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Preface

The aims of this book are to explore the relationship between feminism and ecology and identify the radical potential of feminist and ecological thought. Feminism and ecology are brought together in the ecofeminist assertion that women's subordination and ecological degradation are linked. This claim is examined through an exploration of political activism around women and the environment and the development of ecofeminist thought, together with responses to it from other radical, feminist and green perspectives.

In arguing for the radical potential of a link between feminism and ecology I do not claim that women are somehow essentially closer to 'nature', but rather that it is not possible to understand the ecologically destructive consequences of dominant trends in human development without understanding their gendered nature. The central theme in this analysis is the materiality of human existence. Put simply, human beings as human animals have bodies which must be developed and nurtured. These bodies, in turn, are embedded in a natural environment. Social theories that do not take account of this essential feature of human existence are starting from the false premise that human actors are disembodied and disembedded. It is not surprising, therefore, that in practice these actors turn out to be white, male, mobile and relatively self-determining as a result of economic and social privilege. They represent those who are able to harness science and technology and the benefits of economic 'progress' by putting the burdens of human embodiment and embeddedness on to other peoples, other species and the planet. These burdens are borne by underprivileged women and other subordinated groups

who carry out necessary body-maintaining work, and the earth, species and peoples who bear the destructive ecological consequences of high levels of production, consumption and mobility. Ecofeminism brings together the analysis of the ecological consequences of human 'progress' from the green movement, and the feminist critique of women's disproportionate responsibility for the costs and consequences of human embodiment, to show how relations of inequality within the human community are reflected in destructive relations between humanity and the non-human natural world. To focus on inequality based on sex/gender in this context is not to imply that an analysis starting from racism, class exploitation or colonialism would be any less important or relevant.

The development of a radical social theory based on a feminist and ecological framework is particularly vital given the success of the radical right and various critiques of 'modernism' in undermining theories based on the material or structural analysis of power and inequality. Radical theories have become associated with the 'sins' of white, male-dominated Marxist/social democratic statism in practice, and with theoretical frameworks that have been based on ungrounded and unwarranted assumptions of the direction of human progress. There is certainly substance to these criticisms, otherwise they would not have been so successful in silencing much radical theory and practice. However, I would argue that it is not necessary to go down the postmodernist or postsocialist road. Postmodernists may be right to say that the direction of human history cannot be predicted, and postsocialists may argue that traditional patterns of political solidarity no longer exist, but that does not mean that it is not possible to analyse the conditions of humanity as it presently exists or look for new bases of solidarity. In this book I argue that the feminist and ecology movements as brought together in ecofeminism offer grounds for optimism for both critical social analysis and the politics of social change.

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I would like to acknowledge all the resources and all the people known and unknown who have sustained me and given me space and time to write this book.

1

Introduction

Ecofeminism is a movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women. It emerged in the mid-1970s alongside second-wave feminism and the green movement. Ecofeminism brings together elements of the feminist and green movements, while at the same time offering a challenge to both. It takes from the green movement a concern about the impact of human activities on the non-human world and from feminism the view of humanity as gendered in ways that subordinate, exploit and oppress women.

The green movement starts from the basic tenet of ecology, that all living organisms must been seen in relation to their natural environment. Humanity must always be seen as embedded within local and global ecosystems. The ecosystem surrounding any living organism imposes boundary conditions upon it. Humanity's failure to respect the ecological limits of these bounding conditions has caused the present ecological crisis (McKibben 1990). Greens then divide on whether humanity can use its technological ingenuity to overcome or adapt to those bounding conditions (light green or shallow ecology) or whether it is necessary for humanity fundamentally to rethink its relationship to the natural world (dark green or deep ecology).

Ecofeminists tend to share the perspective of deeper greens that humanity is not just reliant on its physical environment, but that the natural world, including humanity, should be seen as an interconnected and interdependent whole. This raises fundamental questions about the socio-cultural human world in relation to the non-human natural world, including humanity's own physical existence. While

ecofeminism shares with (light and dark) greens a concern about the ecological damage caused by contemporary socio-economic and military systems, it also challenges the failure of the ecology movement and its theorists to address adequately male domination and women's subordination. Although green thinkers and activists pay more attention to feminism than most other political perspectives, ecofeminists have argued that they fail to see the fundamental role of gender inequality in creating the ecological crisis. This failure results largely from male domination of green movements themselves (Salleh 1984; Doubiago 1989; Mellor 1992c; Seager 1993).

