

“Strange Coupling”: Vegan Ecofeminism and Queer Ecologies in Theory and in Practice

CHAPTER 1: A Brief Survey of the Field of Ecofeminism

ADRIANA JIMÉNEZ RODRÍGUEZ
Escuela de Lenguas Modernas
Universidad de Costa Rica

Abstract

The present paper is the first in a series of publications that aim to share the results of an ongoing research project that explores the interconnection possibilities, both in theory and application, of the fields of ecofeminism and queer ecologies. This particular chapter offers a brief survey of the first of these fields: ecofeminism. The author tries to provide a brief critical look into the main tenets and evolution of the field.

Key words: feminism, ecofeminism, vegan / vegetarian ecofeminism, queer vegan ecofeminism, animal rights, environmental justice movements, ecofeminist activism, ecofeminist theory, ecofeminist politics

Resumen

Este artículo es el primero en una serie de publicaciones que busca socializar los resultados de un proyecto de investigación en curso, el cual explora las posibilidades de interconexión (tanto en la teoría como en su aplicación) de los campos del ecofeminismo y las ecologías queer. Este capítulo en particular ofrece una vista panorámica del primero de estos campos: el ecofeminismo. La autora presenta una perspectiva corta y crítica de las principales propuestas y de la evolución del campo.

Palabras claves: feminismo, ecofeminismo, ecofeminismo vegano / vegetariano, ecofeminismo vegano queer, derechos de los animales, movimientos de justicia ambiental, activismo ecofeminista, teoría ecofeminista, políticas ecofeministas

Ecofeminism remains a contested field, much like queer theory, even more so like the very-new queer ecologies. I find that this characteristic is strength rather than weakness. The inspiration for this project comes from a place of comfort with ambiguity because ambiguity creates a space of endless possibilities. Many theorists, critics, activists and academics do not enjoy ambiguity. This is in turn evidenced in any attempt to write a cohesive, uniform theoretical background. There is no agreement on ecofeminism, not much, not really. However, I believe that the interrogations on the lack of uniformity will eventually make the field more solid and more theoretically sound. This is why I have chosen to highlight differences in theory, practice and application in the course of the introduction. Hence, what I want to offer in this introduction is more or less a compilation of ideas that enjoy sufficient consensus. I clarify this at the beginning so as not to repeat the disclaimer throughout. Unfortunately, misconceptions about ecofeminism abound. Fellow feminists' dismissals include claims of essentialism and a whiff of "tree-hugging, tofu-eating hippie-ness" that strikes them as un-academic. These reactions are both humorous and scary. What are the implications of the "bad" reputation of ecofeminism? To what extent is it really a field based on essentialist assumptions? Do we really have to separate in this too? Is patriarchy that efficient? I would like to address all of these issues, and I would like to start with the present work as an offering to my shaggy-haired, perhaps purposefully misunderstood tree-hugging, tofu-eating hippie ecofeminist sisters. Also, I would like to show how these more Earth-bound theory-

creatures have more in common with my other sisters: the more button-down, we-need-to-look-serious-to-be-respected political-economic statistics-armed ecofeminists. I reject most look-ist formality as much as I cannot understand the idea that human suffering "must come before" non-human suffering, but at the same time I am skeptical of certain naturalist practices. I do not think that all conflicting discourses must necessarily be unable to co-exist; then again I am called "too radical" at least ten times a day. All in all, studying this field has been a really interesting experience, one that has intersected with all the other aspects of my life as a scholar, a professor, a queer vegan, and a mother. It is fundamental to my analysis and daily use of vegan ecofeminism to include myself as a subject in my dealings, and I believe this makes my contribution more real². *The struggle is real*, to quote queer expert RuPaul. And if I know anything at all, I know that the queer vegan ecofeminist struggle is that hardest I have experienced so far, but also the most rewarding.

