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Rural Poverty and Impoverished Theory: Cultural Populism, Ecofeminism, and Global Justice

REGINA COCHRANE

The 'left' populist argument of 'culturally-perceived' poverty, proposed by subsistence ecofeminist Vandana Shiva, is gaining increasing currency in the contemporary 'Anti-Globalization' Movement. This article maintains that, instead of challenging neoliberalism, however, this notion lends itself to complicity with it and, moreover, with fundamentalist and reactionary currents that are on the rise worldwide. In order to make this case, it examines four main political currents influencing Shiva: Gandhism, Western maternal feminism, the post-development framework of Gustavo Esteva, and the New Age eco-spirituality of Rudolph Bahro. Also considered are some of the theoretical overlaps with the Right in which Shiva and these mentoring currents have become implicated.

INTRODUCTION: THE POPULIST RESPONSE TO NEOLIBERALISM

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' [*Toronto Social Forum*, 2003: 15].¹ Setting out some basic principles, a first speaker informed those in

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attendance that there are two types of poverty – real poverty and ‘culturally-perceived’ poverty. Given the tendency to interpret subsistence economies in rural areas as backward and deprived, ‘culturally-perceived’ poverty is seen as real poverty, she continued, and this has given rise to the whole development industry. Her basic point seemed to be that much of what is thought to be rural poverty is not poverty at all, but simply manifestations of culturally ‘other’ forms of ‘difference’.

Attempting to put this argument in a Canadian context, a later speaker referred to the situation in Newfoundland, a largely rural island off the east coast of Canada that, together with mainland Labrador, is Canada’s newest and poorest province. People in the small outports (or fishing villages) in Newfoundland don’t have anything, observed this academic. But they aren’t really poor. It was those from outside who came in and labelled them as ‘poor’. This is what is meant by ‘culturally-perceived’ poverty. In a world of corporate globalization characterized by increasing enclosures and privatization of the commons – including fishing grounds, like the Grand Banks off Newfoundland’s south coast – 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 admiralty to preserve Newfoundland as a great ship moored off the fish-rich Grand Banks for their own exclusive use. In this 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 extracted the lion’s share of revenues from the province’s hydroelectric and more recent offshore oil and gas developments [Crosbie, 2005].

The failure of the cod fishery (an effect of capitalist globalization) and the resulting moratorium in 1992 on fishing for cod 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', Newfoundlanders are becoming 'modern day fruit pickers, the latest migration of foreign labour in the global economy' [Locke, 2006: 4].⁴

With 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 labour, 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 designed to assuage the guilt middle-class liberals feel in relation to the 'global South' or to areas in the 'global North' that are subject to 'regional disparity', 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 Vandana Shiva [1989: 10], an Indian ecofeminist who is prominent in the Anti-Globalization Movement (AGM). Shiva, in turn, derived the notion from a number of sources whose politics can be broadly labelled as 'left'-populist.

The idea of 'culturally-perceived' poverty and related populist arguments are now being widely used by those who idealize subsistence production: 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, 2001; Goldsmith, 2001; Christiansen-Ruffman, 2002; Hawthorne, 2002; Brennan, 2003; Isla, 2003; Escobar, 1995 and 2004].⁵ 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 presentation that follows, it will be argued that the 'left' populist notion of 'culturally-perceived' poverty is not only elitist but also complicit with globalized capitalism and reactionary currents that are on the rise worldwide. In order to move beyond this complicity, therefore, it is necessary to embrace a 'three-way' understanding of what constitutes the struggle for global justice.

The centrality of this issue not just to the study of peasants and agricultural labourers, but also to the political direction taken by capitalist development over the past quarter of a century, has been outlined in recent debate.⁶ Hence much of the theory informing current analyses of grassroots rural movements in the so-called Third World, opposition by European farmers to the effects of

globalization, and resistance based on indigenous 'identity' politics, is influenced to no small degree by current varieties of agrarian populism.⁷ The latter include frameworks associated with the subaltern studies project, 'everyday forms of peasant resistance', and post-development.⁸ At stake in this debate is not just the sort of transformation deemed by planning and policy initiatives as desirable for peasants and workers, but also whether economic development is itself any longer a feasible option for the rural poor.⁹

For this reason, it is important to interrogate both the politics and epistemology of seemingly unproblematic anti-globalization arguments circulating in the realm of development studies, especially those that address questions of gender and impoverished rural women. Examined here are a number of such oppositional discourses: ecofeminism, post-developmentism, and Gandhian theory, as projected in the work of Vandana Shiva, Gustavo Esteva and Rudolph Bahro. Identifying subsistence agriculture as the domain of females, much of this discourse projects the same passive images of women that historically are the preserve of (and have been successfully harnessed by) the political right.¹⁰

The argument that the thesis of 'culturally-perceived' poverty ends up lending support to neo-liberalism and to ascendant right-wing movements is organized as follows. The first section draws out the interrelated post-development and populist subtexts of Shiva's notion of 'culturally-perceived' poverty. In the second part, its populist genealogy will be explored in relation to sources that influenced Shiva's elaboration of the idea. The next part examines the implications of this genealogy, looking not only at the complicity of post-development with neo-liberalism but also at the right-left overlap in the political trajectory of Shiva and her mentors. The conclusion will consider calls for a 'three-way struggle' against corporate globalization.

'CULTURALLY-PERCEIVED' POVERTY AND POST-DEVELOPMENT POPULISM

In the opening chapter of *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*, Shiva [1989: 10] distinguishes between two kinds of poverty:

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.

Development, she continues [*Shiva*, 1989: 11–13], 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. Hence, as ‘Gustavo Esteva asserts[,]...development has to be refuted because it threatens survival itself’.

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’ [*Shiva*, 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’ [*Shiva*, 1989: 38–41]. For Shiva, subsistence-oriented rural 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’ [*Shiva*, 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 rural poverty. Both texts reiterate, almost word for word, the initial part of her 1989 discussion on the two kinds of poverty [*Shiva*, 2005a: 112–113; 2005b: 1–2]. Significant additions, in the article, are the extension of poverty beyond the economic domain 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’ [*Shiva*, 2005b: 2, 4]. Among other things, the book argues 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' [Shiva, 2005a: 3, 11, 139].

