Ecofeminism and Geography:

The Case of Vandana Shiva and Chipko
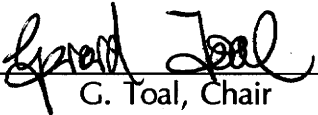
by

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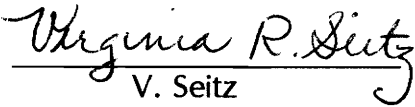in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

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Geography

ABSTRACT

The study of human-environment interactions by geography is traditionally conceptualized as the "man-land" theme in geographic analysis. Feminists and other post-structuralists criticize that conceptualization. Following those critiques, this study evaluates ecofeminism as a possible alternative to a "man-land" formulation.

Ecofeminism is presented and analyzed as a school of thought that also studies human-environment interactions. Vandan Shiva's discourse and treatment of Chipko provide the central ecofeminist case study. The thesis elucidates ecofeminism's sensitivity to the geographic concept of place in order to determine whether or not ecofeminism is adequate as a geographic theory. Analysis of Vandana Shiva's texts reveals that ecofeminism universalizes and fails to accomodate the geographic concept of place.

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Introduction

"In its origins, the term `geography' refers to the earth and to formal, socially-constructed knowledge of the material reality of the world" (Fitzsimmons, 1989:106)

Historically, a central component of geographic inquiry is the analysis of processes and interactions between human societies and the earth. Human relationships with the planet may be conceptualized as the "man-land" theme by geographers. Within geography, the idea of "man" as a generic term designates both genders. "Land" is most often conceptualized as "nature." In this thesis, I problematize the operation of the "man-land" formulation and attempt to discover an alternative formulation of human-environment processes.

On a broad level, a dissatisfaction with the traditional elements of human-environment analyses within geography motivates this thesis. I contend that an alternative conceptualization of human-environment interactions can enter into geographic discourse. Because both feminists and post-structuralists critique geographic "man-land" arguments, I utilize these perspectives in order to develop my arguments about human-environment relationships. Feminism and post-structuralism each offer specific criticisms that I find helpful. Feminist geographers question whether current geographic inquiry adequately incorporates the idea of gender. Post-structuralists question the geographic conceptualizations of "man" and "land/nature." Because each of these approaches open geographic formulations to criticism on certain points, I argue that a different approach to human-earth processes may unseat the "man-land" theme.

I present ecofeminism as an alternative or challenge to geographic inquiry into human-environment relationships. Ecofeminism, an abbreviation of "ecological feminism," makes claims about human-environment interactions that incorporate the

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concept of gender as a central analytical component. Gender refers to the social construction and perception of differences between the sexes. Because feminist geographers argue that geography traditionally ignores gender as relevant to the production of knowledge, I chose to forward ecofeminism as a theory that relies upon gender to foreground discussions of women and nature. Importantly, both geography and ecofeminism construct a field of knowledge about people and their environments. Utilizing that similarity, I engage and review ecofeminism and seek to explore the potential of ecofeminism as a critical geographic theory.

Ecofeminism, as a school of thought, emerged in the late 1970s in response to environmental disasters and pollution. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) represents an early precursor to ecofeminist perspectives by tracing the pathways of environmental chemicals through the human body. Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (1980) develops several ecofeminist concepts, notably a history of the ideas of "women" and "nature" from the Enlightenment forward. Merchant's analysis argues that "women" and "nature" are linked conceptually and treated by society in similar ways. Gender, as a social product, directly bears on relationships between people and their environments. This argument remains a central tenet of ecofeminism.

If ecofeminism truly offers an alternative formulation of human-environment relationships, then ecofeminism should incorporate geographically sensitive concepts in its arguments. Does ecofeminism represent geographic reasoning? In order to answer this question, I wish to "test" ecofeminist discourse against the geographic concept of place. Drawing from John Agnew (1987), I offer the notion of place as indicative of particular contexts and local processes. Therefore, if ecofeminism is to mount an effective epistemological challenge to current forms of geographic inquiry, then ecofeminism must succeed at accounting for place. My overall goal is to determine whether or not ecofeminism is an adequate reconceptualization of human-environment interactions as opposed to traditional geographic research.

I utilize Vandana Shiva's contributions to ecofeminist analyses as my case study. Because Vandana Shiva's publications focus on a particular set of intertwined concerns, and because she publishes book-length analyses, I choose to investigate her discourse. Shiva provides sustained descriptions and arguments about development, science, women, and nature. She particularly focuses her research on the ecological struggle of Chipko in the Himalayan region of India.

I analyze Shiva's discourse on Chipko in order to evaluate the geographic reasoning used by ecofeminists. As a case study, Shiva's ecofeminist approach to Chipko provides an example in which place is important. Because Chipko events occur in a specific region of India, Shiva's description of the struggle can be examined for attention to context. I critique Shiva's discourse about Chipko in order to determine whether or not ecofeminist conceptualizations about human-environment interactions recognize context and thus are sensitive to place.

In order to develop my project, I begin with an explication of geography as an examination of human-earth processes and elucidate current criticisms of the discipline and its epistemology. Chapter One presents the general state of the relationship between feminism and geography. I review feminist critiques of the discipline in order to lay the groundwork for ecofeminism's encounter with geography. I then examine the ongoing debate between feminism and post-structuralism about the construction of geographic knowledge. Both schools of thought claim deconstructive methods, but feminists critique post-structuralists on three crucial points: the origins of deconstructive projects, the presence of a political agenda, and the possibility that post-structuralism is a sexist approach. Because I want to employ a feminist post-structuralist perspective, presenting the debate not only reveals the current state of critical theories within geography but also elucidates the possibility of a merger between the approaches. Chapter One ends with an explanation of post-structuralism as a perspective, and I review the theory's emergence and saliency to my project.

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Feminism is useful as an approach that recognizes gender as an important concept. Post-structuralism is useful as a technique that allows me to question theoretical concepts like gender. Moreover, this approach allows me to suspend as meaningful everyday geographic identities like the "West" or the "Third World." Because ensuing chapters encounter that language within ecofeminism, I employ these phrases within quotation marks. Post-structuralism provides a theoretical base for not accepting such notions as immanently or fully meaningful.

Chapter Two extends the consideration of feminism and geography to ecofeminism. In order to do so, I employ Gillian Rose's (1991) critique of geography's epistemology to merge ecofeminist approaches with a general criticism of the discipline. By reviewing ecofeminism, I uncover three elements of ecofeminist discourse about human-environment relationships: social arguments, biological arguments, and spiritual arguments.

Also in Chapter Two, I offer a definition of the geographic notion of place with which to examine ecofeminist arguments. After establishing the idea of place, I then evaluate the biological, social, and spiritual ecofeminist positions for broad geographic tendencies. This chapter begins to explore the robustness of ecofeminism as a potential form of geographic knowledge. Overall, Chapter Two establishes the broad parameters of ecofeminist thought and considers the geographic consequences of those parameters in order to move the thesis toward an analysis of my central case study.

Chapter Three moves the thesis forward from a general consideration of ecofeminism and geography to my analysis of a specific ecofeminist discourse. Relying on feminist post-structuralism, I detail the components of Shiva's discussion of development, highlighting her subjects and her ecofeminist arguments. I uncover the consequences of utilizing gender in human-environment formulations, and I discover the effects of Shiva's subject making strategy as a prelude to examining Chipko in Chapter Four. Shiva's discourse enunciates women, nature,

development, science, and India as central concepts. I seek to elucidate the geographic results of the constructed relationships between these conceptualizations.

Chapter Four focuses on Shiva's analysis of Chipko. Chipko appears in Shiva's writing as a quintessential site of ecofeminist approaches. Following a general, material presentation of its Indian context, I analyze Shiva's description of the ecology movement. Is her reading of Chipko a geographically sensitive one? I evaluate Shiva's stated goal to construct a universal theory, and I critique the method she employs to accomplish her task to answer the above question negatively. This chapter determines the outcomes of a case study that privileges gender as an analytical idea in order to evaluate the potential of ecofeminism to represent a critical geographic theory.

In conclusion, Chapter Five assesses the adequacy of ecofeminism as a form of knowledge about human-environment relationships within geography. I evaluate the results of my analysis undertaken in Chapters Three and Four and conclude that ecofeminism fails to be geographically sensitive to the particularity of place. In order to support my conclusion, I utilize both feminist post-structuralist and geographic critiques of ecofeminist theory. I contend that ecofeminism is theoretically inadequate, and I rely on geographic criticisms to outline why ecofeminism fails to account for place. I find that ecofeminism is not attentive to context and is not universally applicable. I argue that ecofeminists essentialize and lack sensitivity to difference. Although the extent to which ecofeminism privileges gender suggests geography's lack of attention to gender's relevance in human-environment analyses, ecofeminism fails to offer a robust theoretical perspective from which to engage "man-land" conceptualizations.

Chapter One
Feminism and Geography

The relationships between people, their societies, and the planet are central to geographic inquiry. If geography is about "earth and man relationships" as Shaw declares (1967:3), and geography is "organized knowledge of the earth as the world of man," as Broek and Webb claim (1978:7), then elaborating upon that knowledge is the foremost concern of geographers. Fellman, Getis, and Getis introduce perceptions of the natural world as the "recurring theme of all geographic study" (1992:448) in their textbook.

Historically, one geographic conceptualization of the relationship between people and the environment is the "man-land" tradition (Shaw, 1967; Zimolzak and Stansfield, 1979; Women & Geography Study Group, 1984). The idea of the "man-land" relationship also involves historical themes of man's struggles to conquer nature (Broek and Webb, 1987). Currently, examinations of pollution, development, resource use, and environmental deterioration reflect the "man-land" tradition (see Stella, Wilms, and Leahy, 1981; Fellman, Getis and Getis, 1992). Overall, the "man-land" theme may be considered one of four historical traditions in geography (Pattison, 1964).

While "the `nature' of geography is always negotiated" (Livingstone, 1992:28), geography's history reveals a repeated emphasis on examining societies' interactions with the physical processes of their environments. For instance, early American geographers, influenced by social Darwinism, argued about the environment's formative control over human cultures (Pattison, 1964; Grossman, 1977; Livingstone, 1992). While deterministic arguments are no longer acceptable, a central emphasis on "the interrelationships between earth and man" (Livingstone, 1992:268) recurred through the theory of possibilism, the landscape approach, and the modern subfield of cultural ecology. Further, Grossman's (1977) overview of

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geography speaks to the presence of a historical "man-land" tradition. Designating "man-environment relationships" a sphere of geographic inquiry, Grossman presents cultural ecology as an emerging form of environmental analysis that continues the examination of human adaptations to and uses of the environment.

Discussions of geography's evolution cannot escape "man-land" considerations. For example, Livingstone's (1992) treatment of Vidal's contributions to the discipline stresses the link between "man-land" analysis and regional specification. Thus, "man-land" explorations shaped other elements of geographic inquiry. Importantly, while Sauer decried attempts to define geography as a "terminal illness" with which the disciplines struggled (Livingstone, 1992), one historical attempt defined geography in ecological terms: the study of "mutual relationships" between people and their environments (Grossman, 1977). Overall, the "man-land" tradition persists as a fundamental geographic story.

Rather than employing the generic "man," modern examples of geographic analysis refer to human-environment or human-land relationships. This formal semantic change which began to occur in the 1980s begs the question as to whether or not an accompanying epistemological rethinking of human-environment relationships also occurred. In introductory geography textbooks, such as Fellman, Getis, and Getis (1992), the use of the phrase "human-environment" instead of "man-land" appears to reflect a political and cultural climate that disapproves of employing "man" as a generic term. Textbooks do not discuss the concept of "man," although that problematization is found in feminist work both inside and outside the geographical project.

I consider the feminist perspective important because feminists, and especially feminist geographers, evaluate the adequacy of conceptualizations of human-environment processes. This chapter foregrounds my analysis and examination of ecofeminism by delimiting the larger relationship between feminism and geography. Because I plan to utilize a feminist post-structuralist perspective

throughout my analysis, I first examine the feminist critique of geography.

Feminists criticize both the discipline and the conceptualization of geography for ignoring gender as an important element in geographic inquiry (Women and Geography Study Group, 1984 [hereafter WGSG]). The feminist concept of gender refers to the social distinctions made between women and men (Bowlby and McDowell, 1987). Feminists argue that gender shapes not only how geography examines environmental interactions, but it also affects geographic research agendas (Bowlby and McDowell, 1987; WGSG, 1992). Feminism demands specifically incorporating ideas about gender into geographic exercises, examining women's interactions with their environments, and determining their knowledge of those surroundings. Feminists make two central arguments: one, that women are historically excluded from geography; and two, reconceptualizing gender and geographic knowledge redresses that condition and revolutionizes geography.

Feminist geographers counter the "man-land" tradition as indicative of all people by revealing the scarcity of data on women's lives (Monk and Hanson, 1984; McDowell, 1987, 1989; Bondi, 1992). Although geographers now claim to analyze "human-land" interactions, the degree to which gender informs the project and the amount of emphasis placed on the effects of gender in society remains a question (Christopherson, 1989; Bondi, 1992; McDowell, 1993). In addressing the (hu)man-land tradition of geography, post-structural feminists question who counts as "human."

The introduction of post-structuralist forms of reasoning into the discipline of geography revolutionizes how geographic issues are conceptualized, how geographic knowledge is produced, and how it is perceived. First, post-structuralism questions our conceptions of "human" and asserts that such concepts are not necessarily meaningful in an analytical sense. Post-structuralism highlights the prevalent androcentric understanding of the notion. By ignoring gender, "human" is often assumed to signal only "man." The concept cannot inarguably refer

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to the entire "human" realm, making the notion bereft of any one incontestable meaning. Thus, post-structuralist feminism challenges the subject of modern geographic discourses on human-environment interactions. The production of geographic knowledge remains open to critique.

