

There is an Alternative: Subsistence and Worldwide Resistance to Corporate Globalization was first published by Zed Books Ltd, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF, UK and Room 400, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA, and, in Australia and New Zealand, by Spinifex Press, 504 Queensbury Street, North Melbourne, Victoria 3003, Australia, in 2001.

Distributed in the USA exclusively by Palgrave, a division of St Martin's Press, LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA

Copyright © the contributors, 2001

Cover designed by Andrew Corbett

Set in Monotype Ehrhardt and Franklin Gothic by Ewan Smith

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King's Lynn

The rights of the contributors to be identified as the authors of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

The National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:

There is an alternative : subsistence and worldwide resistance to corporate globalization.

Bibliography.

Includes index.

ISBN 1 876756 17 9

1. Globalization 2. Subsistence economy. I. Bennholdt-Thomsen, Veronika. II. Werlhof, Claudia von, 1943-. III. Faraclas, Nick.

337

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data: available

ISBN 1 84277 005 5 cased

ISBN 1 84277 006 3 limp

Contents

About the Contributors /vii

Introduction /x

Part I On the Theory of Subsistence **1**

- 1 Woman, Nature and the International Division of Labour **3**
Maria Mies interviewed by Ariel Salleh

- 2 Losing Faith in Progress: Capitalist Patriarchy as an
'Alchemical System' **15**
Claudia von Werlhof

- 3 Sustainable Development: Rescue Operation for a Dying
Illusion **41**
Saral Sarkar

Part II On Resistance to Globalization I: Fighting the New Colonialism **55**

- 4 Globalization and Poverty **57**
Vandana Shiva

- 5 Melanesia, the Banks, and the BINGOs: Real Alternatives
are Everywhere (Except in the Consultants' Briefcases) **67**
Nicholas G. Faraclas

- 6 The Clash of Knowledge Systems: Local Diversity in the
Wild versus Global Homogeneity in the Marketplace **77**
Susan Hawthorne

- 7 Globalized Bodies in the Twenty-first Century: The Final
Patriarchal Takeover? **91**
Renate Klein

8	'Women Never Surrendered': The Mau Mau and Globalization from Below in Kenya 1980–2000	106
	<i>Terisa E. Turner and Leigh S. Brownhill</i>	
9	War, Globalization and Reproduction	133
	<i>Silvia Federici</i>	
10	Seattle: A Convergence of Globalization and Militarization	146
	<i>Theresa J. Wolfwood</i>	
	Part III On Resistance to Globalization II: Subsistence in Practice	153
11	Mexico: Creating Your Own Path at the Grassroots	155
	<i>Gustavo Esteva</i>	
12	Resisting 'Technology' and Defending Subsistence in Bangladesh: Nayakrishi Andolon and the Movement for a Happy Life	167
	<i>Farida Akhter</i>	
13	Local Lifeline: Rejecting Globalization – Embracing Localization	178
	<i>Helena Norberg-Hodge</i>	
14	Women in the International Gardens: How Subsistence Production Leads to New Forms of Intercultural Communication	189
	<i>Christa Müller</i>	
15	The Practice of Subsistence: Collective Environmental Action and Community Organic Farming	203
	<i>Elisabeth Meyer-Renschhausen</i>	
16	What Really Keeps Our Cities Alive, Money or Subsistence?	217
	<i>Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen</i>	
	Maria Mies – Selected Publications	232
	Index	234

About the Contributors

Farida Akhter (Bangladesh) is executive director of UBINIG (Policy Research for Alternative Development) Dhaka. As an economist, she has done research in the fields of women's development, health issues, agriculture, marine fisheries, hand-loom industries, garment industries, population and other related development issues, and has taken part in action programmes in the field of social development and feminist publishing in Bangladesh. She is currently co-operating with FINRRAGE (Feminist International Network for Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering), and with other networks on Food Ecology and on Resistance Against Trafficking in Women and Children.

Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen (Germany) is Director of the Institute of the Theory and Practice of Subsistence (ITPS) at Bielefeld, Germany. She is a visiting professor at the University for Soil Culture in Vienna, Austria. She has undertaken research in Mexico and Germany, specifically on Sustainable Regional Economics in East Westphalia. Her publications include work on Women's Studies, Peasant Studies, Social Anthropology and the matriarchal community of Juchitan (Mexico).

