Convergences in Twentieth-Century Radical Environmentalisms: Environmental Justice and An Ecological Perspective In the Works of Rachel Carson, Murray Bookchin, Arne Naess, and Carolyn Merchant

Jamaica Ernst

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Signed by the final Examining Committee:

_____ Chair
Dr. Naftali Cohn

_____ Examiner
Dr. Lorenzo DiTommaso

_____ Examiner
Dr. Richard Foltz

_____ Supervisor
Dr. Lorenzo DiTommaso

Approved by

_____
Dr. Lynda Clarke, Graduate Program Director

_____ 2025

_____
Dr. Pascale Sicotte, Dean of Faculty

Abstract

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This essay analyzes the works of four authors who began writing in the field of radical environmentalism in the second half of the twentieth century: Rachel Carson, Murray Bookchin, Arne Naess, and Carolyn Merchant. An examination of the works of each author illustrates the convergences that exist between the disparate forms of radical environmentalism for which they call. They share an ecological perspective, a focus on environmental justice, the values of unity and diversity, and the goal of synthesizing social justice movements through a change in popular consciousness. This essay demonstrates the continued significance of these shared values as the effects of anthropogenic climate change continue to escalate and concludes that the ecological perspective's focus on relationality is even more relevant in today's increasingly interdependent, globalized world.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Definitions

This essay describes the works of four radical environmentalists of the second half of the twentieth century: Rachel Carson, Murray Bookchin, Arne Naess, and Carolyn Merchant. Each has written multiple books implicating the mainstream way of life in Western society in perpetuating the ecological crisis. Carson's work is identified as the beginning of the area of study because her book, *Silent Spring*, introduced the concept of anthropogenic environmental degradation and called on readers to challenge its perpetuation. In this way, she introduced radical environmentalism to the public. Carson set the stage for the radical environmentalists who came after her by foregrounding the ecological perspective, defined below, and a related critique of post-World War II American society. Bookchin, Naess, and Merchant represent three other forms of radical environmentalism that became prominent in Western society in the second half of the twentieth century: social ecology, deep ecology, and ecofeminism, respectively. This essay identifies the convergences between these forms of radical environmentalism and their continued relevance.

As the ecological crisis continues to escalate, environmentalism today is distinguished from the previous century in that the effects of anthropogenic climate change are more apparent and the awareness of the need for environmentalism is more widespread. The term "environmentalism" describes thoughts and actions concerned with protecting the environment. Different forms of environmentalism are developed as a result of divergences in what is considered part of the environment as well as from what or whom it needs to be protected. Radical environmentalism focuses on revolutionary change in the capitalistic way of life that

characterizes Western society, stressing that "capitalism today has become a *society*" that continues to exacerbate the ecological crisis.[1] Radicalism is contrasted by reformism, which is characteristic of mainstream and institutionalized environmentalism and, according to radical environmentalists, neglects to address the ecological crisis at its societal source. Instead, reform environmentalists attempt to offset the ecological crisis while maintaining a capitalistic "grow or die" way of life. Radical environmentalists hold that this way of life is inherently unsustainable and, therefore, irrational, thus emphasizing the need for change. They believe that the possibility of implementing radical change is dependent on bringing the anthropogenic nature and human consequences of the ecological crisis to the attention of the public, as Rachel Carson did with *Silent Spring*. Radical environmentalists aim to incite environmentalism not in institutions, which would presuppose the continuation of the society that those institutions uphold, but in the people. They hope to change the cultural Zeitgeist through the development in public consciousness of an ecological perspective that is antithetical to many of the unsustainable aspects of mainstream Western society. According to radical environmentalists, uniting the public through a shared perspective is the first step towards the kind of revolutionary change that is necessary to address the ecological crisis. They are critical of the divisive, atomizing, individualistic worldview that gives rise to hierarchical and competitive relationships, all of which are characteristic of "the ethic of mainstream industrial capitalism today."[2] An ecological perspective addresses these issues and therefore, according to radical environmentalists, is essential.

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[1] Bookchin 2005, 20.

[2] Merchant 2005, 63, 64.

Ecology is the study of relationships in nature. The ecological perspective of radical environmentalists foregrounds that humans are part of these relationships and is therefore concerned with the interconnected social and environmental crises. This focus on the interconnections between the social and the environmental is foundational to environmental justice, described below. This essay holds that environmental justice is an essential aspect of radical environmentalism. Radical environmentalists share with environmental justice activists the understanding that humans are part of ecological "relations of interdependence."[3] They hold that "communities and their constitutive environments are inseparable" and "must be understood as being mutually constitutive."[4] Social and environmental issues, therefore, cannot be considered separately, as they constitute the overarching ecological crisis that, from this perspective, can be understood as "a crisis at each scale we are aware of."[5]

Radical environmentalists apply the ecological perspective in their focus on the relationships among the wide variety of struggles that humans face, rather than separating social issues from environmental ones as mainstream environmentalists do. They also share the understanding that this variety of struggles will require a variety of solutions. To this end, by the end of the twentieth century radical environmentalists shared the goal of synthesizing the different forms of environmentalism as well as other social justice movements into a powerful "unity of differences" or "unity in diversity."[6] These values oppose the divisive and hierarchical mainstream way of life in Western society. In light of the ecological perspective, the values of

[3] Cronon 1996, 318.

[4] Cronon 1996, 318.

[5] brown 2017, 3.

[6] Merchant 2005, 148.

unity and diversity are used by radical environmentalists to strengthen the movement by focusing on the ways that people, when united, have the chance to effect revolutionary change. Just as ecosystems are strengthened by diversity, as discussed below in the critiques of monoculture, radical environmentalists emphasize how justice movements are strengthened by diverse goals and perspectives.

The methodology of this essay is not a critical analysis of the authors but instead reads with them in search of what each author has contributed to radical environmentalism as it continues to evolve today. As noted, the turning point that marks the beginning of the radical environmentalism movement of the twentieth century is Rachel Carson's body of work on ecology, particularly *Silent Spring*. It not only marked the introduction into mainstream public consciousness of the relationships between social and environmental concerns such as the pollution of food, air, and water but also led to the inclusion of environmental policies in American law. When analyzed in retrospect, *Silent Spring* contextualizes the works of the other three authors. Carson's book not only led to a change in public consciousness and the institutionalization of environmentalism but set the stage for radical environmentalists' critique of institutionalized environmentalism. Although Bookchin, Naess, and Merchant represent three different forms of radical environmentalism, each is critical of those forms that rely on institutionalization and call, instead, for "direct action," defined below. In calling on the public's participation in this way, they share the common goal of coming together to address the interconnected crises that we all face.

1.2 *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (1996)

Many of the convergences in the radical environmentalisms of the twentieth century are introduced in William Cronon's *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. In a statement that is unfortunately as true today as it was when it was first published, he writes that

> A powerful conservative resurgence produced a Republican-dominated Congress that quickly distinguished itself as the most hostile toward environmental protection in all of U.S. history. Americans who cared about the natural environment suddenly found themselves confronting what looked to be a political juggernaut committed to dismantling a quarter of a century's worth of hard-won environmental legislation.[7]

This statement exemplifies the reason that radical environmentalism cannot rely solely on governments or any institution but requires active involvement from the members of society. This is why radical environmentalists continue to call for more fundamental change and more direct forms of political action. In support of this central tenet of radical environmentalism, the focus of *Uncommon Ground* "is primarily on environmental ideas in American popular culture" rather than "professional" understandings.[8] It is popular culture that will determine the perspective of the public and therefore, like *Silent Spring*, the target audience of *Uncommon Ground* is the people, not the policymakers.

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[7] Cronon 1996, 19.

[8] Cronon 1996, 25.

The contributors to *Uncommon Ground* address the ecological crisis from a "broadly humanistic interdisciplinary perspective."[9] A central tenet of this perspective is that everything "exists in a context that is historically, geographically, and culturally particular, and cannot be understood apart from that context."[10] The importance of context is a fundamental aspect of the ecological perspective. Cronon foregrounds the need for "humility and respect as we confront our fellow beings and the earth itself."[11] This way of relating to the earth would avoid the "human hubris" that has not only led to the ecological crisis but is also the continued tendency of the mainstream methods with which it is addressed. This hubris is a result of the atomizing tendency which ignores the connections that exist between humans and the environment. Cronon writes that society needs to be rebuilt around a focus on "balanced, sustainable relationship[s]" which would be "better for humanity in all of its diversity and for all the rest of nature too."[12] He says that the "struggle to live rightly in the world is finally not just about right actions, but about the ideas that lie behind those actions" which are shaped by our perspectives, understanding of history, and culture.[13] The goal of *Uncommon Ground*, therefore, is "a renewed environmentalism that will enter the twenty-first century more aware of its own history and cultural assumptions, and thereby renewed in its mission of protecting the natural world by helping people live more responsibly in it."[14] The reinterpretation of history from a radical

[9] Cronon 1996, 24, 35.

[10] Cronon 1996, 24, 35.

[11] Cronon 1996, 87.

[12] Cronon 1996, 85, 86.

[13] Cronon 1996, 22.

[14] Cronon 1996, 26.

perspective that is opposed to the institutions that support the existing way of life is essential for the change in public consciousness that radical environmentalists call for.

Connecting the ecological crisis to our daily lives, Cronon writes that "our most serious environmental problems start right here, at home."[15] This concept is also the focus of environmental justice, introduced in Giovanna Di Chiro's contribution to *Uncommon Ground*, "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice." A central tenet of environmental justice is that "people should always be conscious that they are part of the natural world, inextricably tied to the ecological systems that sustain their lives."[16] Social issues therefore always have an environmental component just as environmental issues always have social consequences. The environmental justice movement challenges mainstream environmentalism in its belief that "an effective movement must integrate, not dichotomize, the histories and relationships of people and their natural environments."[17] Di Chiro refers to this as "ecosystemic" thinking which considers the connections within the environment and between the environment and humans, rather than limiting the focus to "single-issue[s]" like reform environmentalists.[18] Ecosystemic thinking, therefore, is another way of referring to the ecological perspective and of understanding humans as intimately tied to the world around us. According to Di Chiro, environmental justice movements are primarily grassroots organizations born out of citizens' concerns about toxic chemicals contaminating the air, water, and land

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[15] Cronon 1996, 85, 86.

[16] Cronon 1996, 87.

[17] Cronon 1996, 317.

[18] Cronon 1996, 317.

around their communities. This concern is what inspired Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*, discussed below. Di Chiro writes that environmental justice activists "conceive of "nature" and "environment" as those places and sets of relationships that sustain a local community's way of life."[19] From this perspective, they "identify such issues as social justice, local economic sustainability, health, and community governance as falling under the purview of "environment.""[20]

The term environmental justice questions mainstream notions of what we refer to when we speak of the environment to produce new ideas in popular consciousness. As Di Chiro writes, it would be "accurate to regard environmental justice activists as the "new" civil rights or "new" social justice activists."[21] This is because the roots of environmental justice movements lie in "the social justice movements of the sixties, including the civil rights, welfare rights, and labour and farm-worker movements."[22] Environmentalism, however, is not what is new about these movements, as environmental justice activists hold that environmental concerns are always connected to social justice issues. What is new is how bringing these issues together under the purview of environmental justice "is transforming the possibilities for fundamental social and environmental change through processes of redefinition, reinvention, and construction of innovative political and cultural discourses and practices."[23] A pertinent example is that

[19] Cronon 1996, 300.

[20] Cronon 1996, 300.

[21] Cronon 1996, 303.

[22] Cronon 1996, 303.

[23] Cronon 1996, 303.

mainstream environmentalists apply a monolithic understanding of humanity and the vague and generalizing belief that "humans are the perpetrators of environmental problems."[24] In contrast, environmental justice activists foreground the fact that "some humans, especially the poor, are also the victims of environmental destruction and pollution and that, furthermore, some human cultures live in ways that are relatively sound ecologically."[25] A focus on these social differences is essential for any environmentalism movement to be truly just. As Cronon writes, the temptation to simplify humans into a monolith and pursue its promise of a simple solution is unsurprising.[26] However, without an understanding of differences and a promotion of diversity, "the prospect of solving environmental problems, to say nothing of working toward a juster world for all the peoples and creatures of the earth, would seem very grim."[27]

Environmental justice activists share with radical environmentalists the view that the mainstream ideologies in Western society are inherently unsustainable and at odds with the goals of environmentalism. Both movements aim to expose "the historical and ecological effects on humans *and* the nonhuman world of these dominant ideologies" and reveal "their limitations as theoretical foundations for a just environmentalism."[28] They both emphasize that mainstream environmentalists describe as "inconsequential" those environmental problems that affect mainly those populations that have been systemically disenfranchised because of a false "separation

[24] Cronon 1996, 301.

[25] Cronon 1996, 301.

[26] Cronon 1996, 52.

[27] Cronon 1996, 52.

[28] Cronon 1996, 310.

between humans and the "natural" world."[29] This separation not only opposes an ecological perspective, but also leaves issues "pertaining to human health and survival, community and workplace poisoning, and economic sustainability" outside of the agenda of environmentalism.[30] Radical environmentalists and environmental justice activists share the goal of undoing this divide to address the social and environmental crises together, referring to this conflation as the ecological crisis. They also both hold that this focus on the relationships between social and environmental justice concerns is essential for revolutionary changes in the direction of a truly just society.

Di Chiro quotes Pam Tau Lee (then coordinator for the Labour and Occupational Health Program at the University of California at Berkeley and board member of the National Toxics Campaign Fund) in stating that the concept of environmental justice can "bring together different issues that used to be separate … to create one movement that can really address what actually causes all of these phenomena to happen and gets to the root of the problems."[31] In this way, Lee is not only drawing connections between various social and environmental struggles but is also advocating for change in the ideas and actions of the people, not the power bloc. This sentiment is similarly quoted in John Storey's "What is Popular Culture?":

> 'The people' refers neither to everyone nor to a single group within society but to a variety of social groups which, although differing from one another in other respects (their class position or the particular struggles in which they

[29] Cronon 1996, 300, 301.

[30] Cronon 1996, 300, 301.

[31] Cronon 1996, 301.

> are most immediately engaged), are distinguished from the economically, politically and culturally powerful groups within society and are hence potentially capable of being united – of being organized into 'the people versus the power bloc– ' if their separate struggles are connected.[32]

Likewise, Di Chiro quotes Dana Alston, a participant in the 1991 First National People of Colour Environmental Leadership Summit, as stating that the "most important thing that came out of the summit was the bonding."[33] Alston says that this bonding acted as a form of rebellion because "it's the history, the culture, the society that's keeping us divided…because that's how the power structure stays in power, by keeping us separate."[34] In response to this divisiveness, the summit resulted in the development of the Principles of Environmental Justice which acknowledged the need to build "a national and international movement" of people united "to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities."[35] This coordination of disparate struggles through a focus on the relationships between them can be understood as an application of the ecological perspective to the interconnected social and environmental crises.

Environmental justice activists apply the idea of "Nature as Community" to produce new "theoretical and material connections between human/nature, human/environment relations."[36] They define community as the place "where humans and environment converge," presupposing

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[32] Storey 2018, 11.

[33] Cronon 1996, 306.

[34] Cronon 1996, 306.

[35] Cronon 1996, 307.

[36] Cronon 1996, 310.

“connection to and interconnectedness with other groups, other species, and the natural environment through everyday experiences.”[37] Di Chiro concludes that these “ideas and practices of “community”” are “the essential feature of environmental justice organizations.”[38] The concept of community as comprised of humans and the environment is used by radical environmentalists and environmental justice activists to strengthen social and environmental justice movements by unifying them. The importance of this unification is also the focus of Jeffrey Ellis’ contribution to *Uncommon Ground*, “On the Search for a Root Cause: Essentialist Tendencies in Environmental Discourse.” He writes that his goal was “to endorse and encourage a movement toward synthesis that has already begun to emerge in radical environmental discourse.”[39] He believes that while the disagreements that exist within the radical environmentalism movement can be divisive, they also “have the potential of generating its greatest strength.”[40] He begins his contribution with a quote from Thomas Pychon: “If they can get you asking the wrong questions, they don’t have to worry about the answer.”[41] In terms of environmental discourse, Ellis intends this as a commentary on mainstream institutionalized environmentalists’ refusal to acknowledge the source of the environmental crisis and the tendency to focus on piecemeal reform. In line with the perspective of radical environmentalists, Ellis holds that this atomizing tendency of institutionalized environmentalism is insufficient to address the ecological crisis.

