



This Elusive Land



*Edited By Melody Hessing,
Rebecca Raglon, and Catriona Sandilands*

This Elusive Land:
Women and the Canadian
Environment



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Contents

Introduction: Women and Environment / vii

PART 1 Explorers and Settlers / 1

- 1** Little Goody Two-Shoes: Reassessing the Work of Catharine Parr Trail / 4
Rebecca Raglon
- 2** Environmentalism, Hermeneutics, and Canadian Imperialism in Agnes Deans Cameron's *The New North* / 19
Daniel O'Leary
- 3** Wilderness Wives: Domestic Economy and Women's Participation in Nature / 35
Randall Roorda
- 4** And the Young Man Did Go North (Unfortunately): Reflections on Issues in Gender and the Academy / 57
Jo-Anne Fiske

PART 2 Making a Living: Making a Life / 77

- 5** Environmental, Industrial, and Political Restructuring and the Health of Women Processing Workers in Newfoundland's Fishery-Dependent Communities / 82
Barbara Neis and Brenda Grzetic
- 6** Working at the Margins of Forestry: The Gender of Labour Practices on British Columbia's West Coast / 102
Maureen G. Reed
- 7** People for Pigs in Pleasant-Land: Small-Scale Women Farmers / 128
Martha McMahon

- 8** Where the Mountain Men Meet the Lesbian Rangers: Gender, Nation, and Nature in the Rocky Mountain National Parks / 142

Catriona Sandilands

PART 3 Environmental Politics: Issues at Home and Away / 163

- 9** The Public, the Private, the Planet, and the Province: Women's Quality-of-Life Activism in Urban Southern Ontario / 169

Sherilyn MacGregor

- 10** Desperately Seeking Sisterhood and Sustainability: Creating Transnational Social Learning Spaces for Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Advocacy / 188

Leonora C. Angeles, Layla Saad, and Rebecca Tarbotton

- 11** Too Close to Home: Dioxin Contamination of Breast Milk and the Political Agenda / 213

Kathryn Harrison

- 12** Acting Locally: Mapping and Countermapping toward a Grassroots Feminist Cartography / 243

Katherine Dunster

PART 4 Rethinking the Environment / 267

- 13** Tracing Amorous Journeys from the Sweetwater to Watson Lake: Environmental Ecstasies of Willa Cather and Aritha van Herk / 270

Anne L. Kaufman

- 14** The Fall of the Wild? Feminist Perspectives of Canadian Wilderness Protection / 281

Melody Hessing

- 15** A Vision of Transformation: Ecofeminist Spiritualities in Canada / 300

Heather Eaton

- 16** The Listening World: First Nations Women Writers and the Environment / 316

Marian Scholtmeijer

Conclusion / 335

Bibliography / 341

Notes on Contributors / 365

Index / 367



Introduction: Women and Environment

(precede me into this elusive country)
always this place, this latitude escapes me
— Gwendolyn MacEwen¹

This Elusive Land: Women and the Canadian Environment is a multidisciplinary anthology exploring a feminist approach to the Canadian environment. A number of factors have coalesced to form a foundation for rethinking how gender influences our perspectives of the Canadian landscape. These include new academic research, especially feminist studies; conflicts in resource use; the articulation of new interests and stakeholders in the development of environmental policy; the increased profile of land claims by First Nations; the creation of a new territory, Nunavut; additional understanding of the global significance of Canadian resources; and decreases in biodiversity and biological integrity. All of these factors have generated increased attention to the Canadian environment. Yet we felt that the topic of gender had been developed only incidentally – for instance, as a chapter on resource management or as a topic developed sporadically in the context of women’s writing. Given the increasing recognition of the importance of gender to environmental history, literature, economics, and politics, it seemed the right moment for a book to examine how Canada, too, is a particular site of feminist interaction with the environment.

