1990

Ecofeminist explorations

Janet Henderson

The University of Montana

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd

Recommended Citation
AN ECOFEMINIST CRITIQUE OF MARX
In the writings of Karl Marx one can find apparent inconsistencies in his thoughts on the human relationship to nature and on utopian thinking. It seems that these two areas of Marx's thought are closely related, as are the reasons for the inconsistencies in his ideas about them. On the one hand, some of Marx's writings indicate that humans are part of nature, not separate from it, and that the relationship between human and nonhuman nature is a reciprocal one. In other writings, that ideal relationship is replaced by one of human "mastery" over nature, wherein nature is merely a resource to be used by humans. Regarding utopian thinking, at times Marx is visionary in his writing and paints pictures of an ideal communist society as he would like to see it. These images are very utopian, but pervading much of his work is a harsh critique of and warning against utopian thought. How is one to make sense of the inconsistent ideas expressed by Marx on these two subjects? Perhaps the body of thought called eco-feminism can be helpful in answering this question since it is deeply concerned with the human/nature relationship and with the notion of utopia.
In his earlier writings, most particularly the "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," Marx developed a theory of the relationship between human and nonhuman nature which claimed that the two are not as distinct as we normally think them to be. He went so far as to call the whole of nature "the inorganic body of man," meaning that it sustains humanity both physically and intellectually and that humans must maintain a constant interchange with it as a condition of their existence. (McLellan 1984, 81). Within this theory, nature is not an abstract entity, removed from and dominated by human beings, but rather a source of life for them, a realm which is continuous with their own human realm. It follows from this conception of the human/nonhuman nature relationship that humans would have some sort of respect for nature, that they would not dominate and exploit it. Even if acting only out of self-interest, humans would not likely exploit nature, because they would be harming their own inorganic body by doing so.

This early notion of the human relationship to nature is not maintained throughout Marx's work; in fact it is inconsistent with his guiding theory of historical materialism in which progress (and therefore human liberation and self-realization) takes place only when the natural world is subjected to the mastery of human
labourers. This deterministic view of history does not allow for humans to exist in a reciprocal relationship with nonhuman nature. It is necessary, according to this view, that nature come to be seen as an object to be possessed and used under capitalism, which is also a necessary stage in the unfolding of the history of struggle which finally leads to the liberation of the working class.

As Marx describes this aspect of the capitalist stage:

Nature becomes for the first time simply an object for mankind, purely a matter of utility; it ceases to be recognized as a power in its own right; and the theoretical knowledge of its independent laws appears only as a stratagem designed to subdue it to human requirements, whether as the object of consumption or as the means of production (363-4).

Marx goes on to say that this change is "permanently revolutionary, tearing down all obstacles that impede . . . the exploitation and exchange of natural and intellectual forces" (364). In other words, the exploitation of nature goes hand in hand with the development of the forces of production under capitalism. The development of these forces and of capitalism itself is, for Marx, a prerequisite to a communist society; it is that which makes communism possible and inevitable. The basis of Marx's theory of communism is that it grows out of capitalism.

This deterministic view of history justifies the domination and
exploitation of nature by humans by pointing out that it is inevitable (and essential for human freedom). The advancement of technology (apparently without regard for its adverse effects on the earth) is hailed as the key to the liberation of humans from slavery, serfdom, and the drudgery of labour and as that which brings about progress in human relationships. It can be concluded from this idea that the domination of nature is necessary for the liberation of humans. Humans are seen in a very different relationship to nature than they are in the mutual one described earlier. Humans are distinct, apart from nonhuman nature; they are in a position of dominance over it, and it is theirs to do with as they will. It is a tool that they must manipulate in order to attain their freedom.

With modern (industrial) technology understood as the paradigmatic relationship of domination between human and non-human nature, a closer examination of Marx's statements about its role in human liberation clarifies the underlying assumption about the human/nature relationship. In the Communist Manifesto, Marx explains why technology is an essential part of the fall of capitalism and the subsequent liberation of the working class:
The essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeoisie class, is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labour. Wage labour rests exclusively on competition between the labourers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable (230-1).

The way in which the advance of industry replaces the isolation of the labourers "by their revolutionary combination, due to association," is by allowing isolated workers from different places to have contact with one another through improved means of communication and transportation. In this way they are able to form a national union and then a revolutionary movement (228).

Another way technology frees humans is through reducing the necessary labour time of society to a minimum. "The counterpart of this reduction is that all members of society can develop their education in the arts, sciences, etc., thanks to the free time and means available to all" (380).

Marx takes the liberating notion of technology the farthest in the *Grundrisse*, when he speaks of it as the realization of human
nature. This idea undoubtedly comes from his basic claim that humans are primarily producers (*homo faber*). Of machines, locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, etc., he says, "These are products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will to dominate nature or to realize itself therein" (381). Marx makes a direct connection between the realization of the human will and the domination of nature in this passage, as he does between the development of the human as social being and the mastery of nature in the following passage on the changes technology brings to the workplace (more specifically the replacement of labourer by machine).

In this transformation, what appears as the mainstay of production and wealth is neither the immediate labour performed by the worker, nor the time that he works - but the appropriation by man of his own general productive force, his understanding of nature and the mastery of it; in a word, the development of the social individual (380).

With his basic premise of human nature as *homo faber*, Marx commits himself to the idea of a relationship of domination between human and nonhuman nature. If the most fundamental capacity of humans is that of production, or labour, and if labour is what Marx says it is in *Capital*, then humans are inherently opposed to the natural world and will inevitably exploit it to fulfill
their own desires. In the section titled, "The Production of Surplus Value," Marx writes:

Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material reactions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to Nature... setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants (455).

Note that Marx's spelling of "nature" is now capitalized. "Nature" with a capital "N" implies that nature is now being considered an abstraction, a totally separate realm from the human, an "Other" which is (theoretically) put at a great enough distance that it can be dominated.

These references to the exploitative relationship of humankind to nature, each of which is considered to be a distinct sphere of reality, are radically different from those in Marx's earlier writings to a healthy, balanced relationship between two parts of the same sphere. Paralleling this inconsistency is the one in Marx's comments on utopian thought. Though a strong criticism and adamant rejection of utopian socialism run through much of his work, Marx undeniably has a utopian strain in his thinking which periodically escapes suppression and makes itself visible on the
One example of such expression is found in his essay, "On James Mill," where he describes what production would be like in an ideal situation, when it is done in a "human manner." Marx writes glowingly of the individual's production as an expression of her/his life, the producer's enjoyment in fulfilling a need of another who uses the product, the mutually affirming connection that takes place between producer and consumer, and the realization of the producer's communal human essence brought about through production as self-expression. He says, "In that case our products would be like so many mirrors, out of which our essence shone" (122). This vision of communist production is in sharp contrast to the bleak picture he painted earlier of production as it exists in reality - as alienated labour - and it definitely has a utopian ring to it. In *Capital* (441), Marx describes another vision of the relationships of production in a communist society. His ideal "community" seems much more compatible with the utopian socialist Fourier's model of a small, decentralized economy than with the predominant view in Marx's writings of a highly centralized global economy.²

Fourier's utopian socialism was spelled out in detailed outline of the socialist community he envisioned, which he called the Phalanx. Schedules of a typical day on the Phalanx were made up
to show how a person’s time would be divided into a great variety of different tasks. The reason for this variety was to insure that people enjoyed their labour and did not work under conditions of drudgery. "The great task of social thought, [Fourier] believed, was to show how work and the apparently incompatible desire for pleasure could be reconciled" (Beecher and Bienvenu 1971, 43). One of Fourier’s guidelines for establishing a Phalanx was that "work sessions must be varied about eight times a day because a man cannot remain enthusiastic about his job for more than an hour and a half or two when he is performing an agricultural or manufacturing task" (274).


When Marx and Engels first began their lifelong collaboration they did appear to believe that labor under scientific socialism might indeed resemble the Phalansterian ideal. In The German Ideology they predicted that socialist modes of production would make it ‘possible for me to do one thing today, another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, engage in criticism after dinner, just as I please . . .’. This, obviously, is a rather limited version of a summer’s day on the Phalanx, not quite as active or colorful and betraying a Germanic
penchant for higher intellectual activities, but a day on the Phalanx all the same. Later, however, Marx rejected this ideal as unrealistic and criticized Fourier for adopting a frivolous attitude toward the serious problem of work (70).

The reason for Marx's denunciation of utopian thinking is apparently that it is incompatible with his Hegelian notion of historical determinism. The liberation of the working class was impossible for him without the necessary preceding stage of capitalism, until the forces of history determined it to happen. He explains this idea further in his critique of utopian socialism in the Communist Manifesto.

The first direct attempts of the proletariat to attain its own ends, made in times of universal excitement, when feudal society was being overthrown, these attempts necessarily failed, owing to the then undeveloped state of the proletariat, as well as to the absence of the economic conditions for its emancipation, conditions that had yet to be produced, and could be produced by the impending bourgeois epoch alone (243).

Marx's inability to reconcile his utopian visions of communist society with the historical determinism upon which he based his entire philosophy led him to denounce all utopian thought. It seems that this same problem is responsible for Marx's abandonment of his early notion of a reciprocal human/nature relationship. It, too, was too idealistic, too far-removed from reality, to have a
place in his philosophy. Both of these rejected ways of thinking seem to have been Marx's initial inclinations, but his loyalty to the deterministic view of history did not allow these visionary ideas to have much influence in the overall development of his thought.

It can be argued from an ecofeminist perspective that Marx should have paid more attention to his visionary thoughts and should have been less faithful to historical determinism. Ecofeminism shares Marx's early inclinations for a non-oppositional relationship between humans and nature and for the notion of utopia. A basic definition of ecofeminism will be a helpful beginning to an exploration of its response to Marx on these matters. Ecofeminism is a synthesis of feminist and ecological thought. Because of the historical association of women with nature, ecofeminists believe that the feminist and ecology movements (and their corresponding theories) need to inform one another in order to be thorough in their analyses of domination.

