both radical (cultural) and socialist feminists.” Gaard points out that these two feminist approaches to the connections between women and nature, which Merchant identifies as cultural ecofeminism and socialist ecofeminism, are frequently positioned in polarized terms. For example, she points out that Janet Biehl:

falls prey to dualistic either/or thinking when she asks, “Is it a reverence for women’s inherent biological traits, or an attempt to show that these traits are merely social constructions and eliminate them?”

Furthermore, Gaard takes the discussion to a different level by offering a “new” vision for how to think about essentialist and social constructionist positions when she explains that:

By polarizing the choices, Biehl overlooks a third possibility: that women’s caring and interconnected nature is a product of social construction which not only can be affirmed, it can be made available to men as well.
Like Gaard, Mies and Shiva also point out that different approaches to ecofeminism do not necessarily have to be posed in opposition to one another. Furthermore, they identify Western feminist theoretical traditions and ways of thinking as imposing boundaries that may possibly exist only in Western thought. For example, Mies and Shiva claim that for Third World women spiritual (cultural ecofeminism) and material (socialist ecofeminism) approaches are not mutually exclusive, as they are assumed to be in the West. And that in fact:

They respect and celebrate Earth’s sacredness and resist its transformation into dead, raw material for industrialism and commodity production. It follows, therefore, that they also respect both the diversity and the limits of nature which cannot be violated if they want to survive. It is this kind of materialism, this kind of immanence rooted in the everyday subsistence productions of most of the world’s women which is the basis of our ecofeminist position.  

While Mies and Shiva are illustrating what I am interested in--the bringing together of ideas or ways of thinking that are posed as oppositional in Western ecofeminist approaches--they have a tendency to over-generalize and deny differences between Third World women and First World women. And, in doing so, they also tend to romanticize “the noble Third World woman.”

It is now clear how the sense of an interconnectedness between cultural and socialist ecofeminism is masked by their division into separate conceptual approaches that are reified as real categories rather than as ways to organize ideas and information. In the introduction to *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Rosemarie Tong agrees even as she proceeds to distinguish between them:
But even as we recognize that these categories can be both limiting and distorting, I continue to believe that they serve a useful analytic purpose.\textsuperscript{38}

Tong goes on to explain that the various categories of feminism have helped her to locate herself along the spectrum of feminist thought.\textsuperscript{39} After pointing out that she does not label herself as a particular kind of feminist, Tong seems to reify the categories as “real” when she states the possible reasons for why she does not label herself. She states:

Perhaps this is a sign that the labels are obsolete. \textit{Then again, it may only be a sign that my feminism is not as consistent and coherent as it ought to be} or, more sympathetically, a sign that I am growing as a thinker (italics mine).\textsuperscript{40}

In taking the categories as “real” Tong seems to lose track of the actuality that such categories are conceptual approaches that have no “real” boundaries. Not only are such conceptual categories both limiting and distorting, when they are taken as “real” they can operate or be used in a way that creates a hierarchy of “good” theory and “bad” theory (as was indicated by Gaard’s critique of Biehl). The mutually exclusive construction of cultural and socialist ecofeminism has allowed for easy dismissals of certain theories in favor of others, as seen by Merchant. The critiques of cultural ecofeminism that Merchant describes, which I discussed earlier, set the groundwork for understanding how cultural and socialist ecofeminism have been constructed as mutually exclusive in the West.

The ongoing feminist debate over essentialism and social constructionism is reflected in these two approaches to ecofeminism. Cultural ecofeminism is described by Merchant as grounded in essentialism, while socialist ecofeminism is grounded in social
constructionism. Just as essentialism and social constructionism are perceived as mutually exclusive in the larger feminist community, so are they again created as such in these two ecofeminist approaches. Another point where socialist and cultural ecofeminism are constructed as mutually exclusive is around the question of whether the woman-nature connection is potentially liberating or always dominating. The cultural ecofeminist approach to this question is that it is potentially liberating while the socialist ecofeminist approach is to understand the woman-nature connection as a means for domination. The either/or choices that are constructed by these two approaches to ecofeminism have the potential to both limit and distort how the connections between women and nature are theorized. For example, King believes that these two conceptual approaches to ecofeminism have missed the mark since she sees “gender identity [as] neither fully natural nor fully cultural. And [as] neither inherently oppressive nor inherently liberating.”

I find King’s perception of and response to the either/or choices posed by cultural and socialist ecofeminism compelling and persuasive. Additionally, the way in which many ecofeminist authors tend to maneuver outside and between the boundaries created by these two approaches to ecofeminism has inspired my interest in looking at how ecofeminist authors evade the use of ideas and approaches that are associated with only a single approach to ecofeminism and instead interconnect the approaches by drawing on ideas that cut across the boundaries. Vandana Shiva is one ecofeminist author who cuts across such boundaries. In the following chapter I will
illustrate how Shiva uses ideas and approaches that do not conform to a single conceptual approach to ecofeminism.
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<td>1975</td>
<td>Rosemary Radford Reuther</td>
<td>New Woman/New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Mary Daly</td>
<td>Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Susan Griffin</td>
<td>Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Susan Griffin</td>
<td>Made from this Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>eds. Leonie Caldecott and Stephanie Leland</td>
<td>Reclaim the Earth: Women Speak out for Life on Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Irene Dankelman and Joan Davidson</td>
<td>Women and Environment in the Third World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Andree Collard and Joyce Contrucci</td>
<td>Rape of the Wild: Man's Violence Against Animals and the Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>ed. Judith Plant</td>
<td>Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>eds. Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein</td>
<td>Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Rosemary Radford Reuther</td>
<td>Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva</td>
<td>Ecofeminism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>ed. Carol J. Adams</td>
<td>Ecofeminism and the Sacred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Irene Diamond</td>
<td>Fertile Ground: Women, Earth, and the Limits of Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Carolyn Merchant</td>
<td>Earthcare</td>
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Table 2.1: Chronology of Books and Anthologies on Ecofeminism
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liberal Feminism</th>
<th>Nature</th>
<th>Human Nature</th>
<th>Feminist Critique of Environmentalism</th>
<th>Image of a Feminist Environmentalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Atoms</td>
<td>Rational agents</td>
<td>“Man and his environment” leaves out women</td>
<td>Women participate in natural resources and environmental sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mind/body dualism</td>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Domination of Nature</td>
<td>Maximization of self-interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Marxist Feminism | Nature is material basis of life: food, clothing, shelter, energy | Creation of human nature through mode of production, praxis | Critique of capitalist control of resources and accumulation of goods and profits | Socialist/communist society will use resources for good of all men and women |
|                  | Transformation of nature by science and technology for human use | Historically specific, not fixed | | Resources will be controlled by workers |
|                  | Domination of nature as a means to human freedom | Species nature of humans | | Environmental pollution will be minimal since no surplus will be produced |
|                  | Nature is material basis of life: food, clothing, shelter, energy | Biology is basic | | Environmental research by men and women |
|                  | Conventional science and technology problematic because of their emphasis on domination | Humans are sexually reproducing bodies | | |
|                  | | Sexed by biology/Gendered by society | | |