Second, post-structuralism problematizes nature as an analytical concept. Geographic analysis seeks to explicate nature, especially the impacts of cultural and economic systems on it (Fitzsimmons, 1989; see also Fellman, Getis, and Getis, 1992). Therefore, post-structuralism can challenge the idea of "nature" in order to analyze geography's epistemology and method. Post-structuralism questions what "nature" means in geographic discourses and how the concept revolves around ideas of "man" and "humanity." If the history of geography rests in the struggles of "man over nature" (Broek and Webb, 1978), then post-structuralism enters geographic inquiry by decoupling these two notions and problematizing their relationship.

Third, post-structuralism challenges ideas about "gender." If gender is a human characteristic, what meanings are present in the notion? Post-structuralist feminists question how other feminists rely upon gender as a meaningful notion. If the idea of "human" undergirds geographic epistemology and examinations of environmental relationships, and "gender" forms the cornerstone of feminist inquiry, then post-structuralist feminism challenges reliance upon either concept. The dialogue between feminism and post-structuralism is important to the future of geographic knowledge, and I examine it in detail.

1.1 The Dialogue Between Feminism, Geography, and Post-Structuralism

The discussions between feminist theorists and geographers have proliferated since the beginning of the 1980s (see Monk and Hanson, 1982 as an early discussion). Liz Bondi remarks on the "ease with which women's contributions to knowledge can be erased" (1992:98) and argues that geography remains both a

sexist institution and practice despite the progress of the last decade. Cited frequently are statistics portraying the relatively small number of female professors and the barriers to their career advancement within academia (WGSG, 1984, 1992). Susan Christopherson claims that feminism and women remain "outside `the project'" and characterizes feminism's engagement with geography as "a political struggle over *whose* theories will have validity and significance" (1989:84, emphasis original). The relationship between feminism and geography is contested, debated, and emerging. While feminist geographers appear in the journals, they do so lamenting the discipline's inattention (Christopherson, 1989; Bondi, 1990; WGSG, 1992; McDowell, 1992).

Linda McDowell in her contribution to the Women and Geography Study Group (1992) asserts that all feminist perspectives are still largely ignored by geography. Gillian Rose's contribution points to liberal feminism as part of the problem. Rather than challenging geography on theoretical and epistemological grounds, liberal feminist geographers attempt simply to add women, gender, and patriarchy to geography's realm (Rose, 1992:231). McDowell (1991, 1992, 1993) and others address the challenge Rose desires. In engaging the theory and epistemology driving geography, feminism enters a discourse with post-structuralist and deconstructive techniques.

Although Michael Dear (1988) calls for a complete acceptance of post-structuralist methodology as the future of geography, feminist geographers both accept and reject this proposal. Bondi (1990) recognizes post-structuralism as insisting on the plurality and instability of meanings, but other feminists do not want gender to be destabilized and question the purpose of post-structuralism. The removal of gender from analytical purviews threatens other forms of feminism (WGSG, 1992). Without gender, feminist geography outside post-structuralism cannot proceed. I find important fault lines between feminists and post-structuralists within geography that create significant tensions. I review these points

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of contention because they shape the formation of feminist post-structuralism. Three central themes in the dialogue between feminism and post-structuralism emerge: (1) the origins of deconstruction; (2) the political practice of feminism; and (3) whether or not post-structuralism remains a biased approach itself.

1.1.1 *Feminists, Post-Structuralists, and Deconstruction*

Feminist geographers elucidate the failure of other post-structuralists to acknowledge their debt to feminism (WGSG, 1992:220, 224, 234; Bondi, 1990:156; Christopherson, 1989:86). The critique of categories such as "man," "woman," "culture," and "nature" were begun by feminist practitioners (McDowell, 1993a:161). As McDowell conceptualizes deconstruction, it is a process that "consists of exposing the inadequacies of the central hierarchical and oppositional categories that form the core of Western intellectual thought" (1991:124). And, she emphatically claims "feminism was there first" (WGSG, 1992:224). The analysis of social categories with the perception that meaning is a created artifact is undertaken by both perspectives. Feminists, however, point to their works as unacknowledged predecessors of post-structuralist deconstruction. In recognizing parallels between feminism and post-structuralism, for example tendencies to attack all claims to universality, a powerful correlation between the two appears to exist; although feminists claim "parental" status in leading the way toward dismantling privileged discourses and truths (Bondi, 1990).

1.1.2 *Post-Structuralism and the Political Practice of Feminism*

Feminist theorists charge that post-structuralism without feminism is not political (Bondi, 1990:163; McDowell, 1991:131; WGSG, 1992:220, 225). Although politics is not always explicitly defined in their arguments, most feminists present a critical theory in which the concept of politics refers to struggles for change and the alleviation of oppressive structures that have material consequences

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for women's lives (for example, see Eckersley, 1992). Critical theorists contend that the manipulation of socio-economics, race, class, gender, and space has profound consequences for human existence (Eckersley, 1992). Feminists argue that post-structuralism does not contain a "notion of power relations" (Bondi, 1990:164), nor can it be used to approach the problem of oppression. McDowell summarizes: "feminists emphasize not the arbitrary nature of the `real' and the impossibility of judging between alternatives, but the significance of...struggling" (1991:131).

The "political" concept is important to the survival of gender as a central analytical category. Post-structural feminists perceive gender as a category constructed in multiple ways and ranging across a spectrum of difference. Bondi (1990) charges that post-structuralism alone is too busy deconstructing the symbolic trappings of gender to account for flesh and blood people. As the unifying field of feminist analysis, gender remains a coherent notion among diverse positions.

However, post-structuralist feminists debate the saliency of gender (McDowell, 1993b). The danger associated with deconstructing gender as a category of meaning is the risk of losing the analytical cornerstone. Harding (1986), Di Stefano (1990), and Haraway (1991) attempt to resolve this tension from within feminism by advancing the notion of "partial and fractured identities." Rather than discarding gender as a fictive notion or subsuming all differences between women into it, gender is relative to situational factors. Gender is relevant but not totalizing.

The feminist suspicion over the post-structuralist intent to deconstruct categories and question ways of knowing has other ramifications. While seeking to retain concepts about gender as a theoretical marker and a political focus, feminist geographers question possible sexism in post-structural arguments. This section addresses the central issue of whether post-structuralism alone leaves a place for women.

1.1.3 *Feminist Perceptions of Sexism in Post-Structuralism*

Feminists do not view post-structuralism as a gender-neutral project. Post-structuralist techniques do not necessarily remove analysts from the theories and epistemology which feminists seek to undo. As feminist geographers evaluate gender's importance in spatial relationships, they contest the invisibility of gender in geography and the practice of knowledge that denies women geographic agency. Regarding future inquiry, feminists ask whether post-structuralism sustains the contest or obscures feminist positions.

Post-structuralism itself may be blind to questions of gender (Di Stefano, 1990:76). By seeking to remove the subject of feminism along with other "master" subjects, post-structuralism jeopardizes the survival of feminism. Post-structuralist approaches without feminism appear to be "flexible sexism" (Bondi, 1992). McDowell and Koffman (WGSG, 1992) also raise charges of bias. The act of deconstructing gender or the concept "woman" is not necessarily innocent.

Further, the loss of the subject is problematic and part of a suspiciously masculinist project (WGSG, 1992:229; Di Stefano, 1990). Post-structuralism without feminism begins to look like a subversive strategy that denies any legitimate attempt at subjectivity at all. Since the humanist claim to "truth" is made invalid, any group's claims to societal knowledge are difficult to legitimize. In this maneuver, ideas about gender may be pushed ever farther into the margins of discourse, theory, and epistemology. Because gender concerns have never occupied the center, strategies that explode the feminist subject appear to be dangerously misogynist extensions of post-structuralism's antecedents. Post-structuralism alone defeats feminism by dissolving its analytical and political categories.

While I note the above issues as problems, the fate of feminism in geography appears inextricable from that of post-structuralist approaches. If feminist geographers are to be successful in re-orienting knowledge, they must

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continue to be aware of post-structuralist deconstructive practices and critical efforts outside ostensibly feminist discourses. While I agree that the ready visibility and acceptance of deconstruction in its post-structuralist form in the face of the feminist effort is suspiciously sexist, I rely upon feminist post-structuralism to provide the backbone of my analytical technique.

1.2 Feminist Post-Structuralism

"How to theorize difference while holding on to some notion both of gender as a central analytical category in feminist scholarship and as a focus of political organization is now a central issue in feminist work" (McDowell, 1993b:309).

McDowell (1993) elaborates the shared goal of feminism and post-structuralism while pointing to the special concerns of feminist geographers. Haraway (1991) explodes the feminist project's reliance on categories such as "gender" and "nature" and dualistic meanings. According to McDowell (1993b) and Di Stefano (1990), fundamental analytical categories of social theories are questioned by both feminists and post-structuralists. Writing as a post-structural feminist geographer, McDowell states that "one consequence is a skepticism about all universal or universalizing claims about existence, nature, the powers of reason, progress, science, language, the mind/body separation, and the rational subject/self" (1993b:310). The various forms of feminism and feminist geography respond to a post-structuralist project that seeks to evaluate and question what are otherwise considered transparent and obvious analytical categories.

I attempt to suspend the notion that objective, recognizable meaning is embedded in such categories as "nature" and "gender," for example. Distinctions between ideas such as those previously mentioned are critiqued. I reject the understanding of each category as imminently meaningful and "commonsensical."

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Rather, I approach concepts such as "woman," "culture," and "nature" as acquiring meaning from their relationships to each other. Following feminist post-structural arguments, I do not consider analytical categories to be inherently meaningful. The concepts used to demarcate the analytical terrain of ecofeminism are themselves the foci of critique.

1.2.1 *The Development of Post-Structuralism*

The history of post-structuralism begins with its foundation in post-Saussurean linguistics. Works by Belsey (1980), Norris (1991), Silverman (1983), and Hawkes (1977) narrate the theory's development. The Swiss linguist Saussure is responsible for the development of semiotics: the study of language as a system of signs. Saussure problematized language itself, arguing that language is not absolute and words do not hold transparent, lucid meaning. Language and its products do not refer to an obviously real world. Meaning is created as a relational system of differences between words and the objects/ideas to which they refer. As Belsey summarizes Saussure's project: "language is not a nomenclature...but a system of differences with no positive terms" (1980:38). Saussure codes linguistic terms *signs* and finds meaning in the interplay between them. A sign consists of the phonetics and written form of the word (the signifier) and the concept that the word represents (the signified). Importantly, the connection between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, and the meaning of a word that is experienced as commonsensical is actually created by language itself.

Language is both arbitrary and structures meaning. Ultimately, meaning is interpretive. Without agreed upon relationships between signifiers and signifieds, language and communication would be impossible. The fact that "the world is divided up by language into entities which then readily come to be experienced as essentially distinct" (Belsey, 1980:39) is a reflection of the social creation of meaning. Thus, meaning has no anchor but rests in the relationships between signs

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that are distinguishable from other terms of the language system. According to Saussure's argument, meaning is plural. For any participant in a discourse, a range of interpretations of a text remains possible. While the number of possible interpretations is restricted within the arrangement of the signs, Saussure's point is a reminder that no single "guarantee of meaning in the world" exists (Belsey, 1980:54).

Structuralism as a methodology seeks to elucidate the relations that construct meaning. Resting on the concept of systems of relations between referents, the structuralist approach seeks to determine how human systems construct and understand the "real." Structures are held to designate the world in which societies exist. Levi-Strauss (1966) provides a key example of applying a Saussurean model of linguistics on culture. Determining that social behaviors and categories of belief are structures, Levi-Strauss applied structuralism to cultural studies. With this advancement, structuralism became a theory about human relations and the ways in which human societies produce and understand knowledge about their world. Like language, culture could by "read" as a text -- a system of signs.

As Hawkes describes structuralism, it "is fundamentally a way of thinking about the world" that "does not consist of independently existing objects" but is "made up of relations rather than things" (1977:17). Structures refer to the institutions of human societies such as language, gender roles, marriage patterns, kinship systems, and methods of economic production. Importantly, while structuralism denies the existence of an essential nature and claims that "particular forms of humanity are determined by particular social relations...and human institutions" (1977:28), the ability of humans to generate structures (and thus society) is a "universal capacity."

Thus, while structuralism challenges the humanist concept "man" as a single, knowing entity distinct and separable from an objective world, the concept of the subject created through social relations and the idea of a universal humanity

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remains. "Mankind" is discernible by the capacity to structure. Predicated on Saussure's claim that language is not inherently meaningful but creates meaning through relationships, structuralism understands the human condition as a product of diverse social relationships. Language itself "constitutes the characteristic human structure" (1977:28). So, while seeking to displace the grand subject "man" of the humanist tradition, structuralism still provides markers for recognizing and analyzing the "human."

Post-structuralism "insists on the instability of meanings" (Bondi, 1990:157). Or, as Silverman describes the theory: "this model of reading is predicated upon the endless commutability of the signified, upon the assumption that the play of meanings has no necessary closure, no transcendental justification" (1983:41). Following Levi-Strauss' revolutionary application of a textual model of analysis on human systems, post-structuralism acknowledges that societies, like texts, are discourses. Moreover, all human products can be analyzed as a form of discourse and a consequence of language in an expanded sense. The post-structuralist project of deconstruction aims to problematize and critique the categories and distinctions created by language. For instance, while structuralism recognizes that "culture" and "nature" are categories of thought that are given meaning by their relationship, post-structuralism questions the ideas themselves as categories that can hold meaning.