A working definition is always a useful place to start. Ecofeminism. What is it? Salleh describes it in a somewhat clinical way as *political* framework that can spell out the historical links between neoliberal capital, militarism, corporatescience, worker alienation, domestic violence, reproductive technologies, sex tourism, child molestation, neocolonialism, Islamophobia, extractivism, nuclear weapons, industrial toxics, land and water grabs, deforestation, geneticengineering, climate change and the myth of the modern progress. Ecofeminist solutions are also synergistic; the organization of daily life

around subsistence fosters food sovereignty, participatory democracy and reciprocity with natural ecosystems. (Mies and Shiva ix)

She does point out the various subjects that ecofeminism can and does address. What this definition is lacking is the sense of interconnectedness—and a lot of acknowledgment of queer existence. All the instances of necrophilic patriarchal domination that the author mentions inform and are informed by one another in complicated, multiple ways, and perhaps there is no sufficient emphasis. I also think that one of the main connections between violence to women and to the Earth and patriarchy is the way in which non-human animals suffer under a regime of speciesism. As a queer vegan, I gravitate more towards a definition of the field that includes non-human animals and their plight in a more specific way: "Ecofeminism addresses the various ways that sexism, heteronormativity, racism, colonialism, and ableism are informed by and support speciesism and how analyzing the ways these forces intersect can produce less violent, more just practices (Adams and Gruen 1). In my opinion, this second definition is more ecofeminist in the sense that it foregrounds the oppression and exploitation of non-human animals at the same time that it establishes the interconnectedness of all patriarchal oppression, including the discrimination of people with disabilities and queer people, which is often-times ignored in ecofeminist texts. The interconnected nature of all brutal patriarchal domination is the thread that will run through the present work, like a spiral of awareness that wants to remind the reader constantly that we are

all touched by each other, always. Vegan queer ecofeminism provides us with the tools that we need to dismantle the system without neglecting any non-human animal used for unnecessary and cruel experiments, any delicate mangrove ecosystem in a poor town in Nicaragua, or the exploitation of queer Russian minors for sexual trafficking, to name only a few examples.

Ecofeminism has established multiple relationships with other fields of society and culture. What about the relationship(s) between ecofeminism and politics? Greta Gaard remains one of the most respected queer vegan ecofeminist theorists, and with good reason, especially when it comes to tracking the roots of contemporary ecofeminism(s). I would like to briefly mention her careful classification of what she terms "paths of activism" and feminist theory branches that have led to the body of contemporary queer vegan ecofeminism. Gaard mentions the peace and anti-nuclear movement, feminist spirituality, animal liberation activism, environmental activism, antitoxics activism and the path of lived experiences³ all as possible windows into ecofeminism. It is easy to see how environmental justice movements played the key role in pre-ecofeminist-articulated activism. One of Gaard's definitions of ecofeminism portrays it as "not a rebellion in any sense of the word but rather a coming together of insights gained from various movements and historical events; unlike a rebellion, ecofeminism offers both a critique of existing conditions and an alternative; it is both multiple and diverse" (*Ecological Politics* 31) I hope to highlight that diversity and multiplicity in the course of the present study, however

imperfect. In this vein, Gaard offers an overview of the various strains of ecofeminism, which are important to consider especially vis-à-vis queer ecofeminism's engagement with actual politics, one important aspect that I have not covered yet. "Liberal" ecofeminism, to begin, falls in the same pitfalls as liberal feminism, which merely seeks the same advantages assigned to men by patriarchal capitalist society to be assigned to women. Demanding the right to exploit others without even challenging the overall systematic capitalist domination structure is certainly not radical or transformative. I agree with Gaard in that there is no such thing as "liberal ecofeminism."⁴ Liberal has become a tag for willing participation in the patriarchal system, and I for one am very wary of any "contributions" from this particular group.

Radical feminisms⁵, the second stream that she mentions, have made the most contributions to queer vegan ecofeminism, helping to thread together ecofeminism, animal liberation, and goddess spirituality. However, "some varieties of spirituality claiming to be ecofeminist are in fact marred by essentialist claims about the relationship between women and nature. Some are apolitical or politically apathetic" (Idem 39), and most of contemporary queer vegan ecofeminists that started out as cultural "animal" ecofeminists⁶ have taken care to re-examine some of their earlier claims that could be deemed essentialist. I am constantly surprised at the fact that the entire body of queer vegan ecofeminism especially is still judged from a position that is so dated and that has been left behind for so many years. Most of the

"ecofeminism bashing" uses cultural feminism and out-of-context quotes from Daly to "prove" how essentialism is wrong. Yes. Essentialism is wrong. Queer vegan ecofeminism has evolved and transformed enormously in 45 years since some critics used the "women are just more naturally nourishing" argument. No serious ecofeminist nowadays would ever agree with that, yet we are still criticized and sometimes ostracized as ignorant hippies for it. Again, it never ceases to amaze me. It is my sincerest wish that we can establish our distance from such archaic ways of thinking while at the same time recognizing that we lose nothing by accepting that some of these "archaic" feminists did pave the way for us in loving and significant ways⁷.

