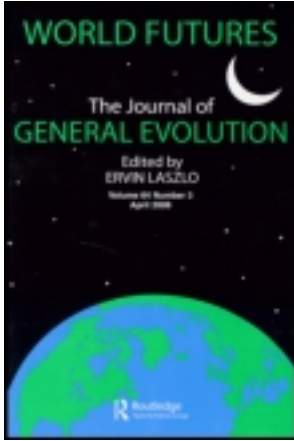


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Publisher: Routledge

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UK



World Futures: The Journal of Global Education

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gwof20>

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To cite this article: Sam Mickey & Kimberly Carfore (2012): Planetary Love: Ecofeminist Perspectives on Globalization, *World Futures: The Journal of Global Education*, 68:2, 122-131

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02604027.2011.615630>

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PLANETARY LOVE: ECOFEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBALIZATION

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This article draws on three ecofeminist theorists (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Val Plumwood, and Donna Haraway) in order to criticize the dominant model of globalization, which oppresses humans and the natural environment, and propose an alternative globalization grounded in planetary love. Rather than affirming or opposing the globalization, planetary love acknowledges its complicity with the neocolonial tendencies of globalization while aiming toward another globalization, a more just, peaceful, and sustainable globalization. In this context, love is characterized by non-coercive, mutually transformative contact, which opens spaces of respect and responsibility for the unique differences and otherness of planetary subjects (humans and nonhumans).

KEYWORDS: *Alterity, colonization, companion species, ecofeminism, globalization.*

It is not difficult to find problems with globalization (problems of colonialism, industrialization, environmental destruction, etc.). Going further than critique, many ecofeminist theorists also work toward developing an alternative globalization that would be more just and sustainable, that is, a globalization grounded in efforts to respect and respond to the unique differences and otherness of planetary subjects (including humans and other species). Furthermore, some ecofeminists call for love as a supplement to any such efforts to nurture a more just and sustainable globalization. In this context, love is not just a feeling or emotion but is more fundamentally a non-coercive, transformative contact, which participates in the co-constitutive link between planetary others while honoring the irreducible otherness of the other.

To further develop an alternative globalization grounded in love, we elaborate on the works of three ecofeminists: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Donna Haraway, and Val Plumwood. Although only Plumwood explicitly designates her theory as ecofeminist, with Spivak and Haraway referred to as feminists more than ecofeminists, all three of these feminists have expressed deep engagements with ecological issues and with connections between gender and ecology. Furthermore, all of these theorists are committed to addressing postcolonial issues and inequalities of race, ethnicity, and class.

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The term “ecofeminist” applies to Spivak, Haraway, and Plumwood insofar as each of them addresses the domination of women while also addressing the underlying logic whereby oppressive hierarchies and asymmetries facilitate the domination of women as well as the domination of nature, the poor, and racial and ethnic minorities. This follows the definition of ecofeminism set forth by Karen Warren (2008), for whom ecofeminism focuses on overcoming the “logic of domination,” which underlies multiple forms of domination (sexism, naturism, racism, classism, ethnocentrism). All of the oppressive hierarchies and asymmetries of globalization are thus folded together with feminism. Accordingly, we speak of women and feminism not because they are involved in some uniquely interesting examples of globalization, but because women and feminism represent all of humanity as they embody the oppressive asymmetries of globalization. As Spivak (2003) says, “women are not a special case, but can represent the human, with the asymmetries attendant upon any such representation” (70).

To express a critique of globalization, we draw on Spivak to articulate the uninhabitable electronic grid of the globe, while Haraway and Plumwood help us elaborate on the tricky logic whereby globalization controls and dominates the realities of local situations. Following this account of globalization, we propose an alternative form of globalization in terms of Spivak’s concept of planetarity, which resonates with Plumwood’s vision of relationships of continuity and difference with Earth others and Haraway’s concept of companion species. We conclude by considering the importance of love for supplementing our efforts to nurture a more just, peaceful, and sustainable globalization.