This collection of essays, drawn from a variety of academic backgrounds, is meant to fill a gap in our knowledge of women and the environment in Canada. As editors, we wanted to develop a multifaceted look at the topic of women and the environment that would collectively address the still powerful, gendered reality of Canadian experiences of the land. In addition, we wanted to build on (1) feminist scholarship on women’s relations to the Canadian landscape and (2) ecofeminist scholarship theorizing women’s relations to natural environments, and to critique both if necessary. In

particular, we wanted to make links between and among disciplinary perspectives by including a variety of views from both the humanities and social sciences (which merge in some chapters). In this way we hoped that a fuller picture of women's experiences would emerge, one that would provide a useful basis for reassessing gendered human relationships to nature. We proceeded on the assumption that women's experiences and positions in society have given us and continue to give us different sets of lenses through which to observe the natural world. Sometimes this gaze is critical, and sometimes it underscores the interests of patriarchal society. At all times, gender is also unavoidably located in historically, geographically, and culturally specific relations of race, colonialism, and class.

While gender is significant to our understanding of all facets of Canadian society, it is especially so in how we confront, depend on, and interact with the natural world. Why this might be so has been the topic of endless and often confusing debate. Is woman really associated with nature as man is with culture, as some feminists claim? Or are women the caretakers of culture, while men are associated with the wild (which is often considered the experience of nineteenth-century women settlers in North America)? Despite the blurring that has occurred in other professions and other aspects of society, association with the environment – in terms of resource-intensive jobs, exploration, or leisure activities – remains largely a man's game. Yet paradoxically, women outnumber men as members of environmental organizations and have been a significant source of environmental activism and leadership. What is to account for these apparent contradictions? Are women still so strongly associated with domesticity that even environmentalism confines them to the role of cleaning up the mess, while men go out and heroically save (or exploit) the wild?

Among the questions this volume explores, then, is how gender influences perspectives and experiences of the environment, how women's relations to the environment embody and reflect the experiences and the perspectives of "others," and how physical environments influence social and political relations. In addition, contributors to this volume ask: How are women's positions in the family, the community, and the labour force mediated by the environment? How are women politically active in developing environmental/resource policy? What would a feminist environmental perspective look like, especially in the Canadian context? And finally, and perhaps most important, does a feminist perspective enable us to better know, understand, and value the Canadian environment, and if so, how?

The contributors to this book have all focused on how women's lives are the product of biophysical places as well as social and institutional factors. What emerges is a nuanced picture of the constant interplay between social factors and the biophysical context of the Canadian environment, one

that is dynamic and varied, reflecting an array of ecological systems, political and biological regions, historical and cultural variables, and theoretical views. This interplay expands both the way the environment is portrayed and notions of what constitutes a problem or crisis. Consequently, this book contributes to women's studies through its environmental focus, it informs environmental studies with a range of feminist perspectives, and it complements Canadian studies by integrating a variety of disciplinary perspectives of the Canadian experience from the humanities and social sciences.

Gendered Accounts of Canada

The familiar facts about the place we call Canada found in its history, economics, and literature are based primarily on the gendered accounts provided by its white settlers, from the first European explorers to workers in today's resource-based economy. Men such as Jacques Cartier, Henry Hudson, Samuel de Champlain, and John Cabot charted Canada's extensive coastline; Alexander Mackenzie, Samuel Hearne, and John Franklin explored the Arctic and interior reaches of the country. Collectively, they described a country that was both harsh and unsuitable for farming: Jacques Cartier is reported to have said, as he navigated the Saint Lawrence River in 1534, that the Gaspé area was "the land God gave to Cain."² Germaine Warkentin points out that even though early exploration accounts are filled with descriptions of the lives of Native inhabitants, much of the interior of Canada during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was depicted primarily as a storehouse of resources that existed outside the civilized fold.³ Traditional accounts of the fur trade tend to suggest that this was exclusively men's work, performed by First Nations hunters, French Canadian voyageurs, and Hudson's Bay administrators. Yet even the fur trade was often contingent on women's contributions. As Sylvia Van Kirk has documented extensively, without First Nations women as guides, many of the hunters, voyageurs, and traders would have found themselves hopelessly lost and, in all likelihood, starving or facing death.⁴