Ecofeminism's challenge to feminism lies in its assertion that to the extent that human societies are biologically sexed and/or socially gendered, men and women stand in a different relationship to the natural world. Human embeddedness in the environment is related directly to human embodiment. Ecological impacts and consequences are experienced through human bodies, in ill health, early death, congenital damage and impeded childhood development. Women disproportionately bear the consequences of those impacts within their own bodies (dioxin residues in breast milk, failed pregnancies) and in their work as nurturers and carers. Some ecofeminists have gone further and argued that women have a greater appreciation of humanity's relationship to the natural world, its embeddedness and embodiedness, through their own embodiment as female. This opens up the whole question of human society and culture in relation to bodies, biology and non-human nature. To argue that women as biologically sexed or socially gendered beings are connected with, or in some way represent, the natural world is seen as dangerous by many feminists. It undermines the struggle that they have waged against the way the identification of women with nature has been used to justify women's subordination. Women have been seen as limited and determined by their bodies and thereby excluded from playing an equal role in public life. To open up the question of women's association with 'nature', as well as positively to assert it, would seem to be a regressive move. The ecofeminist case for doing so will be a central theme of this book.

There has been a tendency to identify ecofeminism with an essentialist universalism. It is seen as positing a biologically based unity between women and the natural world that excludes men and unites all women through their essential life-giving, life-loving 'natures'. Critics argue that such a perspective is reactionary as it essentializes and naturalizes both women and nature. This presents a falsely universalized image of 'woman' that ignores differences and in-

equalities between women. Much of this criticism has been aimed at ecofeminism in the United States (and particularly its West Coast variant) which has been strongly identified with radical/cultural feminism and the feminist spirituality movement. However, ecofeminism has been greeted with deep suspicion in many quarters even where it draws on materialist or socialist feminism rather than cultural or spiritual feminism (Hekman 1990; Biehl 1991; Agarwal 1992; Evans 1993; Jackson 1995).

Ecofeminism's link with cultural and spiritual feminism and more radical approaches to ecology led much early ecofeminist literature, particularly in the United States, not to distinguish between academic and poetic/spiritual writings. Although many of the writers were academics, such a split was seen as reproducing the division within western culture that had allowed science and expert forms of knowledge to be distanced from ecological and social life. The introduction to one anthology describes how:

> [I]ts chorus of voices reflecting the variety of concerns flowing into ecofeminism, challenges the boundaries dividing such genres as the scholarly paper and the impassioned poetic essay. In so doing, it acknowledges poetic vision as a form of knowledge and as one of the important steps in the process of global transformation. (Diamond and Orenstein 1990: vii)

The poetic and impassioned style of writing did, however, fuel some of the criticisms of ecofeminism as essentialist and mystical. As ecofeminism has matured, its writings have become more academic, although no less impassioned, losing some of the poetic energy of the early work, but setting out a more clear theorization of the connection between a feminist and an ecological framework (Mellor 1992a; Plumwood 1993; Mies and Shiva 1993; Warren 1994). Although ecofeminism is a diverse movement with differences in emphasis, and particularly in rhetoric, I would argue that its logic as it has developed in the past twenty years has produced a distinct and very valuable theoretical perspective on the relationship between human society and its natural surroundings that has implications for both social theory and political practice.

Ecofeminism as a movement

The history of ecofeminism can be found in its writings and in the wide range of women's involvement in environmental issues and grassroots struggles around the world. The size and impact of

ecofeminism as a movement depends upon how broadly it is defined. A very narrow definition would only embrace those women (and a very few men) who identify themselves explicitly as ecofeminists. Many of these are academics who are contributing to the growing literature on ecofeminism, seeking to establish it as a perspective as well as a movement. A wider definition would include all women who campaign on environmental issues or who bring together feminist and ecological concerns, whether in grassroots actions or more formal movements. The broader definition would include women's campaigns on environmental issues even where a specifically feminist or ecofeminist politics has not necessarily been expressed.

While ecofeminism as a distinct body of thought has been largely (but not exclusively) developed by feminists in the North, its emergence must be seen in the context of a wider involvement of women in struggles and campaigns concerned with the environment around the world. It is important that the North's domination of the published literature (of which this book is yet another example) should not distort the history of ecofeminism or give the impression that it is a unified movement. As with all perspectives and movements that emerge within a framework of social and economic inequalities, ecofeminism carries the danger of reproducing those inequalities within its own structure and development (Amos and Parmar 1984).

