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Griffin, Susan (1943–)

With her imaginative prose and poetry, Susan Griffin characterizes the dominant mythos of Western civilization as separation from and control over the Earth. This dominant mythos is informed by Judeo-Christian theology and creation narratives. She attempts to disrupt this mythos, by articulating a different vision of embeddedness in the Earth.

Griffin's work links ecological destruction and gender oppression. Her observation that the burdens of "cleaning up" the ecological crisis have been unduly placed upon women inspired her most influential work, *Women and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (1978). In this book, she experiments with two voices: one the "objective, detached, and bodiless" voice of Western patriarchal logic, and the other an embodied and impassioned voice of women (1978: xv). The dialogue of these two voices traces the historical association of men with eternal reason and divine soul and women with earthly sin, corruption, and death. Out of this dialogue emerges a perspective that Griffin describes as a women's "consciousness" of earthly connection (1978: xvi). It is this consciousness that we are "made from this Earth," which Griffin's later essays and poems affirm (1987: 223).

In *The Eros of Everyday Life: Essays on Ecology, Gender, and Society* (1995), Griffin suggests that a consciousness of earthly connection has implications for epistemology and psychology as well as gender and ecological relations. She refers to a "commingling" of the abstract and concrete in thought and claims that identity is an experience of interdependence rather than an assertion of independence (1995: 81, 91). In contrast to the distorted knowledge and divided self of the dominant Western mythos of separation from nature, Griffin insists that "[e]very movement, every breath, every response, the least thought" depends on the Earth (1995: 75).

Molly Jensen

Further Reading

- Griffin, Susan. *What Her Body Thought: A Journey into the Shadows*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1999.
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See also: Daly, Mary; Ecofeminism (various); Feminist Spirituality Movement; Gimbutas, Marija; Merchant, Carolyn; Paganism – Contemporary; Sexuality and Green Consciousness.

Grim, John – See Religious Studies and Environmental Concern.

Grof, Christina and Stanislov – See Breathwork; Re-earthing.

Gulen, Fethullah (1938–)

Fetullah Gulen was born in 1938 in Erzurum, in eastern Anatolia. In the region of his birth, near the mountains of Ararat and the Aras River, Gulen was surrounded by the beauty of nature. He completed his formal education in Erzurum in his early twenties, and then began to educate himself in the Islamic sciences and in Eastern and Western classics, from Sa'di of Persia to Dante of Italy. Today he is considered a prominent intellectual, religious, and spiritual leader in Turkey and is known worldwide. He is the author of dozens of books and articles and writes editorials for several journals. In 2001, he went to the United States for medical treatment for his heart problem. He has remained there since then.

Gulen's view of nature developed during the course of his education. In his early life, Gulen tried to instill in his students an appreciation of nature. He took his pupils on lengthy camping trips in which he encouraged them to be in harmony with nature by exposing themselves to the natural world and removing themselves from the conveniences of the modern world for a time.

Gulen's ethic of nature is different from both anthropocentric and biocentric views. Gulen once wrote,

This miraculous art of nature shows something more subtle, something beyond its own beauty, something that points to the One who created it so beautifully, who wants to be felt through His art, yet not felt thoroughly because of His majesty (Gulen 1991: 110–14).

Here Gulen focuses on the two aspects of nature: nature as a veil and nature as a revelation. It is a veil, because it veils the majesty of God. We do not see God himself, but only the natural world of cause and effect, which he has created. However, nature is also revealing, as it reveals the art of God in the most beautiful manner, reflecting the majesty of God.

In Gulen's understanding there is a triangle, composed of God, the Creator; nature, the book; and humans, the contemplators. Gulen once wrote, "We read [nature] as a book, we feel it, and we watch it, alive with its color and beauty" (1991: 110). Gulen refers to al-Ghazzali's (d. 1111) statement: "In the realm of possibility there is no better form than that which God has created," saying that "it is as if every form of nature is competing to demonstrate its beauty" (1991: 112).

