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INDIGENOUS WOMEN, ECOPOLITICS AND HEALING--

"WOMEN WHO MARRY BEARS"

Women are half the world's population, receive one-tenth of the world's income, account for two-thirds of the world's working hours, and own only one-hundredth of the world's property.ⁱ

More and more of the world's caretaking tasks are again being shifted to women's shoulders as funding to women's shelters, homes, organizations and programs is diced and sliced together with social programmes. It is therefore urgent for all those opposed to the Western world's collective dysfunction to identify our shared and divergent agendas, and to act on our common concerns. They emerge in the 1990s from an invisible global politics in which women and minorities worldwide are particularly vulnerable.

The purpose of this paper is to contrast the dysfunctional beliefs and ideology behind the current politics of "globalization" with the animistic subsistence philosophy of Circumpolar people whose staunchest proponents today are Indigenous women. Among the many Circumpolar and Northern stories, there is a particular motif which

I find most suitable for discussing our affinities across cultural differences; the motif of a woman who marries a bear, thus creating the original totemic link between her people and their half-human, half-animal ancestor. Discussing this motif allows me to ground my discussion about our human/woman affinities in a narrative where ecological concerns unite rather than separate women and ecospiritual men through a shared, central concern of the eco-friendly movements.ⁱⁱ However, I consider it indispensable, before elaborating on this motif, to discuss the ethical concerns linked with cross-cultural exchanges and comparisons, i.e. the issue of asymmetrical research practices. This is related to the latest manifestation of colonial processes--appropriation by those with more access to power of spiritual and epistemic rather than material property.

In discussing global politics, it is important to remember, as Mies and Shiva point out in *Ecofeminism* that:
The 'global' in the global order means simply the global domination of local and particular interests, by means of subsuming the multiple diversities of economies, cultures and of nature under the control of a few multinational corporations (MNCs), and the superpowers that assist them in their global reach through 'free' trade, structural adjustment programmes and, increasingly, conflicts, military and otherwise. (1993, 9)

In view of its own idealistic goals, one might have expected the feminist movement to be at the forefront of the battle for equality--not just for white mainstream women but especially for the women suffering multiple burdens of discrimination; oppression rooted in ethnicity, class, age, ability, sexual orientation and other variables that add to the disadvantages of being "merely" born a woman.

The North American and European feminist movements have become increasingly aware of their own failures and self-serving biases within the realm of human/woman rights and are paying more and more attention to the insights and outpourings of women from the margins of socio-political and economic power.

Among the world's minorities and oppressed groups, Indigenous and/or "Third/Fourth World women" occupy a particularly vulnerable position.ⁱⁱⁱ While it is true that all humans, ultimately, suffer from the shortsighted raping of our planetary resources, it is Native peoples, women and Nature that are the immediate victims of capitalistic, corporate profiteering and violence in many parts of the globe. As Mies and Shiva point out in *Ecofeminism*, "... the world's socio-economic structures are full of inherent inequalities that permit the [non-native] North to dominate the South, men to dominate women, and the frenetic plunder of ever more resources for ever more unequally distributed economic gain to dominate nature" (1993, 2). As Native women continue to point out to non-native feminists, it makes no sense for them to focus on the rights of women to the exclusion of the rights of their fathers, husbands, sons and other members of Native communities who are fighting with them for land and resource rights, for self-determination and against the negative consequences of the Indian Act. Why then should I focus in this paper on Native women rather than Native peoples as being in the forefront of the movements against ecological dysfunction?^{iv}

To a great extent as a result of hierarchical Christian teachings and the patriarchal politics of colonial governments whose laws extend

to Native lands, Native women are less equal than Native men--economically, politically and in terms of poor protection against the physical manifestations of male violence.

^v As suggested by the so-called "standpoint theory,"^{vi} in terms of their disadvantaged location, Native women have, potentially, the broadest perspective for assessing and offering solutions regarding the impact of discrimination. The multiple forms of oppression they often face in education, job searches, economic pursuits and political struggles have also alerted them better than non-native women to the complexity of issues ecofeminists would do well to deal with. Hence, non-native feminists have a great deal to learn from the holistic and well-rounded insights and the outraged outpourings that characterize Native women's writings.^{vii} They point out with particular clarity the impact that the white male body politic is having on the environment in its broadest range--physical, natural, spiritual and mental. In my own interpretation of feminism, it works at its holistic, connected best when it attempts to integrate all--men, women, children and the natural world--to its core with the goal of both theorizing and living out balanced human/animal relations.^{viii}

What, then, does "dysfunction" refer to? In my view, the epistemic, ontological thought and "scientific" paradigms that dominate Western research and institutions are premised on non-ethical principles that promote rather than impede structural violence. The unrealistic, politically motivated Western trust in unlimited growth and "progress" and the way multinationals and other companies exploit cheap labor for THEIR economic advantage is pathological, "dysfunctional". After

all, this attitude is ultimately self-destructive also for the exploiters; they are robbing this Earth from their own future generations, if not from their very own children in this very day and age. As Mies puts it:

One reason for this collective schizophrenia is the North's stubborn hope, even belief, that they can have their cake and eat it: ever more products from the chemical industry *and* clean air and water; more and more cars and no 'greenhouse' effect; an ever increasing output of commodities, more fast- and processed-foods, more fancy packaging, more exotic, imported food *and* enjoy good health and solve the waste problem. (1993, 57)

Despite colonial and religious coercion, Native women continue to celebrate in their writings the respectful human-animal relations which were once the dominant world view throughout the Circumpolar North.^{ix} This persistence of the ancient root values is remarkable and has forced me to re-evaluate, completely, the "cocacolonization", following Finland's former colonization, which has come in the way of my country's former shamanistic/animistic visions.^x The continuing validity of Native stories around women and bears has provoked me to reconnect with animistic, woman and ecofriendly beliefs of my Finno-Ugric ancestors, and to develop a sounder ecospiritual politics as my form of activism and as also my academic area of research.^{xi} Because so much about Native philosophies has been recorded and written by non-natives, I have come to form my understanding of their beliefs from sources other than merely textual ones. In fact, much of what

I know about the motif of women and bears is by Western scholars alone. However, having collaborated closely with Native groups both in Sápmi (the homeland of the European Sami) and in Canada, I have come to reassess the ethnographic and other interpretations of this motif in light of other, Native sources of information. A very different picture emerges from the narratives when they are situated in the broader context of continuing animistic "Pan-Indian" philosophies and storytelling conventions, practices and in the current "Post-colonial" political context.

There has been a tendency to perceive Native theories and writings in a projective, dualistic fashion. On the one hand, it has been common to idealize Native women's writings as having all the solutions to the world's ecospiritual crises with human wisdom being epitomized in the stories of Native elders. On the other hand, the difference between dominant Western and Indigenous epistemological and philosophical traditions and forms of literary expression have resulted in a questionable ordering of knowledge systems; Western scholars often treat Native ways of knowing as "primitive," "unsophisticated" or in other ways "inferior," simply because of their own inability to grasp the totality of the Native approach to life.^{xii} Hence, it is important, when discussing the contributions of minorities to remain vigilant about any projections, dualistic perceptions, guilt-derived exaggerations of victimhood or heroism. Members of minorities are characterized by as much individual variety and interethnic diversity as any group. Hence the importance of adopting an approach that is flexible and

fluid enough to recognize cross-cultural overlapp of human values and ideal aspirations, but disciplined enough to consider asymmetrical relations between the privileged and less privileged nations.^{xiii}

On the other hand, one must, from the outset, beware of treating Native spiritual knowledge and ecofeminist writings as yet another commodity worth copying, adopting and assimilating into mainstream thought and practices without further ado. As Jürgen Kremer notes:

Today, a yearning to recover a holistic approach to healing draws many people to explore indigenous practices. While the desire for this exploration is valid and important, it raises not only ethnical and political issues, but also epistemological questions, specifically: Is the Euro-American way of knowing indigenous healing compatible with the native understanding and use of these practices?^{xiv}

