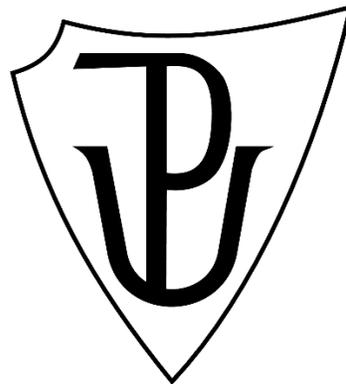


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The Evolution of Ecofeminist Discourse

Bachelor's thesis

Supervisor: Mgr. Tomáš Daněk, Ph.D.

Olomouc, 2019

Declaration

Hereby, I declare in lieu of oath that this bachelor thesis focused on the topic: The Evolution of Ecofeminist Discourse was written by myself under the professional supervision of Mgr. Tomáš Daněk, Ph.D. All information derived from the work of others has been acknowledged in the text and the list of references is given.

Olomouc, 5th May, 2019

.....

Signature

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Mgr. Tomáš Daněk, Ph.D. for his valuable advice, immense patience and food for thought not only during the formation of this thesis but throughout my whole Bachelor study. I am grateful to my family, boyfriend and close friends for their everyday unlimited support and positivity.

Furthermore, I would like to give thanks to all the inspiring people from social justice and environmental movement that I have met or read about in my life. I believe that their stories have shaped me to some extent and helped me to find the purpose that I feel in my life and whose actions keep me going, because I am convinced that without their positive impact on this planet I would be probably experiencing (not only) environmental grief in thinking about all the horrors that have been and are still happening to nature, animals, and people every single moment of my life.

Given the topic of this thesis, I would be ashamed to not express my gratitude to the nature and all its living beings, the animals, the plants, the forests, the rivers, the mountains, which remind me that life still can be beautiful and without them we would not be able to exist.

Since I left Bosnia and Hercegovina, where I had spent some time helping out in refugee camps, I have had this strong feeling that I often try to remind of myself, which applies not only for the refugee crisis, but to life on this planet and all the living creatures on it.

The fact that this world is so immensely unfair does not give us permission to close our eyes and not think and not strive for a better one - more fair and more just, where every single life matters and where we care about one another, no matter who we are and where we come from.

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI
Přírodovědecká fakulta
Akademický rok: 2017/2018

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

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Název tématu: **Proměna ekofeministického diskurzu**
Zadávající katedra: **Katedra rozvojových a environmentálních studií**

Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Bakalářská práce se bude zabývat ekofeminismem, tzn. feministickým proudem poukazujícím na analogii mezi útiskem žen a vykořisťováním přírody a snažícím se o znovuvytvoření rovnováhy mezi člověkem a přírodou. Práce představí ekofeministický diskurz nejvýznačnějších autorek a autorů a jejich myšlenky a poukáže na posun od prvotní ekofeministické literatury 60. a 70. let až do nynějška.

Rozsah grafických prací: **dle potřeby**
Rozsah pracovní zprávy: **10 - 15 tisíc slov**
Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Gaard, G. 1993. Ecofeminism: women, animals, nature. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Mathews, F. 2003. For love of matter: a contemporary panpsychism. Albany: State University of New York Press. Merchant, C. 1980. The death of nature: women, ecology, and the scientific revolution. New York: Harper & Row. Mies, M., Shiva, V. 2014. Ecofeminism. London: Zed Books. Plumwood, V. 1991. Nature, Self, and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy, and the Critique of Rationalism. Hypatia: Ecological Feminism 6(1), 3-27. Plumwood, V. 1993. Feminism and the Mastery of Nature. London: Routledge. Plumwood, V. 2002. Environmental culture: the ecological crisis of reason. New York: Routledge. Pratt, V., Howarth, J., Brady E. 2000. Environment and philosophy. London: Routledge. Salleh, A. 1984. Deeper than Deep Ecology. Environmental Ethics 6(4), 339-345 Shiva, V. 1998. Staying alive: women, ecology, and survival in India. New Delhi: Kali for Women.

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Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **10. dubna 2018**
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Abstract

This bachelor thesis focuses on ecofeminism, a diverse social, academic, activist and political movement that shows the parallels between the exploitation and oppression of nature and women and seeks for recreation of harmony between nature and humankind. Firstly, to put ecofeminism into context, this thesis summarizes history of feminism and then presents the main points and tenets of the ecofeminist theory and how is ecofeminism perceived by chosen ecofeminists, namely Carolyn Merchant, Karen Warren, Val Plumwood, and Vandana Shiva. Afterwards, the thesis focuses on presenting and summarizing the ideas and theory within specific topics that chosen ecofeminists focus on in their work and which, according to them, are the reason of the current environmental and social crisis. The topics discussed in the thesis are the conceptual connections between women and nature and the concepts falling within them – concept of the Other, oppressive conceptual framework, value dualism, use of controlling imagery that naturalizes women and feminizes nature. Critique of ecofeminism, also included in discussion, offers a critical reflection from outside the movement on the meaning and possible weaknesses of the ecofeminist movement.

Key words: ecofeminism, feminism, environmentalism, nature, woman, ethics, movement, Carolyn Merchant, Karen Warren, Val Plumwood, Vandana Shiva

Abstrakt

Bakalářská práce se zabývá ekofeminismem, různorodým sociálním, akademickým, aktivistickým a politickým hnutím, poukazujícím na analogii mezi útiskem a vykořisťováním přírody a žen, snažícím se o znovuvytvoření rovnováhy mezi člověkem a přírodou. Práce, pro zasazení ekofeminismu do kontextu, nejprve shrnuje historii feminismu a poté představuje základní prvky ekofeministické teorie a to, jak ekofeminismus vnímají vybrané ekofeministky Carolyn Merchant, Karen Warren, Val Plumwood a Vandana Shiva. Poté se práce zaměřuje na představení a shrnutí myšlenek a teorie v rámci specifických témat, kterými se vybrané ekofeministky zabývají, a která jsou dle nich důvodem dnešní environmentální a sociální krize. Probíranými tématy jsou konceptuální spojení mezi ženou a přírodou a pod ně spadající koncepty jinakosti, opresivního konceptuálního rámce, hodnotového dualismu a užívání kontrolujících představ a metafor zobrazujících a spojujících přírodu s femininními prvky a ženy s prvky přírody. Kritika ekofeminismu, obsažená v diskuzi a vycházející z vnějšku hnutí, nabízí kritické zamyšlení se nad významem ekofeminismu a nad jeho možnými nedostatky.

Klíčová slova: ekofeminismus, feminismus, environmentalismus, příroda, žena, etika, hnutí, Carolyn Merchant, Karen Warren, Val Plumwood, Vandana Shiva

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Introduction

Do we question enough the way we behave on our planet and the impact we have on it, on our Mother Nature? Is it appropriate to call it ours? And should we consider it as a Mother?

We see it and hear it on a daily basis. The nature is under an immense pressure and the planetary health is deteriorating at unprecedented rates, as well as the shrinking chances of our children and all non-human creatures to live a good life in the future. We hear about the omnipresent natural disasters, the droughts, the hurricanes, the climate change, the melting ice, the deforestation, the air pollution, the never-ending plastic pollution, the way we are driving hundreds of species on the edge of extinction due to our actions such as overhunting, overfishing, and overconsumption (we could go on as this list is not exhaustive). If everyone's lifestyle was such like of a population of US, we would need approximately 4.1 planets to sustain both our needs and the survival of them, but we do not have those three spare planets (2012, De Chant).

Even now, more than seventy years after World War II, in large scale wars and conflicts people are still losing their lives and homes, therefore are forced to move to another place where they are mostly not welcomed. By selling weapons and supporting oppressive regimes, such conflict zones and dreadful conditions of innocent people are being perpetuated and maintained by the greed for sustaining one's geopolitical and economic powers, therefore having access to important natural resources, even though it means to intentionally participate on the largest humanitarian crisis in the world like in case of the war in Yemen since 2015. In the 21st century, almost half of human population is still going to bed hungry or malnourished, as food and water security is under threat, and in the parts where the conditions are deteriorating the most, the world population is still growing. As Oxfam's last report (2019) confirms, the rich continue to get richer, and the poor poorer. This is slowing us down from overcoming poverty and achieving a desperately needed global gender equality. Due to gender inequalities, the opportunities for women in the private, economic and educational sphere are still being immensely inaccessible in most parts of the world, therefore their future continues to be compromised, leaving them often with an increasing burden of climate change-induced consequences. Society and mostly the people from the Global North, do (un)knowingly participate on everyday modern

slavery and exploitation (of other humans and also non-human living beings), not only when buying imported cheap products but when participating in the form of capitalism as we know it, and which is now most likely impossible to escape from.

