

FEMINISM & ECOLOGY

1. Activism
2. Theory and Criticism → Braidotti
3. Literature and Art → Sarah Hall, “Mrs Fox”

1. Ecofeminism → feminist climate action

Goes back to 1970s

- Oppression of women ~ destruction of environment
- Liberation of women ~ respect for environment

Even now:

- women often most vulnerable to environmental destruction (e.g. water pollution, deforestation, floods, ...)
- local ecological community initiatives by women in e.g. India (Vandana Shiva), South-America
- Climate action in tandem with challenge to patriarchal structures
- Gender justice ~ climate justice



The problem: the climate crisis is a *leadership* crisis.

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Far too many people in power continue to focus on short-term profit and prestige, propping up the status quo rather than marshaling their influence for change.

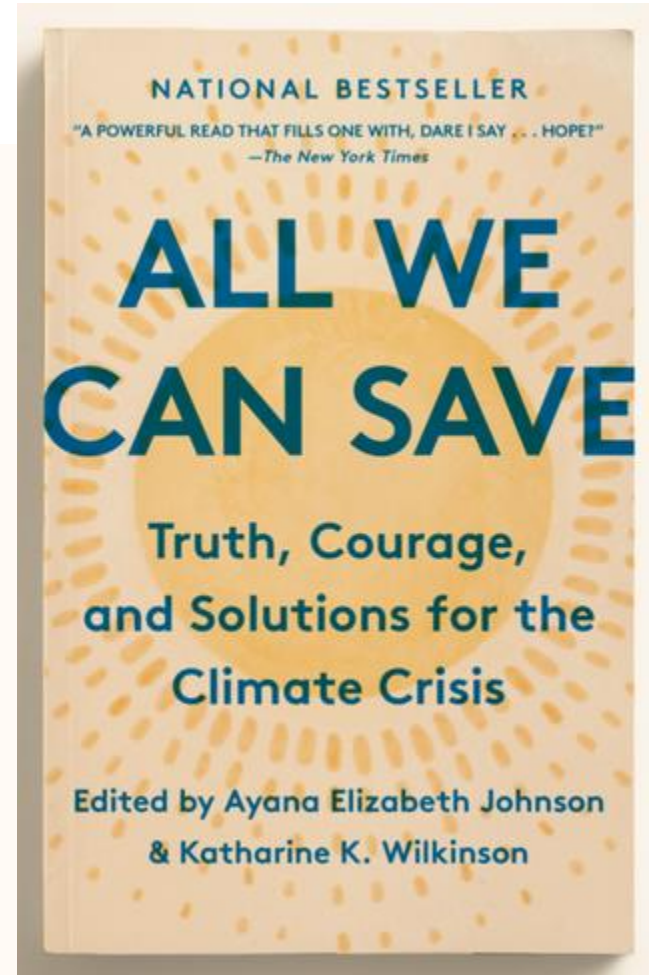
Society at large remains stuck in lukewarm concern and insufficient action, as social, political, and economic systems continue to benefit those who already have so much.

Many of those awake to the climate crisis stand on the sidelines. In the US, for example, 33% of Americans are now "alarmed," but only 34% of that group are active in some way.

Conventional climate leadership centers too narrow a set of voices, ideas, and contributions, privileging facts without feelings, "solutions" without justice, and competition over collaboration.

Within climate decision-making processes, exclusion of those most impacted — particularly women and people of color — hinders genuine progress toward climate justice.

We need a broad leadership upwelling, with many more people linking arms to grow a life-giving future for everyone.



