

A World of Hags

On Second Wave Feminist Difference Thinking in *Gyn/Ecology*:
The Metaethics of Radical Feminism

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Abstract

In this thesis the book, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, by Mary Daly, is researched as an artefact of second wave feminism and how it articulates and reflects ideas on difference thinking. In her book she writes on how women can resist oppression and fight the patriarchy by analysing and resisting society. Daly calls for a radical change in society so women can exist outside male control. She writes that this must be done by changing language, re-evaluating knowledge production, rewriting history, and building feminist communities, separate from men. Her work calls for a narrative by, and for women. Daly uses the figure of the Hag to discuss feminist ideas, which can be compared to the contemporary feminist witch. The Hag is the radical feminist that facilitates this change and way of being. To analyse this book, the theories from the authors Luce Irigaray, Sandra Harding, Adrienne Rich, and bell hooks are used to find concepts on language and discourse, knowledge production, and feminist community within difference thinking in Daly's work. Content analysis, supported by close reading, will be used to trace these theories within *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Daly ultimately creates a language and discourse where women have autonomy. She sketches a way of knowing that is articulated by this new language and is sensitive to diversity that is produced by and for women. Being a feminist and being able to peel back layers of patriarchal oppression is possible due to sisterhood. Women coming together to support and educate each other is the cornerstone of Daly's radical feminist reality. Her themes need to be situated within second wave feminism because some of the ideas are dated. However, she makes interesting strides and interpretations of feminism and society that add to difference thinking and larger discussions on feminism within second wave feminism.

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1. Introduction

The witch is a powerful feminist actor. She is a figure that rebels against norms and lives outside societal rules created by patriarchal ideals. Thus writers, theorists and feminists turn to her for strength and knowledge, that is outside an androcentric society. There are feminists, like @thequeerwitch (Instagram 2020) and @fatfeministwitch (Instagram 2020), identifying as witches, who participate in healing rituals or see it as the power to their activism. Silvia Frederici's, *Witches, Witch-Hunting and Women*, dissecting the role of witches in capitalism as keepers of knowledge (Frederici 2018). A webshop called *Daughters of Witches*, calling for solidarity between women and the LGBTQ+ community, uses the coven to facilitate this. In the 1980s, during second wave feminism, there was a similar group of women that were calling on the witch as a way of empowerment. All these initiatives have the witch in common and place emphasis on female relationships, ways of knowing and connecting with nature. Women were connecting with their true selves, differentiating from men. In *Women Who Run With Wolves* (1992), by Clarissa Pinkola Estés, a bone collector goes through a journey to find her inner 'Wild Woman.' Estés takes the reader through a journey of finding the power that lies within women. She heavily relies on motifs of witches and nature to do this (Estés 1992). Similarly, Mary Daly, in her book *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978), writes on the power of women within themselves using a figure similar to the witch, the Hag. In connecting figures of witches over time women were, and are, able to counter, exist outside of, and fight patriarchal systems of oppression. Now similar work is being done on Instagram, with academic books and by influencing consumer culture with the witch.

To research this phenomenon in second wave feminism I will look at *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, written by Daly. This book reflects the ideologies of second wave feminism, it calls women to action to end sexist oppression, and does this by introducing an additional female narrative that does not include men. It focuses on the power of, and relationships between, women (Daly 1978). This is in line with second wave feminist ideas (van der Tuin 2009). Daly introduces the Hag in her book as a feminist that is actively working to liberate women from systemic oppression. Daly scrutinises aspects of society that are taken for granted and are considered normative. She questions what is normal and in doing so creates space and language for women to exist outside of a patriarchal system set up to control them. In

researching this book I ask the question; How do second wave feminist theories on difference thinking interact and reflect second wave feminist politics and ideas, in *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, written by Mary Daly?

To fully analyse how Daly is interacting with difference thinking within second wave feminism and to answer my thesis question I will first look at how Daly changes and uses language to articulate women's reality. Secondly, I will discuss her ideas on feminist knowledge production and finally I will look at the role of community to reach her adjusted reality where women are autonomous. The method I am using to identify these themes and subjects in *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* is content analysis and close reading. To do my analysis I will use theory from second wave feminists from the 1980s and 1990s. First, I will discuss Luce Irigaray's ideas on difference thinking in her work "Why Cultivate Difference?" (2002), then I will turn back to Irigaray and her work, "The Language of Man" (1989), to discuss the position of women in language and how that affects discourse and our understanding of society. Then I will turn to Sandra Harding and her ideas on traditional knowledge and women in science in her work *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?: Thinking from Women's Lives* (1991) and Adrienne Rich's ideas on politics of location, in "Notes Towards a Politics of Location" (1985), to analyse how Daly questions knowledge production. To discuss community in second wave feminism I am going to use bell hook's ideas on consciousness raising groups in her work "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women" (1986).