The brief summary of Shiva's ideas on poverty set out above contains many overt references that are in keeping with a post-development framework. Given its historical and contemporary integration with capitalism and with social transformation, it is absolutely necessary to take a critical approach to development [Pieterse, 2000: 181–182]. Moreover, those arguing from within a post-development framework do effectively highlight how World Bank definitions of the 'mass structural poverty' of rural economies where subsistence production is widespread position them and it for penetration by the global capitalist market economy [Chakrabarti and Cullenberg, 2005: 3, 9]. However, post-development goes far beyond a critique to insist, as Shiva does, upon a 'total rejection of development' without offering any alternative other than the revival of 'surviving [subsistence] economies' and local traditions. This rejection hinges on 'the problematisation of poverty, the portrayal of development as Westernisation 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]. Yet glossed over in the re-definition by post-development 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 the post-development approach of Shiva is open to the above criticisms, 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 quoted 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 depoliticisation of fractures that exist *within* the collective [community and] peasant subject, splits that are constituted out of gender, class, [race] and caste hierarchies' [Roy and Borowiak, 2003: 60].¹¹ More specifically, as Tom Brass [1997: 204–205] 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.

Yet, even though populism idealizes rural communities and an undifferentiated 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].

In the light of these observations, Shiva's populism becomes considerably more transparent and many of the critiques levelled at her fall into place.¹² 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 rural 'people', living in 'naturally' harmonious, stable communities and sharing cosmologies rooted in a reverence for the 'feminine'. As Agarwal [1992: 3] 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'. 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' [*Agarwal*, 2001: 416].

Given Shiva's condemnation of development as 'culturally biased', her extension of poverty to encompass the primarily cultural domains of 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' [*Roy and Borowiak*,

2003: 79] – than she is about material poverty. Indeed, since feminism is about equality and emancipation rather than preserving traditions, Meera Nanda insists that Shiva's work should not even be called feminist [Nanda, 2003: 233]. For a city-dweller, who owes much of her prominence to a doctorate in physics from a Canadian university, populism can be a comfortable political choice.

In staking out a populist position, Shiva is following the well-worn path of privileged 'Third World scholars abroad' who, upon graduating from metropolitan capitalist universities – and sometimes even obtaining positions there – become the voice for Third World nationalism. Fuelled by a 'radicalism [that] is cut off from the real struggles of ordinary peoples' [Nanda, 2003: 25, 33] and thus identifying nation rather than class as the victim of a globalizing capitalism, this scholarly elite reject a socialism that is internationalist in scope for a nationalist capitalism 'with a human face'. In so doing, they end up 'adopting the standpoint of traditional elites who feel threatened by the new cultural attitudes and the demands of their traditional subordinates'. Given the prevalence of liberal guilt and the hegemonic identity politics of the metropolis, the 'local knowledges' of this scholarly elite are readily validated, explains Nanda [2003: 131, 248, 265], as "'epistemologies of the oppressed'...[rather than as] part of the ruling ideologies in many non-Western societies'. Challenging this view, she insists instead that 'Western friends of the Third World have an obligation to understand the complete social history of ideas in situ in other cultures'.

THE POPULIST GENEALOGY OF 'CULTURALLY PERCEIVED' POVERTY

While her categorization of rural poverty as 'culturally-perceived' is consistent with the interrelated tenets of post-development and populism, tracing the indirect and direct sources from which Shiva derived this concept, and examining the populist politics all espouse, allows for a better understanding of the problems associated with such views. The two prefiguring sources that provide Shiva the general foundation for her work are the ideas of on the one hand Mohandas Gandhi, and on the other Western feminism, especially the work of American historian of science, Carolyn Merchant, and of German sociologist and later collaborator, Maria Mies. With regard to more immediate and direct influences, Shiva's attack on the concept of development *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.¹³

Populism I: Shiva, Gandhi and Merchant

As Nanda has pointed out, the tendency of Indian intellectuals like Shiva to gravitate toward populism stems from the enduring influence of Gandhi. ‘Speaking the language of Hinduism and tradition’, Gandhi brought 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”’ [Nanda, 2003: 26]. The influence of Gandhi was particularly marked where the environmental movement in India is concerned. Indeed, Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha [1995] 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’, Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha [1995: 107–110] go on to characterize that position as anti-socialist, anti-science, and oriented almost exclusively toward agrarian environmental issues.

Although in her recent work Shiva’s direct references to Gandhi are few and far between, her Gandhianism is evident, however, in her ‘mythical’ account of India’s Chipko – or ‘tree-hugging’ – movement which she portrays endorsingly as having Gandhian roots [Shiva, 1989: 68–73].¹⁴ ‘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’, she argued 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’ [Shiva, 1987: 253–254]. However, as Nanda indicates, in this and similar analyses, ‘all of the numerous European romantic influences on Gandhi [which he encountered as a young law student in London] – from the Bible, to Ruskin and Tolstoy – are conveniently forgotten and Gandhi is made into a genuine son of the [Indian] soil’ [Nanda, 2003: 169].

In fact, it is these very same 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 Parekh [2001: 84] 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.

A discourse of populism is also evident in the main feminist influence on Shiva: the text by Merchant [1980], *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. The thesis of the latter 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 pre-modern world that may be worthy of transformation and reintegration into today's and tomorrow's society' [Merchant, 1980: xix]. What is new about Merchant's approach, however, is the gender dimension. She argues that the shift from pre-modern 'organic' society with 'subsistence economies' – where the earth was viewed as a nurturing mother – to the mechanistic worldview of modern science and industrial capitalism was detrimental not to an undifferentiated 'people' but rather to undifferentiated 'women' (plus 'blacks, and wage labourers'). Hence the view that [Merchant, 1980: 28–29, 288]: 'Between 1500 and 1700 [women] were set on a path toward a new status as "natural" and human resources for the modern world system'. Indeed, Merchant [1980: 173] even goes so far as to link the decline of female status in early modern Europe to the fact that 'the cult of the Virgin Mary paled with the weakening of Catholicism'. The similarity between this argument and the maternal feminism of Canadian suffragette, Nellie McClung – that 'the Protestant religion has lost much when it lost the idea of the motherhood of God' (quoted in Flamengo [2002: 156]) – is striking.

