

## Nature, Gender, and Resistance in Atwood's *Surfacing* and *The Handmaid's Tale*

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**Abstract:** This study attempts to explain Margaret Atwood's two famous novels *Surfacing* (1972) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) in reference to Ecofeminism. Women and nature are always celebrated with each other and wherever their position is absolutely neglected. As a result, the sterility of the society launches. Atwood selects females as the leading characters and ecological catastrophe in its contextual. Atwood knowledgeably syndicates in *Surfacing* and *The Handmaid's Tale* the dual subjugation of nature and women that occurs in the two societies. The corruption of nature conveys extermination to the societies and develop a contributory dynamic of subjugation of women by patriarchal society. She clinches that the discrimination against women and nature is identical and thus liberation of women won't be fruitful without an equivalent endeavor to liberate nature.

**Keywords:** ecofeminism, Margaret Atwood, oppression, patriarchy, *Surfacing*, *The Handmaid's Tale*.

### 1.1 Exploring ecofeminist themes in Margaret Atwood's novels

The theory of ecofeminism is a conceptual framework that intertwines feminist ideology with environmentalism. It acknowledges the interconnectedness between the exploitation and deterioration of the environment and the systematic oppression of marginalized communities, specifically women (Phillips 2020: 157). The theory emerged in the 1970s and has since been developed by a range of activists and scholars. One of the core arguments of ecofeminism is that the subordination of nature and the subordination of women are interconnected, both rooted in systems of domination and control. Women have often been associated with nature, seen as closer to the earth and therefore lesser than men in the social hierarchy. As Ottuh (2020: 167) declares:

According to ecological feminists, a historical look at the ways in which women and other oppressed groups have been associated with the natural and the ways in which nature has been associated with the 'womanly' or with the 'feminine' in western contexts reveal important connections.

At the same time, the exploitation of natural resources and ecosystems has a disproportionate impact on women, particularly those living in poverty or in rural areas. Ecofeminists argue that the traditional Western worldview, which places humans at the center of the universe and sees nature as a resource to be exploited, is a major contributor to environmental destruction. By contrast, ecofeminism emphasizes the need to challenge this anthropocentric worldview and shift towards

a more holistic understanding of the environment that recognizes the interconnectedness of all living things.

Margaret Atwood's novels frequently incorporate themes and topics that are significant within the scope of ecofeminist theory, thereby making her work pertinent to this particular framework. Atwood is recognized for her examination of the interconnectedness among individuals, the environment, authority, and the ways in which these dynamics intersect with gender (Van Dam and Polak 2021: 172-189). For instance, as it will be discussed in detail, *The Handmaid's Tale* exemplifies the incorporation of ecofeminist elements into the author's writing. The novel presents a bleak society in which the environment has suffered significant harm, and women are suppressed and confined in their societal roles (Moldovan 2020: 103-123).

By highlighting the devastation of nature alongside the subjugation of women, Atwood means to illustrate the intersections of these issues and encourage her readers to consider how they can work together in order to strive for social and environmental justice. Joshi declares that Atwood and the biologists explore environmentalism as a worry on the pressing need to protect the human presence within a natural environment where being human does not necessarily equate to superiority or isolation. They emphasize that what is artificial or man-made is less fulfilling compared to what exists naturally (2021: 64).

## **1.2 Discussing *Surfacing* in light of ecofeminism**

### **1.2.1 Françoise d'Eaubonne's revolutionary ecological feminism in *Surfacing***

Françoise d'Eaubonne (1920-2005) was a French feminist philosopher and ecologist who coined the term "ecofeminism." Her works, particularly in "Le Féminisme ou la Mort" (1974) (translated to "Feminism or Death" (2022)) explore the interconnectedness of the oppression of women, nature, and the environment. Her ecological feminism argues that the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature are closely interconnected and mutually reinforcing. She sees patriarchal society as being based on a dualistic way of thinking that places humans above nature and divides the world into subject/object relationships. d'Eaubonne believes that the domination of nature began with the domination of women and that this has been justified through language and cultural norms.