Ecofeminism is based on the belief that all forms of domination are related and therefore includes an analysis of racism, classism, and heterosexism in addition to that of sexism and the domination of nature. The fundamental premise is that an oppressive relationship (i.e., that between men and women) cannot be healed when it is addressed in isolation, removed from the context of
other forms of oppression (most particularly in this case, that of nature by humans).

The major point of departure for ecofeminism from other feminisms is the nature/culture dualism. Ecofeminism seeks to do away with this dualism that is perpetuated in other forms of feminism. According to ecofeminism, the nature/culture dualism which pervades our thought does not recognize the fact that human culture is not separate from non-human nature but that it evolved out of it and is necessarily connected to and part of it. The nature/culture dualism de-contextualizes human culture by removing it from its proper place as part of nature and placing it over and above nature where it rules and exploits it. In the same way, nature is de-contextualized, objectified, and turned into an abstraction and a resource. Historically, men have been identified with the culture side of the dualism and women with the nature side. For this reason, the nature/culture dualism is a central concern for ecofeminism.

As ecofeminist Ynestra King (1990) says,

It is as if women were entrusted with and kept the dirty little secret that humanity emerges from non-human nature into society in the life of the species, and the person. The process of nurturing an un-socialized, undifferentiated human infant
into an adult person - the socialization of the organic - is the bridge between nature and culture. . . . The key to the historic agency of women with respect to nature/culture dualism lies in the fact that the mediating traditional conversion activities of women - mothering, cooking, healing, farming, foraging - are as social as they are natural (17, emphasis added).

King does not claim that women are inherently closer to nature than men (that would be assuming the nature/culture dualism, with women more on the nature side and men more on the culture side), but does claim that because of their assigned social roles throughout history, they may be in a position to see more clearly and to appreciate more fully the connections between culture and nature. Many "radical feminists" do maintain that women are inherently closer to nature than men and that they can therefore change the world for the benefit of nature, but in this view men are written off as hopelessly and inherently unconnected to nature. (This is a reversal of the dualism - here, nature and woman are placed over culture and man.) Eco-feminism, on the other hand, maintains the hope that all humans, male and female, will be able to be reconciled with nature. It sees the need to overcome the male/female dualism along with the nature/culture dualism and to replace them both with healthy relationships.
Marx's early writings about a close relationship between human and nonhuman nature seem to be based on a similar notion about nature/culture dualism - that it's an illusion to think that there is a sharp distinction between the two, because one grew out of the other and remains a part of it. But in Marx's later writings, he does draw a line where he earlier said none could be drawn. This line between humans and nature is essential to his theory that the domination of nature through production and technology is an important element in the liberation of human labourers. For ecofeminists, this theory is unacceptable, since they believe that oppression must be dealt with at its roots in order for it to be overcome and that one form of oppression cannot be singled out for a project of liberation which is based on another form of oppression. The following comments by Ynestra King (1990) are helpful in making the case that technology and the domination of nature are not truly liberatory.

A critical analysis of and opposition to the uniformity of technological, industrial culture - capitalist and socialist - is crucial to feminism, ecology and the struggles of indigenous peoples. At this point in history, there is no way to unravel the matrix of oppressions within human society without at the same time liberating nature and reconciling that part of nature which is human with that part which is not. Socialists do not have the answer to these problems - they
share the anti-naturalism and basic dualism of capitalism. Although it was developed by capitalism, the technological means of production utilized by capitalist and socialist states is largely the same. All hitherto existing philosophies of liberation, with the possible exception of some forms of social anarchism, accept the notion that humanity should dominate nature, and that the increasing domination of non-human nature is a precondition for true human freedom (4).

Related to Marx's notion of the nature/culture dualism as liberating is that of the dualism as necessary to his understanding of human nature. Marx certainly upholds the nature/culture dualism when he says, as quoted earlier, that in the labour process, the labourer controls and opposes nature and appropriates it for the satisfaction of his wants. Since labour is the fundamental capacity of humans and the biggest part of human nature, Marx is saying that humans are inherently distinct, apart from, and rulers over nature. This is a clear and strong articulation of the nature/culture dualism.

The notion of humans as *homo faber* is too limiting for ecofeminism. It reduces the richness and complexity and beauty of humanity to the simple role of worker, and, in Marx's thought, as spelled out above, it opposes human nature to non-human nature. The ecofeminist alternative to this opposition is a non-dualistic relationship between humans and nature which would probably be consistent with Marx's ideas on nature in the "Economic and
Philosophical Manuscripts." Though no distinct line is drawn between the human and natural realms, the two are not totally merged together; the uniqueness of each is respected rather than blurred. The proposed alternative to dualistic thinking is "ecological" thinking, which is based on the concepts of interdependence and balance found in the science of ecology - concepts that are contradictory to the hierarchical dualism that underlies the systems of oppression. Following ecology, ecofeminism sees the world in terms of interrelations among people, beings, things. Relations of humans to nonhuman nature, of different genders, races, classes, etc., to one another would not be oppositional or hierarchical. The ecological principle of "unity in diversity" provides a model for a new worldview in which differences are recognized but not ranked or opposed to one another. It tells us that diversity in nature is necessary and enriching, and the same is true in the human realm. An acceptance of and healthy respect for diversity is an important element in overcoming oppression of all kinds, since the reason that most groups are oppressed is because they are different from the established and ruling "norm."

Respect for diversity is perhaps the most basic idea for the revolution envisioned by ecofeminism. Such a revolution would not be a revolution in Marx's sense of the word, but a peaceful,
gradual one that is worked toward, which does not happen all of a sudden due to economic and other forces. This revolution would include much in the way of liberation from all forms of domination. A new way of thinking about our relatedness to each other and to nonhuman nature is the only thing that can save our world. The antagonistic mode of thinking that feels uncomfortable with or threatened by difference and therefore needs to oppress and silence it must be unlearned. This mode causes us to pit "self" against "other" in all kinds of relationships. We use what power our position in life affords us to keep the "others" down, whether they be women, people of color, lesbians or gay men, working-class people, or nonhuman forms of life.

Much of this power that people have over others is economic power, the distribution of which would be much more equitable in a revolutionary society. An ideal society from an ecofeminist perspective, like a Marxist one, would do away with capitalism. However, it would look more like a society imagined by the pre-Marxist utopian socialists than like a Marxist one. Ecofeminism has more in common with utopian socialism and social anarchism than with Marxism. It envisions decentralized communities based on cooperation and mutualism which are small enough that their governance can be participatory, and it actively works toward the
realization of this vision without waiting for an historically
determined revolution to bring it into being. To Marx, this all
sounds very utopian and therefore unacceptable in practical terms,
although he did exhibit utopian thinking in his writings from time
to time. As explained earlier, Marx rejected utopian thought
because it is inconsistent with his theory of historical determinism,
which claims that a revolution will happen only when and if
historical conditions are right for it.

This determinism is inadequate and inaccurate in respect to
feminism. Marx's view of the unfolding of history included the
belief that patriarchy would necessarily dissolve under the capital­
ist mode of production, as women were drawn into the wage
labour force by it. Contemporary Marxists claim that patriarchy
will dissolve in a socialist state with the disappearance of both
private property and the sexual division of labor that excludes
women from the public realm of production. Both of these claims
are obviously false, as we have observed that neither capitalist nor
socialist states have ceased to be patriarchal. Marxism is not able
to adequately account for the systematic oppression of women.
Clearly, feminists cannot wait for "the revolution" (in the Marxist
sense) to liberate them from their oppression as women.

The ecofeminist notion of revolution is necessarily utopian. It
is a vision of something we have no definite historical model for
but that we must construct and strive to achieve. It is imperative
that we do something to better our present situation. Patrocinio
Schweickart (1983), in her article on "Science and Technology in
Feminist Utopias," says this of "the all too real threat of violence
and war, and of ecological depletion and pollution":

> These impending catastrophes are traced not only to science and technology or to the mis-guided overconfidence in reason but, ultimately, to the domination of women in patriarchal society. Against this critique of our own world, utopia is offered as a possible alternative; not something that is bound to happen, but something attainable only by dint of conscious and prodigious effort. Utopia is necessary, not because it is logically or historically necessary, but because we need it (199).

Schweickart implies that the notion of historical determinism is
inadequate for revolutionary politics in the face of these "all too
real threats." Her statement that utopia is necessary "because we
need it" is a good summary of the ecofeminist position on utopia.
We are in such a bad situation that without envisioning a better
world we will not be able to make one for ourselves. Eco-
feminism, with its analyses of all forms of domination, sees all too
clearly how far we are from where we need to be in order for
people and nature to be free from exploitation. A world without
oppression, where severed relationships among all classes of humans and between human and nonhuman nature are repaired, is certainly a utopia, but that does not mean that we should not strive toward it, that it should not be a guiding vision for our revolutionary politics. "Guiding vision" in this context does not refer to a static, fixed goal which must be achieved, but to a dynamic, flexible vision which is everchanging and growing as we change and grow and which is probably never "accomplished" in the final sense of that word. In refuting Marx, we could use Schweickart's closing words: "utopia is not alien to human nature but only the expression of the best in us, the authentic realization of our nature: 'true journey is return'" (1983, 210).

Marx's groundedness in reality and loyalty to the actual conditions of economic life are a helpful and important part of revolutionary philosophy that ecofeminism does not share. Certainly this lack on the part of ecofeminism is a shortcoming when talking in practical terms; it would be ludicrous to Marx. But from an ecofeminist perspective, a greater shortcoming is that of Marx in not exploring the real, deep questions of domination and hierarchy. These questions must be tackled at their roots if we are to effectively work for true liberation.
NOTES

1. The term "ecofeminism" is presently used to refer to a diverse range of ideas, some of which are inconsistent with one another. The body of thought I draw upon in this paper is that developed by Ynestra King during the past dozen years. The interpretation given in this paper is based on my understanding of King's theory as it appears in her many articles, most particularly, "Healing the Wounds: Feminism, Ecology, and Nature/Culture Dualism," in Alison M. Jaggar and Susan R. Bordo, eds., Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing. (forthcoming in 1990 from ?).