Feminist critics of Merchant, however, have called into question many of these basic premises. Agarwal, for example, takes issue with the 'feminist' anti-modernism of Merchant as she did with the more Gandhian version of Shiva. '[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 [Agarwal, 2001: 419–420] 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'. Complaining about those who accept as authoritative Merchant's view that the Scientific Revolution led to a decline in the status of women, Osler [2005: 72, 75–77] insists on the need to move beyond 'the selective set of readings' that Merchant employs. Such a wider reading reveals that, rather than being supportive of gender empowerment as Merchant contends, the pre-modern, 'organic' worldview of alchemy 'reeks of misogyny'.¹⁵ Given that the inferior status of females predates modernity, and that 'Chinese misogyny, in particular, coexisted with an organic worldview', Huey-Li Li [1993: 278]

argues that, although an ‘organic world view may have restrained the human destruction of nature, ... it certainly was not the panacea for women’s oppression’. The mechanical worldview of modernity has, in fact, been associated with social changes, like the valuing of individuality, which contributed to the development of feminism.

Populism II: Shiva, Mies and Esteva

Populist premises and maternal feminism – a cultural feminism that is structured conceptually by the universal sisterhood of non-differentiated women, and as such is the feminist equivalent of populism – are even more overt in the work of Mies.¹⁶ In *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, Mies [1986: 75] endeavours to ‘extend [Merchant’s] analysis of the relation of the New Men [to women] to their colonies’. Thus she [*Mies*, 1986: 4] 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’. 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’ [*Mies*, 1986: 75, 104–110]. Her 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’ – that is, ‘labour-intensive farming’ – and toward ‘producing more of the things we need ourselves’ [*Mies*, 1986: 220–229]. While she deepens and extends Merchant’s anti-modern discourse, 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 [*Mies*, 1986: 53–55, 216].

In her more recent work, the populist and maternal feminist arguments of Mies are even stronger. Capitalist patriarchy is equated to “‘modern’ civilization” and the ‘autarkic economy’ becomes the ‘subsistence perspective’ [*Mies and Shiva*, 1993: 5, 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’ [*Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies*, 1999: 46]. Declaring that ‘women must begin to overcome their alienation from, and learn *again* to be one with, their [reproductive] bodies’ [*Mies and Shiva*, 1993: 294, emphasis added], Mies verges dangerously close to eco-feminist Ariel Salleh’s embrace of ‘maternal thinking’ and Salleh’s proscription of modern contraceptive technology [*Salleh*, 1997: 46, 53,

143–144; *Cochrane*, 2003: 181–182]. Feminist critiques of the entanglement by subsistence ecofeminism 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’ [*Mies*, 1996: 14].

Although he would undoubtedly reject the label, Esteva’s stance, in the article that Shiva cites, exhibits all the main hallmarks of populism.¹⁷ 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*’ [*Esteva*, 1987: 274–277, 296]. ‘[R]ejecting the preceding myths about progress and modernization’, he [*Esteva*, 1987: 281–283] not only discarded a “development” [that] stinks’ but 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’. In place of institutions, Esteva [1987: 275–278, 28, 293–294] 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. In keeping with the views of Ivan Illich, Austrian ex-priest and radical critic of modernity and institutionalization, for Esteva a world ‘beyond development’ 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 [*Esteva*, 1987: 283–296].

While the influence of Illich was central in the early work of Esteva, in his recent book *Grassroots Postmodernism* (co-authored with Madhu Prakash) this anti-modernist stance is reinforced by Gandhian populism.¹⁸ Writing in a heavily anecdotal style with constant references to ‘the people’, Esteva – who now describes himself as a Zapoteco, like his indigenous grandmother – addresses social movements seeking liberation from ‘the Global Project’ [*Esteva and Prakash*, 1998: 1, 16]. 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 [*Esteva and Prakash*, 1998: 5–7].¹⁹

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 modelled on the Catholic Church, he calls for proposals reflecting local ‘cosmovisions’ [*Esteva and Prakash*, 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 ‘global thinking’ of the Church.²⁰ Second, Esteva calls for a challenge to the universality of human rights [*Esteva and Prakash*, 1998: 10]. Targeted here are reproductive rights – “‘emancipated” women’s “rights” to their “reproductive organs”[.]...to the bodies of unborn females’ – and same-sex rights [*Esteva and Prakash*, 1998: 124, 133]. Even the right to literacy is dismissed as a ‘colonial’ imposition [*Esteva and Prakash*, 1998: 142] because ‘with each and every literacy campaign, [illiterates’] way of life and cosmovision are at risk of being disqualified’ [*Stuchul, Esteva, and Prakash*, 2005: 7].²¹ Finally, in his challenge to ‘the myth of the individual self’, Esteva celebrates the story of *doña* 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’ [*Esteva and Prakash*, 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’ [*Esteva and Prakash*, 1998: 195], maybe this suffering is not a problem for Esteva.

Populism III: Shiva and Bahro, but not Téhoédjèrè

Of significance 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, the citation by Shiva was to a comment made 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’, Bahro [1984: 211] 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 caught his attention.

The book that Shiva and Bahro cite is surely *Poverty: Wealth of Mankind*, by Beninese political scientist, administrator, and politician, Albert Téhoédjèrè. In this superbly written, carefully researched, and cogently

argued text, Téhoédjè [1979: 2–3] does distinguish poverty as ‘destitution and misery’ from ‘the rehabilitation of poverty... as a positive value’.²² 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’ 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’ [Téhoédjè, 1979: 56, 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’ – 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’ – that is, without negating the need for some heavy industry and for ‘moderniz[ing] village life’ [Téhoédjè, 1979: 73, 74, 82, 88, 166]. The latter would involve promoting, in the agrarian sector, ‘a simple technology directly accessible to those concerned’. Such a technology would be not only ‘integrated into social reality but also aimed at a real inter-connection between [hu]man[s] and the biosphere’ [Téhoédjè, 1979: 68, 74].²³

In keeping with his call for endogenous development rather than the rejection of development *per se*, Téhoédjè [1979: 85, 153] opts for a ‘co-operative republic’ oriented around political liberty, justice, participation, and solidarity 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’ [Téhoédjè, 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 [Téhoédjè, 1979: 64–65, 153]. Cognizant of the fact that illiteracy, which impacts on 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’ [Téhoédjè, 1979: 31, 60, 107]. Moreover, he insists – in contrast to Esteva – that ‘respect for cultures and traditions cannot run counter to the respect for the human person’ [Téhoédjè, 1979: 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' [*Tévoédjèrè*, 1979: 32].

