

## CLIMATE CHAOS: ECOFEMINISM AND THE LAND QUESTION

Ana Isla, Ed.  
Toronto: Inanna Publications,  
2019

### REVIEWED BY KLAIRE GAIN

Dr. Ana Isla's edited book, *Climate Chaos*, was published in 2019 and includes a diverse collection of essays written by scholars, activists, and land-defenders. While the chapters differ in content, together they provide a comprehensive global and intersectional analysis of the power and potential of subsistence economies in the face of patriarchal capitalist destruction. The authors utilize ecofeminist perspectives to examine global systems of exploitation and oppression of women, Indigenous peoples, peasants, and nature. The authors primarily draw on the works of Silvia Federici, Maria Mies, and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen in connection with specific case studies to demonstrate the relationship between ecofeminism and the current ecological crisis.

In the chapters "Climate Chaos" (Isla) and "Ecofeminism, Commons and Climate Justice" (Perkins), the authors discuss Federici's concept of "the commons" as central to ecofeminist thought. According to the authors, Federici connects the enclosure of the commons to primitive accumulation, which has led to a gendered division of labour and the exploitation of nature and women as nature. The chapters "Climate Chaos" (Isla), "Money or Life" (Bennholdt-Thomsen), "The Guardians of the Conga Lagoon" (Isla), and "Ecofeminism, Commons and Climate Justice" (Perkins) further the discussion of ecofeminist perspectives with the inclusion of Mies's notion of "housewifization." Mies argues that feminized work is diminished and devalued, or "housewifized," yet is essential to

the functioning of a capitalist patriarchy. It is argued that this work is not completed solely by women nor only in the house, but by others, like peasants and Indigenous people, who are also marginalized through systems of oppression.

The third central concept of ecofeminist thought included throughout *Climate Chaos* is the "iceberg model," developed by Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen, which is discussed in "Introduction" (Isla) and "Biotechnology and Biopiracy" (Bonato). The iceberg model divides the current economy into two parts: the visible economy and the invisible economy. The visible economy consists of waged labour, gross domestic product, and gross national product, while the invisible economy, hidden below the surface, includes reproductive work by nature, women, peasants, and Indigenous peoples. Through these concepts, ecofeminists challenge the ways in which subsistent ways of being are rendered invisible, feminized, and privatized.

Through an ecofeminist perspective, the authors explore diverse topics including extraction (Isla), climate change (Perkins), food sovereignty (Brownhill, Kaara and Turner), Indigenous ways of knowing (Kress), feminist organizing (Attakora-Gyan; Leah), and biopiracy (Bonato; O'Donnell). These and other themes are discussed through international case studies spanning from Turtle Island and Latin America to India and Africa. *Climate Chaos* connects the ecological crisis to systems of domination and describes the impacts of neoliberal capitalist money economies on nature and subsistence. Isla discusses this through problematizing programs of land grabbing, ecotourism, and "green capitalism," noting that they disproportionately marginalize and disadvantage Indigenous and campesino communities. Throughout the chapters, the book collectively emphasizes that the privatization and monetization of the commons is devastating ecology on a rapid and global scale.

*Climate Chaos* provides urgent evidence of violence, oppression, and domination that should be heard on an international level. It must be noted that the reader may find themselves overwhelmed by the magnitude of ecological and human destruction described. However, *Climate Chaos* also provides narratives of resistance and viable alternatives to our current disastrous trajectory (Brownhill, Kaara and Turner; Leah). While it is arguable that the book could have been strengthened through additional stories of hope, *Climate Chaos* provides a realistic depiction of the ecological crisis and the urgency of a rapid transformation in economic systems.

Dr. Isla utilized her experience in both academia and activism to beautifully bond essays and narratives from scholar-activists across the globe to share a vital message. Isla's expertise on the themes discussed in the collection stem from her own lived experiences as a woman from Peru as well as a professor of Environmental Justice in the Sociology department at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. Isla has received several prestigious awards and is dedicated to ecological justice and the communities in which she lives and works. These qualities and achievements have equipped Isla as an informed and credible author and editor, which the strength and scope of the studies in *Climate Chaos* demonstrate.

