Multispecies Ecofeminism:
Ecofeminist Flourishing of the Twenty-First Century

by

Chelsea Power
Bachelor of Arts, University of Victoria, 2016

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We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

Ecofeminism has had a nonlinear developmental path. Although it was celebrated as a potentially revolutionary project in the 1970s, by the time climate change and environmental crises had worked their way into mainstream discourse ecofeminism had become practically unheard of. The purpose of this thesis is to reflect on the failure of early ecofeminism and to explore ecofeminism's potential as a transformative project of the twenty-first century. This thesis is motivated by my own personal experience of ecofeminism as transformative and also by what I would call a recent resurgence of interest in ecofeminism by young students, budding feminists, and fledgling environmentalists that understand the climate and environmental crises as fundamentally linked to the oppressions of colonial capitalist-patriarchy.

Recounting the origin, history, and marginalization of the project of ecofeminism, I explore the rift between materialist and spiritual/cultural approaches to argue that the effectiveness of ecofeminism is dependent upon a collaborative recovery from the damages done by extensive anti-essentialism critiques. The onto-epistemology of our current paradigm—defined by neoliberal capitalism and colonial patriarchy—limits response to the environmental crises of our times to that of incremental policy change that is more symbolic than substantive. I argue that, in order to escape the chains of the neoliberal/capitalist/patriarchal subject that are cast upon us by these predatory onto-epistemologies, we must envisage ways to be human otherwise; in reciprocal relationships with more-than-human nature. As a prefigurative project that centres the more-than-human yet maintains a comprehensive intersectional anti-oppressive framework, a contemporary 'multispecies ecofeminism' can endow us with this potentiality. In our times of immense ecological degradation and 'point-of-no-return' deadlines, ecofeminism is a needed 'third story' that resonates as revolutionary with young scholars of the twenty-first century.

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Preface

I have been lost most of my life.

I have been lost in many ways at many times.

In my early 20s I was lost overnight in the woods with no light. But I was lost before that. I have always been lost.

I do not know my ancestors. My mother was adopted into a family of intergenerational trauma. My father lost his family before I came around. My family has always been lost. We jumped around. I lived in eight different houses before I lived on my own. But I know I have never really been alone.

I fell in love with trees the same year I learned about clear-cuts. The first time I saw a clear-cut I thought of the elephant graveyard. I felt an immense loneliness, I cried. My mother explained logging to me, I cried. I have a lot of feelings, I always have.

When you drive North along Highway One there are beautiful trees on either side of the road. But if you stop and walk into the woods it takes only a moment to reach the devastation: an abandoned battlefield of man vs. nature. Tree corpses lie amongst their decapitated kin. Not worth enough money, my mother explained to me. I cried.

Ecofeminism is a story of relationships. Relationships amongst all earth-bound beings. I feel love for trees, I care for the fate of the deer and the wolves and the bear. I wonder how to act when I next see a cougar. I know it will get shot if I call it in. I wonder how to embody what Haraway names response-ability, meaning the responsibility to be responsive to the needs that are not my own. Ecofeminism helped me connect the oppressions I have experienced and seen in my life to my relationships with human and other-than-human nature. Ecofeminism taught me that everything I have ever learned was framed wrong. That there is no need to control nature, that the concept of nature is itself a fallacy.

When I started caving, caving club president Mike told me there are two sorts of cavers: There are gearheads and there are hippies. I am a hippy-caver. Caves are cold and dark. Water flows through the land and carves the limestone into karst. When I am in a cave all else falls away. When I am underground all the problems and stresses of the world of culture are forgotten. Death is always just a step away. Caves in this region are inhospitable. Nothing can live where the sun does not reach. You can tell from the scratches left on the wall and the scattered bones, remnants of the creatures that wandered in but never wandered out. But caves are really more than that, like everything, caves are a complexity of relationships.

Karst ecosystems are special. Karst is a limestone landscape formed at the bottom of the sea a very long time ago; billions of decomposed sea creatures cemented into stone. Raised up above sea level, limestone is soft, porous, and easily dissolved. Karst carved away: cave systems are a network of lakes, streams, ponds, waterfalls, and rivers that run above ground and then underground, snaking up and down again. Karst landscapes contain some of the largest concentrations of biodiversity in the world. And our old growth kin love it. But karst ecosystems

are sensitive: when you cut down the trees that live on a karst landscape there is nothing to hold the soil there anymore, and it washes away. It is difficult to restore karst ecosystems.

When I am underground, I experience an embodied knowledge of oneness. I am one with the world. I think this in an abstract sense when I am not underground. But when I am underground, I know it. I know it because I feel it, we are all one: together we make up the living earth.

When I emerge from the cave I am overwhelmed by colours and smells and feelings. The green is almost too much, the light is almost too bright. My kin. Life has a specific smell. It is beautiful, vibrant and fresh, it is impossible to describe. It is difficult to discern until you have gone without it. When I emerge from a cave, I know all is one, and I know I am alive. When you forget about death you also forget life. I am alive.

Sociology taught me words to frame the suffering I have seen and experienced in the world. Sociology taught me that life isn't fair. That the idea of fairness is a construct utilized to keep the oppressed from revolting against their oppressors. Sociology allowed me to look at the world in a new way, which ultimately led me to ecofeminism. The first thing I learned about environmental sociology is that it goes against everything sociology fought for in the beginning. Separating the study of humans from the study of 'nature,' this was also fundamental in the feminist fight for gender equality. But humans are nature too. Ecofeminism takes this knowledge and puts it into feeling. Separating feeling from knowing is part of the nature culture dualism. Man–woman, mind–body, human–nonhuman, culture–nature, white–black, subject–object. The world is ruled by false binaries. Ecofeminism demands that we break away from these false binaries, and that we feel for and with each other, that we act with care and that we think with love. That we acknowledge that we have been wrong for so long. That the concept of the individual human entity is a fallacy. There is no such thing as an individual. We are all made up of an incalculable collection of intra-acting beings in relationships to each other.

Academia taught me to separate my feelings from my work. That women are too emotional, and that to succeed I must pretend I do not feel. I have a lot of feelings. Sociology is often depressing—I spent a lot of my undergrad skipping class to study alone—where I could read and feel freely. Feelings have not really had a place in sociology. But ecofeminism is built on feelings. Ecofeminism is built on connections that you feel, embodied and material. Ecofeminism taught me that patriarchal pedagogy is wrong. Emotion does not obstruct thinking. Thinking without feeling is dangerous, thinking without feeling leads to acting without care. Acting without care leads to environmental destruction, and multifaceted exploitations. Acting without love will bring about the destruction of all.

Feminist and social theory has been obsessed with the discursive for a long time. And language is important, but it is not all. Material ecofeminisms understand the complexity of the world—always already social and material, never either or. Material ecofeminisms connect the exploitation of women, people of colour, Indigenous peoples, queer peoples, other-than-human animals, and the poor, to the exploitation of nature. As long as humans are understood as separate from nature—as conquerors of nature—no one will be liberated. We are not alone.

My mother used to tell me that god is in all things. I do not think she realized how far she had wandered from her monotheistic Christian upbringing to teach me this earth-based spirituality.

I have always had a lot of feelings. Often these feelings have felt displaced. Lost. Ecofeminism helped me understand that you cannot dismantle the master's house with the master's tools.[1] My ecofeminism is motivated by love. Love is not a word that is used much in academia. I entered academia because I wanted to make enough money to rise above my social standing, I was tired of being poor. But instead I learned that value is not defined by cost, that money doesn't matter when the world is crumbling under our feet.

There was a time in my life when I did not identify as a feminist. I am an ecofeminist. I will never fight for women's rights, not only. Because this is a fallacy. Liberation for one must be liberation for all. I refuse to let the world crumble around me as I push for equal pay. I do not want equal pay if I cannot emerge from a cave and be overwhelmed by the colours and smells and feelings of life. I do not want equal pay if it is built on the exploitation of my kin. I will not let the urge to succeed drown out my feelings of love. I will not let the need to survive overcome the ability to live. Until we are all liberated from the colonial patriarchal structures that hold us down, there can be no multispecies flourishing. Flourishing is always mutual.

Writing a thesis on ecofeminism has been very difficult. I know that I must adhere to the rules of the neoliberal university, I want to teach them that ecofeminism is worthwhile. That we must love and care for each other. That success in the colonial capitalist patriarchy is hollow. I want to share the embodied knowledge of oneness, of acceptance, of life and death, the beauty of diversity, the subjectivity of knowledge, the importance of lichen and slime mold and oak trees. I hope that the truth will shine through my sociological jargon, and that I can help others discover their own ecofeminism. Because I think ecofeminism is the feminism of our times. It can be hard to think through climate anxiety, but we don't really have to.

Ecofeminism is goal oriented and prefigurative. It never forgets the complexity of the past or the uncertainty of the present, yet always works towards a future of multispecies flourishing and the ultimate goal of planetary survival. The ecofeminist imaginary acts like a map; by imagining a future in which all diverse earth-bound kin flourish, ecofeminism helps guide the way.

Our revolution will be motivated by love and built on the respect and reciprocity of our relationships with human and more-than-human kin.

Introduction

I am consistently astonished by the gifts bestowed upon me from the earth. The light of the full moon on a lightly tread elk trail; the courtship calls of humpbacks in the shallows of the Salish Sea; the abundance of salmon berries *just* within my reach: I accept these offerings with no trepidation, but I know I am responsible to give back. I understand that my relationship with more-than-human nature demands that I do more. More than survive, more than procreate, and more than thrive. I must do more than what I thought my life would be, because no life is lived alone. This is why I am here.

I did not think this day would come so soon, but in a way, I have been ready since I submitted my application to the graduate program. I always knew that I did not belong. Today is the day that I am faced with the question I have been asking myself since my first undergraduate class: "Why are you here?" It is the first week of my graduate degree. I am sitting in my professor's office. A proud man. I am nervous; I do not want to out myself. I dance around the word that has been the focus of my work since my first Environmental Sociology course. 'Ecofeminism' I think. "I am interested in the ways that feminism intersects with the environment and climate change" I say. He looks at me. The weight of his stare collects like dread in my chest: I see my own self-doubt reflected in his eyes. I feel a shock of unease; it is too early to reveal that I do not belong. Clear and concise, he asks: "How does feminism have anything to do with the environment or climate change?" ("why are you here?").

I took a course, Gender and society: this was my first taste of gender-based analysis. The instructor handed out a survey: The Feminist perspective scale. Each question was scored 1 – 5, (1) disagree (2) slightly disagree (3) neutral (4) slightly agree (5) agree. The back of the survey read: Intersectional feminist, radical feminist, liberal feminist, socialist feminist, cultural feminist. "Are you a feminist?" the paper asked me. "I don't know" I replied.

How do you explain something you know with you heart? I wish I could tell you that I formulated a quick-witted and informative response to my professor's very direct inquiry. That he was curious and interested in my work, so I shared my knowledge with him: feminism is complexly intertwined with the environment and climate change. But that is not how this story goes. When I fled from his office I was shaken and irritated. I did not present myself well, but, in my defense, I was not prepared to defend a thesis I had yet to write. I should have known better.

In fall 2019 I had my first guest lecture in a 400-level Feminist Sociology course. It was the third year of my graduate degree; I had gained some experience and had a good grasp of my topic area. I was not proud, but I was confident. After all, ecofeminism has been my focus for years: since I first encountered it in my undergraduate. This time I do not dance around the word, the students do not know the history: they do not have the bias.[2] Besides, they are taking a feminist theory course in the age of climate change. I introduce ecofeminism. I explain that ecofeminism is intersectional and nonanthropocentric: ecofeminists visualize the multiplicity of intersecting inequalities as a web. When we understand that inequalities form a web, we can see that in order to address any one form of oppression it is always necessary to address the entirety of the web—including the exploitation of more-than-human nature and nonhuman animals (Plumwood, 1993). I explain that ecofeminism connects ecology with feminism and sees the exploitation of nature to be inexplicably connected to the exploitation of women, especially clear in resource extraction and reproductive labour (Shiva & Mies, 1993; Salleh, 2000). Ecofeminists know that there is no liberation for women—or any oppressed social group—without the liberation of more-than-human nature (Shiva & Mies, 1993; and others). I discussed the negative impact of a mechanistic Euro-western worldview: treating nature as something only useful for human extraction and consumption leads to environmental destruction; climate change; the sixth great extinction (Kolbert, 2014). I situate the current Euro-western onto-epistemology[3] historically—I tell them of the transformation from an organistic worldview of premodern Europe to a mechanistic worldview forwarded by Enlightenment philosophers and the dichotomous and domineering epistemology of the Scientific Revolution (Merchant, 1980). I want the students to understand that this predatory ontology (Ruder & Sanniti, 2019) and epistemology has a history: that the way it is now is not the way it has always been and is not the way it has to be (Merchant, 1980). That there are ways of being human otherwise (Shotwell, 2011), and that ecofeminism can show us the way.

That meeting in the first week of my graduate degree—that one with the proud professor and The Question—reminded me that these spaces are not meant for me. Luckily, I am a sociologist, and we have a term for people who arbitrate access to social roles, institutions, and structures: gatekeepers (Sauders, 2006). Words matter. Language helps us interpret the world. This word helped me frame my experience with my proud professor productively: he is a gatekeeper, but *I am already through* the institutional gates.

Questions after my guest lecture went differently. Students were excited to learn about a feminism that centers the more-than-human. In our age of climate change and environmental destruction, many young people are burdened with what is now called 'eco-anxiety' and 'climate anxiety' (Taylor & Murray, 2020). This refers to the overwhelming grief and fear associated with the knowledge that more-than-human nature is in peril. These "wicked problems" (Ludwig, 2001) are an integral component of the lives of many young people, hence anti-oppressive work that does not consider the impending doom of the world as we know it doesn't really resonate. In the words of Ynestra King (1989) "What is the point of partaking equally in a system that is killing us all?" (p. 115). One student expressed to me that she felt she had found her feminism: ecofeminism resonated with her. She is not alone. I saw myself in her. "But why," she asked, "am I only hearing about this now?" Well, now that's a Good Question.

Sociology allowed me to open my eyes to the social world. I read Marx; I awoke to my class consciousness. I realized that—despite my parents' deep-set feelings of shame—poverty was not our fault. My supervisor once asked me what attracted me to Sociology, I repeated Marx's words to her, the ones written on his gravestone: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it" (1845). I said, sociology is for me because I want to change the world. I was naive. My supervisor expressed this to me, though she did not use those words. "Well," she said, "that is not really the path Sociology has taken."

I am very concerned about the peril of more-than-human nature: about the end of the world as we know it. Climate change; the sixth great extinction; the anthropo-/capitalo-/plantationo-cene; the great dithering; and (perhaps to some) the rapture: it is quite clear that the way that most human society currently relates to the more-than-human is perpetuating serious problems. Anthropogenic climate change: we are causing the acceleration of the earth's changing climate. This will destroy us, and it will destroy more than us.

I remember my first time underground. It was dark, damp, cold, and enclosed. I had borrowed a headlamp from the caving club, but it wasn't working. I was told to stick close to Jim Jacek, the trip leader, and handed a mag light on a string. If Jim's light wasn't bright enough for me to see, I was to use the mag light. I had it gripped in my teeth. Illuminating the walls of Wolf Creek Cave with a flashlight in my mouth was a changing point in my life. I was different after that, more aware. I had a similar experience in my first social theory course, prior to transferring to the Sociology department. We learned about Althusser, ideology, and state apparatuses

(1970). I felt like I had suddenly awoken from a deep sleep I had not realized I was in; as if up until that point I had been fumbling through the absolute darkness of a cave utilizing only touch to find my way. My light turns on: I can see the structure of the cave/social world. The cave walls: the social structures and institutions that shape human experience in the world differently. And there! A path forward. Social theory is like a light in the darkness of the social world. When you shine a light in a cave you can see the way on. I could not find my way without a light, and I want to go deeper. But sociology has not prepared me for this. Sociology has not prepared me for eco-anxiety; the responsibility to fix it before it is too late; nor the knowledge that substantive change is needed but it is not coming. I think, perhaps, that sociology could not prepare me for this because this is something that cannot be understood fully with the onto-epistemology forwarded in sociology (McMahon & Power, 2020). Without the reductionism of the Euro-western scientific worldview, sociology would not exist (McMahon & Power, 2020). And to say that the social world is always already the natural world: the world of matter and biology and stuff. That culture *is* nature. Well, that hasn't gone over very well.

When I am exploring a cave, I have a light, it allows me to see. I would not be able to venture into the underground without a light. Sociology is the spotlight setting on my headlamp in a cave that is the anthropocentric understanding of human society; what we consider the social world. In a cave there is often many different paths: some are wide, some are tight, some are wet, some are dry. They are all dangerous; some more so than others. Some paths lead to a dead-end, others go in a circle. Many different paths go forward, lots of them lead to the same place. No matter which path you take, you are always lost. This is a caver's secret. Nobody really knows where they are going or how to get there. When you have a light attached to your head (just above your eyes) you can see a path. But the light only illuminates what is just ahead of you—usually the widest path—the light makes it seem like there is only one way forward. This can be a problem if the widest path is not the best way to go. It takes a bit of practice to learn not to rush through: it's important to stop and look around. There is more than one path.

Ecofeminism is something different altogether.

Chapter 1: Ecofeminism

As a community of radical scholars and eco-justice activists, what have we lost by jettisoning these earlier feminist and ecofeminist bodies of knowledge?

—Gaard, 2011, p. 27

My first dally with ecofeminism started as an undergrad research paper for my Environmental Sociology course: A feminist analysis of climate change. I read MacGregor's (2010) *A Stranger Silence Still: The Need for Feminist Social Research on Climate Change*, Gaard's (2015) *Ecofeminism and Climate Change*, and Bee, Rice, and Trauger's (2015) *A Feminist Approach to Climate Change Governance: Everyday and Intimate Politics*. I was intrigued. My life had become defined by my obsession with cave exploration, my ventures with the UVic caving club had brought me to obscure and untamed parts of Vancouver Island. The diverse flowering of nonhumans in these places was juxtaposed with the brutal remains of the giants which once populated these lands (before colonialism, before logging). I was filled with curiosity and love and for more-than-human nature, but also fear and despair. What have we done to these lands? It was heart breaking, the eco-anxiety that came along with my rejuvenated passion for nature. Climate change, I knew, had to be stopped. I am no climate scientist, but I care. A lot. Gaard (2015) actually named ecofeminism in her analysis of climate change and governance, and the other two articles dance around the word but are ultimately a part of what I have come to consider ecofeminism. The association of femininity with 'nature'—both terms rejected by the dominant patriarchal voice of traditional sociology—resonated with me in a way no other social theory, perspective, or discourse had before. The questions of: why, if nature has so often been deemed the realm of the feminine, are women and feminist analyses not a major part of the climate change discourse? I was hooked. Perhaps this is my feminism.

Ecofeminism felt natural. Natural, what does that mean? I know a naturalness in the way I feel, an embodied sense of fit—of flow and of ease. But the word 'nature' is a bit of a problem point. Because, what constitutes 'nature,' really? Nature is a social construct. It is a word we use in reference to what 'culture' is not. This is, of course, a fallacy. Humans, and human cultures, are always already nature and vice versa. I think I need to differentiate; moving forward I will utilize the term Nature (with a capital N) to refer to Nature as a social construct and nature (with a lower-case n) to refer to the material reality of the nonhuman world. However, Nature as a social construct is inseparable from the material reality of nature. To emphasize that, when I

refer to both simultaneously, I will use the term (N)nature. Naturalness, then, I will think of as a state of ease: something that is not forced or created. So, I am defining naturalness as a feeling. Like crying in the rain, ecofeminism just felt natural. I hope you aren't confused, but don't worry if you are: it's only natural.

You would think that this aforementioned 'naturalness' would make writing a thesis on ecofeminism easy for me. I will not blame you for thinking that, I thought it myself. However, as my journey began it quickly became clear that this would be no walk in the park. What is ecofeminism, really? I should probably know before I try to write about it. And people kept asking me. Relentlessly. What is ecofeminism? Well, I thought, perhaps if I figure out who the ecofeminists are, I can derive a definition from their works. But finding out who the ecofeminists are actually turned out to be quite difficult: I came to the realization that many of the theorists I consider the cream of the ecofeminist crop do not actually identify as ecofeminists. And what about ecological feminisms, feminist ecology, and gender and the environment? What are these things that are specifically not ecofeminism, yet clearly attempting to address the same topic? Can I consider them ecofeminism as well? Should I? If not, why not? And, importantly, why did these other names come into being? Is there something *wrong* with ecofeminism?

Well, as it turns out ecofeminism is surprisingly contentious. It was difficult for me to find any real exploration of what ecofeminism is outside of critiques of academic ecofeminism—and most subjects of critiques date back to the 1970s and 1980s. Critics argued that ecofeminism is essentialist to its core, that engagement with more-than-human nature is apolitical and unfeminist, and that ecofeminism that utilizes affect and poetic discursive modes are incoherent and illogical. Well! What exactly have I got myself into? Ecofeminism is a minefield! No wonder I've had so much difficulty finding works engaging with ecofeminism, by the mid 1990s it was basically a pariah. Take Noel Sturgeon, for example, who in 1997 shared her struggle with the label 'ecofeminist,' stating, "in presenting my work in academic feminist contexts, I was assumed to be making "essentialist" and therefore useless arguments just because I was writing about 'ecofeminism'" (p. 168). It seems ecofeminism was infected, and theorists wanted to maintain their two metres.[4] In fact, labelling one's work 'ecofeminism' became such a taboo that theorists began to create new labels and terms for the ecofeminist work they were doing so as to avoid catching whatever it is ecofeminism had come down with. Terms such as 'ecological feminism,' 'feminist ecology,' and 'gender and the environment,' originated as consequence.

Although feminist political ecology (FPE) is also rooted in ecofeminism, Nirmal (2016) explains that FPE emerged specifically in response to the blindness to difference in political ecology studies. She writes, "By noting that differently classed, raced, sexualized and gendered beings have different relationships to nature – in other words, by showing how culture has everything to do with nature and vice versa – FPE positively contributed to a field previously dominated solely by political economy questions" (Nirmal, 2016, p. 233). It has become abundantly clear that ecofeminism is more than the academic works of the few authors that choose to take the risk of self-identifying as ecofeminists. Which means it was back to the drawing board for me. Who are the ecofeminists? Okay, first I will figure out what ecofeminism is, and then I will use that knowledge to decide who is an ecofeminist.

Defining ecofeminism is no easy task. One thing is for certain: ecofeminism is not just one thing. There are ecofeminist theoretical approaches and perspectives, but there is also ecofeminism as social movement,[5] ecofeminist spiritualities, and, some argue, ecofeminist discourses.[6] I think perhaps it is more useful to think of ecofeminism as something that is done in various ways, more than it is to think of it as a thing in itself. The Cambridge Dictionary defines 'project' as "a piece of planned work or activity that is completed over a period of time and intended to achieve a particular aim" (2020). I'm not sure ecofeminism can be properly defined as a planned piece of work; nor that ecofeminism is something that can be completed over a period of time; but ecofeminism is certainly done in order to achieve a particular aim. The aim of ecofeminism is to liberate nature and all those oppressed social groups that are equated to nature from the oppression of colonial capitalist-patriarchy.[7] Framing ecofeminism as a project allows us to understand the diversity of theoretical perspectives, approaches, social movement, spiritualities, and discourses; all as a part of the project of ecofeminism. Thus, it may be productive to think of ecofeminism as a project as opposed to any one thing. This allows us flexibility in what we consider ecofeminism and helps free us from the reductionism inherent in Enlightenment thinking. So, what is ecofeminism? Well I want to avoid defining ecofeminism absolutely, as I believe that will close too many doors and we are just getting started here. That being said, I need something to move forward with. Ecofeminism, then, can be considered a project for social change which aims to liberate nature and all those associated with nature from the oppression and exploitation of colonial capitalist-patriarchy for the ultimate goal of reciprocal multispecies flourishing.

Since its time of inception ecofeminism has found itself with a bit of a bad reputation. Founded in the 1970s and gaining ground in the 1980s, by the early 1990s ecofeminism was effectively thrown out of mainstream academia. Gaard notes, "Feminist graduate students were being advised against undertaking ecofeminist approaches in their dissertations, and scholars were advised against publishing works with the word "ecofeminism" in their titles or keywords" (2011, p. 41). What happened with ecofeminism that led academics and theorists to dismiss it so thoroughly? Rejected by environmentalists and social theorists for insisting that the environment is a feminist issue, shunned by mainstream feminists who do not see engaging with the more-than-human as productive feminist work, and suffering a deep blow from early critiques of essentialism, ecofeminism has lived in the margins of feminist and critical environmental theory for decades. The ecological crises of the modern day are feminist issues, and theorists emerging from the intersection of feminism and environmentalism are at the frontlines of academic environmental work today. At such a critical time for feminism and for the environment it seems crucial to ask: why has ecofeminism been ignored in feminist and environmentalist academic thought? Has ecofeminism simply been ignored, or has it been purposely silenced and erased? Why and how did ecofeminism fall from favour? What, if anything, could the current resurgence of ecofeminism signify for the future of the living earth? And what can the project of ecofeminism do to bring about a future of multispecies flourishing? These questions have been crucial to my exploration of ecofeminism and, I hope, my thesis will answer these questions for you. This chapter aims to help my readers develop a solid foundation for the journey into ecofeminism that you have now joined me on. I begin this chapter by introducing ecofeminism as academic discourse followed by an exploration of the origin and development of ecofeminism, I then detail the anti-essentialism backlash of the late 1980s and early 1990s, and conclude with the path of recovery ecofeminism set out on in response to its dismissal from mainstream social theory.

Academic Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is not easily contained in a single definition; we could think of it as project among very different kinds of ecofeminists to engage the degradation of the natural world and the oppression of women as fundamentally interconnected problems. Foundational to ecofeminism is the insight that there are important connections between the oppression of women and the degradation of the natural world: ecofeminists describe and critique the

historical, political, cultural, psychological, and spiritual associations between women and nature and expose the interconnected subjugation, oppression, and exploitation of women, more-than-human-nature, nonhuman animals, and other oppressed social groups. Ecofeminism is goal-oriented and transformative. While critiquing the status-quo and deconstructing the false binary between 'human' and 'nature' are key, ecofeminists also work to imagine and construct alternative solutions which, in engaging gender and the environment, address the continued exploitation of and violence against women, other marginalized groups, and more-than-human nature. Ecofeminism not only represents the academic and scholarly intervention of feminist understandings with ecological aims, but also refers to the efforts of diverse multitudes of women to protect and appreciate the earth, and to disempower the patriarchal structures that allow the oppression and commodification of women and more-than-human nature to prevail. Carlassare states that, "Ecofeminism derives its cohesion not from a unified epistemological standpoint, but more from the shared desire of its proponents to foster resistance to formations of domination for the sake of human liberation and planetary survival" (1994, p. 221).

Ecofeminism contains a multitude of different perspectives and approaches from a diversity of theorists from different walks of life. In attempting to understand something as diverse as ecofeminism, categories can be a useful tool for thinking with. Carlassare (1994) finds it analytically useful to divide ecofeminism into two main stances: ecofeminisms that utilize materialist methods (which she names 'social/ist ecofeminism' and I call 'materialist ecofeminism') and ecofeminisms that work in the realm of the cultural and spiritual ecofeminisms (Carlassare terms this ecofeminism 'cultural ecofeminism'; however I refer to this stance as 'spiritual/cultural ecofeminism'). This type of separation and categorization does blur the reality of academic ecofeminist discourse: most ecofeminist theorists do not fit neatly into either category—and many ecofeminists utilize tenets of both. However, I have found these categories helpful for exploring the development and marginalization of ecofeminism. Materialist ecofeminists have an approach defined by materialist methods, with which they analyze the economic systems of racialized colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy (Carlassare, 1994). Many materialist ecofeminists aim to liberate women from stereotypes that associate women with nature—especially related to biology—that have been used as justification for the exploitation of women and other marginalized groups (Carlassare, 1994). Materialist ecofeminists typically take a constructionist position: they understand the connection between

women and nature to be socially, historically, and culturally constructed. For materialist ecofeminists, liberation for women requires changes to the social, political, and economic system (Carlassare, 1994). Many materialists believe that the construction of the marked social category of women as being grounded in nature needs to be abandoned. However, humans are always already human animals—culture *is* nature. No matter how our identities are represented, we are all entangled with the more-than-human and the embodied nature of experience does really matter.

In contrast to materialist ecofeminism, spiritual/cultural ecofeminists tend to see the connection between women and nature as something to be celebrated rather than viewed with suspicion. Many spiritual/cultural ecofeminists utilize poetic, spiritual, and affective approaches to their analysis of oppression on both a personal and political level. Some (not all) spiritual/cultural ecofeminists understand the connection between women and nature as biological, based on what is seen as the shared ability of women and nature to produce life[4] (Thompson, 2006). Most do not make that biological claim. More generally spiritual/cultural ecofeminists believe that in order to achieve the changes to social structures and institutions that are necessary for the liberation of women and nature, a change of consciousness and spirituality is also required (Carlassare, 1994). Carlassare tells us that for spiritually inclined ecofeminists "…oppression is a sign of a spiritual crisis—political and cultural transformation will not occur without a concurrent shift in human consciousness" (1994, p. 227). Some materialist ecofeminists have been very critical of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism for what spiritual/cultural ecofeminism celebrates (the women and nature connection), materialist ecofeminists see as exploitative and essentialist. Materialist ecofeminists also see the spiritual/cultural approach as de-politicizing and as a way of avoiding relations of power including class and racialization in favour of problematic understandings of gender(s) and sexualities. Despite these differing approaches to ecofeminism, both materialist ecofeminism and spiritual/cultural ecofeminism share the goal of liberation for more-than-human nature and oppressed social groups.