Deconstruction, as the application of post-structuralist theory, critically examines the maintenance of the categories and relations expounded by structuralism. According to Norris' summary of Derrida's presentation of deconstruction, the goal is "not rejecting the entire Saussurean project...rather it is a matter of driving that project to its ultimate conclusions and seeing where those conclusions work to challenge the project's conventional premisses" (1982:30). While structuralism does not accept the notion of one transcendent humanity outside social institutions, it does assume that the category of humanity could be

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found in the analysis of social relations. Conversely, deconstruction seeks to reveal the problematics of a conceptual infrastructure incorporating "men/women," "nature/culture" dualisms or the idea of "humanity." Deconstruction intervenes into expected meanings and categories of knowledge.

In this thesis, I apply a deconstructive reading to Vandana Shiva's ecofeminist discourse. One important goal is to challenge the validity of ecofeminist claims using post-structuralist feminist techniques. A second goal is to elucidate the geographical components of ecofeminist discourse. My task is conceptually important because ecofeminist constructs and typologies represent forms of geographic reasoning. To evaluate the adequacy of that geographic reasoning, I employ a deconstructive reading of Vandana Shiva's discourse as a case study of ecofeminism.

The tensions between other feminisms and post-structuralist approaches are still pertinent. Although the issues involved are far from resolution, I do find both approaches to be useful in tandem. Focusing on ecofeminist discourse, post-structural feminism provides a critical framework that respects gender and political projects. A deconstructive technique allows me to approach categories like "gender" and "nature" with a skeptical eye.

Chapter Two
Ecofeminism and Geography

A central theme in ecofeminism links women to their environments conceptualized as "nature." Thus, ecofeminism approaches a central analytical agenda of geography. Ecofeminists, like geographers, conceptualize and describe relationships between people and the earth. This chapter provides an overview of that similarity and establishes the appropriateness of examining ecofeminism geographically.

Both geography and ecofeminism address an interactive relationship between societies and their environments. As a specific discourse under the feminist umbrella, ecofeminism enters the discussion between feminism and geography by providing descriptions of human-land interactions. Ecofeminism's central arguments represent a geographic conceptualization of women and nature.

First, I present ecofeminism in order to establish the parameters of the discourse. By tracing the development of the theory, I uncover three different ecofeminist arguments. I review and evaluate social, biological, and spiritual perspectives about women's presumed connection to nature. I discuss the relationships between these positions and critique each argument's analytical strength.

Second, I utilize Gillian Roses' (1993) analysis of feminism and geography to highlight how ecofeminism may represent an alternative to traditional geographic inquiry. By presenting geography and feminism as alternative epistemologies, Rose creates space for ecofeminism to represent a different reading of human-environment processes. Because ecofeminism produces knowledge by relying upon gender as an analytical tool, ecofeminist methods may represent what Rose (1993) terms a "strategy of resistance" to prevalent methods of geographic inquiry. In order to deconstruct Vandana Shiva's specific contributions to ecofeminist theory in

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Chapter Three and uncover the geographical ramifications of her case study in Chapter Four, ecofeminism must be elucidated as a potential alternative to traditional presentations of the "man-land" theme.

Third, I evaluate the geographical logic and patterns of biological, spiritual, and social ecofeminist perspectives. Because ecofeminists do not offer arguments specifically about the contexts in which human-environment interactions occur, I provide a concept of place with which to critique the theory. As a key theme in geography, the idea of place represents a challenge to ecofeminist typologies. I determine whether or not ecofeminism incorporates geographic reasoning by "testing" the arguments. This analysis provides the cornerstone of my project.

2.1 What is Ecofeminism?

Ecofeminist theorists claim to be primarily engaged in the joint liberation of women and nature and center their ongoing arguments around: (1) the proper means of achieving women's emancipation, (2) the correct method for identifying humanity, especially women, with, within or against nature, and (3) the origin of women's "special" position vis-a-vis nature and whether or not that relationship should be the primary focus of a liberatory effort.

Several books and articles have been published that designate the development of ecofeminism over the past decade. The five most prominent publications are as follows: (1) *Reclaim the Earth: Women Speak Out for Life on Earth* (Caldecott and Leland, 1983); (2) *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism* (Plant, 1989); (3) *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (Diamond and Orenstein, 1990); (4) *Ecofeminism* (Gaard, 1993); and (5) *Ecofeminism* (Mies & Shiva, 1993). Ecofeminism's core assumptions associate the treatment of women with the treatment of nature. Arguing that women and nature are historically characterized as similar and related, ecofeminists analyze the

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treatment of women and the uses of the environment as twin phenomena. Ecofeminists desire a politically emancipatory theory aimed at both women and nature which would portray gender discrimination and ecological degradation as consequences of a central process.

The term "ecofeminism" was coined in the mid-1970's. Its roots as a theoretical concept of the relationship between women and nature are apparent earlier in Rachel Carson's watershed *Silent Spring* (1962, 1987, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, 25th ed). Carson's publication uncovered a connection between the use of environmental chemicals and contamination of breast milk (Diamond and Orenstein, 1990:ix; King, 1983:9; Norwood, 1993:xiv). Carson's research into the widespread use of pesticides and herbicides provided an important examination of adverse environmental consequences because she elucidated the connection between human poisoning and the biological magnification of chemicals. *Silent Spring* provided scientific evidence of the relationship between human and environmental health. Predating the emergence of ecofeminism as a discourse on women and the environment, Carson's book remains a clear indication that women are affected directly by pollutants and in different ways than men. Moreover, Carson drew attention to women's reproductive physiology as a pathway for bodily contamination in infants before and after birth. Without asserting any overt political position, Carson quietly and eloquently underscored women's unique interests in their ecological status.

The environmental tragedies of the 1970s served as catalysts in bringing feminists and environmental activists together. The 1980 gathering organized by Ynestra King entitled "Women and Life on Earth: A Conference on Eco-feminism in the Eighties" furthered the development of the theory (Caldecott and Leland, 1983:6). The conference responded to the then recent disaster at Three Mile Island. King's efforts directed ecofeminism's future as a viable discourse about women and nature.

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Reclaim the Earth, an indication of the state of ecofeminism in the early 1980s, contains a large number of essays examining women's biological and spiritual connections to the natural environment. *Healing the Wounds*, appearing at the end of the decade, continued to examine these themes but also contains analyses of women's social roles as important variables. By 1990 with the appearance of *Reweaving the World*, the social, biological, and spiritual positions are demarcated and represent three recognizable elements of the discourse. Robin Eckersley, writing as a political scientist interested in ecological criticisms of current political theories, describes ecofeminism as the "historical/symbolic association of women with nature as demonstrating a special convergence of interests between feminism and ecology" (1992:64). For ecofeminist theorists, the construction of theory emerges from that "convergence of interests." They place women in a special position, arguing that both the oppression of women and the destruction of nature are twin expressions of patriarchal social relations. King presents this central tenet: "An analysis of the interrelated dominations of nature -- psyche and sexuality, human oppression, and nonhuman nature -- and the historic position of women in relation to these forms of domination is the starting point of ecofeminist theory" (1990:117).

In general, three responses to the ideological connection between women and nature guide the literature. The biological and spiritual strains of ecofeminism reinforce the association, and the social ecofeminists attempt to use the relationship as a critical tool for social transformation (King, 1989; Merchant, 1992; Warren, 1987). The relationship is perceived in one of three ways: (1) women are inherently, biologically connected to the natural environment; (2) women's social roles determine the relationship, and the association is a cultural artifact; (3) women are spiritually reverent toward the natural world, and the association is one of a spiritual-religious character. These perspectives require more detailed analysis in order to identify elements of ecofeminist theory and approaches to human-

environment interactions.

2.1.1 *The Biological Argument*

The biological interpretation of the woman-to-nature relationship rests on the premise that women connect with nature via body morphology. Hazel Henderson argues that human struggles for liberation are part of survival instincts "encoded in the proteins of our DNA" and are "deeper programmes than our cultural programming" (1983:205). The body itself represents a lived continuity with the natural world, and women's reproductive biological functions maintain their connection despite men's apparent ability to "transcend" nature into a position of authority and control (Henderson, 1983:207; Starhawk, 1988:1-16).

The association of women and nature is defined in biological terminology. The argument relies on the existence of "biology" as a pre-existing condition before either "women" or "nature" are determinable. In this perspective, gender arises from physical attributes. Women and nature are gendered together through parallel physical processes. "Women" are the humans culturally and biologically identified with natural cycles of birth and death through their reproductive processes.

According to Stephanie Leland (1983), biology is a basic factor in establishing the common ground between feminism and ecology. She places a biological account of human development at the foundation of her argument. Citing the stages of fetal development and the evolution of sexual differentiation as her evidence, she makes the extraordinary claim that "scientists know that the natural tendency of life on Earth is to be female" (1983:67). Against this backdrop, men must somehow be "counter-natural," and thus their behavior as oppressors and despoilers derives from their separation from nature. According to Leland, patriarchy evolved (1983:68).

Leland's argument attempts to transform the biological understanding that ontogeny follows phylogeny into ontology follows phylogeny. She asserts that

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human social structures and behaviors reflect her naive interpretation of the fossil record. If the physical development of an organism mimics the evolution of the species, how and why is the nature of its social existence predicated on the same biophysical path? Leland and Henderson conflate the morphology of sexual differentiation with gender and assume "woman" to be a homogenous entity.

Henderson and Leland both collapse cultural, ethnic, geographic, and other differences between humans into one determinative biology. This position credits biological characteristics with the shapes of social institutions. By failing to appreciate the possibility of real social differentiation, the biological position fails to distinguish gender as a social definition and sex as a biological trait.

Analysts employing the perspective of radical ecofeminism still insist upon biological arguments. Although gender is the contested cultural artifact, the biological reality remains prior to gender (Merchant, 1992:chart 8.1). While Spretnak warns: "What cannot be said, though, is that women are drawn to ecology because we are female" (1990:4); she not only credits radical ecofeminism with being the heart of ecofeminism (1990:5) but also continues to make body-oriented arguments herself. The body becomes an ecofeminist tool, privileging the internal emotional state (a biophysical mechanism) both as a source of information and as an end in itself. Julia Scofield Russell furthers this association by arguing for an understanding of humanity and the planet as one body together (1990:277).

While the biological argument has not evolved since the early 1980s, non-biologically based theorists appropriate parts of the biological perspective. Ariel Kay Salleh describes women's relationship with the environment as a social product, and yet presents women's reproductive activities as "these things [that] already ground women's consciousness in the knowledge of being coterminous with nature" (1984:340). By stating the above condition as a "fact of life," Salleh attempts to support a social argument with biological notions. Women already "know" nature through physical mechanisms. Likewise, theorists writing in the spiritual school have

been busily appropriating the biological argument as evidence for their own perspective.

2.1.2 *The Social Argument*

Theorists using the titles of "social" and "socialist" ecofeminism associate women with nature in an attempt to forge a critical perspective from which patriarchy and environmental degradation can be undone. The relationship does not involve identifying women as nature, but instead stresses an historically grounded association and the development of gender roles. The acknowledgement of gender as a cultural assignment is critical to this position: women are associated with nature because the gender roles they fill are imbued with traits held to be characteristic of nature. Women and nature are gendered together.

The phrase "social ecofeminism" borrows from Murray Bookchin's social ecology school of environmentalism. The end to human abuse of the environment requires the reconstruction of human societies without oppressive, dominating structures. "Socialist ecofeminism" stems from Marxist feminism but privileges human reproductive relationships over the relations of production (Merchant, 1992:194). This argument analyzes a dialectic between production and reproduction. Because both processes require inputs from the environment, production and reproduction compete for resources in a capitalist economy (Merchant, 1992). "Socialist ecofeminists" argue that the needs of human reproductive processes should be met first to ameliorate the impacts of environmental depletion and lower production demands.

Ynestra King and Ariel Salleh are theorists that advance the "social ecofeminism" argument (Merchant, 1992:195). King's understanding of ecofeminism centers upon a recognition of the dualism at issue: men and culture versus women and nature. Rather than collapsing into the "Western" female position, however, and thus reinforcing the equation, King argues that ecofeminism

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makes visible the way in which the dualism dominates women and nature in a patriarchal society. Social ecofeminists use the dualism "as a vantage point for creating a different kind of culture" (King, 1989:23). Arguing that ecofeminism provides a challenge to the familiar dualism which sets culture against nature, the theory (1) supports the ecological need for biological diversity alongside the feminist support for diverse cultural expressions; (2) reflects the structures of ecosystems that organize all living organisms in web-like structures and thus critiques the social rationale behind hierarchical forms of human organization; and (3) specifically codes industrial society as being oriented against the lives of women and the limits of nature (King, 1989:19-20). King claims that an ecofeminist praxis develops out of the above conditions and brings ecological principles into political action by strengthening the analytical capabilities of ecological perspectives and helping feminism to more explicitly deconstruct hierarchal structures (1989:24-25).

Although Salleh touches upon biological notions, she argues that the separate roles assigned men and women must remain in the forefront of attempts to reorder society. Salleh's ecofeminist exercise involves "exposing the deeply entrenched epistemological complexes which shape not only current attitudes to the natural world but attitudes to social and sexual relations as well" (1984:344). Salleh's project is a clear example of how ecofeminism can engage geography's human-environment tradition. Focusing on "epistemological complexes," her perspective enables ecofeminism to serve as a strategy of resistance to hegemonic geographic discourses. Social ecofeminists suggest another manner of analyzing the relationship between people, gender, and the environment.

Karen J. Warren, in her development of ecofeminist ethics, presents the "social ecofeminist" argument as one in which the formulation that "women are identified with nature...men are identified with the 'human' has specific historical underpinnings and is not intended to support essentialist notions about men, women, or nature" (1990:130-1). Ecofeminism opposes and undoes the historical

function of patriarchy "to sustain and justify the twin dominations of women and nature" (1990:131) on socially determined ground. Thus, the history of the connection between women and nature becomes a necessary component to an ecofeminist construction of theory and analysis. Like Salleh, Warren's work has ramifications for geography as a patriarchal discourse.