FEMINIST ACTION FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE IN THE PACIFIC AND THE CARIBBEAN

Climate Justice

Gender Justice

11.11.11

VECHT MEE TEGEN ONRECHT

campagne | thema's | 11 in beweging | doe mee | wat en waarom [Do](#)

How feminism can effect climate justice

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to 2.55pm CEST - online

ñez (Acción Ecológica), Lidy Nacpil (APMDD) and Soumaya Majdoub (VUB)

ature: a feminist approach towards ecologic justice



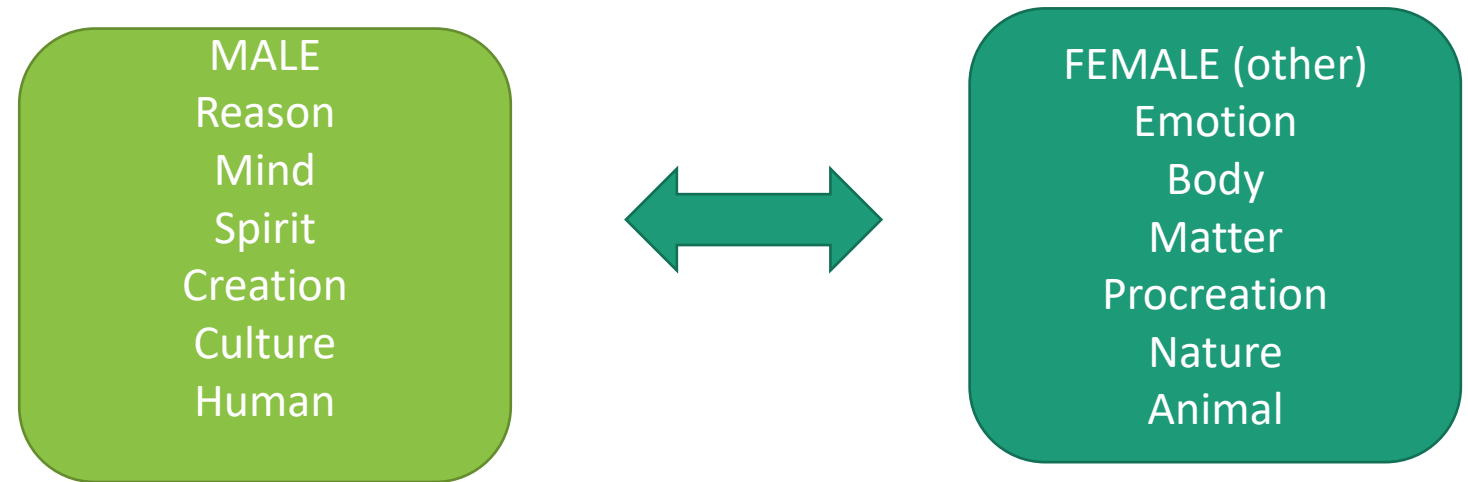
Feminist Climate Justice

This study guide explores climate change from a gender and sexual rights lens.

2. Theory and criticism: brief history

From 1970s onwards, ecofeminist criticism looked at (and criticizes) intersections of **nature and gender** in discourse and acts of Western patriarchal societies:

- Exploitation of nature justified by feminizing it / suppression of women justified by thinking of them as more emotional, bodily, natural creatures. Both women and nature are “othered”
- gender binaries and hierarchical value dualities embedded in language and culture



