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This article explores the poetics and politics of the new canon, feminist critical dystopia, and ostracization of Nature to glorify the potential for creating a space in order to highlight activism and rebellion in the text The Year of the Flood (2009) by Margret Atwood. This comparative study of selected work sheds light on the issues of female objectification, oppression of Others, and dehumanizing nature in besieged patriarchal societies in order to create the possibility of escape from the dystopian nightmare and environmental degradation in the perspective of ecofeminist theoretical framework. The article hypothesizes that the dystopian atmosphere assists women writers in creating a veritable image of the engendered attitudes and their impact on women, Others, and Nature. The study will be beneficial not merely for scholars and policymakers, but also for general readers, offering insights into intersections of environment, feminism, and power.

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Abstract

*This article explores the poetics and politics of the new canon, feminist critical dystopia, and ostracization of Nature to glorify the potential for creating a space in order to highlight activism and rebellion in the text *The Year of the Flood* (2009) by Margaret Atwood. This comparative study of selected work sheds light on the issues of female objectification, oppression of Others, and dehumanizing nature in besieged patriarchal societies in order to create the possibility of escape from the dystopian nightmare and environmental degradation in the perspective of ecofeminist theoretical framework. The article hypothesizes that the dystopian atmosphere assists women writers in creating a veritable image of the engendered attitudes and their impact on women, Others, and Nature. The study will be beneficial not merely for scholars and policymakers, but also for general readers, offering insights into intersections of environment, feminism, and power.*

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Exploitation, Transcultural Fiction, Patriarchy, Alienation, Technology

Introduction

This article explores *The Year of the Flood* (2009) by Atwood, her seminal work in the context of ecofeminism as a dominating stance for the theoretical framework. The research investigates the selected text from the perspective of individual and institutional malpractices in patriarchal communities. The privileged section of male-controlling societies

practices and justifies the persecution and suppression of underdog human and nonhuman groups. The article probes into the environmental degradation as presented in the selected texts to foreground the unethical, alienating, and dehumanizing effects of human actions on nature. It also throws light on survival strategies regarding the relief and



emancipation of oppressed sections of society to win them freedom from patriarchal clutches.

This research offers an investigation into the resistant voices and perspectives of oppressed women, marginalized Others, and degradation of the environment, and glorifies the struggle, and self-expression of underprivileged groups of society. This research advocates for strategies and possibilities that address the interconnected challenges of devalued identities, cruelties of power structures, and demothering of nature. The research reflects the perils of contemporary technology and the detrimental effects of human interference with nature.

Research Objectives

- To conduct qualitative research on *The Year of the Flood*, examining the interlinking of concepts such as ecofeminism, power dynamics, and hierarchical and cultural labeling of Others, particularly women and Nature.
- To interlink the rationality of concluding arguments of study with sociocultural context and thus explore the strategies, and possibilities to bring a positive change and liberate the oppressed entities from gender discrimination with the help of ecofeminist perspective.

Research Questions

1. How does the text, *The Year of the Flood* illustrate the practice of oppressive conceptual frameworks against women, Others, and Nature?"
2. In What ways do the strategies employed by the author contribute to winning freedom for oppressed women, Others, and Nature from exploitation, and dualism caused by maldevelopment?

Literature Review

The Literary world is rich with scholarly studies that offer deep insight into the abuse against women and exploitation of land, as well as precisely develop a connection between the attitude towards women and nonhuman entities. Many scholarly studies have been

oriented towards Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*. Wiczorek (2018), for example, studies the novel for its metaphoric representation of females as well as the development of "ecological consciousness." Another study investigates how the novel portrays the "Anthropocene in the context of social, political, and economic conditions and attempts" (Nouri, 2019; Ali, 2024) and explores the extent of theories that can be applied to the work, especially focusing on mimetic theory by M. H. Abrams. Still, another study investigates the novel from an eco-critic perspective, focusing on the apocalyptic and pastoral depiction of the novel (Hardevkaur & Yahya, 2022).

On theoretical grounds, Murphy (1995) in her work *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* states that ecofeminism has promoted the development of interlinking the territories of male/female and nature/mankind, as they have been kept detached from the philosophical expanse for a long time. The theory of ecofeminism basically originated in France. After that many other Ecofeminists have made their appearance on the literary horizon to observe an intertwining relationship between women and nature. Hawkins (1998) states that dualism is a name of systematic and constructed identity of oppressor and oppressed. Cuomo (1994), in her book *Feminism and Ecological Communities: An Ethic of Flourishing* creates a healthy argument on ecofeminism while tracing the link between various kinds of suppression and domination.

