

**Woman/Body/Nature Connections:
an Ecofeminist Perspective.**

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ABSTRACT

In the ecofeminist perspective presented in this thesis I explore the cultural legacy and current trends which have impact upon the links between women and nature. It argues for the continuing relevance of ecofeminism in a discussion of the politics of the body.

Section One outlines the historical development of ecofeminism, its root traditions and the central perspective that has evolved to this day. The evolution of the politics of the body is then discussed with particular reference to the ecofeminist precept of dualism as an analytical tool. The psycho-sexual origins of the master-class (dominator model) are then considered.

Section Two discusses in detail the cultural devaluation of natural processes evident in the sexual representations of women in the west. Women's magazines and pornography are consulted to test their complicity in the cultural devaluation of woman and nature. The concept of nature under threat is explored by a further consideration of plastic surgery, the new reproductive technology and computers.

CONTENTS

<i>SECTION ONE</i>	<i>1</i>
INTRODUCTION	2
1. ECOFEMINISM AND THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CONTEXT	10
2. THE BODY POLITIC: FEMINIST AND ECOFEMINIST	22
<i>SECTION TWO</i>	<i>34</i>
3. SEXUALITY AND ECOFEMINISM	35
4. THE OBJECT OF SEXUAL CONSUMPTION	47
5. REPRESSION OF THE NATURAL	74
6. IMAGING A DANGEROUS, UNSAFE AND VIOLENT WORLD	85
7. DENIAL OF THE NATURAL: TECHNOLOGICAL WOMAN	100
CONCLUSION: RECLAIMING THE EROTIC: AN ANTIDOTE	110
BIBLIOGRAPHY	119

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other higher degree or graduate diploma in any tertiary institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



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SECTION ONE

Through ecology we attend to possibly the most urgent practical issues in the world today, and yet, most surely, behind and within the practice of ecology there is also the romantic and mythopoeic impulse, eros itself, engaged in its vital and ancient task of binding, weaving and connecting us to the other (Tacey 1995:128).

Introduction

The perspective presented in this thesis explores the assumption that there is a relationship between attitudes to the environment and attitudes to women via the concept of domination. Ecofeminism, because it deals with both the oppression of women and the oppression of nature, and because it delineates the overlaps and intersections among feminism, environmental consciousness, and other theories of oppression, is the conceptual framework that will be used. A concern with the psycho-sexual origins of the ecological crisis (Salleh 1984) has led me to focus on the connections between women, nature and the body. This is not to claim an original focus, but to explore the continuing relevance of these connections to a contemporary environmentalist position.

I will be drawing on both feminist and ecofeminist literature to advance the position that the woman-nature link cannot be set aside as a “relic of patriarchy” but “must remain a central issue for feminism” (Plumwood 1993b:21). This is not only because the woman-body-nature link is critical to an understanding of how woman (as body) has been sexually portrayed and exploited, but also because important trends in the 1990s indicate an attempt to sever the woman-body link. The contradictions of the historical association among woman, body, and nature will be discussed with the consideration that recent ‘denaturing’ trends are not liberating, but imperil our relationship to the natural world, and to each other, even more. Sustainability of diverse life forms on the planet, it will be argued, depends not only on the viability of the ecological community, but also on the viability of the human community. Relationships of communality, nurture and respect for the human and non-human world have a place in older societies that have been neglected by contemporary ones. Knowledge of our embeddedness in the natural world is found in our instinctual ‘wild’ nature, our animal nature, and cannot easily be dismissed, even by a society bent on rationalism and economic exploitation of the human and non-human world.

An examination of the ecofeminist literature will elucidate the themes which illustrate the link between the domination of women and nature. It will be shown that these arguments are not premised on a simple identification of women with nature, and men without nature (for this would contradict the experience of many tribal peoples where both genders hold a strong identification with the natural world), but rather is constructed by a peculiar western philosophical tradition which deems superior the world of 'human' and inferior the world of nature. Of pertinent interest to ecofeminists is how this definition of the 'human' has relied on characteristics drawn from the normative male, whilst excluding those characteristics associated with the female and nature, thus creating what Plumwood calls "the master model": domination by "a white, largely male elite". It will be argued in this thesis that an essential characteristic, and supportive construct, of the master model is the philosophy of dualism (Plumwood 1993b).

Of particular interest to this thesis is what ecofeminism has to say about the politics of the body and how this understanding can be applied as an interpretive tool. Thus an exploration of the dominant sexual representations of women in the west will be done via the central perspective raised by ecofeminism. It will be shown that ecofeminism can elucidate the continuities and contradictions of the layers of oppression which manifest upon examination of the sexual representations of women in the west. It will be seen, via the ecofeminist lens, that the ideology which supports the relegation of the female to 'body' has a long history, and that the contemporary technological frame and postmodern sensibility that rejects structures, essences, "indeed anything which seeks to impose order, coherence or stability" (Lonsdale 1992), increasingly condones the artificiality of the female body and sexuality itself.

For the ecofeminist the notion of 'the body' is invested with layers of meaning. From feminism the ecofeminist inherits an emphasis on threats to the rights of the female body (both physical and psychological); and from ecology the notion of the body under threat extends from the personal to the communal (the human and non-human world): our body, the earth. Juxtaposed with the above is the assumption of the body's innate neutrality and

plasticity, severed from any cultural context, and trends in pornography, television and mass market films which increasingly link sex with violence as 'normal' behaviour (Eisler 1996:197). All these considerations have created a complex ethical field for the ecofeminist to traverse.

It will be argued that the world of sexual propaganda, and the accompanying focus on the female body, censors (by exclusion and denial) images of human beings who, in their natural diversity, creative sexuality, spontaneity and tactility, take us to a richer comprehension of what it means to be mature, self-actualising humans. This sexual propaganda denies that mutual respect empowers us to an appreciation of the other's needs. It denies the natural processes of aging (our own and others), linking sexuality to a female youth cult, and alienating us from responsibility for the care and protection of the young.

This sexual propaganda denies that we are enlivened by contact with our natural need for communality, trust and touch. Instead pornography advertises itself as "sleaze, filth, squalid, dirt [and] degradation" (Lake 1995:96), describing the intimacies of delight that a woman may give to another as "advanced sexual functions", thus defining sexual relations negatively whilst reducing complexity to a "sexual fundamentalism" (Morgan 1982:105) in which the mindless body (female) is mechanistically displayed for the bodiless mind (male).

It will be postulated that this attitude of reducing the female to body parts and functions is dependent on *the same attitude* that reduces the body of nature to a domain of exploitation which profits from some parts while discounting other parts as obsolete. It is an attitude in which the ends justify the means, and anything not considered useful is considered to be irrelevant and waste. This is the attitude which drives the woodchipping of Australian forests for example, where the body of the forest in all its diversity and wonder is laid waste by clearfelling, as it is reduced to loggable components for the paper-making industry. These attitudes are unsustainable because they deny the inter-relationship of the whole and because they assume that 'man' can replicate what nature, over hundreds of years, has grown. These attitudes are unsustainable because a responsible 'ethic of care' for the

reproduction of nature is relegated to a minor position, secondary to the use of nature for profit production. Our dependence on these processes for the continuation of life (the earth, water, air and energy as the 'fire' of evolutionary choice) is denied or minimised. This is not an essentialist argument but an ecological perspective which consciously positions all of us *with* nature (Plumwood 1993b:21, King 1989:23).

This thesis will elucidate an ecofeminist perspective on the sexual representations of women in the west by tracing the history of eco-feminism from its early days to its present position as a philosophical and analytical tool. A discussion of the differing feminist and ecofeminist perspective's on 'the body' will elucidate the relevance of ecofeminism to an understanding of sexual propaganda about women.

I will then apply key ecofeminist precepts to a discussion of the dominant sexual representations of women to illustrate that the link between the oppression of women and nature continues to be a pertinent, perhaps critical, issue. A consideration of the 'beauty' industry, pornography, plastic-surgery and the reproductive industry will reveal that women's body in its natural form, is still subjugated, feared, commodified and simplified, as is the non-human natural world. The problematic of associating women with nature will be shown to involve contradictory impulses in the 1990s, with an increasing propensity to separate women from nature, whilst maintaining their subjugation via connection to their bodies as objects of consumption. It will be argued, however, that the tendency to disassociate women from nature continues the patriarchal mode of control over and detachment from the body, resulting in a further severing of culture from nature. At the same time the emergent ecological consciousness is challenging the limitations of modernism and postmodernism, by envisioning a new world which is based on a relationship of co-operative mutuality with nature, and with each other.

Applying the theory to the dominant sexual representations of women in the west (as beautiful or pornographic beings) involves an indebtedness to the history of feminist thought and the ongoing creation of new ways of seeing. Ecofeminism is concerned with

understanding and transcending the gender straitjackets that have been historically imposed. It reinterprets historical patterns to expose the dualistic philosophy which has separated the cultural and natural domains. It is argued that delineating an authentic relationship with both worlds must be rooted in a reverence towards the natural world. This may involve: a revaluing of the world historically associated with women; fighting for an ecologically and socially just world; challenging the dominant sexist paradigm; and envisioning/creating the alternative. A specific path is not prescribed; ecofeminism is an open-ended philosophy whose underlying intention is not to deny, but *affirm* our links with the natural world (Plumwood 1988), thus the body and nature connection can be a source for liberation.

An ecofeminist analysis therefore broadens the parameters of earlier feminist studies to include the central perspective of relationship to the natural world. Ecofeminism attempts to locate what is natural (or what is 'naturalness') not only to accord it positive value but so that the opposition of nature and culture does not blindly continue, for: "The implications of a culture based on the devaluation of life-giving and the celebration of life-taking are profound for ecology and for women" (King, in Plant 1989:23).

This is not to imply that nature is only concerned with life-giving, but rather that the contemporary western relationship with the natural world is steering humanity on a destructive and ultimately suicidal path geared by capitalist exploitation of life. This exploitive relationship fails to understand that "it is the *ecosystem* that is the fundamental "capital" on which all life depends" (Suzuki 1990:110). An ecofeminist position on the other hand, understands that life and death are a continuum, both creation and dissolution being essential aspects of the manifestation of the natural world, and that their evolution has allowed for greater complexity and planetary sustainability. Thus the aged trees (as the aged people) are not 'over-mature waste' to be carted away but are imbued with the meaning of time, and given time, will sift slowly into warm humus enriching the saplings that grow where they fall. To deny natural process is to deny the wonder and wisdom of evolutionary choice. It is hubris, and it will spell our downfall.

Authors such as Robert Lawlor (1990) and Sam Keen (1992), who consider the shaping of machismo sexual consciousness as intrinsic to our mistreatment of the natural environment, have heralded a new stage in the journey of the male. This thesis acknowledges that the oppression of males by patriarchy is significant, and that the philosophy of dualism has shaped not only feminine identity but masculine, and human identity as well (Plumwood 1993b). I concur with Rosemary Ruether who wrote:

The systems of domination ... are "male" only in the historical and sociological sense that males have shaped and benefited from them, not in the sense that they correspond to unique, evil capacities of males that women do not share (Ruether 1983:188).

Nevertheless sexist ideology has privileged the male over the female. Transformation for both sexes requires an openness to new ways of relating, a constant challenging of patriarchal sexism, and an ability to discern the complexity of the ideology that has shaped our different but common destinies.

The "Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism" (Warren 1990) resides in its ability to facilitate a critical perception of the interlinking net of oppression predicated on the abuse of the natural world. It is therefore *especially relevant* when one is exploring female oppression and humanity's continuing alienation from the natural world. The ecofeminist perspective presented in this thesis is limited to a discussion of the sexual representations of women in the west. It argues that the dominant attitudes to women and nature evidenced in these representations, are premised on the rendering of the body (of nature or woman) as subservient to the will of man. It calls for an erotic liberation steeped in an appreciation of the wild natural body, our selves, our earth.

The thesis is divided into EIGHT chapters.

Chapter One, Ecofeminism: The Multi-dimensional Context explores the historical development of ecofeminism. It outlines the root traditions of ecofeminist thought and presents the central perspective of ecofeminism as it has evolved to this day.

Chapter Two, The Body Politic: Feminist and Ecofeminist explores the evolution of the body politic as a feminist and ecofeminist concern. It will be argued that the ecofeminist precept of dualism is a central, and necessary analytical tool in a discussion on the body as constructed by the master model.

Chapter Three, Sexuality and Ecofeminism sets the stage for a discussion of the representations of female sexuality in the contemporary west by examining the social and psychological origins of the dominator model via a discussion of the transmutation of sexual identity from Prehistory (celebration) to Christian (repression) to Capitalist (consumption).

Chapter Four, The Object of Sexual Consumption explores the themes of objectification, codification and reductionism, which dominate the representation of female sexuality in western society. Women's magazines and pornography are consulted to explore their complicity in the process of, what Diamond (1990) calls, the cultural devaluation of natural processes.

Chapter Five, Repression of the Natural explores the cultural creation of the 'pornographic mind' via ideas fostered by pornography. Ideas such as fear of the natural/ fear of sex/ fear of the power of woman will be considered in greater depth.

In Chapter Six, Imaging a Dangerous, Unsafe and Violent World the links between sexuality and violence will be explored via a discussion of hard-core pornography and studies which suggest exposure to pornography increases tolerance of violent action. Via a discussion of computerised sex the problematic of mechanistic sexuality, domination and violence will be explored.

Chapter Seven, Denial of the Natural will explore the notion of nature under threat. Aspects considered will be plastic surgery, circumcision, genetic engineering, wombless life and the technological woman in a barren world. The reasons for maintaining our links with

nature will be reinforced.

Finally **Chapter Eight, Reclaiming the Erotic** will outline an alternative perspective on sexuality which may show a way forward into a future based on ecological wisdom and mutual respect. The limitations of the ecofeminist model of the world will also be considered here.

Chapter One

ECOFEMINISM AND THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CONTEXT

Although the super-rich increasingly own both the world and the word, the master identity is more than a conspiracy: it is a legacy, a form of culture, a form of rationality, a framework for selfhood and relationship which, through this appropriation of culture, has come to shape us all (Val Plumwood 1993b:191).

Ecofeminism is evolving. For the last two decades different writers under the label of ecofeminism have been exploring the attitudes that have led to the crisis of sustainability, the war between humanity and nature, and that between men and women. The roots of ecofeminism illustrate its diverse, and probably inevitable formation. F.d'Eaubonne introduced the term 'ecofeminisme' in 1974 in her book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort*, where she used it to illustrate women's potential for creating an ecological revolution (Warren 1991). Heller describes Murray Bookchin using the term in 1976 when he placed 'eco' before all the subjects in the social ecology curriculum, thus yielding eco-feminism, eco-agriculture and so on (Heller 1993b:142). Ynestra King then went on to develop the concept into a curriculum at the Institute for Social Ecology (Merchant 1992). By 1980 there were several texts such as Ruether's *New Woman/New Earth*, Daly's *Gyn/Ecology*, Griffin's *Woman and Nature*, and Merchant's *The Death of Nature: women, ecology and the scientific revolution* which were claiming significant links between the domination of nature and the domination of women (Hallen 1994). The concept received a public launch in Massachusetts at a 1980 conference entitled "Women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the '80s". At this conference a major direct-action against the Pentagon's nuclear war and weapons program was planned. In 1980 a massive theatrical action involving 8,000 women occurred. At this time the semi-permanent women's peace camp at Greenham Common in Britain was also established to protest against militarism (Merchant 1992, Heller 1993b).

Ecofeminism has inspired political action and intellectual endeavours, but given that my thesis is concerned with discussing the conceptual precepts of ecofeminism and applying them to the presentation of female sexuality dominant in the west today, the focus will be on theoretical developments.

Rosemary Ruether, who most credit with writing the seminal eco-feminist text, *New Woman/New Earth*, wrote:

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination (Ruether 1975:204).

Ruether claimed that all the models of domination (the separation of self and other, god and creation, hierarchical society, the domination of nature) were all modelled on sexual dualism (Ruether 1975:3). Arguing historically, she claims that the concept of a transcendent immaterial father-god emerged at the same time that there was a transition of the centre of power from the tribe to the urban centres. A culture developed that gave inferior status to the lower classes and to the female, thus justifying the ruling class and male positions which increasingly depended on the “inherited monopoly of political power and knowledge” made possible by industrialisation and which reduced the woman to the sphere of the home (Ruether 1975:7-9). The subjugation of women, class and nature was achieved philosophically by prophets and philosophers who undermined the old nature and mother religions by portraying them as immoral or irrational. Thus the hierarchical, dualistic conception of higher/lower, divinity/matter, male/female, sky/earth, replaced the belief in an all-encompassing and complementary Nature (Ruether 1975:14). This theme of the mutually re-enforcing relationships of domination has been a constant theme in eco-feminist literature, and it is this definition of ecofeminism, as an analysis which can reveal different layers of oppression which led Plumwood to call it “a general theory of oppression” (Plumwood 1992).

As a feminist philosophy, ecofeminism has stressed the importance of patriarchy in framing the concepts which underpin the mutuality of domination. Gaard claims that the patriarchal ideology “which authorises oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature” (Gaard 1993:1). Griscom (1981) supports this position and identifies four major systems of patriarchal oppression: naturism, sexism, racism and classism. She claims that the “philosophical roots of this oppression are found in the eastern version of dualism” and concludes that dualism “is the most powerful conceptual link between the four modes of oppression” (Griscom 1981:5). Warren develops the critique of dualism and argues that the “patriarchal conceptual framework is characterised by value-hierarchical thinking” (Warren 1987:6). This thinking, she says, has resulted in “a logic of domination” whereby reality is divided dualistically, with one side of the dualism (virtues associated with masculinity) being accorded a superior status, while the other side of the dualism (virtues associated with femininity) is accorded an inferior status. Thus a patriarchal conceptual framework is one in which:

the disjunctive terms (or sides of the dualism) are seen as exclusive (rather than inclusive) and oppositional (rather than complementary) ... It, thereby, conceptually separates as opposites aspects of reality that in fact are inseparable or complementary; e.g., it opposes human to nonhuman, mind to body, self to other, reason to emotion (Warren 1987:6-7).

As Plumwood (1991, 1993) argues, because the very definition of human is defined by virtues associated with the masculine (the world of rationality, control, the public realm and culture), the inherent logic of dualism pits man against woman and nature (the world of non-rationality, passivity, the private realm and nature), and assumes the superior status of the ‘human’ over the ‘non-human’. As Ruether points out in her early radical critique, it is because sexual dualism is “foundational to the perception of order and relationship” that the liberation of women “attacks the basic stereotypes of authority, identity, and the structural relations of *reality*” (Ruether 1975:3).

At this point it would be useful to look at the historical origins of the strands in feminist thought which have influenced the development of differing ecofeminist positions. It is this history which, in a large way, conditions the capacity of ecofeminist thought to seriously challenge the “structural relations of reality” to which Ruether refers. Ruether (1983) discusses the liberal, romantic and socialist roots of feminism. Merchant (1992) has divided the ecofeminist movement into its diverse liberal, cultural, socialist and social roots, and Plumwood (1993b) has rather more poetic titles for the different traditions. The categorisation below is a compilation from these writers and others, with the substitution of Merchant’s “social” feminism by “anarchist” feminism which I believe more aptly describes a tradition which draws heavily on the work of social-anarchists. Though categorisation has the accompanying danger of conflation of important difference, it is important to discuss the respective positions and insights of these root traditions. The ecofeminist movement, whilst simultaneously drawing on many sources for its inspiration, also has certain limitations and contradictions because of the different root traditions it draws on.

The **Liberal** feminist roots of ecofeminism support the doctrine of a “common human nature of all persons” (Ruether 1983). Manifest in the suffragette movement, it now calls for equal access of women to all spheres of activity: especially the educational, scientific and professional spheres to which women have been historically denied. Though contemporary liberal feminists support women’s self-determination over reproduction, and oppose sexual harassment and ‘dehumanising’ pornography (Ruether 1983), they do so only to the degree that women have been excluded from decision making centres of power. There is no attempt to critique the ‘masculine model of humanity’ or the capitalist exploitation of the domestic sphere, which has determined the dominant institutions and ideology. Plumwood thus calls this the “Feminism of Uncritical Equality” (Plumwood 1993b). This form of ecofeminism is consistent with the objectives of reform environmentalism: reform from within whilst accepting the essential rightness of given structures (Merchant 1992).

The **radical** feminist roots of ecofeminism use an analysis of patriarchy as the major focus for activism, though many radical feminists from the seventies on also have an understanding of racism and imperialism (Heller 1993b). The domination of the female, however, is seen as the fundamental domination. Radical feminism seeks to restructure the oppressions imposed on women by marriage, the nuclear family, romantic love, the capitalist state and patriarchal religion (Merchant 1992) via “subversion, resistance and replacement” (Plumwood 1993a:44).

Unlike liberal ecofeminism, radical ecofeminism critiques the masculinity of the dominant culture (patriarchy) and rejects the masculine character identity, often calling for a feminine one to replace it. This can result in romantic separatist or utopian visions of society, as men are seen as irredeemable and women are seen as incorruptible. Plumwood calls this process the “Feminism of Uncritical Reversal” (Plumwood 1993a).

Radical feminism’s main contribution though can be summed up in the slogan: ‘The personal is political’, with a particular application to the sexism evident in the treatment of woman as ‘body’. The focus on patriarchy however has often alienated black women who frequently feel greater connection with their black ‘brothers’ than with their white ‘sisters’. Neither does an analysis of patriarchy, as the over-riding focus, often appeal to women from poor countries where issues of survival are their primary concern.

The **socialist** feminist roots of ecofeminism are found in the Marxist/Leninist tradition. Subscribing to the social construction of capitalist patriarchy (via the division of class, race and gender) socialist ecofeminism addresses several of the limitations evident in the radical tradition. Socialist ecofeminism continues the Marxist feminist tradition in calling for the abolition of capitalism but it differs from it to the degree that the category of nature (reproduction) is incorporated as a central focus. Thus ecosocialists argue that under industrial capitalism reproduction is subordinate to production. Socialist ecofeminism thus envisages that a socialist/ecological society could bring human production and reproduction into balance (Merchant 1992). Socialist struggle will involve the fight for reproductive

freedom, and common control and ownership of natural resources (Redclift 1987, Shiva 1989).

An inherent contradiction for the ecofeminist working in this tradition is the bias of classical Marxism towards scientific and technological solutions. Many socialist feminists therefore see “the severance of the woman-nature connection as a condition of women’s liberation” (King 1989:23). They tend to support technological interference in the processes of reproduction (without analysing the male bias in the construction of science or technology), and they agitate for state-run child-care services on the premise that the mother can be ‘free’ to work, thus interpreting the domestic sphere as a prison.

The **anarchist** feminist roots of ecofeminism draw largely on the work of Bookchin, Kropotkin, Goldman and other social-anarchists who aim to rebuild society without domination: decentralisation and local control being central environmental themes of this tradition. Ecological destruction is seen to be rooted in an analysis of human social hierarchy and the market economy (Plumwood 1993b:14). It thus calls for a restructuring of the market economy which relies on the subordination of both women and nature. It offers a strong critique of domination via its concern with liberatory politics and social justice. Rejecting all forms of determinism it visualises both men and women as capable of an ecological ethic based on caring (Merchant 1992) and upholds grass-roots communities as the ideal form for providing nurturing.

The **cultural** feminist roots of ecofeminism also analyse environmental problems via a critique of patriarchy as social construction. Humans are seen to be socially gendered, yet women’s biology and nature are celebrated as sources of power because of the special historical relationship between women and nature (Merchant 1992). The cultural and biological history of women (herstory) is therefore resurrected to offer alternatives that can liberate the relationship to the natural world now. Often this involves a romanticisation of the woman-nature connection via goddess worship, art and theatre where women and nature are re-visioned as powerful forces. According to Starhawk “witchcraft takes its

teachings from nature, and reads inspiration in the movements of the sun, moon, and stars, the flight of birds, the slow growth of trees, and the cycles of the seasons” (Starhawk 1979:3). Spirituality is often seen as a source of both personal and social change whilst science and technology are viewed suspiciously as being aligned with a mechanistic male view instead of an intuitive female one.

Plumwood, commenting on both the radical and cultural roots of feminism, says:

Radical feminist cultural critiques have suffered from various problems: they often assume women's oppression to be the foundational form of oppression from which all others are derived; the denial of the feminine is conceived as the origin point of the distortion of culture (Plumwood 1993b:30).

These traditions are in danger of denying that women and men are both part of culture and nature (King 1989, Plumwood 1993). Plumwood goes on to discuss the critical role that an analysis of dualism plays in understanding why simple reversals of value do not adequately challenge the dominant paradigm: this theme will be discussed in more detail later.