The historian W.L. Morton argues that during the nineteenth century, the "rural myth" took hold in Canada: the belief that the basis of "welfare and virtue was the land and its cultivation."⁵ Accompanying this "rural myth" was the understanding that women immigrants from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Europe typically suffered greater hardships than men when it came to backwoods life. However, in the context of the demise of the fur trade and the rise of a settler society, women were also understood to *embody and transport* necessary "civilization" to colonial landscapes. On top of their sustaining (and largely unrecognized) contributions to frontier economies, these women were thought to bring domestic stability and social conservatism to the "wild." Men could thus trap, hunt, explore; women

were confined to the cabin or to some middle ground of garden or field, where their virtues could, literally, be planted in the national soil.

Immigrant women often longed for the homes they had left behind. In the early nineteenth century, Anna Jameson stated, "I have never met with so many repining and discontented women as in Canada. I have never met with one woman recently settled here, who considered herself happy in her new home and country."⁶ Apart from missing the support of family and friends and the landscapes of previous homelands, women were often confined by domestic responsibility to isolated cabins and woodlots. The "adventure" of settling in a new country was not necessarily undertaken of their own initiative. A hundred years later, the novelist Frederick Philip Grove continued to echo these sentiments as he portrayed the desire to possess and transform land as a masculine obsession in which women were often unhappy accomplices. In his 1923 novel, *The Turn of the Year*, he writes of a man and a wife growing apart as the woman finds employment in the city and begins to enjoy life there. One summer, when the work in the fields took all his time, the duties of milking the cows, feeding the pigs, and tending the garden fell to the woman. "But while he worked his vision was of the farm; her vision was a comparison between this slavery and the city. Man and wife found themselves estranged."⁷

In the mid-twentieth century, Northrop Frye, surveying Canadian fiction and poetry, theorized that Canadians had a "garrison mentality" in relation to nature. Unlike Americans, who marched confidently forward, intent on converting their wilderness into a New Jerusalem, according to Frye, Canadians were appalled by the brooding forests and enormous spaces around their settlements. As a consequence, they huddled indoors, looked inward, and sought comfort from one another. Furthermore, while Americans could regard their wilderness with certain affection, Canadians viewed theirs with ambivalence, even terror: "I have long been impressed in Canadian poetry by a tone of deep terror in regard to nature ... It is not a terror of the dangers or discomforts or even the mysteries of nature, but a terror of soul at something that these things manifest. The human mind has nothing but human and moral values to cling to if it is to preserve its integrity or even its sanity, yet the vast unconsciousness of nature in front of it seems an unanswerable denial of those values."⁸

Once again, however, women's relations to this mentality suggest a more nuanced story. While, on the one hand, such writers as Susanna Moodie indicate that women's sense of "homelessness" in the New World actually intensified their terror, others – including her sister, Catharine Parr Traill – clearly sought to create a dwelling in the wilderness by crafting a complex intimacy with the wild nature around them. Diana Relke's ecocritical reading of some of Canada's most prominent women poets suggests that women

have long been “redrawing the map” of nature by consulting the contexts of their own experiences.⁹ This redrawing of the map continues in the work of contemporary authors such as Dionne Brand, who views the brooding forests of the Canadian North through the context of nontemperate landscape experiences and histories. For Brand, November “is when missing plumes”;¹⁰ its rain brings memories of tropics and tamarinds and not the pastoral England of Moodie’s particular nostalgia. Again, in contrast, Mohawk author Beth Brant finds solace in the natural world; it is in her identification with the wild, not her protective retreat from it, that she discovers safety and personal resolution to crisis and tragedy.¹¹ In Bernice Morgan’s *Random Passage*, Mary Bundle’s adept criminality finds an odd welcome in a bleak Newfoundland outpost.¹² These women’s writings speak of a landscape tradition with roots and branches that extend well beyond the walls of Frye’s garrison. Often garrisoned by domestic responsibilities, women may find a kind of solace or relief in the ambiguities and diversities of wild nature.