Actualizing such a society – one where people can create their own future – will, advises *Tévoédjèrè*, 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' – that is, a rejection of 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]' [*Tévoédjèrè*, 1979: 83, 100, 119, 133].²⁴ It will also require 'poverty in power': 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' [*Tévoédjèrè*, 1979: 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 [*Tévoédjèrè*, 1979: 115, 123, 124, 142].

Given that the 'African writer', *Tévoédjèrè*, 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 1980s 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 [1978] was imprisoned by the Communist government and then deported in 1979 to West Germany where he became involved with the nascent Green Party.²⁵ 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 *Tévoédjèrè*'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 labelling 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'

[Bahro, 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' [Bahro, 1984: 225]. For the new Bahro, 'trade union activity is a retrograde step'; what is needed instead is 'liberated areas of consciousness' [Bahro, 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 [Bahro, 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' [Bahro, 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 actually 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 argument. Indeed, Shiva has been widely criticized not only for the simplistic nature of her analysis but also for her lack of intellectual rigour. Lewontin [2001: 83], 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 unanalysed or distorted scientific findings'. He 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 scientific background, 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.

In a similar fashion, Shiva's recent book, *Earth Democracy*, 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 [Shiva, 2005a: 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 script writer who was not a Native American [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2003: 1].²⁶ 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 [*Roy and Borowiak*, 2003: 15].²⁷

A more basic problem here, however, is the unquestioning manner in which academic feminists and others in the West 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 unrigorous research. Canadian ecofeminist Ana Isla, for example, not only makes the dubious claim that the subsistence perspective is 'socialist' but she also lumps in Shiva's arch critic, Bina Agarwal – who refuses to even use the term 'ecofeminist' to describe her own feminist environmentalism – with Shiva, Mies, Merchant, and Salleh as a 'socialist ecofeminist' [*Isla*, 2003: 7, 14, 15].²⁸ To back this up, Isla then 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'.²⁹ If, on the other hand, faith and intuition are, in keeping with populist assumptions, more appropriate guides for Isla 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'.

NEOLIBERALISM AND THE POLITICAL TRAJECTORY OF POST-DEVELOPMENT

That the populist notion of 'culturally-perceived' poverty at the centre of the post-development framework is problematic is evident from the reasons set out above. However, the difficulties do not end there. The situation gets considerably more complicated when this thesis is examined in relation to the current historical conjuncture of neo-liberalism and rising fundamentalist and right-wing nationalist currents, North and South. Hence the concept of poverty as 'culturally-perceived', together with its populist baggage, readily lends itself to complicity with contemporary globalized capitalism in a number of significant ways. Moreover, in terms of political practice, Shiva and the main populist currents/mentors feeding into her thesis of 'culturally-perceived' poverty have all ended up moving onto the same ground as Hindu fundamentalism, nationalism, and/or the European New Right.

Neoliberalism and Agrarian Populism

At the most obvious level, notions like 'culturally-perceived' poverty can be – and have been – used to justify the neo-liberal privatization of social

services associated with the imposition of SAPs (Structural Adjustment Programmes) in the South and with the erosion of the welfare state in the North. Recasting the ‘culturally-perceived’ poverty of subsistence-oriented rural economies as sustainable and self-provisioning, regulated by ‘nature’ and the moral economy of the ‘people’, as does Shiva, suggests not only that such societies are self-sufficient but also that subsistence is guaranteed to all.³⁰ 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 Overton [2000: 2] 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.

Similarly, the call by rural subsistence endorsing ecofeminists in the North for lifestyle changes and for organizing self-help projects (like community gardens), and can easily become vindications for tax-cutting measures, the erosion of the welfare state and the privatization of the services it offers.³¹ In both North and South, populist ideas like ‘culturally-perceived’ poverty can also have the unintended consequence of justifying the wage cuts associated with neo-liberalism and of helping legitimate neo-liberal 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 onto the rural poor themselves, subsistence strategies can end up serving as a political safety-valve for the crises and unrest generated by neo-liberalism [Overton, 2000: 12, 33].

Of course the stock response to this by a postmodernist such as Esteva would undoubtedly be that any 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' [*Esteva and Prakash*, 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 as 'paradise on earth', it is worth considering what Gandhi's *dharma* might entail as regards abolishing poverty and untouchability. Indeed, the *dalit* leader in India, 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 rural poor, with the only obligation entailed being a spiritual one [*Ambedkar*, 1998: 145–146]. Moreover, Gandhi's call to end untouchability was not a call to end the caste system *per se* but to integrate the 'untouchables' – in contemporary terms, the *dalits* – into the lowest order of the caste system [*Ambedkar*, 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 Ambedkar. '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' [*Ambedkar*, 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 argues:

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 [Brass, 1997: 212; 2000; Holloway, 2002: 38–42, 73].³² Indeed, a post-structuralist/postmodernist ‘deconstruction’ of universalism advocated by Enlightenment modernity 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 Prout, rendering any effective political mobilization against *laissez faire* economic theory extremely difficult. Finally, the anti-intellectual populist baggage attached to notions like ‘culturally-perceived’ poverty helps to undermine critiques of global accumulation and attempts to formulate viable emancipatory alternatives to capitalism.

Agrarian Populism and Nationalism

In addition to its complicity with neo-liberalism, a potentially more serious charge is that post-development populism has a tendency to conflation with fundamentalist and right-wing nationalist politics.³³ Indeed, evidence of this overlap between ‘left’ populism and right-wing discourse is clear from the proclamations of Shiva, Gandhians, first-wave maternal feminists, Esteva, and Bahro. Accordingly, it is worth examining the theoretical roots in Shiva and her mentors or mentoring currents here that give rise to this left/right political overlap, because such examples can seem anomalous, and it is consequently all too easy to dismiss this conflation as mere aberration.

If the ‘Battle of Seattle’ – the massive protests against the WTO meeting in Seattle in November 1999 – is taken as marking the rise of the AGM, then the

speech by Shiva in the debate on globalization at the Seattle Town Hall is symptomatic of the political ambiguity structuring 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 unruled 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 (quoted in Sakai [2001: 21]).