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[37] Cronon 1996, 318.

[38] Cronon 1996, 320.

[39] Cronon 1996, 267, 268.

[40] Cronon 1996, 268.

[41] Cronon 1996, 256.

Environmentalism became institutionalized in the United States with the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Endangered Species Act in 1969 and 1973, respectively.[42] Ellis writes that the passage of these acts gave environmentalists a seat at the decision-making table, but it has not "given them a forum for challenging basic values or the distribution of social power in American life."[43] This is because embedded "in that table are basic assumptions concerning the origins and nature of the country's environmental problems" that radical environmentalists and environmental justice activists intend to change.[44] As soon as this moderate, reform brand of environmentalism became institutionalized, "more radical environmentalists, who believed that the American way of life and/or basic American values and attitudes were major contributing factors to the environmental crisis, began to criticize the advocates of reform for dealing with surface symptoms rather than with root causes."[45] Born out of these criticisms were a multitude of diverse forms of radical environmentalism.

Ellis demonstrates how the diverse views that exist amongst radical environmentalists can be used to strengthen the movement through his analysis of the disagreements that have existed amongst proponents of social and deep ecology, specifically Murray Bookchin and Arne Naess. Ellis writes that Bookchin views the environmental crisis as a result of "the emergence of hierarchy out of society, of classes out of hierarchy, [and] of the state out of classes."[46] All of this, according to Bookchin, resulted in the destruction of community and the perpetuation of a

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[42] Cronon 1996, 262.

[43] Cronon 1996, 263.

[44] Cronon 1996, 263.

[45] Cronon 1996, 263.

[46] Cronon 1996, 264.

worldview characterized by domination and competition. Proponents of social ecology therefore emphasize that it is essential that environmentalists consider the differences between social groups in order to develop a truly just response to the interrelated social and environmental crises. Bookchin shares environmental justice activists' critique of "the hierarchical separation between nature and human culture" which he sees as the root of the ecological crisis.[47] According to Ellis, Bookchin criticizes deep ecology for what he calls "a slightly veiled Malthusianism that identifies "a vague species called 'humanity'" as the source of that crisis."[48] Bookchin's critique of Malthusianism outlines how its focus on the once popular "population problem" ignores the unsustainable nature of Western culture in particular and attempts to implicate humans in general.[49] In response to Bookchin's criticisms, Ellis says, deep ecologists maintained their "tendency to consider humans collectively" to highlight "the large consequences of a triumphant, exploitative species enjoying a population boom and technological prowess."[50] According to deep ecologists, "from this larger perspective, it does not really matter what the petty political and social arrangements are that led to our ecological crisis."[51] Bookchin, in turn, rhetorically asks

> Who is this 'us' from which the living world has to be protected? … Is it 'humanity?' Is it the human 'species' per se? Is it people, as such? Or is it our particular society, our particular civilization, with its hierarchical social

[47] Cronon 1996, 310.

[48] Cronon 1996, 264.

[49] Cronon 1996, 264.

[50] Cronon 1996, 265.

[51] Cronon 1996, 265.

> relations which pit men against masses, employers against workers … and, ultimately, a cancer like, 'grow or die' industrial capitalist economic system against the natural world and other life-forms?[52]

Ellis summarizes his analysis of the social versus deep ecology debate by stating that while "on the surface the two camps seem to agree that the crisis is rooted in human attitudes that see nature as subordinate to man, just beneath this shallow consensus lurks an irreconcilable difference of opinion."[53] Such differences, however, can coexist effectively within a movement that values unity and diversity. As Ellis writes, "the very disagreements that have split the radical ecology movement into factions have the potential of generating its greatest strength."[54] Their tendency to criticize not only mainstream Western society but also other environmentalists has meant that "radical environmentalists have dug deeper than reformers in their quest to understand the social and cultural complexities of environmental problems."[55] In this way, they have developed a variety of goals that can be applied to the complex and interconnected crises which make up the ecological crisis. Recognizing the magnitude of change called for by each form of radical environmentalism, Ellis writes that "each of these agendas taken alone would require nothing short of revolutionary changes in the ways Americans think, act, and relate to one another and the environment."[56] Not only do "they represent the enormity of the challenges that

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[52] Bookchin 2022, 11.

[53] Cronon 1996, 266.

[54] Cronon 1996, 268.

[55] Cronon 1996, 268.

[56] Cronon 1996, 266.

we must face," but also the complexity of the radical change that is necessary.[57] Ellis says that "it is clearly time for radical environmentalists to focus less on defining their differences and more on determining the common ground that might provide the basis for a more coherent and unified ecology movement."[58] The creation of common ground does not require identical perspectives but, rather, a focus on the relationships between the diverse concerns on which these perspectives focus. Ellis concludes that a functional alternative to institutionalized environmentalism will only be possible once radical environmentalists "begin to consider the insights each person has generated and work toward a more comprehensive rather than confrontational understanding of problems that have multiple, complex, and interconnected causes."[59] "The challenge for radical environmental thinkers," Ellis writes, should not be to determine some essential root cause but to provide "a fuller assessment of the related, complex, and multiple origins of the diverse environmental problems that we face."[60] Such an emphasis on relationality can be understood as an application of the ecological perspective which Ellis advocates for in his attempt "to endorse and encourage a movement toward synthesis."[61]

[57] Cronon 1996, 266.

[58] Cronon 1996, 267.

[59] Cronon 1996, 267.

[60] Cronon 1996, 268.

[61] Cronon 1996, 267.

Chapter 2: Rachel Carson

2.1 *Under the Sea-Wind* (1941)

Rachel Carson's first book, *Under the Sea-Wind*, is a scientific and lyrical narrative of the seaside ecosystems along the coasts of the Americas. This book introduced a theme that would be the foundation of all of Carson's writings: "ecological relationships."[62] Carson "introduces us to the tie-lines of ecology in which each entity is linked and made whole by an integrated cycle of life," here encompassed under the term sea-wind, "Carson's shorthand for the encapsulation of all life within a single system."[63] The book's publishing coincided with the start of World War II and, as Linda Lear writes in the introduction, gives the sense that

> Danger is everywhere, yet Carson's narrative of sea life conveys an overall sense of calm. Everything is as it should be in the pattern of an ancient, sometimes violent, but endless cycle comforting in the certainty of repetition.[64]

As Carson writes: "These things were before ever man stood on the shore of the ocean and looked out upon it with wonder; they continue year in, year out, through the centuries and the ages, while man's kingdoms rise and fall."[65] *Under the Sea-Wind*, along with introducing the

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[62] Carson 2007, x.

[63] Carson 2007, xv.

[64] Carson 2007, xv.

[65] Carson 2007, 3.

ecological perspective to the public, was therefore "a product of its time, reflecting anxiety for the future, yet offering the reassurance of nature's constant change."[66]

Like all of Carson's books, *Under the Sea-Wind* was an effort "to change our attitudes about our relationship with the natural world" by presenting "a new way of thinking about the natural world, with which we are in an intimate partnership."[67] The book follows the lives of specific animals, "a gull, a mackerel, and an eel," as well as the myriad other life forms that make up the world in which they live.[68] Importantly, humans are but one small part of this narrative. For example, in telling the story of the gull, Carson writes that it "swerved out around the dock that had been built by the fisherman who lived on the island, crossed the gutter, and swept far over the salt marshes, taking joy in flight and soaring motion."[69] This brief mention of the fisherman is the only reference to the human species for the first several pages of the book, and she writes about his building the dock in the same way as all the other animals who build their lives in the seaside ecosystem. When Carson mentions him again, it is to say that he is one of many local fishermen who "knew from their fathers, who had it from their fathers" about the ways of these local waters.[70] As Carson foregrounds, these fishermen were but one part of these ecological relationships, as we all are.

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[66] Carson 2007, xvi.

[67] Carson 2007, xv.

[68] Carson 2007, xi.

[69] Carson 2007, 12.

[70] Carson 2007, 17.

2.2 *Silent Spring* (1962)

Carson's final book, *Silent Spring*, is by far the most renowned. Its focus on anthropogenic environmental pollutants and their lasting effects on all life on Earth remains relevant to this day. While we should all be terrified by the prospect of a silent spring, which could only be caused by a disruption of the cycles of life, that is not the only reason that this book strikes such a lasting chord. Not two years after its publication, Rachel Carson died of complications related to breast cancer, an illness which today is known to be associated with environmental pollutants. Carson was the canary in the coal mine and *Silent Spring* is her resounding warning call. The haunting image that opens the book is about a town with no birds to sing, no bees to pollinate, no flowers, and (only subsequently) no food, exemplifying an unprecedented disruption in the ecological relationships on which humans, like all life on earth, depend. Carson writes that "no witchcraft, no enemy action had silenced the rebirth of new life in this stricken world. The people had done it to themselves."[71]

Carson intended to have such an effect on popular culture that it would affect policy, and in this she was successful. Although she would die before the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency or the passage of the Endangered Species Act, her lasting legacy is undeniable. As Edward Wilson writes, "rarely does a single book alter the course of history, but Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* did exactly that" as the "outcry that followed its publication … spurred revolutionary changes" and "shaped a powerful social movement that has altered the course of history."[72] Similarly, Margaret Atwood writes that "Carson is a pivotal

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[71] Carson 2002, 3.

[72] Carson 2002, 379.

figure of the twentieth-century…people who thought one way before her essential 1962 book *Silent Spring* thought another way after it."[73] Likewise, in *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle*, discussed below, Arne Naess writes that the "international, long-range ecological movement began roughly with Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*," the publication of which was met by "great public concern for our environment."[74] Carolyn Merchant, furthermore, writes that "the environmental movement propelled by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* … formed my nascent social consciousness."[75]

Carson left a legacy by initiating a paradigm shift in public consciousness. She called for the institutionalization of environmentalism into American law and, thus, for radical change in American society. Although many radical environmentalists mobilized in opposition to this institutionalization, it was nothing short of revolutionary and set the course for the radical environmentalists who came after her. While not as radical by definition as the environmentalists who would follow in her footsteps (due to her focus on institutionalization), Carson, like other radical environmentalists, identified the roots of the problem in the state of society. She outlined this viewpoint in her critique of the fact that hers was "an era dominated by industry, in which the right to make a dollar at whatever cost is seldom challenged."[76] Carson is subtle in her critique of capitalistic society, never using the word "capitalism" in either of the books analyzed here, but her intentions are nonetheless clear. It was because of her willingness to challenge the deeply-set American value of unending economic growth that Carson's environmentalism was able to

[73] Carson 2002, back cover copy.

[74] Naess 1989, 210.

[75] Merchant 2020b, xvi.

[76] Carson 2002, 13.

inspire the radical environmentalists who came after her. In the face of endless technological and economic growth which are characteristics of capitalism, Carson's work stood in opposition to America itself which, in the early 1960s, "was an exuberant and prospering nation."[77] Because American society at the time was experiencing "record peacetime economic growth, an ethic of limitless progress prevailed" and "arguments for limit and constraint seemed almost unpatriotic" and therefore radical by definition.[78]

The information that Carson provided in *Silent Spring* regarding the harmful effects of pesticides was not new, as scientists had long been aware of the anthropogenic nature of the ecological crisis and the dangers of the chemical industry. What was new was the presentation of these facts to the public outside of "the technical literature."[79] As Edward Wilson writes, it "was Rachel Carson's achievement to synthesize this knowledge into a single image that everyone, scientists and the general public alike, could easily understand."[80] Carson writes that the "public must decide whether it wishes to continue on the present road, and it can only do so when in full possession of the facts."[81] That pesticides are harmful to humans is now common knowledge, but this was not the case in 1962. Wilson calls the understanding that humans are part of ecological relationships and therefore affected by changes in the environment the "Carson ethic" which not only spread across America but throughout the world.[82] The Carson ethic is based fundamentally

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[77] Carson 2002, 357.

[78] Carson 2002, 358.

[79] Carson 2002, 357.

[80] Carson 2002, 357.

[81] Carson 2002, 13.

[82] Carson 2002, 361.

on an ecological perspective that focuses on the relationships between all things, including humans and the environment. When *Silent Spring* was first published, this concept of humans as part of the natural world "was a major departure in our thinking about the relationship between humans and the natural environment" that "had enormous consequences for our understanding of human health as well as our attitudes toward environmental risk."[83]

Silent Spring led to "a public that demanded that science and government be held accountable" for the indiscriminate release of chemical poisons into the environment.[84] Carson's writing "makes clear the fact that citizens are not only becoming aroused and indignant but that often they show a keener understanding of the dangers and inconsistencies of spraying than do the officials who order it done."[85] Letters of complaint written to local newspapers and quoted by Carson in *Silent Spring* exemplify this. Citizens ask "can you save trees without also saving birds? Do they not, in the economy of nature, save each other? Isn't it possible to help the balance of nature without destroying it?" and, finally, can "anyone imagine anything so cheerless and dreary as a springtime without a robin's song?"[86] The inclusion of these letters in *Silent Spring* supported Carson's goal of setting "an example of what one committed individual can do

[83] Carson 2002, xvi.

[84] Carson 2002, xviii.

[85] Carson 2002, 113.

[86] Carson 2002, 114.

to change the direction of society."[87] For this reason, as Lear writes, "*Silent Spring* contained the kernel of social revolution."[88]

As Edward Wilson writes, Carson refers to the chemical poisoning which is the subject of *Silent Spring* in terms of "horror stories."[89] She writes, for example, that

> The world of systemic insecticides is a weird world, surpassing the imaginings of the brothers Grimm—perhaps most closely akin to the cartoon world of Charles Addams. It is a world where the enchanted forest of the fairy tales has become the poisonous forest in which an insect that chews a leaf or sucks the sap of a plant is doomed.[90]

Carson employs various forms of popular culture, such as cartoons and fairy tales, to pursue her goal of changing popular consciousness. A similar example lies in her explanation of how the indiscriminate spraying of insecticides would eventually affect humans. She describes this as "a house-that-Jack-built sequence, in which the large carnivores had eaten the smaller carnivores, that had eaten the herbivores, that had eaten the plankton, that had absorbed the poison from the water."[91] As Lear writes, Carson was not an environmentalist per se but, rather, "an ecologist—fascinated by intersections and connections but always aware of the whole," who "acknowledged her "kinship with other forms of life" and always wrote to impress that relationship on her

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[87] Carson 2002, xviii.

[88] Carson 2002, x.

[89] Carson 2002, 361.

[90] Carson 2002, 32, 33.

[91] Carson 2002, 48.

readers."[92] Carson writes that "seldom if ever does Nature operate in closed and separate compartments."[93] "The history of life on earth," she says, "has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings," including, humans and the places where we live.[94] In this way, Carson's reference to "The House That Jack Built" was more than a playful way to attract the public's attention or an easy way to explain that what humans do to the smallest of organisms can have a rebound effect on us. Everything is a "house-that-Jack-built sequence."[95] The world itself is a cumulative tale of ecological relationships. This is the lesson of "The House that Jack Built" just as it is that of *Silent Spring*. The laws of ecology are such that no part of any ecosystem can be considered separately from any other, and humans are just as much a part of these systems as everything else.

In her focus on ecology and relationships, Carson's ethic stood in opposition to the society around her. At "the time, the scientific culture was fixed on the spectacular success of the molecular revolution, which had placed physics and chemistry at the foundation of biology."[96] Carson was critical of the "era of specialists, each of whom sees his own problem and is unaware of or intolerant of the larger frame into which it fits."[97] In her focus on relationships and her understanding that humans cannot be considered separately from their environment or the ecological crisis, Carson is both radical and in support of environmental justice. She "observed

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[92] Carson 2002, xii.

[93] Carson 2002, 42.

[94] Carson 2002, 5.

[95] Carson 2002, 48.

[96] Carson 2002, 357.