Global inequalities mean that while poor, exploited and marginalized women bear the brunt of the physical, economic and social impact of ecological degradation, and engage in direct struggles around their immediate environment, those privileged by class, nation and 'race' dominate and formulate the debate that 'names' and theorizes that movement. This is not to underestimate the contribution of those women who have abandoned their privilege to join in grassroots struggles – but privilege once gained is always available if only as cultural capital. For those without access to even the basics of existence there is no choice. The danger in the domination of the ecofeminist movement by a North perspective is that a distorted view of the ecological crisis and the position of women will emerge. Amos and Parmar's critique of the women's peace movement could as easily be applied to ecofeminism:

> Internationally, while Black and Third World Women are fighting daily battles for survival, for food, land and water, western white women's cries of anguish or concern about preserving the standards of life for their children and preserving the planet for future generations sound hollow. (1984: 17)

Saving the whale, the preservation of wilderness, recycling or green consumer campaigns pale into insignificance against the immediate need for clean water, food, sanitation and personal health (Sen and Grown 1987, Rao 1989). However, it would be equally wrong to see these as in opposition. Amos and Parmar do not argue for a rejection of peace campaigning, but for western feminists to see the political issues that affect them in an international context. They also argue against an exclusively feminist focus that does not take account of the economic and political context: 'A definition of patriarchal relations which looks only at the power of men over women without placing that in a wider political and economic framework has serious consequences for the way in which relationships within the Black community are viewed, (1984: 9). Angela Davis makes the equally important point that those concerned with immediate economic and political struggle should not neglect issues like the campaign against nuclear weapons: 'Peace, my sisters and brothers, is a Black folk's issue and it is a Black woman's issue. The failure to realize this might very well cost us our lives' (1990: 64). Both are valid arguments. Struggles around socio-economic inequality must take account of the ecological context, while the concerns of ecofeminists in the North and the struggles of women around environmental issues in the South must both be seen in an international politico-economic context.

Ecofeminism and feminisms

Most ecofeminists follow radical feminism in identifying patriarchy, and particularly western patriarchy, as the main source of global ecological destruction. The central dynamic of western patriarchy is seen as the division of society into hierarchical dualisms. Culture and society are divided from the natural world; science and expert knowledge displaces traditional folk knowledge. A valued public world is carved out of the complexities of human existence, much of which remains in a private, domestic world. Above all, male/men/the masculine is valued as against female/women/the feminine. However, the historical period in which patriarchy is seen to emerge ranges from 4000 BCE (Eisler 1990) to the Greek city-states (Ruether 1975) to the Scientific Revolution (Merchant 1983). Such a wide-ranging historical sweep leaves the question of the role of patriarchy in pre-industrial and non-western societies in some contention. Some

feminists, particularly in the South, have argued that ecofeminism has encouraged a benign attitude toward non-western patriarchy (Agarwal 1992). It has also been claimed that ecofeminism's emphasis on patriarchy deflects attention from racism, imperialism and capitalism as agents in gender oppression and ecological destruction (Lorde 1980, Agarwal 1992). Mies et al. (1988), on the other hand, argue that women suffer disproportionately in social and ecological terms, where there are patterns of exploitation based on colonialism, racism or worker exploitation.

Although ecofeminist thinking draws heavily on radical feminism and the critique of patriarchy, ecofeminists vary in the way they see patriarchal relations structuring the relationship between women and the natural world. Those who come from a cultural or spiritual feminist background will tend to stress male domination *per se*, and even maleness itself, as the cause of ecologically destructive and socially oppressive behaviour. Those who come from a socialist feminist background see the division of power, and particularly of labour, between men and women as holding the key to unsustainable patterns of development (Mellor 1992a; Salleh 1994). The two groups also differ in the connections they see between women and the natural world. Those from a cultural and spiritual feminist background will tend to stress an elemental connection between women and 'nature', while those who take a more social constructionist view of gender relations will tend to stress the historical and contextual basis of that connection. However, as will become clear, the similarities between ecofeminists in terms of their basic analysis far outweighs these differences, which often reflect differences in rhetoric.