Continuing with the list of feminist rivers that have historically watered the field, Gaard then mentions "womanist ecofeminism" to pay homage to the peculiar and particular aspects of ecofeminism that pertain to the experience of black women in the U.S. She explains that she uses "the quality [sic] of racism in the United States makes it theoretically useful to examine questions of international racial diversity separately" (40). I agree. One cannot think of Alice Walker's novels, short stories, poems, essays or even autobiographical work without thinking about queer (vegan, at times) ecofeminism. Most ecofeminist work is undeniably *white*; this is both evident and enervating. As usual, there is a lot of work to be done in this respect. Maybe one day this almost-mandatory caution will not be needed anymore. "Socialist ecofeminism" draws on "socialist feminism in bringing their concerns

about the intersections of race, class, and gender oppression to an analysis of the oppression of nature" (42). "Social ecofeminism" is very similar in its aims while it originates more strongly from anarchist feminism, social ecology, and the Left. These last three strains, however, curiously emphasize the analysis of the hierarchical structures of capitalist, racist, classist and sexist oppression without taking into account speciesism, and that makes them severely lacking for queer vegan ecofeminists like myself. How can anyone speak of the interconnectedness of everything and everybody and forget the millions of non-human animals tortured and murdered for human consumption every year? How can anyone speak of global warming without addressing the meat industry's immense responsibility in the degradation of the planet? How can anyone speak of balanced ecosystems when the consumption of GMO and antibiotic-laden dead non-human animals is destroying biodiversity and human health? I do not think it is possible, whatever the intention or the analysis of social / cultural / economic structures. Furthermore, Gaard's later reference in her mapping of ecofeminist roots to "activist ecofeminism" seems a bit old-fashioned from the perspective of contemporary ecofeminism. *All ecofeminism is activist*, necessarily, as I will now explain.

Ecofeminism starts in environmental justice movements (and to a lesser degree in animal rights advocacy movements⁸). Environmental justices, explains Stein, encompass diverse issues such as land claims, clear-cutting of forests, radiation exposure from uranium mining

and nuclear wastes, dumping of industrial toxic wastes, struggles over water rights and water quality, hazardous work sites and under-employment, substandard housing, toxic schools, transportation, economic disinvestment, deteriorating infrastructures, as well as numerous other physical / social ills. (2)⁹

From its beginning, it was notoriously impossible not to notice two main factors concerning the environmental justice movement: poor women and children are the most affected by environmental injustice, and "women, primarily women of color and working-class women, compose approximately 90 per cent of the active membership of many organizations (Idem). These are the "street action" roots of both activist and academic ecofeminism as I understand it today. Stein also argues—in an undeniably queer ecofeminist stance—for the connection between environmental justice movements and the rights of sexual dissidents: "By analyzing how discourses of nature have been used to enforce heteronormativity, to police sexuality, and to punish and exclude those persons who have been deemed sexually transgressive, we can begin to understand the deep underlying commonalities between struggles against sexual oppression and other struggles for environmental justice" (7). Pointing out the relationship between sexual and land exploitation is crucial to ecofeminist analyses that spring from environmental justice movements. Extractivism, for example, informs cheap labor policies that exploit native people, especially women and children, who are, also, the ones who suffer the ecological consequences

of irrational capital-only-oriented business endeavors that commercialize natural resources in their very bodies, often times in sexual violence and / or disease. In opposition to negative claims of essentialism, the reality first foregrounded by environmental justice activists shows how, *essentially*, women's bodies are precisely the site of enforced intoxication and disease. Indeed, "many women's bodies and family homes are now so permeated by toxic threats that they no longer offer safe space to inhabitants" (Stein 11)¹⁰ The ecofeminist / environmental justice struggle begins, as it has often done in feminist struggle itself, in our very bodies, in the land that houses our families' homes and the health of our children and loved non-human companions¹¹. Both bodies of knowledge / activism seek justice, in the streets, infiltrating the guilty man-made-and-man-owned corporations, in academia and in our own personal, every-day lives.