As far as environmental criticism is concerned, Lawrence Buell has made notable work. Buell (1995) in his book, "*The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*" deals with the concept of "environmental imagination," which is one of his most famous and central concepts. According to Buell, to find out the significance of environmental imagination and broaden our perception of nature outside the actual environment, we must encompass our societal, cultural, and historical circumstances. Buell (2001) explores how literature deeply affects our ability to perceive the natural world furthermore to find out how literature can encourage positive change and spread awareness among the people regarding

environmental issues in his scholarly work "*Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond*". I have taken Buell's concept of exploitation and domination of nature and inferior groups of society to analyze selected works. [Shiva](#) (1988) is considered the founding father of the Research Foundation for Science, Technological Development, and the natural world, besides [Carolyn Merchant](#) (2010) is also a celebrated name in the field of ecofeminism through her work *Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, since this concept appeared on the literary horizon. There are other well-renowned names to mention such as Plumwood, Gaard, and Griffin. In some cases, theorists like Karen J. Warren (2000) and Plumwood (2005) are in line with Shiva when it comes to defining the ecofeminist viewpoint. Shiva (1988) in her work "*Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development*" believes that the strong interconnection between the exploitation of women, others (Others), and the environment is an irrefutable fact. Warren (2000) also believes that creates a connection between the exploitation, brutal control, and oppression of subjugated sections of society such as women, marginalized, and nature. Shiva (1988) has explored the relationship between feminism and environmentalism in a number of books and articles. A notable publication of her personal collection is "*Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development*." In this book, she explores the male-dominated system that affects women and the environment. She contends that there is a connection that forms a foundation for dominant power structures between the exploitation of women and the environment.

Research Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature. For research methodology, textual analysis is selected. Catherine Belsey's Textual analysis provides instrumental support for drawing a valid research design for my project. Belsey (2013) in her scholarly essay "Textual Analysis as a Research Method" defends the indispensability of choosing textual analysis as a research method for conducting a study on certain

works in their cultural backdrop. As far as the research model is concerned, for my selected category of qualitative inquiry, the concept of content analysis proves instrumental support to unearth the facts. The founding authors Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon (2005) of this model opine that qualitative content analysis is "a research method for the subjective interpretation of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (p.1278). The terms like "subjective interpretation", "coding", and "themes and patterns" by these writers advocate my stand for opting for content analysis as a research model. Because "Directed approach" helps me to seek answers to research questions as well as to determine the validity of analysis regarding formulated theoretical framework as supported or otherwise by the primary texts.

Theoretical Framework

This study aims to contribute to the existing body of research on ecofeminism and ecocriticism by examining how "*The Year of the Flood*" illustrates intersections of exploitation and domination of women, nature, and marginalized groups. By applying the amalgamated theoretical framework of ecofeminism and ecocriticism, the research seeks to uncover the ways in which the novel critiques the dominant power structures that perpetuate the oppression of subjugated groups. Specifically, this study will examine how Atwood's novel represents the exploitation and domination of women and nature, and how these representations reflect the maldevelopment paradigm described by Vandana Shiva. Lawrence Buell (1995) is the theorist who first presented the concept of domination and exploitation in the field of ecocriticism. Buell's research examines how human malpractices cause great harm to the environment, resulting in environmental disparities and decay. He explores the economic, political, and social aftermaths of environmental degradation and propagates a more responsible and viable way of observing our relationship with the natural world. Buell's observations have designed the area of environmental criticism in letter and spirit and

improved public awareness of human activities that are responsible for shaping the environment. In his research on domination and exploitation, Buell reflects on how literature describes the effects of manmade activities on the environment. He explores how writers present the excessive consumption of natural resources, like contamination, overfishing, and deforestation, in addition to the culminating impact on the world of nature. Buell wants his readers to mull over the ethical inferences of human actions on the environment by probing into these portrayals. He prompts the readers to think about the significance of environmentally friendly habits and human interconnection with the environment through his work, undoubtedly an interesting approach that highlights the significance of environmental responsibility and awareness. (Buell, [1995](#))

The work of Vandana Shiva in relation to ecofeminist theory is outstanding. She has explored the relationship between feminism and environmentalism in a number of books and articles. A notable publication of her personal collection is "Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development." She resists by putting forth the idea that there is a connection that forms a foundation for overriding power structures between the exploitation of women and nature. Shiva draws attention to the ways that women especially those from marginalized communities often take responsibility for the harmful repercussions of resource exploitation and environmental degeneration. Shiva is also a celebrated theorist for promoting "Ecofeminism." This exclusive work explores the interlink between the feminist approach, environmentalism, and justice in society, taking deep into the ecofeminist viewpoint. Shiva presents the crucial importance of dealing with environmental issues from an integrated perspective and admits the interrelated nature of justice for the planet, class, and gender. Her writings have shaped dialogue about the intersections between environmentalism and feminism. Intersectional analyses of gender, when applied to eco-criticism, emphasize how environmental issues negatively affect marginalized communities, especially women and people who identify as gender nonconforming. It acknowledges that gender inequality already exists