[97] Carson 2002, 13.

that the captains of industry took no notice of the defilement of her hometown and no responsibility for it."[98] This "experience had her forever suspicious of promises of "better living through chemistry" and of claims that technology would create a progressively brighter future."[99] In this way, Carson's concern for the defilement of her hometown culminated in her focus on environmentalism and environmental justice. She "deliberately challenged the wisdom of a government that allowed toxic chemicals to be put into the environment … in language that everyone could understand."[100] She questioned "the moral right of government to leave its citizens unprotected from substances they could neither physically avoid nor publicly question."[101] She asks: "How could intelligent beings seek to control few unwanted species by a method that contaminated the entire environment and brought the threat of disease and death even to their own kind?"[102] Lear writes that

> In Carson's view the postwar culture of science that arrogantly claimed dominion over nature was the philosophic root of the problem. Human beings, she insisted, were not in control of nature but simply one of its parts: the survival of one part depended upon the health of all.[103]

Carson writes that the indiscriminate use of environmental poisons, which she says "should not be called "insecticides," but "biocides,"" is a result of the modern tendency towards

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[98] Carson 2002, xiii.

[99] Carson 2002, xiii.

[100] Carson 2002, xv.

[101] Carson 2002, xv.

[102] Carson 2002, 8.

[103] Carson 2002, xv, xvi.

monoculture.[104] "Single-crop farming," she says, "does not take advantage of the principles by which nature works; it is agriculture as an engineer might conceive it to be" and not an ecologist.[105] It ignores the importance of diversity, prioritizing mass production and market value. In contrast, agriculture based on ecological principles would see that nature "has introduced great variety into the landscape" for good reason and would avoid monoculture which "undoes the built-in checks and balances by which nature holds the species within bounds" without the need for chemical pollutants.[106] Carson makes clear that the increase in pests and the need for pesticides is a result of industrial capitalism and its focus on unending growth and efficiency, making money not only through the sale of crops but also of the chemicals that this form of farming necessitates. It is for this reason that she writes that industrialized agriculture and the pesticide program that it necessitates is

> [D]eservedly damned by practically everyone except the beneficiaries of this "sales bonanza." It is an outstanding example of an ill-conceived, badly executed, and thoroughly detrimental experiment in the mass control of insects.[107]

The attempt at chemical control of the environment is an example of the human hubris that radical environmentalists implicate in the ecological crisis. Carson writes that by "their very nature chemical controls are self-defeating, for they have been devised and applied without

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[104] Carson 2002, 8.

[105] Carson 2002, 11.

[106] Carson 2002, 11.

[107] Carson 2002, 162.

taking into account the complex biological systems" which are founded on ecological relationships.[108] It is an attempt "to dismiss the balance of nature" despite it being "a complex, precise, and highly integrated system of relationships between living things" of which humans, too, are a part, and which cannot be dismantled without risk to all.[109] This human hubris ignores that "the really effective control of insects is that applied by nature" which "ecologists call the resistance of the environment."[110] But to leave the control of insects to other insects means leaving money on the table which is something that a capitalistic society cannot support. Such a society is not concerned with the best interests of the people or the planet. For this reason, Carson says that "we should no longer accept the counsel of those who tell us that we must fill our world with poisonous chemicals; we should look about and see what other course is open to us."[111] With this statement Carson once again presents herself as truly radical, calling for the public to question society and to demand change when necessary.

[108] Carson 2002, 246.

[109] Carson 2002, 246.

[110] Carson 2002, 247.

[111] Carson 2002, 278.

Chapter 3: Murray Bookchin

3.1 *Our Synthetic Environment* (1962)

Both Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and Murray Bookchin's *Our Synthetic Environment* were published in 1962. In "Divergences on the Left: The Environmentalisms of Rachel Carson and Murray Bookchin," Peter McCord writes about the "coincident publication" of these books, both of which "brought difficult issues of pollution and health to the attention of the American public."[112] He writes that each "synthesized political and scientific arguments into new avenues of inquiry that are now commonly understood as the intellectual underpinning for the environmental movement."[113] Environmentalism, however, even on the left, is not a monolith, and McCord writes that it is important to distinguish between those who are just "left of centre in the American political tradition" and those who are "radically leftist."[114] McCord's comparison of *Silent Spring* and *Our Synthetic Environment* addresses this difference, referring to Carson's work as "reformist" as "working with a body of scientific evidence she appealed to the public to call for federal policy change."[115] At the time, however, as McCord writes, "the reformist impulse was progressive."[116] Furthermore, the radical critique of the reformism of institutionalized environmentalism was only possible after the institutionalization of environmentalism into American law which followed Carson's work. McCord writes that Bookchin's work was more

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[112] McCord 2008, 14.

[113] McCord 2008, 14.

[114] McCord 2008, 14.

[115] McCord 2008, 14.

[116] McCord 2008, 14.

explicitly radical than Carson's, as he was critical of mainstream environmentalists for "tinkering with existing institutions, social relations, technologies, and values" rather than their foundations.[117] Bookchin "called for revolutionary changes in American society as a necessary prerequisite for effectively dealing with environmental problems that were, he believed, rooted in America's social structure," solidifying himself as "a persistent critic of mainstream, reform environmentalism."[118] Reform, mainstream, institutionalized, or "liberal" environmentalism, in Bookchin's words, "hijacked" the environmental movement into "providing more palatable techniques for perpetuating…irremediable diseases" of America's "anti-ecological society."[119] Like environmental justice activists, Bookchin added a socialist critique to the ecological perspective, taking "entirely seriously the need to think about workers and communities as intensely as wilderness."[120]

A similar comparison of Carson's and Bookchin's 1962 works is presented in the introduction of the 2022 edition of *Our Synthetic Environment*. Bill McKibben writes that Rachel Carson's 1962 work "shifted the world" by uniting "Americans, from President Kennedy down, in the recognition that we faced a problem. And in so doing, she accomplished a very radical end: she knocked the shine off modernity."[121] Bookchin's 1962 work makes this critique of modernity even more explicit. As McKibben writes, Bookchin "understood—far better than

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[117] Cronon 1996, 264.

[118] Cronon 1996, 263.

[119] Cronon 1996, 264.

[120] Bookchin 2022, 10.

[121] Bookchin 2022, 7, 8.

Carson, or indeed most environmentalists of the moment—why it was going to be hard to realize that entirely sensible vision" of an ecologically sustainable society: "In a word, capitalism."[122] This is the issue that Bookchin identifies more explicitly than Carson, and it is to this that Jeffrey Ellis refers when he writes that Bookchin's "1962 book, *Our Synthetic Environment*, went far beyond Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in describing the scope of America's environmental problems and analyzing their social and economic origins."[123]

Bookchin begins *Our Synthetic Environment* with an analysis of the effects of recent changes in American society. He writes that although America was reaping the rewards of modernity, such as the reduction of once common illnesses and advances in technology, "by no means are all the advances as beneficial as the historians would have us believe."[124] For "modern man," Bookchin says:

> [F]oods contain a disconcertingly large amount of pesticide residues … His waterways and the air he breathes contain not only the toxic wastes of the more familiar industries but radioactive pollutants … With the rise of these problems, dramatic changes have occurred in the incidence of disease.[125]

Like environmental justice activists, Bookchin's work makes clear that these issues are equally social and environmental and that to understand the depth of the ecological crisis, it is therefore necessary to analyze the human relationship with nature. Bookchin holds that "man must live in

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[122] Bookchin 2022, 10.

[123] Cronon 1996, 263.

[124] Bookchin 2022, 14.

[125] Bookchin 2022, 14, 15.

harmony with myriad forms of plants and animals, many of which are indispensable to his survival" because any "serious disorders in the land or in plants and animals eventually produce disorders in the human body."[126] Therefore, when it comes to "modern man … [n]early all the abuses he inflicts on soil, plants, and animals are returned to him in kind."[127] This is the same lesson that Carson taught with her reference to the "house-that-Jack-built sequence[s]."[128] Also like Carson, Bookchin writes about the need for an increase in "the "ecological viewpoint" toward man's influence on the natural world."[129] Proponents of this perspective critique human hubris when they ask, rhetorically, "whether it is man or his unsatisfactory environment that should be changed."[130] This simplistic belief that an environment can simply be changed without a variety of consequences to humans and the rest of the world ignores the inherent relationships that are the focus of the ecological perspective. Furthermore, this conception of the environment as "unsatisfactory," Bookchin writes, is a result of constructed "wants" which are "created by high-pressure advertising and salesmanship" rather than authentic needs or desires.[131] He concludes that "society would profit more by giving a freer rein to nature" and that this "could be successfully pursued as a form of applied ecology if blind economic interests were replaced with a sense of social responsibility."[132]

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[126] Bookchin 2022, 37, 38.

[127] Bookchin 2022, 38.

[128] Carson 2002, 48.

[129] Bookchin 2022, 38.

[130] Bookchin 2022, 225.

[131] Bookchin 2022, 228.

[132] Bookchin 2022, 212, 215.

Bookchin writes about agriculture under capitalism as a "land factory" which is as harmful to land as it is to people.[133] He says that the "problems of our synthetic environment can be summed up by saying that nonhuman interests are superseding many of our responsibilities to human biological welfare."[134] By "nonhuman" he does not mean the needs of nature or the environment, but those of capitalism. "The needs of industrial plants are being placed before man's need for clean air; the disposal of industrial wastes has gained priority over the community's need for clean water," and in this way, the "most pernicious laws of the market place are given precedence over the most compelling laws of biology."[135] Here, like Carson, Bookchin reminds readers to group humans with the rest of nature and, therefore, in opposition to the "laws of the market place." It was because of capitalism, Bookchin writes, as well as the changes to society that followed the Industrial Revolution that the "word "nature" was replaced by the phrase "natural resources"" and the "progress of man was identified with the pillage of nature."[136] In industrialized, capitalistic society, the "needs of commerce and industry produced a new ideology: There are no dictates of nature that are beyond human transgression."[137] The harmful focus on industry and growth rather than ecology and health places these institutions in opposition to the ecological perspective and the relationships between humans and the plants, animals, and land on which we depend.

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[133] Bookchin 2022, 47.

[134] Bookchin 2022, 35.

[135] Bookchin 2022, 35.

[136] Bookchin 2022, 61.

[137] Bookchin 2022, 61.

In promoting the ecological perspective, Bookchin, like Carson, is critical of the modern tendency towards monoculture. He writes that nature "is a mixed farmer" which "seldom cultivates a single crop to the exclusion of all others. Variety and combination, of both plants and animals, constitute the basis for natural equilibrium."[138] "Man does not practice agriculture in a vacuum," despite the efforts of the "captains of industry."[139] Bookchin shares Carson's understanding that the tendency towards monoculture and the subsequent increased use of insecticides leads to a harmful positive feedback loop, which Carolyn Merchant, discussed below, refers to as "a pesticide treadmill."[140] Bookchin explains that a species only becomes a pest "when it invades a new area that is not inhabited by its natural enemies or when environmental changes occur that provide more favourable conditions."[141] This type of situation is unlikely to occur under normal conditions but precisely describes single-crop agriculture. A single use of chemical insecticides "creates the later need for more chemicals … Once begun, there is no stopping if the crop is not to be lost."[142] This failed attempt to improve the state of nature is an example of the human hubris which continues to contribute to our ecological crisis.

Bookchin's call for the ecological perspective and his analysis of monoculture amount to a critique of the tendency to break things into their components and failure to focus on the whole. Carson referred to this as a result of "an era of specialists," a tendency that Bookchin identifies as

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[138] Bookchin 2022, 44.

[139] Bookchin 2022, 58.

[140] Merchant 2005, 156.

[141] Bookchin 2022, 62.

[142] Bookchin 2022, 63.

the "modern Weltgeist."[143] Like William Cronon, Bookchin acknowledges that the "problems of research would be simplified measurably if every environmental factor that plays a role in degenerative illnesses could be isolated and its effects subjected to precise analysis."[144] This way of understanding the world, however, is opposed to the ecological perspective. The atomizing tendency, increased by the nuclear age, may be able to describe the parts of an ecosystem or a society, but it cannot explain or even acknowledge "the dependence of each group on all the others."[145] From the ecological perspective, rather than analysis in isolation, "each factor is meaningful only in relation to all the others."[146] Bookchin quotes the then Surgeon General's analysis of social and environmental concerns, writing that "the many and complex interrelationships among those problems have become increasingly apparent, and it is obvious that they must be considered as parts of a whole."[147] In this way, like the environmental justice activists quoted by Giovanna Di Chiro, above, Bookchin advocates for the coordination of separate efforts that seek "sound answers to the many challenging questions in the field of environmental health."[148] He supports the pursuit of common ground between the parts that make up environmentalism, thereby aligning his perspective with radical environmentalists' goal of synthesizing the diverse justice groups into a unified movement.

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[143] Carson 2002, 13; Bookchin 2022, 26.

[144] Bookchin 2022, 25, 26.

[145] Bookchin 2022, 44.

[146] Bookchin 2022, 26.

[147] Bookchin 2022, 33.

[148] Bookchin 2022, 33.

Bookchin writes that his goal in *Our Synthetic Environment* is to present the argument that "[c]ompleteness, balance, and diversity should be regarded as practical ecological concepts —as important in producing healthy human communities as they are in producing stable plant-animal communities."[149] He believes that the implementation of these concepts through radical change in mainstream society would lead to the development of an ecological society that would be more just for humans and the environment. For Bookchin, as for environmental justice activists in general, social and environmental issues are inherently connected and changes in one are understood to always affect the other. He writes that any "attempt to preserve the health of individuals which does not also aim at creating social patterns that will favour the health of mankind as a whole may result in limited improvement but not long-range solutions."[150] Extending this concept to include the health of the environment as inherent to human health, Bookchin uses this ecological perspective to develop the concept of social ecology. Because "every social change has deep-seated biological consequences," Bookchin proposes a society that takes both into account, focusing on "balance, and diversity."[151] Both society and the environment, he writes, are strengthened by diversity and a focus on the creation of relationships that are "complementary—between nonhuman and human—in a richly articulated unity."[152]

The intertwined ecological and social crises, Bookchin writes, are of a magnitude that no individual "can hope to solve or even meliorate on his own; they can be solved only by the

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[149] Bookchin 2022, 210.

[150] Bookchin 2022, 225.

[151] Bookchin 2022, 225, 210.

[152] Bookchin 2022, 50.

community as a whole."[153] In this way, like environmental justice activists, he focuses on community and unified action. He writes about the interrelated needs of "restoring the complexity of man's environment and … reducing the community to a human scale."[154] This requires the development of a new relationship with nature as well as between humans, such that the individual and the environment "can develop together, each responding as fully as possible to the needs of the other."[155] In the creation of an ecological society, he writes, humans must "develop our environment more selectively, more subtly, and more rationally than we have thus far, combining the best of the past and present and bringing forth a new synthesis of man and nature."[156] With this focus on synthesis between humans and nature, Bookchin foregrounds the goal of undoing the divide between humans and the environment which is foundational to both radical environmentalism and environmental justice.

3.2 *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (1982)

In *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*, Bookchin writes that the "utopistic sensibility of the 1960s" had been characterized by a "revolutionary optimism … which regarded the success of revolutionary socialism as an *imminent* certainty."[157] However, "as the certainty of a victorious world social revolution gave way to an extraordinary expansion of capital; as capitalism itself prospered, such as it had never done in the past," it

[153] Bookchin 2022, 84.

[154] Bookchin 2022, 244.

[155] Bookchin 2022, 238.

[156] Bookchin 2022, 243, 244.

[157] Bookchin 2005, 13.

became clear that "humanity was not living in the dusk of bourgeois society."[158] Bookchin emphasizes, however, that

> [B]ourgeois society cannot continue its devastation of the ecosphere without destroying the biotic and climate foundation of its own existence. If society is to survive, it must produce a radically new humanity-nature dispensation … This precludes a society that is guided by the maxim of "grow or die"—the immanent bourgeois drive to reduce the organic to the inorganic in an ever-competitive frenzy of capital expansion and human exploitation.[159]

In the wake of the "utopistic sensibility of the 1960s," Bookchin writes, capitalism became "robust materially, a fact that the Left must finally face."[160] Today, however, the "Left" has embraced capitalism, more than just facing it, such that it is only radicals (neither left nor right, but outside of the system and against it) who remain to face off against capitalistic society in the way called for by Bookchin.