Of course, women and nature are not alone in these experiences of oppression and exploitation in colonial capitalist-patriarchy. Both concepts are analytically problematic as I said earlier, although politically meaningful. And ecofeminism would not grip the attention of young minds so thoroughly if it were so narrow. Ecofeminism is intersectional, in that it considers the interactions between gender, race, class, species and other organizing relations of life on earth

whether geo-political or political-ecological. While the concept of 'intersectionality' is attributed to Kimberlé Crenshaw and her work with Critical Race Theory in 1989, the 'intersectional' quality of ecofeminist theory predates the term, as is demonstrated in works such as Vandana Shiva's (1987) book *Staying Alive* and Maria Mies' analysis of colonialism, racism and patriarchy (Ruder and Sanniti, 2019). While ecofeminism is indebted to the work of Crenshaw and other Critical Race Theorists, intersectional analysis has long been a central feature of some of the most influential ecofeminist works. Ecofeminist theory considers the intersecting quality of forms of oppression as perpetuating multi-form and multi-level exploitation. Val Plumwood's explanation of the multiplicity of oppressions as forming a web or net was a visual that captured my attention (1994). She writes, "In a web there are both one and many, both distinct foci and strands with room for some independent movement of the parts, but a unified overall mode of operation, forming a single system" (Plumwood, 1994, p. 215). While there are many distinct forms of oppression, they are always intertwined. As with a web, if one strand is cut, one problem or oppression addressed, the web does not collapse: it is able to continue to function and repair itself despite the damage to one node or section. The web can pull in different directions, and points can even be in opposition to each other—still, the web holds. Ecofeminism is a useful strategy for addressing the complexity of the web. Plumwood (1994, pp. 215-216) explains,

> The strategies for dealing with such a web require cooperation. A cooperative movement strategy suggests a methodological principle for both theory and action, that whenever there is a choice of strategies or of possibilities for theoretical developments, then other things being equal to those strategies and theoretical developments which take account of or promote this wider, connected set of objectives are to be preferred to ones which do not.

The imagery of web in ecofeminism is a precursor of the engagement of this imagery in the social sciences some decades later. Ecofeminism potentially embodies this type of co-operative strategy, in movement and in theory, because it sees inequalities along the various intersecting lines of the web of oppressions as necessary to investigate in order to engage and thus change the structures that perpetuate environmental destruction and the oppression and subjugation of women and marginalized others. Climate change, loss of biodiversity, the acidification of oceans and soils, permafrost thaw, sea ice melt, Indigenous rights, reproductive health, femicide, affordable housing, toxic waste, all are connected within the web of oppression. Gaard writes, "An intersectional ecological-feminist approach frames these issues in such a way that people can recognize common cause across the boundaries of race, class, gender, sexuality,

species, age, ability, nation—and affords a basis for engaged theory, education, and activism" (2011, p. 44). Ecofeminism insists that neither gender equity nor an ecologically stable future is possible without the other. Moreover, ecofeminism understands that in order to address any of the distinct problems in the web of oppression all must be addressed: liberation for one necessitates liberation for all. While many influential feminist works forwarded this intersectional understanding in regard to liberation for women, unlike other types of feminists, ecofeminists include the more-than-human in their analysis. With the prevalence of eco-anxiety and climate anxiety, it should come as no surprise that ecofeminism resonates with the budding awareness of young feminists.

At the Outset

The term 'ecofeminism' has roots in a variety of social movements from the 1970s and 1980s, including peace movements, ecology movements, and feminist movements (Shiva & Mies, 1993). Originally coined by Francoise D'Eaubonne, the term 'ecofeminism' gained popularity through various protests and actions against environmental degradation and destruction sparked by ecological disasters (Shiva & Mies, 1993; 2014). Rachel Carson's (1962) book *Silent Spring* was a nodal point for the inception of the environmental movement and for ecofeminism in America (Gaard, 2011). Devastating environmental disasters, such as the 1979 nuclear meltdown of Three Mile Island, prompted many women to come together in protest of ongoing ecological devastation (Shiva & Mies, 1993; 2014). The meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant was a catalyst that motivated the formation of the first ever ecofeminist conference. Held in the eastern United States, 'Women and Life on Earth: A Conference on Eco-Feminism in the Eighties,' explored themes related to the connections between feminisms, militarization, and environmentalism (Shiva & Mies, 1993; 2014). This monumental conference brought together big names of early ecofeminism, including Starhawk, Charlene Spretnak, Ynestra King, and Susan Griffin, together with antinuclear and peace activists such as Anna Gyorgy and Grace Paley (Thompson, 2006). In 1987 an ecofeminist conference was held in the western United States, titled 'Ecofeminist Perspectives: Culture, Nature, Theory,' this conference was less directly connected to antinuclear and antiwar activism than the 'Women and Life on Earth' conference and instead emphasized the spiritual and academic side of ecofeminism (Thompson, 2006). The attendance of Angela Davis at this conference linked the oppression of women and nature to other forms of oppression, such as

racism, which are complexly linked to the oppression of women and nature (Thompson, 2006). Early on, ecofeminism's analysis of oppression was rooted in an understanding of linkages and connections. Expanding on the emergence of ecofeminism, German ecofeminist Maria Mies and Indian ecofeminist Vandana Shiva[8] wrote:

> Wherever women acted against ecological destruction or/and the threat of atomic annihilation, they immediately became aware of the connection between patriarchal violence against women, other people and nature, and that: In defying this patriarchy we are loyal to future generation and to life and this planet itself. We have a deep and particular understanding of this both through our natures and our experiences as women (2014, p. 14).

Ecofeminist works such as Susan Griffin's (1978) *Woman and Nature*, and Carolyn Merchant's (1980) *The Death of Nature* emerged from the intersection of feminism, social justice, and environmental health movements in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Gaard, 2011). Griffin's *Woman and Nature* examined the interconnection of "the ways that the feminized status of women, animals, nature, and feminized others (children, people of color, farmers, slaves, as well as the body itself, emotion, and sexuality) have been conceived as separate and inferior in order to legitimate their subordination under an elite and often violent and militarized male-dominated social order" (Gaard, 2011, p. 28). Merchant's *The Death of Nature*, a foundational ecofeminist text, examined the intersection of racism, speciesism, sexism, colonialism, capitalism, and the historically specific science-nature model that situated twin domination of women and nature in Europe (Gaard, 2011; Thompson, 2006). Beyond the movement taking place in the United States, ecofeminist scholars Maria Mies (Germany), Shiva (India), and Arial Salleh (Australia), began to form the materialist foundations of ecofeminism (Gaard, 2011). Histories of the entanglements of post-Enlightenment science, colonialism, racism and capitalism offer analogous understandings (Aldeia & Alves, 2019). It is unfortunate that post-colonial and anti-colonial work developed so separately from ecofeminism—and later the anti-essentialist discursive politics of academic feminism were in part at fault for preventing the appreciation of Indigenous women's political and intellectual work (Dulfano, 2017).

In the 1980's feminist activism offered an ecofeminist perspective on militarism, corporatism, unsustainable energy production, and their interconnections through the antinuclear and peace movements (Gaard, 2011). Similar movements were forming in England and elsewhere, linking feminism with issues such as women's health, poverty, food security, forestry, racism, urban ecology, Indigenous rights, militarism, reproductive politics, philosophy, and

spirituality (Gaard, 2011). By the late 1980s ecofeminism had spread to the West of North America taking the form of strong feminist protests and ecofeminist peace camps defending Clayoquot sound in British Columbia, Canada (Gaard, 2011). The Clayoquot Sound peace camp, and similar forest defense camps such as the organized defence of the California Redwoods, demonstrate the early intersectional nature of ecofeminism's analysis of gender, class, ecology, and Indigeneity (Gaard, 2011). A multitude of works, including conference essays and presentations, journal articles, books, and ecofeminist anthologies, were published and widely read among feminist and environmental scholars in the 1980s, with critiques of racism, speciesism, and colonialism at the center of their analysis (Gaard, 2011).

In the United States Marjorie Spiegel revealed parallels between the enslavements of African Americans and other-than-human animals in her (1988) book *The Dreaded Comparison*, and Andreé Collard and Joyce Contrucci's *Rape of the Wild* (1989) explored, via structures of domesticity, hunting, enslavement, militarism, and science and technology, the ways in which religion, language, and culture normalize masculinized violence against women, people of colour, nonhuman animals, and the natural world. In India Vandana Shiva's (1988) *Staying Alive* critically analyzed the reductionism and colonialism of Western science and technology that constituted food insufficiency, deforestation, damming rivers, monocultures, the displacement of women from food production and forestry, and undermining health ecosystems—all in an attempt to extract wealth from nature for giant corporations and the super wealthy, consequently producing scarcity and poverty for the surrounding local communities in India (Gaard, 2011). Activism and movements related to the tenants of ecofeminism, though not necessarily termed ecofeminism, boomed in the late 80s and early 90s and had a strong influence on the development and further sophistication of ecofeminist theory and practice (Gaard, 2011).

The period of popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the excitement generated around the phenomena of ecofeminism, was enough that various feminist scholars predicted ecofeminism to be the 'third wave' of feminism (Gaard, 2011; Thompson, 2006). Anyone who has studied feminism and its waves can tell you that this prediction did not come to fruition, and third wave feminism became defined by the prefix post-(structuralism/humanism/feminism). By the end of the 90s ecofeminism was faced with a tidal wave of critique; facing charges of essentialism and maternalism, ecofeminism was "effectively discarded" by feminist activists and scholars alike (Gaard, 2011, p. 26). According to Gaard,

> Focusing on the celebration of goddess spirituality and the critique of patriarchy advanced in cultural ecofeminism, poststructuralist and other third-wave feminisms portrayed all ecofeminisms as an exclusively essentialist equation of women with nature, discrediting ecofeminism's diversity of arguments and standpoints to such an extent that, by 2010, it was nearly impossible to find a single essay, much less a section, devoted to issues of feminism and ecology (and certainly not ecofeminism), species, or nature in most introductory anthologies used in women's studies, gender studies, or queer studies (2011, p. 31).

To this day scholars working at the intersection of gender and environmentalism shy away from the term 'ecofeminist,' Gaard expands on this, writing that, then and now, "the fear of contamination-by-association is just too strong" (2011, p. 27). Thus, scholars working at the intersection of feminism and environmentalism often avoid labelling their work altogether or call their works by different names: 'ecological feminism,' 'feminist environmentalism,' 'feminist political ecology,' 'critical feminist eco-socialism,' or simply 'gender and the environment' (Gaard, 2011).

In eschewing ecofeminism and renouncing the critical work ecofeminists had been doing at the intersection of gender and the environment for decades, the academic stage for critical feminist environmental theory was left empty and the script was quickly taken up by theorists in new fields that, despite the decades of critical ecofeminist work and analysis, often remained gender-blind. Deliberating on the curious growth path of work at the intersection of feminism and environmentalism, Gaard asks "As a community of radical scholars and eco-justice activists, what have we lost by jettisoning these earlier feminist and ecofeminist bodies of knowledge?" (2011, p. 27). With ecofeminism shunned into the margins of social and environmental theory for decades, what have we lost? Why has ecofeminism been marginalized (ignored, or silenced?) in feminist and critical environmental studies? As any critical social theorist can tell you, marginalization of one thing bespeaks privilege for another. Who and what is privileged from the marginalization of ecofeminism?

Ecofeminism Contention in Feminism

According to Gaard (2011), in the 1990s feminism shifted from exploring the intersecting nature of various forms of oppression to analysing the structure of oppression itself. Whilst a multitude of ecofeminists utilized materialist feminist approaches (Warren, 1997; Plumwood, 1993; 2002; Alaimo, 2000; Salleh, 1997; 2009), taking in the perspectives and advancements of poststructuralist and postmodernist theorists, Gaard and others have argued that postmodern

feminist works have been almost entirely anthropocentrically focused: concentrating on human categories and failing to consider the environment, nature, and ecological concerns (2011). Gaard writes,

> It is this human-centered (anthropocentric) feminism that has come to dominate feminist thinking in the new millennium, effectively marginalizing feminism's relevance. The global crises of climate justice, food security, energy justice, vanishing wildlife, maldevelopment, habitat loss, industrial animal food production, and more have simultaneously social and ecological dimensions that require both ecological and feminist analyses. Ecofeminists have listened to their feminist, social ecologist, deep ecological and environmentalist critics—but have their critics been listening to ecofeminists? (2011, p. 32).

One could come to conclude that third wave feminism has been dominated by a deeply rooted anthropocentrism that, in the face of environmental crises that centres multispecies intra-actions, generates feminisms that are largely irrelevant to some of the most pressing troubles of our times. Most of the critiques ecofeminism faced in the 1990s were largely in response to its supposed maternalist and essentialist foundations, although also in response to its assumed racialized and classed roots in white feminism (Mann, 2012). Some early ecofeminism cited women's biological capacity for childbearing, and traditionally feminine attitudes such as nonviolence and kindness, as justification for women being the ideal caretakers for nature and the earth (Moore, 2008). Others rationalized women's supposed inherent connection to nature with the socially constructed ideals of femininity, including such roles as caretaker and mother (Moore, 2008). While essentialist critiques found ground in some early (mostly cultural/spiritual) ecofeminist works, the bulk of ecofeminist works, early or otherwise, does not essentialize women and nature, and has been critical of homogenizing 'women' as a unitary category (Moore, 2008). While there is a pool of shared experiences that are often associated with the gender identity of women—gendered inequities, exploitation of reproductive resources and rights, and multi-faceted social norms and restrictions—that may allow one to make abstract and analytical connections among the varying experiences of women globally, the intersecting nature of such inequalities and identity factors, and the diversity of standpoints, makes the idea of an 'essential way of being women' untenable. For most ecofeminists it is not women's biological capability of bearing children that grounds ecofeminism, nor the social construction of women as caretakers—although that is what critics of ecofeminism would have one believe. In this thesis I argue that what defines ecofeminism and composes it as a powerful tool for change is the historically situated onto-epistemological (defined in a later chapter) understanding of the

interconnectedness[9] of the living earth. Not all the ecofeminist literature says this as clearly as I do here, but I argue that this is what sets ecofeminism apart as a uniquely valuable politics and analytical approach. Understanding that intertwined inequalities and co-constituted acts of oppression reproduce ecological devastation and systematic exploitation of women and marginalized others, and critiquing those systems, structures and the onto-epistemologies that perpetuate these oppressions, is what truly defines ecofeminism and what truly resonates with the minds of the newest generation of feminists.

The Anti-essentialism and Anti-maternalism Backlash

One of the most important political moves for second wave feminism was its challenge to cultural and scientific ideas of biological determinism, effectively aimed at "undermining associations between women and nature" (Moore, 2008, p. 284) that were used to legitimate women's inferior social position. In 1949 Simone de Beauvoir declared that women were not born but [were] made. By rejecting the idea that biology determined an essential 'woman,' feminists were able to fight for greater equality between men and women and insist that biological differences did not explain either the capabilities of men and women nor the associated social inequalities. The rejection of biological determinism also allowed for the separation of 'sex' from 'gender,' which has been crucial in feminist and queer scholarship and activism.[10] Challenging biological determinism and undermining the cultural associations of women and nature was monumental in the fight for women's rights. With such a loaded history in the relationship between feminism and biology it may not come as a surprise that concentrating on the connection between women and nature, as ecofeminisms do, was often met with defensiveness by mainstream feminists.

According to Moore (2008), ecofeminist scholarship and activism has often been dismissed as maternalist and essentialist due to some early ecofeminists' association with discourses that deemed women as biologically more peaceful and caring than men. New (1996) terms ecofeminism rooted in the physical attributes of biological females 'dualistic affinity ecofeminism,' and ecofeminism grounded in the women's social and cultural roles as caretakers 'social ecofeminist.'[11] New argues that social ecofeminisms are also essentialist as they justify women's role as caretaker of the earth via women's distinct social and cultural attributes (1996). Thus, according to New (1996), both social and dualistic affinity ecofeminisms are rooted in the

problematic concept of an essential way of being women: one biological and the other social. New's use of the term 'essentialist' does not necessarily conform to the usual use of the word.

Both materialist and cultural/spiritual ecofeminisms have, at times, worked with the concept of an essence that is unique to women (be it biological, cultural, social, etc.). However, sociologists understand that there are cultures and perspectives that are distinct and socially constructed via differences of class, gender, race, geo-politics, etc. From a new materialist[12] perspective, we can see that these cultures and perspectives are socially organized but also embodied and situated in material reality. However, this grasp on the materially embodied social and historical reality of sex and gender differences does not necessarily lead to the assumption that all women from varying geographical and temporal places have the same socially constructed roles, identities, and perspectives, and/or that this shared identity justifies the place of women as caretakers of the earth. To claim such a thing would be worse than essentializing; it is an act of erasure of the multiple and complex realities of women's lives and intersecting identity factors such as race, class, sexuality, ability, ethnicity, and place.[13] Historically and concurrently the gender identity of 'women' has, in the West, been *socially* constructed as closer (than man) to that of nonhuman nature, while women's identities, perspectives, and roles vary across differing lines of race, ethnicity, culture, geographical location, class, religion, sexuality, and age.

According to Moore, because of the essentialism critiques in feminisms, anti-essentialism has become almost compulsory to feminist theory (2008). Moore writes of the frustrations of feminists from a diversity of ecofeminist perspectives at being dismissed as 'essentialist' simply because they are ecofeminist (2008). Consequently, ecofeminists have often found their works actively marginalized and deemed 'not proper feminism' (Moore, 2008). Some feminist theorists who once led the call for anti-essentialism later reflected on how the 'compulsory' anti-essentialism has had negative consequences, "particularly the use of essentialism as a pejorative term to cast doubt on the sophistication of one's feminism" (Moore, 2008, p. 283). Moore problematizes the feminist politics of shutting down arguments and marginalizing whole fields of study; by deeming certain feminisms 'essentialist' the opportunity for deep analysis and true engagement is lost (2008). Moreover, as Salleh (1996) explains, while mainstream feminism is the site of much of the advancement in the critiques of essentialism in ecofeminism, many non-

feminists and non-philosophers have adopted the argument and utilize the term 'essentialism' as a theoretical shutdown—a quick closure for complex conversations. She states:

> The term 'essentialism' is routinely called in as hit man by men and women looking for a quick theoretical put-down of some feminisms. However, as Spivak notes, it is 'used by non-philosophers simply to mean all kinds of things, when they don't know what other word to use… anti-essentialism is a way of not doing one's theoretical homework (Salleh, 1996, pp. 140-141).

The Fall of Ecofeminism

While ecofeminism in the 1980s was an umbrella term for a diversity of approaches, including some with essentialist conceptions of women, other ecofeminists grew from relations with liberal, Marxist, social, socialist, and anarchist feminisms. Gaard writes, "Misrepresenting the part for the whole is a logical fallacy, a straw-woman argument that holds up an "outlier" position and uses it to discredit an entire body of thought" (2011, p. 32). By rejecting ecofeminism as a whole, feminist and nonfeminist scholars and critics harm ecofeminism as a whole, but also do harm to themselves as they are unable to learn the many lessons that ecofeminism has to offer. Despite the hollowness of the 'straw-woman' argument being demonstrated repeatedly, the history of these critiques remains, and their consequences are far-reaching. According to Gaard:

> The charges against ecofeminists as essentialist, ethnocentric, anti-intellectual goddess-worshippers who mistakenly portray the Earth as female or issue totalizing and ahistorical mandates for worldwide veganism—these sweeping generalizations, often made without specific and supporting documentation, have been disproven again and again in the pages of academic and popular journals, at conferences and in conversations, yet the contamination lingers (2011, p. 32).

The anti-essentialism debate has led to many academics rejecting ecofeminism all together, often without properly engaging with ecofeminism at all. Consequently, ecofeminist works have been repressed, rejected from journals and publishers alike. What little ecofeminist works did get out into the world during these contentious times were met with a backlash of critiques—often shallow and under-developed (Gaard, 2011). Reviews of Mies and Shiva's (1993) *Ecofeminism* and Carol Adams's (1994) *Neither Man nor Beast*, Gaard explains, were "uninformed, paradoxical, and openly hostile" (2011, p. 34). These reviews articulated the positions of many editors and publishers at the time: "placing ecofeminism outside the margins of mainstream feminism via the books' positions on animal issues" (Gaard, 2011, p. 34). While

mainstream feminists and social theorists rejected nonhuman animal centric ecofeminism, critiques of ecofeminism were mounted from the inside too: certain ecofeminists (often materialist) and environmental feminists were openly critical of other (often cultural/spiritual) ecofeminisms (Gaard, 2011). While some of these critiques were unfounded, others were critical of ecofeminism's roots in white feminism and pushed for a more active engagement with race and class issues. Bina Agarwal (1992) critiqued the essentialist use of 'women' as a unitary category, arguing that when considering environmental degradation and natural resource extraction there are specific class, gender, and location implications, 'women' cannot be understood as an umbrella category for persons of varying geographical or temporal situations (Gaard, 2011). Although Agarwal took this as a reason to abandon the name 'ecofeminism' and brand herself as a 'feminist environmentalist,' her important distinction was taken seriously and internalized by many ecofeminist theorists (Gaard, 2011). By the 1990s her term 'environmental feminism,' and similar terms such as 'ecological feminism,' came to be considered new inter-disciplinary approaches to ecofeminism (Gaard, 2011). Thus, while Argwal's (1992) essentialist critique was not the motivation for mainstream feminisms resistance to ecofeminism, it did provide a platform for ecofeminists to review their work and to shift towards more intersectional approaches (Gaard, 2011). Two anti-essentialist critiques advanced from this point: the first against homogenizing women's experiences and concentrating on sex and gender differentiations, and the second against understanding nonhuman animals and nature as central to feminist analysis (Gaard, 2011). While the critique of a unitary category of 'women' as essentialist was indeed legitimate, the rejection of non-anthropocentric analysis simply because it must be somehow essentialist remains unjustified and has had far-reaching impacts on the development of ecofeminism (Gaard, 2011).

In response to critiques that adequate attention to race and class analysis was lacking, ecofeminists strengthened and deepened their feminist and ecological analysis, increasingly centering intersectionality (Gaard, 2011). However, even prior to these types of critiques many ecofeminists were already working with a non-homogenized concept of women: they understood that some women, too, are oppressors of other women, and actively theorized with class and race distinctions (Gaard, 2011). Despite this and possibly with more mainstream feminist discomfort with the high visibility of nonhuman animal centric ecofeminism in the 1990s, the charges of essentialism that led the anti-feminist backlash dominated the marginalization of ecofeminism

(2011). Environmental health and justice movements grew alongside ecofeminism at this time; however, while ecofeminists foregrounded various issues at the intersection of race, feminism, and the environment, sadly, when environmental justice theorists did embrace ecofeminists' gender insights they often failed to acknowledge the origin of the contribution (Gaard, 2011). Even the environmental justice movement that developed in response to the erasures of class and racialization in environmental movement and theory were very slow to take up issues of gender, sexualities and speciesism (Gaard, 2011).

Debates between ecofeminists and deep ecologists took place between the 1980s and the 1990s (Gaard, 2011). As Plumwood (1993) and others pointed out, deep ecology lacks a gendered analysis. Ecofeminists' of the time critiqued the lack of intersectional analysis in deep ecology's understanding of the foundations of environmental degradation (Gaard, 2011). While deep ecologists saw anthropocentrism (human-centered point of view) as the root of environmental degradation, ecofeminists' intersectional approach takes androcentrism (masculine-centric perspective) as central to ecological degradation (Gaard, 2011). With every debate and critique met, ecofeminism grew and matured. By the late 1990s ecofeminism was diversifying: intersections of queer theory and ecofeminism, materialist analysis of human to human and human to other-than-human animals, and ecofeminist perspectives on eco-socialist movements, intersections of ecofeminism and environmental justice, theories on identity and democracy, were developing further (Gaard, 2011).[14] However, in a way, it was too late:

> The anti-essentialist backlash against ecofeminism had already taken its toll: Feminist graduate students were being advised against undertaking ecofeminist approaches in their dissertations, and scholars were advised against publishing works with the word "ecofeminism" in their titles or keywords. At a time when ecofeminists were at the forefront of bringing animal, feminist, and environmental justice perspectives to feminist theory, environmental studies, and ecocriticism alike, ecofeminism itself had already become discredited (Gaard, 2011, p. 41).

Sociology can learn from the history of ecofeminism. By refusing to engage with more-than-human nature sociology continues to endanger its future relevance. Freese et al., notes that "sociologists often react with hostility to explanations that evoke biology, some critics of the discipline contend that this 'biophobia' undermines the credibility of sociology and makes it seem increasingly irrelevant in larger public debates" (2003, p. 233). And, to answer the question posed to me in my first-ever guest lecture: this is why we do not learn about ecofeminism in

sociology and feminist theory courses. If sociology and feminism is to maintain relevance in a future defined by multiple and intersecting environmental and social crises, the social cannot be removed from the natural; humankind cannot be understood as separate from nature; the historically situated affiliation of women and nature cannot be ignored; and feminism cannot be separated from environmentalism. Contemporary ecofeminists are crucially aware of these complex interconnections, and attuned to the necessity of reciprocal multispecies relationships, as they work to address the multifaceted ecological crises of the Anthropocene (McMahon & Power, 2020). At its heart ecofeminism is a study of relationships. Most valuable ecofeminist works are always aware of the complex interweaving of relationships shared amongst all earthbound beings. What is it that we have lost with the marginalization of ecofeminism? I hope my thesis will answer this question well for you, and perhaps do even more.

Chapter 2: The Social and the Material in Ecofeminism

In the previous chapter I introduced academic ecofeminism and explored its origin and the history of critique and marginalization. In this chapter I will explore ecofeminist approaches that can be considered 'materialist' (no, not 'new materialism,' I will talk about that later). Academics find it useful to categorize and differentiate social movements and theoretical perspectives. Although one is in danger of losing the complexities of reality, categorization is also a useful tool for thinking with. Among other things it makes it easier to see the political and analytical traditions involved and to recognize underlying assumptions, ontologies, and epistemologies. Like much of feminism and other social theory and movement, ecofeminism can often be fit within such categories as liberal, socialist or Marxist and postmodernist. However, because it subverts nature/culture binaries that underlie much post-Enlightenment Western intellectual traditions, ecofeminism does not fit neatly into such categories. That said, it is helpful to recognize the strong currents within ecofeminism that make the engagement of class and political-economic relations central to their political and theoretical projects. I call this materialist ecofeminism. It would be a mistake to think that a focus on class or the political economic creates impermeable borders. As I explore in Chapter 3, spiritual or cultural ecofeminist traditions can intermingle with material ecofeminism in such that many of the academic conventions employed in trying to study ecofeminism can be unhelpful and politically constrictive. Akin to what Barbara Marshall (2000) once said of the concept of gender, one can see ecofeminism as a diverse project that is both politically and conceptually—and, I would add personally—enabling. It enables one to see, to conceptualize, to engage politically as an actor who understands her life to be constitutively and ethically entangled with the flourishing of the more-than-human. In this sense it departs, at least to some degree, from most Enlightenment political and intellectual traditions.

I call ecofeminists who centre the political-economic 'materialist ecofeminists.' It mostly includes what the textbooks call socialist ecofeminism but may also include those working more clearly in a Marxist and Marxian traditions, those with anarchist genealogies, or radically democratic frameworks of many kinds. The histories of feminism have many such entanglements. Although I will be utilizing such terms to categorize different approaches within ecofeminism, I advance cautiously. If Indigenous peoples, women, nonhuman animals, racialized people, and marginalized others, and indeed all of us, are to be freed from the dominion of what I

call a predatory ontology, then the false nature/culture binary must be undone and our very understanding of what constitutes 'nature' and what constitutes 'culture' must be reworked—such is the task of ecofeminism.

The Materialist in Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism that is grounded in the materialist methods whether of Marxist and socialist feminisms or radical democratic imaginaries may adopt either more constructionist position or critical realist positions to understand knowledge and nature as social and historically produced: shaped by the circumstances and conditions of historical and other reality/ies. This old debate between constructionism and realism in sociology is now more often seen as a false and unnecessary division (Young, 2015). When I was first introduced to ecofeminism, I mostly came across materialist ecofeminisms. As a sociologist by trade, materialist ecofeminisms appealed to me for multiple reasons: the basis in social constructionism and/or critical realism; the anti-essentialist emphasis; the analysis of social structures and systems; and the inherent anti-capitalism of materialist ecofeminist approaches. Materialist ecofeminism promises to deconstruct the rule of capitalism, revealing the ways in which capitalism perpetuates oppression and ecological degradation and proposing forms of socialism that are not State-based as alternatives for a future of ecological sustainability (Carlassare, 2000).

For most materialist ecofeminists, capitalism can not be separated from the domination and oppression it perpetuates, and must be replaced – whether by a form of socialism or some de-centralized version of grass roots democracy and small-scale economies (Carlassare, 2000), or other radically democratic kind of economy and social arrangements. The socialist ecofeminist[15] understanding of capitalism and patriarchy as inseparable and interlocking in the oppression of women and nature has caught on, and many materialist ecofeminists treat capitalism and patriarchy as one system: capitalist-patriarchy (Carlassare, 2000; Mies & Shiva, 1993). Although the concept of colonial is implicit in this perspective, many Indigenous and other scholars would argue that it needs more explicit centring. I refer to colonial capitalist-patriarchy throughout this text, while at times I may put more emphasis on 'capitalist' or 'patriarchy,' at other times I emphasize 'colonial'—all are inseparable in our current society but different ecofeminist streams emphasize some currents over others.

Many published ecofeminist works are materialist and the majority of authors that continue to identify themselves as ecofeminists fit somewhat into the materialist ecofeminist

category. Carolyn Merchant, Maria Mies, and Ariel Salleh are particular advocates of materialist ecofeminisms and have each predominantly developed materialist ecofeminist methods. For many materialist ecofeminists women and men are constituted via social relations, thus one project of materialist ecofeminism has been to unpack the concept of 'nature' to help reveal the way the concept of 'women' has been constructed (Carlassare, 2000). By contextualizing human biology and gender in their material histories, materialist ecofeminists show the variability in the discursive, representational, and material forms of 'nature' and 'human.' This project has been thoroughly advanced by Carolyn Merchant (1980) who, through a feminist exploration of the history of the association between women and nature, reveals that discursive constructions of nature and human society are co-constituted in ways that perpetuate and justify the domination and oppression of women and nature. Ecofeminist Ariel Salleh argues that women's and men's socially organized relation to nature, capital, and labour are constructed differently, specifically as the majority of women's unpaid work is essential to the continued success of global capitalism (1995). Salleh thus proposes that ecofeminism must be grounded in a "critical embodied materialism," which recognizes that capitalism is dependent upon the unpaid work and subordinate positioning of women and other oppressed groups in capitalist-patriarchy (1995). Materialist ecofeminism understands reproduction as well as production as essential categories of analysis and as crucial avenues for change. Going beyond political ecological analysis that see the contradictions between ecology and capitalist relations of production as the second contradiction of capitalism (O'Connor, 1988), ecofeminists will typically emphasize that a perhaps more foundational contradictions is between reproduction, which includes the reproduction of life itself, and capitalist relations of production that create environmental crises (Merchant, 1992; Shiva & Mies, 1990; Salleh, 2003; 2017a). In the following sections I discuss the materialist ecofeminist works of Merchant, Salleh, and Mies. These three authors help us appreciate what materialist ecofeminisms bring to the table.