and is made worse by environmental degradation and climate change, for which women are more likely to be affected and frequently shoulder the brunt of the burden of the implications. In addition to revealing various struggles and experiences that different communities have with the environment, this comprehensive approach provides information for more diverse and equitable solutions. In her work on ecofeminism, comparable ideas to Buell's environmental imagination Vandana Shiva explores the connections between various oppressive and power structures in order to pinpoint shared characteristics. They draw attention to the connections between problems like social justice, environmental degradation, and gender inequality. These theories highlight the importance of adopting a comprehensive strategy that acknowledges the intricate connections between different types of marginalization and discrimination. We can endeavor to create more inclusive and equitable societies by recognizing these similarities.

Text Analysis

As an environmentalist, Margaret Atwood's writings and peculiarly her novels throw light on oppressed women under the sexual politics of patriarchy and also present those grave issues that the environment faces in our times. Gina (2012) opines that Atwood's major concern is nature, the people of this planet, and the earth itself with its expected annihilation. The deep analysis of her writings from various perspectives establishes the broader and wider horizon of her skills and talent. As Huttova (2012) believes Atwood expresses her sensitivity towards social, political, ecological, and religious spheres which are close to the catastrophic end due to manmade nefarious activities and excesses being done to the world of nature. A revolutionary spirit is quite visible in her works, where she explores countless themes and this effort on her part receives wonderful acknowledgment in different literary circles. In her dissertation, "You Look Delicious: Food, Eating, and Hunger in Margaret Atwood's Novels", Lahikainen ([2007](#)), feels prevalent awareness in her fictional works. In view of Lahikainen, the observation about the treatment of

food items, and related hunger can be observed rightly obvious in Atwood's work *The Edible Woman and Lady Oracle*. She opines that food and eating stand at symbolic and metaphoric levels to present the feelings, thoughts, characters, and situations in the story at their best instead of mere words to create a monotonous impact. Atwood also presents in her writings social injustice being committed against the marginalized Others.

Bjerke (2008) states, "Atwood is very observant with inequalities and differences between genders, classes and nationalities" (p.16). Atwood is interested in portraying the deplorable conditions of oppressed sections such as women, downtrodden, and nonhumans. The critical analysis of her literary works unearths various issues regarding women and nature. Buell also exposes the effects of the worst human activity on the natural world. He examines how various writers portray the picture of excessive consumption of natural resources on the part of human beings which in turn causes contamination, overfishing, and deforestation, in addition to leaving unending impacts (Buell, 1995). Toby has to leave her house for good to avoid ruthless persecution by the corporation and because she becomes immensely afraid to hear stories "about female debtors being framed out for sex" (p.36). Toby entirely leaves the former identity of her place and finds work at Secret Burgers as a 'furzooter'. While facing extreme monetary issues, she takes a house on rent at 'Sewage Lagoon', an unthinkable place to reside in. She has no one at her side to look after her in such a deplorable condition therefore her plight matches the environment she lives in. This lodging has "a lot of shit ended up in it" (p.36). This soiled locality is full of stink and garbage in contrast to the place where the people from these privileged corporations reside. The toxins mixed with the sewage water which flows from elite localities to slums contaminate the drinking water and inflict many incurable diseases on the downtrodden. Buell (2001) stresses exploring human history first to understand the complete biosphere. He believes that the American agricultural system is the major polluting institution with regard to capitalism, causing a big contribution to nature's decay and death. His views on toxic discussion offer a specific

toxic discourse that Buell promotes with an exploration of Racial Carson's *Silent Spring*. This examination on his part creates a relation to other numberless texts which begin with the late Industrial Revolution and end up to the present.

Atwood presents the idea in her writings that dualistic thinking is responsible for the oppression of women and nature. She, therefore, believes that to win emancipation from the binaries of man/woman and culture/nature dualistic approach should be discarded at all levels. According to Atwood, nature and women both have horizons of mutuality and interdependence as both are exploited by patriarchal ideology. Atwood presents interconnections on different levels where all major and minor characters endure the social injustice and exploitation at the hands of male-controlling corporate ideology that keeps these characters subjugated and contaminates nature. The subhuman handling of Toby, Ren, and above all the worst conditions of Thai immigrants in the story offers a horrible resemblance of maltreatment with the environmental world. Toby faces numerous hardships and exploitation at the hands of Corporations. Her mother died due to consuming pills that the corporations manufacture with harmful effects to grab money. Her father commits suicide because he cannot bear the loss of his wife, moreover, he does not have a single penny to return the loan from the corporation. For CorpSeCorps both women and immigrants have equal status next to animals in that society. The elite even prefers to kill the immigrants instead of bothering to expel them from the country.