Bookchin's critique of capitalism extends to his identification of a change in the cultural Zeitgeist since the publication of *Our Synthetic Environment*. In *The Ecology of Freedom*, he writes that there was a switch from an atomistic preference for simplicity and isolation to "mysticism" which he sees in environmental movements such as deep ecology. He writes that the rise in popularity of these "mystical ecologies" was a result of

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[158] Bookchin 2005, 13.

[159] Bookchin 2005, 13, 14.

[160] Bookchin 2005, 13.

> The massive shift by many people away from serious concerns with the objective conditions of life—such as institutional forms of domination, the use of technology for exploitative purposes, and the everyday realities of human suffering—toward an introverted subjectivism … [that] all testify to a sense of disempowerment in both social and personal life.[161]

According to Bookchin, the interconnected social and environmental crises had culminated in "the inability of millions of people to cope with a harsh and demoralizing reality" and the feeling that they were unable "to control the increasingly oppressive direction in which society is moving."[162] He writes that the subsequent "prevailing mystical Zeitgeist" worked against the radical movement. "Radical ecology's earlier confrontational stance toward capitalism and hierarchical society has been increasingly replaced by cries against "technology" and "industrial society"" which he says were "safe, socially neutral targets" that did not question the mainstream way of life.[163] He writes that "the most compelling real fact that radicals in our era have not adequately faced is the fact that capitalism today has become a *society*, not only an economy."[164] This is why "without changing society, we will not change the disastrous ecological direction in which capitalism is moving."[165] Drawing the social and ecological issues together, he writes that

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[161] Bookchin 2005, 19.

[162] Bookchin 2005, 19.

[163] Bookchin 2005, 40, 54.

[164] Bookchin 2005, 20.

[165] Bookchin 2005, 63.

the "political and economic solution to our current problems is also an ecological solution" which is that the "private ownership of the planet by elite strata must be brought to an end."[166]

Bookchin writes that what "we encounter among mystical ecologies is a crude reductionism" such as the "veiled Malthusianism" introduced by Jeffrey Ellis, above.[167] "To use such ecumenical words as humanity, we, people, and the like … when we discuss social affairs is grossly misleading," says Bookchin, as it gives everyone "the same responsibility for the ills of our planet."[168] This "plays into the hands of a privileged stratum who are only too eager to blame all the human victims of an exploitative society for the social and ecological ills of our time."[169] Like Carson and environmental justice activists, Bookchin writes that the "notion that man is destined to dominate nature is by no means a universal feature of human culture."[170] He says that social ecologists "cannot emphasize too strongly that the concept emerged very gradually from a broader social development: the increasing domination of human by human."[171] This increasing domination, according to Bookchin, "profoundly altered not only social life but also the attitude of people toward each other, humanity's vision of itself, and ultimately its attitude toward the natural world."[172] Bookchin's central argument in *The Ecology of Freedom* is that as the basis of the ecological crisis, "the very *idea* of dominating … nature has its origins in the domination of

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[166] Bookchin 2005, 58.

[167] Bookchin 2005, 23; Cronon 1996, 264.

[168] Bookchin 2005, 33.

[169] Bookchin 2005, 33.

[170] Bookchin 2005, 109.

[171] Bookchin 2005, 109.

[172] Bookchin 2005, 109.

human by human."[173] To blame all of humanity for the ecological crisis, therefore, ignores the social justice issues that are the source of the problem. To address these injustices, Bookchin calls for a society that is "more rational, eliminates classes and hierarchies, and undergoes changes in sensibility that are marked by a deep respect for life," both human and otherwise.[174] An environmental movement that ignores these concerns, such as the institutionalized forms that are opposed to environmental justice, as noted above, is "faced with the dangers" of becoming "mean-spirited and arrogant in its treatment of genuinely denied people."[175] Bookchin therefore emphasizes the need for "the commitment of authentic radical movements—socialist and anarchist alike—to human happiness" which, if pursued in the light of environmental justice, will lead to an ecologically sustainable and just society.[176]

Bookchin defines ecology as "the dialectical *unfolding* of life-forms from the simple to the complex, or more precisely, from the simple to the diverse."[177] Echoing Carson's explanation of ecology as a "house-that-Jack-built sequence" and, thus, a cumulative tale, he writes that nature "is a cumulative evolutionary process from the inanimate to the animate and ultimately the social."[178] His intention in writing *The Ecology of Freedom*, he says, was to define both the natural and the human as part of a single ecology, which he calls an ecology of freedom. A society where both humans and nature can live freely, Bookchin holds, is a society that is truly

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[173] Bookchin 2005, 34.

[174] Bookchin 2005, 35.

[175] Bookchin 2005, 54.

[176] Bookchin 2005, 54.

[177] Bookchin 2005, 10, 11.

[178] Carson 2002, 48; Bookchin 2005, 22.

just. He offers social ecology as "a holistic, socially radical, and theoretically coherent alternative to the largely technocratic, reformist, and single-issue environmental movements."[179] He describes these other forms of environmentalism as "rather narrow, pragmatic, often socially neutral" and, thus, "woefully inadequate" in their understanding of "the causes of, and long-range solutions to" the ecological crisis.[180] He writes that reformist environmentalists aim "to adapt the natural world to the needs of the existing society and its exploitative, capitalistic imperatives by way of reforms."[181] Radical environmentalists understand this to be an impossible task as an unsustainable "grow or die" society is incommensurate with a finite, interconnected world.

In line with radical environmentalism, Bookchin foregrounds the "much needed goals of formulating a project for radical social change and for cultivating a new sensibility toward the natural world."[182] "What is of *pivotal* importance" in determining whether the destruction of the environment and other injustices will continue, according to Bookchin, is "precisely the kind of society we establish."[183] The ecological perspective as expressed by social ecology and environmental justice activists, but often marginalized by mainstream perspectives, holds that human societies are never separate from the ecosystems in which they are built. Societies are not merely a part of ecosystems but a product of them. "We can never disembed ourselves from nature—any more than we can disembed ourselves from our own viscera" as "nature never

[179] Bookchin 2005, 15.

[180] Bookchin 2005, 15.

[181] Bookchin 2005, 15.

[182] Bookchin 2005, 15.

[183] Bookchin 2005, 34.

simply coexists with us; it is part of every aspect of our structure and being."[184] Because of this, "[h]ubris in social evolution is as dangerous as it is in natural evolution and for the same reasons," as "human freedom rests on the stability of the natural ecosystem in which it is always embedded."[185] This is why "we not only share a common history with nature, all the differences between nature and society aside, but also a common destiny."[186] To address the ecological crisis, therefore, Bookchin says, people "must reexamine the cleavages that separated humanity from nature, and the splits within the human community that originally produced this cleavage."[187]

Bookchin emphasizes community in a way that echoes the perspective of environmental justice activists. He writes that human society once "tended to follow an age-old tradition of nestling closely into a local ecosystem, of adapting itself sensitively to local resources and their unique capacity to sustain life."[188] "Only modern capitalism could seriously subvert this ancient sensibility and system of technical integration" through its "divisive political and commercial relations."[189] According to Bookchin, modern capitalism "grossly distorted" human societies such that Western culture no longer exists as "a truly ecological community or *eco community* peculiar to its ecosystem, with an active sense of participation in the overall environment and the cycles of nature."[190] Therefore, "capitalism's historically destructive role" lies in the fact "that it

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[184] Bookchin 2005, 212.

[185] Bookchin 2005, 101, 102.

[186] Bookchin 2005, 99.

[187] Bookchin 2005, 108.

[188] Bookchin 2005, 347.

[189] Bookchin 2005, 347.

[190] Bookchin 2005, 125, 112.

subverted a more fundamental dimension of the traditional social ensemble: the integrity of the human community."[191] Bookchin writes that once "the market relationship—and its reduction of individual relationships to those of buyers and sellers—replaced the extended family, the guild, and its highly mutualistic network of consociation … Community as such began to disappear."[192] Capitalism's destruction of this form of community had a direct and destructive effect on the human relationship with the natural world because out of the "feeling of unity between the individual and the community emerges a feeling of unity between the community and its environment."[193] According to Bookchin, an ecological society would address these effects of capitalism by fostering a focus on community and the development of healthy relationships between human societies and the ecosystems in which they are embedded. Bookchin says that it "is social ecology's crucial responsibility" to "demonstrate that modern systems of production, distribution, and promotion of goods and needs are grossly irrational as well as anti-ecological."[194] These systems are based on what he calls "American pragmatism" and "environmentalist technocracy" which "is hierarchy draped in green garments; hence it is all the more insidious because it is camouflaged in the colour of ecology."[195] Bookchin writes that "American pragmatism is a rationalism of conquest, not of reconciliation; of intellectual predation, not of intellectual symbiosis," and therefore places it in opposition to an ecologically

[191] Bookchin 2005, 347.

[192] Bookchin 2005, 347.

[193] Bookchin 2005, 112.

[194] Bookchin 2005, 349.

[195] Bookchin 2005, 396, 409.

sustainable society built on the values of community and diversity.[196] He calls for "an ecological approach to ethics" that foregrounds environmental justice and focuses on relationships and symbiosis such that "humanity would neither give nor take; it would actually *participate* with nature."[197]

The societal change that Bookchin calls for is explicitly revolutionary, based on his analysis of revolutions throughout human history which he presents in *The Ecology of Freedom*. Rachel Carson, as quoted above, wrote that the "public must decide whether it wishes to continue on the present road, and it can only do so when in full possession of the facts."[198] Similarly, Bookchin writes that his analysis of revolutions "reveal[s] that the rising flood of social change must be … nourished by an educated and informed popular consciousness."[199] This is why Bookchin believes that it is necessary that change "in culture and personality go hand in hand with our efforts to achieve a society that is ecological," because we can only "change the world by also trying to change ourselves."[200] Like Giovanna Di Chiro, who wrote that environmental justice activists find their roots in the social justice movements of the 1960s, Bookchin also locates the beginning of the revolutionary sensibility that underlies radical environmentalism in the 1960s. He writes that at that time, a "widespread alienation" began to develop against "the institutions of the established order" which "exploded into what seemed to be a

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[196] Bookchin 2005, 396.

[197] Bookchin 2005, 367.

[198] Carson 2002, 13.

[199] Bookchin 2005, 101.

[200] Bookchin 2005, 439, 446.

counterculture."[201] He says that this new cultural consciousness "found its bedrock in a vast stratum of western society" as it was "not only the poor but also the relatively affluent, not only the young but also their elders, not only the visibly denied but also the seemingly privileged" who found their values aligned with the new, popular culture.[202] One of the values that united these previously separate groups was the belief that "[i]ntertwined with the social crisis is a crisis that has emerged directly from man's exploitation of the planet," which is foundational to both social ecology specifically and radical environmentalism in general.[203]

Bookchin writes that the "problem that now faces revolutionary movements is not merely one of reappropriating society but literally reconstituting it."[204] The state of society will determine its relationship to nature, and therefore society itself must become ecological, which is a stark contrast to its current state. He says that people "must try to create a new culture, not merely another movement that attempts to remove the symptoms of our crises without affecting their sources."[205] He writes that "[m]ore than ever, we need a clearer vision of humanity's capacity to think as well as to act, to confront reality *not only as it is but as it should be* if we are to survive this, the greatest turning point in history."[206] He asks the public to make the necessary changes by putting thought to action, and in this way his perspective is radicalism at its core. "All of my writings," he says, "are meant to give a coherent view of the social sources of our

[201] Bookchin 2005, 82.

[202] Bookchin 2005, 82.

[203] Bookchin 2005, 82.

[204] Bookchin 2005, 200.

[205] Bookchin 2005, 439.

[206] Bookchin 2005, 12, 13.

ecological crisis and to offer an eco-anarchist project to restructure society along rational lines."[207] In pursuit of this, he calls for "direct action" which he defines as "the unmediated intervention of people into affairs that are usually resolved by parliamentary debates and legislation."[208]

Bookchin's *The Ecology of Freedom* outlines what he sees as the necessary changes to society in a way that is "partly critical and partly reconstructive," based on the foundational belief that "our environmental dislocations are deeply rooted in an irrational, anti-ecological society."[209] Such a society, founded on a "competitive capitalist system that nourishes a view of the natural world as a mere agglomeration of "resources" for human production and consumption" is "irremediable by piecemeal, single-issue reforms."[210] In opposition to such a competitive system, Bookchin writes that social ecology "emphasizes that the survival of living beings greatly depends on their ability to be supportive of one another."[211] He writes that society faces a "disassembly" that will "constitute a conflict more final than the odious prospects of atomization and social breakdown that confronted humanity in the chronic social crises that marked the previous century."[212] He says that this is because the "legacy of domination" has been "permitted to unfold at the expense of the legacy of freedom" such that the perceived divide

[207] Bookchin 2005, 18.

[208] Bookchin 2005, 205.

[209] Bookchin 2005, 16.

[210] Bookchin 2005, 16.

[211] Bookchin 2005, 30.

[212] Bookchin 2005, 12.

between nature and humans has become a foundational aspect of the mainstream worldview.[213] Creating a society that undoes this divide will require "a conscious effort to discern how the particulars of a community" come together to make the "whole more than the sum of its parts."[214] He writes that this is "a very important tenet of ecology: ecological wholeness is not an immutable homogeneity but rather the very opposite—a dynamic *unity of diversity*" in which "balance and harmony are achieved by ever-changing differentiation."[215] The goal of social ecologists, says Bookchin, as for all proponents of an ecological perspective, is to advocate for "wholeness, and not mere adding together of innumerable details collected at random" but a focus on "social and natural relationships in communities or "ecosystems" … conceiving them holistically, that is to say, in terms of their mutual interdependence."[216]

[213] Bookchin 2005, 12.

[214] Bookchin 2005, 87.

[215] Bookchin 2005, 88.

[216] Bookchin 2005, 87.

Chapter 4: Arne Naess

4.1 *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy* (1989)

Arne Naess' *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy* begins with a reference to the cultural consciousness of the 1980s which was similarly addressed by Murray Bookchin in *The Ecology of Freedom*, above. The opening lines of the introduction read: "We feel our world is in crisis. We walk around and sense an emptiness in our way of living and the course which we follow."[217] Naess, like Bookchin, notes how the culture of the 1980s saw an upswing in dystopian rather than utopian ways of imagining the future of the planet as more people felt that they were experiencing a world in crisis that was beyond their ability to control. In response to this crisis, Naess resigned after thirty years as a professor of philosophy and began to write *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle*, believing that the "threat of ecocatastrophe had become too apparent" and that "philosophy could help chart a way out of the chaos."[218] His goal was to develop an "ecosophy," defined below, which would not only explain why "the link between people and nature [is] so central" but also connect this to the necessary action, as he believed that any "action without this underlying wisdom is useless."[219] "Without an ecosophy," he writes, "ecology can provide no principles for acting, no motive for political and individual efforts."[220] The application of an ecosophy, says Naess, results in environmental action based on ecological principles. His ecosophy of deep ecology is explicitly radical in its opposition to the

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[217] Naess 1989, 1.

[218] Naess 1989, 1.

[219] Naess 1989, 3, 1.

[220] Naess 1989, 41.

"shallow ecological movement" which merely "presents technical recommendations for reform."[221] Defining these futile forms of environmentalism, he writes that

> A widespread assumption in influential circles of the industrial countries is that overcoming the environmental crisis is a technical problem: it does not presuppose changes in consciousness or economic system. This assumption is one of the pillars of the shallow ecological movement.[222]

In response to this, deep ecologists emphasize the need for "radical transformation."[223]

As David Rothenburg writes in the introduction to *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle* the book "is not a work of philosophical or logical argumentation" but is primarily "intuitions developed over a long life spent in nature."[224] That Naess' work stems from intuitions explains why Bookchin refers to deep ecology as mystical. The intuitions from which deep ecology arose began in Naess' childhood when he would "stand or sit for hours, days, weeks in shallow water on the coast, inspecting and marvelling at the overwhelming diversity and richness of life in the sea."[225] This experience would later lead him to write that childhood "is an easy time to feel that one's identity is tied to immediate nature," which is foundational to Naess' ecosophy of deep ecology.[226] This is also reminiscent of Rachel Carson's origins as a writer of ecology, as time spent marvelling at the life of the sea was what led her to write *Under the Sea-Wind*, and, later,

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[221] Naess 1989, 40.

[222] Naess 1989, 96.

