

# Patriarchal Capitalism And Ecological Crisis: An Ecofeminist Review Of Margaret Atwood's Fiction

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The fiction written by Margaret Atwood makes an important contribution to the modern literary debate as it sheds light on the interrelation between the ecological crisis, gendered inequality, and socio-economic systems that are dominated by domination. This study is placed in the context of ecofeminist literature research; it is a critical speculative and dystopian narrative by Atwood on the nature of capitalism and its impact on ethics to both women and nature itself. The analysis will be based on the ecofeminist theory, feminist dystopian criticism, and the environmental humanities scholarship, and contextualize The Testaments in relation to The Handmaid Tale, Surfacing, and the MaddAddam trilogy. Analytical emphasis focuses on three dimensions that are interrelated including regulation of female bodies by the patriarchal rule, commodification of nature and life by the capitalist technoscience and ethical alternatives in terms of caring, resisting and multispecies responsibility. The ecological crisis in the context of the narrative by Atwood appears as a socio-political state brought about by systems of control, extraction, and surveillance as opposed to environmental determinism. Reproductive exploitation, corporate biocapitalism and masculinist science are mutually reinforcing processes that perpetuate ecology and gendered oppression. In her fiction, Atwood also imagines a way to survive on both basis of relational ethics, communal practice, and ecological awareness and critiques anthropocentrism and profit-oriented paradigms. The article provides an upshot of current ecofeminist literature and draws upon it to establish patriarchal capitalism as the structural axis of unity within the ecological and feminist critique made by Atwood.

**Keywords:** Ecofeminism; Patriarchal Capitalism; Ecological Crisis; Feminist Dystopia; Environmental Humanities; Margaret Atwood.

## 1. Introduction

The modern moment embodies the growing intersectional process of ecological crisis and gendered inequality that can manifest itself in climate instability, biodiversity loss, environmental toxicity, uneven ecological risk distribution. These circumstances are progressively overlapping with established patriarchal and capitalist systems that legitimize domination, extraction and dispossession. This intersection has been addressed in literary scholarship, especially in the environmental humanities, by means of critical paradigms that are able to contemplate both social and ecological inequity at the same time. Ecofeminism has become one of such frameworks, with sustainable critique of the similar subjugation of women and nature to patriarchal capitalism and revelation of the ideological premises that uphold the exploitation of the environment and gendered power dynamics (Ahmed & Zaouga, 2022; Bowman, 2020). Margaret Atwood is in a central place in this critical landscape. Throughout

decades of literary output, her fiction continues to challenge the confusion of gender, power, technology and ecological susceptibility. Venturing back to the psychological and ecological introspection of *Surfacing* through the reproductive authoritarianism of *The Handmaid Tale* and the corporate biotechnological dystopias of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, Atwood creates speculative worlds that are disciplining the female body and commodifying nature. These fictional spaces are used to shed light on the pattern that has been repeated over and over again in terms of an ideological framework that controls life by means of control, surveillance, and instrumentalization, that has been governed by patriarchal governance and capitalist rationality (Bharti, 2020; Banerjee, 2023). Critical readings place Atwood within a greater tradition of writing of the speculative and science fiction that anticipates ecological precariousness and gendered power dynamics as its main narrative topics (Amale & Ferial, 2019). The ecological crisis in Atwood fiction is always presented as a result of socio-political structures, which are based on domination rather than as an environmental issue. Her stories about the women bodies, their reproductive ability, land, animals, or genetic material are being used by the same logic of ownership and management. Reproductive control in *The Handmaid Tale* is a state apparatus that becomes a tool of turning fertility into a political asset that is subject to control by religious authoritarianism and the law of the father (Almaarof, 2024; Bracken, 2023). Such a reproductive regime reflects the extractive strategies in the ecosystems developing according to capitalist development models, which supports ecofeminist claims about the common premises of gender oppression and environmental exploitation (Aziz and Mohammed, 2024). This is further extended in the *MaddAddam* trilogy, in the form of corporate biocapitalism, technological hubris, and ecological doom. Biotechnological companies play around with genetic life at their own gain crossing ethical boundaries between human, animal, and commodity. These depictions are in line with materialist ecofeminist criticism that considers capitalist science to be a masculinist project based on control, abstraction, and accumulation (Costa Cardoso, 2023; Bowman, 2020). Atwood reveals the effects of unregulated technological force working in the context of patriarchal-capitalist structures, in which environmental destruction, social disintegration, and loss of morality are manifested.

Ecofeminism offers an explanatory prism that is able to place these narrative patterns in the context of larger philosophical and political arguments. Ecofeminist thinking is based on the critique of hierarchical dualisms man/woman, culture/nature, reason/emotion to establish order to legitimize domination and to condone exploitation (Carroll and Tolan, 2023). In literary criticism, ecofeminism has developed to no longer be symbolically involved with the woman-nature relationship, but is focused on material circumstances, political economy, environmental justice, and multispecies ethics (Bedford, 2018). The applicability of the ecofeminist practices in various literary traditions is also shown by comparative ecocritical scholarship, which supports the idea that it could be applied to a range of countries and cultures (Araujo, 2024). This broadness makes ecofeminism especially appropriate to the analysis of the speculative fiction of Atwood that prefigures the intersections of gender, ecology, science, and power. Atwood does not limit her eco-feminist vision to criticism of imaginaries of resistance, caring, and surviving. Her stories continuously predict the appearance of female characters as carriers of environmental, cultural and ethical continuity, especially in post-apocalyptic settings defined by technological malfunction. Another example of an ecological ethic based on sustainability, spiritual ecology, and social responsibility is the example of the