In looking at how a figure of a witch within difference thinking, in second wave feminism, I hope to add to the discussion of the figure of the witch in feminism and how she can be an actor for change in a society that is made for a single type of man.

2. Theoretical Framework

To answer my research question: How do second wave feminist theories on difference thinking interact and reflect second wave feminist politics and ideas in *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, written by Mary Daly, I am going to discuss second wave feminist's ideas on difference thinking. I will focus on the notion of language, knowledge production, and female communities. This focus is relevant as Daly extensively discusses each of these three subjects in

Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism. In the process of discussing second wave feminist ideas in my theoretical framework I plan to identify and analyse second wave feminist ideas regarding difference thinking in Daly's book. I will introduce difference thinking according to Irigaray's definition; then discuss women's position in language and discourse using Irigaray's (1989) ideas on power in language; continuing with a discussion of Harding (1991) and Rich's (1985) work on women in science to support my analysis of the position of knowledge production in Daly's book. Lastly, I will discuss consciousness raising groups and sisterhood to look at the ideas in second wave feminists on female communities.

2.1. *Difference Thinking in Second Wave Feminism*

One of the ways that second wave feminism fought oppression of women was by putting their focus on difference between gender and focussing on diversity (van der Tuin 2009). Second wave feminism was a reaction to the wave before them as well as the political and social climate of that time. In first wave feminism the emphasis was on the equality of men and women, where feminists hoped to gain access to male spaces and gain the right to vote. Despite their success in gaining the right to vote, sexism was still rampant and equality between the two genders non-existent. Additionally, only a small group of principally white women reaped the benefits of first wave feminism (van der Tuin 2009, 11). Emphasising the sameness of men and women was counterproductive because instead of looking at how the two genders were the same, there was a need to focus on how they were different; this is difference thinking. Irigaray wrote extensively on the differences between men and women, in her work "Why Cultivate Difference?" (2002), referencing her work in the 1980s and 90s on the urgency of addressing this difference. She writes that when differences between men and women are denied, there is a danger of denying differences in other matters (Irigaray 2002, 79). In the process of exploring the difference between genders, instead of on how people are the same, space is created for difference and an alternative reality to that of the status quo.

In *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, I have identified three main themes within difference thinking: language, knowledge, and female community.

2.2. *Power and Language*

Language is shaped by, but also determines discourse. Stuart Hall writes, based on Michel Foucault's ideas, that language is a system that represents objects, experiences, emotions etc. However, discourse is what determines the meaning, knowledge, and relevance of what language articulates (Hall 2013, 29-30). This articulation in turn informs discourse, it is an interaction between the two.

According to Irigaray, discourse is shaped by the group in power. In a Western patriarchal society, men have ownership over language and are the ones who speak. When I refer to the patriarchy, I refer to Alba Facio's understanding of the term:

“Patriarchy is a form of mental, social, spiritual, economic and political organization/structuring of society produced by the gradual institutionalization of sex-based political relations created, maintained and reinforced by different institutions linked closely together to achieve consensus on the lesser value of women and their roles. These institutions interconnect not only with each other to strengthen the structures of domination of men over women, but also with other systems of exclusion, oppression and/or domination [in the interest of] a few powerful men” (Facio 2013, 2).

With this understanding of the patriarchy, men have ownership over language because of their position in society, thus a male discourse is established. The singularity within discourse leads to one representation and perspective that strengthens itself. This process makes difference invisible and globalises sameness to the 'man' (Irigaray 1989, 193). In this understanding and use of language women and people different to the white men in power are unrepresented in language and discourse.

Within language and discourse there is gendered power that determines social relations. Psychoanalysis started to question the sexualisation of language, however, did not continue this line of question further than identifying it. As Irigaray comes from this field of research, she was aware of this line of inquiry and took it further to explore the power that is embedded within language, questioning its permanence (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2020). In "The Language of Man" (1989) she analyses how language is sexualised perpetuating androcentric knowledge and power. Her work on this is in French, however the translation has relevance to English as it mostly focuses on the social phenomena of language and how it connects to relational matters. By looking at the different ways that women and men use and relate to

language, she argues that it is possible to deconstruct and change language. With this understanding women can speak without their voice being related to men. Irigaray articulates a female voice that is separate from men and their discourse.