[223] Naess 1989, 96.

[224] Naess 1989, 2.

[225] Naess 1989, 2.

[226] Naess 1989, 2.

an essay called *The Sense of Wonder: A Celebration of Nature for Parents and Children*, in which she "captures the essence of the wonder-filled world of children and stirs in us that ancient longing for unity with the living world."[227] Similarly, Naess writes that "the root of philosophy is in wonder, and this joy in wonder cannot be lost even in a time when conditions appear so grim."[228] In line with this, he wrote *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle* because he "wanted to stress the continued possibility for joy in a world faced by disaster."[229] This focus on joy is similar to Bookchin's call for "the commitment of authentic radical movements … to human happiness."[230] Both authors relate this quest for joy to radical environmentalists' goal of revolutionary change in the relationship between humans and nature.

In response to those who are critical of deep ecology for being "*irrational* … a 'mere' emotional reaction to the *rationality* of a modern Western society," Naess reminds readers that Western culture does not have a claim on rationality.[231] There is nothing rational about implementing a system of perpetual growth on a finite planet. He writes, furthermore, that those who criticize radical environmentalists for their "emotionalism" ignore "that reality as spontaneously experienced binds the emotional and the rational into indivisible wholes, the gestalts."[232] From Naess' perspective, emotional activation is a necessary aspect of radical environmentalism which aims to "stir up worldwide reaction" and public engagement in the

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[227] Carson 1998, 9.

[228] Naess 1989, 13.

[229] Naess 1989, 2.

[230] Bookchin 2005, 54.

[231] Naess 1989, 63.

[232] Naess 1989, 63.

ecological crisis.[233] He cites Rachel Carson's motivation in writing *Silent Spring* as "partly a *feeling* of deep humility" and concludes that the ability to incite this feeling in readers played a significant role in the book's cultural impact.[234] He acknowledges, however, that "expressions of love of nature are not enough. What count, or rather, what should count, are the norms and value priorities actively expressed" by a well-articulated personal ecosophy.[235] He writes that "for supporters of the deep ecology movement … strong basic philosophical and religious positions [are] their own ultimate premises."[236] In this way, he defends what Bookchin and others have critiqued as deep ecology's mystical underpinnings.

In detailing the concept of deep ecology in the introduction to *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle*, Rothenburg writes that "some organizations seem afraid of the possible revolutionary nature" of the movement.[237] One opponent to the fundamental changes that radical environmentalists call for writes that deep ecology is "a far more radical position than that taken by most supporters of alternative technology involving as it does the rejection of economic growth and of the assumptions underlying western science, [and] the subordination of human society to natural processes."[238] In response to these concerns, Rothenburg writes that

> [W]e should see the deep ecology movement as efforts directed towards identity with nature (not non-human, but an extension of humanity). And we

[233] Naess 1989, 63, 64.

[234] Naess 1989, 64.

[235] Naess 1989, 64.

[236] Naess 1989, 73.

[237] Naess 1989, 18.

[238] Naess 1989, 17.

> are to be not subordinated, but integrated into natural processes. Perhaps economic growth for its own sake is rejected, but not growth or progress if redefined in a more ecological manner.[239]

Naess, too, is concerned with these dominant ideas about growth and progress. "Few things have had a more destructive effect upon candid speaking, and more generally upon personal engagement in the ecological movement, than the claim that 'there's no sense trying to stop progress,'" he writes.[240] He is critical of the mainstream tendency to think of development and progress only "in those terms of techno-industrial growth."[241] He writes that it "is interesting but disturbing to note that certain techno-industrial sides to existence are now accepted as unalterable and objective" but that this inevitability of progress is not applied to social justice concerns.[242] In a statement which reflects poorly on the present day, he says that

> Slums must be eliminated by the time we arrive at commercial space flight, but why do the words 'development' and 'progress' have so little appeal here? … Just when do we choose to make use of this term 'progress'? Why not speak of progress in life quality?[243]

Carolyn Merchant, discussed below, has the same concerns, asking: "Why not stop the growth mania and focus on quality of life items that fulfill basic needs?"[244] In asking these questions,

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[239] Naess 1989, 17.

[240] Naess 1989, 72.

[241] Naess 1989, 72.

[242] Naess 1989, 72.

[243] Naess 1989, 72.

[244] Merchant 2005, 34.

these authors align their forms of radical environmentalism with social and environmental justice.

Rothenburg quotes one opponent of deep ecology in defining it as "a trend towards a new revolutionary stream in the environmental movement" which "is not merely content with striving for environmental protection, but is seeking to cultivate a liberal, almost counter-culture view of the world."[245] While this statement was meant as a critique of deep ecology, it is a useful explanation of its goals. From this perspective, deep ecology is "a form of radical protest that seeks to undermine the deepest roots of 'the system'" by "centring on the ecosphere … thinking of the landscape first, before human needs, and then devising technologies, and management, that stem from a rootedness in place and nature."[246] Rothenburg writes that the countercultural character of deep ecology is a result of its foundation in philosophy which must always "go deeply into problems and situations which may at first seem simple or obvious, digging out the roots to reveal structures and connections."[247] The "deep" and radical character of deep ecology is found in "the distance one looks in search of the roots of the problem, refusing to ignore troubling evidence that may reveal untold vastness of the danger."[248] Deep ecologists believe that one "should never limit the bounds of the problem just to make an easier solution acceptable" as many "shallow ecologies" tend to do.[249] In this way, both parts of the term "deep ecology" point to the need for radical change.

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[245] Naess 1989, 18.

[246] Naess 1989, 12, 15.

[247] Naess 1989, 12.

[248] Naess 1989, 12.

[249] Naess 1989, 12.

Naess defines an ecosophy as "*a philosophical world-view or system inspired by the conditions of life in the ecosphere*."[250] An ecosophy, he says, is developed through the application of "ecophilosophy," a study of "the placement of humanity in nature, and the search for new kinds of explanations of this through the use of systems and relational perspectives."[251] Ecophilosophy is grounded in the science of ecology as "it is concerned first of all with relationships between entities as an essential component of what these entities are in themselves."[252] An ecosophy is a way of understanding the world and the human's place in it. In focusing on the development of ecosophies, Naess' *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle* is less of an examination of what has led to the current ecological crisis than it is an explanation of how we should react to that crisis to make a better future possible. Like Bookchin, Naess foregrounds not a reversal in the form of hierarchy such that nature takes precedence over humans but a removal of hierarchy such that nature and humans are considered together. As Naess writes, the deep ecology movement is founded on a rejection "of the man-in-environment image in favour of *the relational, total field image*" which understands organisms "as knots in the field of intrinsic relations."[253] He defines intrinsic relations as "belong[ing] to the definition or basic constitutions" of things such that without the relation, they are no longer the same or are even unintelligible.[254] Despite being in perfect alignment with an ecological perspective, Naess prefers

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[250] Naess 1989, 38.

[251] Naess 1989, 36.

[252] Naess 1989, 36.

[253] Naess 1989, 28.

[254] Naess 1989, 28.

the term "relationalism," which he says "has ecosophical value" because it presents "organisms or persons as something which cannot be isolated from their milieux."[255] He writes that

> The tendency to see things in context … characterizes ecological thought. Hence the slogan 'everything is interconnected' suggests the necessity to articulate total views, everything being in principle relevant for every decision made.[256]

He clarifies, however, that "[s]peaking of interaction between organisms and the milieux gives rise to the wrong associations, as an *organism is interaction*" and, likewise, "a person is a part of nature to the extent that he or she too is a relational junction within the total field."[257]

Regarding *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle*, Naess writes that

> The intention is to encourage readers to find ways to develop and articulate basic, common intuitions of the absolute value of nature which resonate with their own backgrounds and approaches … [through] the utilization of basic concepts from the science of ecology—such as complexity, diversity, and symbiosis.[258]

He asks readers to develop their own ecosophies and, in this way, to join the radical environmentalism movement. Naess' personal ecosophy is based on his belief that humanity is "inseparable from nature" and that if "this ontology is fully understood, it will no longer be

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[255] Naess 1989, 56.

[256] Naess 1989, 72.

[257] Naess 1989, 56.

[258] Naess 1989, 3.

possible for us to injure nature wantonly, as this would mean injuring an integral part of ourselves."[259] He holds that any perspective that similarly reduces a person's likelihood to injure nature is worthwhile. Each person's ecosophy can "lend support to a growing international deep ecology movement, which includes scientists, activists, scholars, artists, and all those who are actively working towards a change in anti-ecological political and social structures."[260] The movement is made up of people who "believe that ecological problems cannot be solved only by technical 'quick-fix' solutions" but rather require "a full scale critique of our civilization."[261] He writes that the concept of deep ecology "is meant as a kind of resting point for agreement; a place where those who desire the type of change argued for in this book can look upon to realize where they stand, what it is they share in common."[262] Naess writes that "the environmental movement will be strongest if it can be shown that its concise set of principles can be derived from a variety of world-views and backgrounds" which nonetheless share the "values of environmentalism."[263] He therefore agrees with Jeffrey Ellis' view that the characteristics that distinguish the different forms of radical environmentalism "have the potential of generating its greatest strength."[264] In pursuit of this, Naess criticizes any in-fighting between radical

[259] Naess 1989, 2.

[260] Naess 1989, 4.

[261] Naess 1989, 4.

[262] Naess 1989, 4.

[263] Naess 1989, 4.

[264] Cronon 1996, 268.

environmentalist groups, writing that "*[d]evaluation of each other's efforts within the total movement is an evil which must be avoided at all costs*."[265]

The shared values of different radical environmentalists, Naess says, are developed through a necessary "gestalt switch" away from the mainstream way of understanding the world and towards a new way of seeing the world. This new worldview comes about through "an increasing awareness of formerly hidden relations" which are revealed by an ecological perspective and its essential awareness of "the principles of interconnectedness in nature."[266] When applied to the interconnected social and environmental crises, the ecological perspective holds that a multitude of approaches is necessary to address the multitude of concerns. Like Bookchin and Carson, Naess is also critical of the tendency towards atomization. He relates this to the radical environmentalism movement by writing that "we cannot simply split into units, pursuing our own goals" but must expand our concerns such that "the larger world becomes part of our own interests."[267] Encouraging readers to develop their own ecosophy, Naess holds that to "work for a more ecologically responsible personal and societal lifestyle is thus not merely the ecologist's job. Nor the philosopher's. We should all do it together."[268] Like all forms of radical environmentalism, "the aim of supporters of the deep ecology movement is not a slight reform of our present society, but a *substantial reorientation of our whole civilization*."[269] Of particular

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[265] Naess 1989, 91.

[266] Naess 1989, 8.

[267] Naess 1989, 9.

[268] Naess 1989, 45.

[269] Naess 1989, 45.

concern are "the ecologically destructive, but 'firmly established ways of production and consumption'" which "are secured by the inertia of *dominant ideas of growth, progress, and standard of living*."[270] Naess attributes the critique of these dominant ideas to Rachel Carson, writing that "the fight against uncritical use of pesticides started in the early 60s and the international ecological movement burst forth" revealing "in a clear and dramatic way that ways of production and consumption had to be tackled straight on."[271]

Like all radical environmentalists, Naess' concern is not only with theory but with revolutionary action, as he writes that in "ecosophy, unlike academic philosophy, decisions and actions count more than generalities."[272] Naess presents the concept of "ecopolitics," writing that it is "concerned not only with specifically ecological activity, but with every aspect of life."[273] Naess writes that "[p]olitical philosophy is implied in any social development of an ecosophy" but that it "is dangerous to rely only on a political process."[274] Like Bookchin, Naess calls on those who share the values of radical environmentalism to participate by way of "direct action" which he defines as the "visible, nonviolent ways in which the environmental grassroots try to fight in public, collective ways."[275] A central aspect of direct action, Naess says, is to attract the attention of the public with the hopes that if they "*only knew*, the majority would be on the right

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[270] Naess 1989, 87, 88.

[271] Naess 1989, 132.

[272] Naess 1989, 42.

[273] Naess 1989, 130.

[274] Naess 1989, 38, 91.

[275] Naess 1989, 146.

side."[276] In this way, he advocates for the proliferation of a variety of radical environmentalisms with diverse goals that are all directed at changing the system through the creation of a new public consciousness. Such a "change of consciousness" would focus on the importance of "a transition to a more egalitarian attitude to life and the unfolding of life on Earth."[277]

4.2 *The Ecology of Wisdom* (2008)

In the introduction to *The Ecology of Wisdom*, Alan Drengson outlines several significant changes to the radical environmentalism movement since the publication of *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle* in the 1980s. In that earlier work, Naess wrote that the environmentalism movement had gained significant ground throughout the 1960s and 70s. He says that at that time there had been "a firm belief in many industrialized countries that a change in personal lifestyle might be necessary."[278] Furthermore, it had been "on the whole quite clear what an ecologically responsible lifestyle would entail."[279] "By 1980 it was not 'in' anymore to be 'ecologically minded,'" however, and by the end of the century, as outlined also by William Cronon and Murray Bookchin, above, much of mainstream society was opposed to the radical environmentalism movement.[280] According to Drengson, however, by 2008 radical environmentalism was again on the rise, this time taking on a new form which he describes as

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[276] Naess 1989, 147.

[277] Naess 1989, 91.

[278] Naess 1989, 210.

[279] Naess 1989, 210.

[280] Naess 1989, 210.

both a "global ecology movement" and a "grassroots ecology movement."[281] While "global" and "grassroots" might appear to be mutually exclusive, the application of an ecological perspective reveals the necessity that grassroots organizations keep global relations in mind. The globalized grassroots ecology movement, Drengson says, was "a response of ordinary people to environmental degradation and other forms of violence against the natural world" and "is supported by social activists from all parts of the political spectrum and from different cultures around the world."[282] It is therefore an example of how justice movements had begun to become synthesized into a people united against the power bloc. The ecological perspective and its focus on connection and relationality had become "especially relevant during the early decades of the twenty-first century" due to the increased "globalization of economy and accelerating cultural transformation."[283] For this reason, by the end of the twentieth century "the people" had begun to become "united" through the awareness that "their separate struggles are connected."[284] Globalization coupled with continuing anthropogenic climate change revealed the relationship between humans and the ecological crisis to an even wider audience. As also discussed by Carolyn Merchant, below, developments in communication contributed to the ecological perspective and allowed for an upswing in globalized grassroots movements. This mobilized radical environmentalism solidarity on a scale far beyond what was previously possible.

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[281] Naess 2008, 24, 25.

[282] Naess 2008, 24, 25.

[283] Naess 2008, vii.

[284] Storey 2018, 11.

Naess refers to these globalized grassroots ecology movements as part of "the three great movements—peace, social justice, and ecological sustainability."[285] This terminology lists the anti-war movement amongst the social and ecological concerns that occupy environmental justice activists, thus supporting Giovanna Di Chiro's claim that environmental justice finds its roots in the social justice movements of the 1960s. Similarly, Naess writes that the three great movements are all supported by people "who work for social changes" and "are motivated by caring for humans, other living beings, and nature."[286] He says that the ecological faction of the three great movements can be called the "deep ecology" movement or "the more vague term *radical environmentalism*."[287] The application of the ecological perspective and the related knowledge that no single method can address every crisis results in Naess' goal of "inspir[ing] diverse ecosophies" that could be applied to the many diverse but related problems faced by humanity.[288] He writes that the possibility of "[g]lobal progress requires broad cooperation at the level of collective action and common principles."[289] He says that while it "is not easy to be personally active in more than one of the three grassroots movements … cooperation among the movements is essential."[290] Therefore, he advocates for "bold cooperative relationships at every level of our lives and society to solve the wide range of problems" that are the focus of the three

[285] Naess 2008, viii.

[286] Naess 2008, 25.

[287] Naess 2008, 310.

[288] Naess 2008, vii.

[289] Naess 2008, 3.