Plumwood, along with others, criticises the radical and Marxist traditions for their reductionist paradigm and she counsels that if the environmental crisis is to be averted an ecofeminist philosophy must be forged which recognises “essentially linked forms of oppression” and “relations of cooperation between movements which can fruitfully explore connection without attempting reduction” (Plumwood 1992:64). She points out that this latter stance is the one taken by the majority of ecofeminists, and notes that in early accounts of ecofeminism disparate positions were often grouped together. She argues that a more rigorous analysis is needed to convincingly explain the notion of dualism (already evident in feminist theory) and its relationship to mechanism and the oppression of nature. She thus concurs with Griscom (1981) that the analysis of the conceptual framework of dualism is the key notion within ecofeminism.

As we have seen, ecofeminism has drawn on different feminist and political traditions and its indebtedness to feminism is without doubt. Ecofeminism's major challenge to feminism has been its call for what Ruether called "an integrative feminism" (Ruether 1983:232). Ruether argued that this "integrative feminist vision" must harness the insights of the liberal, socialist and radical traditions so that an ecological society can evolve. Warren similarly called for a 'transformative feminism' which will "make an eco-feminist perspective central to feminist theory and practice" (Warren 1987:3). The challenge to feminism from ecofeminism is complex and diverse, but the growing body of work on ecofeminism reflects a change in focus, so that many are now calling ecofeminism the '*third wave of feminism*'.

What is the central perspective presented in ecofeminism?

Ecofeminism challenges the dominant reductionist paradigm on many levels. It is concerned with multi-dimensional understandings of the personal, political, environmental and cultural relationships which reveal the nexus of domination over women and nature, and other oppressed groups. Theoretically ecofeminism elucidates what Plumwood calls "a network of oppression", or a "general theory of oppression" (1992:66). Ecofeminism's challenge to the dominant paradigm relies on five central themes which I will delineate below. The adoption of these themes is also how ecofeminism has come to define itself over the last two decades.

Patriarchy and Domination

Primarily, ecofeminism, given its feminist roots, is a critique of patriarchy. Androcentrism is the system of patriarchal domination where the relations between men and women are based on a "logic of domination" (Warren 1990:125). Patriarchy is seen as a model for other kinds of power domination, such as racism, militarism, classism, naturism. Most ecofeminists do not see patriarchy as the basis of hierarchy, but see "women's oppression as one (although perhaps a key one and certainly an irreducible one), among a number of forms of oppression" (Plumwood 1992:65). Ecofeminist theory challenges "the presumed necessity of power relationships" (Birkeland 1993:19) and argues that what is needed is a change

from a morality based on "power over" to one based on reciprocity and responsibility, "power to" (Birkeland 1993:19).

Dualism

A central ecofeminist perspective must include an understanding of the conceptual means by which the domination of women and nature are perpetuated. Plumwood points out that what is common to all the ecofeminist positions is "the rejection of the assumed inferiority of women and nature and of the superiority of reason, humanity and culture" (1992a:47). A critical ecofeminism is bound up with understanding how this superior/inferior split, in humanity, and between culture and nature, has been manufactured by an ideology which is based on dualism. This ideology assumes the superiority of the cultural traits which are linked with the masculine (such as rationality and control) over 'inferior' traits which are linked with women and nature (such as nurturing and passivity), resulting in a devaluing of "whatever is associated with women, emotion, animals, nature and the body, while simultaneously elevating in value those things associated with men, reason, humans, culture, and the mind" (Gaard 1993:5). Hierarchical dualism thereby justifies the relationship whereby women and nature are both viewed as passive objects to be used and exploited for the ends of man. Ecofeminists have pointed out how this world view ignores the active, creative and life-sustaining aspects of women and nature, limits the concept of the human to a male one, and results in a reductionist process of isolating parts that can be used for profit whilst discounting other parts as obsolete.

Rationalism

The rationalist philosophy that underpins the dominant patriarchal paradigm and reinforces dualism is also challenged. One aspect of the Kantian rationalist worldview is the separation of subject and object as scientifically or morally necessary. In the words of Jessica Benjamin, the rationalist world view "conceives of polarity and opposition rather than mutuality and interdependence as the vehicles of growth" (Benjamin 1980:45). Ecofeminists claim that this attitude to life ignores the very real connections between subject and object, thus denying the personal and feeling world. Recent methodological

developments in quantum physics now also reflect the relationship between subject and object by acknowledging the key role played by the observer in laboratory tests.

A second aspect is that rationalism has been aligned with an instrumental approach to the human and non-human world. The rational, as 'human', has been used to oppress people who are categorised as 'irrational' or more bestial. It has thus been used to justify slavery, the colonising of 'lesser races', the exploitation of the labour of peasants and the working class, and the domination of women and the natural ('irrational') world:

Much of the problem (both for women and nature) lies in rationalist or rationalist-derived conceptions of the self and of what is essential and valuable in the human makeup. It is in the name of such a reason that these other things - the feminine, the emotional, the merely bodily or the merely animal, and the natural world itself - have most often been denied their virtue and been accorded an inferior and merely instrumental position (Plumwood 1991:5-6).

As Plumwood (1993b) points out, behind the view that the rational is the human, are several assumptions. These include the assumption of the superiority of the mental sphere itself (and the inferiorisation of the bodily sphere), the assumption that rationality and the masculine are synonymous with the 'human' (albeit only to the degree that individual males fit the ruling order of class or race), the assumption that this definition of the 'human' is unproblematic (even though it works on the exclusion of characteristics associated with the female, lower classes and other races; Plumwood 1993b:24-25), and the assumption of nature as being inferior because it is 'irrational' (in other words has no discernible pattern of order).

Diversity/Process and Context

Ecofeminists endorse diversity, process and context. As Warren states, an ecofeminist ethic attempts to "frame an ethic free of male-gender bias about women and nature" by building on "the multiple perspectives of those whose perspectives are typically omitted or undervalued in dominant discourses" (Warren in Merchant 1992:185). Thereby an

ecofeminist perspective is “structurally pluralistic, inclusivist, and contextualist, emphasising through concrete example the crucial role context plays in understanding sexist and naturist practice” (Warren quoted in Merchant 1992:185).

Thus process is as important as goals. Process involves co-operation among differing perspectives; a respect for diversity. Plumwood notes that this cooperation among movements which understand that forms of oppression are linked should not mean that essential ideas are absorbed or colonised. She claims it is important to maintain what is “new and distinctive in the environmental critique” but that this “does not demand either isolationist or competitive reductionist stances in relation to other movements” (Plumwood 1992:64).

Ethics

Ecofeminism is not only a conceptual philosophy however, it also endeavours to develop an alternative paradigm for praxis. Thus it:

... refocusses environmental ethics on what nature might mean, morally speaking, for humans, and on how the relational attitudes of humans to others - humans as well as nonhumans - sculpt both what it is to be human and the nature and ground of human responsibilities to the nonhuman environment (Warren 1990:145).

This refocussing of ethics, according to Ruether, “must always be an ethic of ecojustice, that recognises the interconnection of social domination and the domination of nature” (Ruether in Plumwood 1992:66). Ecofeminism is thus concerned with revealing the “network of oppression” (Plumwood 1992:66), the layering of political, environmental and cultural relations which construct the nexus of domination over women and nature, whilst articulating an alternative way of interacting with the human and nonhuman world.

This alternative way is founded in an ethic of care, an ethic of partnership with nature. As Merchant writes:

Constructing nature as a partner allows for the possibility of a personal or intimate (but not necessarily spiritual) relationship with nature and for feelings of compassion for nonhumans as well as for people who are sexually, racially, or culturally different.

It avoids gendering nature as a nurturing mother or a goddess and avoids the ecocentric dilemma that humans are only one of many equal parts of an ecological web and therefore morally equal to a bacterium or a mosquito (Merchant 1992:186).

Eisler (1996) claims that at this critical junction of our cultural evolution the partnership ethic, through its capacity to awaken consciousness and love, has the capacity to transform the dominator myths, institutions and destructive technologies which are “taking us to an evolutionary dead end” (Eisler 1996:388). The emergence of an ethic of care, which recognises the creative potential of humans to live in reciprocity with other human and non-human earthlings, is now crucial for our survival.

Chapter Two

THE BODY POLITIC: FEMINIST AND ECOFEMINIST

the same psychological issues run through both political and erotic forms of domination, for they both embody a denial of the other subject
(Benjamin 1980:66)

Evolution of the Body Politic

Second wave feminism began in the 1960s and focused on women's experience as 'lived flesh and blood'. As Heller (1993b) documents, this was born partly out of a response to the perception of increased abstraction in New Left politics, and the contradictions in women's own lives where, whilst fighting for 'freedom for humanity', they were subject to sexism from their male colleagues. Consciousness-raising groups formed, and issues that had previously been cloistered in privacy became public. Women began to see how reconstructing 'the personal' could radically challenge the foundations of political institutions.

During this period the term *body politic* was developed; "a creative concept which rooted a political analysis of women's experience by focusing on the immediate experience of the body" (Heller 1993b:140). Radical feminism as a movement evolved and "women abandoned bras, make-up, diets, let body hair grow" in search of a less artificial "*ecological body* which was free of the pollution of male control or aesthetics" (Heller 1993b:141). The step from patriarchal invasion of the body to the invasion of the earth became easier to see as, concurrently with women reclaiming their physicality and 'wild' sensual nature, the arms race was gathering momentum. It was felt that "neither patriarchy nor capitalism had any limits in sight". The nuclear issue thus bridged the concerns of ecology and feminism : "Both issues demonstrated how little control women had not only of their own bodies, sexuality, economy and health, but how little control women had over their survival in general and the survival of the planet" (Heller 1993b:141-143).

The transition from concern with the individual woman's body (body as 'self'), to the social body of women (body as 'community'), to the global body (body as 'earth') enabled the growth of a 'global feminism'. This 'new' feminism necessarily had to make links among the experience of Third World women who, in tending the earth body, were often dealing with issues of survival (such as deforestation and pollution of water sources), and the reality of women's work in tending to the care of food, children, the sick, and the needs of the body. Thus the use of the term 'body politic' in this thesis does not reflect an accidental relationship, or a relationship of diffuse homogeneity among different realms. In fact it endorses the continuing relevance of radical feminism to an ecofeminist debate on the body. Ecofeminism is grounded in the particular, the local body, and by this connection of caring for the specific can more readily move to an 'ethic' of responsible care for the human and non-human world. (This is counter to the philosophy of transpersonal ecology, for example, which asks for identification with the non-human world as a *sacrifice of self interest*. See Fox 1990:262).

Ecofeminism thus opens up the possibility of valuing domesticity, as care for the immediate local space, in a way that is often ignored by 'liberation' theories which concentrate *only* on class or group process as potentially revolutionary or worthy of analysis. This is not to deny that capitalism will attempt to delegate responsibility to the private sphere rather than assuming 'state' responsibility (as already happens in many pollution or energy usage campaigns where the domestic consumer is expected to reduce or reuse while large companies go unregulated), but to acknowledge the inter-relationship between the healthy sustainability of the local niche and the larger network of relationship. That the personal is political is evidenced by the work of environmental activists such as Rachel Carlson, who through personal tragedy uncovered the connections among pesticides in the food chain; and the tree-hugging Chipko women in Northern India who exposed the links between deforestation and their personal survival (see Shiva 1989); and the Niger delta people who confronted Shell for polluting their land and consequently saw their leaders executed. Pollution and deforestation have a direct bearing on the ability of the local niche to survive.

Thus I support Heller's claim that there was an 'ecological consciousness' latent in radical feminism.

However there are aspects in second-wave feminism which contradict ecological consciousness, Rothfield (1992) below indicates that the notion of the body remains complicated for feminists because of the employment of Cartesian dualism in feminist philosophy itself. She argues that although the concern with the female body is present in second-wave feminism "this has not always extended to an interest in conceptualising *what is the body*" (Rothfield 1992:99). Drawing on Gatens (1983), Rothfield claims that the sex/gender dichotomy in feminism has led to a "tendency to render the body textual and not physical" (Rothfield 1992:101), thus the anatomical body is denied reality. Perhaps, she says "we spend so long *looking* at representations of bodies, we forget the fact of their presence, even our own bodily presence" (Rothfield 1992:100). Her point is that the idea of a socially constructed gender has reduced the body to a brute fact of sex, "a biological given which exists outside the social process" (Rothfield 1992:99). However women's association with nature as a historical and descriptive connection only, with no basis in women's biology other than convention, "views the body as neutral [passive] and the real self as ungendered" (Plumwood 1993b:201). The inference of the sex/gender dichotomy is that sex has no mind, and gender has no body. Rothfield points out that an identification with the physical has been denied because it is interpreted as essentialist and "even though essentialism is now being rethought within feminism, this has not signified the reintroduction of the biological, anatomical body" (Rothfield 1992:101). Elizabeth Grosz takes up this challenge and extensively considers the subjectivity of the body in her book *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (1994).

Many ecofeminists have clearly rejected biological determinism but a minority in ecofeminism accept biological determinism *to some degree* (Griffin: 1978, Salleh: 1984, Collard with Contrucci: 1988). The very conjuncture of ecology (biology and environment) and feminism forces ecofeminists into confronting the problematic of "essentialising" the woman/nature connection. Although there has been some attempt to side-step the

nature/nurture argument, for instance, by an interpretation of men and women's different historical experience as explaining gender difference (as some cultural ecofeminists do), or by a rejection of biological difference in favour of androgyny (as some radical ecofeminists do), ambiguous links between sex and gender often remain. Feminists have been critical of any sociobiological theory of difference between the sexes yet, if we are to overcome the divergence between nature and culture, a re-examination of the links between biology and culture appears pertinent.

Connell (1987) in arguing against biological determinism puts forward the notion of "the shift from biological evolution to history" (Connell 1987:72) as if biological evolution no longer influences our relationships. This may be true if history, as culture, is seen as oppositional to nature, but if the dichotomous relationship between culture and nature is re-interpreted to reflect a network of stranded connection, as ecofeminism proposes, then gender construction also becomes a reflection of both. This is not to support biological reductionism, which, like any form of reductionism, fails to register the variety of choices available to men and women, but it does suggest that biological regulations may be operating in ways that cannot be so readily dismissed.

I believe the simple example of reproduction makes an outright dismissal of biological determinism difficult. Reproduction is an act that has, until very recent times, involved the sexual connection of the female and the male. However it is the mother who has the uterus which ensures that the baby can grow for the necessary time, and it is the mother who has the breasts which are designed to give the baby nurture until other feeding habits are established. After the moment of conception the biological role of the father is over, *however*, the mother is intrinsically linked with the baby for an extended period of gestation. Even after the birth the umbilical cord of sustenance connects the mother and child (and in some cultures this connection was maintained for several hours). Then, and ideally for months, if not years, breastfeeding continues this deeply intimate connection between mother and child. I say 'ideally' not because I wish to restrict women to a crippling dependence on a biological function, but because evolutionary choice has provided

colostrum (which has a high level of antibodies) and breast milk (human breast milk is best for human babies after all) as the 'ideal' nurture for the baby. It is not a social construction that provides colostrum and breastmilk, as the ideal way to nurture a little child (although medical interests with an interest in intervention in reproduction, and capitalist companies such as Nestle may often deny the *essential* role that breastfeeding plays).

Is a consideration of this relationship 'essentialising'? Some would say 'no', claiming that this is just a description of sex (biology), not gender. Others may say, 'no', gender construction builds onto this sex difference. But is the line so easily drawn? For as the baby grows in the womb, it develops important skills such as listening and moving. As the mother suckles the infant she invariably communicates with it in other ways. And as the mother carries and feeds the little child, this shapes how her body can move in the world, and this consequently influences her social interactions. It seems highly likely then, that a network of relationships have co-evolved with this primary focus of caring and tending for the young.

This is not to deny that diverse social roles are possible for men and women (anthropological studies clearly indicate this) but to emphasise that the child's tie to the mother is obviously a deeply biological one, with significant social repercussions; and that, although the father may recognise the child after it is born, his connection to the child is largely a social one. In many traditional societies, in fact, paternity is often not an issue, as the biological father is not the one who assumes responsibility for the child; responsibility is met by the mother's family and relations (men and/or women). With the break down of tribal and extended family networks and the emergence of the nuclear family and private property however, the biological father's economic, and in some cases domestic supportive role became critical. (Of course in contemporary western society the welfare state also assumes economic responsibility here.) This is not to deny the caring role that biological father's have played in the raising of children, as evident in Asian and American Indian societies, but to show that the distance between the mother and baby, and the father and baby, has been influenced by the biological relationship between the woman and her

offspring. In this respect I resonate with Margaret Mead that “Children grow *toward* their fathers” (Mead and Heyman 1965:45), moving from their mothers.

The biological dependence of children on their mothers for nurturance, the vulnerability of a woman in advanced pregnancy and labour, and the care requirements of the human extended childhood do, I believe, counter Connell’s claim that a biological cause *cannot* trigger complex patterns of individual behaviour and social institutions. Thus in a natural and essential way, this example of the dependence of the growing (pre and post-natal) child on the mother has enormous value. The undermining of this natural relationship by surrogacy, invitro-fertilization, “wombless” mothers, and genetic cloning, has far reaching effects which cannot go unchallenged. Many ecofeminists are critical of a furthering of technical interference in reproduction because they value this woman/nature/body connection and this will be investigated further in Chapter Seven, ‘Denial of the Natural’.

The either/or debate surrounding the ‘essentialist’ debate has created a split in feminist thought (Brennan 1989). However in respect to at least the example of reproduction, the splitting of choice into either biological or cultural explanations (nature or nurture) results in a reductionist simplification of this process. Ecofeminists have addressed this issue in a variety of ways but they generally concur that, just as an individual cannot be viewed as separate from its own bodily experience, neither can the body be seen to determine all socio-cultural expression. As Warren (1987) points out, radical ecofeminists have had the most to say about women’s personal, bodily experience being intrinsic to a conception of human nature, thus:

humans are essentially embodied ... We are not (as the Cartesian philosophical tradition might have us suppose) bodiless minds, i.e., “mental” or thinking beings whose essential nature exists independently from our own or others’ physical, emotional, or sexual existence. By taking women’s bodies, and, in particular, women’s reproductive biology, as indispensable to women’s nature, radical feminism brings child-bearing and child-rearing functions into the political arena (Warren 1987:14).

Historically though, women have been delegated particular roles on the basis of either exclusion from nature, or inclusion with nature. Therefore the evolution of patriarchy as an institutionalised social arrangement, based on the *systemic oppression* of the link between women and nature, requires more complex explanation. In the words of Philipa Rothfield (1992):

The problem is not that our bodies are biological, it is what this is taken to mean. If biology is understood as the natural, objective sense in which our bodies have a corporeal substratum, then discourse and discursive inscription can only be a superficial layer - one which can in principle be peeled off to reveal the depth of biology. If, however, biology is only ever part of a cultural complex, then any reference to the physical will never isolate pure biology for it will also implicate discourse and its significations. Clearly much turns upon the way in which the body is theorised. The significance of bodily presence depends upon the kind of approach taken towards the body" (Rothfield 1992:102).

Key ecofeminist precepts elucidating the multi-dimensional context and the network of oppression which ecofeminism endeavours to explain were outlined in Chapter One. One of these key precepts, dualism, will now be discussed to illustrate how an ecofeminist analysis of the body might proceed.

Dualism and the body politic

In critiquing the social/biological, culture/nature dualisms evident in the different strands of feminist thought, ecofeminist Griscom (1981:4) writes: "Social feminists emphasise history and often disregard nature and biology; nature feminists emphasise nature and often disregard history and social structures. This is the nature/history split; and it is, of course, a false split, a false dualism" because "our history is inseparably part of our nature, our social structures are inseparably part of our biology" (Griscom 1981:9).

Dualism as an analytical tool has had an ongoing development since ecofeminism's early days (Reuther 1975; Griffin 1978, 1981; Plumwood 1988, 1991, 1993; King 1989; Warren 1990), and many feminists have used the term. Val Plumwood has played a major role in

clarifying and refining the term in her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, where she develops what she calls a “critical ecofeminism”. I have used Plumwood (1993b) as a foundational text for elaborating the construct of dualism and I am indebted to this work as a guide for anchoring much of the following perspective.

Plumwood (1993b) defines dualism as “the process by which contrasting concepts (for example, masculine and feminine gender identities) are formed by domination and subordination and constructed as oppositional and exclusive” (Plumwood 1993b:31). This hierarchical dualism relies on a construction of difference whereby men are associated with the ‘superior’ side (along with what is culturally defined as ‘human’ male qualities, such as competition, rationality and detachment), whilst women are associated with the ‘inferior’ side (and the ‘natural’ domain of nurturing, dependence and emotion). Several assumptions are thus fused in the construction of dualism, resulting in, not only the exclusion of women from culture and the exclusion of men from nature, but in the assumed superiority of culture (reason and humanity) over nature.

Thus women and the reproductive realm, via their link with nature, have been inferiorised largely because of “women’s different position of power and role in society” (Plumwood 1993b:201), or as Rosemary Ruether put it, the biological imperative of a woman to childbear and lactate is extended into all aspects of caring for the domestic realm, “her reproductive process” becomes owned by men, and defined from a male point of view (Ruether 1983:74).

Susan Griffin has investigated at length the construction of the culture/ nature dualism which underpins what she calls the “chauvinistic mind” (Griffin 1981:2). Her book *Pornography and Silence: Culture’s Revenge against Nature* traces the cultural history that has given rise to this dualistic mind. This mind, she claims, is one in which westerners all participate because it is the mind that dominates culture. Through a series of historical examples, which will be discussed later, she shows how the male/female dichotomy has been reinforced by linking the male with culture, and the female with nature. Thus, Griffin says,

“our culture has increasingly isolated men from biological reality”, creating a category of ‘Other’ “which holds the projection of this part of the self which hasn’t been accepted or included. Both animals and women become the vessels of that denied self” (McCauley 1993:118).

Ruether (1983) describes this process whereby men and women repress certain characteristics which are associated with the other as a “distorted relationality”. The man regresses to “childhood dependence” in the domestic sphere where the woman is expected to serve him, and the woman is denied access to the public realm and the skills necessary for survival there (Ruether 1983:174). The effect of this exclusion and denial has a far greater consequence for women however as “the two realms are not at all comparable in power” (Ruether 1983:174). Neither have they been considered comparable in moral value.

Women’s work in tending to bodily needs, children, and the domestic realm has been seen to be aligned with an inferior passive world, the world of nature. The monetary value (or lack of) assigned to this sphere reflects the assumption that this work is of lower value (male labourers, gardeners, and farmers are also exploited by this association with ‘brute’ nature). Men’s work, in tending to the mind and the public realm, has been seen as actively ‘civilising’, creating progress and ‘culture’. Although this association has a long history some may argue it is now irrelevant given the pluralism and the dynamism of contemporary society, but the difference in wage scale between men and women is significant and reflects society’s continued exploitation and denigration of women and nature.

Dualism operates by attempting to deny the inter-relationship and dependence of one sphere on the other (Plumwood 1993b:41). The world of matter and the world of mind are schizophrenically opposed under dualism, and, alas, many today still vehemently support this division. For example Camille Paglia writes: “Men, bonding together, invented culture as a defence against female nature” and “Earth-cult *must lose* to Sky-cult if mind is ever to *break free* from matter” (Paglia 1995:12, 31 my italics). The fact that the earth, body, nature may lose to sky, mind, rationality is exactly what ecofeminists are afraid of. It is what

Vandana Shiva calls “maldevelopment as the death of the feminine principle” (Shiva 1989:5):

In practice, this fragmented, reductionist, dualist perspective violates the integrity and harmony of man in nature, and the harmony between men and women. It ruptures the co-operative unity of masculine and feminine, and places man, shorn of the feminine principle, above nature and women, and separated from both. The violence to nature as symptomatised by the ecological crisis, and the violence to women, as symptomatised by their subjugation and exploitation arise from this subjugation of the feminine principle (Shiva 1989:6).

As pointed out earlier, this has led some ecofeminists to call for a reversal of the dominant masculine model, however, as Plumwood (1988, 1993b) points out, this position is naive because the problem is not simply one of female identification with nature and masculine distance from and domination of nature, but that the concept of what constitutes the ‘human’ is in itself problematic. She suggests that three critiques converge to explain this problem. These are the critique of masculinity, the critique of rationality and the critique of the human domination of nature.

The critique of masculinity, the critique of rationality and the critique of the human domination of nature converge because the traits traditionally associated with the masculine namely rationality, activity as domination and control, transcendence (as beyond the sphere of matter/nature) and freedom (from the sphere of matter/nature) are used to define what is distinctively ‘human’. These are seen as traits not shared with women, animals or ‘savages’ and thus justify patriarchy, colonialism, slavery, the attempted genocide of indigenous peoples such as the Australian Aborigines, and the domination of nature. These ‘inferior’ realms are seen to be of ‘instrumental’ use only. Rationality is thus aligned with the western ideal of the human as “one who maximises difference and distance from the natural and the animal” and this is then used as “a tool for the exclusion and oppression of the contrasting classes of the non-human” (Plumwood 1988:18).

