Valerie Padilla Carroll

The Radical Possibilities of New (Feminist, Environmentalist) Domesticity: Housewifery as an Altermodernity Project

Shannon Hayes opens her book *Radical Homemakers* with a forthright statement: "It is possible to be a feminist *and* can tomatoes" (6). By claiming that feminism and domesticity can legitimately coexist in the same individual, Hayes questions a common US narrative that defines feminism and homemaking as binary and hostile opposites. This narrative often manifests in the popular press as diatribes against "stay-at-home moms" presented as betraying the feminist project.[1] In contrast to this oppositional view, the last decade has seen the rise of a new phenomenon where women like Hayes promote the domestic sphere as an empowering space. Dubbed "new domesticity" by journalist Emily Matchar, this movement focuses on ". . . reviving 'lost' domestic arts like canning, bread-baking, knitting, chicken-raising, etc." by "the daughters of post-Betty Friedan feminists" ("The New Domesticity"). In this article, I explore "new domesticity" and its radical potential for gender and eco justice. While I borrow Matchar's term to identify this social phenomenon, I expand her definition to investigate this burgeoning movement. Matchar's new domesticity focuses primarily on Gen Y/youth personal growth and individual self-discovery, which may or may not have environmental concerns. The new domesticity I explore here moves beyond the self to the political, emerging as a radical, eco, and feminist housewifery that grew out of

ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment 23.1 (Winter 2016), pp. 51–70
Advance Access publication April 5, 2016 doi:10.1093/isle/isw013
© The Author(s) 2016. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment. All rights reserved.
For Permissions, please email: journals.permissions@oup.com

and in response to the US Women's Liberation Movement. It proffers a mode of simple living as a solution to environmental and social injustice. From this feminist and environmentalist base, new domesticity promotes its altermodernity project: an anticapitalist environmental activism that embraces a global vision of sustainability based on reciprocity and care.

While new domesticity appears in numerous blogs and books, there has not been a scholarly investigation of the phenomenon.[2] As a response to this scholarly gap, this article examines several texts that promote this environmentalist, feminist, and radical domesticity: *Depletion and Abundance: Life on the New Home Front* (2008) by Sharon Astyk, a political analysis of Peak Oil, which calls for cultural and economic adaptation to the end of American empire through the re-centralization of family and home; *Radical Homemakers: Reclaiming Domesticity from a Consumer Culture* (2010) by Shannon Hayes, an ethnographic examination and collection of interviews about the lives of the women and men who reject capitalism; and works by Barbara Kingsolver, chiefly *Animal Vegetable Miracle: A Year of Food Life* (2008), a collectively written chronicle authored primarily by Kingsolver that documents her family's year-long project to abandon industrialized food. While these works vary by genre—comprising ethnography, political treatise, experimental "year of" documentation—they tie together through a semi-autobiographical narration that promotes domesticity as a political act. In exploring these texts I draw from Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's work on affective labor and altermodernity to argue that Kingsolver, Astyk, and Hayes redefine the homemaker as radical, empowered, and vital to gender, social, and environmental justice. Even while new domesticity emerges from these authors' privileged positions, as a feminist and environmentalist altermodernity project, new domesticity has the potential to be a potent revolutionary activism.

New, Environmentalist, and Feminist Domesticity

Domesticity as environmentalism has blossomed in the first years of the millennium via Internet blogs and websites as well as through small eco presses like Chelsea Green, New Society Publishers, and Storey Publishing. These blogs and books, most often written from the firsthand experiences of the authors, focus on environmental sustainability rooted in simple, often frugal, living with the home as the central locus for change. Examples of eco-domesticity blogs range from the urban homesteading of "Root Simple" (Coyle and Knutzen) to the rural "Down to Earth" (Hetzel) with its popular post, "Homemaking-

The Power Career." There have also been a variety of books in the last few years that promote such eco-domesticity, including *Make Your Place: Affordable & Sustainable Nesting Skills* (Briggs), *Made from Scratch: Discovering the Pleasures of a Handmade Life* (Woginrich), *Making It: Radical Home Ec for a Post Consumer World* (Coyle and Knutzen), and *Homegrown and Handmade: A Practical Guide to Self-Reliant Living* (Niemann). While these examples focus primarily on domesticity, they are often sold as environmentalist texts. However, these books differ from the classic off-the-grid homesteading narrative because they forward domestic skills as key to self-reliance (rather than, say, building your own solar array).

Kingsolver, Astyk, and Hayes, like the authors mentioned above, center their writings on eco-domesticity, but they also connect domesticity with social justice. Sharon Astyk draws from her own life as a "former academic" and "small farmer" to envision the home as the primary site to create environmental equality and social justice (*Depletion* 273). In addition to *Depletion and Abundance*, Astyk has written on domesticity and social justice as a straightforward treatise, *A Nation of Farmers: Defeating the Food Crisis on American Soil* (co-written with Aaron Newton, 2009), as well as "how-to" books, *Independence Days: A Guide to Sustainable Food Storage & Preservation* (2009) and *Making Home: Adapting Our Homes and Our Lives to Settle in Place* (2012). Shannon Hayes infuses eco-domesticity into her cookbooks that promote the ecological and social progressiveness of grassfed meat: *The Grassfed Gourmet Cookbook: Healthy Cooking and Good Living with Pasture-Raised Foods* (2005), *The Farmer and the Grill: A Guide to Grilling, Barbecuing and Spit-Roasting Grassfed Meat . . . and for Saving the Planet one Bite at a Time* (co-written with Joe Salatin, 2008), and most recently *Long Way on a Little: An Earth Lover's Companion for Enjoying Meat, Pinching Pennies and Living Deliciously* (2012). Barbara Kingsolver connects eco-domesticity and social justice issues both in her nonfiction, *Animal Vegetable Miracle*, and in her fiction. As one critic notes, Kingsolver " . . . fictionalizes problems she has since published impassioned essays about: failing family farms, fragmented communities, ecosystems out of balance, and rural-urban, insider-outsider tensions" (Jones 83–84). Kingsolver makes such concerns most explicit in *Animal Vegetable Miracle* and continues to explore these in her later works including *Flight Behavior* (2012) where the consequences of global warming intersect with class divisions and educational inequalities of the urban/rural divide.