Even though we have seen an increased awareness about many of these problems, neither most of the people who have the power and possible opportunity, nor the industry is responding to it as quickly and on a scale as such alarming situation we are now experiencing requires. So, is there any way how to solve any of these issues in our globalized world? If so, do we have enough time for solving the problems of such enormous complexity? The report called “Global Warming of 1.5°C” published by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018) and a young activist Greta Thunberg leading the school strike movement try to persuade the world and mostly the politicians about the urgency of an overall and massive change of our economy and everyday habits and behaviour. We have 12 years to cut our emissions and transfer our system to be carbon neutral by 2050 to avoid or lessen the consequences that would lead to a catastrophic climate change crisis which would have an impact on everyone and everything, but on the poorest and most vulnerable in society, particularly in developing countries, the most.

It seems that apart from the much-needed policy and behaviour changes, we need also a change of a perspective and an approach that we have to life in general, the meaning of it, and to everything else that surrounds us and which we are part of since the beginning of our existence, even though we have mastered a very comfortable separation from it. To do so, we must perhaps finally acknowledge and internalize the foundations of several social justice and environmental movements that have criticized the current system of society, economy, and behaviour to nature and to one another. What if we looked beyond the paradigm in which it is so easy to say, “the world has always been unfair, and inequality is inevitable” and sought for the reason of it all – the oppression and domination of subordinated Others, would something change? An overview of one of such movements – ecofeminism – seeking for recreation of harmony between nature and humankind, referring to the interconnections of the twin domination – of nature and women – and challenging the gendered social and economic institutions, is presented in this thesis.

Objectives and Methodology

In this thesis, the aim is to present ecofeminism, a diverse movement addressing the parallels between the exploitation and oppression of nature and women and which seeks for recreation of harmony between nature and humankind.

The objectives are to put ecofeminism into the context of feminism, to provide an overview of some of the scholarly ecofeminist literature and to outline and explain some of the tenets and main thoughts of ecofeminist theory, mainly the connections between women and nature.

The thesis consists of three parts. In the first one, I outline the history of feminism, i. e. all four waves of feminism and make the link of ecofeminism with third wave feminism based on the concept of intersectionality. In the second part, I focus on introducing ecofeminism, its roots and origins, and definition from outside of the movement, and afterwards, I provide an overview of how the chosen ecofeminists—Warren , Merchant, Plumwood, and Shiva—understand the movement and what they focus on. Boundary conditions, forms of ecofeminism (liberal, cultural, social, and socialist) and an example of an Indian ecofeminist movement Chipko are presented in this part as well. The third part of this thesis presents and summarizes the conceptual connections between women and nature and their twin domination, arguing that such connections have led to the way we value and treat the Others and to the environmental and social crisis this world is now experiencing.

I shall start with an explanation of the concept of “the Other” and its structure. After, I will focus on the oppressive conceptual framework and its features – value hierarchical thinking, logic of domination, “power-over power”, privilege, and value dualism. The latter feature will be described in a separate chapter as it is important and needs an in-depth explanation. I will then proceed to explaining the (ab)use of controlling imagery and how different metaphors of women and nature were applied in different times for different purposes, but always for justification and legitimization of one’s domination over the Other. Focus will be brought on the use of imagery in separate chapters, “Female as Nature and Animal” and “Nature as Female”, concerned with women’s naturalization and nature’s feminization.

The chapter called “Discussion” will offer a critical reflection from outside the movement on the meaning and possible weaknesses of the ecofeminist movement, followed by the chapter “Conclusion”.

Since the ecofeminist movement is heterogenous, the literature is rich, and several topics differ profoundly, it is not possible to do a full review of it without compromising the added value and excessive generalization. I do not attempt a comprehensive integration of all the important literature and authors here. The scope of this thesis does not allow me to provide an in-depth analysis and a presentation of many ecofeminists; therefore, I have chosen to focus on the scholarly work of only four well-known authors in the movement associated with social and socialist form of ecofeminism.

This thesis analyses and summarizes their ecofeminist discourse using a literature review of books and essays written by chosen ecofeminists and published in journals discussing ecology, environmentalism, and feminism. The books and essays of chosen ecofeminists that I have analysed are *“The Death of Nature”*, *“Earthcare”*, *“Radical Ecology”* (in case of Carolyn Merchant); *“Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Forest”*, *“Staying Alive”* (in case of Vandana Shiva); *“Feminism and the Mastery of Nature”*, *“Androcentrism and Anthropocentrism”* (in case of Val Plumwood); and *“Ecological Feminist Philosophies”*, *“The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism”*, *“Ecofeminist Philosophy”*, *“Response to My Critics”* (in case of Karen Warren).

Other resources used in the chapters “Linking Ecofeminism with Feminism” and “Introduction to Ecofeminism” are scholarly books, dictionaries, and journal articles concerned about feminism, gender, critical theories, ecofeminism, environmental, and ecological discourses. The only exceptions are the information about Green Belt Movement retrieved from their website, a list of characteristic features of fourth wave feminism (due to the online character of fourth wave feminism) retrieved from an online American women's magazine Bustle, a list of years in which suffrage was granted to women across the world retrieved from Inter-Parliamentary Union's website, and an excerpt from a podcast with Vandana Shiva.

While preparing for this thesis, I have considered two different options of presenting my findings. First, to bring the focus on each of the authors and their writings alone, and to present

their thoughts in separate chapters. Second, to focus on the topics that are being discussed amongst the chosen authors and to present their thoughts within these topics alone, in order to see whether they agree, differ or complement each other; although, I have expected the latter, because they all are being associated with the social and socialist form of ecofeminism; therefore, their fundamental and key positions will not differ that much. After consultation with my supervisor, I have decided to merge both options, since it has seemed as a more comprehensive and coherent way to present and process the information – both for myself and the reader.

1 Linking Ecofeminism with Feminism

First of all, to understand ecofeminism (whose roots are in the wide variety of feminisms) and the background of it, we must understand the concept and history of feminism. Simply, feminism refers to a principle that women and men should be treated equally and to an advocacy of women's rights (Griffin, 2017, p. 76). Buchanan describes it as a social movement addressing the inequality of the sexes and "one of the most important social movements of the past two centuries and certainly the social movement which has brought about the most enduring and progressive transformation of human society on a global scale" (2010, p. 166).

When talking about the history of feminism in the context of the Global North, the history of feminism can be divided into parts, i.e. waves of feminism, each signalling a different period in the struggle against inequality. I have put stress on describing third wave feminism more in depth because ecofeminism is often being referred to it .

1.1 First Wave Feminism

The first wave feminism, emerging with Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and Women's Suffrage¹ movements of early 1800s, was a response to a shared exclusion from political, social, and economic life, with the main objective to extend the social contract to the stage that it would include political citizenship for women. Women also struggled against other injustices, e.g. not being able to own a property (they were dependent on their husbands to be able to inherit one), not having full rights over their own bodies (they were not protected by law against sexual violence), and not being able to apply for a job in some fields, being paid less than men or not having any option of maternity leave (Buchanan, 2010, p. 167). Universal suffrage, however became reality for women across the world after a long time if we consider that women were granted to vote quite recently, e.g. in 1918 in the United Kingdom and Germany, 1920 in Czechoslovakia or US, 1940 in France, 1971 in Switzerland,

¹ Suffrage means the right to vote.

1980 in Iraq, although it was not as universal as it sounds – there were still obstacles not allowing voting to people of colour in the UK or the US, indigenous people in Australia, etc. (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019).

1.2 Second Wave Feminism

Next generation, the second wave feminism was a period of feminist activity between 1965 and 1985 that focused on broader social relations directly affecting women, e.g. mothering, sexual and domestic violence, domestic labour, and abortion; however, it had still included the political emancipation elements (Griffin, 2017, pp. 148-149). The broad spectrum of interest of second wave feminism (and of the subsequent waves) indicates the main difference between the waves, i.e. that first wave was mostly a monolithic movement with goals and aims clearly set, whereas the subsequent waves were becoming increasingly heterogeneous in their objectives as well as discourses.