In relation to other perspectives within feminism, there are strands that are incompatible with an ecofeminist perspective. One example is the liberal feminist argument for equal opportunities within the present socio-economic system. The approach of ecofeminism is summed up by one of the founders of the movement, Ynestra King: 'what is the point of partaking equally in a system that is killing us all' (1990: 106). Ecofeminism also opposes Marxist and socialist feminisms that do not challenge the ecological, as well as the economic, contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. For ecofeminists, equality through economic growth and 'development' for women, and for working-class, racially and (neo)colonially oppressed peoples, is not ecologically possible (Mellor 1993; Mies and Shiva 1993). They share the green critique that economic growth is a dangerous illusion (Douthwaite 1992). The present level of

ecological destruction caused by industrialism and 'development' has substantially benefited only around one-fifth of the world's population. Even within rich countries such as Britain or the United States, about a quarter to a third of the population, mostly women and children, are living in poverty. Whatever claims women have for equality with men, for ecofeminists it cannot be on the basis of consumption and production as promised by capitalism, or even a communistic redistribution of wealth on the present model of industrial production and mass consumption.

Ecofeminism is also incompatible with a radically social constructivist position, whether from a phenomenological, socialist/Marxist or postmodern perspective. By this, I mean a perspective that prioritizes human society/culture not only epistemologically, but ontologically. Although some ecofeminist philosophers have embraced a postmodern critique of western culture (Cheney 1989), and many ecofeminists argue that women's subordination and ecological devastation have social causes, the ecological basis of ecofeminist thinking demands a rejection of perspectives that accords all agency to human society and culture. Meanings may change with discourses, human knowledge or power relations may affect physical and social conditions of life, but the physical materiality of human life is real, however it is described or 'constructed'. For ecofeminism, the natural world of which humanity is a part has its own dynamic beyond human 'construction' or control.

Such a realist perspective is deeply problematic for those feminisms that have sought to reject a biological construction of sex difference in favour of a socially or culturally constructivist view of both sex and gender. However, a rejection of wholesale social or cultural constructivism does not mean a collapse into ecological or biological determinism. What it is both politically and theoretically vital to understand is the relationship between socially constructed relationships and physical realities, whether of embodiment or embeddedness. It is this interface that concerns ecofeminism, the connection between the biological and ecological processes surrounding human society and women's subordination and oppression. For ecofeminists, concern for the vitality of the ecology of the planet is directly related to concern for women's lives and experiences. The postmodern/poststructuralist domination of contemporary social theorizing is presenting a false choice between radical social constructivism and various forms of universalism and essentialism. In this book I want to argue that the logic of the ecofeminist position demands a radical materialist and realist analysis.

Weaving threads

Early images in ecofeminist literature are of weaving and spinning (Daly 1978; Henderson 1983; Diamond and Orenstein 1990) and the arguments in this book are equally interwoven. A book on ecofeminism(s), feminism(s) and ecologism(s) must necessarily be a tangle of ideas, an interweaving of many threads that will sometimes gather into untidy knots or trail out in numerous loose ends. A great deal of the confusion will be around the meaning of words. 'Nature', in particular, is a very problematic concept (Soper 1995). Sometimes it refers to a metaphysical idea of 'Nature', often taken to be a consciously knowing agent – the 'mind of nature'. At other times it refers to the physical world that is the 'object' of scientific study and material exploitation. Sometimes it is taken to be only that aspect of non-human nature that has not been contaminated by 'man' – nature as wilderness. At other times it is taken to be the whole planetary ecosystem which includes human beings. Although, as will become clear, I see humanity as part of an embracing natural world, as most of the debate concerns the divorce between hu(man)ity and nature, I will generally use nature to refer to the non-human natural world.

Reference to women's subordination and male dominance in society is also difficult without presupposing the basis of that domination in the words used. Reference to male, men, masculine, or female, women, feminine can imply an essentialist approach either in terms of biological determinism (women's bodies make them think and act in particular ways) or universalism (all women share common experiences and responses) or appear to accept patriarchal definitions. Equally, concepts such as patriarchy, subordination and oppression demand an explanation of the relational dynamic involved. I will generally use male dominance to refer to the fact that all existing societies have a majority of men in the most powerful positions. I will also use the term 'patriarchy', as this is the concept used in many ecofeminist writings, although, as will become clear towards the end of this book, I am not happy with the term. I also would not wish the use of concepts such as male dominance and patriarchy to prejudge the theoretical explanation of that phenomenon. I do not intend the use of the word 'male' to imply biological determinism or to claim that all men are equally involved in the process of domination and all women are equally subjected to it. However, I do not adopt the position that male domination has no material or structural base and

that there is not a substantive category of 'woman' to be addressed (Riley 1988; Butler 1990).