Plumwood argues that the identity of the master culture (rather than masculine identity *per se*) is expressed most strongly in the dominant conception of reason. A dualised account of reason (rather than reason *per se*) gives rise to a dualistic account of otherness. This account relies on “an alienated form of differentiation, in which power construes and constructs difference in terms of an inferior and alien realm”, thus dualism becomes systemic and institutionalised by building onto “existing forms of difference” (Plumwood 1993:42). (Therefore, in regard to women’s essential role in reproduction for example, difference *may be* interpreted dualistically but difference is not dualistic in itself.) As a conceptual system, a ‘master model’, Plumwood argues that the key dualisms of “male/female, mental/manual (mind/body), civilised/primitive, human/nature correspond directly to naturalise gender, class, race and nature oppressions respectively” (Plumwood 1993b:43).

Plumwood, elaborating on the Platonic and Cartesian roots of the dualised conception of human identity, points out that the early rationalist tradition saw the genuine human self as without the qualities of animal and natural spheres, thereby allowing for the development of the mechanistic conception of nature as clockwork, without consciousness (Plumwood 1993b:104). As feminists and ecofeminists have pointed out this view is still dominant in science today (Merchant 1980, Hallen 1989). It is also easy to see how Platonic philosophy, in which “primal nature (chaos) is conceived as initially fallen and disordered” and oppositional to the rational human (Plumwood 1993b:84), crystallised with the teachings of the institutionalised Christian Church into the doctrine of the fall, whereby the natural passion (body) of woman (Eve) is held responsible for humanity’s (Adam’s) “Fall from Grace” (and the kingdom of god/Mind).

Both the domination of nature from within (evident in the Platonic and Christian relegation of the body and the passions to a lower realm), and the domination of nature from without (evident from the Enlightenment treatment of nature as mechanical and ‘mindless’) stem from a fear of the natural as alien and potentially corruptive. The ‘wild’ (passion or nature) is perceived as chaotic disorder and must be ‘tamed’ into submission by rationalist

transcendence or conquering. This denial of continuity between the human and natural realms highlights not only what has been problematic for feminist philosophy but what is problematic for the development of an environmentally responsible society:

the failure to conceive ourselves as essentially or positively in nature leads easily into a failure to commit ourselves to the care of the planet and to encourage sustainable social institutions and values which can acknowledge deeply and fully our dependence on and ties to the earth (Plumwood 1993b:71).

Dualism has effectively established an ‘unbridgeable gulf’ between mind and matter. It has divided man against woman, the ‘civilised’ against the indigenous, humanity against nature, culture against biology, pure-spirit against impure-matter. The continuum of connection has been cut and, as Grosz points out, the defining of the two sides, by exclusion of one from the other, largely leaves their interaction unexplained (Grosz 1994:7).

Thus it can be seen that dualism as the philosophy of the “master model” has supported the oppression of gender, race, class and nature (Plumwood 1993b). The latter half of this thesis explores at greater length the operation of Cartesian dualism in effecting the relationship between male and female, and our relationship to the natural world. The key dualisms of culture/nature, mind/body (nature), and reason/nature will be seen to exert a major influence in the construction of the dominant sexual representations of the female body in the west. These key dualisms, along with others such as master/ slave, public/private, subject/object, self/other, universal/particular, artificial/natural will be seen to have particular relevance in interpreting the master model’s production and reproduction of the female body.

SECTION TWO

Where there is a wound on the psyches and bodies of women, there is a corresponding wound at the same site in the culture itself, and finally on Nature herself (Pinkola Estés 1993:204).

The task of Section II is to analyse the psycho-sexual representations of women in the west to see whether the ecofeminist precepts anchored by dualism can elucidate in a further and practical way the contradictions and continuities among nature and culture, mind and body, women and men. Research in this area is much needed for, as Eisler notes, the connection “between social and ideological structure and how different human bodies are imaged - and specifically how relations between the male body and the female body are imaged - is still almost nowhere addressed” (Eisler 1996:215). The task of shaping our future relationship to each other, and to the natural world, is conditioned by our cultural legacy which identifies women and nature as the ‘alien’ other. Additionally female complicity in the construction of dualistic sexuality will be seen to be a pertinent issue, for it is not only men who have internalised the structures of dualism.

Chapter Three

SEXUALITY AND ECOFEMINISM

Changing the interactions among male and female and the natural world involves a recognition of our co-evolution and co-partnership on this planet. Our displacement from the 'wild' nature with-out, is related to our displacement from the 'wild' nature with-in. I use the term 'wild' to describe an "instinctive affiliation" (Estés 1993:203) with the natural body (the body of both human and non-human nature). The master model via psychological and political domination has pathologised our 'wild' natural sexuality resulting in a "bias against the natural body" (Estés 1993:204). The denial of the 'wild', untamed and free flowing, is reflected in a culture which elevates thanatos over eros, the rational over the emotional, reason over intuition, consumption over conservation.

Understanding the processes that have given rise to a culture which is afraid of 'wild' nature involves understanding the political and psychological structuring of *masculine* and *feminine* as dualised identities steeped in historical relationships of domination (patriarchy). Domination relies on taking possession of the other. It denies the other's capacity for 'wild', free-flowing action. It utilises the other for its own pre-determined ends. Wild nature, on the other hand, "would never advocate the torture of the body, culture, or land" (Estés 1993:204). Patriarchal dual identities have been challenged by both women and men through the ages to lesser and greater degrees. In contemporary times, as our connection with 'wild' nature is increasingly under threat, women and men are again calling up what was known a long time ago, reverence for the self-determination of the 'wild', an erotic liberation of the natural.

Ecofeminists argue that the process of transformation from a self-centred, anthropocentric, dominator relationship with the natural world, to a partnership of co-operative mutuality, must involve the recognition that the destruction and domination of nature stems from the same mind-set implicit in dominator, androcentric relationships among humans. An

ecofeminist perspective therefore broadens the net of environmental/political concern. (This point has been convincingly argued by ecofeminists who have criticised the environmental philosophy of Deep Ecology; see Salleh (1984), Plumwood (1993b, chapters six and seven).)

In fact, the transformation of our personal and structural relationships must involve fundamentally challenging androcentric values of power and hierarchy reflected in sexual relationships. Enacting a nurturing, caring and respectful relationship with nature involves recognising our dependence on the non-human other, as well as recognising the earth-other's capacity for self-determination (difference). Co-existent with this we must strive for mutual respect in our human relationships, a respect which acknowledges both dependence on and difference from each other. This is the path closest to home, the path of intimacy, the path that yields our being in place.

The way the female body has been conceptualised as a chattel, tool, or object of display for male empowerment reflects a dominator mythology that requires a limited concept of female body as 'resource', and conceptualises nature as a passive and exploitable resource. This requirement diminishes what it is to be a woman; denies the creative and dynamic aspects of women and nature; and requires a limited construct of masculine identity as displaced from, by a conquering of, the natural world. The historical origins of these attitudes are considered in the remainder of this chapter.

The roots of dominator social and sexual organisations

Riane Eisler (1996), like ecofeminists before her, argues that the construction of the female as resource, and the construction of nature as a passive and exploitable body, is not an accidental relationship. Tracing the origins of the 'dominator model' of sexual relationships to at least 5000 B.C., Eisler notes that the research of geographer James DeMeo found "a correlation in preindustrial tribal societies between a harsh environment, the rigid social and sexual subordination of women, the equation of masculinity with toughness and

warlikeness, and the repression and/or distortion of sexual pleasure”. These patterns of relationship that were transferred by the Indo European invaders into fertile areas where they were “perpetuated through the institutionalisation of trauma”, which included “particularly severe and cruel controls over female sexuality” (Eisler 1996:92-93). Eisler suggests that the Indo-European invaders also developed a deadening of “soft” emotions because of their technological relationship with nature. They practiced nomadic pastoralism, which relied on the progressive destruction of nature without any attempt at regeneration (Eisler 1996:95). Ruether supports this in her suggestion that the aggression and hostility of these nomadic people was due to the lack of a female gardening role (essential for an agricultural culture), and that this displacement from the earth contributed to the emergence of male monotheism as god the Sky-Father (Ruether 1983:53)¹.

Although our cultural legacy is one of idealising male violence and “equating true masculinity with the suppression of not only ‘inferior’ peoples but ‘inferior’ feelings - that is, stereotypical feminine feelings such as caring, compassion and empathy” (Eisler 1995:102), Eisler points out that good evidence exists to support the theory that in Neolithic and early Bronze Age times more egalitarian sexual relationships existed. Drawing on examples from Neolithic art (such as female fertility figures) and other archaeological research (such as that of Marija Gimbutas) she argues that there was a close link between sex as a regenerating principle and religious rites which honoured the female regenerative principle. Sjoö and Mor (1987) describe female fertility figures (‘Venus’ statues) found in cave hearths, niches and graves as “the mother guardians of the daily life, death, and rebirth of the people”. These female forms were made by a people who saw the earth “as the

¹ I prefer Eisler’s term ‘dominator model’ because, as indicated above, the dominator mentality is not only found in western traditions but is a “mind-set found in a number of rigidly male-dominant societies”, such as Islamic Iran (Eisler 1996:5). However, as this thesis focuses on female sexual representations in the west, where the dominator model is also that of a ‘white male elite’, Plumwood’s term ‘master model’ will be interchanged with Eisler’s term.

source of nourishment, protection, power, and the mystery of cyclic recurrence” (Sjöo and Mor 1987:46-47). Cultural ecofeminists embrace these links among sexuality, renewal and spirituality when they honour the seasons of nature, the moon-cycles of time, and the sexual potency of the goddess and the god. The revival of goddess traditions, such as wicca and paganism (Stone 1976, Starhawk 1979), and the interest in taoist and tantric sexual practice in current times, indicates a contemporary need for an alternative view of sexuality. This alternative view is very different from how westerners have come to view sex, but it is contemptuous to refer to it as “primitive” or “superstitious”:

As these people observed, sex is necessary if life is to go on. So it was not so irrational of our prehistoric ancestors to view sex and birth as sacred manifestations of the mysterious life-and-pleasure-giving powers of the cosmos (Eisler 1996:77).

This “partnership model” of society (partnership between people and nature, as well as between men and women) was forced underground by the conquering Indo-Europeans, and by prophets and philosophers who portrayed it as “immoral or irrational” (Ruether 1975:14). Eisler argues that the attempt to destroy partnership was not successful however, and the partnership model has continued throughout history to offer a counterpoint to the dominator model. Currently it is gathering strength as a major challenge to the rule of the ‘master’. We will look at this further in the chapter entitled “Reclaiming the Erotic”.

In her discussion of our psychosexual history Eisler shows that the dominator mythology became particularly pronounced in the ancient Roman “idealisation of the power of the phallus”, which rested on the inferiorising of women and slaves (men and women of other races) and the sexual exploitation of young boys. Further, it is often assumed that ancient Athens was a ‘liberated’ egalitarian homosexual society. In fact:

sex between males of equal maturity and power was not socially sanctioned. In this way Athenian society tried to make sure that all sexual relations involving males, be they homosexual or heterosexual, conformed to the dominator model; in other words, that they met the requirement that sex be not an act of giving and receiving pleasure between equals, but one of domination and submission (Eisler 1996:107-108).

The hierarchical sexual relationships of classical antiquity are expressed in the art of the period, wherein the male nude was predominant. This presentation of the male nude does not present an alternative to the 'male gaze and passive subject' analysis of feminist critique, but in fact endorses the dominator analysis. It does illustrate, however, that sexual domination, like fashion, is steeped in values which reflect culturally defined concepts of desirability. Thus sexual representations of ancient time often reduced the difference between men and women, not because of an equality of gaze between male and female, but because adolescent boys were the preferred sexual conquests of powerful men. Thus "Athenian men considered genitalia beautiful when small and taut" and hairless (Solomon-Godeau, in Smith 1997:16) but they also glorified, in statues such as the *Farnese Hercules*, the massive phallus (the latter a prerequisite for male models in contemporary pornography). The dualistic construction of sexual difference in classical times resided, then, not in the "masculinised" masculine and the "feminised" feminine, but in the "masculinised" masculine and the "feminised" masculine (Smith 1997:16).

Plumwood (1993b Chapter 3) supports this position in her analysis of the "deep roots of human/nature dualism" evident in Platonic philosophy:

The relation between the orders of reason and nature is constantly depicted as one of control and mastery. The body in particular and the lower passions (representing nature within) are to be controlled by 'commands', 'threats' (Timaeus 70), coercion and violent discipline (Plumwood 1993b:87).

Greek and Roman myths illustrate the misogynous nature of classical civilisation, which successfully debased the ancient Mother goddess religion and split it into a fractured reflection of what it once was. Aphrodite, for instance, has become the goddess of sexual love and is often in rivalry with other goddesses such as Hera (power), Athena (wisdom), Demeter (mother) and Artemis (warrior). These goddesses were once all part of 'The Great Mother' as the creatrix of life. The Greco-Romans effectively split apart the Great Mother, atomising her separate

qualities, and placing the divided goddesses in a kingdom ruled by a male god. Although there was much pairing of gods and goddesses in the Olympic pantheon, the seeds of domination had succeeded in naming a god, Jupiter/Zeus, as ruler of the immortal kingdom. The myth of Pandora from this time illustrates how women, as well as being dominated, have become closely associated with evil. Pandora was forbidden to open the box, but she succumbed to temptation and released all manner of evil into the world. Luckily hope remained. It was Pandora's natural curiosity, her desire to see, which caused her to open the box. This myth of woman causing evil through her desire parallels the old testament myth of Eve.

Eve was tempted by the cobra to induce Adam to eat the apple from the tree of knowledge. God then punished Eve/woman by decreeing: "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16). Stone (1976), in tracing the origin of Judeo-Christian attitudes towards women, claims that the symbol of the cobra in the myth of Eve evidences the earlier goddess religion. In fact in lower Egypt "the cobra was known as the Eye, *uzait*, a symbol of mystic insight and wisdom" (Stone 1976:201) and was associated with the goddess throughout the near and middle east (Stone 1976:210). The goddess was revered as the "patroness of sexual pleasures and reproduction" (Stone 1976:217). Stone suggests that when the Levite priesthood wrote The Bible they included the myth of Eve so as to discredit the earlier pagan goddess religion which revered the creative strength of woman's sexuality and reproduction. The association of desire and knowledge (of the carnal world) with evil has been used to suppress women so that they do not challenge the 'law' of the father. The dichotomous entrance of god the father (transcendent male/mind), in heaven and the devil (woman/ sex/desire) in hell has been prepared for in advance.

Although male and female images of the divine have undergone great transformation through the ages, the normative image of the divine in the west today is the Judeo-Christian

one of the “transcendent ego in the male god image”, and the underside of this “transcendent male ego is the conquest of nature, imaged as the conquest and transcendence of the Mother” (Ruether 1983:47) . This hierarchical order is clearly evident in the Old Testament, in which only the male heads of families are addressed directly. Women, children, and servants are referred to indirectly through their duties and property relations to the patriarch. In the New Testament this hierarchical “order” appears as a cosmic principle: “the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband “ (1 Corinthians 11:3,7) (Ruether 1983:54). Male monotheism has “split reality into a dualism of transcendent Spirit (mind, ego) and inferior and dependent physical nature” (Ruether 1983:56). The sensual, physical and therefore sexual nature is evil and therefore must be denied or repressed.

However many early Christian texts refer to the spirit as female (see for example the Apocryphal Gospels). In the lost scrolls of the Essenes (who were renown for their healing use of herbs, and for their fairness in settling disputes) reverence for the Earth Mother is seen to be as worthy of as much reverence as the Heavenly Father. Thus:

*For the power of our Mother is above all.
She hath rule over all the bodies of men
And all living things.
The blood which runs in us
Is born of the blood of our Earthly Mother*

and

*Man is the Son of the Earthy Mother,
And from her did the Son of Man
Receive his whole body,
Even as the body of the newborn babe
Is born of the womb of his mother.
Thou art one with the Earthly mother;
She is in thee, and thou in her (Szekely 1981:41-42)*

But as Ruether points, out earlier Christianity which used such female imagery was gradually “marginalised by a victorious Greco-Roman Christianity that repressed it”

(Ruether 1983:58-59). The Church Fathers' institutionalisation of the order of domination (led by Saint Paul) in many ways contradicted the teachings of Jesus which were based on principles of compassion and love. Likewise the order of domination contradicted the goddess tradition where the bull god (or the hoofed and horned Pan) was the consort of the goddess, where women were priestesses, and women's sexual power was "venerated and sanctified" (Eisler 1996:31). Schizophrenic domination by the Church stemmed from a political strategy which attempted to subvert the desire for love and connection with others into a position of supplicating masochism in favour of the Church itself. Fear of the power of nature, woman and the body (epitomised by the transition of the bull god to the devil) was to be the scapegoat on which dominion was waged.

Christianity and the icons of suffering, punishment and death

And it is said ... That mankind has evolved away from the bestial and closer to the angel (Griffin 1978:27)

The persecution of witches during the Christianisation of Europe has been well documented by feminists and ecofeminists. Ecofeminist Susan Griffin (1981) was however the first feminist to discuss at depth the links among the persecution of witches, the cultural domination of nature, and the pornographic mind. She points out that the inquisitors were obsessed with sexuality. The *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) which obsessively details women's purported sexual associations with the devil, rests upon the assumption that "woman is by nature more sinful because she is more carnal than man" (Eisler 1996:31). It was the pleasures of sex which the inquisitors most feared, not the association of sex with violence, for sadistic acts of torture on the bodies of women was exactly what they were doing on a daily basis. The Catholic Church's attempt to repress was thus fuelled by an obsession with the body itself. This repression/obsession dualism was viciously manifest during the witch-hunt centuries as it exercised a "truly unnatural condemnation of sex" (Eisler 1996:31).

The Church's traditional sexual morality, which named sexual pleasure a sin, sent the pagan religion's veneration of sex as the "sacred gift of the Goddess" underground (Eisler 1996:31, 32). It paved the way for the development of the conjugal rights of the husband over that of the wife and institutionalised in law the right of the husband to rape his wife. It also ensured that property and children became the possession of the husband. But more insidious, perhaps, than all of that, the Church's obsession with controlling sex through violent punishments "effectively eroticised domination and violence" (Eisler 1996:206). This controlling of the body through fear and force is, as Eisler notes, "the ultimate mainstay of dominator social organisation", and it serves "the same purpose as much of the pornography the Church vehemently condemns to our day" (Eisler 1996: 205, 206).

The Church ideologically and practically promulgated the double standard, blaming women for all manner of evil whilst justifying patriarchal barbarities such as war, violence and slavery. This double standard, hinging on the obsession/repression dualism was also rife in Victorian England, a consideration to which I will now turn.

Victorian England: repression and obsession

Victorian England is well known for its repression of sexuality. What is perhaps not so well known is that pornography, especially written pornography, became an industry during this period. Drawing a comparison between scientific writing of the time and pornography, Marcus (1966:23) concludes that "scientific thinking about sex had attained the same level of intellectual development as pornography", where sexuality and sexual disorders were seen as strictly mechanical physiological functions.

This concreteness of Victorian pornography, focusing on organs and positions is, however, written in a totally abstract style. This style Marcus notes is indifferent to place: "In the kind of boundless, featureless freedom that most pornographic fantasies require for their action, such details are regarded as restrictions, limitations, distractions, or encumbrances" (Marcus 1966:272). For this reason pornography registers social and historical changes

more slowly than any other form of written expression (Marcus 1966:45). Pornography is therefore archly conservative, though its appeal and defence often relies on the exact opposite contention, that is subversive and liberating. For this reason Marcus claims that the advent of modern psychology is “the mortal enemy of pornography” (Marcus 1966: 22-23), as it examines motives and connections that otherwise would be suppressed. However a theory of interconnection which understands the transformative nature of historical circumstance must recognise also the limitations of psychology as a sole explanation of social behaviour.

On this point, there was a “veritable flood of publications during the Victorian period of works devoted to describing the experiences of flagellation” (Marcus 1966:xx). Marcus notes that this pornography was directed to members who had been to a public school it asserts that “the lower order of mankind are not such slaves to this passion as people in high life” (Marcus 1966:260). Marcus notes that these repetitious sado/masochist fantasies rely on “two principal phases”: In one phase “a little boy is being beaten by a woman; in the other, a figure represented as a little girl is being beaten, also by a woman”. This woman is invariably large, often hairy, and “armed with a rod or symbolic phallus” (Marcus 1966:260). Here sexuality is so repressed, it has almost ceased to exist and the sexual fantasy tells us more about abstract power relationships than sexual intimacy.

The link between sado/masochism and cruel child rearing practice in Victorian times is quite tenable for how we are taught to act in our childhood relationships clearly conditions our adult relationships. Eisler argues that sexually obsessive and compulsive behaviours stem from “an inability to fully experience bodily sensations and a full range of emotions” (Eisler 1996:123). Incest and cruelty in childhood can damage this potential to feel. Recent research by psychiatrist Bruce Perry indicates that “in someone abused or neglected, the section of the brain involved in attachment, in making emotional bonds, actually looks different”, which can create a vulnerability to “certain kinds of anger”, or to social situations that might end in violence” (*The Age: Good Weekend* 1997:29-30).

Marcus (1966) notes that beneath all the pornographic fantasies he studied, the underlying emotion is fear, “fear of sex in general and particular: of impotence and of potency; of impulse and of its loss” (Marcus 1966:28). Fear, of course, can be exciting up to a point but as Eisler points out, it is one thing to be curious, and even excited by linking sex with violence, but, “it is quite another to deliberately institutionalise, and even sexualize, horror as a means of conditioning people to view it as normal” (Eisler 1996:242).

Pornography is a world of contradiction which reflects a “split or divided consciousness”, a world of “organs and physiology in which everything is convertible into matter” (Marcus 1966:33), and in which everything is tirelessly repeated in obsessive detail. According to Marcus the formulaic nature of pornography was well established by the mid-Victorian period, and although the circumstances of the Victorian trade were obscure, the modes, categories and varieties were much the same as when he was writing in 1966. Linda Williams’s book *Hard Core*, written in the 1990s, compared contemporary pornography available on the internet with magazine material, and also concluded that the way pornography is represented is deadeningly the same.

Of course pornography was not the only sexual representation of gendered dualism typical of the Victorian era. The romantic notion of the good Christian woman of the home who does not like sex was pitted against the the bad woman on the streets who loves it. The ‘virginal’ home-maker’s role was to “uplift” the man by denying her own sexuality, “lye back and think of England”. The romantic notion thus idealises the home and privacy: “it idealises women in their separation from the world and allows no synthesis of culture and nature” (Ruether 1983:110). The ‘whore’ on the other hand, is there to service the lusts of the public ‘man about town’ whose desires cannot, and should not, be contained by the home.

Sado-masochistic pornographic fantasies and popular women’s romance novels “where masterful males sweep women off their feet” and involve them in “torrid love scenes” which are “initially against the heroine’s will”(Eisler 1996:212) both depict relationships of

domination and submission. One must remember also that “marital rape only began to be recognised as a crime of violence in the late twentieth century” and until then “wives were legally required to be sexually available to their husbands, even if it was by force against their will” (Eisler 1996:211).

Thus the historical association between sex and power relied not only on the dualistic ranking of men over women, master over slave, man over nature, but the distortion and repression of sexuality. This distortion and repression relies on the “vilification of sex and woman”, “the equation in both heterosexual and homosexual relations of sexual arousal with domination or being dominated” (Eisler 1996:4), and the accompanying “need to convert men from fully sentient and aware human beings into psychosexual automatons” (Eisler 1996:120). The creation of an alienated identity is established because the dominator model of sexuality effectively “blocks the full experiencing of bodily and emotional sensations”, creating a “psychosexual armouring that in our time continues to drive men to ever more sexual conquests, to the “excitement” of warfare, and to all the other frantic compulsions that fuel both war and the war of the sexes” (Eisler 1996:124).

It is to a discussion of our more recent alienated sexual identity that I will now turn. This is a time when if one speaks of slavery people are outraged, but if one speaks of the sexual slavery of women, many are merely titillated. Romance and pornography both belie the realities of many women and girls (today and in the past) who are abducted and sold into harems or prostitution. “In Asia alone an estimated million or more women and children are every year “traded like commodities on a stock exchange” (Eisler 1996:213).

Chapter Four

THE OBJECT OF SEXUAL CONSUMPTION

The contemporary portrayal of female sexuality in the west has been chosen as the field in which to test the power of ecofeminism as an interpretive tool for several reasons. Firstly the use of the term 'sexual representation of the female body', although limited to a discussion of the dominant cultural representations found in visual, textual, and scientific portrayals of the female body, has a broad enough canvas of concern to address how the female body has been theorised and represented in its capacity for both sexual excitement and reproduction. Sexual representation is most obviously found in pornographic and technological frameworks which attempt to define the 'nature' of the female body. The pertinent question is, can ecofeminist precepts be applied to shed new light on what has been a major radical-feminist concern, the 'pornographic' presentation of women? I believe the foundational discussion thus far illustrates the potential of ecofeminism to expand the concerns of feminism and environmentalism to a point of overlap because the preceding analysis of domination illustrates that ecofeminism has a profound contribution to make in challenging the patriarchal construction and denial of the 'natural'.