While little to no scholarly work exists on Astyk's or Hayes' writings, Kingsolver's novels and nonfiction, including *Animal Vegetable Miracle*, have attracted significant scholarly notice. Much of the

scholarly criticism of *Animal Vegetable Miracle* finds fault with its promotion of the local food movement. For example, in "Memories of Mother in the Kitchen," Tracey Deutsch contends that Kingsolver and other local food proponents like Michael Pollan promote "a conservative set of assumptions" that unfairly burden women with "unpaid and time-intensive labor" in food procuring and preparation (168). Susie O'Brien likewise castigates *Animal Vegetable Miracle*, reading Kingsolver's emphasis on local food as an "expression of postcolonial politics," which "like the writing of all uncomfortable beneficiaries of empire . . . acknowledges some sins and omissions while discounting others" (232). Such scholarly arguments correctly highlight the problematic uncompensated work of motherhood and the ways such local food writing, including *Animal Vegetable Miracle*, reinforce imperialist assumptions. Yet, despite these criticisms, *Animal Vegetable Miracle* also focuses on something left out by these critics: the *value* of the domestic and domestic labor.

For Kingsolver, as well as for Astyk and Hayes, heteropatriarchal cultures like the United States devalue domestic labor not because the labor itself lacks value, but because such cultures associated this labor with women. Feminist scholars have long been interested in understanding the devalued nature of domestic labor, claiming that a "fundamental contribution of feminist research is to trouble the boundaries of the category 'work' . . . [by expanding that construct] beyond solely waged work to encompass unpaid reproductive work and the work of politics and community activism" (England and Lawson 77). This recuperative feminist scholarship, often focusing on capitalist economies, situates domesticity as central to understanding gender inequality. Rather than perceiving domestic and reproductive labor of the home as economically unproductive, they argue for the vitality of such work because it reproduces and maintains the work force. In *Depletion and Abundance* Astyk notes, "Housework (which is in large part about creating a healthy, pleasant environment and reducing the need for medical intervention), cooking (keeping workers fed) and other ordinary household work is done outside of the market economy, but the market economy couldn't function without it" (56). For Astyk and these feminist researchers, the market economy relies on the unpaid labor of the domestic sphere for tangible benefits, like reproduction of workers. Moreover, such unpaid labor establishes the very concepts that underlie the inequality inherent in capitalism. Or as feminist scholar Iris Young explains it, the exploitation of women's domestic labor is an "essential and fundamental characteristic of capitalism" (58).

Feminist historical analyses of this capitalist gendered division of labor trace its origin to the rise of industrialism in eighteenth- and

nineteenth-century United States and Western Europe. Here, ideological and economic shifts born of industrialism changed the craft tradition and *oeconomea* of the home to a bourgeois model of domesticity for the middle- and upper-class housewife. This change, explains Nancy Forbre in "The Unproductive Housewife," devalued the economic work of the home and promoted the value of the bourgeois homemaker as the moral guardian of society (465). Concurrent with this new gendered construction in the United States arose what feminist Linda Kerber termed "Republican Motherhood," a nineteenth-century cultural expectation which defined women's civic responsibility and moral authority arising from the rearing of children as citizens of the republic (43). The simultaneous emergence of this "new" nineteenth-century domesticity, which devalued domestic labor, and Republican Motherhood, which cast women as bourgeois moral guardians, was paradoxical. While the role of the homemaker was perceived as economically value-less, her morality was established as essential to the functioning of society. For example, Woman Suffrage, as well as other nineteenth-century US progressive movements like Temperance, used the ideal "woman as moral guardian" to justify the enfranchisement of women. Thus, even as the housewife remained devalued she also became a tool to fight for gender equality.

The new domesticity of the twenty-first century, like that of the nineteenth century, emerges from a historical moment of radical economic and social changes. Here, the shift from an industrial to a service economy in the United States has disrupted the ideal of the heteronuclear family with its patriarch, the single earner, and the stay-at-home wife. Changing beliefs about race, gender, and environment forwarded by important twentieth-century justice movements like Civil Rights, Women's Liberation, and Environmentalism have also questioned mainstream white, heteropatriarchal, and capitalist power. The twenty-first-century new domesticity is a response to and a result of these changes. It draws from multiple lines of social/environmental movements and philosophies including simple living, back-to-the-land, urban homesteading, and environmental justice. New domesticity as way of life connects to the frugality of the simple living and minimalism movements, the imagined self-reliance of smallholder independence offered by back-to-the-land, self-sufficiency, and urban homesteading movements, and the search for equality for humans and justice for nature of environmental justice and deep ecology. At its core, however, the new domesticity is a feminist domesticity that focuses on the empowerment of women as political actors who promote human and ecological justice. In fact, as I will show, the origin story proposed by Kingsolver, Astyk, and Hayes roots this feminist

domesticity in the US Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. While their version of history over-simplifies at times, ignoring the variety and complexity of feminisms and erasing global feminisms, these writers situate new domesticity as a response to the US feminist/anti-feminist debates about the homemaker.

