

Book Review: *Queer Ecofeminism*

Reviewed by Sākihito win Awāsis

Book under Review: Ourkiya, Asmae. 2023. *Queer Ecofeminism: From Binary Environmental Endeavours to Postgender Pursuits*. Lexington Books

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Queer Ecofeminism: From Binary Environmental Endeavours to Postgender Pursuits contributes to an important and growing body of work that is moving ecofeminist analysis away from a colonial gender binary. The book does this by articulating the interrelations of gender and ecological justice. The enthralling, provocative, and timely work offers an ecocritical analysis of a wide range of media. This includes film, television shows, art installations, historical documents, and religious texts. The approach is designed to help move the field of ecofeminism towards a postgender future that is socially and environmentally just. The aim of the work is to fill the urgent need to address root causes of the climate crises by expanding research beyond the limitations of the gender binary.

Increasingly, scholars across a variety of disciplines are incorporating gender into ecological and climate research. Scholars such as Szilvia Csevar (2021), Baada, Baruah and Luginaah (2023), Goldsmith and Bell (2022), and Kivioja, Pongsiri, and Brody (2023) have effectively argued that climate change disproportionately impacts Indigenous women, women of colour, and gender and sexually diverse individuals. The origins of mainstream ecofeminism were grounded in a binary approach to gender. As such, research on the gendered impacts of climate change still largely rely on the colonial gender binary. However, the field is shifting towards a more inclusive, nonbinary approach that problematizes patriarchal, capitalist systems and intersecting forms of oppression. This new approach embraces gender diversity. Asmae Ourkiya, a nonbinary researcher of Amazigh descent, describes how this shift is in part motivated by the 2016 Orlando Pulse nightclub shooting and the current rise of far-right politics.

First-wave cultural ecofeminism emerged in the 1970s and is characterized by the essentialization of women, as well as a lack of intersectionality, inclusivity, engagement with queer theory, and politicization. Meanwhile, radical ecofeminism rejects the essentialist association of women with the earth and claims that this reinforces patriarchal domination and restricts the potency of ecofeminism. Following the lead of queer theory and radical ecofeminism, Ourkiya demonstrates the rich potential for ecofeminism to not only challenge the normalization of binary gender, intersex/transgender exclusion and erasure, and compulsory heterosexuality, but also to further develop its own distinct modes of analysis.

The book consists of five chapters that together provide readers with a framework for queer ecofeminism. The first chapter analyses the connections between the oppression of nature, women, and marginalized people through the lens of intersectionality and demonstrates that gender and climate justice are deeply intertwined with decolonization. The second chapter, “On De-essentializing Ecofeminism,” develops ecofeminism as a movement and discourse that aims to promote nonhierarchical social organization by rejecting binary thinking. The chapter exposes essentialist entanglements in science and literature, calling for urgent de-essentialization. The third chapter details Ourkiya’s interlinking of feminism and environmentalism as interdependent movements. The fourth chapter draws attention to the

post-gendered approach missing in gender and climate discourse, introduces postgenderism to ecofeminism, and challenges the heteronormativity of far-right politics. Artwork explored in this chapter includes the Amorous Couple painting from Iran's Qajar Dynasty and Alok Vaid-Menon's poetry. The fifth chapter reexamines and synthesizes the contributions that all chapters make to the development of a neo-ecofeminism.

Overall, this book carves a vibrant path forward for queer ecofeminist thought. Still, several oversights are apparent. First, the book contains a few formatting inconsistencies (most glaringly a reference to the "table below" that does not exist on page 30) that presumably are remnants from its prior form as thesis. Second, there is some replication of dualistic thinking, for example framing the Global North/Global South as colonizer/colonized. Considering the systemic oppression of the Uyghurs, can China be grouped with the Global South? Can Indigenous peoples of North America be characterized as part of the Global North? This dualistic framing risks essentializing geographic location and would benefit from more nuance.

Moreover, Ourkiya purports to challenge all forms of essentialism and I was left wondering how they would respond to Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014) who problematizes the anti-essentialist approach, arguing it overestimates its emancipatory potential because although it could adequately address the breadth of interrelated power relations, it can also serve colonial power structures. Coulthard states that "both constructivist and essentialist articulations of identity can aid either the maintenance or subversion of oppressive configurations of power" (2014, 102). Ourkiya may have inadvertently created another dualism by demonizing essentialism and glorifying anti-essentialism.

Ourkiya successfully brings ecofeminism into constellation with nonbinary genders and non-heteronormative bodies and sexualities, but this falls short of how Michi Saagiig Nishinaabe scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) defines constellation as relationships that are informed by the radical resurgence of embodied Indigenous political orders. Although Ourkiya accounts for how early forms of ecofeminism "borrowed" from Indigenous communities and relationships with land, some Indigenous scholars consider this a form of appropriation (Nixon 2015; Kwaymullina 2018). The connections to Indigenous studies, and Indigenous feminisms in particular, could be strengthened.

Although Ourkiya aims to guide research on Indigenous peoples from the tenets borrowed by ecofeminism to a more expansive intersectional study of issues faced by Indigenous communities, a question arises and reflects a wider and long-standing gap in the field of ecofeminism: what does it mean for ecofeminism to center Indigenous knowledge systems? What does Indigenous ecofeminism look like? There was a missed opportunity here to animate ontological pluralism, further combat hierarchies of knowledge, and elevate the voices of queer Indigenous people. Despite these shortcomings, Queer Ecofeminism opens possibilities for new research methodologies and interdisciplinary synergies and has much to offer scholars, scientists, artists, and activists alike. Ourkiya implores us to bridge queer theory with critical ecofeminist scholarship because "natural spaces have always and will always be queer" (95).

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