Kremer echoes my approach by promoting a self-reflective ethical stance and by reminding scholars that
 Conversation and inquiry can conceivably happen in a framework of exchange, mutuality and equity--rather than of appropriation. However, this will only be the case as long as we confront the grim facts of colonization at the same time. Unless westerners approach indigenous cultures from such a perspective of recovering their own ancestral minds, the essence of all native traditions will always remain *Other*--that is, fundamentally alien, different, split off, separate, beyond the reach of the self of the researcher. (1996, 150)

Kremer suggests that an alternate stance helping scholars avoid inappropriate research paradigms and approaches could be the recovery for them of their own indigenous roots within the framework of Eurocentric [or other] paradigm(s) for

This allows the critical review and integration of past scientific accomplishments (in the broadest sense), and an approach to indigenous (healing) knowledge of other peoples within a comparable epistemology and value

perspective. The result would be a relationship between inquirers recovering an indigenous framework and inquirers living now in indigenous cultures, where knowledge is explored and exchanged based on equality. (1996, 151)

For Kremer, the exposure to Native American healing practices, for example, should be an occasion for Euro-Americans and Europeans to develop and remember their own indigenous roots and healing approaches. This process would include the integration of the western medical and psychological achievements from indigenous Euro-American [and other] perspectives (1996, 151).

I call my own politics, based on close collaboration with Native groups, the politics of Affinity.^{xv} This is a carefully chosen term for "affinity" is in my view less dualistic than "difference" and more political than "sameness" or the rhetorical emptiness of "sisterhood." It is in the spirit of Affinity, then, that I consider the animistic world view of bearwomen.

THE NARRATIVES ABOUT WOMEN AND BEARS

The motif about women intimate with bears has a wide distribution throughout the Canadian and European North, creating links between groups as different from each other as the Crees of North America, the Tlingit and Dene of the Northwestern territories, The Sami and the Finns, the Swedes and the Norwegians, and many Indigenous peoples in Northern Russia and Siberia.^{xvi} Even Armenian women of mountainous regions use the story of women marrying bears as a political weapon.^{xvii} However, the ecological motif could speak with equal relevance to

non-circumpolar ecofeminists whose cultures may be far removed from pre-Christian or pre-capitalistic and industrial memories and rituals.

The stories featuring women cohabiting with bears reflect an animistic subsistence philosophy in which the ancient Circumpolar healing dramas, centered on the worship of the bear as a hybrid "transitional object" are ecospiritual blueprints for a modern model of holistic healing and balanced relations. What they tell us of ancient socio-religious and cosmic relations is worth emulating in its most ideal form. While these stories continue to circulate as a central tool of acculturation and traditional values among Indigenous women, they survive mostly as "children's lore" among Nordic women. Few Nordic women suspect, however, that their cherished childhood stories about witches on brooms and princesses in bed with bears refer to an ancient powerful shamanistic cultural vision that goes back as far as several millenia B.C. My purpose in tracing this motif is to suggest that by keeping this "lore" alive, not as "old wives' tales" or silly children's stories, but as living theory and practice, Native women are role-modelling some of the wisdom that is needed for the world to regain its senses.^{xviii} For Native people, stories have always contained their history, memory of the past and continued present visions in the purest form of collective memory.

What then is it that these stories contrast with and offer challenges to? The pre-christian, pre-industrial animistic/shamanistic philosophies have become attractive models of socio-political organization for many ecofeminists, because they

offer a functioning model to contrast with the dysfunctional global politics, particularly of the 1990s. The "primitive" ancient times, in this light, are not primitive at all, but in fact quite sophisticated.

One shared ecofeminist goal is in my view to collectively make visible the global processes that are becoming invisible as a new world order becomes increasingly anchored on the control of people and resources worldwide for the sake of capital accumulation. The global forces of capitalist patriarchy are simultaneously homogenizing and fragmenting the world. The holy grails of "modernization" and "development" are euphemisms for the over-exploitation of peoples and lands. As Shiva and Mies point out:

Ecofeminists have clearly articulated their vision of an alternative society, based not on the model of growth-oriented industrialism and consumerism but close to what we call the subsistence perspective. (1993, 4)

The Western Cartesian world-view based on Enlightenment models of perception and a dead, mechanistic vision prevents men from appreciating the enriching potential of the diversity of life and cultures, which these dominant epistemic and scientific approaches view and experience as threats to their goals. The efforts to control people and capital have led to standardization and to homogenization because diversity and difference defy the monoculture of the profit-obsessed mind. Cultural and economic politics at present all aim at eliminating diversity and qualitative differences. The backlash against the funding and existence of women's and Native studies, Black studies and other "minority" programs is a perfect example of this

trend. Even though women are 51% of humanity, the power-holding elite (men) tell them that "society can no longer afford" funding for "special interest groups" (the majority). An ecofeminist perspective propounds the need for a new cosmology which recognizes that life in nature is maintained by means of co-operation, and mutual care, respect--however idealistic, utopian and childish this may sound. Only in this way can we respect and preserve the diversity of all life forms, including their cultural expressions, as true sources of our well-being and balance. As Mies and Shiva point out, "The ecofeminist effort to create a holistic, all-life embracing cosmology must necessarily imply a concept of freedom different from that used since the Enlightenment" (1993, 6). Bringing to mind views expressed time and again in the writings of Native women, they note further:

[We] reject the notion that Man's freedom and happiness depend on an ongoing process of emancipation from nature, on independence from, and dominance over natural processes by the power of reason and rationality. Socialist utopias were also informed by a concept of freedom that saw man's destiny in his historic march from the 'realm of necessity' (the realm of nature), to the 'realm of freedom'--the 'real' human realm--which entailed transforming nature and natural forces into what was called a 'second nature', or culture. According to scientific socialism, the limits of both nature and society are dialectically transcended in this process.
(1993, 6)

My research on Circumpolar women's ancient status and role shows that the nature/culture split is the paradigmatic model of asymmetrical power relations which themselves ground the systemic violence and health problems women suffer from in patriarchal societies, and which prevents the quality of life from applying and being available to

women as well.^{xix}

One can look upon the motif of a woman who marries a bear as both a tool of socialization and, paradoxically, as a model helping women transgress the sex/gender system. It is this story, however, that is seen to have originally grounded social relations and rules. According to Georgina Loucks, "This particular myth appears to explain certain rituals that different tribes observe in connection with hunting bears. The many motifs in the story that are similar in some versions, and different in others, can be understood in terms of their relationships to specific cultural observances."^{xx}

Loucks claims that "the function of the myth was to explain the ways in which the animal helper could be expected to be of assistance to the hunters, and what the hunters would have to do to encourage the animal helper to assist them. Many of the versions stress that there was very little food and the people were hungry" (1985, 221). She comments on several versions of the motif where either the woman is rescued by her brothers from the bear, or she kills the brothers, is punished or turns herself into a bear, killing her brothers. Instead of accepting the tales "neutrally" as didactic lessons about proper relations, she points out the male interests that underlie them. If it is the woman insulting the bear excrement and breaking other taboos, such and other elements "would explain to the community to whom they were related, why it is that women held the positions they did and why it was that women were not to participate in the sacred rituals of the hunters" (1985, 225). There are many problems with a non-native feminist interpretation of this tale, something to which I have over

the years become more and more alerted; for the purposes of this paper, however, I claim that the stories continue to serve numerous aims which can even be mutually contradictory.^{xxi} They need not be either vestiges of Christian impact where women are increasingly made to carry the role of social transgressors or to act as the healing links between organized society and "wild nature" (the Christian, patriarchal view); from the point of view of ancient animistic societies based on sustainable philosophies, they can be interpreted to both carry on ancient balance-oriented values, AND serve as stories where women can transgress their social roles and restrictions. In fact, the stories contain contradictions because they no doubt incorporate both shamanistic elements and Christian influences. This would explain why they can serve several mutually exclusionary functions and become "compatible" in the non-dualistic mindset, spiritbody or "unconscious." They both reinforce the ancient appreciation of the animal/human connection while carrying traces of limiting taboos resulting from more recent times. They both attract and repel--like the bear-lover in his den. Finno-Ugric peoples, like Native peoples of the New World, had an animistic and shamanistic world view based on the concept of an extended family of human and animal interconnections. The bear rituals and feasts give interesting indications of a social organization that was rooted in the mediating role of this totem animal who-which was also believed to be half-human, a human ancestor, hence a true mediating figure between the dead and the living, human and animal, and not just male/female relations. The social contract of the Finnic peoples was not based on a dualistic

division of nature vs. culture; boundaries between the sacred and the profane, the human and the animal realm. In the animistic world view, boundaries were much more fluid than what the Western consciousness can even grasp. The fluidity is best expressed in the attitudes Circumpolar peoples have shown towards the bear. Fluidity was not a threat because social/economic conditions did not depend on women being resources. This contrasts sharply with the non-values of global politics, where "progress" is a measure of an elite's seizure of and treatment of others as resources. Shiva and Mies point out:

