GENDER
OPEN
REPOSITORIUM

Speaking from the South of Europe

Puleo, Alicia H.

2012

https://doi.org/10.25595/112

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Puleo, Alicia H.: *Speaking from the South of Europe*, in: Deportate, esuli, profughe : rivista telematica di studi sulla memoria femminile (2012) Nr: 20, 78-89. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25595/112.

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY 4.0 Lizenz (Namensnennung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu dieser Lizenz finden Sie hier:

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.de

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY 4.0 License (Attribution). For more information see:

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en

GenderOpen – Repositorium für die Geschlechterforschung: www.genderopen.de

FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN

HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN

DEP Deportate, esuli, profughe
Rivista telematica di studi sulla memoria femminile

Speaking from the South of Europe

by

*Alicia H. Puleo**

Abstract: Almost forty years after the invention of the term ecofeminism by Françoise d'Eaubonne, there now exists a wide range of theoretical positions and practises that we can call ecofeminist. The different intellectual, historical, social and economic situations from which they have arisen explain this diversity. Nonexistent until a few years ago in the South of Europe, the interest in this subject matter is currently increasing. In this paper I will speak about the focal points of the ecofeminist philosophy developed in my recent research illustrating its links with the Iberian and Latin American background.

Introduction

Currently there is a growing interest in ecofeminism in Spain and the Latin American countries. This situation contrasts with how indifferently it was received in its early development. In this introduction I will point out a number of possible reasons for the lack of initial interest. I will dedicate the remainder of the article to outline the main concepts of the ecofeminist proposal that I have worked on from my own vital and intellectual background. I have called it "Critical ecofeminism". It is an ecofeminism that has preserved the Enlightenment's legacy of equality and autonomy but also lays claim to a strong meaning of "eco". That is to say, it is not just a simple anthropocentric environmental feminism whereby the relationship with Nature is confined to the proposal of management of "non-renewable resources". I hold that the time of climate change is an opportunity to develop an ecological vision of the world without retracing the path taken by feminism or abandoning the principles which have given women freedom. I would like to explain the characteristic principles of this ecofeminism pointing out its relationship with some of the contemporary Spanish and Latin American debates and struggles[1].

* Alicia H. Puleo is Full Professor of Ethics and Political Philosophy at the University of Valladolid (Spain) where she also headed the Center for Gender Studies during more than ten years. She is the author of *Ecofeminismo para otro mundo posible* (2011) and a variety of other books and articles on Ecofeminism and Feminist Philosophy.

[1] This paper is published as part of the following research project: *Gender Equality in a Sustainable Culture: Values and Good Practices for Collaborative Development* (FEM2010-15599).

© *DEP* ISSN 1824 - 4483

Almost four decades have passed since the first cases of ecofeminism appeared. The term ecofeminism was created by Françoise d' Eaubonne in Paris in the 1970s, when echoes of May 1968 still rang out creating the second wave of feminism. Françoise d'Eaubonne's mother was Spanish and her father a French anarchist trade unionist. This thinker, who defined herself as half Aragonese and half Breton, managed to bring together the worries of the environmentalists of the time (focused on the overpopulation and unsustainability of the consumer society), with the feminists demands of the control over one's own body and the rejection of domestic bourgeois ideals. Her initiative was not understood in France. It was said that feminism and ecology had nothing in common. On the other hand, her thesis aroused interest in small groups of radical feminists in the US. There, a type of ecofeminism was developing which is today considered as "classic"[2]. Mary Daly's seminars and her book *Gyn-Ecology* opened the way to ecofeminist essays such as *Rape of the Wild, Man's Violence against Animals and the Earth* by Andrée Collard. This book, which was written in the 1970s, was published after her death in 1988. Collard was born in Brussels and lived in the US. She taught Romance and Comparative Literature and also Women's Studies at Brandeis University (Massachusetts). She was an authority on the Spanish Baroque[3]. Her linguistic background together with her feminist and animalist involvement had allowed her to become aware of the importance of language in the construction of our perceptions on reality[4]. However, it can be said that the relationship of her feminist work and her knowledge of the Spanish Baroque period is confined to this general verification on the power of language.

