

The *Enlafos* as Eco-corporeal Resistance: Eco-philosophical Reflections on the Cordilleran Female and the Articulation of an Inchoate Indigenous Land Ethic

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Abstract

As part of the quest for a deliberate articulation of the contours of that elusive thought which we may refer to tentatively as the Cordilleran land ethic, this paper explores the environmental philosophical underpinnings of the Bontoc/Mainit *enlafos*, a previously underexplored and frequently misunderstood tactic of resistance against development aggression in the Cordillera. I intend to inform this project with eco-feminist philosophy with references to the sociology of the body as a central philosophical concern and employ content analysis as my primary research approach and methodology, recognizing in this philosophical engagement its importance in clarifying the contours of a Cordilleran land ethic and the role of the feminine body in the activation of this ethic as a force for social and political change.

Keywords: indigenous people, metaphysics of the body, sociology of the body, ecofeminism, *enlafos*, politics of the body, radical philosophy, land ethic, environmental philosophy.

“In Mainit, Philippines, in the 1970s, Bontoc women fought with mining company surveyors and drove them away. In some protests, they removed their clothes to shame their attackers into retreat.”¹

“Look at me in my nakedness, this is where you came from. You are looking at your mother.”²

In August of 1973, prospectors from the Benguet Corporation—one of the biggest mining conglomerates in the Philippines—accompanied by armed security men, set up camp on the banks of the Mainit River, a tributary of the great Cagayan River in the municipality of Mainit, Mountain Province. The residents of the municipality put up a concerted resistance. Men and women, young and old, went in turns to the camp to uproot the tent stakes of the prospectors, taking their personal belongings as well as the construction equipment they brought, and throwing these into the river. In a one-night foray against the men in camp, four elderly women went up against the chief engineer and his guards thinking they would have an easy time tearing down his tent and throwing his equipment away. When they found themselves overpowered, in what amounted to an act of desperate pleading — what the actors *in situ* called a “lighting decision”— one of them stripped her clothes off and bared herself to the mining company men and their guards. The three other elders followed suit and they cried out, “Before you mine the mountains, mine me! Look at where you came from!” The reaction of the men was to cover their faces with their hands as they retreated.³

The *i*-Bontoc call this the *enlafos*, the naked indigenous female. This baring or exposure of the feminine body to resist mining operations in Mainit was not the first of its kind. Bontoc women had been reportedly using the strategy against the entry of American miners before the Second World War.⁴ This would be repeated in subsequent struggles for a liberated space of indigenous social

¹ See Survival International, as cited in Melisa Casumbal, *Unintelligible Bodies: Gender, Time, and the Political in the Philippines*, (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2012), 116

² An unidentified elderly woman protester to the prospectors and guards of the Benguet Consolidated Mining Corporation in Mainit, Mountain Province in 1973, cited in Zenaida Hamada-Pawid, *A People’s History of Benguet* (Baguio City: University of the Philippines, 1983).

³ Casumbal, p. 117.

⁴ *Ibid.*

existence against armed development aggression in the Cordilleras, whether these be mines or dams or mini-hydroelectric projects as long as these posed threats not only against the traditional land-based livelihoods of the people in the affected areas but also against the land itself, its ecological balance and its sustainability.⁵

This paper explores the conceptual levels where one can mine eco-philosophical meaning from the above act of a female Bontoc elder in the deliberate removal of her garments in front of a man (who is not her husband, or her doctor, or any male having an intimate relationship with her) in pursuit of an equally deliberate politico-radical purpose—to defend land, rights, and the environment. It attempts to lay bare an indigenous land ethic that underpins a political statement delivered through a deliberate unclothing of the human body—an act intended to be primarily political and activist—whether the political and the activist female is conscious of this ethic or not. We intend to argue that the “lightning decision” to defiantly expose the feminine body (i.e. the body of an elder) – whether this was done intentionally or not or whether this may or may not have been an invitation to violence both allegorically and literally conveyed by the statement, “Before you mine the mountain, mine me!” – was at the same time a reflexively philosophical audacious expression of protest and resistance.⁶

