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"They Aren't Really Poor": Ecofeminism, Global Justice, and "Culturally-Perceived Poverty"

Regina Cochrane
University of Calgary, Canada

1. Introduction: The Populist Response to Neoliberalism, North and South

At the Toronto Social Forum in March 2003, a group calling itself Toronto Women for a Just and Healthy Planet organized a workshop that was billed as promising to "tackl[e] the patriarchal and colonial as well as capitalist relations at the heart of our current system" (Program 2003: 15).[1] Setting out some basic principles, a first speaker informed those in attendance that there are two types of poverty – "real poverty" and "culturally-perceived poverty." Given the tendency to interpret subsistence economies as "backward and deprived," "culturally-perceived poverty" is seen as "real poverty," she continued, and this has given rise to a "whole development industry." Attempting to put this argument in a Canadian context, a later speaker referred to the situation in Newfoundland, a largely rural island off Canada's east coast that, together with mainland Labrador, is Canada's newest and poorest province (and, incidentally, my own home province). People in the small outports (or fishing villages) in Newfoundland don't have anything, observed this career academic. But they aren't really poor. It was those from outside who came in and labeled them as "poor." This is "culturally-perceived poverty." In a world of corporate globalization characterized by increasing enclosures and privatization of the commons – including the world's oceans – the alternative this group endorsed was thus "honouring a lot of what has kept communities going" throughout the ages – "gift-giving" practices, especially women's mothering.[2]

In light of their collective history and present reality, however, just how valid is it to label those – such as outport Newfoundlanders – who live "traditional" lifestyles and who "don't have anything" as "not really poor"? The ancestors of today's Newfoundlanders were mostly Irish emigrants who had been forced off their land by their British colonial masters and English fisher folk who settled there illegally during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in spite of attempts by the British fishing admiralty to preserve Newfoundland as a great ship moored off the fish-rich Grand Banks for their own exclusive use. In the newfound colony, both groups eked out a living, in conditions characterized by frequent malnutrition, widespread illiteracy, and nearly constant indebtedness, under the economic domination of a small fish merchant elite (Overton 2000: 9-10, 20-22, 43-44) and the social control of conservative religious authorities, particularly a powerful Irish Catholic Church. After confederation with Canada in 1949, Quebec and then the federal government raked off the lion's share of revenues from the province's hydro-electric and more recent offshore oil and gas developments (Crosbie 2005). The corporate-globalization-fuelled failure of the cod fishery and the resulting cod moratorium in 1992 put around 35,000 fishers and fish plant workers – from a population of just over 500,000 – out of work (Overton 2000: 5-6).[3] While out-migration in search of employment has been happening for generations, the fisheries crisis is now accelerating this phenomenon. According to a recent article, entitled "Mexicans with Sweaters," in a local newsletter, Newfoundlanders are becoming "modern day fruit pickers, the latest migration of foreign labour in the global economy" (Locke 2006: 4).[4] With "official" unemployment hovering around 20% and a literacy rate of about 66%, Newfoundland is seen

by mainstream Canadian society "(along with our great land north of 60) [a]s probably the most vast and scenic welfare ghetto in the world" (Wente 2005). Various native communities in Labrador, which lack a basic livelihood and amenities and which have been plagued by alcohol and drug abuse as well as youth suicides, are faring considerably worse. To refer to all of this as poverty is not to demean the people living this reality. Rather it is to point to the colonialism and exploitation that have dispossessed many of their livelihoods and the fruits of their labours, and that have deprived them of necessities, like education, that could potentially help them to challenge oppressive economic relations and social traditions.

While "culturally-perceived poverty" can be readily understood as a romanticized explanation of poverty that is designed to assuage the guilt middle-class liberals feel in relation toward the "pre-modern" poor, upon closer examination it can be seen to entail much more than just a patronizing elitism. In the feminist literature, the term was first employed by Indian subsistence ecofeminist and prominent "Anti-Globalization" Movement (AGM) star, Vandana Shiva (1989: 10). Shiva, in turn, derived the notion from a number of sources whose politics can be broadly labeled as "left"-populist. The idea of "culturally-perceived poverty" and related populist arguments are now being widely used by subsistence ecofeminists and "post-development" thinkers, more generally, and others who align themselves with the contemporary AGM (Salleh 1997; Esteva and Prakash 1998; Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999; Miles 2000; Bennholdt-Thomsen, Faraclas, and von Werlhof (ed.) 2001; Goldsmith 2001; Christiansen-Ruffman 2002; Hawthorne 2002; Brennan 2003; Isla 2003; Escobar 2004). However, as has historically been the case with "left" populism, these same arguments are presently playing into and are being appropriated by rising right-wing currents. In the paper that follows I will argue that the "left" populist notion of "culturally-perceived poverty" is not only elitist but it is also complicit with globalized capitalism and with fundamentalist and even fascist currents that are on the rise worldwide and that, in order to move beyond this complicity, it is necessary to embrace a "three-way" understanding of the struggle for global justice.

In order to make the case that the thesis of "culturally-perceived poverty" ends up lending support to neoliberalism and to ascendant right-wing movements, this paper will be organized as follows. The next section of the paper will draw out the interrelated post-development and populist subtexts of Shiva's notion of "culturally-perceived poverty." In Part 3, the populist genealogy of this notion will be explored by examining two background and two direct sources that influenced Shiva's elaboration of the idea. Then, in Part 4, the implications of this subtext and genealogy will be traced out by looking not only at critiques of post-development populism's complicity with neoliberalism but also at some of the right-left "flirts" in the political trajectory of Shiva and her mentors. The paper will conclude with a brief consideration of calls for a "three-way struggle" against corporate globalization.

2. The Post-Development Populist Subtext of Shiva's "Culturally-Perceived Poverty"

Shiva distinguishes between "two kinds of poverty" in the opening chapter of her text, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*:

In a book entitled *Poverty: the Wealth of the People* an African writer draws a distinction between poverty as subsistence, and misery as deprivation. It is useful to separate a cultural conception of subsistence living as poverty from the material experience of poverty that is a result of dispossession and deprivation. Culturally perceived poverty need not be real material poverty; subsistence economics which satisfy basic needs through self-provisioning are not poor in the sense of being deprived. Yet the ideology of development declares them so because they do not participate overwhelmingly in the market economy…. As a culturally biased project [development] destroys wholesome and sustainable lifestyles and creates real material poverty, or misery, by the denial of survival needs themselves, through the diversion of resources to resource intensive commodity production. (1989: 10)

Development, she continues, is rooted in "an economic system based on the patriarchal concept of productivity [that] was created for the very specific historical and political phenomenon of colonialism" and that led, in turn, to the "creation of inequality" and resource destruction (1989: 11-12). Hence, as "Gustavo Esteva asserts[,] … development has to be refuted because it threatens survival itself" (1989: 13). According to Shiva, the alternative to development entails the "recovery of the feminine principle," which was displaced when modern, "reductionist" science, a "western … and patriarchal project which necessarily entailed the subjugation of both nature and women," displaced "ethnosciences" that had generally been adequate in "maintaining societies and nature" (1989: 14-15, 32). Based on the "world-views of ancient civilizations and diverse cultures," the "feminine principle" – or *Shakti* in "Indian" cosmology – assumes an "ontological continuity between society and nature". This is a continuity that is evinced in the "symbolism of Terra Mater, the earth in the form of the Great Mother" that has been "shared … across space and time" (1989: 38-41). For Shiva, subsistence societies embody the feminine principle because, as "Maria Mies [points out in her 1986 text, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*,] women's work in producing sustenance[,] the *production of life*" – and "as producers of new life" – "has created a special relationship of women with nature" (1989: 42-43).

In a recent article, "How to End Poverty," and her 2005 book, *Earth Democracy*, Shiva has returned once again to the subject of poverty. Both texts reiterate, almost word for word, the initial part of her 1989 discussion on the "two kinds of poverty" (2005a: 1-2; 2005b: 112-113). Significant additions, in the article, are the extension of poverty beyond economic poverty to "[c]ultural poverty, social poverty, ethical poverty, ecological poverty, spiritual poverty [which] are other forms of poverty more prevalent in the so called rich North than in the so called poor South" and the claim that, before "the market and man-made capital [were elevated] to the position of the highest organizing principle for societies," "[t]rade and exchange of goods and services … were subjected to nature's and people's economies" (2005a: 2, 4). The book argues, among other things, that while "terrorism, extremism, ethnic cleansing, and religious intolerance are unnatural conditions caused by globalization, in contrast, "[l]iving cultures promote peace and create free spaces for the practice of different religions and the adoption of different faiths and identities" which, in turn, can serve as a "source of resistance" (2005b: 3, 11, 139).