eco-conscious group of Gods Gardeners in *The Year of the Flood*. These kinds of representations echo the ecofeminist ideas of relational ethics, interdependence, and care-based ways of being in reaction to environmental crisis (Bedford, 2018). Other existing research on the late fiction by the author also highlights the importance of ecofeminist activism and ethical opposition expressed through female-based stories of survival and renewal (*The Testaments*) (Begum, 2024; de Oliveira, 2021). Another way through which Atwood addresses anthropocentric assumptions in fiction is through posthuman and multispecies worldviews. The issues of the hybrid beings, genetically engineered animals, and human-nonhuman alliances require the conventional hierarchies between man and the natural world to be questioned. Such narrative techniques conform to the current ecofeminist and posthuman frameworks of theory that propose ethical responsibility to be applied beyond human exceptionalism (Bignall & Braidotti, 2019). The survival in the Atwoodian speculative worlds relies on trading, coexistence, and joint vulnerability, instead of dominance, which contributes to ecofeminist arguments about the power of masculinity and technology.

Although there is a growing body of scholarly interest in ecofeminist themes as part of the oeuvre of Atwood, the critical perspective, in general, still remains piecemeal. In *The Handmaid Tales* (Cooke, 2019), *Surfacing* (Ates, 2024; Bharti, 2020), the *MaddAddam* trilogy (Costa Cardoso, 2023), there are many studies about reproductive politics, ecological consciousness, or corporate biocapitalism. Previous critical approaches to fiction by Atwood focus on identity formation, trauma, and survival, and are used to provide the foundational basis of further ecofeminist readings (Batroukha, 2017). The lack of scholarship, however, consolidates these debates by one analytical lens of patriarchal capitalism as the structural axis linking gendered oppression and ecological crisis. This type of synthesis is especially applicable during times of heightened international debate about climate justice, environmental ethics, and vulnerability over gender.

The following study fills this gap of crucial necessity by conducting a valid ecofeminist synthesis of the principal works of fiction by Margaret Atwood. This study does not appreciate her novels as distinct textual entities, instead creating a consistent ideological plot over her fiction showing sustained interest in the phenomena of patriarchal capitalism and ecological destruction. This review considers Atwood as one of the key literary voices that can express ethical demands of environmental crisis through the prism of gendered power structures (Agir, 2023; Alansary, 2023).

This review includes *The Handmaid Tale*, *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood*, *MaddAddam*, and depending on the context, includes *Surfacing* and *The Testaments*. Analytical focus is on three dimensions of concern: state of women bodies under patriarchal control, commodification of nature and life under capitalist technoscience and the rise of ecofeminist ethics based on caring, resistance and shared life of the multispecies. The review is significant to current ecofeminist literary criticism as well as it supports the perennial significance of Atwood fiction to the discourse of environmental humanities.

The study further moves the research to the thesis that the fiction of Margaret Atwood is a long-term ecofeminist analysis of the capitalist system as patriarchal in an age of ecological precarity. Her stories shed light on the moral implications of domination and imagine other futures made on basis of responsibility, relationality and ecological awareness. The aesthetic

inquiry is not the only way in which such literary interventions engage in interdisciplinary discussion on sustainability, justice and survival in the Anthropocene.

## **Objectives of the Study**

1. To critically examine the representation of patriarchal capitalism, gendered domination, and ecological crisis in Margaret Atwood's fiction through an ecofeminist framework.
2. To synthesize existing ecofeminist scholarship on Atwood's major works in order to identify prevailing interpretive trends and unresolved critical gaps within literary studies.
3. To evaluate the ethical alternatives proposed in Atwood's narratives through ecofeminist principles of care, resistance, and multispecies coexistence.

## **2. Theoretical Framework: Ecofeminism**

### **2.1 Origins and Key Concepts of Ecofeminism**

The late twentieth century has seen the rise of ecofeminism in the intellectual traditions of feminism, ecological and anti-capitalism, tackling structural connections between feminized oppression and environmental destruction. The conceptual grounding was created with the help of the work of Francoise d'Eaubonne whose intervention made the patriarchal domination a central source of ecological crisis. Her conceptualization positioned the destruction of the environment and subordination of women as complementary processes to each other, which were strengthened in the context of exploitative socio-economic relations. This was later elaborated by other theorists who framed ecofeminism in the context of critique of industrial modernity, colonial extraction and capitalist accumulation. Vandana Shiva predicted the material outcomes of the patriarchal modes of development by focusing on subsistence economies, native ecological knowledge and sexed labor relations. Her ecofeminist criticism focused on women displacement as ecological steward in market rationalities, with increased vulnerabilities being identified with global environmental crises. Carolyn Merchant contributed also by exploring scientific epistemology in history to the development of ecofeminist theory, which envisages a shift in the perception of nature as a living being to a resource that has been mechanized and dominated. This epistemic transformation solidified cultural discourses of legitimacy around the control of both ecosystems and women that solidified ecofeminism as an attack on Enlightenment rationality and technocrat authority. In these root interventions, ecofeminism has defined a central set of ideas that revolve around the interrelational oppression, relational ethics, and the opposition to hierarchical dualisms. Binary systems dividing culture and nature, reason and embodiment were ideological processes of maintaining the ecological exploitation and gender inequality. Subsequent feminist theory added to the essentialist understandings of ecofeminism the intersectional, materialist, and posthuman approaches to race, class, coloniality and species relations (Gaard, 2022; Jubimol, 2017). Ecofeminism has become a critical perspective in the contemporary Anthropocene, which questions the power framework and determines environmental control and gender-based survival (Ehsan, 2024).