As part of the quest for the conscious and deliberate articulation of the contours and content of that elusive thought we may refer to tentatively as the Cordilleran land ethic, I explore the various levels of meaning seen in the phenomenon of the Bontoc *enlafos*. This is a previously underexplored and frequently misunderstood act of resistance against development aggression in the Cordillera.⁷ I intend to inform this project with eco-feminist

⁵ Judy Cariño and Rene Villanueva, *Dumaloy ang Ilog Chico [And So the Chico River Flows]* (Quezon City, Gabriela: National Alliance of Women’s Organizations, 1995). The newsletter of *Innabuyog*, a women’s organization in the Cordillera, recounts several other instances of “breast baring” in protest actions against mining in the region from the 1980’s to the 1990’s. See Aquino-See, Bernice, *Organizing Indigenous Women in the Cordilleras*, (Manila: Cordillera Women’s Education and Resource Center, 1989).

⁶ The deliberate undressing of the body by the female elders can definitely be read as a defiant invitation to being violated. However, in our research, we found no factual nor literary evidence that in the Cordillera, it has been done as a protest action against the violation of women by perpetrators seeking to shame not only the women themselves but the villages where they come from.

⁷ The *enlafos* has been primarily described in extant literature as a political protest tactic against development projects such as mines and dams in the Cordillera

philosophy with references to the sociology of the body as a central social and philosophical concern. I aim to employ content analysis as my primary research approach and methodology, recognizing in this philosophical engagement its importance in clarifying the contours of a Cordilleran land ethic and the role of the feminine body in the activation of this ethic as a force for social and political change.

Contextualizing the *Enlafos* in the Frame of Indigenous Resistance

When the elderly women of Mainit exposed their bodies to shame private engineers who arrived to mine gold from their lands, in as much as they were later conscious of the political intent of their act, they were at the same time largely unaware of its philosophical implications. Indeed, ever since Spaniards attempted to conquer the Cordilleras in search of Igorot gold, indigenous resistance to external economic aggression had been continuous and sustained.⁸ There was no slacking of such resistance with the advent of a new colonizer by the next century especially since the Americans apparently lost no time picking up where the Spaniards had left off, establishing the Benguet Consolidated Mining Company as early as 1903 and the Lepanto Consolidated Mining Corporation in 1936.⁹ The debilitating effects of these mines on their host communities were not lost on neighboring provinces. So was the organized and sustained resistance by Cordilleran indigenous peoples.¹⁰ In the recent unfolding of this history of resistance, women were invariably involved but not necessarily at the forefront such as in the mobilization against Benguet Corporation's open-pit mining operations in Benguet over the last two decades of the twenty-first century,¹¹ the 2002

but little has been done to explore the phenomenon philosophically. Furthermore, such classification of the act as primarily "political" or emotionally "desperate" leads to a nuanced misunderstanding of it as merely tactical in a psychological-political sense rather than philosophically imbued with meaning.

⁸ William Henry Scott, "Igorot Responses to Spanish Aims: 1576-1896," in *Philippine Studies*, 18, No. 4 (October 1970), 695-717.

⁹ Salvador P. Lopez, *Isles of Gold: A History of Mining in the Philippines* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹⁰ William Holden et al., "Exemplifying Accumulation by Dispossession: Mining and Indigenous People in the Philippines," in *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 93, No. 2, (July 18, 2011), 141-161.

¹¹ Jill Carino, "The Situation of Women in the Cordillera from the Perspective of the Militant Women's Movement in the Cordillera," in *Towards Understanding Peoples of the Cordillera: A Review Research on History, Governance, Resources, Institutions, and*

demonstration against Lepanto Consolidated,¹² and the militant movement against the Batong Buhay mines in Kalinga.¹³

Enlafos as a strategy in this same resistance has been first documented against the first American mines.¹⁴ Yet, it achieved a particular character of its own in the context of the indigenous people's struggle against the infamous dams that the Marcos regime planned to construct in the 1970s in the provinces of Mountain Province and Kalinga. Called the Chico River Basin Development Project (CRBDP), Marcos' grand plan envisioned the construction of a series of four dams that were projected to generate a total capacity of 1,010 megawatts of electricity. It was meant to offset the crunch caused by the OPEC oil price hikes of 1973 but would cause the displacement of up to 100,000 indigenous people from Bontoc and Kalinga. Six (6) barangays in Kalinga alone would be submerged in the headwaters of one dam alone, as well as up to P65 million worth of farmlands.¹⁵ A Kalinga pangat (leader) expressed it eloquently:

