

Ecofeminism Goes Bush

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Abstract

This paper suggests that even radical positions such as Ecofeminism need to go bush. We need both ecologically literate Ecofeminists and ecofeminist environmental educators. The article outlines a postgraduate course in Ecophilosophy and Earth Education and discusses some of the surrounding risks and hopes.

Résumé

Dans cet article, l'auteure propose que même des positions radicales telles que l'écoféminisme doivent reposer sur une expérience de terrain. On a besoin aussi bien d'écoféministes versées en écologie que d'intervenantes en éducation relative à l'environnement qui soient écoféministes. L'auteure présente un cours d'études supérieures sur le thème de l'écophilosophie et de l'éducation à la terre et discute certains des risques et des espoirs associés.

(and buds know better
than books
don't grow)

Cummings, 1954, p. 423

I have been teaching university students for 35 years. As a junior in college at 18, I had a job as a teaching assistant for a large first year course: "The Study of Western Culture."

I love teaching. It is my vocation rather than my career.

Highlights include:

- lecturing for two and a half years in the Philosophy of Science and Ethics at the University of Lagos in Nigeria where I learnt far more than I taught,
- helping to found a new University—Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia—where we were convinced that our first 300 students were all geniuses (given that kind of encouragement, they went on to prove us right),
- taking my Environmental Ethics students into the bush for voluntary field trips, where they seemed to learn more in two and a half days than in 13 weeks of lectures, and
- facilitating a five day “bush school” in the wet sclerophyll forests on the south coast of Western Australia, where the philosophical and the experiential were woven together in poignant ways.

It is these last two experiences that have galvanized me to take a risk: to take future students “bush” for substantial periods. And it is this risk that forms the heart of this article.

In what follows, I will introduce my plan for taking Ecofeminism bush, show why it is a risky venture, and indicate why I am prepared to take that risk. I will suggest that buds do know better than books because they grow.

The Need

... at least one-quarter [to one-half] of living species are on the cusp of the most profound extinction crisis in the last sixty-five million years. (Soulé, 1995, p. 144-145)

If we do not soon remember ourselves to our sensuous surroundings, if we do not reclaim our solidarity with the other sensibilities that inhabit and constitute those surroundings, then the cost of our human commonality may be our common extinction. (Abram, 1996, p. 263)

David Orr (1992) points out in his landmark book, *Ecological Literacy*, that the most important discoveries of the 20th century exist not in the realm of science, technology or medicine, but rather in the dawning awareness that the Earth has limits. Orr laments that while some attention has been devoted to what governments, industry, corporations, international agencies and private citizens can do to facilitate the transition to sustainability, little thought has been given to what universities can do. Not only has

education largely ignored the “finitude” of the Earth, but many universities directly contribute to unsustainable practices by totally ignoring the place they inhabit, uncritically “plugging into the mains” and educating for the market place. Certainly in Australia, universities are under financial pressure to tailor their goals for corporate commercial purposes that all too often undermine our ecological foundations. And, as Orr indicates, on most campuses, students learn the lesson of indifference to the ecology of their immediate place. On my campus, despite record enrolments in my “Environmental Ethics” course over 18 years, we still do not properly recycle our wastes, we still seem to be addicted to cigarettes, coffee, coke, and fast foods and, after a fine day (of which there are many in a place that averages eight hours of sunshine daily), litter is scattered across our show-piece “bush court.”¹

Moreover, as the innovative work of Steve van Matre (1990) shows, programs that have been established in environmental science and environmental education have been trivialized by mainstream education, diluted by those with other agendas, cut when budgets get tight or coopted by the very hegemonies that attack our life support systems. As one indication of this process of marginalization, if one perused the journals in these key areas, one would have little sense that humanity had any problems beyond “methodological esoterica” (Orr, 1992, p. 84).

This trivialization and marginalization of environmental education is paralleled by the omission of ecofeminism in environmental education. What I hope to do is to bring the two areas of environmental education and ecofeminism together by first, showing the need for a bush-grounded education, and then second, indicating the merit of an environmental education that is informed by an ecofeminist analysis which shows that all the forms of oppression (based on gender, race, class or species) are interlocked. We need to take both environmental education and ecofeminism bush, but we also need an ecofeminist environmental education.