### **2.2 Patriarchal Capitalism and Environmental Exploitation**

One of the major assumptions of the ecofeminist theory is the patriarchal capitalism as a set of domination which is structured in social and ecological space. The mode of production of

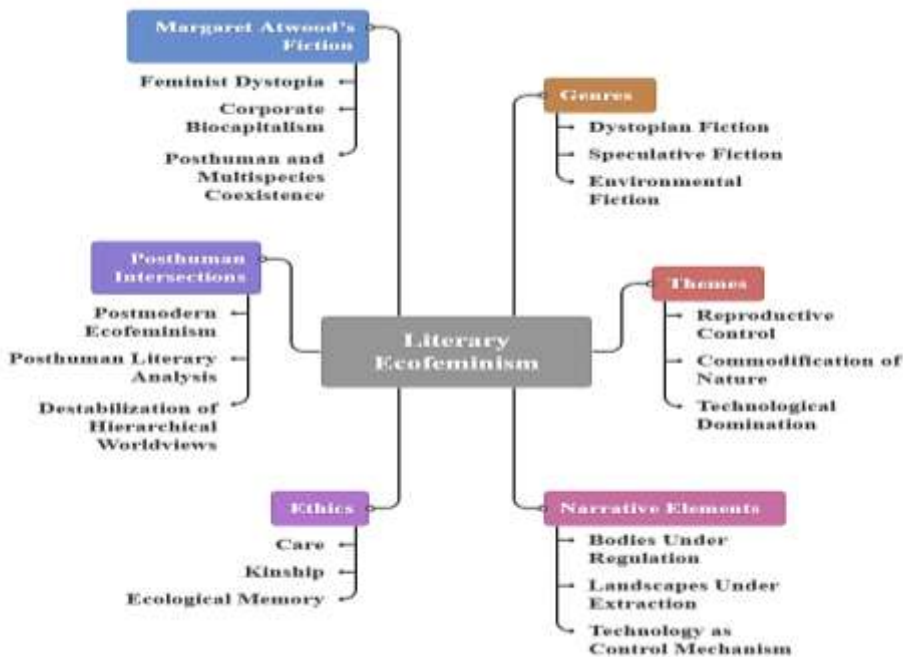
capitalists implements bodies, land and biological life into commodities and strengthens extractive relations which are founded on rationality of making profits. Ecofeminist theory recognizes gendered division of labor, exploitation of reproduction, and destruction of the environment as related effects of this structure. The women often find themselves in the role of ecological precarity where they are disproportionately vulnerable to environmental degradation and are not even included in the institutional decision process. Materialist ecofeminism frames the environmental exploitation in terms of political economy with the focus on structural inequalities that can be found in capitalist expansion. The view is a criticism of scientific and technological discourses which justify the manipulation of the ecology in the name of efficiency and progress. Masculinist science is an effect of the ecofeminist analysis as a disciplinary power that promotes the principle of abstraction, control, and possession over relational knowledge systems, which is especially apparent in the field of biotechnological governance and reproductive control (Kitch, 2023). The Marxist discourse of those who engage in ecofeminist with the patriarchal capitalism is also applied to the issue of commodification of reproductive labor and environmental resources. Capitalist patriarchy has been recognized as a structural opponent that arranges surveillance, extractions, and dispossession with the help of authoritarianism as the subject of scholarship analyzing dystopian storylines (KOC, 2021). In this school of thought the ecological crisis is presented as a social political state that is a result of inequality within the system and not an objective environmental process. Feminist dystopian criticism also places such dynamics within the framework of the narratives of gendered power, control and resistance in the regimes of capitalism (Khetan, 2023).

### **2.3 Ecofeminism in Literary Studies**

Ecofeminism has emerged as one of the crucial methods of critical analysis in the field of literary studies, especially in the studies of speculative, dystopian and environmental fiction. Literary ecofeminism is the study of narrative tactics that display the relationality of gender, power and ecological vulnerability, where texts are considered cultural places of socio-environmental anxiety. This method underlines depiction of bodies, landscapes, and technologies at domination regimes, which makes literature a place of ethical denunciation and imaginative opposition. Ecofeminist literary criticism is dominated by dystopian and speculative fiction. These genres play dramatic roles in ecological futures through technological gluttony, authoritarian politics, and capitalist domination, setting the stage of gender-based experiences of crisis. Within ecofeminist readings, the patterns of narrative that can be identified show control of reproduction, commodification of nature, and degradation of relational ethics in such a fictional world (Kaur & Khanna, 2023; Koyluoglu, 2022). An example of ecofeminist dystopian literary writing is the fiction of Margaret Atwood. Feminist critiques of *The Handmaid's Tale* focus on reproductive management, biopolitics, and ecological scarcity via ecofeminist expert systems connecting the regulation of the body and the degradation of the environment (Kapoor and Giri, 2018). As an extension of this, analyses of the *MaddAddam* trilogy place Atwood and her speculative vision of a posthuman world within the context of Anthropocene feminism and the companion species discourse (Jennings, 2019; Grimbeek, 2017). Another focus of ecofeminist literary criticism is ethics of place, kinship, and care, as Figure 1 demonstrates. Research on *The Year of the Flood* speculates on

ecofeminist ethics based on ecological memory, community survival, and alternative knowledge regimes, and emphasizes opposition to technocratic domination (Hummel, 2019). The more recent critical discussions take ecofeminist literary analysis one step further as they traverse into the postmodern and posthuman convergences, highlighting narrative plurality and destabilization of world hierarchies in dystopia literature (Koch, 2022). This combination empowers ecofeminist to embrace complexity in the context of contemporary environment crises and solidifies the literary analysis further devolving it as a critical feedback of environmental humanities research (Diotto, 2023; Joshi, 2021).