Leigh S. Brownhill (Canada) studied at the University of Guelph and is a founding member of First Woman, the East and Southern African Women's Oral History and Indigenous Knowledge Network.

Gustavo Esteva (Mexico) is a grassroots activist and deprofessionalized intellectual, and an adviser to the Zapatista Army for National Liberation. Having been a public officer and university professor in Mexico, and having taught world-wide, he works in co-operation with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and indigenous groups, peasants and urban marginals, contributing to the creation of social, economic, technological and ecological alternatives.

Nicholas G. Faraclas (Greece/USA) is Senior Lecturer in Linguistics at the University of Papua New Guinea. He has a PhD from the University of California at Berkeley. He teaches and does research in the areas of

Woman, Nature and the International Division of Labour

Maria Mies interviewed by Ariel Salleh

The eco-feminism of Maria Mies stands at the crossroads of the feminist, ecological and colonial liberation movements. Mies attempts to bring Marxian theory face to face with the newly emerging political crises of the late twentieth century. This has involved a heuristic reading of Marx's text in the light of modern anthropology and what she calls 'object-relations'. But Mies is as much an activist as an academic sociologist. Her concerns range from prescriptive essays on methodology in social science, to empirical studies of exploitation among Indian women lace-makers, campaigns against pornography and the reproductive technology industry in West Germany. Ariel Salleh spoke with her in 1987 and formalized this interview by correspondence.

Commodification and Violence

ARIEL SALLEH: Plainly, feminism is in crisis: Third World workers are divided from middle-class western housewives, and both of these from the feminist movement per se. The feminists, in turn, are split between the socialists and those who would organize autonomously. But your analysis in *Patriarchy and Accumulation* gives a new unity and coherence to women's struggle world-wide [Mies 1986]. What experiences in your own life brought you to this insight? Or was it already deducible from your reading of Marxism?

MARIA MIES: Well, I don't think that feminism itself is in crisis. The divisions you mention are objectively part and parcel of the capitalist patriarchal 'divide and rule' strategy. Under capitalism, there emerges not only a sexual division of labour, but also a particular social division between private and public and an international division of labour. All these divisions are hierarchically structured and connected, although they appear

as autonomous entities. What binds them together is a dependency relationship based on violence, commodity production and money. The dependent sector in each of these divisions I call 'colonies'.

I did not gain these insights by reading Marxism. First came my experience in India, where I worked and lived for six years; second, was my involvement in the German women's movement since 1968. While trying to find a satisfactory explanation for the ongoing exploitation of women here, and the colonies 'down there', I began to read Marx. But, as argued in my book *Patriarchy and Accumulation*, Marxism did not offer an explanation. The central constitutive relationship studied by Marx and Engels was wage labour and capital, and this excludes all non-wage labour relations. The latter are shoved into the realm of 'nature' or called 'pre-capitalist'; it amounts to the same. This is particularly true for the life-giving and life-sustaining work of women.

ARIEL SALLEH: One result of this, which you take up in the book, is the fact that structuralist Marxists shove 'the woman question' into the realm of 'ideology'; the net result being that they are as politically ineffectual as they claim middle-class 'cultural' feminists to be! Is this problem connected with what you describe as the 'biologically loaded' concept of labour in Marx? What do you mean when you say this?

MARIA MIES: The Marxist concept of labour was certainly not intended to be biologically loaded. Following Adam Smith, Marx stresses that the concept of 'productive labour' under capitalism no longer simply means work for the satisfaction of human needs, but rather surplus-producing labour. This concept comes to be the dominant one and all other forms of labour are left outside the realm of capital accumulation. By calling wage labour 'productive' and all other types of non-wage labour 'non-productive' or natural, Marx contributed to what I see as the 'naturalization' of women's work. Women's labour henceforth disappears from the social or human sphere and becomes invisible, locked up in the family, the 'realm of nature' or even the 'realm of death' as Hegel put it.

The problem with this Marxian concept of labour is not only its dualistic division between 'nature' and 'society', but the dominance relation existing between these two poles: society dominates nature, culture dominates nature, man dominates woman, etcetera. Woman now *appears* as a biological category as a result of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourse. Marx and Engels did not break entirely with this discourse. In fact, they expected the reconciliation of Man with Nature to arrive from a further extension of men's domination over it through their development of technology and science as productive forces.