A look at the origin of ecofeminism shows us then two contacts with Spanish culture: an émigré mother and a literary specialist. There does not appear to be anything more to the matter than this. Neither *Gyn-Ecology* by Mary Daly nor Rape of the Wild by Andrée Collard has been translated into Spanish to date. There are no Spanish or Latin American authors in the first ecofeminism. Nor were the Spanish speaking feminist members interested in the points of contact with ecology. In my opinion, this lack of interest in the concept of order and practice has many origins.

In the first place, we must take into account the vast difference of the movement and the environmentalist ideas of the 1970s in the Germanic and Anglo-Saxon world compared with the Spanish world. The environmentalist conscience was and

---

Subprograma de Proyectos de Investigación Fundamental no orientada) funded by Spanish Ministry for Economy and Competitiveness.

[2] However, it is necessary to point out that, with *Alarm Clock* (1941) and *Peace with Earth* (1940), the Swedish writer Elin Wagner was a pioneer in the ecofeminist idea which related patriarchy and environmental destruction. See K. Leppanen, *En Paz con la Tierra*, in M. L. Cavana-A. Puleo-C. Segura, *Mujeres y Ecología*, Almudayna, Madrid 2004, pp.109-118.

[3] Her essay *Nueva poesía: conceptismo, culteranismo en la crítica española* was published in Madrid in 1967 (La Lupa y el Escalpelo, 7, Editorial Casalia).

[4] Thus, for example, it indicates a significant fact the use of the term beast (in Sanskrit "that which is feared") as a reductionist language in contrast with the word animal (in Latin anima) which makes reference to the soul and life, something which is shared by all living things, including the human being.

still continues to be a minority in Spain in spite of being one of the European countries which is threatened most by desertification due to climate change. Its delay in this area could be attributed to its tardy industrialization, which took place primarily from the 1970s onwards. As we know, the common profile of the ecologist in developed countries is an urban person whose university studies and position at work are not connected to the sectors of industrial production. This profile of an inhabitant is a recent large-scale appearance in Spain. Hence we are now starting to perceive a greater concern for the environment. On the other hand, the industrial period was marked by the migration of people from rural backgrounds to cities. This occurred at different rates depending on each Spanish community. The migration was a social success and did not impoverish or exclude anyone, which is what occurred in Latin America. Therefore, in Spain this "Environmentalism of the poor"[5] (people who fight for their land or environment they live in, in other words people who then become environmentalists) did not emerge.

Spanish environmentalism has had a greater presence as a social movement than political party. Until recently, the ecologists have run for election in divided and conflicted parties. EQUO, the new green party with links to the European Green Party, was not able to gain parliament representation in the 2011 elections. This is due in the first place to the electoral system d'Hondt which favored the two-party political system and in the second place for not reaching an agreement with the Party Against Cruelty to Animals, which received a great deal of voting attention in a country where part of the population insists unsuccessfully on the abolition of the bullfights and a toughening of the laws against acts of cruelty to animals.

In the 1990s, the Spanish Green party combined like the Greens in France, the feminists' demands for equality with the environmentalist conscience and in some cases, the animalist conscience. A number of activists formed the Women's Green network on the fringes of the party as an independent organization. However, in an inter-state congress of the Green party at the end of the 1990s, it was decided that this new network was only a type of special commission within its own organization. In the end, this committee did not succeed in establishing itself. Some of these feminists left the party and others stayed on, managing to hold political posts related to the environment in some regions of the Left. In those years an organized feminist movement did not exist. It is important to know that, currently, a large number of women from Equo and the Party Against Cruelty to Animals would like to organize themselves into an ecofeminist movement.