| Radical Feminism | Nature is spiritual and personal | Unaware of interconnectedness of male-domination of nature and women | Woman/nature both valued and celebrated Reproductive freedom | |
|                  | Conventional science and technology problematic because of their emphasis on domination | Male environmentalism retains hierarchies | Against pornographic depictions of both women and nature | |
|                  | | Insufficient attention to environmental threats to women's reproduction (chemicals, nuclear war) | | Radical ecofeminism |

| Socialist Feminism | Nature is material basis of life: food, clothing, shelter, energy | Human nature created through biology and praxis (sex, race, class, age) | Leaves out women's role in reproduction and reproduction as a category | Both nature and human production are active |
|                   | Nature is socially and historically constructed | Historically specific and socially constructed | | Centrality of biological and social reproduction |
|                   | Transformation of nature by production | | | Dialectic between production and reproduction |

ENDNOTES


8 Ibid., 8.


10 Ibid.


12 Ibid., 14.


15 Ibid., 196.


17 Ibid., 630.

18 Ibid., 634.


20 Ibid., 197.

22 Ibid., 42.

23 Ibid., 47.


26 Ibid., 191.

27 Ibid., 191.

28 Ibid., 192.


31 Ibid., 194.

32 Ibid.


35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.


39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

SLIPPAGE AND SHIVA: INTERCONNECTING

THE SEEMINGLY MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

In Chapter 3 I will take a closer and more critical look at these supposedly mutually exclusive approaches by exploring the presence of themes from both socialist and cultural ecofeminism within Vandana Shiva’s book *Staying Alive*. I will illustrate how the two approaches can be read as interconnected rather than mutually exclusive. To accomplish this I will locate specific passages in *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* that weave together perspectives that are constructed as oppositional in the Western socialist and cultural ecofeminist approaches.

As a western ecofeminist I engaged in my reading of this book with the ecofeminist categories I previously described. If a reader of Shiva, such as myself, were familiar with those categories and accepted them as appropriate divisions of ecofeminist thought, then it would create difficulty in understanding Shiva’s ecofeminism. Shiva does not ascribe to one single western ecofeminist category. Rather, her work echoes themes within both socialist and cultural ecofeminism. I call this movement back and forth
between themes “slippage.” My primary purpose in this chapter is to explore cases of slippage between socialist and cultural ecofeminist themes. My intent in doing so is not to critique Shiva as “a sloppy theorist who can’t even stick to one category” but rather to show that there is a problem inherent to the creation of separate and mutually exclusive ecofeminist approaches. My interest lies in that this occurs and what it might mean for the validity of ecofeminist approaches that are constructed oppositionally. Before I begin I would like to preface this analysis through a brief description of the organization of Staying Alive and how book reviews have categorized Shiva and her book.

In 1989, Vandana Shiva was the director of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Natural Resource Policy in Dehradun, India and her book Staying Alive was published.1 In a book review Ariel Salleh described her as being “a member of a privileged grouping” because of her education as a physicist.2 Salleh also states,

she has an intimate practical knowledge of the many dimensions of her subject. Her text weaves its way comfortably through geology, plant physiology, economics, mythology, epistemology. The book’s basic thesis is that while Western “development” was supposed to be a “post-colonial” project, it has merely carried colonization forward into a new phase.3

The book is comprised of seven chapters: Ch.1 “Development, Ecology and Women;” Ch. 2 “Science, Nature and Gender;” Ch. 3 “Women In Nature;” Ch. 4 “Women in the Forest;” Ch. 5 “Women in the Food Chain;” Ch. 6 “Women and the Vanishing Waters;” Ch. 7 “Terra Mater: Reclaiming the Feminine Principle.” Throughout these chapters Shiva explores the exploitative and oppressive relationship the “North” has with the
“South” specifically in terms of how this relationship, which is based on western “development,” hurts both women and nature. While this is her primary focus she also explores ways in which resistance to what she deems “maldevelopment” has or could occur.4 Shiva focuses her analysis on India initially and extends her analysis to generalize about women’s experiences throughout the Third World. In this book, both socialist ecofeminist and cultural ecofeminist approaches to the woman-nature question emerge.

Since I am interested in how multiple western ecofeminist approaches echo throughout Shiva’s book I am going to describe the ways in which other writers have or have not used these approaches to describe her analysis. I have not found any reviews in which Shiva is labeled as one specific kind of ecofeminist, perhaps because her book echoes multiple western ecofeminist approaches. However, there are some authors who imply that she is a specific kind of ecofeminist. For example, Ariel Salleh states “Shiva’s Staying Alive arrives as an urgent complement to the export dominant ‘culturalist’ tendency in ecofeminist literature.”5 Salleh claims that Shiva provides what is missing in ecofeminist literature,

an explicit and concerted challenge to the multi-national structure of economic oppression: a global economy in which a so-called “advanced” world is utterly dependent for its daily survival on the labors and resources of an “un-developed” Two thirds World. Thankfully, this is what Vandana Shiva’s Staying Alive brings to ecofeminism.6
This description, with its emphasis on economics and material conditions, reflects a socialist ecofeminist analysis in a Third World context. It is this vantage point that Salleh praises.

In contrast, Salleh goes on later in the book review to provide a description and critique of Shiva’s discussion of the “feminine principle.” Salleh makes a connection between cultural ecofeminism and Shiva’s “feminine principle” when she states, “A convergence of this analysis [‘feminine principle’] with the ‘culturalist’ tendency in ecofeminism is thus quite clear” (brackets mine). Salleh’s own alignment with socialist ecofeminism and rejection of culturalist ecofeminism seems to be revealed at the end of the book review when she states,

Empirical knowledge conceived in daily labor sustains the ecofeminist voice that Shiva translates for us in Staying Alive. That in itself is sufficient validation for our political perspective. In my view, Prakriti [“feminine principle”] might just as well have been left to sleep in a footnote” (brackets mine).