Simone de Beauvoir, a French existentialist and feminist philosopher, was an important figure for the rise of second wave feminism. Her famous phrase “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” (1956, p. 273) appeared in *The Second Sex*², where she discussed and investigated popular definitions of femininity and argued that femininity as such is not inherent, but a socially constructed so to keep men in dominant position. The second wave feminists stressed the disruption of gender stereotypes, and their emphasis on feminism being important to men as well to women became essential. This period was rich on strikes, street marches and demonstrations, and feminist journals were established (Gillis et al., 2004, p. 1) (Griffin, 2017, pp. 148-149). Also, the famous slogan “the personal is political” was coined, referring to the fact that issues that were ascribed to having an individual character were actually systematic and political, and the expression stressed the “impact of sexism and patriarchy on every aspect of women’s private lives” (Munro, 2013, p. 2).

² *The Second Sex* was first published in 1949, only five years after women in France had been granted the right to vote.

1.3 Third Wave Feminism

First and second wave feminism were criticised predominantly by ethnically and racially diverse or lesbian women for neglecting the issues of race, class and sexual orientation, which became essential for the development of the next generation - third wave feminism, which developed in the early 1990s. It is described as “a movement for the renewal of feminism’s original project - i.e. equality between the sexes - expanded to incorporate those women, particularly women of colour, and women from the Third World, who felt excluded from Second Wave feminism” (Buchanan, 2010, p. 469). This wave is presented mostly by young women who reject the paradigm in which they are seen and present themselves as victims of gender structures and regimes (Griffin, 2017, pp. 163-4). Snyder concludes that third wave feminism “replaces attempts at unity with a dynamic and welcoming politics of coalition” (2000, p. 176).

Third wave feminism was heavily influenced by queer theory and the concept of intersectionality. Queer theory, which emerged in the early 1990s and is associated with Judith Butler or Michael Foucault, rejects “sex and gender binarism, that is the division of people into female and male based on their biological sex, in favour of a recognition of the fluidity and ambiguity of both gender identity and sexuality” (Griffin, 2017, p. 139). Butler’s critique of the binary distinction has been presented in the argument that both sex and gender are socially constructed and there exist more than two gender identities (Butler, 1990).

During this period, the term intersectionality, coined and promoted by Black American legal scholar and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, has emerged as a response to the inability of both feminist and anti-racist movement to acknowledge and act upon the specificity of the particular discrimination that black women are facing, as both movements rather tend “to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139). She argued that this tendency is perpetuated by a single-axis framework which distorts the multidimensionality of Black women’s experiences. The concept of intersectionality has developed into an analytical tool and theory with much diversity, arguing that there are no homogeneous groups of women or men and that their experiences differ and vary based on their race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc. It is crucial to recognize and cross-

examine the complexity of discrimination and identity while describing the ways in which forms of oppression intersect (Kings, 2017, pp. 63-67) (Griffin, 2017, pp. 101-102).

1.3.1 Ecofeminism as a Third Wave Feminism

The linking of ecofeminism with third wave feminism can be partially based on the concept of intersectionality. As Kings notes, “ecofeminism was using the ideas of intersectionality long before it came to be defined as intersectionality” (2017, p. 72). Ecofeminism as an academic area is intersectional because it is concerned with understanding the interconnections between the domination of women and nature and “takes into account the interconnected nature of social categories such as gender, race, class, sexuality, caste, species, religion, nationality, dis/ability, and issues such as colonialism” (2010, p. 71).

From the ecofeminist movement’s perspective, it is for example the academic and activist Ynestra King, professor Noël Sturgeon or ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood, who explicitly made the link between ecofeminism and third wave feminism; although, they take a different position. As Moore indicates, Plumwood sees ecofeminism as emergent from the second wave that contributes to the feminist theory; on the other hand, both King and Sturgeon understand ecofeminism as an activist movement and “as a third wave of activism, which is analogous to the first and second waves, but which implicitly goes beyond these waves” (2004, p. 231). However, since the main topic of ecofeminism lies in the link between nature and women, therefore is often critiqued of being essentialist, Moore adds that some feminists view ecofeminism as almost anachronistic and incompatible with the third wave (2004, p. 229).

1.4 Fourth Wave Feminism

Nowadays there is an ongoing debate whether a new, fourth wave of feminism, has evolved. If yes, it is a wave of which definition is still to some extent unclear, and which has the specificity of having predominantly an online character, as “the internet has created a ‘call-out’ culture, in which sexism³ or misogyny⁴ can be ‘called out’ and challenged” (Munro, 2013, p. 23). Internet

³ Sexism is defined as “*denigrating attitudes and behaviours towards a person on the basis of their sex which draw on conventional gender stereotypes*” (Griffin, 2017, p. 152).

⁴ Misogyny means a dislike or ingrained prejudice against women.

has thus shaped a worldwide community of feminists who meet there and use it for discussion, activism and campaigning, using platforms and their tools (e.g. hashtags) such as Facebook, Twitter and online blogs. Munro also adds that the online character of the fourth wave causes a growing gap between older feminist activists or researchers (who are not so engaged in the 'online feminism') and the fourth wave feminists, and also the possibility that academic feminism is failing in the examination of the development of this new wave (2013, p. 24). According to Sollee (2015), the fourth wave feminism has such characteristics - it is queer, sex-positive, trans-inclusive, anti-misandrist⁵, body positive and digitally-driven.

⁵ Anti-misandrist means against the dislike or ingrained prejudices of the male sex.

2 Introduction to Ecofeminism

2.1 The Origins of Ecofeminism

The roots of the ecofeminist movement can be traced to social change and ecological movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Gaard, 1993, p. 251). More precisely according to Phillips and Rumens (2015, p. 3), the movement “arose in the late 1970s to early 1980s from roots in activist social movement, the anti-nuclear and peace movements in particular, and from a growing sense of discontent with what was perceived as gender blindness and sexism in the environmental groups.” Also, some say that Rachel Carson, the author of the famous book *Silent Spring* (1962), influenced both the feminist and ecological movement and thus gave rise to the formation of the new one, therefore has been called as an “ecofeminist forerunner” (Gaard, 1993, p. 251).

The term ecofeminism⁶ itself was mentioned for the first time by French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 in her book *Le féminisme ou la mort* (*Feminism or Death*), where she argued that women need to lead an ecological revolution and that the masculinist order is threatening the humanity (due to its effects such as overpopulation, as an exploitation of female reproductive power, and depletion of resources, as an exploitation of nature), and that such revolution would entail new relations between women, man, and nature (Merchant, 1996, p. 5). However, Ariel Salleh (1991, p. 206) and Greta Gaard (1993, p. 252) see the birth of ecofeminism rather as an internationally observable spontaneous phenomenon across several continents, not necessarily as a follow-up to d'Eaubonne's work, as her book was translated to English language 15 years after 1974. Also, in 1974 a conference on the topic of “Women and the Environment” concerning the parallels between the oppression of women and nature was held in Berkeley for the first time (Gaard, 1993).

⁶ in French *l'eco-féminisme*

2.2 Defining Ecofeminism

There is no universally agreed definition on what is ecofeminism; however, it is being perceived as a movement that shows and discusses the parallels between the exploitation and oppression of nature and women and seeks for recreation of harmony between nature and humankind. It has been described as an ideological position and political practice (Griffin, 2017), a continually developing social, political, activist, theoretical and academical movement (Phillips and Rums, 2015), or “an open, flexible political and ethical alliance that does not invoke any shared, singular theoretical framework or epistemology” (Carlassare, 2000, p. 90).

Eaton and Lorentzen (1956, p. 5) explain that ecofeminism is heterogeneous, as it is rooted in the heterogenous and pluralist ecological and feminist thinking. Although the ecofeminist positions within the movement vary, they all clearly agree on one thing, which is that the connection between the twin dominations – of women and of nature – does exist and that “ecofeminism is united by the commitment of its proponents to planetary survival and ending oppression” (Carlassare, 2000, p. 9).

Eaton and Lorentzen (1956, pp. 2-3) define three central claims of ecofeminism – empirical, conceptual and epistemological:

1. The empirical claim states that women are disproportionately affected by the environmental problems and degradation in most parts of the world, leaving them with an increased burden as family sustenance and providing fuel and water are predominantly female responsibilities, based on unfair gendered labour division. This claim examines the restrictions (existing socio-political and economic structures) that drive women to poverty, ecological deprivation and economic powerlessness.
2. The conceptual claim examines the connections – conceptual and symbolical – between women and nature in Euro-western worldviews, in which the world is divided both hierarchically and dualistically which leads to the justification of male power over both women and nature.