The capsule summary of Shiva's ideas on poverty above contains many overt references that are in keeping with a post-development stance. Given its historical and contemporary integration with capitalism and with social engineering, it is absolutely necessary to take a critical approach to development (Pieterse 2000: 181-182). Moreover, post-developmentalists do effectively highlight how World Bank definitions of the "mass structural poverty" of traditional subsistence economies position subsistence societies for penetration by the global capitalist market economy (Chakrabarti and Cullenberg 2005: 3, 9). However, post-development goes far beyond critique to insist, as Shiva does in the summary above, upon a "total rejection of development" without offering any alternative other than the revival of "surviving economies" and local traditions. This rejection hinges on "the problematisation of poverty, the portrayal of development as Westernization and the critique of modernism and science." More specifically, development is rejected because it is seen to cause "real" poverty – poverty that is generated *externally* via the market economy and its international agents, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and World Bank (Pieterse 2000: 175-176; Chakrabarti and Cullenberg 2005: 10-11). However, glossed over in post-development's re-definition of poverty is the fact that "subsistence economies did not (and still do not) supply all the nutritional needs of all their members at a level that is biologically adequate for maintaining their basic capabilities." Moreover, the "basic needs" satisfied by subsistence economies "did not include access to education, personal autonomy, freedom of thought, and a host of other higher-level cultural capabilities" (Nanda 2003: 231).

While Shiva's post-development stance is front and center above, how this ties into the more general category of populist politics is less obvious. In very general terms, populism is a politics that claims to "to identify with the people, to praise the [traditional] cultures of the ordinary people" (Shils as cited in Nanda 2003: 26), especially rural and peasant populations. When viewed from a critical perspective, however, it can be understood as constructing this "ordinary people" in a way that "allows for an effective depoliticization of fractures that exist *within* the collective [community and] peasant subject, splits that are constituted out of gender, class, [race]5 and caste hierarchies" (Borowiak 2003: 3). More specifically, as Tom Brass points out,

populism is an 'a-political'/'third-way' ideology that has a long history, and which projects itself in terms of a discourse-against that is simultaneously anti-capitalist and anti-socialist…. [W]ith roots in romantic and conservative notions of an organic society[,] … this discourse has entailed a critique of industrialism, urbanization and modernity based on nostalgia for a vanishing way-of-life, linked in turn to perceptions of an idyllic/harmonious/folkloric village existence as an unchanging/unchangeable 'natural' community and thus the repository of a similarly immutable national identity. Linked to the latter was the view of the countryside generally as the locus of myths/legends, spiritual/sacred attributes, non-commercial values, and traditional virtue. (1997: 204-205)

Even though populism idealizes rural communes and the peasantry and thus opposes development, it should be noted that "populist leaders [and promoters] who tend to present themselves as of and for 'the people' … [typically] 'ha[ve] an urban, intellectual [and often academic] base" (Overton 2000: 12-13).

Guided by the exposition above, Shiva's populism becomes considerably more obvious and many of the common critiques leveled at her fall into place. Given her evocations of "wholesome and sustainable societies," organized around "nature's and people's economies," that have only come to experience inequality, the subjection of women, and ethnic/religious intolerance with the advent of modernity, it is clear that Shiva subscribes to a notion of an undifferentiated "people," living in "naturally" harmonious, stable communities and sharing cosmologies rooted in a reverence for the "feminine." As Bina Agarwal, one of the best known of Shiva's feminist critics in India, complains: "[H]er generalizations conflate … different classes, castes, races, ecological zones, and so on." Hence, "a form of essentialism could be read into her work," especially in relation to Third World women, whom she sees as 'embedded in nature'" (1992: 3). While Shiva acknowledges that poverty is "a result of dispossession," she attributes this "dispossession" solely to capitalist modernization in the form of colonialism and "globalization." Leaving feudal class relations in pre-colonial India unquestioned, she suggests a nationalist rather than a socialist alternative. In contrast, Agarwal emphasizes that "the pre-colonial period was far from one of ecological stability…. Nor was it a period of social harmony: caste and class divisions were deeply oppressive, … and caste (and class)-linked sexual exploitation of and violence against women was common" (2001: 416). Given Shiva's condemnation of development as "culturally biased," her extension of poverty to encompass the primarily cultural domains of culture per se, the social, ethics, spirituality, and her call for religion as a source of resistance, it would seem that Shiva is more concerned about the loss of cultural identity – and, ultimately, "the death of the sacred" (Borowiak 2003: 15) – than she is about material poverty. Indeed, since feminism is about equality and emancipation rather than preserving traditions, Nanda insists that Shiva's work should not even be called feminist (Nanda 2003: 233). For a well-funded city-dweller, who owes much of her prominence to a doctorate in physics from a foreign (Canadian) university, populism can be a comfortable political choice.

3. The Populist Genealogy of "Culturally-Perceived Poverty"

While Shiva's thesis of "culturally-perceived poverty" is consistent with the interrelated tenets of post-development and populism, tracing the indirect and direct sources from which she derived this notion

and examining the populist politics all espouse allows for a deeper understanding of the problems associated with the stance. The two main background sources of inspiration and analysis that provide the general foundation for Shiva's work in general are the ideas of Indian nationalist and independence leader, Mohandas Gandhi, and Western feminism, especially the work of American historian of science, Carolyn Merchant, and of German sociologist and later collaborator, Maria Mies. As regards direct sources, Shiva's attack on the development project per se draws on the Illich-and-Gandhi synthesis of Mexican "de-professionalized intellectual," Gustavo Esteva. Moreover, rather than being derived from an "African writer" as she claims, her notion of "culturally-perceived poverty" actually originated with the late East German Green, Rudolph Bahro.6

The tendency of Indian intellectuals, like Shiva, to gravitate toward populism stems from the enduring influence of Gandhi, argues Science Studies scholar and Shiva critic, Meera Nanda. "Speaking the language of Hinduism and tradition," Gandhi bought together impoverished peasants and urban bourgeoisie in a common struggle for national independence and for "a preservationist, culturally conservative model of development" – "a future India based upon an idealized version of 'village republics' and 'trusteeship of the rich'" (2003: 26). Gandhi's influence was particularly marked on India's environmental movement. Indeed, Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha cite "crusading Gandhians," who "rel[y] heavily on a moral/religious viewpoint" and who call "for a return to pre-colonial (and pre-capitalist) village society" – as one of three major strands in contemporary Indian environmentalism. Grouping Shiva with the "crusading Gandhians," these writers go on to characterize that position as anti-socialist, anti-science, and oriented almost exclusively toward agrarian environmental issues (1995: 107-110).

While Shiva's direct references to Gandhi are few and far between in her recent work, her Gandhianism is evident, however, in her "mythical" account of India's Chipko – or "tree-hugging" – movement7 which she portrays as having Gandhian roots (1989: 68-73). "The ecological implications of resource-intensive and labour-displacing production forms were understood in ancient India. This understanding was revived by Gandhi in modern India," argued Shiva in an early article on the Chipko Movement. "In Gandhi's view, the Indian civilization opted for another development not because of technological inadequacies, but because of ecological sophistication" (1987: 253-254). However, as Nanda points out, in this and similar analyses, "all of the numerous European romantic influences on Gandhi [which he encountered as a young law student in London]8 – from the Bible, to Ruskin and Tolstoy – are conveniently forgotten and Gandhi is made into a genuine son of the [Indian] soil" (2003: 169).

Indeed it is these very romantic influences that helped shape not only Gandhi's attitude toward modernity but also his – and thus indirectly Shiva's – related views of the imperialist tendencies and homogenizing nature of rationality and science (Parekh 2001: 85). As Bhikhu Parekh explains:

Gandhi believed that rationalism was a false and pernicious doctrine. Certain areas of human experience such as religion transcended reason and required faith…. In addition, in some areas of human experience such as morality and politics, reason was inherently inadequate and needed to be guided by wisdom, tradition, conscience, intuition, and moral insight…. Rationalism valued only one form of knowledge, namely the scientific. It therefore marginalized, ignored, or suppressed many valuable human faculties and forms of knowledge and had a deep anti-pluralist bias and a strong streak of intolerance. (Parekh 2001: 84)

A populist stance is also evident in Shiva's main feminist Science Studies influence – Merchant's 1980 text, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. In fact, the thesis of Merchant's book is very much in keeping with the anti-modernist orientation of populism: "By critically reexamining history from [feminist and environmentalist] perspectives, we may begin to discover values associated with the premodern world that may be worthy of transformation and reintegration into today's and tomorrow's society" (1980: xix). What is new about Merchant's

approach, however, is that she argues that the shift from pre-modern "organic" society with "subsistence economies" – where the earth was viewed as a nurturing mother – to modern capitalist society was detrimental not to an undifferentiated "people" but to an undifferentiated "*women*" (plus "blacks, and wage labourers"): "Between 1500 and 1700 … women … were set on a path toward a new status as 'natural' and human resources for the modern world system" (1980: 28-29, 288).