GLOBALIZATION

For Spivak (2003), the current form of the globe is “the computerized globe” (73). The globe is not a space that can be inhabited. “The globe is on our computers. No one lives there” (72). On computer networks, the figure of the globe is an object of calculation and control. Of course, such calculation and control did not begin with computers. Globalization has “a long history” that can be traced to the practices, ideals, and aspirations expressed in “ancient world systems,” including ancient empires, philosophies, and religions (73). Although consideration of this long history is a crucial part of the task of thinking about globalization, our efforts in this article are directed toward transforming contemporary flows of globalization, and these flows are relatively independent insofar as they rely on computer technologies and information systems that were not present in ancient cultures.

The globe has been computerized, and not only through the Internet, but through the calculation of economic exchanges around the world. The computer has facilitated economic globalization, such that the computerization of the globe is a “financialization of the globe,” a financialization that has been accompanied by international compacts like North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the European Union, which turn state economic into tools of economic rationality (85). The computerized

globe imposes its system on others by reducing everything to “the gridwork of electronic capital,” with which “we achieve that abstract ball covered in latitudes and longitudes, cut by virtual lines, once the equator and the tropics and so on” (72). On this grid, everything is computed, reduced, contracted, calculated, simplified; in short, homogenized.

On the globe, everything is assimilated into the same computer-finance processes. Those processes build connections, with ideas, technologies, people, and natural resources circulating around the world, and those connections are bringing together a complex planetary whole. Yet, those connections take place on a grid that assimilates the planet and its inhabitants into homogenizing generalities, which tend to suppress or control the unique differences and the otherness (i.e., alterity) of those planetary subjects. Names like “environment” and “woman” and “animal” and “human” become general categories that support the manipulation and misappropriation of the very beings they name. This process of generalization is inescapable. Globalization “will not (and cannot) throw away the power of the move toward the general” (Spivak 2003, 46). Effacing the otherness of planetary others, globalization appears to be a cause (or even *the* cause) of the interconnected social and environmental crises addressed in ecological justice movements. Whether it is a cause, the cause, a symptom, or even to some extent a remedy to ecological injustice, globalization assimilates humans, organisms, and environments into a grid of objectification and commodification, a grid that propagates injustices and irresponsible contact between humans and the other organisms and environments on the planet.

The global grid is an imposition on the planet, imposing itself by performing what Haraway (1997) calls a “god trick,” which posits an absolute Truth (i.e., economic rationality) that rests completely outside of or in some such superior position to the complex materiality, heterogeneity, and multiplicity in which all knowledge is situated (134–138). That kind of un-situated Truth is the “god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere,” and such a “view of infinite vision,” regardless of whether it posits relativism or totalization, “is an illusion” (Haraway 1991, 189). According to the god trick of globalization, the computerized and financialized totalization of the world is inevitable and absolute, with no room for anything outside of the global grid, and no room for an alternative globalization that would celebrate local differences instead of homogenizing and controlling them. To put it another way, the god trick of globalization follows a logic whereby the global colonizes local others. This is what Plumwood (1993) calls the “logic of colonization.”

The logic of colonization enacts hierarchies between the poles of dualisms, where one pole is seen as superior and the other inferior. Examples of these dualisms are male/female, human/nature, ego/world, self/other, culture/nature, reason/emotion, mind/body, master/slave, and civilized/primitive (Plumwood 1993, 43). The logic of colonization is the underlying system that links multiple forms of colonization: the oppression of women by men, the suppression of emotion by reason, the disenfranchisement of the poor by the rich, the exploitation of people of color by Whites, and the domination of nature by humans. Furthermore, the logic of colonization is at work in the dualism whereby global identity

homogenizes and exploits local diversity and differences. The logic of colonization that structures globalization can also be understood in terms of what Plumwood (2002) calls “hegemonic centrism,” which signifies a sense of centrality that sets up a mutually exclusive dualism between center and periphery, such that whatever is central (global financial exchanges) has power or control over that which is peripheral or marginal (the different inhabitants and ecosystems of the planet) (101).