In addition to highlighting the nationalism at the centre of Shiva’s politics, and that her opposition to capitalism is confined to its international variant, and does not extend to domestic capital, 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’ [Krebbbers and Schoenmaker, 2001: 66].³⁴

Goldsmith, however, has been strongly criticized for espousing a ‘Gaian sociobiology’ with anti-immigrant and anti-feminist implications, and also for his willingness to address meetings organized by the European New Right.³⁵ 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’.³⁶ 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’.³⁷ In similar

fashion, he evokes the 'natural' elimination of 'mutations' to call for the disposal of 'social aberrations' [Krebbbers, 2001: 80].

However, as Hildyard [1999: 6–8] points out, the views that Goldsmith derives from his 'Gaian sociobiology' 'accord closely (if coincidentally) with those of the New Right' in Europe.³⁸ 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 in France, 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'.³⁹ In keeping 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' [Benoist and Champetier, 2000: 13–15].

Hindutva Populism

Shiva's dealings with the political 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' [Fox, 1989: 6, 239] – are, however, more direct.⁴⁰ Thus she has addressed a national convention of the Indian peasants' association, the BKS, which recruits peasants for *Hindutva*. She has also worked closely with nationalist groups such as Swadeshi Jagran Manch, which is associated with Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, 'the politburo of *Hindutva*'. And she has 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: 247–48].⁴¹

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 pseudo-nationalism that has co-opted folk traditions that were once the source of collective belonging, diversity, and tolerance. For her, therefore, Hindu fundamentalism is unrelated to the Gandhian peasant nationalism that she regards as a site for collectively resisting 'Western' models of development. However, as the most recent criticism of her views [Roy and Borowiak, 2003: 75–76] has 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'.⁴²

Given that in the early 1980s aspects of Gandhian nationalism were incorporated into Hindu nationalist ideology and rhetoric, Fox [1989: 6, 32] asks whether Hindu chauvinism was implicit in Gandhi's vision or whether it represents a subversion of Gandhian ideals. Fox sees both forms of nationalism as rooted in an 'affirmative Orientalism' which reversed pejorative Western stereotypes of Indians as essentially spiritual and incorporative, and reclaiming these attributes as positive. 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 [Fox, 1989: 217, 221, 245–246, 270–271].⁴³ However, the spiritual focus that both share favours social discipline and spiritual revolution over class conflict and institutional change – a stance that is further strengthened by a shared corporatism that subordinates individual, sectoral, and minority interests to the interests of the 'nation' as a whole.

Thus, while Hindu nationalists undoubtedly recast some of Gandhi's ideas, significant aspects of Gandhianism served them well.⁴⁴ The nationalism they shared with Gandhi justified an 'Indianization' of democracy; 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 rein in the indigenous bourgeoisie. The antagonism Gandhi expressed towards the notion of class struggle, moreover, was useful in diffusing threats from impoverished classes and from the more prosperous sectors of the rural 'backward castes'.

Biology is Destiny

While Mies dismisses any linking of right-wing politics and a feminism oriented around motherhood 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 ethnic nationalism.⁴⁵ First-wave maternal feminists in North America – whom Michael Kazin [1998] 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' [Kazin, 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’. She emphasizes that 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. Davis [1983: 121–123, 147] notes: ‘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”’.

Indeed, as Weinbaum [2001: 273] observes, 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’. Similarly, prominent Canadian first-wave maternal feminists, Emily Murphy and Nellie McClung, opposed extending suffrage to ‘feeble-minded’ and ‘degenerate’ immigrants of colour [*Flamengo*, 2002: 154].⁴⁶ While Josephine Donovan [1985: 32, 61–63, 171] 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. However, this will not happen until – *pace* Mies⁴⁷ – the ‘thought taboo’ against discussing links between populism, racist nationalism, and an elitist, essentialist maternal feminism has been broken.⁴⁸

In embracing a ‘grassroots postmodernism’, Esteva is very careful to distance himself from grassroots movements, like Peru’s Maoist Shining Path, European fascism and the American Ku Klux Klan, that are notorious for their espousal of ethnic politics. Such movements he classifies as being ‘fully immersed in modernity or pre-modernity’ [*sic*]. Moreover, he joins the Zapatistas in ‘explicitly reject[ing] any and every variety of fundamentalism’ [*Esteva and Prakash*, 1998: 3, 180]. In a recent article on the Zapatistas, Esteva [2005: 151] restates his opposition to the ‘fundamentalism of the “Global Project”’:

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.

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 Benoist and Champetier [2000: 11] 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.

Esteva uses these ideas to argue for the preservation of indigenous cultures. However, French New Rightists Benoist and Champetier employ the very same ideas to argue, among other things, ‘for policies restrictive of [non-European] immigration’ and, more subtly, for a return to aristocratic, pre-Christian, caste-like modes of social organization – that is to say, ‘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’ [*Benoist and Champetier*, 2000: 9, 14]. The strong resonance of Esteva’s stance with that of the French New Right suggests that what passes as ‘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 instance of a left-right overlap, 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 a new social order, and the nature of the ‘salvation’ government. There are many arguments that resonate with those of Shiva: calls for a ‘communitarian subsistence economy’ as an alternative to agribusiness [*Bahro*, 1994: 1, 233, 264], a rejection of ‘the “development” model’ [*Bahro*, 1994: 56, 232], and evocations of the Great Earth Mother, Gaia, and gendered ‘cosmogenic original principles’ [*Bahro*, 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', asserts Bahro [1994: 204]. He continues along the same lines: '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' [Bahro, 1994: 226].

More worrisome than the psychologicistic assertions of Bahro, however, are his constant favourable references to ancient theocracies and caste hierarchies [Bahro, 1994: 102, 176, 328], his call for a 'conservative revolution' [Bahro, 1994: 12, 53, 165, 246], and his insistence that we should 'risk envisaging an enormous despotism to create and maintain a measure of order' [Bahro, 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' that will be 'totalitarian' but '*selectively* repressive' [Bahro, 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' [Bahro, 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' [Bahro, 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].