Merchant presents the "socialist ecofeminist" argument as the most promising for providing analysis of the social processes that are responsible for the devaluing of women and nature (1992:195-200). By developing a model that describes the current survival issues facing the planet as products of contradictions between the capitalist mode of production and the realities of human reproduction, Merchant advances socialist ecofeminism as an agenda that reverses patriarchal structures. The means of production become secondary to the needs of reproduction. Retaining the Marxist notion that "nature is the material basis of all life" and is "transformed through human praxis," socialist ecofeminism becomes the vehicle for providing the necessary social analysis needed to establish a new, sustainable praxis (1992:196).

2.1.3 The Spiritual Argument

A third school of analysis, falling under the label of radical or cultural ecofeminism (Spretnak, 1990; Merchant, 1992) presents the human-nature relationship via a spiritual analysis. This position draws upon the biological argument by assuming that humans have a bodily, sensual connection to the natural world. Presumably, women are more likely to act upon that connection than men (Starhawk, 1988, 1990; Allen, 1990; Keller, 1990; Spretnak, 1989, 1990).

Assessing "spirit" as a product of the "body" privileges women's bodies as a source of knowledge and spirituality. Biological, sexual traits are once again conflated with the social distinctions of gender. Spiritual ecofeminists refute the dualistic position of rational/spiritual man versus chaotic/physical woman. However,

a subtler dualism evolves that reinforces the association of women with physicality. This position asserts women's concomitant physicality and spirituality against men's lack of both. Women's perceived connection to nature remains entrenched and unanalyzed. Men, as a sex, are ignored except as the constructors of the "patriarchy" and the cause of women's oppression and nature's destruction (Spretnak, 1989:131). For instance, Starhawk develops spiritual ecofeminism through a revival of matrifocal, European paganism (1990:74). She establishes an "earth-based spirituality" and creates an understanding "that the Earth itself embodies spirit and that the cosmos is alive" (1990:73).

From a social perspective, the spiritualist position supports merely "populist ecological activism" and not true ecofeminism (Merchant, 1992:192) that assumes humans are repositories of an essential ability to "transcend culture and socialization" via spirituality (Merchant, 1992:193, citing Susan Prentice). By not recognizing social factors, this brand of ecofeminism fails to offer a political agenda for actualizing change. Moreover, the "origin stories" of women's spiritual link with the earth rely on western European myths (See Starhawk, 1988). This body of literature constructs women's spirituality from the regional traditions of Western Europe and cannot support universal claims about "women" and "spirituality."

One crucial weakness underlies most ecofeminist discourse. Little distinction can be found between the notions of sex and gender in ecofeminist arguments. The biological position depends upon a conflation of the two; the spiritual perspective fails to distinguish one from the other. And, while the social perspective seeks to address gender roles, the idea of a gender labelled "woman" apparently rests on shared sexual morphology.

While the ecofeminist use of the concept is not very sophisticated, some notion of gender remains in the arguments. The historical, socially determined characteristics which gender both women and nature are the cornerstones of most ecofeminist work (see Merchant, 1980). Whether or not ecofeminists ultimately

essentialize and erase all distinctions between sex and gender, the idea that gender shapes relationships with the environment remains useful and may enter into geography's practice.

2.2 Gillian Rose's Reading of Ecofeminism and Geography

Gillian Rose's *Feminism and Geography* (1993) is the latest feminist critique of the both the academic structure of the discipline and the epistemology guiding geography. Rose approaches geographic discourse as a masculinist project that ignores gender; and she draws upon post-structural feminist arguments to highlight the "masculinism" of the project. Fundamentally, geography denies women status as producers of knowledge (1993:1-4).

Since how and what women know are central to ecofeminism, any denial of that knowledge directly counters ecofeminism's tenets. Geographic discourse, as examined by Rose, genders itself by excluding women. I argue that ecofeminism genders itself by insisting on women's presence and epistemological capability. In other words, ecofeminism asserts women and their knowledge of the environment. If ecofeminism is to increase it utility as a body of critical theory, it must insist upon geographic agency. In order to accomplish this, Rose's (1993) deconstructive reading of geography suggests way in which ecofeminism can enter a discussion with geography.

Examining how geography constructs its field of knowledge, Rose states that the discipline displays a "fundamental resistance to women as subjects and authors of geographical knowledge" (1993:6). Borrowing from Donna Haraway, Rose finds the white, heterosexual male in the position of "master subject" (1993:6) in geographic texts. In other words, geographic knowledge revolves around a single mode of interpreting and representing the world that belongs to a particular historical subject. Ecofeminism can engage the discipline by questioning the

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omnipresence of the "master subject."

Geography is a hegemonic discourse: "Social-scientific masculinity asserts its authority by claiming access to a transparently real geographical world" (1993:10). Because the field is rooted in the science and humanism of the Enlightenment tradition, various forms of feminism represent "strategies of resistance" (1993:11) to geography's epistemological processes. In particular, Rose examines what she terms radical feminism, a form of feminism that links women with nature, as a form of resistance. Although Rose critiques authors who utilize biological arguments, she argues that these feminists "succeed in imagining a space" for women's knowledge. However, she discards this approach for its ultimate "essentialism and universalism" (1993:79, 81). Following Rose's analysis, I propose that ecofeminism may offer a strategy of resistance to geographical knowledge because it asserts that women are subjects and producers of knowledge about the world.

Importantly for ecofeminists, geography does not explore what kinds of relationships exist between women and nature (if any at all) but continues to utilize "the gendered Nature/Culture dualism" as a "central meta-narrative" (1993:68). While ecofeminists also construct a "central metanarrative" around women and nature, according to Rose geography merely perpetuates "the discursive opposition between masculine Culture and feminine Nature" that began with the Scientific Revolution. The discipline of geography often fails to problematize the ideas that define the women and nature relationship. To the extent that ecofeminism criticizes the association between women and nature, the theory offers a fresh approach to human-environment studies. Critically addressing the central relationship, however, is part of a general constraint on feminist language discussed by Rose.

Rose recognizes that by addressing the masculine hegemony, (eco)feminist discourses are "caught in already existing masculinist discourses of meaning and subjectivity" (1993:11). Critical resistance to geography relies, in part, on the

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creative use of the dominant language of geography. Ecofeminist arguments center on the same meta-narrative Rose ascribes to geography, that of examining the relationships between societies and the earth. Thus, like other brands of feminism, ecofeminist texts are caught between "two basic strategies of critique."

On the one hand, the social concept of gender needs to be analyzed and the homogenous, monolithic idea of "woman" dismantled. On the other, a solid political grounding needs to be established from which to address women's issues. Gender needs to be critiqued as historically determined, while women as social agents need to strengthen common emancipatory relationships. However, Rose's work remains useful as a reminder that feminist discourses critiquing any hegemon face the same dilemma.

In conclusion, ecofeminism's reliance on notions of gender as analytically important critiques geography's central assumptions about the human-land relationship. Geography makes possible a contextual analysis of the consequences of gender/ecological oppression. Ecofeminism, as a particular subset of feminist arguments, may potentiall critique geography's theorizing about the relationship between gender and environment.

2.3 Ecofeminism as an Adequate Form of Geographic Knowledge? The Question of Place

If ecofeminist arguments about "women" and "nature" are to be plausible, then a mechanism should be present within ecofeminism to account for varying locales and contexts in which such arguments are made. Linda Vance claims that the texture of ecofeminism varies with the "particular intersection of race, class, [and] geography" (1993:136), but no ecofeminist analysis focuses specifically on the variable function of context in the women-and-nature equation. Vance (1993) does not elucidate how geography significantly affects ecofeminism although she

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discusses race and class as important variables.

I argue that "place" represents the intersection of social, historical forces that shape human-environment relationships and that ecofeminist arguments must include "place" in order to challenge geography. The conditions and processes that form particular events at a particular site may not be problematized by ecofeminists. According to John Agnew, the geographic idea of place emphasizes the "contexuality of action" and indicates "settings in which social relations are constituted" (1987:28). Thus, place indicates geographic context -- the physical, cultural, and historical milieu surrounding events and processes.

I propose that utilizing the geographic concept of place may substantially enrich ecofeminist arguments by focusing on particular venues and conditions. Thus, I analyze spiritual, biological, and social arguments for broad geographic tendencies. Without acknowledging particular contexts and processes, the three perspectives employ language that "places" women in certain theoretical positions.

2.3.1 *Spiritual Arguments and Place*

The spiritual strain of ecofeminism utilizes planetary language such as Starhawk's use of the phrase "earth-based spirituality" (1988, 1992). The spiritual perspective raises the level of the presumed connection of women and nature to the planet at large, denotes the earth "Gaia," and subsumes specific locality in whole earth imagery. While proponents address structures that are global in scope such as the world economy and planetary ecology, analysts do not present how "earth-based spirituality" as a concept corrects globally or locally oppressive systems in a sustainable fashion. Women's spirituality and "connectedness" to nature is writ large. The planet is one giant "Gaian" terrain. Accordingly, women's celebration of spirituality and relationships with nature counters oppression regardless of place.

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2.3.2 *Biological Arguments and Place*

Because the biologically based ecofeminist arguments are primarily about identification (eg., *women are identified by their place in nature*), this discourse never articulates a concern for any geographic context. As found in Henderson's claims, the biological discourse speaks about women's "embeddedness" in nature (1983:207) rather than analyzing local or regional manifestations of that "embeddedness". The female body acts as a site for natural reproduction and simultaneously is an extension of it.

The consequence of the biological argument is an indiscriminating expectation that women are located inside "nature" without regard to other factors. Like the spiritual arguments, the biological position also raises the relationship of women and nature to a planetary level that is totalizing in its effects. Women and the planet are described as one body together (Russell, 1990). Women embody the earth itself. The ideas of "women" and "nature" have no specific spatial, social, and historical dimensions. The categories themselves behave as placebos for geography. In other words, "women" designate the presence of "nature" and vice-versa. Women and nature "place" each other.

2.3.3 *Social Arguments and Place*

While refuting the biological characteristics of the women-and-nature connection, the social ecofeminist discourse does not succeed in questioning its own categories and ideas. As a consequence, the claim that ecofeminism opposes and undoes patriarchy's function "to sustain and justify the twin dominations of women and nature" (Warren, 1990:130-1) begs the question: patriarchy where? No parameters demarcate the relationship of "women" and "nature." To recognize the historical and cultural character of the categories without also explicitly recognizing their geographical contexts reveals an innate failure in the constructs of social ecofeminists. Seeking to counter a presumably universal patriarchy, the

theory utilizes universal notions. Geography dictates recognizing situational factors, but women and nature remain universal.

The ways in which ecofeminist texts apprehend or recognize the dynamics of place thus become important to determine the implicit biases or agendas employed by analysts. If ecofeminist arguments are about human-environment interactions, what assumptions do ecofeminists make about the arenas in which those processes take place? Ecofeminists designate "nature" as the ground of analysis. "Nature" is women's domain and the site of oppression and struggle. However, ecofeminists fail to represent where struggles against patriarchy occur and in what contexts women and nature interact. Ecofeminism subordinates place, as the context that forms and regulates human-environment relationships, to presenting the universal, gendered connection between women and nature.

Chapter Three
Vandana Shiva, Ecofeminism, and Geography

Vandana Shiva creates a discourse that seeks to establish relationships between development, ecology, and knowledge. She analyzes each of her topics for the impact of development on women and nature. In establishing the structure of her ecofeminist analysis, Shiva combines a socially based approach to the women-and-nature association along with an accommodation of spiritual/religious perceptions. Shiva insists that social contexts shape women and nature, and she incorporates the worship of nature into her arguments.

In this chapter I critique Shiva's discourse and her analyses of human-environment interactions. To that end, I examine her intellectual background in order to uncover the foundation of her discourse. Further, I examine women, nature, and India as part of her ecofeminist typology. I then evaluate the geographic consequences of Shiva's approach by analyzing the categories and concepts Shiva incorporates as meaningful into her discourse.

How she constructs and positions "women" and "nature" as analytical markers are central elements. Shiva's key text, *Staying Alive* (1992), positions women as ecofeminist subjects. I argue that this strategy reveals implications for the ecofeminist conceptualization of human-environment interactions. Her chapter titles read, for instance: "Women in Nature," and "Women in the Forest," suggesting that women are found in certain arenas. Shiva's exercise details the myriad links between women and nature and emphasizes their manifestation as ecology movements. The construction of subjectivities underlies this effort.

The creation of subject categories is an *a priori* requirement of Shiva's discourse. She constructs "women" and "nature" as necessarily linked phenomena. Likewise, her reading of Indian history specifically privileges those subject categories. Within the contours of her discourse's terrain, I explicate women,

nature, and India as the markers of society, development, and history. A feminist post-structuralist reading provides a detailed analysis of this terrain and reveals how her discourse requires a specific interplay between women, nature, and development. This chapter's analysis provides the foundation for critiquing Shiva's presentation of Chipko in Chapter Four.

3.1 The Biography of Vandana Shiva

Vandana Shiva is a trained scientist, ecofeminist, and Chipko activist. She is currently the Director of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology, and Natural Resource Policy in Dehradun, India. Shiva produces ecofeminist discourses on development that reflect her Hindu background as well as Gandhian activism. She has published five books, co-authored a sixth, and published presentations on the social movement Chipko since 1986. A description of Shiva's career contextualizes her discourse and highlights her own discursive position.