While environmentalism has had a weak presence in Spain, feminism on the other hand has carved out an important path from Transición (1975-1982) which is to say from the time when General Franco's dictatorship came to an end and there was a normalization of democracy. For the women of the Spanish feminist movement in this transition period, taking to the streets had real content and symbolic power, a sense of freedom and enjoyment of their rights which they had

[5] J. Martínez Alier, *El ecologismo de los pobres. Conflictos ambientales y lenguajes de valoración*, Icaria, Barcelona 2004

not experienced until that moment[6]. The feminist slogan, "What's personal is political" will help to make great changes to the daily life of the average Spanish woman[7]. While in the Anglo-Saxon world small groups of self-consciousness were being formed, characterised by an expressive logic (directed at personal development and feminine identity) in contrast to the instrumental logic of the National Organization for Women headed by Betty Friedan, this period of transition in Spain urged political transformation. From these special historical circumstances, different forms of "feminism of the state" were put into practice in the 1980s along the same lines as in Northern Europe, with countless legal reforms and the creation of the Woman's Institute in 1983 which brought about the plans for equal opportunities or positive action policies. A smaller group of women who were closer to the expressive logic of the subsequent radical feminism (or cultural feminism) preferred to demand total autonomy from the movement and promote their own feminine-feminist culture. Years later, the Italian thinking on sexual difference would be felt. Given that the first Anglo-Saxon ecofeminism evolved as difference feminism, we can appreciate that Spanish feminism of that time belonging in the main to the equality trend, would not be attracted by its subject matter. Franco's political praise of the mother-woman was too close to forget its dangerous potential of subjection.

The Enlightenment Roots

The absolute rejection of Enlightenment has been the principal intellectual environment in the West over the latter part of the 20th century until the present. I think that it is now time to make way for a better balanced vision which at the same time recognises the positive elements of its legacy. The process of development of Modernity has many faces and not all of them are desirable. It may even be said that many are perverse. But it is nonetheless true that the criticism of prejudices and the idea of human equality have been decisive to the unstoppable emergence of women. This is what a number of Spanish feminist philosophers have understood to be the case. The name of one of the research groups which emerged in the 1980s at the University Complutense of Madrid, where I come from, expresses this idea in the following way, "Feminism and Enlightenment". I think that in an era such as our own, characterised on the one hand by hedonism which often abandons critical analysis and, on the other hand, by economic crisis and the advance of different types of religious fundamentalism, it is becoming more and more important that ecofeminist theory and praxis maintain the Enlightenment tradition of condemning oppressive doctrines and practices.

Post modernity has fortunately corrected the rationalistic optimism of the Modernity era but tended to see in the Enlightenment legacy only a diabolic process of normalization. This negative vision comes close to the conservative position as Habermas observed in his comments on Michel Foucault. Choosing the

[6] P. Escario, *Lo personal es político*, en C. Martínez Ten-P. Gutiérrez López-P. González Ruiz (eds.), *El movimiento feminista en España en los años 70*, Cátedra, Madrid 2009, pp. 213-218.

[7] Cf. A. Valcárcel, *Rebeldes. Hacia la paridad*, Plaza & Janés, Barcelona 2000.

aspects which are clearly oppressive or capable of being interpreted as such and silencing progress in recognition of the rights and freedom is only a small part of the reading. Enlightenment has also been a fight for freedom against fanaticism and despotism.

With regard to non-human Nature, it is important to correct the decrease in learned thought by Cartesian rationalism. The fact that Descartes has been a key thinker does not indicate that Modernity can be restricted to just his work. On the other hand, the obvious falseness of his animal-machine theory offended many learned people, particularly women, provoking unintentionally a debate and meditation on animals which had never been considered beforehand[8]. The 18th century is characterised by a growing interest in the animal as a victim because people began to regard him or her as an individual with a psychology and physiology much like our own. Fear transcends into a love of Nature[9]. Animals, which had been perceived as being evil beings, were discovered to be victims of human cruelty. I believe it is significant that the present European map of the cruelty against animals as popular amusement and the lack of critical ecological awareness show important coincidences with the historical map of an enlightenment which has been insufficiently developed due to both religious and economic reasons.