To find freedom does not involve subjugating or transcending the 'realm of necessity', but rather focusing on developing a vision of freedom, happiness, the 'good life' within the limits of necessity, of nature. (1993, 8)

Ecofeminists call this vision "the subsistence perspective," stressing that one cannot justify 'transcending' nature but instead, nature's subsistence potential in all its dimensions and manifestations must be helped along as it is and conserved in its natural rhythms. Bear rituals and feasts were based on the celebration and ritual nurturing of such renewable resources.

Descriptions of holistic healing practices and endeavors authored by Native women today represent in many ways a continuity with old ways, ways as old as bear rituals. The Native writer, Leslie Malloch, for example, has provided an excellent chart about the differences between traditional Indian medicine and Western medicine, which I would like to quote in full because it outlines at the same time the value differences between some aspects of animistic and capitalistic societies:^{xxii}

Traditional Indian Medicine	Western Medicine
Integrated, holistic approach to health: body, mind and spirit interact together to form person.	Analytic approach: separation of body, mind and spirit (total split between medicine and religion).
Emphasis on prevention of sickness.	Emphasis on disease, treatment.
Personal responsibility for health and sickness.	Impersonal, "scientific" approach to health and sickness.
Man living in balance with nature, natural law.	Man controlling nature, manipulating natural variables.
Traditional medicine governed by the laws of the Creation: everything we need comes from the Earth - our food, medicines, water, education, religion and laws.	Western medicine is governed by laws of the State, man-made laws which grow out of a political-economic system.
Medicine man is accountable to the Creator, to the people, to the Elders of his medicine society.	Doctor is accountable to the government, and to his professional association.
Medicine is not for sale, not for profit - It is a gift to be shared.	Medicine is a business, the patient is the consumer, the doctor and the medical industry profit.
The land and the people support the medicine man and his practice.	The government, the taxpayer and the consumer support the doctor and the practice of medicine.
Encourages self-sufficiency, self-care and responsibility and control by the people.	Encourages dependency and abdication of self-government by the people.

The interest in things spiritual is a manifestation of Western patriarchal capitalist civilization's deep crisis. Even though there is no denying the value of many Western technological advances, it is the exaggerated and pathological trust in "modernity" that has led into the crises. Many of the fragmented and divisive aspects

described on the right account for the dis-ease Westerners feel as they are buffeted by schizoid public services and by public institutions based on dualistic philosophies. Because in the West the spiritual aspects of life have typically been separated from the 'material' world, the spirit has become more and more eroded and people now look towards the 'East', the Natives or pre-industrial traditions for what has been destroyed in their own culture. This search derives no doubt from a deep human need for wholeness of the bodymind, the spiritbody, but few know how to go about it without the fragmented and commodified way in which the New Age, for example, seeks to market and package spiritual things.

Many North American women are re-exploring animistic philosophy as an alternative to deficit-thinking, and ecofeminist envisionings of balanced living overlap with central aspects of Native belief systems: both oppose the materialistic emptiness of the "technotrance" and topdown ideologies. For Native people, the term "health" means balance and harmony within and among each of the four aspects of human nature: spiritual, emotional, mental and physical. They point out that over-focusing or under-focusing on any one aspect upsets the balance of the four. "Mental health" is one part of our total being, and the aspects of spiritual, emotional and physical life must also be considered.^{xxiii}

For Native women and for Third World women who fight for the conservation of their survival base this spiritual "icing-on-the-cake," the divorce of the spiritual from the material is incomprehensible for they continue to regard the earth as a living

being which guarantees their own and all their fellow creatures' survival. They respect and celebrate Earth's sacredness and resist its transformation into dead, raw material for industrialism and commodity production (Mies and Shiva, 1993, 19). The bear rituals to which the bear/woman motif is linked were occasions for atonement; the participants expressed their sorrow and guilt at having had to kill the bear for their subsistence needs, but the ceremony represented a thanksgiving to the bear's guardian.

The bear's skull was ritually hung on a tree to ensure its return to its ancestor in the skyworld, and to ensure the continuity of the death-rebirth cycle in nature. The marriage of the woman and the bear, sometimes before, sometimes after the ritual feast commemorated the totemistic origins of the people in and its intimacy with the animal world. Instead of bears and women being seen as mere resources and representatives of "passive nature", they were respected and venerated as the very life-principle itself of the bear hunting societies.

A similar attitude stressing balanced relations and connectedness with Nature marks the ecopolitics of Sami women. To quote Elina Helander:

The Sami also possess the kind of knowledge that Western culture does not fully acknowledge as valid knowledge ... The direct knowledge gained through shamanistic methods and experiences and through a long-lasting stay in Nature makes people conscious of the interrelatedness of animals, stones and other natural objects and beings. Ecological thinking becomes an important factor in the maintenance of these mutual relationships.

.... [Christianity] pays attention to personal salvation, emphasizes an individual's access to heaven and grace. What happens with the Earth as a collective home base for

humans, animals and other life forms is not relevant ...^{xxiv}

Sami philosophy in its most ideal traditional form contrasts, indeed, sharply with top-down philosophies and epistemic conventions of the dominant Western philosophies. Helander argues that respect for the Earth is the root of all other, including academic relations. Whether or not this is true of practice, the lofty ideal echoes the ancient values of Finno-Ugric peoples:

.... The philosophy of Indigenous peoples, in which Mother Earth is central, has been passed on to us from our forebears. Our task, which we have received from Mother Earth, is to look after our lands for future generations. This philosophy is grounded in its own power and right. (1998, 161)

This is the balance that we have lost, and which the so-called primitive societies understood as the sustainable basis of life. People as closely related linguistically and culturally as the Finns have come to see the animistic subsistence perspective as a thing of the past, yet the stories about women and bears are the pawprints that lead us Finns back to our shamanistic philosophies. The forest, too, whose embodiment the bear was believed to be, is being discussed in non-mythic, archieconomic terms. It no longer "moves" or has its "väki" (special force, energy, mana)--now it is merely so many square kms of potential pulp.

BEARS AND SPIRITUALITY

The motif of women and bears offers multiple correctives to the global dysfunctional politics that ecofeminists oppose.

The animistic philosophy of the bear hunting societies has made a come-back in the pagan, pre-christian or 'non-denominational' spiritual practices of many North American (and some) European ecofeminists. As women in various peace and health movements re-discovered or re-invented as a value the interdependence and connectedness of everything, they also rediscovered the non-pompous, simple spiritual dimension of life--the realization of this interconnectedness is what many now refer to as "spirituality." For many women disillusioned by the dominant patriarchal religions which collaborate with colonialism and contribute to the denigration of women, nature and "primitive peoples," spirituality is the "numinous," "awesome" religious sentiment pervading all things and beings, minus all its exploitive and destructive connotations. Of course, the very term 'spiritual' means different things to different people.^{xxv} One might agree, however, that a defining feature is its resistance of hierarchical and dogmatic orderings, and that it is not connected with commercial exploitation (an ideal which does not always stand the test of New Age consumerism). Some refer to the spiritual as a general female principle permeating everything in nature.^{xxvi} As a type of connecting principle, an embodiment of Eros, spirituality can be seen as having more affinities with the positive uses of magic than any organized form of worship. For many North American "witches" spirituality has to do also with women's sensuality and sexual energy, because it is this natural and joyful life force that links them to each other, to men and to other life forms and the elements.