The question of the dam is more than political. The question is life—our Kalinga life. Apo Kabunian, the Lord of us all, gave us this land. It is sacred, nourished by our sweat. It shall become even more sacred when it is nourished by our blood.¹⁶

Expressed profoundly herein, the massive implications of the CRBDP, not only to the properties of the indigenous peoples of Bontoc in the Mountain Province and those in the villages of Lubuagan and Tomiangan in Kalinga but also to their indigenous lands and domains—nay, to their life itself, bring to the fore the existential connections between nature, bodies, and life among the Cordillera people. The desperation that brought *enlafos* its character as embodied weapon, in the very last resort, and as a declaration and display of life defiant in the face of overwhelming power is narrated

Living Traditions, (Baguio City: Cordillera Studies Center, University of the Philippines, 2001), 236-249.

¹² Vernie Yogocan-Diano, "Globalization: Sham Development for Filipino Women," in *Asia-Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development* (Siem Reap: APWLD, 2008)

¹³ Cariño, 2001.

¹⁴ Casumbal, 2012.

¹⁵ Asiaweek, "Valley of Sorrow," in *Asiaweek* 6, No. 35 (September 5, 1980), 18-31

¹⁶ Maria Ceres Doyo, *Macli-ing Dulag: Kalinga Chief, Defender of the Cordillera*, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2015).

passionately by one of its militant women in Kalinga. It is worth quoting at length:

Our people and the people from other villages forged peace pacts through our traditional systems . . . We kept vigil at night and barricaded the sites—men, women and children were all involved. We took turns in cooking, planting, keeping vigil and watching over the barricades . . . Each day, callers were assigned to provide the signal . . . [a]nd if we heard the loud cry—everyone of us stopped what we were doing—and we'd go to the site and stop any move to construct the dam . . .

. . . we all rushed to the site—we dismantled and took the tents and other equipment with us . . . brought them to the barracks in the town center—we had to march for miles . . .

At another time, during the height of the struggle, women tried to prevent the entry of a truck that was bringing in more construction materials. We laid [sic] down in the road so that the trucks would not be able to pass. When they tried to bring the materials down from the truck, others tried to physically struggle with the men—the men were becoming more aggressive—many among us were hurt—we cried but at the same time we fought back and kicked them. All the women who were there did what they thought was best to prevent any move by the men to construct the dam or set up their tents. In desperation—one woman removed her clothes—others followed. One lactating mother had to squeeze out milk from her breast to prevent a soldier from getting near her. But the men had guns, so they were able to take many of my elders, sisters and brothers to the barracks where they were detained.¹⁷

The above narrative points to resistance as a communal endeavor that involved all “men, women and children.” In a dramatic example of a *gemeinschaft*, the community moved in unison, even walking “for miles” to accomplish a common purpose. The resistance

¹⁷ Leticia Bula-at, “Indigenous Women’s Struggles: The Chico Dam Project and the Kalinga Women,” in *Kasama* 10, No. 2 (April-May 1996).

is woven through the fabric of their community life as they “cook(ed), plant(ed), and (kept) vigil ... watching over the barricades...,” lying down on the road to prevent the passage of the trucks and construction material, fighting back, and “kicking.” And when the point was reached, the *enlafos* unfolded as “one woman removed her clothes—others followed (and) one lactating mother had to squeeze out milk from her breast to prevent a soldier from getting near her.” The narrative illustrates the interweaving of the economic, the social, the political, and the cultural into a single fabric of resistance that came to a unified expressive point in the *enlafos*.