The recognition of human rights, anti-slavery, feminism and modern anthropocentrism[10] belongs to the emancipated face of the Enlightenment. The disenchantment of the world is not only oppression and manipulation of the human and non-human world; it is also a fight against prejudice, superstition and authoritarianism. Religious wars, accusations of witchcraft and lives crushed by prejudice are also realities in a world inhabited by spirits. Correct does not mean destroy. Eroding the learned bases of Modernity without distinguishing its components prepares its terrain for the return to chains. The sleep of reason produces monsters, as Goya saw in his well known engraving. When tiredness strikes in the face of unintelligible speeches of various postmodernists who hide the conceptual emptiness behind the proliferation of words, when minds have forgotten how to think, tired by futile attempts to find intellectual sustenance where there was none, the preachers with dogmatic texts will be waiting there with simple answers to every question on moral conduct and the meaning of life. The old patriarchal desert is waiting behind the fog of impenetrable relativism.

Hence, it is advisable to remember that there are at least two "forgotten Enlightenments". The feminist philosophical line, represented by thinkers such as Poulain de la Barre, Madame Lambert, the Encyclopedist Jaucourt, Condorcet, Jerónimo Feijóo, Josefa Amar y Borbón among others and that which dreamt of

[8] M. L. Scholtmeijer, *Animal victims in modern fiction*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto Buffalo London 1993.

[9] Cf. S. Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature. Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2004. Cf. too A. H. Puleo, *Ecofeminismo para otro mundo posible*, ed. Cátedra, Col. Feminismos, Madrid 2011, chapter 2 and 3.

[10] I call "moderate anthropocentrism" the ethics which consider the non-human animals as sentient beings worthy of moral consideration.

expanding (one way or another, with greater or lesser audacity, with more or less emphasis) the moral consideration beyond the human race. Giving a voice to those without a voice often implied a commitment to various just causes. Theoreticians and activists from the first wave of the feminist movement such as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Margaret Fuller, Emma Goldman and Charlotte Perkins Gilmans[11] included antivivisection, vegetarianism and reforms directed at cruelty against animals in their different proposals for social change.

Nowadays, with the animal liberation movement and ecofeminism, these topics have returned. On the subject of gender and pets, I hold that the love and care which many women show to animals could be construed as a work-to-rule to the patriarchy, generally unconscious, with so much diversion of the energy flow that habitually transfers from the feminine collective to the masculine without reciprocity[12].

We can consider there is Enlightenment when the thought retains its dynamism without converting itself into a doctrinal body against all dissent. The criticism should not only be directed at beliefs, customs and pre-modern prejudices which end up being oppressive, but at Modernity itself and its faults, errors and unfulfilled promises. The majority of ecofeminist theories have increased their criticism to modern rationalism, proposing a re-enchantment of the natural world destined to return its lost dignity. On occasions, this re-enchantment arises from the mystification of new ecological forms of community life as exempt from the relations of gender power. At other times, a discreet silence is held on traditions with a strong patriarchal content. Some authors, in an attempt to stand out from the male demonization of classic ecofeminism and with the aim of combating new forms of colonialism in Southern countries by creating resistance fronts with man, omit all forms of criticism and prejudices of the pre-modern cultures. They consider that the Western patriarchal capitalism is the only being which deserves to be criticized and they tend to idealize the life of the native communities. This attitude perhaps aims to get an efficient alterglobal strategy and may well be the beginning of the empowerment and of the feminist conscience of many women in the countries suffering a destructive development. However, we cannot idealise the past concerning the role of women. The critical ecofeminism I propose examines the customs based on patriarchal prejudice, even those which belong to convenient ecological cultures. That is why the declaration of the women in the forum of Nyéléni for the Food sovereignty appears to be an excellent example of ecofeminism which accepts neither the old oppressions nor the false promises of an exploiting and destructive modernization. An interculturalism which points out another possible and desirable world can combine – as we can appreciate in some

[11] Cf. J. Donovan, *Animals Rights and Feminist Theory*, in G. Gaard (ed.), *Ecofeminism. Women, Animals, Nature*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia 1993, pp.167-194.