Traditionally, feminists have tended to focus either on spirituality or on politics, or on the end product rather than the creative, spiritual process. In contemporary spiritual practices they are, however, seen to be intrinsically interrelated. Spirituality has typically focussed on the individual's uniqueness and individuality while politics has emphasized one's membership in a group. At best feminist spirituality centers on our interconnectedness and sense of oneness, without ignoring politics.

For me, spirituality is a politics of affinity; it is the energy calling forth our deepest feelings of belonging, to ourselves and our communities, and to nature. By worshipping the bear, my forebears did not celebrate nationalistic boundaries but the fluid borders between self and the animal world.

Mies and Shiva discuss the close affinities between the ecofeminist beliefs and ancient animism when they point out that

The ecological relevance of this emphasis on 'spirituality' lies in the rediscovery of the sacredness of life, according to which life on earth can be preserved only if people again begin to perceive all life forms as sacred and respect them as such. This quality is not located in an other-worldly deity, in a transcendence, but in everyday life, in our work, the things that surround us, in our immanence. And from time to time there should be celebrations of this sacredness in rituals, in dance and song. (1993, 18)

The sacredness of the Earth is such a central concept in Native women's, and in general, Native people's writings, that it would be easier to quote the sources where it is not evoked, than the ones where it is present.

Ancient tales about women marrying bears provide important information about women's spiritual roles and of the socio-cosmic organizing principles of bear hunting societies and times. Elements of this old worldview suggest the roots of the Native Sweatlodge and also of the Finnish sauna in ancient bear societies' social attitudes. They combined the spiritual, social, economic and psychological dimensions of holistic living. The bear rituals following the ritual killing of the totemistic bear resulted precisely in the celebration of sensuous energies, song and dancy and merrimaking beyond the Christian fear of the female, of matter and the body. Women marrying bears were espousing the spiritual as a natural form of sensuousness; as very spirit of Nature embodied in its most respected representative: the bear, and as their own furious, furry, ambivalent, natural realm of instinct, the body, the spiritbody.

The very notion of `multidimensional' healing which is gaining currency in the popular, alternative health movement calls for the deconstruction and dismantling of the category of nature vs. culture reified within Western androcentric patriarchy. The animistic societies were most significantly not rooted in dualistic models, nor in the hierarchical separation and reification of the mind/body. In fact, they did not even seem to draw such important and

taken-for-granted distinctions as human vs. animal or reality vs. dream world but allowed for situations and states of mind where there could be some blurring of such realms. In contrast, the dominant, schizoid male body politic is rooted in a dysfunctional set of dualistic and hierarchically ordered oppositions which we need to keep on exposing and transforming for a healthier social organization to emerge. I have in mind such oppositions as body/mind, male/female, primitive/civilized, spirituality/politics, story/history, fiction/reality, whore/madonna to name a few. Their hierarchical rather than heuristic ordering is the root of violence in its various manifestations. To link and associate women and Native peoples in an essentialist way with Nature has had serious socio-political and health implications for these groups. Because the oppositions are not rooted in complementarity but in a structure of inferiority/superiority, control and subjugation, being ascribed the less honorific label (with the polarizations noble savage/drunken bum, whore/madonna as some of its manifestations) has contributed to the structural basis of cultural and gender-based violence.

It is precisely here that the pre-christian, pre-industrial, pre-dualistic and hierarchical animistic societies of ancient times reveal the practical wisdom of their visions and socio-cosmic outlook. Instead of looking upon the animal, female and natural realm as inert or passive matter to be controlled, penetrated, harnessed, turned into a resource for "development", important rituals such as the bear ritual served to celebrate and consolidate the interconnectedness that was perceived to form the core of all

relations; those between men and women, humans and animals, humans and the entire natural environment.^{xxvii}

THE CASE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The issue of sexual abuse is an apt example of the harm that the nature/culture split has created for women and the seriousness of the consequences increases when we take into account additional differential factors from class to ethnicity and age. I will discuss the sexual form of violence as an example of the impact that philosophical and scientific violence can have and how it is a result of the separation of the public and the private, the feminine and the masculine, self and other. To idealize women as mothers and as domestic guardians, reigning in the private domain is to conceal the consequences of such an economic division of labor; women's dependency on men economically, in terms of "expert" advice, spiritual, medical and cultural counselling, protection from violence.

It is my impression that while sexual violence is not affecting minority women to the same extent in the Nordic countries, the links between sexual violence and the violation of ecobalance needs more attention here as well. Canadian feminists situate sexual abuse in the very broadest context of systemic violence and note that it exists on a deeply socio-political continuum that ranges from rape or individual to institutional, or systemic violence. In a culture that looks upon aggressive acts as manly and places men on the side of culture, social regulation, authority with obedient, passive, submissive behavior as womanly, sexual violence is a semi-logical

extension of normal/abnormal male-female relationships, but also of Native/non-native relationships. Hence the importance of seeking socio-political models--even Utopian ones--that do not perpetuate the institutionalization of violence against women and minorities.^{xxviii}

These other social models expose the "unnaturalness" of the prevailing Western political thought and policies. Most importantly for abused women, they offer alternatives to the representation of women as passive handmaidens and servants of men, based on the whore/madonna dichotomy of Christian iconography. If sexual abuse is just one extreme manifestation of other forms of violence, healing, too, can only happen by reuniting holistically what the fragmented institutions have sundered. Psychiatry, psychotherapies, all dominant institutions in the West share an ideology of violence against women and other "others," for they conceal their own biases and lack of objectivity, rarely addressing the importance for healing of cultural symbols, communal rituals, self-esteem etc. The dominant medical research cannot help abused women if it remains tied to the same interests and clinical approaches as other forms of "science":^{xxix}

The feminist critique of science--particularly after Chernobyl--has made it eminently clear that all current science and technology is quite fundamentally military science and technology, and not just when it is applied in bombs and rockets (Mies, 1986). Since Bacon and Descartes, modern natural scientists have been 'fathers of destruction' (Easlea, 1986). If we take our responsibility towards life, women, children, the future, Mother Earth and our own human dignity seriously, we must first clearly state that this science is irresponsible, amoral, immoral, and second, that we no longer want to

go along with this game of a double moral standard--one set for the laboratory, another for private or political life. (Mies, 1993, 51).

The separation of the physical, emotional, spiritual and mental dimensions of health and healing in the dominant biomedical model of health (and its lack of political dimensions) increases rather than alleviates the issues abused women face. It is important not to forget that cultural alienation and subjugation breeds substance abuse, alcoholism etc. and this in turn, breeds "domestic," i.e. male violence against women and children.

Because sexual violence hits Canadian minority women in particularly harsh ways they cannot afford but raise awareness about the way in which violence vs. nature, women and the Native peoples is interconnected, and why a holistic ecopolitics implies fighting all forms of violence together rather than as separate issues. A major critique of androcentric Western philosophy is its fragmentation of important connections and the way it dichotomizes people and phenomena along hierarchical, profit-motivated lines:

... capitalist patriarchy or 'modern' civilization is based on a cosmology and anthropology that structurally dichotomizes reality, and hierarchically opposes the two parts to each other: the one always considered superior, always thriving, and progressing at the expense of the other. Thus, nature is subordinated to man; woman to man; consumption to production; and the local to the global, and so on. Feminists have long criticized this dichotomy, particularly the structural division of man and nature, which is seen as analogous to that of man and woman. (1993, 5)

Echoeing the central tenet and theme of most Native women's writing, Mies and Shiva write:

... This celebration of our dependence to Mother Earth is quite contrary to the attitude promoted by Francis Bacon and his followers, the fathers of modern science and technology. For them this dependence was an outrage, a mockery of man's right to freedom on his own terms and therefore had forcefully and violently to be abolished. Western rationality, the West's paradigm of science and concept of freedom are all based on overcoming and transcending this dependence, on the subordination of nature to the (male) will. (1993, 18)

What other models of femininity are available for women either unable to conceive, or whose virginity is itself a memory of violence, who need other rolemodels of "femininity" than the dysfunctional and dualistic Western ones?