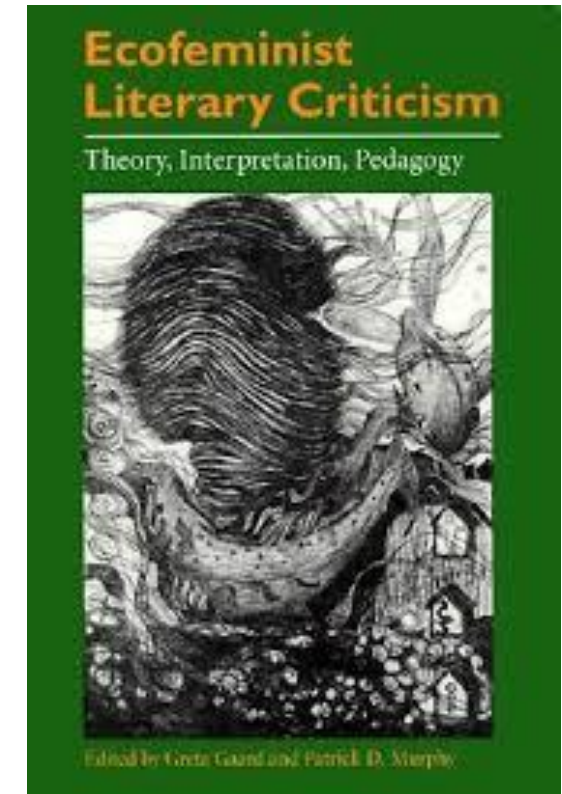
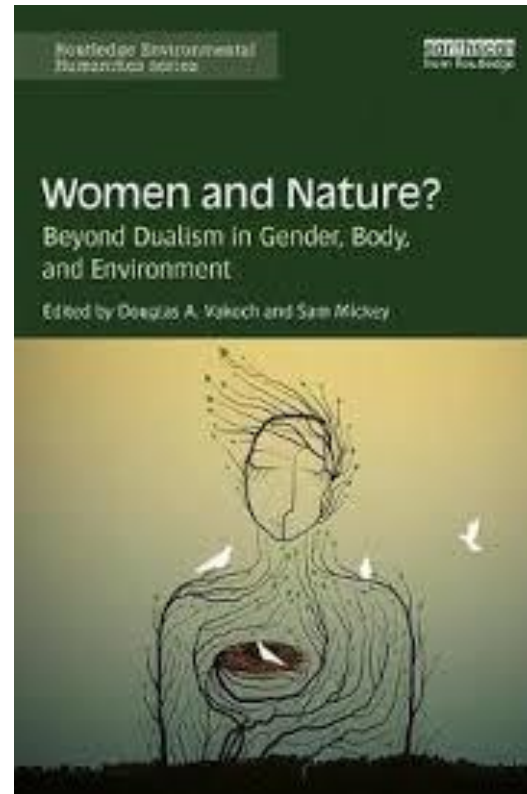
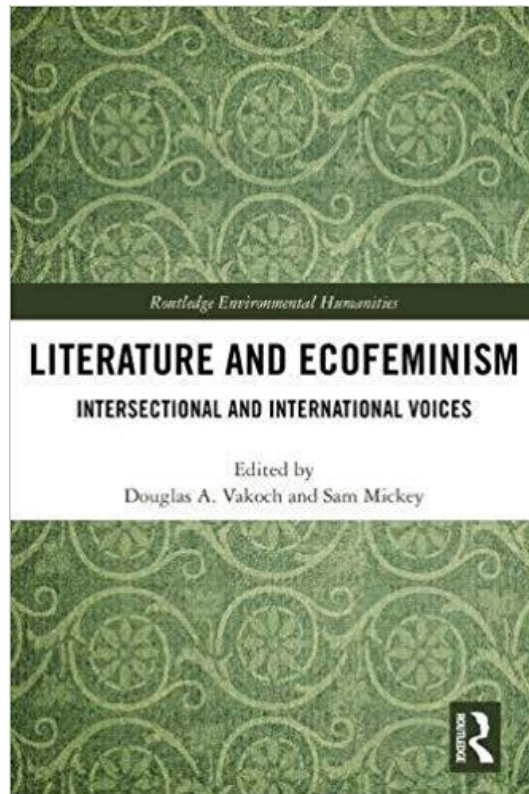
diagnosis easy – what to do? different responses

- Radical ecofeminism: get rid of associations between women and nature, degrading to both
- Cultural ecofeminism: foster this association to rectify destruction of environment

Cf. Term “ecofeminism” coined by French feminist Françoise d’Eaubonne in 1974 to draw attention to women's potential to bring about an ecological revolution.

Today?

- Binary hierarchies have shifted
- Yet: essentialist association between women and nature has been questioned
- Moreover: intersectionalist approach: intersection of various binaries rather than parallel structure