The Historicity of Nature/Culture and Women

> To write history from a feminist perspective is to turn it upside down—to see social structures from the bottom up and to flip-flop mainstream values.
>
> —Merchant, 1980, p. xx

In her (1980) book *The Death of Nature*, Carolyn Merchant brings a feminist perspective to the history of the cultural associations of women and nature that emerged particularly with the scientific revolution. Perhaps because her pathbreaking book *The Death of Nature* was published

in 1980, in it Merchant does not appear to hesitate to identify herself as ecofeminist. Merchant (1980) explores the historical shift in the worldviews of Western European elite strata from an organistic worldview—organized via an organic metaphor (nature is alive) —to a mechanistic worldview—organized via a metaphor of a machine (think of it as reality acting as a machine, more-than-human nature simply cogs in said machine). Merchant delves deep into the older identification of nature and the earth as a female (at times, a nurturing mother, at other times unruly or untamed forces), revealing the ties between the history of women, the history of nature, the co-constitution of the N(n)atural and social world, and the path of development to a hegemonic Euro-Western worldview and mechanistic organizing metaphor (1980). Federici (1998) further reflects on this co-construction via her exploration of the relationships between witch-hunts, colonialism, and capitalism in her analysis of the transition from feudalism to capitalism from a feminist viewpoint in *Caliban and the Witch*. Both Federici (1998) and Merchant's (1980) focus on the subjectification[16] of women in these transformational periods as they pertain to the Nature/Culture binary.

Critical to my exploration of the historicity of the Nature/Culture dualism and the association between women and nature is an understanding of worldviews and their relation to metaphor. A worldview can be understood as a social group's interpretation of the world, it ties society and the self together with cosmology to form a shared cultural reality, often characterized by a dominant descriptive metaphor that organizes daily life. Metaphors organize our interpretation of the world; they are a human tool used to make sense of the physical world. I am not arguing that all those living in those times shared a single worldview. Indeed, it is likely that Christianity was one of the few unifying beliefs in wide diversity. The emergence of what Merchant calls a mechanistic world view was largely carried by particular social elites for quite some time in European history while peasants and others continued to operate with a more organic understandings of reality.

In the following subsections I explore the development of a mechanistic worldview in early Europe which can be seen as finding expression in such developments as early extractive industry, the scientific revolution, and the rise of colonialism and capitalism. I hope to show that the Nature/Culture binary is historically and socially situated in specific events associated with the shift of dominance from an organistic to a mechanistic worldview. This section of my thesis relies heavily on Merchant, although I also bring in work from Federici. I have chosen to rely

primarily on Merchant because her work on these transformations has been so central to the development of ecofeminism.

Mining and Mechanism in Europe: the shift from an organistic to a mechanistic worldview

While many past and contemporary Indigenous worldviews understand more-than-human nature as living, agentic, and responsive—which works to sustain ongoing nonviolent[17] relationships between human and more-than-human nature— what might be called the current dominant or hegemonic Euro-Western worldview—which views much of nonhuman nature as passive and inert—perpetuates an understanding of nature as important primarily via its usefulness and/or for extraction for the benefit of human economic progress. According to Merchant, this was not the organic cosmology and metaphor of pre-Enlightenment Europe. Merchant details the social and environmental events that led to the transition from an organistic worldview to a mechanistic worldview, and how this transition was paralleled by changes to the practical relations and cultural association between women and nature. According to Merchant, the superseded metaphor of the earth as a living organism and nurturing mother worked as a cultural constraint, restricting the morally and socially acceptable actions of humans onto the earth, she writes:

> One does not readily slay a mother, dig into her entrails for gold or mutilate her body, although commercial mining would soon require that. As long as the earth was considered to be alive and sensitive, it could be considered a breach of human ethical behaviour to carry out destructive acts against it (1980, p. 3).

According to Merchant while an organic metaphor permeated the pre-Enlightenment European understandings of nature, humans were constrained in how they could interact with nature. The liveliness of nature, she tells us, permeated the cosmos at every level—from stone to tree to river—and interdependence and community organized the daily lives of early modern Europeans. As an early extractive industry, Merchant (1980) explains, mining was entrenched with constraints and confined by moral obligation to the metals, minerals, and the Earth Mother. In premodern Europe, we are told, seeking metal and minerals from the earth required immense amounts of respect and caution for the Earth Mother and often required ceremonial sacrifices and other spiritual precautions (Merchant, 1980). Merchant explains that these spiritual precautions, based on the ethical behaviour of humans unto the earth, were intended to ensure respect was central to the practice of mining: only caring and thoughtful action was to be taken in the process of mining for metals and minerals. It is hard to know the extent to which mining practices

followed these moral obligations, but it is clear that the contemporary mining industry today has far fewer such concerns and constraints. The dominant Western ideology of today requires no ceremony or spiritual prowess for resource extraction. In fact, the mining industry is known historically as a destructive force on nature and associated resources: what was once a mountain is now a pit, surrounded by waste rock and filled with toxic water. Potawatomi ecologist and author Robin Wall Kimmerer, expanding on the state of the contaminated sites of abandoned mines in Onondaga Nation, explains that, without ecological and spiritual restoration, wastelands such as these will continue to pollute the land around them despite their abandoned status:

> By the time it reaches the bottom of the heap, the water has picked up enough chemicals to be as salty as soup and as corrosive as lye. Its beautiful name, water, is lost. It is now called leachate. Leachate seeps from the waste beds with a pH of 11. Like drain cleaner, it will burn your skin. Normal drinking water has a pH value of 7 (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 314).

Canada is particularly guilty of pollution and environmental degradation via mining. Expanding on Canada's near monopoly on exploitative extractive practices of the modern mining industry, Ojibwe scholar and environmental activist Winona LaDuke (2016) states:

> It's an important point in history because 75% of the world's mining companies today are Canadian-based, and—in the present era—we've seen inefficient and extravagant consumption of North American First World countries (especially the US and Canada) drive a level of resource extraction which will not only require additional planets to continue, but ultimately destroys the land and water upon which we live (p. 138).

The respect- and reciprocity-based practices of Indigenous peoples worldwide, ancestral cultures, and premodern Europeans are absent from the land-based policies and practices of the corporate mining sector. In Canada: mining, fracking, drilling, and other exploitative practices threaten the non-renewable freshwater sources that work to sustain multispecies communities of the land. Despite the protests of thousands of Indigenous people and allied-settlers, the Trans Mountain pipeline, carrying bitumen mixed with sand mined from the Athabasca oil-sands—considered to be the world's most destructive oil operation—from under what was once a thriving boreal forest, continues to be supported by federal and provincial governments (Hunter, 2020; Leahy, 2019; CBC, 2014).

In what Merchant terms the dominant worldview of modern capitalist societies (and what Dorothy Smith might better term the 'conceptual practices of power'), nature—and thus the earth, the body, and the environment—is likened to a machine. According to Merchant (1980) it

was between 1500 and 1700 that this worldview began to develop in Euro-Western societies; a mechanistic metaphor gradually became internalized and naturalized in Europe's early modern period and has persisted as a fundamental organizing concept in the dominant Euro-Western worldview of today. For Smith (1990), the conceptual practice of power are the ontological and epistemological practices of the ruling relations and the powerful, and one can track historically how the emerging new ruling strata and classes started to organize the lives of those being ruled through knowledge and information managing and other text based practices of governance and management. According to Merchant (1980), the more-than-human became perceived as passive and nonhuman nature lost its claim to agency, and even living beings—nonhuman animals and plants—were reduced to object-like ontological status. Science-based academic works often motivated by the good intentions to help heal the world (such as in addressing hunger or poverty) continue to frame the earth and nature through a mechanistic worldview—reducing nature to working parts and denying the agency of the living earth. Alienated from the rest of the world, it has become hard to be human in anyway other than what the institutional structures and economic systems of colonial capitalist-patriarchy dictates. It is no surprise that so many young people feel hopeless and powerless in facing the impending destructions of climate change. They do not have different stories by which to live with the more-than-human.

Chaotic Nature

Merchant (1980) argues that symbolic imagery of chaotic nature, disorderly women, and the witch were utilized to justify the need to control and dominate nature and to legitimate colonization – in particular of the Americas. With the transition to a mechanistic metaphor and the creeping dominion of commercialism, European culture became more and more alienated from more-than-human nature, and, according to Merchant (1980), man's claim of superiority over all beings associated with nature was partly justified via imagery associated with unruly women and chaotic nature. From within the new competitive practices of early commercialism, the new emphasis on the individual over community, discoveries of 'new science,' and augmented by religious wars, fear and anxiety gripped the collective consciousness—taking the shape of chaotic nature and prominently featuring female symbolism (Merchant, 1980). "The ecological deterioration of the earth, changing images of the cosmic organism, and a sense of disorder within the soul of nature reflected an underlying realization that the old system was dying," Merchant explains (1980, p. 126). Federici (1998) points out that capitalism did not

evolve naturally from feudalism, it developed as an unintended result of what is known as the anti-feudal struggle. The underlying realization of the imminent death of the old system was characterized by an era of fear and disparity, Federici explains, "Capitalism was the counter-revolution that destroyed the possibilities that had emerged from the anti-feudal struggle—possibilities which, if realized, might have spared us the immense destruction of lives and the natural environment that has marked the advance of capitalism worldwide" (1998, pp. 21-22). According to Merchant (1980), this fear and despair is represented in the literature of the late Renaissance and Elizabethan era that show a persistent concern that nature's order was in danger of breaking down; sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers illustrate an enduring proclivity to frame both nature and society as wilderness—in need of order and control to mitigate the forces of nature and the fates to follow. Recently Jason Moore and Raj Patel (2017), working from a Marxist tradition, focus on this period as critical in the transformations central to the development of capitalism and colonialism and thus, they argue that the climate crises should be traced to these political, colonial, and intellectual transformations rather than the industrial revolution, for which they were actually preconditions.

A third prong of the women/nature association was important in this period: that of the witch. As Silvia Federici demonstrates in (1998) *Caliban and the Witch*, the persecution of witches was central to the formation of the "New World," the creation of the modern proletariat class, and the development of capitalism. Federici (1998) sees the witch as the embodiment of the female subject that capitalism had to destroy before being able to take hold. According to Federici (1998), the witch-hunts were necessary to abolish any control women had over their reproductive functions and thus to allow the development of a more oppressive patriarchal regime. Merchant adds, "The witch, symbol of the violence of nature, raised storms, caused illness, destroyed crops, obstructed generation, and killed infants. Disorderly women, like chaotic nature, needed to be controlled" (1980, p. 127). Merchant (1980) understands this pervasive imagery as having worked to perpetuate the fear of the time period[18] and incentivize the need for control and dominion over nature and women. Indigenous peoples, Merchant (1980) explains, were also likened to chaotic and disorderly nature and nonhuman animals: the image of the savage Indian[19] has permeated the colonial history of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and settlers on this land since. According to Merchant, the Cartesian sexual philosophy—deeply rooted in the false dichotomies of mind/body, man/woman, culture/nature—

was used to justify women's place as below men in the social hierarchy via 'new science.' Both Merchant (1980) and Federici's (1998) representation of the witch can be read as embodying ontological challenges to the development of class and political-economic relations dependent upon the emergence of colonial capitalism.

With the development of industrial capitalism and the separation of home and wage work in key parts of Europe and the Americas, women's reproductive work was devalued. This period of rising power of the professions also saw conscious discrediting of midwives by male physicians; women began to lose control over midwifery[20] and birth. According to Merchant (1980), by the end of the century, childbirth had effectively passed into the dominion of male doctors and 'man-midwives,' and new scientific studies worked to justify the exploitation of women and their subjugation under men in capitalist market systems. "The body" Federici explains, "has been for women in capitalist society what the factory has been for male waged workers: the primary ground of their exploitation and resistance" (1998, p. 16). Perhaps it is because the body has been the primary site of exploitation and resistance for many women that feminisms (and especially ecofeminisms) have been more likely to engage theoretically *with* the body or *from* an embodied perspective. For both Merchant (1980) and Federici (1998), the witch-hunts—fundamental to women's loss of control over trades and their own reproductive capabilities—were a critical site of this embodied exploitation and resistance.

For Merchant (1980) man's right to dominate nature is written into the Judeo-Christian tradition—but I will leave that to the interested reader to pursue. It is worth noting in passing that according to Merchant, the Fall was interpreted by Francis Bacon and others as divine motivation for the colonization of the 'New World,' and as justification for dominion over the more-than-human (1980). According to Merchant (1980), Bacon believed that magic and science should be utilized to recover man's dominion over nature, which he saw as lost when Adam and Eve were expelled (due to the temptation of a woman) from paradise (Merchant, 1980). Bacon utilized witch-trial symbolism and sexual imagery to advocate for the inquisition of nature, man's rightful dominion over nature, and the modification of nature by man (Merchant, 1980).

Merchant (1980) contends that the Scientific Revolution generally, and Bacon's agenda of dominion over nature via science specifically, has had lasting consequences on relationships between human and the more-than-human in Euro-western societies. In addition to their grounding in and perpetuation of the nature/culture binary, attitudes about nature such as

Bacon's are deeply intertwined with gendered values and female symbolism, and place nature and all that is associated with it in opposition to the growth and progress attributed to science and technology in the capitalist state. The lasting consequences of Bacon's exploitative program, the values, language, and symbolism of his ideology—working with the economic systems of colonial capitalist-patriarchy—has had lasting effects on relationships between Euro-western societies and the more-than-human. "The expansive tendencies of [Bacon's] period have continued, and the possibility of their reversal is highly problematic," Merchant writes (1980, p. 185). The motivator of economic and technological growth and progress developed in Bacon's time period continues to limit potential avenues of connection between humans the more-than-human and continue to perpetuate cultures of overconsumption—at the expense of nature and nature associated groups. The expansive tendencies of colonial capitalist-patriarchy have been naturalized and internalized by many dominant social groups (and theorists) to the point that, to most, it seems almost impossible to imagine a way of being human otherwise.

Colonialism, the Meta-Industrial Class, and the Myth of Catching-up Development

Technological progress and economic growth have emerged since the age of Enlightenment to be a cultural theme and political economic ideological rhetoric—often advanced at the expense of nature and nature associated groups (women, people of colour, the poor, etc.). The material relations of colonial capitalist-patriarchy are shaped historically and socially by Nature/Culture dualism and the association of chaotic nature with evil woman and wild savages (Merchant, 1980; Federici, 1998). An important function of materialist ecofeminisms is the analysis of these material relations in regard to nature and nature associated groups. In this section I expand on how material ecofeminists see nature/culture binaries as being intertwined with contemporary ecological problems.

According to Mies (1993), a persistent myth of 'catching-up development' has coloured the relationship between colonizers (the Global North) and colonies (often the Global South). Mies (1993) explains that this 'catching-up' myth has meant that white, affluent men are understood as the model in which women, people of colour, peasants, Indigenous peoples, people in the Global South, etc., should aspire to—this strategy maintains dominance of the world economy, the exploitation of nature and the colonies, and maintains the military as a necessity. According to Mies, the colonial relationships between colonies and colonizers is always based in force and violence (1993). The success of 'those on top,' Mies (1993) explains,

is dependent on the exploitation, oppression, and domination of the 'others'—what I call nature associated groups. Economically this success is based on externalization of costs: the economic, ecological, and social costs of constant growth in industrial societies is shifted—externalized—to the colonized countries of the South (Mies, 1993). Within industrialized societies, Mies notes, as well these costs are externalized—to nature, to women, to people of colour (1993). Similarly, Salleh (2000) points out that salaried workers are often maintained by women's domestic labour in the North and women food farmers in the South (2000). Both Mies (1993) and Salleh (2000; 2003) problematize the gendered and geo-political division of labour in capitalist patriarchy, within which most women's (peasants, Indigenous peoples, etc.) work is defined as non-productive (and/or reproductive) and thus unpaid and uncounted. Salleh (2000) names the social group(s) that carry out reproductive labour at the intersection of humanity and nature the 'meta-industrial class.'

According to Salleh (2000), the meta-industrial class is a class of actors mostly outside of wage labourers, it includes all the social groups that participate in reproductive labour: farmers in the global South, Indigenous peoples, sustenance farmers globally, women in the global North and so on. Each of these social groups participate in reproductive labour (or 'holding labour'[21]) and are thus part of the meta-industrial class (2017a). These meta-industrial workers do not necessarily participate in the alienated wage labour that Marx's analysis of capitalism is dependent upon, instead they carry out alternate ways of knowing and being in tune with the natural world (Salleh, 2000).[22] "It is this experience outside of the dominant productivism time frame," Salleh writes "that provides the possibility of a grounded political vision and solidarity between meta-industrial labour North and South" (2000, p. 35). This is why, for Salleh (2000), the meta-industrial class are the ideal agents of history in our times of rapid ecological and social change.

For Salleh (2003), the nature-woman-labour nexus is a foundational contradiction of capitalist patriarchal relations. She argues that wage labour is dependent upon the unpaid labour of the meta-industrial class in capitalist patriarchal relations and develops the concept of 'embodied materialism'—an ecofeminist materialist method of analysis vis-à-vis engagement and critique with/of classic Marxian historical materialism—in response (Salleh, 2003). Salleh explains, "[embodied materialism] is "materialist" in endorsing the basic tools of a Marxist sociology, and "embodied" in that it sets out to re-frame that discourse by giving equal weight to

the organically interrelated entities - man, woman, nature. Historically, these have been unequally valorized" (Salleh, 2003, p. 65). By centering the exploitation of women and nature in the gender-based division of labour, Salleh structures a materialist ecofeminist economic analysis that addresses the critical exploitation that Marx failed to account for: the exploitation of reproductive labour (women and nature) (2017a). Moreover, Salleh contends, "Living things are expendable for a capitalist patriarchy, which does not value what it does not itself produce" (2017a, p. 122). The thesis of Salleh's embodied materialism, then, is that the wage that is key to Marx's historical materialism is dependent upon the reproductive labour done by the meta-industrial class, which is undervalued. Mies (1993), too, understands wage labour of 'those on top' as dependent on the reproductive labour of what Salleh calls the meta-industrial class. This is why Salleh contends that an embodied materialism is necessary for an ecofeminist materialist analysis. Salleh explains, "Ecofeminist politics can re-embody materialism and in doing this, the notion of reproductive labour becomes central. Reproduction means to be engaged in nurturing living processes by enhancing our human interchange with nature" (2000, p. 31). To Salleh, socialism and Marxism have put too much theoretical emphasis on the proletariat, which she believes has unintentionally erased other forms of social exploitation from analyses (2017a).

Materialism and Ecofeminism

It seems clear to me that in order to work towards a future of multispecies flourishing we must refuse to align with discourses that are based on hyper-individualism and self-interest. The ecological crises[23]—which ignores nation boundaries but impacts those with less the most—exposes that this self-interest is not just unethical but also irrational. Salleh's embodied materialism is based on an ontology of internal relations, a non-hierarchical epistemology that is dialectical, an ethics of care, and a bioregional politics (2000). "It celebrates the qualities of engagement that an unnamed class— housewives, subsistence farmers and forest dwellers, bring to their provisioning in partnership with nature," Salleh explains (2000, p. 35). Mies' and Salleh's engagement with the class and political-economic relations of women and other oppressed social groups shows that, for materialist analysis of culture *and* nature, the differing experiences of women, people of colour, Indigenous people, the global south, etc., must also be considered.

The works of Merchant (1980; 1993) and Federici (1998) reveal that the Nature/Culture binary is historically rooted in specific transformational ecological and social events: especially

the transition to capitalism and to a mechanistic worldview—both linked intrinsically to the exploitation of women. The witch-hunts and the colonization of Turtle Island[24] were motivated by a deep-set fear of chaotic nature and the desire to control dominate the more-than-human—associated symbolically with evil witches and wild savages (Merchant, 1980; 1993; Federici, 1998). Federici (1998) contends that, in order for capitalism to successfully take hold of early Europe, the free and wild female subject of the witch had first to be overcome. Merchant (1980) adds that the symbolic association of evil witches with chaotic nature acted as a sanction to justify man's domination of nature *and* women. Moreover, the 'new science' of people like Francis Bacon played a critical role in the development of a mechanistic worldview and the desubjectification of the more-than-human and nature associated groups (Merchant, 1980).

Merchant, Federici, Salleh, and Mies are a good representation of what materialist ecofeminism adds to the conversation: all of these authors offer crucial analyses on the development and perpetuation of what I call a predatory onto-epistemology (Ruder & Sanniti, 2019) and economic/social systems of colonial capitalist-patriarchy. Other forms of materialist and/or materialist feminisms seem unwilling to adequately engage with the environment, ultimately demeaning their own potential for relevancy in modern times. This, I argue, is because they remain trapped by Enlightenment ontologies and epistemologies.[25] Non-feminist environmental and ecological theorists, on the other hand, tend to be mostly gender-blind and often fail to engage with the interconnection of exploitation and subjugation of oppressed social groups and the destruction of nature. Through the strengths of materialist methods and engagement of class and political-economic relations, materialist ecofeminisms provide insight into the interconnected and interdependent state of the nodes of the web of oppressions and the structures and systems that perpetuate the exploitation of the majority of the human population and the more-than-human for the benefit of a few. However, materialist ecofeminism is only a part of ecofeminisms' movement for social change. In order to develop a full understanding of ecofeminism, however, it is necessary to engage with spiritual/cultural ecofeminisms and their critics. I will turn to that in chapter three.

Chapter 3: The Spiritual and the Cultural in Ecofeminism

> Nowhere is ecofeminism more fraught and fractured than over the question of spirituality.
>
> —Mallory, 2010, p. 50

In chapter one I introduced readers to ecofeminism and explored ecofeminism's development: beginning with its origin through to the backlash of critique and consequential marginalization. In chapter two I utilized works from ecofeminists Salleh, Merchant, Federici, and Mies to demonstrate the important insights that materialist ecofeminisms bring to the table. In chapter three I will show that, despite the large quantity of critiques it has garnered, the ideas and knowledges forwarded by spiritual/cultural ecofeminism are crucial to escaping the predatory onto-epistemologies of colonial capitalist-patriarchy. This may not sit well with some feminists, but ecofeminism is alive and changing and is part of the messy processes that hooks (1986) calls 'movement for social change.' Moreover, while the anti-essentialist critiques from within feminisms often seem to miss the point, critiques of the lack of acknowledgement of racial and geopolitical differences in women's experiences within spiritual/cultural ecofeminism have been a necessary and important lesson. While I have spent the last two chapters and the first half of this chapter discussing materialist ecofeminism and spiritual/cultural ecofeminism as separate entities, in closing this chapter I will emphasize that the divergence between materialist ecofeminisms and spiritual/cultural ecofeminisms do not make them incompatible—and attention to both realms is essential on the path towards a future of multispecies flourishing.

Spiritual/Cultural Ecofeminisms

It seems that ecofeminist works that fit into the spiritual/cultural category have inspired the strongest critiques of essentialism. The charge, as I argued earlier, helped turn ecofeminism into a kind of pariah feminism for many. Spiritual/cultural ecofeminism celebrates qualities traditionally associated with 'women' and femininity. The intention was to revalue attributes such as care, emotions, the body, nurture, and intuition (Carlassare, 2000). How, one wonders, could this be seen as problematic or dangerous? For cultural/spiritual ecofeminists, the cultural dominance of qualities traditionally associated with 'men' over the qualities associated with 'women' is seen as foundational to ecological destruction (Carlassare, 2000). Many ecofeminists in the realm of spiritual/cultural have sought to recover women's history and cultivate women-based spiritualities (Starhawk, 1989, 1990; Griffin, 1990; Spretnak, 1990). For critics this

smacked too much of validating the practices and personality traits that had been forged under oppression and reproduced—rather than troubled—gender binaries.

Many of the most prominent early ecofeminists texts coming from the U.S. contained pieces that explicitly engaged with the spiritual to address environmental degradation and ecological destruction. Two early anthologies *The Promise of Ecofeminism*, edited by Judith Plant in 1989, and *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, edited by Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein in 1990, contain within them a variety of essays. Among these are some that engage critically with the materialist and historical association between women and nature, and essays within the spiritual/cultural realm, in which authors address the linguistic, affinitive, affective, and symbolic connections between the exploitation of women and an anthropocentrically and androcentrically exploited and oppressed earth. Mallory writes that, for the authors of these spiritual/cultural ecofeminist works, "the earth can be "healed" through a reclaiming of purported ancient value systems, religions, rituals and practices that find liberatory power in the historic, symbolic, and material associations between women and nature" (2018, p. 19). Explaining the spiritual themes in early ecofeminism, Shiva and Mies write:

> As women in various movements – ecology, peace, feminist and especially health – rediscovered the interdependence and connectedness of everything, they also rediscovered what was called the spiritual dimension of life – the realization of this interconnectedness was itself sometimes called spirituality. Capitalist and Marxist materialism, both of which saw the achievement of human happiness as basically conditional on the expansion of material goods' production, denied or denigrated this dimension. Feminists also began to realize the significance of the 'witch hunts' at the beginning of our modern era in so far as patriarchal science and technology was developed only after these women (the witches) had been murdered and, concomitantly, their knowledge, wisdom and close relationship with nature had been destroyed. The desire to recover, to regenerate this wisdom as a means to liberate women and nature from patriarchal destruction also motivated this turning toward spirituality (1993, pp. 16-17).

However, this turn toward the spiritual was interpreted quite differently by mainstream and materialist feminists: it was critically read to mean that women possess a special connection to nature—a connection that men do not possess. As a result, many deemed spiritual/cultural ecofeminism irredeemably essentialist (Mallory, 2018; Carlassare, 2000). Feminist scholars increasingly distanced themselves not just from spiritual ecofeminism but from ecofeminism as a whole (Mallory, 2018; Gaard, 2015). Anti-essentialism has dominated the feminist framing of ecofeminism for some time, silencing many ecofeminist voices. This is something I have fallen prey to myself. As I began to build my thesis and explore the history and development of

ecofeminist theory, I found myself specifically avoiding texts that evoked the spiritual. After all, I wanted to be taken seriously—something I am already endangering by engaging with ecofeminism. However, as I dug deeper into ecofeminism, I realized that, by refusing to engage with spiritual/cultural ecofeminism out of a fear of rejection and ridicule, I was missing out on a fundamental aspect of ecofeminism. As I began to engage with spiritual/cultural ecofeminisms I came to feel a kinship with certain perspectives and expressions. After all, I was personally drawn to ecofeminism by my affective experiences with (N)nature: not material and historical analysis.

At times the critique of essentialism referred to the process of erasing class and racial differences with a homogenized conception of 'women' (Lorde, 1984), and/or appropriating and misinterpreting Indigenous beliefs, knowledges, and experiences (Wilson, 2005). Some of the feminist critiques of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism can be understood as a form of 'policing' that has led to the marginalization of all kinds of ecofeminist theory (Mallory, 2018; Carlassare, 1993, 2000; Gaard, 2011; Sturgeon, 1997), and institutionalizing the 'right' kind of feminisms.[26] It is important to see how the marginalization of ecofeminism implicitly or explicitly privileges some ways of knowing over others. In so doing dominant discursive practices, epistemologies, and ontologies built on nature/culture binaries are reproduced. The emergence of what could loosely be called feminist and other new materialisms[27] in academia (Barad, 2008; Alaimo, 2010, 2013, 2014; Schnabel, 2014) might explain the recent resurgence of interest in ecofeminism in academia. But the insights of such new materialism have long existed in Indigenous knowledge and in some ecofeminist traditions. Thus, feminist critiques of ecofeminism have unwittingly collaborated with policing of hegemonic knowledge and devaluation of knowledge practices outside those of the Western Enlightenment tradition. Abandoning my earlier discomfort, I will argue in this chapter that spiritual/cultural ecofeminism provides to ecofeminist theory that which other branches of ecofeminism cannot and opens it to political and epistemic alliance that are central to addressing issues as pressing as climate change.

Goddess, Affect, and the Witch: Spirituality in Early Ecofeminism

The Promise of Ecofeminism (1989) and *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (1990) both contain essays that engage explicitly with spirituality as an approach to ecofeminism. These spiritual/cultural ecofeminist works draw on linguistic, affective, and symbolic connections between the suffering of the earth and the suffering of women. Within

spiritual/cultural ecofeminism there are three main—yet often overlapping—discursive areas: 1) goddess worship, 2) affectual knowing, and 3) earth-based spiritualities. The following sections of this thesis may offer more detail than all readers feel they need and so may be read very quickly, if at all (so a reader could skip lightly over the next ten pages and refocus at page 50). However, I needed to work through these histories to better understand my subject and I believe this overview will be useful for those who are not well-read in ecofeminism. What is important for this thesis is that one can see in these works various projects of re-understanding relationships between humans and the more-than-human; ways of being human differently; and entanglements with gendered (and to a far lesser extent, racialized) identities that are now so urgent to addressing climate change and environmental degradation.

Goddess and Gaia. In reference to Goddess worship, Diamond and Orenstein (1990) write, "For some, the power of ecofeminism derives from the way in which it articulates new stories of origins and the place of humans in the world" (p. xiii). Some ecofeminists find strength and liberation in the celebration of and identification with a feminine nature symbolized in the revival of Goddess worship. While ecofeminists essays engaging with new and revived Goddess-based origin stories have faced judgement for (what some critics call) their uncritical interpretation of ancient matriarchal societies (Ruether, 2005), others argue that—no matter the empirical origin of the Goddess symbol—women need the Goddess in order to embolden a new love of the divine (Christ, 1994). In *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* multiple essays make reference to, or explicitly discuss, female- or feminine-deities. Diamond and Orenstein explain that "in their hope for the creation of new cultures that would live *with* the Earth, many women in the West were inspired by the myths and symbols of ancient Goddess culture in which creation was imaged as female and the Earth was revered as sacred" (1990, p. xi). Mara Keller looks back at and reclaims the ancient female deities Demeter and Persephone, "as metaphors for our current descent to and rebirth from the underworld" (1990, p. xiii). Riane Eisler discusses archeological findings of ancient cultures, Goddess worship, and Gaia, and calls for humanity to "reaffirm our ancient covenant, our sacred bond with our Mother, the Goddess of nature and spirituality" (1990, p. 34). Carol Christ argues that humanity should reconceive our connection to more-than-human nature via new theology that realigns "the Divine/Goddess/ God/Earth/Life/It" with humanity and nature (1990, p. 65), and Irene Javors ponders on the appearance and representations of the dark Goddess Hecate/Kali in the Urban world (1990). One

does not have to adopt any one of these representations but all of them allow for understandings of self, humanity, and nature/culture relations that are different than the dominant ones of modernist, classed and racialized masculinist subjectivities, that these ecofeminists argue seem so interwoven with the histories of capitalism and colonialism.