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In many ways, the anti-development discourse traced here is the mirror image of an earlier, pro-development one: the 'culture of poverty', associated with the work of Oscar Lewis [1959; 1966].⁴⁹ The latter argued that the poor were kept in poverty by their culture, and that it was this disempowering aspect that prevented them from becoming fully integrated into modern urban society. By contrast, those who hold the populist views criticized here – such as subsistence ecofeminists and post-developmentists – invert the logic of this earlier theory; they maintain that, because the culture of the rural poor is much rather empowering, economic development is for them an alien experience for which there is now no need. The 'culture of poverty' has accordingly been transformed from an alienating experience for the rural poor to an enabling one.

A consequence for the study of development of this epistemological *volte face* is profound. An important reason that poverty has vanished from the development agenda, therefore, is quite simply that its meaning has been reversed. Initially seen as a 'problem', it has now become a 'solution'. Rather than being categorized as a problem, which is what much development theory did throughout the 1960s and 1970s, rural poverty has been redefined by current theory about development as part of culture, and thus empowering for its grassroots subjects. In the course of this transformation, the achieving, the attainment, and the desirability of modernity have themselves shifted; socio-economic development has been recast, from a desirable and attainable outcome for the rural poor to a negative, undesirable and unobtainable objective.

The significance of this is that populist notions like 'culturally-perceived' poverty are becoming increasingly common in the Anti-Globalization Movement (AGM). While such arguments are central to subsistence ecofeminism and post-developmentalism, they are also having a substantial impact on major peasant movements in the AGM, such as *Via Campesina*, and on environmentalist, feminist, and other AGM social movements more generally.⁵⁰ Moreover, this 'left' populism resonates strongly with the postmodernist underpinnings of major AGM 'spaces' such as social fora (on which see 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 (on which see 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 [1998: 281] 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.

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 Sakai [2001: 7–9, 23] 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. 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. This is a right-wing populist stance that boils down to a ‘nativist’ way 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].⁵¹

Similar events are unfolding on the opposite side of the Atlantic. Owen Worth and Jason P. Abbott [2006: 57–59] note the rise of ‘reactionary resistance to globalization’ in Britain, in the form of ‘populist responses . . . [to] greater integration with the European Union, the “myth” of multiculturalism, the rise in foreign ownership of domestic companies and the increase in immigration’. Moreover, the concern of such national populists about a ‘globalism . . . that seeks to undermine national sovereignty, culture, heritage and morality’ is shared by the resurgent British National Party (BNP). The latter, which ‘aspires towards a Le Pen style of nationalism that . . . critiques globalization from a distinct nationalist and xenophobic stance’, won approximately 5% of the vote (in those seats it contested) in the 2005 election. Hence, according to Worth and Abbott, ‘if we are to strictly take into account party politics over new social movements, then the BNP, just solely through the ballot box, appears to be the most successful challenger to globalization in the UK’.⁵²

Another example from Europe 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 own* 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 [*Krebbbers and Schoenmaker*, 2001: 62–62, 67].

Sakai’s point that the reactionary Right is ultimately anti-bourgeois rather than anti-capitalist helps clarify the ‘structural flaw’ in such ‘anti-globalization’ campaigns. ‘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 . . . 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 indistinguishable from right-wing populism. This suggests that populism *per se* and challenging ‘globalization’ – using relativistic poststructuralist or postmodernist coalition politics – are not just simplistic stances; they are downright dangerous.⁵³ As Hildyard [1999:12] 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.

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 [1997: 204, 206, 235 n. 61], right and ‘left’ populisms are both right-wing positions; hence, ‘left’ populism is a contradiction in terms.

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 movements... just as certainly as they provide potentials for a revitalized revolutionary left’ [*Hamerquist*, 2002: 24], the struggle of the AGM 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.⁵⁴ 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.

ACRONYMS

AGM	Anti-Globalization Movement
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People’s Party)
BKS	Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (Indian Farmers’ Association)
BNP	British National Party
CLOC	Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo (Latin American Coordinator of Peasants’ Organizations)
GRECE	Groupement de Recherche et d’Etudes pour la Civilisation Européenne (Research and Study Group for European Civilization)
IFG	International Forum on Globalization
MAI	Multilateral Agreement on Investment
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
WTO	World Trade Organization

NOTES

- 1 This workshop was entitled 'A Feminist Challenge to the Market: The Gift Economy'. The 'gift economy' refers to proposal by Genevieve Vaughan [1997] 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 [1987; 1989]. 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.
- 2 For an article espousing this perspective, see Christiansen-Ruffman [2002]. For an alternative feminist analysis of the impact of the fisheries crisis on Newfoundland women see Power and Harrison [2005]. For a critique of the claim that Newfoundland – after European settlement – was ever a true subsistence economy, see Overton [2000].
- 3 According to Overton [2000: 6], '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'. For a more detailed discussion of the role of corporate greed in the failure of the Newfoundland fisheries, see Petras and Veltmeyer [2003: 132ff].
- 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 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 [*Current*, 2006: 6].
- 5 While Arturo Escobar is purportedly one of the most high-profile advocates of post-development, it is worth noting, in Escobar [1995], his totally uncritical appropriation of Shiva [1989].
- 6 See, for example, Boggs [1999], Loker [1999], and Petras and Veltmeyer [2003].
- 7 For more on this, see Bové and Dufour [2001], and the contributions to four edited collections about grassroots mobilization in India, Latin America and Mexico [Demmers, Fernández Jilberto and Hogenboom, 2001; Brass, 1995, 2003; Washbrook, 2007]. Agrarian populism is an ideology that has deep historical roots, in Europe [Mitrany, 1951], the US [Hicks, 1931] and in Russia [Venturi, 1960]. In all these contexts, it was deployed from the late nineteenth century onward by peasants and small farmers opposed to the effects of capitalist development.
- 8 The link between these frameworks and what is termed the 'new' populist postmodernism is outlined by Brass [2000].
- 9 Much of what passes for 'post-development' theory is more accurately perceived as the politics of *anti*-development, advocates of which – for example Harding [2000] – maintain that the global process of economic development (identified as male and scientific) should be replaced with a localized smallholding agriculture (identified as female and 'natural').
- 10 On the connection between gender discourse and rightwing politics in different national contexts at particular conjunctures, see Koonz [1984], Caldwell [1986], Blee [1991], Mazumdar [1995] and Durham [1998]. For the equation of females with subsistence agriculture, see among others Howard [2003] and Haverkort, van 't Hooft and Hiemstra [2003]. The difficulty arising from a strong ideological association of subsistence agriculture with females is that a defence of peasant economy is likely to attract the support of poor rural women, while an attack on it is equally likely to generate their antagonism. Where private property in agriculture is a policy advocated by the political right, the defence of smallholding cultivation as a specifically gendered activity (=the provision of subsistence by women for the peasant family) means that females may align themselves with such parties. This is a