Environmental justice movements also remind ecofeminists of the simple yet radical idea that the victims of environmental racism, to name just one oppressed group (poor, sick women of color and their children) can take on entire governmental institutions and monstrous life-destroying corporations in saving their little bit of Earth. Even if not every fight is won, the mere fact of the resistance itself is proof enough of the unbreakable power of those who have been socialized and represented as "powerless" in capitalist patriarchal societies. According to Verchick, the processes involved in feminist theory and environmental justice require several strategies, such as access to feminist legal theory, unmasking patriarchy, contextual reasoning¹², and

consciousness-raising (Stein 63-77). All these strategies are core elements of activism, and all of them come from grassroots feminism and project into queer vegan ecofeminist activism as well—proving once again, how we all meet in the center of our struggles, that is, in the periphery of the margins. Kaalund has studied the specific incidence of black women in the fight for environmental justice. She explains that "when black women stand up and demand that there be clean air and clean water in their neighborhoods and follow these demands with actions (such as peaceful protests, rallies, legal action, work slowdowns, and so on), they make concrete the nexus between ideology, moral agency, and what is 'real' (Stein 83) This very valuable recognition of the labor of black women (ecofeminists of color even if they do not identify as such) brings us back to the interconnectedness between theory and activism, and environmental justice and ecofeminism. Other specific examples in the U.S.¹³ include women's admirable fight in investigating the environmental causes of the breast cancer that kills them, or the pollution that makes their children suffer from pulmonary diseases such as chronic asthma, or how the social construction of gayness affected the indifferent governmental response to the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. Environmental justice movements / theory / activist strategies show how these factors are all part of environmental racism / sexism / homophobia. As such, it is hopefully by now clear how these movements are worthy predecessors (or co-siblings?) of the queer vegan ecofeminism.

In 1990 Carol Adams published the seminal work *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. Twenty years later she re-issued it with three prefaces, the original one, the tenth-anniversary and the twentieth-anniversary ones. That is the thing about vegan ecofeminism: it is as relevant today as fifty years ago, only that now everything is more urgent¹⁴. As all the issues that vehement ecofeminists have been calling attention to all this time have predictably gotten worse—I will return to this as I approach the conclusion of this chapter¹⁵. Adams provided vegan ecofeminists with the necessary tools to analyze the violence to non-human animals parallel to the sexual violence to women, and this is a monumental contribution. In 2003 Adams supplemented with *The Pornography of Meat*, focusing more directly on the visual representations of patriarchal sexual violence that link the exploitation of women and non-human animals¹⁶. I have decided to center this section of the ecofeminism survey (the questions of vegetarianism and / or veganism) on her ideas, as they still are the referent. There has been plenty back-and-forth on the question of the consumption and other abuse of non-human animals within ecofeminism. I think the controversy is expectable, especially because the use of animal products cuts across ecofeminists' very every-day lives. There is some debate as to the terminology here. "Vegetarian" means that a person does not eat animal flesh of any type. However, some people use it broadly to mean that they do not consume any animal product either (like dairy or eggs). Especially in the theory, I have found both uses of the

word. I much prefer the word "vegan," which unequivocally states the ethical commitment to not eating / using animals in any way. This includes not eating animal flesh, not consuming animal by-products (dairy, eggs, leather, feathers, wool), not purchasing items tested on animals, and not attending spectacles that include nonhuman animals. In general, a vegan rejects any and all forms of the exploitation of nonhuman animals. This is why in my work I use the term "vegan ecofeminist," a term that in my opinion is sufficiently inclusive and appropriately describes both my theoretical position and my personal lifestyle choice. The controversial nexus of the issue goes beyond adherence to particular terminology and extends into the practice of ecofeminist veganism itself, especially when faced with trans-cultural issues. In other words, how is a vegan ecofeminist ethics broadly applied or not applied in what I could easily call "non-human animal-eating cultural relativism." Basically, I will try to simplify an extremely complex discussion by referring to three key issues: contextual moral veganism, moral repair, and claims of universalism.

