

Rosemarie Tong's Ecofeminist Perspective of *Woman and Nature: The Roar Inside Her*

Nida Batool¹ 

¹PhD Scholar, Air University, Islamabad & Visiting Faculty Member, Rawalpindi Women University
Correspondence: batool7800@gmail.com¹

ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The history of exploitation of women and nature is as old as the history of the universe itself and it is as relevant to the contemporary world as any other matter of critical importance. Ecofeminists have been highlighting and criticizing environmental injustice and gender inequality since 1970s, as these are afflicting our planet as a whole. This article aims to explore Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roar Inside Her* from Rosemarie Tong's Ecofeminist Perspective. The article identifies women with the nature as both are nourishment for humanity and victims of male fury. Western Patriarchal philosophy and religion have exploited language and science to gain their dominance over both women and nature.

Methodology: The present study is qualitative and exploratory in nature. To conduct the study the researcher has made use of textual analysis method proposed by Catherine Belsey. To analyze Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roar Inside Her* Rosemarie Tong's Ecofeminist lens is used.

Findings: The findings of the study reveal that Women are naturalized and nature is feminized in patriarchal civilizations. What men do to nature; they also do to women. The exploitation of nature and the enslavement of women are inextricably linked, and the freedom of one requires the liberation of the other.

Conclusion: The article concludes that both women and nature are victims of male fury as well as of modernization process. Although, the environment and women issues are debated internationally yet there is a dire need to execute the plans as seriously as they are highlighted in theory.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Patriarchy, Nature, Women, Men, Environment.

Introduction

Ecofeminism is an attempt to outline new utopian horizons by addressing environmental issues from the perspective of patriarchy, sexism and gender. Ecofeminism is a combination of environmentalism and feminism, arguing that female dominance and environmental exploitation are the result of patriarchy and capitalism. Strategies to deal with one must consider its influence on the other. Ecofeminist propagate that women's equality should not come at the cost of environmental degradation, nor environmental improvement at the expense of women. Like feminists, ecofeminists argue that women need to be recognized as decision-makers in demographic issues. Women are the subjects within their own lives

Article History

Received:
December 31, 2022

Revised:
June 11, 2023

Accepted:
June 26, 2023

Published:
June 30, 2023

who should be let free to make decisions. They should have freedom of deciding whether they want to have children or not and, if so, when and how many to give birth to in the framework of an ecological culture of equality.

The present research is an ecofeminist study of Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roar Inside Her*. Susan Griffin was born in Los Angeles, California. She is a Poet, essayist, and playwright. The horrors of World War II and her early perceptions of childhood in the Sierra Nevada mountains has a lasting impact on her work. Her works include poetry and prose. She has also published books in a trilogy of social autobiographies. The themes in her work are ecology, feminism and politics and is famous for its innovative and fusion form.

Summarizing her writing philosophy, Griffin once told a contemporary author: People who do not take our work, our words, our lives seriously. In this regard, I am a fortunate woman who is published, read, supported, and lives in a cultural and social movement aimed at liberating us all. We are experiencing the transformation of the soul through a world of suffering, a world of pain, and a world of joy. I found that I really knew what my vision was going to be or what it would be like when I started writing.

The book *Woman and Nature: The Roar Inside Her* by Susan Griffin examines how both women and the earth are the food for mankind and the victim of men's wrath. Based on Plato's doomed division of the world into spirit and matter, it is the story of how patriarchal Western philosophy and religion used language and science to enhance their power over women and nature. Drawing on an astonishing variety of sources, from woodworking manuals and medical texts to scriptures and classical literature, the readers get conscious that how destructive is the urge to separate the human soul from the body.

Problem Statement

The research highlights through Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roar Inside Her* from Rosemarie Tong's Ecofeminist Perspective that both women and the earth are the food of mankind and the victims of men's wrath. Patriarchal Western philosophy and religion exploited language, media, literature and science to enhance their superiority over women and nature. In a patriarchal civilization, women are naturalized and nature is feminized, and both must be liberated.

Research Objectives

- 1) To identify the similarities between the exploitation of women and nature by patriarchy.
- 2) To identify how animal imagery is used to show the exploitation of women.
- 3) To explore the possible modes of resistance that can be adopted by women to break the chains of oppression.