**Figure 1. Ecofeminism in Literary Studies**



### 3. Margaret Atwood's Ecofeminist Vision

#### 3.1 Atwood's Engagement with Environmental Ethics

The works of Margaret Atwood in fiction demonstrate extensive experience of environmental ethics developed through feminist awareness and environmental accountability. The environmental crisis in her stories is not a background setting, but a structural condition created by the methods of domination, extraction, and influence of the ideology. By placing Atwood in the context of women writers whose literary interventions reveal moral implications of ecological exploitation through gendered experience and political consciousness, ecofeminist criticism situates the author (Mahato, 2017). The ecological imagination developed by Atwood anticipates vulnerability, interdependence and responsibility and criticizes discourses that justify environmental destruction as an act of progress-driven rationality. Ecological imbalance is always introduced as an inseparable element of moral failure in her texts, which abide by the framework of patriarchal-related social systems. Literature about the eco-feminist issues of Atwood highlights in what manner she has



articulated the crisis of consumerist cultures in which women as well as nature are exploited using parallel objectification (Lakshmi, 2022).

### **3.2 Feminist Dystopia and Speculative Realism**

The feminist dystopian vision presented by Atwood is realized via the speculative realism which projects the current socio-political trends into the near future settings where ecological precarity is the order of the day. This literary form unveils heightened control of feminine bodies and ecological paucity, which supports ecofeminist perspectives on collective formations of most forms of domination. According to feminist interpretations, *The Handmaid Tale* is a dystopian work that reveals the reproductive control as the tool that perpetuates the patriarchal rule (Mirzayee, 2019). The visionary criticism of feminism in the *MaddAddam* trilogy extends this dystopian feminist critique of the world into post-apocalyptic futures of corporate biocapitalism and technology overload. These imaginary landscapes represent a form of ecological failure created by the use of genetic engineering, climate change and moral decay. Ecofeminist scholarship views these landscapes as an act of denunciation of domination-reliant functioning models that drive out relational morals and care (Lashley, 2023). Comparative studies place the dystopian narratives by Atwood into greater ecofeminist traditions of crisis driven ecological futures being converted by moral change. In such scholarship, the role of Atwood in feminist speculative writing which preempts resiliency and moral responsibility instead of technocratic control is highlighted (Kuznetski, 2021).

### **3.3 Nature, Technology, and Power Relations in Her Fiction**

In the fiction of Atwood, nature is often a controversial space that is commodified, monitored, and modified. The process of ecological degradation in *Surfacing* is faced with the same impact as the psychological fragmentation and colonial intrusion showing environmental degradation as something that is inseparable with the degradation of female subjectivity and Native presence. Ecofeminist interpretations underline in what way Atwood has depicted nature as a living being as opposed to an inanimate scenery. This ecofeminist vision is also enforced in Atwood, poetic works by the images of embodiment, vulnerability, and relation consciousness. Her poems portray the experiences of women and nature under patriarchal hierarchies, expressing opposition to them through the lyrical contact with ecological awareness (Luthfi, 2020). Technology plays a role in the novels by Atwood as an extension of the masculine and capitalist force. The science of intervention turns life into a controllable resource, which strengthens domination with the help of abstraction and control. Ecocritical analysis sees technological regulation of the *Handmaid of Tale* and the *MaddAddam* trilogy as a tool of ecological exploitation and gender domination (Mellor, 2021). Atwood dystopian fiction Posthuman possibilities in Atwood develop ecofeminist research in multispecies ethics and reconstituted subjectivities. Mixed animal creatures and in-bred species upset anthropocentric hierarchies, prefiguring interdependence and weakness between the species (Table 1). These representations are placed in critical scholarship within the context of the Anthropocene that discusses the formation of the posthuman subject and environmental responsibility (Munoz-Gonzalez et al., 2021). The ecological criticism of Atwood finds its peak in *Oryx* and *Crake*, where the destruction of the environment is presented through uncontrolled corporate experimentation and the profit-making technoscience. The ecocritical

approach focuses on the ecological collapse depicted as an ethical failure due to capitalist rationality and not technological inevitability (Mohamad, 2022).

**Table 1. Ecofeminist Dimensions in Margaret Atwood's Literary Vision**

Analytical Focus	Core Ecofeminist Insight	Primary Textual Context	Key Reference(s)
Environmental ethics	Ecological crisis framed as moral and ideological failure within patriarchal systems	Surfacing, Oryx and Crake	Mahato (2017)
Consumption critique	Parallel exploitation of women and nature under consumer-driven cultures	The Edible Woman	Lakshmi (2022)
Feminist dystopia	Reproductive regulation functions as a tool of patriarchal governance	The Handmaid's Tale	Mirzayee (2019)
Speculative realism	Ecological collapse linked to biocapitalism and technological excess	MaddAddam trilogy	Lashley (2023)
Ethical futures	Feminist dystopia foregrounds resilience and moral responsibility	Selected speculative novels	Kuznetski (2021)
Nature and subjectivity	Environmental degradation mirrors erosion of female and indigenous identity	Surfacing	Mohamad (2022)
Poetry and embodiment	Ecological consciousness articulated through vulnerability and relational awareness	Atwood's poetry	Luthfi (2020)
Technoscience critique	Science operates as patriarchal instrument of domination over life	The Handmaid's Tale, MaddAddam	Mellor (2021)
Posthuman ethics	Multispecies coexistence destabilizes anthropocentric hierarchies	MaddAddam trilogy	Muñoz-González et al. (2021)
Capitalist rationality	Ecological devastation portrayed as ethical failure of profit-driven systems	Oryx and Crake	Mohamad (2022)

## 4. Patriarchal Capitalism in Atwood's Fiction

### 4.1 Control of Women's Bodies

Patriarchal capitalism in the fiction of Margaret Atwood is the most violent in the form of institutional control over the bodies of women, especially in the field of reproductive governance. The Handmaid Tale forms a socio-political system according to which fertility becomes a controlled resource of authoritarian theocracy, connecting the control of bodies to



the lack of resources and environmental fear (Nawar, 2023). Reproductive exploitation operates at the novel level as an economic and political approach to maintaining state power in terms of surveillance, discipline and ritualized violence. The female bodies are viewed as the tools of demographic control, as opposed to as an autonomous entity, thus ecofeminist arguments on commodification of life in a patriarchal power system (Sansour). There is the concept of violence within reproductive control that emphasizes the structural normalization of gendered oppression in dystopian worlds. Ecofeminist scholarship contextualizes this kind of violence in the wider dynamics of patriarchy governing the agency of women through terror, repression, and figuratively through erasure, which builds on analogies between female domination and domination over the environment (Naz et al., 2024).