[12] A. H. Puleo, *Ecofeminismo para otro mundo posible*, cit., chapter 8.

forms of the emerging Latin American paradigm of Sumak Kawsay or Good Living – women's rights as free people and the rights of Nature[13].

Critical ecofeminism expresses the feelings of a Spanish society whereby the majority of progressive sectors have a decidedly anti-mystic and anti-religious position. It is fitting in the fight against consumer nihilism from the ideas of gender equality and eco-justice and a wider compassionate materialism of the non-human world. Since Antiquity, the state of dissatisfaction which a person ends up feeling when they seek a state of happiness through the many pleasures which are not marked out in a project transcending selfish motives is known as the "paradox of hedonism". The contemporary nihilistic consumer is the most comprehensive historical realization of this. Millions of people have been trapped in the hedonistic paradox while many others have lacked the necessary resources to survive in countries which have been impoverished by systematic plundering. And if millions of human beings, who in theory have been recognized as bearers of rights, find themselves at the limit of subsistence, what is to be said of the woodland creatures which are literally being wiped out by hunting, herbicides, pesticides, and alterations due to climate change, in other words the disappearance of the world? Is this the Earth we want?

Empowerment and Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Some of the first forms of Anglo-Saxon ecofeminism gave a biological explanation for the war and ecological crisis and saw woman as the saviors of the planet in contrary to the destructive masculine technology. This essentialism, which did not focus on anything but the differences between both sexes, ignoring historical and economic reasons and going back to the ancient patriarchal identification between Woman and Nature, created a strong rejection in Spanish feminism, directed for the most part at obtaining equal opportunities in the framework of socialist feminist understanding between women and men. Associated with this kind of essentialism, ecofeminism has been rejected. And even when feminists know that there are constructivist ecofeminisms which stopped trying to identify woman and Nature, an objection remains: Why must we add one more task to the oppressed while the oppressors destroy without a care in the world? In the face of this question, it is interesting to study the actions aimed at integrating the policies of women empowerment with other actions directed at sustainability. There has already been a case of this type of initiative in some Spanish regions. If the concern for Nature helps to find a job, it is no longer a question of appealing to the proverbial spirit of feminine sacrifice.

Ecofeminism has reported the uneven distribution of costs and profits in the economical use of natural resources and has helped to bring these conflictive matters to light. It has highlighted the negative effects that the destructive development of the environment has had on several country women in the South and has been internationally acclaimed for its involvement, which on numerous

[13] About Human Rights and Rights of Nature, see A. Costa, *Hacia la Declaración Universal de los Derechos de la Naturaleza*, "Sin Permiso", April 18, 2012.

occasions has been successful. It has also pointed out the different harmful effects of the scientific community on consumers and producers according to social class and race. In the face of these problems, we must strengthen the international feminist sorority, in this occasion against pollution, environmental devastation, the destruction of peasant forms of sustainable production and the consequences of misery, illness and death. In other words, it is a question of meeting the demands of eco-justice of the environmentalism of the poor. The enormous effort of women must not lead to the loss of their own demands as an eternally neglected collective; the defense of the sustainability must be accompanied by their empowerment. This is possible and it is already taking place. In Latin America, several women have played a leading role in this change with their role of "multiplicadoras", country women who offer their experience and technical knowledge of agro-ecology to other country folk in order to produce non toxic foods and to free them from the economic dependence that the standard agricultural model creates. Thanks to agro-ecology, these "teachers" leave the limited circle of their home and obtain economic means, their new role granting them a certain degree of leadership within the community[14]. The rise of the feminists' demands in the framework of the agro-ecological movement proves that the sustainable practices favor self-assertion and the empowerment of women.