Research Questions

- 1) How Susan Griffin in *Woman and Nature: The Roar Inside Her* identifies the similarities between the exploitation of women and nature in a patriarchal setup?
- 2) What kind of animal imagery is used by Griffin to depict the exploitation of women and nature in the selected text?
- 3) What are the possible modes of resistance that can be adopted by women to break the chains of oppression?

Significance of Study

The following research is significant as it contributes to the existing realm of knowledge and understanding. It is especially significant to understand the modes of oppression exercised on women and nature and the similarity between these two victims. Therefore, the researcher anticipates that the present research will make an original and innovative contribution.

Research Methodology

The present research is qualitative and exploratory in nature. In the following literary research qualitative textual approach of investigation given by Catherine Belsey will be carried out through the theoretical concepts of ecofeminism given by Rosemarie Tong.

Research Method

To conduct the study textual analysis method proposed by Catherine Belsey is used. Textual analysis is the method of analyzing qualitative data which is used to describe and interpret the characteristics of a message as defined by Catherine Belsey (Belsey 3). The purpose of textual analysis is to describe the message, its structure and functions contained in texts. In this method, researchers analyze social life by deciphering words and images from portions of documents or other similar formats such as movies, music, etc, Belsey's method of textual analysis involves four stages: description, interpretation, evaluation, and application. In the description stage, the researcher identifies and describes the formal features of the text, such as its language, structure, and genre. In the interpretation stage, the researcher analyzes the meaning and significance of the text by examining its themes, symbols, and metaphors, and by considering its relationship to its historical and cultural context. In the evaluation stage, the researcher evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the interpretation by considering alternative readings and by assessing the validity and reliability of the evidence used to support the interpretation. Finally, in the application stage, the researcher considers the implications of the interpretation for broader theoretical or practical issues, such as the relationship between literature and society, or the role of literature in the formation of cultural identity. In the present study, the researcher has made use of this textual analysis method to analyze the text.

Theoretical Perspective

Rosemarie Tong, in her *Ecofeminist Perspective of Woman and Nature*, argues that there is a close-knit relationship between women and nature. She notes that in patriarchal cultures, women are naturalized and nature is feminized. Tong states that a woman is naturalized when she is treated as a cow, fox, chick, snake, bitch, beaver, old bat, cat, etc., and nature is feminized when she is worshiped as the greatest mother of humanity (Tong, 2009). Women and nature are symbolically interchanged and what humans do to nature they also do it to women. She argues that the liberation of both is interdependent. Tong says that people best care about those elements of the earth that make a contribution to their well-being. According to Tong, ecofeminists should seek to strengthen, rather than weakening women's attachment to nature. They believe that women's physiological makeup and her experiences lead to development of traits such as compassion and intuition, and these traits are undervalued in male-dominated societies (Tong, 2009). According to Tong, nature will perish unless women take action.

Data Analysis

Data i.e., the selected text has been analyzed by the researcher with reference to the theoretical perspective selected for the study.

Analysis

Ecofeminism is an attempt to outline new utopian horizons by addressing environmental issues from the perspective of patriarchy, sexism and gender. Susan Griffin *Woman and Nature: The Roar Inside Her* is a work of ecofeminism. It examines women's similarity with the earth as both are source of nourishment for humanity and also victims of men's wrath. Griffin has given examples from a no of sources, from wood-manufacturing manuals and medical texts to scriptures and classical literature, to demonstrate how destructive is the urge to separate the human soul from the body, and how long it has been apart. A common problem, according to Griffin, is that women are compared to nature. This ideology is the root cause of women's subjective position in society. Just as the earth is conquered, plowed, cultivated, inhabited, burned and managed, so are women. Nature is feminized when she is raped, dominated,

subjugated, dominated, invaded, oppressed, mined by humans, or she is revered as the greatest mother of humanity (Griffins 238). This ideology is rooted in religious mythology, and these are probed in Griffin's work. Tong (2009) points out that this attitude is rejected by the ecofeminism.

