

INTRODUCTION

LORRAINE KERSLAKE

Universidad de Alicante / GIECO / Instituto de Franklin

TERRY GIFFORD

Universidad de Alicante / GIECO / Bath Spa University

Having battled against entrenched gender essentialism in Spain, the English department at Alicante University was sceptical when Terry Gifford arrived and gave a talk on ecofeminism ten years ago. In any case the relationship between women and nature hardly seemed a strategic priority, or a theoretical field of relevance to the urgent issues of equal opportunity, abortion and divorce rights that feminism in Spain had yet to transform. In the range of social issues discussed in terms of gender roles that teachers and researchers in literature, culture, philosophy, sociology and politics engaged, the consideration of gendered representations of environment seemed less urgent than the recently developed discussions of gendered dimensions to cultural expressions of class, race and postcolonialism. Actually this was also the case for the first reception within French feminism of the term *ecoféminisme*. In the early 1970s Françoise d'Eaubonne, who coined the term, wrote a series of books, beginning with *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974), which reflected upon the debates within the feminist movement Front Reformiste that led to their adopting an ecological manifesto in 1973, only to soon renounce it in favour of other social priorities.¹

Now that the global environmental crisis is more widely recognised, any discussion of it, or attempts to address it, will be counterproductive unless there is an awareness of the long-standing patriarchal assumptions and structures

1. Barbara T. Gates, 'A Root of Ecofeminism: *Ecoféminisme*' in Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy, *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 15-22.

that produced it. Two pioneering collaborative books that appeared just over twenty years ago from California, almost at the same time and with some of the same contributors, remind us just how recently this analysis has been developed. *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, edited by Judith Plant (Santa Cruz: New Society Publishers, 1989) and *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, edited by Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990). ‘Emergence’ and ‘promise’ have now given way to the sophisticated modes of analysis and debate conducted in the international collaboration contained in this ecofeminist special issue of *Feminismo/s*. We have been heartened and impressed by the alacrity with which leading international writers on ecofeminism have responded to our invitations to join with the Spanish ecocritical research group GIECO in making this issue a landmark publication for feminism and ecocriticism in Spain.

There was an ecofeminism section in the first ecocritical reader to appear in Spanish, *Ecocríticas: Literatura y Medio Ambiente*, edited by Carmen FLYS Junquera, José Manuel Marrero Henríquez and Julia Barella Vigal (Madrid and Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2010) which included a bibliographical history of ecofeminism by Esther Rey Torrijos.² For this issue of *Feminismo/s* Esther has updated that earlier essay whilst providing both an historical overview and a projection for future work. In Spain the leading ecofeminist has been Alicia Puleo, publishing only in Spanish, so we very much appreciate her generosity in giving an opportunity for Lorraine Kerslake to interview her for this issue, a reduced version of which Lorraine has translated for readers of English. Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy’s *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998) was the first collection of literary essays in the field of ecofeminism and we are delighted that they have both offered us new work for this issue, each at the cutting edge of new areas of ecofeminist enquiry.

This is the first time that a monographic number of *Feminismo/s* has been dedicated to ecofeminism. The object of this special issue is to provide an introductory survey of ecofeminism and the different feminist ecocritical theories, linking feminism with the emergent field of ecocriticism. It contains articles in both Spanish and English, written by scholars and leading critics in the field of ecofeminism in Spain and beyond. The title ‘Ecofeminismo/s: Women and Nature’ makes reference to the plurality of subject matters that

2. REY, Esther. “¿Por qué ellas? ¿por qué ahora? Orígenes y Evolución de la Síntesis Ecofeminista”, *Ecocríticas. Literatura y Medioambiente*. Eds. Carmen FLYS et al. Madrid: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2010: 135-166.

literary ecofeminism addresses in the fields of ecocritical theory, literary criticism, environmental ethics and environmental philosophy. The articles that make up this issue offer an international collection of scholarship to the reader bringing a diversity of perspectives central to the debate being undertaken under the broad heading of ecofeminism today.