#### **4.2 Corporate Power and Capitalist Excess**

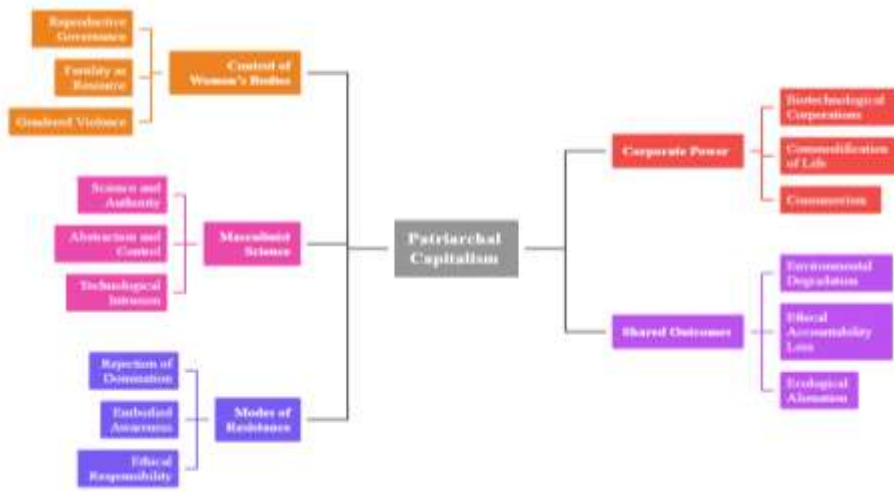
Corporate capitalism holds a middle stage in the criticism of ecological collapse by Atwood, especially through its descriptions of profit-driven biotechnological corporations in the MaddAddam trilogy. These companies control genetic life, ecosystems, and human bodies according to market rationality, and erase the ethical borders to expand their businesses (Schiopu, 2022). Consumerism works in these narratives as an ideological movement that perpetuates environmental destruction by establishing the normative aspects of excess and disposability. According to ecofeminist readings, the capitalist consumption is positioned as a process commodifying nature and women that highlights extractive practices grounded in the global market systems (Parrinello, 2019). Capitalist profligacy in the speculative worlds of Atwood brings about ecological destruction by means of experiments and the disregard of nature. Critical commentaries highlight the depiction of corporate science which is disconnected with ethical responsibility, which promotes ecological destruction at the discourse of innovation and efficiency.

#### **4.3 Masculinist Science and Technological Domination**

The role of masculinist science in the fiction by Atwood is that it is a form of discipline that favors control, abstraction and technological mastery over relational ethics. The scientific power seems to be in line with the patriarchal rule, making life an object of manipulation instead of a relational being (Seudin & Hussein, 2021). Within the MaddAddam trilogy, technological domination enhances alienation between humans and nature with the help of genetic engineering and restructuring the ecology. Such alienation is recognized by ecofeminist readings as an effect of patriarchal epistemologies in which dominance is preferred to coexistence (Figure 2). Another feature of the environmental alienation is the case of Surfacing as in the case, ecological balance is interfered by technological intrusion and embodied connection with nature is eroded. Critical studies explain this perturbation as a continuation of androcentric and anthropocentric ideology and justification of environmental exploitation (Rosa et al., 2021). The opposition in the fiction of Atwood is reflected in the denial of masculinist scientific rationality and returning to ecological awareness. According to ecofeminist analyses, narrative strategies that focus on memory, embodiment, and relationship consciousness are considered as alternative to technological domination (Sasani, 2024). The ecocritical views that extend further into environmental power relations and moral responsibility place the critique of the patriarchal science offered by Atwood into the

framework of the worldwide discourse. Through such readings, ecological collapse is perpetually represented as a socio-political failure that is based on domination-focused epistemologies, but not as an unavoidable progress (Raheemah & Alhelal, 2024).

**Figure 2. Patriarchal Capitalism: Structures and Consequences**



## 5. Ecological Crisis and Environmental Degradation

### 5.1 Dystopian Landscapes and Ecological Ruin

Margaret Atwood's speculative fiction creates the terrains of ecological destruction as a result of systemic exploitation and not a natural disaster. The ecological collapse is reflected in these spaces as intensification of environmental degradation in capitalist modernity, and the ecological destruction has been placed in the framework of ideologies that benefit domination and extraction over sustenance (Shiva, 2016). *Oryx* and *Crake*'s post-apocalyptic environs hint at the future destruction of the environment through genetic engineering, climate change, and unregulated corporate intervention. The ecological disintegration in the story serves as a criticism of the anthropocentric patterns that justify technological dominance over nature to the detriment of environmental sustainability (Sharma and Ringo, 2020). The dystopian landscapes created by Atwood focus on the powerlessness of the human being in terms of extinction and moral decay due to the need to accumulate money and power. The reverse anthropocentrism of worldviews in *Oryx* and *Crake* is established through critical interpretation and anticipates ecological interdependence and vulnerability as the primary thematic issues (Sharma, 2023). The theme of pollution and toxicity is repeated throughout the speculative worlds of Atwood, which supports the links between industrial growth and environmental destruction. These representations locate environmental crisis as a historicized product of consumption-based structures as opposed to occurrences of disaster (Simeone, 2024).