In her work Irigaray keeps insisting that binaries should be eradicated, and yet she holds onto the binary of gender, only speaking of how men and women relate to each other in her work on language and on difference thinking. Irigaray writes that this process of domination of men and the power of language is made possible by Western logic that is tied to binaries; everything is measured by a right and a wrong. Questions and phenomena that do not fit into this binary system are then measured hierarchically to fit into the right/wrong order (Irigaray 1989, 196). This system does not allow for multiple different alternatives that hold equal value, thus language and the discourse that it articulates become static and singular.

Irigaray continues by offering an alternative for women to escape binary logic through fluidity of discourse where speech is not in relation to men. Fluidity of discourse, language, and knowledge would be a full-circle process instead of fixed binary discourse (Irigaray 1989, 199). Male language is filled with unchangeable rationality; however, women have the opportunity to break from this and turn to fluidity of language and discourse. An example of this shift is how Hannah Arendt changes “Why did you obey?” to “Why did you support?” (Arendt 2003, 48). The language and discourse would not be hierarchical and binary but would allow for a state of two or more truths (Irigaray 1989, 197-8). This new language would be able to articulate fluid discourses and be open to multiple equal differences, instead of hierarchal order of phenomena, where some are subservient to others.

I argue that her fixation on gender binaries and her insensitivity to racial differences, undermine her theories. Yet she adds important ideas on difference thinking and questions the gendered nature of language and discourse within second wave feminism, where she incorporates radical changes within language. These theories make language and discourse more inclusive to white women in particular and a starting point for minorities within androcentric Western society.

2.3. *Difference Thinking and Knowledge*

During second wave feminism theorists questioned if ‘good’ science was possible. Irigaray

argues that patriarchal systems stay intact due to the discourse of men being filled with methods of technical power and science that strengthen a singular static discourse (Irigaray 1989, 200). Science serves the group in power, to the point of it being an instrument to perpetuate that power (Harding 1991, 1). With this line of thought feminists like Harding and Rich, question how and who does research and how could knowledge production become feminist, giving space for alternative identities to men (Gurr & Naples 2014, 14). Harding advocates feminist science for all people who are disadvantaged by androcentric Western sciences, not only for women. Science needs to be sensitive to class and race and how those occasionally have conflicting interests. (Harding 1991, 5). Unlike Irigaray, Harding has a more nuanced interpretation of who is disadvantaged within knowledge production and discourse, however her focus stays on women.

Science was articulated in a sexualised way at the time of second wave feminism, but is also the case today. This way of talking about women and science exposes the power structures, according to Harding (Harding 1991, 44). Power can shift by including women in science and knowledge production, as well as acknowledging multiple perspectives, axes of identity, and oppressions. Harding traces women in science's history as well as introducing standpoint theory to change knowledge production, while Rich does similar work in using politics of location to include the body in knowledge production. Both Harding and Rich call for a need for women in science, but also all knowledge production that is for women by women of "every class, race, and culture" (Harding 1991, 5; Rich 1985). When trying to add women as active participants within traditional knowledge production, theories that are taken for granted start to unravel (Harding 1991, 47).

Many writers in second wave feminism commenced tracing and adding female lines in history, so it becomes possible to refer back to female knowledge instead of it being veiled by patriarchal memory. Harding, a leading theorist in this landscape, traces the invisible work done by women using a lens that is sensitive to diversity. Similarly, Irigaray writes of a Pre-Socratic time where there was an idea of fluidity instead of the static Western understanding of logic. Harding, like Irigaray, argued that through tracing the history of women within science there is a tradition of female knowledge for women to refer back to. However, Harding adds that in the process of uncovering these hidden histories, one must be sensitive to race and class, and how women often had to conform to androcentric science traditions to be able to participate (Harding

1991, 20-26). In the process of adding narratives to science it is possible to carve out space for women within knowledge production that is held in high regard within academia in Western society (Harding 1991, 3).

Harding, as well as Rich, writes that there needs to be science by and for women. Harding states women have a different approach to science as they know more about social and emotional life. Harding's concept of strong objectivity takes into account that our beliefs and observations are socially situated (Harding 1991, 48). Strong objectivity incorporates relations and different perspectives, while being critical in the value of perspective and situatedness. (Harding 1991, 142). Rich similarly advocates that we listen to women and create knowledge for and by women, however she places more emphasis on the position of the body and how it relates to knowing (Rich 1985, 9). This knowledge needs to be sensitive to the female knower having a "place of location" (Rich 1985, 10). Unlike Irigaray's understanding on difference thinking, Rich is more sensitive to difference, she writes: "Even to begin with my body I have to say that from the outset that body had more than one identity" (Rich 1985, 11). This is different from Irigaray's male or female actors, giving a more inclusive perspective on knowledge.

These theories offer a way to interpret Daly's ideas on knowledge production and science. Harding, Rich, and Irigaray write that by listening to women, introducing women as knowers to sciences and other areas of knowledge production, and adding lines of female history, an additional narrative is created that offers an alternative to traditional androcentric Western way of knowing.