Shiva's academic training is in nuclear and theoretical physics. She left atomic physics in the 1970s because of the destructive potential she believed it represented and reoriented her training. While recognizing that her involvement with atomic energy made her part of a "privileged minority" (1993:22), Shiva does not comment on the status of theoretical physics. Whether or not Shiva is attempting to discard "privileged" standing is unclear, but her role as a scientist appears to make suspect claims otherwise. Her development as an ecofeminist and activist apparently began in the 1980s: her publications indicate her involvement with ecology movements and concern for the status of women.

Shiva's claim to a "Third World perspective" politicizes her identity as a professional scientist. Her Indian citizenship provides her with this claim. From within this "perspective" Shiva utilizes Hindu traditions and Gandhian concepts to elucidate her viewpoint. Her reading of Chipko and other Indian ecology struggles

places them within a legacy of non-violent protest against development begun by Gandhi (1986, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1993). Her activism continues that tradition and reflects a reliance on cultural and spiritual arguments. She uses general Hindu beliefs to bolster her analysis of human-environment interactions, women's social roles, and Indian history (1986, 1987, 1989, 1993).

Although she is an intellectual trained in a "Western" science, Shiva positions herself outside the "Third World elite." Designating "elite" status to those who economically benefit from development projects, Shiva sets herself apart based on her opposition to development (1991:10). She does not discuss whether or not she benefits intellectually or professionally from her participation in India's scientific establishment as a product of development. Her current career position is not addressed as affording her economic benefit from development projects. In situating herself, Shiva appropriates a "Third World" identity that aligns her with dispossessed, illiterate, Himalayan women and activists countering development within India.

Shiva and Mies claim to have constructed a global ecofeminist discourse (1993:13-16). While holding to a "Third World perspective," Shiva enjoins a new universalism predicated on the basic elements of human interaction with nature. Rejecting the dominant discourse of development, she proposes that the experiences of "Third World women" highlight the true manner in which women are globally united through an ecofeminist dialogue (1993). While seeking to counter a falsely universal "eurocentric" worldview and the "elite" development perspective, (1989, 1993) Shiva insists that a universal position is possible. Relying on gender to be universally applicable, Shiva argues about that which "women" hold in common. She rejects the "elite" discourse of "eurocentric" development, yet she counters with her universal conceptualization of women and nature.

The tensions between the elements of Shiva's proclaimed subjectivity (scientist/non-elite, "Third World"/international intellectual) can be accommodated

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within feminism. Harding's (1990) analysis of feminism's relationship with science and Haraway's (1991) elaboration of feminist identities allows partial and contradictory positions. Shiva discusses human-environment interactions from a position cross-cut by different claims to identities. By arguing for "situated knowledges" and "partial perspectives" (Haraway, 1991), space is created within feminism to hold Shiva's discourse. Shiva's multiple claims to subjectivity are accommodated by the "permanent partiality of feminist points of view" (Harding, 1991:173). Post-structural feminism disclaims attempts at permanent and innocent discursive positions. Shiva's discourse enters feminism along the fault-line of identity and knowledge.

3.2 Shiva on Development

Shiva addresses the current state of development as built upon a "[Walter] Rostowian fiction"(1991:27). Development is "an ideology...based on the universalisation of the western economic tradition" (1991:24) and is best understood as an exercise in linearity. According to this view, progress evolves from constant economic growth supported by ever-increasing productivity measured in capitalist terms (1989:24-28). Shiva denounces development as the imposition of "Western" economic rationales and models on the "Third World." Implicated within development practices are the treatment of women, the natural world, and their relationship to each other and to economic "progress." Throughout her critique of development, Shiva maintains the categories of women and nature.

One of the cornerstones of Shiva's position is Carolyn Merchant's history of women and nature in Europe and North America (*The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, 1980). In *Staying Alive* (1989), Shiva relies on Merchant's presentation of the perception of women and nature as having changed during and after the Enlightenment in Europe. In beginning her discourse, Shiva

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grounds her understanding of development as a "specific project of western man" (1989:15). According to this view, development rests upon the emergence of modern science in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Her reliance on Merchant's work is part of her attempt to decode development's universals of "progress," "growth," and "productivity" as "restricted patriarchal categories" (1989:7). Using the trajectories provided by Merchant, Shiva re-codes development as "maldevelopment" because it is a source of "male-female inequality" (1989:5) predicated on a particular science of "western male-oriented concepts."

The first element underlying Shiva's work is her argument that through development "nature and women are turned into passive objects to be used and exploited" (1989:6). Shiva counters through the concept of a "feminine principle," derived from Hindu/Indian culture, and argues that development lacks this quality. Fundamentally, the "feminine principle" is a force through which nature is expressed as "Prakriti" and is the "source of abundance" (1989:39). Shiva presents nature/Prakriti as "an embodiment or manifestation of the feminine principle" (1989:40) so that she herself codes the natural world as a feminine realm. The feminine principle involves creativity, productivity, diversity in its expressions, connectedness and continuity between its expressions, and the sanctity of life as basic characteristics. Moreover, women recognize "Prakriti" through their spiritual practices (1989:40). Women become the repositories of its traits and the representatives of "Prakriti" that are over-ridden by development.

In creating women's subjectivity, Shiva also endows nature with meaning. Nature becomes simultaneously a subject of the discourse and the arena in which women are enthroned. Nature is a feminine actor in the text. "Nature" has "perspective," is capable of viewing the differences between developmental science and "women's" knowledge, and has life of its own (1989:42, 47). Like "women," "nature" is the focus of an emancipatory effort: part of the ecofeminist project "liberate[s]...women and nature" (1989:46). Thus, "nature" and "women" share the

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same elements of subjectivity.

The second component of the relationship is a functional connection between women and nature. Shiva contends women's work connect them to their environments. She supports her arguments by citing Maria Mies' analysis of women's economic labor (*Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, Zed Press, 1986). The model of partnership presented here stems from women's productive labor as a part of a reciprocal process. Women supply their social units with nature's products as well as using nature to grow their own. Women collect and cultivate; both relying on and implementing nature's productivity. As Mies emphasizes, the relationship is more than one of dependence on nature: women "made things grow" (1986:55). Shiva argues that women and nature are the primary components in a sustenance-producing economy that is critical to survival and radically different from the economic model of development (1989:42-28). Not only is this economy produced by the material relations between women and nature, but it is legitimated in the spiritual practices connecting women with natural productivity. Social and spiritual aspects of ecofeminism are mutually reinforcing.

"Women" are a constructed category of the discourse, posturing perceivable entities bounded by and engaged with social structures. I argue that Shiva's critique of development formulates "women" in certain epistemological ways:

(1) Shiva postulates that "women" bear the brunt of maldevelopment and feel the first and most severe consequences of ecological degradation (1989:7). Her position is not without ample evidence. Jacobson (1993), Jackson (1993), Argawal (1992), Vickers (1991), and Mies (1986) all provide substantial documentation of the impoverishment caused by the current development paradigm. Women bear decreasing standards of living as a result of development programs. Shiva creates "women" as a population disenfranchised by development (1989:26). Development as a project of Cartesian science "subjugates and dispossesses them of their full productivity, power, and potential" (1989:22).

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"Women" are marked by their exclusion from development's ideology.

(2) Shiva adds to the category by conceptualizing "women" as the source of a traditional, civilizational knowledge. Women's knowledge is denied by the development process, but women are repositories of alternative knowledge that counters the development paradigm (1989:24, 41, 46-47). "Women" produce ecological, holistic knowledge and perceive and express the relationships between human communities and the earth's environments. Thus, the oppression of "women" oppresses a knowledge system that critiques development as maldevelopment. However, Shiva defines ecology as "the economy of natural processes" (1991:29, 31). This definition does not differ substantially from the idea of ecology used by scientists: the study of natural systems and their interactions. The construction of flow charts and formulas designating ecosystem interactions (see 1991:40, 67-8, 72) is also a familiar scientific exercise.

(3) "Women" are sources of production and material sustenance. "Women" provide the daily requirements of the household. The subject category rests in Shiva's understanding of the gender role: socially prescribed activities construct "women." "Women" are those "whose productivity in the sustaining of life is based on nature's productivity" (1989:42) through the subsistence economy. "Women" represent a functional link between the environment (read: "nature") and the material imperatives of "culture": "Women produce and reproduce life not merely biologically, but also through their social role in providing sustenance" (Ibid).

However, the functional role is not just the product of gender roles alone. Shiva incorporates spiritual evidence to advance a social analysis. Because women "embody the feminine principle" they have "privileged access...to the sustaining principle [Prakriti/nature]." "Women" are responsible for the spiritual recognition of their terrain. By offering their worship "women renew the relationship of the home with the cosmos and with the world process" (1989:40). Historical Indian gender roles and the worship of sacred plants create the firmament that supports the idea

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of "women" around the world.

Understanding the functional role is important to dissecting the subjectivity constructed by Shiva's discourse. Shiva records the physical labor women endure to collect fuelwood, water, fodder, and food as necessary raw inputs to society (1989:42-48, 55-60, 64-65). The social role of Indian women highlights a crucial function of the subject position. "Women" are those whose daily activities form a journey from "nature" to "culture". "Women" embody the bridge between the worlds of human and nonhuman production. Shiva's strategy privileges the role of socially assigned go-betweens that transform the outputs of one production system into the inputs of the other.

The overall thrust of Shiva's subject-making strategy is the creation of "women" as a discursive category recognized through a reciprocal relationship with nature. The characteristics of "women" as victims of maldevelopment, sources of knowledge, bridges between society and environment, and spiritual acolytes of "Prakriti" form the structure of the women-and-nature partnership. Shiva's determination of "women" has apparent geographical consequences. In the widest sense, "women" are those who are *embedded in nature*.

But, which women are Shiva's subjects? The violence of development is not just directed at women: it is directed at "Third World women."   The functions Shiva subscribes to "women" are not those that women in industrialized societies perform. Shiva uses the Indian context to generate "women" and places India in the Third World.

The following passage demarcates the "women" claimed by Shiva as harbingers of Chipko:

> "...women resorted to the novel method [tree-hugging] to protect their forests in order to protect themselves from future landslides and floods...The illiterate women of the hill villages did not need the professional forest hydrologists to tell them of the role of forests in protecting the land and water stability of mountain watersheds, they had drunk of this knowledge

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with their mother's milk, and had it reinforced as they grew with religious myths and folklore."

Drawn from the Himalayan context, women are illiterate, religiously connected to the forests, and counter-balanced against the professional representative of development. Shiva extrapolates her subject from a particular arena, and yet her arguments name a general "woman." Whom is Shiva addressing?

The answer is not explicit. While Shiva in effect creates the category of the "Third World woman," her discourse does not acknowledge its own productive process. "Third World women" represent all "women." I propose that Shiva's subjects, while broadly addressed, are only those Indian women who produce the sustenance economy and represent "Prakriti."

3.3 Shiva's Reading of Ecology and Women's Knowledge

Shiva constructs arguments that center on environmentalism and ecology. The term "environmentalism" is treated as a concept of the "dominant discourse" in which the perception of environmental issues is biased in favor of the economic North (1991:10). Environmentalism does not include the implementation of women's perspectives or the feminine principle and is therefore only a "patriarchal project of technological fixes and political oppression" (1989:48). Shiva emphasizes the ecological perspective and the political viability of ecology movements as the curative for development. Women's knowledge is reinscribed as an alternative to development's "scientific" knowledge, and only women's knowledge is credited with being holistic and life-enhancing. "Environmentalism" remains outside Shiva's project.

Ecology is fundamental to what Shiva terms the "politics of survival" in the Third World (1989:13,30,37; 1991:12). Ecology movements comprised by women articulate "categories of challenge" to patriarchal maldevelopment (1989:47). She

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places women's movements in the center of her argument because women are "embedded" in nature and integral to the production of life. Thus, women's movements and ecology movements are one phenomenon (1991:11).

Shiva's ecofeminism politicizes the material and spiritual link between women's sustenance economy and ecological processes. Shiva develops her reading of ecology movements as struggles with development over access to nature, the type of dominant economy, and the production of life (1991:11-56). She argues that ecology movements seek to undo the consequences and practices of development by making visible again the sustenance economy, the current poverty of women, and the immediacy of survival needs (1989). Primarily, ecology movements express the indigenous, material concerns of women.

Importantly, even as ecology movements are forms of a survival politics, they simultaneously embody a politics of knowledge. Ecology movements privilege women's indigenous knowledge as part of the "marginal communities" of the Third World (1991:11). Ecology movements express the epistemological tension between science and women over nature. The Cartesian filter of science and technology is destructive and violent when imposed on Third World women (1989). From the ecological perspective of women, to adhere to positivist science is to undermine life.

In examining Shiva's discourse of the two types of knowledge systems, her own ecofeminist perspective contextualizes her discourse. Like all other ecofeminists, Shiva argues for the necessary merger of feminism with environmental/ecological agendas. Feminist perspectives alone are inadequate to successfully engage the survival struggles of "Third World women" (1989:54). Ecology involves the "recovery of the feminine principle" (1989:53) as a means of achieving women's liberation. Because of the productive relationship between women and nature, liberation is necessarily equated with environmental restoration. Ecofeminism becomes the political ecology of women.

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3.4 Geographical Reasoning in Shiva's Discourse

3.4.1 *Shiva's Geographical Antinomies*

Shiva's texts are full of references to "places," but her terminology remains broadly universal. Shiva constructs a framework of geographical parameters, indicated by her use of competing ideas of North/South, Third World/Industrial World, East/West, and rural/urban (1989, 1991, 1993). Within and across these parameters are found women, men, and nature. Interacting along the axes formed by Shiva's labels are development, the industrial-economic world order, and the competing knowledges of science and women's ecology movements. Shiva's arguments allude to "place," such as the "Third World," but her discourse fails to clearly conceptualize relationships between context, gender, and oppression except in the universal realm.