2. This comparison between Marx's vision and Fourier's utopia was pointed out to me by Ron Perrin.

3. Much has been written about the historical woman/nature connection and how it has contributed to the domination of both. The most well-known books that have been written on this topic are Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), and Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978). There are numerous other works on the subject.

4. According to Ynestra King, liberal and socialist feminism maintain the nature/culture dualism by attempting to overcome the woman/nature connection through acceptance as equals in the male culture. In wanting to sever the woman/nature connection which has played a large part in their oppression, they feel the need to abandon the realm of nature (theoretically) and to gain status as part of culture. Understandably, this is the only hope for liberation that these feminists see. On the other hand, one form of radical feminism embraces the woman/nature connection wholeheartedly, claiming that women and nature are related and are superior to men and culture. They reverse the dualism from its normal form of men/culture as superior and women/nature as inferior, but in doing so they maintain the dualism. (King 1990, 7-15).
5. "For social anarchists, then, the revolution is a process, not a point in time; and how one lives one's daily life is very important. People don't learn that they can live without leadership elites by accepting socialist ones; they do not end power relationships by creating new ones" (Ehrlich 1981, 114). Note the similarities in what Ehrlich says about a social anarchist revolution and what I have said about an ecofeminist revolution. The roots of ecofeminism are largely in social anarchist-feminist thought.
REFERENCES


IN SEARCH OF AN ECOFEMINIST UTOPIA
The project of ecofeminism, in part, is the liberation of women and nature. The world it envisions is one that is very far from the reality of our own and is therefore often called "utopian." Several feminist utopian novels offer visions of societies that do not oppress women and that have somewhat sound relationships with their natural environment. They make either explicit or implicit connections between the favorable position of women and the respectful treatment of the natural world, and they can be considered ecofeminist utopias in that sense. Utopian thought is an important element in ecofeminist theory and practice. It will be helpful to evaluate some of these novels from an ecofeminist perspective to determine whether the stories they tell are constructive in bringing the ecofeminist vision to life. Three novels appropriate for this discussion are The Wandering: Stories of the Hill Women, by Sally Gearhart; Herland, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman; and Woman on the Edge of Time, by Marge Piercy.

Since the term "ecofeminism" is currently used to represent a diverse range of ideas, I will clarify my own use of that term. My understanding of ecofeminism is based on the work of Ynestra King, a pioneer in ecofeminist theory and activism.¹ The
fundamental premise of King's theory is that an oppressive relationship (i.e., that between men and women) cannot be healed when it is addressed in isolation, removed from the context of other forms of oppression (i.e., that of nature by humans). Since ecofeminism is based on the belief that all forms of domination are related, it includes analyses of racism, classism, and heterosexism in addition to those of sexism and the domination of nature. All of these instances of domination are products of the prevailing dualistic worldview which deals with difference by dividing reality into two halves, assigning higher value to one half and lower value to the other. This division pits self against other in all kinds of relationships, and we use what power our position in life affords us to keep the "others" down, whether they be women, people of color, lesbians or gay men, working-class people, or nonhuman forms of life. Because of their common roots, these forms of oppression must be addressed in connection with one another. While ecofeminism recognizes those connections and attempts to address all oppressive relationships, it focuses on the joint dominations of women and nature, because their historical association with one another means that they are mutually reinforcing and inextricably linked.

The major point of departure for ecofeminism from other
feminisms is the nature/culture dualism. Ecofeminism seeks to do away with this dualism that is perpetuated in other forms of feminism. According to ecofeminism, the nature/culture dualism which pervades our thought does not recognize the fact that human culture is not separate from nonhuman nature but that it grew out of it and is necessarily connected to and part of it. The nature/culture dualism decontextualizes human culture by removing it from its proper place as part of nature and placing it over and above nature where it rules and exploits it. In the same way, nature is decontextualized, objectified, and turned into an abstraction and a resource. Historically, men have been identified with the culture side of the dualism and women with the nature side. For this reason, the nature/culture dualism is a central concern for ecofeminism.

The ecofeminist alternative to this dualistic, oppositional relationship between humans and nature is a close, mutual one which is based on an evolutionary understanding of how human culture emerged out of nonhuman nature and therefore recognizes the connection between the two. Though no distinct line is drawn between the human and natural realms, the two are not totally merged together; the uniqueness of each is respected rather than blurred. The proposed alternative to dualistic thinking is ecological
thinking, which is based on the concepts of interdependence and balance found in the science of ecology — concepts that are contradictory to the hierarchical dualism that underlies the systems of oppression. Following ecology, ecofeminism sees the world in terms of interrelations among people, beings, things. Relations of humans to nonhuman nature and of different genders, races, classes, etc., to one another are not oppositional or hierarchical. The ecological principle of "unity in diversity" provides a model for a new worldview in which differences are recognized but not ranked or opposed to one another. It tells us that diversity in nature is necessary and enriching, and the same is true in the human realm, according to ecological thinking. An acceptance of and healthy respect for diversity is an important element in overcoming oppression of all kinds, since the reason that most groups are oppressed is because they are different from what is considered the "norm." From an ecological perspective, though, "otherness" need not be considered inferior; if accepted, we can learn from it and enrich our own lives through connection with "others."

Ecological thinking means that men cannot be excluded from the ecofeminist vision. Ynestra King has borrowed the term "two-handed feminism" from pacifist-feminist Barbara Deming to
describe ecofeminism. The two hands are: (1) the restraining hand, which expresses criticism of and anger at oppression, and (2) the open hand, which offers the possibility of reconciliation.

"Without the [restraining] hand of criticism and militant non-violent resistance, reconciliatory ecofeminism runs the risk of selling out, or lapsing into meaningless mush" (King 1988, 127).

Without the open hand, the male/female dualism is maintained, and the possibility of individual and social transformation is not kept open (for men).

The three utopian novels under consideration here each use different hands or a combination of the two. *The Wanderground: Stories of the Hill Women* exhibits only the restraining hand. It is the story of a mass exodus of women from "the City," which has become unbearably misogynist. Threatened by feminism and the increasing independence of women, the establishment has responded with extreme restrictions of and violence against women.

A dress code is established to force women to wear "ladylike" clothes (no pants), and other laws are enacted to keep women in their place. Beatings, rapes, even murders, are increasingly common methods of keeping women in submission. Lesbians are particularly despised and targeted for violence. More and more women find these conditions unbearable and plan secret getaways
to flee the City. They literally run for the hills, where they
establish a community of women based on living in harmony with
the earth. They bring nothing with them from the City, so they
are forced to start from scratch without the aid of the technology
which they associate with the violence of the City.

At first, the authorities from the City chased the fleeing
women, captured and/or killed them. Male citizens developed a
sport called "Cunt Hunts," in which they drove out into the
country, hunted for women and raped them. Then one day, as
some men attempted to rape two women they captured in the
hills, they found they were impotent. It was discovered that all
men had become impotent outside the City limits. At the same
time, machines and weapons had stopped working outside the City.
Logging trucks fell off the sides of mountains, horses in a rodeo
threw their male riders off, and the natural world generally
revolted against male violence towards the earth and women. The
story of this revolt is told to later generations in the
Wanderground as part of their "remembering" and is called "The
Revolt of the Mother."

Once upon a time, there was one rape too
many . . . . The earth finally said 'no.' There
was no storm, no earthquake, no tidal wave or
volcanic eruption, no specific moment to mark
its happening. It only became apparent that it
had happened, and that it had happened everywhere (Gearhart 1979, 158).

As a result, women and the earth were protected from male violence. Now women could live peacefully in the country, as allies with the earth. In fact, after many years of developing their psychic powers rather than destructive technology, the Hill Women can communicate with animals, trees, etc. There is a genuine reciprocity in their relationship with nonhuman creatures and an underlying assumption that such creatures and the land are at least as deserving of respect as humans are, if not more so. The close, caring relationship between the Hill Women and nonhuman nature is the most harmonious one of the three described in these novels and also represents the strongest ecological statement made.

Gearhart paints an exemplary picture of how humans might relate to nature in a utopian society. The possibility for this type of relationship, though, seems open only for women. Men are the enemy of both women and nature in this novel, and their violence against both is at times presented as an inherent and permanent phenomenon. One of the Hillwomen says of man, "It is not in his nature not to rape. It is not in my nature to be raped. We do not co-exist" (25). Many indications are given that men and women are so radically different from one another that there is
little hope for reconciliation between them. "Women and men cannot yet, may not ever, love one another without violence; they are no longer of the same species" (115). It is implied that the "species" of woman is closer to nature than the "species" of man. The nature/culture (and the accompanying male/female) dualism is accepted in this story, and the order of the hierarchy is simply reversed. Women and nature are considered to be superior to men and culture. And according to the logic of domination which the dualism is based on, it follows that women can dominate men. The danger of oppression is always present when superiority is assigned to one side of a dualism. We must be careful not to exchange male oppression of women for female oppression of men. Because it does not adequately deal with the dualistic roots of oppression, this story contains the seeds of oppression and suggests the superiority of one group of people over another. Though it is understandable that Gearhart takes this oversimplified perspective to make her point (and she does acknowledge its simplicity6), the hierarchical framework underlying the story makes it an inadequate one from the perspective of ecofeminism.