Embodying Nature in the Undressed Female

It has been argued that the human body, organic as it is, serves to perpetuate a conscientizing memory of our embeddedness in nature.¹⁸ This means that the body reminds us of the history of our relationship with nature—from oneness to alienation to current aspirations for the restoration of that oneness; or from fear to conquest and domination and to the present attempts to restore balance. It is a relationship that fluctuates between ambivalence to deliberative concern, domination, and conservation. It is a relationship driven by a rationalism that frequently eludes definition and boundedness. This memory of embeddedness is a troubled and a troubling memory. Matter—and nature, by inherence—was once considered vastly inferior to reason and to associate oneself with what is inferior can trouble the psyche to no end. The dualism—as well as other dualisms—fuels the continuing intense debates of various ecofeminisms, debates that appear symbolic of a disturbant conscientization.

That the feminine body is more intimately or specially related to nature than that of the male is a subtheme of this main theoretical debate within feminism.¹⁹ The principal theoretical dialectic may have its origins rooted in the pioneering but divergent postulations of Simone de Beauvoir (and subsequent feminists who hewed closely to her feminist founding tenets) and Françoise d’Eaubonne.²⁰ In her

¹⁸ Richard Twine, “Ma(r)king Essence: Ecofeminism and Embodiment,” in *Ethics and the Environment*, 6, No. 2 (Autumn 2001), 31–58.

¹⁹ Catherina Roach, “Loving Your Mother: On the Woman-Nature Relation,” in *Hypatia* 6, No. 1 (Spring 1991), 1–16.

²⁰ Catrina Gersdorf, “Nature and Body: Ecofeminism, Land Art, and the Work of Ana Mendieta (1948–1985),” in *Focus Gender*, by Ernst Waltrand and Ulrich Bohle (Hildesheim: ZIF, 2013).

seminal work, *The Second Sex*, De Beauvoir sought to clarify and articulate a feminist philosophy that defined femininity as a construct, that is, not born but 'made' by society.²¹ On the other hand, in *What Could an Ecofeminist Society Be?*, D' Eaubonne sought to establish ontological seams between women and nature by linking the exploitation and domination of one to the exploitation and domination of the other by a patriarchal political-economic system founded on the rationalism of modernity.²²

De Beauvoir strove for the liberation of women from their conceptual social entrapments, ironically perceived as their 'natural state.'²³ A feminist anthropologist claimed in an early work that it was the woman's symbolic connections with nature that was responsible for her oppression.²⁴ Indeed, in the not so deeply misted past, women have been portrayed as Cato's "wild and uncontrolled animals," at their worst and Thomas Aquinas' "necessary object(s)," at their best.²⁵ Even today, women have always been regarded by a patriarchal patronizing worldview as part of the background environment within which males perform and obtain achievements. These were their natural places: In households: the bedroom, the kitchen, and the flower garden. In hospitals, they were to be found at the nurses' and attendants' stations. In business and industry, they would be behind the secretaries and receptionists' desks. In short, women are seen to take mere supportive roles, "necessary object(s) . . . to provide food and drink" to men.²⁶ De Beauvoir aimed at their emergence from this background as self-autonomous individuals, freed from this 'nature' and thus from their captivity in prevailing socio-political as well as economic arrangements that were founded on this so-called 'natural state.' The De Beauvoirian feminist tradition, thus, sought the freedom of the woman by separating her from nature.

In contrast, d'Eaubonne strove to uncover and, in the process, recover the links between woman and nature, that is, the 'nature out there,' in what she was to call ecofeminism. Certainly, one

²¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010).

²² Françoise d'Eaubonne and Jacob Paisain, "What Could an Ecofeminist Society Be?", in *Ethics and the Environment*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1999), 179-184.

²³ Stacy Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2000).

²⁴ Shery Ortner, "Is Male to Female as Nature is to Culture?" in *Woman, Culture, and Society* by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds. (Stanford, CT: Stanford University Press, 1974), 68-87.

²⁵ Fidelis Morgan, (Ed.), *A Misogynist's Source Book* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989), 193, 183.

²⁶ Aquinas as cited in Morgan, 1989, *ibid*, 183.

consequence of such recovery was the intricate weaving of the feminine to the mysteries and mytho-poetics of the earth and d'Eaubonne's (and her followers') oftentimes spiritually metaphoric allegories of women as goddesses of nature. This naturally invited spirited critiques from other feminists who lambasted ecofeminism as a re-essentialist philosophy that abhorred reason, science, and theoretical rigor.²⁷ This is not so much unguided critique as one based in the classical philosophical tradition. Reason has and in many respects continues to occupy the center of philosophical musings of the real. With Cartesian dualism placing a great premium on reason, to celebrate the material body is, therefore, to court attacks of being anti-reason. So much did the goddess metaphor come to be deeply entwined with ecofeminist thought that one critic, Donna Haraway (1991), even went to the extent of declaring her preference to be a cyborg rather than be called a goddess.