Economic expansion adds another layer to the experience of the Canadian environment. While First Nations for centuries lived in diverse subsistence and gift economies, contemporary capitalist livelihoods are largely wrested from the resources we exploit. Indeed, what we now perceive as the “environment,” the biophysical systems that support this country, is still reduced by conventional economics to the utilitarian notion of “resource.” Resources are sold in an increasingly global, if still American-dominated, marketplace. Today the Canadian economy is based on the exploitation of resources in sectors such as forestry, mining, fishing, energy, and agriculture, which account for almost one-third of the value of all exports. Canada is still a country dependent both materially and symbolically on natural resources, although diversification and technological innovation have reduced jobs in resource sectors. Resource economies, involving the direct exploitation of the environment for human use, have been overwhelmingly characterized by a male workforce, although employment has decreased in recent decades. Nonetheless, resource processing (e.g., pulp and paper production or food processing) and related transportation, construction, and service activities, as well as indirect employment in retail, wholesale, and government sectors, provide opportunities for many women in rural communities.

Here again, gender complicates the picture. Although well-paid jobs in the resource sector go to men, women have played – and continue to play – important roles in resource communities. Meg Luxton points out in *More than a Labour of Love* that women are reproductive labourers in resource communities;¹³ in addition, women have played significant productive roles in particular resource industries. They have salted, dried, packed, and canned fish; they have picked fruit among families of migrant labourers (legal and

illegal); they have transformed billions of potatoes into French fries and tomatoes into ketchup. In addition, as particular resource industries feel the pressures of globalization, patterns of resource exhaustion and technological change disrupt long-established gender and family patterns, a significant issue for resource communities. Women's employment outside the home ironically becomes the basis for staying on the land and holding on to the farm. As tourist-industry jobs replace logging, and as lands once occupied by family farms are taken over by agribusiness or residential development, gendered relations to landscape cannot help but shift, reflecting changes occurring in labour patterns.

Finally, a gendered account of Canadian environments must include a sense of how women and men are affected and politicized in different ways by environmental degradation. The environmental-justice movement in the United States has increasingly recognized that we live in a global as well as a local environment. People are not equally affected by toxic wastes, industrial agricultural discharges, chemical spills, and air-quality alerts.¹⁴ Race and class are important factors in determining who gets what in their ecological backyards. It is thus frequently low-income women and women of colour who must respond to the task of recognizing the effects of environmental contamination on their families and communities. These women are then charged with the task of pursuing justice in the face of unresponsive bureaucracies and reluctant industrial polluters. In Canada major urban centres are increasingly faced with significant pollution problems. The more children develop severe asthma and other respiratory problems, and the more the safety of the food and water systems is called into question, the more women will be called upon to politicize the ecological conditions of their families' illnesses. In places like Whitney Pier, Nova Scotia, residents are still seeking justice in the face of years of irresponsible contamination and cover-up. For many First Nations women, toxic politics are compounded by isolation and social problems. Labrador Innu are fighting environmental battles against low-level NATO flights at the same time as they are struggling to preserve and vivify their traditional land-based culture in the face of alcoholism and abuse.

In past male-authored accounts of Canadian exploration and exploitation, the rougher and tougher the landscape, the more heroic are the men who seek to discover its secrets, tame it, and wrestle the wealth from it. Yet women's labour – invisible, marginalized, devalued – enables men's adventures. These same labours, of course, alert women to environmental change. In the midst of an environmentalist critique of resource exploitation and toxic imperialism, then, feminists have an important role to play in issuing a reminder about the complex gendered dimensions of Canadian environmental history, literature, and economics. An understanding of the complex and diverse relationship between women and the natural environment

will contribute to a deeper understanding of the environmental challenges facing Canada.