Ecofeminist criticism

Animal Studies

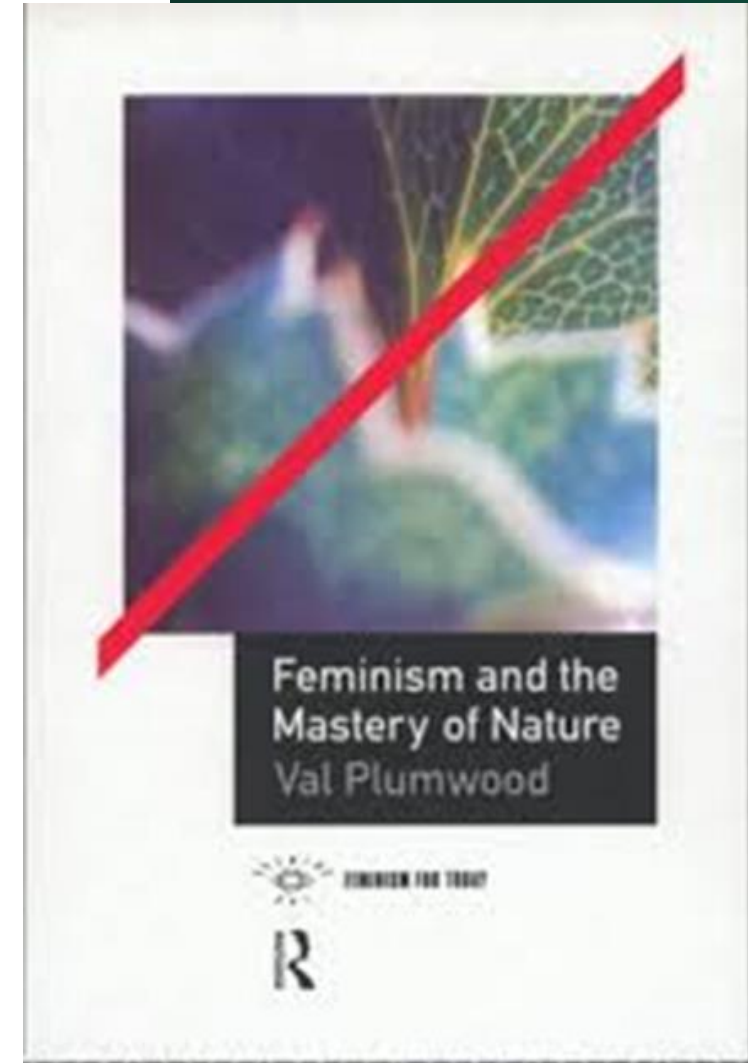
- Makes visible interconnections between violence against/subjugation of women and animals in Western (patriarchal) societies
- Contests same binaries in Western thinking and philosophy, but with special emphasis on human/animal distinction

Cf. Western philosophy:

- Man as supreme rational being >< emotional and embodied others: women, animals, ... → anthropocentrism (androcentrism)
- Man at top of species hierarchy (Aristotle) --> speciesism
- Interconnections between **speciesism** and **sexism** (and racism):
Existential/epistemological or ethical/moral?

