

aside from the Buchans and Charles Ritchie there were people like T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolfe, Edmund Wilson, Lady Ottoline Morrell, Evelyn Waugh and a plethora of other figures some well, some not so well-known who were friends of this fascinating woman.

Probably the most important key to Elizabeth Bowen's character and to her achievement was her Anglo-Irish birth and the strength she drew from her rooted love of place. Bowen's Court, her family seat in County Cork, seems to have been central to her preception of the world. We find her continually going back to it as a place of refuge. Childhood, Bowen's Court, and the sweet remembrance of its ghostly past gave her both matter for her writing and character to her life. When she was dying of cancer of the lungs in 1973 she was barely able to whisper. This made it almost impossible for her to communicate with her life-long friends and cousin of her childhood, Audrey Finnes, who was now deaf. Yet it was Bowen's Court and the world of childhood which obliterated any barrier of communication:

Audrey spoke to Elizabeth of the roses that had grown at each side of the steps at Bowen's Court. Their faint scent was always associated in Audrey's mind with Elizabeth's "Welcome home, darling", as they drew up inexpertly at the front door. Now she said, "Does the smell of those roses

haunt you as it does me?" and Elizabeth's face came to life. They spoke of the two sisters who were their mothers; and they were close to one another.

It is in this ending of both the biography and of Elizabeth Bowen as a figure in it, that the intertwining comes full circle.

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Women and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her. SUSAN GRIFFIN, New York: Harper and Row, 1978, Pp. 263

In her book "Woman and Nature" Susan Griffin is concerned to explore and to name the specificity of women's unique place in the world, a specificity which all women, feminist and non-feminist alike, have sensed instinctively but which has only in the last few years begun to be acknowledged and explored systematically in feminist philosophy. Griffin's poetic vision represents to us, in loving detail, women's lives as they are lived and shaped differently than men's. In it she speaks equally to our inchoate yet

powerful sense of our body and our body's place in the world to our intellectual being and sense of self in history. Each passage of her book echoes in us on both the physical and intellectual level, reflecting the current disjunction and the essential unity of these two levels of existence. In doing so Griffin's sub-text defines the shape of a revolutionary project whose task is to end this disjunction and to make a world where our essential wholeness is a lived experience.

In such a project all the separations of a world which is built on and mirrors and reinforces this disjunction become the ground of struggle. The separation, for instance, of labour from 're-creation,' mental and manual, personal from political, public from private and, above all, humanity from nature, is thrown into question. It is the last of these separations that Susan Griffin explores in this book. She does more, however, than movingly document the separation of man and his creature, woman, from nature--which is, after all, not a new thought. She shows how women's separation from nature has always been partial, how woman represents, in the condition of her existence and in her deepest being, man's inability to exist apart from nature. Woman exists on both sides of this great divide. She has been, like nature, raw material for man to exert his power over.(1) She has been, also like nature, a fearsome, unpredictable force, needing continually to be dom-

inated and held at bay.(2) She has been a buffer, too, between man and nature. His distance from her is a continual and reassuring reminder of how much farther he is above and beyond the elemental, physical and animal world of nature.(3) His connection with her is at the same time an essential link with the energy, wonder and mystery of that world.

Susan Griffin shows us what this existence both in and yet apart from nature and from our own natures has meant for women. She reflects our experience of this divided yet strangely complete condition with tremendous power. As she does so, we feel deep sadness and overwhelming anger at the exploitation of women and of nature that is institutionalized in the division between man and nature. Somehow, too, her writing generates a growing, exhilarating awareness of the tremendous potential that lies in women, together, to heal that divide.

Early feminist theory, in all its many tendencies, repudiated women's special relationship with nature. The way forward for women was defined almost exclusively in terms of achieving the full separateness from nature, and therefore the exalted humanness, of men. Shulamith Firestone would have achieved this with the help of test-tube babies.(4) Simone de Beauvoir too, rejected maternity, arguing that in it "woman remains closely bound to her body like an animal."(5) She

would have had women leave their "immanence" behind for the more noble "transcendence" of men. Juliet Mitchell also saw women "relegated to the species while men--through work transcend it" because "all three" of women's roles (providing sexual gratification for their partners, giving birth to children and rearing them) "were shared with other mammals."(6)

In those early days of our movement, before we had built the power we now have, there was a risk in acknowledging positively a special relationship that had for centuries been asserted as the basis of our inferiority. Nevertheless we were never entirely at ease with the early absolute rejection of our association with nature (and with it, incidentally, all of women's specific labour, characteristics and concerns). As our power grew we became more able to accept the risk of falling back into the stereotype traps that we had only just escaped from and which still lay in wait. So we began to dare, in scattered and unsystematic ways, to claim our connection with nature not only as mutual oppression,(7)but also as a political asset. Robin Morgan, for instance, in 1977 declared:

We are Vietnam. And Auschwitz. And Cologne. And Hiroshima. And Como--where one thousand witches were burnt in a single day. And Harlem. And Galesburg. And China. And South Africa. And Williamsport. And the open seas where the great whales are

slaughtered, spuming red geysers, and dying forests where the eggs we lay in our birds' nests have thin pesticide-rotted shells. We are this whole agonized weeping grieving heaving anguished furious mad-with-pain planet crying out against the insupportable burden we have borne for so long.(8)

With statements such as these, feminists defiantly and proudly accepted an association that had previously been experienced only as a male imposed condition which condemned us to sub-human existence.