In *Healing the Wounds* (1989) Deena Metzger discusses the split between the masculine and the feminine in dominant culture, stating that, in reviving the Goddess, "[spiritual/cultural ecofeminists] are trying to open ourselves again to the reality of the feminine principle in the universe" (p. 120). Metzger expresses a shared sense of loss for Western ecofeminists in regard to feminine-spiritual traditions: "that we come from a broken lineage, and we don't know the practices" (1989, p. 124). In reaching back past the roadblock of hegemonic Judeo-Christian traditions and dominant culture, to what Metzger and other spiritual/cultural ecofeminists understand as gynocentric spiritual traditions, Goddess-centric spiritual ecofeminism requires both a remembering of that which was lost, and an emergence of new ritual and ceremony. While the project of a Goddess-based ecofeminist spirituality may include recovering tradition from ancient cultures and religions stamped out by the patriarchy and Judeo-Christianity, Metzger accepts that it also includes creating tradition anew. She writes,

> What does it mean to bring back the Goddess?
> It means that She exists.
> Our task is to bring back the Goddess with the God, to re-invoke the Grover, to reforest the earth, to be aware of the spiritual reality of the universe, so that we can save the planet (Metzger, 1989, p. 126).

The above passage indicates that, in re-invoking the Goddess, Metzger does not aim to celebrate the feminine *over* the masculine principle, however in dominant culture God and the masculine or characteristics culturally associated with masculinity are already valued: revaluing the Goddess necessitates a revaluing of what some ecofeminists call the feminine principle. Thus, Metzger believes that in order to protect the living earth, a spirituality and culture that values more-than-human nature—and the feminine—must be cultivated.

Charlene Spretnak was elated to stumble upon early ecofeminist practices of reviving the Goddess, she found that it gave her a personal frame of reference for her own spirituality that she felt was missing from the Judeo-Christian tradition (1989). Many holistic earth-based spiritualities work to honor more-than-human-nature, Spretnak explains, and do not 'other' those who are different whether these be human or more-than-human beings of the earth (1989). Spretnak understands Goddess worship as succeeding where other religions and spiritualities

fail: it maintains a holistic approach simultaneously with an anthropomorphized deity (1989). According to Spretnak, Goddess worship represents the actuality of the world, and has thus been the spark to many a spiritual/cultural ecofeminist flame:

> The revival of the Goddess has resonated with so many people because She symbolizes *the way things really are*: All forms of being are One, continually renewed in cyclical rhythms of birth, maturation, death. That is the meaning of Her triple aspect: the waxing, full, and waning moon; the maiden, mother, and wise crone. The Goddess honors *union and process*, the cosmic dance, the eternally vibrating flux of matter/energy: She expresses the dynamic, rather than static model of the universe. She is *immanent* in our lives and our world. She contains both female and male, in Her womb, as a male deity cannot; all beings are *part of Her*, not distant creations (1989, p. 128).

The Goddess in Spretnak's ecofeminist spirituality is decidedly female, however she represents maleness and femaleness simultaneously: both are embodied inside of her—all of earthly-being is embodied inside of her in an immanent expression of 'Oneness.' This Goddess worship does not necessitate the devaluing of the masculine principle; however, it requires the re-valuing of the feminine, and the revaluing of more-than-human-nature and all that is associated with it. Spretnak sees women to be at an advantage compared to men when it comes to embodying this holistic spirituality, and she brings up an apt point (jarring though it may be), she states, "men may consider that old feminist saw: Biology is not destiny. All minds contain all possibilities. The sexes are not opposites or dualistic polarities; the differences are matters of degree, whether negligible or immense" (1989, p. 130).[28] In this quick-witted inversion of the criticism so often directed at spiritual/cultural ecofeminism—that of biological determinism—Spretnak illuminates the necessity of exactly the opposite: biology is not destiny, even for those born into the most privileged places in the dominant culture.

It is evident in these passages that, while Goddess worship does celebrate the feminine, it does not necessarily perpetuate the destructive male/female dichotomy nor the human/more-than-human nature dichotomy, although at times some work does risk doing that. Goddess worship invites us to look at history with a critical eye. When a critical, feminist, gaze turns to prepatriarchal history, it is revealed that the destructive tenets of the patriarchy—so ingrained in the dominant epistemologies and ontologies of the day—have never been the only way. For Spretnak, the ancient history of Goddess traditions shows that "peace and progressive societies thrived for millennia, where gynocentric values prevailed, for example, in Minoan Crete and Old Europe" (1989, p. 131). While not all eco/feminists will choose to align themselves with Goddess spirituality, the image of the reality of ancient peaceful gynocentric societies allows us

a certain knowledge that we could be otherwise: "we have lived sanely before, we can do it again" (Spretnak, 1989, p. 131). By looking back at history with a feminist perspective, spiritual/cultural ecofeminists work to allow for the possibility of being human otherwise. Spretnak writes, "We have choices. We have will. We have insight and awareness that can be acknowledged and developed—or denied. We can move far beyond the patriarchal boundaries" (1989, p. 132).

In each of these works the authors find strength in conceiving nature as female, and in celebrating female-deities or 'Goddesses.' The authors utilize symbolism and imagery that draws connections between women and more-than-human nature, however, unlike materialist ecofeminist essays within these same anthologies, the association of women with nature is celebrated as liberatory in spiritual/cultural ecofeminism. However, that which spiritual/cultural ecofeminists celebrate—a unique connection (for some cultural, for others biological) between nature and women—has, ultimately, been fuel for ecofeminism's downfall.

Affectual Knowing. Multiple essays in *Reweaving the World* (1990) and *Healing the Wounds* (1989) describe a kind of knowing and experiencing the world through affect: these works highlight emotion and feeling, often embodied in sexual experience, as critical to the connection between women and nature. The relevance and validity of emotion and feelings has often been rejected in academia: I have seen, throughout my time in the ivory tower, that if one wants to be taken seriously, they should not talk about feelings. I appreciate the tenacity of spiritual/cultural ecofeminists that emphasize the importance of emotion; especially in regard to feeling-with and for more-than-human nature. In *Reweaving the World*, Spretnak's (1990) essay details the importance of affectual experience and embodied knowing, asserting: "extremely important [to ecofeminism] is a willingness to deepen our experience of communion with nature" (p. 7). She implores her readers to participate in the creation of an alternative future, urging us to cultivate our spiritual impulses and embolden our sexualities (1990). Her suggestions range from explicitly political and concrete to ethical and relational, but for Spretnak it is the affectual experiences of ecofeminism that are of the most important and the most transformative. According to Spretnak it is embodied knowing—affectual and immanent experience—that allows us to cultivate spirituality through intimate communion with more-than-human-nature. For Spretnak, it is women's predisposition to perceptions of the connectedness in

life via empathetic awareness of the interpersonal that creates epiretinal moments[29] (1989). She sees this as especially evident in the context of female sexual experience:

> The experiences inherent in women's sexuality are expressions of the essential, holistic nature of life on Earth; they are 'body parables' of the profound oneness and interconnectedness of all matter/energy, which physicist have discovered in recent decades at the subatomic level. Every woman who has practiced meditation and is aware of the holistic composition of the universe—whether through Goddess spirituality, Eastern religions, or modern physics—recognizes that her postorgasmic mindstate is something quite different from what males have described as *le petit mort* (the little death); rather, the boundary-less, free-floating, non-discriminatory sense of oneness that females experience could more accurately be called *le petit satori* (the little glimpse of enlightenment). In a culture that honored, rather than denigrated such 'body truths,' the holistic realities would be guiding principles of ethics and structure (Spretnak, 1989, p. 129).

The above passage offers a vision of an embodied, immanent, and material experience of women's sexuality as a form of affectual knowing in which spirituality is innate in the oneness of all earth-bound beings. Spretnak recognizes that, if the dominant culture was to honor and respect such embodied experiences and 'body truths' it would need also to recognize the embodied experiences of all other earth-bound beings: both human and more-than-human. She urges us to value that which society cheapens; our affectual, emotional, sensual, embodied experiences, writing, "Feed your natural tendencies toward multilayered perceptions, empathy, compassion, unity, and harmony. Feel your wholeness. Feel our oneness. Feel the elemental source of our power. Discard the patriarchal patterns of alienation, fear, enmity, aggression, and destruction" (Spretnak, 1989, p. 132). One does not have to adopt any one of these perspectives to recognize that ecofeminism was advocating the value of embodied knowledge long before the 'turn to the body' among academics more recently.

Dolores LaChapelle's essay in *Healing the Wounds* (1989), explores the relationship between more-than-human-nature and human sexuality. She discusses the history of sexuality in dominant Western culture in comparison to what we know of sexuality of ancient cultures, tribal cultures, and Taoism (LaChapelle, 1989). LaChapelle compares the cultural traditions of sex for procreation vs. cultural traditions with a history of sex for reasons other than procreation, concentrating specifically on a cultural tradition of ritual sex in Taoism (1989). "Taoist sexual rituals sensitize the entire body; whereas, in western culture we have forced most of the passion of living into the narrowness of genital sexuality" LaChapelle explains (1989, p. 166). According to LaChapelle this ritual sexual experience and tradition—motivated by the possibility of embodying peace and harmony—elicits a total-body response[30] that is always already spiritual

and material (1989). Clearly this represents a challenge to heteropatriarchy and is in some sense prefigurative of the rise of nonbinary gender and queer sexual politics. LaChapelle asserts that this embodied sexual experience allows us to *know* the wholeness of the world and the interconnectedness of all earth-bound beings, that which humans are—and always have been—a part of. To clarify, LaChapelle explores the process of creating human children:

> It is obvious that humanity alone cannot engender children. Instead, it is the entire living environment which produces the child and keeps it alive: the air, soil, plants, and animals of its immediate environment. We are the children of our particular place on Earth. This is why the land is sacred, sex is sacred, and eating is sacred; because they are all parts of the same energy flow as the Tukano and the Taoists conceived it (1989, p. 167).

For LaChapelle the affectual knowledge of the interconnection of all earthbound beings and the understanding of our own dependency as a species on more-than-human-nature is embodied in the sensual and felt knowledge inherent in sexual experience. In the dominant Western culture sex is largely alienated from immanence and interconnectedness. Spretnak suggests, orgasm allows us a little taste of enlightenment: "*le petit satori"* (1989, p. 129).

Susan Griffin, in her essay "Curves Along the Road" (1990), discusses what she sees as the contemporary separation of spirit from matter and nature from culture, and describes a kind of sensual knowing that is invalidated by the separation of culture from nature. She writes,

> In splitting spirit from matter, human consciousness is divided. We think of intellectual knowledge as separate from sensual knowledge, and the spirit as belonging to a different realm entirely. In this way, our experience of the world is fragmented. And because of this we see fragments (Griffin, 1990, p. 87).

She explains that scientists, by using the scientific method, attempt to separate themselves from sensual experience, however she believes that sexual experience breaks through the illusion of separation between humans and nature (Griffin, 1990). In sexual experience we cannot be separated from sensual experience, this is because, Griffin explains, sexual experience "makes evident a kind of knowledge in the body" (1990, p. 94). However, by 'othering' women, culture is unable to learn from this bodily, sensual, knowing (Griffin, 1990). Like many of the spiritual/cultural ecofeminist essays in *Reweaving the World*, Griffin's essay utilizes poetry, metaphor, and linguistic play to express feelings of connectedness with the Earth and more-than-human nature. This poetic linguistic play is also exemplified in Griffin's (1978) book *Woman and Nature*.

Woman and Nature is a playful poetic criticism of traditional analytic dichotomies—riddled with metaphors and gendered language—Griffin's (1978) book delves deeply into the

connection between women and nature via sensual imagery and affectual knowing and celebrates the experiences of women with nature in juxtaposition to the voice of patriarchal culture. *Woman and Nature* is presented as a dialogue between a disembodied patriarchal voice and a singular voice representing women and nature (1978). Griffin's *Woman and Nature* has drawn harsh criticisms for pitting the voice of culture and men against the voice of women and nature (Mallory, 2000). *Woman and Nature* (1978) has been employed as an example of the essentialist tendencies of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism and has been accused of perpetuating the dichotomy between women and men and nature and culture (Biehl, 1991). However, Griffin's use of the universal subject position to represent Western patriarchal civilization can be read as a sardonic reflection and criticism of the rule of patriarchal 'objective' scientific knowledge over all other forms of knowing. She can be read as utilizing essentialism to illuminate the silencing of the voices of women and nature, dismissal of affectual linguistic and artistic discursive form, and to highlight the associations of women and nature (1978). While considered 'incomprehensible' to some (see: Biehl, 1991), others understand Griffin's poetic discursive form as intentionally affectual and artistic— the antithesis of traditional academic writing. "These words" Griffin states, "are written for those of us whose language is not heard, whose words have been erased, those robbed of language, who are called voiceless or mute, even the earthworms, even the shellfish and the sponges" (1978, preface).

Essays and articles on the affectual, sensual, and sexual aspects of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism that are riddled with poetry and linguistic play that—sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly—emphasizes and celebrates the connection between women and more-than-human-nature. Unlike the scholarly works of the dominant Western culture, these works exemplify the emotional, sensual, sexual, and affectual: tendencies that have been associated with chaotic, unruly nature, and the dark side of women. Ideas about women as overly sexual beings have been utilized throughout history as justification for their subjugation and domination by (some, but far too many) men. Similarly, throughout history there has been a narrative perpetuated that women are 'too emotional' to take on leadership roles or to make rational arguments—these ideas are still prevalent today. In spiritual/cultural ecofeminism women's ability to connect affectually and emotionality, sensually and sexually, to ourselves and to more-than-human-nature, is explored as a strength and celebrated. These works are expressions and celebrations of the attributes of being woman—and being nature—that have been framed by the

dominant culture as evil, wild and chaotic: in need of control and domination. The spiritual/cultural ecofeminist works detailed above understand these characteristics associated with women and nature as liberatory and—potentially—revolutionary.

Earth-based spirituality and magic. Starhawk, perhaps the most well known self-proclaimed spiritual ecofeminist, invokes an ecofeminist earth-based spirituality based in the practice of magic (1990). Her work is unapologetically spiritual and simultaneously material. She grounds her earth-based spirituality in three concepts: immanence, interconnection, and community (Starhawk, 1990). "The first—immanence—names our primary understanding that the Earth is alive, part of a living cosmos. What that means in that spirit, sacred, Goddess, God—whatever you want to call it—is not found outside the world somewhere—it's in the world: it is the world, and it is us" (Starhawk, 1990, p. 73). The divine as inherently immanent—that pervasive animism alive in pre-enlightenment Europe and many Indigenous ontologies today—insists on a spirituality that is always already political. This understanding of the divine as immanent is not Starhawk's alone, ecofeminists such as; Spretnak, Griffin, Mies, and Shiva adhere to this belief and see the separation of divine from matter as perpetuating the exploitation and subjugation of women and nature (Griffin, 1990; Spretnak, 1990; Mies & Shiva, 1993). Interconnection, the second concept foundational to Starhawk's earth-based spirituality—foundational to all contemporary understandings of the world-ecosystem—grounds her spirituality further in the material. She writes,

> When we understand that the Earth itself embodies spirit and that the cosmos is alive, then we also understand that everything is interconnected. Just as in our bodies: what happens to a finger affects what happens to a toe. The brain doesn't work without the heart. In the same way, what happens in South Africa affects us here: what we do to the Amazon rain forest affects the air that we breathe here. All these things are interconnected, and interconnection is the second principle of Earth-based spirituality (Starhawk, 1990, p. 73-73).

If we understand the always already interconnected nature of all earth-bound beings, then we are also aware that the consequences of human and more-than-human-nature relationships affect all the intertwined multispecies livelihoods bound to earth. Starhawk sees interconnection as necessitating an understanding of multispecies community: for when we understand these interconnections, we understand that we are all a part of a whole, earth-wide, multispecies community (1990). She writes, "Each of these principles—immanence, interconnection, and community—calls us to do something. That call, that challenge, is the difference between a spirituality that is practiced versus an intellectual philosophy" (Starhawk, 1990, p. 74). Starhawk

calls to questions the overvaluation of intellectual philosophy—the validity of the claim that knowledge created from within 'the ivory tower' is more worthwhile, more 'true,' than knowledge constructed through other, nonhegemonic, ways of knowing. Immanence, interconnection, and community—the three concepts that are the foundation of Starhawk's earth-based spirituality—form a call to action: a spirituality that must be practiced.

For Starhawk the spiritual is the political: "When we understand that everything is interconnected, we are called to a politics and set of actions that comes from compassion, from the ability to literally feel with all living beings on the Earth" (Starhawk, 1990, p. 74). The knowledge that we are all interconnected calls to us, but this plea for action is not heard through the ears of culture: the plea cannot be heard by the objective scientist with his knowledge of the materially and historically situated fact that humans are dependent upon more-than-human-nature—though that is also important—the plea is heard through empathetic affectual ears: literally feeling-with all living beings on earth. This affectual knowing, this sensual understanding of the intertwined interconnection of our own species with the diverse multispecies more-than-human-nature of Earth calls those who can hear—who are willing to listen—to a politics of compassion that is necessary for the future to come. "That feeling is the ground upon which we can build community and come together and take action and find direction" (Starhawk, 1990, p. 74).

While Starhawk identifies her spirituality as witchcraft, she explains that the values of earth-based spirituality are not limited to any one tradition: they can be found in many ancestral and contemporary spiritualities, culture, and politics (1990). She understands pluralism to be vital to the ecofeminist movement and sees that diverse ontological and epistemological groundings enable people with varying identities and loyalties the ability to hear the planet's plea (Starhawk, 1990). "Earth-based spirituality calls us to act with integrity" (Starhawk, 1990, p. 74). It is the integrity inherent in understanding our response-ability to more-than-human-nature, our responsibility to be responsive to the pleas of multispecies earth-bound beings, that call us to act—act now!—and to carry such political actions out with the integrity they deserve, the integrity we *need*. According to Starhawk, "Magic is the art of changing consciousness at will" (1990, p. 76). Moreover, Starhawk sees this explanation of magic as also "a very good definition of political change—changing consciousness on a mass scale in a country" (Starhawk, 1990, p. 76). Political action works to change consciousness on a mass scale—often contained within

colonial political boundaries of the nation state, but, at times, planet wide. Starhawk's earth-based spirituality—her ecofeminist magic—is also a form of future-guided prefigurative politics, she explains:

> There is a certain way that magic works: it is, in a sense, a technology. When we want to do something, to change consciousness, for example, we first need an image of the change we want to create. We need a vision. The same is true for political work. If we want to change consciousness in this nation, we first need to have a vision in our minds of what we want to change it into. We need to have an image, and we need to create that image and make it strong. And we need to direct energy and, in some way, ground it in reality (1990, p. 76).

Starhawk's spirituality is always already political: she aims to change consciousness, and, like all good ecofeminist work, she enables potential alternative futures through a visionary configuring of the world we want as a result of the changes we aim to bring about. Like the prefigurative politics of contemporary multispecies ecofeminists, at the core of Starhawk spiritual/political approach is the knowledge that, in order to enable potential alternative futures in which humans can become-otherwise with multispecies earth-bound beings, we need to first create an image to direct our energy. Starhawk understands that the prefigurative vision we construct must also restructure power relations: she states that we must move away from the current model of power as power-over—grounded in domination and control—and move toward power-relationships based on the knowledge that the Earth is alive and responsive (1990). She states, "We need to speak about the joy and wildness and sense of liberation that comes when we step beyond the bounds of the authorities to resist control and create change" (Starhawk, 1990, p. 79). Liberation must be founded in love—of the land and of each other—of joy and of wildness, so that our liberation can be sustained, because any politics grounded in hate and negativity will putter out. We cannot allow our political action to putter out, we simply do not have the time. "We need to see the process of changing our society as a lifetime challenge and commitment," she explains, "transforming consciousness so that we can preserve and sustain the Earth is a long-term project" (Starhawk, 1990, p. 78).

Starhawk's spiritual ecofeminism is conscious of the vast interconnection in and of the material and the social (1990). She explains that if we fail to take the complexity of the web of interconnections to the heart of our politics, then we chance falling for false solutions (Starhawk, 1990). Starhawk writes,

> Unless we understand all the interconnections, we are vulnerable to manipulation. For example, we are often told that to end hunger we must sacrifice wilderness. But what will work to end hunger is not the further destruction of natural resources within the same system

> of greed and inequality that has engendered hunger. . . *people are hungry not because there isn't enough food in the world, but because they are poor*. To end hunger we must restore control over land and economic resources to those who have been disenfranchised by the same forces that destroy, with equal lack of concern, the life of a child or a tree or an endangered species, in the name of profit (1990, p. 83, emphasis added).

The knowledge that everything is complexly interconnected enables us to think-with more-than-human-nature and construct political action and solutions that do not address one node in the web of oppressions while fueling another. The spiritual/political call to action that reverberates in the echoing silence of the mountains and the deafening crash of waves upon the shore demands that we see the world for what it is: an inextricably intertwined web of agentic, responsive, active, inter- and intra-acting Earth-bound beings (1990). All inequalities and exploitations are interconnected, the web of oppressions maintains and heals itself when one strand is attacked. "Ultimately, to work on any one [issue], we need to work on all of them" (Starhawk, 1990, p. 84).

The earth-based spirituality of spiritual/cultural ecofeminists like Starhawk, Spretnak, Griffin, and Shiva is ingrained in the perception of the divine as immanent. The divine-as-immanent is innate in the always already embodied, affectual, sensual, and sexual spirituality of the aforementioned authors, and other spiritual/cultural ecofeminists like LaChapelle. The divine-as-immanent is enacted through these embodied ways of knowing, being, and celebrating. Likewise, Goddess-based spirituality is a celebration of the embodied, affectual knowing and experience of being women—the celebration of the Goddess is always already a celebration of the female body and all that is associated with it. Starhawk's second fundamental concept for her earth-based spirituality: interconnectedness, is a principle concept in ecofeminism as a theory and a movement. It is this interconnectedness that allows ecofeminism to address all forms of oppression as interrelated, and to acknowledge that there is no liberation possible for one without liberation for all. Community, the final foundational concept of Starhawk's earth-based spirituality, is necessary for any group that aims address oppression via political activism. Spiritual/cultural ecofeminism understands that the connection between women and nature has been utilized as justification for the oppression of all that is associated with nature, however, instead of working to liberate women and oppressed social group from their connection with nature, spiritual/cultural ecofeminism celebrates the connection and works to revalue nature and all that is associated with it.

> [Spirituality] is the energy that enables women to live and to celebrate life. This sensual or sexual spirituality, rather than 'other-worldly' is centered on and thus abolishes the opposition between spirit and matter, transcendence and immanence. There is only immanence, but this immanence is no inert, passive matter devoid of subjectivity, life and spirit. The spirit is inherent in everything and particularly our sensuous experience, because we ourselves with our bodies cannot separate the material from the spiritual. The spiritual is the love without which no life can blossom, it is this magic which is contained within everything. The rediscovered ancient wisdom consisted of the old magic insight into the existence of these all-embracing connections and that through these, power-less women could therefore influence powerful men.
>
> —Shiva & Mies 1993, p. 17

The Value of the Spiritual and Cultural in Ecofeminism

Spiritual/cultural ecofeminists often argue that liberation for nature and all groups associated with nature requires a change of consciousness on a global level and that this includes the revaluing of women and nature both culturally and spiritually. Though my own exploration of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism began begrudgingly, I felt very uncomfortable with it, I have come to see the value of many tenets of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism. Reflecting on the growing secularization of the modern world—the rule of religion replaced by the rule of the bureaucratic systems of economic and social capitalism—one of sociology's forefathers, Max Weber once spoke of the disenchantment of the world (1918). Has all the enchantment, all the magic, been chased from the world by the rule of colonial capitalist-patriarchy? I do not think so: I have seen magic in the world. Magic is the courtship rituals of Humpbacks illuminated by a late spring full moon; wheat, water, and woman cultivating wild yeast; the unbidden assistance of sunfleck pathfinders; and cephalopods that see colour with their skin but not their eyes. It seems, to me, more likely that we as thoughtless human actors have pulled the cover over our eyes: we have been blinded to the magic inherent in the relationships of the living earth in order to justify the continuation of lifestyles of overconsumption and convenience. Haraway asks, "what happens when human exceptionalism and bounded individualism, those old saws of Western philosophy and political economics, become unthinkable in the best sciences, whether natural or social?" (2016, p. 30). In the face of mass extinction, of planetary destruction perpetuated by valuing profit over mutual flourishing, can we come to know and care for our multispecies kin? We must shed the chains of fossil fuel capitalism, human exceptionalism, white supremacy, and neoliberal hyper-individualism. We must learn to see the magic of the world. In the words of ecofeminist Ynestra King (1990),

> We thoughtful human beings must use the fullness of our sensibility and intelligence to push ourselves intentionally to another stage of evolution. One where we will fuse a new way of being human on this planet with a sense of the sacred, informed by all ways of knowing—intuitive and scientific, mystical and rational. It is the moment where women recognize ourselves as agents of history—yes, even as unique agents—and knowingly bridge the classic dualisms between spirit and matter, art and politics, reason and intuition. This is the potentiality of a rational reenchantment. This is the project of ecofeminism (pp. 120-121).

Historically, socially, culturally—there are real connections between women and (N)nature. And is the psychological, the mental and the spiritual, not always already material—historical, social, cultural? The association of women and nature has been used as justification for the exploitation of nature and all social groups associated with nature, *but it should not be so*. Revaluing more-than-human nature necessitates revaluing women and revaluing Indigenous people and people of colour. A future of multispecies flourishing requires escaping the predatory onto-epistemology of colonial capitalist-patriarchy: dismantling the hierarchy of power-over, denouncing the myth of human exceptionalism, and embodying ways of being human otherwise. Ecofeminists working in the realm of the spiritual and cultural have been urging us to see the magic in the world for some time: there are and have always been different ways of being human. However, we need changes in the ways we understand and relate to more-than-human nature in order to achieve these alternate ways of being and knowing.

Postmodernism and Ecofeminism: rejecting 'women' and 'nature'

Critique of ecofeminism has been prolific and widespread. From feminism, criticism of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism has notably come from postmodernists, rationalists, and socialists. Critiques that have come from outside feminism typically involve anti-feminist backlash devoid of familiarity with the original literature (Gaard, 2011). As Mortimer-Sandilands explained in a personal communication with Gaard,

> More recent rejections of ecofeminism—e.g., by privileged straight white men in ecocritical and ecophilosophical texts that summarize ecofeminism in a couple of paragraphs and then dismiss it as hopelessly outmoded and essentialist—actually seem to play on the dissent that occurs within ecofeminism. Not surprisingly, rather than take up the important questions that critics raise about gender and sexuality in ecofeminism, they use anti-essentialist rhetoric to dismiss the significance of gender and sexuality to environmental thought and politics altogether, as if any and all ecofeminist questions are moot because not all of us agree on what the "right" feminist perspective is (Gaard, 2011, p. 43).

Postmodern feminisms have critiqued spiritual/cultural ecofeminisms for what they see as the uncritical use of the categories of 'women' and 'nature' in ecofeminism, which they

understand as reproducing problematic and, at times, universalizing conceptions of gender and of nature (Haraway, 1991), and some postmodern critics misidentify the work of spiritual/cultural ecofeminists as making passive 'women' and 'nature' (Haraway, 1985; Sandilands, 1997)—whereas this framing is often taken up by spiritual/cultural ecofeminists *as critique* of the ways the concept of nature is constructed as a legitimating resource for colonial capitalist-patriarchy (Griffin, 1990). Moreover, postmoderns contend that because conceptions of 'women' and 'nature' are built on a relationship of mutual oppression they reinforce patriarchal discourses and (Haraway, 1991; Wilson, 2005). Haraway's work with the genderless cyborg can be read as a postmodern critique of 'women' and 'nature' and also of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism. According to Salleh, Haraway's discomfort with the category 'women' led Haraway to reject feminist standpoint theory as a useful tool for analysis (Salleh, 2009). For Salleh, this points to a problematic tendency in postmodern feminism: too much focus on specificities, differences, and 'partial truths,' and not enough attention to the lived realities of women (2008). Salleh contends that postmodern feminists are often resistant to big picture narratives, which makes it difficult for them to productively address issues on a global scale (2008). Salleh writes, "the [postmodernist] focus on words and ideas, leads intellectuals away from the materiality of ecopolitical questions" (Salleh, 2008, p. 202).[31] Many ecofeminists agree that postmodern feminists are often inadequately concerned with environmental degradation and the more-than-human (Salleh, 2008).

The idea that spiritual/cultural ecofeminism uses concepts of women and nature in ways that reinforce patriarchal discourses, I argue, is an overly simple reading of texts that could as easily be read as assigning agency and vitality to the more-than-human. According to Salleh, refusing the category 'woman' and de-naturing nature and the gendered body is itself an apolitical move situated in the historical reality of privileged lives in the Global North.[32] Both 'women' and 'nature' are important analytical categories in Ecofeminism because of the ways in which many women's lives are organized. Salleh (2009) risks reproducing her own simplistic narratives about women's lives when she tries to contest academic feminists' critique of the term women and nature:

> Ecofeminists do not necessarily want to 'de-nature' the sexed body by hybridising it, as Haraway would. That move has been popular among lesbian women, and urban-based career oriented liberal feminists, because socially constructed gender is controllable in affluent high tech societies. However, the body is not so readily immunised in the global South. Here, biological sex is a teacher that leaves the majority of women at the mercy of wider socio-

> economic and ecological forces. And so, ecofeminists part company with Haraway, for whom the utopian permeability of the cybernetic woman–machine boundary is ranked above – i.e. as more progressive – than any 'natural' woman–man–child symbiosis (p. 205).

It appears to Salleh (2009) that while many feminist critics of ecofeminism may be engaged with the false duality of sex/gender, they typically fail to engage with the equally necessary everyday politics of the human/nature binary as it plays out in the realities of women's lives (2009). This challenge, according to Salleh, is at the heart of ecofeminist politics. Thus, in this view, both liberal and postmodern critics of ecofeminism reproduce one of the foundations of modern capitalist oppression: the nature/culture binary on which empirically the commodification of nature—and all life—rests.