In new domesticity's foundational origin myth, during the feminist/anti-feminist debates of the 1970s, anti-feminists like Phyllis Schlafly claimed that gender equality would mean the end of the homemaker. In her 1977 speech at the "Pro-Family Counter Convention" offered in response to the "National Women's Conference," Schlafly said, feminists are "going to drive the homemaker out of the home . . . if you make us equal, it takes away from the home . . . They want to forbid you from identifying with the traditional roles as wives and mothers. I don't" (qtd. in Quinn, 6A). Schlafly's anti-feminism attacks a perceived feminist disdain for the homemaker and taps into the anxiety of those who feared equality would challenge the traditional patriarchal family. Schlafly was not entirely incorrect. Women's Liberation leader Betty Friedan overtly criticized homemaking. For example, in her book, *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan compared homemakers to prisoners in concentration camps claiming that the domestic environment of the homemaker "denies woman's adult human identity" and stunts "her intelligence," making her "childlike" (426). In Friedan's argument, the homemaker eventually becomes "an anonymous biological robot in a docile mass" (426). Such feminist responses by Friedan and other Women's Liberation feminists defined the housewife, according to postfeminist scholar Stephanie Gertz, as "the epitome of female non-identity and passivity, a perfect illustration of patriarchal constructions of Woman as apathetic, dependent and purposeless being" (51). By contrast, others interpret Friedan as sympathetic to the plight of housewives rather than rejecting housewives themselves.[3] But however Friedan felt about housewives and housewifery, the solution that she and other mainstream feminists proposed remained the same: the key to the feminist project of equality persisted as the integration of women into the competitive formal economy. Through such integration, they reasoned, women, like men, could earn income and find fulfillment through career achievements.

Essentially the feminist/anti-feminist debate offers women two choices: work in the masculinized public sphere for wages or remain in the home as a subordinate. New domesticity, as reflected in Kingsolver's, Astyk's, and Hayes' work, situates itself in this feminist/anti-feminist debate by choosing none of the above. It critically frames both the subordinated housewife and the careerist woman as springing from the same degraded site of consumer capitalism, which profits

from both. For example, Hayes questions the insistence on women's integration into the public sphere work world. Likening both subordinated homemaker and marketplace worker to slavery, she explains:

> In the old paradigm, women chose the gilded cage or the glass ceiling. If they choose the gilded cage and stay home, they become slaves to the marketplace image of the happy (shopping) homemaker. If they opted for the glass ceiling, they entered the workforce, where they become enslaved to their employers and hope that they could fulfill their family dreams without getting tossed out like used Kleenex. (*Homemakers* 38–39)

In this characterization, Hayes juxtaposes the (non) choices for women in a capitalist economy that offers them only the roles of consumer or worker (or even more disturbingly, that of disposable product). For Hayes, the worker/homemaker dichotomy is a fabricated choice constructed within consumer capitalist ideology that erases alternative possibilities. Both the roles of homemaker and worker reinforce the very economic structures that Hayes rejects. Instead, like the other authors discussed here, Hayes offers an alternative, one rooted in family, community, and a connection to nature. By rebuilding the home as the central locus of human culture and economy, she argues, "we can begin the process of dismantling the extractive economy and creating in its place a life serving economy that enables us to meet our needs while thriving in harmony with our earth and spirits" (Hayes, *Homemakers* 51).

Kingsolver, in *Animal Vegetable Miracle*, also takes issue with the insistence on female integration, faulting Women's Liberation's rejection of creative homemaking:

> When we traded homemaking for careers, we were implicitly promised economic independence and worldly influence. But a devil of a bargain it has turned out to be in terms of everyday life. We gave up the aroma of warm bread rising, the measured pace of nurturing routines, the creative task of molding our families' tastes and zest for life; we received in exchange the minivan and the Lunchable. (126–27)

Like Hayes, Kingsolver questions the "devil of a bargain" as the false promises of the corporate work world. For Kingsolver, women lose power when integrating into the formal economy because they lose the pleasures and power of the domestic. In Kingsolver's argument, the homemaker inhabits a space where, "molding . . . families' tastes," for

example, she powerfully influences the family by creating home environments (126). She further questions the payoff of the bargain itself. Instead of "economic independence and worldly influence," women become mired in consumer motherhood necessitated by careers in the formal economy, which she satirizes by equating this lifestyle with mass produced minivans and Lunchables. Instead of powerlessness, for Kingsolver, homemakers and the home function as radical sites of family, community, and cultural change.