Feminist Scholarship on Environment and Gender

Feminist scholars, confronting these gendered relations, have reacted in a variety of ways. Helen Buss, noting some of the shades of women's responses to their newfound lands, suggests that far from communicating the kind of "terror" that Frye discovered in his reading of primarily masculine works, women's accounts convey a different ethos. According to Buss, "All the women autobiographers ... react to the strangeness of the Canadian landscape by merging their own identity, in some imaginative way, with the new land." This feminine merging is certainly considerably different from the terrified recoiling detected by Frye. Buss believes that such moments of intimacy are arrived at in two ways: "through a relationship with significant others and through some creative activity that discovers each woman's unique relation to the land." She urges literary critics to begin to see through "ungarrisoned eyes" and suggests that the "interconnection of self, other, and land" is a "female vision of the land."¹⁵ Annis Pratt goes even further in her discernment of difference between the male and female experiences of nature, suggesting that Canadian experiences with nature generally, compared with the American experience, have certain "feminine" attributes. According to Pratt, this femininity can be characterized by a kind of "animistic reciprocity between being of woman and being of rock, tree, and beast."¹⁶

Interpretations such as Pratt's and Buss's tended to coincide with the evolution of ecofeminist writings in the 1980s and seemed to suggest that women had – or have – a more evolved connection to the natural world than men. Although ecofeminist thinkers have generally eschewed biologically determinist arguments about women's inborn proclivities to "nature-nurturance," they have also emphasized strong connections between the oppression of women and the domination of nature. For some ecofeminists, Western philosophical systems of hierarchical dualism have organized a world in which women are subordinated to men, emotion to reason, body to mind, and nature to culture. In this broad conceptual frame, women share a degraded social position with nonhuman nature; both are "resources" for male exploitation, overused, undervalued, and denied full subject status in patriarchal thought. For others, it is more the case that women's social position in patriarchal societies shapes a particular consciousness of natural environments. As indicated earlier, women are often alerted to particular conditions of ecological degradation in the course of their everyday work as caregivers for families and communities. In addition, it is often women's work that is most adversely affected when ecological systems are devastated. In subsistence economies, women have to work harder to feed their families when

their community resource base is depleted – for example, in favour of cash crops for export. In both cases, ecofeminists have suggested that it is not so much that women have an innate connection to nature as it is that women occupy a social position that allows them epistemic privilege in relation to nature and, especially, to processes of environmental degradation.

Ecofeminist analyses of this kind have been hotly criticized by feminists such as Janet Biehl, who speak of the political dangers of creating essentialized connections between women and nature, even in the act of opposing male-dominated agendas.¹⁷ In recent years, however, ecofeminist scholarship has become increasingly more complex than this idea of essential connection allows. In some instances, writers such as Noël Sturgeon have argued in favour of a strategic essentialism, in which women activists are able to mobilize around problematic understandings of gender and nature in order to make crucial points about the effects of these essentialist ideas.¹⁸ In other cases, writers such as Lee Quinby argue for a more interrogative political form, in which the deep specificities of local struggles are not and cannot be located in singular, overarching conceptions of gender or nature (or race, class, sexuality, or nation). In contrast to Biehl, for whom ecofeminism is to be rejected partly as a result of its conceptual “incoherence,” Quinby embraces it for its intellectual and political diversity.¹⁹

Still, some feminist ecologists, including Bina Agarwal, remain deeply critical of ecofeminism, indicating the ease with which international institutions have picked up languages of gender difference and planetary nurturance.²⁰ They suggest that any political stance that relies on notions of women’s “difference” to carve out an ecological politics runs into the danger of reinforcing, rather than challenging, patriarchal and colonialist ideas of gender and nature. It is also important to recognize that ecofeminist ideas about labour, history, and even the nature of oppression do not exhaust the theoretical possibilities for feminist/environmental inquiry. In this context, ecofeminist scholarship could continue to benefit from a more thoroughgoing understanding of the intense particularities of gender and nature in specific places and how these are organized by complex intersections of power based on both physical and cultural environments.

Organization of This Book

In addressing some of these questions, the book encompasses a range of perspectives, topics, and issues investigating women’s experiences of the Canadian environment. The chapters range from literary and historical discussion to investigations of socio-economic and political issues. They reflect the experiences of women in different provinces and bioregions across the country, from Newfoundland to British Columbia. In order to organize this very wide-ranging inquiry, we chose four broad areas to examine: the

cultural and historical representation of the natural world found in women's writing; the roles of women in environmental and resource work, especially logging, fishing, agriculture, and tourism; the roles of women in both local and global environmental politics; and finally, the possibilities for reframing and reimagining the gendered experience of wilderness, nature, and the environment.