The Internal Struggle: Materialism and Rationalism in Materialist Ecofeminism

I have offered what some might call a sympathetic reading of spiritual and cultural ecofeminism, If post-modernist feminism rejects ecofeminism—spiritual and cultural ecofeminism in particular—because of the sins of essentialism via universalizing categories, socialist feminists—including many materialist ecofeminists—reject spiritual/cultural ecofeminism for what they see as de-politicizing tendencies. In *Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics* Janet Biehl, who describes herself as an ex-socialist ecofeminist (not because she is no longer politically left, but is more conventionally politically left), puts it like this: "Ecofeminism has also become a force for irrationalism, most obviously in its embrace of goddess worship, its glorification of the early Neolithic, and its emphasis on metaphors and myths" (1990, p. 2). Moreover, Biehl writes that "[ecofeminism] has also become irrational in another sense: that is, by virtue of its own incoherence" (1990, p. 2). Biehl sees the embrace of Goddess worship, celebration of early life-affirming cultures, and metaphorical discursive style of cultural ecofeminism as a clear sign of 'irrationality' in ecofeminism. Further, she sees the diversity of perspectives contained with ecofeminist theory as making it incoherent, contradictory, and, ultimately, useless.

Similarly, socialist feminist Alison Jaggar denounces spiritual/cultural ecofeminism for forwarding an essentialist concept of the association between women and nature, and for the use of a discursive mode which she calls "invariably poetic and allusive rather than literal and exact" (1983, p. 95). Biehl takes aim at Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature*, identifying Griffin's work as an apt example of essentialism and incoherency in spiritual/cultural ecofeminism. However, *Woman and Nature* can be interpreted differently. Instead of simply rejecting the essentialism implicit in Griffin's work, Carlassare (1994) questions the aim of Griffin's use of an essential

link between women and nature. She writes, "It seems unlikely that Griffin as a feminist would be interested in perpetuating the oppression of women. If she is not using essentialism for this purpose, how else might she be using it?" (Carlassare, 1994, p. 224). From Carlassare's perspective Griffin's use of the opposition of the patriarchal voice *Woman and Nature* actually illustrates an 'essence' of women and nature that is historically constructed by the patriarchal voice and scientific discourse as less than men *in order to perpetuate masculine privilege* (1994). While this[33] can be read as an essentialist representation of women and nature and men and culture, it can also be interpreted as strategic essentialism functioning as critique of the socially constructed and historically situated hierarchy of knowledge and power which places men and culture above women and nature. In this view Griffin cannot be read as simply 'essentialist' nor 'constructionist.' Hence, according to this perspective, Griffin's strategic use of essentialism[34] in *Woman and Nature* can be read as perpetuating problematic gender roles *or* as a form of resistance and critique (Carlassare, 1994).

Spivak cautions us about the charge of essentialism, "Anti-essentialism is a way of really not doing one's homework" (1994, p. 160). If, as Carlassare has said, the essentialism in spiritual/cultural ecofeminist works such as Griffin's are strategic, aimed to illuminate the exploitation and subjugation of women and nature by patriarchal power structures, how should we judge Biehl and Jaggar's critiques? Do they stand up to an eye that is *critical of anti-essentialism*? Carlassare notes that Jaggar's critique of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism as forwarding essentialist ideas of women and nature via their writing styles seems to draw a connection between essentialism and poetic discursive modes (1994). "This association," Carlassare writes, "implies that there is something better about discursive practices that employ 'literal and exact' language, and the criticism works to marginalize the work of ecofeminists who do not write in this way" (1994, pp. 226-227). Thus, according to Carlassare, Jaggar's verdict works to marginalize the discursive practices of some ecofeminists (and scholars in other disciplines) based on the assumption that poetic discursive styles are themselves essentialist. Biehl, on the other hand, shifts from accusing ecofeminism of being 'irrational' to critiquing it for being essentialist. Hence, for Biehl, only ways of knowing considered 'rational' are valid. Evidently Biehl privileges the dominant Western patriarchal scientific epistemology over other, nonhegemonic, ways of knowing. Reflecting on Biehl's critique, Carlassare writes,

> In calling (cultural) ecofeminism 'irrational,' Biehl implies that her epistemological position is superior, a common use of the word 'irrational.' What is curious, though, is that she uses this word to dismiss works such as *Woman and Nature*, which by means of both their style and content, contest notions of truth as masculinist and oppressive and situate these notions as historical and cultural events (1994, p. 227).

Griffin's epistemological positioning in *Woman and Nature* works specifically in opposition to the patriarchal concept of objective truth, situating such 'truths' in historical and cultural events. Moreover, Carlassare notes, Biehl's criticism of such works as 'incoherent' would only be relevant if ecofeminism aimed to create a single totalizing epistemology, which has never been a tenet of ecofeminism (1994). Carlassare sees critiques such as Biehl's and Jaggar's as working to erase the multiplicity of ecofeminist voices and epistemological traditions, especially the spiritual and intuitive ways of knowing inherent in spiritual/cultural ecofeminism (1994). While it is important that we do not stumble into the apolitical realm of relativism, I believe it is equally important that we recognize that Western scientific knowledge has maintained the top spot in the hierarchy of knowledge for some time: constructed as objective and rational truth, this type of knowing is continually held as more valid than all other ways of knowing. This is why, as Carlassare notes, Biehl's use of the concept of 'irrationality' is noteworthy, "because it is [a concept] that has historically been used so often in the service of essentializing 'the other' and dismissing their subject positions and knowledges as 'false'" (1994, p. 227). One does not have to endorse all forms of ecofeminism to recognize that many of the criticisms are themselves steeped in ethnocentric and often racialized and classed assumptions.

I agree with Carlassare's conclusion that labelling spiritual/culture ecofeminism 'essentialist' seems to privilege materialist ecofeminist discourses that utilize traditional Euro-western discursive style and hegemonic epistemological practice. "The marginalization of these voices within ecofeminism", Carlassare explains, "unconsciously reinscribes traditional discursive practices and ways of knowing" (1994, p. 229). In critiques such as these materialist ecofeminism—which emphasizes transforming the material conditions of life by overcoming oppressive social structures—is constructed as more valid and politically effective than spiritual/cultural ecofeminism—which emphasizes changing consciousness, revaluing women and women's culture, and cultivating a women-based spirituality. Can we engage in productive critique that does not rely on limiting understandings of politics and valid knowledge?

Colour-blind: Erasing Difference and Silencing Voices in Ecofeminist Discourse

Up until now I have argued that many of the anti-essentialist critiques of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism have been result of a superficial understanding of the original ecofeminist works. I have also shown that some of the critiques of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism stem from and perpetuate the hegemony of colonial and patriarchal ways of knowing and being. However, this is not the case for all anti-essentialism critiques. The charge of essentialism often speaks to a denial of difference, in particular of the lived realities of racialization and geo-politics, so well captured by Mohanty's (1984) "Under Western Eyes." By utilizing the concept of 'women' to represent all women, and failing to discuss or acknowledge the varying experiences of women of colour—and other women not included in western society's definition of an acceptable woman—some spiritual/cultural ecofeminism (and other eco/feminisms) erase the experiences, strengths, and oppressions of non-western non-white women. Too often when difference is recognized, the other is framed as a victim of oppression. Audre Lorde, in her (1984) book *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* discusses this tendency in her response to Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology*. Lorde's (1984) exploration of Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* reveals that not including the strength stories and knowledges of non-white and non-western women is a choice that perpetuates white supremacy and silences the voices of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC). Lorde reminds us that there can be no liberatory politics or community without the recognition and celebration of difference (1984).

In some spiritual/cultural ecofeminisms difference is engaged through cultural appropriation or taking Indigenous knowledges out of context. Wilson (2005) shows that both spiritual/cultural ecofeminists and materialist ecofeminists are, at times, guilty of what Greta Gaard calls 'cultural cannibalism.'[35] This is seen in spiritual/cultural ecofeminisms that appropriate Indigenous knowledges to forward the argument of a feminized nature, and in materialist ecofeminisms that utilize Indigenous lifeways and stories out of context to show the oppression suffered by social groups associated with nature (Wilson, 2005). Despite the different approaches of materialist and spiritual/cultural ecofeminism, both have forwarded a type of essentialism that erases racial and geopolitical differences. Wilson, in her research into gender and nature in Anishinabek culture, has problematized the use of Indigenous experiences in both materialist and spiritual/cultural ecofeminisms (2005). Wilson explains that the misrepresentation of the gendered connections between Indigenous people and the land in

ecofeminism perpetuates academia's cultures of silencing Indigenous voices (2005). It is important to understand that, while a large share of the anti-essentialist critiques of ecofeminism has lacked a deep engagement and true understanding of the works they critique, anti-essentialism has also been a critical lesson on anti-racism and inclusion within ecofeminism.

In order to fully recognize the ways that the lifeways, experiences, cultures, and beliefs of Black, Indigenous, and racialized people can—and do—intersect with and improve ecofeminist discourses, we must learn to listen to BIPOC people speak about their experiences. We must include their strength stories, diverse lifeways, and powerful histories and traditions in our ecofeminism; not just stories of oppression and victimization within colonial capitalist-patriarchy. We must learn to listen to Indigenous people speak of their connection with nature; not utilize an appropriated contextless interpretation of gendered nature for our own gain.[36] Importantly, being Indigenous does not necessitate being ecological—as being woman does not necessitate a connection to nature. Women, Black, Indigenous, and racialized people have been associated with nature socially and historically such that the exploitation of these groups and more-than-human nature is justified by that association under the rule of colonial capitalist-patriarchy. For many Indigenous nations, connection with the land is an inherent part of identity. In order to support and discuss the connections between women and nature and the possibility of a future of multispecies flourishing we must learn to listen to each other and hold space for the voices of Indigenous people, Black people, racialized people, and other marginalized groups.

Ecofeminism as Material, Spiritual, and Cultural

This chapter has contained a detailed exploration of spiritual/cultural ecofeminist works and defense of the spiritual/cultural ecofeminist goal of 'changing consciousness' as an attempt to escape the predatory onto-epistemology of colonial capitalist patriarchy. I have argued that the anti-essentialism critiques of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism forwarded by some postmodern feminists, socialist feminists, and materialist ecofeminists often misunderstand the radically different kinds of knowledges and insights forwarded by spiritual/cultural ecofeminism and, ultimately, inscribes hegemonic discursive practices and epistemologies. I have shown that, while much of the anti-essentialism critique of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism is a hollow sort of 'straw woman' argument, the anti-essentialism that is critical of the erasure of differences between women—especially racialized and geopolitical differences—is a productive and important reflection on the use of the universalizing category 'woman' in spiritual/cultural

ecofeminism. I have discussed the problematic engagement of some ecofeminisms with the exploitation of BIPOC people and the lack of engagement with BIPOC cultures and strength stories[37] and shown that both materialist and spiritual/cultural ecofeminisms have appropriated Indigenous lifeways, knowledges, and cultures. I argued that in order to move forward in a productive way, we must learn to listen to and make space for marginalized voices without appropriation and misrepresentation. While I think by this point my readers are aware of the divergence in ecofeminism, between the materialist and spiritual/cultural approach to social change, I hope to show my readers that—while the categories of 'materialist' and 'spiritual/cultural' ecofeminisms may be useful analytical categories for thinking with—the split between the two is exaggerated and has likely caused more harm than good.

Some Reflections on Making Social Change

Spiritual/cultural ecofeminisms understand social change as dependent upon change in consciousness, spirituality, language, discursive practices, and culture and materialist ecofeminisms see social change as rooted in changes to material, economic, and political structures. Many ecofeminists utilize tenets of both materialist and spiritual/cultural ecofeminism, and few ecofeminists—with some exceptions—choose to claim either categorization (Carlassare, 2000). The diversity of views and perspectives within ecofeminism has attracted a horde of critique from mainstream feminisms and environmentalisms, that see the differences within ecofeminism as a sign of 'incoherency' (Carlassare, 2000; Biehl, 1990; Jaggar, 1983). I do not believe that it is necessary for ecofeminism to be 'coherent' in the way some critics seem to want. I argue that if we can successfully address the infighting that has taken place between some materialist ecofeminists and spiritual/cultural ecofeminists, we will be better situated to see that the demands that ecofeminism adhere to ideals of rationality and coherence are situated in a predatory onto-epistemology that values masculine associated traits and does not value traits associated with women.

Spiritual/cultural ecofeminists and material ecofeminists are much less distinct than the previous discussions suggest. Much of the ecofeminism direct political action that has taken place historically has utilized symbols and rituals from paganism to protest patriarchy, ecocide, militarism, and racism at politically charged locations such as military bases, nuclear power plants, and the Pentagon (Carlassare, 2000).[38] Ecofeminist spirituality has also been essential in the politics of direct-action forest defense camps in the Pacific North West (e.g. Clayoquot

Sound): multiple women and transgender forest defense camps incorporated ecofeminist spirituality and many forest defenders have asserted that their ecofeminist spirituality emboldens their political actions (Mallory, 2010). While spiritual/cultural ecofeminism has received criticism for what was read as an apolitical focus on the personal and/or spiritual, spiritual/cultural ecofeminists like Starhawk contend that the spiritual is always already political.[39] Many spiritual/cultural ecofeminists utilize their spirituality in direct political action aimed to change material and economic realities.

The tension between materialist ecofeminism and spiritual/cultural ecofeminism has been overstated. I believe that, in criticizing spiritual/cultural ecofeminism for not adhering to Western epistemologies and discursive modes, critics have effectively marginalized non-hegemonic forms of knowing and being and promoted the anthropocentric and androcentric onto-epistemology of colonial capitalist-patriarchy—which is ultimately what ecofeminism opposes. This rejection and devaluing of non-western forms of knowing is also a practice of colonialism. Immanent within many Indigenous spiritualities—and ecofeminist earth-based spiritualties as well!—is a rejection of anthropocentricism. Humans are not the only actors in the story of life on earth, not even the most important.

If we understand spiritual/cultural ecofeminisms call for changes to consciousness, spirituality, and culture, as an invitation to enact ways of being human otherwise; it is clear that the spiritual/cultural is an important avenue for social change. I believe that the path toward a potential future of multispecies flourishing requires attention to the spiritual/cultural and the material realm. After all, as Rocheleau (2016), and Nirmal (2016) remind us, nature and culture are always already bound up in complex relationships of what Haraway (1994, 2007) calls 'natureculture.' Perhaps it is the change of consciousness—the change within ourselves—to spirituality, culture, and the way we think, that will have the greatest impact of all. These kinds of changes can usher in substantive changes to the political economy. I agree with Mallory: "in actuality, ecofeminist spirituality is too political for the tastes of some—even some feminists—who would wish to retain some sort of human dominance!" (2010, p. 69).

Chapter 4: Nature and Human and Capitalist-Patriarchy

The previous three chapters have discussed the origins and development of ecofeminism, detailed important insights and knowledges from materialist ecofeminisms and spiritual/cultural ecofeminisms and expanded on anti-essentialist critiques of ecofeminism. Chapter three expanded on the marginalization of ecofeminism: highlighting the rejection of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism within feminism, especially from postmodern and socialist feminists, and materialist ecofeminists. I argued that the dismissal of spiritual/cultural ecofeminism as irrational because it engaged with nonhegemonic discursive modes and epistemologies can unintentionally work to uphold knowledge-power hierarchy that privileges Western ways of knowing and being over all other ways of knowing and being. I also explained that, while many anti-essentialist critiques of ecofeminism are little more than straw woman arguments, anti-essentialism that addresses the erasure of differences—especially racial and geopolitical—contained necessary and important lessons for the project of ecofeminism. At the conclusion of Chapter Three I argued that changes in the realm of spiritual/cultural—changes to consciousness and changes within ourselves—are as necessary as changes in the realm of material—to the economic and the political—on the path to a potential future of multispecies flourishing.

In this chapter I consider what could be called a predatory onto-epistemology associated with hegemonic Eurocentric thinking as it has been shaped neoliberalism, capitalism, and the logic of patriarchy. The neoliberal subjectification of humans constructs us as social actors that prize hyper-individualism and competition over all else, this neoliberal subject cannot maintain communities of care, love, and response-ability. Ecofeminism is a crucial tool for escaping the limitations of the neoliberal subject and thus for working towards livable futures. I will explain that the re/de/subjectification of humans and more-than-humans does not allow for what Haraway calls ongoingness. By ongoingness she means staying present in the trouble of the now in a productive way that holds space for potential flourishing (Haraway, 2016). I argue in order to make possible a future of multispecies flourishing we must put an end to the de/subjectification of humans and more-than-humans in the current ruling paradigm and reimagine what it means to be human. Ecofeminism empowers us to explore ways of being human otherwise—in relationships with more-than-human nature based on care, reciprocity, and love—and is thus essential in escaping this predatory onto-epistemology and eventuating futures of multispecies flourishing.

Our Paradigm

Almost any ecofeminist perspective tells us that we are entrenched in a neoliberal capitalist paradigm of hyper-individualism and techno-rationalism. Many people know and feel that immense changes are needed to support life on this planet. What Dorothy Smith (1990) would call the ruling relations, which includes ways of knowing, the thought patterns and concepts which constrict what is considered valid experience. There are what Smith (1990) calls the conceptual practices of power. There is power embedded in epistemological and ontological assumptions. Assumptions about what constitutes reality and what it means to be—ontological assumptions—and what constitutes knowledge and what it means to know—epistemological assumptions—are foundational to paradigms. The current ruling paradigm is founded in specific internalized ontological and epistemological assumptions that shape the world we experience as subjective beings. Hegemonic onto-epistemological assumptions construct some knowledges as legitimate and others as false and constitute some beings as subjective agents and others as simply background. The relationships constructed via the hegemonic onto-epistemology are power-laden: through denying some agents subjectivities and gifting others, a hierarchy of power is created and continually reproduced. Many ontological and epistemological assumptions that constitute the current ruling paradigm of colonial capitalist-patriarchy are carried over from the Enlightenment era and the Scientific Revolution (see Chapter 2) and mutated via neoliberal capitalist economic systems.[40] Haraway, for example, is a scientist and not anti-science. Her point is that hegemonic onto-epistemology of the ruling paradigm does not cultivate ongoingness. As constituted, it cannot enable what she calls ongoingness of flourishing of life.

The political environment of neoliberal capitalism, founded in the hyper-individualized consumerism and techno-rationalism of the patriarchy, does not cultivate multispecies wellbeing. In fact, even restricted just to humankind, the neoliberal capitalist patriarchy primarily cultivates ever-expanding global wealth disparities and structural inequalities.[41] Both neoliberalism and capitalism are destructive of more-than-human nature and do not allow for ways of being human otherwise. Furthermore, founded as it is in patriarchal logics of rationalism and scientism,[42] mainstream and corporate environmentalism continues to perpetuate the sacrifice of nature in the name of preserving the socio-political status quo (Harvey, 1996; Phillips, 2014). Responses aimed to mitigate climate change related risks, structured by neoliberal capitalist and colonial patriarchy, consistently fail to implement change and instead uphold the hegemony of this

predatory onto-epistemology. A national climate emergency is declared one day, and a contested pipeline pushed through unceded Indigenous land the next.[43] In the next section I explore the concept of neoliberalism; discussing neoliberalism as political economy and internalized regulatory discourse, I argue that neoliberal climate governance is not effective and that the neoliberal subject does not allow for ongoingness or mutual flourishing.

Neoliberalism, Climate Governance, and the Neoliberal Subject

There are several working definitions of neoliberalism/neoliberalization in contemporary social theory. While some scholars theorize that neoliberalism has already come to an end (Dean, 2011; McCarthy, 2012), and, according to Bakker, others, "juxtaposes distinct (and at times divergent) conceptualizations of neoliberalism – as political doctrine, as economic project, as regulatory practice, or as process of governmentalization" (2010, p. 715; see also Brown, 2015). Neoliberalism has been the dominant political economic philosophy of the Global North since the 1980s. David Harvey defines neoliberalism as, "a theory of political economic practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade" (2007, p. 22). A central role of the state in neoliberalism is to maintain institutional frameworks that support the forwarding of this agenda (Harvey, 2007). However, neoliberalism is most accomplished at reproducing inequalities across class lines. According to Dean[44] hyper-competitive neoliberalism is rigged for the benefit of the top 1%: it has been unsuccessful at bolstering the market but is has increased the transfer of wealth to the very rich (2011). Regardless of which definition of neoliberalism[45] we are working with it holds true that the main tenets of neoliberalism continue to have global consequences.

To a great extent, the main tenets of neoliberalism have become internalized and naturalized.[46] The culture perpetuated by Neoliberalism—that of competitive individualism and market-based success—is integrated into the minds of people globally (although certainly not universally), such that any successes or failures, no matter the social contexts, are considered the result of the hard work and/or skills of individuals (Carroll & Sarker, 2016). With the continued expansion of inequalities globally, it is clear that the neoliberal focus on agency over structure is problematic: the acute emphasis on the individual, based on the neoliberal hegemonic ideology that everyone is (or should be) an autonomous and 'free' individual, denies collective subjectivity and devalues social mobilization (Carroll & Sarker, 2016). McCarthy (2012) writes,

"over the past several decades, neoliberalism has become a deeply rooted, institutionalised, common sense framework" (p. 184). Embedded as we are in the 'common sense framework' and political climate of neoliberal capitalism, it should come as no surprise that policies responding to climate change and environmental degradation are constructed via a neoliberal framework.

Neoliberal climate governance and associated environmental policies[47] are based on an ideal neoliberal subject—the autonomous, 'free,' individual consumer—acting via marketplace choices. Policies ascribe responsibility to mitigate environmental damage on individuals through their consumer choices (Shove, 2010; Shotwell, 2016; Bee, Rice, & Trauger, 2015). Individuals are compelled to change their attitudes, behaviors, and choices via consumption (buying green, hybrid vehicles, 'clean' household products, sustainably produced foods, etc.) which in turn directs attention and effort away from collective and state-based forms of action—while ensuring profit for corporations (Bee, Rice, & Trauger, 2015; Shotwell, 2016; Shove, 2010). In valuing economic progress over the health and wellbeing of more-than-human nature, neoliberalism promotes a kind of market-based environmentalism that constructs market-based solutions.[48] The main tenets of neoliberalism (individualism, autonomy, private property rights, unencumbered markets, and free trade) produce and perpetuate environmental and climate governance that deemphasizes collective forms of action and prevents substantive change. Moreover, the neoliberal de/re/subjectification of humans and more-than-humans to objects and actors of consumption and compulsive individualism denies the potential of being-otherwise and rejects the idea that *we need each other* (McMahon, 2019; McGuin, 2014). Similarly, capitalism and capital re/de/subjectify human and more-than-human into commodity form and alienate humans from more-than-human nature. In the next section I explore the relationships between capital, capitalism, and nature; argue that effective environmentalism must be anti-capitalist; and assert that, for a future of multispecies flourishing, we must find ways to be human in ways other than what capital dictates.

Capital, Capitalism, and Nature

If the end of neoliberalism has passed us by, as some scholars claim, capitalism itself still holds the world and its inhabitants in its death-grip.[49] Capitalism is adaptive; so far, the depth of the crisis or the strength of the anti-capitalist opposition has not been transformative, capitalism has held strong. Harvey explains that capitalism actually thrives on trouble: "it is in the course of the crises that the instabilities of capitalism are confronted, reshaped and re-engineered to create

a new version of what capitalism is about" (2014, p. ix). Capitalism has faced opposition in many forms but has so far always recovered by transforming itself: social movement that is not inherently anti-capitalist has often been co-opted by capitalism in one way or another.[50] Capital can adopt the environmental mantle and adapt it so as to profit and thrive off growing environmental degradation—to some extent it already has. Haraway suggests that we call our current era 'Capitalocene,' stating that in the age of capitalism's global dominance, the term 'Anthropocene' is misleading as it implies that the existence of the Anthropos has had a much greater effect than it truly has had (2016). According to Haraway, "no matter how much he might be caught in the generic masculine universal and how much he only looks up, the Anthropos did not do this fracking thing and he should not name this double-death-loving epoch" (2016, p. 47). A great deal of the destruction and damage of the contemporary epoch has been the result of capital accumulation, as opposed to the automatic result of humanity's continued existence.

Jason Moore sees capitalism as a world-ecology that organizes human and more-than-human life (2016).[51] Moore asserts that understanding the ways in which capitalism organizes the relations between reproduction, labour, and the conditions of life allows us to understand how capitalism cheapens nature—through exploitation of the more-than-human and human labour (2016). Akin to the insights of materialist ecofeminists (Salleh, 2008; Mies, 1993), Moore's work emphasizes the oppressions inherent in the entanglements of humans, more-than-human nature, and capital; organized via capitalism (2016). Like Carolyn Merchant (1980), Moore understands human and more-than-human as cocreative—continually affecting change in each other (2016). According to Moore, "the Capitalocene accelerated environmental transformation beyond anything known before—sometimes, as with forest clearance, moving at speeds an order of magnitude greater than the medieval pattern" (2016, p. 98). Capitalism is dependent on cheap nature, and in that the cheapening of nature is foundational to the continued destruction and degradation of the natural environment: this is one of the inherent contradictions of capital, capitalism, and nature. According to Harvey, the contradictions inherent in capitalism and capital "transcend the specificities of capitalist social formations" (2014, p. 7). Thus, even if capitalism is something other than neoliberal, these contradictions persist as they are inherent in capitalism and in capital. Harvey does not believe that the current environmental crises are fatal to capitalism, in fact, he explains, growing support for environmentalism has actually helped bolster capital and capitalism (2014). "This is known as 'greenwashing'—" Harvey writes,

"disguising a profit-driven project as a project to enhance human welfare" (2014, p. 249). However, Harvey does believe that, nearing a critical juncture in confronting global climate change, the rule of capital and capitalism may be challenged (2014).

It seems that anti-capitalism may be an essential requirement for productive environmentalism, or nature/culture struggles that enable life on earth to flourish for most of its inhabitants. According to Harvey, the commodification of nature by capital is inevitable: capital cannot change the way it views nature as simply a commodity (Harvey, 2014). "To challenge this would be to challenge the functioning of the economic engine of capitalism itself and to deny the applicability of capital's economic rationality to social life" (Harvey, 2014, p. 252). In order to generate profit and promote economic growth, *nature must be made cheap* and commodified. Moreover, Harvey contends, "the concept of nature that underpins various philosophies of environmentalism is radically at odds with that which capital has to impose in order to reproduce itself" (2014, p. 252). Capitalism's desubjectification of nature—which denies the agency of more-than-human nature and frames it as passive object useful only as commodity—and subjectification of humans—as self-promoting consumers always in competition—constrains relationships between humans and with more-than-human nature to relationships of domination. According to Harvey, this de/subjectification alienates humans from our more-than-human kin and from the ecological system (2014). Capital's desubjectification of more-than-human nature disregards the inherent beauty of the more-than-human and the relationships that make up the living earth—the magic in the world—and potential fulfillment for humans could garner from relationships with more-than-human nature that are not based on domination. Harvey contends that under the rule of capital, due to the unrelenting privatization, commodification, and monetization of both nature and human subjects, humankind loses the potential of being human in any way other than what capital dictates (2014). Reflecting on the threat that this universal human alienation poses to the rule of capital, Harvey writes,

> The seeds are sown for a humanist revolt against the inhumanity presupposed in the reduction of nature and human nature to the pure commodity form. Alienation from nature is alienation from our own species' potential. This releases a spirit of revolt in which words like dignity, respect, compassion, caring and loving become revolutionary slogans, while values of truth and beauty replace the cold calculus of social labour (2014, p. 263).

Both neoliberalism and capitalism constrict what it means to be human to commodity form. The neoliberal subjectification of humans—as autonomous 'free' individuals—leaves no

room for community, collaboration, and response-ability (Haraway, 2016). Capitalism continues to alienate humans from potential reciprocal relationships with more-than-human nature, promoting competition and consumption as key to what it means to be human. The neoliberal subject and the capitalist wage labourer do not allow for ongoingness. If we are to work toward a future of multispecies flourishing, we must overcome these predatory onto-epistemologies and transcend the prison of the neoliberal/capitalist subject. If we are to survive, we must look elsewhere for ways of being human and work to resubjectify the human and more-than-human.

Logic of Patriarchy

Chapter 4 up until this point has focused on the discourses and subjectivities constructed by neoliberalism, capital, and capitalism. What you ask, can ecofeminism add to the kinds of compelling analysis by scholars working in a Marxian tradition? While internalized neoliberalism and the relationships between nature, capital, and capitalism are essential factors of the predatory onto-epistemology of the ruling paradigm, there is something missing from the discussion thus far. Fundamental to the current ruling paradigm, ecofeminism argues, is the oppressive conceptual framework of patriarchy. Patriarchy is not a super-structural phenomenon, an add-on, something to be dealt with after climate change or class conflict is addressed. Warren (2000) explains that a *conceptual framework* is the socially constructed lens we understand the world through: it is a set of attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, and values—shaped by intersecting identities that structures how we see ourselves and the world around us (2000). An *oppressive* conceptual framework, Warren explains, works to justify, explain, and perpetuate relationships of 'unjustified' subordination and domination (2000). A patriarchal conceptual framework is oppressive: it works to justify, explain, and perpetuate the subordinations not just of class but of racialization and of gender (Warren, 2000). Analyses of capitalism alone will not be adequately liberatory or transformative.