Given the contemporary context of looming ecocatastrophes, clearly detailed by conservation biologists such as Michael Soulé and sensuously storied by philosophers like David Abram, we urgently need a recovery of an ecologically literate citizenry. In order to achieve this, both the content and the form of knowledge—what we know and how we learn it—require radical reversioning. As ecofeminist analysis reveals, the impending cataclysms cannot be averted by the same kind of education that helps to propel the nihilistic drive to destroy nature.

I have been going bush with my partner at every available opportunity since we first landed in Australia in 1974. The bush is home. I have been

teaching Environmental Ethics since 1981 and Ecofeminism since 1991. What I propose to do is situate these interdisciplinary knowledges within the direct experiencing of a more-than-human world.

Global thinking can only do to the globe what a space satellite does to it: Reduce it, make a bauble of it... If you want to see where you are, you will have to get out of your spaceship, out of your car, off your horse and walk over the ground . . . (Berry, 1993, p. 20)

I want to take my philosophy bush and “walk the world into being.” This is my plan.

My Plan

First hand knowledge is the ultimate basis of intellectual life. (Whitehead, 1929/67, p. 51)

We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand or otherwise have faith in. (Leopold, 1949/68, p. 214)

Commencing in the year 2000, I plan to start a Postgraduate Certificate in Environmental Philosophy and Earth Education, assisted by a grant from a patron. The certificate will be worth 12 credit points and will occupy a full semester (13 lecture weeks) from February until June. The programme will alternate between an academic and a natural environment, attempting a balance between short excursions into the bush and total immersion.²

This is the proposed structure:

- An in-depth series of lectures and seminars on campus for 3 weeks during which students will be introduced to the main concepts and debates of environmental philosophy and will write a 3,000 word essay in environmental philosophy,
- Three weeks in the bush during which we will:
 - integrate our scholastic knowledge with our experience of a more-than-human environment,
 - keep a daily journal, reflecting our embodied journeys, and
 - formulate a proposal for a project (a major piece of writing of 5,000 words).
- Return to campus for 2 weeks of research, seminars, small group work and writing. During this period students will finalize their project choices through discussion and library work, draw up a detailed project proposal and orally present this proposal to the group.

I anticipate that the project topics will vary, depending on students' backgrounds, interests and passions. Possible subject areas include:

- Investigating the impacts of patriarchal thinking on the landscape,
 - Constructing a wilderness ethic,
 - Articulating the philosophy of restoration ecology,
 - Evaluating the strengths and limitations of conservation biology,
 - Reinventing nature as alive,
 - Developing an ontology of relational selfhood,
 - Discussing the meaning and importance of the practice of the wild,
 - Considering how the world-views of indigenous peoples can facilitate environmental practices,
 - Thinking about why environmental etiquette is important (or even necessary) for environmental philosophy,
 - Exploring the idea that the natural world is an active partner in the construction of knowledge,
 - Analysing the following claim by Tom Birch: "Wilderness treats me like a human being" (Pers. com. Birch & Cheney, qtd. in Cheney, 1997, p. 299), and
 - Focusing on the work of a particular thinker (such as the philosopher and ecofeminist, Chris Cuomo, author of the 1998 book, *Feminism and Ecological Communities: An Ethic of Flourishing*).
- Two weeks in the bush to test the hypothesis of our projects, contribute to our daily journal, participate in experiential rituals and commence work on our creative assignment. The creative assignment is designed to honour the imaginative self and to encourage creativity. It can be in any medium (eg. music, visual arts, dance, poetry) and should be accompanied by a 500 word written piece to show how the creative assignment connects to the content of the programme.
 - Return to campus for 2 weeks for preparing the final projects in written form and for presenting them orally to the group.
 - One week in the bush for completing the journal, for sharing the creative assignment, for celebration and for thanks-giving.

My Objectives

What am I hoping to achieve within this structure? My academic goals include:

- some understanding of ecological processes and of the intrinsic value of nature,

- a re-cognition that human well-being is radically contingent on ecological well-being,
- the ecologizing of thought and the linking of one's discipline to the wider context of the wild world (seeing economics, for instance, as grounded in biological health or tree planting as pivotal for national security), and
- the development of tools for minimizing humanity's destructive patterns of domination and for restoring the health, diversity and complexity of both ecological and human communities.