2.4. *Finding Sisterhood in Difference*

Relationships between women gained more attention during second wave feminism. Similarly to how feminist theorists were calling for knowledge by and for women, there was also a call for women to support each other in a critical and situated way. Consciousness raising groups were a staple of feminist activism in second wave feminism. Within these groups, women shared their struggle in their daily lives. By doing so they could identify and discuss their daily oppressions while educating each other (Gurr & Naples 2014, 29).

bell hooks writes that in Western patriarchal society relationships between women were discouraged (hooks 1986, 127). According to hooks, sisterhood is a support system and a place

of learning. They write, “To develop political solidarity between women, feminist activists cannot bond on the terms set by the dominant ideology of the culture. We must define our own terms” (hooks 1986, 129). In the process of using different ways of bonding and relating to each other as women, a sisterhood can be formed that is not determined by androcentric systems of bonding that is mediated by language and discourse (hooks 1986, 130; Irigaray 1989/2002). hooks warns women that bonding over victimisation is a trap. One must bond and find solidarity in one’s commitment to end sexist oppression (hooks 1986, 31). Unlike the theories that I have used so far, hooks’ ideas on consciousness raising groups and sisterhood is explicitly anti-racist, instead of just mentioning diversity in their theories.

By forming community that is exclusively for and by women, outside of the context and influence of men, power can be found. This idea within difference thinking gives women safety and support to continue their activism. Due to this separation from men there can be a distinct focus on ending sexist oppression with emphasis on diversity without the influence of an oppressive male control. This focus on diversity and explicit anti-racism of hooks’ is only present to an extent in Daly’s book, which is not sensitive to race and is written for a white female audience. I will discuss this further in my analysis.

In *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* the difference, and specifically the superiority of women over men is focussed on to analyse society and fight sexist oppression. I will trace how my chosen theories appear within Daly’s book and in what way they correspond or deviate. In this process I will be able to identify how second wave feminist theories appear in my case study and thus be able to see how these theories are performed by a cultural artefact in this time period.

3. Methodology

As my methodology I will be doing a content analysis of the book *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* written by Daly with a close reading of a few sections of the introduction. I have chosen to focus on the introduction because here Daly tells her motivation for writing the book, outlines the language that she is using and why, and what themes she will be writing about. By narrowing my scope to the introduction, I will be able to do a more thorough analysis on the

way that Daly interacts with difference thinking within second wave feminism than if I analyse the whole book.

To understand in what way Daly interacts with second wave feminism I am doing a content analysis. Content analysis is a method to analyse a text, it is a system to look for and record themes (Leavy, 2000: 4). Upon reading the text, chosen and recurring themes need to be identified and mapped. Then one can arrange or structure them to be able to draw conclusions from the patterns created (Shields & Twycross, 2008). In addition to using content analysis in my research, I intend to use a feminist approach. To do this I turn to Patricia Leavy's ideas on feminist content analysis. Leavy writes that media, in my case text, embodies the discourse of the producers and writers (Leavy, 2000: 6). Additionally, media does not only show themes in the analysed media but also reflects the society in which it is produced. Leavy writes on content analysis "...cultural artefacts embody, reflect and mediate the views of the society from which they emerge" (Leavy, 2000: 5). Thus, the themes that are found do not stand separate from society and other media.

Additionally, a close reading will support my content analysis. I will be using Clariza Ruiz De Castilla's ideas on close reading in his text: *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods* (2018). According to Castilla, a close reading looks for the internal discourse to understand the interworking of a particular text (Castilla 2018, 137). A close reading attempts to reveal hidden details in texts that may be overlooked at first (Castilla 2018, 138). In this way a close reading is an appropriate addition to a content analysis, it adds a layer of analysis and interpretation of a given text. Castilla writes that a close reading is interpreting gut reactions to a text and shifting those to be a critique backed with theory. Like Leavy, Castilla writes that all close readings are an interpretation of the text, Castilla adds that a close reading then must be shared with others to nuance and contextualise the reading (Castilla 2018, 142).

I am going to look at recurring themes in Daly's book that relate to and reflect difference thinking, knowledge production, female communities, and how the hag is a facilitator of these themes. Through this mapping I can discern how the book is interacting with second wave feminism (Leavy 2000, 7). The way I am going to be looking at *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* is as a cultural artefact that reflects the cultural aspects of society (Reinharz & Davidman 1992, 145). In the process of only looking at *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* as a reflection of second wave feminism and how the symbol of the witch, in Daly's

case Hag, facilitates ideologies, my scope is relatively narrow. Due to only looking at one book and three aspects of second wave feminism, I will not be able to fully describe how this book is reflecting second wave feminism and if there are more aspects of this wave that I have not mentioned. However, because I am focussing on one book in a specific context, I can place it in a larger social setting without drawing broad conclusions that would make the specificity of life invisible (Leavy 2000, 7).