[290] Naess 2008, 310.

great movements. In this way, Naess calls for the revolutionary change in both theory and practice that radical environmentalists see as necessary.[291]

One global grassroots movement developed the "Earth Charter for Nature" which states that "[a]s the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise."[292] This increased interdependence of the world is a result of globalization, about which the Charter states that the "emergence of a global civil society is creating new opportunities to build a democratic and humane world."[293] It also states that the "dominant patterns of production and consumption are causing environmental devastation" and that "[f]undamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living."[294] In this way, the Charter supports the central tenets of radical environmentalism which is, evidently, becoming less marginal. In agreement with this, Naess writes that

> The very special situation today must be kept in mind: An increasing portion of the populace in the industrial countries is aware of the colossal changes taking place on land, in the oceans, and in the atmosphere, threatening everybody everywhere. The interconnectedness of everything is manifested in a more dramatic and convincing way than in 1970 and 1980.[295]

The ecological perspective therefore is becoming more relevant as globalization has made global relations more apparent. As a result, there is no longer any excuse for the perpetuation of the

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[291] Naess 2008, ix.

[292] Naess 2008, 28.

[293] Naess 2008, 29.

[294] Naess 2008, 29.

[295] Naess 2008, 103.

climate crisis, a solution to which can only come from far-reaching radical change. Naess writes that opponents of environmentalism appear more and more marginal and eccentric in their views and that in the face of such extreme anti-ecological sentiments, the "sense of global solidarity helps us persist in our efforts."[296] Carolyn Merchant, addressed below, likewise writes that the "visibility of radical environmental movements" makes the goals of environmentalists "more acceptable" to mainstream society.[297]

The Earth Charter for Nature states that "[w]e stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future."[298] Naess, Bookchin, and Carson all refer to this choice and the divergent trends identified in environmentalism and throughout this essay: reform versus radical change. Naess writes about these "two trends, one in which it was presumed that a piecemeal approach within the established economic, social, and technological framework is adequate, another which called for critical examination of the man-nature relation and basic changes which would affect every aspect of human life."[299] More pointedly, Bookchin writes that

> We can try to mend the tattered treaties that once held the world together so precariously, and work with them as best we can … Or our efforts can take a radical turn: to overthrow … a hopelessly aborted society.[300]

Carson characteristically frames this choice in terms of a literary reference, writing that

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[296] Naess 2008, 30.

[297] Merchant 2005, 13.

[298] Naess 2008, 28.

[299] Naess 1989, 163.

[300] Bookchin 2005, 486.

> We stand now where two roads diverge. But unlike the roads in Robert Frost's familiar poem, they are not equal fair. The road we have long been traveling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road—the one "less travelled by"—offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that assures the preservation of our earth. The choice, after all, is ours to make.[301]

Each concludes that the latter option is necessary and that widespread change will only be possible through widespread action which is both grassroots and has an eye on global relations.

[301] Carson 2002, 277)

Chapter 5: Carolyn Merchant

5.1 *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1980)

Many of the quotations throughout this essay demonstrate a seemingly unthinking use of the male pronouns or the word "man" when referring to humans in general. This is a characteristic of patriarchal society's male-centrism which, though undoubtedly still a pressing concern in our present day, was even more severe in the twentieth century and had a significant impact on Rachel Carson's work in particular. Linda Lear writes that as a biologist and ecologist trying to change the world in an age of atomization, Carson's opponents saw her as "a hysterical woman whose alarming view of the future could be ignored or, if necessary, suppressed … a woman out of control" who had "overstepped the bounds of her gender and her science."[302] For this reason, Carson had taken to excluding her first name from her publications in the hopes that she would be mistaken for a man and subsequently taken seriously. In "postwar America, science was god, and science was male."[303] Murray Bookchin, however, speaks to this issue in a way that makes his male-centric language seem less unthinking. In a footnote about his critique of "man's exploitation of the planet," he writes

> I use the word "man," here, advisedly. The split between humanity and nature has been precisely the work of the male … I would be disposed to substitute "one immense killing-ground" to describe the male-oriented "civilization" of our era.[304]

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[302] Carson 2002, xvii.

[303] Carson 2002, xi.

[304] Bookchin 2005, 82.

This way of understanding the ecological crisis is the focus of ecofeminism and was foundational to Carolyn Merchant's book *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*.

As Merchant writes in the preface to *The Death of Nature*, the book is based in part on her graduate work in the History of Science and in part on a Rachel Carson-inspired "conference on "ecofeminist perspectives" [that] called upon women to lead an ecological revolution to restore planetary ecology."[305] Through its emphasis on a critique of the patriarchal aspects of Western society, Merchant says, ecofeminism has "the potential for a more thorough critique of domination and for a liberating social justice."[306] Like Arne Naess and Murray Bookchin, proponents of ecofeminism advocate for "an egalitarian perspective" that is free of domination and hierarchy.[307] Just as Bookchin says that it is crucial "to eliminate hierarchy per se, not simply replace one form of hierarchy with another," Merchant says that ecofeminism "would not mean power in the hands of women, but no power at all."[308] She writes that

> Building on the social ecology of Murray Bookchin … ecofeminists ground their analysis in capitalist patriarchy. They ask how patriarchal relations of reproduction reveal the domination of women by men, and how capitalist relations of production reveal the domination of nature by men.[309]

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[305] Merchant 2020b, xxiii.

[306] Merchant 2005, 197.

[307] Merchant 2020b, xxix.

[308] Bookchin 2005, 27; Merchant 2005, 194.

[309] Merchant 2005, 205, 197.

In this way, ecofeminism takes social ecology's focus on the relationship between the domination of humans and that of nature and adds a feminist perspective which is essential in a patriarchal society.

Merchant quotes "social ecofeminist" Janet Biehl in stating that only "ending all systems of domination makes possible an ecological society, in which no states or capitalist economies attempt to subjugate nature, in which all aspects of human nature—including sexuality and the passions as well as rationality—are freed."[310] Merchant also quotes "ecosocial feminist" Val Plumwood in stating that the "web of oppression … requires cooperation and seeing the connections among a wide variety of issues."[311] These different forms of ecofeminism represent the critique of domination and hierarchy and the call for the synthesis of social justice groups, respectively, both of which are foundational to radical environmentalism. The diverse forms of ecofeminism, as Merchant writes, are all "united, however, in viewing capitalism and patriarchy as oppressive to women and nature and in viewing participation in ecofeminist actions as means of liberation."[312] In this way, she says, "there is perhaps more unity than diversity in women's common goal of restoring the natural environment and quality of life for people and other living and non-living inhabitants of the planet."[313] She writes that "when women today attempt to change society's domination of nature, they are acting to overturn modern constructions of nature and women as culturally passive and subordinate."[314] Ecofeminists are critical of these

[310] Merchant 2005, 206.

[311] Merchant 2005, 207.

[312] Merchant 2005, 208.

[313] Merchant 2005, 221.

[314] Merchant 2020b, xxv.

constructions rooted in gender essentialism, in response to which they emphasize that "concepts of nature and women are historical and social constructions. There are no unchanging "essential" characteristics of sex, gender, or nature."[315] Harmful tendencies of domination, therefore, are based on aspects of society that can and, according to radical environmentalists, must be changed.

Like Bookchin's *The Ecology of Freedom*, *The Death of Nature* tracks the change in Western society from an organic worldview based on the ecological relations between humans and their environments to the current mechanistic, technological, and atomizing worldview that took precedence during the Industrial Revolution. Merchant writes that her "book was an early critique of the problems of modernism and especially mechanistic science and its associated worldview" which "laid open a new and brutal exploitation of the environment, animals, and a living, vital nature."[316] As outlined also by Bookchin, above, this worldview sees the environment as mere resources to be used by humans and perpetuates the relationship of domination between humans and nature which is foundational to the ecological crisis. Centring ecofeminism in her analysis of this crisis, Merchant writes that the "image of the earth as a living organism … had served as a cultural constraint restricting the actions of human beings."[317] Echoing Bookchin, she says that the "change in controlling imagery was directly related to changes in human attitudes and behaviour toward the earth" as "the new images of mastery and

[315] Merchant 2020b, xxiv.

[316] Merchant 2020b, xxi, xx.

[317] Merchant 2020b, 3.

domination functioned as cultural sanctions for the denudation of nature."[318] To explain the need to reverse this change in worldview, Merchant also tracks the ecological perspective from the science of ecology, through human and social ecology, to what Naess would call her own "ecosophy" of a partnership ethic. Such an ethic, she says, is "based on the assumption that the natural and human environments together form an interrelated system."[319] In its emphasis on this perspective, *The Death of Nature* "pointed the way toward a reassessment of the human ethical relationship to nature by moving away from ideas of domination and toward a new dynamic partnership between people and their environment."[320] Again, this perspective echoes Bookchin's view that in an ecological society, "humanity would neither give nor take; it would actually *participate* with nature."[321]

In a preface to *The Death of Nature* written in 1990, much like Naess and Drengson in *The Ecology of Wisdom*, Merchant writes about "a global ecological crisis that goes beyond the environmental crisis of the 1970s [and] threatens the health of the entire planet."[322] As a result of this global crisis, she says, it is time for "an ecological revolution" that would entail not only new relationships amongst humans but also "between humans and nature."[323] One of the most important goals of radical environmentalism, Merchant agrees, lies in the revolutionary change that can only come about through "changing attitudes, raising consciousness, and promoting

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[318] Merchant 2020b, 2.

[319] Merchant 2020b, 42.

[320] Merchant 2020b, xxi.

[321] Bookchin 2005, 367.

[322] Merchant 2020b, xxiii.

[323] Merchant 2005, 194.

social change."[324] Just as Bookchin writes that such revolutions are "nourished by an educated and informed popular consciousness," Merchant foregrounds the need to reinterpret history from a radical environmentalist perspective, as also introduced by William Cronon, above.[325] She writes that people must learn to see history

> [A]new from the viewpoint not only of women but also of social and racial groups and the natural environment, previously ignored as the underlying resources on which Western culture and its progress have been built. To write history from a feminist perspective is to turn it upside down—to see social structure from the bottom up and to flip-flop mainstream values.[326]

Merchant writes that both "the women's movement and the ecology movement are sharply critical of the costs of competition, aggression, and domination arising from the market economy's *modus operandi* in nature and society."[327] She concludes that both are subversive worldviews that call for a restoration of balance through the development of an ethic based on living "within the cycles of nature."[328] In this way, she aligns ecofeminism with the critique of society that emphasizes the necessity of radical change in the direction of an ecological perspective which is foundational to radical environmentalism.

Writing from a time of increased globalization, Merchant says that built into the modern, globalized form of capitalism is "an inexorably accelerating force of expansion and

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[324] Merchant 2005, 13.

[325] Bookchin 2005, 101.

[326] Merchant 2020b, xxx.

[327] Merchant 2020b, xxx.

[328] Merchant 2020b, xxxi.

accumulation, achieved, over the long term, at the expense of the environment."[329] Throughout *The Death of Nature*, Merchant writes about how the mechanistic worldview made possible the development of modern, exploitative capitalism and "the processes of commercialism and industrialization, which depended on activities directly altering the earth."[330] She says that the mainstream way of life's atomizing tendency that views "[n]ature, society, and the human body [as] composed of interchangeable atomized parts" stands in direct opposition to an ecological perspective.[331] She holds that the mechanistic worldview "excludes the possibility of mathematizing the gestalt—that is, the ways in which each part at any given instant take their meaning from the whole."[332] This is because, she says, the "more open, adaptive, organic, and complex the system, the less successful is the formalism" of the mechanistic worldview, and both society and nature exemplify open, adaptive, organic, and complex systems.[333] Like Naess and Bookchin, Merchant also speaks of each plant and animal in an ecosystem as "more than a sum of its parts."[334] She relates this to the radical thrust of the ecological perspective, writing that by "pointing up the essential role of every part of an ecosystem, that if one part is removed the system is weakened and loses stability, ecology has moved in the direction of the levelling of value hierarchies."[335] Similarly, she says, through the concept of ecofeminism, the "conjunction

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[329] Merchant 2020b, 51.

[330] Merchant 2020b, 2.

[331] Merchant 2020b, 193.

[332] Merchant 2020b, 291.

[333] Merchant 2020b, 291.

[334] Merchant 2020b, 292.

[335] Merchant 2020b, 293.

of conservation and ecology movements with women's rights and liberation has moved in the direction of reversing both the subjugation of nature and women" and has brought the more general "issue of liberation into focus."[336] In this way, she connects the concept of ecofeminism to "the three great movements—peace, social justice, and ecological sustainability," introduced above.[337] In line with the goals of these movements, Merchant calls for "a reversal of mainstream values and a revolution in economic priorities" which "may be crucial if people and nature are to survive."[338] As a form of radical environmentalism, Merchant writes that ecofeminists are continuing the development of "a new world view that could guide twenty-first-century citizens in an ecologically sustainable way of life" which stands in opposition to the current capitalistic society.[339]

5.2 *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World* (1992)

Carolyn Merchant's *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World* is part of a series by Roger Gottlieb titled *Revolutionary Thought/Radical Movements*. In the preface, Gottlieb writes that the series arises from "a deeply felt anguish and outrage over the sheer magnitude of human suffering—along with the terrible frustration of knowing that much of this suffering could be avoided."[340] In this way, the series "challenges contemporary society and civilization" through

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[336] Merchant 2020b, 294.

[337] Naess 2008, viii.

[338] Merchant 2020b, 295.

[339] Merchant 2020b, xxvi, xxvii.

[340] Merchant 2005, xiii.

the understanding that suffering "comes from injustice, exploitation, violence, and organized cruelty that can be eradicated … [i]f we drastically alter our arrangements in the direction of equality, justice, and human fulfillment."[341] Gottlieb writes that "unlike reformers and philanthropists, radicals and revolutionaries address whole *systems* of injustice" in which the "few become rich while the many suffer from poverty or economic insecurity."[342] Because the world is "shaped by these systems of domination and exclusion … the radical ideal goes beyond piecemeal improvements to a Utopian vision; and tries to realize that vision in everyday struggles for a fair distribution of power, human dignity, and a livable environment."[343] This belief in the importance of a utopian sensibility is a significant part of radical environmentalism, as addressed below.

In line with the views presented throughout this essay, Gottlieb writes that "the conception of radicalism which informs the series stipulates that authentic revolutionary change requires the self-action of sizeable groups of people" through direct action.[344] He writes that this is a step towards "true 'democracy'" in which "ordinary men and women would help shape the basic conditions which affect their lives."[345] Gottlieb writes that although the successes of radicalism today amount to "partial reforms rather than sweeping revolutions, many of the basic freedoms, rights, and material advantages of modern life were fought for by people called

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[341] Merchant 2005, xiii.

[342] Merchant 2005, xiii.

[343] Merchant 2005, xiv.

[344] Merchant 2005, xiv.

[345] Merchant 2005, xiv.

radicals, dangerous revolutionaries, or anti-American."[346] Highlighting the importance of the synthesis of social justice groups, he says that these radicals "offered a theoretical analysis which shows the *connections* between problems which may appear to be separate."[347] Gottlieb concludes his introduction to *Radical Ecology* by stating that the diverse focuses of different radical environmentalists "shows that authentic radicalism is not a dead graven image, but a living quest to learn from the past and change the future."[348] This is reflective of Jeffrey Ellis' perspective, introduced above, that the "disagreements that have split the radical ecology movement … have the potential of generating its greatest strength."[349] "The debates among these various camps of radical ecologists," Merchant agrees, "are important, as they push each other to rethink and reevaluate their own proposals for change."[350] She writes that the many forms of radical environmentalism "are often at odds in goals and values, as well as techniques and specific actions."[351] These diverse goals and values "produce conflicts and heated debates within the larger movement resulting in a variety of approaches to resolving environmental problems" which are essential to address the variety of problems that exist.[352] Merchant views this diversity of approaches with "guarded optimism," writing that the various perspectives all "foster and

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[346] Merchant 2005, xv.

[347] Merchant 2005, xvi.

[348] Merchant 2005, xvi.

[349] Cronon 1996, 268.

[350] Merchant 2005, 160.

[351] Merchant 2005, 12.