Embedded within these four main aims are several other goals. Echoing the Nobel Prize winning scientist, Barbara McClintock (Fox Keller, 1983), I hope to help people realize that nature is more complex than we know and more complex than we *can* know, thus engendering humility, openness and a beginner's mind. I also hope to expose the arrogance of the patriarchal ego (detailed below) which sees humans as separate from and superior to nature, and which assumes (disasterously, I will argue) that we can manage, improve on, and even dispense with wild nature.

I also hope to create a safe space within which people can explore their attunement to the natural world. As I will suggest in what follows, we belong in the company of non-human others and, deprived of these vivid and intimate relationships, we are diminished and distorted.

Drawing on the best traditions of my discipline, philosophy, I wish to nurture wonder. The ability to wonder is a constant struggle in a post-modern age which insists on hip responses embossed in virtual reality and which builds expensive egos. But, as the etymology of the term "philosophy" discloses (*philo*: friend, *sophia*: wisdom), a love of wisdom is key to staying alive. Moreover, enlightened by ecofeminist insights, I want to turn traditional philosophy on its head and foster the wisdom of loving. Developing our capacity to love means recognizing the energy that connects us to the whole web of life. It signals the ability to "fall in love outward" to use Robinson Jeffer's phrase. And in this more-than-human context, we can together take up the practice of that long forgotten art, the cooperative search for the good life.

Unless we can actually live differently, I feel my efforts will not be realized. It is not sufficient to intellectualize. As David Orr (1992) expresses it:

The study of environmental problems is an exercise in despair unless it is regarded as only a preface to the study, design and implementation of solutions. (p. 94)

I am keen to provide the occasion for people to reflect on the various forms of oppression (whether of race, class, gender, or species in nature, or political,

cultural, or biological in form). I wish to encourage people to oppose and resist oppression, to be active against injustice. I also want to collaborate with others in building ecologically self-reflexive practices in our daily lives.

These objectives are, of course, ideals but they are articulated with the hope that they will serve to inform and to inspire us, even as we fall short. Hope is not a factual affair; hope is an orientation.

But my wish-list is not complete. Guided by the communally designed manifesto of our bush school (see Appendix 1), I also wish to encourage certain recognitions and remembrances: to own up to conflict, suffering and death, to recognize their role in the web of life, to challenge them when appropriate and to wisely negotiate them when not; and to remember the often erased histories of past generations (both human and non-human), to honour the lives that were often sacrificed to give us the present and to ensure that these precious gifts are passed on.

Finally, I wish to enhance certain qualities and attitudes: to encourage self-confidence, to cultivate playfulness, delight, creativity and celebration and to recover the art of allowing, of silence, of receptivity, and surrender (Keen, 1983).

Some specific outcomes of the course might include: learning to give voice to the unheard members of our biological community, learning to be at home in the dark, learning to trust ambient vision, learning to let our feet make the decisions, learning to balance, learning to lope, learning to smell, being sensitive to the aural world, paying attention to kinesthetic intelligence, being aware that food is a gift, not a commercial commodity, and practicing the disciplines of being in the bush (focused, attuned, and receptive) and being with other humans (respectful, gracious, and generous).

All these objectives and aspirations are premised on being able to learn how to learn. As Gregory Cajete (1994) reminds us in his ecology of indigenous education:

A first step in understanding the nature of true learning is reaching a level of clarity regarding why one is learning. Students become aware that ambition, self-gratification, power and control as purposes for learning are forms of self-deception. (p. 226)

Being in the bush will not necessarily provide lightening bolts of revelation or self-transformation, but I am confident that being-there will allow subtle happenings that claim us.

The Risks of Going Bush

I am relatively comfortable in the rather rarified atmosphere of a university. Although I feel at home in the bush, I am vulnerable there as a teacher.