Part 1, "Explorers and Settlers," deals with the literary and historical record of women's relations to the Canadian environment. This part asks whether women were in fact as alienated from the settlement experience as past writers and recent feminist scholarship have claimed. Does an ecofeminist viewpoint reveal an alternative story to the one of women's alienation? Do women have a "special" relationship with the natural world? In this part we find two sets of ideas. On the one hand, there are examples of adventurous women (who negate the idea that exploration is a man's activity); on the other hand, many women were incapable of meeting the rigours of life in the bush. This part contains examples of women who endorse what we now understand as patriarchal social structure or who were enthusiastic supporters of what we now perceive as imperialistic projects of settlement and colonization. Certainly, evidence also points to situations in which women's work, for example, gave them the ability to develop apparently "caring" relations with the natural environment and to develop autonomy and competence, even if involuntarily.

Catharine Parr Traill is well known to many Canadians, yet she is usually viewed as the "less interesting" of the two Strickland sisters. Rebecca Raglon provides an ecocritical reading of Traill that places her work in a more congenial context and in the process suggests that Traill's early feminine viewpoint offers new insights that challenge the genre of nature writing. Daniel O'Leary looks at a neglected Canadian writer, Agnes Deans Cameron, who travelled in the far North in the early part of the twentieth century. One has to be impressed with her energy, independence, and spirit, but O'Leary does not engage in feminist hagiography. Rather, he develops a critical approach that allows him to acknowledge Deans Cameron's imperialistic mode and missionary zeal and sets it within the context of the missionary magazines that were popular reading among the Canadian public. Randall Roorda plays with the term "wilderness wives," wondering why so many accounts of wilderness travel, exploration, and adventure were written by "wives" in the twentieth century and why these "wives" clung so fiercely to their gender roles, finding them so difficult to abandon. Finally, Jo-Anne Fiske brings readers up to date on the present-day North, with all of its contradictions, revealed by the irony of her chapter's title, "And the Young Man Did Go North (Unfortunately)." Fiske, an anthropologist, sees the North not as a land that is "true and free" and filled with brave and stalwart men, but as a

place almost hallucinogenic in its cognitive dissonance. According to Fiske, while some residents still cling to old myths, they do so while plugged into satellite TVs or imagining pure wilderness adventure from the cab of an oversized pick-up truck.

Part 2, "Making a Living: Making a Life," examines the diverse ways that women engage with the natural environment not only as a means of economic survival, but as the basis for their connection to family and community. Women's labour, both paid and unpaid, constructs the frame(work) in which they weave their lives – where women spend time, learn skills, meet other people, and earn wages (in some kinds of work). This part challenges several common assumptions about the male character of employment in the resource sector, extending our ideas about the nature of work and who should be doing it. Men's work has, and continues to be, directly associated with resource economies; however, declines in traditional male employment have created increased demand for women's contributions to household incomes. While technology, resource supplies, and resistance to women's labour have historically curtailed women's paid work, the emergence of new technologies additionally spur women's participation in the labour force.

This part examines a Canadian resource economy in transition by exploring women's contributions to the fishery, forestry, agriculture, and tourism, which is a growing force in environmental employment. Barbara Neis and Brenda Grzetic focus on the impacts of economic and environmental restructuring on women's work and, in turn, their health. They discuss the economic, social, and personal costs of environmental restructuring due to overfishing. They argue that restructuring is not gender neutral but threatens women's health by eroding and transforming opportunities for work and by reducing household incomes. Restructuring is not merely macro-economic; rather, it intrudes into women's lives, reshaping health and households just as it transforms canneries and mills. Maureen G. Reed explores the role of women in forestry by discussing women's experiences of paid work within the forestry industry and in communities. By adopting women's perspectives on their work, we understand how their location in households and communities informs their life choices and opportunities for work. Martha McMahan explores how farming is a gendered experience. She describes how small-scale women farmers resist marginalization through the generation of an alternative ecological agriculture, one that rejects and disrupts conventional understandings about food and our relationship to the land. Finally, Catriona Sandilands' chapter demonstrates how gender informs environmental politics in the "nonconsumptive" sector of tourism. Discussion of how gender infiltrates parks interpretation and wilderness tourism in Banff National Park and others reveals the continuing primacy

of male definitions of what it is to be a park warden, and also of the role of national parks in Canadian nationalism. Here, a lesbian treatment of this work challenges the conventional separation between rock-and-ice machismo and cabin domesticity.