Emmerman speaks about moral repair as a means to engage with the complexities of inter-animal conflicts¹⁷ in a very useful way. "Moral" here is understood as favoring what is right over what is wrong. She starts by stating her personal position on the matter as follows: "A pluralist, non-hierarchical, and contextualized approach to conflicts of interest helps us recognize the complexity and plurality of the interests at stake on all sides of a conflict and it forces us to take a more honest look at our dealings with others.

Moral life is in part about recognizing remainders as the norm, rather than the exception” (Adams and Gruen 163). What she ends up offering as a means to cope with the moral ambiguity of having made the choice to use an animal product in a particularly life-threatening situation is moral repair. This strategy may seem like not doing anything, really, but I find that it in effect counters the linear, patriarchal reasoning based on the very bipolar oppositions that feminists have spent ages fighting to debunk. Moral repair is not about structural hierarchical worldviews of domination. It speaks to the queer vegan ecofeminist practice of constant self-examination and transformation that echoes in communal ecofeminist endeavors in very real ways. Moral repair should not be dismissed as “sentimental” or “useless” but rather celebrated for focusing on actual vegan ecofeminist practices of daily existence / survival. Emmerman bravely suggests that “recognizing that damage [to non-human animals], seeing it for what it truly is, and confronting what we might do about it is a crucial part of navigating inter-animal conflicts” (Idem 162).¹⁸ I believe that a moral repair approach to certain circumstances where vegans have to use non-human animal products is a valid resource.

The concept of moral repair also touches on the key idea of contextual moral veganism, which basically argues, following the work of vegan ecofeminists like Warren, that food practices regarding animals should not reproduce other social / cultural / economic / ideological structures of oppression and / or domination. To use one of countless examples, vegan

ecofeminist opposition to the hunting of whales on the part of some native cultures can be analyzed from a critique of the practice of veganism within an industrialized, Western-cultural-oriented perspective. Contextual moral veganism stands in opposition to what has come to be known as vegan universalism: the belief that everyone everywhere in the world has the choice to be vegan and should therefore become vegan and save non-human animals from human exploitation forever. Twine points out how “some popular proponents within the animal advocacy movement appear to assume that a universal veganism is a goal without first opening the question up for scrutiny” (Adams and Gruen 192). This is clearly both a mistake and a “weakness” that has been interestingly transferred to “those vegan ecofeminist women” in a typical systematic patriarchal move. Well, Twine does a fine job at proving that, while vegan universalism is certainly a problematic and limited (and limiting) perspective, the attacks aimed in its direction tend to be essentialist themselves and end up minimizing the global impact of an *indeed* universalizing trend towards cheap meat-eating and its devastating consequences on both the planet and non-human animals. A point in fact, as he eloquently claims, is “the implication has been for some (even in the culturally limited example of academic conference catering) that to advocate for vegan eating is ethnocentric, exclusionary, or even racist” (Idem 194).¹⁹ My point is also this: we do not have to accept a neurotic, bipolar vertical line of privileged choice / victim choicelessness in terms of the eating of dead animals and / or dead

animal products. There *must* be ways to deal with the fact that speciesism and the brutal and ethically unacceptable industry of "meat"-production can be tackled in an inter-culturally sensitive manner. I dislike relativistic contextual approaches that are the equivalent of an inherently racist shrugging of the shoulders: *it is those people's culture*. Yes, but maybe vegan ecofeminists can transcend internalized mental obstacles such as ethnocentrism and cultural stereotyping and confront our vegan cultural racism in order to discover useful and creative ways to overcome transcultural differences that blindfold us to the factual reality of the horrific non-human animal suffering that supports and is supported by the very same macro-structures that are responsible for horrific human suffering worldwide.

So what are some of the most contemporary issues that ecofeminists are discussing in the *now*? What is going on, other than a severe deepening of the ecofeminist problems that they have been pointing out for over twenty years? In yet one more revised edition of their 1993 book *Ecofeminism* in 2014, Mies and Shiva propose a number of relevant themes to consider contemporary issues in their introduction. These critics propose keeping in mind the difference between freedom from oppression and the patriarchally-driven emancipation from nature that is responsible for so many ecological tragedies; rejecting false strategies such as equalization gender policies that allow some women to share in the spoils of capitalism while leaving the system intact; the pull towards the global while destroying the local²⁰; and the breakdown of universalist (Western) ideologies and the emergence of