Griffin narrates the history of man's domination over nature, and woman. She says the repeated use of the words and phrases like "it is decided" and "it is said" reinforce patriarchy. There is no concrete subject behind these phrases, but everyone knows that men and science are behind the pronoun 'it' and many issues of women arise because of being excluded from the process of decision making. Many of these norms are also related to Christian symbolism and Genesis mythology. This means that part of the problem is the religious beliefs that have led men to believe that they are superior to the earth and women (Griffin, 1978).

Griffin writes, "It is written that there is no evil equal to the evil of women, but it is also written that the good wife, brought salvation to men, and saved nations, lands, and cities. Having a virtuous wife is a blessing for man" (Griffin, 1978). It shows that men consider every woman sinful and wicked and only those women are respected who are docile and submissive.

Religion and ideologies also play role in strengthening patriarchy. The use of religious images, beliefs, and ideologies by Griffin is also useful in showing readers that a man's belief in his superiority over the planet continues to be the catalyst for his belief in his superiority over women. Effective. In this regard, Mr. Tong said: "What men do to nature, they can do to women" (Griffin, 1978). This strongly ties nature to women and leads to the common problem of being plundered, raped and dominated by men through divine rights. Women are considered weak, emotional, irrational, sinful and immoral etc., In creating all these stereotypes traditions play a major as it is said: "every time I raise my head, I am reminded of tradition" (Griffin, 1978). This shows that women are dominated through religious teachings, traditions and patriarchal societal norms.

All such ideas about binaries and traditions are supported by facts and data about science. A number of scientific inventions are harmful for earth, such as oil lines and power plants etc. These are the inventions of men and also have negative impacts on nature but while men are praised for manipulating the natural world through scientific inventions, women are criticized for being cruel to nature and for using the minerals and plants for aesthetic purposes. Through her work, Griffin has demonstrated the connection between women and nature. A significant example is the use of land to increase productivity: This way land come under man's rule: "He turns waste into a garden, he sets the plow in the soil, he plants, he sows her seed with sweat on his forehead and made her bow and then she will become pregnant" (Griffin, 1978). Here, the treatment of nature by men is linked to sexual intercourse and reproduction. It shows women and nature are treated alike. It also shows that it is not easy for men to change their attitudes towards both women and the nature.

This agricultural and peasant imagery in Griffin's work continues through comparison of women to show horses, cows and mules. None of these are presented in an offensive manner, but they are beautifully presented by contrasting the way animals and women are treated. Images of cow's appearance, feeding, udders, milking, birth and calves are presented in section on cows. Cow is described as: "She's a great cow, standing on her own tender flesh and spreading it out like a drone for the world to use" (Griffin, 1978). and it ends with a subsection titled "We are Mothers" telling the readers that women are also like cows as both play the role of mother. Both are always ready to serve others. It also refers to Griffin's objection to the idea that "A woman's greatest achievement is proclaimed to be the mother of a great man" (Griffin, 1978). Women are respected not because of their status of being human but in terms of the role they play in others' lives i.e., mother, daughter, and wife etc.

The mule section represents another function of the woman, and although it is related to work, women's emotions are also presented in this chapter. As Griffin writes: "And we know it's not logical. Mules bark for no apparent reason. And I remember suddenly crying for no good reason" (Griffin, 1978). Griffin has presented women's and mule's emotions and seems to be hinting that both are related. She also says that

mules and women are “raised for domestic use” (Griffin, 1978). This shows her sharp criticism of the treatment of women and animals by men. By drawing the parallel between the objectification of women and the exploitation of nature Griffin argues that the same mentality that treats women as objects to be controlled and dominated also views nature as a resource to be exploited for human gain.

Griffin has also compared women with show horses. Show horses are tamed and controlled women are also tamed to meet societal expectations. Griffin has described the treatment of horses as: “Horses are very sensitive to pain all over their body, not just in their mouths, and the rider control pain through the pressure of his or her body weight, movement of the feet and tacks etc,” (Griffin, 1978). This treatment of horses is certainly not natural, but it a way of domination of nature by men. The Horse section focuses on show horse training, grooming and dressage. And Griffin comments: “How obedient the show horse is.” (Griffin 81). This also hints to the fact that just like show horse, the more docile a woman is, the more comfortably she and her children live” (Griffin, 1978).