Agarwal, however, takes issue with Merchant's "feminist" populism as she did with Shiva's more Gandhian version. "[Merchant] does not grapple with gender inequalities (such as in economic rights and the division of labour) in pre-industrial Europe, or with the institutions that perpetuated them," she notes. "Merchant also downplays some of the positive features of women's position in the sixteenth century that she herself notes, namely greater opportunities for education and for public speaking on religious matters" (2001: 419-420). Indeed, Merchant even goes so far as to link of the decline of women's status in early modern Europe to the fact that "the cult of the Virgin Mary paled with the weakening of Catholicism" (1980: 173). The resonance of this statement with a similar assertion by Canadian suffragette and maternal feminist, Nellie McClung – that "the Protestant religion has lost much when it lost the idea of the motherhood of God" (cited in Flamengo 2002: 156) – is striking.

Populist premises and maternal feminism – a cultural feminism[9] that is oriented around the universal sisterhood of all women and that, as such, is likely the feminist parallel of populism – are even more overt in the work of Mies. In *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, Mies endeavours to "extend [Merchant's] analysis of the relation of the New Men [to women] to their colonies" (1986: 75). Thus she argues that, in capitalist modernity, "other countries and women are defined as 'nature', or made into colonies to be exploited by, WHITE MAN in the name of capital accumulation or progress and civilization" (1986: 4). In other words, colonization – the creation of "external colonies" – and "housewifization" – the creation of "internal colonies" whereby women lose "the sexual and economic independence [they] had," in "gynocentric" pre-modernity, as they become domesticated agents of consumption – are "closely and causally interlinked" (1986: 75, 104-110). Mies's alternative to this is to call for a "feminist consumer liberation movement" and for "autarkic economies" to be established by "mov[ing] away from employment in industries towards employment in agriculture" – i.e. "labour-intensive farming" – and toward "producing more of the things we need ourselves" (1986: 220-229). While she deepens and extends Merchant's anti-modernism, Mies also moves Merchant's "feminist" populism toward a maternal feminism wherein the maternal body becomes the paradigm of "*social production*" and the mother the model of the worker (1986: 53-55, 216).

In Mies's more recent work, her populist and maternal feminist tendencies are even stronger. Capitalist patriarchy is equated to "'modern' civilization" (1993: 5) and the "autarkic economy" becomes the "subsistence perspective" (1993: 297-322) which, in turn, becomes a third-way position: "the question of whether capitalism or socialism was the better system is simply the wrong question. …[F]rom a women's perspective … none of the two is preferable to the other" (1999: 46). Declaring that "women must begin to overcome their alienation from, and learn *again* to be one with, their [reproductive] bodies"[10] (1993: 294), Mies verges dangerously close to ecofeminist Ariel Salleh's embrace of a "maternal thinking" and Salleh's proscription of modern contraceptive technology (1997: 46, 53, 143-144; Cochrane 2003: 181-182). Feminist critiques of subsistence ecofeminism's entanglement with essentialism – which come from socialist and other feminists, in addition to postmodernists – she dismisses as "hatred … of their symbolic and real mothers and of the facts that they can be mothers too[,] …hatred of motherhood" (1996: 14).

Although he would undoubtedly reject the label,[11] Esteva's stance, in the article that Shiva cites, exhibits all the main hallmarks of populism. A former middle-class professional from Mexico City, who "began to suspect that conventional wisdom [obtained via the "formal categories of social science"] inevitably reduced the peasant world to a mechanical structure," he abandoned the world of academia

and NGOs and "renounced the use of the beautiful word *socialism*" (1987: 274-277, 296). "[R]ejecting the preceding myths about progress and modernization," he not only discarded a "development' [that] stinks" but he also "opposed … any attempt by the 'alternative' establishment to grant the notion of development a new lease on life through new labels: 'alternative,' 'another,' 'humane' development" (1987: 281-283). In place of institutions, he embraced "*ephemeral* or *issue* campaigns in concert with others" and instead of Western values, a pluralistic cultural relativism and the "mysterious" world of his Mexican-Indian grandmother from Oaxaca (1987: 275-278, 28, 293-294). In keeping with Austrian ex-priest and radical critic of modernity and institutionalization, Ivan Illich, a world "beyond development," for Esteva, calls for hospitality rather than the individual "self," remedies in preference to technologies, commons instead of resources, localization in lieu of global design, horizons but not borders, vernacular discourses as an alternative to schooling, hopes in place of expectations. In sum, moving "beyond development" entails "authentic cultural creation" and conviviality rather than "the progressive modernization of th[e] poverty" of the overwhelming majority (1987: 283-296).

While the influence of Illich was central in Esteva's early work, this anti-modernist stance is fortified with a large dose of Gandhian populism in his recent book, *Grassroots Postmodernism12*, which was co-authored with his partner, (Professor) Madhu Prakash. Writing in a heavily anecdotal style with constant references to "the people," Esteva – who now describes himself as a Zapoteco, like his indigenous grandmother (1998: 16) – addresses social movements seeking liberation from "the Global Project" (1998: 1). The key example of this "struggl[e] for a multiplicity of voices and cultures currently threatened by the monoculture of modernity, with its monolithic institutions: the nation-state, multinational corporations as well as national or international institutions" is, he argues, the Zapatista movement (1998: 5-7).13

However, the struggles that Esteva chooses in order to illustrate what he sees as the three major challenges to "the Great March of Progress" are all problematic. First, in order to counter the "myth of global thinking," which he sees as modeled on the Catholic Church, he calls for proposals reflecting local "cosmovisions" (1998: 9-10, 27, 31). Aside from the fact that local cosmovisions often justify very oppressive local traditions, (European Enlightenment) modernity actually *began* with struggles against the Church's "global thinking." And ironically, the main charge that Harry Clever levels against Illich for his residual Catholicism – "his embrace of a life of aestheticism, of a monk's life of freely chosen poverty" (1987: 12) – is equally applicable to Esteva. Secondly, Esteva calls for a challenge to the universality of human rights (10). Targeted here are reproductive rights – "'emancipated' women's 'rights' to their 'reproductive organs'[,] … to the bodies of unborn females" (1998: 133) – and same-sex rights (1998: 124). Even the right to literacy is dismissed as a "colonial" imposition (1998: 142) because "with each and every literacy campaign, [illiterates'] way of life and cosmovision are at risk of being disqualified" (Stuchal, Esteva, and Prakash 2005: 7). It should be noted here that the Revolutionary Women's Law, proclaimed by the Zapatista women in January 1994, specifies in Articles Three and Six respectively that "Women have the right to decide the number of children they can have and care for" and that "Women have the right to education" (Millán 1998: 75). Finally, in his challenge to "the myth of the individual self," Esteva celebrates the story of *doňa* Refugio, the traditional woman from Oaxaca who "refused the convenience of a Lorena stove (which would 'save' her from squatting), along with many of the other 'comforts' of modern society" (1998: 11, 57). Comforts aside, the Lorena stove was primarily designed to burn fuel more efficiently and to thereby reduce the incidence of smoke-related respiratory illnesses. However, given his argument that "suffering is the source of the amazing capacities 'the people' have for reinvention and innovation" (1998: 195), maybe this suffering is not a problem for Esteva.

What is most interesting about the (cited) direct source for Shiva's thesis of "culturally-perceived poverty" – the "African writer [who] draws a distinction between poverty as subsistence, and misery as

deprivation" – is that the ideas of this particular "African writer" on development and poverty are almost diametrically opposed to those of Shiva. In fact, Shiva's citation was actually to a comment made quickly in passing by Rudolph Bahro in his 1984 text, *From Red to Green: Interviews with New Left Review*. "An African writer has written a book whose title I like very much: *Poverty: the Wealth of the People*. He draws a distinction between poverty and misery" (1984: 211), Bahro noted before addressing the question posed by the interviewer. From this remark it is not clear whether Bahro – let alone Shiva – has even read the book. Indeed, given the dissonance between the arguments outlined in Bahro's text and the ones made by the "African writer," it is likely that he has not and that it is merely the title that has caught his attention.