It is necessary to contextualise the following perspective with a consideration of radical feminism's approach to pornography as this will reveal its limitations in comparison with an ecofeminist analysis. A radical lesbian feminist perspective will also be included, because lesbians are currently divided over the issue of pornography and a radical lesbian critique offers valuable insights into the 'cult of the phallus' from a minority perspective.

Pornography as the locus of debate on the body has become increasingly problematic for feminist discussion for several reasons. Firstly, given that the "public awareness of women's issues and rights is arguably more widespread than at any other time in history" (Lonsdale 1992), pornography is being reinterpreted as a domain for female self-expression.

Secondly, the distinctions between pornography and erotica are increasingly blurred. This reflects both changes in the genre itself, and what Lonsdale (1992) calls the new cultural dominant in which the postmodern project of vigorously contesting and challenging “traditional assumptions about reality, the human subject, knowledge [and] morality” is reflected in an increasingly fluid society which “valorises diversity” and a “multiplicity of sexual identities” (Lonsdale 1992: 88-90). Thus one of the key precepts of ecofeminism, honouring diversity, contains contradictions for women in a context where liberation from authoritarian prescription may result in the increased consumption/exploitation of woman as ‘body’.

The application of an analysis of dualism can avoid the criticism of superficiality levelled at descriptors such as ‘diversity’. (It will be argued however that diversity is an essential, though qualifiable, ecofeminist precept.) This is because dualisms are not “just free-floating systems of ideas” but are “the major cultural expressions and justifications” of the process of domination and material accumulation (Plumwood 1993b:42). Dualism therefore explains not only the domination of women and nature (as an appropriation of matter), but also the capitalist control of the ideology which sanctions the domination of women and nature (the appropriation of mind). This is important because an ecofeminist environmental ethic is not only concerned with the conservation of non-human eco-systems, but is also critical of unsustainable capitalist exploitation of human resources, which is why ecofeminism envisions an alternative society of enriching cultural practices of mutuality, communality and participatory democracy. The elucidation of dualism as an anti-nature (body) ideology is especially important in relation to ‘pornographic’ portrayals of the female body for it can illustrate the mutually re-enforcing relationship between the material and cultural spheres (something which Marxism’s emphasis on production, over reproduction, cannot do).

So what is pornography, how have feminists viewed it, and what issues are of particular concern to ecofeminists? The debate rests not only on historical definition and redefinition, but also on lack of definition (exclusion and censorship of alternatives).

Pornography and the problem of definition

In the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1976:860) 'pornography' is "explicit description or exhibition of sexual activity in literature, films, etc., intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic feelings" (from the Greek *porne*, prostitute, and *grapho*, write). The same dictionary defines 'erotic' as "of sexual love, amatory, esp. tending to arouse sexual desire or excitement" (from the Greek *eros erotos* sexual love). The 1982 *Macquarie Concise Dictionary* defines 'pornography' as "obscene literature, art, or photography, designed to excite sexual desire". 'Erotic' is defined by the *Macquarie* as "pertaining to sexual love; arousing or satisfying sexual desire; subject to or marked by strong sexual desires". In the 1976 definitions the pornographic and the erotic are seen to be similar; both stimulate erotic desire (though not necessarily aesthetic feeling). In the 1982 definitions, however, the pornographic is seen as 'obscene' and there is a separation between erotic and pornographic desire. In 1987 *The Encyclopedia of Feminism* (Tuttle 1987) claimed that a widely accepted definition of pornography has yet to be formulated, and the definition in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (1992): 'pornography' is "Pictures, writing, or other material that is sexually explicit and sometimes equates sex with power and violence" covering both violent and non-violent materials in a broad sweep, reflects both the confusion and diffusion of the genre.

In the United States in 1985 Dworkin and MacKinnon drafted a model anti-pornography civil-rights law which defined 'pornography' as "the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and/or words". This definition included reference to some of the following: dehumanising women as sexual objects, things, or commodities; showing women enjoying pain or humiliation; women being penetrated by animals; and women being tortured. The Feminist Anti-Censorship Task Force (FACT) was formed to counter the legislation put forward by Dworkin and MacKinnon. Composed of academics, feminists and artists FACT formed an alliance with the pornography industry (Raymond 1989) and objected to the definition of pornography, arguing that it was too vague and could be used to restrict women's freedom of sexual expression (Tuttle 1987:253-255). FACT, in its objection to the

legislation, specifically cited the 'need' lesbians have for pornography. Hynes (1992) makes the interesting observation that the anti-pornography movement charges that it is:

impossible to define what is and what is not pornography, that great art and literature and subversive, counter-cultural work and even feminist work are equally threatened by any movement to ban pornography. They thwart any attempt to define pornography by alleging that everything can be called pornography (Hynes 1992:393).

The FACT response appears to be a deliberate mis-interpretation of the civil-rights legislation put by Dworkin and MacKinnon, which attempted, by a listing of specific examples to define what was meant by 'the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women'. Attempts to define or control pornography have always been met with extreme resistance, and given the inclusion of vested pornographic interests in the FACT alliance it is difficult to see how this dilemma can be resolved without a radical and far-reaching debate in the broader community.

Raymond (1989) argues that lesbianism and feminism were once linked in a political movement which spoke on behalf of all women, but today "one hears more about lesbian sado-masochism, lesbian pornography and everything lesbians need to know about sex - what has fashionably come to be called the 'politics of desire', a sexuality embraced by lesbian lifestylers (Raymond 1989:149). Raymond contends that the latter lacks a political consciousness: in 'lifestyle lesbianism' there is "little difference between a conservative world-view which locates women in this world sexually for men and a lesbian libertarian lifestyle that is increasingly preoccupied with fucking as the apogee of lesbian existence" (Raymond 1989:149). It was exactly this portrayal of lesbian sex in heterosexual pornography that earlier lesbian critiques of pornography rallied against. The radical lesbian critique of pornography argued that lesbian sexuality was radically *different* to hetero-pornographic depictions of lesbian sexuality. Lesbians, it was argued, did not make love as pornography depicted it and lesbian sexuality was based on a real difference which was "rooted in the lesbian imagination" (Raymond 1989:153).

The radical critique called for women to assert their unique sexuality and not to be defined by masculinised discourses on what that sexuality was. However this idea was co-opted by lesbian lifestylers who interpreted 'freeing up' sexuality as the desire to imitate the 'freedom' of male-power sex. The right to choose one's sexuality consequently became the right to choose the available representations of male-power sex. Consequently the dominant representations of sexuality available in pornography, butch (dominator) - femme (submissive) relationships and sado-masochism were interpreted as liberating. The presentation of "a vital, vigorous and robust female sexuality" which could challenge the male-power sexuality model (Raymond 1989:150) was dismissed as 'goody-goody' erotica. Pornography became lifestyle lesbianism's erotica and was "enlisted in the service of lesbian speech and self-expression" (Raymond 1989:151). Thus, coming full circle, the lesbian critique of pornography transmuted to a lesbian lifestylism that spoke the same language as the "liberal patriarchal discourse" it had once denounced (Raymond 1989:152-153).

This either/or debate among feminists has left pornography in limbo with many giving it a wide berth. Susan Faludi (1992), in her massive tome *The Backlash: The Undeclared War against Women*, refers to it only cursorily. The split in the feminist critique of pornography explains, to some degree, the contemporary situation where the terms 'pornography' and 'erotica' are commonly interchanged. Definitions also vary according to what is assumed to be the nature of sexuality and its place in personal and political life. A common belief, which feminist Andrea Dworkin put to paper in 1981, is that "erotica is simply high-class pornography". Another feminist, Gloria Steinem, editor of *Ms* magazine, claims that pornography is about dominance. Erotica is about mutuality. The latter distinction will be the one developed in this thesis, as it allows for a critique of patriarchal sexuality and relationships of dominance and submission whilst recognising that representations of sexuality based on an ethic of care and respect allow for the transformative power of the erotic.

The debate over the genres of art, erotica, soft and hard-core pornography, which all involve graphic portrayals of sexuality, has highlighted the view that sexuality is a

social construct that is "culturally relative and subject to change" (Eckersley 1987:9), a view which this thesis supports. However the definition of 'pornography' proffered by Howard Lake (1995) most accurately reflects the perspective presented in this thesis. Lake says that:

Pornography is the pictorial transmutation of human flesh. In the pornographic arena, bodies, whatever their initial disposition, are transformed beyond normal aesthetic criteria, transformed into something almost sacrificial, an offering to the viewer that they might use this flesh in any way they deem fit. The operative word is use - pornography being an interactive commodity dependent upon the emotional state/needs/fantasies of the viewer if it is to work at all (Lake 1995:94).

As will be seen later, this definition can be used to cover 'beauty' pornography as well. This limited definition of pornography, however, does not account for what Kappeler (1986) has called the pornographic *structure of representation*. Kappeler's term highlights the power relationships in pornography and argues against the libertarian idea of sexuality being outside moral consideration. An ethical consideration would focus on the structure of pornographic representations as revealing certain power relationships which may reflect inequality, a perspective which feminist analysis addressed.

Socialist feminists such as Susan Brownmiller and radical feminists such as Andrea Dworkin were the first to address pornography as an expression of a relationship of domination. This relationship was seen to be based on power, the power of a man over a woman. To the radical feminists this power of a man over a woman is intrinsic to the hierarchical paradigm known as patriarchy. To the socialist feminist this power of a man over a woman is one of several structures of domination which support the oppression of the working class, women and different races through a system known as capitalism. The political premise of these analyses has been that 'men' as a group benefit whilst women lose; there is no consideration of the position of women who do not perceive harm to themselves, or women's "complicity in creating the circumstances of their own oppression" (Eckersley 1987:10) or, and this is surely significant, of the harm it may cause men.

It can be argued that in recent times some women have reclaimed pornographic images as their own. Madonna, for example, "dresses like a 'whore', a woman available for male sexual gratification, but acts like a 'witch', an independent sexual being" (Haste 1992:24). 'Women only' sex shops have opened, such as *The Pleasure Spot* in Sydney. Lesbian magazines such as *Wicked Woman* present images of sado-masochism and bondage. Male strip shows are increasingly popular along with male centrefolds. Yet there is concurrent outrage (largely by women) against public images which objectify and sexualise women. *People* magazine depicted a woman wearing a dog collar and a bubble, captioned: more wild animals inside. This precipitated protests outside shops displaying the magazine and forcing its eventual removal from public display; likewise a mural painted on a Hobart pub, which depicted a man goggling at a woman who was bending over revealing her undies, was subject to so much feminist graffiti that it was eventually changed.

Faust claims that "simple political lines on something as complicated as sexuality aren't helpful to either sex", albeit she claims that pornography "takes sex out of all emotional or social context and presents it raw. It distorts the place of sex in daily life" (Faust in Garner 1981:149-150). This distortion of sexuality which ignores both the context and process of intimate relations is of primary concern to ecofeminists. I will argue that the defence of pornography as either a matter of sexual preference or 'freedom' of expression is superficial, and may even be dangerous. Pornography relies on an ideology, steeped in our dominator heritage, a heritage which attempts to sever the links between culture and nature, mind and body. In this sense it cannot be considered neutral territory, beyond moralistic inquiry. This perspective takes a close look at the values implicit in 'pornographic' expressions (which may or may not be, products of masculine consciousness). It will look for, in the sexualised representations of women, evidence of the severing of culture from nature, mind from body. It will consider how expressions of the erotic, by exclusion and denial (a form of censorship condoned by 'libertarians') inhibit freedom, and cultivate a reduced and polarised construction of masculine and feminine sexuality.

The primary focus of this section of the thesis is to illustrate that an ecofeminist analysis of the sexual representation of women in the west is relevant and enriching. Heller claims that “since the late sixties, feminists have used the body as a touchstone by which to measure the ‘groundedness’ of feminist theory” (Heller 1993b:137). Ecofeminism will also be asked to stand up to the test of the body. The main question underlying this perspective will be: do contemporary sexual representations of women found in pornography and other media in the west, reflect the cultural devaluation of natural processes (Diamond 1990) of which environmental thinkers have been critical. This question, plus the ecofeminist precepts listed in chapter one, together with the analysis of dualism offered in chapter two, will be employed to construct an ecofeminist investigation of the dominant sexual representations of women in the west.

Pornography as the locus of debate on sexual representation has been chosen for several reasons. Firstly, pornography worldwide is becoming increasingly violent (Wolf 1990:79, Faludi 1992:16). Secondly, defence of pornography often hinges on the argument that what happens in the mind (as fantasy) has no relation to what happens in the world (as action), a seemingly simple argument which runs contrary to theories such as ecofeminism which stress interconnections. Thirdly, pornography as a focus for feminist debate has often involved discussing sexually-violent pornographic material (as a male construct) in isolation from the attitudes which under-pin this genre which may be found in a broader context. Fourthly, the attitudes I particularly want to explore are the attitudes to the 'natural' body, our human form being our most intimate inheritance from the natural world.

These concerns led from an application of ecofeminist theory to an elucidation of not only pornography as a mode of domination but to other media and actions which are not necessarily defined as pornographic but may reflect what Susan Griffin calls the 'pornographic mind'. This mind-set will be seen to be dependent on an attitude of objectification which allows detachment from the feeling world and natural processes. This mind-set is evident in the treatment of the abstract/particular, and mind/body dichotomies. In many instances it will be seen to be anti-nature as it relies on the idea that the natural

should be dominated (or manipulated). Thus art, advertising, women's magazines, soft and hard-core pornography will be seen to reflect different shades in the spectrum that can elucidate the 'pornographic mind'. The current trends towards technological intervention in many aspects of the female body can also be seen to be part of this trend.

But before I go on, let me offer a defence. Feminists who critique pornography are often accused of being prudish women who are unable to deal with the smorgasbord of sexual delights available. These are the radical feminists, characterised as lesbian man-haters with hairy armpits, who are regularly joked about in *Playboy* and *Penthouse*. It is argued that these women are simply afraid to acknowledge their own, or other's lusts. Besides, it is said, women are into pornography too, so why be critical of pornography for men? It is my intention to illustrate that the historical radical feminist critique of pornography and the ecofeminist critique have much in common. This commonality is not an objection to sexual pleasure but an attempt to reveal the "sexual domination and exploitation of women" which uses "sex to model, and inculcate, unconscious patterns of domination and subjection" (Eisler 1996:217). However the ecofeminist challenge builds on the earlier radical critique, deepening it to include the network of oppressions which give rise to the 'pornographic mind'. Ecofeminists do not call for a separatist solution, or for a matriarchal utopia because, via an analysis based on dualism, they are able to address the issue of female complicity. Also, as has been argued earlier, the normative construction of the 'human' relies on a limited concept of the masculine, which damages both masculine and feminine identities. An ecofeminist concern with pornography is not based on a fear of sex. On the contrary, a critique which exposes the reductionist, mechanistic, dualistic, and technologist construction of sexuality, calls for an alternative sexuality which is fully and powerfully liberatory. A citing of sexuality as part of both the natural and the cultural worlds calls for the overcoming of dualisms which have held us captive to a schizophrenic conception of the body and mind.

Western pornography, until recently, has largely been a secret kept by men. Exclusively available in specialty shops, commonly sealed in plastic in newsagents, located in dark

corners in second hand book shops, pornography's attraction is fuelled by mystique. Purchasing pornography is like undertaking an initiation, involving knowledge of 'under the counter' transactions and wrapping the purchase in a newspaper so it can't be seen by public eyes. Then it is a peep show usually undertaken in private, where the images are revealed in a compelling expose sequence of anticipation and desire. Nowadays, the adrenalin is more likely to be found in down-loading onto the computer.

One hour after conventional photography began in 1839 the first nude was photographed. World War 1 soldiers carried postcards of nude 'artist's models' and nude pinups were hailed by the Australian World War II army as 'morale boosters' (Richardson:1994). *Playboy* was first published in 1958 (Wolf 1990:134) and mass produced sexualised female images were launched with a picture of Marilyn Monroe. Today, no longer a discreet addition to a gentleman's wallet, pornography is a seven billion dollar industry (Wolf 1990:17) with *Playboy* and *Penthouse* having a combined circulation greater than that of *Time* and *Newsweek* (Schleifer 1982:10). Every video shop has a section dedicated to pornography and the internet makes pornography readily accessible, with the 'Penthouse Interactive' CD Rom centrefold predicted to replace magazines within 25 years (Richardson 1994). Cable TV is now showing what was restricted to x-rated theatre 30 years ago (Ted Bundy in Stiles 1989).

Susan Griffin on the 'pornographic mind'

And since this culture that we live in would dominate nature, gradually we replace natural images with cultural images of ourselves (Griffin 1981:108).

The first ecofeminist text to address pornography is Susan Griffin's *Pornography and Silence* in which Griffin argues that sexual liberation must be "a release from patriarchal values" which are based primarily on the dualisms of culture/nature and spirit/body (Griffin 1981:2-14). Distinguishing between sexual images and pornography Griffin claims that pornography, "in its intensified mythology, simply expresses the same tragic choice which

our culture has made for us, the choice to forget eros” (Griffin 1981:7). This choice, she claims, is historically evident in the persecution of witches, Jews and other marginalised groups, where the desire to humiliate the other stems from fear of what is naturally different, fear of losing control, and fear of the material world (nature) itself. It is eros, *sexual love*, that is the loser in the pornographic representation.

The choice to forget eros, to forget our connection to each other and to nature, breeds a pathological relationship in pornography, where the woman as a being with a will is subjugated into an *object* whose *function* is to please the man with her body. The voyeur is not passive, but actively requires the subordination of the woman to his will. Several mechanisms are utilised to aid this process. The use of the culture/nature, and mind/body dualities are incorporated with the whore/virgin, sadism/masochism dualities. Coitus is often presented as an act of rage (rape, violence and Nazi memorabilia are common themes) (Griffin 1981:158). Violation of taboos which protect the vulnerable (children, family members and animals) are commonplace (*Hustler* featured a series entitled “Chester the Molester” which depicted child molestation as humour) (Griffin 1981:160). Pornography in Griffin’s analysis is an amoral world, a world without love or tenderness, a world where the mind “has rejected the natural realm and attempts to live exclusively within its own image” (Griffin 1981:67). Pornography’s victim is an ‘image of woman’, and this image must be humiliated by the viewer, yet “the very image he uses to silence nature rises up to speak to him” (Griffin 1981:67). This is because the dualistic constructions of masculine/feminine and culture/nature in pornography are false. Males and females are in dialectical and continuous relationship, just as culture and nature are. Our cultural conditioning attempts to separate what, in reality, is intimately connected. The more the male pornographer attempts to objectify and distance the image of woman, the more he denies an essential aspect of himself, his own shared humanity, and his own child-self that at one time had felt a deep connection with his mother’s being, in her womb, on her breast.

Griffin argues that the repeated image of the woman with penis in her mouth is evidence of *reversal* of the infant’s natural desire for milk and is a quest for power and revenge over the

mother who must constantly swallow without gagging (Griffin 1981:61). To me this indicates how reductionist psychological method can be, for surely the image could also be interpreted as nothing more than a man's desire to have his penis sucked which Victorian repression has taught 'nice' girls not to do. (Admittedly, the experience may not be that pleasant for the real women involved in the production of pornography as evidenced by Linda Lovelace's claim, in her book *Ordeal* (1987), that her natural capacity was overcome by hypnosis.)

I would argue however that what more forcefully indicates a desire to dominate or humiliate women, are I believe, the countless images which now dominate 1990s hard-core sex-video catalogues, which illustrate *both* penis in mouth, *and* penis in the anus of a woman. When a number of images are considered concurrently with the associated repetition of the female in a supplicating position in relation to the male, and the man with a huge constantly erect penis, a strong case for the interpretation of the desire for *power-over*, the desire to humiliate, and the desire to control can be made. I would also claim that anal sex illustrates a better example of *reversal* of the natural order, as the anus is designed to expel, not intake. Further examples of this hard-core pornography are discussed in Chapter Six.

The ideological conditioning is rooted in the culture/nature dualism. The pornographer denies his material being (he is mind), and he projects the world of matter onto woman (because her mind does not matter). Thus the cultural message that women are degraded and inferior beings is reflected in pornography by representing women as powerless nature. Nature is "without a capacity for culture" (Griffin 1981:163), it is the 'dark other'. This 'dark other' is not only associated with women but with other marginalised groups who are associated with nature. Thus the black man is portrayed as "stupid, passive and bestial", Jews are seen as a "dark, avaricious race", the black woman is always the lusty whore (never the docile virgin) (Griffin 1981:160). For this reason Griffin cries of the pornographer: "He must know himself as matter" (Griffin 1981:30), he must come back to earth.

As women in the 1990s are increasingly using sexually explicit material (Buchanan 1994), many women are now proclaiming the liberatory aspects of pornography. Although some pornography may be interpreted as erotic freedom, images still abound which pressure women to deny their material reality and strive for the myth of youthful immortality. Griffin addresses the dilemma for women in this way: "Just as culture teaches its sons to take revenge against nature in the body of a woman, so does culture give this same lesson to a woman, only it is her own body she must hate and fear" (Griffin 1981:149). The promotion of cosmetic breast surgery and face-lifts in the 1990s can be viewed as women trying to emulate the pornographic ideal. This, according to Griffin, is the mind in which we all participate because it dominates religion, film and advertisement in our culture (Griffin 1981:1-7). Perhaps in the 1990s 'woman must also *remember* herself as matter'. My chapter *Denial of the Natural* further addresses this dilemma.

Like Ruether (1983), Griffin draws strong links between the Christian mind-set and the perception of both women and Jews as epitomising evil: "A man believes in anti-Semitic propaganda, or the pornographic ideology, because the illness of his mind requires that he believe these ideas to be true" (Griffin 1981:121). Thus for Griffin pornography and Nazi propaganda both reflect a pathological mind, a mind which "must try to remake the world after an illusion" (1981:121), a mind which is alienated from reality and nature, and a mind which projects onto the other what it cannot accept of itself.

The opposition of culture and nature, and the domination of the feeling body, is based on the idea that the body must be made to suffer, thus the crucifixion is presented as Christ's "deliverance from the original sin of knowing flesh" (Griffin 1981:67). It is the physical nature of sexual pleasure which causes shame, and the mind is given power over this nature through "unfeeling states", such as those experienced by Don Juans and femme fatales who have conquered the vulnerability of eros through cynicism. "What causes *shame* in pornography is always nature" says Griffin (1981:56). The Marquis de Sade believed that "the flesh of women", like the "flesh of all female animals", is inferior (Griffin 1981:161). Hitler named syphilis a "Jewish" threat during a time when pornographic magazines

depicted “Aryan women as succumbing to the powers of hairy and apelike men from the *dark races*” (Griffin 1981:177-180). Griffin thus elucidates the thesis that the traditional religious ideal, the pornographic ideal and the Nazi ideal all rely on viewing the “*absolute qualities*” of masculine and feminine as essentially different (Griffin 1981:171), and that the domination of women that ensues from this mind-set is linked to the domination of nature and the domination of those associated with the natural world.

Perception of the Object: Art, Beauty or Lust

Gaard claims that masculine consciousness is historically linked with western reductionist scientific inquiry where the "self/other distinction is based on a sense of self that is separate, atomistic" (Gaard 1993:2). Berger in his 1972 treatise, *Ways of Seeing*, argues that this consciousness is also visible in the artistic development of ‘the nude’ female in art (which is the precedent for the nude in photography). In both Renaissance and secular depictions of the female nude, the woman is painted as if "aware of being seen by a spectator" (Berger 1972:49). Even if she was seen to be viewing herself "the real function of the mirror ... was to make the woman connive in treating herself as, first and foremost, a sight" (Berger 1972:51). Thus woman was objectified as a sight to be seen by the owner of the painting (by inference, he also owned her). Her nakedness was judged and the portrayal of her as beautiful became synonymous with her value: "Those who are not judged beautiful are not beautiful" (Berger 1972:52). Thus the woman's subjective pleasure in her nakedness became codified to represent a beautiful and objectified nude for his pleasure. She is the pleasurable ‘other’ which he desires, but his own self is kept hidden, separate. (Berger points out that this western art differs markedly from non-European traditions such as Indian and African where artistic displays of sexual love are expressed equally, "the actions of each absorbing the other" [Berger 1972:53].)