cultural relativism in terms of the dangers of contesting Western dominance with defending cultural practices that enforce violence against women and the environment²¹. Mies and Shiva's version of ecofeminism claims for careful consideration of the fact that "the 'symbioses or living interconnectedness' both in nature and in human society are the only guarantee that life in its fullest sense can continue on this planet" (13). They are adamant in the premise that "the liberation of women cannot be achieved in isolation, but only as part of a larger struggle for the preservation of life on the planet" (16) but remain silent on the interconnectedness of the violence against women / the environment and non-human animals, which seems to me strange and myopic, as they do not even stop to talk about the capitalist, transnational aspect of meat-eating as an industry that is in effect destroying the planet.

In spite of this *glaring* omission, their essays are full of knowledge and very effective interconnection exercises. Shiva, for example, discusses science-at-the-service-of-patriarchy thus: "The reductionist world-view, the industrial revolution and the capitalist economy are the philosophical, technological and economic components of the same process" (Mies and Shiva 24)²². She goes on to discuss more fully the major ecofeminist issue of genetic modification as one of the main destroyers of life on earth. Her general emphasis on agriculture, and the vicious corporate overtaking of agriculture is the fundamental component in the degeneration of both natural and human (and non-human, I would add) ecosystems²³. Shiva threads the connections between control of life-giving particles

(seeds) and violence against women, especially insofar as this corporate control annihilates subsistence economies (not even considered “economies” *per se* by the bank conglomerates that control the world’s resources, as their goal is balanced survival of all and not profit for a handful). Seeds and food sovereignty are intimately linked to another ecofeminist concern in terms of non-renewable resources: the access to water, which, as we see time after time whenever we step into the field of ecofeminist analysis, is multi-layered and interconnected deeply with many other issues that further ghettoize the sustainability of the most vulnerable human and non-human groups: “The declining availability of water resources, due to their diversion for industry and industrial agriculture and to complex factors related to deforestation, desertification and drought, is a severe threat to children’s [and women’s and men’s and all non-human animals’] health and survival” (Idem 81). So-called “development,” hand in hand with the extreme impoverishment of over 80% of the world’s population, has been the label that patriarchy has given to the devastation of the environment and the deficient quality of life on earth that we face today. I ask, with Mies and Shiva, to whom does the future belong?

It is easy to focus on the destruction. But I ask you to look at the resistance as well. As feminists, we are used to backlash; we are used to passionately working for years for conquests that only our granddaughters will be able to see fully developed; we are used to being vilified, isolated in academia, spat on in the streets and even incarcerated, tortured, raped, and murdered. We still go on; tirelessly, relentlessly, we go on. We have nothing left to lose,

only life on earth. We are queer vegan ecofeminists. We fight for liberation of all slaves, human and non-human. Somewhere along the line, environmental justice movements have become the heart of ecofeminist struggle, once again, as everything is interconnected to everything else. There is no escaping the complex and beautiful ecosystem of life that touches us all:

Across different contexts, in the North and in the South, in ecologically eroded zones and polluted places, women identify with the interest of the earth and their children in finding solutions to the crisis of survival. Against all odds they attempt to reweave the web which connects their life with the life of their children and the life of the planet [*and the life of all non-human animals*]. From women’s perspective, sustainability without environmental justice is impossible, and environmental justice is impossible without justice between sexes and generations [*and species that share the planet!*] (Mies and Shiva 85)

The issues that I have mentioned comprise a very small sample of the vast universe of ecofeminist theory / practice and activism. I will expand more in the course of the analysis of Ruth Ozeki’s two queer ecofeminist novels *All Over Creation* and *My Year of Meats*. The diverse voices, the silences and the unoccupied spaces are just as valuable as the contradictions and the lack of anti-speciesism and queer awareness. I will work side by side with all to remedy, supplement and expand. That, for me, is the shape that theory is taking in my life right now.