4. Research Analysis

In the introduction of *Gyn/Ecology : The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* Daly describes how patriarchal society has oppressed women and how through deconstructing ideas and being critical, women can find power within themselves and fight persecution. In my analysis I will try to answer the question: How do second wave feminist theories on difference thinking interact and reflect second wave feminist politics and ideas, in *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, written by Mary Daly? In this book I will trace second wave feminist ideas on difference thinking. In this theory of difference thinking I will focus on language, knowledge, and community between women in the form of what Daly calls, a Journey to the Background self, where the woman can become a radical feminist, or the Hag, and free herself from patriarchal oppression. First, I will expand on some phrases and ideas of Daly for reading comprehension. I will continue by looking at how language is used and analysed within the book. Then I will discuss, using content analysis, Daly's viewpoint on knowledge production. Lastly I will interpret Daly's ideas on feminist communities and how this illustrates second wave feminist difference thinking.

4.1. Clarification

Daly uses different phrases and language to expand on feminist thought and ideas. In *Gyn/Ecology : The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* Daly describes the Journey of women finding their Background self (Daly 1978, 7). The Journey that she describes is the process of peeling back layers of oppression women experience. This Journey is not linear and takes time.

By deconstructing assumptions and roles in society a woman is Journeying into the Background, which I interpret as an abstract realm where women have autonomy (Daly 1978, 8).

For Daly the patriarchy inhabits all spaces. “Patriarchy appears to be ‘everywhere’. Even outer space and the future have been colonized” (Daly 1978, 7). This patriarchy is internalised by everyone, including feminists. To understand and be free of the patriarchy and its oppressions, one needs to look inward, according to Daly. The Background is the realm of reality where women’s selves lie within women there is power and knowledge that needs to be uncovered. Men and their myths dominate the Foreground, where women are moulded to be perfect for the man. By peeling back layers of oppression women can come closer to their ‘true’ reality in the Background (Daly 1978, 8).

The Background is the realm for Hags (Daly 1978, 8). The Hag is a feminist that has “transvaluated” the expectations of women in society and embraced the value of women outside of androcentric societal expectations, where aging, strength, and creativity is demonised (Daly 1978, 15). The Hag can transcend boundaries, however it is work to become and discover her within one’s self. Daly writes that women should look within, to the Background, where the Hag is located, to make decisions and govern their lives (Daly 1978, 15). She traces a history where women have lived in the Background; she calls this history the Hag-ocracy. By being critical and questioning the world, Hags can interact with a position of power in society.

Daly outlines a different standard of living and history to the one controlled by patriarchal narratives and norms. Like Irigaray, who writes that by focussing on the difference between men and women it is possible to move away from ownership and the emphasis on male realities (Irigaray 2002, 89). Daly takes a radical position to articulate a reality where women have power and freedom to be themselves outside the expectations that Western patriarchy has put on them—a space for feminists to be themselves outside the system designed to subjugate women.

4.2. *A New Understanding of Language*

Daly writes that language does not provide space for women, thus when women speak they are positioned in relation to men, who and for whom language was shaped, rendering women invisible (Daly 1978, 18). In this understanding of language, a woman cannot speak or articulate ideas as an autonomous person separate from men. Daly writes that an important component to

the start of the Journey to the Background is in understanding language.

Throughout this whole book Daly keeps changing words, adding onto them, changing the meaning of them, capitalising them and tracing their history. Daly in her preface is already explaining why and which words she is using and will change. She finds that some words have connotations that either cannot be changed or should be deconstructed. An example of this is: "...God represents the necrophilia of patriarchy, whereas Goddess affirms the life-loving being of women and nature." (Daly 1978, 2). Due to Christianity being a religion where historically women have no power, she replaces the all-powerful male God figure with a woman, the Goddess. Thus, she changes the focus to the feminine that has an alternative reading that women can either worship or refer to without being subjugated to a discourse that is oppressing.

An additional way that Daly confronts language is by deconstructing words. Daly writes that 'spinster' is used to signify women that are alone and invaluable (Daly 1978, 8-9). The literal meaning is, one that spins, which is a place of productivity but it is attributed to those who are not mothers and wives. Spinsters are women who do not serve men and have no use for them. Daly not only deconstructs the word spinster; she adds a new meaning to this word. To spin becomes a word of creating and continuing to move and live, instead of signifying a woman that is stagnant in life. Spinning makes for un-linear thinking that is different from the linear androcentric understanding of the world. By tracing, changing, and adding words, the gendered nature of language is uncovered and countered. Daly's argument is that women themselves can create language where they can exist without being disenfranchised.