Regardless of these offensives and counteroffensives—and the rift in feminism that subsequently emerged from these contrasting views—ecofeminism brought to the fore a focus on nature not only as a philological metaphor of the feminine but also as constructively associated with it.²⁸ Seeing the earth as an equally powerful image of and contextually connected with the feminine body, ecofeminism brought forth a wealth of literature on these subjects (i.e. the nature and the feminine) as spaces of political philosophical resistance and struggle.²⁹ To push the metaphor, on the one hand, the vulnerabilities of the land as the source of inputs to the treadmill of production could now be seen in the increasing vulnerabilities of women in various social and economic structures. Conversely, in the typical Filipino imagery, the picture of a naked female evokes an image of helplessness and exposure, even as—to the male eye—it is perceived to provoke aggression and the blatant exercise of power.

Nakedness has also been transformed into a performative symbol of environmental resistance and protest.³⁰ “The body is a key

²⁷ Trish Glazerbrook, “Karen Warren’s Ecofeminism,” in *Ethics and the Environment* 7, No. 2 (Autumn 2002), 12-26.

²⁸ Greta Gaard, “Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism,” in *Feminist Formations* 23, No. 2 (Summer 2011), 26-53.

²⁹ See for examples Merchant 1995, King 1990, Plumwood 2002 and 1993, Alaimo 2000, and Thompson 2006 as well as the rich anthologies edited by Salleh 2009, Plumwood and Heckman 2007, and Warren 1997.

³⁰ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, (New York: Routledge, 1997).

vehicle of protest,” claims Sutton.³¹ She goes on to argue that when women used their nakedness in public declarations of protest, the body is transformed from an “object of repression” to a symbol of rebellion.³² Such resistance has been demonstrated time and again when women deliberately display their naked bodies in protest of ecologically destructive governmental policies or technological advances by private corporations. These naked performances of protest are eloquent communications of deliberately exposed vulnerabilities transformed as affirmative actions whether these be in the protection of forests from logging concessions,³³ against genetically modified organisms,³⁴ or the violation of animal rights.³⁵ Current ecofeminist theory is, thus, also complemented by various discursive action with the naked feminine, displaying vibrant resilience in the continuing struggle for the restoration of the woman-nature connectivity.

By signification, then, the naked female can now be a subject of a focused and sustained philosophical discourse on the vulnerabilities of the earth and the possibility of its rape and exploitation. By extension, the restoration of the vigor and power of the feminine (or its recovery from male control and domination) and her conversion from being merely a tool, prop, or resource in the maintenance of male dominated structures of wealth and power to a free and self-determining subject is seen in the imagery of a rejuvenated and restored nature. The deeply expressive and provocative art of Ana Mendieta powerfully articulates this association where nature and the naked female are engaged in a communicative experience of essence, experience, and unity. Thus, in explaining her art, Mendieta exclaims that through it, “I become an extension of nature and nature becomes an extension of my body.”³⁶

³¹ Barbara Sutton, “Naked Protest: Memories of Bodies and Resistance at the World Social Forum,” in *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 8, No. 3 (April 2007), 139–148.

³² *Ibid.*, 143.

³³ Stacy Alaimo, “The Naked Word: The Transcorporeal Ethic of the Protesting Body,” in *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 20, No.1 (2010), 15–36.

³⁴ Kay C. Weaver, “Mothers, Bodies, and Breasts: Organizing Strategies and Tactics in Women’s Activism,” in *Gender and Public Relations* (London: Routledge, 2013), 124–147.

³⁵ Emily Gaarder, *Women and the Animal Rights Movement* (Camden, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

³⁶ Gloria Moure, *Ana Mendieta* (Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafa, 1996), 51.