ARIEL SALLEH: Now you are not talking about some universal sexism of men behind this, are you? The naturalism of Marx and Engels' *The German Ideology*, say, is itself an expression of the capitalist mode of production, right? [Marx and Engels 1965]

MARIA MIES: Yes, I do not think that there is anything like an inherent sexism in men. I reject Freud's dictum that anatomy is destiny, as much for men as for women. There were long periods in history when men were not sexist, and there are still cultures where men do not dominate women. Patriarchy is a historical and social system, not a biological one. However, when Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* refer to the 'natural division of labour in the family' or to the 'sheep-like or tribal consciousness' that prevails until a 'division of labour between mental and material labour appears', they uncritically accept the Enlightenment concept of progress. This discourse is based on an ever-growing mastery of the 'masculine' human mind over 'feminine' nature or matter. Before there was 'industry and exchange' there was rape, robbery and loot. Capitalism would not have emerged without the destruction of self-sufficient and self-sustaining subsistence systems in the colonies and Europe, and the Marxian theory of unlimited development of productive forces helps to justify that, I'm afraid.

ARIEL SALLEH: How does all this relate to your argument about differences between men's and women's object-relation to nature, your observation that men and women are productive in different ways?

MARIA MIES: This argument is often misinterpreted as being biologicistic, because it starts with the recognition that the human being appears in two sexes and that men and women interact with nature in bodies which are, at least partly, qualitatively different. Biological difference, however, is not only given. Maleness and femaleness are differently defined in each historical epoch, differently interpreted and valued, according to the dominant mode of production. In matrifocal societies, femaleness was interpreted as the paradigm of all productivity and creativity. Capitalist patriarchal society defines femaleness as devoid of productivity, activity, subjectivity, humanity, historicity.

ARIEL SALLEH: Well, let's come at the question of object-relations this way: I think you see men's reliance on 'tools' to mediate their relation with 'external' nature as basic to the logic of an appropriative economy – the predatory model.

MARIA MIES: I do say that men cannot experience their bodies as 'productive' in the same way as women, that they need 'tools' to mediate their relationship with nature as a productive or creative one. But this

instrumental relationship of men to their bodies would not have led to an appropriative or predatory economy, if the tools men invented had remained 'productive' in the true sense. With the invention of arms and the monopoly of some men over these arms, the relationship of men to their bodies, to each other, to women and to external nature, changed fundamentally. Arms are not means of production, but means of destruction and coercion. By means of arms, a relationship of exploitation and dominance can be established and maintained. Only as hunters became warriors and where conquest became a regular *economic* activity, could men's productivity, based on a monopoly over arms, appear as an independent process from women's productivity and nature's productivity.

ARIEL SALLEH: Eventually, 'colonization' and 'housewifization' become two faces of the one 'coin' in the rise of international capital, violence against women being essential to the maintenance of this international division of labour. What are examples of this, Maria?

MARIA MIES: Abundant examples can be found in the history of colonialism, in the politics of slavery, in the violent destruction of self-sufficient survival systems, in the process of the witch-hunt in Europe and its accompanying historical counterpart in the colonies. But even today, violence against women is the 'necessary' method for maintaining the exploitative international and sexual division of labour. Housewifization and colonization are part of the world market system. Both are necessary for capital accumulation. In the modern colonies, this violence takes the form of mass rapes, dowry killings, forced sterilization, sex tourism, use of Third World women as guinea-pigs for testing drugs, pro-natal and ante-natal technology by transnational concerns. Another recent example of neo-patriarchal violence against women is the revival of suttee [widow burning] in India.

As I said, these manifestations are neither the result of some inborn sadism in men, nor remnants of feudal backwardness. They are the result of the ongoing process of primitive accumulation of capital, which has always been dependent on direct violence. In this process, the men play the role of agents for capital; the mediators. Most men in the Third World cannot hope to rise to the standard of living of their big white brothers by means of wage labour. But they still want to get access to the consumer goods the world market offers, the TV sets, cars, motorbikes, videos, computers, which all serve as symbols of modernization and progress. Neither individual men nor Third World governments can reach this material level by means of non-violent exchange. The debt trap is one direct outcome of this impossibility.