3. The epistemological claim states that those women, whose lived experiences cause them to have different connection and closeness to nature than man (which makes them epistemologically privileged in having greater knowledge on some topics concerning nature and environment), “are in a good position to aid in creating new practical and intellectual ecological paradigms (...), and are best equipped to address local environmental problems” (1956, p. 3).

According to Dryzek (1997 cited in Tuler, 1998, pp. 6), who developed a taxonomy for organizing conflicting environmental discourses, ecofeminism⁷ is a discourse of green radicalism, i.e. an imaginative and radical discourse that rejects the basic structure of industrial society. In Wissenburg’s (1997) taxonomy of green ideas, where he offered a systematic analytical approach for classification of green ideas⁸, ecofeminism is presented as an ecological political theory, with such characteristics or approaches to problems and possible solutions:

- *The scale of problems*: ecological crisis threatens the survival of all life on this planet
- *Relevance of society*: human actions matter both morally and practically
- *Relative importance*: the fate of nature and humankind is an overall concern of all
- *Quantitative development*: decrease or zero growth of population
- *Qualitative development*: shrinking of economic growth or zero growth
- *Political theory*: feminism

⁷ As well as deep ecology, bioregionalism, social ecology, and environmental justice (Dryzek, 1997 cited in Tuler, 1998, p. 66).

⁸ He uses the expression “green ideas” rather than calling them theories.

2.3 Comprehension of the Ecofeminist Movement by Ecofeminists Themselves

“You are not Atlas carrying the world on your shoulder. It is good to remember that the planet is carrying you.”

— Vandana Shiva

In this part, I will shortly present the ecofeminists that I have chosen for this thesis. Afterwards, I will focus on how they see the movement itself, what they focus on in their discourse and why it is important.

2.3.1 Karen Warren

Karen Warren, born 1947, is an American professor, philosopher and writer with a focus on social and environmental justice movements and feminist issues, whose work has been crucial for setting the foundations of ecofeminist thought.

Warren understands ecofeminism as an umbrella term for a variety of different positions concerned with interconnections amongst women, other human Others, and nature (2000, p. xiv). Such positions are rooted in different practices and philosophies of feminism and of understanding of the nature and ways how to solve the environmental crisis (1996, p. x). Ecofeminism offers a “framework for a distinctively feminist and environmental ethic” (1990, p. 189).

The version of ecofeminism that she defends is such that acknowledges the “interconnections—historical, empirical, socioeconomic, conceptual, linguistic, symbolic and literary, spiritual and religious, epistemological, metaphysical, political, ethical, and theoretical — among the dominations⁹ of women, other subordinated humans, nonhuman animals, and nature” (2002, p. 39) while stating that their understanding is necessary and crucial for both – feminism and environmentalism. She also puts stress on the incompleteness and inadequateness of such ethics and theories from both environmental and feminist movements that fail to acknowledge such dominations (1990, p. 173). She argues that “feminism must embrace ecological feminism if it is to end the domination of women because the domination of women is tied conceptually and

⁹ Later she lists the “-isms of domination” that share commonalities, e. g. “sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, colonialism, ethnocentrism, speciesism, naturism and the unjustified domination of nonhuman nature” (2002, pp. 39-40).

historically to the domination of nature". The same applies for environmental ethic, only vice versa (1990, pp. 187-188).

2.3.1.1 The Boundary Conditions of Ecofeminism

In her article "The power and the promise of ecological feminism" (1990, pp. 186-187), she came up with the boundary conditions of ecofeminism that demarcate the minimal limits of ecofeminism, which needs to:

1. *"be quintessentially anti-naturist"* (i.e. rejects any reflections of logic, values or attitude of domination in the way humans behave or think about non-human nature)
2. *"be a contextualist ethic"* (i.e. does not perceive ethics as only matter of predetermined rights, rules and principles, but understands ethics also as evolving from defining relationships)
3. *"be structurally pluralistic"* (i.e. assumes and accepts the differences among humans, between humans and nonhuman nature)
4. *"reconceive theory as theory in process"* (i.e. acknowledges the fact that with time some historical and material realities change is inevitable as well as the volume of knowledge grows)
5. *"be inclusivist"* (i.e. acknowledges the diversity of voices of women and other oppressed persons from different background such as indigenous peoples, the women who critique environmental movement and ethics for not addressing properly the issues of black community, etc., and includes them into redefining new ethics)
6. *"make no attempt to provide an objective point of view"* (i.e. recognizes the twin dominations of women and nature as a problem of a social matter that stems from very concrete circumstances within the oppressive patriarchal conceptual frameworks)
7. *"make central point for values of care, love, friendship, trust, and appropriate reciprocity values"*
8. *"involve a reconception of what it means to be human and of what human ethical behaviour consists"* (i.e. rejects abstract individualism, the human 'nature' has been shaped and affected by many contexts and relationships with our environment)

2.3.2 Carolyn Merchant

Carolyn Merchant, born 1936, is an American professor of environmental history, philosophy and ethics, mostly known for her book *Death of Nature* (1980), an excellent examination of the connections and relationships between the Scientific Revolution, nature, culture, humans and ecology, explaining how the Western mechanistic worldview of modern science has led to justification and rationalization of subordination and exploitation of nature and women.

Merchant (1996, pp. XI-XII) offers “an ethic of partnership between people and nature that could lead to a sustainable world in the next century”, a non-gendered ethic of Earth care that does not assume nature as female and does not see women as caretakers, even though some of its standpoints are based on the very gendered experiences of women and cultural connections to the Earth. Her idea of a partnership ethic consists of treating all humans as equals and humans would also be equal partners with nonhuman nature. Everyone would acknowledge the special needs that everyone else on this planet (including nature and the planet itself, of course) has – the need to grow, develop, reproduce, evolve.

In her work, she examines the theoretical, historical and practical convolutions that connect the symbols and the way nature is constructed and gendered as female (sometimes positively or negatively), with the women’s culture role in society as caretakers and nurturers, and their effort to save and preserve nature from devastation.

She argues that the state of nature that can be described as ‘sickness’, caused by pollution, pesticides, photochemical smog, etc. which “has been supported since the Scientific Revolution and the ideology of ‘power over nature’ and a methodology of ‘penetration’ into her inner-most secrets” (1980, p. 295), can be restored only by changing our mainstream values and economic priorities, by turning the world upside down.

2.3.2.1 Forms of Ecofeminism

As Warren notes, “ecological feminism has roots in the wide variety of feminisms (e.g., liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, radical and socialist feminisms, black and Third World feminisms)” (1997, p. 4); therefore, it is logical that ecofeminism has various forms too.

Merchant recognizes that ecofeminism, as well as feminism, has also liberal, cultural, social, socialist form and that each one of them has contributed to ecofeminism differently. Now, I will shortly describe one of them; however, I will focus more on the social and socialist form, which the chosen ecofeminists for this thesis could be associated with the most (1996, pp. 7-18) (2005, pp. 200-211).

The liberal form of ecofeminism seeks to reform environmentalism by remaking laws and regulations within existing structure to change the relations between humans and nature. The natural resource boundaries will be solved with better science, conservation and laws – fields where women can work in, given the equal educational opportunities.

Cultural form examines environmental problems by criticizing the patriarchal system, while offering alternatives for liberation of both nature and women through direct political action. The source of empowerment of cultural ecofeminists is the celebration of the positive connection and relationship between women and nature through reviving of ancient rituals that focus on our consciousness in relation to nature, worship of female goddesses, female reproductive and menstrual cycle, spirituality, intuition, witchcraft, etc. This form of ecofeminism is widely criticised by the feminist movement for perpetuating essentialist assumptions that one could understand that what is done by men is bad, whereas what is done by women is good, based on the special relationship between them.

Social and socialist ecofeminism examines the problems by criticizing capitalism and capitalist patriarchy, while arguing that market economy needs a total change and restructuralization to liberate and not exploit both women and nature as resources.