For many Finno-Ugric peoples, among them the Hanti and Mansi, the Finns and the Sami, the original she-bear goddess, foremother represented the primal unity, origins of the people. She controlled supply of food and game and was greatly respected; sacrifices were given to her by all bear-hunting peoples. For the Finns, her name was Mielikki or Hongatar, Osmotar. There was no dualistic division to women as being on the side of Nature and men on an opposite side. Even though it would be idealistic to imagine that women were in all respects equal, that rapes did not happen for example, the social organization of ancient animistic societies echoes the political utopias of ecofeminists. In this world-view gender was not the root metaphor for the establishment of boundaries, roles and economic units. It is doubtful that compulsory heterosexuality with women as male possessions grounded social relations; we know this was definitely not the case with many Native North American groups. For example, it is known that among the Iroquois men held political,

women economic power.^{xxx} This created the conditions for real rather than rhetorical complementarity, contrasting sharply with the Western governments' claim for "separate but equal" spheres of influence for the sexes (private vs. public). Also among the Iroquois it was the female elders that had the highest power allowing them to demote the male leaders who did not ensure the protection of the most vulnerable members of society. Nature and women were not the wildness that had to be tamed and controlled, for everyone was part of the continuum of Nature. This was part of the "pan-Indian" philosophy throughout North America, not just the North, despite obvious cultural differences between the many Native nations.

The literature and oral traditions giving us information about ancient bear hunting societies suggest a social organization that was rooted in symmetrical realms of power, or rather, empowerment. In the context of the bear rituals, men and women also had complementary and distinct roles. We know much less of the woman-specific rituals because the ethnographic materials, on which much of the information resides, were mostly gathered by male scholars, missionaries etc. They often projected their nuclear family-assumptions, their presumptions about male priority and superiority, and often failed to even consider the possibility that women might have had their own powerful, complementary roles. On the other hand, because of ritual gender segregation, they may simply not have been introduced to the spiritual or socio-cosmic activities, duties, roles of women. Hence the speculative nature of the research on bear rituals and feasts. However, it is reported that both the

Finns and the Sami believed that women and bears had a telepathic communication and could understand each other. Instead of this relative closeness of women to animals being a cause for social inferiority (as is the case in the Western view of women's lower physical nature), it gave them an important status as healers and shamanistic guides. It was the role of women to help locate the bear's den, and they had many other spiritually empowering, socially central roles in the bear drama.^{xxx1}

I have evoked the importance of treating the consequences of sexual violence in a holistic way because it is an apt example of how the harm that fragmented approaches cause can be mended. The Native "sweats" as holistic healing rituals are used for a variety of purposes which are not relevant here. Of importance in this context is however their uses as holistic practices that defy the Western split medical model for treating sexual abuse. Whatever may have happened in the sweatlodge as a "bear's den" in the mythic past, even today many Native Canadian/American people heal the roots and impact of violence by withdrawing into the safety of the sweatlodge, an ideal space for the reunification and healing of the physical, emotional, spiritual and mental aspects of a person. The sweats are most appropriate for many of the long-term effects of abuse (dissociation, loss of self-esteem, psychic numbing, difficulty with touch, frozen chakras etc.) and reveal the healing power of cultural symbols, communal rituals and of faith. They also show the important role that nature, support and peer groups play in collective and individual healing: finally, they offer a functional alternative

to the uppers and downers that mainstream psychiatry pushes without addressing the root causes of women's depressions and "post-traumatic stress syndromes." They reveal the extent to which nature heals without invasive interference by "experts" and when we let healing follow nature's own rhythms and our own regenerative, creative powers.

The sweats, also in the Finnish context, offer natural highs, when they are not approached merely for hygiene. As the Finns, too, used the sauna as the ritual, protective site for healing sexual traumas, they would be well-advised to revive ancient practices that have been dismissed over the years.

The representation of women as idolized virgins/mothers is all the more traumatic for abused women that they may have lost their virginity in violent circumstances, and often end up having physical problems with their reproductive system. Collective healing necessarily means addressing such emotional root problems as lack of cultural and individual rootedness, self-esteem and support, and if accompanied by spiritual imagery other than the virgin/mother idolization of patriarchal religions, they offer great spiritual solace for women as well. Hence the importance for Finns, also, to bring back into public knowledge the many female spirit beings, goddesses, guardians of health that Christianity changed into the "handmaidens of Christ" or, men in general. Abused women cannot easily regain their sense of Self, authority, self-love and self-trust, if the only available rolemodels are the virgin/mother image. As I have tried to show, ecopolitics does not imply the separation of

ecology and politics, or of spirituality and economics, or of health, wellness and economic planning. Ecopolitics, on which the Native women are the leaders in world politics, is a holistic attitude rooted in balancing individual and communal rights and needs, on balancing human and animal relations, of avoiding exploitive and sexploitive profit-oriented policies and practices, and in working towards balance in all aspects of life, health, political and ecological planning, culture, spirituality. The sweats are in my mind a perfect representation, and reality, of the woman in the bear's den; after all, it is likely that the sweatlodge, built in the image of Mother Earth, is a spiritual container for a most central and lasting rebirth experience. To quote a Cree activist of women's health matters, Diane Reed:

The fastest way to heal people who are sick is in the sweat lodge. It is the healing lodge of our people. The sweat lodge is like being in the womb of our mother, we are protected and we are safe there. That is where we need to go back ... When we discover our medicine wheel, we discover ourselves, our identity, our connections to the creator, to mother earth, to the grandfathers and to the grandmothers in the spirit world and our connections to animals and nature. The animals and nature can communicate with us. Because we have been brought up in a noisy society and with so much distraction, we have forgotten the ability to talk to nature and animals. We can understand what the wind is saying as it blows around us, we can understand what the bird is saying and we can hear the voices of our people. We can hear the voices of our grandmothers

and more and more as we go along in it we will understand what they say to us.^{xxxii}

People in the Western world are increasingly becoming myopic idiots, so plugged into their machines--faxes, internets, cell phones etc.--that they no longer see the forest for the trees--which they cut to support much unnecessary gadgetry and a toxic fast food industry. Clear cutting, downsizing and slashing funding to the vulnerable members of the society share an ideology of violence against women and Nature. Gadgetry itself claims to be a solution to the world's crisis of deficit, promising to generate mass consumption, job creation and profit--the main Religion of Western North America.

To find a way out of cultural relativism, it is necessary to look not only for differences but for diversities and interconnectedness among women, among men and women, among human beings and other life forms, worldwide. As Mies and Shiva point out:

The common ground for women's liberation and the preservation of life on earth is to be found in the activities of those women who have become the victims of the development process and who struggle to conserve their subsistence base; for example, the Chipko women in India, women and men who actively oppose mega dam construction, women who fight against nuclear power plants and against the irresponsible dumping of toxic wastes around the world, and many more worldwide. (1993, 12)

Hence, in their fascination with Native "spirit bears" and shamanistic female guides, ecofeminists, too, must beware of keeping all connections in the picture; of not separating the spiritually

attractive from the politically and ethically necessary--a constant vigilance about the uses of any research.