A dualism is different than simply distinguishing X and not-X in categorizing a polarity (e.g., light/dark, top/bottom, and male/female). A dualism is a hierarchy in which one term is better than the other, or more highly valued, and worthy of superior treatment. Such a hierarchy of value involves a sociological factor (e.g., gender roles, master/slave identities, and cultural norms), which can become “naturalized” and accepted as inevitable fact, and can then be used as justification for acts of colonization where the superior term of the dualism dominates the subordinate, inferior term (Plumwood 1993, 51). Plumwood enumerates five key principles relating to the logic of colonization (backgrounding, radical exclusion, incorporation, instrumentalism, and homogenization) (48–60).

Backgrounding involves a denied dependency, whereby the colonizing force (global capital) asserts independence from the subordinated other (local people, organisms, and habitats). Humanity, life, and nature are ignored by the global grid, as if their contributions to civilization and their cries for justice are merely background noise. *Radical exclusion* is hyperseparation, which diminishes shared qualities and overemphasizes differences between two categories or groups, such as civilized (“developed”) nations and uncivilized (“developing”) nations. *Incorporation* assimilates the subordinate other of a dualistic opposite into the autonomy of the superior identity, “defining the other only in relation to the self,” as in the reduction of humans, life, and nature to parts of the global grid (Plumwood 1993, 52). *Instrumentalism* treats subordinated others as mere instruments with no intrinsic value, such as human and nonhumans becoming mere tools to be used to serve the needs of globalization. *Homogenization* is not unlike stereotyping, a problem pervading globalization just as much as it pervades more commonly discussed forms of stereotyping like racism, sexism, and speciesism. In homogenization, differences between individuals in subordinated groups are erased and denied. Diverse species and ecosystems of the natural world become “animal” and “environment,” and the multiple socioeconomic classes, races, and genders become a nameless and faceless “human.”

Although globalization functions through god tricks and the logic of colonization, anti-globalization is no better. To support localization and reject the generalizations that compose international and global initiatives is to invert the god trick of globalization, favoring the local and particular at the expense of the universality of the global and general. In short, the anti-globalization movement fits the definition of what Plumwood calls an “uncritical reversal,” which simply inverts dominator hierarchies so that the subordinate becomes the new superior, as in feminisms that want to replace male-dominated societies with female-dominated societies (as expressed in slogans like “The future is female” and “Adam was a rough draft, Eve is a fair copy”) (1993, 31).

PLANETARITY

We can avoid the colonizing god tricks of globalization and anti-globalization by nurturing a better form of globalization, a more just, peaceful, and sustainable globalization. For Spivak (2003), it is possible to criticize globalization while simultaneously affirming its use of universals and generalizations: “We cannot and should not reject this impulse toward generalization” (46). For instance, participating in feminist movements, we cannot and should not reject the generalization “woman,” despite that fact that the name “woman” risks being appropriated into a homogenizing grid. Rather, Spivak goes on to say that, in feminism as in ecology and other movements for peace, justice, and sustainability, we “must keep the generalizing impulse under erasure, visible as a warning.” Feminist engagements can set generalizations to work strategically in efforts to engender responsible contact with women. Similarly, ecological engagements can set generalizations (e.g., “nature,” “animal,” “wild,” “human”) to work strategically in efforts to create connections of responsible contact with the natural world.¹ The generalizing impulse is a necessary and risky part of any international or global initiative to support peace, justice, and sustainability. Along these lines, Spivak articulates her own risky generalization to address the complexities of globalization: “planet.”

Spivak (2003) says, “I propose the planet to overwrite the globe”: rather than imagining ourselves as “global entities” or “global agents,” we open movements for becoming “planetary subjects” or “planetary creatures” (72–73). “Today it is planetarity that we are called to imagine” (81). It is important to mention that what Spivak calls “planetarity” is not simply opposed to the globe. The planet “is not really amenable to a neat contrast with the globe,” for it is an “underived intuition” (72). So, we cannot simply say that Spivak proposes the planet as an “opposition” to the globe. We are called to imagine the planet differently. Underived, the planet is other, and its otherness is not derived from the globe, from humans, or from anything.