Salleh, then, identifies themes from both socialist and cultural ecofeminist approaches in Staying Alive. What is interesting to me about Salleh’s perspective is that she apparently goes into her description of Staying Alive with a bias against culturalist ecofeminism and a bias in favor of socialist ecofeminism. Salleh trashes Shiva’s description of the “feminine principle,” which “just happens” to align with cultural ecofeminism, and she praises Shiva’s discussions related to economics, labor, and material conditions, which “just happen” to align with socialist ecofeminism. Salleh’s concluding comments about Staying Alive reflect the notion that Western ecofeminist approaches encourage either adoptions
or rejections of certain approaches over others, which in turn creates a hierarchical ordering of “good” ecofeminism and “bad” ecofeminism.

If one accepts the western ecofeminist approaches, then an application of them to Shiva’s *Staying Alive* would reveal that she echoes both socialist and cultural ecofeminism in her analysis. Shiva does not claim to write from a particular ecofeminist perspective. The description of the book on the back cover reveals this quite clearly.

Examining the position of women in relation to nature—the forests, the food chain and water supplies—the author links the violation of nature with the violation and marginalization of women, especially in the Third World. Both arise from assumptions of economic development, a process the author argues should more aptly be described as maldevelopment. One result is that the impact of science, technology and politics, along with the workings of the economy itself, are inherently exploitative. Every area of human activity marginalizes and burdens both women and nature.

There is only one path, Vandana Shiva suggests, to survival and liberation for nature, women and men, and that is the ecological path of harmony, sustainability and diversity. She explores the unique place of women in the environment in India, in particular, both as its saviours and as victims of maldevelopment.

Her analysis is an innovative statement of the challenge that women in ecology movements are creating and she shows how their efforts constitute a non-violent and humanly inclusive alternative to the dominant paradigm of contemporary scientific and development thought.

If a reader is familiar with western categories of ecofeminism the socialist ecofeminism and cultural ecofeminism themes are easily distinguished.

I will be using the term slippage to describe the movement within Shiva’s text between socialist and cultural ecofeminist approaches in her analysis of the connections between women and nature. Slippage, as I am using it, is intended to convey a sense of
escape from and flowing between approaches constructed as mutually exclusive, not lapsing between approaches. Specific examples from the third chapter of *Staying Alive*, “Women in Nature,” exhibit what I mean by slippage. We can see how slippage functions within Shiva’s discussion of the “feminine principle” in this particular chapter. Shiva characterizes the feminine principle as:

(a) creativity, activity, productivity; (b) diversity in form and aspect; (c) connectedness and inter-relationship of all beings, including man; (d) continuity between the human and natural; and (e) sanctity of life in nature.\(^{10}\)

The feminine principle, for Shiva, stands in contrast to Cartesian concepts of nature. The Cartesian view perceives nature as:

(a) inert and passive; (b) uniform and mechanistic; (c) separable and fragmented within itself; (d) separate from man; and (e) inferior, to be dominated and exploited by man.\(^{11}\)

Shiva holds the Cartesian perception of nature as largely responsible for the creation of our current “development” paradigm which exploits and oppresses both women and nature simultaneously.\(^{12}\) Thus, the feminine principle is spiritual and creative in nature while the Cartesian view is materialistic and destructive.

How Shiva locates women’s and men’s relationships to nature in light of her explanation of the feminine principle and her desire for it to replace the dominant paradigm that is based on Cartesian concepts of nature is the slippage between socialist and cultural ecofeminism. Shiva’s analysis interconnects both of these Western
approaches to ecofeminism. To begin with, Shiva very clearly positions herself here as a social constructionist. She maintains that:

[...]he privileged access of women to the sustaining principle thus has a historical and cultural, and not merely biological, basis. The principle of creating and conserving life is lost to the ecologically alienated, consumerist elite women of the Third World and the over-consuming west, just as much as it is conserved in the lifestyle of the male and female forest-dwellers and peasants in small pockets of the Third World.¹³

That is, the relationship is historically and culturally specific, which means that it is socially constructed. Having an ecologically appropriate framework and lifestyle is not automatically conferred or withheld on the basis of sex. Rather, at this point she is arguing that living by and adopting the feminine principle as a philosophy is dependent on one’s social and material position to nature. Access to or ignorance of the feminine principle, Shiva implies, is shaped by class, race, ethnicity, culture, geographical location, and gender. While Shiva makes the claim that women’s knowledge of and connection to nature is socially constructed she does not relegate herself to holding only this vantage point throughout her analysis of men’s and women’s relationship to nature and thus the feminine principle. For example, she also takes the vantage point that all women in the Third World share a common experience with nature.

One way the shift between social constructionist themes and essentialist themes occurs is through Shiva’s continual and unspecified use of the category Third World women. For instance, Bina Agarwal notes that:

Although she distinguishes Third World women from the rest, like the ecofeminists she does not differentiate between women of different classes, castes,
races, ecological zones, and so on. Hence, implicitly a form of essentialism could be read into her work, in that all Third World women, whom she sees as “embedded in nature,” *qua women* have a special relationship with the natural environment.\(^\text{14}\)

Later in the same chapter Shiva, rather than isolating her analysis to strictly *either* social constructionist claims *or* essentialist claims, engages in slippage by bringing *both* of the perspectives together. She states:

> Work and wealth in accordance with the feminine principle are significant precisely because they are rooted in stability and sustainability. Decentered diversity is the source of nature’s work and women’s productivity; it is the work of ‘insignificant’ plants in creating significant changes which shift the ecological equilibrium in life’s favour....Women’s work is similarly invisible in providing sustenance and creating wealth for basic needs. It is this invisible work that is linked to nature and needs, which conserves nature through maintaining ecological cycles, and conserves human life through satisfying the basic needs of food, nutrition and water. It is this essential work that is destroyed and dispensed with by maldevelopment: the maintenance of ecological cycles has no place in a political economy of commodity and cash flows.\(^\text{15}\)

Shiva seems to be enacting Agarwal’s observation of the use of an all encompassing and unqualified ‘women’ here in her discussion of women’s work and productivity as linked to and compatible with nature and, thus, what is assumed to be men’s work is that of maldevelopment. She argues that the imperial rise of Cartesian modes of thought [read masculine] both opened the door for the possibility of a life destroying economic system and ‘development’ pattern and for the death of the feminine principle. In the above quote Shiva appears to move between socialist and cultural ecofeminist approaches. She wants both to make tangible the notion that there is a woman’s work that is closer to nature by being ecologically sensitive and appropriate [read cultural ecofeminism] and to show that
such work and knowledge is being crushed by maldevelopment and capitalism [read socialist ecofeminism]. I would argue that part of the reason this slippage is occurring is because Shiva’s focus is rural/peasant/indigenous Third World women and because she recognizes that there is a tangible claim here to be made that within this specific category of woman. That is, women’s knowledge and work is frequently different from men’s knowledge and work with respect to nature. One such difference is that for Third World women engaged in subsistence agriculture their work is both productive (agricultural) and reproductive (domestic) at the same time. Even though this discussion is socially constructed it does not mean that there are not essential differences between what women know and what men know about nature in specific contexts.

