Although this is the political implication which many people draw from *Gyn/Ecology* I do not think that this is Mary Daly's political vision. Nor do I think you can accept the book as a poetic vision only and not as an attempt to come to terms with everyday reality. Daly goes to great lengths to attack the publicly recognised women's movements as "male designed, male orchestrated, male legitimated, male assimilated". She similarly attacks the homosexual movement and feminist therapy. She criticises many women as "fembots", "Daddy's girl", "Daddy's little Titterers" in an ironic use of the labelling she is so critical of in other people. She makes specific practical political suggestions, as for example, her solution to the contraceptive problem ...."It is obvious to Hags that few gynaecologists recommend to their heterosexual patients the most foolproof of solutions, namely Miste-rectomy. The Spinsters who propose this way by our be-ing, liv-ing, speak-ing can do so with power precisely because we are not preoccupied with ways to get off the heterosexually defined contraceptive dilemma." (p.239)

Read on this level I think that the book has very deep political and theoretical failings. One most obvious example is the a-historicism of her work. The framework of Patriarchy is assumed in all instances. There is no other explanation for witch-burning for example, than that men hate and want to destroy women. No reference is made to struggles in the Church, the class divisions in society, natural disasters making for instability during that period. It is the same with the other sections of the book on genital mutilation, suttee, foot-binding, etc.

There is no way open for any criticism within the framework of the book. Daly specifically castigates those who would be critical as "fembots", token women doing Daddy's work. In this respect, I think the book must be seen to be extremely authoritarian and anti-women.

In terms of political strategy, there is no consideration of the material circumstances of most women's lives, certainly no consideration of how men and women might live without exploitation and domination since it is presupposed that that is impossible, and to strive to do so is merely a distraction and draining of our energy which should be woman-centred. There is no attention paid to the class nature of capitalist, or any other society, and the bearing this has on Patriarchal power relations in such a society, or the functions Patriarchy fulfils in class society.

Despite such criticisms *Gyn/Ecology* does raise one of the most fundamental political and personal problems for women .... that is, given the violence which has been, and continues to be, practised against women, how is it possible to create a society where women and men can live in harmony.

**Architect or Bee? The Human/Technology Relationship** by Mike Cooley, published in *Australia* by TNC, $8.95. Reviewed by Peter Mason.

In 1917 Bertrand Russell wrote a speech for the war workers of Glasgow dealing with a pressing problem that is every bit as pressing today: how, as an individual, to avoid being crushed by the huge, impersonal institutions of the twentieth century. Above all how to escape the tendency to greed and self interest which, he said, modern capitalism forces upon all who are not heroic or exceptionally fortunate.

"Vast organisations", he told them, "are an inevitable element in modern life, and it is useless to aim at their abolition .... It is true that they make the preservation of individuality more difficult, but what is needed is a way of combining them with the greatest possible scope for individual initiative.

One very important step towards this end would be to render democratic the government of every organisation .... There can be no real freedom or democracy until the people who do the work in a business also control its management".

In the sixty years that have passed since that speech the problems of the individual in the face of these vast organisations have grown so great that most of us, being neither heroic nor exceptionally fortunate, feel generally overwhelmed by them.

**Architect or Bee** throws a unique and brilliant spotlight on these problems of modern living. It shows how a group of workers in England, far from being daunted by the size and technical power of their institution, have used their imagination to discover how that very technology could be used efficiently and profitably for socially useful purposes. And not only did they show it: they actually did it!

Mike Cooley's title, **Architect or Bee**, highlights the human importance of retaining some individual initiative in the processes of production. It comes from a passage in *Das Kapital*:

A bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of its cells; but what distinguishes the worst of architects from the best of bees in this. The architect raises the structure in imagination before it is erected in reality. At the end of every labor process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement.

Cooley himself is an industrial designer who has seen his profession changed out of recognition by the coming of the computer. Yet he's saddened by his observation that the human liberation
promised by automation and robot devices doesn't seem to be happening. Instead, the power of high technology is being used to remove not only the tedium and the unpleasantness but also the skill and the initiative from challenging jobs. The position of the worker is thereby literally degraded.

But this is all subjective; theoretical; and to some extent arguable. What about the action that Cooley and his fellow-workers have been engaged in at Lucas industries in Britain?

The Lucas Aerospace Division was formed as part of a "rationalisation" program during Harold Wilson's white heat of the technological revolution. GEC had already been rationalised, leading to the sacking of 60,000 staff. One of the sacked was my friend Jerry Booth, who had worked for GEC for over 20 years. The shock of being fired and the problems of relocation were too much for Jerry; he died not long after at the age of 47.

So Mike Cooley and his friends set up what they called the Combine Committee at Lucas Aerospace to defend their positions against the kind of tactics that had been used by GEC. But not content with purely defensive action, they started to ask some keen questions about what they really ought to be doing with their collective expertise, ranging from fitting and turning through all of the engineering skills, including such fancy modern techniques as computer-aided design.

As good technocrats they knew that science and technology are already sufficiently advanced to free the world from most of its squalor, poverty and disease if we so choose.

Yet working at Lucas they were made painfully aware of the appalling gap between that which technology could provide for society and that which it actually does provide. There they were, pouring their skill and effort into making gadgets for that most stupidly conceived and ill-timed of all aeroplanes, the Concorde, while in the city around them hundreds of old age pensioners were dying from cold through lack of a decent heating system.

They saw the most sophisticated and profitable technical equipment being rushed into service while even more sophisticated devices — human beings — were being wasted by the growing structural unemployment. Cooley points out that about 180,000 building workers are out of a job, yet about seven million people are living in semi-slum conditions. In Cooley's own London area, 20 per cent of the schools don't even have an indoor toilet.