Another difficult area is the description of male–female inequality in terms of sex and/or gender. There has been much debate over these words (Oakley 1972; Gatens 1991a; Delphy 1993). The original division of the concepts was between that which related to biology (sex) and that which related to social characteristics (gender) (Oakley 1972), although it was quickly recognized that the two ideas could not easily be kept theoretically separate (Rubin 1974). Later writers have increasingly argued that sex, like gender, should be seen as socially constructed rather than biologically given (Delphy 1993; Butler 1990). As I have argued, from an ecofeminist perspective the latter approach is problematic, as it is not possible to see the body as (totally) socially constructed. I would follow Moira Gatens in seeing embodiment as a material and an historical phenomenon that cannot be 'degendered' through socialization or counter-socialization (1991b). It is true that there is no Archimedean point from which we can ascertain what of the body is natural as opposed to social. However, social constructions do not begin from a blank slate.

To say that human beings as reproductive mammals are embodied in sexed bodies does not imply anything about the sexual identity or sexual orientation of individual people, or even some unified and singular bodily form of the male and the female. Embodiment is a universal human condition, not a determining factor at the individual level. It is also important not to limit discussion to sex, sexuality and reproduction. Human embodiment covers all aspects of human biological needs and developments such as hunger, excretion, maturing and death. If the realities of human embodiment in its broadest context are not discussed, the ways in which the social consequences of embodiment have historically had different impacts for men and women will not be addressed. For this reason I will use the linked concept of sex/gender except where I am referring specifically to sexed bodies or to social relations that can be detached from human embodiment. It is also interesting to note with Donna Haraway that the sex/gender dilemma is one that is unique to the English language, and has undermined the ability of English-speakers to theorize the sexed body adequately:

> In the political and epistemological effort to remove women from the category of nature and to place them in culture as constructed and self-constructing social subjects in history, the concept of gender has tended to be quarantined from the infections of biological sex. Consequently, the ongoing constructions of what counts as sex or as female have been hard to theorize. (1991: 134)

The ecofeminist critique of modernity is also conceptually and linguistically problematic. Concepts like advanced, modern and developed all imply a positive value for western imperialist socio-economic structures. Pre-industrial, pre-modern and non-western all use the western socio-economic system as a referent. Third World implies that the 'western' system represents a 'First' World. Concepts like West and North posit a false geography of privilege. There are rich societies in the South (Australia, New Zealand) and in the East (Japan). Such a geographical divide also ignores the inequalities within societies. Not everyone in poor countries is poor or, in rich countries, rich. Following ecofeminist literature I will generally use the concept 'West' to represent European culture, and 'North' to represent the global capitalist economy and internationally dominant nation-states. Towards the end of this book I will develop what is, I hope, a more helpful way of addressing exploitative socio-economic and ecological relations.

The overall aim of this book is to explore the history and development of the various strands of ecofeminism and their relationship to elements of feminism(s) and ecologism(s). Ecofeminism, like the feminist and green movements, is one of the 'new' social movements that are increasingly being heralded as the source of a new politics, of a regenerated civil society for the twenty-first century (Wainwright 1994). The issues they raise are seen as formulating a radical critique of industrial capitalism (O'Connor 1988; O'Connor 1994) or forming the basis of a new radical movement (Merchant 1992). I will argue here, as I have argued elsewhere, that ecofeminism has a great deal to offer as a radical perspective, particularly as the basis for a reformulated socialism (Mellor 1992a, 1992b, 1993).

The next chapter looks at the emergence of social movements and perspectives that link women and the environment. It would not be right to subsume these all under the heading of 'ecofeminism', as they cover a broad range of environmental action in various parts of the world. Although ecofeminism has been very much dominated by the voices and political concerns of the North, the voices, struggles and experiences of the South are also central to its development. These struggles will be set in the international context of the development process and women's responses to it from around the globe. Women in grassroots movements, political movements and academia have taken their concerns about the impact of development on women and the environment to the heart of the international political system, although not necessarily from an explicitly ecofeminist perspective. The emergence and development of ecofemin-

ism as a movement will be set alongside these actions and debates.

