

Twentieth century capitalist patriarchy has hitched its wagon to 'development and technology transfer', but in a world where a (so called) privileged 6% of the population consume 40% of global resources, more of the same is not the answer. This is why ecofeminists see the 'population debate' as a scurrilous distraction from the main cause of environmental degradation. Mies and Shiva stand alongside Manfred Max-Neef and Ted Trainer as uncompromising critics of 'catching up development', and their 'subsistence perspective' proposals for self reliance through consumer resistance; men in nurturing roles replacing militarisation; a people's science; are unquestionably the way to go.<sup>1</sup> At base, it is a question of reclaiming the parts of ourselves that an industrial civilisation has forced us to repress – a resocialisation, yet re-earthing of our human identity in nature.

*Earth Follies* is strongest in the chapters dealing with social structures; less satisfying when Seager turns to ideological debates within environmentalism. Her critical portrait of deep ecology is entertaining, if a little journalistic. Unfortunately, she does not have an equally sceptical eye view of the social ecologists, taking their rejection of ecofeminism at face value without examining the local personal/political agendas behind it. This part of her book could have done with more research all round. In particular, one wonders what US mega stars Sonia Johnson and Camille Paglia are doing in a section on ecofeminist ideas. While she acknowledges ecofeminism as 'virtually the only ideology to self-consciously bridge feminism and environmentalism' (p.11), her own relation to it is ambivalent. I read this as a reaction to unresolved tensions in the US Green scene. But has Seager, in fact, written an ecofeminist book, in spite of her desire to marginalise ecofeminism as 'fringe' and play for the political centre as 'feminist'? Yes and no: Seager's structural analysis of environmental crisis takes us half way. If we are to complement that with a deeper cultural critique, then Mies' and Shiva's *Ecofeminism* is indispensable.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: Salleh, Ariel (1984), 'Contribution to the critique of political epistemology', *Thesis Eleven*, No. 8, pp.23-43; King, Ynestra (1989), 'Healing the wounds', in A. Jaggar and S. Bordo (ed.) *Gender/Body/Knowledge* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press) pp.115-41; Birkeland, Janis, 'Ecofeminism: linking theory and practice', in G. Gaard (ed.), *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press) pp.13-59.

<sup>2</sup> Max-Neef, Manfred (ed.) 1992. *Real Life Economics*. London: Routledge. Trainer, Ted 1987. *Abandon Affluence!* London: Zed Books.

*Human Ecology: Fragments of Anti-fragmentary Views of the World*  
ed. Dieter Steiner and Markus Nausser  
London: Routledge, 1993  
ISBN 0-415-06777-4 (HB) £65.00. xiv + 365pp.

Why did I find this an unusually difficult book to review? To start with, it was hard to read. The text looks formidable; the reading supports this. A colleague and I received three review copies between the two of us. We came to refer to it wryly as 'the black book.'

'How are you getting on with ...' and the other would finish the sentence '... the Black Book?'

We placed the third copy on reserve in the library. There it found its function. A student wonders whether human ecology is 'really an academic subject'. 'Ah well', we'd say gleefully, 'Read the Black Book. Come back and then we'll discuss the academic credentials of human ecology.'

Oh the abuse of teaching power! It worked every time. I even took a copy to flash around at the occasional academic meeting. 'This is the way academic human ecology's going', I'd comment to an economist friend; calculating that it would fall open at one of the calculus pages. The impression sunk in with due gravity. Human ecology, within the university, has finally come of age. Here is the proof of its seriousness, of its coherence within the greater body of knowledge. And may those two sentences be the soundbyte grabbed by the publicity agent from this review.

So what do we have here? A book divided into four parts. The first addresses transdisciplinarity, biohistory, and the human ecological triangle of person-society-environment. Part two largely addresses questions of epistemology, including one of the best papers (by one of the few women contributors, Ingela Josefson) which exposes the inadequacy of expert systems in nursing care for the terminally ill. This is the only paper which seriously discusses the human ecology of love – a word which otherwise does not even appear in the index. Part three is on structuration, with the warning that 'structuration theory is sensitive to the shortcomings of the orthodox consensus'. Amazing! And part four is on the regional dimension, effectively showing human ecology to be just another name for human geography – which of course it is, when aliveness to the power of love, the plight of the poor, humour, poetry, deep ecology and the movement of the Spirit are largely left out.

I found this a frustrating yet valuable book. I was struck by how much it is needed. We need something with which to counter pseudo-academic carping that human ecology is all surface and no depth. Our subject may leave the detail to the disciplinary specialists, but it certainly does not lack penetration. Having a text like this, soundly rooted in contemporary geographical theory and social science perspectives, is therefore of value.

Such a book needs to be in all our libraries. It needs to be read by teachers of human ecology. But I question how far it is a book to teach from – a textbook for students. The authors do subtitle it, 'Fragments of anti-fragmentary views of the world'. That is honest for the book does not and possibly could not offer in any way an adequate rendition of the richness and pertinence of what human ecology can be about.

Yes, we need the social sciences with their structuration theories, epistemologies, and even the (radical?) suggestion that feeling and doing have a role alongside thinking. But the real fire of human ecology is much more passionate than the editors' very-Swiss, coolly-analytical treatment suggests.

Where, I wondered, is the fire that gets the academics off their asses (I mean, of course, the plodding horse-like creature). Where are the voices speaking truths which hit hard at the political cutting edge? Is a distanced academic approach like most of the writers in this volume adopt really going to change anything one iota for those and that which suffers now, today?

Would the contributors not have found more to teach their students from a summer on the barricades at the Twyford Down motorway protest with the Dongas Tribe? Or touching the hearts of submariners at the Faslane Peace Camp? Or up a tree house with the urban unemployed at Pollock Park in Glasgow or in Claycoquet Sound? Or in a German