“Planet-thought opens up to embrace an inexhaustible taxonomy” of “names of alterity” (e.g., “mother, nation, god, nature”), including names that come from “aboriginal animism,” “postrational science,” and everything in between (73). The planet is different: “mysterious and discontinuous—an experience of the impossible” (102). The planet is “in the species of alterity, belonging to another system; and yet we inhabit it, on loan” (72). The planet is discontinuous, yet it is continuous with us as we appropriate it (“on loan”) for our own inhabitation. Accordingly, planetarity is not *opposed* to the financialized globe, but is much more complex. It is folded together with globalization. In other words, planetarity is complicit in the global imposition of economic exchange.² Planetarity includes the alterity of the planet as it is folded together into the continuity of human habitation and economic exchange. In short, planetarity embraces relations of continuity and difference between planetary subjects. In this sense, planetarity resolves the dualisms of the global logic of colonization. “The resolution of dualism requires, not just recognition of difference, but recognition of a complex, interacting pattern of both continuity and difference” (Plumwood 1993, 67). Plumwood thus affirms the otherness of planetary subjects—“earth others”—while also recognizing that

humans inhabit the planet and exist in community with it. “We need to understand and affirm both otherness and our community in the earth” (137).

With its relations of continuity and difference between planetary others, the concept of planetarity resonates with what Haraway’s concept of “companion species,” which she articulates in *When Species Meet*. She opens that book with two questions—“(1) Whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog? and (2) How is ‘becoming with’ a practice of becoming worldly?”—and she weaves these questions together with a planetary concern: countering “militarized neoliberal models of world building” by “nurturing a more just and peaceful other-globalization” (“*autre-mondialisation*”), which is neither neocolonial globalization nor a reactionary “anti-globalization” (“*alter-globalisation*”) (Haraway 2008, 3). In short, questions of touching and becoming with other species open possibilities for becoming worldly and for facilitating a more planetary globalization.

The category of companion species is not just about Haraway’s dog Cayenne or other companion animals or “pets” (e.g., cats, antfarmers, bunnies). It figures the complex contact whereby species (including humans) become intimately entangled with one another in mutually constitutive relationships. Shaping and being shaped by one another in practices of becoming with and becoming worldly, companion species are “significant others” (15). The word “companion” derives from the Latin *cum panis*, “with bread,” which indicates that a companion is one with whom you eat, a “messmate” (17). Companions are those with whom you keep company. The word “species” derives from the Latin *specere*, “with its tones of ‘to look’ and ‘to behold.’” It involves a coincidence of opposites, as the word performs a dance between *specific* individuals and classes or kinds of individuals. The stakes of this dance of species are high. We must consider vital questions about which species deserve and receive “respect” (from the Latin *respecere*—“to look back reciprocally,” that is, to regard and respond, to pay attention) (19).

Haraway includes the global grid of computers and finance in the dynamic dance and play of species interdependence. “Not much is excluded from the needed play, not technologies, commerce, organisms, landscapes, peoples, practices” (19). Including human and animal species as well as species of technology, commerce, and so on, engagements with companion species involve the implosion of dichotomies such as nature/culture, matter/spirit, science/society, and so on. In other words, engagements with companion species are engagements with co-constitutive flows of nature and culture. The natural and material is tied together with the cultural and semiotic in “material-semiotic nodes or knots,” which can also be described as “naturalcultural contact zones” or “boundary formations” (2, 7, 31).