In the third chapter I will examine the theoretical debates within the ecofeminist movement, largely, but not exclusively, from the North. The central division is between those who see women's biology and/or culture as creating a special and direct affinity between women and the natural world, and those who see this relationship as socially constructed, a debate to which I have alluded above. Despite the different origins and orientations of ecofeminist thought, core themes emerge that will be taken up in later chapters.

Chapters 4 and 5 will address ecofeminist thought in relation to feminist theory. The fourth chapter will look at the heart of ecofeminism, the relationship between woman and nature. This is where ecofeminism comes most into conflict with other feminisms, and I will examine where these differences lie, in particular in relation to woman/nature and the body/biology. To do this it has been necessary to return to earlier feminist texts and retrace these debates, as well as address more recent feminist thought. I will argue that criticisms of essentialism levelled at ecofeminism can be met if concepts such as embodiment and its relationship to sex/gender are looked at within a materialist framework. Ecofeminist analysis shows how sex/gender inequality has been used to create the destructive nature/socio-cultural divide. Ending sex/gender inequality is essential if that divide is to be closed.

In the fifth chapter I will look at ecofeminism in the light of recent debates about women and knowledge, the feminist critique of western epistemology in general, and science in particular. Ecofeminism shares the epistemological critique of western dualism and the knowledge base of modernity in science and technology with other radical perspectives, including postmodernism. However, by emphasizing women and women's experiences, ecofeminism implicitly or explicitly, adopts a standpoint perspective. The idea of a specific women's knowledge and culture has been particularly strong in spiritual ecofeminism (Spretnak 1982, 1990; Starhawk 1982, 1987, 1990) and is also represented in Vandana Shiva's argument for the importance of women's indigenous knowledge (1989). However, arguments for women's experience as the basis of a privileging knowledge is problematic, particularly from a postmodern perspective as recent debates within feminist epistemology have shown (Jaggar and Bordo 1989; Nicholson 1990; Alcoff and Potter 1993). I will hope to show that a materialist and realist ecofeminism can plot a route out of this theoretical quagmire.

The sixth chapter will look at the relationship between ecofeminism

and green thinking, particularly deep ecology. While ecofeminists have used green thinking in combination with their feminism, green thinkers (who are mainly men) have been much more varied in their approach to feminist thought and to the place women have in their theories and visions of the 'good society'. In particular, there has been a long-running debate between ecofeminists and deep ecologists about the relative importance of androcentrism (male-centredness reflecting male domination over women and nature) as against anthropocentrism (human-centredness reflecting human domination over nature) in the breakdown of sustainable relations between human society and non-human nature. The central concept in deep ecology is biocentrism, or ecocentrism, that is, seeing nature or natural processes as more important than, or ontologically prior to, human interests or existence. Ecocentric thinkers see all other political perspectives, including ecofeminism, as human-centred and therefore as prioritizing human interests or claiming human ontological priority over the non-human natural world. I will argue that there is an ambivalence in the concept of ecocentrism in deep ecological thought which renders it potentially both idealist and dualist rather than materialist and holist. However, a materialist and holist conception of ecocentrism, I will argue, is helpful in framing a materialist ecofeminism.

In the seventh chapter I will look at ecofeminism in relation to ecoanarchism, ecosocialism and Marxism. In particular, I will look at the ideas of Murray Bookchin and the critique of ecofeminism that has been developed from his ecoanarchist perspective. In relation to Marxism, eco-Marxism and socialist feminism, I will return again to the issue of embodiment and the sexual/gender division of labour, and argue that although Marx can be criticized from an ecofeminist perspective, his historical materialist analysis, particularly in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, is still relevant if reformulated on an ecofeminist basis.

The final chapter will bring all these ideas together and set out the framework of a realist and materialist ecofeminist analysis. I will not argue that ecofeminism is *the* solution, as this would mean adopting the reductionist position that sex/gender inequality is the basis of all other oppressions. However, I will argue that the insights of ecofeminism can inform a more comprehensive historical and materialist perspective that can explore the dialectical relationship between humanity and the natural world, as well as the dynamics of human society. With deep green thinkers I see humanity as part of a natural world that has its own dynamic beyond the control of embed-