Five common features categorize an oppressive conceptual framework. First, it involves *value-hierarchal thinking*, which posits more value onto things higher up and less to those low down (Warren, 2000). According to Warren, in a patriarchal oppressive framework men are the Ups and women are the Downs (2000). Second, it encourages and perpetuates *oppositional value dualisms*: when one part of distinct, exclusive, and oppositional pairs are valued over the other (Warren, 2000). In the patriarchal conceptual framework, Warren explains, 'male,' 'white,' 'reason,' and 'culture,' are valued over 'female,' 'black,' 'feeling,' and 'nature' (2000). Third,

power is conceived as *power-over*, a hierarchy of powers of Ups over Downs (Warren, 2000). Expanding on this Warren writes, "when power-over power serves to reinforce the power of Ups as Ups in ways that keep Downs unjustifiably subordinated (which not all cases of power-over do), such conceptions and practices of power are unjustified" (2000, p. 47). Fourth, an oppressive conceptual framework constructs and perpetuates a conception and practice of *privilege*, specifically as belonging to the Ups and not the Downs (Warren, 2000). The fifth and most important feature of oppressive conceptual frameworks is that they imbue a *logic of domination* which justifies domination and subordination (Warren, 2000). A logic of domination allows for arguments that superiority is justification for subordination. Warren explains, "a logic of domination is offered as the moral stamp of approval for subordination, since, if accepted, it provides a justification for keeping Downs down" (2000, p. 47). Warren understands the logic of domination as playing the most important role in justifying subordination (2000).[52]

A logic of domination is explanatorily basic in two ways: first, it functions to explain and justify domination by utilizing a value system based on the perception that superiority justifies subordination (Warren, 2000). That is, it constructs others as inferior and then utilizes that inferiority to explain and justify domination and subordination (Warren, 2000). (Warren, 2000, p. 48). Second, a logic of domination imbues moral value to descriptions of similarities and differences, without which they would be only descriptive (Warren, 2000). According to Warren, "the logic of domination is necessary both to turn diversity (or difference) into domination and to justify that domination" (2000, p. 49). Thus, from this perspective, without the logic of domination diversity and difference would not be able to justify oppression.

In Western societies, as ecofeminism helps us understand, the oppressive conceptual frameworks that have justified the domination and subordination of nature, women, people of colour, Indigenous people, LGBTQ+, the poor, and nonhuman animals have historically been patriarchal (Warren, 2000). As Merchant agues in *The Death of Nature* (1980): in Western societies since the Enlightenment (Plumwood emphasizes the Greek origins of these binaries) men have been associated with reason, logic, culture, and the mind; while women have been identified with emotion, art, nature, literature, and the body. Occurring within a patriarchal conceptual framework, these associations work to justify the subordination and domination of women, often dependent on the claim that women and Others were not rational (Warren, 2000).[53] The logic of patriarchy is a logic of domination that inherently values men and male-associated

traits over women and those features associated with women. Masculine identity is defined by what it is not, prominently features associated with the feminine (Kheel, 2008). However, it is also defined by the oppositional value dualisms of the logic of patriarchy: good/evil, reason/emotion, culture/nature, conscious/unconscious, strong/weak, active/passive, human/nonhuman (Merchant, 1980; Kheel, 2008; Warren, 2000; Phillips, 2014). Kheel reminds us, "a common thread running through these dualisms is that what is categorized as authentically human conforms to ideas around idealized, hegemonic masculinity and is defined in opposition to what is taken to be natural, nature, or the physical or biological realm" (2008, p. 444). Women and nature are constructed as the other, while men, mind, reason, and culture, are that which transcends nature and the feminine.[54]

The 'logic of patriarchy' perpetuates the overvaluation of scientism and rationality which, dependent on the false binaries of the dualistic worldview (nature/culture, human/nonhuman, reason/emotion), constructs that which is 'authentically human' based on ideals of hegemonic masculinity and specifically in opposition to that which is natural, nature, physical, and feminine (Phillips, 2014). Functioning within the political economy of neoliberal capitalism, the logic of patriarchy perpetuates responses to the ecological crises and climate change that are founded in the Enlightenment myth of man's mastery over nature. Moreover, the logic of patriarchy perpetuates a value hierarchy of knowledge in which rational knowledge is valued over affective and intuitive knowledge—associated with women and nature. Again (as discussed in Chapter 3) this is not to make any essentialist claims about women's knowledge but to acknowledge that in gendered (and racialized) social worlds knowledge is gendered and racialized—as it is shaped by the classed relations of capitalism. When we then apply this perspective to our previous discussion on the marginalization of the spiritual/cultural in ecofeminism, we can see that critiques of ecofeminism as 'irrational' and 'poetic' are very much situated in the patriarchal logic of domination. The logic of patriarchy—like neoliberalism and capitalism—constrains and restricts ways of being human. If we are to productively address climate change and environmental degradation and allow for potential futures of multispecies flourishing, we must escape these predatory onto-epistemologies, transcend the limitations of the neoliberal/capitalist/patriarchal subject, and begin our journey of becoming-otherwise.

The Environmentalism of the Capitalocene

The stories of the Anthropocene and Capitalocene end badly. Inspiring dominant discourses of climate change and ecological crises that say, "it's already too late, we may as well give up," the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene create their own self-fulfilling prophecy (Haraway, 2016). Environmentalism within the Capitalocene, framed by the logic and oppressive conceptual framework of patriarchy and the hyper-individualism and economic rationality of neoliberalism, claims a continued commitment to growth that can be achieved (we are assured) *without* the continued destruction of the more-than-human (Phillips, 2014). However, as Harvey contends, the contradiction inherent in capital's relation to nature makes that impossible (2007). Moreover, the neoliberal/capitalist/patriarchal subject that is at the heart of these imaginaries cannot commit to reciprocal and response-able relationships with human and more-than-human kin and thus does not support ongoingness. Despite the clear consequences of the current desubjectification of nature, the nonhuman continues to be made passive and commodified as objects only valuable for human consumption and the Capitalocentric goal of economic 'progress'.

The current ruling paradigm frames environmentalism and environmental policy thorough market-based ideals of hyper-individualism and utilitarian techno-rationalism that deemphasize collective and state-based forms of action (Bee, Rice, & Trauger, 2015); climate change and climate change policy—presented as both largely a scientific problem (scientized) as well as a threat to international security (securitized)—are constructed as the kind of problems to be addressed within domains traditionally associated with men and hegemonic masculinity (MacGregor, 2010);[55] and corporations forward a greenwashed 'sustainability' that views nature as a resource for human consumption and commodification or as a risk that requires mastery, domination, and management (Phillips, 2014). The logic of patriarchy, which perpetuates and justifies the dualistic worldviews and relationships of oppression and subordination, validates the masculine approaches (mastery, domination, subordination) inherent in humanity's extractive relationship to more-than-human nature. Discourses of reason over emotion, mind over body, culture over nature, masculine over feminine, white over black restrict human subjectivities and deny potential alternative futures. These discourses stem from the Enlightenment thinking that perpetuates the belief that non-human nature's real worth is for human use, and that desperately upholds the masculine/culture identity that is constructed in opposition to women/nature (Phillips, 2014). Phillips explains that corporate discourses 'de-nature' nature by perpetuating the

false nature/culture binary and while denying the inter/intra-connectedness of all earthbound beings via discourses of rationality and reductionism (2014). According to Olkowski (1999), "Reason is believed to be paramount in achieving the limited change that is espoused such that rational persuasion and argument are assumed to be or even guaranteed to be the engines of change even while they act to guarantee uniformity" (as cited by Phillips, 2014, p. 446). These discourses are dangerous, especially enmeshed as we are in these times of trouble. The multispecies crises of care (Fraser, 2016)[56] that sabotages potential positive futures cannot be allowed to carry on and these discourses, inherent in the predatory ontologies and epistemologies of neoliberal capitalism and colonial patriarchy, must be dismantled in order to allow for the possibility to be otherwise. Phillips (2014) explains that maintaining the nature/culture binary is essential for corporate 'environmentalism':

> The human sphere and that of nature cannot be allowed to overlap in any significant way as nature must be divided off from the human and cast as alien, hostile and inferior. Regarding nature in this way has justified seeing it only as a resource to be consumed, granted little status in its own right and positioned as secondary to the (usually) short-term interests of corporations. As corporations thus sit outside nature, the destructive potential of over-production and consumption can be largely ignored and disregarded (p. 446).

Despite the rapidly expanding accumulation of environmental theory and research that exclaims "our descent toward the point of no return is happening much too quickly!" environmental policies and governance seem to be more concerned for capital accumulation than for environmental protection. Policies and governance are ruled by 'business as usual' paradigms and 'not in my backyard' (NIMBY) politics that work to uphold the hegemony of our current paradigm and maintain the status quo. Ecofeminism goes further and deeper that most emancipatory politics framed by Enlightenment thinking. It is neither anti-modernist nor post-modernist and not even post-humanist. It cannot be contained within the history of Western intellectual and political traditions although it is of course shaped by them. For a future in which multispecies flourishing is possible, we must first free ourselves from the exploitation and subjectification of these predatory onto-epistemologies and take up ways of being and ways of thinking differently.

Chapter 5: Knowing and Being Otherwise: Alternative Onto-epistemologies

The first three chapters of this thesis built a foundation for this ecofeminist journey: Chapter 1 introduced academic ecofeminism from origin through to its marginalization; Chapter 2 discussed materialist ecofeminisms; and Chapter 3 brought spiritual/cultural ecofeminism into the conversation, detailed multiple avenues of anti-essentialist criticism, and argued that materialist and spiritual/cultural ecofeminisms both contribute in different ways to the project of ecofeminism. In Chapter 4 I built a case for my argument that the ontology and epistemology of the current conceptual practices of power—defined by neoliberal capitalism and colonial patriarchy—cannot allow for ongoingness. In this chapter I argue that, through engagement with alternative ontologies and epistemologies found in new feminist materialisms (NFM), feminist political ecology (FPE), and Indigenous worldviews, ecofeminism may be well situated to free us from the chains of colonial capitalist-patriarchy. In the first subsection I discuss the construction of knowledge and subjectivities in the current ruling paradigm and argue for revaluing other ways of knowing. In the second subsection I explore alternate ways of knowing and being through engagement with NFM and FPE. In the third subsection I explore ontological and epistemological lessons from Indigenous ecologist Robin Wall Kimmerer and suggest that productive ecofeminism must be decolonial.

Objective Knowledge and the Neoliberal/Capitalist/Patriarchal Subject

The predatory ontology and epistemology of neoliberal capitalism and colonial patriarchy work to subjectify humans into hyper-individualized consumer entities and desubjectify all other earth-bound beings. In hegemonic ways of knowing there is limited opportunity to learn from subjugated others or to consider the subjectivity of a river or a forest or to entertain the ideas of trees communicating among themselves.[57] Smith (1990) reminds us that the relationship between the construction of knowledge and the construction of subjectivities and subjects is power laden—power is inherent in the construction of knowledge as some groups are constructed as legitimate subjects and some knowledge as legitimate knowledge and other subjects and knowledges are constructed as illegitimate (1990). The subjects/ways of knowing that are considered legitimate within the hegemonic epistemology/ontology hold power over the subjects/ways of knowing that are devalued (Smith, 1990).

Smith (1990) and Shotwell (2011) are both critical of knowledge that is constructed as removed from or independent of the knower. “A necessary and ubiquitous feature of knowing is

the presence of a knower, and that knower commits herself to a stance in the act of knowing" Shotwell explains (2011, p. 11). Knowledge that is removed from the knower—constructed as 'objective' or 'propositional'—is at the top of the knowledge-power hierarchy that grants some subjects agency and others none. Smith explains that the construction of some knowledge as objective truths suppresses the embodied local and particular knowledges of women and other oppressed social groups (1990).[58] Smith and Shotwell both urge the revaluing of embodied and implicit knowledges. Shotwell distinguishes between four different types of implicit knowing; practical skill based knowing, bodily knowing, unspoken knowing, and affective/emotional knowledge (2011).[59] These implicit ways of knowing—the embodied knowledges—are coined 'subjective' and thus of lesser value if not suspect despite their grounding in lived experiences. What is considered legitimate knowledge and who/what are considered legitimate subjects is regulated by dominant ontologies and epistemologies. Alternate ways of thinking and being in the world, different ways of understanding agency, subjectivity and our relationships in the world, are needed to productively move forward within the current ecological crises. Ecofeminism advocates for boundary transgressive ways of knowing and being, and concepts offered in NFM and FPE have transformative capacities.

Boundary Transgressing and Reconceptualizing Agency

The onto-epistemology of the current ruling paradigm constructs agency and subjectivity as characteristics of the bounded individual human entity and—the human subject. Depending on the historical context different social beings are or are not recognized as full subjects. At different times and places slaves, women, racialized or Indigenous people were denied full or even any subjecthood. New feminist materialism challenges traditional ideas about subjectivity: instead of granting some actors agency and others none, NFM sees agency as emergent via relationships and interactions between human and more-than-human subjects (Schnabel, 2014; Alaimo, 2014; Barad, 2008; Mol, 2008). From an NFM perspective, Schnabel explains, "sentience, and even life, is dethroned and agency distributed, meaning even non-biological matter is thought to be potentiating—and even agentic—in its facilitating of activity in assemblage" (2014, p. 11). This understanding of agency and subjectivity as emergent and shared between human and more-than-human entities is clearly at odds with the current mechanistic worldview of our paradigm.

New feminist materialisms are partly a response to what is seen as the overly discursive turn in the social sciences and humanities. It is an effort to acknowledge the material. According to Barad, language has been granted too much power: everything—even matter—has been turned into a matter of language and/or social construction (2008). Moreover, Barad explains that while matter is constructed as passive, language and the discursive have been granted agency and historicity (2008). Barad suggests the concept of intra-action—which states that matter (life and nonlife), history, discourse, language, politics, emotion, culture, and all other things are co-constituted in relationships of entangled agencies—as a useful tool for productively contemplating agency and subjectivity of life and nonlife matter (2008). Intra-action is a concept of emergence: it rejects the idea that only individuals have agency and the subject/object dichotomy and instead sees agency as flowing between entities in relationship to each other (Barad, 2008). "[The] ongoing flow of agency through which 'part' of the world makes itself differentially intelligible to another 'part' of the world and through which local causal structures, boundaries, and properties are stabilized and destabilized does not take place in space and time but in the making of space-time itself," Barad writes (2008, p. 135). Thus, according to Barad the world and the universe becomes-with in a dynamic agentic relationship of intra-action; nonlife matter has agency; and other-than-human bodies are not inherently different than human bodies (2008).

For Alaimo, agency *and* matter are shared between the semi-permeable boundaries of human and other-than-human bodies that are always in interaction with each other (2014). These understandings of agency as emergent from interactions between human and/or nonhuman bodies challenges traditional conceptions of subjectivity as characteristic of bounded human entities. The subjectivity of an apple comes into question for Mol (2008) as she ponders the flow of agency between apple and eater before, during, and after the apple is eaten. "Neither tightly closed off, nor completely open, an eater has semi-permeable boundaries" Mol explains (2008, p. 30). Mol maintains the transcorporeality[60] of apple and eater, contending that we cannot separate ourselves from the world and we are, literally, what we eat (2008). Alaimo also forwards the idea that 'we are what we eat,' but she situates the conversation in the issue of plastic pollution: human bodies are also plastic, as it is in the food we consume (2014). She suggests that accepting the impossibility of separating ourselves from 'the stuff of the world' necessarily precedes a political ecological new feminist materialist paradigm shift (Alaimo, 2014). Shotwell

also argues for a transcorporeal understanding of being human: explaining that, through the irreversible consumption of objects in our environment and interaction with transcorporeal bounded entities, we are always already polluted (2016).

I have explored these emerging ideas in feminist analysis because they can be read as a kind of new generation of ecofeminism. They engage with the materiality of the more-than-human in ways that are removed from the anthropocentrism and hyper-individualism of the neoliberal/capitalist/patriarchal subject and thus allow for the potential of being human otherwise. This potential is a necessary precondition of doing effective political work in these times of climate and ecological crises. If we can only every be what is dictated by the conceptual practices of power of colonial capitalist-patriarchy, then we are doomed to repeat the mistakes of generations before us and there can be no future, multispecies or otherwise. The difference that these different ways of knowing and being make is critical for a potential livable future.

The Difference of Different Ontologies

These alternative understandings of subjectivity, agency, and the construction of knowledge necessarily entail alternate ontological assumptions. NFM challenges the dualisms inherent in the current conceptual practices of power, according to Barad separating 'epistemology' from 'ontology' is a consequence of that dichotomous thinking. She writes, "the separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse" (Barad, 2008, p. 147). An ontology is always already an onto-epistemology. Barad suggests agential realism as an alternate onto-epistemology for productive engagement with the discursive and material realm (2008). Intra-action—an essential feature of agential realism—posits knowledge as always embodied. Barad explains that, "We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because 'we' are of the world," (2008, p. 147). Barad's NFM onto-epistemology grants more-than-human nature agency and subjectivity as part of the intra-acting web of the living earth. These NFM concepts are a sort of new ecofeminism, despite the lack of the ecofeminist label.

For Alaimo, the ways that transcorporeal human and nonhuman bodies[61] share agency and matter also leads to an ontology that is always already epistemology. "The practice of thinking from within and as part of the material world swirls together ontology, epistemology, scientific disclosures, political perspectives, and environmental activism" Alaimo explains

(2014, p. 20). This understanding of ourselves as embedded and engaged with life and nonlife matter urges us to acknowledge our role in the shared response-ability of all entities that make up the web of intra-action, and thus, Alaimo contends, call us to action (2014). "Recognizing how all living creatures intra-act with place—with the perpetual flow of water, air, nutrients, toxicants, and other substances—makes it imperative that we be accountable for the many material-semiotic systems we always already inhabit," she explains (2014, p. 20). When we think-with concepts like transcorporeality and intra-action, the nature/culture binary is destabilized and concerns with the degradation of more-than-human nature are reframed as questions of our own survival.

It is integral that we escape the predatory onto-epistemology of the current conceptual practices of power and free ourselves from the chains of the neoliberal/capitalist/patriarchal subjects. Definitions of what is acceptably human and what has agency in the colonial capitalist patriarchy is restrictive and does not allow for positive and reciprocal relationships with the more-than-human. Capitalism and patriarchy require domination and exploitation to maintain their hegemony, neither of which is conducive to a future of multispecies flourishing. New feminist materialisms offer alternative ontologies and epistemologies that allow for different understandings of subjectivity and agency and thus of potential alternative futures. As Dianne Rocheleau reminds us, we are and have always been a part of the living world (2016). Rocheleau's FPE work on rooted networks and relational webs engages with actor network theory (ANT) to show that living worlds emerge from the continual and complex material interdependences between human, other-than-human, and place (2016). Rocheleau explains,

> We all live in emergent ecologies – complex assemblages of plants, animals, people, physical landscape features, and technologies – created through the habit-forming practices of connection in everyday life. We both inhabit and co-create these ecologies of home, often without being able to "see" them clearly (2016, p. 213).

Rocheleau's attention to the dynamic and uneven relations of power embedded in the co-construction of nature and culture emphasizes both the responsibility we share for the sustainment of livable worlds and the danger of perpetuating the fictitious separation of nature and culture (2016). Nirmal (2016) contends that Rocheleau's framing of the relationships between beings and things as always rooted in place furthers the political reach of FPE and both legitimizes practices of 'being differently' and furthers the decolonial agenda of FPE. According to Nirmal, Rocheleau's rooted networks make alterative worlds in the socionatural visible as

living worlds, "showing how places and their politics are embedded in the world and, significantly, emphasizing the multiplicity of worlds" (2016, p. 234). Importantly, Rocheleau's rooted networks theory allows for an expanded understanding of different worlds existing simultaneously—and thus validates alternative ontologies and epistemologies such as the relational ontologies of Indigenous peoples (2016; Nirmal, 2016).

These NFM and FPE conceptualizations have transformative capacities. However, it is necessary to point out that many of the ontological and epistemological insights discussed in the sections above have existed for a long time in Indigenous knowledges. Moreover, those of us who are settlers on Indigenous land need to become receptive to the lessons of the Indigenous peoples of the land. Some ecofeminists have engaged previously with Indigenous knowledges; at times this has amounted to little more than an act of culture cannibalism (Wilson, 2005; Gaard, 2011). Many Indigenous worldviews perceive humans and other-than-humans as inextricably connected within the multispecies community of the land. These understandings of connection and reciprocity are deeply rooted in many Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and lifeways. While being Indigenous does not necessarily lead to being ecofeminist, I argue that any productive contemporary ecofeminism must be decolonial.[62] A future of multispecies flourishing must necessarily include Indigenous sovereignty and support Indigenous resurgence for a decolonial future.

Toward a Decolonial Ecofeminism

Decolonization is necessary for the project of ecofeminism. Colonization, a little like Parenti's (2012) understanding of the function of the modern State, makes 'nature', as Indigenous peoples' lands, available for capital accumulation. Not just property relations but relationships with nature are at the core of colonialism. Decolonization changes how all people are intertwined with the more-than-human.[63] According to Nirmal, Indigenous relational ontologies, which emphasize living well with the land, "signify the entanglement of the material (land) with the spiritual, ecological and cultural, producing knowledges about the world – decolonial knowledges that stand in opposition to colonial violence that removes the indigenous from the land and destroys the land" (2016, pp. 236-237). Indigenous relational ontologies emphasize the interconnection of material, spiritual, ecological, and cultural: all are inseparable in the world of natureculture.

Lessons from Plants: The Gift Economy and Becoming Naturalized to Place

> We are the planters, those who clear the land, pull the weeds, and pick the bugs; we save the seeds over winter and plant them again next spring. We are midwives to their gifts. We cannot live without them, but it's also true that they cannot live without us. Corn, beans, and squash are fully domesticated; they rely on us to create the conditions under which they can grow. We too are part of the reciprocity. They can't meet their responsibilities unless we meet ours
>
> —Kimmerer, 2013, p. 140

This section delves into the onto-epistemological lessons taught by Potawatomi author and ecologist Robin Wall Kimmerer. These lessons are incredibly important for the future of ecofeminism because they offer ways of being and knowing *with* more-than-human nature that are removed from what I call a predatory onto-epistemology of colonial capitalist-patriarchy. Kimmerer (2013) offers a vision of an alternate economy that she was taught by plants, a 'gift economy' that allows for ongoingness and multispecies flourishing in ways neoliberal capitalism cannot. Moreover, Kimmerer (2013) shows us that such alternative ways of being human are not new but have been existing alongside the neoliberal/capitalist/patriarchal subject since colonization (and despite the colonizers intent to destroy and discredit these alternative ways of being and knowing), and offers to settlers an example of immigrants that have become 'naturalized to place.' I utilize Kimmerer's (2013) *Braiding Sweetgrass* to argue that Indigenous onto-epistemologies that are in tune with the more-than-human offer an essential critique of hegemonic Euro-western worldviews that are crucial for the future of a productive ecofeminism.

In *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013) Kimmerer explains the botanic foundations of the gift economy: a lesson taught by plants and passed on generation to generation in many Indigenous nations globally. "Plants tell their stories not by what they say, but by what they do," Kimmerer explains (2013, p. 128). Plants grow and flourish together; they provide food to eat and air to breathe; and they are interdependent upon each other and upon human and nonhuman people alike. Plants share their gifts with all. They do so without expecting payment, and in doing so they teach us about interconnection, reciprocity, and the gift economy. Reflecting on gifts from the living earth, Kimmerer (2013, p. 24) writes:

> A gift comes to you through no action of your own, free, having moved towards you without your beckoning. It is not a reward; you cannot earn it, or call it to you, or even deserve it. And yet it appears. Your only role is to be open-eyed and present. Gifts exist in a realm of humility and mystery—as with random acts of kindness, we do not know their source.

The gifts the living earth bestows upon us are multiple and varied, our lives are dependent upon the gifts of the living earth. Though we do not earn gifts, they do require response and they

necessitate responsibility. According to Kimmerer "In the gift economy, gifts are not free. The essence of a gift is that it creates a set of relationships" (2013, p. 28). In the gift economy, a gift given is the beginning of a relationship: a gift given requires reciprocity, responsibility, and thanksgiving (Kimmerer, 2013). Kimmerer explains that, while larks have the gift of songs and maples the gifts of food and energy; humans have the ability to express gratitude, it is one of our gifts and thus one of our responsibilities:

> It is human perspective that makes the world a gift. When we view the world in this way, strawberries and humans are alike transformed. The relationship of gratitude and reciprocity thus developed can increase the evolutionary fitness of both plant and animal. A species and a culture that treat the natural world with respect and reciprocity will surely pass on genes to ensuing generations with a higher frequency than the people who destroy it. The stories we choose to shape our behaviours have adaptive consequences (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 30).

When we view the world as a gift, reciprocal relationships with the living earth stand out as the only sensible way forward. In relationships, beings are transformed—we become otherwise, together. These reciprocal relationships ensure the survival of all earthlings engaged in them. I am reminded of what Haraway calls *sympoiesis*: "nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organizing," she explains (2016, p. 58). All beings are interdependent: together we make up the living earth. Sympoiesis is a useful word when thinking about the living earth in all its intra-acting complexity. "*Sympoiesis* is a word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems" Haraway writes (2013, p. 58). The living earth is a system of multispecies becoming-with, all beings on and of the living earth become-with through the gifts we share with each other. This necessitates responsibility and reciprocity. Whereas Haraway and other theorists have come to this understanding through engagement with NFM, these onto-epistemological understandings have been an integral part of many Indigenous cultures and worldviews since time immemorial.

Kimmerer forwards the code of the Honorable Harvest; a set of moral and ethical instructions taught in Indigenous nations that guide how to harvest without causing harm (2013). This philosophy" Kimmerer explains, "guides not only our taking of food, but also any taking of the gifts of Mother Earth—air, water, and the literal body of the earth: the rocks and soil and fossil fuels" (2013, p. 187). The gifts from the living earth are multiple and varied; the shining sun, the blowing wind, the warmth of the earth below, the power of the waves: "we can understand these renewable sources of energy as given to us, since they are the sources that have

powered life on the planet for as long as there has been a planet," Kimmerer explains (2013, p. 178). Gifts are given freely; they are not deserved, earned, asked for, or forcibly taken. Thus, in this context oil and coal, which must be forcibly taken, should certainly remain in the ground.

Akin to Starhawk's understanding of the Earth's call to action, Kimmerer explains that, when we understand the gifts that the living earth bestows on us, we are called to respond (2013). We are called to claim our responsibility to take care of the living earth, to practice reciprocity with the living earth that takes such care for us. Relationships based on respect and reciprocity perpetuate flourishing for all that participate. Indigenous onto-epistemologies and lifeways are generative of this respect and reciprocity with the living earth, however, colonization has taken much from Indigenous peoples—language, culture, land, and rights—many of the features of Indigeneity that perpetuate multispecies flourishing are continually endangered by the continued growth of economic capitalism and the colonial patriarchy.

There are many lessons to be learned from plants. Some plants, like some humans, are colonizers. They arrive to new land and they take over, doing their best to eradicate and replace the Indigenous beings on the land. Others are immigrants that, through time and effort, have become naturalized to place (Kimmerer, 2013). One plant that exemplifies this is Plantain, also known as White Man's Footsteps. Kimmerer explains that Plantain is not indigenous to North America: it followed colonizers faithfully to Turtle Island (2013). But, unlike the human people who settled on Turtle Island, Plantain worked with the local ecology and continues to work hard to participate—reciprocally—in multispecies flourishing. "It's a foreigner, an immigrant, but after five hundred years of living as a good neighbor, people forget that kind of thing" Kimmerer writes (2013, p. 214). Plantain is a settler, but it doesn't hog all the resources and starve the locals, nor does it poison the soil and putrefy the air. Plantain is not Indigenous, but it has become naturalized to Turtle Island (Kimmerer, 2013). Kimmerer suggests that human settlers should learn from Plantain, follow in the footsteps of White Man's Footsteps and become 'naturalized to place' (2013):

> Being naturalized to place means to live as if this is the land that feeds you, as if these are the streams from which you drink, that build your body and fill your spirit. To become naturalized is to know that your ancestors lie in this ground. Here you will give your gifts and meet your responsibilities. To become naturalized is to live as if your children's future matters, to take care of the land as if our lives and the lives of all our relatives depend on it. Because they do (Kimmerer, 2013, pp. 214-215).

To become naturalized to place, a lesson Plantain offers to settler, means to act as if the land in which we have settled is the land that sustains us, because it is; to act as if we cannot flourish without the flourishing of the multispecies communities of our place, because we cannot. In order to become naturalized to place we must take up the responsibility to respond to the gifts that the living earth bestows upon us. We must reciprocate with our own gifts, and work to repair and maintain the positive relationships our ancestors once had with the land they were Indigenous to. And we must learn to listen to the Indigenous people of the land, those who have embodied and implicit knowledge of the land. We can no longer deny the validity of these knowledges, nor of these alterative ways of being with the world. Trees speak to each other. Indigenous people have always known this, but Western scientists and Western culture dismissed this knowledge as myth. Indigenous knowledge is often dismissed as myth. This is a feature of the predatory onto-epistemology of the current Euro-Western paradigm that validates faux-objective scientific knowledge and invalidates all other forms of knowledge. There is now compounding (Western scientific) evidence that trees do talk to each other, root-to-root through a fungal network (Kimmerer, 2013). "They weave a web of reciprocity, of giving and taking" Kimmerer explains, "In this way, the trees all act as one because the fungi have connected them. Through unity, survival. All flourishing is mutual" (2013, p. 20). All flourishing is mutual. Because nothing is truly autopoietic, nothing really creates itself, all of the living earth is bound up in the interconnected web of reciprocity: flourishing for one necessitates flourishing for all.

Decolonization and the Path Forward

I have shown you ways of being and ways of knowing otherwise offered from Indigenous, FPE, and NFM scholars. These alternate onto-epistemologies are crucial for the project of ecofeminism because they allow for ways of being human that, in collaboration with the more-than-human, work to sustain a livable world. Much of Western academia—sociology and feminisms included—has often failed to respectfully engage with Indigenous knowledges and lifeways. Hegemonic onto-epistemologies of colonial capitalist-patriarchy still function in higher education: Indigenous students and scholars are told that their worldviews do not belong—that their ways of being and ways of knowing in the world are irrational, untrue, unreasonable and unscientific. No ecologically progressive future is possible without Indigenous sovereignty, but without respect for and acknowledgement of the tremendous work of Indigenous peoples, scholarships, teachings, stories, and onto-epistemologies globally, the path

to Indigenous sovereignty is greatly obscured. Settlers must turn to the human and nonhuman teachers of the land for the lessons we have ignored since our arrival on Turtle Island—there is no better starting point than an ecofeminism that recognizes the importance of Indigenous relational ontologies, relational webs and rooted networks.

With such an ecofeminism comes response-ability to all earthbound beings. To care for 'ourselves' is to care for everything: we are also the living world. Thinking-with these onto-epistemologies allows us to conceptualize potential futures where humans actively care, and caringly act. There is a world of multispecies flourishing, a story of ongoingness, in which the climate, the environment, life and nonlife, acts and cares and co-constitutes in intra-acting relationships of reciprocal becoming-with amidst the gift economy of the living earth. We must free ourselves from the chains of the neoliberal/capitalist/patriarchal subject and nature/culture binary and learn to become human otherwise: this is the project of multispecies ecofeminism.