The use of terms such as "Third World/South," and "North"/ "West" presumably as pairs of synonyms prevails throughout Shiva's presentation of her arguments (1989, 1991, 1993). Shiva's chosen subjectivity of a "Third World woman" is meaningless without the comparisons she offers. Yet, she risks claiming an empty subject category by constructing her position out of relational differences between ideologically presumed regions that are themselves ungrounded. Thus, within her ecofeminist framework relying only on the concepts of women and nature as analytical principles, Shiva leaves her geography and her subjectivity loosely defined and unspecified.

Shiva's discourse is not only attempting to establish an at-large ecofeminism but also remains purposefully global in scope. In this globally oriented discourse, the relationship between the "West/North" and the "South/Third World" is expressed antagonistically. For example, "Europe" is the productive terrain of patriarchal exploitation and "India" is the terrain of the exploited (1993:1-20, 1991:17). Likewise, science and development are "European" in origin and are imposed upon

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"India" (1989:xiv-xx), generating the battle between modern and alternative knowledges. The implied characteristics are that the developed world is like Europe while the undeveloped, or maldeveloped, world is like India.   Shiva handles the "global-local" dichotomy by employing the meaning of "global" as simply a synonym for "Western." "The global does not represent *universal* human interest but a particular local and parochial interest which has been globalized" (1993:9, emphasis mine). The dominant "Western" discourse assigns the description to the "political space in which the dominant local seeks global control". The claim to a "global" discourse is presented as false and resting on recourse to economic and political power. Therefore, arguing from an ecofeminist, "Third World" perspective Shiva presents that idea of universalism emerging from the West's pretensions to global status as being contradictory to the ecofeminist's *ideal universalism* (1993:13, emphasis mine).

The task for the ecofeminist is to construct a new *universalism* out of the commonalities of daily experiences, "common human needs" such as food, shelter, and freedom, and the preservation of the ecological mechanisms that insure subsistence (1993:13). Such concerns are "common to all people, irrespective of culture, ideology, race, political and economic system and class" (ibid). Geography on an explicitly conceptual level has been removed. Context has no place in ecofeminist universalism. All human spaces contain the same human needs, and for women, the same subjectivities.

In rejecting the Western model of the "global" as an exercise of regional dominance, Shiva seeks to create a universalism that does rely on any specific locality or context to provide its form and historical background. Instead, her model only requires the proper understanding of "human needs." Shiva's discourse, ironically, relies on the notion of a transcendental humanity superseding culture, language, etc. that mimics the tradition she criticizes. While seeking to reject the "West" as the arbiter of the global, she reinstates a concept utilized by the dominant

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universalism. Shiva's universalism still borrows regional criteria from the hegemonic tradition she desires to supersede.

In presenting the evidence to support the new ecofeminist universalism, Shiva makes an assumption about women as worldwide subjects. Throughout the framing of her argument, references are made to "women everywhere," "women worldwide," "wherever women acted," "experience as women," and even "our female body" (1993:2-14). In the attempt to "present a realistic picture of what an ecofeminist discourse at the global level can be" (1993:20), all women are imbued with the same ecological concerns and responses "irrespective of different racial, ethnic, cultural, or class background" (1993:3). An ecofeminist argument does not need to consider women *where* because women are *everywhere*. This particular argument invalidates social and historical differences between women as a population and subtly promotes a biological basis for the common identity of all women. A single, shared body of knowledge that registers and responds to the common experiences of women is assumed by the discourse. Experience becomes an underlying whole shared by women regardless of locality. Shiva's geography, in the first instance, reflects the geographical positioning of purely biological ecofeminist arguments. However, her geography subsequently incorporates social underpinnings. Shiva engages a litany of cross-cultural examples as evidence for her position.

Citing the activities of women in Germany, Kenya, Italy, Switzerland, France, the United States, Russia, and most importantly India, Shiva finds the recurrent element of women's responsiveness to ecological dangers (1993). Shiva also relies on United Nations reports -- worldwide data -- to establish the commonalities of women's worldwide experiences (1989). Her method catalogs the various settings in which women act in ecology struggles in order to establish, paradoxically, that the particular setting is ultimately irrelevant. Shiva further supports this tactic with the use of statistics drawn from various world regions that quantify the current levels

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of ecological destruction as global events (1989, 1991, 1993).

The statistical data along with the collected cases from different countries, examined together, reveal an ecofeminist exercise that draws upon a collection of local events in order to support a universal perspective. By pointing to various countries, Shiva apparently establishes the theory's validity in a particular context. However, the task remains to construct a universally valid ecofeminism. The "local" contexts do not survive because they are incorporated into the "global" situation.

A tension is successfully created in the theoretical aspirations of ecofeminism. The theory appears to apply in local contexts, given that examples are so numerous from a variety of settings. And, the theory must be globally applicable because so many case studies are available from around the world. Any context, ecological struggle, or population of women in tandem with nature must therefore fit the larger pattern. Thus, Shiva aspires to a universal position: one that fundamentally circumscribes women as a homogenous population in tandem with nature.

Shiva comes closest to recognizing a precise geographic place through her description of India, even though she relies on Indian women's experiences as evidence for her universal position. Shiva's conceptualization of India deserves attention as the premier terrain from which her ecofeminism originates. The characterization of the area by Shiva's texts raises points about the ecofeminist project at work. Shiva provides a history of India that privileges the role of the forest (ie., nature) and women's sustenance economy. Contingent upon that condition, India's pre- and post-colonial statuses are designated as male and female respectively.

Shiva argues that forests originally represented "a model for societal and civilizational evolution" and "formed the organisational principles guiding Indian civilization" (1989:55). As a pre-colonial society, India represented an "ecological civilization" (1989:56). In order to substantiate her claim, Shiva states that "all religions and cultures of the South Asian region have been rooted in the forests"

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(1989:57). By presenting this truism for the larger region, India becomes a subset of a larger culture complex. Moving her argument to a larger scale absorbs the multitude of societal differences within India. By momentarily focusing on the surrounding continent, she avoids addressing internal variations that might belie her argument. Establishing this at-large condition, she can then refocus on a particular India: the India that retains continuity with the broader civilization of South Asia.

The precolonial India is understood as feminine in Shiva's text. The forests as the "highest expression of the earth's fertility and production" were venerated as "Earth Mother" and "sacred trees serve[d] as an image of the cosmos" (1989:56). The entire culture embodied the principles that "women" represent currently. The spiritual tasks are not presented historically as the domain of women alone, for example. Shiva even goes so far as to state that "man's capacity to merge" with nature determined cultural advancement. By employing the masculine as the generic, Shiva signals that the function of women as bridges between nature and society was not a specialized role. Rather, the function of civilization was to behave ecologically with nature in order to continue. In precolonial India, the forests as representatives of nature contained not just women but civilization itself.

Shiva marks the change from precolonial to postcolonial status with a particular consequence of the British presence: "women's subsistence economy...was replaced by the commercial economy of British colonialism" (1989:61). By denotating colonialism as the precursor of development, the "scientific management" of the colonized forests is understood to be masculine in character (1989:63). The extraction of raw materials for the empire's needs is a masculinist endeavor. Like development, the British, commercial attitude was reductionist and blind to the complex, life-supporting relationships between natives and the forest (Ibid). In sum, colonized India is no longer predicated upon cooperation with and reverence for the female domain of nature. The second India becomes a masculinized and colonized territory. Women's interactions with the

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forest that form the basis of the survival economy are marginalized and interrupted.

The presentation of a dichotomous India, feminine in its "natural," evolved state and masculine in its disrupted, colonized state, signifies the ways in which the discourse situates women. Shiva's enunciation of Chipko in Chapter Four is shaped by the tensions between women, once central and now marginalized, and the developing India. Understanding these tensions in order to analyze the discourse's use and presentation of Chipko is a crucial exercise. Chapter Four examines Chipko as a specific example of ecofeminist conceptualizations of human environment relationships. In other words, I assume Chipko to be an *ecofeminist place*. In order to test the adequacy of ecofeminist geographic reasoning, I evaluate Shiva's reading of Chipko as a social movement.

Chapter Four
Chipko as a Quintessential Ecofeminist Place

Chipko, or "hug-the-trees," originated as an organized protest movement in the Uttarkhand region of northeast India. Covering eight governmental districts in the Himalayan mountains of the state of Uttar Pradesh, the Uttarkhand houses a relatively small population governed by administrative offices in the plains to the south. Within the state of Uttar Pradesh, the Uttarkhand region houses the lionshare of forest and mineral resources, and India's development programs intensively exploit the region. As a result of state forestry projects, tree cover has been denuded, soil eroded, surface waters lost, and subsistence activities interrupted and pre-empted. Because monetary profits from resource exploitation schemes accrue outside the mountain region, male out-migration is increasing and altering interactions between villages and their resource base. As Paul Routledge summarizes, the region is a victim of "fourth world colonialism:" "Uttarkhand has become a colony within the state and country that administer it" (1993:79).

In 1970, the monsoon flooding of three mountain rivers covered approximately one hundred square kilometers of land and resulted in widespread loss of life and damage. The worst affected areas lay directly beneath timber operations, and villages began to question forest policies. In October of 1971, a large demonstration in the district of Chamoli demanded strengthening local access to forests. In March and June of 1973, the actual use of Chipko methods began in forest demonstrations. To prevent commercial cutting in the Mandal forest, villagers successfully blockaded and embraced trees slated for extraction.

The following year women were the sole participants in a Chipko incident. Cutting was scheduled for the Reni forest in March of 1974. Anticipating protest, government officials invited village men to the Chamoli district administrative center for unpaid land compensations stemming from the 1962 Chinese invasion

(Routledge, 1993:86). Village women chose to act alone and prevented the commercial harvest.

Chipko began to spread to other districts in 1974. In the Garwhal districts as well as Dehra Dun and Naini Tal, the movement gained momentum and attracted student activists who advertised Chipko's goals (Routledge, 1993). By 1977 the movement gained strength after a landslide killed forty-five people. Demonstrations continued throughout the year, and tree removal was prevented in the neighboring district of Almora. Also in 1977, women in the Tehri Garwhal district wound sacred ribbons around trees and organized readings from the Bhagavad Gita. In several district villages, tree-hugging prevented cutting.

Throughout 1978 and 1979, women's participation in protests comprised the forefront of action.) Overall, between 1972 and 1979, Routledge records twelve large-scale events and various minor Chipko confrontations (1993:89). Between 1974 and 1980, approximately one-hundred seventy five villages in four districts and twenty-three thousand people were involved.

During the 1980s, Chipko diversified. From 1983 to 1988, Chipko activists protested expanding limestone operations that depleted water sources. Activists demanded changes in the regions political structure and contested state forestry policies. In 1988, Chipko demonstrators uprooted Eucalyptus seedlings planted by the government instead of subsistence providing species. Tree-hugging continued in the 1980s such as the 1987 event in Chamoli during which women prevented government cutting. Throughout its history, Chipko has maintained staunchly non-violent tactics and has acquired global attention as an effective environmental response to exploitative economics.

In some respects, Chipko is a successful endeavor. Deforestation rates slowed; reforestation efforts have been ongoing since 1974. A temporary ban on tree felling was accomplished in 1981. Watershed management advanced, and the preservation of the Himalayans is a recognized issue. Local labor cooperatives

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emerged and now address the effects of resource removal and male labor out-migration. Non-violent protest continues to protect forest ecosystems and to prevent other extractive industries that compromise ecosystem health (Routledge, 1993; Shiva, 1989).

4.1 Chipko in Its Geographic Context

Chipko actions emerge from an area characterized by environmental deterioration and increasing rates of poverty. Particular consequences of development intersect with the ecology of the Himalayan region. In order to more fully elucidate the material reality faced by Chipko activists, a description of indigenous and regional conditions follows.

Within India, three hundred and eighty languages are spoken. Seven percent of the population (sixty-seven million people) are defined as indigenous peoples. The majority inhabit forested areas (Durning, 1993) and include the Himalayan societies. Indigenous peoples represent the majority of India's migrant labor, and the destruction of forested native lands is the major cause of migration. In 1988 India was the thirteenth leading timber producer in the world contributing two percent of the global supply (Durning, 1991). This statistic includes the removal of trees from the Himalayan region.

Wood alone currently provides twelve percent of the world's total energy supply. The estimated number of people worldwide facing fuelwood shortages is now three hundred fifty million (Lenssen, 1993). Although India has massive capital investments in coal-fired, nuclear, and hydroelectric power plants, wood remains an essential energy source. Within the Himalayan region, timbering reduces the amount of biomass fuel available to households.

Deforestation disrupts the hydrologic cycle as well, and by 1985 seventy thousand villages in Uttar Pradesh suffered from water shortages (Postel, 1991).

Due to a loss in soil moisture, rates of soil erosion increased and lowered agricultural productivity. Deforestation causes flooding as well as drought: violent mountain run-offs result from the loss of vegetative cover and absorbent soil.

Due to the sexual division of labor, women are more harshly affected by deforestation than men. Women are responsible for gathering fuel, food, fodder, and water from forests and contributing to agricultural production. Other activities include caring for children, preparing meals, and performing domestic chores. The ecological disruption of deforestation adversely affects all arenas of women's work and the fundamental material reliance of Himalayan households on forest systems (Argawal and Narain, 1985; Jacobson, 1993). Tree removal has direct consequences for the length of the working day, agricultural production, changes in male/female labor patterns, water quality, and nutrition.