### 5.2 Exploitation of Nature as Feminised Space

The frequent ecofeminist readings of Atwood's fiction always put nature into a feminised space that becomes colonised, monitored, and controlled. This allegorical juxtaposition shows ideological similarities between environmental exploitation and gendered exploitation as a tool of patriarchal control, which creates both women and nature as inert resources (Shafique et al., 2024). In *Surfacing*, the Canadian wilderness turns out as a disputed space where ecology is intruded upon and cultural effacements take place. The decay of the environment in the novel is similar to the disaggregation of female identity, which supports ecofeminist theories of the connection between dispossession of land and the silencing of the female voice (Shinde, 2024). Critical analyses put a greater focus on the description of landscapes as frail objects in the grip of extractive activities in the name of masculinity. These descriptions reveal colonial and patriarchal rationales that justify the exploitation of the environment by dominance-based epistemologies.

5.3 Human–Nonhuman Relationships

The human-nonhuman relations in the fiction of Atwood take a lead role in the expression of ecofeminist critique of ecological crisis. Her stories disrupt anthropocentric hierarchies with foresight of ecological integrity and interdependence between ecology and human survival and a moral accountability to nonhuman life. The post-apocalyptic landscapes in Atwood, speculative fiction depict the existence of disrupted relations between humans and the ecosystem as a result of environmental carelessness, as shown in Table 2. These environments reveal the effects of estrangement to nature, which makes survival dependent on new ecological consciousness and relational ethics (Shiva, 2016). The ecofeminist scholarship places the ecological subjectivity and opposition to instrumental rationality in the context of wider discussions of the relations between humans and nonhumans, as Atwood does. These kinds of readings promote narrative reconstructing of nature as non-active, as opposed to an active and visible component of ethical dialogue (Simeone, 2024).

Table 2. Ecological Crisis and Environmental Degradation in Margaret Atwood’s Fiction

Analytical Dimension	Ecofeminist Interpretation	Primary Textual Focus	Key Reference
Dystopian ecology	Ecological ruin produced through capitalist exploitation rather than natural disaster	Oryx and Crake	Shiva (2016)
Post-apocalyptic landscapes	Environmental collapse linked to biocapitalism and survival ethics	MaddAddam trilogy	Lashley (2023)
Anthropocentrism critique	Rejection of human-centred mastery over nature	Oryx and Crake	Sansour's (2021)
Feminized nature	Nature is constructed as passive, colonised, and exploitable	Surfacing	Williams (2018)
Ecological identity	Environmental loss is mirrored in fragmented female subjectivity	Surfacing	Rosa et al. (2021)

Gendered violence and ecology	Environmental degradation parallels systemic gendered violence	Dystopian fiction context	Naz et al. (2024)
Human–nonhuman ethics	Multispecies interdependence challenges anthropocentric hierarchies	MaddAddam trilogy	Şchiopu (2022)
Posthuman subjectivity	Ethical responsibility extended beyond the human	Selected dystopian novels	Muñoz-González et al. (2021)

## 6. Resistance, Survival, and Ecofeminist Ethics

### 6.1 Female Agency and Resistance

Margaret Atwood’s fiction foregrounds female agency as a central mode of resistance within dystopian environments shaped by patriarchal domination and ecological collapse. The ways women survive in these stories have often developed in embodied consciousness, memory and narrative self-preservation as opposed to direct political resistance. Feminist ecocritical studies contextualise such opposition to the speculative fiction category as a practice of resistance, transforming the domination structures through endurance and resilience (Vakoch, 2021a). In the dystopian worlds that Atwood creates, female characters are able to challenge patriarchy through reestablishing bodily autonomy, ecological expertise, and awareness of relations. Survival acts are subversive practices which subvert authoritarian structures through non-total assimilation in systems of surveillance and control. Such resistance is highlighted as the main characteristic of the ecofeminist speculative fiction by comparative feminist studies, where the agency of women is presented as the moral counter to the ecological and social destruction (Williams, 2018). The opposition in the narratives of Atwood is usually expressed in the form of refusal, silence, narrative, and ecological sensitivity, but not clearly. The strategies disorient patriarchal power by maintaining other systems of knowing and relating which cannot be subjected to domination systems. Such narrative resistance is a focus of ecofeminist critique of speculative literature and is identified as such by scholars of feminist environmental humanities.

### 6.2 Alternative Communities and Ecological Harmony

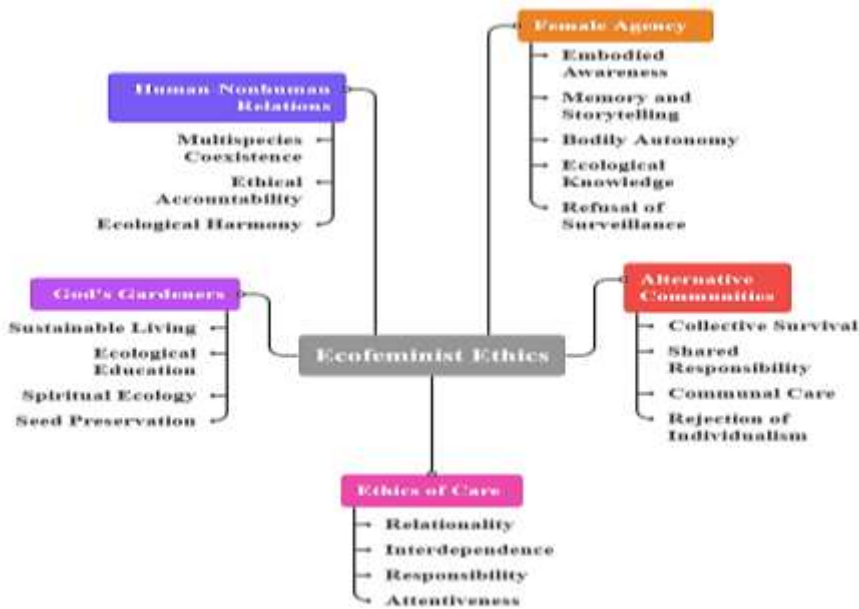
Atwood’s speculative fiction frequently imagines alternative communities grounded in ecological harmony and collective responsibility as responses to environmental collapse. An illustration of the communal resistance is the eco-conscious community of God's Gardeners in *Year of the Flood*, through sustainable living, education on ecology, as well as ecological spirituality. Such communities are seen through a lens of literature to be antithetical to capitalist exploitation and technocratic domination (Wieczorek, 2018). These other social structures focus on the interdependence between human beings and the ecosystem, where human beings are not concerned with consumption but with the ecological balance. Ecofeminism ideas have been expressed through practices of seed preservation, ethical food systems, and environmental reverence, and are based on the concept of care and sustainability. Ecofeminist science fiction studies place such communities in the role of utopian intervention into dystopian narratives with ethical possibilities to coexist with environmental devastation