*Climate Chaos* provides a unique insight into the interconnections between deep ecology and feminism, and bridges economic, political, and social critique to offer readers a glimpse into an alternative to our current patriarchal-capitalist economic system. This alternative is one that values situated knowledges, ecological systems, and harmony with nature. *Climate Chaos* proves that it is only through these subsistence perspectives that we can find ways out of the current climate crisis and create a world free from the destructive constraints of patriarchal capitalism.

## References

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## IN THE SHADOW OF THE EIGHTH: MY FORTY YEARS WORKING FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH IN IRELAND

Peter Boylan  
Milton Keynes: Penguin Ireland, 2019

and

## IT'S A YES! HOW TOGETHER FOR YES REPEALED THE EIGHTH AND TRANSFORMED IRISH SOCIETY

Gráinne Griffin, Orla O'Connor and Ailbhe Smyth with Alison O'Connor  
Dublin: Orpen Press, 2019

REVIEWED BY KATHERINE SIDE

The most significant landmark to date in the thirty-four-year struggle to end the Republic of Ireland's constitutional and legal restrictions on abortion is addressed in two important books. *It's a Yes!* details the mechanics of the Together for Yes (repeal) campaign and its victory (66.4% support) in Ireland's 2018 public referendum on abortion rights. *In the Shadow of the Eighth* offers the perspective of a physician committed to reform and someone whose assistance was, later, sought by the (then) coalition government. His assistance was sought by a government that assumed "doctors should provide leadership" in the referendum campaign and grossly underestimated the reach and influence of a citizen-led, grassroots movement for repeal (Boylan 199). *It's a Yes!* is an accessibly written, and photographically illustrated, primer on contemporary Irish citizen mobilization and engagement. Collectively authored with *Irish Examiner* columnist, Alison O'Connor, it was published eleven months after the new law and clinical guidance came into effect. It sets out the establishment of the coalition and its strategies and decision-making. It demonstrates the commitment, courage, and humility of the Together for Yes campaign's co-directors: Gráinne Griffin, founding member of the Abortion Rights Campaign; Orla O'Connor, director of the National Women's Council of Ireland; and Ailbhe Smyth, convenor of the Coalition to Repeal the Eighth Amendment and marriage equality activist. *Time* magazine's 2019 list of "most influential people" recognized all three as "icons." The energy and creativity of organizers, campaigners, and artists are recorded here. Activists are likely to gravitate to details about engaging with politicians and political processes (here, the Citizen's Assembly and Oireachtas Committee on the Eighth Amendment) and

campaign tactics. Researchers will likely be drawn to the story about how public uses of shame were reshaped by storytellers into understandings about health and humanity.

The relatively short time-to-publication may account for certain silences, about which the co-authors and campaign co-directors are probably already aware. Fractures between local groups and the national Together for Yes campaign could be analyzed more closely. What might be lost in the Together for Yes campaign decision to present "a united front" (Griffin, O'Connor, and Smyth 117)? How might the authors respond to criticisms that the campaign's central principles—care, compassion, and change—are inadequate to instigate significant human rights reform? Upon reflection, what might they say about the exclusion of migrant and marginalized groups and voices from among the coalition's leadership? And how might they rethink marginality in their written account?

As a medical doctor, former Master of the National Maternity Hospital, and chair of the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists Ireland, Dr. Peter Boylan's voice was heard often in campaigning. Together for Yes executive member, Sinéad Kennedy notes that, in the female-led campaign for repeal, the voices of male physicians were prioritized by government and media (Griffin, O'Connor, and Smyth 162). Boylan has certainly endured his own professional "collision course with the Catholic Church" (Boylan 43). His account of working "in the shadow of the eighth" is valuable for the exposure of anti-choice physicians within the Irish medical profession, and for questions he asks about the current political arrangements to relocate Dublin's National Maternity Hospital to land administered by the Catholic Church's Sisters of Mercy (176, 263). In the post-referendum