In Europe, we are starting to detect a movement of strong and educated women returning to the countryside, women who prefer to be considered famers and not "the farmer's wife". What is more, many of them wish to become ecological farmers in what is a particularly difficult moment, when agricultural policies, market mechanisms and big businesses are strangling small farms. On the other hand, we now know that the toxic chemical substances used in the agro-business particularly affect women's bodies. It is clear that as producers and consumers we have common interests that must be defended. Is it difficult to imagine ecofeminist networks of production and health, justice and the future of humanity and of the Earth?

The Welfare State must be revived in two ways. Firstly, by not decreasing as the neoliberal model wants and secondly by becoming Green, that is to say, focusing on sustainability. Help with new business ventures and the creation of jobs for women from the two sides of feminist and environmental perspective should be supported by whatever incentives are available. But the defense of the women's equality and autonomy is not only about the access to resources. It also demands that women's experience be recognized, something which has been underestimated by the experts. It will be necessary to encourage women to participate in those jobs created by (authentic) green technology and in the decision-making processes concerning ecological projects, combining

[14] E. Siliprandi, *Mujeres y Agroecología. Nuevos sujetos políticos en la agricultura familiar*, in A. Puleo (coord.), *Praxis ecofeminista en las culturas ibéricas e iberoamericanas*, Monográfico de la revista *Investigaciones feministas*, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2010: http://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/INFE/issue/view/INFE101011/showToc

environmental politics with those of positive action for gender equality. Instead of a sacrifice, the environmental transformation of society could be an opportunity for the complete integration of the feminine collective in a restructured public domain.

The word "ecofeminism" still evokes distrust and rejection among the Hispanic feminists because they associate it with the theories which identified women with the natural world and with maternity. By insisting on the ability of the woman to give birth could mean a step back regarding the feminist principle of maternity as a free and personal choice. Demanding equality and autonomy means promoting sexual and reproductive rights. Faced with a dim exaltation of Life which hides the traditional negativity of giving sexual autonomy to women, the ecofeminist criticism I offer will defend the free will over one's own body. It is important to remember that the text which first used the term ecofeminism was an article by Françoise d'Eaubonne linking the freedom of the feminine collective to the necessary decrease in demographic growth, in accordance with the criteria of freedom and sustainability. This idea has been weakened in some later ecofeminist developments which have rejected all technological resources as an expression of the capitalist patriarchy. Thus they return to the image of the woman defined by her role as mother. Nowadays, some forms of environmentalism are driving an essentialist and anti-feminist speech that will probably reactivate the justifiable fear of women towards environmentalism[15]. This is extremely negative for both women and environmentalism. I hold that, between the nihilistic irresponsible hedonism and the return to the sanctity of biological processes, there is a third possibility which is the environmental conscience that preserves women's autonomy. The future of feminism is going through a clear positioning in favor of women's access to the free decision on the subject of reproduction. Women must be acknowledged as subjects with the deciding power in demographic matters, which is to say that they are subject to their own life, that they can decide whether to have children and in the case that they do so, when and how many in the framework of an conservationist culture of equality. This requires on occasion a contest between scientific knowledge and technology.