Taking a group of students into the natural world, far removed from human habitation, roads, or even tracks invites a number of challenges and responsibilities. One must, for example, pay keen attention to issues of health, safety and comfort. These are areas I can completely ignore in the classroom. Furthermore, I must relinquish my (dubious) position as knowledgeable. I recognize the role of “expert” as contested, but this acknowledged lack of expertise is compounded by the fact that I am not a botanist or a geologist; I am a philosopher. Now, the study of philosophy has helped me enormously (in spite of philosophy’s pretensions, abstractions, remoteness and self-deceptions). But for all its virtues, philosophy cannot identify poisonous plants, treat snake bites, negotiate intensely-felt personal differences, restore integrity to the fragile outback, or overcome patriarchy. So why, you may well ask, why make yourself academically and personally vulnerable; why take on the logistics and responsibilities of bringing people bush?

The Most Powerful Educator

My response to these problems is simple: because the natural world is the most powerful educator. You see, it is a master of trust, a kind of wild trust.

I feel enormously happy (in a deep sense) when I am in the outback and I imagine that this feeling is not unique. What I can offer, with my partner’s capable help, is a safe space where people can dwell and allow themselves to open up.

I am hoping to really “educate,” to draw people out, as the roots of the term suggest (e-ductio: to draw out). I want to educate the whole person. Being in the bush does not guarantee this integration of the head, hand, and heart, but I believe it opens up the opportunity in a much more viable way than classroom-only education. Also, being in the bush does not replace book learning, research, and scholarship. The power of ideas is as substantial as the force of bulldozers. But, being in the bush can enhance ideas and ground them (Grumbine, 1988).

For all its problems—the logistics, the liability, the lack of academic expertise, the leadership challenge—the benefits can be enormous, especially for Australians. As Australian scholars such as David Tacey (1995) and Gary Burke (1996) remind us, post-1788 Australians are a highly urbanized people who have never developed a deep sense of place. Almost a third of our population was born overseas. We run on a cultural calendar from the northern hemisphere. We do not eat indigenous plants or animals in our staple diet. Eighty percent of our flora and fauna occur only in Australia, but most of us are ignorant of our richly diverse plant life and we cannot identify even the major mammals of our bioregion. Gary Burke comments:

By and large, Australians still live in a cultural construct that does not adequately acknowledge the vital nexus that exists between environmental and cultural well-being. The lack of ecological awareness is maintained by the lack of a substantive ecological component in the Australian cultural identity. This is for many and diverse reasons, but one of the underlying factors is the low priority given to the ecological dimension in the everyday Australian cultural practice. The Australian ecology is rarely mentioned as being a significant part of the Australian identity, despite the fact that the Australian ecology is unique and that our social and economic well-being is dependent on it. (p. 28-29)

As latemoderns, we inhabit a deprived world, a world of artifice and simulation, engineered pleasures and electronically produced vistas, where we are distracted, numbed, and lured into being passive spectators. As Soulé (1995) points out, "one of the quietest and most profound changes . . . that has occurred in the 20th century . . . is the urbanization of people" (p. 162): people increasingly live in cities away from the "commanding presence" (Borgmann, 1995, p. 38) of the natural world.

Universal urbanization has disquieting implications. It enforces global sterilization. Increasingly, on every continent, people are being forced to congregate in urban centres, often on the fringes, but still far-removed from the self-regulating vibrancy of nature.

This severing from the soul of nature, in turn, engenders biophobia, a pathological fear of nature. David Brower (quoted in Swan, 1990) has suggested that much anti-environmental behaviour is a result of the fear of nature. Certainly anti-environmental behaviour is more allowable in a culture which fosters both ignorance and fear of nature.

Of course, certain aspects of the natural world should command respect, caution, or even terror (crocodiles and cyclones, to cite just two), but what we are talking about with biophobia is an unqualified revulsion, a turning away from nature based on ignorance, a pathological fear in which the Earth is imagined as fundamentally inhospitable. One of the striking features of taking my Environmental Ethics students on our voluntary field trips is how trepidacious fit, young people can be in anticipation ("Isn't the bush unsafe, dangerous and uncomfortable?") and how amazed and relieved they are when they discover that they can be relatively comfortable and safe³ in the outback.

Feeling at ease in the bush can help induce the contrary of biophobia, namely biophilia, defined by E.O. Wilson (1984) as "the urge to affiliate with other forms of life" (p. 85; Kellert, 1997; Orr, 1994).⁴ This urge to affiliate is, I suggest, constitutional of being human. Biophilia is rooted in evolutionary biology which testifies, on the basis of overwhelming genetic evidence, that "all species are kin" (Fox Keller, 1985, p. 141-142).