Notes

1. I am fully aware that most of the material that I am using is from the United States. Rest assured that in future chapter I will address both the specific history of ecofeminism in my geographical location (Central America) and the racist, capitalist politics of feminist publication both in the United States and Latin America.
2. In Gaard's wise words: "Naming as inauthentic the 'objectivity' of the traditional researcher, feminist research methodology requires each scholar to describe her unique subjectivity and suggests that the best scholars are also full participants themselves in the projects they are studying" (*Ecological Politics* 5).
3. For Gaard, "women who may or may not have been activists began making the connections to ecofeminism from their own personal experiences... [For example:] earth-based spiritual practices, memories from childhood, or simply moments of deep insight into the interrelationship of all life on earth" (*Ecological Politics* 29). I think this quote evidences our different understanding of knowing from multiple positions, which is definitely a plus in any counter-cultural movement / ideology / body of theory.
4. Gaard does mention the Women's Environment and Development Organization, which does work to implement actual policies to benefit women and the environment *but* does so without challenging the institutions or the basic unequal distribution of power in patriarchal societies.
5. Basically Daly and Griffin.
6. I agree with Gaard. Cultural feminism is a definite faux pas. It is a 70s strain that is based on "revaluing attributes traditionally associated with women, a belief in the superior nature of women for nurturing and for ensuring health and survival" (*Ecological Politics* 38).
7. One of the most significant moments on my life as a queer vegan ecofeminist was attending Mary Daly's memorial service in San Diego, and being able to hear her best friend Linda Barufaldi's moving words in honor of her friend and mentor. Linda told me on that occasion, while wiping the tears of her face, holding her newly wed wife and partner of 38 years (you know, back when gay / lesbian was not "cool"): "My one goal in life is to destroy patriarchy." I strongly believe that dismissing those courageous warrior women who came before us is disrespectful at best, and patriarchal at worst. I honor these women, these feminists, at the same time that my beliefs, theory and practice evolve past them. Both acts of love are not mutually exclusive or even contradictory.
8. Numerous ecofeminists have shown repeatedly the multiple ways in which animal rights groups / movements / theory center around sexism, often exploiting female workers while making their voices and actions invisible or even supporting environments conducive to sexual harassment and molestation, to name just two aspects. While it is indeed very necessary to analyze and expose these issues from an ecofeminist perspective, the endeavor exceeds the scope of the present study.
9. The introduction to Stein's excellent book opens with a quote from ecofeminist writer and activist Cherrie Moraga, whose words I simply cannot refrain from transcribing here: "Land remains the common ground for all

- radical action. But land is more than rocks and trees... For immigrants and natives alike, land is also the factory where we work, the water our children drink, and the housing project where we live. For women, lesbians, and gay men, land is that physical mass called our bodies.” Here I see queer ecofeminism in a (beautiful) nutshell. Once again, even if for analytical purposes we have to separate the two fields, it is evident that we cannot really do so, for both are interconnected in deeply intimate (and political) ways. I met Moraga in San Diego State University and her talk revolved around women’s bodies, race and sexuality and oppression. She remains one of my biggest inspirations.
10. Here it is useful to refer to the same author’s use of the term “sovereignty,” as she explains, it “underlies many land and struggles and land claims, so that it includes the rights of women, gays and lesbians [and transgendered people, I must add], and people of color to ‘inhabit’ their own bodies” (Stein 14).
 11. I believe this is environmental justice movement’s most disappointing limitation: the hierarchical manner in which it places non-human animals’ suffering in second place to humans. We should be side by side, displaying the common roots of our suffering, as queer vegan ecofeminists strive to show every day.
 12. Contextual reasoning is a feminist method that “enables activists to link environmental threats to racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination” (Stein 67).
 13. As a Latina, and even more, a Central American queer ecofeminist I cannot not mention the obvious fact that I am personally very aware of environmental justice / queer vegan ecofeminist struggles in my land. The recent murders of turtle-defender Jairo Mora in Costa Rica and river activist Berta Cáceres in Honduras are very painful, real reminders of the extreme patriarchal violence continues to inflict not only on the environment but on the very bodies of the people of color—MY PEOPLE—who have bravely defended innocent ecosystems and innocent non-human creatures from disgusting, corrupt corporate / governmental unchecked greed and hatred of Life. However, we will not stop fighting. This and every single one of my individual or collective offerings to the cause of justice will always keep Jairo, Berta, and the countless murdered sisters and brothers alive.
 14. “What makes today’s crisis different from earlier ones is the exhaustion of the resources which could earlier be used for the recovery of the economy,” says Mies (xxix). The meat industry market has also exploded (forced even into cultures that traditionally leaned more towards a vegetarian diet via capitalism and its marriage to the media and advertising), with its accompanying environmental, health, and non-human animal cruelty ecological / ethical disasters.
 15. In very simple terms, the sexual politics of meat is a concept phrased by Adams which “means that what, or more precisely **who, we eat is determined by the patriarchal politics of our culture**” (Preface to 10th Ann. Ed., location 216, par. 21). I consider this to be the crux of the patriarchal matter, as well as the reason I decided to become a strict vegan transformed into theoretically-coherent language.
 16. I want to mention only one aspect that Adams discusses in this text, macho “humor,” within her larger analysis of how