Astyk, like Hayes and Kingsolver, also criticizes the Women's Liberation's strategy for equality and its ties to the market economy. In *Depletion and Abundance*, Astyk's main criticism focuses on the mainstream Women's Liberation movement's tying of equality to the needs of capitalism. Such ties, she explains, "demeaned private life and private actions and denied them importance because doing so enabled us to 'privatize' (to give over to corporations) the practice of what was once private life" (25). Capitalism thereby denigrated the private sphere, promoting instead its commercialization. For Astyk, this takeover of the private is foundational to obscuring hegemony—capitalist ideology makes both homemakers and careerist feminists ask the wrong questions and focus on solutions that remain in the service of hegemonic power. So, we argue about whether women should remain at home or enter the formal workforce when we should instead question the gendered nature of the public/private split, which serves the needs of capitalism. Astyk explains, "at least as important as the question of what women with children should do is the less commonly asked question, should fathers work outside the home?" (109). Astyk flips the normative construction of childrearing to reveal the patriarchal and capitalist economic notions of where cultural power lies and how gender continues to be naturalized in discussions of domesticity.

These authors promote a return to the home for women *and* men to answer the deep problems of capitalism that harms women, men, children, families, communities, and the Earth. New domesticity thus provides a template for life and lifestyles rooted in "family, community, social justice and ecological balance" (Hayes, *Homemakers* 39). While these authors criticize Women's Liberation feminism, all three, particularly Hayes, clearly state that the denigration of the housewife did not originate with feminists (as Schlafly claimed), but evolved from the long history of capitalism and industrialization that first uprooted males from the domestic sphere and only later granted women the false choice to leave the home. According to Hayes, once a critical mass of women left the home, only then did much of homemaking commodify as consumer products through, for example, pre-prepared food for home cooking, cheap clothing instead of sewing and mending, and

variety of "labor saving" devices. Such commodification only intensified the profit and power of capitalism rather than freeing women from drudgery (67–70).

While the commodification of the home and homemaker has a much longer and more complicated history than these authors present, it provides an origin story for new domesticity. This origin story offers: (1) a rationale for the lost connection to the home brought about by economic and social changes; (2) an enemy marked by both a market economy and consumer capitalism; and (3) a goal that re-centers home and re-imagines sustainable communities. From this perspective, the new feminist domesticity offers not only the goal of a more fulfilling life, but also the tools to create this life, like the re-skilling of women and men in the domestic arts, the cultivation and preparation of local and organic food, the practice of natural medical care, the homeschooling of children, and the development and maintenance of connections to extended family and community.

New Domesticity as an Altermodernity Project

Key in new domesticity's origin story is the rationale for rejecting capitalism as a destructive and inhumane system. These authors, and the people Hayes interviews, adamantly reject consumer and market capitalism. This may be a little surprising since they themselves are so steeped in relative privilege of whiteness and US citizenship that has historically benefited from capitalism or at least from capitalist concessions. That is, they belong to racial and citizenship categories that while not elite, have received the largest concessions from elites. Yet the social and political changes of the late twentieth century discussed in the last section have eroded some benefits of whiteness (for lower class at least) and of US citizenship. The response to such loss of relative privilege has often been a re-entrenchment in support of hegemony—witness the recent rise of the Tea Party in the United States. However, these adherents of new domesticity reject this path and instead advance an anticapitalist altermodernity project that embraces a global vision of a sustainable expanded community based on reciprocity and care.

For theorists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, altermodernity "indicate[s] a decisive break with modernity and the power relation that defines it," and while emerging from antimodernity, it "also departs from antimodernity since it extends beyond opposition to resistance" (*Commonwealth* 103, 102). Altermodernity, like antimodernity, "challenge[s] the institutionalized hierarchies of modernity along lines of race, gender, class, or sexuality" but also "move[s] from resistance to

alternative" (103, 102). A pertinent altermodernity model for new domesticity appears in Hardt and Negri's discussion of the nomenclature of 1990s "globalization protest movements" where corporate media labeled protests as "anti-globalization." Uncomfortable with this term, activists proposed the term "alterglobalization" because while they rejected the current, imperial capitalist globalization, most of the participants promoted "alternative but equally global relationships of trade, cultural exchange, and political process" (102). Likewise, new domesticity's altermodernity project resists and critiques capitalism but does not define itself as an antiglobalization or antimodern project. As proposed by Astyk, Hayes, and Kingsolver, new domesticity's goal of a re-centered home and re-imagined communities living sustainably provides an alternative to global capitalism's consumer and extractive economy. In this alternative, people's empowerment comes from valuing the affective labor of the home, they find security in the community rather than the individual, and they develop economics of reciprocity rather than profit.

At the root of new domesticity's proposed alternative lies the affective labor of the home. For the new feminist domesticity (and even for the consumerist housewife), the affective labor of the home primarily defines the homemaker. Sometimes called care labor or reproductive labor, this labor includes cooking, cleaning, nursing, and childrearing. But affective labor encompasses more than just physical work; it is, according to Hardt, the "labor of human contact and interaction" and "is itself and directly the constitution of communities and collective subjectivities" (95, 89). Affective labor then can create and form social life; it is originary and structural. Thus, the affective labor of the home includes not just the labor of food production, household cleaning, and childrearing but also the emotional, immaterial labor of developing and maintaining vital interpersonal relationships and community connections. While Kingsolver, Astyk, and Hayes do not use the term "affective labor," their texts illustrate how the affective labor of the home produces social networks and forms of community, which can be sites of potential anticapitalist liberation.