By our very nature, we are bound to living things. Mindscape has been hewn by landscape. Our identity is ecological.⁵ Humanity's relations to living nature are not external and accidental; they are internal and substantive. These relations constitute who we are. If we renounce the world as its lover, we relinquish our inner core.

Paul Shepard (1982) has argued that the loss of contact with nature must lead to pathology. And one expression of this disfiguration is the hegemonic system of patriarchy.

This leads me into ecofeminist territory. What I would like to do in the remainder of this paper is briefly characterize ecofeminism and show how it both illuminates the blind spots of patriarchal reason and offers sustaining alternatives. Finally, I will indicate how ecofeminist theories can benefit from a return to the sensible world.

Ecofeminism Makes Sense

Because you can die of overwork, because you can die of the fire that melts rock, because you can die of the poison that kills the beetle and the slug, we must come again to worship you on our knees, the common living dirt.
(Piercy, 1983, p. 54)

Embedded in its welcome diversity, there is a central claim of ecofeminism, namely that if we are to become ecologically sane, we need to overcome our need to dominate.⁶ The illusion that we can dominate nature is a major contributor to environmental degradation, and the compulsion to dominate is one of the hallmarks of patriarchy. Ecofeminists set themselves two principal tasks: to expose this "logic of domination" (Warren, 1996) and to seek alternatives that bring us to our senses (Sturgeon, 1997; Cuomo, 1998).

In uncovering the social and ecological manifestations of the logic of domination, ecofeminists make explicit how the structures which keep women oppressed are the same structures which reduce fertile wetlands to toxic wastelands. And it is argued that the failure to identify and work on the twin exploitations of women and nature will result in the further deterioration of both. Vandana Shiva (1993) astutely analyzes western "maldevelopment" which aims at accumulating capital while undermining the reproductive ability of life. She comments, "The colonization of regenerative sources of the renewal of life is the ultimate ecological crisis" (p. 33).

If we investigate the logical structure of colonization, we see that it has several features, teased out by Val Plumwood (1993) in her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. In what follows, I will develop Plumwood's logic of domination using nature as my subject (though women and other oppressed peoples know these moves well).

First, patriarchal reason *backgrounds* nature, decentering its reality and making it appear as unimportant and peripheral. Then it *homogenizes* nature, reducing it to an undifferentiated, uniform blob. Next it *inferiorizes* nature, redefining it to lack inherent meaning. Thus conceived as subordinate, the living world becomes the standing reserve, the instrumental means in service of the master's ends. Then, the master rationality *hyperseparates* nature and culture, radically excluding the natural world from the centre of cultural meaning. Nature is positioned as oppositional to mind, and reason becomes the locus of what is real and meaningful. Within this powerful dualistic construction, mind and nature cannot be seen in any way as continuous. The final move in the process of colonization is to *devour* the other. Nature, rendered mindless and meaningless, needs human interpretation, mediation, and re-creation. The upshot is that the master subject "creates" nature and endows it with meaning through scientific and technological mediation. By means of patriarchal reason, we can not only manage nature, but we can improve on it, reconstructing a slow and recalcitrant biosphere through hi-tech innovations. As one biotechnologist put it: "Nature took her own sweet time, but with genetic engineering, you can speed up evolution" (Elington, 1988, p. 17). At last, we can, it is declared, dispense with wild nature altogether. In the words of bio-entrepreneur Doyle (1985): "You will be able to find more variability [in plant genetic engineering] than you can in nature" (p. 197). Wild nature is dispensible. Through the mediation of genetic technology, we will be able to preserve and, in some cases, own the world's gene wealth (Hallen, 1991).

The conceptual colonization of nature is complete. Living nature is stripped of autonomy, intelligence, and meaning. Human identity is constructed as the master of a subordinate, utterly instrumental "other" which is in need of improvement and, in fact, complete recreation through human intervention and ingenuity. The world is absorbed into the master ego and thousands of years of human history are erased.