Chapter 6: Becoming Otherwise

It is easier to imagine an end to the world than an end to Capitalism.

—Fredric Jameson, 1994

How can it be that it is so difficult to imagine a 'from now on' that is different from what 'now' has always seemed to be. This is due, in part, to the internalized and embedded components of the hegemonic onto-epistemology. Entrenched as we are in the doom-and-gloom discourse of the Anthropocene and Capitalocene and the internalized and embedded colonial neoliberal ways of being and knowing and capitalism, it is difficult to imagine an alternate future.

The first three chapters of this thesis examined ecofeminism offered a history and analysis of ecofeminism. In chapter four focuses on 'the conceptual practices of power' using the concept of a predatory onto-epistemology. In Chapter 5 I theorized the political and personal implications of predatory ontologies and offered research on alterative ways of being and knowing from a variety of literature, and I suggested that an ecofeminism that is engaged with the alternate onto-epistemologies of NFM, FPE, and Indigenous worldviews is potentially transformative. I argued that decolonization must be at the heart of ways of being and knowing that have the potential to offer paths to lives of multi-species flourishing and social justice. This chapter wants to reflect more directly on making social change.

Like many of my friends and my generation, I do not know how to enact the change I know is needed. However, it is crucial that we do not let our fear freeze us to inaction. Future-guided approaches to political and social change allow for actions in the 'now' to be guided by a future that is yet to come: what that future looks like is up to us. The following three subsections focus on future guided approaches to social change: first, social imaginaries; second, the polyphony temporality[64] of revolution; and third, prefigurative politics. In the last subsection of this chapter I expand on the claim that ecofeminism is future-guided and transformative, and, citing various instances of prefiguration and worlding in early ecofeminism, I situate contemporary ecofeminism as a transformative form of prefigurative politics.

Imagining Otherwise

'Imaginaries' can include tenets from one or all of the political, social, economic, and/or ecological. State theorist Bob Jessop explains that imaginaries are 'mental maps' of reality (2012). Because reality is complex, imaginaries are simplified and consist of both normative and

cognitive functions (Jessop, 2012). According to Jessop, "these maps are never purely representational accounts of an external reality: many actually help to construct the reality that they purport to map" (2012, p. 17). Imaginaries are crucial for social change because they include prescriptive and descriptive elements, "anticipating or recommending new lines of action, which may guide present and future (non)-decisions and (in)actions in a world pregnant with possibilities" (Jessop, 2012, p. 17). Imaginaries are stories that allow thinking about possibilities that are different than what the present is and aiming towards those future possibilities in the present. Hegemonic imaginaries are socially instituted, embedded, and reproduced via a multitude of mechanisms that ensure cognitive and normative holds on social agents, and are thus crucial for political struggles and for the state remaining in power (Jessop, 2012). According to Jessop, "semiosis, discourse, language (and mass media) are key forces in shaping the political imaginaries at the heart of the state and political struggle… The 'raw material' of ideological domination is meaning systems and lived experience, and these are articulated into specific 'imaginaries' on the basis of particular articulations of this semiotic raw material" (2015, p. 117). The current hegemonic economic imaginaries are 'capitalocentric,' "[concerned] with profit-oriented, market-mediated accumulation based on the commodification of social relations (including relations with nature)" (Jessop, 2012, p. 18). Because imaginaries are constructed from meaning systems and lived experience, counterhegemonic imaginaries are possible. In order to escape from the hegemonic capitalocentric path of environmental destruction out before us, a counterhegemonic imaginary (mental map) is necessary to create an alternate path leading toward an alternate future. Before we can enable the social and political changes that are necessary for a future of multispecies flourishing, we must first be able to imagine the possibility that it could be otherwise than it is.

The Polyphony Temporality of Revolution

In *The Actuality of Revolution* (2016) Jodi Dean builds an argument on how to approach and organize revolution. Dean takes up Georg Lukács' account of the Leninist innovation that the core of historical materialism is the actuality of the proletarian revolution (2016). A main component of her argument is based on Jean-Pierre Dupuy's notion of 'projected time' (Dean, 2016). With the notion of 'projected time' the future is fixed but only in retrospect. Dean explains, "From the perspective of the future, what led to it was necessary. It could not have been otherwise because everything that happened led to it" (2016, p. 60). Thus, from this perspective

the future is not inevitably brought about by events in the present; it is the inevitability of the future that structures the processes of the present. “The future produces the past that will give rise to it” (Dean, 2016, p. 61). For Lukács, the process of projected time is inherent in Lenin’s ‘actuality of revolution’ (Dean, 2016). Lenin sees the future revolution as inevitable and lets that future guide the actions of the present: “The projected future of revolution generates the practices that materialize the belief necessary for its realization” (Dean, 2016, p. 62). Dean explains that, for Lukács, the projected future of the proletariat revolution organizes the revolution itself.[65]

Prefigurative Politics

Prefiguration, Swain explains, is a concept and process based on the idea of “building the new world in the shell of the old” (2017, p. 1). Coined by Carl Boggs in 1977, the term has gained attention amidst the prefigurative politics of contemporary social movements such as the Occupy movement (Swain, 2017). Similar to the notion of projected time, the temporality of prefiguration is nonlinear. Carroll explains prefiguration is essentially “reaching from a troubled present to an alternative future” (2015, p. 664). It refers to the anticipation of an alternative future which in turn affects the present. “If people make their own history, if the present is always history in-the-making, then the future, as potential, already inhabits the present” (Carroll, 2015, p. 664). Prefiguration consists of the potential future that, in always already inhabiting the present, structures the ongoing processes of the present.[66]

In “Robust Radicalism” Carroll discusses the relevance of the word ‘radical’ in contemporary politics (2015). He contends that a radical approach to prefiguration, in order to enable meaningful change, must go beyond lifestyles and subcultures and address system transformation (Carroll, 2015). “Radical prefiguration consciously strives to create from that [troubled] present an alternative future of human thriving within a context of ecological health” (Carroll, 2015, p. 664). Thus, radical prefiguration consists of creating a solidarity economy in which foundations for new ways of life are built bottom-up based on such things as collective ownership, self-management, reciprocity, and engaged citizenship (Carroll, 2015). Carroll notes, “radical prefiguration takes the form of cognitive praxis: the production and advocacy of alternative visions, policies, and practices, extending to the articulation of counterhegemonic projects” (Carroll, 2015, p. 665). Radical prefiguration is prefiguration that takes action.[67]

All three of the above theoretical concepts are dependent upon the ability to imagine an alternative future. Counterhegemonic imaginaries are necessary in order to be able to

conceptualize an alternative future to guide the prefiguration that will bring about the actuality of the revolution; the imagined alternative future affects the processes of the present so as to bring about the alternative future. The story these concepts tell when applied to ecological crises and climate change cultivates an urgent need to leave behind the self-fulfilling prophecy of the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene and to imagine otherwise. Since its inception ecofeminism has been future-guided, in imagining a future in which humans and more-than-human-nature coexist and flourish together, ecofeminists prefigure a future in which we as humans live with more-than-human nature, in ways otherwise than what the hegemonic onto-epistemology of colonial capitalist patriarchy dictates.

The Future-Guided Imaginaries of Ecofeminism

> The established disorder is not necessary; another world is not only urgently needed, it is possible, but not if we are ensorcelled in despair, cynicism, or optimism, and the belief/disbelief discourse of Progress.
>
> —Haraway, 2016, p. 51

Even in its earliest stages, ecofeminism has always been future-guided. In *Healing the Wounds* (1989), ecofeminist D'Souza wrote of the necessity of prefiguration, stating, "what is essential is to go beyond the politics of terror of today's world and to search for a vision to create an alternate political order, a new pattern of civilization" (1989, p. 38). Starhawk's and other cultural/spiritual ecofeminists' earth-based spiritualities are prefigurative: dependent upon an imagined future (see Chapter 3). Commenting that this imagined future is a necessary part of her ecofeminist magic and politics, Starhawk writes, "if we want to change consciousness in this nation, we first need to have a vision in our minds of what we want to change it into" (1990, p. 76). When Starhawk insists that a vision of the future is necessary for her magic and politics, she is commenting on the necessity of prefiguring a future that has yet to come. Ynestra King writes,

> Rather than succumb to nihilism, pessimism, and an end to reason and history, we seek to enter into history, to a genuinely ethical thinking—where one uses mind and history to reason from the 'is' to the 'ought' and to reconcile humanity with nature, within and without. This is the starting point for ecofeminism (1990, p. 116).

King understands creating the 'ought' as the starting point for ecofeminism; that is, imagining a future of how the world ought to be. Moreover, she sees this prefiguration as the starting point of ecofeminism. A great deal of early ecofeminism was future guided, and contemporary ecofeminists continue to develop this prefigurative project of ecofeminism.

Although many of the authors I discuss in the following sections do not claim the name ecofeminism, their works are advancing the project of ecofeminism and, as such, are ecofeminist works. I choose to name them as such. Contemporary ecofeminist scholars are engaging with materiality, multispecies care, alternate ontologies and epistemologies, and the understanding of the inter/intra-connected and interdependent nature of all beings on earth, to argue that another world is still possible.

Chapter 7: This is not the end (this is only the beginning)

> It matters which thoughts think thoughts. It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds. It matters what stories tell stories.
>
> —Haraway, 2016, p. 35

Ecofeminism works to destabilize the nature-culture dualism on which so much of the social (dis)order of patriarchal, colonial capitalism rests. This is not simply a matter of changing thought and ideas. The section on 'new material feminism' (a problematic term[68]) allows us to understand the materiality of what Haraway calls nature-culture.[69] Thus, destabilizing nature-culture dualisms, this in turn endangers the rule of colonial capitalist-patriarchy and thus the stability of the status-quo. If the project of ecofeminism were to succeed, there would be no more power-over: there would be no more profit-for-some upon the suffering of most. Ecofeminism was ahead of its time: ecofeminists disputed the nature-culture binary before climate change was accepted into mainstream discourse. Ecofeminists protested the destruction of nature in a time when the dominant feminist discourse was that of equal pay and workers' rights. Like other materialist feminisms, part of the ecofeminist agenda is smashing colonial patriarchy and replacing capitalist economic systems. The unapologetic emphasis on female-based spirituality and cultures forwarded by spiritual/cultural ecofeminists demands that the neoliberal/capitalist/patriarchal 'subject' be abandoned and replaced with ways of being human differently, in an egalitarian, caring and just, immanent (not transcendent) society, that respectfully lives with the more-than-human world in ways that advance multispecies flourishing. The materialist ecofeminist interrogation of colonial capitalist-patriarchy exposes the political economy's dependency on the exploitation and oppression of most human and more-than-human people, and the unlikelihood of this system ever allowing for mutual flourishing, liberation, and the preservation of life on earth. But ecofeminism does more than other emancipatory projects I have learned about in sociology, whether Marxism, feminisms, anti-racism or others. It makes the emancipation of people and the end of multiple kinds of oppression of people dependent on new social formations that are respectfully entangled with the multispecies flourishing of the more-than-human world. To me this is a project whose time has really come.

Ecofeminism is transdisciplinary and transboundary—it reveals the ineffectiveness of the compartmentalizing and reductionist tendencies of Euro-Western thinking, embodied in the organization and processes of advanced education. If academia was to accept the value of ecofeminism—as theory and as praxis—it would require the restructuring of the very foundations of modern education. That is, Western academia would have to accept the legitimacy of nonhegemonic discursive modes—such that 'literal' and 'exact' language (those associated with the hard sciences and traditionally masculine disciplines) are not valued over all other ways of knowing, sharing knowledge and being in the world. Thus, embodied knowledges, experiential knowledges, affectual knowledges, knowledges of Indigenous peoples, the poor, people of colour, plants, nonhuman animals, more-than-human nature, etc., would be understood not only as valuable, but also as gifts. This will not happen without struggle. As Black feminist and activist Assata Shakur once said, "No one is going to give you the education to overthrow them" (n.d.). The ecofeminist insistence that we celebrate and unite in diversity and difference undermines the conservation of the political-economic systems of colonial capitalist-patriarchy that are built foundationally on the externalization of costs and the exploitation of more-than-human nature and (N)nature associated social groups. My feminist colleagues do not realize that by pitting spiritual/cultural and materialist ecofeminists against each other; calling in the hit-man named anti-essentialism; and demanding that ecofeminist discourses conform to patriarchal pedagogy's ideals of logic and rationality, ecofeminism has been effectively silenced in academia—in this they colluded with neutralizing the threat that ecofeminism posed to the dominant political, economic, social, and cultural systems of colonial capitalist-patriarchy.

Ecofeminism emerged in the 1970s, and many things have changed in the past half-century. Even in the past few years, things are changing rapidly. In America in 2018 the amount of people who reported being 'very worried' about climate change had doubled compared to only three years previous.[70] How many people were 'very worried' about climate change in the 1970s? Eco-anxiety wasn't even a concept yet,[71] concern for more-than-human nature was not the norm. Ecofeminism was before its time, but I think now is the time for ecofeminism. For many budding feminists and fledgling environmentalists of the twenty-first century, ecofeminism provides what other critical theories do not: an intersectional anti-oppressive framework that not only understands the urgency of climate/environmental crises and social justice, but also centres the interdependency and inherent beauty of multispecies relationships. Ecofeminism allows for

ways of being human, with more-than-human nature, other than what is dictated by colonial capitalist-patriarchy. We need ecofeminism, now more than ever.

This thesis started as a journey into ecofeminism: I explored ecofeminism at its emergence, throughout its development, to its marginalization. I discussed materialist and spiritual/cultural approaches to ecofeminism separately, then argued that they are both essential for a future of multispecies flourishing. In Chapter 4 I built a case for my argument that the ontology and epistemology of the current ruling paradigm/conceptual practices of power—defined by neoliberal capitalism and colonial patriarchy—do not allow for liveable futures for most of us and must be overcome. In Chapter 5 I expanded on the topic of ontologies and epistemologies: critiquing the construction of knowledge and subjectivities in the current ruling paradigm, I suggested that an ecofeminist engagement with new feminist materialisms and Indigenous worldviews offers alternative ways of being and knowing with more-than-human nature. Chapter 6 proposed future guided ecofeminism as a tool for escaping the subjectification of the predatory onto-epistemologies of our current paradigm. In this seventh and final chapter I present the concept of 'multispecies ecofeminism' and argue that—via engagement with alternate ontologies and epistemologies that centre assemblages of human and more-than-human people—contemporary prefigurative multispecies ecofeminism has the potential to be a transformative '4th wave' of feminism.

A New Feminist Politics: Multispecies Ecofeminism

Multispecies ecofeminism understands the Earth and nonhuman nature as alive, agentic, responsive, and invariably interconnected and co-constituted via intra-action with human and more-than-human history, language, and culture. Everything is connected to everything else; we are all part of the same co-constituted, materially and historically situated reality. All knowledge is situated historically and culturally, multispecies ecofeminism works with multiple ways of knowing in the world and does not deify one way of knowing (technocratic, scientific) over others (affectual, experiential, spiritual, etc.).[72] Because capitalism cannot cultivate multispecies flourishing, multispecies ecofeminism is inherently anti-capitalist: it denounces the commodification of earthbound beings and our relationships and understands the inherent value of more-than-human nature and the complexity of relationships that co-constitute us. This necessitates respectful, gratitude-laden, ethical production and consumption: in understanding the place of humans as beside and together with multispecies earth-bound beings, abominations

like factory farming, genetically modified crops, deforestation, violent extraction of energy sources and minerals, and overconsumption, become impossible to justify. The ethics of multispecies ecofeminism engages with the historical and contemporary human/more-than-human relationships of Indigenous and ancestral cultures: it requires care, love, the reciprocity of the gift economy, and the moral and ethical guidelines of the Honorable Harvest: we take from the Earth what the Earth gives to us willingly, with gratitude, and give back to the Earth all that we can, with love. Multispecies ecofeminism is rooted in ethics of care and community and understands that in alienating ourselves from more-than-human nature we alienate ourselves from the potential to be human otherwise.

Multispecies ecofeminism works toward an imagined potential multispecies future while staying situated in the historical and material reality of now. Importantly, for multispecies ecofeminism making-kin with multispecies beings and reweaving relationships between human and more-than-human nature is key for transformative social change. Storying with multispecies kin and reframing the narrative from human-centered epics to carrier-bag stories, is key to reweaving relationships between human and more-than-human. When we go out into the world and commit to change—working to heal devastated landscapes and restore the health and vitality of the multispecies communities of the living earth—we as humans are also changed: the Earth restores us as we restore the Earth, this is one way we can begin becoming otherwise.

Prefiguring a Future of Multispecies Flourishing

Multispecies ecofeminist insights are emerging persistently at the contemporary interdisciplinary intersections of feminism and ecology. Theorists are working from a diversity of backgrounds, and, in utilizing concepts and tools from lived experiences with more-than-human nature, ecology, physics, sociology, biology, and other 'hard' and 'soft' sciences, work to bridge the theoretical gap between culture and nature. Many of these contemporary scholars do not actively claim the spurned label of ecofeminism, yet—hailing from distinct backgrounds: Haraway from zoology; Tsing from anthropology; Alaimo from humanities; McMahon from sociology; and Shotwell from philosophy—each can be understood as forwarding ecofeminism's project of a reenchantment of the world for the ultimate goal of planetary survival and multispecies flourishing via their engagement with entanglements of human and multispecies kin. Informed by sciences *and* arts, the rational, mystical, *and* affectual, these theorists bridge the dualisms between spirit and matter, politics and arts, nature and culture, and reason and intuition,

in their historically situated, embodied, prefigurative politics of imagining otherwise. Their compelling works challenge conventional understandings of contemporary relationships between human and more-than-human people, and, in doing so, condemn the idea that technological and economical 'growth' and 'progress,' which necessitates the exploitation and degradation of more-than-human nature, is our only possible future.

Haraway engages with the potential of making kin with nonhuman beings and imagines a future of multispecies flourishing while 'staying with the trouble' of entangled multispecies lives (2016). Anna Tsing likewise engages with more-than-human beings in an ethnographic journey with Matsutake mushrooms (2016). Deliberating on how humans relate to fungi, Tsing sees possibilities emerge from human-nonhuman relations to prefigure futures of multispecies flourishing (2015). Alexis Shotwell in her (2016) book *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* critiques contemporary purity politics in regard to the ecological crisis and climate change and argues for the necessity of finding a new direction in order to work towards a world of multispecies flourishing. She engages with the entangled impurity of Earth and addresses the challenges of prefiguring a world in which multispecies beings can flourish, together (2015). Stacey Alaimo (2010; 2014) decenters the concept of human individuality and brings the concept of transcorporeality into the conversation to highlight the ongoing flows and exchanges of materiality and culture that co-constitute human and more-than-human bodies. Martha McMahon explores the contested politics of nature and predatory ontologies via an ecofeminist exploration of the shared realities of condemned sheep and human farmer and argues for the necessity of re-subjectification of nature and new ontologies that centre vibrant matter for a future of multispecies flourishing (2019). Informed by alternate ways of knowing and being in the world and infused with an immanent understanding of the materiality of the sacred, their works reveal the potential of contemporary multispecies ecofeminism to story with multispecies kin and prefigure alternative futures and ways of being human—entangled with more-than-human beings—in ways other than what capital dictates.

Haraway's attention to multispecies assemblages appears again and again throughout her recent work. *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) opens with an in-depth exploration of the history of relationship between humans and pigeons and concludes with the prefiguration of a potential future in which relationships between human and more-than-human kin are central (Haraway). For Haraway the concepts of Anthropocene and Capitalocene are literally unthinkable: they are

not useful tools for thinking as they are both stories of death and do not allow for ongoingness (for liveable lives—they are deadly, death producing stories) (2016). She thus invokes the term 'Chthulucene' as a useful tool for productively theorizing with and as a potential world of multispecies flourishing: "The unfinished Chthulucene must collect up the trash of the Anthropocene, the exterminism of the Capitalocene, and chipping and shredding and layering like a mad gardener, make a much hotter compost pile for still possible pasts, presents, and futures" (Haraway, 2016, p. 57). The Chthulucene does not deal with time in a linear fashion; it is at once the present and a possible future. It is a social imaginary, an imagined potential future, and a process of prefiguration for a world of multispecies flourishing.

> Specifically, unlike either the Anthropocene or the Capitalocene, the Chthulucene is made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with in times that remain at stake, in precarious times, in which the world is not finished, and the sky has not fallen—yet. We are at stake to each other. Unlike the dominant dramas of Anthropocene and Capitalocene discourse, human beings are not the only important actors in the Chthulucene, with all other beings able simply to react. The order is reknitted: human beings are with and of the earth, and the biotic and abiotic powers of this earth are the main story (Haraway, 2016, p. 55).

In the social imaginary/prefigurative processes of the Chthulucene humans and nonhumans beings are, together, working with and of the earth to cultivate ongoingness. Working with the Chthulucene counterhegemonic social imaginary allows Haraway to imagine alternative futures and thus to work towards those futures from the reality of now. Speculative Fabulation, a form of 'worlding,' is Haraway's preferred brand of prefiguration. Camille and the communities of compost is Haraway's speculative fabulation, that "[proposes] a relay into uncertain futures" (2016, p. 134). The Camille stories are prefigurative: they construct alternative worlds in which humankind cares for nonhuman beings. "Camille Stories are invitations to participate in a kind of genre fiction committed to strengthening ways to propose near futures, possible futures, and implausible but real nows," Haraway explains (2016, p. 136). The Camille stories begin in a troubled now. The communities of compost are human communities that have broken away from the destruction of the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene and have come together to form groups that choose to live ethically and care for multispecies kin (2016). In Haraway's speculative fabulation the communities of compost have chosen to produce fewer human children (although human children are still cherished), this allows for cultivating relationships with multispecies kin (2016). Haraway's speculative future is one in which humans and more-than-humans think and become together, contributing to and committed to building

and sustaining a habitable earth. Haraway does not provide us with a utopia, but she does prefigure the potential to be otherwise—in the company of multispecies others—for a future in which the earth and all earthly beings can flourish.

Anna Tsing, partnered with the Matsutake pine mushroom, tells stories of interspecies entanglements and assemblages living in capitalist ruins (2015). Determined to engage with life lived *despite* capitalism, Tsing departs from what she calls 'first nature' and 'second nature'—akin to the stories of the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene—and begins storying with what she calls 'third nature' (2015). "Like virtual particles in a quantum field," she writes, "multiple futures pop in and out of possibility; third nature emerges within such temporal polyphony" (Tsing, 2015, p. viii). Tsing challenges her readers to conceptualize human and more-than-human nature assemblages differently. Working with a counterhegemonic social imaginary, she collaboratively theorizes with human-mushroom assemblages to prefigure multispecies flourishing in the ruins of capitalism (2015). "Assemblages are open-ended gatherings. They allow us to ask about communal effects without assuming them. They show us potential histories in the making" (Tsing, 2015, p. 22-23). Collaborative and creative, assemblages are simultaneously multispecies kin making and processes of prefiguration. Multiple potential futures can and do exist. When we think in assemblages—entangled with nonhuman beings and human beings alike—we are enabled to imagine potential alternative futures and thus we can begin to prefigure these potential histories in the making.

In *Bodily Natures* (2010) Stacey Alaimo centres human and nonhuman assemblages via engagement with her concept 'transcorporeality,' reconceptualizing agency and subjectivity as shared between bodies with semi-permeable boundaries, she argues against storying with the bounded human individual. Central to transcorporeality is the understanding that human bodies are themselves assemblages of human and more-than-human nature, "Imagining human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from 'the environment'" Alaimo explains (2010, p. 2). Alaimo does not adhere to the colonial concept of the individual, which is dependent upon the false subject-object and culture-nature dichotomy (2010). Her understanding of the human body as inextricably intertwined with more-than-human and nonhuman nature in the transcorporeal process of sharing agency and subjectivity works to delegitimize these problematic binaries (2010). Trans-corporeality

emphasizes the ways in which matter and agency moves between human and nonhuman bodies, undermining the human conception of individuality enforced by the 'physical' boundary of the human body (Alaimo, 2010). Alaimo stories with assemblages defined by material interconnections of the human body and nonhuman nature/the environment (Alaimo, 2010). Alaimo refuses to allow traditional disciplinary boundaries to diminish her theorizing, and, with her concept of trans-corporeality, her work allows for productive thinking across academic boundaries and emphasizes thinking-with and becoming-with more-than-human nature (2010).

In the age of climate change and environmental crises, ignoring the material, biological, and nonhuman interconnectedness of the world is no longer a feasible approach, especially for anti-oppressive frameworks like feminism (Alaimo, 2010).[73] Moreover, biology has endured as motivation for multilevel and multifaceted exploitation of human social groups for some time. In the web of oppression every exploitation is interconnected, we cannot address one node without addressing the entirety of the web—and we cannot address the web without attention to the biological. Importantly, "Trans-corporeality denies the human subject the sovereign, central position. Instead, ethical considerations and practices must emerge from a more uncomfortable and perplexing place where the 'human' is always already part of an active, often unpredictable, material world" (Alaimo, 2010, p. 16-17). In imagining and thinking-with the concept of trans-corporeality, the hero 'Man' is no longer the centre of the story. Instead, Alaimo stories with assemblages of human and the more-than-human, forever interconnected within the multispecied web of agency that defines our living Earth. Trans-corporeality is a way of thinking for a future of multispecies flourishing: it does not engage with the self-fulfilling prophecies of the Anthropocene/Capitalocene and instead allows for engagement with becoming-human otherwise, entangled with the lives of our multispecied kin. Alaimo has gone on to story with transcorporeality, applying it to relationships of human and the more-than-human-ocean in order to argue for making-kin with marine critters (2016). Like Haraway (2016), she highlights the ways in which emerging science-art ocean activism makes space for alternative futures in which the human and more-than-human kin flourish, together (Alaimo, 2016).

In Farmed and Dangerous (2019) ecofeminist Martha McMahon explores the contested bio-politics of nature via storying-with the lived realities of Ontario farmer Montana Jones and her condemned rare-breed Shropshire sheep. While at first the story appears to be about Montana Jones' resistance to the slaughter of her rare-breed sheep at the hands of the Canadian Food

Inspection Agency (CFIA) for an unconfirmed case of scrapie, McMahon (2019) explains that the true story is of relationship between farmer and sheep and their shared resistance to the de/re/subjectification by the dominant predatory onto-epistemology (2019). “It is not much of a stretch to say these ontologies are killing us. They are barriers to the flourishing of life in what some now call the Anthropocene or Capitalocene,” McMahon asserts (2019, p. 16). McMahon utilizes NFM concepts to explore how particular types of subjectivities (such as neoliberal) are constructed and others deconstructed, she writes, “the colonial and capitalist subjectification of some is accompanied by the de-subjectification of most of the world, ecofeminist analysis reminds us” (2019, p. 16). Jones’s rare-breed sheep are de-subjectified through the CFIA’s framing of the scrapie disease: they are constructed as commodity objects useful only for their objectified exchange value—not as agentic actors interacting in assemblages of human and more-than-human (McMahon, 2019). Jones rejects the subjectification of herself and her rare-breed sheep when she refuses to obey the CFIA. The assemblage of farmer and sheep-kin did not fit into the box of the neoliberal subject: if Jones did obey the CFIA her sheep would be desubjectified and she would be resubjectified as a neoliberal subject. The assemblage would not survive. “Instead, Jones and her sheep embodied challenges to the regulatory bio-politics and capitalist biopolitics of Canadian agriculture,” McMahon explains (2019, p. 19). McMahon turns to NFM to engage alternative ontologies and subjectivities:

> These feminist conceptual resources help us (sheep included) escape masculinist epistemologies and old ontologies of empire and associated imperial epistemologies. The sheep in this story are not objects but, in expanded (and decolonizing) understanding of agency and subjectivity (Schnabel 2014), become “other-than-human” kinds of actors who are “sub-jected” to processes of objectification (2019, p. 20).

Utilizing Alaimo’s concept of trans-corporeality to overcome the embedded idea that more-than-human world is worthwhile only as object or as background to the story of Man, McMahon argues that all actors in this story are participants in networks of agencies with varying ontological statuses (2019). Disrupting the false nature/culture binary and thus the embedded human understanding of the self, society and nature, McMahon explains that, from an ecofeminist perspective, sheep and farmer are struggling against the predatory onto-epistemology of colonial capitalist-patriarchy (2019). Under the rule of this predatory onto-epistemology, the assemblage of farmer and sheep are reduced to pieces of bio-knowledge; removed from the material and affectual history of co-construction of sheep, people, landscape,

and agriculture (McMahon, 2019).[74] Instead, McMahon urges us to recognise nature-human kinship, "which ecofeminists say is needed for earthly survival" (2019, p. 28).

Ecofeminist analysis allows us to see the power relations inherent in contemporary multispecies entanglements of agency, technologies, ontologies, epistemologies, and discursive and material worlds intersectionally, and demands de-centering, especially of the category 'Man' and 'humankind.' "The recognition of new kinds of subjectivities from the margins is not a move towards assimilation that welcomes new members to the club of "Man," especially not in the Capitalocene," McMahon explains (2019, p. 28). Like Haraway (2016), McMahon understands that the category of man or humankind is not a good concept for thinking about a future of multispecies flourishing (2019). "In this kind of fetishizing of life on Earth living relationships are mystified as relationships among things. This dead-like subjectification of humans is, as ecofeminism has long reminded us, interconnected with the more extensive de-subjectification of all nature" (McMahon, 2019, p. 29). McMahon argues that re-subjectification of more-than-human nature is a central and urgent need for emancipatory politics (2019), this is, in part, the task of multispecies ecofeminism.

According to McMahon, an aim of ecofeminism is to reconceptualize what it means to be human, in ways other than what the hegemonic predatory onto-epistemologies of capitalism and the colonial patriarchy dictate. Pulling from Tsing (2017) and Haraway (2016), McMahon counsels "to live in the ruins of capitalism and degraded landscapes we must make kin with other creatures" (2019, p. 30). From Shotwell (2016), McMahon points out that we need to reject purity politics, "and take seriously, in political terms, our complicity with things we abjure" (2019, p. 30). From Plumwood (2002) and Cuomo (1998), McMahon argues that we must push for liberation from the masculinist fantasy of mastery and learn to live respectfully with more-than-human nature for a future of multispecies flourishing (2019). From the contested history of [eco]feminism, McMahon reminds us that this does not mean erasing differences to celebrate unity: "it does not mean pulling all diverse others into the category of human, or vice versa, nor a denial of ontological diversity" (McMahon, 2019, p. 30). She implores us to work with more-than-human nature to ensure the flourishing of the multispecies kin with whom we co-evolved (McMahon, 2019). "This kind of solidarity is an ontology that calls into being lives of mutually assured flourishing, rather than what appears to be current masculinist projects of mutually assured destruction" (McMahon, 2019, p. 30).