The colonizing god tricks of globalization prevent respectful engagements with the complex boundaries of companion species. God tricks presuppose pre-fabricated answers that short-circuit the question of “Which historically situated practices of multispecies living and dying should flourish?” (Haraway 2008, 88). This question must be kept open, such that our answers respect and respond to the significant otherness of interspecies relations. “There is no outside from which to answer that mandatory question; we must give the best answers we come to know how to articulate, and take action, without the god trick of self-certainty” (88). Without god tricks, humans can engage the complexity of companion species

rather than pretending to exist in some separate (un-situated) space of self-certainty and innocence. Without god tricks, we have “no assured happy or unhappy ending, socially, ecologically, or scientifically” (15). There is no assured answer or ending. There is only the chance for respecting and responding to the differences between companion species. In short, there is the chance for love.

LOVE

Practices of touching companion species with respect are practices of becoming with. Such practices are intimately entangled with practices of love—loving individuals and loving kinds—that contact the “co-constitutive link” whereby species become companions (Haraway 2008, 96, 134). Furthermore, for Haraway, practices of love are also practices of becoming worldly. “To be in love means to be worldly” (97). Practices of love intertwine companions in interactive contact zones that blend the natural and the cultural. At these contact zones, planetary others are tied together in co-constitutive relationships that can bring spiritual and physical feelings of loss and joy.

Expressing her love for her dog Cayenne as a transformative “naturalcultural practice,” Haraway describes an “intensifying bond” that “feels like a loss as well as an achievement of large spiritual and physical joy” (228). Moreover, love brings salvation, not in the form of a god trick of otherworldly escape, but in the joy of playing games together. “Cayenne’s love of the game—love of work—is our real salvation” (228). Amid loss and joy, love is transformative, as both parties lose their old identities and boundary formations and open up to new ones. This transformative and touching love opens every boundary project up to question.

Opening everything to question, love messes up interspecies relations, radically transforming species into naturalcultural messmates. “Significantly other to each other, in specific difference, we signify in the flesh a nasty developmental infection called love. This love is a historical aberration and a naturalcultural legacy” (Haraway 2008, 16). To become companion species, we must “learn to live intersectionally” (18). Like Haraway’s “over-the-top love for Cayenne,” planetary love requires anyone who feels it “to build a bigger heart with more depths and tones for tenderness” (215). Learning to live in naturalcultural knots with companion species means learning to love planetary others with respect for all of their otherness. This resonates with Plumwood’s claim that love is foundational for building resilient relations with planetary others: “Ultimately, a durable relationship between we humans and our planetary partners must be built on the kinds of perceptual, epistemic and emotional sensitivities which are best founded on respect, care and love” (Plumwood 2002, 142). Similarly for Spivak, responsible relationships with planetary alterity need to be supplemented by love.

Spivak (1999) emphasizes this connection to love when claiming that we need to “learn to learn from the original practical ecological philosophies of the world” (383). Dreaming of “animist liberation theologies,” Spivak claims that we must, without romanticizing, learn how to learn from below, that is, from indigenous traditions, whose participation in the alterity of nature is expressed in animist ecological philosophies (382). Such “learning can only be attempted through the

supplementation of collective effort by love” (383). For Spivak, the invocation of love for the sake of ecological justice is part of an effort to use the mobilizing discourse of justice not only for the uplift of the poor, the oppressed, and the fourth world, but for all planetary subjects. What, then, does Spivak name with the word “love”? “What deserves the name love is an effort—over which one has no control yet at which one must not strain”: neither controlling nor straining, love is “slow, attentive on both sides” (383). Love patiently attends to both sides, whatever these sides might be: self and other, male and female, planet and globe, nature and politics, animist and theologian.