By exploring the connection between horses and women, Griffin aims to highlight the ways in which the oppression and exploitation of women are intertwined with the exploitation and objectification of nature. She argues that both women and horses have been subjugated within patriarchal systems, and their liberation is interconnected. By challenging the traditional gender roles and reimagining the relationship between women, horses, and nature, Griffin encourages a re-evaluation of the power dynamics and values that have shaped our society.

Overall, Griffin’s exploration of the connection between horses and women in *Woman and Nature: The Roar Inside Her* contributes to her larger thesis on the interplay between gender, nature, and oppression. Through this examination, she reveals the ways in which the treatment of horses mirrors the treatment of women, shedding light on the broader issues of control, exploitation, and the need for a more equitable relationship with both women and the natural world.

Through Griffin’s work, the readers get conscious about the female body and the many expectations of society from them regarding their appearance. All parts of the women body are examined, including the genitals. Griffin notes that as we grow, “our faces begin to die”. This leads a woman to buy a list of creams and chemical solutions to apply on her face without considering their harmful effects. As a result, the face may get damage. Without saying it directly, Griffin gives a reminder that women give themselves harm through many ways. She says that plastic surgery is also a way to gain control over a female body and nature. This is because it is natural for wrinkles to increase over time. This applies to hair and chest as well. She points out the breast implants and criticizes them.

Griffin claims that men and society will keep doing this to women in order to maintain their control over women and nature. Susan Griffin explores the societal expectations and pressures placed on women’s bodies. She critically examines how patriarchal systems have shaped and controlled women’s bodies, perpetuating harmful beauty standards and reinforcing gender inequality. Griffin argues that women’s bodies have historically been objectified and commodified, treated as objects for the male gaze and subjected to scrutiny and judgment. She examines how societal expectations regarding women’s bodies have been constructed and perpetuated through various means, including media representations, advertising, and cultural norms.

One aspect Griffin focuses on is the idealization of a specific body image for women. She highlights the emphasis on thinness, youthfulness, and physical attractiveness as defining traits of feminine beauty. These ideals, she suggests, are deeply ingrained in cultural narratives and reinforced through media imagery, fashion, and beauty industries. Griffin argues that such expectations place immense pressure on women to conform to a narrow and often unattainable standard of beauty, leading to body dissatisfaction, self-esteem issues, and even harmful practices such as eating disorders.

Griffin also explores the ways in which women’s bodies have been controlled and regulated by societal expectations. She examines practices such as foot binding, corsetry, and cosmetic surgeries, which have

historically been used to mold and modify women's bodies according to societal standards of beauty. She suggests that these practices reflect the desire for control over women's bodies, as well as the reinforcement of patriarchal power dynamics.

Moreover, Griffin examines the ways in which societal expectations regarding women's bodies intersect with other forms of oppression, such as race, class, and sexuality. She acknowledges that beauty standards often perpetuate Eurocentric features, exclude diverse body types and sizes, and reinforce inequalities based on race and social class. Additionally, she highlights how lesbian and transgender women, in particular, face additional challenges and discrimination due to their non-conformity to heteronormative beauty ideals.

Griffin's analysis aims to expose the harmful effects of societal expectations regarding women's bodies and to challenge the underlying power structures that perpetuate these norms. She argues for a reimagining of beauty that embraces diversity, rejects objectification, and values women's agency and self-expression. By critiquing and questioning these expectations, she seeks to empower women to redefine their relationship with their bodies and to challenge the oppressive systems that seek to control and exploit them.

Throughout her work, Griffin has shown the injustices to women and nature. She has presented facts and naturally integrates her thoughts on the intersection of women and nature. She also points to the possible integration of both male and female gender in nature. As the book's subtitle suggests that women can come out of this oppression if they refuse to be tamed and begin to roar. She tells a parable of a woman yelling and a man asking why she is doing it. "They try to shut her voice and says: ...we know what is right for you" (Griffin, 1978). But this woman "devours" them (Griffin, 1978). This devouring is metaphorical and suggests that women need to speak up and get their rights. She presents the idea that women can find their own strength and beauty by roaring. At the end of the section, she writes: "Her clarity comes from this roar and self-rebirth" (Griffin, 1978). This is a mean through which women can emancipate themselves.