Neither technophobia nor idolatry of technique

Critical ecofeminism will require the effective application of the precautionary principle, taken on by the Council of Europe in the year 2000 but not always respected. According to this principle, there must be prudence when there is scientific doubt with regard to the risk involved to the environment or of public health in any new activity. It is not necessary to demonstrate its harmful effect in order to take preventive measures. It concerns specially the potentially irreversible changes. The burden of the proof that there is no risk will fall on those who aim to introduce the new product or activity. Against the tendency to prioritize economic profits above everything, the precautionary principle implies transparency and democratic participation. What social security service is going to be able to take on

[15] See, for example, *La Revolución calostral ha empezado*, in "The Ecologist para España y Latinoamérica", 48, January-March 2012.

the vast number of sick people created by the mass poisoning we are going through? The solution will end up being a question of leaving to their fate those who are unable to defray the treatment which could very well save them. The growing privatization of the health service has overtaken this phenomenon of an increase in the number of incidences of serious illnesses in younger people as yet another piece of the neoliberal puzzle.

The problem of the techno-scientific changes in Nature does not lie in the alteration of the sacred order but in the rudimentary and crude current human intervention on complex systematic changes which are over a million years old. "Collateral damage" and the possible irreversibility of these changes which have been introduced compel us to have a closer look in the light of Human Rights – particularly the right to be in good health in a healthy environment – of biodiversity, of the suffering of other living beings and the inheritance we leave for future generations. One of the reasons why ecology has become a feminist issue is due to the fact that, as mentioned previously, pollution has a specific impact on women's health and reproductive health. Human beings are hosts that must obtain the self-awareness of belonging to a fabric of multiple life and life forms of the planet we live in, and that its destruction is in the short or long term, our own.

Intercultural learning

The Latin American movements of feminist women, women peasants and indigenous people are strongly and unmistakably expressing their demands for women's rights and ecological proposals. We must learn from the sharing of cultures which is being offered by the Latin American example. Faced with a severe multiculturalism that beatifies whatever practice is founded upon tradition, an intercultural learning allows us to compare, criticize and be criticized. Critical ecofeminism proposes that our suicidal civilization learns a timely lesson from sustainable cultures without succumbing to mystification. We must also be capable of recognizing in ourselves what we can offer to others. It consists of building together an environmental culture of equality and of not worshipping our own customs or those of others simply because they form part of the traditional culture. The past has in general been cruel to women and non-human animals. I propose the following minimum criteria of comparison to preside over the mutual intercultural help of critical ecofeminism: sustainability, human rights – with particular attention to be paid to women rights for being the most ignored across cultures – and the treatment of animals.

Universalizing virtues of care

It is not possible to replace the denunciation of economic interests implicated in the destruction of the environment with a criticism of gender identity. However, a gender criticism is necessary if we want an ecofeminist ethical-political change which goes beyond a rational management of resources. We will have to proceed to a visualization and criticism of androcentrism; demanding, teaching and sharing attitudes, roles and virtues. A profound evolution of the masculine and cultural

identity is required as a whole. Praising the virtues of care without a critical look the relationship of power culminates in a sweetened speech that leads us nowhere.

The universalization of an ecological and post-gender ethic of care is an unresolved task in our daily life and in that of Education. The predominant Environmental Education continues without making itself visible to women and without giving them a critical awareness of gender role. It does not favor either the rise of empathetic feelings with regard to the natural world. At this stage the matter of the dualism of reason / emotion operates which has a long patriarchal history. It can be said, with some exceptions, that the developments in environmental education would not pass an ecofeminist exam. There is a broad consensus about the importance of teaching environmental values in the private circles as well as in the *media* and formal education. Nevertheless, in order for these values to be passed on in the best way and for us to continue advancing towards an environmental culture of equality it is vital that Education works with the human concept which integrates feeling and the historical experiences of women.