Governments who have embraced a policy of modernization in the face

of actual dependency will have to sell their women, or their land, or both. The case of suttee in India is revealing. As Madhu Kishwar has shown, the men who campaign for the revival of suttee are not 'backward' peasants, but modern, urban, educated young men who want to get rich quickly, supported by powerful industrial interests which invest a lot of money in temples and religion [Kishwar and Vanita 1984]. By burning a widow, a new suttee-shrine can be established, a new cult can be created. Pilgrims flock to the new shrine and bring money. Neo-patriarchy and religious fundamentalism go smoothly together with modernization and capital accumulation: they are not in contradiction. It's not only in the neo-colonies or the South that violence against women is increasing. We all know about its increase in the industrialized countries: wife-battering, rape, pornography. Even the emergence of reproductive technology which turns women into marketable reproductive raw material is not possible without virtual vivisection of the female body.

Culture not Nature

ARIEL SALLEH: You claim that 'naturalization' is the ideological linchpin in this economic process. How does it work?

MARIA MIES: The concept of 'naturalization' cannot be properly understood without its other pole, namely 'humanization' or 'civilization'. Humanization here implies becoming independent from nature by means of science and technology. Domination over 'nature' in this sense is always a destructive and coercive relationship. 'Naturalization' hence means that not only external nature, but also women and the peoples of the 'South', are seen as 'nature'. So defined, they are robbed of subjectivity, spiritual value, dignity and sovereignty. These 'colonies' become mere objects or raw material for the process of 'humanizing' the working class in the western metropolises [Mies et al. 1987]. As my friend Claudia von Werlhof put it, all that is free of costs for capital is defined as 'nature'. It is, however, important to keep in mind that such a concept of nature is already an ideological one; it implies that the integrity of self-sustaining survival systems, our bodies, the fact that women bring forth children, the earth which produces plants and animals, has already been destroyed. Nature has already been subdued and is dominated by 'Man'.

Then, after this destruction, 'nature' gets ideologically reconstructed in a sentimental way. It is both degraded and romanticized. This is true for women – 'good and bad women'; for external nature – 'chaotic and idyllic'; and for colonized peoples – 'good and bad savages'. Those who have been 'civilized' or 'humanized' obviously cannot forget their 'lost paradise'. They

yearn for what they have destroyed. Ironically, this very yearning is the strongest motive force for the present round of capital accumulation: Third World sex tourism, eco-marketing, etcetera.

ARIEL SALLEH: The feminist concept of 'gender' unwittingly collaborates in this naturalistic ideology too.

MARIA MIES: Indeed. The feminist concept of 'gender' collaborates with this dualism and reinforces the polarization between 'nature' and 'culture'. It shares in the concept of progress developed by white men, and in the hegemony of culture over nature. It also shares the evolutionist view of this process as inevitable. Because of the distinction made by some feminists between 'gender' and 'sex', it is easy now for reproductive engineers to say that the realm of sexuality and reproduction is only 'biology', hence it is their domain. Meanwhile the symbolic manifestations of these areas are called 'gender' and are said to belong to the social, cultural or truly 'human' sphere.

ARIEL SALLEH: This device of 'naturalization' continues to be important for the self-definition of the male proletariat, doesn't it?

MARIA MIES: Yes, the European labour movement, at least from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, aspired to reach the cultural level of the bourgeoisie. The leaders of the German Social Democrats, then still strongly influenced by scientific socialism, saw clearly that for the rise of the German working class from a miserable proletarian existence to a civilized one, an industrial nation like Germany needed colonies. Colonies were necessary for the cheap import of more raw materials, of more labour and for an extension of markets [see Luxemburg 1967]. But for the 'humanization' or civilization of the German male proletarian, a decent family was necessary, where the man was breadwinner and woman the housewife. Hence colonial policy and family policy in imperial Germany were basically accepted by the Social Democrats and by the trade unions. In England and other industrialized countries, the situation was more or less the same.

ARIEL SALLEH: I suppose the technological optimism of Marx, Engels and many present-day socialists would be influenced by men's specific object-relation to nature as well ...