As the theologian Catherine Keller (2005) points out, Spivak herself is in some ways not attentive enough to both sides of this “new liberation-animist eco-hybrid,” for she sees Christian theology as too complicit in religious appeals to an individualist and transcendent alterity to help bring about ecological justice (131). To some extent, Spivak’s critique is valid, since Christian ideas of love are implicated in the history of colonialism. Plumwood (1993) also recognizes that love can be (and has been) appropriated by the logic of colonization, as in Platonic philosophy, which assimilates love into a dualism where rational love of the Idea is promoted in contrast to lower kinds of love, which are seen as inferior insofar as they are material, animal, sensual, reproductive, and so on (81). The task for philosophers and theologians is to recover a sense of love that runs counter to the logic of colonization, a planetary love that would resist any colonizing appropriation of love. This is the sense of love Plumwood calls for by quoting the French philosopher Simone Weil: “Let us love the land of Here Below: it is real—it offers resistance to love” (190).

Along these lines, Catherine Keller (2005) shows how expressions of Spivak’s “love-supplement” can indeed be sustained by a theology that resists colonization, more specifically, the love-supplement can be sustained by a “constructive theology of becoming,” which accounts for the flows of immanence, alterity, multiplicity, impossibility, and difference in the relations between humans, the sacred, and planetary subjects (131, 150–151).³ Becoming more attentive to both sides of the animist–liberation hybrid, we follow Keller in her engagement with Spivak’s planetarity in terms of a “theopolitics of planetary love,” which affirms planetarity in a theological context that counters the imperial tendencies of globalization by supporting an “*ecology of love*” (116–117). In other words, efforts to open globalization into planetarity need to be supplemented by efforts of love, and such efforts are folded into bodies and material relations (“planetary ecology”) and into the politics, meanings, and mysteries of theology and animism (“*planetary spirituality*”) (emphasis in the original, 130–132).

Love is a constructive and transformative force, not merely a passion. Thus, Spivak (1999) says that love is “mindchanging on both sides,” facilitating responsibility for an ethical singularity that cannot be appropriated or ascertained (383). Love responds to the singularity of every planetary subject, and it does so with intimate contact rather than resorting to coercion, imposition, or crisis. The collective efforts of ecological justice movements are working “to change laws, relations of production, systems of education, and health care,” but these efforts cannot achieve anything unless they are supplemented by love, that is,

supplemented by “mind-changing one-on-one responsible contact” (383). This contact goes both ways. To love another, one neither romanticizes the other as unconditionally admirable (e.g., I desire and long for the other) nor does one assert that the other is “better off” because of one’s love (e.g., the other needs me and longs for my love). Love approaches responsible contact with the ethical singularity of planetary others “when responses flow from both sides” (384).

With supplementation by love, collective efforts for ecological justice can overcome the global logic of colonization with the inexhaustible taxonomy of planetary others. This can be done with responsible recognition of one’s complicity in globalization, thus avoiding the tendencies of anti-globalization movements, which commit and uncritical reversal that fails to honor the importance of universals and general categories such as freedom, woman, species, and nature. Those who resist the global grid (e.g., animists, feminists, liberation theologians, companion species) are also part of the global grid in one way or another, and by engaging in this complicity with love, humans can nurture another globalization, a more peaceful, just, and sustainable globalization. By supplementing our efforts with love, it is possible to change minds and change the world, cultivating respectful and responsible contact between humans and the whole Earth community. The task of our current historical moment is simply this: practice planetary love.

NOTES

1. This strategic deployment of generalizations is related to what Spivak (1988) terms “strategic essentialism” (205). Long-term efforts for promoting ecological and social justice must take the risk of deploying essentialist determinations found in names like “nature,” “woman,” and so on. The task of strategic essentialism is to make these strategies critically self-conscious so that they do not fall into oppressive tendencies whereby essentialisms efface difference and alterity. “The strategic use of an essence as a mobilizing slogan or masterword like *woman* or *worker* or the name of the nation is, ideally, self-conscious for all mobilized. This is the impossible risk of a lasting strategy” (Spivak 1993, 3).
2. Drawing on the etymology of the word “complicity” (which is related to “complexity”), Spivak (1999) suggests that to be in a “complicitous” relationship is to be “folded together” (361).
3. For further explorations of the increasingly productive relationship between theologians and Spivak’s work with planetary love, see the collection of essays in *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology* (Moore and Rivera 2011).

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