It is important for Finns, too, to know as well as possible our Finnish shamanistic and animistic beliefs, practices and philosophies. Otherwise there is the risk that one takes shortcuts through other, apparently more "exotic" cultures--such as the Sami, for example, in order to fulfill spiritual needs. For me, true spirituality resides in simple magic and natural sustenance, of the four primal elements--air, water, earth, fire--the most uplifting, trance-inducing and best of all, non-polluting, health-promoting rawmaterials of balance and graceful being. As I experience them in our Finnish bear's den--the sauna--I feel no need for fake rocks produced with cheap labor somewhere in Asia as "affordable" stand-ins for home-made magic. While feminist postmodernism hails the importance of local action, we must not forget the asymmetries of local and global:

Local cultures are deemed to have 'value' only when they have been fragmented and these fragments transformed into saleable goods for a world market. Only when food becomes 'ethnic food', music 'ethnic music', and traditional tales 'folklore' and when skills are harnessed to the production of 'ethnic' objects for the tourist industry, can the capital accumulation process benefit from these local cultures. (1993, 12)

Much healing comes from rootedness in simple, natural values discovered in one's own soil. As one finds more and more peace in

nature and, as in my own case, in the whole ritual context of the traditional sauna, the need for empty, compensatory consumerism diminishes. As Mies and Shiva remind us:

While local cultures are ... dissected and their fragments commodified, these atomized parts are then 're-unified' in the global supermarket, thereby procuring a standardization and homogenization of all cultural diversity. Cultural relativism is not only unaware of these processes but rather legitimizes them; and the feminist theory of difference ignores the workings of the capitalist world system and its power to transform life into saleable commodities and cash. (1993, 12)

Capitalistic values can, of course, co-opt the spiritual feminists' New Age beliefs and "products." Hence, our shared Circumpolar bear stories must not become new age commodities divorced from the broader economic and political context. There must not be one common Euro-Bear Story but resources available for all to express their specific and special variation on a theme--a politics of affinity, not homogeneity. The New Age movements have created new markets for ethnic curiosities, transcendental meditation books, crystals, records, self-help books and practices which are of differing quality. However, many of them are fragments taken out of their cultural and political contexts. At worst, this market represents yet another colonization by dominant groups of the cultural knowledge, wisdom and contributions of marginalized peoples. Native women continue to point out that after the material resources of the colonies have been seized, now their spiritual and cultural resources are being transformed into commodities for the world market.^{xxxiii}

CONCLUSION

The bear has been a compelling symbol of the space in-between, whether we call it androgyny, human-animal hybridity, cultural transitional objects, or anything else. As an alternative image for desire and the body, the bear is a most appropriate figure for a new politics of representation, for the good life rooted in interconnectedness of nature and humans. As a more challenging "first principle" than even gender, the she-bear allows for the subversion of the prevailing patriarchal binarisms (body/mind, nature/culture, woman/man, animal/human, primitive/civilized etc.) without the dangers of reverse essentialism. Maybe the solution to the ecological crises is that all women do what the stories to which I referred earlier suggest they wish to do: marry bears, produce furry children. After all, the essence of the stories about women intimate with bears is this; they role-model an attitude towards the feminine, the Earth and the animal world that is sorely missing from the global phallic politics: espousing and embracing the Self as half-self/half-other, not exploiting--the Other.

I would like to conclude on a humorous note which is most appropriate since Native women more than others have taught me the value of edutainment--the power of satire and humor to mock dysfunctional politics, and to educate through entertainment:

"As I understand it," said the American Indian [to one of the Puritan Fathers], "you propose to civilize me."

"Exactly."

"You want to get me out of the habit of idleness and teach me to work."

"That is the idea."

"And then lead me to simplify my methods and invent things to make my work lighter."

"Yes."

"And after that I'll become ambitious to get rich so that I won't have to work at all."

"Naturally."

"Well, what's the use of taking such a roundabout way of getting just where I started from? I don't have to work now."^{xxxiv}

i. Patricia Smyke, *Women and Health* (London & New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1991): 120.

ii. Ecofeminism, according to Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva in *Ecofeminism* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1993) "a new term for an ancient wisdom' grew out of various social movements--the feminist, peace and the ecology movements--in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Though the term was first used by Francoise D'Eaubonne it became popular only in the context of numerous protests and activities against environmental destruction, sparked-off initially by recurring ecological disasters" (15). For F. D'Eaubonne's own views, see "Feminism or Death," Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds. *New French Feminisms, an Anthology* (Amherst, Amherst University Press, 1980). Although there may be many definitions of ecofeminism, at its core is the view that it is about the wholeness and connectedness, inseparability of theory and practice. It asserts the special force, life energy and integrity of every living thing: "The ecofeminist principle of looking for connections where capitalist patriarchy and its warrior science are engaged in disconnecting and dissecting what forms a living whole also informs this movement" (Mies and Shiva, 1993, 15).

iii. I have put these terms in quotation marks because the very designations are being deconstructed as being part of a hierarchically conceived Western categorization; in this questionable "pyramid" the Western technological world imagines itself to be the "developed" and ideal "first world" with less polluting and invasive agricultural nations being the "third or fourth" world. Furthermore, "third" and "fourth" world women are in many cases overlapping categories since they are references, essentially, to economic, "developmental" "non-development." Some women prefer to refer to such areas as the "over-exploited" countries.

iv. Many scholars feel that we are now going through the crises of Western "master narratives" and top-down philosophies. To Mies and Vandana: "There are a number of people who interpret the end of East-West confrontation as not only signalling the end of all socialist dreams and utopias but also of all universal ideologies based on a universal concept of human beings and their relation to nature and other human beings. These ideologies have been 'deconstructed' as being eurocentric, egocentric and--according to some feminists--androcentric, and materialist ... The end of these ideologies is being proclaimed by post-modernist thinkers, who hold that the universalization of modernization--the European project of the Enlightenment--has failed. And there are environmentalists and developmentalists who argue that the emphasis on material or economic development and on emulation of the West's model of the industrial society has failed to appreciate that in most non-European societies culture plays a significant role" (11) For Dion-Buffalo and Mohawk as representatives of Mohawk deconstructive theory: "The beneficiaries [of hierarchy] have for centuries constructed elaborated institutions to control and limit the possibilities of both thought and action, but they are vulnerable to movements that can challenge their legitimacy. We are at a time and place in the intellectual history of the West when new theories about what can possibly be conceived and uttered within the West's discourses are being constructed and politicized. It's about time," (p. 20) in "Thoughts from an Autochthonous Centre: Postmodernism and Cultural Studies," *'All of Us' Akwe:kon Journal IX.4* (Winter 1992): 16-22.

v. I have heard many Native women protest against the view of their "oppression"; many explain their powerful status within Native communities as leaders, strong matriarchs and cultural tradition-bearers. Many Native men also protest that because of substance abuse and violence many Native men suffer in fact more than Native women, whose stronger identity and self-esteem is rooted in child-raising and care. Both statistics and socio-political and economic studies reveal a different picture and it is hard to measure Native women's psychological and spiritual strength which may indeed be a mark of their "higher status." However, as the wide-spread nature of violence against Native women right within their communities points out, in economic, political and

material terms the status of Native women remains inferior. Whatever the "truth" between Western statistics and Native women's perceptions (and there are of course different views on that), for me the most important factor remains the need to show solidarity to those who are fighting against Native women's victimization in prisons, schools, band councils etc.

vi. On standpoint theory and feminist methodology see for example Joan E. Hartman and Ellen Messer-Davidow, eds. *(En)Gendering Knowledge. Feminists in Academe* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991): "Briefly described, standpoint epistemology begins with the idea that less powerful members of society have the potential for a more complete view of social reality than others, precisely because of their disadvantaged position. That is, in order to survive (socially and sometimes even physically), subordinate persons are attuned to or attentive to the perspective of the dominant class (for example, white, male, wealthy) as well as their own. This awareness gives them the potential for what Annas (1978) called 'double vision,' or double consciousness--a knowledge, awareness of, and sensitivity to both the dominant world view of the society and their own minority (for example, female, black, poor) perspective. For example, given that blacks in our culture are exposed to dominant white culture in school and through mass media as well as in interaction with whites, we can see how it is possible that blacks could know both white and black culture while whites know only their own. The same might be said about women vis-à-vis men (McCarl Nielsen, 10).