Paradise is another word and concept that Daly unravels and reconstructs. She writes that by Journeying into the Background women are participating in the concept Paradise. Daly's writes: "Patriarchal Paradise [. . .] is imaged as a place or a state in which the souls of the righteous after death enjoy eternal bliss, that is, heaven" (Daly 1978, 8). This Paradise is a place that is stagnant and always the same, walled off and exists to pleasure men. It is made to emulate a park where everything but men are game to hunt or use. Daly writes: "It is the place for the preservation of females who are the "fair game" of the fathers, that they may be served to these predatory Park Owners, and service them at their pleasure" (Daly 1978, 10). The discourse of Paradise perpetuates ownership and the singularity of androcentric society and afterlife. Daly writes that a female interpretation of Paradise would be more fluid, it would transcend the walls of the 'park.' The meaning and discourse surrounding it would give space for Paradise to be

moving, situated, and fluid instead of a space to domesticate women. Breaking with society's form of Paradise would mean "letting out the bunnies, the bitches [. . .], so that they can at last begin naming themselves" (Daly 1978, 10). In re-purposing this word and giving it new meaning and discourse, Daly continues to create a language where women have meaning and freedom.

In this new language there is freedom and space for women, yet this idea of woman is rather singular. Like Irigaray, Daly uses binary language of men and women that in part undermines her idea of language without ownership. Due to Daly's singular interpretation of women she does not allow for much diversity.

Difference thinking takes form in this book by changing words, deconstructing them and adding meaning to already existing words to undermine power, that is made possible by linguistics, to create language for women. In this understanding Daly reflects Irigaray's ideas, where she writes that language is used to signify the world and because of this it holds power. Through language patriarchal ideas and discourses are instilled and maintained, thus when women speak, they have to conform to a male standard (Irigaray 1989, 191). As Daly illustrates in her understanding of God, spinster, and Paradise, words and language are used and organised within a hierarchical discourse of ownership and power. She states, like Irigaray, that by speaking, writing and creating content women must engage with language wherein they do not have a space of power. This leads to women never having a space and position of speaking freely (Daly 1978, 18). This is part of a larger discussion within that time where many feminist thinkers were looking at language as a point of change and power (Irigaray 2002). Like Irigaray and Daly, Harding writes that the way language is used in science affects it, thus the connotations around sexualised metaphors affect science and society that interacts with it. (Harding 1991, 44). However, Daly takes the ideas on language a step further by offering concrete changes in language and discourse instead of merely analysing and theorising. Daly is creating a language and space where women can speak, thus being part of knowledge and writing.

4.3. *A Different Way of Knowing*

"Gynocentric Method requires not only the murder of misogynistic methods (intellectual and affective exorcism) but also ecstasy, which I have called ludic cerebration. This is "the free play of intuition in our own space, giving rise to thinking that is vigorous, informed, multidimensional, independent, creative, tough". It arises from the lived experiences of be-ing" (Daly 1978, 20).

Daly is rejecting academic and scholarly traditions of knowledge, ones that are static and guarded. She tries to break a tradition of knowledge that is unchanging, filled with male myths, built and maintained to keep women out. Harding writes, when one speaks of knowledge, we have to think about how it is constructed, knowledge production follows the traditions of society. If in society a group is marginalised then this will be reflected in writing and academic traditions (Harding 2008, 105). By excluding certain groups of people from knowledge production and making certain types of beliefs seem 'natural', people that profit from this knowledge and the solidification of certain structures stay in their position of power and strengthen the validity of the knowledge that they themselves produce (Harding 2008, 119). With Daly's method to knowledge production she confronts these mechanisms in her book by analysing how discourses are created and knowledge is produced and passed on, while offering alternative ways of interacting with knowledge that includes women. She carves out space for women to create freely.

Daly calls for women to represent themselves. By adding another narrative and change the existing one, female voices can create discourse. Daly writes: "The primary intent of women who choose to be present to each other, however, is not an invitation to men. It is an invitation to our Selves" (Daly 1978, 2). Similarly, to other feminist writers in the 1980s, like Harding and Rich, Daly is pushing for women to start representing themselves, instead of men spinning their narrative (Rich 1985, 11). Daly banishes men from female knowledge, and demands that women represent themselves without input from men.

Daly writes that in the process of finding each other as Hags and Journeyers, it is possible to break the seal that is put on knowledge and create a discourse allowing for women to exist as knowing actors (Daly 1978, 4).

