

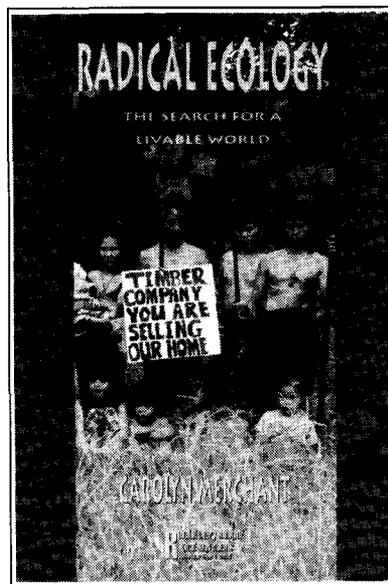
interest in ecofeminism obviously forms the basis of many of her arguments. In my view, it is both her feminist critique of radical ecology and her clear overview of ecofeminism which makes *Radical Ecology* a useful contribution to environmental and feminist literature.

Carolyn Merchant identifies two central contradictions to do with environmental problems: the tension between economic forces and local ecological conditions, and the tension between production and reproduction. The three main sections of this work provide explanations of these contradictions, and a historical analysis of the science, theory, and politics of radical ecology.

First, the problems which are relevant to radical ecology are outlined in the context of the history of science and the development of environmental ethics. Second, the theoretical perspectives which inform different approaches to radical ecology are discussed with particular reference to historical and cultural context. The final section outlines recent trends in the environmental movement to effectively synthesize many of the issues and ideas raised in earlier chapters.

Since *Radical Ecology* is aimed at an audience with an interest in environmental issues, regardless of knowledge of the principles of ecology and technology, perhaps the snapshot view of science in a global context in the first chapters is a necessary starting point. For many, however, it may be worth skimming these background chapters on science and ecology, because the rest of the book is far more interesting and insightful. The first section ends with a discussion of environmental ethics in terms of egocentric, homecentric, and ecocentric perspectives. This succinct and informative analysis forms the basis for Carolyn Merchant's subsequent interpretation of the theory and practice of radical ecology. At this point, she draws on feminist theory to systematically critique radical ecology, a strategy she uses to pattern the rest of the book.

In the second section, theoretical frameworks which distinguish deep ecology from spiritual ecology and social ecology are delineated. Deep ecology offers a philosophical approach based on the principle of biospheric equality, a vision of society which offers total freedom. This



perspective is informed by a social understanding of western science and a holistic interpretation of the interconnections between society and the environment. Alternatively, spiritual ecology focuses on a connection to the earth to inform political action and management of resources. The healing practices of goddess spirituality and native American land wisdom are ways in which women's traditions are part of this perspective. One strategy for change central to spiritual ecology is sharing in rituals which are intended to be not only celebratory, but also a preparation for social action.

Deep ecology and spiritual ecology can be criticized for a lack of political critique and inadequate analysis of capitalism and patriarchy. In contrast, social and socialist ecology are firmly grounded in historical materialism and provide explanations of the human implications of systems of economic production on the environment. For Carolyn Merchant, versions of social and socialist ecology are clearly the means of providing explanations which account for not only gender, 'race' and class, but also for the environment. This perspective also offers strategies for political action which potentially lead to social transformation.

Drawing on her analysis of environmental ethics and radical ecology theoretical perspectives, Carolyn Merchant's discussion of environmental movements is particularly informative. While the descriptions of green politics and sustain-

able development link well with earlier analysis, it was the discussion of ecofeminism that caught my attention. Using a feminist analysis, the diversity of ecofeminism is described in terms of feminist theory and concrete examples of political action. By placing an emphasis on environmental issues to rethink many studies from the women and work literature, the usefulness of ecofeminism for uncovering previously hidden connections is clearly demonstrated. Carolyn Merchant's arguments to support ecofeminism as a distinct branch of feminism are persuasive. Nonetheless, I am not convinced that this further fragmentation of feminism is necessarily a useful strategy.

Radical Ecology offers a sound introduction to the theory and practice of radical ecology in the context of progress made by current social movements. If this work is taken as an introduction to radical ecology, then some of the oversights in terms of an analysis of gender, race, and class are less problematic. It is worth noting that this book is intended to be an overview of radical ecology in general; it may be most useful as a reference source to draw on when pursuing other ecofeminist literature in more depth.

CELEBRATING THE LAND: WOMEN'S NATURE WRITINGS, 1850-1991

Karen Knowles, ed. Flagstaff, Arizona:
Northland Publishing, 1992.

by *Catriona Sandilands*

Ecofeminist theory begins from a point that suggests that women and nature have been mutually oppressed and denigrated because of their supposed "connection." What that connection means, however, is a matter of debate: some ecofeminists emphasize women's reproductive activities as the experience of continuity of life on earth; others emphasize women's historical association with nature, a shared "connection" born from a shared oppression.