The book that Shiva and Bahro cite is surely *Poverty: Wealth of Mankind*, by Beninese political scientist, administrator, and politician, Albert Tévoédjrè. In this superbly written, carefully researched, and cogently argued text,14 Tévoédjrè does distinguish poverty as "destitution and misery" from "the rehabilitation of poverty … as a positive value" (1979: 2-3). However, instead of post-development he calls for an "endogenous development." This would entail "favouring social needs rather than productivity for the benefit of monopolies" (56) and would be based on "a self-reliant form of collective development[,] … rely[ing] on one's own forces, on one's own resources and the creative capacities of one's people" rather than "copying the techniques and organizational methods of the industrialized countries" (1979: 61, 64, 85). Although this is not a subsistence perspective – "The Third World will industrialize so that it too can produce the more sophisticated goods for its own use, going beyond mere subsistence" (1979: 166) – it does entail "follow[ing] a different road towards industrialization from … the capitalist type." It would involve "break[ing] away from the opposition between the industrial cities and rural areas devoted to agriculture alone" via "the dialogue of science and development" – i.e., without negating the need for some heavy industry and for "moderniz[ing] village life" (1979: 73, 74, 82, 88). The latter would involve promoting, in the agricultural sector, "a simple technology directly accessible to those concerned." Such a technology would not only be "integrated into social reality but also aimed at a real inter-connection between [hu]man[s] and the biosphere" (1979: 68, 74)15

In keeping with his call for endogenous development rather than the rejection of development, Tévoédjrè opts for a "co-operative republic" oriented around political liberty, justice, participation, and solidarity (1979: 85, 153) rather than for a populist revival of tradition. Finding it "distasteful to hear well-fed people extolling the virtues of peoples that suffer from poverty," he warns that a "religious and poetic idealizing of poverty… has been widely used and exploited by many with the aim of dominating, subjugating and becoming wealthy by making others even more wretched" (1979: 8, 10). Given that "to live is not merely to exist, it is also to have the means of developing one's participation in [hu]mankind as a whole," there is a need for a "social edifice rest[ing] on a broad foundation formed by a vigorous rural sector that has not been oppressed." This presupposes institutional change enabling more effective popular participation in political decision-making (1989: 64-65, 153). Cognizant of the fact that illiteracy, which impacts women disproportionately, makes political participation difficult and that it "often provides a pretext for coercion," he emphasizes that "education and training is as much a basic need as a decent standard of living" (1989: 31, 60, 107). Moreover, he insists – contra to Esteva – that "respect for cultures and traditions cannot run counter to the respect for the human person" (1989: 137). For countries that lack any indigenous written languages and scientific literature, he recommends enriching and transcribing indigenous languages as a means of "show[ing] the way to progress while respecting local cultural identity" (1989: 32).

Actualizing such a society – one where people can create their own future (1989: 83) – will, advises Tévoédjrè, involve a "freely chosen" poverty. However, this will be poverty in the sense of an ethic of "poverty for each individual and wealth for all" – i.e., rejecting the consumer model of Western society,

with the political leaders themselves setting the example by living simply, and "possessing [instead] what it takes to be a real human: goodness, courage, real [comradeship]" (1989: 100, 119, 133).[16] It will also require "poverty in power" – i.e., popular participation, particularly by women, as well as decentralized social organization and "teaching people how to learn, how to become fitted to deal with change" (1989: 95-112). Furthermore, it will necessitate a mobilization of the "power of poverty" – a "pooling of intelligence [by and] a coalition of the poor," especially in the form of workers' organizations, in order to "give concrete expression to the idea of working together collectively for the good of all" and thus ultimately for a New International Order (1989: 115, 123, 124, 142).

Given that the "African writer," Tévoédjrè, whom Shiva cites as the source of her thesis of "culturally-perceived poverty" actually outlines a strong critique of related positions, it is obvious that Shiva is drawing this idea from Bahro. In the early 1980's when the interviews in *From Red to Green* were conducted, Bahro was a figure of some interest on the European political scene. A dissident Marxist writer in what was formerly East Germany, Bahro was imprisoned by the Communist government and then deported in 1979 to West Germany where he became involved with the nascent Green Party. The informal, conversational-style interviews in *From Red to Green* focus on Bahro's early life, the political scene in East Germany, his critique of the system and his run-ins with the Communist Party, his views on the European left and the Cold War, and finally his abandonment of historical materialism and his move to Green politics. The quick reference to the title of Tévoédjrè's book was made at the beginning of the last interview, which was conducted in 1983 and which was entitled "From Red to Green: Industrialism and Cultural Revolution."

In this last interview, Bahro is very explicit about labeling the shift in his political views. "From scientific socialism I have returned to utopian socialism, and politically I have moved from a class-dimensional to a populist orientation. My exemplar would be Thomas Münzer." Bahro chose Münzer, the German mystic who led the early sixteenth-century Peasants' War, because this involved "the peasants not as a class but as a people" and because, for Münzer, "[j]ustice … meant liberation for the peasantry to enable it to attain the freedom of the Christian, to communicate directly with God" (1984: 220). When asked about Solidarnosc, the opposition movement to Communist rule in Poland, he repeatedly insisted that its "structure is one of popular resistance and not of a class-against-class formation. We are dealing with a populist political construction" (1984: 225). For the new Bahro, "trade union activity is a retrograde step"; what is needed instead is "liberated areas of consciousness" (1984: 236). Arguing that history is "primarily psychodynamic" and that "human evolution began to go wrong with the English industrial revolution," he calls for "industrial disarmament" and a cultural revolution (1984: 145, 212, 214-215). Such a cultural revolution, he stipulated, will entail "an inward journey" aiming at "the reconstruction of God – … the recreation of spiritual equilibrium" (1984: 221). Indeed, Bahro's references to liberated consciousness, psychodynamics, and inward journeys are indicative of the increasing influence of New Age spirituality on his thinking during the 1980s (Biehl 1995: 50).

That Shiva repeatedly cites, as the source of her thesis of "culturally-perceived poverty," a writer whose ideas provide a strong critique of her own and that her thesis comes instead from someone whose "intellectual" framework is New Age spirituality says a lot about Shiva's intellectual standards (or lack thereof). Indeed, Shiva has been widely critiqued not only for the simplicity of her analysis but also for her sloppiness. Richard Lewontin, for example, has complained that Shiva's book *Stolen Harvest* is a "conjunction of religious morality, undeveloped assertions about the cultural implications of Indian farming, unexplained claims about the nature of the farm economy in India and how biotechnology destroys it, and unanalyzed or distorted scientific findings." Lewontin takes particular issue with Shiva's claim that the estrogen content of soy-based infant formula is the equivalent of a daily dose of 8 to 12 contraceptive pills! In spite of her Ph.D. in science, Shiva seems to have confused

human estrogens with plant estrogens that, according to the very article she cites, have a physiological activity that is lower by a factor of one-thousandth (2001: 83). *Earth Democracy*, Shiva's recent book, opens with a statement about how "Native American and indigenous cultures worldwide have understood and experienced life as a continuum between human and nonhuman species and between present, past, and future generations." This is illustrated with a much-quoted passage attributed to an 1848 speech by Chief Seattle (2005: 1). It is well known in ecopolitical circles, however, that this speech comes from the script for an environmental documentary that was written by a white script writer ("Mother Earth" 2003: 1).17 In general, critics take Shiva to task for her highly "selective and largely ideological interpretations" (Agarwal 2001: 424) as well as for "remain[ing] willfully uncritical of the economic, social, and political cleavages within and across rural communities" and of the continuities between her views and agrarian populism (Borowiak 2003: 15).

A more basic problem here, however, is the low intellectual standards of the academic feminists and others in the West who have made Shiva into the global celebrity she is while ignoring the excellent work of other Indian feminists. Some of this is again due to simplistic analysis and sloppy research. Canadian ecofeminist Ana Isla, for example, not only makes the dubious claim that the subsistence perspective is "socialist" but she also lumps Shiva's arch critic, Bina Agarwal – who is so allergic to subsistence ecofeminism that she refuses to use the term "ecofeminist" to describe her own feminist environmentalism18 – in with Shiva, Mies, Merchant, and Salleh as a "socialist ecofeminist." (2003: 7, 14, 15). To back this up, Isla cites an article by Agarwal (2001: 410) taking as its thesis the claim that "rather than challenging traditional inequities[,] … ecofeminism (especially its Indian variant) could, in specific contexts, strengthen institutions that entrench gender inequities."19 If, on the other hand, faith and intuition are, in keeping with populist assumptions, more appropriate guides than rational categories like consistency and evidence, what need is there to consider alternative analyses or – even worse – critiques? Underlying populism – and especially academic populism – is a highly elitist and patronizing anti-intellectualism that assumes critical thinking is not suitable for "the people."

4. Neoliberalism and the Political Trajectory of Post-Development Populism

The post-development populist notion of "culturally-perceived poverty" is problematic for a whole host of general reasons as outlined above. However, the problems do not end there. The situation gets considerably more complicated when this thesis is examined in the context of the current historical conjuncture of neoliberalism and rising fundamentalist and right-wing nationalist currents, North and South. The notion of "culturally-perceived poverty," together with its populist baggage, readily lends itself to complicity with contemporary globalized capitalism in a number of ways. Moreover, in actual political practice, Shiva and the main populist currents/mentors feeding into her thesis of "culturally-perceived poverty" have all ended up engaging in various forms of "right-left" flirts with forces such as Hindu fundamentalism, racist nationalism, and/or the European New Right.