vii. For frank and outspoken articulations of Native women's oppression, cultural dispossession (and also of the irritating fact that many non-native women only perceive and represent Native women as victims rather than survivors and resisters) see for example Amoja Three Rivers, *Cultural Etiquette for the Well-Intentioned* (Distributed by Market Wimmin, Box 28, Indian Valley, VA 24105, 1990); Carol Lee Sanchez, "Sex, Class and Race Intersections. Visions of Women of Color" (163-167) and Kate Shanley, "Thoughts on Indian Feminism" (213-216) in Beth Brant, ed. *A Gathering of Spirit: a Collection by North American Indian Women* (Ithaca: N.Y., Firebrand Books, 1988); for the internal fights of Native Canadian women against the marital inequality resulting from the Indian Act see Janet Silman, *Enough is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1987); more generally on women of color perspectives on the women's movement I recommend Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown, Massachusetts: Persephone Press, 1981); Gloria Anzaldua, *Making Face, Making Soul: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Colour* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990). Other good sources for reading about the plight and resistance of Native women is "Native Women", special issue in *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* (Summer/Fall 1989, Vol. 10, Nos. 2 & 3); Kathleen Jamieson, *Indian Women and the Law in Canada: Citizens Minus* (Ottawa: Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Indian Rights for Indian Women, April 1978);

viii. For articles in which I discuss the minority/majority relations between the Finns and the Sami, and also discuss the concerns of Native women in Canada see Kaarina Kailo, "Integraatiefeminismin ihanteet," *Kvinnoforskning/Naistutkimus*, 7.4. (1994): 41-45; also Kailo, "Trance-Cultural Travel: Indigenous Women and Mainstream Feminisms," Mari Peepre, ed. *Trans-Cultural Travels: Essays in Canadian Literature and Society, NACS/ANEC*, Text series of the Nordic Association for Canadian Studies/L'association nordique d'études canadiennes, Vol. 11 (1994): 19-36.

ix. To list such works would be impossible as human-animal relations are a central aspect of so much "Pan-Indian" writing in all its tribal variety and genre. In terms of the specific woman as bear-motif, however, I recommend Louise Halfe's *Bear Bones and Feathers* (Regina, Sk.: Coteau Books, 1994) and the classic ecospiritual books of Paula Gunn Allen, *Grandmothers of the Light. A Medicine Woman's Sourcebook* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991); *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian*

Traditions (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986); she has also produced noteworthy bibliographies of Native writings in the USA. For women and bears, see also Freda Ahenakew and H.C. Wolfart, *Our Grandmothers' Lives as Told in Their Own Words* (Saskatoon: 5th House Pub., 1992). It may be that most of the bear-woman stories actually recorded in written form (rather than being circulated in ongoing storytelling sessions and rituals) are by non-native scholars. I have found most of my information about this motif in Catharine McClellan, *The Girl Who Married the Bear: A Masterpiece of Indian Oral Tradition* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, Publications in Ethnology, no. 2, 1970); *My Old People Say: An Ethnographic Survey of the Southern Yukon Territory*, 2 Vols. National Museums of Canada, Publications in Ethnology, Numbers 6 (1 and 2), (1975); Georgina Loucks, "The Girl and the Bear Facts: A Cross-Cultural Comparison," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, V.2 (1985): 218-239 and Julie Cruikshank, *The Stolen Women: Female Journeys in Tagish and Tutchone*, Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series. Canadian Ethnology Service, Paper No. 871983 (1983).

x. For a treatment of the woman-bear motif in Finnish scholarship, see Carl-Martin Edsman, "The Hunter, the Games and the Unseen Powers," *Lappish and Finnish Bear Rites, Hunting and Fishing* (Norrbotten: n.p. 1970): 37-60 and 159-188; "Studier i jägarnas förkristna religion: finska björnjaktsriter," *Kyrkohistorisk arskrift* (Uppsala, 1953); 48-106; "The Story of the Bear Wife in Nordic Tradition," *Ethnos* 21 (1956): 36-56.

xi. For my writings in this area see "Furry Tales of the North: a Feminist Interpretation." *Simone de Beauvoir Institute Bulletin/Bulletin de l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir*, 12.2 (1993): 104-133; "The She-bear--Circumpolar Mother of Spiritual Feminism," *Canadian Woman Studies*, Vol. 17.1 (Winter 1996): 48-52 and "Return of the She-Bear: Foremother of Ecospirituality," *Appropriation and Re-appropriation: The Return of Native Canadian Voices*, Ed. Christopher G. Trott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming). I have also published a poem on the bear, "Honeypaws in Heaven--a Prayer to the Bear." *Canadian Woman Studies*. Vol. 17.1 (Winter 1996): 51.

xii. On Native women's epistemic, literary and philosophical differences see for example Lee Maracle, "Oratory: Coming to Theory," and Joy Asham Fedorick, "Decolonizing Language--Reflections on Style" in *Give Back. First Nations Perspectives on Cultural Practice* (North Vancouver: Gallerie Publications, North Vancouver, 1992) pp. 85-94 and 47-61 respectively.

xiii. On majority/minority relations in the context of the European treatment of the Sami, see Alf Isak Keskitalo, "Research as an Inter-Ethnic Relation," *Acta Borealia* 13 (1976): 15-42.

xiv. From "The Possibility of Recovering Indigenous European Perspectives on Native Healing Practices. Developing the Basis For Respectful Knowledge Exchanges," *Ethnopsychologische Mitteilungen* (1996) 5 (2): 149-164.

xv. To situate myself, I am an immigrant Finn living in Canada, with one foot on both sides of the Atlantic both in terms of my research and my ethnic allegiances. I grew up and was educated in Finland but did not learn enough about the Sami and other Finno-Ugric minorities through the official educational system. Hence, I am informing myself both in the pre-Christian beliefs and values of Finno-Ugric peoples which were approached in Finnish schools merely in the patriarchal, Christian spirit. I greatly lament the fact that the Finns and the Sami are taught so little about Sami ways and mythology, and about woman-specific spiritual beliefs and traditions through the educational channel. As regards the concept of "affinity," I am underlying the "Finn" in my Finnish background, not to engage in nationalistic chauvinism but to underline that I try to ground my own political/spiritual practice in my own roots, my own ethnicity, taking no short-cuts through other peoples' spiritual rituals and beliefs.

xvi. For the most thorough descriptions of bear rituals see Irving A. Hallowell, "Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere," *American Anthropologist*, 28, Vol. 1 (1926): 1-175;

David Rockwell, *Giving Voice to Bear* (Toronto: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1991); on bear, women and literature Annis Pratt, "Affairs with Bears: Some Notes Towards Feminist Archetypal Hypotheses for Canadian Literature," *Gynocritics/la Gynocritique*, Ed./Rédigée par Barbara Godard (Toronto: ECW Press, 1987); on Finnish bear rituals by Lotte Tarkka, "Other Worlds--Symbolism, Dialogue and Gender in Karelian Oral Poetry." *Songs Beyond the Kalevala*, Anna-Leena Siikala and Sinikka Vakimo, eds. (Helsinki: SKS, 1994): 250-301.

xvii. With my Armenian colleague, Sima Aprahamian, we hope to publish a collection of woman/bear stories resulting from a special session called called *Transgressing Nature and Culture, Women and bears* following an interesting session at the Canadian Anthropology Association (CASCA) annual meeting, where we chaired a session called "Transgressing Nature, Culture: Women and Bears". Sima Aprahamian discussed the theme in "Transgressing Nature/Culture: Armenian Women and Bears."