Shotwell (2016) engages with climate change and the purity politics. She explains that to yearn for purity is an ethical compromise, that we have never been pure and to pretend otherwise is to deny the complexity of earthly entanglements (Shotwell, 2016). "To be against purity is, again, not to be for pollution, harm, sickness, or premature death," Shotwell explains, "It is to be against the rhetorical or conceptual attempt to delineate and delimit the world into something separable, disentangled, and homogenous" (2016, p. 17). Aligned with the arguments forwarded by other multispecies ecofeminists in this section, Shotwell sees the stories of the Anthropocene and Capitalocene as depoliticizing and as deemphasizing collectivity. She writes: "I am concerned about the sacrifice of human solidarity in pursuit of purity, but I am concerned also with what we might think of as political solidarity with ecosystems, critter, bugs, microbes, atoms" (Shotwell, 2016, p. 13-14). Shotwell is attentive to multispecies flourishing and human-nonhuman entanglements, she understands the need for, and potential of, potential alternative futures (2016). "How do we craft a practice for imagining and living a future that does not simply replicate and intensify the present?" she asks (Shotwell, 2016, p. 170). Borrowing Haraway's prefigurative 'speculative fabulation,' she writes:

> Speculative futures can prefigure a practice that welcomes the selves to come. This orientation toward futures to come is grounded in the experience of interdependence, politically organized around the idea of identifying into a world that we create starting from our speculation that it could be otherwise than it is. Shaping our identities out of politics includes understanding the history that has shaped our field of possibility as a site for identification. *The new world we carry in our hearts is always a world grounded in the actually existing present in all its impurity, responsible to the past in all its complexity* [emphasis added] (Shotwell, 2016, p. 200).

By imagining possible 'speculative futures' we are able to prefigure these potential futures and thus begin the process of becoming otherwise. We must stay informed by our complex and impure past, but to imagine a future of multispecies flourishing and to identify with it is to begin to shape that future in the present. Shotwell understands that, in order to enable the possibility of alternative futures in which multispecies assemblages flourish together, we must imagine potential futures, and let those speculative fabulations guide our processes in the now.

These multispecies ecofeminist theorists reject the capitalist narrative of progress and the subjectification of colonial capitalist-patriarchy and work to stay with the trouble of the earth in all its entangled complexity. In leaving behind the narratives of the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene and speculating and imagining potential futures of multispecies flourishing

Haraway, Tsing, Alaimo, McMahon, and Shotwell make space for humans to 'be otherwise' in the company of more-than-human others, and work towards potential futures of multispecies flourishing. Despite not necessarily claiming the label 'ecofeminist,' each of these authors advance the project of multispecies ecofeminism: storying and worlding with human and more-than-human nature for the ultimate goal of planetary survival. Emphasizing the need to reframe the relationships (between and within the human and more-than-human) that make up the living earth, these ecofeminists can be considered 'multispecies ecofeminists' in that they centre assemblages of human and more-than-human people, decentering the human and allowing for thinking-with and worlding-with the intricacies of the living earth and thus prefiguring a potential future of multispecies flourishing. As Potawatomi ecologist Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) reminds us, all flourishing is mutual.

Darning the Web

Ecofeminism is not just one thing. The project of ecofeminism celebrates multiplicity and diversity in perspectives, approaches, discursive modes, epistemologies, and ontologies: no one way of knowing or being is valued over all others. The paradigm of colonial capitalist-patriarchy is contradictory to the goal of sustaining life on our living earth: it does not cultivate multispecies flourishing and cannot eventuate potential alternative futures in which the thriving of the living earth is ensured. Future-guided multispecies ecofeminist approaches, which work with alternative imaginaries that centre more-than-human assemblages, allow a productive way forward. By staying with the trouble of the present, but never forgetting the complexity of the past, these prefigurative ecofeminisms allows for ways of being and ways of knowing differently—engaged in reciprocal relationships with and of the living earth in relational webs rooted in place. By abandoning the self-fulfilling prophecies of the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene and storying with alternative onto-epistemologies of new feminist materialisms, and Indigenous and ancestral cultures, ecofeminism allows for the possibility of being human-otherwise. Multispecies ecofeminism concentrates on storying-with, and thus the resubjectification of assemblages of human and more-than-human people. Ultimately, multispecies ecofeminism works toward repairing the multispecies relationships that make up the living earth, restoring the vitality of the earth and the multispecies communities that we are always already a part of. Although we cannot expect patriarchal pedagogy to forward the project of ecofeminism—ecofeminism works against the maintenance of the systems of colonial

capitalist-patriarchy—prefigurative multispecies ecofeminist imagining-otherwise is essential for a future of multispecies flourishing.

Speculative Fabulation: Toward the Gift Economy via Ecological Restoration

A gift from Indigenous and matriarchal societies of the past and present exemplifies successful gift economies. Based on relationship building, the gift economy emphasis the flourishing of all beings together—not the profit of some. Reciprocal and caring relationships between and with human and more-than-human nature are necessary to cultivate in order to maintain life on earth. In a gift economy, when a gift is given a relationship is started. To maintain that relationship the gift-receiver becomes the gift-giver: this is the circle of reciprocity. The living earth gives to us clean air to breathe, pure water to drink, and diverse multitudes of lives—plants and animals—to consume: if we can respond with care and love for the lives of our multispecies communities. We must leave behind the predatory onto-epistemology of colonial capitalist-patriarchy and learn to act caringly and with response-ability for all of our earth-bound kin; we must reinstate the commons and learn to consume ethically and share freely; we must centre relationships, do-away with individuality, and resubjectify the more-than-human; and we must learned to be united—not divided—in celebration of the beautifully vast diversity of human and more-than-human earthlings that share this space.

In Indigenous ontologies it is known that every individual brings a unique gift to table, that gift is also a responsibility (Kimmerer, 2013). If our human intelligence—our self-aware consciousness and creative ingenuity—is our gift than it is also our responsibility. Genetically modified organisms that allow us to grow anywhere, but degrade biodiversity; transportation machinery that allows us to fly, but hinders the ability to breathe; chemical compounds that allow us to extend life, but at the expense of many others lives; we have not been responsible for our gifts. We have not utilized our gifts to reciprocate for all that is given to us in our relationship with the living earth. We must become responsible, and response-able, for and with our gifts in our multiple relationships with and of the living earth. Thus, we will (we must!) begin to sustain the intra-connected web of reciprocity that is the living earth, that we call home. For too long we have been taking, taking taking taking, what is not given freely. Adhering to the guidelines of the Indigenous honorable harvest, participating actively in the gift economy, and becoming response-able to our nonhuman kin: each of these are necessary steps for a future of multispecies flourishing.

But we have been taking for far too long without reciprocating. We have degraded the vitality of the earth—of the very relationships we depend on for survival. It is time to give. Time to give give give, without expecting anything in return. And to restore—to restore human relationships with our more-than-human kin, and to restore the vitality of the earth which we have consumed in order to gather more and more and more that we do not need. The first step to repairing our relationships with more-than-human nature and with the living earth is to work towards restoring the ecosystems that have been degraded. Ecological restoration does not just work to repair the harm done by human greed onto the nonhuman world—though this is key—in working to restore the lands, in lowering ourselves to our knees and burying our hands in the soil, we work to restore ourselves as well. Ecological restoration is always already spiritual restoration, and spiritual restoration is necessary as well—despite what the ivory tower may have led you to believe. We cannot expect to change the material reality of our current paradigm without a change in consciousness as well. We must look to the lessons gifted to us by Indigenous teachers—and from more-than-human teachers: nonhuman animals and plants alike—and allow ourselves to believe that alternative futures are possible. This is a necessary step in our journey of becoming human otherwise: inextricably entangled in and response-able for joyful and loving assemblages of the human and the more-than-human. Because all flourishing is mutual, and we are not alone.

Let's Call This a Commencement. Cave exploration is a passion of mine. Sometimes when I am underground, I am afraid; often I am cold; and almost always I am lost. Finding the right path through a complicated network of tunnels and paths and dead ends is challenging and exciting: knowing that I could trip and fall to my death reminds me to cherish life. I would not be able to find my way in a cave without my light. Discovering sociology was like turning on my light for the first time in a cave: I was able to see the structure of the cave/social world. But, like the spotlight setting on my headlamp, sociology can sometimes cause tunnel vision: it can make it seem like there is only one way to go when really there are many. Learning to pause and look around before rushing ahead—stopping to check out the less-tread trails—is akin to learning nonmainstream social theory. There are many different paths. Ecofeminism, though, is something different altogether. When I emerge from a cave I am overwhelmed by the multiplicity and diversity of life: the colours and sounds and feelings of the more-than-human. My kin. Ecofeminism is like emerging from a cave: suddenly, there is life. I am filled with

gratitude for the warmth of the sun and the vibrancy of the forest as I greedily inhale the unique scent of life. There is something special about an intact old-growth karst ecosystem: the magic of more-than-human assemblages. It is difficult to discern until you have gone without.

Young people of the twenty-first century are deeply concerned with the peril of human and more-than-human nature via climate change and environmental degradation. We have reached an era of history in which these concerns are shared by the majority of the earth's human population.[75] Multispecies ecofeminism has the potential to be a transformational 4th wave of feminism because it centres more-than-human nature; forwards an intersectional anti-oppressive framework; and because it allows for ongoingness. In this era of eco-anxiety and climate consequences, the new generation of young feminists needs a feminism that centres relationships with more-than-human nature but does not forget the need for comprehensive anti-oppressive work. There is no time to waste. Multispecies ecofeminism is prefigurative and forward thinking; in imagining a potential future of multispecies flourishing, ecofeminism instills hope while simultaneously perpetuating politics in the now motivated by the potential to be human otherwise—it allows for the possibility of being human in ways other that what is dictated by the predatory onto-epistemology of colonial capitalist-patriarchy. Ecofeminism's time is now. We are ready to begin our journey of becoming-otherwise; in reciprocity with more-than-human nature. It is time to emerge from the cave, to open our minds and our hearts to the vitality and beauty of worlds of care and love co-constituted with more-than-human nature.

> There is no point in liberating people if the planet cannot sustain their liberated lives, or in saving the planet by disregarding the preciousness of human existence not only to ourselves but to the rest of life on Earth.
>
> —King, 1990, p. 121

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Notes

[1] Audre Lorde (1984).
[2] Refer to Chapter 1 for information on the discrediting of ecofeminism in the academy.
[3] According to Barad, ontology and epistemology inseparable and do not need to be discussed in isolation. She writes "the separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse" (Barad, 2008, p. 147).
[4] In reference to the Covid19 social distancing rule of maintain 2 metres of separation between oneself and others.
[5] bell hooks: social movement not a social movement
[6] Carlassare argues that ecofeminism is best understood as a discourse
[7] Although we, as humans, are always already nature, specific social groups have been equated and/or associated with nature as justification for their exploitation (Merchant, 1980). Women have been equated to nonhuman animals (Peggs, 2012; Adams, 1990), to property and land (Jabeen, 2020). Indigenous peoples (Merchant, 1980; Wilson, 2005; Isla, 2019), people in the global South (Jabeen, 2020; Isla, 2019; Mies, 1993), racialized people (Fielder, 2013; Peggs, 2012), the poor (Peggs, 2012; Nhanenge, 2011) and nonhetero-sex and -gender conforming folks (Gaard, 1997; Adams, 1990), have likewise been equated to more-than-human nature and/or nonhuman animals to justify their exploitation and oppression.
[8] Many people will know Vandana Shiva's work and will recognize the ways in which she used terms like nature and women as political referents and not as foundational representations. However, her work has too often been read literally and misunderstood.
[9] A relational totality is expressed in Marxist ontology (the totality of social relations of production) it is, most often, gender blind and does not consider relations to and with more-than-human nature (Salleh, 2017b; 2003). While Political Ecology does consider the totality of natural relations, unlike ecofeminism, the Political ecology perspective remains mostly gender, and race, blind (Salleh, 2017b). The ecofeminist perspective on interconnectedness sees that everything we do as humans effects the more-than-human world, and vice versa, and that we have a responsibility to respond to the actions of the more-than-human world (Haraway, 2016).
[10] This easy separation that separates sex and gender, although politically useful, is of course theoretically problematic as it reproduces the nature/culture binaries that much contemporary ecofeminism rejects.
11 The strand of ecofeminism that sees the connection between women and nature grounded in the organization of women's lives and work—particularly as caregivers
[12] New Materialisms reflect that the theoretical discursive turn left engagement with material reality behind and aim to engage with matter and discourse in theoretical analysis.
[13] Essentialism *is* problematic because it implies that all people of a specific social group are essentially the same, but, in essentializing all women—no matter their socio-economic status, racial and ethnic identity, sexuality, etc.—this type of 'essentializing' literally works to erase the lives and histories of racialized (etc.) peoples. Although this erasure is also essentializing, not all essentialism is necessarily negative (for example, strategic essentialism and the gender essentialism of some Indigenous cultures cannot/should not just be considered 'bad' and thrown out). Thus, this form of essentialism which erases the lives and histories of women from different walks of lives and different standpoints in especially problematic.
[14] Nonhuman animal centric ecofeminists developed a culturally specific approach in response to Indigenous rights, animal activists, and environmentalist claims that grew out of the Makah whale hunt debates in 1999 (Gaard, 2011).
[15] Because socialist feminism aims to analyze and disrupt oppression along multiple intersecting axes, many ecofeminists have suggested that socialist feminism is the only suitable basis for ecofeminism (Carlassare, 2000).
[16] The process of becoming a certain kind of subject (Davies, 2006).
[17] Here I am not claiming that Indigenous worldviews, peoples, and histories are inherently nonviolent. What I mean is that many Indigenous worldviews forward a respectful, reciprocal, and nonviolent relationship *with the more-than-human* world.
[18] Reformation Era.
[19] Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century colonizers brought back tales of wilderness and savages from the—so-called—'new world' (Merchant, 1980). Originally, early explorers described the Indigenous peoples of what is now called North America as: civil, merry, kind, courteous, and "a people of exceedingly good invention, quick understanding, and ready capacity" (Merchant, 1980). However, as colonizers began to dominate and eradicate the original people of the land, Indigenous people began to defend themselves. After the Powhatan attack of 1622, in which the Powhatan nation killed 347 people in defense of their homeland and the colonizers responded with genocide, the

European impression of Indigenous peoples lost all traces of positivity (Merchant, 1980). In the European discourses of the time Indigenous peoples "became wild, savage, slothful, and brutish outlaws. They had 'little of humanity,' were 'ignorant of civility, of arts, of religion,' and were 'more brutish than the beasts they hunt'" (Merchant, 1980, p. 132).

[20] Midwives, a profession restricted to females until the seventeenth century, was soon threatened by male surgeons who masculinized and scientized reproduction via new sciences and technologies that women were barred from (Merchant, 1980). Midwives were consciously discredited by male surgeons such as the Chamberlen family (who invented forces), William Harvey (discovered the circulation of blood), and others (Merchant, 1980). Male surgeons began to deliver children with forceps, a technology that was only available to licensed physicians (Merchant, 1980). Midwives detested the use of forceps as, through experience, they understood forceps labour as extraordinarily violent (Merchant, 1980). For women midwifery was a symbol of control over reproduction (Merchant, 1980), this was lost at this time and it has never been fully regained.

[21] Salleh understands the meta-industrial class to participate in what Ruddick calls 'holding labour,' in which 'holding' is taken to mean minimizing risk and reconciling differences (Salleh, 2000). "Holding is a way of seeing with an eye toward maintaining the minimal harmony, material resources, and skills necessary for sustaining a child in safety. It is the attitude elicited by world protection, world-preservation, world repair" (Ruddick, as cited in Salleh, 2000, p. 33). When working with the earth's natural cycles, planning is long-term and must be adaptable to whatever circumstances the earth presents: "Whether domestic care givers or peasant farmers, these meta-industrial workers have hands-on knowledge of sustaining labours in a remarkable metabolism with nature" (Salleh, 2000, p. 31).

[22] It is possible that any one individual may actually participate in both wage labour and meta industrial labour. The focus of Salleh analysis is on relations not identities. However, there are probably consequences for political mobilization.

[23] In reference to multiple ecological crises. Ocean acidification, climate change, deforestation, air and water pollution—many ecological crises of the modern day ignore/are ambivalent to nation boundaries.

[24] What is currently called North America.

[25] This is not to argue for anti-modern or post modernist positions but a case for recognizing what imprisons one theorizing and politics.

[26] To what extent does the criticism of cultural ecofeminism as 'essentialist' by materialist ecofeminists serve to privilege certain positions and discursive practices within ecofeminism over others, and polices what counts most in ecofeminist discourse? How does the criticism serve to privilege some ways of knowing over others? To what extent do these criticisms serve to maintain the very same dominant discursive practices and ways of knowing that voices within ecofeminism and feminism call into question?

[27] The original or "old" (not new) materialism refers to an ontological theory that claims that only things that exist in the physical world/occupy space are real. Thus, spirit, ideas, souls, perhaps even the social world, are not considered 'real' (Brown & Ladyman, 2019). New materialisms is a response to the discursive turn, which emphasized the social construction (via language, discourse, etc.) of reality. New materialism turns back to matter and material reality without forgetting discourse, language, etc. It is thus an intersectional ontological theory emphasizing the interconnection and co-constitution of the social (discourse, language, history) and physical (material, things that occupy space) worlds (Alaimo & Heckman, 2008).

28 Queer ecofeminism of course would disrupt any linear framing of differences as this re-affirms a binary however fluid.

[29] Moments on the outskirts of what is considered normal or central experiences.

30 In this way, a total-body response—which is always necessarily sexual—can also be invoked in human interactions with more-than-human-nature. "It can occur in any relationship, with an animal, with a flower, with the world itself" (LaChapelle, 1989, p. 166).

31 Although this is hardly a critique that applies to Haraway who really should not be categorized as postmodern and does not fit easily in any box.

32 Too many postmodern feminists display a kind of contempt for the concept of 'nature', an attitude that parallels their negativity to the concept of 'woman'. Over and against an often literal, even positivist treatment of 'universals', postmoderns would celebrate a multiplicity of differences, 'pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction'. Even so, during this process of re-contextualising 'universals', women and feminists still have to 'speak' the everyday words that are in process of contestation and re-definition (Salleh, 2009, pp. 204-205).

[33] The actual content of *Woman and Nature* is a dialogue between an 'objective' patriarchal voice entrenched in scientific discourse and the voice of women and nature as a single entity: both of the voices in the dialogue and the roles of women/nature and men/culture are thus represented as historically and social constructed.
[34] Strategic essentialism is utilizing essentialism or essentialist tendencies to make a point/do something specific with a specific strategy (Carlassare, 1994). In the context of Griffin's (1978) work, strategic essentialism is used to highlight the way women and nature are equated and pitted against men and culture.
[35] Taking (stories, morals, etc.) from other cultures and using them out of context for ones own gain.
[36] such as with Haraway's argument that we should not use the term mother nature but understand nature as a coyote trickster.
[37] Strength stories are stories that highlight positive experiences and strengths. When we tell stories about strengths people are empowered, negative narratives are diminishing and do not empower people. Stories on ecofeminism in mainstream discourse are not strength stories; they emphasize only problems with some ecofeminism and fail to engage with the positive and strong narratives ecofeminism has produced that empower people.
[38] According to Carlassare, "this unique form of protest combines the spiritual with the political and connects individual oppression to systems of oppression, underscoring that the personal is political, one of feminism's central tenets" (2000, p. 96).
[39] (as detailed in the earth-based spirituality section of this chapter)
[40] This does not mean that all of what is called modernity, or all of the advancements associated with scientific thinking are suspect. It means we need to be critical as social change came and comes as a 'bundle' and we may not want all that is in that package
[41] According to Carroll and Sarker (2016) 80 people in the world now have more money 80% of the world
[42] Rationality is patriarchal because, in Western culture, reason has been ascribed to men and emotion to women (Nagl-Docekal, 1999). It is a patriarchal assumption that rationality leads one closer to truth than affect and emotion. Similarly, science has been constructed has in the realm of the masculine, a realm women are often left out of (Gaard, 2015).
[43] The Canadian government declared a climate emergency on June 18, 2019 and the next day announced they would continue to push through the contested Trans Mountain pipeline (CBC, 2014; Leahy, 2019; Hunter, 2020).
[44] Dean, however, believes that neoliberalism has already come to an end. She writes, "having done its redistributive work and left a path of economic destruction in its wake, it has lost its place as the hegemonic economic discourse" (Dean, 2011, p. 7).
[45] According to Harvey (2007) definitions of neoliberalism vary between identifying it as political doctrine, economic project, regulatory practice, and/or a process of governmentalization.
[46] Harvey explains that neoliberalism has "become hegemonic as a mode of discourse and has pervasive effects on ways of thought and political-economic practices to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way we interpret, live in, and understand the world" (2007, p. 23).
[47] In the past 20 years there has been a wide array of scholarship published on 'neoliberal natures,' neoliberal environmental governance, and neoliberal climate governance (McCarthy & Prudham, 2003; McCarthy, 2012; Bakker, 2010; Shotwell, 2016; Bee, Rice, & Trauger, 2015; Swyngedouw, 2010). McCarthy and Prudham argue that neoliberalism, environmental change, and environmental politics are always already deeply intertwined (2003). In the US, McCarthy explains, many political parties and decision makers have come to see environmental protection as actually contributing to the economic crisis and choose to prioritize economic growth over environmental protection (2012). Thus, McCarthy contends: "[ecological] crisis has been used as an opportunity to deepen, rather than reconsider, neoliberalism" (McCarthy, 2012, p. 188).
[48] Market based solutions: e.g. Buying green, electric cars, etc.
[49] I do not think neoliberalism has passed us by, but if it has than the discussion above still applies to the current situation (even if it will assume a new name).
[50] Second wave feminism, for example: in failing to change the deeply gendered structures inherent in capitalism, turned from the fight for 'redistribution' to the fight for 'recognition' which (albeit unknowingly) helped ensure the success of neoliberal capitalism (Fraser, 2015). Fraser explains that "the turn to recognition dovetailed all too neatly with a rising neoliberalism that wanted nothing more than to repress all memory of social egalitarianism" (Fraser, 2015, p. 703).
[51] A nature in which human organizations (classes, empires, markets, etc.) not only make environments, but are simultaneously made by the historical flux and flow of the web of life. In this perspective capitalism is a world-ecology that joins the accumulation of capital, the pursuit of power, and the co-production of nature in successive historical configurations.

[52] The problem with value-hierarchical thinking, value dualisms, and conceptions of power and privilege that systematically advantage Ups over Downs, is the way in which each of these has functioned historically in oppressive conceptual frameworks to establish the inferiority of Downs and to justify the subordination of Downs by Ups. The logic of domination is what provides that alleged justification of subordination (2000, pp. 47-48).
[53] Historically in Western cultures, the justified inferiority of women and other inferiorized groups (other Others) often turns on claims that women and Others were not rational. Ecofeminist philosophers show how an exaggerated emphasis on reason and rationality, and the attendant 'hyperseperation' of reason from emotion, has functioned historically to sanction both the feminization of nature and the naturalization of women in ways that make women and nature inferior to male-gender identified culture (Warren, 2000, p. 50).
[54] Lloyd (1993) reminds us "Rational knowledge has been constructed as a transcending, transformation or control of natural forces; and the feminine has been associated with what rational knowledge transcends, dominates or simply leaves behind" (as cited in Phillips, 2014, p. 444).
[55] She states that "by 'scientizing' and 'securitizing' it, climate change is constructed as a problem that requires the kinds of solutions that are the traditional domain of men and hegemonic masculinity" (MacGregor, 2010, p. 128). Moreover, MacGregor explains, this 'securitizing' frames climate change in a way that justifies militaristic and immoral responses, and the role of the expansion of human population to climate change is over-emphasized such that the reproductive freedoms of women are once again being threated (MacGregor, 2010). As the main spokes people for climate change privileged (often white, often rich) men dominate the arena of climate change policy and thus the issue is constructed in gender-specific ways (MacGregor, 2010). Despite the traditional status of environmentalism as women's domain, "climate change has brought about a masculinization of environmentalism. Men dominate the issue at all levels, as scientific and economic experts, entrepreneurs, policy makers and spokespeople" (MacGregor, 2010, p. 128). MacGregor explains that this strange absence of women as the framers and shapers of climate change is partially due to a lack of female representation in the political arena, however in large part this is because masculinist discourses of science and security has shaped the climate change debate (MacGregor, 2010). As dominant forms of femininity do not encourage women to go into the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields—reflected in the underrepresentation of women in STEM—MacGregor argues that the scientific framing of climate change works alienates women from deeper engagement (MacGregor, 2010).
[56] She doesn't actually consider the multispecies in her crises of care, but I do.
[57] Trees literally do communicate with each other; they pass distress signals about draught and disease or insect attacks through mycorrhizal networks and other trees act differently in response to the information (Wohlleben, 2016).
[58] The construction of some knowledge as objective truths suppresses embodied local and particular knowledges, which, according to Smith, is where the knowledge of women is located (1990).
[59] Practical knowledge is the knowledge we have in being skilled in something, it cannot necessarily be explained verbally but is inherent in the way a professional athlete knows best how to physically succeed at their chosen sport (2011). Bodily knowing is described as the way that we know with our body, such as what feels good and what feels bad (2011). The unspoken knowledge is knowledge which could be verbally expressed but is not; "it provides the foundation from which we reason, or is heuristically unspoken" (2011, p. xii). Affectionate or emotional knowing is that which we feel, that "texture and tone our experiences" (2011, p. xii).
[60] Transcorporeality means that all earth-bound beings are embedded and connected in the material world which runs through them, transforms them, and is transformed by them (Alaimo, 2014).
[61] All earth-bound material bodies are transcorporeal, be them human or other-than human (see endnote 59).
[62] Decolonization will look different in different places, and, while I am situated in what is currently called Canada, I believe that decolonization will include a global shift in the way we think and the way we treat the land and the people of the land (and the ethics of land grabs and occupation of other places).
[63] My own experience at environmental dissent activities—resource extraction protests; pipeline protests; climate change marches; the BC Legislature occupation in solidarity with Wet'suwet'en—has shown this to be true. They are very often led by (or extremely well attended by) Indigenous women. The Global Citizen website also notes this Indigenous women leadership in their article "These Indigenous Women Are Leading the Fight to Save the Planet" (Prolman, 2017).
[64] The temporality of revolution is polyphonic in that it is nonlinear and works within the past, present, and future simultaneously.
[65] This is done by inspiring the belief of the revolution, establishing the goals and role of the revolutionary party, and conceptualizing the state (2016). "As tactics and organization materialize belief in the revolution, they help bring about the revolution that caused them," Dean writes (2016, p. 63). The revolutionary party is fundamental to

Dean's actuality of revolution; it is coordinated by the future but also a necessary process of 'now' that brings about that future (2016). Dean calls for a new party to be the 'revolutionary agent' of the proletariat revolution, she explains, "many of us are convinced that capitalist crises have reached a decisive point. We know that the system is fragile, that it produces its own grave-diggers, and that it is held in place by a repressive international state structure" (2016, p. 77-78). According to Dean, our failure to act on these beliefs and knowledges is due to a lack of a revolutionary party to organize the movement (2016). The political party has a necessary role in the revolution, because, according to Dean, "The party provides a form that can let us believe what we know" (2016, p. 78).

[66] Swain differentiates between 'ends-guided prefiguration' and 'ends-effacing' prefiguration (2017). Ends-guided prefiguration is defined by the relationship between means and ends which is immediate and unmediated; thus, the ends and means must both consistently mirror each other (Swain, 2017). With ends-effacing prefiguration the focus is always on the present and individual acts are understood as both means and ends simultaneously (Swain, 2017). "Thus, if ends-guided prefiguration is concerned with specifying the future in order to live up to it, ends-effacing prefiguration is concerned with collapsing the future into the present, rather than holding them apart" (Swain, 2017, p. 9).

[67] Prefiguration generally creates alternative futures to work towards, radical prefiguration specifically organizes actions in the present meant to direct us to those imagined alternatives.

[68] The term 'new material feminisms' or 'feminist new materialisms' is problematic in that it implies that insights from new material feminisms are *new* when really, they have been around for a long time in Indigenous knowledges.

[69] Haraway's term 'natureculture' emphasizes that ideas are embodied in social formations and are both material and ideological, nature and culture are always already natureculture.

[70] A study done by Pew Research Centre in the United States showed that in 2018 between 21% and 29% of Americans said they were "very" worried about the climate, double the rate of a similar study in 2015, and between 62% and 69% were "somewhat" worried (Fagan & Huang, 2019).

[71] While I am sure that people experienced eco-anxiety in the 70s (and earlier), feelings of ecological anxiety were not so widespread and prolific that a term was created. The term eco-anxiety emerged in 2017 in response to the vast shared feelings of dread and anxiety for nature (Nugent, 2019).

[72] The problem with deifying one form of knowledge, such as technocratic scientific knowledge, is that all other knowledges are considered lesser. It is not the existence of this type of knowledge that is problematic, on the contrary, technocratic scientific knowledge is valuable and necessary. The problem is that all other forms of knowledge are dismissed out of hand as false, mythological, and/or invalid.

[73] She points out that because woman has, in Western culture, often been associated with nature (and thus outside human culture, rationality, agency, etc.), most feminist theory has worked to separating woman from nature (Alaimo, 2010). She thus takes the ecofeminist perspective that instead of refusing to engage with more-than-human nature we should work to "undertake the transformation of gendered dualisms—nature/culture, body/mind, object/subject, resource/agency, and others—that have been cultivated to denigrate and silence certain groups of human as well as nonhuman life" (Alaimo, 2010, p. 5).

[74] McMahon understands human and more-than-human nature as co-constituted: "ontologically, we are not human apriori but become humans within the diversity of others, amongst the social and ontological diversities of the more-than-human in which we are 'composed.' We 'become-with or not at all,' as Haraway (2016) cautions" (McMahon, 2019, p. 29).

[75] According to a study by Pew Research Centre in 2018 utilizing data from a survey of 26 countries, 13 out of the 26 countries see climate change as the top threat to their nation. The Majority of countries say climate change is a major threat to their nation (Fagan & Huang, 2019).