***Enlafos* as Embodied Articulation of a Still Unarticulated Indigenous Land Ethic**

Seen in the context elucidated above, the *enlafos* is more than a political last resort strategy. It is a declaration although still inchoate of an ecofeminist ethic characterized by definitive elements. For one, the *enlafos* entails a deliberate act. This means that, second, it is declarative of a cognition of a particular relationship of power. Third, it is an ecological ethic focused on the centrality of land and its possession and ownership. Fourth, such a land ethic is feminist. And last, it is subversive in that it seeks to overthrow existing relationships of power.

Luce Irigaray once wrote, "One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it."³⁷ This deliberateness as an affirmation of femininity and the thwarting of subordination is displayed in every demonstration of the *enlafos*. The women display their consciousness of their bodies in the act of stripping in front of men who are not their husbands, lovers, or members of their immediate family. The women are aware that their very act of stripping is itself a declaration of their being women in front of an other (i.e., men). There is a decisiveness in the act, a purpose embodied in the baring of the whole person. What is distinctive is that the act is done without bowed heads, the women's sure and unflinching eyes directed surely and deliberately at the men to whom the act is communicated. The nakedness as a form of subordination has been transformed into a form of affirmative action.

To be sure, women in Mountain Province and Kalinga do perform chores undressed without false modesty even in front of strangers. Foreign tourists visiting the falls of Sadanga and Mainit nowadays are sometimes struck by women nonchalantly removing their clothes when crossing the stream or when taking a bath after doing their laundry at the riverbanks. These acts of undressing are also deliberate. What distinguishes this deliberateness from that of the *enlafos* is the consciousness of this latter act as inherently political. According to an informant, this is because even in their presence, "men are expected not to look at a woman's nakedness." The women *enlafos* are aware of the implications of their act as a deliberate decision to expose themselves before men who

³⁷ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. by Carolyn Burke and Catherine Porter (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 77.

intend to do them harm even if the perception of such men is that they are the receivers of aggressive actions whose purpose is to dislodge them from their camps. The idea is to deliberately show or demonstrate their vulnerability as women before men. The act therefore is a deliberate exposure of femininity. The act itself is an embodied message. Moreover, the body itself is the message.

Through the *enlafos*, the textuality of resistance is transformed. Gudmarsdottir says, "When the earth is declared a body, violated by human consumption and greed, powerful transformations of language take place."³⁸ Indeed, in the *enlafos*, the women seem to declare, "You are men. You are more than miners or prospectors or guards. You are men-prospectors, men-miners, men-guards. I am a woman exposed before you as woman. Now, I dare you as a man, before you mine that mountain, mine me!" This association of mountain and body (mining the mountain and mining me) signifies the cognition also of the links between the feminine body and nature itself. The nakedness of the *enlafos* starkly underscores the nakedness of the mountain. The defenselessness of both is thrust onto the focus of the consciousness of the stripper and the gazer. The act reduces relationships to the barest essentials of the natural. In the embodied demand for confrontation, the rest of the world appears to disappear. There is just man and woman and the moral-ethical relationship invoked between them. In the confrontation, Benguet Consolidated Mining Company (BCMC) has disappeared. The security agency hired to protect its employees seems to be irrelevant along with the Philippine state employed to render political or legal legitimacy. In the words of Alaimo, "the act of stripping appeals to an environmentalist desire for an ethical recognition of nature itself, liberating it from the layers of capitalist, bureaucratic, and legal vestments."³⁹

In relation to this, Gail Weiss would call such a confrontation a vivid display of the "ethics of intercorporeality" where she says bodies are made to focus on the ethics of their actions in "calling us to respond ethically to one another."⁴⁰ When the women in *enlafos* uttered to the BCMC prospectors and their guards, "Look at where you came from!" they sought to provoke from the mining personnel and their guards an ethical—though visceral—recognition of one's

³⁸ Sigridur Gudmarsdottir, "Rapes of the Earth and Grapes of Wrath: Steinbeck, Ecofeminism and the Metaphor of Rape," *Feminist Theology* 18, No.2 (2010): 206.

³⁹ Alaimo, 2010, 21.