At the most obvious level, notions like "culturally-perceived poverty" can – and have – been used to justify the neoliberal privatization of social services associated with the imposition of SAPs (Structural Adjustment Programs) in the South and with the erosion of the welfare state in the North. Recasting the "culturally-perceived poverty" of subsistence economies as sustainable, self-provisioning lifestyles regulated by "nature" and moral "people's economies," like Shiva does, suggests that such societies are totally self-sufficient. Consequently, there was no real need, in the first place, for the outside interventions – like food and income subsidies, publicly-funded schooling, and modern healthcare – that SAPs are presently forcing governments in the South to cut. As James Overton explains:

In the World Development Report for 1995 the World Bank uses the alleged existence of a moral economy to argue against the early introduction of a public safety net for the poor in those countries that do not already have such a safety net…. Part of the Bank's justification for this is that state programs are unnecessary because a kind of moral economy that obviates the need for state

intervention to protect the poor is said to operate. According to this view, poverty and insecurity – particularly in rural areas – is limited because various forms of income transfer between relatives perform an important insurance function and because benevolent paternalism, characterized by informal commitments by employers to protect the poor, exist. (2000: 2)

Similarly, the call by subsistence ecofeminists in the North for lifestyle changes and for organizing self-help projects, like community gardens, can easily play into the erosion of the welfare state and the privatization of the services it offers.[20] In both North and South, populist ideas like "culturally-perceived poverty" can also have the unintended consequence of justifying the wage cuts associated with neoliberalism and of helping legitimate neoliberal discourses focusing on the issue of "dependency" (Overton 2000: 36-37, 47). All in all, by pushing most of the responsibility for solving social issues back on the poor themselves, subsistence strategies can end up serving as a "political safety valve" for the crises and unrest generated by neoliberalism (Overton 2000: 12, 33).

Of course the response here by grassroots postmodernist Esteva would undoubtedly be that such outside interventions are not only unnecessary but downright "colonial." For Esteva, the "welfare state … [is] marginalized by … the economy of communal commons in which the *dharma* of bread labor flourishes[,] … creat[ing] open spaces for the flourishing of other cultural and religious ideals." Hence, instead of universal welfare rights, Esteva prefers Gandhi's "paradise on earth" (1998: 145-146) where there will be neither paupers nor beggars, nor high nor low, neither millionaire employers nor half-starved employees, nor intoxicating drinks nor drugs. There will be the same respect for women as vouchsafed to men and the chastity and purity of men and women will be jealously guarded. Where every woman except one's wife will be treated by men of all religions as mother, sister, or daughter according to her age. Where there will be no untouchability and where will be equal respect for all faiths. They will all be proudly, joyously, and voluntarily bread laborers. (Gandhi as cited in Esteva and Prakash 1998: 145)

Aside from the likelihood that chastity, prohibition, and – for women in patriarchal societies – being "treated as mother, sister, or daughter" will not be accepted by many people as "paradise on earth," it is worth considering what Gandhi's *dharma* might entail as regards abolishing poverty and untouchability. Indeed, India's famous *dalit* leader B.R. Ambedkar was very vocal on this matter. Gandhi "has no passion for economic equality," Ambedkar complained. All Gandhi asked for was for the rich to become *voluntary* trustees for the poor, with the only obligation entailed being a spiritual one (1998: 145-146). Moreover, Gandhi's call to end untouchability was not a call to end the caste system but to integrate the "untouchables" – in contemporary terms, the *dalits* – into the lowest order of the caste system (1998: 143). "Gandhianism may well be suited to a society … with a life of leisure and culture for the few and a life of toil and drudgery for the many," concluded Amberkar. "But … Gandhianism, with its call of back to nature, means back to nakedness, back to squalor, back to poverty and back to ignorance for the vast majority of the people" (1998: 148).

At a second level, the entanglement of notions like "culturally-perceived poverty" with cultural identity and cultural difference can end up serving the interests of global capital by recasting poverty in the global South as a form of cultural identity that must be guarded in order to preserve its "quaintness" (Brass 1997: 223). As Brass explains:

Economic 'difference' as a form of 'otherness'/ 'not-us' is displaced by cultural difference' as the definition of identity, the consequence of which is that the economic 'difference' is no longer perceived as alienating or exploitative but merely organizationally 'other': not only does economic 'difference' no longer have to be explained or changed, but it is epistemologically reduced to and in effect becomes part of 'cultural' difference, henceforth to be celebrated as such.… [T]he rich and the powerful are simply culturally 'different' from the poor and powerless and the economic 'difference' of the latter is not merely part of their culture but much rather a form of empowerment. (Brass 1997: 221)

Preserving the cultural "difference" of the poor, however, protects the economic power of the rich – the power to command cultural resources and to the time required to use them in order to become "different" (Brass 1997: 217).

Thirdly, recasting "culturally-perceived poverty" as cultural identity facilitates the reduction of capitalist globalization to "globalization" and thus to modernity. In this manner, post-development populism assists in the colonization of the "Anti-Globalization" Movement by an academic poststructuralism/postmodernism with politically quietistic implications (Holloway 2002: 38-42, 73; Brass 1997: 212). Indeed, a poststructuralist/postmodernist "deconstruction" of Enlightenment modernity's universalism can be seen in the World Social Forum's second defining maxim – i.e., its call not only for "another world" but also for "no single way of thinking" (Cochrane 2004). This uncritical relativism allows populist notions like "culturally-perceived poverty" to go unchallenged. Moreover, it floods the AGM with liberal reformists and esoteric movements like Falung Gong, neo-paganism, and Proust, rendering any effective political mobilization against globalized capitalism extremely difficult.

Finally, the anti-intellectual populist baggage attached to notions like "culturally-perceived poverty" facilitates the erosion of critiques of globalized capitalism and of attempts to formulate viable and liberatory anti-capitalist alternatives. Dismissing critical thinking as elitist, populist (anti-) intellectual elites contribute to the "dumbing-down" of public discourse and to the increasing "McDonaldization" of the neoliberal academy by offering, in place of cogent analyses, easily digested and bland commentaries supplemented with large "Happy Bags" of "infotainment," repackaged "cosmovisions," New Age "thinking," and/or goddess therapy.

In addition to its complicity with neoliberalism, a potentially more serious charge is that post-development populists have – contra Shiva who blames capitalism and especially neoliberal capitalism for this (Shiva in Mies and Shiva 1993: 108-116) – a strong tendency to become entangled, in actual political practice, with fundamentalist and right-wing nationalist politics. Indeed, instances of this "left"-populist-right-wing collaboration can be seen in the political involvements or proclamations of Shiva, Gandhians, first-wave maternal feminists, Esteva, and Bahro. It is worth examining the left-right "flirts" of Shiva and her mentors or mentoring currents here, in turn, because there is a strong likelihood that, if taken separately, such examples will be summarily dismissed as mere individual aberrations.

If the "Battle of Seattle – the massive protests against the WTO meeting in Seattle in November 1999 – is taken to mark the rise of the AGM then Shiva's speech in the debate on globalization at the " Seattle Town Hall" is emblematic of the ambiguous political orientation of much of the AGM. As Doug Henwood, editor of the *Left Business Observer*, reported:

Shiva, rightly denouncing the WTO as an agency of imperialism, urged a "return to the national decision-making which we control," apparently not noticing that the nation-state itself was an imperial inheritance, nor disclosing just when it was that "we" (whoever that is) controlled its governance. Her India seems like one consisting almost entirely of displaced peasants; she spoke of it as a single thing, as if unriven by class, ethnic, and regional differences. She also claimed that business was once limited by ethical concerns, but with the WTO, the logic of profit maximization has taken over – a strange version of capitalist history indeed. (cited in Sakai 2001: 21)

In addition to highlighting the fact that Shiva's politics is basically nationalist rather than anti-capitalist, this debate is significant for having been sponsored by the International Forum on Globalization (IFG), an elite think-tank in which Shiva has served as a board member. The IFG was co-founded in 1994 by British editor of *The Ecologist* magazine, Edward Goldsmith – who is also a *Bija guru* at Shiva's *Bija Vidyapeeth* (Centre for Learning) in India – and others in order to work toward "revers[ing] the globalization trend and redirect[ing] actions toward revitalizing local economies." To accomplish this

goal, it favours uniting left and right in a movement against "globalization" (Krebbers and Schoenmaker 2001: 66).21

Goldsmith, however, has been strongly critiqued for espousing a "Gaian sociobiology" with anti-immigrant and anti-feminist implications and for his connections to the European New Right. The central objective of ecopolitics, according to Goldsmith, should be to re-establish a "natural social order," with tradition supplying the blueprint for re-ordering gender, familial, community, and ethnic relations and with religion providing the means for carrying out this regimentation (Hildyard 1999: 8). "[S]ystems which are sufficiently differentiated, such as biological organisms and societies, will tend to develop mechanisms that will enable them to exclude foreign bodies likely to menace their integrity," he argues, in keeping with his "Gaian" understanding of the "natural social order." "What today is regarded as prejudice against people of different ethnic groups is a normal and necessary feature of human cultural behaviour" (cited in Krebbers 2001: 81). Therefore Goldsmith's solution to conflicts between "distinct ethnic groups, of different origin, with different manners and traditions … is to separate them territorially … in order to establish a stable society" (cited in Hildyard 1999: 8). In similar fashion, he evokes the "natural" elimination of "mutations" to call for the disposal of "social aberrations" (Krebbers 2001: 80).