This displaying of female sexuality as a codified, objectified, beautiful feast for the male gaze dominates soft-pornography. The 'capture' of a supermodel or moviestar in *Playboy* or *Penthouse* is seen as a *coup de gras* because both stereotypes are prized (worth lots of

money) and highly marketable (the beauty). The emphasis on beauty in soft pornography is largely a result of the hierarchical nature of the industry and illustrates the link between advertising and pornography. At the top end of the spectrum the super-model displays her body with her clothes on (for example, the model in *Vogue*), but she is still selling sex, as the allure of the clothes depends blatantly on the allure of her body. In May 1991 *Cleo* ran an article entitled: "Is this the perfect body of Naomi Campbell?". Even if it would generally be considered beneath the super-model to pose nude, if she does, as Elle Macpherson did in *Playboy*, this would be the ultimate coup for the pornographic magazine. Next in the hierarchy are the soft-porn magazines where, if a woman is an aspiring actress or model, she would not risk posing as it would ruin her chances of success (model agencies will not handle pornography work in Australia), albeit centre-fold nudes are often models who are "too short for the catwalk" (Richardson 1994). In soft-pornography you may or may not expose your genitalia but the lower your beauty rank the higher the pressure for you to do so. (Elle Macpherson did not expose her genitalia and her success as a super-model was already assured.) In hard-pornography however, the judged less beautiful may pose and all must expose their genitalia. If males are present they are usually presented as focused on the female while she, like the artist's model above, focuses on the viewer. Hard-pornography is the bottom end of the spectrum and focuses on gynaecological shots that do not attempt to be 'beautiful' but are extremely similar to medical texts (that is scientific presentation of raw data).

Supermodels and pornmodels alike must all fit the mould. In *Playboy* porn models details are listed on 'Playmate data sheets'. Examples of this reductionism are:

Name: Nicole Wood, Bust: 36C, Waist: 23, Hips: 34, Height: 5'6
Weight: 108, and so on.

The myth of perfection is reduced, for ease of assessment, to 'her vital statistics'. Likewise in *Escort* magazine:

Covergirl: is Samantha from Redbridge where all the London taxi drivers live (including her bloke), being photographed on our own roof here at

Raymond Towers and being watched by all the chaps from accounts who were up there offering to help her fill in the form ... she measures 37-24-34 (Escort:1993) .

Models (pornographic or fashion) must have bodies that have made the grade of perfection which is set by what is known as the 'classing gaze'. Ideals of beauty leave many lacking. Natural diversity is denied. The intrinsic value of a woman is reduced to the way she looks; an elite standard to which only a few will comply is set up as the norm for women to achieve. This norm is hinged on concepts of youth and beauty, which are often fashionable constructs. Breasts, for example, are fetishised to the point that women's genetic diversity is denied. Fashion dictates whether small breasts or large breasts are fashionable. Either way women whose breasts do not 'fit' the dominant image struggle with the idea that their breasts are not acceptable. It is possible that the high incidence of breast cancer in the West may be related to women's fear of judgement, and internalisation of guilt, over not having the 'right' breastshape.

Naomi Wolf, in her book *The Beauty Myth* (1990), documents the way in which beauty has been linked to female sexuality. Exploring images from women's magazines and pornography and deducing that the sexual display is similar in both, she labels such images 'beauty pornography'. According to Wolf the damage beauty pornography does to women is less immediately obvious than the harm usually attributed to pornography: "A woman who knows why she hates to see another woman hanging from a meat hook, and can state her objections, is baffled if she tries to articulate her discomfort with *soft* beauty porn" (Wolf 1990:152). Pornography, she claims, is insidious because of its denial of real women's faces and bodies. Airbrushing and computer imaging slims bodies and deletes signs of age (maturity) and individuality. Women in the industry are aware of their use-by dates. Australian pornography models average between 23-25 years; in America they are between 25-33 years (Richardson 1994). The genitals are moulded, tucked and painted. Women posture, often absurdly, expressing desire as 'wanting to be seen' by a camera (a mechanical tool). The result is a text which reads as a formula. This formula requires

pert firm breasts, flat bellies, super slim legs, high buttocks, full lips parted, and often a severe, almost aggressive facial expression.

The repetition of the formula creates an illusion which blinds society to the truth about the natural diversity of the female body. In fact, while models are getting thinner - "Miss Americas of the 1980s are twice as skinny as those of the 1940s" - the average woman has put on weight (Concar 1995). Wolf argues that "in effect, woman's sexuality, her experience of her own body as being treasured, unique and beautiful is stolen from her" by a constant comparison with the ideal (Wolf 1990: 247).

Many women absorb this definition of the ideal, in the same way that many men do, via cultural stereotypes disseminated in magazines aimed at them. Women's magazines ask women to constantly scrutinise their own and other women's bodies. The consumption of women as commodified bodies, involves women defending the utilisation of their own, and other women's bodies as "assets" to be exhibited. Although, for many women, trying to please another by fulfilling a projected ideal involves the maintenance of a fake relationship, other women quite happily work as photographers, journalists and editors in industries which rely on women as sexual objects. R.D.Laing describes this conscious or unconscious complicity, as collusion. In collusion:

The one person does not use the other merely as a hook to hang projections on. [S]he strives to find in the other, or to induce the other to become, the very embodiment of projection. The other person's collusion is required to 'complement' the identity self feels impelled to sustain. One can experience a peculiar form of guilt, specific, I think, to this disjunction. If one refuses collusion, one feels guilt for not being or not becoming the embodiment of the complement demanded by the other for his identity. However if one does succumb, if one is seduced, one becomes estranged from one's self and is guilty thereby of self-betrayal (Laing 1961:111).

In this sense women (both to themselves and to others) 'prostitute' themselves in the interests of the 'ideal'; "they stand for (*pro-stare*) whatever the client requires them to be, so that he can become for a while who he wishes to be" (Laing 1961:112). Men and women who participate in this process thus "make what singly could only be an *illusionary* or *delusionary* identity into a *collusive identity*" (Laing 1961:113). An example of this is the constant debunking of Camilla Parker Bowles in women's magazines because she does not fit the ideal of what a 'beautiful' woman (princess) is supposed to be *for other* women, or for a prince. The real Camilla, with signs of age, is unacceptable. In fact *New Idea* (March 1997) ran an article in which a so called "cheeky" cosmetic surgeon, "with a few subtle nips and tucks", could "transform Camilla's dowdy, tweedy image into that of a raving royal beauty who would rival Diana in the popularity stakes". A full page spread of her new 'false' face was presented, with the subtitle that it was "Just what the doctor ordered" (*New Idea* 1997:12-13). This is *collective collusion*, resulting in alienation from authentic relationships with self, other and nature.

The myths of perfection, operating as the beauty myth and the myth of eternal youth, are presented in pornography to the point that older women are actually censored (only older women who have succumbed to the physical censorship of their own bodies via plastic surgery, such as Joan Collins, are permitted display). The inference is that one has to be young (or at best, look young), to be sexual. These attitudes are also found in many contemporary women's magazines where 'perfection' is the lure used by most advertising and 'perfect' models are presented to women as ideals to be emulated. The fact that these images have been airbrushed or computer imaged simply supports the assumption that the natural is not perfect. This is endorsed by skillful attempts to deny what naturally occurs, such as hair under the arms, on legs, on the face, different shaped breasts, stretch marks, bellies, changes caused by pregnancy and age. Along with advertisements of 'perfect' women run articles on how to achieve the look. A woman's self concept is challenged if she does not subscribe to the ideal of faultlessness as a perfect specimen of womanhood. This ideal of perfection is akin to a religious or moral accomplishment. It is inferred that the

woman is not sexually attractive if she is not perfect, she has no hope of finding (or keeping) a man, and she is ugly and slothful.

Heller (1993b) writes that patriarchy has been afraid of 'slime', of any bodily secretions but on the other hand, it has not been afraid to associate women with dirt. Thus hardcore pornography describes itself as "filthy" and "disgusting". But is *Australian Hustler* (April 1997), in presenting a woman totally covered in glistening slime appealing to this association of women and dirt, or is the glistening slime, simply a device to focus on the erotic power of the skin? In fact to highlight the pure, clean, hairlessness of a model who has nothing 'odd', no spontaneous eruption of flesh or hair, a shining clean body and vagina, a 'virginal' almost 'sterile' presentation. Are not virginity and purity the antithesis to dirt? As Griffin's analysis of pornography reveals, the psychology of dualism allows several presentations to coexist without apparent contradiction. Thus, on one hand virginal purity may be portrayed as sexually stimulating, and so also may the experienced whore, but neither may exhibit the fully fledged hairiness of a mature woman, as this would run counter to the psychology of 'knowing' the subject, of seeing all, and thus controlling what is seen.

The desire to know all/see all is related to the desire to control - to have no surprises. Thus surgeons in the recent past have insisted that women's pubic hair be shaved when they are about to give birth. (At the birth of my second son, only six years ago, the nurse arrived with a shaver. When I asked why, she said "The doctor prefers it".) Hair which naturally occurs on the vagina is considered inappropriate, presumably because it is considered less clean or a hindrance to surgical procedure. The 'eye' of the doctor is given priority over the birthing mother, and evolutionary choice. (Ironically the desire for a partially hairless vagina as promoted by much pornography and obstetrics has a double bind, for as you probably know, the more you shave, the more the hair grows.)

The desire for knowledge about the mysteries of childbirth, and the mysteries of the woman's sexual organs, cannot be reduced to aesthetics alone, for although many women may actively choose to shave their vaginal hair this is often a desire to manufacture an

image of sexuality (revelation of the little girl) which has been defined by men. The historical association of woman's body with filth has led to cultural mores which attempt to sterilise and control the dark fecund places. It is an attempt to know, the unknowable; to deny the mystery of darkness. Sam Keen writes:

Since the world is an unsolvable mystery whose surface has scarcely been penetrated by our efforts to know and explain, the assumption that we can understand and conquer all is actually a symptom of insecurity and an inability to tolerate ambiguity and darkness. Nothing is less appropriate in our time than the posture of certainty (Keen 1991:132).

As we have seen, this desire to know 'the woman' is also a desire to control her sexuality, and although pornography often encourages insecurities and phobias in the viewer, it also postures itself as revealing the 'truth'.

Capitalist consumption of the 'pornographic' image

Certain groups (those who own the means and relations of production) stand to benefit financially from pornography at the expense of others. The pornography industry is dominated, psychologically and economically by a few men from the 'master class'. The top men are Robert Guccione, Hugh Hefner and Larry Flynt. Guccione, publisher of *Penthouse* started the magazine in London in March 1965 to challenge Hefner's *Playboy* whose news stand sales he overtook in 1975. Larry Flynt publishes *Hustler* magazines. Robert Guccione also has a massive perfume empire. Cindy Crawford was reportedly paid \$50,000 to bare all for American Playboy (*Cleo* July 1991). Pornography is a money spinner for the movies as well. Hard-core porn star John Holmes, (who traded on his natural endowment), is reputed to have earned US\$3000 a day at the height of his popularity (*Rolling Stone* 1989:45).

The overlap of interests among pornography, women's magazines and newspapers is significant with most of the women's magazine companies dealing with the pornography trade. Many pornography traders also have business interests in property which in turn

protects sex shops and strip shows. The United Kingdom's pornography industry is "bread and butter to the commercial printers, the magazine distributors and wholesalers" (Itzin 1992:77). For example Paul Raymond's *Escort* and *Men Only* are printed by Hunterprint who also print Rupert Murdoch's *New Woman*. *Men Only* is distributed by Conde Nast and National Magazine (COMAG) who publish *Vogue*, *Tatler* and *Cosmopolitan*. Kenneth Bound's *Mayfair* is published by Fisk who also publish Seymour's *Elle* and *New Woman* (Itzin 1992:76-77).

The influence of market forces in the shaping of sexuality extends from the business world to the promotion of women who aspire to look (and act) like a certain type. This artificially created need requires satisfaction by the consumption of other goods, such as cosmetics, diets, clothing, gym equipment or plastic surgery, and thus the pornographic industry feeds into, and is fed by, women's magazines which focus on the exterior image of a woman rather than any deep relationship between mind and body. Naomi Wolf argues that the beauty myth resulted in a widespread suppression of women's true sexuality just at the time that women were beginning to reclaim their freedom after the second wave of feminism (Wolf 1990:132). It is, as with social and ecological reform, one step forward and two steps back. The impetus for mutually beneficial partnership relations is met by the forces of dominator resistance.

Environmentalists question the unbridled consumption promoted by capitalism and 'The Ethical Investment Research Service' whose employees advise investors who wish to invest in green initiatives now services those who wish to exclude companies whose members are involved in pornography or violence (Itzin 1992:85). Research by Brian Taylor found that, although many environmental movement members argue primarily for ecocentric moral and spiritual values, the predominant characteristic of global environmentalism is its radical challenge to "the property relations attending the globalization of market capitalism". Radical environmentalism is "grounded upon the recognition that environmental degradation is threatening human survival" usually with "nation-state and corporate complicity" (*World Rainforest Report* 1996:25-26).

Ecofeminism's integrative vision often includes incorporating a socialist perspective, a challenge to the capitalist forces of production.

Ruether (1972) claims that capitalist advertising has isolated women, and the private sector of life, as the "prime consumer unit" for products which generally "glut the appetites but distort basic needs". Women have thus become both the chief buyer *and* the "sexual image through which the appetites of consumption are stimulated" (Ruether 1972:198). Ruether writes that this is because:

The eroticisation of the private sector of life is deliberately stimulated in capitalist society to compensate for and pacify male alienation from, and loss of control over, the work and political processes and to intensify the compensatory role of women and the home (Ruether 1972:198).

Ruether argues that the secularisation of society has privatised and sentimentalised morality, identifying it with the 'feminine'. In this way capitalist ideology "splits private morality from public business" and places the burden of ecological morality on the private, individual consumer (Ruether 1972: 199-200). Ruether argues that an ecological society must be a "communitarian socialist society" because the nuclear family cannot overcome the caste status of women, or the inherent dualism of work/home, male/female, public/private, culture/nurture.

Taking a pornographic image in isolation reflects one level of meaning, but when images and ideas from a spectrum of pornography, or when the entirety of a single magazine, is considered, multiple interconnecting meanings emerge. Thus the April 1997 edition of *Australian Hustler* is interesting for many reasons. Firstly, the timing of the issue in Australia followed the Australian release of the movie by Milos Forman, *The People Vs Larry Flynt*, a movie which worked very much in the interests of promoting *Hustler* magazine, so one may assume the producers were expecting heightened interest in the April edition. Secondly, the issue featured a centrefold model who was in the advanced stages of pregnancy (ABC radio broadcaster "JJJ" reported that the woman gave birth two weeks

after the shoot [ABC radio 1997]). Several key themes common to pornography coalesce around this issue.

The plot of *The People Vs. Larry Flynt* centres around the Supreme Court decision in which Larry Flynt won his First Amendment right to publish a satire of morals crusader, the Reverend Jerry Falwell, who had instigated a libel suit against him. It also involves semi biographical material about Flynt himself. In this sense the film operates to promote *Hustler* magazine and also, in typical Hollywood style, the Supreme Court is promoted as a staunch defender of 'freedom' of expression (that is of 'freedom' for capitalist appropriation).

The libertarian defence of pornography hinges on slogans such as "Government Out of the Bedrooms!", and assumes that there is no relationship between the public state and private sexuality. This belief is promoted by both liberal and socialist libertarians. In the words of a socialist-libertarian paper: "our Marxist, materialist approach" sees a clear distinction between "the two disparate questions of the capitalist state and human sexuality" (*Workers Vanguard* 1997:6). However pornography, like the state, is also involved in entrepreneurial activities to augment its own capital accumulation, and as the paper cited above acknowledges: "Flynt got his day in court because his interests coincided with those of a bunch of big capitalist publishers" (*Workers Vanguard* 1997:7). The socialist-libertarian position reflects the limitations and contradictions of much socialist commentary on pornography which refuses to see that the ideology of domination extends beyond material appropriation, to the appropriation of mind. Likewise it reflects the limitations of the libertarian position which attempts to make pornography independent of critique by insulating the sexual sphere from the sphere of reality (Raymond 1989: 151).

The People Vs. Larry Flynt is interesting for another reason, for as Marcus notes, anticlericalism (especially directed against Roman Catholicism) is a characteristic mode of the pornographic genre (Marcus 1966:40). This is not surprising because, as already indicated, Christianity and pornography have operated as two extremes swinging between repression and obsession. Although self-servingly portraying itself as being in polarised

opposition, the Church's repressive response denies it's own 'pornographic' history, whilst pornographers obsession with attacking clericalism likewise reflects its intransigent 'fear' of challenge and change. The Church, however, is not to be defended either, for as Eisler comments, "despite the fundamentalist Christian charge that pornography is a symptom of the modern drift away from religion, we find in Christian religious art almost the identical images of sexual sadism we find in modern pornography: of nude women being tortured, dismembered, and killed" (Eisler 1996:240).

Now to address the second aspect of this issue, the so called 'shocking' portrayal of a nude, heavily pregnant centrefold. Despite the fact that the model's genitals were typically shaved, moulded and tucked, and only a handful of women would remain so trim during pregnancy, there was nothing offensive about the spread. Of course, there is nothing "shocking" about a sexy pregnant woman, and Demi Moore had already prepared the masses for the revelation of pregnancy. However, the timing of this centrefold was probably a deliberate ploy, given the resurgence of interest in *Hustler*, and taken in isolation one could breathe a sigh of relief; at last an erotic presentation of pregnancy, how liberating of *Hustler*. But, as will be discussed in the next chapter, this same issue also included an image of a woman who, it is suggested, is having sex with a dog. So although pornography has the capacity to be self-reflective, its underlying intention remains to inferiorise women and the world of nature. In fact Marcus (1966) comments that the pornographic genre needs to strike notes of reality (in which, for example, pregnancy, menstruation and contraception are mentioned) as a means of reassuring itself that it is sane:

Sometimes, amidst the incessant barrage of sexual activities, it will be the fact of menstruation that is brought in, and when it is brought in it almost invariably brings those activities to a temporary halt. Sometimes it is the fear of venereal disease, and sometimes it is pregnancy. Usually one such circumstance is introduced, and just as usually that circumstance turns out to be the single instance of the recognition of sexual reality ... It is as if the pornographic novelist were almost aware that there was some danger in cutting himself entirely loose from the earth, of precipitating himself completely into the open space of fantasy. The single link with reality, then, may serve the novelist unconsciously as a kind of control; it protects him

from finally and ultimately identifying his universe of fantasy with the real world (Marcus 1966:237-238).

Although Marcus is referring to the pornographic novel in this example, it applies just as well to *Hustler* magazine which has a reputation for being at the cutting edge of 'cute and vulgar taste' because it sexualises *any* interaction. What is 'shocking' then, is the sense of reality, and the 'new' sexual fantasy it allows. *Hustler* also because it is aimed at a 'working class' readership attempts to dissolve the link between sophisticated gloss ('beautiful' models) and 'the girl next door'. (This is in contrast to *Penthouse* and *Playboy* who target the white-collar worker, a more literate readership).

However *Hustler*, and the pornographic genre generally, refuse to remain even sceptical about the research which suggests links between violent acts of crime and pornographic exposure, deflecting criticism any way it can. This included nominating associate professor of politics at La Trobe University, Robert Manne, who has conducted research into pornography and violent crime, as "Asshole of the Month" (*Hustler* 1997:5). Pornography is rabidly anti-clerical, at least to the degree that it cannot use clericalism as sexual fodder. It is likewise anti-intellectual, to the degree that it will, almost obsessively, deflect any intellectual criticism of itself.

The psycho-sexual health of women (and men) is intimately linked to the way they perceive themselves. Thus *Playboy* magazine focuses on the perfect sexual female; young, beautiful and pliable. The male viewer on the other hand is always being asked to question the size of his penis, for the accompanying stereotype of a huge well-hung stud, to which few can aspire, creates insecurities in the man which foster his dependence on the magazine (for how could an insecure man get a woman like that!). It may also stimulate the creation and satisfaction of other needs. This example was found in *Mayfair* magazine:

Small penis? Is your penis bringing you down? Sure, the medical authorities say that size doesn't count, but as long as women have a need to be filled, they will demand the full measure of devotion. And no amount of psychological reassurance will fill the gap between expectation and reality. SUPER-KING ENLARGER. A safe a (sic) proven natural way to improve

your manhood. With the Super King you will experience improvements you never thought possible (Mayfair 1993:July) .

The presentation of the male sex object is relatively recent and is training women to assess men. Perhaps when men are evaluated and subjected to a similar standard of measurement that women are, they will become less critical towards women and more able to appreciate the diversity that makes us human. Alternatively the beauty myth may endorse a beauty elite of women and men who will parade like gods before the imperfect masses, this trend is indicated by the way in which young men are also having surgery and (ab) using steroids in the search for 'idealised' body types.

Diversity is essential for the sustainability of the gene pool and evolution has created a diverse range of possible body types. Ecological health is not prescribed by artifice but by quality food and water, an animated body, a supportive niche and a network of relations with others. Ecology teaches us that our sexual needs are intrinsically linked to our naturalness and are innately alive in every being. As Pinkola Estés so poetically puts it:

To take much pleasure in a world filled with many kinds of beauty is a joy in life to which all women are entitled. To support only one kind of beauty is to be somehow unobservant of nature. There cannot be only one kind of songbird, only one kind of pine tree, only one kind of wolf. There cannot be one kind of baby, one kind of man, one kind of woman. There cannot be one kind of breast, one kind of waist, one kind of skin (Pinkola Estés 1993:202).

In the pornographic representations discussed thus far women's diverse sexuality (of body, mind and emotion) is reduced to a prescriptive 'ideal' type of body by which all others are judged, and to which 'good' women are pressured to conform. In the interests of dominator definitions of desire women's sexuality is commodified and objectified, utilised for the interests of the master capitalist class. The 'wild' woman's appetite is not for herself; her embodied power is disembodied into fractured fetishised parts which are subject to the power of the viewer's gaze. The viewer's insecurities are exploited by the inculcation of ideals that can never be met, ideals which attempt to reduce the one assessed, and the

assessor, to a mind-game of schizophrenic fantasy. This fundamentalist presentation of sexuality reduces the diverse field of human sexuality and sensuality, and consequently wild nature itself, to a singular and mechanistic model which works in the interests of capitalist consumption.

Chapter Five

REPRESSION OF THE NATURAL

“Postmodernism valorises diversity” (Lonsdale 1992:90) and so have many ecofeminists. Yet, unlike postmodernism, ecofeminism’s call for acceptance of diversity is rooted in a position of ethical justice and consequently they will defend marginalised groups against domination and discrimination whilst also not condoning the oppression of one individual in the interests of another (as in master/slave, sado/masochist relations). As we saw in Griffin’s analysis of pornography, there are fine lines between puritan disgust and moral consideration. Postmodernism however offers no guidance on ethical matters. According to Lonsdale:

Traditional ways of viewing sexuality, with their authoritarian overtones, and binary assumptions of purity/perversity or chaste/unchaste behaviour, have given way in postmodernity to the validation of a multiplicity of sexual identities. [Lonsdale quotes Jeffrey Weeks (1991:77) saying] ‘transvestites, transsexuals, paedophiles, sado-masochists, fetishists, bisexuals, prostitutes and others have vocally emerged, clamouring for their right of self-expression and legitimacy’. Such multiple ‘erotic populations’ are the ‘living proof of sexual diversity’ (Lonsdale 1992:90).

The implications for women of the affirmation of sexual diversity obviously needs to be considered. Ecofeminism offers a way of valuing action by its commitment to process and context. Recognising a world geared to exploitive relationships, ecofeminism attempts to forge sustainable relationships. Thus the binary distinction of purity/perversity, chaste/unchaste must be contextualised by questions such as: Power for whom? Is this respectful? Is this invasive? At what social or environmental cost? The nature and effect of the action is put under scrutiny in the interests of an ecologically sensitive and mutually respectful relationship with each other earthling. In this sense ecofeminism is unashamedly a moral position whilst, as shown in the section on the origins of social and sexual domination, it is acutely aware of how ‘traditional’ sexual morality has been used to control women’s sexuality. Fragmentation and schizophrenia are common metaphors for the

postmodern condition (Lonsdale 1992: 88-90) and in the words of R.D.Laing, a most gifted writer on schizophrenia, “we must continually learn to unlearn much that we have learned” (Laing 1972:42). The double-standard is part of our dominator heritage where those who hold power are subject to very different rules to those who do not. According to John Stoltenberg (quoted in Eisler 1996):

Once you have sexualised inequality, once it is a learned and internalized prerequisite for sexual arousal and sexual gratification, sexual freedom becomes a license for men to more effectively hunt and subdue women. Pornography...institutionalises male supremacy the way segregation institutionalises white supremacy (Eisler 1996:262).

As Eisler notes, “some of the strongest threads in the cultural warp and woof that hold repressive institutions together are dominator stereotypes of sex and gender” (Eisler 1996:263). It is these dominator stereotypes, which condition men and women to deny their need for intimacy and channel sexual energy into impersonal, *conquistador* sexual relationships, which now threaten the sustainability of life on this planet. As this section illustrates, the dominator model evident in pornography thrives on sexualising male coercion and female submission.