xviii. It is worth considering the insights on storytelling by Trinh T. Minh-ha in *Woman, Native, Other*: "The "civilized" mind is an indisputably clear-cut mind. If once upon a time people believed in the story and thought it was true, then why should it be false today? If true and false keep on changing with the times, then isn't it true that what is "crooked thinking" today many be "right thinking" tomorrow? What kind of people, we then wonder, walk around asking obstinately: "Is there not danger of making liars of children by feeding them on these [fairyl] stories?" What kind of people set out for northern Alaska to study storytelling among the Indians and come round to writing: "What especially impressed me was their eagerness to make me understand. To me this eagerness became a proof of the high value they set on their stories and what they represented"? What kind of people, indeed, other than the very kind for whom the story is "just a story?" (125) Minh-ha reveals the biases of Western anthropology further by providing examples of non-native views on storytelling: "...the story is either a mere practice of the art of rhetoric or 'a repository of obsolete customs' (A. Skinner). It is mainly valued for its artistic potential and for the 'religious beliefs' or 'primitive-mind'-revealing superstitions mirrored by its content. ... Associated with backwardness, ignorance, and illiteracy, storytelling in the more 'civilized' context is therefore relegated to the realm of children ... Primitive means elementary, therefore infantile. No wonder then that in the West storytelling is treasured above all for its educational force in the kindergarten and primary school. The mission of the storyteller, we thus hear, is to 'teach children the tales their fathers knew,' to mold ideals, and to 'illuminate facts.' For children to gain 'right feelings' and to 'think true,' the story as a pedagogical tool must inform so as to keep their opinion 'abreast of the scientific truth of the time, instead of dragging along in the superstitions of the past.' But for the story to be well-told information, it must be related 'in as fascinating a form as [pin] the old myths and fables' (124). In contrast with the above views, the Sami look upon stories and storytelling as their theory, ways of knowing, their history (Helander and Kailo, *No Beginning, No End--the Sami Speak Up*, Edmonton: Circumpolar Institute, forthcoming, 1998).

xix. The classic anthropological analysis of the nature/culture split as it affects women is Sherry Ortner's "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" *Woman, Culture and Society*. M. Rosaldo-L. Lamphere, eds. (Stanford: 1974): 67-87.

xx. "The Girl and the Bear Facts: A Cross-Cultural Comparison," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, Vol. 2 (1985): 218.

xxi. To elaborate on the sexist projections in this context is a matter for another paper.

xxii. Taken from "Indian Medicine, Indian Health--Study Between Red and White Medicine," *Canadian Woman Studies* 10. 2-3 (1992): 105-106. Although the chart is based on a stereotype of the differences and is in that regard overdrawn, and although the androcentric language ("Man") that subsumes and renders women invisible is irritating, I find this useful as a "heuristic device"

for alerting readers to the harmfulness of the fragmented medical system under which they must live.

xxiii. See for example Shannon Simpson, "Inside the *Inipi* Sweat, Trust and Fears" Interview with Laverne Gervais-Contois, Special Issue on Healing Politics: Violence, Culture, Alternative Health of *Simone de Beauvoir Institute Review/Revue de l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir*, Vol. 17. (1997): 215-225; see also Ella Saganash, "Sweatlodge: Getting to the Bottom of the Barrel: Interview with Diane Reid, 197-215 of the same issue on holistic healing.

xxiv. Helander and Kailo, eds. *No Beginning, No End--the Sami Speak Up* (Edmonton: Circumpolar Institute, forthcoming, 1998), 146.

xxv. For a critique of ecospirituality divorced from politics, see Janet Biehl, *Rethinking Eco-Feminist Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990).

xxvi. For an excellent introduction to feminist spirituality see Charlene Spretnak, ed. *The Politics of Women's Spirituality* (New York; Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1982) and Winnie Tomm, *Bodied Mindfulness, Women's Spirits, Bodies and Places* (Waterloo: Wilfrid University Press, 1995).

xxvii. Mies and Shiva claim that the dualistic separation of economy and culture (or in Marxian terms of bases and superstructure) finds no resonance in most non-modern societies (1993, 11). They point out that modernization strategy has resulted in the destruction of cultural as well as biological diversity, to a homogenization of cultures on the US coca-cola and fast-food model, on the one hand and of life forms according to the demands of profit-oriented industries, on the other (1993, 11).

xxviii. Sharon Stephens in *Changes in Sami (Lapp) Conceptions of Male and Female as a Key to Cultural Transformations in Sami History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1983) discusses the truly complementary philosophy of the Sami before the gradual turn through Christian influence towards more androcentric models of social organization.

xxix. For my elaboration of the theme of sexual abuse and the holistic therapies that can revolutionize the treatment of the long-term consequences of sexual violence see Kailo, "Beyond the Clinical Couch and the Patriarchal Gaze: Healing Abuse in the Finnish Sauna and Through Holistic Sweats," "Healing Politics: Violence, Culture and Alternative Health," special issue, edited by Kaarina Kailo, *Simone de Beauvoir Institute Review/Revue de l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir* 17 (1997): 89-115.

xxx. On this topic see Judith K. Brown, "Economic Organization and the Position of Women among the Iroquois," *Iroquois Women--an Anthology*, Spittal, W.G., ed. (Ohsweken, Ontario: Irocrafts, 1990): 182-198; Sally Wagner Roesch, "The Root of Oppression is the Loss of Memory: The The Iroquois and the Early Feminist Vision," *ibid.*, 223-228.

xxxi. On this, see Edsman, "The Story of the Bear Wife in Nordic Tradition," *Ethnos* 21 (1956): 36-56.

xxxii. Ella Saganash, "Sweatlodge: Getting to the Bottom of the Barrel: Interview with Diane Reid," *op.cit.*, 203-204.

xxxiii. See for example Loretta Todd, "Notes on Appropriation," *Parallogramme*, Vol. 16.1. (Summer 1990); Allyson Dandie, "Native People Must Start Telling Their Own Stories," *The LeaderPost* (Regina, April, 19, 1990 B6); Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, Lenore, "Stop Stealing Native Stories," *Globe and Mail* (Jan. 26, 1990); Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter--Colonialism & Sovereignty in Hawaii* (Monroe, Maine; Common Courage Press, 1993). For Sami women's discussions

of post-colonialism, see Rauna Kuokkanen "From the Jungle Back to the *Duottar*," *Awakened Voice, The Return of Sami Knowledge*, Elina Helander, ed. (Guovdageaidnu: Nordic Sami Institute, Diedut 4, 1996): 54-64.

xxxiv. Qtd. from *American Jokelore* by Carol Lee Sanches in "Sex, Class and Race Intersections, Visions of Women of Color," in Beth Brant, ed. *A Gathering of Spirit: a Collection by North American Indian Women* (Ithaca: N.Y., Firebrand Books, 1988): 163-167.

Changing Women Initiative: "We are focused on developing a culturally centered reproductive wellness and birth center. By creating a physical space for education and healing for Native American women, we will reclaim cultural identities through birth and motherhood that has been shaped through our cultures." Indigenous Goddess Gang: Colonial tactics like divide and conquer and patriarchy have impacted women by pitting us against one another. There is a narrative that is fed to women that we must compete with each other for everything; a man's love, for validation, in beauty, in success, and this is normalized to nausium by the media. This way of thinking is based on a patriarchal belief that women aren't enough or that we are somehow lesser than. When it comes to Indigenous women, the problem is exacerbated by confusing jurisdictional issues on reservation land, where it's often unclear which agencies have responsibility to look for a missing person or submit their information to the database. Data about those who have been murdered is also sparse "it's been less than a priority for U.S. police to track homicide rates of Indigenous women, if the convoluted responses to Lucchesi's requests for historical data are any indication. But the data that does exist provides a window into the scope of the violence and its impact on Indigenous w... At least 60 Indigenous women are pursuing a lawsuit alleging they were sterilized against their will, as recently as last year. Is there an issue of systemic racism within Canada's healthcare system?" The 57-page report interviewed seven Indigenous women and compiled details described as "scare tactics" to get their consent. Indigenous women coerced into sterilizations across Canada: senator. Boyer, who is now a senator for Ontario, called on the Senate this week to study the scope of the issue nationally. "If it's happened in Saskatoon, it has happened in Regina, it's happened in Winnipeg, it's happened where there's a high population of Indigenous women," Boyer said in an interview. Listen to the full discussion near the top of this page.