For new domesticity, the affective labor of the home generates an expanded notion of community based on reliance and reciprocity. In Astyk's, Hayes', and Kingsolver's texts, such community relationships are built and maintained through the care labor of the home; in fact, the labor itself develops the relationships. From these relationships, self-reliance, gender equality, and anticapitalism exist in tandem. Astyk provides a clear example by explaining the integration of familial bonding through domestic labor as education for her sons:

> Our homeschool focuses on 'how we get ready for winter.' We're splitting wood and canning tomatoes, replenishing our supplies of basics like soybeans and popcorn, digging potatoes and onions and picking apples by the bushel at our local orchard. Mom and Dad both knit when we're sitting quietly and three-and-a-half-year-old Isaiah has started his first scarf and brought in his first pumpkin. The older boys take (heavily supervised) turns with the axe. (*Depletion* 194)

Here Astyk paints a picture of the interconnections between the care labor of the home (canning, storing, knitting) and the education for her boys enmeshed within familial relationships that locate the reason for work within an affective framework. This labor of the home meshes physical labor with the emotional attachments developed through domestic labor. The familial relationship is reinforced as a site where all members, including children, have an important role in establishing the family's security. Such affective labor connects domestic work with the security and self-reliance of the family, rejects traditional heteropatriarchal gender roles, and also teaches skills ignored in most marketplace-focused public schools.

In new domesticity, self-reliant security originates in the family but also includes the importance of community relationships as vital to familial security. The people Hayes interviews in *Radical Homemakers* emphasize how the family's security and self-sufficiency tie intimately to the community. Here, the affective labor of the home spills out into the community by building relationships. Hayes explains, "In place of conventional employment, these men and women build security through frugal living, domestic skills, and reduced material needs. They have opted to trust and actually nurture their personal partnerships and to cultivate a web of family and community that supports them" (*Homemakers* 43). Later in the book she continues, "While each home was more self-reliant, no home was a one-stop shop. It was the *community* that was self-sufficient, not the home" (225). Hayes suggests that such relationships are not based on laws or marketplace transactions but must be built through communication, collaboration, and care among the "web of family and community" (43). This focus on the communal affective nature of the domestic sphere provides one of the key ways new domesticity differs from the housewife of Schlafly's era: new domesticity rejects consumerism's security as a product, instead locating security in the development of relationships.

Kingsolver expands the definition of community further to include a population's localized knowledge and history. Such expanded

community provides knowledge of locale, which increases familial and community self-reliance. Incorporated into the affective labor of her home, for example, is the knowledge of "Appalachian mothers" who collect garlic ramps and wild ginseng as medicine or morels for food. Such localized knowledge, taught person-to-person or via stories, developed from these mothers' "intimate connection to the land," and becomes part of a shared, affective bond that creates and maintains the community (Kingsolver et al. 77).

While new domesticity and its affective labor develop and maintain the emotional connections of this expanded community, it is important to note that affective labor, especially as domestic labor, has often been used as a heteropatriarchal justification for female subordination. New domesticity as promoted in these books evades this potential restraint by stressing the importance of reciprocity. That is, new domesticity, by valuing affective labor and the development of community relationships, demands mutual benefits for all members. Such reciprocity comes out in the ways families in these books work within their communities to develop community reliance. The reciprocity also emerges in Kingsolver's emphasis on localized knowledge and history, since such practices do not require destruction—well-harvested ginseng will continue to grow, and knowledge does not diminish having been shared. However, in the keeping and slaughter of domesticated animals, reciprocity can be more controversial. Yet, this animal "harvest," as Kingsolver terms it, truly illustrates how reciprocity and community extend across the globe and across species.

Numerous environmentalists and animal rights activists argue against rearing and slaughtering domesticated animals for food. One of the best known critiques comes from bioethics philosopher Peter Singer, author of the foundational animal rights work *Animal Liberation: Towards an End to Man's Inhumanity to Animals*, who offers a utilitarian ethical argument for vegetarianism: since ethical behavior based on creating the greatest good is not species specific, our ethical behavior should acknowledge the experiences of the animals who have the capacity for suffering. Singer particularly criticizes factory farms because of the intense harm done to animals as well as the massive environmental destructiveness caused by factory farms. While all three new domesticity authors recognize the ethical issues of animal suffering and factory farms, they question any absolute prohibition of animal rearing and consumption. All three claim that the ethical raising and harvesting of domesticated animals encompasses mutual benefit and care where animal use provides important means to develop family and community, further social and environmental justice, and create reciprocal care relationships with the animals

themselves (Astyk, Depletion 259; Hayes, Homemakers 237; Kingsolver et al. 225).

While all three women raise and slaughter their own domesticated livestock, Kingsolver provides the clearest argument for animal "harvest," a term she purposefully employs because, "a harvest implies planning, respect, and effort" (223). Animal harvesting, while not enjoyable to Kingsolver, provides another example of new domesticity's focus on the imprecated nature of affective domestic labor and reciprocity. As an "important ritual" it creates a space where family and friends as a community share in the affective labor of the home and it develops and maintains relationships (223). For example, in the fall harvesting of the chickens she writes:

> Lily, Abby, and Eli pulled the neck and breast feathers, making necessary observations such as "Gag, look where his head came off," and "Wonder which one of these tube thingies was his windpipe." Most kids need only about ninety seconds to get from *eeew gross* to solid science. (232)

Kingsolver further explains, "A few weeks later Abby would give an award-winning, fully illustrated 4-H presentation entitled, 'You Can't Run Away on Harvest Day'" (232). This domestic scene of animal harvest presents a discourse rooting the work and rewards of harvest in reciprocity. In the most basic sense, these chickens will feed family and friends in the following months. But Kingsolver imbues the realities of sustainability and food consumption with an affective lesson as well: the children and the observers at the 4-H presentation, like Astyk's sons, learn not only the necessary skills of butchering, but also the specifics of animal anatomy and, most importantly, the practice of cooperative work. Such are the hallmarks of new domesticity.