Griffin asserts that through our connection with nature we can find strength in ourselves. Griffin mirrors Tong's thinking: "The problem is not that women are more closely related to nature than men, but that this relationship is underestimated." (Tong, 2009). Griffin implicitly claims that this relationship should be how we decide it through our roars. She argues that people need to transcend the dualistic, linear mindset of patriarchy and embrace the passionate, subjective voice of women's culture. This is the only way to overcome the dualism that regards women and nature as inferior. Griffin suggests that women should regain a powerful connection with nature. There is nothing wrong with women's relationship with nature, but the problem is that those in power see this as their right to subjugate both women and nature. She admits that we women "know what we are made of on this earth" (Griffin, 1978). Claiming the image of a bird, she tells readers:

"[W]hen I let this free bird to fly as per her own will, it seems to me that the light from this bird body gets transferred to my body, and whenever I see the gorgeous arc of her flight, I adore this bird and I fly high with her, I enter her body with my mind, leave myself altogether and die for few moments to live in this bird" (Griffin, 1978). Griffin has expressed her wish to be like a freely flying bird. She also suggests in her work that men should accept women as equals. She says men should leave the nature alone and accept woman and nature as they are without tampering or controlling them.

Griffin has suggested ways for emancipation of women and nature. Griffin emphasizes the need to recognize and understand the deep interconnections between women and nature. This involves acknowledging the ways in which patriarchal systems have oppressed and exploited both women and the natural world. By understanding the shared experiences and interconnected struggles, a foundation for liberation is established. Griffin encourages challenging and deconstructing the dominant narratives that perpetuate the subjugation of women and the exploitation of nature. This includes critically examining cultural, social, and scientific discourses that have reinforced oppressive systems and harmful hierarchies.

By questioning these narratives, new possibilities and perspectives can emerge.

Griffin stresses the importance of valuing and amplifying women's voices, experiences, and contributions. This involves recognizing the knowledge and wisdom that women bring, both in relation to their own bodies and their understanding of the natural world. By centering women's perspectives, a more inclusive and holistic approach to the environment can be fostered. She calls for a reimagining of the relationship between women and nature, one that moves away from exploitation and control and towards respect and harmony. This entails rejecting the notion of dominance over nature and instead fostering a sense of interconnectedness, reciprocity, and stewardship. It involves embracing an ethic of care and responsibility towards both women and the environment. She emphasizes the importance of collective action and resistance against systems of oppression. This includes challenging patriarchal structures, advocating for gender equality, and working towards social and environmental justice. It involves forging alliances and collaborations between feminist and environmental movements to address the interconnected issues at hand. Griffin's ideas and suggestions serve as a starting point for a broader discourse on the emancipation of women and nature, inviting further exploration and action towards a more just and sustainable future.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The present research explored Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roar Inside Her* from Rosemarie Tong's Ecofeminist Perspective to show that both women and the earth are exploited by men. This study shows that women are naturalized in patriarchal civilizations and nature is feminized. The treatment of women and nature is alike. The oppression of nature and the enslavement of women are inseparable, and the liberty of the one requires the emancipation of the other. Although, the environment and women issues are debated internationally yet there is a dire need to execute the plans as seriously as they are highlighted in theory.

The focus of the current study is on the book *Woman and Nature: The Roar Inside Her* through the Rosemarie Tong's Ecofeminist perspective. Because of the time constraints the researcher has studied the selected works through perspective of one theorist. The future researcher can work on the same works through a different theoretical framework or can work on other works of Griffin through Tong's theoretical concepts.

Acknowledgments

None.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declared no conflict of interest.

Funding Source

The authors received no funding to conduct this study.

ORCID iDs

Nida Batool ¹  <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6668-6690>

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Note: This Research Paper Orally Presented at the 1st International Conference on Contemporary World: Challenges and Transformations (October, 2022) at Rawalpindi Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.