MARIA MIES: Today we have reached a stage where we can speak of an ideological convergence of the male proletarian and the capitalist. Both expect more 'progress' from further domination over nature by high tech. Both collaborate in the further destruction of our natural base of existence. The western working class has been strongly opposed to the ecology

movement and also to the women's movement. But it's not only the western working class who share this technocratic Utopia with capital. Workers in present-day socialist countries share the same paradigm of technological progress as the key to all happiness. Its theoretical roots are indeed to be found in the technological optimism of Marx, and particularly Engels, who see domination over nature as a precondition for the liberation of mankind from the 'realm of necessity' and for the beginning of the 'realm of freedom'.

ARIEL SALLEH: What would a feminist concept of labour and economics look like, in your view?

MARIA MIES: A feminist concept of 'labour' cannot be based on domination. Women cannot expect liberation to come from continued exploitation of nature and other colonized peoples. One colony cannot be decolonized at the expense of other colonies. A feminist concept of labour has therefore to replace the predatory economic relationship of Man to 'nature' by a co-operative one. The model of a co-operative, reciprocal relationship between woman and nature is also the only way in which women will restore their bodily integrity and wholeness, their dignity and their sovereignty over life processes. A feminist concept of labour has to reject the notion that all 'necessary labour' is a burden that should be done by machines or robots. We have to maintain a concept of labour in which 'enjoyment' as well as the 'hardness' of work are united. This would require a different economy from the one we know today. I have elaborated on this in the last chapter of *Patriarchy and Accumulation*. The main characteristic of such an economy would be an emphasis on the maintenance of self-sustaining survival systems: 'a subsistence perspective'. It would be a 'moral economy', based on principle, not merely on supply and demand.

ARIEL SALLEH: Women have nothing to gain from a continuation of the prevailing 'growth' ethic, have they? By the way, when you developed your subsistence perspective in *Patriarchy and Accumulation*, were you consciously trying to provide a theoretical bridge between eco-feminism and Green politics? Without a thoroughgoing emancipation of both Third World and western women from their sustaining position in the predatory division of labour, Green politics won't even reach first base, will it?

MARIA MIES: I agree that Green politics will not reach first base unless the growth and accumulation ethic is consistently rejected and a 'subsistence perspective' put in its place. However, Green politics in West Germany at present is far from such. When Greens began to enter the parliaments, a process of redefining their goals began. It ended by drastically reducing their criticism of the industrial growth model and talking rather about an

'ecological reconstruction of the industrial system'. This means they expect a solution of the ecological and social crisis to come not so much from a radical change in people's daily life, but from technological innovations, like solar energy, etcetera. But, since the Social Democrats pursue a similar strategy of harmonizing capitalist accumulation with ecological reconstruction, it is possible that the Greens will not even last very long as a parliamentary party. I put my hope not so much on the Greens or any other party but on the broadening movement among people, particularly women who are ready to challenge the growth model by consumer resistance. We need a strategy combining the goals of the ecology movement, anti-colonialism and women's liberation simultaneously.

New Strategies for Feminism

ARIEL SALLEH: In your favour there is the fact that feminism is much more healthy now in Asia, Latin America and Africa. Originally, colonial women were loath to identify with the feminist movement at all. Why the turnaround?

MARIA MIES: While the old prejudice that 'feminists are all single women, lesbians, man-haters and housebreakers' still exists among some Third World women, increasingly they find themselves confronted with the same manifestations of capitalist patriarchy as we do. The rise in violence against women has renewed feminist rebellion in many Third World countries. It can no longer be labelled a western import. Third World sisters also need an answer to the question 'Why has capitalism or modernization not liberated women?' So we are finding a keen interest in feminist theory now among women in Asia, South America and Africa.

ARIEL SALLEH: Recently, in London, I came across the Wages for Housework campaign again, vigorously pursued by migrant women of colour at the King's Cross Women's Centre. How do you feel about the revival of this strategy in the present conjuncture?

MARIA MIES: It is understandable why women who are hit by unemployment, the flexibilization of labour or 'housewifization' of more and more areas of production demand a guaranteed minimum income or 'Wages for Housework'. This strategy has even been adopted in West Germany to some extent by the Christian Democrats. They have granted women with small children a small allowance as 'education money', too little, of course, even to feed them. Though the demand is understandable, as a tactical move, it begs the same strategic questions as the old Wages for Housework campaign. These are:

1. Can the strategy be applied to all women in the world? Is it conceivable that all women in the world can in reality become 'housewives' maintained by a male breadwinner or the welfare state? Is this desirable?
2. As the state has to pay these wages for housework or the guaranteed minimum income, this demand will automatically lead to state control in the sphere of reproduction and livelihood.
3. Would such a strategy not presuppose continuation of the existing international division of labour and the existing world market? It is even conceivable that some women in the West may be paid wages for housework out of debt services paid by the indebted Third World nations. The debt bondage of the Third World can easily be used to feed an increasing number of non-wage workers or unemployed in the metropolises. But it is impossible to feed all the unemployed and all non-wage workers in the world at the same level. If all women should get wages for housework, then none of the indebted nations would be in a position to repay the interests on their loans. This, in turn, would be the end of wages for housework in the metropolises.