The lives and loves of porn models along with actresses and supermodels are celebrated with obsessive fixation, but how often do we see behind the scenes? Linda Lovelace was presented in the film *Deep Throat* as a liberated woman with an insatiable appetite for fellatio yet she was held captive by her boss for two years (often at gun-point) and was hypnotised to suppress the gag response (Itzin 1993:21). (Although some are sceptical of this claim it is interesting to note that recent research into hypnosis indicates that those with a history of child abuse are more susceptible to hypnosis). Andrea Dworkin tells us that many women she interviewed were not able to refuse the humiliating treatment they received as porn models because they expected it; it was all that they knew (Dworkin on SBS TV:1993).

Dworkin realistically points out that most people do not know what is in hard-core pornography, but they must know if they are to debate it knowledgeably. She found instances in the United States of women being penetrated by animals (dogs, horses, eels), household objects, spiked dildos, knives, guns and glass. One can only assume, in a lot of these cases, that the sexual response is being stimulated by a response to injury. Even those who view pornography, Dworkin claims, do not really 'see' it, in the sense of understanding the effect it has on the women involved, for whom "pornography is a concrete memory that never dies" (SBS TV 1993). One woman interviewed says: "maybe babies aren't meant to be anally penetrated by snakes or bottles or men's penises but I'm not really sure about that because that's what my life was". This ex-porn model had introduced her 2 year old child to the industry (SBS TV 1993).

It may be a surprise to many that films showing women being penetrated by animals such as dogs and horses are available in Australia. Although bestiality is illegal under Australian law several male acquaintances of mine have been exposed to such films. One film, a video copy, handed from mate to mate on a work site, included a portrayal of a woman being explicitly penetrated by a dog and two women stimulating a horse to erection and then having intercourse with it. Another film, depicting a woman and an Alsatian dog having intercourse, was shown to workers at a photography shop in Melbourne for their Christmas break-up. Some of the male work colleagues, despite feeling physically sick, felt compelled to view it to the end (*pers comm* from a worker there). Lake (1995) reviews *Animal Farm*, which depicts a woman fellating a pig.

The pornographic suggestion that women enjoy having sex with animals is, unfortunately, not only to be found on the black-market. Linda Lovelace, who was forced to have sex with a dog, described it as the worst moment of her life (Schleifer 1982:10). Lovelace's book *Ordeal* (1987) notes that Hugh Hefner collects 8mm human/animal sex films in which he has a special interest. Hefner's collection includes films with chickens, probably "those in which the birds are literally disembowelled by the human actor's penis" (Schleifer 1982:10). Larry Flynt, in his own book, *An Unseemly Man: My Life as Pornographer, Pundit and*

Social Outcast, claims that in his home region of Kentucky “sexual relations with animals - particularly cows, sheep, and horses - were common ... At the age of nine, I had sex with a chicken” (*Workers Vanguard* 1997:6).

In the same *Australian Hustler* edition that features a pregnant woman centrefold, there is a full page cartoon depicting a woman and a dog embracing on a blue bed. The naked woman and a large dog have their arms/paws around each other. The woman is screaming at her husband who has just come in from work: “You’ve got a sick mind, Carl! We were just kissing!”. The man looks flabbergasted. Both the woman’s and the dog’s genitals are visible and red (*Australian Hustler*, April 1997:35). I do not believe it is coincidental either, that this cartoon follows the only nude black woman sequence entitled “Bitch’s Brew”. This cartoon epitomises the multiplicity of oppressions represented in pornography. The woman is demeaned by having sex with a dog and the inference is that she herself is a dog. The dog and the woman are exploited in the interests of sexual humour; they are both inferiorised. And the over-weight worker is made to look ridiculous and, by inference, not sexually satisfying. *Hustler*, is the third-highest circulation pornography magazine in America (Lake 1995:101).

The fostering of sexual desire relies in these cases both on the exploitation of animals and women and the violation of taboos. The inference is that these women enjoyed having sex with animals. There is no recognition that bestiality is possible because animals and humans are alienated from their own self interest to the point that they will contemplate sexual relations with other species, and also because, as Schleifer points out, “interspecies sexual relations are always between people and domestic or otherwise tame animals, over whom one can exercise unlimited power” (Schleifer 1982:10). The plight of the animals and the plight of the humans in these situations is of *immediate* concern. This immediacy to bodily relationship, personal relationship and the community needs of the human species is an essential recognition of ecofeminism. This contrasts with other forms of environmentalism, such as Fox (1990) who, in arguing for cosmologically based identification, claims that “my self first, my family and friends next, my cultural or ethnic groupings next, my species next,

and so on ... would seem to have far more to do with the cause of possessiveness, greed, exploitation, war, and ecological destruction than with the solution to these seemingly intractable problems (Fox 1990:262). Fox's quest is for a non-anthropocentric world view, and although many may embrace the idea of cosmic unity, is it not wise to also acknowledge that biological processes work to sustain species who have an urgent sense of their own needs. Thus the self-interest of species to reproduce with their own kind is a concern of personal and ecological importance. Ecofeminism, grounded in the particular, has no difficulty with defending self-interest of the human species to the degree that it is *complementary* to the self-interest of non-human species, for the tree-of-life, the web of relationships evolved on this earth, has as much interest in the diversity of its branches as it does with the generation of new seed.

Compassion for women and animal's self-interest is strikingly missing in the pornographic genre and comparisons between women and animals are common. The animal epithets for women, such as Playboy "Bunnies" and Penthouse "Pets", and reference to women's vaginas as "beaver" or "pussy", although playful to a degree, ultimately endorse the dominator culture which sees animals and women as 'sport' to be hunted or domesticated. Women's bodies are often judged in the same way that animals are, for consumption. Schleifer sites this cartoon example from *The National Farmer* where two farmers looking simultaneously at a pig and a woman comment: "She's got a good strong back, even tits and nice legs! And a Good Back End Too". Another popular cartoon depicts a woman's headless body cut up into 'Prime cuts': chops, rump, leg, breast, belly, and so on. The inference is that women are "just another kind of meat" (Schleifer 1982:11), and men are depicted as the aggressive consumers of the animal world.

"Hustler humour" is often more offensive than pictures of nude women could ever be. Three more examples from this issue, taken in order, illustrate Hustler's contempt for older women, contempt for female sexual need, and contempt for attempts to bridge understanding about human relationships:

Question: What do dog shit and women have in common?

Answer: As they get older, they become easier to pick up.

The HUSTLER dictionary defines 'eternity' as: the length of time between when you come and when she leaves (Hustler 1997:71),

With us today is Abe Klarn, author of the book Men are from Earth, Women are From Some Other Goddamn Place! (Hustler 1997:9)

It is unfortunate that a genre which could teach men and women about the mutuality of passion, instead promotes a deep schism between male and female sexual relationships. If the last joke, did not so self-consciously reveal the dualistic construction of sexual difference established between the sexes in pornography, it would probably be funny.

Judith Bat-Ada, after analysing the language used in *Playboy*-genre magazines, concluded that they were emphatically negative towards the loving aspects of human beings. In cartoons, photographs, drawings and text, there is a clear isolation of the male from the traditional view of male-female, father-child relationships, which, although patriarchal, at least involved some norm of responsibility and concern. *Playboy* readers are conditioned by text and images to disavow their sentiments of caring, and to abdicate their social responsibility for respect in female-male relationships and nurturance in adult-child relationships (Bat-Ada, in Lederer 1980:124).

This is achieved not only by the obvious objectification of women as sexual objects but by the demeaning treatment the readers themselves receive. For example *Hustler*, printed a two page letter (supposedly from a reader) who described himself as just being retrenched from his job after six years loyal service. His only consolation was to return home to his "blonde, 22-year-old wife" for dinner and "a consolation lay". However she "crapped all over" him "for being an ageing, bald, overweight fuckup who couldn't even hold a job". Needless to say he gets to have sex with a woman who says "Just stick it in my butt - and don't be stingy with those nine inches" though he does complain that she does not allow him "to twist her body into any contorted position that pops into [his] perverted imagination" (*Hustler* 1977:15-16). Also in this same issue an article entitled "Sex Dreams" suggests that

“of course, some guys will never get laid” because they have grown fat, familiar or lost a job. This psychology is surely aimed at cultivating dependence on the product. It is slick advertising after all to demean the reader so that he prefers fantasy to the real thing. This is not to deny the realities of loneliness, isolation and impotence but the magazine is not concerned with these issues. It is hostile to its own readership.

Exploring the dualisms of culture/nature; spirit/body; and whore/virgin in pornography, Griffin argues that the male is afraid "of what the female body calls up in him"(1981:19) . In an interview with Macauley she describes the patriarchal mind as one which attempts to "tame, control or dominate what it perceives as either threatening and chaotic on the one hand, or passive and pliable on the other hand" (Macauley 1991:116). The pornographic mind's reliance on dualisms can be seen operating in contemporary soft-pornography (such as *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *Hustler*) where expositions of female sexuality exploit the perceived duality of the whore and the virgin. The viewer is often asked to respond to a sequence of images in which the centrefold plays a critical role in achieving sexual release. The centrefold is often the woman who is exposing the most, the wild one (the whore) or the most highly prized (the beauty). The "whore" as centrefold is often immediately followed by the "virgin" (the most innocently dressed) thus playing with the psycho/sexual desire to possess (control) both the chaotic and the passive. Either way recognition of the other's self-determining wild nature is denied.

Helen Haste, in a discussion on the Cartesian "rationality/chaos" polarity in western scientific thought, noted that Aristotle and Plato "believed rationality was masculine and chaos was feminine (because females were closer to nature, which was chaotic and subject to unpredictable and uncontrollable forces)" (Haste 1992:23). Thus women were depicted as witches (whores) with insatiable sexual appetites and masculine rationality was promoted as a system to control nature. In the Nineteenth Century however conceptions of female sexuality changed from the witch to the virgin, where the chaste and "feminine" woman could elevate the male from his "potentially chaotic passions" (Haste 1992:23). Haste claims that the contemporary metaphor of mutuality in sex is not visible in

pornography "where chaos and inequality of power are explicit, and where women are either innocent and vulnerable, or else temptresses" (Haste 1992:23).

Laura Lededer, in an interview with Judith Bat-Ada (who worked in the pornography industry), explains how pornography denies reality: "The realities of everyday life are hidden ... because [reality] threatens the isolated, mechanistic, aggressive male life-style the magazine is promoting". The sexually exploitative ideal man of *Playboy*:

requires the dehumanisation of woman and the ridicule of family members, relatives, and children. Thus, a staple joke image of the Playboy genre is the devalued wife. In thousands of repetitions over and over again, females are depicted as nonhuman, as whores, as animals- thereby removing any obligation on the part of the male to treat them as equal beings (Bat-Ada in Lederer 1980:124).

Pornography breaks down the desire to care, which humans, as social animals, need in order to survive. This is particularly obvious in the pressure to ignore the incest taboo which offers some protection to children. *Playboy* conditions men to consider *all* females as sex objects. There is a blur between mature women, teenagers and children. Techniques to break down the incest taboo involve women simulating children and their behaviour by being photographed surrounded by childhood trappings such as teddy bears, toys, 'virgin-white' petticoats and school uniforms. Fairy tales (which take us back to childhood) are rewritten, Bat-Ada claims, to condone rape, molestation and violence against women and children. She cites the examples of The wolf molesting Little Red Riding Hood, the Seven Dwarfs raping Snow White, and Goldilocks having sex with Baby Bear (Bat-Ada in Lederer 1980:125). When a number of demeaning adjectives for men, gleaned from pornographic material, are put together you get a picture of "bald-headed, small-dicked, ageing, unemployed men" who are being stimulated to fantasise about (have sex with) 'barely adult' teenage girls who could well look very much like their daughters. The presentation of the machismo, large peniled, male models are contrasted with the insulted small peniled viewers giving rise to what, must surely be, a schizophrenic experience.

One consequence of this is that men are encouraged to remain in a state of deferred maturity, perhaps always doubting their ability to relate sexually to a mature woman. Sam Keen argues that “many men never graduate from the locker-room school of sexuality” and that: “the popularity of hard porn provides a fairly accurate index of how many men in their chronologically mature years are still caught in the adolescent philosophy that reduces women to objects with desirable parts to be used and abused by men” (Keen 1992:74). As indicated earlier, in the pornography industry this may be a deliberate strategy on behalf of the publishers who are exploiting the inferiorised status of the working class and the unemployed. Along with this, and more importantly for our survival, the qualities that have been traditionally associated with women, qualities of caring, sharing and nurturing, are under threat here. As long as power is defined as domination over the other, hierarchical dualism will ensure that men continue to dominate women who, by virtue of their lower status, will be aligned with the natural and the sexual. The result is a situation where the intellectual body is divided from the corporeal body, and thus we lose touch with the feeling world and lose touch with reality. This allows for a de-naturalising of sexuality, a mind/body split which more easily accommodates an association of sexuality and violence (rather than sexuality and communality). Hard-core pornography, replete with metaphors of violence, coercion, sadism and symbols of destruction (guns and knives), is predicated on the divided consciousness of a machismo hero who embraces the capitalistic technological frame of competition and powermongering, making ‘love’ like he makes war.

As Val Plumwood says:

dualism is a process in which power forms identity, one which distorts both sides of what it splits apart, the master and the slave, the coloniser and the colonised, the sadist and the masochist, the egoist and the self-abnegating altruist, the masculine and the feminine, human and nature (Plumwood 1993b:32).

What is needed is a revision of power relationships, a demystification of the social concept of “masculinity as power” (Birkeland 1993:53). It would be unfortunate and unsatisfactory, however, if this revision simply involved a reversal of the dualistic gender constructions of

“masculine” domination and “feminine” submission, yet there is a trend, evident in sadomasochism, to do just that.

Sadomasochism, acts of sexual cruelty and sexual bondage, have been interpreted as liberating by some avant-garde artists and lesbians, and features in some pornography aimed at women. Eisler writes of a “Torture Circus” held in California which the female organiser described as being “at the forefront of sexual and political freedom”. The Circus featured “chainings and whippings”, emulating what is portrayed in dominator pornography (Eisler 1996:217). Some studies of the sado/masochistic subculture claim that switching roles can expand consciousness, thus freeing participants from being locked into particular roles. Raymond (1989) however, argues in her lesbian critique of pornography, “that it is difficult to see what is so advanced or progressive about a position that locates ‘desire’, and that imprisons female sexual dynamism, vitality and vigour, in old forms of sexual objectification, subordination and violence, this time initiated by women and done with women’s consent” (Raymond 1989:150). Sado-masochistic relationships, whether allowing reversal or not, involve a dualised construction of dominance and submission which is premised on inequality albeit if the sado-masochism is performed in trust it may be cathartic in effect, however it may also act to reinforce a fetish premised on inequality.

Ultimately pornography relies on the idea that the allure of the female is totally dependent on the manipulated *effect* of the female body, and thrives on fantasy which interprets sex as what can be done *to or by* that body. Pornography splits off the interiority of the body and associates corporeality with one sex - the female. As Grosz (1994) writes: “corporeality must no longer be associated with one sex (or race), which then takes on the burden of the other’s corporeality for it. Women can no longer take on the function of being *the* body for men” (Grosz 1994:22).

Today there are significant numbers of women who work in the pornography industry, as photographers, journalists and even editors. Market forces are increasingly shaping social relations, and economic rationalism encourages women to see their bodies as ‘an object of

exchange' or as an 'asset' to be profited from. According to Carkeek and James (1992) "objectification, privatisation, rationalisation, commodification and technological extension - are part of an increasing abstraction of the frame of social integration, and that this development, as uneven and contradictory as it is, is making our relationship to our bodies increasingly vexed" (Carkeek and James 1992:69). Increasingly the body is becoming a constructed reality, as plastic and malleable as other consumer objects: "the image has consumed the subject" (Carkeek and James 1992:78).

Chapter Six

IMAGING A DANGEROUS, UNSAFE AND VIOLENT WORLD (PORNOGRAPHY AND VIOLENCE)

*There's a bear in there
An electric chair
People with AIDS
And hand-grenades
So come inside
Commit Suicide
It's war school.*

(‘Anonymous’, Boolarra Primary School, Australia.)

I first heard this children’s playground rhyme from my nine year old son in 1995. It is interesting not only for the typical propensity of children to re-word rhymes to reflect popular themes but because it reflects overwhelmingly the cynicism and nihilism felt by today’s youth. In a confronting and thought provoking article entitled: “Porn Shows the Way Forward: Notes on the Ugly Aesthetic, Howard Lake (1995) exposes the violence in hard-core pornography that has hitherto been alluded to. He argues that hard-core pornography reflects in the 1990s “a malaise each of us feels”, an era where only “uncertain concepts: disease (Cancer, AIDS)” are “a metaphor for the human/global situation”, an age where the unspoken fear is that “we might be living in the terminal days of our civilisation RIGHT NOW” (Lake 1995:103). This chapter examines the scientific evidence on pornography and violence, it discusses the culture of alienation which is contributing to anti-social behaviour, and looks closely at what hard-core pornography is. It concludes with a discussion of the imaging of violence and sex in computer software. It argues that the dominator culture expressed in hard-core pornography and computer technology epitomises an alienated society where control and power *over* others is perceived as normal and where the body is virtually annihilated in the interests of mind-games.

Whether pornography has an effect on changing attitudes towards women in terms of stimulating rape or violence has been the subject of some research. Early feminists such as Dworkin, Lederer and Brownmiller investigated sexuality largely in terms of male power over women and subsequently documented studies which spoke of female suffering in relation to this male power. Dworkin and Lederer have been criticised for being too anecdotal. The personal experience of women was seen to be unscientific and therefore unsubstantiated. Griffin, who used poetry, prose and metaphor to deepen her analysis, has been criticised for being too emotional. On the other hand feminists and ecofeminists have been critical of the construction of science, and scientific methodology. Merchant (1980) documents the development of science, illustrating how, in both origins and practice, it reflects a reductionist, mechanistic paradigm which, contrary to its own descriptions, is neither objective or value free. This “mechanistic model” has a direct impact on the social sphere guiding technological and industrial development (Merchant 1980:291). Hallen strikingly reveals the dominator bias evident in contemporary science: “Ninety percent of all scientists and technologists that have ever lived are alive today, and 51 per cent of these work on war-related research while 36 per cent work for large corporations, mainly in teams on profit-motivated research projects not of their own choosing” (Hallen 1989:1). Science is deeply embedded in the military and industrial organisations of our time, and as Hallen notes, the figure of 51 per cent applies only to the ‘defence’ industry: “it does not take into consideration the wars humans wage against the earth and its creatures” (Hallen 1989:1).

However the feminist critique of science has perhaps resulted in a catch-22 situation where the belief that the scientific agenda is inherently patriarchal has meant that some research which endorses arguments proposed by feminists, and likewise discounts arguments, is being ignored. One such case of the latter is research by Kerekes and Slater (1995) whom, after extensive investigation, could not find one instance of the controversial “snuff” movie where a human being was deliberately killed for the purpose of entertainment. (They do, however, find an obsession with images of violence, dismemberment and death which will be discussed later.) As Heller points out, it is important to be aware of the limitations of

science, but also to cherish those who wish to “metamorphose science by nurturing a world of difference” in which “more women, more classes, more cultures” are encouraged to participate in science, thereby reflecting a reality which is multifaceted and more complex than we could ever understand (Hallen 1989:8-10). Environmental studies, inter-disciplinary studies, systems science and other theories which challenge static, linear cause-and-effect models, recognise the dynamism inherent in living systems and reveal the potential for transforming our cultural evolution. Although much science is aimed at conquering the natural domain, some also helps to explain, via relational and intimate analysis, the nature of sexuality. Ecofeminism must therefore critique and challenge reductionist science which is geared to the destruction of life, but honour scientific research that endeavours to investigate the "psycho-sexual dimension" of domination, especially that which profiles masculinity (Hallen 1992:53). Some of this work will be considered below.

Research conducted (often by men) into the construction of masculinity is very important, not only because it may reveal important factors which trigger machismo consciousness, but because gender socialisation, as this thesis has argued thus far, profoundly affects the shaping of our human consciousness, “from how we view our bodies to the degree to which we feel we have both personal and social choices” (Eisler 1996:246). In the words of Sam Keen, “the first act of freedom is the willingness to see how we have been enslaved” (Keen 1992:207).

Scientific researchers have conducted various behavioural studies to illustrate the effect or non-effect of pornography. In the early 80s scientific research on the effect of pornography on male behaviour found that the effects were negligible, though serious questions about the structure of the research were subsequently raised. Bart and Jozsa (1980) identified several problems with the research that had been done on pornography up to 1980. They found that the terms "erotica", "pornography" and "explicit sexual materials" were used interchangeably and that most of the research was done before violence had pervaded pornography. They also noted that the effects of pornography on women have not been sufficiently studied and suggested "that there is an elective affinity or compatibility between

the 'do-your-own-thing' (male) ethic reflected in the so-called sexual revolution which pervaded the sixties and seventies, and the increasing presence of and blatant content of porn" (Bart and Jozsa 1980:216). They criticised the "catharsis model" which says men 'do less if they read or see more', because both rape and pornography are increasing. However, due to the complexity of human nature it is impossible to reduce acts of violence to a single cause, so these factors may never correlate to prove a causative link. However, as Eisler puts it:

The question is whether images of violence produce a cultural climate, that particularly for those individuals already predisposed to violence due to psychological or physical factors, increases the likelihood that they will act out this predisposition. And still another question is how this cultural climate affects the general perception of violence, particularly when it is violence against women (Eisler 1996: 237).

On this point the most recent research concludes that violent pornography raises the male threshold to inflicting pain on female subjects. "Aggressive pornography" or "sexually violent mass media images" are the terms preferred by Donnerstein and Linz, who claim it is the violent images in pornography that explain the research effects (Donnerstein and Linz 1986:601). Research by Malamuth indicates that "a nonrapist population will evidence increased arousal to media-presented images of rape" and that "exposure to sexually explicit rape scenes in which the victim shows a 'positive' reaction tends to produce a lessened sensitivity to rape" (Donnerstein and Linz 1986:603-4). Donnerstein and Berkowitz (1985:606) found that an aggression-only film produced more aggressive behaviour than a sex-only film", but Donnerstein (1984) found "the combination of sexual explicitness and violence against a woman (the violent pornographic condition) "resulted in the highest levels of aggression against a woman" (Donnerstein 1984:615). It seems then, that violent pornography does have an effect on attitudes to inflicting pain against women. What is more insidious though, is how our general cultural climate, through the mass media, is being influenced by images which link sexual excitement and violence together.

Soft-pornography is of course more subtle than violent pornography and involves fewer abject acts of humiliation but, as outlined in Chapters Four and Five, the attitudes transmitted reinforce patriarchal attitudes of hierarchy and subvert the idea of 'naturalness'. Researchers have noted that viewers of non-violent pornography also regard rape as a less serious crime than non-viewers and this appears to be related to the presentation of women as sexually insatiable and eager to have sex 'under a variety of demeaning conditions'. Gordon and Riger consider that, despite the controversy surrounding pornography, "the objectification of women in pornography and advertising perpetuates myths and sex-stereotyping which contribute to a culture of rape" (Gordon and Riger 1989:128). Baxter (1990) claims that "the weight of evidence is accumulating that intensive exposure to soft-core pornography desensitises men's attitude to rape, increases sexual callousness and shifts their preferences towards hard-core pornography" (Baxter 1990:23).

Serial murderer Ted Bundy gave a final interview to Dr. James Dobson, which was recorded in the documentary video *Fatal Addiction* (Stiles 1989), 16 hours before Bundy was executed. Although probably considered unscientific, this interview endorses the conclusions reached above. Bundy, who confessed to murdering more than twenty eight young women and girls, claims that his dangerous impulses were "fuelled day in and day out by-violence in the media" (Stiles 1989). Bundy describes the process of his 'desensitisation' as stemming from his youth when, as a boy of 12 he discovered soft pornography in the local grocery store and harder material in bins where it had been thrown away. Together with an interest in detective novels he describes how the wedding of violence and sexuality fuelled his fantasy until finally the fantasy crystallised into a separate entity inside himself. He describes his pornography habit as 'a kind of addiction' where he was always looking for more potent acts of 'hardness'. He felt himself to be living on the edge of restraint where the next step would be 'doing it' because it had become a "compulsion ... a building up of this destructive energy" (Stiles 1989). Bundy also spoke about his experience in prison with men who had committed violence, saying that: "without exception, every one of them was deeply involved in pornography". Dobson supports this by quoting the FBI's study on serial murderers which showed that "81% of them listed as their predominant interest, to the level

of compulsion, the matter of pornography, and mostly hard-core violent pornography" (Stiles 1989).

One of the frightening aspects of the interview is that Bundy presents as a bright, articulate but vulnerable man. In fact he saw himself as a normal person except for this small, very potent, very secret part of himself that he did not let anybody know about. Like Susan Griffin in her analysis on pornography, Dobson draws a parallel with Nazi warlords who didn't have trouble finding ordinary people to do their murders because: "they had been given a rationale for this kind of killing, then they were desensitised until they got to the place where they didn't feel it anymore" (Stiles 1989). The pornographic genre, in its own defence, often relies on this ability to "persuade the reader that psychosis is merely a heightened form of normality" (Marcus 1966:74).