She has contended that the ideals connected to femininity, such as nurturing and empathy, better align with ecological values compared to the ideals traditionally associated with masculinity, such as dominance and exploitation. This scholar from France also asserts that women, due to their historical experiences of oppression and their potential as mothers and caregivers, have a crucial societal role in the pursuit of ecological sustainability. She advocates for a reevaluation of the human-nature relationship, suggesting a rejection of binary thinking and the cultivation of a more comprehensive and interconnected understanding of the world (d'Eaubonne 2022: 36). In sum, Françoise d'Eaubonne's ecological feminism represents an important contribution to both feminist theory and environmental ethics, highlighting the interconnections between social and environmental

injustices and the importance of challenging patriarchal and dualistic thinking in order to create a more just and sustainable world.

*Surfacing* (1972) is considered as Atwood's second novel. According to Howells, *Surfacing* has been explained by critics as a companion novel to this Canadian writer's collection of poems, *Power Politics*, which was written the preceding year and revolves around corresponding subjects (2021: 49). It is set in Quebec and is narrated by a woman who returns to her hometown in order to search for her missing father. As the narrator spends time in her hometown, she becomes increasingly aware of the damage that has been done to the natural environment by human exploitation.

Atwood's ecofeminist concerns are evident throughout *Surfacing*. The novel explores how the patriarchal treatment of women is linked to the exploitation of nature (Cooke 2004: 53). The protagonist herself faces injustices at the hands of men. Additionally, the narrator begins to reject capitalist ideologies, whose prioritization of profits is responsible for the harm done to the natural environment. Furthermore, the novel shows a connection between the human psyche and the natural landscape. The narrator grapples with her own identity while exploring the natural environment around her. It is suggested that the breakdown of the natural environment is mirrored in the decline of the narrator's own mental state. The novel is a critique of the consumerist, patriarchal, and capitalist society, which causes harm to natural life and human life.

In fact, Atwood penned the novel *Surfacing* in response to the cultural and political climate of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Joshi 2021: 52). At the time, there were significant social changes and activism around issues such as feminism, environmentalism, and the anti-war movement. The novel reflects on many of these themes and explores the personal and political struggles of a woman who returns to her childhood home in rural Quebec to confront her past and search for her missing father. Ultimately, *Surfacing* offers a critique of the patriarchal power structures that dominate society and the effects of environmental destruction on the natural world.

In *Surfacing*, Atwood portrays the protagonist's immersion in nature as a way of healing and finding her true self. This theme of embracing nature and reconnecting with the natural world can be viewed within the framework of ecofeminism, a movement that seeks to unite feminist and ecological concerns. Françoise d'Eaubonne's ecofeminist perspective encompasses several key themes, some of which are reflected in Atwood's novel. In other words, *Surfacing* embodies many of the principles that d'Eaubonne espouses in her ecofeminist perspective. Atwood's novel highlights the importance of the connection between humans and nature, the need for ecological responsibility, and the intersectional oppression and marginalization of different groups. By creating a story that digs deeply into the protagonist's relationship with her environment, Atwood explores ecofeminist themes and ideas that underline the interconnectedness of all forms of life and value systems.

As mentioned earlier, one of the key tenets of ecofeminism is the idea that the dual oppression of women and the environment is interconnected, and that

movements for social and environmental justice must therefore be intertwined. In *Surfacing*, the protagonist's personal growth is intimately tied up with her connection to the natural world. As she comes to terms with her traumatic past and the injustices she has experienced, she finds solace in the wilderness and begins to cultivate a new sense of purpose and belonging. Atwood's portrayal of nature as a healing force aligns with ecofeminist values, which emphasize the importance of valuing and respecting the natural world.

In the novel, there is a scene where the narrator, who is returning to her childhood home in Quebec, is observing the surroundings and reflecting on the changes that have occurred in the environment. From the ecological point of view of d'Eaubonne, the scene highlights the relevance of the relationship between humans and nature. The narrator's awareness of the environmental changes embodies d'Eaubonne's idea of an individual's perception of their environment. The narrator's observations about water pollution, deforestation, and extinction of animals, reflect the impact of human activities on the environment.