So they set to work collectively and produced an alternative Corporate Plan for products that could be made, and mostly made profitably, with the existing machine tools and skills at Lucas Aerospace. The very thoroughness with which the Plan was developed, both in the engineering and the economic aspects, gave the group a strength that it had previously lacked, as shown by this revealing extract.

_Before we even started the Corporate Plan, our members at the Wolverhampton Plant visited a centre for children with Spina Bifida and were horrified to see that the only way the children could propel themselves about was literally by crawling on the floor, so they designed a vehicle which subsequently became known as HOB CART. It was highly successful, and the Spina Bifida Association of Australia wanted to order 2,000 of these. Lucas would not agree to manufacture them because, they said, it was incompatible with their product range. At that time the Corporate Plan was not developed and so we were unable to press for the manufacture of HOB CART. However, the design and the development of this product were significant in another sense. Mike Parry Evans, its designer, said that it was one of the most enriching experiences of his life when he carried the hobcart down and saw the pleasure on the child's face. It meant more to him, he said, than all the design activity he had been involved in up till then. For the first time in his career he actually saw the person who was going to use the product he had designed. He was working in a multi-disciplinary team together with a medical type doctor, a physiotherapist and a health visitor. I mention this because it illustrates very graphically that it is not true to suggest that aerospace technologists are only interested in complex esoteric technical problems. It can be far more enriching for them if they are allowed to relate their technology to really human and social problems._

Mike Cooley then describes some of the socially useful projects that have been developed under the Alternative Plan. Although there is a wide mix of products, some for British conditions, some for the Third World, they avoid what Cooley refers to as the unhappy tendency for alternative technology to provide products which are little more than playthings for the middle class in their architect-built houses.

The projects they are working on are things such as a heating system, based on a heat pump (with the old-age pensioners particularly in mind); a hybrid petrol-electric engine for a motor car that would halve fuel consumption and last for at least...
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15 years; a life-support system for use in operations for heart attack patients en route to intensive care.

There is a road/rail car, a vehicle that runs equally well on the road or on the railway lines. This could lead to a really integrated, safer and more efficient transport system in a country such as Britain; whilst in developing countries it has the enormous advantage of going up gradients ten times steeper than the maximum for a train, cutting the cost of track building and laying to one-fifteenth.

The portable kidney machine is a particularly poignant example. Lucas Aerospace had been trying to sell off its kidney machine division to a company in Switzerland. The Lucas workers found to their horror that 3,000 people die in Britain every year because they cannot get a machine. In Birmingham, if you are under 15 or over 45 you are, as the medics put it so nicely "allowed to go into decline". Unless, of course, you have enough money to pay for one privately.

So the Lucas plan didn’t just protect the kidney machine division but went on to the design of a portable version enabling the sufferers to continue a more active life and to retain their dignity.

Architect or Bee is written simply and with touches of Cooley’s puckish wit which give it sparkle. Bill Richardson, Assistant Secretary of the ACTU, sets it well in the Australian context in his Foreword written specially for the Australian edition.

I can perhaps best convey its essential flavor by quoting a passage in which Cooley is making his plea for human-centred systems of organisation:

"The new technologies highlight the fact that we are at a unique historical turning point. We must not allow our common sense to be bludgeoned into silence by technocratic and scientific jargon, nor should we be intimidated by the determinism of science and technology into believing that the future is already fixed. The future is not "out there" in the sense that America was out there before Columbus went to discover it. It has yet to be built by human beings and we do have real choices, but these choices will have to be fought for, and the issues are both technical and political.

If we ignore this we may find ( and here he is quoting Norbert Wiener, the founding father of cybernetics) "All our inventions and progress seem to result in ending material forces with intellectual life, and in stultifying life into a material force".

A microphone is not an ear, a camera is not an eye and a computer is not a brain. We should not allow ourselves to be so confused or wrapped up in the technology that we fail to assert the importance of human beings.

We have to decide whether we will fight for our right to be the architects of the future, or allow a tiny minority to reduce us to bee-like responses.

Architect or Bee is an important book. I would not be surprised if it becomes a classic, the modern equivalent of Bertrand Russell’s earlier foray into the same field.


Alan Roberts, an activist in the anti-war and anti-uranium mining movements, is a marxist who takes environmental problems seriously. In the last years he has written a number of articles on environmental politics, the nuclear issue and the implications of ecological issues for left wing thought and practice. This book, launched early last year in Sydney, brings together reworked versions of some of his earlier writings along with much that is new.

The whole that Roberts has constructed out of this material is not always as coherent as he intends it to be. The transitions between sections are sometimes as obscure as those of the philosopher Hegel whom he occasionally mentions. An introduction could have been a great service to the reader.

Nevertheless, it is not difficult to discover the main themes of the Self-Managing Environment. Roberts’ principle contention is that environmental degradation, in both capitalist and non-capitalist countries, is primarily a consequence of consumerism.

"Consumer values" refer to a complex of quite different goals and motivations: possessions as a major source of self respect, the future valued according to the hopes it holds out for fresh consumer satisfactions, the social system judged by its capacity to provide them (or the illusion of them), the continual creation of new commodities and new demands - all accompanied by, and depending upon, the downgrading of competing values and alternative satisfactions. (37-38)

Roberts exposes the reactionary views of those who tell us that we must all tighten our belts for the sake of the environment. But he also criticises the socialists who think that environmental problems will go away once capitalist ownership is eliminated.

Consumerism, Roberts thinks, is an understandable consequence of a system of production in which workers are deprived, dominated and manipulated.

That is to say, to continue with the alienated workplace is necessarily to prolong the sway of