Another location in Shiva’s text where slippage surfaces is in her analysis of the feminine principle as a pathway for the liberation of women and nature. To begin with, Shiva’s call for the widespread adoption of the feminine principle--as a way to end the violence against women and nature that is enacted by western colonialist and capitalist maldevelopment--clearly resonates with cultural ecofeminist claims that the woman-nature connection is potentially liberating. Also, in accordance with cultural ecofeminism, she locates the devaluation of women and nature as the cause of their subordination. However, at the same time she incorporates socialist ecofeminist themes within her analysis of devaluation. For example, Shiva claims that:

The devaluation and de-recognition of nature’s work and productivity has led to the ecological crisis; the devaluation and de-recognition of women’s work has created sexism and inequality between men and women. The devaluation of
subsistence, or rather sustenance economies based on harmony between nature's work, women's work and man's work has created the various forms of ethnic and cultural crises that plague our world today.\textsuperscript{16}

For Shiva it is these three processes of devaluation that have subjected peasant and indigenous women in India and other Third World nations to extreme conditions of exploitation and oppression in a way that fundamentally threatens even their ability to survive. Shiva attributes this process of devaluation largely to the widespread imperialist and global enforcement and/or adoption of the Cartesian mind set. In Shiva's own words,

The rupture within nature and between man and nature, and its associated transformation from a life-force that sustains to an exploitable resource characterises the Cartesian view which has displaced more ecological world-views and created a development paradigm which cripples nature and women simultaneously.\textsuperscript{17}

This pattern of Cartesian thought not only separates and polarizes culture/nature, man/woman, and civilized/uncivilized and allows for the devaluation of nature, women, and people dependent on sustenance economies, but also encourages maldevelopment within a global market economy. The naming of devaluation as the problem and revaluation as the cure is one of the core precepts within cultural ecofeminism and is a notion that is also clearly present within Shiva's analysis. For she claims both that:

The ecological crisis is, at its root, the death of the feminine principle, symbolically as well as in contexts such as rural India, not merely in form and symbolism but also in the everyday processes of survival and sustenance.\textsuperscript{18}

and that:

The ontological shift for an ecologically sustainable future has much to gain from the world-views of ancient civilisations and diverse cultures which survived sustainably over centuries. These were based on an ontology of the feminine as
the living principle, and on as ontological continuity between society and nature-the humanisation of nature and the naturalisation of society. Not merely did this result in an ethical context which excluded possibilities of exploitation and domination, it allowed the creation of an earth family.19

In short, the revaluation of the feminine principle is necessary for the liberation of women and nature. In this way Shiva can be understood as echoing themes from cultural ecofeminism as the approach that has “ownership” of the notion that the woman-nature connection’s potentially liberatory. For Shiva, the adoption of the feminine principle is necessary for the liberation of Third World women and nature. It is necessary because it allows for substituting a spiritual or use value for the monetary values assigned by capitalism and economists to nature. Within the analysis Shiva offers of this connection, slippage occurs between cultural ecofeminist and socialist ecofeminist themes.

An interesting site where slippage occurs in Shiva’s text is in her further discussion of the liberatory potential of the “feminine principle.” This surfaces when Shiva discusses the dangers of seeing women involved in survival struggles only as victims and then goes on to claim that her study is one of “post-victimology.” She concludes that:

In the perspective of women engaged in survival struggles which are, simultaneously, struggles for the protection of nature, women and nature are intimately related, and their domination and liberation similarly linked.20

Both cultural and socialist ecofeminist perspectives are reflected within this singular sentence. It is typical for socialist ecofeminists to see the intimate relationship between women and nature only in terms of domination just as it is typical for cultural
ecofeminists to see the women and nature relationship only in terms of liberation. Shiva places both of these perspectives within the same space—escaping from the proscribed boundaries of western ecofeminist approaches assumed to be mutually exclusive by Western feminists. Shiva interconnects the two categories in a way that makes them interdependent on one another in their description of the woman-nature connection, not as an either/or choice. In other words, for Shiva, the shared subjugated position women and nature have been socially constructed into has provided them with an opportunity for mutual liberation. Furthermore, such liberation is informed by a particular knowledge about nature and human relationships to nature that only certain women, women fighting for their survival which is being threatened by maldevelopment, have access to.

In reference specifically to the “feminine principle,” rather than to women’s struggles for survival, Shiva again makes a claim on the woman-nature connection as it relates to domination and liberation that is reflective of both cultural and socialist ecofeminism. An example of this slippage occurs in the following paragraph:

The revolutionary and liberational potential of the recovery of the feminine principle consists in its challenging the concepts, categories and processes which have created the threat to life, and in providing oppositional categories that create and enlarge the spaces for maintaining and enriching all life in nature and society. The radical shift induced by a focus on the feminine principle is the recognition of maldevelopment as a culture of destruction. The feminine principle becomes a category of challenge which locates nature and women as the source of life and wealth, and as such, active subjects, maintaining and creating life-processes.21

Here Shiva is saying that maldevelopment as made possible by Cartesian thought is largely responsible for the subjugated position rural women in the Third World inhabit.
The attention she gives to matters of development as a critical issue for women is clearly reflective of a socialist ecofeminist approach. However, the echoes within Shiva's analysis of socialist ecofeminism "slips" in her solution for dealing with such problems due to its reflection of a cultural ecofeminist approach. Her solution for liberation is a call for the adoption of the "feminine principle," as a life-enhancing conceptual framework, in place of Cartesian thought which is based on a life-destroying conceptual framework.