Social ecofeminism draws from the social ecology of Murray Bookchin and does not associate itself with the ideas of cultural feminism regarding the special essentialist relationship that women and nature have; therefore, they do not approve the worship of goddesses and all the other related traditions that perpetuate the essentialist notion of such relationship. Overturning the economic and social hierarchies that shape everything in our lives into a market society is needed, and life in decentralized communities is wanted. They acknowledge the obvious biological differences between male and female sex and believe that “both women and men are capable of an ecological ethic based on caring” (2005, p. 206). They reject any sort of determinism and advocate for freedom – reproductive, intellectual, sensual and moral of all women. Social ecofeminist tenets are based on the fundamental critique of hierarchy, dualism, logic of domination, i.e. the characteristics of an oppressive conceptual framework.

Socialist ecofeminism draws from socialist ecology, sees nonhuman nature as the material basis of all life, and believes that nature and human nature are both social and historical constructs. It questions the consequences of colonialism and capitalism, which affected and disrupted the production in traditional societies, and the consequences of the technological and chemical interventions on the traditional methods of biological reproduction and on polluted nature. Whereas the premise of capitalism is an economic growth and competition, which is incompatible with sustainability (both nature and waste are perceived as externalities in profit maximization), socialism is, on the other hand, based on needs of society. As Merchant notes, “because growth is not necessary to the economy, socialism has the potential for sustainable relations with nature”. She is aware of the former socialist regimes which were oriented on economic growth and definitely were not sustainable; however, she believes that “new forms of socialist ecology could bring human production and reproduction into balance with nature’s production and reproduction” and the economies of both nature and humans could be in a partnership relation, where priorities of capitalism would be reversed in favour of sustainable forms of reproduction and ecology (2005, p. 210).

2.3.3 Val Plumwood

Val Plumwood, who was born in 1939 and died in 2008, was an Australian environmental philosopher and teacher, whose book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993), proving that the feminist critique of dominant forms of rationality can and should incorporate theories of gender, race, class and nature oppression, has become a classic in the ecofeminist movement.

Plumwood's reaction to the stereotypization of ecofeminism being weak and exclusively linked to cultural feminism was setting her objectives to develop "an environmental feminism that can be termed a critical ecological feminism", so to increase the critical and analytical force of such theory and "make it a powerful political tool" (1993, p. 1). She believed that the feminist theory can enrich and enhance the mainstream environmental philosophy, ethics and radical green thought, which are often embedded and continue to operate within the masculinist oppressive framework, creating and supporting biased damaging assumptions from rationalist tradition, inimical to both women and nature.

In her work, she radically critiqued the traditional Western concept of nature and provided a rich historical analysis of how the division between humanity and nature has been shaped, refined and constructed into the value-hierarchical and value-dualism system of the opposition between reason and nature. She focused on oppression and the concept of the Other, and the parallels between "centrisms" such as androcentrism, ethnocentrism, Eurocentrism, heterocentrism, anthropocentrism, etc. She argued that the anthropocentric framework ignores the other's needs and limits for its own aggressive self-maximization. Such needs and limits are being perceived from the point of view of humans and their own needs. This understanding of nature, its homogenization and treatment as it is replaceable, leads to treating nature "as an infinitely manipulable and inexhaustible resource" (1997, p. 344).

According to Plumwood, given the current culture and environmental crisis we are now experiencing, the creation of a new (ecofeminist) theory is rather a luxury but it is needed if we want to understand the flaws that are rooted in the Western and now global story. With such understanding, we can avoid "remain trapped within it or settle for one of its new versions" (1993, p. 6). Our future is predetermined whether we will be able to move on beyond the paradigm of

dualism, and to build a truly democratic and ecological culture (1993). That is what makes acknowledging and understanding the ideas discussed by critical ecological feminism crucial.

2.3.4 Vandana Shiva

Vandana Shiva, born 1952, is an Indian environmental and social feminist activist and writer, a very visible, influential and engaged postcolonial critic of capitalist economy, and a food sovereignty, biodiversity and anti-globalization advocate. Shiva puts stress in most of her writings on pointing out the inequalities and injustice in contemporary globalized society while offering an insight from the Global South, especially the experiences and rich knowledge of rural Indian women (and marginalized peasants in general), who are still deeply fixed and dependent on nature and who experience everyday struggle for the protection of the nature they are dependent on.

Shiva raises the issues of complex connections among economy, nature and culture, with an emphasis on the consequences of a capitalistic patriarchy as an expression of the reductionist and mechanistic science and the domination and mastery of nature. She stresses that we cannot continue to live and understand our role on planet as up to the present, as such understanding is deeply imbedded “in the old paradigm of capitalist patriarchy – based on a mechanistic worldview, an industrial, capital-centred competitive economy, and a culture of dominance, violence, war and ecological and human irresponsibility” (2014, p. xix). If we do so, the problems regarding climate change, extinction of species, or collapse of economy will worsen even more and our society will become even more unequal.

She sees it as we are in a vicious circle with an “epic contest between the rights of Mother Earth and the rights of corporations and militarized states (...), between the laws of Gaia¹⁰ and the laws of the market and warfare (...), between war against Planet Earth and peace with it” (2014,

¹⁰ The term Gaia can be used and understood in many ways. For example, as an effort of many ecofeminists (e.g. Charlene Spretnak) to create a new earth-based form of spirituality with Gaia as an earth-mother, rooted in ancient traditions where both earth and female deities were worshipped. After such recognition of Gaia, nature and women would be liberated and the patriarchal construction of women as ‘Other’ and men as ‘godlike’ and inherently superior would be removed. (Spretnak, 1986 cited in Merchant, 1996, pp. 3-4). Or second, as the Gaia hypothesis, called after the Greek goddess who gave birth to the gods, a scientific theory formulated by James Lovelock, stating *that* “Earth acts like a living organism, with its living and nonliving components acting in concert to create an environment that continues to be suitable for life” (Lovelock, 2003, p. 569).

p. xix). To make the shift, we need to understand that we are not nature's masters and owners, but we are part of nature, and to acknowledge nature's rights and "the intrinsic value of all her species and living processes" is crucial for the future of the planet Earth and everything existing on it (2014, p. xx).

During a podcast interview (Bradley, 2014), Shiva offered a different perception of ecofeminism, according to which "ecofeminism is not an -ism, it is merely a window to see the world differently, and that seeing the world differently has become vital because the capitalist patriarchy – based on erasing the contributions of nature, women, and people – is creating a world of fear. The fear of scarcity, the fear of the other."

2.3.4.1 Local Ecofeminist Movements

Also, when talking about Vandana Shiva and ecofeminism, we must (at least shortly) mention ecofeminist local movements, especially the Chipko movement, that she has been part of in the 1970s. Chipko is probably the most famous ecofeminist movement of courageous Indian peasant women of the Garhwal region Uttar Pradesh, well-known for its specific technique – embracing living trees. Chipko has emerged as a response to the start of a large-scale deforestation - destruction of India's forest ecosystems and a following displacement of women whose lives (and their families' lives too) were closely dependent on inputs of such environment. Commercial exploitation and reductionist forestry of these Himalayan forests were the consequences of the approach that colonizers had brought there. Chipko women symbolise a non-violent struggle for salvation of the forest, which in Indian Hindu cosmology plays a very important role (Shiva, 1988). The knowledge on forest and nature that Shiva gained in Chipko has inspired her to action. In 1987, she founded another ecofeminist movement called Navdanya. This movement focuses on promoting biodiversity conservation and organic farming by establishing local seed banks, with a clearly set message – that "conservation of biodiversity is (...) the answer to the food and nutrition crisis" (Shiva, 2013, p. 274).

There exist many other successful ecofeminist movements, for example the Green Belt Movement, which is primarily a tree-planting women initiative founded in 1977 in Kenya as a response to food insecurity, drying up streams and lack of firewood (Green Belt Movement, 2019).

3 Connections Between Women, Nature and Animals

Based on the information presented in previous chapter which summarizes and focuses on the main points that are being discussed in the work of Warren, Plumwood, Merchant, and Shiva, I will now focus on some of the connections between women and nature and the twin domination of them, which were identified within the ecofeminist movement and which I consider important for understanding at least some part of the ecofeminist theory.

As most of these topics are interconnected and mutually affected and it would be difficult to read it in one chaotic text, I have decided to divide them into groups for the purpose of more clear and easy understanding; however, some points will be appearing in many sub-chapters as they are interconnected.

As Warren (1996) proposes, there are eight sorts of connections – historical and casual, conceptual, empirical and experiential, epistemological, symbolic and ethical. I shall concentrate on the conceptual connections which are the most crucial as they result into the others.

