

# The Ideology of Environmental Domination

Lecture Part 3

SOC165

Spring 2010



# *In Part 3*

- Patriarchy and Eco-feminism



# Nature and Gender

- Are women are more connected with nature than men?
  - If yes, is this positive?
- How does social hierarchy affect resource use and distribution of power?



# Carolyn Merchant

- Historical analysis
- Similar analysis as Bakhtin:
- There was a change in Europe in the 1600s – a shift from more the “organismic” social relations of a rural, pre-modern society to the more formal, mechanistic, rationalistic relations of an urbanizing, modernizing society



Carolyn Merchant  
1936 -



# Carolyn Merchant

- Western society is patriarchal
- Historically, women have been identified with nature as weak and inferior
- Social domination promotes ideological dualisms, such as:

- Good vs. bad
- Man vs. woman

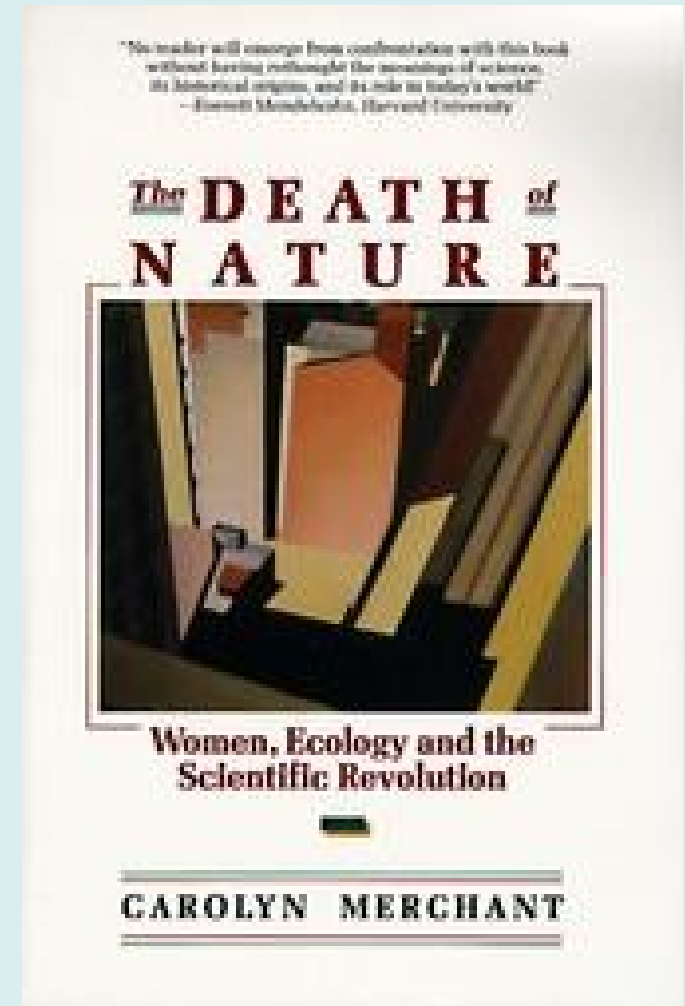


- Nature vs. culture
- Nature vs. reason
- Nature vs. science



# Carolyn Merchant

- Domination of the environment starts with social domination of all kinds, not just gender
- The historic emergence of mechanistic worldview caused “*The Death of Nature*” (1980)



"The female earth was central to organic cosmology that was undermined by the Scientific Revolution and the rise of a market-oriented culture...for sixteenth-century Europeans the root metaphor binding together the self, society and the cosmos was that of an organism...organismic theory emphasized interdependence among the parts of the human body, subordination of individual to communal purposes in family, community, and state, and vital life permeate the cosmos to the lowliest stone."

-- Merchant, *The Death of Nature* (1980: 278)





# Carolyn Merchant

- The ideology and practice of industrial capitalism has created today's ecological crisis
- Her conclusion: We need a new “partnership ethic” with nature





# Critique of Eco-feminism

- Not just Western society has ecological problems
- Jared Diamond: Many non-Western and pre-modern cultures have destroyed environment



# Critique of Eco-feminism

- Women participate in environmental destruction



# Critique of Eco-feminism

## Just Another Dualism?

- Sometimes, ecofeminists identify the female with nature – as a positive thing
- This is another dualism, separating men from women
- Celebration of the “Ecofeminine,” not ecofeminism?

LOVE YOUR MOTHER...



**EARTH**





# End of Part 3.

Continue to Part 4.



# Citations Used in This Lecture

Diamond, J. 2004. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. London: Penguin books.

Merchant, C. 1980. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. New York: HarperCollins.