But not only does Ecofeminism offer powerful forms of critique, exposing the vicious logic behind the mastery of nature and the violent liaison with trans-national interests, it also offers empowering forms of resistance. Ecofeminist activists work to undermine a culture premised on the denial of dependence by offering alternative ways of being-in-the-world which "recognize our dependency on the Earth as the sustaining other" (Plumwood, 1993, p. 196; see also Shiva & Mies, 1993; Merchant, 1996; Mellor, 1997; Salleh, 1997; Warren, 1997; Sturgeon, 1997; Cuomo, 1998).

One way to uncover alternatives to the domineering patterns of the master subject is to go to where ". . . a thousand million pairs of eyes,

antennas and other sense organs are fixed on something beyond themselves that sustains their being, in a relationship that works" (Shepard, 1995, p. 27). In taking my Ecofeminist students bush, I hope to reconstruct a relational selfhood, to reveal humans in radical relationship with self-generating, complex, resourceful, astonishing processes. So, it makes as much sense to teach Ecofeminism in an outdoor classroom as it does Field Biology or Plant Ecology. By immersing Ecofeminist theories in the living world, I hope to revision an ethics of reciprocity, the reciprocity of inter-dependent living systems.

This move to take education outdoors flies in the face of long-standing and deeply entrenched pedagogical and patriarchal traditions. From the time of Plato's academy, formal education has been an exclusively indoor, primarily male-focused pursuit, dependent on male mentors and libraries. This introversion of learning is encapsulated by Plato's mouthpiece, Socrates, in dialogue with Phaedrus. When Phaedrus remarks on how awkward the citified Socrates is at being outdoors, Socrates replies: "You must forgive me, dear friend: I'm a lover of learning, and trees and open country won't teach me anything, whereas *men* in town do" (Quoted in Soulé, 1995, p. 149, my emphasis). Not only are we captives of an impoverished, rapacious culture that denies our life debt to the Earth, we are bewildered (wilderness severed [Cohen, 1993]) by a 2,000 year heritage which demeans living nature. Being in the bush is thus not an entertaining frolic, it is serious work. It is a demanding job to overturn world-views.

The exposure to the ecological foundations of being may be specially crucial for postmodern university inhabitants steeped in the subculture of deconstructionism. Postmodern deconstructionism has, in my view, considerable heuristic value in its dethroning of objectivism, exposing the origins and limits of our knowledge-claims. But, however useful as an epistemology, as an ontology, deconstructionism can spell disaster for the natural world. Deconstructionism has serious relativistic consequences when it claims that all texts are "equivalent" (Lyotard, 1990, p. 23) and it has dire nihilistic tendencies when it affirms that nature is an "invention of culture" (Hayles, 1995, p. 47).⁷ As Soulé (1995) points out, the fashionable posture of post-modern deconstructionism is the ideological equivalent of a physical attack on the living world. And such an intellectual war against the reality of nature is not just a quaint academic parlour game, but is politically potent, for it can serve to justify, where useful, the physical assault on nature, providing a space of equivocation and collusion.⁸ In view of the grip that such subcultures can have on our consciousness, it might be a transformative experience to insert people into the actuality of nature where lack of liquid undeniably means thirst. By teaching Ecofeminism in the living world:

We begin to turn inside-out, loosening the psyche from its confinement within a strictly human sphere, freeing sentience to return to the sensible world that contains us. Intelligence is no longer ours alone, but is a property of the Earth. (Abram, 1996, p. 262)

Conclusion

We need to wrap the world in a web of songlines.⁹ In Australian culture, Aboriginal people moved through the landscape aided by songs which oriented them to country and enabled them to move from waterhole to waterhole. These “songlines” were essential to survival: forgetting a stanza was equivalent to an earthquake.

I want to wake us up to who we are, to return us to our senses.

To return to our senses is to renew our bond with this wider life, to feel the soil beneath the pavement, to sense - even when indoors - the moon's gaze upon the roof. (Abram, 1996, p. 270)

I might end up with sprained ankles instead of enlightened minds, but to me it is worth the risk. It is a way of keeping my wonder alive.

A philosopher, in contrast to a professor of philosophy, is one whose philosophy is expressed in his or her life. (Næss qtd. in Zimmerman, 1993, p. 193)

Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life? (Oliver, 1990, p. 60)

Notes

¹Litter is a superficial problem compared to species extinction, soil loss, air and water pollution, deforestation, desertification, toxic and radioactive contamination, ozone depletion, climate change and so on, but it signals alarming attitudes of apathy.