⁴⁰ Gail Weiss, *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 5.

individual human body: the women as an embodied feminine, the mining personnel and the guard's bodies as embodied males and the land/mountain over which the struggle was being fought as the field of such a gendered struggle. In this focusing over the ethic of intercorporeality, the power relationships linking these elements of nature, femininity, and masculinity are thrown to the fore and subsequently exposed. In Mainit and in the subsequent struggle over the Chico River dam projects, however, the aftermath led to the transformation and reversal of such power relations: the men covered their faces and retreated.

We further reflect that in this power relation, clothing assumes a particular symbolic meaning. Between the protagonists, clothing becomes something that is unnatural, that is, of a human artifactuality. It functions as a barrier between the naturality of the bodies in a relationship of intercorporeality as well as between them and the earth. The act of consciously stripping away clothing is thus to consciously discard the barrier, to declare that the human body and, in the case of the *enlafos*, the naked feminine body, is no different from the earth and it is from these where, "you [i.e., the male prospectors and their male guards] come from." Again, the reaction of the men is symbolic of an almost mystical realization that is itself a manifestation of the indigenous. The men from Bontoc and Mainit, recruited to be the protectors of the mining personnel because they were known to the resisting population, were the first ones to cover their faces with their hands in shame. They were the first to back away and leave the vicinity. It was said they ran away. The other men at first laughed in derision. Then, realizing that they had missed some very important point, turned serious and also backed away.

Subverting the Order through Vulnerability

In exposing their bodies to armed men seeking to promote development aggression, nude women protesters display a remarkable courage in driving across a political and ethical statement via the exposition of vulnerability.⁴¹ Their naked bodies represent their vulnerability, and yet by juxtaposing their condition against the might of armed men, it is here that they find strength and become

⁴¹ Alaimo, 2010, 24–25.

empowered.⁴² Such a paradox is also evident in the subversive display by the women *enlafos* of Mainit. They, in fact, opened themselves to the possibility of physical and moral injury. Without clothing, the human body becomes vulnerable to cold. The feminine body is vulnerable to staring, or violation by sight, or worse to the extreme prejudice of males who consider public nakedness a sign of loose morality or an invitation to lewdness. Clothing serves as a barrier to ogling and is thus a protective cover from violation. Moreover, the uniforms of the men from the mines on the other hand function not as barrier but as mantles of authority; a signification of the legality of the violence that may be committed by the men in that uniform. The removal of the women's clothing in *enlafos*, thus, enhances both the women's vulnerability and the uniformed men's authority. It emphasizes the unequal relations of power between the two groups.

Without their clothing, the women of Mainit became more vulnerable. Without the resistance of the women of Mainit, the mountains become vulnerable. The mines need trees to be cut for timber to shore up the walls and ceilings of the mine tunnels. This rendered the mountains naked of their cover. The BCMC timber yards at Bokod and Itogon, Benguet—now long abandoned but once full of strong timber bursting at their seams—are mute testimonies to this stripping. However, by emphasizing nakedness, the women sought to display a greater power, the power of indigenous values—that it was the elderly women who were *enlafos* is an eloquent statement of this indigeneity; that the act was directed at all the prospectors and their guards but its meaning being first recognized by Mainit and Bontoc men underscored such eloquence.

In the experience of the Mainit and Bontoc women, the naked vulnerability becomes transposed into an act of defiance and a challenge: "Before you mine the mountain, mine me." Or "I dare you to violate first this body that is symbolic of your origins before you violate the earth and strip it of its wealth." It is at this confluence of all the elements of the indigenous land ethic that the philosophical foundations of the *enlafos* is revealed. These elements include an active consciousness, a focused deliberation, a declaration of the cognition of a particular relationship of power, a feminist and a subversive indigenous ethic of land and of the indigenous identity defined and forged by the historic defense of that land. This is the

⁴² Brownie, Barbara. "Naked Protest and the Revolutionary Body," *The Guardian*, (www.theguardian.com/fashion/costume-and-culture/2014/jan/15/naked-protest-revolutionary-body).

inchoate land ethic of the indigenous which echoes the recurrent theme of ecofeminism: The violation of the feminine is intimately related with the violation of nature and it is in the conscious deliberate act of exposing the vulnerabilities of the embodied indigenous female where power can be summoned and displayed in the emergent consciousness of men: to violate one is to violate the other.

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