Similarly, cultural ecofeminism calls for the need of new conceptual frameworks that re-value both women and nature. Another point of similarity between the "feminine principle" and what many cultural ecofeminists are calling for is related to the spiritual aspect of both. Cultural ecofeminism looks toward various earth-based and woman-based spiritual traditions for alternative ways of thinking about the value and place of women and nature in the world that are potentially liberatory and life affirming. Similarly, Shiva locates the origins of the "feminine principle" in Prakriti. Prakriti is the manifestation of energy and power in the form of nature.22

Prakriti is worshipped as Aditi, the primordial vastness, the inexhaustible, the source of abundance. She is worshipped as Adi Shakti, the primordial power. All the forms of nature and life in nature are the forms, the children, of the Mother of Nature who is nature itself born of the creative play of her thought.23

Clearly, Shiva's "feminine principle" is drawn from an Indian spiritual tradition based on the strength, power, and life producing qualities of women and nature.24 Thus Shiva's conceptualization and use of the "feminine principle" is reflective of a cultural ecofeminist approach. In going back to the original quote from Shiva, in her claim that replacing
Cartesian ways of thinking that lead to maldevelopment with the “feminine principle” is the way toward liberation she exhibits slippage between socialist and cultural ecofeminist approaches.

My hope in pointing out all of the various locations of slippage in Shiva’s *Staying Alive* is to convey that her analysis does not fit easily into any of the approaches to ecofeminism that western ecofeminist thought has created. While I have claimed that Shiva’s analysis is reflective at different points of both socialist and cultural ecofeminism, the slippage occurring between the two perspectives in her analysis makes her difficult to categorize. What all of this indicates is that there seems to be a problem with the approaches themselves. The problem lies in the either/or choices they tend to create for theorists. I, of course, am not the first person to make this sort of observation. In “Feminism and the Revolt of Nature” Ynestra King is concerned precisely with this issue.

King states:

> It is possible to take up the question of spirituality and meaning without abandoning the important insights of materialism. We can use the insights of socialist feminism, with its debt to Marxism, to understand how the material conditions of our daily lives interact with our bodies and psychological heritages. Material insights warn us not to assume *innate* moral or biological superiority and not to depend on alternative culture alone to transform society. Yet a separate radical feminist culture within a patriarchal society is necessary so we can learn to speak our own bodies and experiences, so the male culture representing itself as the “universal” does not continue to speak for us.  

and

> If we proceed dialectically and recognize the contributions of both socialist feminism and radical cultural feminism, operating at both the structural and cultural levels, we will be neither materialists nor idealists.
In these statements King is calling for a move away from the use of feminist approaches as mutually exclusive. She is claiming that not only do feminists not have to choose between categories but that we *ought* to refrain from doing so. In other words, the claim King is making is that we ought to engage in the sort of slippage that Shiva appears to exhibit more often. For it is such slippage, such escape from the supposedly impermeable boundaries of categories that allows us to move into new and productive areas of theorizing rather than continually re-creating and maintaining the categories as "real." King notes:

To fulfill its liberatory potential, feminism needs to pose a *rational reenchantment* that brings together spiritual and material, being and knowing. This is the promise of ecological feminism.27

Ironically, King wrote this essay in 1981 when ecofeminism as a theoretical framework was just beginning to take hold and, unfortunately, ecofeminist theory as a whole has not performed the "rational reenchantment" she predicted. Instead, for the most part, ecofeminist theorists went on to construct anew the very approaches King critiques for presenting themselves as incompatible with one another and mutually exclusive. Thus, the challenge King describes of refusing to make either/or choices is still a challenge for analysts today. Approaches such as socialist and cultural ecofeminism are artificially imposed in opposition. Even though they are all too frequently described and understood as mutually exclusive, Shiva's slippage between the two approaches reveals that this does
not have to be so. In Shiva’s discussion of what the woman-nature connection means for
liberation she represents the “rational reenchantment” for which King called.


3 Ibid.

4 By “has” I am referring to Shiva’s discussion of the Chipko movement. A grassroots environmental movement largely organized and led by rural, peasant, and tribal Indian women in the northern Himalayan region. By “could” I am referring to Shiva’s discussion of the “feminine principle” as a mindset that resists Western ways of thinking about nature and women.


6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., 211.

8 Ibid., 214.


10 Ibid., 40.

11 Ibid., 40-41.

12 Ibid., 41.

13 Ibid., 42.


16 Ibid., 44.

17 Ibid., 41.

18 Ibid., 42.

19 Ibid., 41.

20 Ibid., 47.
21 Ibid., 46.

22 Ibid., 38.

23 Ibid., 39.

24 Shiva's claims here about the practice and worship of Prakriti and also about living by the "codes" of the "feminine principle" are problematic because she does not distinguish between different belief systems in India. She generalizes in a way that creates a uniform sense of the spiritual beliefs of all Indians that is non-specific. She never says precisely which religious tradition she is speaking of. This is clearly a problem since there is such a great diversity of spiritual thought in India--including multiple sects of Hinduism, Sikhs, Jains, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and so on.


26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., 14.
CHAPTER 4

SPIRITUALITY AND POLITICS:

BREAKING THE BOUNDARIES

In this chapter I will look more broadly at Western ecofeminist literature to see how these two approaches are operating. My purpose here is to provide a more "comprehensive" vision of the problematic nature of ecofeminist approaches that will serve as a complement to the analysis of Shiva's *Staying Alive*. Again, in this chapter I will show how other ecofeminist authors' ideas are not confined within the boundaries identified with a single ecofeminist approach. I will continue to use the themes associated with socialist and cultural ecofeminist approaches as my vantage point for this analysis in order to explore slippage between the two approaches. However, whereas in the last chapter I focused on essentialism and social constructionism, in this chapter I will focus primarily on how other ecofeminists address spirituality because it is another theme within ecofeminism that lends itself to such an analysis.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2 cultural ecofeminism has been associated with spirituality and criticized for this, whereas socialist ecofeminism has not been associated with spirituality and, instead, has been associated with critiques of
colonialism/capitalism/patriarchy and a more general interest in politics and social/environmental movements. Cultural ecofeminism has been taken by some to be “fluffy” in its emphasis on spirituality. However, as Greta Gaard points out, “for some people, social activism and spirituality are not mutually exclusive.”¹ My purpose here is to point out various authors who have interconnected spirituality with politics and/or materialist critiques of colonialism/capitalism/patriarchy. These particular topics lend themselves to such an analysis because the Western spirit/matter duality is another site where socialist and cultural ecofeminism has become divided. Furthermore this duality is artificial, in that it is culturally produced and maintained. For instance, Riane Eisler claims:

> We have been taught in “Western tradition,” religion is the spiritual realm and that spirituality is separate from, and superior to nature. But for our Goddess-worshipping ancestors, spirituality and nature were one. In the religion of Western partnership societies, there was no need for the artificial distinction between spirituality and nature or for the exclusion of half of humanity from spiritual power.²