3.1 Conceptual Connections – the Master Story

Throughout history, there have been established structures and forms which justify oppression that have shaped the relations we have with one another (between men, women, people of colour, nonhuman nature) and which are still present, but their historical character has normalised and internalized them into our lives so deeply; therefore, we do not usually question them. Ecofeminist theory draws from a feminism's social analysis of domination and says that such structures (presented and shaped by interconnected logic of power, domination, dualistic and value-hierarchical thinking, the concept of Other, and the oppressive conceptual framework) are the very reason of the unequal and unsustainable state of world we are now at.

3.1.1 The Concept of “the Other”

To explain to whom is being referred to as the Other, we need to understand that Othering¹¹ is “a process whereby individuals and groups are treated and marked as different and inferior from the dominant social group” (Griffin, 2017, p. 128).

According to Plumwood, the centric structure of Otherization consists of radical exclusion, homogenization, denial and backgrounding, incorporation, and instrumentalism of the otherized groups (which are characteristics of dualism). Such structure “provides a form of rationality, a framework for beliefs, which naturalizes and justifies a certain sort of self-imposition and dispossession”. This structure justifies superiority, conquering and mastering the Other within a framework of moral and cultural blindness (1997, pp. 343-344).

For Warren, the ecofeminism’s central mission from a Western perspective symbolizes “the exploration of conceptual aspects of women - other human Others - nature interconnections”. Such otherization is happening within the patriarchal and other oppressive conceptual frameworks, systems, and institutions and those who have become unjustifiably dominated and subordinated Others are in the Western and Euro-American worldviews both “human Others and earth Others,” i.e. women, non-white people, children, the poor, animals, forests, land, etc. (2000, p. xiv) (2002, p. 42).

3.1.2 The Oppressive Conceptual Framework

The conceptual connections between the subordination of women and nature are embedded in an oppressive patriarchal conceptual framework. According to Warren, a conceptual framework itself is a “set of basic beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions which shape and reflect how one views oneself and one's world”, influenced by factors such as “gender, race, class, age, affectional orientation, nationality, and religious background”. Not all conceptual frameworks are oppressive, but what is common to all social “-isms of domination” (e.g. racism, heterosexism, sexism as well as naturism or the domination of nonhuman nature) is the oppressive conceptual framework. An oppressive conceptual framework “is one that explains, justifies, and

¹¹ Othering is in ecofeminist literature sometimes also written as otherizing or otherization.

maintains relationships of domination and subordination” (if patriarchal, such framework concerns the domination and subordination of women by men). It constitutes of these crucial features: (1) value-hierarchical thinking, (2) logic of domination, (3) “power-over power”, (4) privilege, and (5) value dualism (2000, p. 46) (1990, p. 174).

(1) *Value-hierarchical thinking* means that according to our perceptions of diversity which is organized by a spatial “Up-Down” metaphor we attribute “greater value to that which is higher, or Up, than to that which is lower, or Down”. To explain such thinking that legitimates inequality, in value-hierarchical thinking we would place “Up” terms such as men, whites, culture, minds, whereas terms such as women, people of colour, nature, and bodies would be placed “Down”. Therefore, we assume that men, whites, culture and minds present a greater value over women, people of colour, nature, and bodies. (2000, p. 46-48) (1990, p. 174).

(2) *Logic of domination* is a logical structure of argumentation with a set of substantive values that results into justification of one’s subordination given the fact that we need to have an ethical premise for it. As Warren explains, “this justification typically is given on grounds of some alleged characteristics (e.g. rationality) which the dominant (e.g. men) have and the subordinate (e.g. women) lack” (1990, p. 174).

(3) *The concept of “power-over power”* in the structures described above means that we talk about the power of Ups over Downs, e.g. power of men over women, power of humans over nature (2000, p. 47).

(4) *The concept of privilege* is understood in the context of an oppressive conceptual framework as those privileges are created, maintained and belong to Ups (to those who qualify) and not to Downs, and they keep the dominant-subordinate Up-Down relationships alive (2000, p. 47).

(5) *Value-dualism* will be described in the next chapter since it needs to be explained more in-depth.

3.1.3 Value Dualism

The relation of human and nature has been in the Western society treated as a dualism, which is “process in which power forms identity” and which imposes the conceptual framework discussed in previous chapter (Plumwood, 1993, p. 32). Plumwood argues that this explains the reason of the problematic way of how Western culture have behaved to nature to the point of environmental crisis (1993, p. 2). To understand how dualism works, have a look on following contrasting pairs as presented by Plumwood (1993, p. 43):

culture	/	nature
reason	/	nature
male	/	female
mind	/	body (nature)
master	/	slave
reason	/	matter (physicality)
rationality	/	animality (nature)
reason	/	emotion (nature)
mind, spirit	/	nature
freedom	/	necessity (nature)
universal	/	particular
human	/	nature (non-human)
civilised	/	primitive (nature)
production	/	reproduction (nature)
public	/	private
subject	/	object
self	/	other

These are the key interconnected elements of dualism which are being mutually reinforced, and which appear and run through the thinking and understanding of the world in the Western culture. As Warren (1996, p. xi) adds, they are “disjunctive pairs in which the disjuncts are seen as oppositional (rather than as complementary) and exclusive (rather than as inclusive)”.

They reflect the key forms of oppression and to properly understand the meaning and implication of them, we must look at them as an interlocking structure. The key role in the list plays the reason/nature pair, because “the reason/nature story has been the master story of Western culture” (1993, p. 196) and was the main concern and characteristics of Greek philosophy and Western intellectual frameworks, where reason was associated only with men. Thus, virtually everything on the left – viewed as superior – symbolises forms of reason, whereas everything

on the right side – viewed as inferior – represents forms of nature (Plumwood, 1993, p. 44). As Plumwood notes, dualism is deeply rooted into the West’s intellectual traditions and beginnings of rationalism in Greek culture and philosophy, dependent on a strong master and masculine identity. Dualism is present and rooted in the work of many important philosophers such as Plato or Aristotle who discussed these contrasting terms and used them for justification of different forms of oppression, e.g. slavery in Aristotle’s *Politics* (1993, p. 46, 72) – and who shaped the Western culture.

One could argue that such thinking and contrasting one thing to another is normal and unharmed. However, it is not that easy, given the complexity of the context of patriarchal structure which is weaved into the Western culture and functioning. Plumwood explains:

A dualism is more than a relation of dichotomy, difference, or nonidentity, and more than a simple hierarchical relationship. In dualistic construction, as in hierarchy, the qualities (actual or supposed), the culture, the values and the areas of life associated with the dualised other are systematically and pervasively constructed and depicted as inferior. Hierarchies, however, can be seen as open to change, as contingent and shifting. But once the process of domination forms culture and constructs identity, the inferiorised group (unless it can marshal cultural resources for resistance) must internalise this inferiorisation in its identity and collude in this low valuation, honouring the values of the centre, which form the dominant social values. (Plumwood, 1993, p. 47)

She suggests that “the category of nature is a field of multiple exclusion and control” and that the roots of oppressions such as racism, colonialism and sexism are embedded in the construction of notion of the inferior group that cannot achieve the full scope of rationality or culture. Nature (and everything connected to it through dualism) symbolizes passivity and the notion of environment as an invisible background “against which the foreground achievements of reason or culture (provided typically by the white, Western, male expert or entrepreneur) take place” (1993, pp. 2-4).

In the Western and due to colonialism and globalization nowadays almost global thinking, the reason/nature dualism has an immense consequence on the relation of humans to nature. Other dualistic thinking – self/other, reason/emotion, public/private triggers something in humans that makes them treat nature as an instrument and consider it as not ethically significant. Overcoming of such thinking and dynamics involves an acknowledgment of both continuity and

difference – “acknowledging the other as neither alien to and discontinuous from self nor assimilated to or an extension of self” (1993, p. 8).

On the other hand, Shiva brings a different perspective on the topic of dualism as she comes from India, where in Hinduistic cosmology there is ontologically “no divide between man and nature, or between man and woman, because life in all its forms arises from the feminine principle” (1988, p. 38). That is a totally different approach of harmony when compared to the pervasive binary Western modern tradition. She continues by mentioning that in their cosmology it means that

Person and nature (Purusha and Prakriti) are a duality in unity. They are inseparable complements of one another in nature, in woman, in man. Every form of creation bears the sign of this dialectical unity, of diversity within a unifying principle, and this dialectical harmony between the male and female principles and between nature and man, becomes the basis of ecological thought and action in India. Since, ontologically, there is no dualism between man and nature and because nature as Prakriti sustains life, nature has been treated as integral and inviolable. (Shiva, 1988, p. 38)

However, due to colonisation and following perception on what has been seen as progress, such conception of duality in unity has been changed to the Western kind of duality, no longer seeing nature as Prakriti, the living and creating force and process supporting all life, but as natural resources which are here for the benefit of people, and such conception obviously lacks any notion of harmony or acknowledgment of the nature’s needs.