(Vakoch, 2021b). The survival of the community in the fiction of Atwood is opposed to the individualistic structures propagated by the capitalistic modernity. Collective ecological practices operate as resistance strategies that redefine social relations based on the issue of responsibility, collaborative practices, and awareness in relation to the environment. These portrayals affirm ecofeminist views of stratified systems of power that perpetuate social disparity as well as ecological devastation (Zaouga, 2022).

6.3 Reimagining Ethics and Care

Atwood's ecofeminist vision is focused on re-imagining care, relationality and responsibility grounded in ethics with respect to both human and nonhuman life. Her stories focus on ethical models that are based on care, sensitivity and reciprocity instead of domination and control. The ecological crisis, as a reaction to the ecofeminist literary theory, recognizes ethics of care as one of the cornerstone responses to the ecological crisis in the speculative fiction (Vakoch & Mickey, 2018). The role of interdependence in the fiction by Atwood is a moral value that dictates survival and resistance. There seems to be no way of existence without ecological well-being that would not contribute to ecofeminist critique of anthropocentric and patriarchal worldviews (Figure 3). This moral renewal predicts the forward-looking conscientiousness to the environment, animals, and post-generation as the essential aspect of co-existence. The speculative stories of Atwood are therefore an expression of ecofeminist ethics that oppose instrumental rationality and capitalistic exploitation. As a result of her focus on caring-based relationships and multispecies responsibility, her fiction is able to provide ethical imaginaries, which can deal with ecological precarity and gendered injustice. These ethical models put survival as a state of coexistence with nature on the basis of respect and responsibility rather than domination (Xausa, 2022).

Figure 3. Resistance, Survival, and Ecofeminist Ethics in Atwood’s Fiction



## **7. Critical Reception and Scholarly Perspectives**

Ecofeminist engagement with Margaret Atwood's fiction has expanded steadily alongside growing scholarly interest in environmental humanities, feminist theory, and speculative literature. Initial critical reception mainly interpreted the work of Atwood in feminist or dystopian terms, as a focus on gender politics, reproductive control and authoritarian governance. As time passed by, environmental issues took centre stage, especially the ecocritical readings that anticipated the ecological degeneration, human exceptionalism, and ecological ethics. It is at this intersection that ecofeminist scholarship was created and provided a comprehensive lens through which it is possible to deal with gendered oppression and ecological crisis that is present in the narratives of Atwood. Authors whose work on *Surfacing* are commonly interested in the symbolic and material connection between female subjectivity and the natural world. Researchers understand the setting of wilderness in the novel as a place of resistance to the encroachment of patriarchy, technology and colonialism. Atwood reflects the ecofeminist readings with the idea that nature is an agent creating identity, memory, and a sense of ethics, and ecological immersion is one of the oppositions toward alienation created by modern rationality. Such a line of scholarship provides a platform to subsequent ecofeminist readings in the oeuvre of Atwood.

The critical reading of *The Handmaid Tale* also represents an important development of the ecofeminist question, especially in reproductive politics and environmental scarcity. Scholars look at the way ecological degradation and biopolitical domination intersect in the theocratic state of Gilead and find that the regulation of female bodies and natural resource instrumentalisation are similar. Eco-feminist approaches also highlight the way patriarchal capitalism, as unveiled in the novel, functions based on surveillance, ritualisation, and commodification of fertility and place the environmental crisis in wider contexts of domination. *MaddAddam* trilogy has received a significant level of ecofeminist criticism as of its overt concern with the ecological disintegration, corporate biocapitalism and posthuman futures. In scholarly readings, one can anticipate such a view as that of Atwood on technoscientific hubris, genetic manipulation, and consumer capitalism, which views ecological catastrophe as a failure of social and ethical practice, as opposed to a technological certainty. The ecofeminist critics emphasise the aspect of multispecies coexistence, ethical responsibility, and other epistemologies discussed in the trilogy as these narratives are placed within the Anthropocene discourse and posthuman feminist concept. Throughout this stream of writing, Atwood has always emerged as a godmother of ecofeminist lit, admired for writing techniques that integrate feminist criticism with environmental awareness. Through her speculative realism, the modern crises can be extended into the future of ethically charged scenarios, and it is a literary space where the author can question power, survival, and responsibility.