- rape culture is constructed on patriarchal rules of domination of women and non-human animals alike: "Sexual humor about women's and nonhuman's bodies teaches men how to look at women and teaches women how to be looked at and used" (28).
17. In her specific case she is referring to her dilemma, a strict vegan who was physically incapable of breastfeeding her newborn son at a time when high-quality vegan formula for infants was unavailable. Her choice to feed him cow milk-based formula made her confront the issue of contextual moral veganism face to face. I would like to highlight the ways this brave vegan ecofeminist uses a very painful, intimate misfortune to problematize theoretical vegan ecofeminist issues.
 18. I am going to use a very painful example. I am a strict vegan, but not strict enough to feed my non-human companions vegan food. That is, my dogs and cats eat processed food designed for metabolic excellence that *comes from* the exploited bodies of other non-human animals' dead bodies. I have had numerous devastating health experiences with my companions that have convinced me that in order to keep them healthy I have to feed them those foods—those foods have at times saved their lives during critical life-threatening episodes. Am I to be considered a hypocritical vegan? A speciesist vegan? Simply a very self-ish contextual vegan? Another important aspect to take into account is that in Costa Rica I cannot easily purchase safe, high-quality vegan "pet" food. What can I do? For now I resort to some variation of moral repair to those non-human animals that die and one of the consequences of their death keep my non-human animal companions alive and healthy. As I write these words, I am filled with distress and anxiety—again, as I constantly revisit and hopefully will one day be able to change this situation. I am also aware of the financial privilege I enjoy to afford such specialty brand-name foods. However, I also refuse to be judged (by others—especially non-vegan others—or myself) with extreme harshness because of all my minority identities. This is a patriarchally-socialized, internal self-destructive mechanism that I refuse to partake in. I hope this exercise somehow illustrated the daily ethical plights of this one queer vegan ecofeminist woman.
 19. Tell this to the (I am sure countless) queer vegan ecofeminists like myself who have eaten (probably pesticide-ridden, GMO) rice for days at conferences while having to put up with either the typical macho "vegan jokes," or dead animals being shoved in your face to prove the "delectability" of the meat, or the cold accusations of being a privileged elitist for not eating animal products. ALL of these are examples of institutional and socially-sanctioned violence against us as dissidents to animal cruelty and environmental murder.
 20. I could not agree more with the authors' assertion that "contrary to what it suggests, the global does not represent universal human interest but a particular local and parochial interest which has been globalized thought its reach and control" (9).
 21. Mies and Shiva explain how grassroots movements that oppose the exploitation of local resources for global profit purposes are accused of "universalism," when in reality, "the universalism that stems from their efforts to preserve their subsistence—their life base—is

- different from the Eurocentric universalism developed via the Enlightenment and the rise of capitalist patriarchy” (13)
22. Science, as one of THE major institutions of patriarchy, is responsible for many of the horrors of ecological destruction in the world, but maybe a tad worse, because it has done so with an amazing lack of remorse AND even prestige! Shiva discusses the responsibility (or lack thereof) in scientific ethics committees, where “the profoundly immoral marriage between science and force, science and militarism, science and patriarchy” (Mies and Shiva 50) is never addressed.
23. Shiva is famous for her passionate defense of the seed, the seed of Life (impossible not to reach for the metaphors here) and what its horrific genetic modification has done to the Earth: “Modern plant-breeding is primarily an attempt to eliminate the biological obstacle to the market in seed: its inherent ability to regenerate and multiply. Seed that reproduces itself stays free, a common resource and under the farmer’s control. Corporate seed has a cost and is under the control of the corporate sector or agricultural research institutions” (Mies and Shiva 29).

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