"It is Hag-ocracy. The demons who attempt to block the gateways to the deep spaces of this realm often take ghostly/ghastly forms, comparable to noxious gases not noticeable by ordinary sense perception [...] It is spinning and whirling into the background" (Daly 1978, 8).

The Hag has to invade and break spaces to become her true self, needing to fight for a place in this world. Questioning traditional knowledge was an important part of second wave feminism (van der Tuin 2009, 18-19). Deconstructing established knowledge was a way to realise how women were oppressed and through this process it would be possible for feminists to create a

narrative where they have power. A notable act to shift power is Daly's practice of focussing on female perspectives and only using male sources as secondary. She practices what she writes, in the sense that female/hags voices should be heard and centred within discourse.

Not only does *Gyn/Ecology : The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* call for women to add a new narrative and create a discourse, the book practices situated knowledge as well (Haraway, 1988). As Daly argues: "The charting done here is based on some knowledge from the past, upon present experience, and upon hopes for the future" (Daly 1978, 7). Daly situates this book within time, while being conscious of how time is fluid, interacting with itself and location. When Daly discusses the tradition of language and theory, she speaks of necrophilic leaders, meaning that society worships and searches for guidance in people that are long dead and ancient myths (Daly 1978, 18). The discourse that Western patriarchal society leans on is static and solid, with no space for fluidity and multiple truths that are situated in time and space (Irigaray 1989, 199-200). Daly writes that to Journey to the Background and to understand the complex problems of language and knowledge in society, one must see the interconnectedness of everything—one must situate and scrutinise each way that a woman is silenced or steered into a direction, only then is it possible to see the 'big picture' (Daly 1978, 18). Daly, like Rich, writes that all knowledge needs to be located (Rich 1985, 9). Journeying to the Background self is to be constantly situating oneself in one's surroundings. Thus, Daly's understanding of additional narratives and histories are situated in society as well as the created Hag-ocracy.

Daly not only situates knowledge, she also situates it within a created history of feminists, the Hag-ocracy. In the process of tracing an alternative history to the one taught, she is uncovering a history where women have power and autonomy (Daly 1978, 16). By tracing the Hag-ocracy she discusses women that practiced knowledge in a different manner than is done now. She discusses how 'our foresisters' possessed knowledge that was not bound by static rules and norms, but was boundless and alive. She writes, "Patriarchal erasure of our tradition forces us to relearn what our foresisters knew and to repeat their blunders" (Daly 1978, 20). In tracing female historical knowledge an additional narrative is created. This knowledge is fluid and situated without claiming ownership over anyone. Daly's Hag-ocracy paints a utopian picture of historical Hags and their knowledge that reads as unrealistic. Her history reads of a world run by women where there was no wrongdoing. However, in adding this additional history, she makes women visible, whereas in 'traditional' knowledge they are invisible. Daly is functioning within

a history and discourse, that is outside of male tradition, thus questions androcentric narratives. In this process she creates a body of knowledge that other women can turn to for guidance and reference (Harding 1991, 20-26).

Daly writes that knowledge must be looked at critically and changed to make it more feminist. Daly performs difference thinking as she creates a knowledge tradition and history that is for women and by women. She argues the advantages of knowing and creating in a different way than what is encouraged and taught in most official knowledge institutions. Daly uses extreme and radical examples and suggestions, creating the option of a different way of knowing.

4.4. *A Community of Hags*

Gyn/Ecology : The Metaethics of Radical Feminism is a call to action for women to band together, create, and (re-)discover a reality where women are active actors instead of subjects.

“It is a declaration/Manifesto [. . .] a call of the wild to the wild, calling Hags/Spinster to spin/be beyond the parochial bondings/bindings of any comfortable “community”. It is a call to women who have never named themselves Wild before, and a challenge to those who have been in struggle for a long time and who have retreated for awhile” (Daly 1978, 4).

Daly calls for the wild Hags to come together and challenge each other to break the walls of male Paradise. In forming a community, discourses can be changed prohibiting men from dominating discourse (Irigaray 1989, 191). This community of women is joining in “political solidarity” with one another (hooks 1986, 127). Daly’s sisterhood of Hags is for women who want to change the discourse and explore their female identity and power. “She, and she alone, can dis-cover the mystery of her own history, and find how it is interwoven with the lives of other women” (Daly 1978, 3). This book is a radical cry for action and consciously situating itself within a historical political movement where women ‘peel back layers’ of oppression.