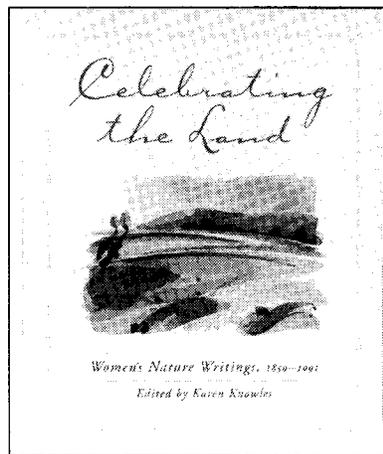
It is my contention that emphasis on one, and only one, terrain of "connection" limits possibilities for redefining human life in relation to nonhuman nature, and for redefining what it means to be "a woman." What we need is a reaffirmation of multiple "connections" between women and nature, and there are few better places to begin this process of reaffirmation than in women's diverse and prolific writings about nature.

Karen Knowles' anthology is an excellent example of just how varied women's experiences of nature are. Included are stories ranging from Isabella Bird's difficult 19th-century climb into the Rockies, to Sue Hubbell's wonderful descriptions of frogs, to Ursula Le Guin's relationship with Mount St. Helens, to Mary Austin's vivid depictions of the Californian high desert. Here, multiple sensations emerge: fear, wonder, solidarity, pain, sadness, exhaustion, delight, visceral sexuality. Here, multiple forms of knowledge appear: careful scrutinies of tidal and forest life; solitary contemplation of a family of beavers emerging from its winter den; disbelief at how a dense fog can make the most familiar landscape unrecognizable; backbreaking labour in the experience of herding sheep for the first time. No one realm of "connection" could possibly include all these.

Indeed, Knowles makes no real case for the "specificity" of women's nature writing, or for any "particular" connection between women and nature. In both her introduction and her choice of materials, she is, instead, concerned to show that women's experiences of nature have been just as diverse as men's, despite 19th-century (and continuing?) discourses around women as "indoor" creatures. She is careful, though, to suggest that nature is not just "outdoors," that it cannot be separated from these women's daily lives: natural, personal and social histories all converge in these varied writings, to blur the boundaries between "culture" and "nature."

As Knowles notes in her introduction, these convergences produce diverse accounts of women's sense of "place" in nature: there is "land that is linked with family history, and land that is 'discovered' often as a result of travel or the desire to move from familiar places. What seems to matter most to these writers is

that they can identify with their surroundings and discover places that become part of their personal histories." These identifications are very rich, and well worth reading. Not only do they show, in a striking way, types of cultural and biological diversity that are currently under



threat from contemporary "monoculture," but they show possibilities for living that emphasize respect for both humanity and nonhuman nature.

The anthology has limitations, though. I wonder at Knowles' decision to include *only* writings from the continental United States (except for one from Alaska), and to then subtitle the book "women's nature writings," with no mention of any specificity that this national limitation might produce. Although no anthology can include "all there is," I find the imposition of such national boundaries particularly odd for a book that tries to be about "nature" rather than any particular "culture" of nature.

I also find it odd that Knowles has ignored urban landscapes. While I will certainly argue that "nature" must include unlogged forests, open prairie spaces, and unpolluted wetlands (to name but a few of the landscapes she includes), I would also argue that we need to reaffirm the "natured" spaces in cities. Although Le Guin writes of Mount St. Helens from Portland, Oregon, I am still left, after reading the book, with the sense that "nature" is out in the countryside, and that there is no hope for "wild" spaces or "nature" experiences in cities.

Finally, there is a problem with anthologies in general to which this book

falls particularly prey: the excerpts are too short. Just as I got involved in each landscape, the scene (and author) changed. Particularly given the sense in many of these writings that developing a relationship to nature takes time, it seemed hardly appropriate (not to mention rather frustrating) to have the experience, however second-hand, cut off so soon.

Or perhaps that is the point of the book. Perhaps it was constructed to whet our appetite for more, not just for more women's writings on nature, but for our own experiences of nature. Knowles seems committed to developing varied long-term relations between women and natural environments; perhaps these writings are showcased so very briefly in order to push us to our own explorations. Hopefully, someone in the future will show our experiences to be even more diverse.

TRANSFORMATION MOVEMENT: A CANADIAN VISION OF COMMON SECURITY - THE REPORT OF THE CITIZENS' INQUIRY INTO PEACE AND SECURITY

Co-published by the Canadian Peace Alliance (CPA) and Project Ploughshares for the Citizens' Inquiry into Peace and Security. March 1992.

by Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg

"What makes you feel secure?" was the question asked during hearings in 19 Canadian cities over six weeks last winter by a commission of inquiry. The responses, reflecting more than 600 formal public submissions, as well as written briefs from diverse sectors of society, form the substance of this 80-page report.