Furthermore, d'Eaubonne emphasizes the importance of understanding the indigenous cultures that lived in harmony with nature as they act as an essential source of knowledge in maintaining a sustainable ecosystem. In *Surfacing*, the narrator's remembrance of the indigenous culture that was once present in the area, particularly in the form of traditional art, reflects d'Eaubonne's ideas. The indigenous culture had an understanding of the environment that allowed them to use natural resources without exploiting them, and their knowledge can help in restoring the depleted ecosystem.

Another aspect of ecofeminism that is relevant to *Surfacing* is the critique of patriarchal society and its impact on the environment. d'Eaubonne's ecofeminist theories posit that the patriarchal social structure has a profound impact on the environment. According to this scholar, patriarchal societies are characterized by a dominant culture that asserts dominance over nature and views nature as a resource to be exploited for human gain. This, in turn, leads to the degradation of the environment and the oppression of women and marginalized communities who depend on the same environment for their livelihood. *Surfacing* depicts the decline and devastation of the Canadian wilderness, with a significant portion of the blame placed on commercial interests and the capitalist system (Sheckels 2022: 17).

Atwood highlights the ways in which patriarchal social and economic structures have contributed to environmental destruction, suggesting that a feminist perspective on environmental issues is essential to bring about meaning changes. Atwood's protagonist reflects on her experiences and the consequences of a society that sees nature as a resource to be exploited. She also examines the ways in which human beings have come to view themselves as separate from the natural world and the consequences of this separation. In sum, *Surfacing* can be read as an embodiment of key ecofeminist principles of Françoise d'Eaubonne. Its focus on personal relationships with the environment, feminist themes, and ecological responsibility makes *Surfacing* an important work of ecofeminist literature that dovetails with d'Eaubonne's ecofeminist perspectives.

### 1.2.2 Applying Rosemary Radford Ruether's ecofeminism to *Surfacing*

Rosemary Radford Ruether is a prominent feminist theologian who has made significant contributions to the field of ecofeminism (Ackermann 2008: 37–46). In her works, she also highlights the connection between the exploitation of nature and that of women. She argues that the environmental crisis and the subjugation of women are related issues that stem from the patriarchal system. As Suresh argues, both women and nature experience the negative effects of both institutionalized oppression and the actions of specific men (2021: 116). Ruether traces the roots of this patriarchal system to biblical times, where male figures dominated in the religious and societal spheres. She asserts that the Christian religion has perpetuated a dualistic view of nature and humanity, where nature is seen as inferior and a means to serve the needs of human beings. This mentality has led to the reckless destruction of the environment, including the exploitation of natural resources, extinction of species, and pollution.

Ruether also recognizes that women have been similarly exploited, often relegated to subservient roles in society. Just as nature has been subject to human domination, women have been oppressed by men. The core belief in Ruether's ecofeminist theology is that both nature and women are not mere resources to be used and exploited but rather deserving of respect and care. She advocates for the need to establish a more equitable and sustainable relationship between humans and the natural world, where women are empowered and given equal opportunities.

In "Religious Ecofeminism: Healing the Ecological Crisis", Ruether analyzes the religious backgrounds of the ecological predicament and how these religious patterns that have indorsed mistreatment and annulment of nature are interrelated with the religiously authorized patterns of manipulation and repudiation of women. In other words, she means to settle the basic proposition of ecofeminism, that there is an interconnection between the domination of women and the domination of nature. As a result, she examines this interconnection of domination of nature and of women chiefly from the viewpoint of Christianity (2006: 362).