However, as Nicholas Hildyard22 points out, the views that Goldsmith derives from his "Gaian sociobiology" "accord closely (if coincidentally) with those of the New Right" in Europe (1999: 6-8). For example, Guillaume Faye, a former member of *GRECE* (*Groupement de Recherche et d'Etudes pour la Civilisation Européenne*) who has moved to the National Front, recommends: "In keeping with the core of the right to difference doctrine, we must reject multiracial society and envisage together with the immigrants themselves, their return to their country of origin" (cited in Hildyard 1999: 6). In parallel with this call for replacing a "universalist anti-racism" with a "differentialist anti-racism," *GRECE* members Alain de Benoist and Charles Champetier call for a "differentialist feminism" based on the recognition of "distinct and unique natures" that "in general …fall into feminine and masculine categories: cooperation and competition, mediation and repression, seduction and domination, empathy and detachment, concrete and abstract, affective and managerial, persuasion and aggression, synthetic intuition and analytic intellection" (2000: 13-15). Indeed, it is worth noting that Goldsmith accepted an invitation to address the 25 th anniversary meeting of *GRECE* in 1994 and that, in 1997, he participated in a meeting of *TeKos*, a think tank associated with the Belgian extreme-right *Vlaams Blok* (Krebbers and Schoenmaker 2001: 65).

Shiva's dealings with the extreme right in India – the Hindu fundamentalist *Hindutva* movement which seeks a unitary India in which Muslims, *dalits*, and other minorities belong only to the extent that they conform to Hindu ways and acknowledge an essential "Hindu-ness"23 (Fox 1989: 6, 239) – are, however, more direct. She has addressed a national convention of the Indian peasants' association, the BKS, which recruits peasants for *Hindutva*. She has worked closely with economic nationalist groups such as Swadeshi Jagran Manch, which is associated with Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, "the politburo of *Hindutva*." She has also acted as an advisor to a Northern Indian farmer's union that assisted the Hindu nationalist BJP party with its election bid and the Ayodhya campaigns (Nanda 2003: 247-248). That Shiva is willing to make such associations while condemning Hindu fundamentalism may be due to her account of the origins of Hindu fundamentalism. For Shiva, *Hindutva* ideology is a politically naïve pseudonationalism that has co-opted folk traditions that were once the source of collective belonging, diversity, and tolerance. Hence, Hindu fundamentalism is unrelated to the Gandhian peasant nationalism that she regards as a site for collectively resisting "Western" models of development. However, as Shiva's critics have pointed out: "Far from presenting a mode of resistance to [Hindu fundamentalist] communalism, such a revivalist project [of Gandhian peasant nationalism] is an integral element of Hindutva and hypernationalism in contemporary India" (Borowiak 2003: 12-13).

Given that in the early 1980s aspects of Gandhian nationalism were incorporated into Hindu nationalist ideology and rhetoric, Richard Fox asks whether Hindu chauvinism was implicit in Gandhi's vision or whether it represents a subversion of Gandhian ideals (1989: 6, 32). Fox sees both forms of nationalism as rooted in an "affirmative Orientalism" which reversed pejorative Western stereotypes of Indians as essentially spiritual and incorporative by reclaiming these attributes as affirmative. While Gandhi embraced spirituality as a human universal that can be recognized in non-Hindus as well, Hindu nationalists claimed spirituality as an exclusively Hindu essence. Therefore, in place of Gandhi's more even-handed policies toward minorities, Hindu nationalists advocated a proselytizing sectarianism and an aggressive intolerance toward minorities that, although they were also adopted by many lower-middle and middle classes and castes, ultimately served to protect traditional high-caste privileges[24] (1989: 217, 221, 245-246, 270-271). However, the spiritual focus that both share favors social discipline and spiritual revolution over class conflict and institutional change – a stance that is further strengthened by a shared corporatism that subordinates individual, sectorial, and minority interests to the interests of the "nation" as a whole.

Hence, as Fox emphasized, while Hindu nationalists undoubtedly recast some of Gandhi's ideas, significant aspects of Gandhianism served them well.[25] The nationalism they shared with Gandhi justified an "Indianization" of democracy and socialism that took the form of adopting elements of a voluntaristic Gandhian "socialism." Gandhi's corporatist stance could be cited by "forward-caste" Hindu nationalists to justify protests against the government's "reservation system" (of affirmative action for dalits and "backward castes") and to reign in the indigenous bourgeoisie. Gandhi's proscription of class struggle was useful in diffusing threats from impoverished classes and from the more prosperous sectors of the rural "backward castes." (1989: 227, 233, 240, 245, 255, 256, 258).

While Mies vehemently dismisses any linking of right-wing politics and a feminism oriented around motherhood[26] as "latent hostility against mothers" (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999: 190), there are historic connections not only between "fascism and its use of women for its motherhood ideology" (Mies and Shiva 1993: 159) but also between maternal feminism and racist nationalism. First-wave maternal feminists in North America – whom Michael Kazin, in his study of American populism, labels "populism's womanly face" – demanded suffrage for women on the grounds that the "elevation of womanly virtues would banish the evils of patriarchal society" (1998: 82-86). African-American feminist Angela Davis, however, takes great issue with this "sexist cult of motherhood" and its arguments "that women's 'special nature,' their domesticity, and their innate morality gave them a special claim to the vote." These same arguments, which were based on middle-class, white notions of femininity and domesticity, ended up leading many maternal feminists to oppose suffrage for black men and to support racist eugenics campaigns, she emphasizes. "White women were learning that, as mothers, they bore a very special responsibility in the struggle to guard white supremacy. After all they were 'mothers of the race.'" (1983: 121-123, 147) Indeed, American maternal feminist "[Charlotte Perkins] Gilman's … belief in women's reproductive role in crafting the proper (white) national genealogy was an enduring component of her feminism" (Weinbaum 2001: 273). Similarly, prominent Canadian first-wave maternal feminists, Emily Murphy and Nellie McClung, opposed extending suffrage to "feeble-minded" and degenerate immigrants of colour[27] (Flamengo 2002: 154). While Josephine Donovan sees contemporary cultural feminism as a continuation of first-wave maternal feminism, she believes that feminists have learned, from their past history, that women do not automatically "purify politics" (1985: 32, 61-63, 171). However, this will not happen until – contra Mies[28] – the "thought taboo" against discussing links between populism, racist nationalism, and an elitist, essentialist maternal feminism has been broken.[29]

In embracing a "grassroots postmodernism," Esteva is very careful to distance himself from grassroots movements, like Peru's Maoist Shining Path, European Nazism and neo-Nazism, and the American Ku

Klux Klan, that are notorious for their racism and extreme violence. Such movements he classifies as being "fully immersed in modernity or pre-modernity (Esteva and Prakash 1998: 3). Moreover, he joins the Zapatistas in "explicitly reject[ing] any and every variety of fundamentalism." In a recent article on the Zapatistas, Esteva restates his opposition to the "fundamentalism of the 'Global Project'" (Esteva and Prakash 1998: 180).

Accepting the assumption that there is a fundamental sameness in all human beings, the construction of *One World* was adopted in the West as a moral obligation. It became a destructive and colonizing adventure attempting to absorb and dissolve, in the same movement, all the different traditions and forms of existence on this planet. This old project, supported by all forms of the cross and the sword, is now carried on under US hegemony. At the end of the Second World War, such hegemony used the symbol of development (Esteva 1992). The emblem of globalization substituted it at the end of the cold war, to promote with more violence than ever a universal culturicide. (Esteva 2005: 151)

However, by conflating the "Global Project" with modernity, in keeping with "left" populism, Esteva ends up unwittingly and eerily echoing *the very same ideas* that French New Right thinkers de Benoist and Champetier cite in their own rejection of "globalization":

The West's conversion to universalism has been the main cause of its subsequent attempts to convert the rest of the world: in the past, to its religion (the Crusades); yesterday, to its political principles (colonialism); and today, to its economic and social model (development) or its moral principles (human rights). Undertaken under the aegis of missionaries, armies and merchants, the Westernization of the planet has represented an imperialist movement fed by the desire to erase all otherness by imposing on the world a supposedly superior model invariably presented as "progress." Homogenizing universalism is only the projection and the mask of an ethnocentrism extended over the whole planet. (2000: 11)

Esteva uses these ideas to argue for the preservation of indigenous cultures. However, French New Rightists de Benoist and Champetier employ the very same ideas to argue, among other things, "for policies restrictive of [non-European] immigration" (2000: 14) and, more subtly, for a return to aristocratic, pre-Christian, caste-like modes of social organization – i.e., "the existence of several modes of life (contemplative, active, productive, etc.), each arising from different moral codes, and each finding their place in the city's hierarchy" (2000: 9). The strong resonance of Esteva's stance with that of the French New Right suggests that "left" populism is not just being passively co-opted by right populism but that it is actively – if unwittingly – complicit with it.