Part one begins by looking at the background of feminist ecocritical theory. Esther Rey Torrijos's essay offers both an introduction to feminist ecocritical theory and an excellent overview of new directions in ecofeminism. It is followed by Lorraine Kerslake's interview with Spain's leading ecofeminist, Alicia Puleo, who, whilst reflecting on ecofeminism offers practical and theoretical suggestions towards a more sustainable future. From Turkey Serpil Oppermann's essay 'Feminist Ecocriticism: The New Ecofeminist Settlement' examines whether material feminisms and trans-corporeality can be productive models for conceptualizing feminist ecocriticism, and offers new ecocritical pathways to deconstruct sexist and homophobic discourses of nature. Closing the first part is Carmen Flys Junquera's essay, "'The Rocks Began to Speak to Me": A Literary Application of Ecofeminist Philosophy', published in Spanish, which draws on the ecofeminist theories of Val Plumwood and Karen Warren to analyze the different literary strategies used by writers including Linda Hogan, Starhawk, Ann Pancake and the Spanish writer Juan Cobos Wilkins, and suggests ways in which readers might re-think their attitudes towards the more-than-human world in developing an ethics of care.

The second part entitled 'Nature, Women and Animals', opens with American ecofeminist Greta Gaard's brilliant essay on "Animals in (New) Space: Chimponauts, Cosmodogs, and Biosphere II" which looks at questions such as the following: what can ecofeminism contribute to our understanding of space exploration ideology? How do narratives of gender, species, and culture play out beyond the biosphere? And what information do these scientific pursuits tell us about contemporary environmental problems in 2013? This is followed by Diana Villanueva Romero's cutting-edge essay "'Savage Beauty": Representations of Women as Animals in PETA's Campaigns and Alexander McQueen's Fashion Shows', in which Villanueva uses ecofeminism to analyze the use of the woman as animal image in advertising, focusing on PETA's campaigns, and McQueen's fashion shows. From Italy, Serenella Iovino's closing essay explores how in the framework of feminist ecocriticism the literary imagination can be used as a tool for theoretically exploring the relationship between the human/ non-human, by examining different narrative strategies used in magical realism and considering the Italian writer Anna Maria Ortese's novel *The Iguana*.

The third and final part, 'Readings in Feminist Ecocritical Theories', offers a variety of different approaches to ecofeminist readings. The first essay is by the pioneering American ecocritic and ecofeminist Patrick D. Murphy. His article looks at the subsistence perspective in literature, an alternative view of economics that is found in ecofeminist analysis, and considers a variety of literary works by women writers including Buchi Emecheta, Leslie Marmon Silko, Ana Castillo and Toni Morrison, looking at their shared but different treatments of aspects of subsistence culture. Margarita Carretero González's essay 'Another Cassandra's Cry: Mary Wollstonecraft's "Universal Benevolence" and the Ecofeminist Praxis' questions whether it would be possible to claim her now for the ecofeminist cause by conducting an ecofeminist reading of her *Letters* (1796). Brazilian ecofeminist critic and poet Izabel F.O. Brandão's closing essay of the volume looks at two contemporary women poets, the popular Brazilian poet Arriete Vilela and the Caribbean poet living in Britain, Grace Nichols, in order to show how they deal in different ways with notions of space and place in nature, approaching these ideas from ecocriticism, feminism and other interdisciplinary readings.

The ideas and thoughts put forward in these articles present a diversity of feminist ecocritical approaches in environmental literature, culture and science. The volume offers an international collection of new scholarship bringing together a diversity of perspectives which use new developments in ecocriticism, animal studies, queer theory, feminist and gender studies.

As editors, we are truly grateful to all those who contributed to make this volume possible and hope that these vibrant cutting-edge essays will meet the aims and expectations of our readers as well as being both an introduction and a significant contribution to the diversity of international ecofeminist debate today.