Of the three novels, the one that escapes this dualism most completely is *Woman on the Edge of Time*. Great pains have been taken to overcome the problems present in the Wanderground.
The women and men of the utopian place called Mattapoisett have become equal in a very real sense. Androgyney has been the solution to the problem of sexism and has gone so far as to deny the major biological distinction between the sexes - the reproductive role of women as childbearers. While a Mattapoissettian character gives a person from "the past" a tour of the baby factory, she explains the reason for their technological childbirth:

It was part of women's long revolution. When we were breaking all the old hierarchies. Finally there was that one thing we had to give up too, the only power we ever had, in return for no more power for anyone. The original production: the power to give birth. Cause as long as we were biologically enchained, we'd never be equal. And males never would be humanized to be loving and tender. So we all became mothers (Piercy 1976, 105).

The people of Mattapoisett appear to have consciously rejected the male/female dualism described in the Wanderground. In liberating women, they were careful not to give them power over men; they truly want equality for everyone, and to achieve that they had to throw out human hierarchy altogether. The aim of this project of equality is admirable, but the means of carrying it out and its end result raise questions about its desirability.

The first question about the technologizing of childbirth as a
means to equality is whether it is based on the nature/culture dualism. Childbirth is a natural human event, something we share with other animals, and which is therefore a reminder of our place in nature, not over, above, and opposed to it. To do away with human childbirth is to sever our relationship to non-human nature in an important way, to distance ourselves from it in order to liberate ourselves. It seems that, in this particular situation, the Mattapoisettians have accepted the dualistic view of man/culture vs. woman/nature and have decided that the way around the "natural" inequality that results from that dualism is to sever the perceived woman/nature connection by separating women from the "natural enslavement" of their bodies. The message is that women must distance themselves from and conquer nature in order to be human. The idea that we must escape our biology to be free comes from biological determinism, which has been a major justification for male/female dualism. This view reinforces the notion of women as closer to nature than men and tells us that women's bodies determine their stereotypical roles in society (i.e., that women's reproductive capacities mean their role is to bear children and stay home as mothers).

Dealing with differences, like those between female and male bodies, is a key problem in overcoming oppression. We need to find
a middle ground between denouncing, denying, and hating differences on the one hand and glorifying them on the other. We tend to go too far in one direction or the other, as Marge Piercy has done in her utopian answer to the issue of childbirth. Another question about the desirability of Mattapoissett's childbirth technology is whether this pursuit of equality has obliterated some important differences between the sexes. Is this story an "ecological" one - is there adequate respect for and appreciation of diversity? Or is difference done away with before it has even been respectfully acknowledged? Wiping out otherness for the sake of equality is an inadequate and undesirable response to oppression since it reinforces one of the roots of oppression - the idea that differences cannot be tolerated, understood or valued.

On the other hand, the blurring of gender boundaries that comes with the denial of difference in this novel is an important part of a utopian story. The part about this androgyny that I do find consistent with ecofeminism is its movement beyond the patriarchal constructs of gender that imprison us so completely. Challenging those oppressive gender categories that result from male/female dualism is imperative in our revolution. The dominant framework that splits the world into distinct halves called male and female and assigns different characteristics and
values to each half has greatly impoverished all people. In our efforts to become whole people we must move out of the fractured notions of our selves that patriarchal categories of gender have imposed upon us. But the way to do that is not to whitewash biological sex differences by obliterating female reproductive capacity, as Piercy has done. That is a superficial quick-techno-fix approach. A more thorough method would be to address the assumptions and role-stereotyping that make the sex differences problematic for women, without denying them their unique capacity for childbearing.

Because she does not tackle the underlying oppressive forces in her move from dystopia to utopia, Piercy's feminist analysis lacks depth. This lack is also indicated by the absence of the restraining feminist hand. There is no evidence of restraint at all in Mattapoissett and no mention of it in the preceding struggle to create this utopia; there is only the welcoming outstretched hand (the opposite extreme of the Wanderground, which offered no outstretched hand and only a restraining one). Although Piercy does a good job of portraying the multiple oppressions of her main character, Consuelo (who lives in the dystopian world and "travels" back and forth from there to utopian Mattapoissett), her utopian solutions to those forms of oppression reveal a lack of depth of
analysis of all kinds of oppression. This is also apparent in the superficial solution to racism in Mattapoissett.

Like the mechanized-childbirth remedy for sexism, the solution to racism has also been a technological one in *Woman on the Edge of Time*. Through genetic engineering, they "broke the bond between genes and culture" so there would be no chance of racism ever again (104). This is not a deep enough healing of the roots of oppression. If the way to heal oppression is to accept and respect diversity, the technological solutions to sexism and racism fail. They are based on a disrespect for difference since their purpose is to do away with it, in the case of sexism, and to scramble it up technologically and control it, in the case of racism. The version of diversity which is genetically engineered is phony and gives up the essence of diversity in exchange for superficial diversity. These solutions are based on the domination of nature and are therefore not acceptable solutions for ecofeminism. They rely on technological manipulation of nature to do away with relational problems among human beings. The liberation of one group or realm cannot be based on the domination of another.

The treatment of these issues in *Herland* has both similarities and dissimilarities with the other utopias. The women of Herland would be appalled at what has been done to childbirth in
Mattapoissett. In Herland, it is the highest, most honorable activity one can participate in. Motherhood is exalted as the divine purpose in life; it is the religion of these women. In this way, they are deeply connected to nature through childbearing and birth, in sharp contrast with the Mattapoissettians. Of course, the big difference between the two places is the absence of men in Herland and the striving for harmonious living between women and men in Mattapoissett. Unlike the Wanderground, Herland's absence of men is not the result of choice (at least not initially), but of historical accident. However, this total exaltation of motherhood leaves little room for men, except as inferior beings, since they are incapable of bearing and birthing children. They do not possess the supreme power that rules in Herland, the power of motherhood. Though the women initially welcome the idea of living with men, they finally choose not to. "We are unwilling to expose our country to free communication with the rest of the world - as yet" (Gilman 1979, 145). There is a similarity to the Wanderground in that male violence against women (rape) is definitely a contributing factor in their decision, and it caused them to expel the rapist, Terry. There is a subtle suggestion that male violence makes it impossible or undesirable for women to live with men. The outstretched hand at the beginning of the story becomes a restraining hand by the
end. Like the *Wanderground, Herland* basically concludes that women and nature are closer to one another and superior to and better off without men, who are the bad guys. The theme throughout both stories of the violent male treatment of land, animals, and people is true to life because of dualistic socialization, but it is not innately or ultimately true. In not acknowledging this, *Herland* helps to perpetuate the male/female dualism.

Even more clear than this is the acceptance of the nature/culture dualism in *Herland*. Though the relationship between the women and their natural environment is a caring one on their part, it is also a dominating one. There seems to be no question for them that nature is in some sense separate from and inferior to humans and that it is there to be used by them. The women's use of the land and its creatures is respectful in some ways, but it is definitely guided by the best interests of the human inhabitants of Herland. They have found it most useful to obliterate wildness by replanting the forests with useful, fruit-bearing trees and by breeding the only animals around, cats, (since all others have been purposely allowed to die off), to kill rodents but not birds, and to not make too much noise. Everything in Herland is tidy, polished, well-bred, domesticated. Both the land and the people are so controlled and cultivated; they have bred out wildness and
diversity through breeding out "the lowest types." Everyone is intelligent, kind, pleasant, and courteous. Even the children have lost much of their wildness; there is no room for such a thing since they are always improving on nature.

Another manifestation of this absence of wildness in Herland is the asexuality of the women. Their portrayal as sexless virgin mothers is too patriarchal and Christian for a feminist vision. Those few women who have manifested sexuality during the history of Herland have been punished by being denied motherhood. This, too, is "unnatural" and an unnecessary taming of wildness. Certainly it is understandable that Charlotte Perkins Gilman was writing in a time (Herland was written in 1915) when lesbianism was not an approved topic for popular literature, and so, whether or not it occurred to her that an all-female community does not have to be an asexual one, she assumed in the story that it does. The heterosexism inherent in the notion that women are not sexual beings unless men are around has no place in a good story, but it is more excusable in Gilman's story than it would be in a contemporary feminist utopia. The people in both the Wanderground and Mattapoisett are very openly and naturally sexual beings, and they have no homophobic hang-ups about whom they express their sexuality with. This acceptance of
diversity is a strong point of Mattapoissett (and perhaps less so of the Wanderground, since there is no sexual diversity - only lesbianism, since there are only women).\textsuperscript{10}

Racial diversity is another thing missing in Herland but present in Mattapoissett and the Wanderground. Perhaps the only reason for the racial homogeneity of Herland is a geographical one (the little country is completely isolated from other cultures), but one wonders why the race is white when this country seems to be located in some deep hidden corner of the world where the surrounding tribal natives (called "savages" by the narrator) are dark-skinned and speak in still "unknown" dialects. The issue of race goes unexamined, and its omission is particularly glaring because of the imperialistic undertones of the story.\textsuperscript{11} While Herland does not address racism, the other two novels make at least a half-hearted attempt to do so. Although the inhabitants of the other two utopias are made up of a mixture of skin-colors, the portrayal of racial diversity is very shallow, especially in the Wanderground. All three novels fail in the sense that they do not include a deep analysis of racism. Such an analysis is an essential part of an ecofeminist utopian vision.

Marge Piercy, in Woman on the Edge of Time, makes the best
attempt at taking on the issue of racism by portraying the
oppression of the main character, Consuelo, as a Chicana. The
reader (this white reader) does get a taste of the racism she
experiences and of how integrally it is related to her oppression as
a woman, a working-class person and a mental patient. Whether
or not Piercy succeeds from the perspective of a woman of color is
unknown to me. She tries and that is to be encouraged, I think.
But Piercy's utopian solution to the problem of racism fails; it
reveals that her understanding of the the depth of racism is
limited. As pointed out earlier, her techno-fix fails to address
racism; it is an escapist, easy answer with which no healing of the
problem takes place.