In blurring this duality these authors are breaking supposed barriers between cultural ecofeminism and socialist ecofeminism. I will be analyzing passages from six essays selected from three different ecofeminist anthologies. The Western ecofeminist authors I will be looking at in this chapter are Ynestra King, Starhawk, Delores S. Williams, and Karen J. Warren. The authors I have selected are all good examples of Western theorists who deviate from dualistic Western approaches in their analyses by cutting across the boundaries I have outlined.
To begin, I am going to look at two essays Ynestra King has written. The first essay is “The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology” which was published in *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism* in 1989. The second essay is “Healing the Wounds: Feminism, Ecology, and the Nature/Culture Dualism” which was published in *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* in 1990. In “The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology” Ynestra King attempts to bring these two schools of thought, feminism and ecology, together. But she resists the kind of dualistic or oppositional thinking that has constructed cultural and socialist ecofeminism as mutually exclusive. Slippage between the two perspectives is evident through King’s resistance to oppositional thinking:

Ecofeminism suggests a third direction: a recognition that although the nature-culture dualism is a product of culture, we can nonetheless consciously choose not to sever the woman-nature connection by joining male culture. Rather, we can use it as a vantage point for creating a different kind of culture and politics that would integrate intuitive, spiritual, and rational forms of knowledge, embracing both science and magic insofar as they enable us to transform the nature-culture distinction and to envision and create a free, ecological society.²

King is suggesting that ecofeminism allows for the bringing together and interconnecting of perspectives that are posed as mutually exclusive within cultural and socialist ecofeminism and in mainstream thought. For example, spirit and matter are not only imagined as oppositional and mutually exclusive in Western thought but are frequently reconstructed as such by cultural and socialist ecofeminism.
King’s slippage between socialist and cultural ecofeminist themes reappears in “Healing the Wounds: Feminism, Ecology, and the Nature/Culture Dualism.” King again resists the tendency to view “cultural feminism” and “socialist feminism” as mutually exclusive in this essay. Instead, she claims:

We [ecofeminists] share with cultural feminism the necessity of a politics with heart and a beloved community, recognizing our connection with each other-and with nonhuman nature. Socialist feminism has given us a powerful critical perspective with which to understand, and transform, history. Separately, they perpetuate the dualism of “mind” and “nature.” Together they make possible a new ecological relationship between nature and culture, in which mind and nature, heart and reason, join forces to transform the systems of domination, internal and external, that threaten the existence of life on Earth.\(^4\)

In this understanding of what ecofeminism is, King shows that cultural and socialist approaches, which other analysts try to separate, perpetuate dualities. The ideas and themes associated with the two approaches are frequently manipulated into artificial dualities. However, when the two approaches are interconnected they dismantle dualities and have a transforming potential. In this quote King overtly interconnects both socialist and cultural approaches.

In a fashion similar to King, Starhawk also interconnects themes between socialist and cultural ecofeminist approaches in two different essays. The first essay I will discuss is “Feminist, Earth-based Spirituality and Ecofeminism” which was published in *Healing the Wounds*. The second essay is “Power, Authority, and Mystery: Ecofeminism and Earth-based Spirituality” which was published in *Reweaving the World*. In “Feminist, Earth-based Spirituality and Ecofeminism” Starhawk claims that Paganism, as a form of
spirituality, in its emphasis on interconnectedness does not only see spirit and matter as interconnected, but also humans and nature and political issues as well.\(^5\) Starhawk’s critique of Western/Northern colonialism and exploitation of Africa leads her to conclude that:

What both feminism and Paganism bring to ecology is that knowledge that every movement, to be effective in the defense of the earth, must see its interconnections with other movements and issues, for its own survival. Unless we understand the interrelationships of human systems of oppression, and the oppression of the earth, we cannot develop a strategy and program of political action that makes sense. It is in the interest of those who rule to prevent us from seeing these connections—because such knowledge is power. Famine in Africa is a critique of our policies, of the same agricultural practices that are turning the Midwest into a desert, of the values of profit over inherent value, gain over use, that are at the root of the exploitation of wilderness.\(^6\)

Socialist ecofeminist critiques of the colonial economic relations the North has with the South are understood by Starhawk as made visible and clear by a Pagan emphasis on interconnectedness. Here, slippage surfaces when Starhawk brings together the spiritual tradition of cultural ecofeminism and socialist ecofeminism. What Paganism offers to politics is made even more clear in Starhawk’s “Power, Authority, and Mystery: Ecofeminism and Earth-based Spirituality.” Starhawk states:

What Witches and Pagans do is practice magic. I like the definition of magic that says, “Magic is the art of changing consciousness at will.” I also think that’s a very good definition of political change-changing consciousness on a mass scale in this country.\(^7\)
Starhawk is dismantling the false duality that separates spirituality from politics. She goes on later in the same essay to point out, again, that Paganism necessitates an understanding of interconnection and that:

One of the advantages of seeing issues as integrated, rather than fragmented, is that it can help us avoid false dichotomies. For example, environmental issues are social justice issues, for it is the poor who are forced to work directly with unsafe chemicals, in whose neighborhoods toxic waste incinerators are planned, who cannot afford to buy bottled water and organic vegetables or pay for medical care.8

This looks very much like a socialist ecofeminist analysis and she goes on to discuss how environmental issues are “international” as well as “women’s” issues.9 Within this essay, written by a self declared Witch about spirituality and ecofeminist politics, spirituality co-exists with what is frequently labeled a materialist, socialist ecofeminist approach. It is her spirituality that leads her to an understanding that what is happening to nature is both a political and a personal issue. Similarly, Vandana Shiva creates space in Staying Alive for the interweaving of spirituality with a materialist analysis.

Such slippage or interconnectedness between cultural and socialist ecofeminist approaches also appear in many of the essays included in Ecofeminism and the Sacred edited by Carol J. Adams and published in 1993. In the introduction Adams, like Starhawk, also emphasizes the interconnection between spirituality and politics. Adams states:

Ecofeminist theories resist dividing a culture into separate enclaves-separating politics from spirituality, human from the rest of nature-and name such divisions as patriarchal dualism.10
This is important because Adams, along with the other authors, is rejecting the notion of distinct and mutually exclusive ways of thinking because they represent a patriarchal way of organizing reality.