According to Lonsdale (1992) the postmodern condition endorses the representation and consumption of gendered violence by cutting adrift the "ontological moorings" which are necessary for people to ground themselves. "Familiar reference points are gone without anything unifying or stable to take their place" (Lonsdale 1992:89). Thus one may surmise that Bundy could find no morality in which to anchor himself, despite coming from what he describes as 'a good Christian family'. In fact, the combination of the dominator myths of Christian suffering, violent warfare and bloodshed portrayed in the media, and pornographic representations linking sexuality and violence, may have conjoined in Bundy to produce the detachment and amorality necessary for his actions. For, in Eisler's words, these dominator myths are anchored in the notion of "salvation through violence and pain" (Eisler 1996:399) whether that salvation be religious, political or sexual.

Salvation through violence and pain has also motivated the colonialist/conquering attitude found in the patriarchal relationship to wilderness. Jane Campion's film *The Piano* gives an insightful account of the blend of puritanical zeal, paranoid fear (of indigenous people and 'alien' nature) and the dominator mentality which supported the colonisation of New Zealand, and the domination of the heroine by her husband to the point of physical

mutilation. Barry Lopez similarly describes a contemporary distorted and alienated relationship to nature in his book *Arctic Dreams*. The camp description is strangely reminiscent of life in an all male prison:

In the most distant camps, to my sensibilities at least, were some of the saddest human lives I have ever known. The society is all male. The tedium of schedule is unrelieved. Drugs and alcohol are smuggled in. Pornographic magazines abound ... one realises that they are nearly inescapable, and that they are part of a resentful attitude toward the responsibilities of family life. There is a distrust, a cursing of women, that is unsettling. Women and machinery and the land are all spoken of in the same way - seduction, domestication, domination, control. This observation represents no new insight, of course ... but it is not academic. It is as real as the scars on the faces of flight attendants I interviewed in Alaska who were physically and sexually abused by frustrated workmen flying to and from Prudhoe Bay (Lopez 1987:398).

Lopez describes how the employees' frustrations were directed not only against women but against their employers, those considered to be "overeducated" and "vague political and ethnic groups whom they saw as confused and impractical critics of growth". The dominator network of oppression thrives in this environment that is seen as a wasteland "with a few stupid birds" (Lopez 1987:398). We would hope that environmental destruction does not in our future create the barrenness of social and natural relationship evidenced here, yet Howard Lake (1995) offers little hope in his analysis of hard-core pornography which I will now discuss.

Lake (1995) calls hard-core pornography the "ugly aesthetic" because rather than inciting joy in viewing sexuality, it incites disgust. Taboos on nudity and sex have created a cultural climate of repression and obsession, Lake claims this is felt "even in those who revel in the medium, for their delight stems as much from these deep-buried phobias regarding fleshly exposure as does the revulsion of the pornophobes" (1995:95). The word degradation may be bandied about but, Lake argues, "hardcore porn is where the real degradation hangs out" (1995:97). One such example is the sadomasochistic movie *Slave Sex*, where 'performers' have their testicles or labia nailed to a table, women are suspended by their

breasts, and a woman urinates into the mouth of her co-star, who is having her genitals beaten with a flyswatter (1995:99). Lake describes the action of *Slave Sex* as “gruesome, akin to watching a bizarre medical operation” and “the wounds you are viewing are not faked ... those breasts skewered with needles, that dick stretched by the equivalent weight of five bags of sugar”, that woman bound, sodomized, ‘forced’ to fellate her co-stars and left with a lit cigarette between her vagina (1995:100), are the actual thing. As Lake says, there is no doubt that the ‘actress’ in this movie is degraded, and that the movie has been produced for “someone who derives sexual satisfaction from witnessing a female being, abused, humiliated and degraded ... There is no hint of consensuality in the ‘plot’ ... Brutality and hatred is at its core” (Lake 1995:100).

These manifestations of misogyny/ gynaephobia are “on the rise”, says Lake. In an American *Hustler* magazine’s advertising section, Lake found this:

KINKY BARBARA ... Hurt my ASSHOLE and ABUSE my PUSSY - Be A Rough, Mean Master! (Private, Live SUBMISSION - 1 on 1, Visa, MIC, or Direct: Toll Free) (Lake 1995:101).

Although rape is not directly stated in this advertisement, it infers that this is what makes ‘kinky Barbara’ so attractive. Lake’s litany goes on, mail order catalogues list: “*Barnyard Fantasies; Screw My Ass ... then My Mouth*”, “*Hot bitches do ANYTHING and EVERYTHING for money!*”, “*Tiny Titties Tight Pussy - Forbidden topics that cannot be described in this ad. Hard to find subject matter not available in video stores*”, the reference is obviously to female child pornography.

The contemporary work of Lake, fleshes out in detail why the previously quoted criticisms of degradation and violence in hard-core pornography (see Griffin [1981] and Lededer [1980]) are not reactionary, prudish attempts to deny some ‘good fun sex’ but are an earnest attempt to come to grips with the violence and humiliation on which much pornography relies. Lake’s inclusion of sexual violence done to men (penis stretching and

testicle nailing) supports the current ecofeminist contention that both, men and women, are in “cultural bondage to the logic of the master” (Plumwood 1993b:190).

Lake argues that hard-core pornography was a reaction against the feminist gains of the 1970s and it thrives on the viewer’s insecurity, fear, and neuroses. “Sexuality is a major weapon in the enforcement of consensus control”, says Lake (1995:104) and hardcore pornography sells a man the ‘false’ myth that he *can* have power over the female object of his desire, that women can be tamed through masculine virility (Lake 1995:106). The false myth, though, as evidenced in Bundy’s case cited above, is ‘false’ only as long as it remains separated from reality. These sexual representations do nothing to alleviate cultural stereotypes, encouraging the viewer instead, to have no regard to the ‘performers’ plight, as Lake sardonically puts it, they may be poverty stricken, homeless, or of a different sexual persuasion but “they are not your kind, but something separate, more animalistic and uncivilised” (Lake 1995:106). Frighteningly, in a world where we are gradually becoming more isolated from each other and detached from ourselves, where “values are so much excess baggage” (Lake 1995:108), the global media (from television to hard-core pornography) seem intent on promoting sexual representations of violence, humiliation, degradation and alienation. This is not sustainable living, this is homicide, suicide and ecocide.

Computers and the age of bodiless sex

the mind is the most erotic organ - Cyberspace Erotica.

The internet was developed by the U.S. military during the 1960s as a peer-to-peer computer system. It was “a radical departure from the conventional mainframe hierarchical system” because, not having a central hub, it was harder to destroy. Now commercial addresses dominate the internet, including the dissemination of interactive audio and video. Pornographic videos require credit card payment and are theoretically off-limit to minors. However to verify age on the private adult bulletin board, all you are asked to do is click a box if you are over 18, so any minor can gain access if they have a credit card. Also pornographic shorts are easily accessible and are very similar in content to magazine

pornography. The difficulty in policing and viewing the mass of pornographic material on the internet raises important questions regarding community standards on sexual obscenity, and issues of responsibility. Who is responsible for the material, for example, the provider or the downloader? The debate currently underway is likely to be resolved economically rather than socially.

Donna Haraway's *A Manifesto for Cyborgs*, as interpreted by Caddick, claims that feminists have the choice to "counter the current power frame of the information revolution - in which 'all resistance to instrumental control disappears and all heterogeneity can be submitted to disassembly, reassembly, investment and exchange'" (Caddick 1992:117). However, only a small percentage of the population are ever going to program computers, and the male domination of the computer industry is currently inscribing the surface images of women with the all too familiar themes of domination and control. Linda Williams (1991), author of *Hardcore*, a book which details her research into the history of pornographic movies and compares old and new forms of pornography, concludes that the pornographic representation of the symbolic woman is "deadeningly the same" (*SBS TV* 1996). Given the interest of boys in computer games which involve a frightening level of violence, there can be, as Roszak claims: "the real danger that we fall prey to a technological idolatry, allowing an invention of our own hands to become the image that dominates our understanding of ourselves and nature" (Roszak in Suzuki 1990:199).

A popular interactive computer game "Doom" is regularly played by children (predominantly boys) and adults (predominantly men). The game has a macabre fascination, the setting resembles the interior of a prison, on another planet. The aim is to kill the devil-like werewolves and guards (who drip blood when injured), collect more weapons, and move to higher skill levels. A range of weapons is available. The weapons include a fist with metal blade on the thumb, a handgun, plasma rifle, pistol, shotgun, rocket and chainsaw. The rebound when the guns are used is imaged realistically (and Microsoft have now invented a joystick which rebounds in your hand). The weapon dominates the centre of the frame and the accompanying sound effects include heavy panting, screaming, and the very

loud and realistic sound of the chosen weapon. The levels, in order of increasing 'skill' are called: I'm too young to die, Hey not too rough, Hurt me Plenty, Ultra-violence and Nightmare. Another similarly popular children's computer game is "Duke Nukem 3D". This game is set in a recognisable city, post apocalyptic LA. It has a scene in which the player enters a room and sees two lesbians having sex on a bed with a bondage mistress standing over them. The player has the option of shooting the lesbians, the bondage mistress, or the 'bad' guy, all of whom will explode into a gratifying pile of flesh and blood.

Commenting on introducing computer technology to students at an early age, Theodore Roszak writes that: "creating the impression that their little exercises in programming and game playing are somehow giving them control over a powerful technology can be a treacherous deception. It is not teaching them to think in some scientifically sound way; it is persuading them to acquiesce" (Roszak, in Suzuki 1990:197). This acquiescence, however, should not be equated with passivity, for the attitudes emulated in the micro (chip) world of computer fantasy games (of which 'Doom' is a milder example) mirrors the macro dominator world we have discussed so far, a world where violence is equated with power, and the desire to dominate the other is cultivated over the desire to connect with the other. These games condition boys to see power in terms, not of their humanity, but their weaponry. As Di Bretherton, once President of National Action Against War Toys, puts it: "We are teaching shoot first, ask questions later. We should be teaching the fundamental question: how do we solve human problems without shooting?" (*Habitat* 1988:14).

Elisabeth Newson, head of the child development unit at Nottingham University, and author of the report "Video Violence and the Protection of Children" endorsed by 25 leading doctors and academics in Britain, claims that researchers have been naive in their failure to predict the extent of damaging material, and its availability to children. The report involved an extensive review of literature on the effects of television and violent behaviour. Newson found that "there was a strong link between violence on screen and anti-social behaviour by children", and she voiced concern over the innovations in present video material where "unlike traditional gruesome stories the

viewer is made to identify with the perpetrator of the act, not with the victim” (Mercury 1994). In 1988 the average child in Australia saw 18,000 murders on television during their school years (*Habitat* 1988:15), whilst computer games now encourage children to not only see, but inter-actively perform, countless murders. Children like action, but the promotion of the alliance between violence and action over other forms of action only serves to foster the culture of war and violence in which, all too often, children and nature are the innocent victims.

In a world where people are increasingly alienated from meaningful community interaction and connection with the natural world, the computer is not a panacea and it is wise to treat it cautiously. Apart from attitudinal effects on children, one must also consider the environmental effects. As we encourage our children to interact with computers we need to take time to contemplate the effect of this technology on their bodies and minds.

Psychologist and sociologist Sherry Turkle points out that: “in time past, children learned their human nature in large measure by comparing themselves to animals. Now, computers with their interactivity, their psychology, with whatever fragments of intelligence they have, bid to take this place” (Turkle in Suzuki 1990:198). Children not only absorb socially destructive attitudes from the computer but they also abdicate physical play and face-to-face interactions, in favour of a technology whose long term effects on rapidly changing cells remain unscrutinised. Statistics on the dangers of exposure to computer radiation are difficult to find, and although this cannot be investigated here, more research is needed on the health risks of interacting with computers, for example studies on physical immobility, eye damage and levels of radiation exposure on changing cells, before we unwittingly encourage our growing children, even kindergarten children, to idolise computer technology. Life is much more than a ‘text’ on the screen. Our bodies are not just information sites. Nature is not something we make in our own image.

The saying, ‘the mind is the most erotic organ’, once popularised in an attempt to make obvious the links between mind and body sex, is now in danger of epitomising sex as *only* mind. For with computer sex we have entered the age of bodiless sex. The ultimate in

sterilisation of the body may be to deny the body all together. Of course, there are similarities between looking at a pornographic magazine for sexual excitement and cruising the internet sex highway, however, the differences are significant. For one thing, a magazine may be read in multiple-settings (even a relaxed, 'natural' setting), with a relaxed body. Computer viewing, however, requires exposure to an electronic device in a fixed space, with an accompanying bodily rigidity. Computers dominate physical and emotional space in ways that magazines generally cannot, and are, it seems, far more enticing to the young.

'Virtual reality' Heller claims, can be seen to represent "the ultimate replacement for the organic erotic". This is because "we are a society which worships image over content, pure idea over organic reality" (Heller 1993b:151). Perhaps in the 1990s no other trend more clearly indicates this than Cybersex. Heller postulates that one reason for the patriarchal obsession with manufactured image over the natural organic is the desire for sterility. Describing the interaction with 'virtual reality' sex, she writes that:

organic sensual experience is reduced to a synthetic array of computerised sensations which can be selected, purchased and experienced by the consumer ... Here, men are literally creating a world where they can have sex with pure, odourless images of women they have completely created and controlled. Simply slide on a clean white suit, select the male fantasy of choice and enjoy the anti-erotic replacement for real, sexual, erotic intimacy (Heller 1993b:151-152).

The body of the viewer is, of course, present, but sexual interaction is not a tactile interaction between bodies, or even between one's own imagination and a coded visual (as in magazine porn), for the computer-mind has already been programmed to present the viewer with the choices of how to interact with the information. Thus, in virtual reality, the body of the woman may be stripped, made to bend over, made to perform sexual functions; one may zoom in, zoom around; one may even 'grope' with a computerised hand. The viewer has become the camera and the comptroller all at once. The technological medium however distances the viewer from the 'woman' who appears to be more like a doll or a robot, capable of greater manipulation because of the control the viewer has over making it perform. The viewer suffers the illusion of power and control not only over the image of the

woman, but over the (pre-programmed) technology itself. The imagination of someone viewing computer porn is thus controlled more profoundly than someone viewing magazine porn.

The internet can allow a degree of freedom otherwise unobtainable in our society, and it is claimed that in America, the internet is extraordinarily unregulated with regard to sexual material at the moment, with pornography flowing freely. It can also involve large sums of money, \$400,000 was made by one individual in 1995 who asked members to pay \$100 per year for digital images from around the world depicting scatology, bestiality and implied incest (*SBS TV* 1996). As Linda Williams says, in the same program, "Americans love to fuck their machines". However what this tongue-in-cheek comment belies are the realities of an industry which traffics in women; what Dworkin calls "Technologised prostitution", where women are sold a million times in a picture and the publisher makes the money. Women, she says, are the largest cash crop coming out of Thailand (*SBS TV* 1993). The technologised master frame now has the capacity to sample women from all around the world with very little, if any, remittance to the women themselves.

It is claimed that computer sex, along with phone sex, offers a service for the lonely, desperate or simply too busy. "Worlds Chat" (<http://www.world.net>) offers a forum on the internet where people can meet, flirt, have 'affairs', and have 'sex' all in cyberspace. Sexual consumption is rampant, and given the amount of advertising for phone sex, people are even paying for 'conversation'. Lake claims phone sex is "one of the highest financial turnover sex trades of these times" (Lake 1995:102). With the break down of family and community interactions, consumerism has stepped in to replace spontaneous social relations however "techno-sex and the many other practices of disembodied interaction contribute to a changing and increasingly abstracted dominant ontology of embodiment" (Carkeek and James 1992:68) and the alternatives that are offered, to the alienated, lonely, desperate or over-worked, all have a price tag. It is important to consider what effect technologically mediated sexual relations will have on future generations, and to ask what we stand to lose,

or have already lost, by allowing the capitalist technological master-frame to determine what human social needs are.

Chapter Seven

DENIAL OF THE NATURAL: TECHNOLOGICAL WOMAN

perfection is terrible/ it cannot have children
(Sylvia Plath, "The Munich Mannequins")

The very idea of what constitutes a 'natural' woman is under question in this postmodern era. The subversion of nature, manifesting as the domination of the female body, is evident in many spheres of scientific pursuit, from plastic surgery to genetic engineering. The repression of the natural, which women (and men) have gladly embraced in the form of cosmetics, fashion and pornography, has created an ethos of manipulation where doctors feel they can now prescribe the future of the female body. Repression has led to denial.

Male medical intervention in birth pre-dates Henry V of England who ordained that his wife lie on her back (instead of working with gravity) so he could see the birth of his child. But in the technological age women, not only undergo more surgical intervention at birth than ever before, but many women are afraid to undergo natural transformations implicit in pregnancy and childbirth because of the changes it will make to their bodies. (This conclusion is not based on science but on anecdotal discussion with many women throughout my life.)

Can medical technological fixes really provide women with freedom? This is the question ecofeminists and feminists grapple with as they review the path promoted by invitro-fertilisation techniques (IVF). The first test-tube baby was born in England in 1978 (Hepburn 1992:xiii). Invitro-fertilisation is popularly understood as being a last resort option for those who are unable to reproduce naturally. However the process of choosing prospective mothers is highly selective (by age and health) and women who have already had children (by another partner) are admitted because they are more likely to be

successful. Even given these odds only 8.1 per cent of couples take home a live baby (Hepburn 1992:52) and sadly, the risks of malformation of the baby are significant. In Australia there is a 2.6 per cent incidence of major congenital malformation in an IVF pregnancy compared to the 1.5 per cent in the Australian population (Hepburn 1992:48).

The 'ethics debate' in Australia illustrates the polarised position feminists have taken on reproductive technology. Liberal feminists' endorsement of the new reproductive technologies rests on 'freedom of choice' and arguments which support the independence of the private individual. This position is also supported by some environmental philosophers, such as Peter Singer who is an advocate of human embryo experimentation (Hepburn 1992:88). On the other hand, radical feminist's such as Gena Corea (1985) argue that these technologies "manifest a misogynist logic", a logic "alien" to the real needs of women (Caddick 1992:113-115). An ecofeminist must surely ask, as Merchant does: "What is at stake for women and for nature when traditional methods and norms of biological reproduction are disrupted by interventionist technologies?" These technologies, reliant on assumptions of the cultural supremacy of the mechanical model over the natural one, "push us increasingly in the direction of artificial environments" and mechanised control over more and more aspects of human life, leading to a loss in the quality of life itself (Merchant 1980:291).

What is at stake is the concept of 'life itself'. The age of genetic engineering has irrevocably problematised notions of conception and birth (Lonsdale 1992). The reality of chemical birth control, sterilisation, rented wombs, test-tube babies and humans surviving with non-human body parts, is here to stay, but this technology has not evolved in a vacuum and to ignore its historical construction is to ignore the role the master model has played in attempting to control the female body. Thus the feminist debate pivots on "whether the new technology is women-centred in its motivation and whether it provides women with real choices and real reproductive control and self-determination" (Hepburn 1992:100). The presentation of the new technology as liberating does not take into account the power relations involved, nor the intense medical intervention involved, nor the cost to the public

health purse. IVF and genetic engineering are intimately related because the research aspects of each support each other. The Harradine Report (Commonwealth Australia:1985) noted that the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council has never made a distinction between 'spare' and 'specially-created' human embryos (Hepburn 1992:84), thus allowing experimentation to be ethically ambiguous. An international trade in human ova and embryos indicates their 'property' status, as Hepburn states "we do not allow a woman to sell her ova ... yet we allow everybody else to make money out of it" (Hepburn 1992:85).

For these reasons the new reproductive technologies and genetic engineering have featured highly at women's international congresses. The 1985 Women's Emergency Conference on the New Reproductive Technologies in Sweden called for feminist resistance to the new technologies on the basis that:

the female body, with its unique capacity for creating human life is being expropriated and dissected as raw material for the technological production of human beings. For us women, for nature, and for the exploited peoples of the world, this development is a declaration of war. Genetic and reproductive engineering is another attempt to end self-determination over our bodies ... We do not need to transform our biology, we need to transform patriarchal, social, political and economic conditions ... Hepburn 1992:103).

Although feminist debate has focused on a 'woman's right to choose', the 70 women from 16 different countries at the above conference support research by Lorraine Hepburn and others, that the choices women are being given are defined by patriarchal parameters. Feminists argue that equality for women means reproductive self-determination but, as Hepburn (1992) points out, with the splitting of reproduction from sex one cannot assume greater freedom for women. Currently 'choosing' this technology means choosing a technology which is controlled by men therefore women need to consider all possibilities before "endorsing a technology which leaves male-dominated culture to control not only birth but the very conception and procreative process itself" (Commonwealth of Australia 1985:1519). The radical

ecofeminist affirmation of 'our bodies, our selves', is especially relevant in assessing the likely effects of this technology.

Concerns with the run-away nature of the IVF technology is best illustrated by a 1990 report of The Australian National Bioethics Consultative Committee which predicted developments that would become part of clinical practice within the next decade. These included: "The use of IVF at a much earlier stage in the treatment of infertility ... the use of these procedures as an option rather than as a last resort", and "the use of IVF together with embryo biopsy for choosing the sex of an embryo for transfer, first in special circumstances beyond the genetic indication ... and then a more general use for sex-selection of children" (Hepburn 1992:147). It appears that we are paving the way for a corporatisation of reproduction, where genetic purification (the screening of all potential ova and sperm) by genetic engineers will determine who or what is the fittest. This has nothing to do with Darwin's survival of the best adapted: instead it emulates Nazism's eugenics programs.

Along with defect-correcting surgery on the foetus whilst in the mother's womb (which has resulted in many deaths), examples abound of the technological colonisation of the female body where the role of mother is being subverted by technology. Hepburn notes that the emphasis on the foetus "leads to language which separates the mother from her foetus, which is actually dependent on her (Hepburn 1992:44). Operations on foetal tissue from abortions, stillbirths and invitro-fertilisations could propel us, if we are not careful, into a future of the womb-less mother with children, like the mothers, being viewed simply as commodities. Jeunet and Caro's post-modernist movie, *The City of Lost Children* horrifyingly depicts a technological future where children have only nightmares and are but instruments to satisfy others' desires. It is, what Chaia Heller refers to as "social ecocide". Health, Heller says, should be redefined as not only absence of illness, "but as an ability to sustain a state of cultural, ecological and personal strength" (Heller 1993b:145). Our present path is health threatening, not only as it poisons our ecosystems, but because it

poisons our interactions with each other, treating both women's bodies and nature as fodder for economic yield.

The utilitarian attitude to women's bodies found in the new reproductive technologies evidences a further division of the cultural from the natural. This attitude is also found in the encouragement by cosmetic surgeons for women to undergo surgery in the name of 'beauty'. Women are now demanding that men staple their stomachs, mechanically suck out fat tissue, burn their faces and cut open their breasts to place artificial objects inside, because they are afraid that their bodies are not beautiful enough. The cult of the objectified female body is resulting in totally idealistic images of beauty which are not located in the natural. The following comments, made by a 26 year old Melbourne man in conversation with me, reveal the depth of this denaturing mythologising: "You should see her now. She's had silicon implants. Her breasts are perfect. She's really worked on that lean body of hers. She's no longer pudgy but is like Madonna, perfect and gorgeous". He was speaking about Bridgitt Nielson post *Red Sonia* (a movie in which she had played an athletic warrior).

Pamela Anderson had breast implants after her first *Playboy* shoot at a time when she was suffering from low self-esteem. She was 19 years old. She felt "she had no chance at fame unless she had the surgery" and commented that she received humiliating treatment at the hands of the *Playboy* photographers (*Woman's Day* 1994). She has since done her second *Playboy* centrefold and fifth *Playboy* cover. Lake (1995) claims that the "inescapable, bald conclusion is that this mutilation (which is often what it amounts to) is inspired with the express purpose of giving breast-obsessed males something upon which to fixate as they masturbate" (Lake 1995:98).

Cutting off the breast that succours would be to many women like cutting off the nose to spite the face, yet breast surgery is increasingly being promoted as a viable option. One out of fifty Australian women have breast implants and eighty per cent of these are for cosmetic reasons. In America 159,300 breast operations and 67,000 face lifts are performed per year (Wolf 1990:241). Howard Lake, who has worked on photosets featuring models with silicon implants says that the majority are done on the cheap and have a limited lifespan:

"The consequences can be appalling - the implants can shift and distort the breast; they can solidify till the bosom has the consistency of gravel" (Lake 1995:98). Dr. Henry Jennings claimed that early evidence of the problem was suppressed, and the evidence is now overwhelming that it can cause serious problems, including cancer (*ABC TV*, 7.30 Report 1994). As a result Australia now has a moratorium on silicone implants. Australian plastic surgeons however still believe it is safe. Wolf writes: "though the Surgical Age has begun, it remains socially, ethically and politically unexamined" (Wolf 1990:235).