The fact that these stories are all white, in different degrees,
should not be overlooked. There are few if any works by nonwhite
women that fit into the category of utopian novels. Does that
mean something about utopian writing - is it elitist? Do non-
privileged women not have the luxury to write about such far-off
fantasies since their lives are grounded in the very real day-to-day
circumstances of the present? We need to question what we're
doing in terms of utopian thought. If we are to talk about utopia,
we need to know what a utopian society would look like to those
who dream of an end to their own oppression on the basis of race
and class. It is important to note that women of color may not be as inclined to write women's separatist utopias (though perhaps racially separatist ones) as white women are. In thinking about women's utopias like the Wanderground and Herland, we can consider what Beverly Smith (1981) says in an interview about lesbian separatism:

One of the most dangerous and erroneous concepts that separatists have put forward is that other oppressions, in addition to sexism, are attributed to men only. Some separatists believe that although women are racist, when men disappear and no longer rule, racism will not be a problem. . . . What lesbian separatists are saying is that when we get rid of men, sexism and racism will end too. I think that this is one of the most racist aspects of it because it does not recognize the racism that women, including lesbians, have (122-3).

These words serve as a reminder that white feminists or any other single group of people cannot decide what a liberatory future will look like for members of other oppressed groups and that a multiplicity of voices is necessary in the construction of utopian visions. Ecofeminism is about diversity, theoretically, and must remain mindful of it in practice, including in its utopian endeavors.

Despite their shortcomings, the utopian visions we do have are important steps in the overall process of building a better future for ourselves. The ecofeminist project is necessarily utopian. It is a
vision of something for which we have no definite historical model but which we must construct and strive to achieve. We are in such a bad situation that without envisioning a better world we will not be able to make one for ourselves. Ecofeminism, with its analyses of all forms of domination, sees all too clearly how far we are from where we need to be in order for people and nature to be free from exploitation. A world without oppression, where fractured relationships are healed, is certainly a utopia, but that does not mean that we should not strive toward it, that it should not be a guiding vision for our revolutionary politics. The term, "guiding vision" in this context does not refer to a static, fixed goal which must be achieved, but to a dynamic, flexible vision which is everchanging and growing.

In her essay on "Science and Technology in Feminist Utopias," Patrocinio Schweickart (1983) addresses the need for utopian thought by explaining the common theme in feminist utopian novels of "the all too real threat of violence and war, and of ecological depletion and pollution:"

These impending catastrophes are traced not only to science and technology or to the misguided overconfidence in reason but, ultimately, to the domination of women in patriarchal society. Against this critique of our own world, utopia is offered as a possible alternative, not
something that is bound to happen, but something attainable only by dint of conscious and prodigious effort. Utopia is necessary, not because it is logically or historically necessary, but because we need it (210).

Schweickart's statement that utopia is necessary "because we need it" is a good summary of the ecofeminist position on utopia. It is imperative that we work toward it. Also important in this paragraph is her claim that utopia is "something attainable only by dint of conscious and prodigious effort." It is not a magical, otherworldly event which happens overnight by the grace of some god, nor is it something that will happen inevitably. We are not going to be saved from our oppression by divine forces; we must struggle together toward our own emancipation. In the context of this world, creating a utopian vision requires incredible determination and work, and the vision can bear fruit only if that work is carried out through long and continuous struggle. Ynestra King (1983) describes part of the work needed in an ecofeminist revolution and how that work is compatible with the notion of utopia.

Ecofeminism supports utopian visions of harmonious, diverse, decentralized communities, using only those technologies based on ecological principles, as the only practical solution for the continuation of life on earth . . . . Visions and politics are joined as an ecofeminist
culture and politics begin to emerge. Central to this development is ecofeminist praxis: taking direct action to effect changes that are immediate and personal as well as long-term and structural. Direct actions include learning holistic health and alternate ecological technologies, living in communities which explore old and new forms of spirituality that celebrate all life as diverse expressions of nature, considering the ecological consequences of our lifestyles and personal habits, and participating in creative public forms of resistance. This sometimes involves engaging in nonviolent civil disobedience to physically stop the machines which are arrayed against life (125).

Part of this revolutionary struggle is creating new visions that guide us as we work for liberation for all of life. The utopian novels examined here present visions of real communities - small, communal groups of people living together and governing themselves in anarchist fashion through participatory, collective political process. The authors' attempts at freeing people and nature from domination, though not always adequate, are important. The stories they tell come from and speak for voices that have been silenced and provide an element of hope and many constructive ideas from which we can learn in our search for utopia. Patrocinio Schweickart (1983) sums up what we can learn from stories like those of the Wandering, Herland, and Mattapoissett.
Feminist utopias offer fascinating suggestions, but their value does not lie primarily in offering blueprints for the future. They perform the twin functions of exploring alternative worlds organized around feminist values, and of deepening our critical perspective on our own world. Above all, they offer us a liberating experience. They allow us to live in utopia, to escape the confines of our world, to stretch our sense of what is possible and what is natural, to see what we could be in a better world (210).

Although it is a helpful and important element of liberatory thought, we must be cautious in using utopian writing/thinking. The important question that arises out of the racism discussion remains unanswered. That is, how can we construct visions that are not oppressive in themselves when we are still so deeply embedded in the oppressive context of our culture? Won't our visions necessarily be tainted with the products of the institutions of oppression (for example, our entrenched notions about gender that are a product of patriarchy)? We have seen that this is true in many respects of the three utopian novels analyzed in this paper.

This difficulty need not keep us from envisioning, though. We must begin to paint pictures of our visions, to work toward constructing a new worldview. Perhaps with the dissolution of patriarchy and other oppressive institutions in a truly postmodern
In a paper on "The Possibility of Feminist Theory," Marilyn Frye (1988) writes about a way of doing theory that would supposedly escape these dangers. Her criticism of theory as oppressive totalizing generalization calls for an alternative liberating model for theory, and she shows how feminist theory has both fallen into the old familiar generalizing framework and moved beyond it in some respects. Her focus is on getting past the
difficulty feminism has had dealing with differences among women. Because of the perceived need to present a coherent, unified worldview that represents the category of "Woman," feminists have overlooked many varying women's experiences. In particular, differences due to race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, age, etc., have not been paid attention to with complete respect by the privileged women who have written most of what is called feminist theory (1988, 5).

In place of the generalizing that leads to domination with its tendency to silence voices that do not "fit" the generalization, Frye proposes thinking in terms of dynamic, fluid "patterns" which are perceived by a wide variety of women in efforts to make sense out of our varied experience. "Instead of bringing a phase of enquiry to closure by summing up what is known, as other ways of generalizing do, pattern recognition/construction opens fields of meaning and generates new interpretive possibilities" (Frye 1988, 10). The discovery of the type of patterns Frye describes requires encounters with difference. It is in paying attention to anomalies, making them central to our perception, that we see patterns (13). The emphasis in this pattern-making is on diversity, on paying attention to "others" and making sense of their unique experiences, listening to their voices. The generality of a pattern is not a
generality that defeats or is defeated by variety (12). Of these patterns, Frye says

They work until they don't work. You find out where that is by working them until they dissolve. Like a metaphor, a pattern has to be appreciated, put to use. You have to run with it. You may outrun its power without realizing you have if you are not paying attention to the voices and perceptions of many women (18).

This understanding of patterns could serve as a model for our utopian visions that would keep those visions from becoming stagnant and totalizing. To escape a danger implicit in utopian writing - that it will be intended and/or perceived to be a fixed notion of how everything should ultimately be - we must be sure to employ a wide array of contributors in the building of our utopias. There is a healthy uncertainty in admitting that we do not and cannot know just what utopia ought to be because we are limited by our cultural context; this will keep us from speaking for others. It is crucial that our utopian stories remain dynamic, open-ended, evolving, and interactive with variety and reality so that they do not become an updated, cosmetically improved version of a very old and very bad set of stories.
NOTES

1. The body of thought I draw upon in this paper is that developed by Ynestra King during the past dozen years. The interpretation given in this paper is based on my understanding of King’s theory as it appears in her many articles and forthcoming book, *Feminism and the Reenchantment of Nature: Women, Ecology and Peace*, and as it was presented to a seminar at the Institute for Social Ecology in July 1988.

2. Much has been written about the historical woman/nature connection and how it has contributed to the domination of both. The most well-known books are Susan Griffin’s *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), and Carolyn Merchant’s *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980). There are numerous other works on the subject.

3. According to Ynestra King, liberal feminism and socialist feminism both maintain the nature/culture dualism by attempting to overcome the woman/nature connection through acceptance as equals in the male culture. In wanting to sever the woman/nature connection which has played a large part in their oppression, they feel the need to abandon the realm of nature and to gain status as part of culture. They want to join with men against nature. Understandably, this is the only hope these feminists see for liberation. On the other hand, radical cultural feminists embrace the woman/nature connection wholeheartedly, claiming that women and nature are superior to men and culture. They reverse the dualism from its normal form of men/culture as superior and women/nature as inferior, but in doing so they maintain the dualism (King, 1990).

4. Before her death, Barbara Deming was “the major mentor to the [ecofeminist] movement,” according to King (1988, 125).

5. The word “rape” serves as a metaphor for the exploitation of the planet. For Gearhart, rape of women and “rape” of the earth appear to be the same phenomenon.
6. One of her characters says, when addressing the issue of men, "It is too simple to condemn them all or to praise all of us. But for the sake of earth and all she holds, that simplicity must be our creed" (2).

7. *Wanderground* and *Herland* display a much stronger, less critical acceptance of given gender categories than *Woman on the Edge of Time* does.

8. This domination of nature is inconsistent with the caring, non-hierarchical relationship the people of Mattapoisett see themselves as having with nonhuman nature. "We see ourselves as partners with water, air, birds, fish, trees" (125). The inconsistencies with this statement go beyond the instances of technological solutions to sexism and racism. There is further evidence of human/nature dualism in the genetic manipulation they practice and other high-tech problem-solving techniques that reflect a managerial relationship with nature.