The most significant left-right "flirt" here, however, is the political journey that Bahro embarked upon in a 1987 text that was later published in English as *Avoiding Social and Ecological Disaster.* An elaboration of the themes broached in the 1983 interview that Shiva cited, this rambling tome maps the apocalyptic "Megamachine" of industrial culture, its psychodynamic roots in European cosmology, the spiritual path to the new social order, and the nature of the "salvation" government. There are many arguments that resonate with Shiva's: calls for a "communitarian subsistence economy" as an alternative to agribusiness (1994: 1, 233, 264), a rejection of "the 'development' model" (1994: 56, 232), and evocations of the Great Mother, Gaia, and gendered "cosmogenic original principles"(1994: 126, 130, 155, 229). However, these arguments are embedded in a larger matrix of what can only be described as "psychobabble." "A consciousness such as we now need, which would be capable of reconciling cosmos and history, to permit the arrow of development to turn in the cycle of eternal return[,] … such a consciousness was at that time [of Lao Tzu] not yet conceivable," rants Bahro (1994: 204). "Out of the right hemisphere, whence from ancient times 'the gods' spoke, a different temperament comes into us – if only we allow it to speak – a positive one which can mobilize quite different energies" (1994: 226).

More worrisome than Bahro's psychobabble, however, are his constant favourable references to ancient theocracies and caste hierarchies (1994: 102, 176, 328), his call for a "conservative revolution" (1994: 12, 53, 165, 246), and his insistence that we should "risk envisaging an enormous despotism to create and maintain a measure of order" (1994: 262). Citing the need for an institutional structure in order to facilitate the withdrawal from "industrial society," Bahro argues for "sett[ing] up an eco-dictatorship" which will be "totalitarian" but *selectively* repressive" (1994: 259, 299, 333). Until a "mystical democracy" can be attained, he insists that a "power-political hero figure" – a Lenin-meets-Lao-Tzu with "Brown [i.e., fascist] accents" (1994: 237, 256, 299, 307-311), which might possibly be a collective (Biehl 1995: 52) – will be necessary. For Bahro, "it is not 'Red', but the polarity of 'Green' and 'Brown' which is characteristic of the forces which would like to evade the Megamachine" (1994: 274, 281-282, 297). Greens must reclaim "the positive that may lie buried in the Nazi movement," urges Bahro, because "there is a call in the depths of the *Volk* for a Green Adolph" (cited in Biehl 1995: 53). "I can't rule out the possibility that at the end of the 1920s I wouldn't have gone with the Nazis," he adds (cited in Biehl 1995: 55).

4. Conclusion: Ecofeminism and the "Three-Way Fight" against Capitalist Globalization

"Left" populist notions like "culturally-perceived poverty" are becoming increasingly common in the "Anti-Globalization" Movement. While such arguments are central to subsistence ecofeminism and post-developmentalism, they are also having a significant impact on major peasant movements in the AGM, such as *Via Campesina*,30 and on environmentalist, feminist, and other AGM social movements more generally. Moreover, this "left" populism resonates strongly with the postmodernist underpinnings of major AGM "spaces" such as social fora (Cochrane 2004) and with an AGM "new politics" that has generally been described either as (postmodernist/poststructuralist/post-/individualist) "anarchist" or alternatively as postmodernist/poststructuralist (Cochrane 2002).

The prevalence of populism in the AGM can be attributed to the ideological casting of the issues associated with contemporary capitalism as "globalization." As Kazin explains:

By the end of the twentieth century, would-be champions of the "plain people" … had discovered an enemy that, in bold outline, the original Populists [i.e., the US Populist Party] would have recognized: banks and corporations who routinely moved capital, goods, and services around the globe and could shrug off the once potent restraints of national governments and labor movements. From the nationalist voice on both Right and Left came the same complaint: the well-being of the humble wage-earner no longer mattered in a world of interlocking stock exchanges where millions of dollars could be won and lost in the same time it took the average American to drive to work. The very language of liberty was being subverted. The free market so assiduously promoted in the mass media and among centrist politicians from both major parties was, in truth, holding U.S. democracy hostage and throttling the economic future of millions of ordinary Americans. (1998: 281)

Identifying the problem of contemporary capitalism as "globalization," however, not only elicits a "left" populist response; it also attracts "right" populists. Indeed, this is exactly what is happening in the AGM at present. As J. Sakai points out, the assumption that opposing the WTO is a leftist position is an illusion: "Far Right, Center and Left converged politically in Seattle" and the Far Right is investing a great deal in this campaign (2001: 7-9, 23). One of "notables" invited to speak at the "anti-globalization" rally in Seattle, for example, was US Reform Party presidential candidate, Pat Buchanan, who is notorious for "ha[ving] celebrated reactionary movements and movement figures – from Hitler and Franco to … 'former' Klan Grand Dragon David Duke." In line with his slogan "American workers and people first" and his attacks on the "godless New World Order," Buchanan opposes "globalization," the WTO, and immigrant workers in order to "save" the "American" way of life.31 This is a right-wing populist stance that boils down to a "nativist stew of xenophobia, racism, sexism, anti-Semitism and homophobia … – the American equivalent of European neofascism as

presented by demagogues such as Jörg Haider and Jean-Marie Le Pen" (Sakai 2001: 16, 19-20; Burghardt 2001: 33, 39; Schoenmaker and Krebbers 1999: 3).

Another example, from the opposite side of the Atlantic, involves the anti-MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment) campaign launched in 1997 by *De Fabel van de illegaal* (The Myth of Illegality) – a Dutch grassroots group espousing an anti-racist, socialist, and feminist perspective. In keeping with its focus on the struggle of undocumented immigrants and anti-fascism work more generally, *De Fabel* became involved in this campaign as "a way of putting international solidarity into practice and of making a connection with the struggle for open borders and the support for both political and economic refugees." In the course of their anti-fascist work, however, *De Fabel* members happened upon a Dutch New Right magazine with an article opposing "globalization" and recommending *their* campaign to its readers. As well, they came across a direct link to their campaign on the website of a local New Right student group. Concluding that this interest was due to a structural flaw in the campaign – "separating and criticizing international or foreign capital" by focusing on "free trade" while ignoring local capital, racism, and patriarchy – they withdrew (Krebbers and Schoenmaker 2001: 62-62, 67).

Sakai's point that the fascist Right is ultimately anti-bourgeois rather than anti-capitalist helps clarify the "structural flaw" in such "anti-globalization" campaigns further. "Enemy of emigrant Third World labor [and/or ethnic minorities] and the modern supra-imperialist state alike, fascism draws on the old weakening national classes of the lower middle-strata, local capitalists and the … declassed … ripped out of productive classes – whether it be the peasantry or the salariat," he explains. It champions a "vision of payback" for the declassed sectors of "the people" – especially young men – and their "right" to "be the ones giving orders … and living off of others" (Sakai 2002: 94, 104).

That the "Anti-Globalization" Movement is attracting populists from the extreme right as well as from the "left" is not surprising given the tendency of "left" populism, such as that of Shiva and her mentors, to become actively complicit with right-wing populism. This suggests that populism *per se* and challenging "globalization" – including a relativistic poststructuralist or postmodernist coalitional politics that would not even rule out allying with the Moonies32 (Tormey 2005: 337) – are not just simplistic stances; they are downright dangerous. As Hildyard warns in relation to "sharing" platforms with the Right,

[t]he danger is three-fold. First, a platform shared with authoritarian interests inevitably legitimizes those interests, giving them a credibility that they might otherwise not enjoy. Second, such platforms send a public message to many groups who might otherwise be allies that progressives are prepared to set aside certain core issues (anti-racism, for example) in the fight against globalisation…. Third, the failure to place opposition to the ideologies underpinning social exclusion on a par with economic exclusion gives wider scope for authoritarian interests to shape the localisms that are emerging in response to corporate rule – scope which might not be so available if the focus of opposition was not concentrated so exclusively on economic interests. (1999:12)

While Hildyard's third point highlights the importance of considering race, gender, and caste hierarchies that, although linked to "economic exclusion," cannot be reduced to it, Brass would likely add a qualifying fourth point. The failure to draw a sharp distinction between a progressive analysis of "economic exclusion," that includes "exclusion" by local as well as global capital, and a populist analysis, that merely focuses on global capital and is simultaneously anti-socialist, also allows authoritarian interests to shape emerging localisms. For Brass, right and "left" populisms are both right-wing positions; hence, "left" populism is a contradiction in terms (1997: 204, 206, 235 n. 61).

Given the populist genealogy of the thesis of "culturally-perceived poverty", the rightward political trajectory of its adherents, and the deeply problematic "new politics" of "anti-globalization,"

ecofeminists and other New Social Movement actors in the AGM would do well to take a lesson from the anti-fascist movement. Since "capitalism's current contradictions provide the potentials for revolutionary fascist movements33… just as certainly as they provide potentials for a revitalized revolutionary left" (Hamerquist 2002: 24), the AGM's struggle against capitalism must be expanded to a "three-way fight." Together with the struggle against capitalism, there must concurrently be a struggle against fascism, fundamentalism, and its populist progenitors so that naïve and tepid "leftist" analyses do not end up supporting right-wing agendas. Similarly, the larger struggle for social and global justice – the struggle against interlinking forms of systemic oppression that goes beyond capitalism to include patriarchy, colonialism, racism, casteism, homophobia, and other forms of social exclusion – must also be expanded to include the struggle against fascism. Simplistic calls for a "real third way," a "going back deliberately [that] means going forward," and "alliances with true conservatives" (Brennan 2003: 18, 156, 163, 168) must be *strongly* rejected.