In spite of a high level of academic interest, ecofeminist criticism of the fiction by Atwood exposes some of the open, unresolved issues and shortcomings in the analysis. A single problem is related to the fragmentation of current studies. There have been numerous studies that focus on single novels or discrete themes, e.g. reproductive control, environmental symbolism or posthuman ethics, without a long-term synthesis of the corpus of Atwood's works. Such compartmentalisation prevents the acknowledgement of the continuity of ideology between her early and later works by a common thread of criticism of patriarchal



capitalism and ecological exploitation. The other controversy is the theoretical orientation in the ecofeminist readings. Previous literature has at times depended on allegorical relations between women and nature, which were subject to criticism of essentialism. Even though subsequent research employs materialist, intersectional and posthuman approaches, there is still inconsistency in terms of methodological consistency. Certain ones favour cultural symbolism, others favour political economy or ethical philosophy, of which there will be divergent interpretations, which will not be integrated into a dialogue. It is also a tension that arises in the scholarship on technology and science in the fiction by Atwood. Some of the readings discuss technological innovation as something destructive by nature, whereas others highlight the ambivalence of technology and the possibility of positive ethical change. The ecofeminist discourse continues in the way much Atwood, in her speculative narratives, denies technoscience or critiques its control over things in a capitalist and patriarchal society. The ambiguity is an indication of larger theoretical debates in environmental humanities around science, responsibility, and ecological futures. There are posthuman interpretations that make things even more complicated. Although several researchers hail the idea of the challenge of anthropocentric hierarchies by Atwood, there are still some questions about the limits of ethics in multispecies. Critics note posthuman dangers to the destruction of human responsibility by posthumanism, especially in the context of environmental racism and gendered susceptibility. Nevertheless, ecofeminist scholarship still struggles to strike a compromise between broadened ethical scope and an appreciation of structural inequities. It is important to note that few disciplines are dealing systematically with patriarchal capitalism as the binding element between the ecofeminist vision of Atwood. Though the capitalist exploitation is evident in many critical discourses, not many works anticipate the same as a structural theory that links the reproductive control, ecological destruction, technological hegemonies, and environmental ethics. This disjuncture inhibits comprehensive comprehension of the way Atwood portrays in her enduring critique of power going on at both social and ecological levels.

The current review fills these critical gaps with an extensive ecofeminist synthesis of the fiction of Margaret Atwood, prefiguring patriarchal capitalism as the main structural power that determines the gendered oppression and the ecological crisis. Instead of considering separate novels separately, this review will follow an ideological line of inquiry throughout the novels of Atwood and demonstrate a continuum in her attack on environmental ethics, feminist retaliation, and feminist commentaries on domination. It is hoped that by applying ecofeminist theory to feminist dystopian criticism and environmental humanities scholarship, the present study provides an analytical framework that is coherent enough to encompass symbolic, materialist, and posthuman viewpoints. This synthesis is not confined to the disjointed readings, but the interdependence between the control of female bodies, commodification of nature, corporate biocapitalism, and the degradation of the ethical in the worlds of Atwood is demonstrated in the speculative worlds of her fiction. The research is another addition in that it elucidates the role played by Atwood in the eco-feminist literary analysis as a speculative realist who outlived the realm of critique and moral fantasy. Her stories describe not just the diagnosis of ecological and social collapse, but also possibilities of resistance on the basis of care, relationality and multispecies responsibility. The focus on the alternative communities, ecological memory and ethical coexistence underlines the long-term interest of Atwood to ecofeminist values in various forms of narratives. Also, this

research responds to methodological arguments by showing that ecofeminism can be a useful tool of integrative criticism and not a unique way of interpretation. By compiling the current literature, the study highlights the role of ecofeminism in responding to complexity in the current problems of the present environmental crisis, especially through the focus on power, inequality, and moral responsibility. In the end, this study places the fiction of Margaret Atwood as a focal point of an ecofeminist question on the literary practice in the twenty-first century. Integrating the scattered literature and formulating a cohesive critical approach, the work contributes to the development of the field of environmental humanities and feminist theory, and provides a perspective on future research on the issues of ecological precarity, gender justice, and narrative ethics.

## **8. Conclusion**

This study shows that the ecofeminist indictment of patriarchal capitalism is eloquently represented in the fiction of Margaret Atwood as she links the gendered domination theme with environmental destruction and moral decline. Through her speculative and dystopian stories, the issue of environmental crisis does not manifest itself through an external disaster, but as a systematic consequence of systems of domination-focused socio-economic relations. Bodies of women, commodification of the natural world, and technoscientific surplus seem to act in accordance with a common logic of control, extraction, surveillance, and show a profound nexus of ecological destruction and gendered oppression. The key works of Atwood are analysed by pointing to the uniformity of their exposure to reproductive governance and corporate biocapitalism as a means of perpetuation of patriarchal power. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, fertility is energetic in foregrounded as a tool of politics, but in the *MaddAddam* trilogy, the same applies to genetic manipulation, consumerism, and the ecological disaster of post-capitalism. The surfacing adds to an ecological introspection, associating the pollution of the environment with the psychological fragmentation and the destruction of the culture. Combined, these stories form a logical ideological development that grasps ecological precarity in the framework of inequality among the technological determinism of many elements. The study also determines that resistance, survival, and ethical reorientation as the primary themes in the ecofeminist vision of Atwood. Women's agency is expressed in the form of memory, care, communal practice and ecological consciousness instead of open rebellion. Other communities, like the *Gods Gardeners*, express caring and sustainable ways of living, which are based on interdependence and accountability. Posthuman imaginaries reconfigure ethical relations between humans and nonhumans by preserving hierarchies of anthropocentrism and enforcing multispecies responsibility. This synthesis of fragmented scholarship by means of a unified ecofeminist approach makes sense of patriarchal capitalism as the structural axis between the interrelations of Atwood with gender, ecology and power. This kind of synthesis makes Atwood relevant both to environmental humanities and to feminist literary criticism, and serves to emphasise in what way her fiction remains relevant to the present discussion of ecological justice, ethical responsibility and survival in the face of an environmental crisis that is increasingly gaining pace.

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