In second wave feminism consciousness raising groups were a way for women to come together to exchange knowledge, locate as well as share their experiences and oppressions (hooks 1986). bell hooks emphasis that within these groups solidarity needs to be present without compromising diversity and striving for sameness (hooks 1986, 135). Daly’s Hags learn and build upon one another. Every Hag has their own journey of challenging oppression and how the structures of language and knowledge affect them, however there is solidarity in working to

create a space where Hags are celebrated. Daly encourages women to help each other to break the bonds that hold them, to help other women see how language is informing reality, and how knowledge and society needs to be dissected. Women need to help other women to peel back layers to get to the authentic self (Daly 1978, 20). Similarly to Rich, Daly focuses on the relationships between women instead of men, unlike Irigaray who stays in the binary of men and women, she urgently calls on women to build a better world for each other (van der Tuin 2009, 19; Irigaray 1989).

However, the dominant feminist movements are led by bourgeoisie white women and this reflects in the way that the movement sets goals and priorities (van der Tuin 2009, 11). I have perceived a lack of inclusivity in Daly's book, she mentions being anti-racist, yet she does not thoroughly explore the difference and diversity of experiences that are dictated by race in Western society. She predominantly writes from a position that is for white women and for the dominant feminist movement (Daly 1978). Yet to truly change the androcentric patriarchal Western society, like Daly intends to do, one needs to form a sisterhood that is inclusive of all women and identities that do not fit into 'traditional' society (hooks 1986, 36). There needs to be solidarity in goals, beliefs, and commitment to end oppressive sexism. Daly does not adequately address the diverse set of experiences of women, creating a sisterhood that fits into difference thinking, yet is not inclusive to all women.

5. Conclusion

Reading *Gyn/Ecology : The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* made me sit at the edge of my seat, ready to question everything around me. Daly paints a reality that is free from ties and language that bind women to men, she creates a history for women to be proud of and a way of knowing for women, while sketching a community where women are in solidarity with each other. Daly approaches language and discourse with a radical viewpoint that is not bound by rules and ideas dictated by men. For instance incorporating spinning into vocabulary, giving women a verb for feminist growth and movement. Daly offers women a space and a voice that reflects female identities and realities, free from the male mediated discourse. The knowledge production that Daly encourages is by and for women, while being situated and fluid. Not only does she make

space for women in knowledge production, she also traces a history of Hags in her work. This narrative borders between mythical and probable, as it refers to a history before patriarchal society that was full of powerful women. This book shows how women must help and support each other in breaking sexist chains that bind the body and mind within Western patriarchal society. In articulating ways that women can be feminist and fight oppression with difference thinking, an alternative and additional, language, narrative, knowledge, and community is sketched to the existing androcentric one. She focuses on the differences between men and women, while expanding on how women can fight sexist oppression. She articulates these ideas in second wave feminist on difference thinking by using the Hag.

However, *Gyn/Ecology : The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* is dated in its approach to feminism. Daly's articulation of diversity is limited to the binarity of men and women, for example in her Foreground versus Background and Hag versus men. Daly's claims that her work is diverse and anti-racist, yet she fails to explicitly address how her ideas on radical feminism will achieve this. Another aspect of this book which is dated, is its singular idea of gender. Daly speaks from the position of a cis woman without exploring gender identities. Her feminism only has space for the true Hags, thus only radical difference thinking feminists. Her idea of feminist becomes exclusionary and singular, the very thing she is trying to fight. However it must be situated in second wave feminist academia, and from this perspective in her time she was progressive and radical on some fronts. Yet other writers in a similar time period like Harding, Donna Haraway, and hooks, were already sensitive to racial diversity and multiple expressions of gender. Nevertheless, Daly analysed and dissected society to create space and language for women where there was none, while advocating for a female line of knowledge and emphasised sisterhood that was rooted in solidarity and activist change.

Daly's Hag is the feminist witch. The Hag has mystical power with a long female line of knowledge and sisterhood. She stands outside of androcentric society, while rejecting oppression and confronting sexist structures of power. The modern feminist witch has many interpretations, like being anti-capitalist and striving for a world where multiple identities are able to exist autonomously. The Daughters of Witches on their website state: "We chose witches for a reason: these women helped other women and were breaking gender boundaries" (Daughters of Witches 2020, About). People are choosing the witch to articulate their feminist ideas and identity. Similarly to how, in second wave feminism, Daly used the Hag to discuss her feminism and

Estes, in *Running With Wolves (1992)*, used witch motifs to discuss the personal growth of her main character. Using the witch as a metaphor for feminist ideas is not a new phenomena and I expect to see witches more often in social media, the news, and my friend circle. Further inquiry to the purpose of witches in contemporary feminism would be an interesting continuation of my research and would further add to a bigger debate on feminist expression and how the witch can be used as an actor to create an inclusive society. Like Daly writes about the Hag, who is a woman committed to change, I believe everyone fighting for a better and more accepting future is a witch.

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