9. This is the opposite extreme of Mattapoisett's total denial of women's childbirth. Something of a middle ground between these two extremes is what an ecofeminist utopian vision might include.

This childbearing of women issue is what hangs us up in discussion about healing sexism. Our rigid notions of gender keep us from figuring this out without wiping it out. We have always used it as the gender-separating issue and built the oppression of women up around it (as proof of rigid gender distinction).

10. Even though lesbian separatism is not an ultimate answer from an ecofeminist perspective, it does have a valid purpose and place, and it need not be dualistic if used as an interim solution. It can serve as an important space for women to heal the wounds of their oppression while men are unlearning their oppressive socialization. Women also need a place of their own to define themselves apart from men since their culture defines them as appendages to men.

11. Gilman never seems to question or be critical of the imperialist attitude of the party of explorers who visit Herland except in terms of the nice little country of white women that they intrude upon. She doesn't call into question their adventures
into the jungles of that isolated corner of the world, or their intentions or attitudes, until they reach Herland. Their imperialism regarding the tribal natives around Herland is what makes the lack of awareness of race issues in this novel all the more disturbing.
REFERENCES


BEYOND DUALISM,
TOWARD AN ECOFEMINIST SCIENCE
Contemporary feminist critiques of science deeply challenge the predominant worldview as it is articulated by mainstream modern science and suggest radical reconstruction of that scientific worldview. Several of these critiques share the goals and methods of ecofeminism, and both the scientific and ecofeminist perspectives can be illuminated and enriched by an effort to draw the connections between them. The common ground between the two perspectives is found in the commitment to overcome dualistic modes of thought. Since this commitment is what distinguishes ecofeminism from other feminisms, and since science has been so instrumental in the construction of the dualistic worldview that pervades western culture (and so must be greatly affected by challenges to it), it seems that a natural alliance exists between the feminist science critics and ecofeminists. Both find the roots of oppression specifically in the man/culture vs. woman/nature dichotomy as expressed by the metaphor of science as male mind violently penetrating female nature. The main task of both, as I see it, is to overthrow this dichotomy, and both agree that the now common feminist solution of simply embracing the woman/nature half of the dichotomy as the realm of salvation by
glorifying traditionally "feminine" characteristics is not an adequate or thorough one. Both help to shed light on the necessity of a radical, thoroughgoing dismantling and re-visioning of the scientific worldview from the ground up.

Since the term "ecofeminism" is currently used to represent a diverse range of ideas, I will clarify my own use of that term. My understanding of ecofeminism is based on the work of Ynestra King, a pioneer in ecofeminist theory and activism.1 The fundamental premise of King's theory is that an oppressive relationship (i.e., that between men and women) cannot be healed when it is addressed in isolation, removed from the context of other forms of oppression (i.e., that of nature by humans). Since ecofeminism is based on the belief that all forms of domination are related, it includes analyses of racism, classism, and heterosexism in addition to those of sexism and the domination of nature. All of these instances of domination are products of the prevailing dualistic worldview which deals with difference by dividing reality into two halves, assigning higher value to one half and lower value to the other. This division pits self against other in all kinds of relationships, and we use what power our position in life affords us to keep the "others" down, whether they be women, people of color, lesbians or gay men, working-class people, or nonhuman
forms of life. Because of their common roots, these forms of oppression must be addressed in connection with one another. While ecofeminism recognizes those connections and attempts to address all oppressive relationships, it focuses on the joint dominations of women and nature, because their historical association with one another means that they are mutually reinforcing and inextricably linked.

The major point of departure for ecofeminism from other feminisms is the nature/culture dualism. Ecofeminism seeks to do away with this dualism that is perpetuated in other forms of feminism. The nature/culture dualism which pervades our thought overlooks the fact that human culture is not separate from nonhuman nature but grew out of it and is part of it. The nature/culture dualism decontextualizes human culture by removing it from its proper place as part of nature and placing it over and above nature where it rules and exploits it. In the same way, nature is decontextualized, objectified, and turned into an abstraction and a resource. Historically, men have been identified with the culture side of the dualism and women with the nature side. For this reason, the nature/culture dualism is a central concern for ecofeminism.
This dualism and others that go hand in hand with it have also been central to feminist critiques of science. In her book, *The Science Question in Feminism*, Sandra Harding (1986) says:

The androcentric ideology of contemporary science posits as necessary, and/or as facts, a set of dualisms - culture vs. nature; rational mind vs. prerational body and irrational emotions and values; objectivity vs. subjectivity; public vs. private - and then links men and masculinity to the former and women and femininity to the latter in each dichotomy. Feminist critics have argued that such dichotomizing constitutes an ideology in the strong sense of the term: in contrast to merely value-laden false beliefs that have no social power, these beliefs structure the policies and practices of social institutions, including science (136).

It is plainly seen in the work of the feminist science critics that science has been guided by oppressive ideology and that its foundation has been built upon (and has simultaneously helped to construct) the above-mentioned dichotomies. According to scientist Evelyn Fox Keller (1985, 79), science divides the world into two parts: the knower, or mind, which is male, and the knowable, or nature, which is female. The activity by which the knower can acquire knowledge is genderized, as the language of science reveals. Sexual and patriarchal metaphors abound; the purpose of the male scientist is to "conquer," "penetrate," and "master" nature. The relationship between the knower and the known is one of distance
and separation. Subject and object are radically divided, without worldly relation; nature is objectified. Carolyn Merchant (1980) quotes Francis Bacon, the father of modern science:

> For you have but to follow and as it were hound nature in her wanderings and you will be able when you like to lead and drive her afterward to the same place again. . . . Neither ought a man to make scruple of entering and penetrating into these holes and corners, when the inquisition of truth is his whole object (168).

Harding makes connections between the development of the worldview that came to hate and dominate both women and nature and how this worldview was justified by and went hand in hand with the development of modern science. She draws on Carolyn Merchant's work to show that historically, each wave of scientific advancement coincided with a period of repression for women (i.e., the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century advent of modern science and the European witch burnings) and that the changing conceptions of nature corresponded with those of women (i.e., when women were perceived as passive, mindless, submissive objects, so was nature) (Harding 1986, 113-116).

Harding further illustrates her claim with the work of L. J. Jordanova, whose study of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century
biomedical science in Europe showed that "sex roles were constituted in a scientific and medical language, and, conversely, the natural sciences and medicine were suffused with sexual imagery" (Jordanova quoted in Harding 1986, 117). Men were depicted in scientific literature and in anatomical drawings and wax models as rational human agents, while women were portrayed as mysterious sex objects. Jordanova argues that women's roles were diverse during this period, not limited to the stereotype promoted by science, and that this gender symbolism was not simply a reflection of an existing division of labor by gender. Rather, "the lack of fit between ideas and experience clearly points to the ideological function of the nature/culture dichotomy as applied to gender." Harding concludes, "Thus, biomedical science intensified the cultural association of nature with passive, objectified femininity and of culture with active, objectifying masculinity - and was in return more intensely masculinized by this project" (1986, 118).

Through such pictures of the large role ideology has played in the history of science, the notion of pure scientific objectivity is revealed as myth. Harding exposes many oppressive uses of this myth in writing about the "seamlessness of science's participation in projects supporting masculine domination" (1986, 103). Another
feminist philosopher of science, Ruth Hubbard (1983), gives good examples of the selectivity in application of oppressive scientific ideology that reveals this domination. One of these follows.

The ideology of woman's nature that is invoked [to serve the purposes of those in power] would have us believe that a woman's capacity to become pregnant leaves her at all times physically disabled by comparison with men. The scientific underpinnings for these ideas were elaborated in the nineteenth century by the white, university-educated, mainly upper class men who made up the bulk of the new professions of obstetrics and gynecology, biology, psychology, sociology and anthropology. But these professionals used their theories of women's innate frailty only to disqualify the girls and women of their own race and class who would be in competition with them for education and professional status and might also deprive them of the kinds of personal attention and services they were accustomed to receive from their mothers, wives, and sisters. They did not invoke women's weakness to mitigate the exploitation of poor women working long hours in homes and factories that belonged to members of the upper classes, nor against the ways Black slave women were forced to work for no wages in the plantations and homes of their white masters and mistresses (1983, 4).

The interrelations between the racism, sexism and classism of science can be seen clearly here. Because of the ideological basis of much of science, it becomes clear that we can move in a whole new direction scientifically only when and if we overcome the forms of domination in all areas of life. According to Sandra Harding (1986, 249), a new science, from a feminist perspective,
must be self-consciously anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-classist, etc. The feminist goal is not to pretend to be objective, since it is not possible to be truly "objective" in the traditional scientific sense. We are always in relation to whatever we are studying and cannot pretend that we can escape our inevitable human biases (1986).

Throughout her book, Harding stresses the depth of the androcentrism and other oppressive biases that lie at the core of modern science and dispels the notion that these countless oppressive uses of science are simply misuses of an otherwise good and pure, truly objective science. She asks the following rhetorical questions:

Could the uses of science to create ecological disaster, support militarism, turn human labor into physically and mentally mutilating work, develop ways of controlling 'others' - the colonized, women, the poor - be just misuses of applied science? Or does this kind of conceptualization of the character and purposes of experimental method ensure that what is called bad science or misused science will be a distinctively masculinist science-as-usual? (1986, 116).

She makes a convincing case that science is deeply shaped by what she calls "coercive" values. "Classist, racist, and sexist social relations are as central to the organization of science as they are to the organization of social life more generally" (1986, 78). Because these values so deeply permeate science as we know it, says
Harding, we must totally reconstitute a science without allegiance to those values. However, she does not propose alternative visions of science and says that we cannot do so while we are still entrenched in the distorting, oppressive forces of our culture. It is only when we have transcended those forces that we will be able to build a new science.