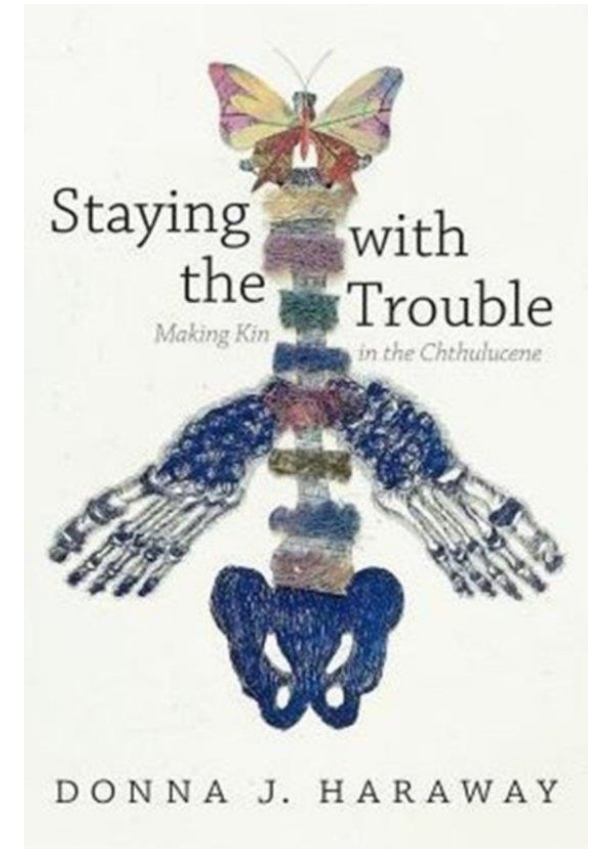
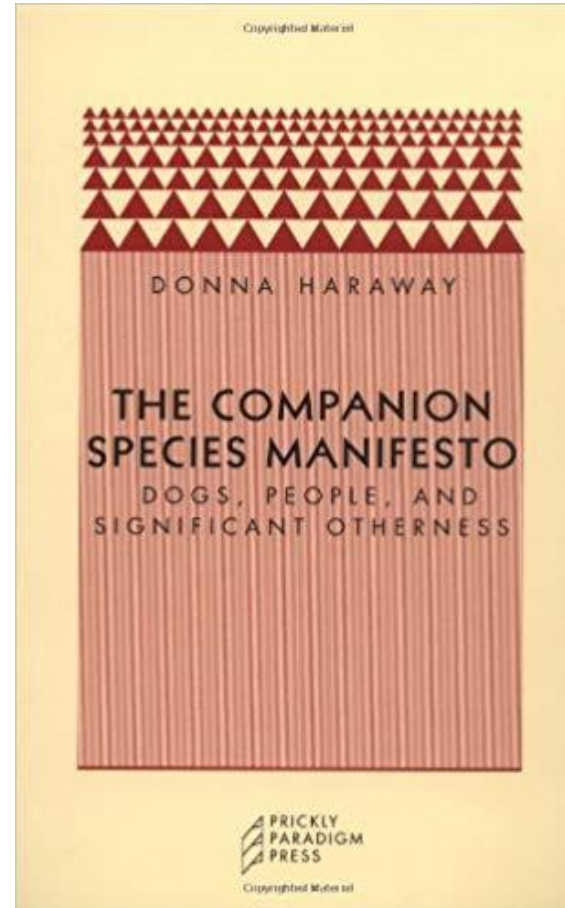
Val Plumwood: Australian philosopher

- feminist critique of Western philosophy
 - “Hyperseparation” (human-nature)
 - “Anthropocentrism”
 - “Standpoint of mastery”
 - Value binaries
 - *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993)
 - "Human vulnerability and the experience of being prey" (1995)
- Paradigm shift: fundamental animal-human interconnectedness



Donna Haraway

- “hybridity”: technology (cyborg) → nature
- *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003)
- *When Species Meet* (2008): humans and companion animals are caught up in “**co- constitutive relationships**” in which none of the partners pre-exist[s] the relating, and the relating is never done once and for all”
- *Staying with the Trouble* (2016)