- problem facing those who currently endorse smallholding agriculture as the 'natural' and gendered 'other' of neoliberalism.
- 11 Emphasis added. Roy and Borowiak's article focuses exclusively on India. Hence the omission of race as a significant 'fracture... within the collective peasant subject'.
 - 12 It is interesting to note that some of those who originally welcomed the postmodern/populist attack on development have subsequently found this position to be very problematic, and have accordingly changed their minds. Although others have rejected particular aspects of the attack on development, they still cling to some positions that are basically populist.
 - 13 Shiva [2005b: 112] does finally acknowledge that Bahro [1984: 211] is the source of this idea.
 - 14 For a critique of Shiva's 'mythical' version of the Chipko movement, see Rangan [2000].
 - 15 Moreover, portrayals of nature as a woman being tortured by a mechanistic science in search of her secrets 'rests on a careless translation of Bacon's Latin.'
 - 16 For a discussion of cultural feminism, and a history of its rise and eclipse of the radical feminism with which it is often conflated, see Echols [1989].
 - 17 Esteva [1987: 276, 293] equates populism with the 'rhetorical "we"' [of] a populist politician' who 'transform[s] hopes into promises'.
 - 18 Esteva [*Esteva and Prakash*, 1998: 2–3] distinguishes his grassroots postmodernism from academic postmodernism. However, as Brass [1997; 2000], Nanda [2003], and others would argue – and I agree – academic postmodernism and poststructuralism are merely different forms of populism. Thus they also lend themselves to many, although not all, of the problems considered here, especially those discussed below. For an interesting discussion of the link between populism, postmodernism and Islamic fundamentalism, see Moghissi [1994; 1999].
 - 19 For a very different interpretation of Zapatismo as also including a struggle against oppressive aspects of tradition, see Lorenzano [1998] and Millán [1998].
 - 20 Ironically, the main charge that Harry Cleaver [1987: 12] levels against Illich for his residual Catholicism – 'his embrace of a life of aestheticism, of a monk's life of freely chosen poverty' – is equally applicable to Esteva.
 - 21 However, it is interesting to note that, contrary to Esteva, the Revolutionary Women's Law, proclaimed by the Zapatista women in January 1994, specifies in Articles 3 and 6 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].
 - 22 This book garnered the *Prix de la vie économique* in Paris in 1980.
 - 23 While Tévôédjèrè [1979: 73] integrates some elements of Ivan Illich's notion of 'conviviality' in his understanding of technology, it is interesting to note here as well the influence of social ecologist Murray Bookchin. However, Tévôédjèrè retains the state while Bookchin, a social anarchist – or, maybe more accurately from the late 1990s on, due to his fundamental disagreement with 'lifestyle' and poststructuralist approaches to anarchism, just a social ecologist – called for a confederal libertarian municipalism.
 - 24 This would seem to be a rather idealist solution to the problem of corruption and the usurping of power by political leaders. However, a full discussion of Tévôédjèrè's proposals is beyond the scope of this article.
 - 25 On Bahro and the German Green Party, see Hülsberg [1988].
 - 26 It is highly likely that the concept of 'Mother Earth', which Shiva [1989; 2005b] 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 1960s [*Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, 2003].
 - 27 See also Brass [1997; 2000].
 - 28 In criticizing subsistence ecofeminism, I am not dismissing ecofeminism *per se*. Subsistence ecofeminism is a form of cultural ecofeminism that, 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 Plumwood [1993] and Soper [1995] is considerably more sophisticated and politically astute than is subsistence ecofeminism. Postmodern ecofeminists, such as Sandilands [1999: 51–53, 137–139, 142, 179 ff], also criticized Shiva and her associates. Yet this critique is

- limited because postmodern ecofeminism tends to be ahistorical and, in its own way, highly Romantic. Sandilands' [1999: 179 ff.] ultimate celebration of the 'mystery' and 'wildness' of nature is, for example, deeply evocative of the Romantic-religious aesthetics of the sublime. Similarly, Sandilands' [1998] postmodern queer 'analysis' of the population issue in the 'Global South' is, in keeping with her basic Romanticism, ahistorical and highly idealist.
- 29 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 Brownhill (with Turner) and a reprinted review of Cranney's book. There were no articles critical of the subsistence perspective.
 - 30 Significantly, the same claim was made by British colonialism when confronted by famine in rural Africa, the inference being that there was no need for government aid in such crises as village society would ensure adequate provision [Vaughan, 1987].
 - 31 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 Bennholdt-Thomsen, Faraclas, and von Werlhof [2001].
 - 32 For Holloway [2002: 73], 'to focus on the multiplicity [of forces making up power] and forget the underlying unity of power relations leads to a loss of political perspective: emancipation becomes impossible to conceive, as Foucault is at pains to point out'. In a similar fashion, Holloway [2002: 171–173] takes Hardt and Negri to task for their undialectical understanding of capital: 'Hardt and Negri have no concept of capital as class struggle[, ... as the struggle to appropriate the done and turn it against the doing' and thus 'crisis is not so much a moment of rupture as a force of regeneration in capitalism'. Holloway [2002: 64] is also cognizant of the reality that 'the nationalism of the oppressed (anti-imperialist nationalism), although it may aim at radical social transformation, is easily diverted from its broader aims into simply replacing "their" capitalists with "ours"'. Although he is critical of nationalism and postmodernism/poststructuralism, he does not discuss populism, however. This is a significant omission given Holloway's [2002: 21] description of Zapatismo as 'highly contradictory, and certainly includ[ing] many activities that might be described as "petty bourgeois" or "romantic" ... [Y]et the projection of a radical otherness is often an important component of the activity involved... This is the confused area in which the Zapatista call resonates.' What is to prevent this 'radical otherness' from lending support to a populist politics of preserving an indigenous or peasant 'identity' rather than to the proto-council communism that Holloway [2002: 105] seems to be reading into Zapatismo?
 - 33 Pace Shiva, who blames this conflation on capitalism and especially *laissez faire* economic theory [Mies and Shiva, 1993: 108–116].
 - 34 For a more extensive examination and critique of the politics of the IFG, see Westerink [2000].
 - 35 On this, see 'Leading ecologist to address far right: French speaking engagement attacked by Greens', *The Guardian* (London), 25 November 1994, and the subsequent correspondence about this on the letters page of the same newspaper ('Ecologists and their right to be independent', *The Guardian* (London), 5 December 1994). As well as accepting an invitation to address the 25th anniversary meeting of *GRECE* in 1994, Goldsmith also participated in a 1997 meeting of *TeKos*, a think tank associated with the Belgian extreme-right *Vlaams Blok* [Krebbers and Schoenmaker, 2001: 65].
 - 36 Quoted in Krebbers [2001: 81].
 - 37 Quoted in Hildyard [1999: 8].
 - 38 Hildyard is a former member of the editorial team of *The Ecologist*. He left the magazine, together with the rest of the editorial team, due to political differences with Goldsmith over issues related to ethnicity and gender.
 - 39 Quoted in Hildyard [1999: 6].
 - 40 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 insensitive to say the least.