Because women operate within a biomass-based subsistence economy that remains largely un-monetised, the consequences of forest loss are immediate and have direct affects on physical well-being. Women perform more physical labor than men and contribute more of their resources to the household. While the amount of work done by women across India is undercounted, the statistics collected in the Chipko hill regions are likely to be more accurate due to women's greater visibility (Argawal and Narain, 1985). Women spend more than fifty percent of their labor time acquiring food and fuel. In the Chamoli district, the average woman spent 7.2 hours/day collecting wood in 1985, and the work day lasted fourteen to sixteen hours.

As water and wood collection becomes more labor intensive, nutrition is compromised. Women select foods that require less preparation and cooking in order to ameliorate constraints on fuel, water, and time. The diet narrows, and foods that require longer cooking times for optimal nutrition may be served raw or excluded from the diet. Often food selection practices lower the total number of calories consumed. As forest disappears, wild food sources are lost and restrict the

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number and kinds of foodstuffs available. Malnutrition emerges in women and children as a direct consequence of biomass reduction.

The Himalayan area faces high rates of male out-migration (Argawal and Narain, 1985:315). As men leave in search of wage labor, the demands on women's labor increase to include over ninety percent of all agricultural tasks. The hill districts of Uttarkshi, Chamoli, Tehri, and Garwhal demonstrate the highest counted rates of female work participation (from thirty-two percent to forty-nine percent) in the state. The counted average across Uttar Pradesh is six percent (Argawal and Narain, 1985:316). Male out-migration highlights a crucial gender schism. Men selectively participate in monetized economies and seek wages. Because women's labor is not measured in wages, development projects, government officials, and the men of their own villages overlook the real material needs they fulfill (Argawal and Narain, 1985; Jacobson, 1991). As a result, women face increasing subsistence destitution as the hill districts are drawn into monetized economic networks.

The gendered dichotomy between the subsistence and monetized economies is an important factor in understanding tribal women's daily lives. Not only does increasing male migration leave women responsible for more household functions, but resource extracting industries appear attractive to men as wage opportunities (Argawal and Narain, 1985; Jacobson, 1991; Routledge, 1992). Women's survival interest (and that of their dependents) lies in access to a diverse biomass base. Because women contribute most, if not all, of their income to household needs whereas men do not, the submergence of subsistence into a monetized economy does not mean that gathered resources are equitably replaced with purchased goods (Jacobson, 1993). Men are less likely to contribute earnings to purchase food and basic household goods and are more likely to purchase individual consumer items for personal satisfaction. While men might welcome timber operations, women have a vested interest in preserving the forest ecosystem

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as a means of household provisioning.

Projected estimates of deforestation made in the mid-1980s forecasted complete forest removal within forty-five years (Jacobson, 1993:73). While some land is replanted in commercial Eucalyptus plantations, monocultures do not provide resources to women and their families. During the 1970s and 1980s, timbering and other resource industries accelerated in the Himalayas of Uttar Pradesh. The incursion of state development programs dramatically altered women's access to resources, their labor burden, and their health.

4.2 Chipko in Shiva's Discourse: Constructing the Quintessential Ecofeminist Place

The creation of Chipko as a discursive event reflects how ecofeminism appreciates place. Not only is Chipko the site of a particular kind of analysis and description, but it also reveals the contours of the ecofeminist domain. The particular ways in which Shiva scripts Chipko are products of a discursive strategy that centralizes women, nature, and development. However, if Chipko represents an ecofeminist approach to human-environment processes, and ecofeminism offers a remedy to traditional geographic inquiry, then Shiva's discourse should accommodate place and emphasize events' contexts.

The use of history is an important element of Shiva's strategy. Chapter Three emphasizes her reading of India's past as an exercise that engages her subjects: women and nature. Her reading of Chipko, in turn, engages her subjects in a particular project: the struggle against development. Beginning with the assertion that Chipko is a movement that is "characteristic of India's...historical and natural heritage" (1986:255), the ecological history of India creates a platform from which Shiva positions Chipko in a local versus global discourse. The first geographic consequence is her attempt to represent Chipko as a local phenomenon.

She acknowledges the indigenous, village-based foundation of the movement

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as resting in the Garwhal region of the Himalayas inside Uttar Pradesh (1989:67). Shiva presents Chipko both as the collective response of women within a specific, named area and the decentered organizational network formed between villages (1989:73). By naming particular female leaders in particular villages as responsible for specific tree-hugging events (1989:74-75), Shiva's reading of Chipko alludes to the local as the domain of the movement. However, the local presentation is almost apocryphal or mythic in nature.

For example, Shiva describes the Reni village event and names nine key leaders, but the climax of the action revolves around an unnamed women warning others of approaching timbermen. This unknown character represents Shiva's quintessential subject by informing the timber contractors: "This forest is our mother" (1989:74). *Everywoman* is thus present in the local context.

While giving a specific, local example, Shiva's strategy partially obscures the uniqueness of a local context. The unnamed woman expresses the sentiments Shiva inscribes in all women. The lack of a name suggests the universality of the subject. While allowing the local formation of Chipko representation in her text, women remain everywhere. For example, Shiva claims that "women throughout India have resisted" the conversion of forest ecosystems into commercial domains (1989:82).

Shiva implicates the protest against development in her analysis. Because Chipko is countervailing development and development takes place across India, Shiva argues "all women's and peasants' struggles revolve around this theme, whether in Garwhal or Karnataka, in the Santhal Pargana or Chattisgarh, in reserved forests, farmlands, or commons" (1989:82). Specifically, Chipko demands a "recovery of life" by women "in partnership with nature to recreate and regenerate" (1989:93) and counter development. Women, nature and life (ie., Prakriti) occur across all regions; thus, Chipko as an ecological struggle adequately represents all of India.

The villages Shiva cites are not contextualized by her discourse. While named and situated within Himalayan districts, nothing more is detailed. Why women in certain villages organized and acted while other villages did not is not evaluated. Rather, the rapid spread of Chipko is emphasized (1989:73,75; 1986). Shiva widens the context to all of India. Shiva describes Chipko with the following claim: "Beginning as a grass roots local movement, it has spread into the national and transnational arenas" (1987:256). Shiva exports Chipko across the landscape. In this maneuver, the actual locality within India represents no more than an example of India. Chipko is just one moment in a "long tradition of ecological consciousness" and resistance to environmental abuse in India (1986:257). The result is a homogenized presentation of the country. Chipko is forwarded as an adequate representative of the national arena.

Shiva widens the terrain by being silent about the economic and sociopolitical characteristics of individual villages and interpolating Chipko's arena to India at large (see 1989:55-95; 1988:258-260). The local becomes the regional. India itself is read by Shiva as representing a particular, homogenous ground. Arguing that "ecological conflicts, regardless of where they take place and how they are conducted, have things in common" (1987:256), Shiva does not emphasize geographical context. "The contemporary Chipko movement" becomes a "national campaign" and "not merely a conflict confined to local or non-local distribution of forest resources" (1991:110).

The immediate movement of Chipko from the village scale to the regional scale is a consequence of Shiva's universal project. Shiva interprets Chipko as a series of events that express certain values "regardless of where they take place and how they are conducted" (1986:258). Discarding the notion of place, social movements are not context dependent beyond the clashing arenas of the "West" and the "Third World." Wherever "growth economics, ecologically destructive technology, and reductionist science" encounters resistance by "sustainable

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economics, ecologically sound technology, and ecological science" (Ibid), social movements erupt. Attributing the former group of characteristics to development and the latter to the "Third World," ecological protests such as Chipko can be generated at any point along the boundary between the two. More specific circumstances are unnecessary.

Chipko is paradigmatic of all ecology movements. Shiva names other organizations across India that resist development (1991;1989). Interestingly, the title of her first text "Ecological Movements in India" suggests that she describes a number of movements, but only one other is mentioned (See 1986:267). Shiva advances Chipko an adequate case-study that explains all aspects of ecology movements. The core of Chipko contains economic, technological, and scientific conflicts that represent the basic elements of ecological struggles (1986:258).

The second geographic consequence of Shiva's analysis is her deployment of Chipko to support her universalism. In the construction of the new, ecofeminist universalism to replace development's hegemony, Chipko supports the categorical reality of Shiva's subjects. The construction of women/Third World women and the interpretation of Indian history create geographic consequences. By using the Indian setting to produce "women" and "nature," Shiva claims Chipko as a means of broadcasting her subject positions around the world.

The overwhelming purpose of Chipko is to challenge "global paradigms" of development. While tree-hugging events occur in Himalayan villages, Chipko's arena remains "transnational" (1989:258-260). Chipko is a global phenomenon. Its members protest the global marketization caused by development and their ensuing oppression (1989:73-75). This basic presentation of Chipko as a protest against maldevelopment is central to Shiva's reading of ecological struggles. Her use of Chipko to support her universalism relies on constructing its apparently global context.

Used universal scale, Chipko no longer designates the actions of a particular

society. As a product of the women-and-nature relationship, Chipko is everywhere. Like the two subject categories, no particular locale can exclusively claim Chipko. As ecology movement par excellence, Chipko is divorced from the Himalayas by the persistent silence of the text. Very little information is provided about Chipko's hometowns. While Shiva does not ignore the region, the discourse moves Chipko across India and then around the world. While tree-hugging has not left India, the movement has. Through the presentation of Chipko, all women's "grass roots" actions protect nature and counter development (1986:258; 1989; 1991). Chipko as a local phenomenon is subsumed by the text's universal claim.

4.2.1 Reading India's Past and Chipko's Future

The ramifications of Shiva's discourse inside India involve her concepts of women, men, and India. Two axes are formed, the first along the gender division and the second bifurcating pre- and post-colonial India. Shiva's reading of Indian history is implicated within her reading of Chipko and contributes to the demarcation of gender.

The last chapter provides an examination of India's history and reveals Shiva's creation of two Indias. Through Chipko, women become the civilizational reenactment of the first, pre-colonial India and are the embodiment of the future (1989:54). According to Shiva's view, women represent the precolonial ethic of ecological civilization. Chipko, with its roots three centuries in the past, expresses the resurgence of the previous culture. Women have never actually been colonized (1989:77).

Colonization, the precursor of development, denied women's subsistence economy and replaced it with commercial interests (1989:61). Development continues the process and engenders Chipko. Women's current response to forest depletion is pre-colonial. Indian women are simultaneously the bridge between nature and culture and the past and the present. Shiva places them along both a

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gender continuum and a temporal one.

As Shiva states, Chipko has "renewed in contemporary times" the "first paradigm...from India's ancient forest culture" (1989:76). Internally, Chipko is women's attempt to return India to its original state. The conscious, purposeful strategy to reclaim the precolonial India is supported by Shiva's reliance on spirituality and the acceptance of women's social roles. The first India is read as one that worshipped the Goddess of the Forest (1989:55). Twentieth century Chipko events are accompanied by "discourses from ancient texts on [women's] role in Indian life" (1989:75). Shiva's reifies the spiritual and historical social positions of women as imperatives for action. Moreover, Shiva's argument is integrated with the construction of ecofeminist universalism.

"Third World women" become the site of future civilization. Arguing that organizations like Chipko "are political movements for a non-violent world order" and are "felt far beyond their small geographical boundaries" (1986:272), Shiva extends the salvational role of women into a universal realm. Engaged in "civilizational conflict," women combat the imposition of an ecologically destructive system on a planetary scale. Indian women acting in the local contexts of Himalayan villages are combatting the global structure of development and the commercial economy. For Shiva, Chipko reinstates a precolonial India and transforms the hegemonic "Eurocentric" civilizational paradigm.

4.2.2 Shiva's Ecofeminist Agenda and Chipko

If the global emancipation of women and nature is the primary goal, how are Shiva's arguments accomplishing this task? Shiva locates emancipation outside local social structures. Validating Indian women's gender roles, Shiva contests the imposition of development from outside the local context. Emancipation does not take place inside India but rests in the removal of global, economic forces. Chipko as a liberatory event does not contest internal social processes but rejects the

imposition of development ideology upon them.

While Shiva claims that women's social identification and tasks are products of historical and cultural forces, she does not critique these roles. Despite critiquing development's attitude toward women and nature and the destructive epistemology of Cartesian science (1989:14-37), Shiva does not question the correctness of women's situation within India. Her failure to do so implicitly acknowledges the correctness of the "Third World" situation and the incorrectness of the "Western" one. Her exercise seeks to reveal the dangerous results incurred when monetized economies supersede the women-and-nature partnership, but she accepts as given the social strictures that place women in a subsistence economy. Her ecofeminist agenda thus perceives the emancipatory project as removing the imposition of development rather than challenging indigenous gender roles.

Chipko is an ecofeminist expression of Third World women who are liberated by their original, correct place in nature. Chipko activists, by reclaiming Prakriti, can successfully overcome forest destruction and the commercialization of the economy. However, Shiva's own universalism is implicated in the criticism she offers of development's universalizing tendency.

Asserting that "the crisis of survival that the categories and concepts of the age of masculinist `enlightenment' have engendered cannot be overcome from within these categories" (1989:223), Shiva fails to recognize her own exercise's mimicry of those categories. She does not contest the ideas of "women" and "nature" as categories, nor does she argue that the two should not be ideologically and materially associated. Rather, she simply alters the characteristics of the categories themselves.

Shiva does not question the existence of women and nature as universal subjects. She merely rewrites them as the basis of an ecofeminist universalism that replaces the masculinist one. Unlike post-structuralist feminists, Shiva does not grapple with the saliency of categories and subjects. Her project does not

deconstruct the concepts. For instance, while the notion of gender is currently debated within feminism (Bordo, 1990; Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1991), Shiva utilizes it as a meaningful and universal reference by which to recognize "women."

The treatment of Chipko in Shiva's discourse creates certain geographic consequences. While acknowledging the local roots of the struggle, the broader purpose is to support the universal construction of women and nature. Locating ecofeminist analysis at the juncture of development and ecological needs, Shiva expands her efforts to incorporate the planet.