Delores S. Williams and Karen J. Warren also explore connections between spirituality and politics. In “Sin, Nature, and Black Women’s Bodies,” Williams explores connections while engaging with themes associated with socialist ecofeminism. Williams draws such connections in the following quote:

Within the last ten years, African-American women have begun developing Womanist Theology and have labeled this assault upon the environment and upon black women’s bodies as sin. In some womanist theological quarters, this sin has been named “defilement.” Different from the traditional theological understanding of sin as alienation or estrangement from God and humanity, the sin of defilement manifests itself in human attacks upon creation so as to ravish, violate, and destroy creation: to exploit and control the production and reproduction capacities of nature, to destroy the unity in nature’s placements, to obliterate the spirit in the created.11

Socialist ecofeminism has been associated with its attentiveness to production and reproduction. Williams is also concerned with such issues and is at the same time engaged with spirituality as it manifests into both political issues and issues of “defilement” simultaneously. In this way Williams’ slippage interconnects themes from both socialist and cultural ecofeminism. In an exploration of the validity of “spirituality-oriented approaches to ecofeminism,” Karen J. Warren in “A Feminist Perspective on Ecofeminist Spiritualities” points out that:

Politically, the sorts of protest actions ecofeminists often cite as illustrative of ecofeminist activism (e.g., the Chipko movement in India, Women of all Red
Nations [WARN] organizing against environmental racism) often grow out of spiritual traditions (e.g., Gandhian satyagraha, nonviolent actions or spirituality-based kinship cultures). Honoring the ethnic dimensions of such ecofeminist activism, then, involves recognizing their spiritual roots.¹²

This observation is interesting considering that most of the ecofeminist literature on Third World ecofeminist movements is grounded in socialist ecofeminist analyses of colonialism and economic exploitation. Other than Vandana Shiva, few have recognized and brought into their analysis the spiritual dimension of such movements. Warren is correct in claiming that recognizing the role of spirituality in ecofeminist movements is important not only because it does in fact exist but also because of the importance of making ethnic specificity visible. Not recognizing the importance of spirituality within ecofeminism, then, could be considered a form of Western colonialism and cultural annihilation. Warren implies that in order to maintain ethnic diversity within ecofeminist theory spirituality must be taken seriously. Thus, a more interconnected and “whole” approach to understanding ecofeminist movements would include the consideration of colonialism, economic exploitation, and spirituality simultaneously. I want to encourage such analyses that interconnect the themes within both socialist and cultural ecofeminism in the ways that Vandana Shiva and the authors I have discussed in this chapter have. Their analyses are significant because they reveal that accepting the themes within the two approaches as mutually exclusive is an artificial assumption.
ENDNOTES


6 Ibid., 180.


8 Ibid., 82.

9 Ibid., 83.


CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

This thesis has problematized the notion of distinct Western ecofeminist "approaches" and has raised serious questions regarding their usefulness and validity. Instead of helping analysts understand the issues, the imposition of analytical techniques that pigeonhole and pit "approaches" against each other limit how we theorize about women and nature and how we understand ecofeminist writings. While so-called "socialist" and "cultural" ecofeminist approaches have been theoretically constructed in opposition to one another in Western theorizing about ecofeminism, I propose that their differences would better be conceptualized as existing on an ecofeminist continuum. Such a conceptualization allows for and could encourage a clear recognition of the interconnecting and interweaving of themes across ecofeminist writings. Furthermore, this could shift the debate from "which is better" to an analysis of the complexity of the issues involved. Such interweaving of the approaches could create new possibilities for how we understand woman-nature connections and how we understand ecofeminists.

After providing vital information about the origins of Western ecofeminism and the "debate" between socialist and cultural ecofeminists in Chapter 2, I proceeded in Chapter 3 to point out Shiva's slippage between essentialism and social constructionism.
My intention here was to open a door for a discussion of why—even though social
correctionism and essentialism are positioned oppositionally—they so frequently
appear together within a single analysis. Additionally, I use Shiva to propose that it is
possible to incorporate both social constructionist and essentialist claims into a single
analysis and to show how this allows for new ways of theorizing that don’t get caught up
in the social constructionist versus essentialist debate.

My analysis of ecofeminist theorists and critics in Chapter 2, combined with
Shiva’s work in Chapter 3, revealed how when essentialism and social constructionism are
categorized as oppositional and thus necessarily exclusive of one another, they tend to only
manifest themselves as such when being discussed specifically by critics. More frequently-
in the works of theorists like Shiva, King, and Gaard—the two categories/themes are more
often layered and interwoven with one another; their “boundaries” are permeable and are
permeated by analysts—"slippage" occurs. It seems as though the ability to maintain a
coherent, disconnected, and unfragmented position when approaches are constructed
oppositionally is not only constraining and stifling but verges on the “impossible.”

One example of how this has created a stifling atmosphere within feminist
theorizing is that a hierarchy of value has also been attributed to these approaches. This has
resulted in the simplistic claim that social constructionism is not only good but correct and
that essentialism is bad and wrong. I find that, in great part, this is explained by academic
pressure to obsessively maintain the “coherency” of certain approaches or frameworks that
are constructed in opposition to one another. This denies the possibility for exploration
within the cracks or between the lines and boundaries and an exploration of the overlap and
interconnectedness between approaches which could result in a more comprehensive and
richer approach. This is an important project since, as Ynestra King has pointed out,
“gender identity is neither fully natural nor fully cultural” and “[women’s oppression is] neither strictly historical nor strictly biological. [It is both]." The oppositional construction of social constructionism and essentialism is not a reality of how the two approaches interact.

The either/or choices that are constructed through a separation of ideas into “cultural” and “socialist” ecofeminisms, are merely two different responses to the same political “problem”: how multiple forces have created ideological and material connections between women and nature that have resulted in far reaching and detrimental impacts on both women and nature. The politically charged responses to this problem by those identified as “cultural” or “socialist” ecofeminists have been formulated through seemingly mutually exclusive positions. A “cultural” ecofeminism would embrace and invert the ideological woman-nature connection by maintaining that it can be revalued in a way that is liberating to women and nature. A “socialist” ecofeminism would handle the problem differently through its rejection of the ideological woman-nature connection by claiming that it is completely socially constructed and that the only thing it can bring to the table is the continued domination of women and nature. Furthermore, it is the notion of social constructionism that makes liberation from our inferior position possible. These narrowly defined approaches have limited the possibilities for how we think about the woman-nature connection. A better approach, in my opinion, is Shiva’s willingness to use both essentialism and social constructionism within her analysis. It is this approach.
which allows Shiva to see the domination and liberation of women and nature as similarly linked.²

These arguments are situationally dependent on historical and contextual factors.³

The arguments, and indeed even the concepts themselves, were historically produced and are continually reproduced and are used in different ways and for different ends depending on the context—who is saying what to whom and for what purpose. The debate is complicated because it is impossible to "test" the relative validity of an essentialist perspective or a social constructionist perspective, and as used by authors discussed, both essentialist and social constructionist claims can, depending on the context, be both oppressive and liberating. Moreover, as Dianna Fuss states:

Too often, constructionists presume that the category of the social automatically escapes essentialism, in contradistinction to the way the category of the natural is presupposed to be inevitably entrapped within it. But there is no compelling reason to assume that the natural is, in essence, essentialist and that the social is, in essence, constructionist. If we are to intervene effectively in the impasse created by the essentialist/constructionist divide, it might be necessary to begin questioning the constructionist assumption that nature and fixity go together (naturally) just as sociality and change go together (naturally). In other words, it may be time to ask whether essences can change and whether constructions can be normative.⁴

The ability to see and incorporate the reality that these are not either/or questions into analyses of women and nature is critical to our theories and strategies toward liberation.