[352] Merchant 2005, 12.

support the new economic and social directions" that radical environmentalists deem necessary.[353]

In *Radical Ecology*, Merchant presents an analysis of the development of the movement beginning with the science of ecology as a focus on the connections that exist in nature. She then adds the fact that humans are part of nature (human ecology) and a political critique of the current relationship between humans and nature (social ecology). Finally, she uses these factors to develop an ecological ethic that stipulates what needs to be done to address these issues (radical ecology). She writes that ecology "as a science … looks at nonhuman nature, studying the numerous, complex interactions among its biotic components."[354] She says that "human ecology adds the interactions between people and their environments."[355] "Social ecology," she writes, "takes another step … analyz[ing] the various political and social institutions that people use in relationship to nature and its resources."[356] Finally, she says that radical ecology "is the cutting edge of social ecology" that "pushes social and ecological systems toward new patterns of production, reproduction, and consciousness that will improve the quality of human life and the natural environment."[357] It does so by challenging "those aspects of the political and economic order that prevent the fulfillment of basic human needs."[358] Radical ecology "offers theories that explain the social causes of environmental problems and alternative ways to resolve

[353] Merchant 2005, 12.

[354] Merchant 2005, 7.

[355] Merchant 2005, 8.

[356] Merchant 2005, 8.

[357] Merchant 2005, 8.

[358] Merchant 2005, 8.

them."[359] Furthermore, it "supports social movements for removing the causes of environmental deterioration and raising the quality of life for people of every race, class, and sex."[360]

"Radical ecology emerges from a sense of crisis," says Merchant, which characterizes the time in which the book was published, as also noted by Cronon, Bookchin, and Naess, above.[361] In response to the interconnected, globalized social and environmental crises, Merchant writes that people must begin to live according to environmental ethics which underlie the various radical environmentalism movements. Such ethics, she says, "link the ideas of theorists with the movements of activists, translating ideas into behaviours in the effort to bring about a livable world."[362] She writes that "[r]adical environmental movements draw on the ideas and ethics of the theorists, but intervene … [through] a variety of direct actions."[363] Like Naess, who wrote that action without underlying wisdom is useless, Merchant writes that

> Environmental ethics are a link between theory and practice. They translate thought into action, worldviews into movements. Ideas generated from social conditions must be transformed into behaviours in order to change those conditions. Behaviours are thus guided by an underlying ethic.[364]

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[359] Merchant 2005, 8.

[360] Merchant 2005, 8.

[361] Merchant 2005, 1.

[362] Merchant 2005, 87.

[363] Merchant 2005, 12.

[364] Merchant 2005, 64.

The diverse environmental ethics of radical environmentalism, she goes on, are all ecocentric ethics. They are "rooted in a holistic, rather than mechanistic, metaphysics" which begins with the assumption that

> Ecology necessarily must consider the complexities and the totality. It cannot isolate the parts into simplified systems that can be studied in a laboratory, because such isolation distorts the whole.[365]

This quote is very similar to Naess' description of the deep ecology movement, which he says is based on the understanding that an "intrinsic relation between two things A and B is such that the relation belongs to the definition or basic constitutions of A and B, so that without the relation, A and B are no longer the same things."[366] This shared focus on context dependence is foundational to the ecological perspective of radical environmentalists.

From her late-twentieth-century perspective, Merchant analyzes the forms of radical environmentalism that have been the focus of this essay. She makes explicit the need to synthesize these separate views, writing that the "[d]eepest ecology is both feminist and egalitarian" and "must be consistent with a new social ecology and with feminist values."[367] She says that each of these perspectives "entail[s] an ecocentric ethic in which all parts of the ecosystem, including humans, are of equal value, or an ecologically-modified ethic that values both environmental justice and social ecology."[368] According to Naess, as noted above, an

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[365] Merchant 2020b, 293.

[366] Naess 1989, 28.

[367] Merchant 2005, 113.

[368] Merchant 2005, 12.

ecocentric ethic can be called an "ecosophy," and each person should be encouraged to create their own. Merchant does this by taking the concept of radical ecology and developing a partnership ethic that reflects Rachel Carson's call for "a new way of thinking about the natural world, with which we are in an intimate partnership."[369] Merchant says that a partnership ethic moves "beyond ecocentric ethics to ethical formulations that include principles of environmental justice and cultural diversity and respond to globalization."[370] She quotes J. Baird Callicott who says that a multicultural ethic "builds on the complementarity between biological diversity and cultural diversity."[371] He writes that "the one globally intelligible and acceptable ecological ethic and the many culture-specific ecological ethics may mutually reflect, validate, and correct one another—so they may exist in a reciprocal, fair, equal, and mutually sustaining partnership."[372] Like Giovanna Di Chiro, above, Merchant outlines how "feminist philosophers have also proposed ways to synthesize ecological ethics with multiculturalism and environmental justice … to create a care-sensitive ethic that is both inclusive and nonhierarchical."[373] A care-sensitive ethic is based "on people's capacity to care for others (people who are both like us and different from us) and the environment."[374] Similarly, Merchant defines her concept of a partnership ethic as a "synthesis between ecocentrism and environmental justice" which "*holds that the greatest*

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[369] Carson 2007, xv.

[370] Merchant 2005, 81.

[371] Merchant 2005, 81.

[372] Merchant 2005, 82.

[373] Merchant 2005, 82.

[374] Merchant 2005, 82.

good for the human and nonhuman communities is in their mutual living interdependence."[375] It "is grounded, not in the self, society, or the cosmos, but in the idea of relation."[376] This focus on relation is both an application of the ecological perspective and a rejection of hierarchy, exemplifying the socialist foundations of Merchant's ecofeminism.

Merchant shares the understanding, common to the other three authors who are the focus of this essay, as noted above, that the environmentalism movement is standing at a crossroads. One road, she writes, "is newly paved and its centre strip is painted white."[377] It "leads to the nation's capital where the heads of each group meet regularly to divide up issues and pledge support for each other's actions … They breakfast with corporate leaders and bankers to work out long term environmental deals and debt for nature swaps."[378] The other

> [I]s under construction. Still rocky and covered with multi-coloured soil, the construction work is being carried out by grassroots environmental justice activists. Concerned that the road pass through clean air and waters and that its workforce be treated fairly, the builders stop frequently to oppose the victimization of peoples of colour, toxic landfills, and factory pollutants.[379]

While the first road, running at the speed of capitalism and the marketplace, is much faster, the second, running at the speed of humans and nature, is the one leading to radical change. It is

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[375] Merchant 2005, 83.

[376] Merchant 2005, 83.

[377] Merchant 2005, 165.

[378] Merchant 2005, 165.

[379] Merchant 2005, 165.

being built by the same grassroots activists who were identified by Naess and Di Chiro. Such activists focus on the local as they

> [W]ork to transform politics itself in new, more truly democratic, environmentally just, and green directions. Grassroots activists focus on the ways in which daily life is reproduced in neighbourhoods and local communities, demonstrating loudly for environmental justice, clean water, air, and healthy food, and against toxic and nuclear threats.[380]

In contrast, those on the first road "have traditionally focused much of their attention on the legislative process" and "draw their members and staffs primarily from white, middle-class, educated Americans concerned with issues of wilderness and wildlife preservation," as also outlined by Di Chiro, above.[381] They are reform environmentalists who "tend to devalue social problems such as poverty, lack of housing, garbage and toxic waste disposal in poor areas and Third World countries, and worker health issues," thereby marginalizing issues of environmental justice.[382] Merchant writes that during "the late twentieth-century, mainstream environmentalism moved further from grassroots confrontation and closer to corporate cooperation."[383] This led "to disenchantment among those who wanted to use direct action to assert the rights of women and minorities" and further separated the two roads of reform versus radical change.[384]

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[380] Merchant 2005, 166.

[381] Merchant 2005, 167.

[382] Merchant 2005, 230.

[383] Merchant 2005, 168.

[384] Merchant 2005, 168.

Writing more recently than the other three authors, Merchant sees a third option which is made possible by the worldwide relations that have been revealed by globalization. This third road, she says, is just beginning to be created.

> At its entrance people dressed in green clothing are painting signs reading "We are neither left nor right, we are in front." These Global Greens have formed an international network of Green Parties that communicates with members around the world who reach decisions by consensus.[385]

Merchant writes that as "environmental gains have been undercut by corporate globalization, grassroots environmental protests have also globalized … to create a global solidarity movement to achieve social and environmental justice."[386] These global grassroots environmentalists, Merchant says, emerged from the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and were proponents of the Earth Charter for Nature, introduced above. As stated in the Charter, they are "united as "citizens of the planet" in the "awareness that we depend on the Earth's vitality, diversity and beauty, and that it is our responsibility to pass them on, undiminished or even improved, to the next generation.""[387] As a result of their work, "the seemingly separate issues of wilderness and people's health are beginning to merge."[388] These groups share the method of "thinking globally, yet acting locally," exemplifying "a new, coordinated level of environmental activism" at a global scale.[389] Merchant writes that "fundamental conflict between capitalism and democracy

[385] Merchant 2005, 166.

[386] Merchant 2005, 226.

[387] Merchant 2005, 180.

[388] Merchant 2005, 190.

[389] Merchant 2005, 190, 226.

lies at the heart of the anti-globalization movement."[390] The movement aims to respond "to social injustice and the global ecological crisis through a variety of approaches," thereby exemplifying the goals of radical environmentalism.[391] In this way, the "movement as a whole is both dynamic and timely. New ideas and new strategies for change are continually evolving."[392] These globalized grassroots activists are radical environmentalists who stand in opposition to the current state of society and call for a focus on radical change and environmental justice. Merchant concludes: "Radical ecology itself stands outside the dominant political, economic, and scientific world order. Together its various strands and actions challenge the hegemony of the dominant order."[393]

[390] Merchant 2005, 225.

[391] Merchant 2005, 226.

[392] Merchant 2005, 253.

[393] Merchant 2005, 254.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (2017)

adrienne maree brown's emergent strategy, introduced in her book *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, is an example of twenty-first-century environmental and social justice activism that draws together the characteristics of radical environmentalism that have been revealed throughout this essay. Emergent strategy would certainly be interpreted by Arne Naess as an ecosophy. It takes its cues from nature and is based on the concept of fractals or, in Naess' words, "the infusion of the character of the whole into each single part."[394] brown writes that "[e]xistence is fractal—the health of the cell is the health of the species and the planet."[395] In this way, she says, the concept of emergence "is another way of speaking about the connective tissue of all that exists," which is the focus of the ecological perspective.[396] brown quotes Farhad Ebrahimi who perfectly characterizes both the environmental and social justice aspects of emergent strategy as follows:

> The biggest thing that I've learned from nature is the importance of relationships. E.g. an ecosystem isn't just a list of living things (squirrel, tree, bee, flower); it's the relationships *between* those living things (the squirrel lives *in* the tree, the bee *pollinates* the flower). In terms of organizing, this means that a given social movement isn't a list of organizations, or

[394] Naess 1989, 58.

[395] brown 2017, 13.

[396] brown 2017, 3.

> campaigns, or even individuals; it's the set of relationships *between* organizations, campaigns, individuals, etc.[397]

brown writes that patriarchal capitalistic society has created "a crisis at each scale we are aware of, from our deepest inner moral sensibilities to the collective scale of climate and planetary health and beyond."[398] She acknowledges that the problems are overwhelming in size but says that "emergence notices the way small actions and connections create complex systems, patterns that become ecosystems and societies."[399] She writes that

> We create the patterns of our society through our choices and beliefs and practices. As such, the path to a future in which humans can be in an authentic and accountable peace with each other is fractal—we must be willing to practice authenticity and accountability at the small scale of ourselves and our lives.[400]

In this way, emergent strategy focuses on the change in public consciousness that is foundational to radical environmentalism. It is also aligned with radical environmentalism in its focus on activism, which brown defines, like direct action, as "efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to make improvements in society."[401] Emergent strategy also argues for "a system of agricultural and social design principles centred around simulating or directly utilizing the patterns and features observed in

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[397] brown 2017, 96.

[398] brown 2017, 3.

[399] brown 2017, 3.

[400] brown 2024, 149.

[401] brown 2019, 13.

natural ecosystems."[402] As Rachel Carson wrote, "[w]here man has been intelligent enough to observe and to emulate Nature he, too, is often rewarded with success."[403]

brown writes that emergent strategy "is for people who want to radically change the world."[404] Like others pursuing radical change, she is critical of movements that focus on "reform" and fall "back into modelling the oppressive tendencies against which we claim to be pushing."[405] Like radical environmentalists, she emphasizes that these reformist tendencies are particularly problematic when they focus on "individualistic linear organizing" and seek "to assert one right way or one right strategy."[406] In this way, she aligns her views with the values of unity and diversity. She writes that we need to "cultivate the muscle of radical imagination" to "move from competitive ideation, trying to push our individual ideas, to collective ideation, collaborative ideation."[407] Like Naess' call for each person to develop their own ecosophy, brown holds that "if we want worlds that work for more of us, we have to have more of us involved in the visioning process."[408] Like Roger Gottlieb in Merchant's *Radical Ecology*, brown also writes that "the roots of most harm are systemic, and we must be willing to disrupt vicious systems that

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[402] brown 2017, 23.

[403] Carson 2002, 81.

[404] brown 2017, 4.

[405] brown 2017, 8.

[406] brown 2017, 8.

[407] brown 2017, 59.

[408] brown & Imarisha 2015, 281.

have been normalized," thus calling for the revolutionary change that is fundamental to radical environmentalism.[409]

A prominent idea in brown's work that was also significant to Bookchin, Naess, and Merchant is an emphasis on imagining a better future. brown says that it "is important that we fight for the future" through the embodiment of change that begins in our imaginations because "the realm of imagination is also where culture begins."[410] Bookchin writes that by affecting the imagination

> Capitalism invaded and undermined areas of social life that none of the great empires of the past could ever penetrate or even hope to absorb. Not only was the technical imagination savagely dismembered but also the human imagination.[411]

In *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories for Social Justice Movements*, brown's co-editor Walidah Imarisha writes that "[o]nce the imagination is unshackled, liberation is limitless."[412] Similarly, *Silent Spring* spoke to people's imaginations, using literary references and fairy tales to invoke images of a nightmarish world that was coming to fruition. In calling on the public to demand change in these nightmarish policies, Carson inspired the radical environmentalists who came after her to imagine a better future.

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[409] brown 2019, 11.

[410] brown 2017, 18; 2019, p. 222.

[411] Bookchin 2005, 347.

[412] brown & Imarisha 2015, 5.

Emphasizing the importance of "the very *power* to fantasize," Bookchin writes that "utopian thinking today requires no apologies" as it has become "crucial to stir the imagination into creating radically new alternatives to every aspect of daily life."[413] He says that in "this confluence of social and ecological crises, we can no longer afford to be unimaginative; we can no longer afford to do without utopian thinking."[414] *Octavia's Brood* is a collection of works that exemplify Bookchin's call for "neither poetry nor science, but a transcendence of both into a new realm of theory and practice, an artfulness that combines fancy with reason, imagination with logic, vision with technique."[415] He holds that whether "as drama, novel, science, fiction, poetry, or an evocation of tradition … utopian *dialogue* in all its existentiality must infuse the abstractions of social theory" if society is ever to achieve a "utopian vision—particularly an ecological one."[416] Likewise, Naess writes that the radical environmentalism movement "includes scientists, activists, scholars, artists, and all those who are actively working towards a change in anti-ecological political and social structures."[417] Similarly, Imarisha writes that whenever "we try to envision a world without war, without violence, without prisons, without capitalism, we are engaging in speculative fiction. All organizing is science fiction."[418] Merchant, too, takes utopian thinking seriously, writing that such ideas express the real need for

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[413] Bookchin 2005, 347, 432.

[414] Bookchin 2005, 106.

[415] Bookchin 2005, 84.

[416] Bookchin 2005, 432.

[417] Naess 1989, 4.

[418] brown & Imarisha 2015, 3.

social revolution and are put forward "as serious alternatives to existing social conditions," and not as mere fantasy.[419] About utopian thinkers, she says that

> [T]heir ideas are worth examining because they proposed concrete schemes for a better society in times of despair and oppression. They were not mere visionaries, but activists who attempted to translate their ideas into community change.[420]

Merchant holds that "if we abandon these visions we also abandon human life to its current misery, with little to hope for but token reforms."[421] Utopian thinking, therefore, is an essential aspect of radical environmentalism's oppositional stance to mere reformism.