Internally, India is the local arena of Chipko without cultural, economic, or socio-political differentiation. Externally, India is the representative of a Third World that is itself the total ground of ecology movements pitting women against development. And lastly, the "Western" becomes the universal. Hegemonic and monolithic, the West dictates the world economy and the imposition of commercial development. Ultimately, the discourse perpetuates a war between universals: Shiva's ecofeminism grounded in Chipko versus the West's reductionist economics predicated on the Enlightenment.

Overall, Shiva reifies gender as a universal subject position along with the presence of nature and development. All three categories interact across all terrains. Women and nature occur everywhere. Development, as a product of the "West" implemented in the "Third World," is likewise everywhere. The discourse's liberatory strategy finally rests on its ability to exchange the contents of a priori categories with its own. The battle between women and maldevelopment begins as a local/global contest but ends entirely in the universal domain.

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Chapter Five
Evaluating Ecofeminism

In this chapter I examine the adequacy of the ecofeminist approach to human-environment relationships. I rely on Vandana Shiva's contribution to the ecofeminist perspective as an example, but the chapter's focus is evaluating ecofeminism as a school of thought about relationships between people and the earth. In doing so, I emphasize the ways in which geography makes positive contributions to ecofeminist formulations. Although I conclude that ecofeminism is not adequate as a theory that challenges geography epistemologically, privileging women's knowledge suggests the extent to which traditional geographic inquiries into human-environment processes ignore gender.

The chapter proceeds with geographic and feminist post-structuralist critiques of ecofeminism. Together, these two analyses reveal ecofeminism's weakness as a critical theory. By insisting on universal validity, I find that ecofeminist discourse faces charges of essentialism and theoretical inadequacy. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of ecofeminism's usefulness for geography.

5.1 Geographic Critiques of Ecofeminism

Nesmith and Radcliffe (1993) offer a critical overview of "environmental feminisms." Recognizing both the centrality of the environment to geographers and that the discipline often ignores associations between women and nature, "engagement with these current feminist theories" expands geographical knowledge. Thus, these geographers address ecofeminism.

Charges that ecofeminist discourse "replicate[s] many characteristics of Western gender and nature categories" (Nesmith and Radcliffe, 1993:381) may merely represent the language dilemma expounded by Rose (1992). However,

Nesmith and Racliffe's argument that ecofeminism essentializes can be supported by using Shiva's work as an example. By perceiving a "special sustainable relationship between women [and] the earth," Shiva and other ecofeminists assume "women are linked to nature in ways men cannot possibly be" (Nesmith and Radcliffe, 1993:383-4). By relying on essentialist notions, ecofeminists are subsequently guilty of constructing a "privileged position" from which to speak about human interactions with the earth. I contend that ecofeminism creates a new "master subject" by privileging a gender-based relationship with nature. I find that the following critical points apply:

(1) Ecofeminism simply reverses the conditions of subjectivity inherited from Europe's Enlightenment (Nesmith and Radcliffe, 1993). Women are still inherently associated with and represent nature. Shiva's example of Chipko, as a case study, forms that relationship into the only platform of subjectivity from which oppression can be relieved. "Women" and "nature" act upon "men" and "culture" to alleviate material and social disenfranchisement.

(2) Likewise, dualism creates meaning. Women and men remain what the "other" is not, and "nature" is territory conquered by "culture." For instance, development represents the destruction of "nature" through cultural processes and is not simply a way in which humans interact with the environment. Likewise, ecofeminism defines women's knowledge against science.

Ecofeminism fails to escape gender as a dualistic concept. Shiva's essentializing and gendering discourse prevents her from achieving a truly social analysis that respects context. She does not recognize how "women" may be created through historical, geographical processes. Women simply *are* through an opposition to "men." From Nesmith and Radcliffe's (1993) viewpoint, this failure is attributable mainly to the incorporation of spiritual arguments.

(3) "Spiritual ecological feminism" necessarily essentializes because, like "gender", "spirit" represents an a priori attribute of women. The attempt to

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construct universally valid spiritual positions for women in nature requires geographical critique and leaves unexamined women's historical situations. While women in certain places may construct spiritual relationships with nature, ecofeminism needs geography to recognize specific contexts.

(4) Ecofeminism confers a single, coherent identity on women in a world of "multiple sites of oppression and identity formation" (Nesmith and Radcliffe, 1993:287). Thus, feminist geography enters with a critique of ungrounded universalism. As an ecofeminist, Shiva's case presents the situatedness of "Western" knowledge but erases the Himalayan context that supports her universalism. Such maneuvers do not critically engage questions of scale and the position of the researcher (Christopherson, 1989), nor are differences between women subject to critical scrutiny (McDowell, 1991).

(5) Geography can become the mechanism that pries ecofeminism's romantic elements from the discourse. Recognizing that "environmental feminists risk.... appropriating other women's struggles as part of Western feminism," challenges "the extent to which we can expect poor, overburdened, rural women" (Nesmith and Radcliffe, 1993:387) to save the world. Presenting a utopian discourse predicated on the "Third World woman's" ability to be an environmental savior is no more than a "romantic move" and "authorising technique." Rather than challenging the conceptual validity of linear social progress, ecofeminism creates a new "narrative of progression and development towards an ideal society" (Nesmith and Radcliffe, 1993:388) directed by the new master subject.

The geographer Paul Routledge (1993) offers an alternative analysis of ecological struggle. He does not attempt to create a universal framework but privileges local conditions using the concept of a terrain of resistance. This geographic idea designates the arena in which ecological struggle occurs as part of the movement's agency. Within ecofeminism Shiva's universal position erases the terrain of resistance. Routledge's approach exposes ecofeminism's lack of

geographic clarity.

As a case in point, Routledge's method provides a detailed examination of women's contributions to Chipko and a strong materialist argument concerning women's agency. Recognizing that Himalayan women enjoy higher social status than other Indian women (a point missed by Shiva), Routledge maintains that "status accompanies their heavy contribution to the agricultural subsistence economy" (1993:95). Women have a vested interest in "maintain[ing] the status quo by retaining the traditional ecosystem" (1993:96). The geographic approach exposes regional differences within India that have bearing on Chipko and, by extension, on Shiva's contribution to ecofeminist theory. Further, the geographic method uncovers a relationship between women and the environment that does not emerge from essential, gendered characteristics.

Specific analysis of ecofeminist discourses outlines certain problems: lack of contextual clarity, essentialism, and lack of material analysis. For example, Shiva's "generalizations conflate all Third World women into one category" (Argawal, 1992:125). Ecofeminism does not succinctly analyze the foundation of women/nature relationships or examine why women are accorded innate ecological wisdom. "Ideological constructions of gender and nature" (ibid) are not originally grounded in women's material, subsistence efforts. Instead, women's activities are *consequences of gender*.

Ecofeminism does not adequately emphasize cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity and makes simplistic use of history (Argawal, 1992). Shiva can be criticized for utilizing "Prakriti," a product of one Hindu discourse, across India's diverse milieu. Shiva's use of Indian history is also simplistically uniform in its designation of pre- and post-colonial conditions.

Ecofeminism is blind to "very real forces of power, privilege, and social relations" (Argawal, 1992:126). Most importantly, ecofeminist theorists need to give material conditions more analytical weight, and ecological struggles deserve to be

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examined in context. Ecofeminist approaches would be strengthened by accounting for historical, socioeconomic, and geographic differences.

Feminist geographers demand attention to context. A feminist post-structural position also requires ecofeminists to deconstruct analytical concepts. Geography can enter into critiques of ecofeminism (Nesmith and Radcliffe, 1993; Routledge, 1993; Argawal, 1992; McDowell, 1991; Christopherson, 1989). Nesmith and Radcliffe and Routledge accord place a central role in understanding human-environment interactions. Routledge's concept of the terrain of resistance provides a rigorous analytical tool with which to identify women's agency in ecological struggles. Argawal counters essentialism and argues for more cultural specificity. Christopherson and McDowell critique ecofeminists both as geographers and feminists.

5.2 Feminist Critiques of Ecofeminism

"The evidence is building of a need for a theory of `difference' whose geometries, paradigms, and logics break out of binaries, dialectics, and nature/culture models of any kind" (Haraway, 1991:129). Haraway points to the basic difficulty in translating the English word "gender" into other languages and retaining the concept (1991). Ecofeminism insists on the validity of gender as a unifying concept by which women can be recognized. I criticize this assumption through feminism's debate on the saliency of "gender" as an appropriate discursive tool. I contend that applying "gender" and such notions as "woman" and "nature" is a questionable practice.

The idea of gender "depends on a related system of meanings clustered around a family of binary pairs: nature/culture, nature/history, natural/human, resource/product" and "this interdependence...problematizes claims to the universal applicability of the concepts around sex and gender" (Haraway, 1991:130).

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"Concepts of gender raise sharply the problems of cultural comparisons" because "gender is so closely related" to Western distinctions between categories (Haraway, 1991:131). Without critically examining the use of the "illusion of an interior organizing gender-core" (Haraway, 1991:135), ecofeminists maintain constructed categories of analysis and outside the relevant debate within feminism and between feminists and other post-structuralists about "gender" as a meaningful concept (see McDowell, 1991, 1993; Bordo, 1991; Bondi 1990).

Related to the ecofeminist failure to question the universal validity of "women" and "gender" is the twin failure to recognize "nature" as an historically determined category. Ecofeminist discourses proceed as if "nature" were a commonality: existing and recognized everywhere as something other than "culture" or "human society" and something like "women." Even Merchant (1980, 1992), in her attempt at an ecofeminist conceptual history of "women" and "nature," merely absorbs and conflates the categories and does not decode them in her discourse. "Nature" is half of the "nature/culture" dualism, but while culture represents historical processes, "nature" does not.

Geography enters the critique once again via the critique of "nature" as a social construct (Fitzsimmons, 1989). The idea of "nature" "arises from real history and geography" (Fitzsimmons, 1989:107). "Nature" is an abstraction predicated in Enlightenment discourses (Fitzsimmons, 1989:109) and can thus be questioned by geographers and feminists alike. Ecofeminism's reliance on "nature" is a consequence of failing to question its own central dualism.

Greta Gaard claims the ecofeminism that develops by 1993 as a theory opposing "the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species" (1993:1). By broadly sweeping across differences, Gaard's statement implicates place as well. The ecofeminists Merchant (1989, 1992), Shiva (1989, 1993), D'Souza (1989), Philipose (1989), and Anand (1983) appropriate women's actions in the "Third World" as

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evidence of ecofeminism's validity. However, the attempt by ecofeminists to cover so much ground between "First" and "Third World" leads to a "lack of clarity in theory" and inattentiveness toward "the implications for human communities" (Cuomo, 1992:358).

Moreover, the "self-evident" affinity between women and nature is not "a transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon" (Li, 1993:272). Argawal's (1992) denial of the nature/culture divide as a universal reality further supports this position. I argue that when ascribed to the universal level, the central premise of ecofeminism loses validity. For example, "there are no parallels between Chinese people's respectful attitude toward nature and the inferior social positions of women" (Li, 1993:276). Women and nature are not oppressed together. In light of this evidence, Merchant's (1980) founding arguments underlying ecofeminism are "neither well grounded nor fully developed" (Li, 1993:278). Depending on location, historical oppression of women may have existed long before mechanistic, exploitative attitudes toward the environment developed.

Images of women and nature are "used as an available and powerful metaphor to describe and prescribe human perception of nature" (Li, 1993:281). This metaphor is prevalent in both causes of and responses to modern environmental problems and the development process. As a theory that centers on women and nature, ecofeminism may succeed at revealing "androcentric fallacies" in human-earth relationships (Li, 1993). Potentially, ecofeminism may contribute to geographical knowledge by highlighting gendered associations present in analyses of environmental conditions. However, I find that ecofeminism fails to adequately contextualize arguments and to recognize the limited applicability of its typology.

Evaluations of ecofeminism problematize its universal position, uncovering ecofeminist categories as social, historical products of the Enlightenment tradition (Haraway, 1991; Fitzsimmons, 1989). Universal arguments are suspect. While geography can also be understood as a product of the Enlightenment, feminist post-

structuralist critiques explode its analytical concepts as necessarily meaningful. In contrast, ecofeminism insists upon the validity of "gender" and "nature" and fails to generate a deconstructive project in order to become a critical "strategy of resistance" to traditional geographic inquiry.

5.3 Conclusion

Because ecofeminism does not generate an alternative epistemology, ecofeminist theorists do not reconceptualize human-environment interactions. The theory continues to rely upon the same dualisms that historically form the "central metanarrative" of geography. Rather than operating as a means of resistance to the traditional geographic perspective of the "man-land" tradition, ecofeminist perspectives merely substitute a "woman-nature" formulation. Ecofeminism continues to function as a liberal school of thought: adding women to the realm of human-environment interactions while failing to dislodge universal concepts from its repertoire.

Further, ecofeminists fail to incorporate conceptualizations of place and context into their theoretical musings. While the changing material conditions of women's lives and the environmental ramifications of degrading ecosystems are closely linked in particular venues, these observations fail to alert analysts to the monolithic and static attributes accorded "nature" and "women." Through a failure to deconstruct the categories of their analysis, ecofeminists only attempt to substitute one universal subject for another. While other feminist arguments enter into geographic discourses, ecofeminism's insistence on broad, universal concepts makes it of limited usefulness in the production of a genuinely critical geographic knowledge about human-environment relationships.

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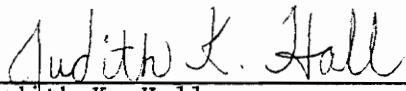-- <u>Geography and Gender</u>, Hutchinson & Co., London, 1984.

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