²The State of Western Australia is one million square miles with a human population of 1.8 million, so it is comparatively easy to locate places suitable for backpacking expeditions away from human habitation, roads, or tracks. Compare figures for this section of Australia with statistics for the entire country of India which is 1.2 million square miles with a population of almost 1 billion (982,223,000 in 1998) and a population density of 774 people per square mile.

³ Safety is dependent on many variables and should not be assumed, but I am convinced that it is considerably safer in the bush than in a moving car.

⁴ I believe, possibly naively, that we can accept certain aspects of the Biophilia Hypothesis without falling prey to the dangers of biological determinism.

⁵ Deep Ecologists and Ecofeminists have developed this notion of the ecological self extensively (see Næss, 1973; Hallen, 1988; Mathews, 1991).

For an Ecofeminist critique of Deep Ecology's notion of ecological self-hood, see Hallen, 1999.

⁶ An early version of this claim appeared in 1987, see Hallen, 1987 and Smith, 1997.

While there are many common factors uniting Ecofeminism, there is no single party line (thank heavens). Ecofeminism aspires to recognise and to respect differences, embracing heterogeneity, celebrating ambiguity and centralizing diversity. For a discussion of the various forms of Ecofeminism see Hallen, 1994.

⁷ I do not wish to homogenize deconstructionism and I acknowledge the variety of positions within its ambit.

⁸ See Alison Caddick's (1998) recent report of Donna Haraway's visit to Australia where she argues that Haraway's reluctance to take a stand on political and environmental issues may be both a space of equivocation and of collusion with the ruling oligarchy.

⁹ Mununggurr, Ngalawurr, of the Djapu clan, Yirrkala, Arnhem Land, personal communication; see also Neidjie, 1989; Chatwin, 1987, pp. 80-2, pp. 313-4, pp. 324-325; Mowaljarlai, 1993; Olive, 1997; Lowe, 1990; Peasley, 1983; Flood, 1983.

Notes on Contributor

Patsy Hallen, a senior lecturer in Environmental Philosophy at Murdoch University, is a Canadian by birth, and an Australian by passion. She came to Murdoch University in 1974 as a foundation member of staff. In 1993 she was a visiting scholar at the University of California Berkeley.

She has travelled extensively and has taught philosophy at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, where she learned far more than she taught.

Patsy spends substantial periods in the bush, thinking about ways to make philosophy life-relevant. She has published book chapters and articles in the areas of Environmental Philosophy, Philosophy of Science and Ecofeminism. She loves teaching.

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Appendix One *The Kurrabup Manifesto*

We recognise that:

1. Earth is the ground of philosophy.
2. Philosophy should foster the love of wisdom and a cooperative search for the good life.
3. Good environmental philosophy should aim to provide ecologically self-reflexive practices and ecological literacy, attuning to the planet as part of a dialogue with place, presence and biosphere.
4. Philosophy is lived through rather than despite the body, and should be expressed by social and political actions that can challenge the dominant presuppositions of societies.
5. One of our central metaphysical purposes is to acknowledge our belonging within the eco-community (instead of seeking to own it), to relate communicatively with it, and discover its responsiveness.
6. One of our central moral purposes is to supplant the dominant conception of human / nature relations as based upon a hierarchy in which all other species service humanity, and creatively to serve the entire earth community.
7. One of our central epistemological principles is that a complete knowledge of nature as a whole and of its members will never be available to us and that we require humility, openness, and a beginner's mind in our interactions with the universe.
8. One of our central political purposes is to understand, oppose and resist oppression, whether it is of race, class, gender, species or other in form, and whether economic, political, cultural, or biological in character.
9. Honour and remembrance are due to the forgotten and erased histories of human and non-human generations who were tested and often sacrificed to give us the present, and whose gift must be passed on to future earth generations.
10. We acknowledge that conflict, suffering, and death also have their role in the web of life and need to be challenged where appropriate and wisely negotiated when not.
11. We aim to respect our differences and celebrate one another and all of life through education, a cultivation of playfulness and creative participation.
12. The members of Earth Philosophy Australia are entitled to discuss, revise and augment these principles as seems to them suitable.

(The Bush School, South Coast of Western Australia, May 1997)