ARIEL SALLEH: Changing tack, Maria: I notice that your thesis makes use of Carolyn Merchant's eco-feminist deconstruction of Baconian science. Is the critique of science developed by English-speaking feminists such as Sandra Harding, Evelyn Fox Keller, Hilary Rose and others well regarded in Europe?

MARIA MIES: Carolyn Merchant's and Evelyn Fox Keller's books have been translated and are discussed in Germany by women and men who, since Chernobyl, have begun to criticize the foundations of science and technology [Merchant 1982; Fox Keller 1985]. The critique is spearheaded in West Germany by the women's movement against reproductive and genetic engineering. Women begin to understand that this technology amounts to a revival of the eugenics movement of the Nazis, but now activated on a world scale. In other European countries, the resistance against these developments is not so strong. Recently, I heard French feminists saying: 'After we have rationalized production, we rationalize reproduction.' In France, the faith in instrumentalism is fairly unbroken.

ARIEL SALLEH: Your own assault on patriarchal methodology in social science puts particular emphasis on action research. And this is one of the most impressive aspects of your writing, I think; not only does it bring a vast array of empirical and historical material into synthesis and shows how diverse areas of feminist politics are interrelated, it is clearly informed by a long-standing personal engagement in women's struggle both in the Third World and the 'overdeveloped West'.

MARIA MIES: True, my work follows methodological principles for feminist research first formulated in 1978, integrating research and action, theory and practice. I still use these ideas with my students, in women's and environmental projects, and with other groups. In the present political climate, however, it seems that nothing is more suspect to those powers that maintain the status quo than integration of theory and practice. In West Germany, it is quite all right if you hold courses on Marxist or feminist theory; it is even considered innovative! But as soon as you step out of the confines of academia and link up feminist research and politics, you are suspect. Or you are not seen as a 'good scholar'.

ARIEL SALLEH: Can you tell us a little about the police raids on your German feminist colleagues who are actively opposing reproductive technologies and genetic engineering? This harassment on the part of the state seems to underscore the structural significance of the patriarchal need to appropriate and control women's reproductive labour 'resource'.

MARIA MIES: The December 1987 raids on women in the movement against reproductive and genetic engineering were a reaction to the erosion of public acceptance for these new techniques. Since 1985, our women have mobilized over their anti-woman, indeed anti-human, effects. Industry is keen to launch bio-tech as one of the main 'future technologies', so the police raids were meant to intimidate the protest movement and thus create a better climate for investment here [Mies 1987]. Clearly these new technologies cannot be 'profitable' unless the state steps in to enforce total control over women's reproductive capacities. Here we see the unity of patriarchy and capitalism again. In West Germany, we have always insisted on linking up our critique of reproductive technology to that of genetic engineering and to the issue of population control policy in the Third World. Only by showing the interconnectedness of these areas can we expose the basically racist, sexist and, ultimately, fascist implications of such techniques. [A second congress for Women Against Reproductive and Genetic Engineering was held in Frankfurt in November 1988.]

ARIEL SALLEH: Among the feminists I encountered working with Die Grunen, some have endorsed a Mothers' Manifesto; others are fiercely opposed to what they perceive as the naturalism of that same document. In my view, this 'debate' marks a significant new stage in our developing feminist consciousness. If only the movement will be mature enough to work through the political antinomies posed by the Manifesto.

MARIA MIES: The Mothers' Manifesto group began by pointing out the many grievances of mothers with small children in the women's movement. These grievances are real and there has not been very much solidarity with

mothers on the part of our movement. But it is wrong, as the Manifesto women do, to say that the non-mothers are 'career women', or even that a career means emancipation. This position was already rejected quite early by the women's movement. On the other hand, the women who criticize the Manifesto for its 'biologism' are equally superficial. They usually argue that the Nazis also put 'motherhood' on a pedestal with their '*Blut und Boden*' ideology.