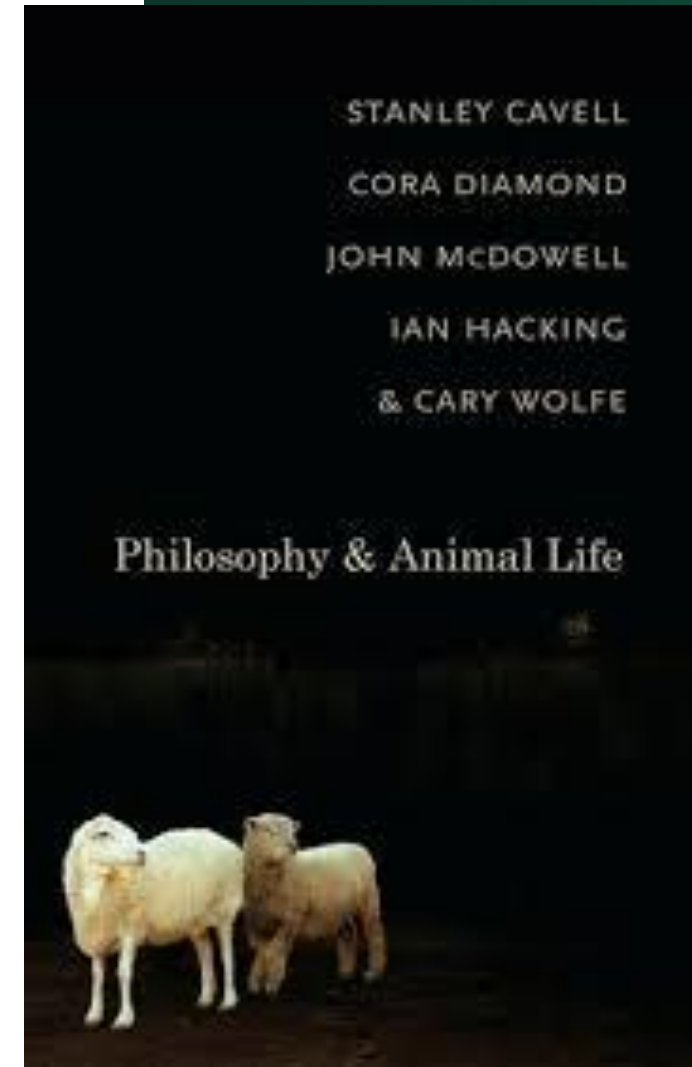


Cora Diamond

- “Injustice and Animals
- “The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy”

“the awareness we each have of being a living body, being ‘alive to the world’, carries with it *exposure* to the bodily sense of vulnerability to death, sheer animal vulnerability, the vulnerability we share with them. This vulnerability is capable of panicking us.”

“In the case of our relationship to animals, a sense of the difficulty of reality may involve not only a kind of horror [...] but also and equally a sense of astonishment and incomprehension that there should be beings so like us, so unlike us, so astonishingly capably of being companions of ours and so unfathomably distant”.



Posthuman Feminism

- 21st century
- *Alternative terms:* posthumanist feminism; feminist posthumanities; feminist posthumanism
- Feminism + posthumanism → draws on:
 1. critique of Western philosophical humanist tradition,
 - formulated in anti-humanist and deconstructionist philosophical traditions
 - formulated by feminist scholars, esp. ecofeminism, feminist animal studiesadding alternative: trying to move beyond this tradition
 2. Legacy of late 20th-C technological “Posthumanism”
 - Human-technology hybrids: Donna Haraway *A Manifesto for Cyborgs* (1985); N. Kathryn Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* (1999)
 - Popular posthumanism: monsters, cyborgs, hybrids,

Posthuman Feminism

Part of critical posthumanities

- Epistemology, ontology, ethics, politics
- Moving beyond binaries (human-animal; man-woman; culture-nature; mind-body; reason-affect; ...)
- By means of emphasis on: relationality, entanglement, shared materiality and embodiment

“people are entangled in co-constitutive relationships with nature and the environment, with other animals and organisms, with medicine and technology, with science and epistemic politics” (*Feminist Companion to the Posthumanities*, 1)

ROSI BRAIDOTTI

- Italian-Australian feminist philosopher and cultural theorist
- Professor of women's studies at Utrecht University
- *Patterns of Dissonance* (Polity Press, 1991)
- *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (Columbia University Press 1994)
- *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Polity Press, 2002)
- *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (Polity Press, 2007)
- *The Posthuman* (Polity Press, 2013)



“Four Theses on Posthuman feminism”

In Richard Grusin (ed). *Anthropocene Feminism* (2017)

1. feminism is not a humanism
2. Anthropos is off center
3. Zoe is the ruling principle
4. sexuality is a force beyond gender

Challenges & questions

- Humanities disciplines without the human?
- Feminism without gender?
- Thinking beyond the human?
- Envisioning more-than-human worlds?
- Relevance for literary studies?
- Do art and literature matter in the feminist posthumanities?

Sarah Hall: “Mrs Fox”

°1974

Novels:

Haweswater (2002), *The Electric Michelangelo* (2004), *The Carhullan Army* (2007), *How to Paint a Dead Man* (2009), *The Wolf Border* (2015)

Short Fiction:

- *The Beautiful Indifference* (2011)
- *Madame Zero* (2017)
- *Sudden Traveller* (2019)
- *Burntcoat* (2021)

“Mrs Fox” winner of BBC Short Story Award 2013