On the other hand, the project of some feminist philosophers of science has been to offer alternative visions of a science which is not based on these false dualisms between nature/culture, male/female, subject/object, etc., and Harding is supportive of these efforts ("successor science projects," as she calls them) to a degree. Evelyn Fox Keller offers a constructive use of the subjectivity that is inevitably a part of science, in contrast with the oppressive uses of much *unacknowledged* scientific subjectivity. Keller has proposed a new notion of scientific objectivity that is not opposed to subjectivity but is something of a synthesis of the dichotomous notions of objectivity and subjectivity. This new notion is called "dynamic objectivity" and it is distinguished from what Keller (1985, 117) calls "static objectivity:"

Dynamic objectivity aims at a form of knowledge that grants to the world around us its independent integrity but does so in a way that remains cognizant of, indeed relies on, our connectivity with that world. In this,
Dynamic objectivity is not unlike empathy, a form of knowledge of other persons that draws explicit on the commonality of feelings and experience in order to enrich one's understanding of another in his or her own right. By contrast, I call static objectivity the pursuit of knowledge that begins with the severance of subject from object rather than aiming at the disentanglement of one from the other.

Dynamic objectivity's recognition of simultaneous independence and connectivity is strikingly similar to the ecofeminist notion of "ecological" relatedness. The ecofeminist alternative to the oppositional relationship between humans and nature advanced by modern science is a close, mutual one which is based on an evolutionary understanding of how human culture emerged out of nonhuman nature and therefore recognizes the connection between the two. Though no distinct line is drawn between the human and natural realms, the two are not totally merged together; the uniqueness of each is respected rather than blurred. The proposed alternative to dualistic thinking is ecological thinking, which is based on the concepts of interdependence and balance found in the science of ecology - concepts that are contradictory to the hierarchical dualism that underlies the systems of oppression. Following ecology, ecofeminism sees the world in terms of inter-relations among people, beings, things. Relations of humans to nonhuman nature and of different genders, races, classes, etc., to
one another are not oppositional or hierarchical. The ecological principle of "unity in diversity" provides a model for a new worldview in which differences are recognized but not ranked or opposed to one another. It tells us that diversity in nature is necessary and enriching, and the same is true in the human realm, according to ecological thinking. An acceptance of and healthy respect for diversity is an important element in overcoming oppression of all kinds, since the reason that most groups are oppressed is because they are different from the established and ruling "norm." From an ecological perspective, though, "otherness" need not be considered inferior; if accepted, we can learn from it and enrich our own lives through connection with "others."

If ecological thinking were accepted and if Keller's dynamic objectivity were the basis for science, then science would not be dominating. Rather, it would be attentive and loving, as Keller (1985) explains in the following passage:

[Dynamic objectivity] recognizes difference between self and other as an opportunity for a deeper and more articulated kinship. . . . . The scientist employs a form of attention to the natural world that is like one's ideal attention to the human world; it is a form of love. The capacity for such attention, like the capacity for love and empathy, requires a sense of self secure
enough to tolerate both difference and continuity . . . . (117-18).

The loving attentiveness Keller describes is the same kind of love described by Marilyn Frye (1983), in her essay on arrogance and love. Like the scientist who practices dynamic objectivity, Frye's "loving eye" "knows the independence of the other" and respects that independence. The one with the loving eye does not usurp the other into her own interests; neither does she give up her interests. "What is the case is that her interest does not blend the seer and the seen . . . . One who sees with a loving eye is separate from the other whom she sees" (1983, 264). This maintenance of the two distinct selves is important for the possibility of healthy relationship, which can only happen when two strong selves come together. If the boundaries between self and other are totally blurred, otherness is often smothered and domination follows. In the loving eye, this respect for boundaries is coupled with humility and attentiveness.

[The loving eye] is the eye of a seer who knows that nature is indifferent. It is the eye of one who knows that to know the seen, one must consult something other than one's own will and interests and fears and imagination. One must look at the thing. One must look and listen and check and question.

The loving eye is one that pays a certain sort of attention (265).
The relationships between self and other described by Frye and Keller are manifestations of the respect for otherness advocated by ecofeminism. With such love and respect as the basis of our interactions with one another and with nature, our science would be entirely different from the one we now have, which is based on arrogance and domination.

Frye describes arrogance in contrast to love. The one with the arrogant eye objectifies and silences the other rather than respecting and paying attention to it. He assumes that the world and everything in it exists for his use. Therefore, he simplifies everything to make it understandable enough to use it. "The arrogant perceiver does not countenance the possibility that the Other is independent, indifferent" (262-263). This attitude is characteristic of mainstream modern science.

As much of modern science is revealed as oppressive ideology, though, it becomes clear that it is both possible and necessary to dismantle our present science and build another. According to Harding (1986, 240), "the feminist successor science projects require the radical belief that it is possible to redefine political and intellectual progress in ways that reveal the social hierarchies of racism, classism, sexism, and culture-centrism to be not natural, not due to biological differences, but socially created and thus
changeable." Since science is socially constructed, we can de-construct it, and we must do so if we are to move beyond the oppressive structures that rule our society. Harding says of even what she calls one of the "least threatening feminist challenges to science, namely the elimination of masculine bias in social science and biological theory and research," that it "requires a fundamental transformation of concepts, methods, and interpretations in these areas, and a critical examination of the logic of scientific inquiry - rather than mere reforms" (1986, 108).

A fundamental scientific revolution is a necessary part of the ecofeminist project. Ynestra King (1990, 6) writes that "the serious consideration of ecology by feminists suggests critical directions for theory, and creates an imperative for a feminist epistemology based on a noninstrumental way of knowing. This implies a reformulation, not a repudiation, of reason and science." We must reconstruct science according to the new ways of conceptualizing and taking up with the world that ecofeminism envisions and is working toward. A radically different understanding of our relatedness to each other and to nonhuman nature is the only thing that can save our world. A society in which diversity is celebrated rather than suppressed would produce a more ecological science. If we were not so separate from nature and did not have
such a fractured, dominating relationship with it, we would naturally take into consideration any effects of our scientific method on the earth and its life forms. In an essay on "Science and Technology in Feminist Utopias," Patrocinio Schweickart (1983) explains why a new science and technology are imperative from an ecofeminist perspective:

... a key feature of the feminist perspective is the realization that, in patriarchy, science and technology are governed by the same principle that governs the relationship between the sexes - the master/slave dialectic between self and Other. The domination of women and the domination of nature serve as models for each other. Thus, science and technology have a place in a feminist utopia only if they can be redefined apart from the logic of domination (210).

Schweickart's focus on utopian thought goes hand in hand with the utopian element in ecofeminism. With its analyses of all forms of domination, ecofeminism sees all too clearly how far we are from where we need to be in order for people and nature to be free from exploitation. A world without oppression, where relationships are repaired and where our science is consistent with ecological principles and does not disempower and exploit human beings is certainly a utopia, but that does not mean that we should not strive toward it, that it should not be a guiding vision for our
revolutionary politics. Without envisioning a better world, we will not be able to make one for ourselves. The term, "guiding vision" in this context does not refer to a static, fixed goal which must be achieved, but to a dynamic, flexible vision which is everchanging and growing.

The question arises, how can we construct visions when we are still so deeply embedded in modernism, patriarchy, etc.? Wouldn't our visions be tainted with the products of these institutions (for example, our notions about gender)? Harding suggests that it is too soon to know what a solution to the problems of science and gender ought to look like. She realizes that the transcendence of the categories of gender, race, class, etc. that is a necessary precursor to a nonoppressive science is unimaginable to us who are firmly entrenched in those categories. Harding (1986, 139) quotes Elizabeth Fee, "For us to imagine a feminist science in a feminist society is rather like asking a medieval peasant to imagine the theory of genetics or the production of a space capsule; our images are, at best, likely to be sketchy and unsubstantial."

This fact need not keep us from envisioning. We must begin to paint pictures of our visions, to work toward constructing a new worldview. Perhaps with the dissolution of patriarchy and other oppressive institutions in a truly postmodern age, as we outgrew
the distorted notions they have imprinted on our minds, we would let these notion go since they were no longer useful. To ensure that there would not be one grand totalizing vision of utopia, the constructions of our visions must come from many different kinds of voices. Without diversity, the potential for silencing and oppression that are the likely products of a homogeneous utopia is too great.

In a paper on "The Possibility of Feminist Theory," Marilyn Frye (1988) writes about a way of doing theory that would supposedly escape these dangers. Her criticism of theory as oppressive totalizing generalization calls for an alternative liberating model for theory. She proposes thinking in terms of dynamic, fluid "patterns" which are perceived by a wide variety of women in efforts to make sense out of our varied experience. "Instead of bringing a phase of enquiry to closure by summing up what is known, as other ways of generalizing do, pattern recognition/construction opens fields of meaning and generates new interpretive possibilities" (Frye 1988, 10). The discovery of these patterns requires encounters with difference. It is in paying attention to anomalies, making them central to our perception, that we see patterns, in contrast with the more conventional method of ignoring/overriding them to get generalization (13). The
generality of a pattern is not a generality that defeats or is
defeated by variety (12). Of these patterns, Frye says:

They work until they don't work. You find
out where that is by working them until
they dissolve. Like a metaphor, a pattern
has to be appreciated, put to use. You have
to run with it. You may outrun its power
without realizing you have if you are not
paying attention to the voices and perceptions
of many women (18).

This understanding of patterns could be a model for our utopian
visions. This kind of approach would keep those visions from being
stagnant and totalizing.