I consider both positions wrong. The Manifesto women treat motherhood as an existential antagonism but forget that it is only one part of a woman's life. The anti-Manifesto women, on the other hand, do not take the trouble to go deeper than their anti-fascist rhetoric – a rhetoric by which any new movement in Germany can be denounced. They thus commit the same mistake which communists and social democrats committed in the Weimar Republic, before Hitler came to power. These groups denounced all feelings of discontent centring on topics such as 'nature', 'motherhood', 'land' and 'home' as irrational, out of tune with the modern world. And in doing so, they gave this whole dimension of human reality over to the Nazis. Given its lodgement in Enlightenment discourse, scientific socialism was not able to accommodate these so called 'irrational' yearnings within its theoretical body and policies. However, by basing their Utopia exclusively on rationalization and class struggle, communists and social democrats were not able to understand the 'rumblings under the factory floor', as my late friend Christel Neuss put it. These rumblings stemmed from the emotional alienation of the industrial working class and Hitler exploited these feelings for his own purposes. Yes, I also hope that the discussion around the Mothers' Manifesto will be able to transcend the facile pattern of 'right' and 'left', and come to grips with what lies underneath the rebellion of mothers in the women's movement.

Note

This interview was first published in Australia as Maria Mies with Ariel Salleh, 'Women, Nature and the International Division of Labour', *Thesis Eleven*, 21 (1988), pp. 129–39. It was reprinted in the UK in *Science as Culture*, 9 (1990), pp. 73–87 and in the USA by *Fifth Estate*, 26 (1992), pp. 8–17.

References

- Fox Keller, E. (1985) *Reflections on Gender and Science*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Kishwar, M. and R. Vanita (eds) (1984) *In Search of Answers: Indian Women's Voices*, London: Zed Books.

- Luxemburg, R. (1967) *The Accumulation of Capital*, London: Routledge.
- Marx, K. and F. Engels (1965) *The German Ideology*, London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Merchant, C. (1982) *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, San Francisco, CA: Harper.
- Mies, M. (1986) *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, London: Zed Books.
- (1987) 'Sexist and Racist Implications of the New Reproductive Technology', *Alternatives*, XII, pp. 323–42.
- Mies, M., V. Bennholdt-Thomsen and C. von Werlhof (1987) *Women: The Last Colony*, London: Zed Books.

2

Losing Faith in Progress: Capitalist Patriarchy as an 'Alchemical System'

Claudia von Werlhof

Why is it that we in the West have such a hard time conceptualizing alternatives to corporate globalization, particularly Maria Mies's assertion that 'Subsistence is the Alternative' (SITA)? I contend that the difficulties that we have in imagining alternatives stem directly from the fact that especially women, nature and the colonies have been subjected to domination, exploitation and also to a fundamental *transformation*. The concept that we normally use to refer to this exploitative, violent and sexist history is 'patriarchy' (along with its flipside 'matriarchy'). In my opinion, patriarchy has not yet been fully analysed, and I will therefore attempt to deepen this analysis in this chapter in order to redefine the very concept of patriarchy.

Patriarchy has neither been *systematically* related to other significant phenomena of our society nor has it been interpreted as a system of changing and multifunctional concrete politics in everyday life as well as on a general social level. In a word, it has been *underestimated* as an interdisciplinary historical category and as a reality. Patriarchy has not vanished with progress. On the contrary, it is developing with progress: it is progress itself! Capitalism is only the latest stage of patriarchy and not its contradiction, as many people (especially women) seem to believe today.

My contribution to this theoretical debate consists in the use of the seemingly obsolete historical concept of *alchemy*. In relating alchemy to patriarchy, however, I found the 'key' (the key is the main symbol of alchemy) not only to understanding the history and concrete versions of patriarchy, but also the forms of patriarchal behaviour, of concrete patriarchal politics towards people, women, nature, society and the world in general. In a nutshell: alchemy is the 'method' of patriarchy. Using this method, politicians, technocrats, scientists and experimenters try to transform the world not just into a modern one, but also into a patriarchal one. Therefore, patriarchy has become what I call the 'Alchemical System'.