Most people would agree that if it is in a woman's interests to have her breast removed because of a life threatening disease then breast surgery is necessary. But the promotion of breast surgery for 'cosmetic' reasons, (evident in nearly every second woman's magazine you may pick up), has nothing to do with medical problems. The attitude women are suggested to cultivate is: if you don't like the shape of your breast then consider breast surgery as a desirable option. This denaturising is premised on the inferiority of the natural shape of a woman which has been given to her by her genetic heritage, or created by natural processes of change such as pregnancy and breastfeeding. Consider this:

THANKS TO BUSTIERS AND IMPLANTS, WE'VE arrived in the Decade of the Breast ... The under-twenties who buy these magazines belong to a unique generation of women: because of cosmetic surgery, they've grown up never knowing a time when learning to live with your body was the only choice there was (Cleo 1994).

Acceptance of one's own body, as an aspect of health and love, is not promoted as the primary option. The acceptance of cultural interference in drastically restructuring the body is, in fact, lauded:

Since the ban on silicone implants the only alternative for Australian women who want bigger breasts are saline implants, considered safe because even if they leak, the saline is excreted instead of staying in the body (Mode 1993:124, my emphasis).

Under the title of "Health Works" in *The New Weekly* (1994) women are graphically shown how saltwater implants "magically transform" Marilyn's "bellybutton" boobs. The surgery is promoted as essential and easy; "with this operation a woman can be shopping the next day" and there is "far less chance of losing nipple sensation". Don't worry if hardening of the implant happens, the article seeks to reassure its readers, for another operation will fix it! The patient says: "the implants feel like they're part of my body and are not something *unnatural*". What is health? What is natural? The definitions are becoming strangely blurred.

There is a genre of pornography which centres on hurting and cutting women's breasts, but just as frightening is that breast surgery itself is being sexualised. Surgeons' implements (along with guns) commonly feature alongside porn models. *Playboy* featured the surgery of Mariel Hemingway and Jessica Hahn: "not so much the breasts; the surgery" (Wolf 1990:246). The Dutch documentary "Tycoons" (*SBS Television* 1993), which profiled Brazilian plastic surgeon Ivo Pitanguy, renown for rebuilding people's faces after car accidents, showed that his work also involved cosmetic surgery. The eulogising that accompanied the description of his work as 'correcting a deformity' whilst he drew lines on a woman's breast in preparation for cosmetic surgery, showed the penetration of the beauty myth into scientific operation. This woman's breasts had been changed by breast feeding. The inference is that there is something wrong with the woman whose breasts show the influence of mothering or time. According to Naomi Wolf: "Beauty pornography is curtailing female sexuality to the point that a sexually dead breast can be seen and felt to be 'better' than one that is sexually alive" (Wolf 1990: 246). This pervasive anti-life, anti-nurturing attitude is being taken to new heights with genetically engineered food. According to Gaard it is no coincidence that "milk is the first genetically engineered food to be sold in the United States" (Gaard 1994:203). Underlying the use of this biotechnology is the belief that "not only must science 'improve' upon nature, but that nature can and must be controlled ... In both humans and cattle, motherhood is seen as a proper and necessary site for scientific intervention" (Gaard 1994:203).

Another normal stage of a woman's life, menopause, is also being denied. Instead of encouraging women to celebrate the change of life, drug companies are seeking to artificially "medicalise" a normal stage of life, because it is profitable. Hormone replacement therapy is being recommended to many women for symptoms from arthritis to sexual dysfunction. This is despite international research which has linked it with the increased risk of breast cancer (Ryan 1993). The treatment is also contentious because some doctors are routinely prescribing it for all older women, whether they need it or not, problematising menopause as a disease. Renate Klein, deputy director of the Australian Women's Research Centre, in an interview with Denise Ryan from *The Age*, said: "Women were being coerced into taking HRT by false claims that it would make them youthful and healthy" (Ryan 1993). Sandra Coney, author of *The Menopause Industry*, claims that the advocacy of HRT resurrects the 'feminine forever' approach of the 60s, with powerful chemicals being fed to women like lollies. Menopause, which was once the time of the last period, is now being redefined as an "oestrogen deficiency disease"(Coney in Ryan 1993).

Marilyn Glenville, author of *Natural Alternatives to HRT* points out that women in non-western countries "do not experience the menopause as a crisis demanding medical intervention" (Glenville 1997:2). This suggests that the problem is more to do with lifestyle and diet and how 'the change' is perceived. Menopause, like menstruation, pregnancy and breastfeeding, is a change that nature has provided for women, so that they can "pass through the menopause to enjoy the freedom it can bring" (Glenville 1997:2). Instead of this change been interpreted as a natural and inevitable process, one to be embraced as providing new opportunities, the patriarchal medical authorities are interpreting it as a problem to be fixed with synthetic technologies. Glenville, because of her perspective on menopause as a natural stage of a woman's life, offers natural alternatives, such as herbs and diet to calm the mind and provide extra vitamins, to ease the natural transition. Her solution places the cure back into the woman's hand. This is also why alternative therapies are often derided by the medical institution, profit cannot be made if women honour their bodies as temples provided by nature, temples which celebrate and accept natural processes

of change. This deep respect for process and change, as Joan Halifax writes, is a lesson we can learn from nature:

One of the strongest places to learn about this changing body is in nature. Yet our fear of impermanence has driven us to attempt to fix that which always transforms, whether it is our minds or Earth (Halifax 1992:151-152).

Glenville draws on the analogy of the tree losing its leaves, she reminds us that we do not perceive this as a sign of disease, nor as something which we must reverse, instead we accept that the autumn trees will continue on their natural cycle and blossom again, and so it is with the coming of menopause.

Women's control of their reproduction and sexuality is an essential task for rebuilding and reclaiming our future. It is a task increasingly being promoted by politically aware men and women, yet it is a task that is difficult to achieve due to the undervaluing of women, women's reproductive capabilities, their sexuality and work. Eisler notes that globally women earn "one-tenth of what men do and own a mere one-hundredth of the world's property" (Eisler 1996:339). Commenting on western societies Jillian Abbott writes "Women who actually care for children - mothers and childcare workers - remain the lowest paid and lowest status workers in society" (*The Weekend Review* 1995:4). Mothering may also be a very alienating experience. The mother may be totally dependent on the State, as a single mother, and be treated like a parasite in the eyes of the community. She may go crazy due to restrictions she feels she must impose on her children because she resides in a world of fear; a world where strangers and friends are treated with suspicion if they express interest in children. As Abbott writes "we have lost the safeguard of the community" (*The Weekend Review* 1995:4).

Even if the woman is in a nuclear family situation, this can often add to the tension, because her husband's work is considered so important, and her work, labour intensive, and augmented by caring for him as well as the children, is considered unimportant because it does not make dollars. Don Edgar, ex-director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies

suggests that “recognition for the role of carer will come as more men become actively involved in childcare”. Edgar continues “Young men want to spend more time with their children. Older men regret that they didn’t do this. I think eventually a greater respect for the role will emerge” (Edgar quoted in *The Weekend Review* 1995:4). Eisler endorses this view of a shift to a partnership society, a shift called for by ecofeminists who, not only expose what separates us but favour what connects us.

Eisler’s book *Sacred Pleasure*, as the title suggests, heralds a time that many are now suggesting is emerging, a time of new growth and change. Eisler takes time to develop the idea that we are moving from a time of suppression of sexual relations to a time where our intimate relations are in the forefront of public debate. As she points out, some still believe ‘private’ relations to be beyond scrutiny but overall, it is the “day-to-day relations involving women, men, and children” (Eisler 1996:348) which are at the forefront of political debate. This signifies a positive diffusing of the public/private dualism. It is a shift from focusing on the top of the dominator pyramid to the grassroots, the web of relationships on which the pyramid rests. However, as Eisler and others have pointed out, this partnership thrust can be easily co-opted, and there is evidence of a dominator backlash, especially in relation to rights won for women (see Faludi 1992).

Despite the backlash however, Eisler claims that “we stand at the threshold of a new stage in politics that takes the struggle for freedom from coercive controls to its most basic level: to the choices that most directly impact our bodies”. The aim of this new politics requires “a fundamental reconceptualization of power in all spheres of life, from our individual families to the family of nations” (Eisler 1996:348-349). It is a change to an ethic of care, an ethic which answers the human need for creative and fulfilling work and interactions with others. It is this ethic which will fundamentally challenge the materialistic lifestyle of consumer societies which relies on the undervaluing of the production and reproduction of the world’s workers, women and nature.

CONCLUSION: RECLAIMING THE EROTIC: AN ANTIDOTE

Marge Piercy wrote: "The link between sex and violence must be broken in our generation and broken for good if we are to survive into a future fit for our children to inhabit" (Piercy, in Lederer 1980:7). The gendered dualistic constructions of male/female, master/slave, butch/femme, culture/nature, mind/body have been increasingly challenged over the last two decades by both women and men seeking to overthrow the master model of an oppressive and distorted sexuality which links pleasure with pain. Advertising has made it obvious that ideas (whether as formulaic fantasy or creative imagination) do shape consciousness and pleasures can be artificially created and orchestrated for accelerated consumption, but as Rosalind Coward points out 'pleasures' can change, just look at the dramatically reduced tolerance towards fox-hunting, bull-fighting and cock-fighting (Coward 1984:14).

This thesis claims that the eroticisation of violence in pornography (sometimes involving the depiction of death, as in 'snuff' movies) is akin to the violence women subject themselves to in the name of beauty (the slicing of the female body resembling a sado/masochistic relationship of extreme degree). But juxtaposed to this is "a social and ecological creative tendency which strives to make the world richer, more diverse and interdependent" (Heller 1993b:147) This creative tendency calls up the erotic as a site for potential liberation because the erotic represents much more than sexual desire. As Heller puts it, "the erotic is the 'social desire' that we have for others. It is our desire to be seen and understood, to feel that we are part of a social whole while we retain our individuality" (Heller 1993b:147) but until our society no longer eroticises domination, or promotes attitudes of conquest and control, rather than connection and caring, pornography remains problematic.

The debate on pornography cannot be put to rest until modes of dominator sexuality no longer typify the pornographic genre. Thus it is vitally important that women take up the challenge to produce or purchase alternative pornography (erotica) that reflects the dignity, humour and sensitivity of sexuality which magazines such as *Australian Women's Forum* and Britain's *Women on Top* indicate many women (and men) want (Buchanan 1994).

Feminist 'porn stars' such as Nina Hartley and Christy Canyon are politicising their work and the 'porn for women' movement led by Candia Royalle offers an alternative to the phallogentric dominance of current pornography (Lake 1995:107). It would not be wise to hand over the exploration and representation of our sexuality to the same 'master class' which augments its wealth by the oppression of women, people of other races and the working class, and who, through capitalist appropriation of nature, has brought the world to the brink of ecological and social disaster. It is essential that women reclaim control over their bodies' health and reproduction, and this may well involve seeking alternative natural therapies which treat their problems holistically, recognising the relationships among mind, body and environment.

The West has not always experienced the erotic as an isolated sexual experience. Cultural ecofeminists who resurrect the sensual earth mother draw valuable links between our pagan heritage, which honoured the fecundity of nature, women and sexuality as an erotic and powerfully creative force. Tribal societies recognised the bonding qualities of sexuality as it was woven into their kinship relations. Eastern peoples often interpreted sexuality as an expression of the divine nature principle. The Tantra tradition in India saw the copulation of Shiva and Parvati as representing the creation of the world, through Shakti, the sexual force of life. Likewise the contemporary ecological movement honours, and wishes to maintain mutually dependent and caring relationships among the different aspects of our earth body, its myriad creatures, and ourselves.

Chaia Heller (1993b) says that "Reclaiming the erotic" is part of the ecological project of our time. Moreover, it is an essential part, for if we cannot trust and touch with respect other members of our species, if we cannot represent our innate sexuality honouring the diversity and changeableness of our natural forms, if we cannot tend and care for the particular moments of our local niche - our home, what hope to do have for rebuilding our connection with the earth. David Tacey says, "the ecological crisis is at bottom a psychological and spiritual crisis", and what is required is a transformation of consciousness from the path of heroic distinction from nature (the rationalist endeavour), to a new bond

with nature, a reanimation of the world and ourselves (Tacey 1995:151); “the truly ecological task is not only to repair our damage in the outer world, but to repair the deep splits on the inside, to work toward inclusive rather than exclusive concepts of selfhood and identity” (Tacey 1995:152). To rebuild our connection to each other, and to the earth, our spiritual home.

To envision a way of relating beyond the limitations of dualism requires an acknowledgment of the mind in our body-nature, and the body-nature in mind. This concept is understood by many indigenous people, as Tacey points out the Australian Aboriginal dreaming saw the landscape as the “centre of everything: at once the source of life, the origin of the tribe, the metamorphosed body of blood-line ancestors, and the intelligent force that drives the individual and creates society” (Tacey 1995:148). A non dualistic way of being makes us aware of our dependence on the basic elements of life: air, water, earth, fire. This is an empowering dependence which reveres the network of connection which flows through everything. Clarissa Pinkola Estés says that according to ancient teaching “the senses represent aspects of soul or the ‘inward holy body’ ” thus:

fire animates, earth gives a sense of feeling, water gives speech, air gives taste, mist gives sight, flowers give hearing, the south wind gives smelling
(Estés 1993:449).

Reductionism, rationalism, exploitation and utilisation have enabled the development of technologies which rely on the godlike capacity of humans to shape matter, giving us ‘freedoms’ hitherto unthought of, but these same technologies have the capacity to destroy life as we know it. We have the capacity to transform the ‘culture of the blade’, with its technologies that destroy and dominate, to a society that sustains and enhances life (Eisler 1987 xx). The task of our time is to heal the split between nature and culture, between men and women, between all earth dwellers and our communal body (the earth). This involves a shift from the dominance of economic rationalism, technological fixes and consumption to a focus on ecological balance, community and respect for all species.

This “earth advocacy” (Keen 1992:116) does not reduce female sexuality to an object of consumption, straitjacketing men and women into differentiated roles of conqueror and conquered, nor does it simplify the capacity of a female to reproduce as a ‘receptive uterine environment’. Earth advocacy builds on the erotic need for sensuality, intimacy, friendship and community. As Lorde reminds us, the very word ‘erotic’ comes from the Greek word ‘eros’ which means personification of love in all its aspects, “born of Chaos and personifying creative power and harmony” (Lorde 1980:297). Pornography, beauty pornography and violent attitudes to the female body are attempting to deny the power of the erotic (despite the saturation of articles on sex). As Naomi Wolf and others have asked:

How can a dead breast respond like a live one? How can a test-tube duplicate a mother's pulsating womb? How can virtual reality sex imitate the real experience? The point is they can not. And although some would argue that a fantasy is never intended to reflect the real experience we must ethically question the trends in our society which lead to the suppression of sensual interaction in our daily lives and the elevation of the two-dimensional symbolic woman to the embodiment of desire. Surely we do not want to become like Hugh Hefner whose ultimate ideal is to commune via the internet with all the playmates through the decades, many of whom are presumably dead! (Wilson 1996).

Fortunately there is a contemporary movement which is concerned with re-establishing the connections among self, other and nature. Many are RE-reading the text and re-creating eros on their own terms. Pornography as “a form of psychic assault” (Eckersley 1987:3) is being challenged by the emergence of new forms of sensuality and representations which reflect the complexity of what it is to be a woman. Despite the many life denying fantasies/actions which dominate the present time, there are also those who are rejecting the aesthetics of distance, coldness and neutrality for a message that communes the needs of a “compassionate ecological self” (Gablik 1991:180). The voyeuristic eye now returns the gaze. Photographer Cindy Sherman for example, reclaims popular images of women, for herself, as a means of discovering personal identity. Louise Bourgeois explores the themes of passion, unrequited love, gender and the body, and “interaction with her art is not simply a visual experience, but a spiritual and visceral one” in which we are both seduced and

disturbed by the “inherent fragility of our own identity” (Smith 1995:9). Annie Sprinkle lays on the stage with her legs spread and invites all to look at a live woman's vagina. Sex healing workshops (such as ‘Sluts and Goddesses’ run by Barbara Carellas) provide safe places where women can act out and work through sexual stereotypes. Tantric workshops (based on ancient Indian ‘love’ philosophies) invite couples to open their hearts and channel their raw sexual energy to an all encompassing body/spiritual level of pleasure. Tribal celebrations of nudity confront us with real diversity and a sense of what it is to be without shame, whilst communal chants, through kundalini transformation of energy unite culture and nature, male and female, mind and spirit into one orgasmic whole.

Let us not forget either that sexual energy can generate new life. The consciousness which drives the desire for intimacy between male and female is one of our deepest connections with ecology. Ecology is the study of nature, the study of the patterns of evolution manifesting in the way plants and animals relate to each other and their environment. Several patterns emerge over and over again in the plant and animal domains, but the desire to reproduce is essential. Ecology teaches us that populations are dependent on their environment for food and shelter. A famous experiment revealed an interesting process which I leave you with for further thought. Male and female rats were placed in a box. Over time the walls were moved closer and closer in. If a female became pregnant it was removed and replaced. The males and females mated heterosexually for some time but as the walls became very close the males began to mate with each other. There are several inter-related factors here, the space was shrinking (becoming more crowded), and there were no offspring. Today we are living in a world whose health is threatened for many reasons: pollution, excessive consumption of resources, poverty, over-population, disease, violence and alienation. The links among biology, ecology, and human sustainability are just beginning to be explored, let us hope we can evolve into compassionate, creative and nature-honouring beings before it is too late to make a difference.

This thesis argues that the ecological project is also a humanist project. Environmental consciousness involves an ethical or moral relationship to the world. This morality can be

seen as a distinguishing feature of humanity, the capacity to reflect on and make decisions which reflect long-term concerns with what is considered best for the social and ecological environment. In the words of the Aboriginal people of Kooparooona Niara (Tasmania): “The most sacred right of humanity is to be ourselves and to be in control of the making of ourselves ... ” (*The Daily Planet* 1997:15). Both homosexual and heterosexual relationships are capable of expressing love and consideration, or domination. We are no longer captive to the instinctual demand to reproduce, and in a world in which the human population threatens to consume or pollute the resources of all other creatures, the human need for sensual connection can be expressed in a diversity of ways. However, as Keen writes, “to be involved in creating a wholesome future, men [and women], gay or straight, need an active caring relationship to children” (Keen 1992:227). In a world where myriad ‘family’ arrangements now exist, the social needs of single persons, one-parent families, homosexual couples, co-operative households, for contact with an extended network of others, young and old, is vital. It is highly likely that the desire for sexual contact has co-evolved with the desire for the conditions which make reproduction more likely. These conditions involve a sense of responsibility to the young manifested by individual, pair or group concern, and a nurturing sense of place (an appropriate environment).

Human sexuality at the survival level is about the ability to reproduce ourselves. Without reproduction we would not be here. Through untold ages reproduction has been embedded in nature; in recent times technology has attempted to take over the reproduction of life. When survival conditions have been established (enough food, water and shelter) sexuality may begin to relax, to play. The urgency to reproduce weaves together with other needs, the need for comfort, for attention, communication, pleasure, bonding. Human sexuality is generally a pleasurable activity, because this has stimulated the desire to reproduce. Though we are all here because of reproduction, sexuality can obviously exist without the desire to reproduce. The debate between biological determinism and social construction confuses the reality that we are an ad-mixture of evolutionary and cultural processes, and that we all have a responsibility in shaping our social and ecological future.

The transformative power of ecofeminism relies on an ethical choice; the choice to embrace equality, empowering relationships, cultural diversity and the valuing of our own unique beauty, our sacred and intuitive sexuality. It relies on recognising the intrinsic value of nature and the interconnectedness of all life processes. It is an ethic of mutual respect. Plumwood claims that “when four tectonic plates of liberation theory - those concerned with the oppressions of gender, race, class and nature - finally come together, the resulting tremors could shake the conceptual structures of oppression to their foundations” (Plumwood 1993b:1). The “Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism” (Warren 1990) resides in its ability to facilitate a critical perception of the interlinking net of oppression predicated on the abuse of the natural world. It is therefore *especially relevant* when one is exploring female oppression and humanity’s continuing alienation from the natural world.

In summary, this ecofeminist analysis illustrates that attitudes found in pornography, advertising and women's magazines, and the promotion of cosmetic surgery, invitro-fertilisation and genetic engineering, are steering humanity into an artificial, dis-embodied, future which represses and denies our links with the natural world, breaking down respect for our bodies, and our familial and community needs. Although this thesis has only touched on the censorship debate, Patricia Hynes (1992) raises several important questions for environmentalists and feminists to consider. Hynes asks, if it is possible for environmental protection organisations to define toxicity in a world saturated with synthetic chemicals, “why can’t we define pornography in literature, art and film?”. She also asks if governments can regulate free enterprise by banning and controlling the use of toxic chemicals, “why can’t they limit ‘free speech’ without fundamental damage to First Amendment rights?” (Hynes 1992:388). In Australia legal censorship already exists through a classification system and much sexually explicit material available in video shops exhibits high levels of mutuality which are suitable for young adults. A socially mature society should, at least, be able to define (and discuss) those sexual representations which rely on the blatant subordination of children, animals, and adults so that no-one is harmed. Although the ecofeminist perspective illustrated in this thesis demonstrates that ‘pornography’ traverses a

wide spectrum of representation, the critique of the pornographic mind-set is contextualised by moral considerations of equality, justice and an honouring of natural processes and the non-human world. There is no simple solution to the problems generated by a mind-set.

An ecofeminist perspective opens up to considering the network of “multiple and interlocking oppressions” (Plumwood 1993b:75), *as well as* the multiplicity of challenges to this oppression. An ecofeminist position can critically posit the contradictions and oppressions inherent in the nature of mind/body dualisms which underlie the dominator ideology. It can weave the links among the various oppressions, thus encouraging greater solidarity in supporting action against the destruction of the earth, our body and ourselves. We are at a critical point on our evolutionary path. Knowledge of our dominator history is now widespread. We have the chance to embrace partnership and commune with others again. Many are already doing so. We have the chance to take on the responsibility to transform our culture, to develop an alternative to destruction, cynicism and alienation.

To forget our links to the natural world, on which we depend, from which we came, is a dangerous and vain quest which must ultimately fail. We say that only time and nature can grow a forest. What then do we say about our own species which denies the natural aging process of woman, encapsulates the adolescent girl in the cult of sexual perfection, fears mature and fertile women, disguises true experience, and denies the intrinsic link between mother and child, packaging all for the god of consumerism? Such attitudes corrupt and displace relations of continuity, the spontaneous and mutual attraction between humans and the sustaining matrix of life.

In a world which is bent on arguing for the end of nature the ecofeminist dilemma (as it is for other conservationist positions) rests on definitions of the natural. Some readers may sympathise with Allan Bloom who claims that pornography simply shows “the old love relationship, which involved differentiated sexual roles” (Faludi 1991:328), or with Camille Paglia, who asserts that “the female body is a chthonian machine, indifferent to the spirit who inhabits it ... For nature's fascism is greater than that of any society” (1995:15,19). An

ecofeminist, however, celebrates and honours the ecological time that has given her, her body and given him, his body. And she hopes that when she meets her lover (the other), it will be in a context of mutual respect fuelled by authentic knowledge that accepts the other, as it is, warts and all. It is this choice for mutually enhancing relationship with each other, and with the natural world, that will grow us into mature beings, beings who, no longer dependent on domination, competition, or unrealisable idealisation (the sexual opium of late capitalism), can recognise the work that needs to be done to make this planet a safe, healthy and sustainable home for us all. Then, at last grounded in our place, we will truly 'see' each other, and embrace our conscious and intuitive knowledge of the wild that is within and without.

This sense of the wild is erotic liberation. It is a revitalisation of the creative connection between matter and mind. It is a recognition of our own divine power, s/he who has been suppressed but not forgotten:

The God/ess who is the foundation (at one and the same time) of our being and our new being embraces both the roots of the material substratum of our existence (matter) and also the endlessly new creative potential (spirit) ... The God/ess ... leads us to the converted center, the harmonisation of self and body, self and other, self and world ... The liberating encounter with God/ess is always an encounter with our authentic selves resurrected from underneath the alienated self. It is not experienced against, but in and through relationships, healing our broken relations with our bodies, with other people, with nature (Ruether 1983:71).

Our relationship with the other begins in the comfort of our mother's womb. Our capacity to love is founded on the communion we feel as we search for, and receive comfort as small children, love matures us into social creatures with the capacity to both give and receive. This is what ecological wisdom has decreed. Sexuality helps us to bond, to empathise, to care for, and express mutual acceptance of the other. Sexuality used to humiliate, dominate, and abuse, breaks down trust, friendship and communion in our social lives. The environmental movement, at heart, must face these issues of alienation.

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