In Chapter 4 my intention was to focus on another way in which the themes associated with socialist and cultural ecofeminism have been and can be interconnected. The duality between spirituality and matter and/or politics has limited how analysts
theorize the relevance of spirituality to ecofeminism. Such theorizing has been limited and "stigmatized" which is reflected by the rejection of spirituality by liberal and socialist feminists. Charlene Spretnak states:

Because this spiritual orientation particularly honors the elemental power of the female and its embeddedness in nature, it was perceived as regressive, embarrassing, or even horrifying to liberal and material/socialist feminists, who apparently accepted the patriarchal dualism of nature-versus-culture and had internalized the patriarchal rationalization that the reason women had traditionally been blocked from participation in culture was their bodily "plaint of being mired in the reproductive process of nature.5

However, at the same time that many socialist ecofeminists have fallen into complicity with the patriarchal dualities of nature/culture and spirit/matter so have many cultural ecofeminists through an uninterrogated embrace of nature. Accepting either end of such dualities with the complete rejection of the other does not move us away from the stronghold of such dualities, it reinforces them. The complexity inherent to moving away from such dualities is made evident by Carol P. Christ:

Because the disjunction of divinity, humanity, and nature is deeply embedded in the words God, humanity, and nature—it is difficult to articulate new conceptions. The three terms in the triad "God, man, and nature" must be rethought together. It will not do, for example, simply to say that the divine is nature because concepts of nature have already been defined as excluding teleology and the kind of power commonly associated with divinity. Nor, on the other hand, will it do simply to say that nature is teleological since teleology has been defined as residing in the divine and human moral will that stand over and against nature. Similarly, it cannot be asserted that humanity is nature since to most people that would imply that humans are irrational, immoral, and inarticulate. What is required is a revolution in thought, a deconstruction and reconstruction of both theology and language.6

I am proposing that we need to challenge the assumptions of such dualities rather than fall into complicity with them. Our energies might be better spent rethinking what nature, culture, and spirit mean and how they interrelate with one another rather than on arguing in favor of or against nature or culture. Moreover, such a "revolution in thought" could lead to new ways of acting in the world that are liberating rather than oppressive to women and
nature. Creating space in ecofeminist thought and action for the creation of new ways to think about the relationships between essentialism/social constructionism, nature/culture, and spirituality/politics is what I want to encourage.

In conclusion, Western ecofeminist approaches, as they currently are constructed, foster dualistic thinking because they are presented as distinct and incompatible frameworks in a way that encourages ecofeminist scholars to adopt one cohesive, unfragmented, impermeable, and pure category and encourage critics to be shortsighted due to the expectation that ecofeminist authors will make either/or choices and “stick to their approach.” Given such pressure, that the ecofeminist authors I have highlighted manage to traverse the boundaries drawn around the various approaches to ecofeminism through their “slippage” calls into question the validity of rigidly defined Western ecofeminist approaches. As made evident in this thesis, such traversing of boundaries is occurring among both Third World and even some First World Western ecofeminists thereby revealing the artificial construction of Western ecofeminist approaches as mutually exclusive. Moreover, the interweaving of themes (essentialism and social constructionism; spirituality and politics) that are artificially separated within Western ecofeminist approaches shows that these approaches, posed as mutually exclusive, are not adequate for developing an understanding of how many ecofeminists are actually engaging with ideas in their analyses. Instead of attempting to maintain the “purity” of these seemingly mutually exclusive approaches to ecofeminism, I propose that we ought to encourage anti-dualistic thinking by writing and acting “impurely” in a way that
traverses the boundaries that have been artificially drawn around Western ecofeminist approaches.

The irony of this project is that in order to act "impurely" the prior existence of specific and unique approaches to ecofeminism are necessary. In fact, the critical claims that I have made regarding the conceptual limitations of the various approaches to Western ecofeminism throughout this thesis are dependent upon the very existence of these different conceptual approaches. Thus, while the existence of different approaches to ecofeminism are useful in the sense that they allow for the development of different ways of thinking and responding to similar/dissimilar questions or problems they can become limiting when they inhibit ways of thinking that combine themes from multiple approaches to ecofeminism.

My proposal, then, is that we ought to be able to utilize the different approaches to Western ecofeminism in a way that is creative and exploratory and allows for the utilization and combination of themes from multiple approaches. Thinking about the various approaches to Western ecofeminism in this way encourages a resistance to the "coherency" of theory. Moreover, taking an "impure" approach to ecofeminism could discourage the kind of dualistic either/or thinking that limits and stunts how the connections between women and nature are conceptualized. Similarly, Lee Quinby more generally resists the construction of "coherency" within theory because it reflects and perpetuates the totalizing impulse of masculinist politics. She states:
Ecofeminism as resistance politics has a great deal to tell us about the uses and abuses of theory itself as a power relation. It suggests that theory in the interrogative mode—as opposed to theory in the prescriptive mode—asks difficult questions; that is, it asks questions that pose difficulties, even, perhaps especially, for one’s own practices. In fact, the we of ecofeminism is most formidable in its opposition to power when it challenges its own assumptions.

It is the “prescriptive” tendency of Western ecofeminist approaches that is dangerous. For when they operate in a prescriptive mode and are taken as “real” and mutually exclusive approaches then they have the potential to stunt and limit how we conceptualize the oppression of women and nature. I, like Quinby, want to suggest that our task ought to be asking difficult questions and also inventing new ways to explore the connections between women and nature rather than labeling others with and ascribing to a singular “coherent” ecofeminist theory. This “task” would be fostered by the conceptualization of the various approaches to Western ecofeminism on a continuum of thought or as themes that can be combined and used in multiple ways rather than as “coherent” approaches.
ENDNOTES


8 Ibid.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