The environmental education cannot be further from gender *mainstreaming*. The non-sexist criteria which have long been considered to be essential in any Spanish education manual must be applied. The contributions of important scientists to the environment and the value of the sustainable practices of millions of women in the world should be recognized. Even more so, we must overcome this gender bias. Its exclusive instrumental focus leaves no room for the empathetic feeling with the non-human. We are not going to convince the new generations of the need to care for the "environment" if we present it this task as such; simple administration calculated from the "resources" as "waste management". Environmental education might have to pass through the emotions. It does not consist *only* of acquiring information. We must cultivate solidarity, an esthetic emotion in the face of natural beauty and the ethical emotional of caring for other non-humans. Infancy and adolescence is when we feel more empathetic towards animals. However, animals are astonishingly absent in environmental educational texts. They appear under zoological labels, reduced to simply "fauna". Is "fauna" the same as "animals"? We will not achieve this great cultural change which is needed with only a "scientific" environmental education that does not establish empathetic bonds with the object under study. We will attain a complete environmental education when we prevail over the androcentric oppression of the empathetic feelings towards non-human Nature. There is evidence of some excellent initiatives which go further than the reductionist approaches but they still remain limited, isolated and not appropriate for formal education.

Finally, an ecofeminism with an Iberian background must speak about bullfighting. In Spain, both the supporters and detractors of bullfighting are a minority. The vast majority is simply indifferent. They never attend or even think about the bullfights, but, because of an attitude of false tolerance that confuses relativism and an absence of rules with progressiveness, nor do they call for their abolition. The slogan seems to be "prohibition is prohibited" regardless of what is at issue. This attitude, positive in terms of preserving individual liberties, turns out to be damaging to the animals when a human being, protected by laws, decides that

his or her liberty consists in watching animals tortured to death in a ring or actively participates in the countless street festivals celebrated during the summer.

The integration of women into this highly criticized barbaric activity is one more strategy to give it prestige and legitimacy in a period of full decline. Women bullfighters and women fans seem to be a living refutation of the feminine empathy assumed by the basic tenets of ecofeminism. They are not moved by the bull's blood and bellows of pain; on the contrary, they enjoy the violence. Should we applaud or condemn the consecration of a woman *torera* into the hyperpatriarchal world of bullfighting? Should we support the new "form of entertainment" of a female public fascinated by power and violence?

Bullfights and other activities that involve the public torture of animals are a symbolic place – and, unfortunately, very real in terms of pain and blood – in which anthropocentrism and androcentrism intersect. Is the female *torera* more blameworthy than the male *torero*? Is the female spectator more blameworthy then the male spectator? I don't think so. Both are trapped in the mystique of virility and the historical definition of the masculine and the human as domination. The suffering of the animal is the same in either case. Ethics and feminist political philosophy have to vindicate equality between the sexes, but they must also set forth a critique of androcentrism. Both tasks, if understood as separate projects, entail certain dangers. As the ethics of care can lead to resignation and the exaltation of virtues produced by subjugation, the uncritical adoption of pseudo-liberal transgressiveness implies the acceptance of values that hide a gendered subtext.

I believe that, as feminists, we should not demand gender-specific virtues of women but we must examine the gendered nature of the virtues in order to effect a critical revision of culture. This is not a matter of wishing that bullfighting continue to be an exclusively masculine world, but nor is it a celebration of women's inclusion. Rather, this is about denouncing the patriarchal tenor of this bloody subculture, the horrific logic of domination that legitimizes it and calling for its abolition. If we want to broaden the concept of the human with those qualities that have been devalued as feminine, if we wish to move towards a society in which the autonomous subject does not need to dominate and humiliate in order to affirm her or his identity, nor to base her or his satisfaction on the suffering and death of the Other, then feminism has something to say about the bullfight. We need a reconceptualization of the human which combines reason and emotion, an amplified moral sense and an ethic of the responsibility in terms with the new technological power of the human race. Orphaned of our old preachers and stripped of our teleogical alibi we discover our insignificance in the infinite cosmos. In a universe which has been disenchanted by science, technology and philosophy, only an empathetic look at humans and non-humans will rescue us from nihilism. We are not the only beings that have been thrown into the cruel whirlpool of the existence; we possess the privilege of conceptualizing it but not the exclusiveness of living it. I hope ecofeminism can help us to understand this and build together an ecological culture of equality.