Beyond the family and local community, new domesticity as presented by Kingsolver, Astyk, and Hayes, promotes ethical and humane animal harvesting as vital for global justice. Again, Kingsolver explains:

> Many of the world's poor live in marginal lands that can't support plant-based agriculture. Those not blessed with the fruited plain and amber waves of grain must make do with woody tree pods, tough leaved shrubs, or sparse grass. Camels, reindeer, sheep, goats, cattle, and other ruminants are uniquely adapted to transform all those types of indigestible cellulose into edible milk and meat. (225)

Here Kingsolver defines sustainable meat as a moral good that supports the world's poor by allowing for food production in agriculturally marginal land (225–27).

Finally, for Kingsolver, animal harvesting promotes care for the animals themselves by recognizing the naturalness of death and grounding that death in reciprocity and recompense. Such harvesting of domesticated animals provides a reality check, where she and her family "reconnect[s] with the purpose for which these animals were bred. We dispense with all delusions about who put the *live* in the livestock, and who must take it away" (Kingsolver et al 223). Because her own journey to raising and slaughtering her own animals began after seeing horrifying Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) that are the main sites for commercial animal production in the United States, Kingsolver makes the same argument as Singer, decrying the inhumane treatment and massive suffering of these animals. She explains such operations are immoral because they confine these "creatures at the limits of their physiological and psychological endurance" (228). However, unlike Singer who rejects all animal use, she calls for a relationship with animals based on reciprocity and care. She provides them with a good, healthy life and a humane death, and they provide her companionship and sustenance for her family. Here the animals are seen as part of the household and the extended community.

In discussing Kingsolver's argument for ethical animal use, the point is not its truth (Singer would certainly disagree with her), but how her argument illustrates, to paraphrase Hardt, the ways that affective labor constitutes community and collective subjectivity in the ethos of new domesticity (89). Kingsolver's argument roots animal harvesting in the affective and care labor of the home, and the development of a kind of rhizomatic network of relationships from the distant poor of the Global South to the more intimate ones with her domesticated animals. Such a network of relationships highlights the global nature of new domesticity's altermodernity project: a project that seeks to transform the housewife into an empowered actor battling contemporary global capitalism through local and global trade relationships of reciprocity.

While Astyk, Hayes, and Kingsolver all condemn capitalism, each author refers to it using different terms. Hayes favors "extractive economy," Astyk uses the term "capitalism" alone or with qualifiers ("industrial," "growth," "modern," "free market"), while Kingsolver avoids naming the economy but nonetheless spends considerable time condemning the "industrial food system." Primarily, though, these authors critique consumerism with its naturalization of wasteful consumption. Yet they see the *consumer* as a particularly powerful

disrupter of global capitalism. They reject the consumer activism of boycotting one company while buying from another, instead re-appropriating the consumer to replace current global capitalism with an economics based in the affective labor of the home and reciprocity. Thus, at the core of this new domesticity narrative lies the idea that homemakers are socially, politically, and economically powerful. Hayes explains it best when she writes:

> And herein lies the power of the Radical Homemaker to create these changes: the more homemakers are able to do for themselves—whether it be cooking, preserving or growing food, mending clothes or purchasing it used, fixing cars and appliances to avoid replacing them, cleaning with vinegar and water rather than toxic chemicals, or making rather than buying gifts and toys—the less time they exchange for money, the fewer natural resources they require from the planet and the less they rely upon (and the less they are complicit in) the global extractive economy. (*Homemakers* 93–94)

Here the power of the homemaker exists in every act performed outside the market economy, including cleaning with vinegar and making gifts. This power comes from making one's own products and performing one's own labor rather than exchanging money for goods and services. This rejection of the market economy is framed as an activist fight against consumer capitalism. Astyk talks about this power and empowerment as the expansion of the feminist claim, "the personal is political" to include "the political is personal," arguing, "the political cannot be separated from personal choices in most cases" (*Depletion* 30). One of Hayes' interviewees states it more boldly: "Everything we do is a vote . . . everything you do is political" (qtd. in Hayes, *Homemakers* 212).

The new domesticity these authors present re-appropriates the figure of the homemaker, constructing her as an ideal of feminist empowerment. This re-appropriation understands the home and the domestic as vital for humans and the Earth alike. The three writers explored here present their own lives and the lives of women and men who reject mainstream careers and instead embrace the domestic sphere to create what they perceive as simpler, better lives for themselves, their families, communities, and the Earth. Such rhetoric eschews mainstream beliefs and values based on marketplace exchanges that establish self-esteem as coming from wage labor. Astyk, Kingsolver, and Hayes write of themselves and others who have chosen to reject, or at least evade, capitalism, and consumerism in favor of frugal and local living.

Here the practices of new domesticity forward a collective subjectivity of the empowered, environmentalist, and feminist homemakers who can, like others who collectively resist capitalism, "mobilize what it shares in common and what it produces in common against the imperial power of global capital" (Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 101).