Utopian thinking is one form of future orientation. When Naess asks the supporters of deep ecology to create their own ecosophy, just as when Bookchin asks supporters of social ecology to engage in dialogue to "stimulate imagination and evoke the details of reconstruction," they are planning for the future even in the face of planetary catastrophe.[422] As Naess writes in an essay titled "The Place of Joy in a World of Fact," the "solution of environmental problems is presupposed in all utopias."[423] He asks, however, "whether the green utopian societies *must* look so dreary," stating that the "usual utopian green societies seem so sober and tame."[424] brown

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[419] Merchant 2020b, 83.

[420] Merchant 2020b, 94, 95.

[421] Merchant 2005, xiv.

[422] Bookchin 2005, 432.

[423] Naess 2008, 123.

[424] Naess 2008, 312.

echoes this when she writes that "the problem with most utopias" is that "they are presented as mono value, a new greener more local monoculture."[425] She contrasts this by saying that

> Compelling futures have to have more justice, yes; and right relationship to planet, yes; but also must allow for our growth and innovation. I want an interdependence of lots of kinds of people with lots of belief systems, and continued evolution.[426]

Thus advocating for the values of unity and diversity, brown writes that we "have to create futures in which everyone doesn't have to be the same kind of person."[427] Tying these values to Naess' quest for joy, she refers to utopian thinking as a form of "pleasure activism … the work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression and/or supremacy."[428] She writes that a "central aspect of pleasure activism is tapping into the natural abundance that exists between our species and this planet."[429] In this way, she emphasizes what Bookchin calls "social ecology's crucial responsibility to demystify the tradition of a "stingy nature.""[430] brown holds that "[p]art of the reason so few of us have a healthy relationship with pleasure is because a small minority of our species hoards the excess of resources, creating a false scarcity and then trying to sell us joy."[431] Similarly,

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[425] brown 2017, 57.

[426] brown 2017, 57.

[427] brown 2017, 57.

[428] brown 2019, 13.

[429] brown 2019, 16.

[430] Bookchin 2005, 349.

[431] brown 2019, 15.

Bookchin writes that the "tradition" of a "stingy nature" is not an essential characteristic of nature but, rather, "is rooted in the stinginess of people—more precisely, of the elites."[432]

Foregrounding a socialist, just, and feminist ethic, brown asks: "Where did capitalism, white supremacy, and patriarchy come from?" and answers: "Some imagining of scarcity and power that isn't true."[433] The mainstream perspective that holds these harmful constructs as inevitable often leads to a dystopian form of future orientation based on ideas of scarcity and domination. Utopian thinking, in stark contrast, allows us to imagine, in brown's words, "what it might be to live in partnership with a fecund earth."[434] Merchant shares this perspective, writing that "[r]adicals reject this essentially cynical "realism," opting for a continuing faith in the human capacity for a fundamentally different and profoundly liberating form of life."[435] Similarly, Bookchin is critical of "dystopian bitterness and misanthropy."[436] He writes that "it is precisely in this utopistic quest for pleasure, I believe, that humanity begins to gain its most sparkling glimpse of emancipation."[437] Referring to the worldview that was more prominent in the 1960s, as noted throughout this essay, Bookchin writes that

> We must recover the utopian impulses, the hopefulness, the appreciation of what is good, what is worth rescuing in human civilization, as well as what

[432] Bookchin 2005, 418.

[433] brown 2019, 222.

[434] brown 2024, 115.

[435] Merchant 2005, xiv.

[436] Bookchin 2005, 54.

[437] Bookchin 2005, 74.

> must be rejected, if the ecology movement is to play a transformative and creative role in human affairs.[438]

Similarly, brown writes that "pleasure—joy, happiness and satisfaction—has been the force that helps us move beyond the constant struggle, that helps us live and generate futures beyond this dystopic present."[439]

In answer to the question "[h]ow do we create and proliferate a compelling vision of economies and ecologies that centre humans and the natural world over the accumulation of material?" brown writes: "We embody."[440] Specifically, we embody forms of "collaborative ideation" by asking "what are the ideas that will liberate all of us?" and then "practic[ing] the future together."[441] Quoting Albert Camus, she writes that the "only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion."[442] Similarly, she quotes Grace Lee Boggs: "*Transform yourself to transform the world*."[443] These quotes exemplify how "activists dedicate their lives to creating and envisioning another world, or many other worlds" by acting in ways that collectively make these other worlds possible.[444] In this way, brown's perspective echoes Bookchin's belief that we can only "change the world by also trying to change ourselves."[445] brown writes that "if we want to have a revolution, we have

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[438] Bookchin 2005, 63.

[439] brown 2019, 437.

[440] brown 2017, 18.

[441] brown 2017, 19.

[442] brown 2017, 56.

[443] brown 2017, 53.

[444] brown & Imarisha 2015, 3.

[445] Bookchin 2005, 439, 446.

to craft revolutionary relationships, in action, not simply in rhetoric."[446] She says that "a revolution cannot be created by conforming to existing roles in relationships already defined by the systems we want to overthrow. We have to practice creating new relationships."[447] She holds that the world that radicals imagine can only exist if the world that currently stands in its place is replaced. This can happen, she writes, only if the members of society unite in "protesting it, opting out, critiquing and ridiculing it, developing analyses to help see how it works, educating each other. In this way, we change culture and assumptions and structures a bit every day."[448] Utopian thinking is in this way inherently radical, as such a society could only be created through "revolutionary change in the status quo and radical critique of its abuses."[449] This "radical thrust of utopian thinking" is also identified by Naess when he writes that "environmental thinking" can be understood as a form of thinking that focuses "on how to move in the direction of the utopias."[450] He says that the "utopias of green societies point toward a kind of direct democracy."[451] The choice between radical change and mere reform, between the continued harms of capitalism or the creation of an ecological society, can in this way be understood, in Bookchin's words, as a choice "between utopistic freedom and social immolation."[452]

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[446] brown 2019, 71.

[447] brown 2019, 71.

[448] brown 2024, 173.

[449] Bookchin 2005, 431.

[450] Naess 1989, 431, 162.

[451] Naess 1989, 158.

[452] Bookchin 2005, 79.

Taking utopian thinking seriously, radical environmentalists emphasize that there is still time to make the necessary changes despite the extent of harm that has been and continues to be done. They argue against the idea that a continuation of the climate crisis is inevitable, choosing to foreground the possibility of a better society and acting in ways that collectively could make it possible. Taking seriously the magnitude of change that is necessary, each of the authors who are the focus of this essay writes about the environmentalism movement in terms of generations. In their 1962 works, Carson and Bookchin each begin with the fact that the extent of chemical pollution that humans have subjected the world to will be felt for generations to come. Carson writes that to "adjust to these chemicals … would require not merely the years of a man's life but the life of generations."[453] Similarly, Bookchin writes that the subsequent "environmentally induced illness" needs to be understood to "include all structural levels of the human organism and encompass not only present but also future generations."[454] In the final chapter of *The Ecology of Wisdom*, Naess writes that he is "a convinced optimist—when it comes to the twenty-second century" because he is "confident that we have a mission, in shaping a better future that is not remote. Just a couple of hundred years."[455] Merchant, like Naess, looks to the twenty-second century, writing that "worldwide "green" political parties" are focused on creating "[n]ew forms of production, reproduction, and consciousness [which] could structure the world differently for twenty-second-century citizens."[456] brown, too, says that it is "no small task, but our generation

[453] Carson 2002, 7.

[454] Bookchin 2022, 21, 33.

[455] Naess 2008, 308, 312.

[456] Merchant 2020a, 152.

has one charge: save the world for the next generation."[457] She also writes that a "compassionate economic approach would care not just for the safety of people on Earth right now but also for the generations we hope to bring into [it]."[458] Each of these authors, therefore, stresses the possibility of creating a better future if the people can be united in their shared goal of protecting an increasingly interconnected world.

6.2 Synthesis

This essay has focused on the works of four authors who began writing in the field of radical environmentalism in the second half of the twentieth century. An examination of the works of each author illustrates the convergences that exist between the specific forms of radical environmentalism for which they stand. Murray Bookchin, Arne Naess, and Carolyn Merchant foreground social ecology, deep ecology, and ecofeminism, respectively. Each of these forms of radical environmentalism shares an emphasis on the ecological perspective that Rachel Carson is known to have brought to the attention of the public, particularly through her book *Silent Spring*. Radical environmentalism is defined both by this ecological perspective and this focus on the public's attention. Radical environmentalists aim to affect public consciousness as a means to the revolutionary societal change that they see as a necessary response to the ongoing ecological crisis.

The primary change in public consciousness that radical environmentalists aim to develop is, in Naess' words, an "ecological gestalt switch."[459] In pursuit of this switch, radical

[457] brown & Wimsatt 2004, 23.

[458] brown 2024, 127.

[459] Naess 1989, 8.

environmentalists emphasize the significance of an ecological perspective and the irrationality of the divisiveness that characterizes the mainstream way of life in Western society. The development of this perspective requires the replacement of the focus on individualism and atomization which characterize the mainstream perspective in Western society today and are antithetical to the ecological perspective. As written by Carson, from an ecological perspective "each entity is linked and made whole by an integrated cycle of life."[460] Ecology is focused on "intersections and connections but always aware of the whole."[461] Humans are an inseparable part of this whole, and the ongoing effects of anthropogenic climate change can therefore be understood as "a problem of ecology, of interrelationships, of interdependence."[462] The ecological perspective holds that human health reflects the health of the planet and that "there is an ecology of the world within our bodies."[463] Bookchin writes that ecology "deals with the interrelationships of living things (including man) and their environment."[464] He says that "[n]ever before in man's history has there been a greater need for … the "ecological viewpoint.""[465] He therefore calls for "a new ecological sensibility" and "an ecological approach to ethics."[466] Likewise, Merchant writes that "an ecological perspective is essential" as it emphasizes "that the natural and human environments together form an interrelated system."[467]

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[460] Carson 2007, xv.

[461] Carson 2002, xii.

[462] Carson 2002, 189.

[463] Carson 2002, 189.

[464] Bookchin 2022, 211.

[465] Bookchin 2022, 38.

[466] Bookchin 2005, 76, 367.

[467] Merchant 2020b, 42.

She foregrounds "ecology's premise that everything is connected to everything else."[468] "Context dependence is a fundamental characteristic" of the ecological perspective.[469] "The tendency to see things in context," Naess similarly writes, "characterizes ecological thought."[470] Each of these authors stresses how, in opposition to the atomistic worldview that separates humans from their environments as well as from each other, the ecological perspective foregrounds relationships. Applying this to the goals of the radical environmentalism movement, they each also emphasize, in Merchant's words, that ecology "as a new worldview could help resolve environmental problems."[471]

Another change in public consciousness that radical environmentalists deem necessary is towards a more direct form of political engagement. "All is politically relevant," says Naess, and therefore the "ecological movement cannot avoid politics."[472] The radical faction of this movement, however, holds that the kind of change that is necessary will not come about through governmental or institutional action alone because they focus on piecemeal change and mere reform. This is why radical environmentalists foreground the importance of direct action. In the preface to Merchant's *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World*, we read that "the radical ideal goes beyond piecemeal improvements to a Utopian vision; and tries to realize that vision in everyday struggles for a fair distribution of power, human dignity, and a livable

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[468] Merchant 2020b, 99.

[469] Merchant 2020b, xxvii.

[470] Naess 1989, 72.

[471] Merchant 2005, 156.

[472] Naess 1989, 130.

environment."[473] These everyday struggles are a form of direct action. Similarly, Naess writes that the "utopias of green societies point toward a kind of direct democracy."[474] As Bookchin says, the "common principle that legitimates direct action and direct democracy is a body politic's commitment to the belief that an assembled public, united as free and autonomous individuals, can deal in a competent, face-to-face manner with the direction of public affairs."[475] Each of these authors, therefore, writes of "direct action as a way to cultural transformation" which is a foundational goal of radical environmentalism.[476]

Environmental justice is another fundamental aspect of radical environmentalism. Its movements are composed of activists who share radical environmentalists' ecological perspective and focus on direct action. They often were inspired to become involved in the movement because their communities were directly impacted by the effects of the ecological crisis. They emphasize the concept of community as "at once the idea, the place, and the relations and practices that generate what these activists consider more socially just and ecologically sound human/environment configurations."[477] The central tenets of environmental justice are that humans are inherently related to their environments, that a truly just environmentalism must take into account the social effects of the ecological crisis, and that environmental issues always have human and social consequences. This focus on relationships, whether between humans and their environments or between social and environmental justice, is

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[473] Merchant 2005, xiv.

[474] Naess 1989, 158.

[475] Bookchin 2005, 206.

[476] Naess 2008, viii.

[477] Cronon, 1996, 310.

an application of the ecological perspective. The term "social ecology" is a way of describing these inherent relationships between human societies and their environments. The term "deep ecology" highlights the movement's focus on fundamental societal change rather than "shallow" reforms. "Ecofeminism" encompasses both of these ideals and adds a critique of patriarchy and male domination. In this way, each of these forms of radical environmentalism emphasizes the relationship between the ongoing social and environmental crises and the subsequent need for revolutionary societal change.

In "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice," Giovanna Di Chiro writes that environmental justice activists' concept of community

> [E]mphasize[s] the notion of "unity in difference." This idea of community presupposes connection to and interconnectedness with other groups, other species, and the natural environment through everyday experiences.[478]

In this quote, Di Chiro is describing the ecological perspective. The values of unity and diversity that underlie this perspective similarly underlie radical environmentalists' hope for a more ecologically just society. Naess says that his goal in writing *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle* was "to introduce two basic ecological principles into a philosophical review of our society: unity and diversity."[479] In pursuit of this, he foregrounds "ecologists' argument that the preservation of diversity and genetic variability is essential to the survival of life on the planet," which includes ecosystems and the human societies that exist within them.[480] Similarly, Bookchin writes that society "may yet derive its ethics for a balanced and harmonized world"

[478] Cronon 1996, 318.

[479] Naess 1989, 4.

[480] Naess 2008, 61.

through the application of "a radical social ecology" that emphasizes the importance of "unity in diversity."[481] He says that this concept "presupposes an awareness that nearly every species perpetuates the stability of the biosphere."[482] Likewise, Merchant writes that "[r]ecognized today as keys to viable ecosystems in nature are the interrelationships and organic unity among a system's parts, and the maintenance of ecological diversity."[483] Diversity, therefore, is an essential aspect of viable ecosystems and the human communities that exist within them.

Radical environmentalists hold that diversity also strengthens social and environmental justice movements and that uniting these movements is necessary to make revolutionary change possible. As Naess writes, in order to address the ecological crisis, a diversity of perspectives is necessary because "[*n*]*o single solution can be applied to every place*. One size does not fit all. … The common ground is in principals that support a diversity of practices."[484] He says that "some kind of agreement is essential if people are to act together towards change in a group, but their differences in perspectives and means for reaching agreement should not be lost in the oneness."[485] He concludes that "the environmental movement will be strongest if it can be shown that its concise set of principles can be derived from a variety of world-views and backgrounds" which nonetheless share the "values of environmentalism."[486] Similarly, Bookchin says that it is the coordination of diverse ideas, "their ecological holism, not merely their individual

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[481] Bookchin 2005, 364.

[482] Bookchin 2022, 210.

[483] Merchant 2020b, 83.

[484] Naess 2008, 30

[485] Naess 1989, 4

[486] Naess 1989, 4.

components—that [gives] them a radical thrust."[487] He writes that it is only when "supported by a consistently radical practice" that "these views challenge the status quo in a far-reaching manner" which is "the only manner commensurate with the nature of the crisis."[488]

Radical environmentalists emphasize that it is only when the social groups that "are distinguished from the economically, politically and culturally powerful" are united that they *become* sufficiently radical such that they might lead to revolutionary change.[489] Foregrounding how "their separate struggles are connected" comes about through an application of the ecological perspective.[490] This perspective's emphasis on relationality is even more relevant in today's increasingly interdependent, globalized world as the effects of anthropogenic climate change continue to escalate. As the ecological crisis continues, diverse responses continue to evolve. As Carolyn Merchant writes,

> Radical ecology and its movements will continue to challenge mainstream environmentalism and will remain on the cutting edge of social transformation, contributing thought and action to the search for a livable world.[491]

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[487] Bookchin 2005, 67.

[488] Bookchin 2005, 67.

[489] Storey 2018, 11.

[490] Storey 2018, 11.

[491] Merchant 2005, 254.

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