So, is there any way how to escape dualism, or is it impossible? Is the elimination of dualism and every distinction the solution? One could agree so, but Plumwood opposes by saying that such strategy is neither necessary, nor wanted; however, rethinking and reconstruction of relationship is needed in order to perceive the existing differences as non-hierarchical. It would require acknowledging the contribution, needs, values, complexity and diversity of the Others which have been backgrounded, excluded, incorporated, instrumentalized, and homogenized (1993, p. 60).

3.1.4 The (Ab)use of Imagery

Since the origins of our species we have been in close contact with nature and its orders. Humans were forced to cooperate in groups for their survival and still in the 16th century Europeans perceived their environment and everything in it as something functioning like an organism. However, this period in early modern Europe came to an end and the foundations of organic theory, present prior to the 17th century, were undermined by the desire for knowledge and progress of Scientific Revolution and market-oriented culture. It slowly shifted to a new, completely different conceptual framework of the Scientific Revolution – the mechanism, with a mentality of domination and mastery of nature that eliminated and exploited the female principles which were important in the organically oriented one. However, with such a shift in culture there needed to be a shift in language too, as to be coherent in what society promoted and how it presented it. However, Warren notes that in both models the nature was female – in the organic one as a “benevolent female and nurturing mother”, and in the mechanistic one as a mere machine, inert, and dead, insensitive to human action (Merchant, 1980, pp. xx, 2-3) (Warren, 1996, p. xiii) (Shiva, 1988, pp. xiv-xv).

Ecofeminists have been pointing out that through literature, art, philosophy, and science the oppressive controlling imagery and metaphors of the Others (i.e. women, marginalized, people of colour, and nonhuman nature) have been continually used and therefore the domination and exploitation of the Others have become embedded, internalized, normalized – and most importantly mutually reinforced. As Warren explains – “exploitation of nature and animals is justified by feminizing them; the exploitation of women is justified by naturalizing them” (1997, p. 12). The chosen language used for description of women or nature was therefore very important, because, as Merchant says, “language contains a culture within itself, when language changes, a culture is also changing in important ways” (1980, p. 4).

I refer to it as the “ab(use) of imagery” on purpose, as such usage of it was utterly perfect for perpetuating and disguising domination within the patriarchal oppressive conceptual framework, and to control how society should and should not perceive the Others.

3.1.4.1 Female as Nature and Animal

Plumwood (1993, p. 19) points out that the feminine closeness to nature has been more of a pejorative character rather than a compliment in the dominant traditional thinking. The shift of the woman to the sphere of nature played a crucial role in authorization of their oppression. To get the notion of such shift, she cites Marcus Porcius Cato, a Roman statesman (234 BC – 149 BC): “Woman is a violent and uncontrolled animal”, Edmund Burke, a British classic political thinker (1730 – 1797): “A woman is but an animal and an animal not of the highest order”, or Jonathan Swift, an Irish clergyman and writer (1667-1745): “I cannot conceive of you [women] to be human creatures, but a sort of species hardly a degree above monkey”.

Warren (2000, p. 27) then provides us with a list of other used animal terms—cats, pussycats, pussies, bunnies, cows, sows, chicks, bitches, beavers, birdbrains, old bats, old hens, old crows, vixen, serpents, whale, etc. This usage of animal terms pejoratively when talking about women occurs for example in the English language.

It is important to understand that such animization of women, given the context of patriarchal culture, where humans are superior, and animals are inferior, reinforces and authorizes such inferiority. Even though Warren notes that it is not only women who are the target of sexist-naturist pejorative language (because men are being called for example wolves, sharks, skunks, jackasses, goats, etc.) or that some animal or nature language referring to humans can be complementary (e.g. to be a busy bee, brave as lion), given the historical and cultural context of patriarchal framework, applying such terms on women and men works very differently:

The majority of animal terms used to describe women identify women with (inferior) bodies, sexual objects, domesticated pets or playthings, man's property, spiritually sinful or sinprone (temptress) creatures vis-a-vis (at least ruling-class) men;

whereas

the majority of animal terms used to describe (at least ruling-class) men identify men with (superior) intellects or minds, agency, sexual subjects, spirits, rulers, and sovereigns who have power over both women and nature. (Warren, 2000, p. 28)

However, in renaissance women's connection to nature was symbolised in drastically opposite ways – as virgins (the good, clean, untouched side of them), and as witches (the dark side of women). In the latter case, witches were the symbol of violent nature, they could control the forces of nature - affect storms, illnesses, yields, deaths, they were violent, lusty and in sexual contact with Devil – and like with nature – that needed to be changed; therefore, “the disorderly woman, like chaotic nature, needed to be controlled”. In 15th and 16th century such assumptions of women that society (men) thought of as witches resulted in witch hunting, witch trials and burning them at stake by inquisitors (Merchant, 1980, p. 127), even though they were actually murdering only women herbalists and midwives. Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the well-known “father of modern science” who encouraged controlling and exploitation of nature for human benefit, also engaged in the witchcraft subject and saw the inquisition of witches as means how to discover nature's secrets. And just like that, the awful exploitation, oppression, and domination of both women and nature for the good of human race was supported and presented by the “father of modern science” that people looked up to (1980, p. 168).

3.1.4.2 Nature as Female

Merchant (1980) draws attention to the fact that such metaphorical description works also the other way around; therefore, degradation and exploitation of natural environment by denoting nature by the female gender have been justified.

Nature was represented and perceived in two very different ways, one as a nurturing mother who provides for the needs of humans, the second one as wild, uncontrollable and violent. Nevertheless, both of them were identified with female sex, and both were present in philosophy, art, religion, and literature. The first idea of nature as a mother was present in Greek and other pagan philosophies, whereas the idea of nature that needed to be tamed and dominated was typical for the context of Greek philosophy and Christianity. However, with the progress of science, industry, and commercial market, the dominion metaphor was supported and pushed within the social and political sphere, whereas the image of Earth as a nurturing and living was becoming less important and actually became dangerous as it symbolized an obstacle for modernization, innovation, and development (Merchant, 1980, pp. 2-3).

If we look at it from the nature's perspective, such linguistic metaphorical obstacle of presenting nature as female was beneficial, as it played a crucial role in decelerating the exploitation of it. Merchant points out that such imagery "has served as a cultural constraint restricting the actions of human being (...), 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." Such imagery of Mother Nature in the Western culture was central to the organic theory and cosmology; nevertheless, with the arrival of Scientific Revolution in the 15th century and later the new mechanistic (Newtonian) paradigm, there was a need for a new imagery. There could no longer be an omnipresent notion of Mother, if you needed to directly alter the earth through mining, drainage or deforestation, the living creature was incompatible with progress. Like that, the Mother Nature had to be transformed into a machine, an instrument, and any symbolic boundaries of a sentient Earth had to be erased, so the progress could continue (1980, pp. 2-3).

When describing and perceiving nature as female, it was often used of biological terms. As Merchant shows that on an example of mining, such imagery used to evoke in miners respect and submission:

For most traditional cultures, minerals and metals ripened in the uterus of the Earth Mother, mines were compared to her vagina, and metallurgy was the human hastening of the birth of the living metal in the artificial womb of the furnace – an abortion of metal's natural growth cycle before its time. Miners offered propitiation to the dieties of the soil and subterranean world, performed ceremonial sacrifices, and observed strict cleanliness, sexual abstinence, and fasting before violating the sacredness of the living earth by sinking in a mine. (Merchant, 1980, p. 4)

Merchant expresses that the scornful usage of sexual female imagery referring to nature as something to be "penetrated" and "raped" (both for human good) was the central feature of Scientific revolution and modern experimental method that was hungry for exploration, "hard facts" and progress (1980, p. 171). Such paradigm brought new values into Western society, language therefore had to change too – for example, if the value of mining was proposed by Francis Bacon as a way to make an improvement of human race, the language had to be changed (1980, p. 41). With sexual imagery, he justified nature's exploitation saying that "We have no right, (...) to expect nature to come to us, (...) nature must be taken by the forelock, being bald behind, (...) permit one to clutch at nature, never to lay hold of her and capture her." (1980, p. 170). Nature was perceived as a machine, an instrument that according to Bacon's words "must

be bound into service and made a slave, put in constraint and molded by the mechanical arts¹²” (p. 169). However, as Shiva points out, the Bacon’s target of improvement of humans’ lives was everything but humans, given the fact that it was not humanly inclusive. As Shiva says, it was a special programme, a privilege for the “middle class, European, male entrepreneur through the conjunction of human knowledge and power in science” (1988, p. 15).