A scientific translation of Frye's notion of paying attention to
anomaly and a variety of voices in pattern-making can be found in
the scientific method of Barbara McClintock. Evelyn Fox Keller
writes about McClintock, who discovered the phenomenon of genetic
transposition through paying attention to an aberrant pattern she
discovered in her research on corn plants. Her unique method of
scientific research was responsible for her important discovery,
which was overlooked by most scientists who disregarded
aberrations, always seeking to fit individual events and specimens
into a framework of generalization. McClintock, on the other hand,
had a real respect for diversity that meant that she gave her
attention to difference. She was dedicated to "listening to the
material" in a way that meant she had an intersubjective relationship with the material she studied rather than a traditional subject/object relationship. In her own words, there is an element of love in her scientific method - a unique and respectful attentiveness that does not allow for objectification and domination. "McClintock can risk the suspension of boundaries between subject and object without jeopardy to science precisely because, to her, science is not premised on that division" (Keller 1985, 164).

In the relationship she describes with plants, as in human relations, respect for difference constitutes a claim not only on our interest but on our capacity for empathy - in short, on the highest form of love: love that allows for intimacy without the annihilation of difference. I use the word love neither loosely nor sentimentally, but out of fidelity to the language McClintock herself uses to describe a form of attention; indeed a form of thought. Her vocabulary is consistently a vocabulary of kinship, of affection, of empathy (l64).

McClintock's way of doing science is compatible with ecofeminism's ecological respect for diversity and opposition to the dualistic relationship of nature/culture, etc. Keller's explication of the difference principle practiced by McClintock shows its similarity to ecofeminism's notion of difference:

Difference constitutes a principle for ordering
the world radically unlike the principle of division or dichotomization (subject-object, mind-matter, feeling-reason, disorder-law). Whereas these oppositions are directed toward a cosmic unity typically excluding or devouring one of the pair, toward a unifying, all-encompassing law, respect for difference remains content with multiplicity as an end in itself. . . . Difference, in this world view, does not posit division as an epistemological prerequisite - it does not imply the necessity of hard and fast divisions in nature, or in mind, or in the relation between mind and nature. Division severs connection and imposes distance; the recognition of difference provides a starting point for relatedness. It serves both as a clue to new modes of connectedness in nature, and as an invitation to engagement with nature (1985, 163).

Although Keller and ecofeminism share this understanding of difference, it means different things to each. For ecofeminism, it means that we need a new science based on such modes of relation - one that is not thoroughly tainted by oppressive biases; for Keller it means a more superficial reform of the science we know. She believes it is sufficient to develop positive scientific models present in modern science. Though she offers a good beginning answer, Keller doesn't go deep enough with her analysis. She clings to the traditional notion of an untouchable, almost sacred structure at the core of modern science; she says we cannot have a different science (1985, 178). At the same time, she calls for a gender-free science. Must not a gender-free science be a different one, though, since the one we know is deeply androcentric?
Regardless of her failure to see the depth of science's engenderment, Keller's ideas on science as genderless are important and helpful. She argues strongly that McClintock's science is non-gendered. Though it may be tempting to label it "feminine" because of her emphasis on feeling, intuition, and relationship, we would be wrong to do so. A gender-free rather than a feminine science is what Keller advocates, along with Harding, Bleier and ecofeminism. A non-dualistic science is a non-gendered science. Our dichotomous categories of gender are symptoms of a fractured people; we must transcend them to be whole again. Certainly, a gender-free science would be more "feminine" than our present science, which is "masculine." It would be whole, though, rather than feminine - not fractured, neither masculine nor feminine. Keller says McClintock wanted to claim science as a human rather than a male endeavor (Keller 1985, 175).

This holistic approach is the best one from an ecofeminist perspective. The answer is not to reverse the dualism and embrace what is on the woman/nature side (love, caring, etc.) while rejecting what's on the male/culture side (objectivity, etc.)\(^5\). That perpetuates the dualism and glorifies the characteristics of an oppressed class. Feminists need to be wary of buying into the
patriarchal ideology that's been designed to oppress women. In her book, *Science and Gender*, scientist Ruth Bleier (1984) makes this clear:

We may indeed value the characteristics that in our Western societies are associated with femaleness - and, indeed, need to celebrate them, since they seem to be the only force standing in the way of our society's plunge into self-destruction - but we need not justify them as natural, biological or innate . . . . The chance for liberating ideas lies not with trying to turn traditional or misogynist or racist ideologies 180 degrees around and in our favor, but in turning them under completely, destroying their roots (12).

We can begin to destroy the roots of the oppressive ideologies Bleier speaks of by deconstructing the categories in which science is so firmly entrenched. Its understandings and definitions of nature, gender, etc. are dominational and need to be entirely replaced by new ones. When we transcend the dualistic framework, the lines of demarcation between categories blur, and our notions about those categories are deeply challenged and radically altered. An alternate, intersubjective framework is much more fluid, dynamic, uncertain, evolving, and it is unsettling to the totalizing mind of most of modern science, theory, and politics. But this is as it should be, according to Harding (1986). She says:
It would be historically premature and delusionary for feminism to arrive at a 'master theory,' at a 'normal science' paradigm with conceptual and methodological assumptions that we all think we accept. Feminist analytical categories should be unstable at this moment in history" (244).

Harding, like Frye, is committed to keeping feminist theory from becoming too sure of itself and too homogenous. Uncertainty is healthy; we cannot claim to speak for others or to know "the truth" about feminism, just as wealthy white straight men cannot speak for all the others or know "the truth" about science.

Though we cannot know precisely what an ecofeminist science would look like, we can envision some possibilities. Once the rigidity of the dualistic model is replaced by the fluidity of the intersubjective one, the whole world looks different; it is no longer based on relationships of domination but on respectful, non-hierarchical ones. Until that happens, though, we must work within our present context. While postmodernism is useful in an ecofeminist critique of science, it must not be ahistorical or acontextual. We can use the postmodernist critique without losing sight of the reality that limits and constructs us. It is only practical and reasonable that we move within our given world in order to make any real movement away from oppression. In
order to be meaningful, our visions need to grow out of a place grounded in a contextual reality. At the same time, though, we can imagine the freedom that lies beyond the confines of that reality and begin to actively imagine and construct it.

Ecofeminism strives for a balance between critical, visionary theory and down-to-earth politics based on the historical context within which we find ourselves. It is useful to work with gender differences while acknowledging that they're socially constructed and moving beyond them. The woman/nature connection is neither totally embraced nor abandoned in ecofeminism, but is used as a vantage point from which to see both sides of the nature/culture dualism. Ynestra King says:

> It is as if women were entrusted with and kept the dirty little secret that humanity emerges from non-human nature into society in the life of the species, and the person. The process of nurturing an unsocialized, undifferentiated human infant into an adult person - the socialization of the organic - is the bridge between nature and culture . . . . The key to the historic agency of women with respect to nature/culture dualism lies in the fact that the mediating traditional conversion activities of women - mothering, cooking, healing, farming, foraging - are as social as they are natural (King 1990, 17).

King does not claim that women are inherently closer to nature than men, but does claim that because of their assigned social roles
throughout history, they may be in a position to see more clearly and to appreciate more fully the connections between culture and nature. Using the woman/nature connection in this way helps to ultimately move beyond its dualism.

Like ecofeminism, Harding advocates working within our given circumstances while simultaneously transcending them. She encourages both standpoint epistemologies (successor science projects) and complete postmodernist transcendence, since the dialectical tension between the two can help to keep our theories of science heterogenous and flexible. Keller and Frye (1983) are helpful in envisioning and working toward a non-dualistic science by reminding us to pay attention to differences, while we ultimately move away from limiting categories and totalizing theory altogether.

Harding (1986) makes the point that most of feminism has been presented as totalizing theory, meaning that it has sought generalization at the expense of diversity. She argues against the possibility and desirability of such theory for feminism and points out that some feminist theory attempts to not be totalizing:

Equally important strains in feminism, however, insist that it cannot be a totalizing theory. Once "woman" is deconstructed into "women," and "gender" is recognized to have no fixed referents,
feminism itself dissolves as a theory that can reflect the voice of a naturalized or essentialized speaker (246).

If ecofeminism wants to transcend the oppressive worldview it criticizes, it must self-consciously refuse to conceptualize oppression in a totalizing framework by copying the language and methodology of the oppressors. We must move beyond these frameworks - though it is painful and frightening - out into the unknown beautiful world of freedom that we struggle to find/build. It is a difficult, uncertain place in which we find ourselves, but we need not be paralyzed by that uncertainty. Rather we must rise to the challenge, engage in the struggle to seek liberation, and continue to follow our dreams of a radically other time, always remembering to keep our ears open to the variety of voices we encounter along the way, and rejoicing in the multiplicity of selves and beings, both human and nonhuman, that color our experience.
NOTES

1. The body of thought I draw upon in this paper is that developed by Ynestra King during the past dozen years. The interpretation given in this paper is based on my understanding of King's theory as it appears in her many articles and forthcoming book, Feminism and the Reenchantment of Nature: Women, Ecology and Peace, and as it was presented to a seminar at the Institute for Social Ecology in July 1988.

2. Much has been written about the historical woman/nature connection and how it has contributed to the domination of both. The most well-known books are Carolyn Merchant's The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), and Susan Griffin's Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her (New York: Harper and Row, 1978). There are numerous other works on the subject.

3. According to Ynestra King, liberal feminism and socialist feminism both maintain the nature/culture dualism by attempting to overcome the woman/nature connection through acceptance as equals in the male culture. In wanting to sever the woman/nature connection which has played a large part in their oppression, they feel the need to abandon the realm of nature and to gain status as part of culture. They want to join with men against nature. Understandably, this is the only hope these feminists see for liberation. On the other hand, radical cultural "nature" feminists embrace the woman/nature connection wholeheartedly, claiming that women and nature are superior to men and culture. They reverse the dualism from its normal form of men/culture as superior and women/nature as inferior, but in doing so they maintain the dualism (1990).

4. For further development and examples of this and its corresponding dualisms, see my preceding paper, "In Search of an Ecofeminist Utopia."
5. This is not true of other types of ecofeminism that are inconsistent with my definition of it. Many writings called "ecofeminist" do enthusiastically embrace the woman/nature connection as inherent and build theory from that starting point.
REFERENCES


