



Mother / Nature: Popular Culture and Environmental Ethics

Catherine M. Roach

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This brief but ambitious book explores our relationship with nature through the imagery we use when we talk about Mother Nature. Employing the critical tools of religious studies, psychology, and gender studies, Catherine M. Roach examines the various manifestations of nature as "mother" and what that idea implies for the way we approach the natural world. Part One, "Nature as Good Mother," discusses the notion that nature is, or is like, a beneficent and nurturing mother who provides and maintains life. In studying the "green" slogan "Love Your Mother," Roach questions the effects?for women and for the environment?of imputing female gender to nature. She asks us to look at the associations that "motherhood" and "mothering" carry within a culture still shaped by patriarchy. She notes the danger of such an apparently pro-environmental slogan if "mother" evokes the bountiful, self-sacrificing provider who herself requires no care.

Part Two, "Nature as Bad Mother," looks at the contrary notion of nature as a violent, threatening, and wrathful mother. This image arises most often when humans and technology are depicted as masters of unruly nature. Here Roach draws on theological reflection to analyze this ambivalence toward nature manifested in a fantasy that casts humans as gods. She explores the contributions of eco-theology and eco-psychology to a "heart of darkness" perspective. Finally, Part Three, "Nature as Hurt Mother," looks at possibilities and pitfalls of environmental healing inherent in the image of nature as a mother we have wounded and now seek to heal.

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