NOTES

1 This workshop was entitled "A Feminist Challenge to the Market: The Gift Economy." The "gift economy" refers to proposal by Vaughan that globalized capitalism be replaced with a gift economy based on women's mothering. Although this workshop focused mainly on the ideas of Vaughan and her associates, there was also integration of ideas taken from Shiva. We were informed at the workshop that the "activist" group that organized the session, Toronto Women for a Just and Healthy Planet, was not presently active. In fact, every time I have come across a reference to this "activist" group during the last 8 years or more, the group members have been limited to a university faculty member and her former or present graduate students.

2 For an article espousing this perspective, see Christiansen-Ruffman. For an alternative feminist analysis of the impact of the fisheries crisis on Newfoundland women – and one that draws mainly on the ideas of Bina Agarwal – see Power and Harrison. For a critique of the claim that Newfoundland – after European settlement – was ever been a true subsistence economy, see Overton.

3 According to Overton, "Undoubtedly, the main force behind the collapse of the fishing stocks is the drive to accumulate capital in the fishing industry and the state's unwillingness to limit this drive even in the interests of protecting the continued viability of the fish stocks in the north west North Atlantic Ocean" (2000: 6).

4 Locke fails to mention, however, that in sharp contrast to Mexican migrant workers coming to the US and Canada on temporary work permits, Newfoundlanders have the right to settle wherever they move in Canada (which, these days, is generally Alberta) and to claim benefits like healthcare and employment insurance from the Canadian state. As well, even though they are often the butt of ethnocentric Newfie jokes, the great majority still benefit from considerable white privilege. It is interesting to note also that the next article in this publication was an interview, with the Venezuelan ambassador to Canada, which focused on how the Chavez government managed to obtain a majority stake in all the oil developments in Venezuela. In recent negotiations with oil companies, the Newfoundland government's request for a 4.9% equity stake was refused ("You Go, Hugo!" 6).

5 Emphasis added. Borowiak's article focuses exclusively on India. Hence the omission of race as a significant "fracture … within the collective peasant subject."

6 Shiva does finally admit that this idea comes from Bahro in *Earth Democracy* (p. 112).

7 For a critique of Shiva's "mythical" version of the Chipko movement, see Rangan.

8 For an interesting discussion of how, "even in their anticolonialism, early Indian nationalists [like

Gandhi] employed and reinforced Orientalist stereotypes of India," (1989: 95), see Fox, chapter 5.

9 For a description of cultural feminism and a history of its rise and its eclipse of the radical feminism with which it is often conflated, see Echols.

10 Emphasis added.

11 Esteva equates populism with the "rhetorical 'we' [of] a populist politician" who "transform[s] hopes into promises" (1987: 276, 293).

12 Esteva distinguished his grassroots postmodernism from academic postmodernism (1998: 2-3). However, as Brass, Nanda, and others would argue – and I agree – academic postmodernism is also a form of populism. Thus it also lends itself to many, although not all, of the problems discussed in this paper, especially the problems discussed in Part 4.

13 For a very different interpretation of Zapatismo which also includes a struggle against oppressive aspects of tradition, see Holloway, Lorenzano, and Millán.

14 This book garnered the *Prix de la vie économique* in Paris in 1980

15 While there is some integration of Ivan Illich's notion of "conviviality" in Tévoédjrè's understanding of technology, it is interesting to note here (p. 73) as well the influence of social ecologist Murray Bookchin. However, Tévoédjrè retains the state while Bookchin, a social anarchist – or, maybe more accurately these days, a left-libertarian – calls for a confederal libertarian municipalism.

16 This would seem to be a rather idealist solution to the problem of corruption and the usurping of power by political leaders. However, a complete discussion of Tévoédjrè's proposals is beyond the scope of this paper.

17 It is highly likely that the concept of "Mother Earth," which Shiva celebrates as central to indigenous cultures but which does not even exist in the main indigenous languages in Canada, is a European transplant that entered native cultures through interactions with "hippie communities" in the 60s (CBC 2003).

18 In critiquing subsistence ecofeminism, I am not dismissing ecofeminism per se. Subsistence ecofeminism is a form of cultural ecofeminism which, in its other, largely Western varieties – for example, animal advocacy ecofeminism and spiritualist ecofeminism – is also deeply problematic. However, the socialist ecofeminism – or socialist feminist environmentalism – of philosophers Val Plumwood and Kate Soper is considerably more sophisticated and politically astute than subsistence ecofeminism. Postmodern ecofeminists also critique Shiva and her associates but the postmodern critique of cultural ecofeminism is limited because postmodern ecofeminism is also, in its own way, highly romantic.

19 It should be noted that this article was published in a special issue of *Canadian Woman Studies*, focusing on "Women and Sustainability," that was guest-edited (*and* "blind reviewed") by Ana Isla, Leigh Brownhill, Myriam Wyman, and Brenda Cranney. The issue also contained an article co-authored by subsistence proponent Brownhill (with Terisa Turner) and a reprinted review of Cranney's book. There were no articles critical of the subsistence perspective.

20 For a discussion of how the subsistence perspective might be applied in the North, see articles by Helena Norberg-Hodge, Christa Müller, Elizabeth Meyer-Renschhausen, and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen in the Bennholdt-Thomsen, Faraclas, and von Werlhof anthology.

21 For a more extensive examination and critique of the politics of the IFG, see Westerink.

22 Hildyard is a former member of the editorial team of *The Ecologist* who, together with the rest of

the team, left the magazine in 1997 due to political differences with Goldsmith over issues related to ethnicity and gender.

23 Many of Shiva's critics complain about her constant conflation of "Indian philosophy" with "Hindu philosophy." Given that non-Hindu minorities comprise about 20% of the population of India and that these same minorities have suffered considerable violence at the hands of Hindu fundamentalists, this conflation is *extremely* insensitive to say the very least.

24 Many religious minorities in India were, in earlier times, *dalits*. They converted to Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, and other religions specifically because these religions lacked a caste system. Forcing them to acknowledge their "essential Hinduism" thus entails forcing them back into the lowest echelon of the caste system.

25 And, vice versa, aspects of Hindu fundamentalism served some interests of Gandhians. For example, Gandhian Rajani Kanth, who also claims to be inspired by Shiva, accords the Hindu nationalist BJP a favorable mention in passing in his 1997 book, *Breaking with Enlightenment*.

26 Feminists should, of course, be critiquing social movements that fail to make provisions for mothers with children who want to participate in meetings, events, and actions and that ignore or downplay issues impacting pregnant women, women who are mothering, and children. However, maternal feminism goes far beyond this to argue that feminist politics be modeled on the caring relationship of a mother for her infant child. This is a very problematic stance for many reasons. However, a full discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this particular paper.

27 This is the subject of Wendy Lill's excellent play "The Fighting Days."

28 According to Mies, fascism arises from the "rationalist paradigm" of science and from industrialism: "This thought-taboo ["around issues like motherhood, land, and so on"] prevents a real critique of fascism and its use of women for its motherhood ideology, because those who profited most from fascism were not 'irrational' women but rather in particular, those scientists who were wedded to the rationalist paradigm and the industrialists who used this rationalist science for their war preparations" (Mies and Shiva 1993: 159).

29 There are interesting parallels between how Gandhi's cultural-essentialist populism lent itself to appropriation by Hindu nationalists and how an essentialist maternal-feminist populism became complicit with racist nationalism during the suffrage campaigns. Gandhi's "affirmative Orientalism," for wxample, resonates strongly with the "counter-cultural" stance of cultural feminism which seeks to reverse pejorative patriarchal stereotypes of women as essentially emotional and as closer to nature by reclaiming these attributes as affirmative. There are also significant similarities between the critique of "universalist feminism" and the arguments for a "differentialist feminism" made by French New Rightists, de Benoist and Champetier, and cultural feminism's critique of liberal feminism and its espousal of a feminism rooted in women's "difference."

30 This is the subject of my unpublished paper "'*Al servicio de la humanidad*': Women, Seeds, and Global Justice."

31 The observations of American right-winger, Matt Hale, on the Seattle protests are also relevant here: "What happened at Seattle is a precursor for the future – when White people in droves protest the actions of world Jewry … by taking to the streets…. I witnessed some of the marches, and while there was certainly a fair amount of non-white trash in them, the vast majority were White people of good blood…. It is from the likes of the White people who protested the WTO … that our World Church of the Creator must look to for our converts … [and to] the left wing [–] … we should concentrate on these zealots…" (as cited in Hamerquist 2002: 36-37).

32 This calls into question as well the Zapatista slogan "One no, many yeses."

33 The anti-fascist movement in the US has a website devoted to this "three-way fight." This website and the *De Fabel* website are invaluable sources of critical analyses of and resources relevant to the inroads that the Right is presently making on "left" populist orientations and campaigns.

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