Atwood presents a horrible picture of the nefarious activities of the elite which is found involved in tanning the skins of rare animals with dangerous chemicals. The fumes of these chemicals become extremely malodorous and foul-smelling for the environment. The corporations also kill endangered animals, shoot innocent immigrants, pollute nature, and oppress women debtors as these corporations are headed by the same masculinized identity who can cause any kind of harm to anyone for the sake of material benefits. Therefore, Toby, immigrants, and animals represent an interconnected nexus of women,

Others, and nature. The Ecofeminists and Ecocritics highlight the oppression and domination of women, marginalized, and the environment. They offer probable solutions for bringing this oppression to an end. Buell (1995) and Shiva (1988) support the ethical stance in their argument regarding varieties of ecofeminism and ecocriticism. The novel's title *The Year of the Flood* is also symbolic and provides a link with an anticipation of a natural calamity made by The God's Gardeners. This religious group in the novel anticipates that a waterless flood is coming to annihilate the earthy life due to human malpractices which are leading towards a devastating end. They are of the view that men after leaving the path of God, have fallen into moral degradation. The avaricious nature of Humankind in the form of the presence of corporations has exhausted all the valuable resources of the Earth. Man has destroyed the rare species of animals and the natural world at large to obtain his material objectives. The animals are being slaughtered brutally for bio-engineering, whereas cloned and hybrid animals are being created to challenge the natural habitats of life. When the earth faces a waterless flood, a fatal disease of plague erupts and takes away many living beings. Only two characters Ren and Toby survive this calamity due to being in a safe place.

They want to establish a nonviolent society which may prove possible if man mends his ways and returns to the world of nature. They dream of a society where caring for one another and respecting fellow beings will be the order of the day. When it comes to the example of Ren's character, her time and upbringing which she receives at the Gardeners' place bring revolutionary changes in her approach. As she becomes ready to forget the emotional injuries caused by her friends. Therefore, she wonders to think about forgiveness "who [she] needs to forgive" (p.489). If she wants to start a new life where she has to start a new journey. "The end of one journey is the beginning of another" (p.490) is the consciousness that she has discovered about life. In order to establish a violence-free society and to put an end to victimization the institutions and individuals should respect commonalities and differences instead of promoting gaps and differences between various

social groups. To establish more egalitarian and democratic societies, it is the need of the hour to promote a healthier, cooperative, and non-violent environment at all levels. The transformation in Ren's behavior at the end of the novel encourages respect for diversity and says no to dichotomy.

Therefore, when Ren walks toward Jimmy, she takes a step ahead in developing a dominant and violence-free society. Atwood promotes the philosophy of forgiving and ignoring the wrongs being done in the past to accommodate all human beings in one social structure. "This is not the time", Toby utters these words in her old Eve voice, "for dwelling on ultimate purpose. I would like us all to forget the past, the worst part of it. Let us be grateful for this food that has been given to us. Amanda, Ren. Jimmy, you too, if you can manage it," (p.515). The message of establishing a society based on freedom, justice, and equality proves the essence of the survival strategies of the novel.

When the story ends, the major characters go for reconciliation with their fellows and make pledges to rebuild humankind on the earth once again. Atwood promotes that the rebuilding of man hinges upon its reintegration with the environment and raising its voice against the patriarchal rule. In order to establish a violence-free society and to put an end to victimization the institutions and individuals should respect commonalities and differences instead of promoting gaps and differences between various social groups. Atwood promotes the philosophy of forgiving and ignoring the wrongs being done in the past to accommodate all human beings in one social structure.

Conclusion

The work of the selected writer confirms the objectification of women, the degradation of nature, and the oppression of the downtrodden in social hierarchies. These exploited sections of society in the anthropocentric conception of otherness, are presented as degraded agencies of the invisible constituent to the rational economy. The interconnection among the sufferings of nature, women, and Others strengthens the point that

everything gives a positive response when treated well, with care, kindness, respect, and freedom of choice, as contrary to a devastating reaction from nature, women, and the marginalized. This study establishes the fact that scientific patriarchy, war sexism, politics, and the wrong use of technology all contribute to the manipulation and marginalization of both the environment and people. Atwood reflects in her selected work that life is being wiped out on this planet due to environmental devastation caused by

ruthless human intrusion with the help of lethal technology. She exposes the myth behind the development projects launched by the corporations in the name of progress, which eventually proves devastating at all levels. The writer establishes the fact that the patriarchal system keeps women, Others, and nature oppressed in the name of establishing hospitals, introducing new medicines, and marketing new products to make money through their so-called progressive agendas.

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