Critical Issues with the New (Feminist, Environmentalist) Domesticity

Thus far, I have tried to understand new domesticity's radical project on its own terms—what it calls for and how it presents itself as a radical rupture with global capitalism. Kingsolver, Hayes, and Astyk all seek to present this new, environmentalist, feminist domesticity as a solution to economic, social, and environmental problems. They provide persuasive arguments about domesticity and how the affective labor of the home, re-centralized and outside of the capitalist market economy, can provide a resilient and sustainable life for the individual, family, community, and the Earth. As such, this movement has radical potential. However, at the same time, this new domesticity and its altermodernity project could possibly forward problematic assumptions like the essentialization of women and the exploitation of the Global South as an empty symbol.

One way that new domesticity could be read is that it essentializes women as moral caretakers of the home and the world. New domesticity can appear as underpinned by difference feminist philosophy, "which seeks to redress the devaluation of women by elevating women's distinct sensibilities and activities" (Maathai 465). While difference feminism is not necessarily essentialist, it can easily fall into defining gender differences as gendered exceptionalism. As already discussed, nineteenth-century progressive movements, like Suffrage and Temperance, often rested their demands for change on just such essentialist claims as the perceived inherent morality of women and the Republican Mother. The calls made by Astyk, Kingsolver, and Hayes for political change to emerge from the domestic sphere can sound very much like the calls of the nineteenth century. For these writers, the homemaker's power as an agent of change draws from her authority and labor in the home. While twenty-first-century new domesticity could potentially recreate the "woman as moral guardian" as educator of future citizens of the sustainable republic, all three authors advocate instead for egalitarian homes and communities in ways that refute such simplistic essentialism.

A more potentially troubling concern might be new domesticity's use of the Global South as either absent or as empty symbol. For

Hayes, the Global South is simply absent. Her only mention of anything remotely close to the Global South (or even specific nations, people, or continents) exists in a few sentences about the semester abroad in South Africa taken by one of the women she interviewed (Hayes, *Homemakers* 3, 256). While Astyk and Kingsolver advocate for the Global South, they simultaneously use it as a symbol. For example, Astyk calls for the people of the Global North to use "our privilege and wealth to create justice" and to advocate for the "greatest victims of climate changes" (*Depletion* 236, 35). Yet her advocacy ignores the political, instead calling for us to use fewer resources through local living. Kingsolver also includes the need to advocate for global justice, but often the Global South simply provides evidence for her arguments, such as the animal harvesting argument discussed earlier. Thus, the issues of global injustice and poverty provide a kind of justification for the Global North, the privileged, to live more simple and local lives. In this discourse, the Global South, rather than a vast collection of different cultures and people, becomes homogenized as a symbol used in support of new domesticity. The advocacy espoused by Astyk and Kingsolver relies on a hierarchical colonialist discourse that defines the peoples of the Global South (and the poor, the less privileged, and other "victims") as the objects of Global North charity.

And yet I would argue that even as these authors use the Global South as a symbol, there is an opportunity to expand the alterglobal nature of new domesticity and build alliances. Here, these authors and adherents of the new, feminist, environmentalist domesticity would focus on listening and learning from people and resistances of the Global South. Many of the peoples of the Global South can offer important skills and knowledges, which will benefit people like Astyk, Hayes, and Kingsolver in their altermodernity, anticapitalist project. As the ecofeminist Vandana Shiva explains, the women of the Global South are both victims of global corporate capitalism and "leaders in creating new intellectual ecological paradigms. . . [and] central to arresting and overcoming ecological crises" (45). Here Global South women (I would add the peoples of the Global South) should be seen as leaders because they have valuable knowledge and skills that emerge from their colonized experiences. They are not just "victims" for which to advocate, but are peoples that new domesticity can learn from. From larger alterglobal resistances like Shiva's Navdanya, which saves traditional and heirloom seeds to the everyday knowledges of appropriate technologies developed like low-wood cook stoves, these Global South resistances promote anticapitalist and alterglobalization projects that, like new domesticity, rest on cooperation, reciprocity, and care labor. In solidarity with the peoples of the Global South rather than through

charity, and by learning from rather than leading, Kingsolver, Astyk, Hayes, and the adherents of new domesticity can become a truly radical altermodernity.

Notes

1. Authors like Linda Hirshman and Elizabeth Wurtzel epitomize this perspective. For example, Hirshman's article "Homeward Bound" claims that presenting the choice for women to stay home reinforces patriarchal structures of the nuclear family. The solution Hirshman proposes calls for feminism to return to its "early, judgmental roots" and for women to focus on professional advancement and strategically choose spouses. Wurtzel claims, "Real feminists earn a living, have money and means of their own" ("1% Wives").

2. There are numerous scholarly studies on related topics including simple living and local food. I discuss local food later in this article. For more on simple living see Amitai Etzioni's "The Post Affluent Society" in *Review of Social Economy,* which offers a good overview of the various forms of simple living, and Mary Grisby's *Buying Time and Getting By: The Voluntary Simplicity Movement*, which includes an examination of the issues of gender and leadership in simple living.

3. See for example, Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s.*

Works Cited

Astyk, Sharon. *Depletion and Abundance: Life on the New Home Front.* Gabriola, BC: New Society Publishers, 2008. Print.