Susan Griffin has taken these early insights and articulated and developed them carefully and wisely. She has grounded them in profound interior examination and wide research. Her work is essentially an uncompromising search for a vision which transcends the divide man has posited and enforced between himself and nature. It celebrates the possibility of a new female integration with nature which is a chosen, conscious, human condition rather than the enforced, sub-human limited condition it has always been presumed to be and has indeed often been. Her struggle to articulate this vision has necessarily entailed also a struggle to develop a new voice, for existing constructions of language reflects merely the male/dominant half of the man/nature divide--an essentially exploitative approach in which nature is presumed mute, inert, passive, and

in which intuition and emotion are repressed and ignored in a pose of objectivity. The connection of women with nature that Griffin is concerned to define/create is not the assimilation of women to this dumbness but the situating of women within the living, suffering planet as we struggle for our/its voice. In an unassuming but entirely original way she tries to feel and think what its/our first words would be/are as we move toward this new consciousness of self in nature. She builds her book around the counterposition of this new voice/vision with the life denying "objectivity" of society's dominant male voice--a voice which situates itself absolutely outside, above and against nature"

In the process of writing I found that I could best discover my insights about the logic of civilized man by going underneath logic, that is by writing associatively, and thus enlisting my intuition, or uncivilized self. Thus my prose in this book is like poetry, and like poetry always begins with feeling. . .

Since patriarchal thought, however, represents itself as emotionless (objective, detached and bodiless), the dicta of Western civilization and science on the subjects of woman and nature in this book are written in a parody of a voice with such presumptions. This voice rarely uses a personal pronoun, never speaks as "I" or "we", and almost always implies

that it has found absolute truth, or at least has the authority to do so. . .

The other voice in the book began as my voice but was quickly joined by the voices of other women, and voices from nature, with which I felt more and more strongly identified, particularly as I read the opinions of men about us. This is an embodied voice and an impassioned one. These two voices. . . are set in different type styles; thus a dialogue is implied throughout the book.(9)

In doing this Susan Griffin has deepened our own experience, given it words and shown us that the source of women's central role in progressive struggle today, lies in our recognition of the deep separateness of woman's world from man's world. When women move we move from a unique position on both sides of the man/nature divide (and all other divisions of society as well). Our struggle for liberation is not merely linked to the ecology or environmental struggle, but is the deepest and most profound expression of that struggle. Our affirmation of ourselves is necessarily the beginning of the integration of all the dichotomies which structure and divide the male dominated and alienated world. Susan Griffin's original and exciting documentation of this political truth is powerful testimony to the fact that in the current development of autonomous feminist

politics and scholarship we are seeing the emergence of a truly new voice and agent in the history of the struggle for human freedom.

Of course, feminism, in all its forms, does not always and everywhere encompass, deepen and transform traditional progressive concerns. But it can do this. In its most radical, most courageous and most creative expressions feminist theory and feminist practice open the way to new political/personal syntheses and new levels and forms of progressive struggle undreamed of until this phase of our movement, indeed until the last few years of this phase. Woman and Nature is one of the books that allows us to dream new dreams and helps us, together, to build new worlds.

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NOTES

1. King James, for instance, said in 1603: "I am the husband and the whole island is my lawful wife," cited in Plain Brown Wrapper, Rita Mae Brown, Maryland: 1976.
2. Nietzsche expressed this feeling well: "That in woman which inspires respect and fundamentally fear is her nature which is more 'natural' than that of man, her genuine, cunning, beast-of-prey suppleness, the tigers claws beneath the glove, the naivety of her egoism, her ineducability and inner savagery. . ." (Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude for a Philosophy of the Future, Friedrich Nietzsche, Harmondsworth: 1973).
3. Thoreau's distinction between female (spoken) and male (written) language illustrates this distancing from nature through women: "(T)here is a memorable interval between the spoken and the written language, the language heard and the language read. The one is commonly transitory, a sound, a tongue, a dialect merely, almost brutish, and we learn it unconsciously, like the brutes, of our mothers. The other is the maturity and experience of that; if that is our mother tongue, this is our

father tongue, a reserved and select expression, too significant to be heard by the ear, which we must be born again in order to speak." (Walden, or Life in the Woods, Henry David Thoreau, New York: 1965.)

4. The Dialectic of Sex, New York: 1970.
5. The Second Sex, New York: 1953, p. 60.
6. "Discussion of 'Women: The Longest Revolution,'" pages 81-83 in New Left Review, 41, p. 82.
7. Andrea Dworkin is one of many feminist writers who has developed the parallel between man's exploitation of nature and of woman: "The arrogance which informs man's relations with nature (simply, he is superior to it) is precisely the same arrogance which informs his relationship with woman (simply, he is superior to her). . . Man has treated nature much as he has treated women: with rape, plunder, violence." Woman Hating, New York: 1974.
8. Going Too Far: A Personal Chronicle of a Feminist, New York: 1977, p. 225.
9. Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her, New York: 1978, p. xv/xvi.

The Liberation of Women: A Study of Patriarchy and Capitalism, ROBERTA HAMILTON,
London: George Allen and Unwin, 1978, Pp. 117

This book, written by Roberta Hamilton, a young Canadian sociologist, and published in the distinguished Controversies in Sociology series, edited by T.B. Bottomore and M.J. Mulkey, sets out to examine two theoretical approaches to the question of why women have occupied a subordinate position, relative to men. The two theoretical positions that interest the author are Marxism and feminism, and her purpose in the book is to examine their value as explanatory concepts by applying each one to two separate aspects of women's experience in the context of seventeenth-century England.