Part 3 deals with "Environmental Politics: Issues at Home and Away." While politics are often thought of in terms of formal institutions such as Parliament, individuals also engage in political activity and experience the consequences of political actions in all facets of their lives. Environmental politics refers to how power is mobilized, decisions are made, and policy is formulated and implemented with respect to our physical and social surroundings. Politics, then, refers to the processes by which humans decide how to live on this earth – how they should distribute wealth, whether to recycle goods, and where (and if) to situate an industrial dumpsite. It includes the allocation of household tasks and the kitchen-table discussion of neighborhood traffic control, in addition to traditional municipal, provincial, and federal decision-making. International tribunals and agencies are increasingly relevant to environmental governance due to the extent and fluidity of ecological systems and the global dimensions of contemporary society. Women have been significantly underrepresented in formal political processes at the provincial and federal levels in Canada but have been especially visible and active in environmental and municipal politics. Women's political activity often interprets the personal as political, and it also understands the importance of every stage of political struggle, from the local to the global.

The chapters in this part show how women integrate household, community, and society through their political activity. Sherilyn MacGregor's chapter, "The Public, the Private, the Planet, and the Province: Women's Quality-of-Life Activism in Urban Southern Ontario," describes how women activists politicize personal and local environmental issues. MacGregor discusses the burden of "caring" and household support that women have absorbed in the face of government cutbacks. First-hand accounts explain how women personally accommodate the additional responsibility of political work, their perceptions of their own contributions to society, and their views about the relationship between sustainability, society, and political citizenship.

On the global stage, Canadian development agencies have been widely recognized within the international community for their work on two major concerns: gender and the environment. Leonora C. Angeles, Layla Saad, and Rebecca Tarbotton's chapter, "Desperately Seeking Sisterhood and Sustainability: Creating Transnational Social Learning Spaces for Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Advocacy," describes how women have mobilized around environmental issues in less developed countries,

specifically India, the Philippines, and Brazil. These examples of local political organization are significant not only for Canadian women, but for hinterland communities, where resources are also under pressure from global markets.

The politics of reproduction, family, and industrial production are addressed in the next chapter, "Too Close to Home: Dioxin Contamination of Breast Milk and the Political Agenda." Kathryn Harrison discusses how breast milk reflects environmental quality, demonstrating how the personal – the breast milk mothers provide their babies – becomes political. Economic and political actions – the character of industrial production, the implementation of regulatory policies – are not usually associated so closely with our personal health and intimate relations. Finally, Katherine Dunster's chapter, "Acting Locally," demonstrates how mapping can be used as a means of community mobilization by putting environments and issues on the political map. The process of mapping politicizes participants, while the map as a product is a visual manifestation of environment, integrating individuals not only into community but into the larger physical context of region, province, nation, and planet.

Living in the twenty-first century involves living in that uncomfortable zone known as the "environmental crisis." If this crisis has come about because of a nexus of historical, economic, and political forces, then it seems vital that we try to find new ways of thinking about human relationships with the natural world. Part of this process involves identifying the gendered reality of many activities, histories, and cultural engagements with the Canadian land. In Part 4, however, the authors have gone beyond identifying the attitudes and activities that have enmeshed women within a reality increasingly perceived as an ongoing "environmental crisis." In this final part of the book, the authors tackle the idea of "rethinking," or "remapping," the environment as they break free from the contexts that have garrisoned women in domestic quarters or in the roles of helper and enabler of environmental destruction.