Gulen writes not only of the amazing beauty of nature, but also of "pure-hearts," those who are capable of contemplating nature. The result of this contemplation is an understanding of God. This view is derived from a Qur'anic verse: "Lo! In the creation of the heavens and the Earth and (in) the difference of night and day are signs (of His sovereignty) for men of understanding . . ." (3:190). The "men of understanding" referred to in this verse are the "pure-hearts" of which Gulen writes. According to Gulen, humans finally realize that the beauty of nature is not the eternal beauty, but an indication of the eternal beauty of God. The life of a human is not long enough to experience all the beauty that nature holds. Therefore, the "awakened hearts" turn to the eternal beauty of God. In Gulen's understanding, "The spirits who are aware of this beauty see the creation in a deeper manner, listen to the music of every creature, a music beyond imagination . . ." (1991: 112). To Gulen, in the sight of these "awakened hearts," "all trees say 'Hu!' [The Qur'anic pronoun used for God, which means 'He'] Roses, flowers, in their own languages declare the Most Holy Creator" (1991: 112). Similarly, Gulen writes, "The rivers run, saying, 'Wahdet, Wahdet' ['You are the One'; can also be translated as 'Oneness']" (1991: 111). Thus, as the rivers run they express the oneness of God.

Gulen expresses his regret toward today's civilized society's behavior toward nature, writing,

Nature which is given to humanity by the Most Merciful One, for contemplation, as a mighty book, how it is painful that it is not cared for as much as a can of trash . . . Not only is nature not cared for, it is attacked on all sides, by deserting, and by trashing. Therefore, it is battered and bruised (1991: 113).

Gulen believes that because of humanity's behavior, air is polluted, water is contaminated and alarming, and the soil is losing its fertility. If the appropriate steps are not taken soon, the ecological balance will collapse and the Earth will become "the land of death." Gulen, then calls upon humanity, Muslims in particular, to be more responsible, saying, "the protection of nature is among the duties of every Muslim" (Gulen 1997: 239). Gulen refers to the Prophet of Islam's declaration, after his immigration from Mecca, that Medina was to be a "Haram," which in modern terms can be translated as a National Park, in which "grass

is not to be taken, animals are not to be killed, and trees are not to be cut." Gulen warns again, saying, "If we do not take lessons from what we have done, our beautiful world will be an amount of debris after disasters as destructive as the floods of Noah" (1991: 113).

Zeki Saritoprak

Further Reading

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See also: Gardens in Islam; Islam.

Gurdjieff, Georges Ivanovitch (1866?–1949)

The notion of the "biosphere" – the thin organic film that covers the surface of our planet not only as a single integrated unit but also as one that has been the greatest force shaping our planet – coined by the Russian geochemist V.I. Vernadsky in 1926, is arguably the most significant idea that modern Russian thought has contributed to the ongoing interpenetration of the ecological and the religious.

Vernadsky's intellectual ambition, though, ranged wider. As a "cosmicist" within the historical ambit of Russian mystical philosophy, like that of many of his scientific and artistic contemporaries, far from being simply a precursor to James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis or an influence upon the likes of Lynn Margulis, Vernadsky was at pains to emphasize that the "biosphere" was in some important way involved in the transformation of cosmic energy pouring forth from the Sun, which was also in some way its source.

It is unlikely to be simply a coincidence that in 1916, a decade before Vernadsky published his revolutionary work, G.I. Gurdjieff, a Russian who began his mystical career in the West as a refugee from the Bolshevik revolution formulation, also saw organic life, nature as a whole, as forming "something like a sensitive film which covers the whole of the Earth's globe" which serves as a "transmitting station of forces" (Ouspensky 1949: 138) and which also "began in the sun" (Ouspensky 1949: 139).

Despite little verifiable information about Gurdjieff until his arrival in Moscow in 1911, at the very least this similarity suggests the ubiquity of "cosmicism" in the Russia of the time. As a "key ancestor" (Heelas 1996: 48) to the New Age, Gurdjieff's "cosmicism" has achieved a widespread if diffuse influence. For example, the author of the environmental classic *Small is Beautiful*,