———. *Independence Days: A Guide to Sustainable Food Storage & Preservation*. Gabriola, BC: New Society Publishers, 2009. Print.

———. *Making Home: Adapting Our Homes and Our Lives to Settle in Place*. Gabriola, BC: New Society Publishers, 2012. Print.

Briggs, Raleigh. *Make Your Place: Affordable & Sustainable Nesting Skills*. Portland, OR: Microcosm Publishing, 2008. Print.

Coyle, Kelly and Eric Knutzen. *Making It: Radical Home Ec for a Post Consumer World*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale, 2010. Print.

———. *Root Simple.* Blogger. Web. 25 Apr. 2012.

Coontz, Stephanie. *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s*. New York: Basic Books, 2011. Print.

England, Kim and Victoria Lawson. "Feminist Analysis of Work: Rethinking the Boundaries, Gendering, and Spatiality of Work." *A Companion to Feminist Geography.* Ed. Lise Nelson and Joni Seager. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. 77–92. Print.

Etzioni, Amitai. "The Post Affluent Society." *Review of Social Economy.* 62.3 (2004): 407–20. Print.

Deutsch, Tracey. "Memories of Mother in the Kitchen: Local Foods, History, and Women's -Work." *Radical History Review.* 110 (2011): 167–77. Print.

Forbre, Nancy. "The Unproductive Housewife: Her Evolution in Nineteenth-Century Economic Thought." *Signs* 16.3 (1991): 463–84. Print.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001. Print.

Gertz, Stephanie. ""I am Not a Housewife, but. . .": Postfeminism and the Revival of Domesticity." *Feminism, Domesticity and Popular Culture*. Ed. Stacy Gillis and Joanne Hollows. New York: Routledge, 2009. 49–64. Print.

Grisby, Mary. *Buying Time and Getting By: The Voluntary Simplicity Movement*. Albany: State U of New York Press, 2004. Print.

Kerber, Linda K. "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment - An American Perspective." *Toward an Intellectual History of Women: Essays.* Ed. Linda K. Kerber. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. 41–62. Print.

Hardt, Michael. "Affective Labor." *Boundary 2* 26.2 (1999): 89–100. Print.

——. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin, 2004. Print.

—— and Antonio Negri. *Commonwealth*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009. Print.

Hayes, Shannon. *The Grassfed Gourmet Cookbook: Healthy Cooking and Good Living with Pasture-Raised Foods*. Richmondville, NY: Left to Write Press, 2005. Print.

——. *Radical Homemakers: Reclaiming Domesticity from a Consumer Culture*. Richmondville, NY: Left to Write Press, 2010. Print.

——. *Long Way on a Little: An Earth Lover's Companion for Enjoying Meat, Pinching Pennies and Living Deliciously.* Richmondville, NY: Left to Right Press, 2012. Print.

—— and Joe Salatin. *The Farmer and the Grill: A Guide to Grilling, Barbecuing and Spit-Roasting Grassfed Meat . . . and for Saving the Planet One Bite at a Time*. Richmondville, NY: Left to Right Press, 2008. Print.

Hetzel, Rhonda. "Homemaking-The Power Career." *Down to Earth: A Blog about Simple Life*. Blogger. Web. 25 Apr. 2012.

Hirshman, Linda. "Homeward Bound." *American Prospect*. 21 Nov. 2005. Web. 5 May 2012.

Jones, Suzanne W. "The Southern Family Farm as Endangered Species: Possibilities for Survival in Barbara Kingsolver's 'Prodigal Summer.'" *The Southern Literary Journal.* 39.1 (2006): 83–97. Print.

Kingsolver, Barbara. *Flight Behavior*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012. Print.

——, Steven Hopp, and Camile Kingsolver. *Animal Vegetable Miracle: A Year of Food Life*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008. Print.

Maathai, Julie. "Healing Ourselves, Healing our Economy: Paid Work, Unpaid Work, and the Next Stage of Feminist Economic Transformation." *Review of Radical Economics*. 33.461 (2001): 461–94. Print.

Matchar, Emily. *New Domesticity: Thoughts about Women and Homemaking in the 21st Century*. Wordpress. Web. 25 Apr. 2012.

Niemann, Deborah. *Homegrown and Handmade: A Practical Guide to Self-Reliant Living*. Gabriola, BC: New Society Publishers, 2011. Print.

O'Brien, Susie. "'No Debt Outstanding': The Postcolonial Politics of Local Food." *Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. Stephanie S. LeMenager. New York: Routledge, 2011. 231–46. Print.

Quinn, Sally. "Upbeats and Downbeats of the IWY." *The Des Moines Register*. 25 Nov. 1977: 1A, 6A. Print.

Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement*. New York: Harper Collins, 2009. Print.

Shiva, Vandana. *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Survival in India*. London: Zed, 1989. Print.

Woginrich, Jenna. *Made from Scratch: Discovering the Pleasures of a Handmade Life*. North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing, 2008. Print.

Wurtzel, Elizabeth. "1% Women are Helping to Kill Feminism and Make the War on Women Possible." *The Atlantic*. 15 June 2012. Web. 28 Sept. 2012.

Young, Iris. "Beyond the Unhappy Marriage: A Critique of the Dual Systems Theory." *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*. Ed. Lydia Sargent. Cambridge MA: South End Press, 1981. 4–6. Print.