- 41 The extent to which the new farmers' movement in India shared a common ideology with the political right was pointed out initially at a 1993 workshop in New Delhi, some contributions to which were subsequently published as a special issue of this journal in 1994 and then as a book [Brass, 1995].
- 42 For the same point made almost a decade and a half ago, see the contributions by Brass in Brass [1995].
- 43 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.
- 44 And, *vice versa*, aspects of Hindu fundamentalism served some interests of Gandhians. For example, Gandhian populist Rajani Kanth [1997: 113–114, 117], whose call for a 'workable... utopia, wearing necessarily a *feminine* face, [that] lies(s)... in our own historic past – and present' is inspired by Shiva, sees the Hindu nationalist BJP as representing 'the inevitable resurgence of long suppressed local ideas, mores, and practices'. For Kanth, that 'traditional mores are today dismissed wholesale, i.e., uncritically, as "fundamentalist"' by the West suggests only that they are simply *inimical to the development of capitalist (and socialist) modernisms*: 'The fact that much of this populism appears to be reactionary should not daunt the serious observer', argues Kanth [1997: 151–152], because 'it is not always the populism but the leadership ready to seize advantage of it, that has been opportunist'.
- 45 Feminists should, of course, be criticizing social movements that fail to make provisions for mothers with children who want to participate in meetings, events, and political activity, and that ignore or downplay issues that have an impact on pregnant women, women who are mothering, and children. However, maternal feminism goes far beyond this to argue that feminist politics be modelled on the caring relationship of a mother for her infant child. Modelling political relationships among adult women, who often differ in class, race/ethnicity/caste, and/or sexual orientation, on an adult-infant relationship and, moreover, one wherein class and, most often, race are shared and sexual orientation is not yet an issue, is an extremely problematic stance. However, a full discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this article.
- 46 This is the subject of Wendy Lill's [1985] insightful play *The Fighting Days*.
- 47 According to Mies [Mies and Shiva, 1993: 159], 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'.
- 48 There are interesting parallels between the way in which 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 example, resonates strongly with the 'counter-cultural' stance of cultural feminism that 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, Benoist and Champetier [2000], and cultural feminism's critique of liberal feminism and its espousal of a feminism rooted in women's 'difference'.
- 49 The behavioural characteristics associated by Oscar Lewis with the 'culture of poverty' included fatalism, familism and dependence, negative traits culminating in (and in his view responsible for) political and economic marginalization of slum dwellers within the wider society. According to Lewis [1962: xxvi], therefore, in Mexico 'the culture of poverty... is a provincial and locally oriented culture. Its members are only partially integrated into national institutions and are marginal people even when they live in the heart of a great city.' For a critique, see Valentine [1968].
- 50 The populist drift of Via Campesina and its member organization CLOC – celebrations of 'harmonious' peasant lifestyles, subsistence economies, 'integral cosmovisions', etc. – is very obvious in Carvalho [2004].

- 51 The observations of American right-winger, Matt Hale [as cited in *Hamerquist*, 2002: 36–37], 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’.
- 52 Various other authors have also discussed the phenomenon of right-wing ‘anti-globalization’. However, most of these have tended to draw a sharp distinction between the mainstream AGM and right-wing anti-globalizers by ignoring or denying the significant extent to which the politics of the mainstream AGM, South and North, is populist/postmodern. Acknowledging the existence of a ‘reactionary anti-capitalism’ that also opposes economic globalization, Callinicos [2003: 68–70] strongly disassociates this from the mainstream AGM by arguing that one of the mainstream AGM’s ‘main impulses is internationalism, and in particular, solidarity with the poor and oppressed of the South.’ For Callinicos [2003: 11], the AGM ‘marks the breakdown of the hegemony that postmodernism has exerted over avant-garde thinking over much of the past two decades’. Manfred Steger [2003: 113–130] differentiates the economic nationalism of ‘particularist protectionists’, like Buchanan, from the ‘ideals of equality and social justice’ espoused by ‘universalist protectionists’. However, he then goes on to include, among the ‘universalist protectionists’, groups like the IFG. While Kiely [2005: 176–183] notes that ‘there is something of a reactionary, romantic anti-capitalism in some pro-localisation accounts, particularly those associated with Shiva, and a politics based on the principle of “local first” can lead to an embrace of right-wing anti-globalisation’, he sees the mainstream AGM as ‘actively seeking to separate itself from right-wing anti-globalisation’ through its ‘explicit commitment to global solidarity’. The particularist and/or individualist orientation of much mainstream AGM activism (on which see Cochrane [2002, 2004] and Chandler [2004: 168–170]), however, calls into question the existence of such internationalism and global solidarity. For three striking examples of this individualist and particularist orientation in the AGM, see Free Association [2005: 25], Pettman [2005], and Sullivan [2005].
- 53 This calls into question as well the Zapatista slogan ‘One no, many yeses’.
- 54 The *De Fabel* website (<http://www.gebladerte.nl/v01.htm>) is an invaluable source of critical analyses of the inroads that the Right is presently making on ‘left’ populist orientations and campaigns.

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