¹² By mechanical arts Francis Bacon meant technology.

Discussion

In my opinion, an ecofeminist movement is thus an ambitious one, trying to discuss the big current problems and especially explain their very roots, the common cause of it all – the embedded value-hierarchical ways of thinking and the twin domination of nature and women, the master model as Plumwood would say (1993). Challenging the environmental and feminist issues at once – the environmental and social justice, ecofeminism presents itself as a diverse body of theory and practice. Nevertheless, its diversity has often led to its critique from outside the movement, like in the case of ecofeminism's (of cultural ecofeminism to be more precise) accusation of being essentialist. In feminist theory, "essentialism refers to the notion that women and men have particular, biological traits that make them different from each other" (Griffin, 2017, pp. 69-70) and is a concept that feminists disagree with as it gives a specific and fixed essence to women (and men also). Merchant in her book *Death of Nature* discusses that:

If women overtly identify with nature and both are devalued in modern Western culture, don't such efforts work against women's prospects for their own liberation? Is not the conflation of woman and nature a form of essentialism? Are not women admitting that by virtue of their own reproductive biology they are in fact closer to nature than men and that indeed their social role is that of caretaker? (Merchant, 1980, p. xiv)

She points out that maybe such actions and views on the connection between women and nature may "cement existing forms of oppression against both women and nature, rather than liberating either" (1980, p. xiv); however, she then puts stress on the fact that both concepts of nature and women are primarily a historical and social construct. Therefore, the characteristics of sex, gender or nature are changing throughout the history as individuals form concepts about them, based on the ideas and norms of the society that these individuals were born into, socialized and educated within. Warren rejects any attempts of making women closer to nature than men. Plumwood supports that idea by saying that if we believe "that the fact of being a female guarantees that we are automatically provided with an ecological consciousness and can do no wrong to nature or to one another, we are going to be badly disappointed." (1993, p. 10)

Warren argues for what she calls "strategic essentialism",

according to which one can make empirically verifiable, materially supported, historically accurate, and politically useful generalizations about the contingent commonalities among the dominations of women, other dominated human groups, nonhuman animals,

and nature. These “strategic” generalizations establish ways these unjustified dominations are interconnected, mutually reinforcing, and the basis for a potential “alliance in the face of a common enemy”—despite and in addition to crucial differences among these groups and the historically specific ways domination occurs. (Warren, 2002, p. 41)

In general, any critique of any movement is good - it forces to rethink and reevaluate if what the movement is doing has a clearly set and valid reasons for it. Such critique directed towards ecofeminism indeed entailed a need for more in-depth theoretical foundations that have led many ecofeminist scholars to do more research and provide more proves of the interconnections between the domination of the Others, the nature, the women, the marginalized people. However, such critique has not only born fruit. As another important ecofeminist Greta Gaard notes,

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. (Gaard, 2011, p. 31)

Ecofeminism forces us to take a few steps back and see things from a bigger perspective, much different than what we are used to – the upside-down perspective, as it sees the very roots of today’s poor and sick state of nature and people and inequality in the oppression and mastery of the ‘weaker’ –the women, the animals, the not-enough creatures–the ‘Others’. It explains how the dualistic thinking and preferring of the reason over nature resulted in the unjust and unethical treatment of nature and one another.

The world seems to be slowly falling apart and the time to fix it is probably running out. Although not for the planet, but for the humankind. Nature can survive without people, but humanity cannot survive without nature. Being surrounded and to face the alarming social and environmental related problems, when we are instantly being informed about everything wrong happening in this world as nowadays, many people are overwhelmed and respond to it differently. Maybe ecofeminism or at least some of its aspects could be the answer for a better life and future– not of the humans and the nature, but rather the humans in partnership and harmony with nature.

Although it seems that ecofeminism, due to its diversity, has lost its chance to be the change-maker movement that would help to dismantle society from its embedded oppressive dualistic thinking, one never knows. Gender topics are being discussed increasingly more in most spheres of our lives, as well as pressing environmental issues. Maybe ecofeminism will make a comeback, as it symbolises the response to problems that both environmental and feminist movements are dealing with, while shedding light to their interconnections.

There are definitely limitations of my bachelor thesis. One of them is that I could have included more – in numbers or in their diversity – ecofeminists, so to give an objective presentation of the ecofeminist movement as a whole. However, I argue that it had to be done this way, if I wanted to have a closer and deeper look and understanding of their thoughts and the foundations alone, rather than shortly generalizing their ideas and applying it broadly on the whole ecofeminist movement. For this purpose, I have chosen only Plumwood, Merchant, Warren, and Shiva, because they are presented as proponents of the social and socialist form of ecofeminism that I find the most valid and important. Another limitation would be the lack of discussed topics in the third part of the thesis, and I would agree that this critique is valid and if I could, I would include more of them, because there are several indeed very interesting topics (such as animal rights and vegetarianism, spirituality, globalization, capitalism, etc.). However, I have chosen to present, in my opinion, the most basic and important ones concerning the connections between women and nature, so one can truly proceed to understanding the elementary theory of ecofeminism and why it is important.

Conclusion

The presented bachelor thesis concerned the topic of ecofeminism, a heterogeneous movement that is being perceived as an umbrella term for different approaches which sometimes disagree with each other; nevertheless, all of them are showing the parallels and analogies between the exploitation and oppression of nature and women (and other subordinated groups, the “human Others and earth Others”). Such oppressions and dominations share historical, empirical, linguistic, symbolical, spiritual, religious and theoretical interconnections, and in this thesis, I presented the conceptual ones that result into others. Ecofeminists claim that both feminism and environmentalism must embrace one another if it is to end the domination of women and nature because both dominations are conceptually and historically tied to each other. They seek for recreation of harmony between everyone and everything – nature and humankind, by shedding light on the connections between the domination of women and nature.

The first part of this thesis was devoted to a short summary of feminism, so to put ecofeminism into context and understand its background and where it comes from. Afterwards, in the second part, there was introduced the ecofeminist movement (as it has been described by other scholars) and its origins that are rooted in the activist social change and ecological movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Followed by the introduction of chosen ecofeminists, their perceptions and ideas about ecofeminism in general—Carolyn Merchant, Karen Warren, Val Plumwood, and Vandana Shiva, who are being associated with the socialist and social form of ecofeminism—it was outlined which topics will be discussed in the next chapters. In the third part of this thesis, I presented and summarized the conceptual connections between women and nature and the domination of them, explaining that these connections have resulted into the way we treat the women and nature (and Others in general), and into the pressing environmental and social crisis this world is now experiencing. Among discussed connections were the concept of “the Other”, oppressive conceptual framework and its features – value hierarchical thinking, logic of domination, “power-over power”, privilege, and value dualism. Afterwards, I explained and showed the (ab)use of controlling imagery and how such metaphors of women and nature were used in different times (prior to Scientific revolution and after) for different purposes. Focus was brought on the use of imagery in separate chapters “Female as Nature and Animal” and

“Nature as Female” concerned with women’s naturalization and nature’s feminization, arguing that such metaphors were mostly used for justification and legitimization of one’s domination over the Other within the conceptual patriarchal oppressive framework.

The last part of this thesis included discussion, where I have concentrated on the topic of essentialism and how it maybe stopped ecofeminism as a theoretical approach with a solid foundation based on historical evidence from its adoption by the wider group of people engaged in environmental and feminist (social justice also) movements.

I believe that I managed to accomplish the aim and objectives of this thesis to present the ecofeminist movement, its connection with feminism (and third wave feminism especially), its origins, definition, description of its boundary conditions and different forms of ecofeminism (liberal, cultural, social, socialist). An overview of scholarly ecofeminist literature describing some of the tenets of ecofeminist history, focused on the conceptual connections between women and nature, by reviewing the books and essays of Carolyn Merchant, Val Plumwood, Vandana Shiva and Karen Warren was given.

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