Anne Kaufman looks across the border in her comparison of Willa Cather and Aritha van Herk in a chapter that examines a different form of "Canadian western," one that opens up a new scale of authenticity and revivifies familiar Prairie territory by examining it through the experience of feminine eroticism. Kaufman concludes in "Tracing Amorous Journeys from the Sweetwater to Watson Lake" that Canadian writers are less confined by nation-building issues such as Manifest Destiny and thus more open to parodying the myth of the West. In "A Vision of Transformation: Ecofeminist Spiritualities in Canada," Heather Eaton examines the transformative possibilities of spirituality and the importance of the sacred in any reassessment of human interaction with the land. Eaton points out that spirituality

often underscores what communities consider to be most profound in their lives and examines how ecofeminism and spirituality have intersected in Canada.

The theme of rethinking the human relationship to the Canadian environment by discussing the physical wilderness, which still exists as a defining characteristic of Canada, continues in "The Fall of the Wild? Feminist Perspectives of Canadian Wilderness Protection." According to Melody Hessing, despite the relative abundance of wild places in this country, Canada lags behind many other countries in terms of wilderness protection. Hessing's chapter is a call for continued recognition of the wilderness as a central aspect of the Canadian experience and identity. This recognition can be approached, however, only through a careful rethinking of the term wilderness and its various, often contradictory meanings. Finally, in "The Listening World: First Nations Women Writers and the Environment," Marian Scholtmeijer examines how many First Nations writers convey a sense of a nonhuman world that is very different from the natural world of Western literary tradition, which most often presents nature as a backdrop to a more absorbing human drama or as a storehouse of convenient metaphors and symbols to enhance human importance. In particular, the identification of human and animal can be very close in First Nations women's writing, which suggests yet another way of thinking about the world, a profound way that reaches beyond the identification of nonhuman nature as mere resource.

Together the chapters in this collection are meant to identify how gender has contributed to experiences of the land. Our hope is that such an examination, touching on many diverse places and issues, will highlight previously neglected issues concerning the environment, while also suggesting the many challenges lying ahead in developing a more meaningful, equitable, and enduring relationship to the natural world.

Notes

- 1 Gwendolyn MacEwen, "The Caravan," in *Modern Canadian Verse*, edited by A.J.M. Smith (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967), 415.
- 2 Jacques Cartier, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 10.
- 3 Germaine Warkentin, *Canadian Exploration Literature: An Anthology: 1660-1860* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993).
- 4 Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trader Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer Publishing, 1980).
- 5 W.L. Morton, *The Shield of Achilles: Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), 312.
- 6 Anna Jameson, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* (1838; reprint, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1923), 139.
- 7 Frederick Philip Grove, *The Turn of the Year* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1923), 60.
- 8 Northrop Frye, *The Bush Garden* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1971), 250.
- 9 Diana Relke, *Greenwor(l)ds* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1999), 323.
- 10 Dionne Brand, *In Another Place, Not Here* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 200.

- 11 Beth Brant, *Food and Spirits: Stories* (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1991).
- 12 Bernice Morgan, *Random Passage* (St. John's, NF: Breakwater, 1992).
- 13 Meg Luxton, *More Than a Labour of Love: Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1980).
- 14 Robert Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990).
- 15 Helen Buss, "Women and the Garrison Mentality: Pioneer Women Autobiographers and their Relation to the Land," in *Re(dis)covering Our Foremothers*, edited by Lorraine McMullen (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 123-36, 126.
- 16 Annis Pratt, "Affairs with Bears: Some Notes towards Feminist Archetypal Hypotheses for Canadian Literature," in *Gynocritics: Feminist Approaches to Writing by Canadian and Quebecoise Women*, edited by Barbara Godard (Toronto: ECW Press, 1987), 157-78, 162.
- 17 Janet Biehl, *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1991).
- 18 Noël Sturgeon, *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory, and Political Action* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997).
- 19 Lee Quinby, *Anti-Apocalypse: Exercises in Genealogical Criticism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
- 20 Bina Agarwal, "A Challenge for Ecofeminism: Gender, Greening, and Community Forestry in India," *Women and Environments International Magazine* 52/53 (Fall 2001): 12-15.