In Atwood's *Surfacing*, the central character comes to terms with her own identity and the manipulation of nature and women (López-Rodríguez 2023: 11). The novel can be associated with ecofeminist theology, especially the work of Ruether. The protagonist realizes that the degradation of nature and women is interconnected, and their liberation must be sought together. This idea aligns with Ruether's philosophy. In Christianity, humankind is considered superior to the natural world and that nature is only there for humans to exploit, resulting in a dissociation of nature from God's creation and social injustice against women. Radical feminists like Ruether critique Christianity's historical role in patriarchal oppression, ascribing its dominative anthropocentric teachings as the overarching ideology that supports the subjugation of women and the environment. In one part of the novel, it is written that:

I lay down beside them. They were huddled together, blood and limbs heaped like dead leaves, all the men I had ever known. And I felt my own absence like a deadness, something that I had left behind me and could never get back to. They could not see me; they were rooted like trees in

their own soil. I remember the smell of their sun-heated bodies and the glowing maze of light that came around them, embroidered like a cloak with all the minute, daytime movements of insect life: the drone of the cicadas, the blur of hovering wings, the bright specks of pollen in their straight gold hair. They were the still center of all this motion. From them, the ripples went out, spreading into the delicate webwork of the surface (Atwood 1972: 157).

From the ecological viewpoint of Ruether, this quote highlights human's disconnection from nature and their obliviousness to the interconnectedness of all living things. The protagonist is cut off from nature and in her own words feels like an "absence." She perceives herself as separate from the natural world, while the men around her are "rooted like trees in their own soil". Furthermore, the description of the "blaze of hovering wings" and "bright specks of pollen" in their hair highlights the intricate web of life that humans are often oblivious to. In the context of Ruether's ecological viewpoint, the ecological destruction wrought by humans is often due to their lack of awareness of this network of life and their impact on it. The ripples that the men in the description create is symbolic of the wider ecological impact that humans have on the earth.

Moreover, Atwood's protagonist moves away from established ideals of Christianity and looks towards a more egalitarian worldview that recognizes the importance of liberating both nature and women. She notes explicitly the need to reject the male view of nature's inferiority to humanity and similarly reject the objectification of the feminine gender. This concept aligns with ecofeminism's critique of Christianity, which argues that subjugation of women is an extension of the damaging attitudes towards nature and the environment. In sum, Ruether's ecofeminist theology provides a lens to examine the degradation of nature and women in *Surfacing* from the viewpoint of Christianity.

### **1.2.3 The powerful alliance: Examining Karen J. Warren's ecological feminism in relation to *Surfacing***

Karen J. Warren has also emphasized the interconnectedness and interdependence of the environment, feminism, and social justice. According to this perspective, the domination and exploitation of women and nature are intimately linked, and so, it is crucial to resist both forms of oppression simultaneously. Warren argues that men's control over women and nature arises from similar patriarchal systems of power, resulting in the exploitation and subordination of both. The natural world is subjected to the domination of humans. Similarly, women's bodies are also subjected to men's domination, suggesting that the same underlying systems of oppression behind the exploitation of nature are responsible for the oppression of women. Drawing from various feminist and ecological theories, Warren's ecological feminism offers an integrated approach to addressing environmental issues and promoting societal justice and equality for all.

When applied to Atwood's *Surfacing*, Warren's philosophical viewpoints offer a powerful lens for interpreting the novel's themes and messages. One key aspect of Warren's philosophy, as mentioned already, is the idea that nature and

women are often treated as exploitable resources under patriarchy. In *Surfacing*, this is evidenced by the protagonist's growing awareness of how the male characters in the novel are working to extract resources from the land around them, without regard for the ecological damage and destruction they are causing. At the same time Rosa, Vadilla, Fauzana and Jayawardana believe that the protagonist has to cope with the ways in which social standards have made her regard her own body as something to be measured and manipulated, rather than as a natural part of her actuality (2021: 145).

Another important component of Warren's philosophy is the idea that there are alternative ways of relating to nature and to each other that are more equitable and sustainable. Although the world depicted in *Surfacing* is one of environmental and social degradation, Atwood leaves open the possibility that the protagonist, through her immersion in the natural world and her connection to her own bodily experiences, might be able to cultivate a different way of being in the world, one that is characterized by respect for all living beings and a recognition of their inherent value.

One specific scene that illustrates the relevance of Warren's viewpoints to *Surfacing* can be found where the narrator is exploring the wilderness alone and comes across a group of men who are cutting down trees. She observes their behavior, noting that they are not paying attention to the forest as a living system but are instead focused solely on their own work. She thinks to herself:

I don't believe in their God anymore. They're cutting down trees, and they don't even know what trees are. They're not interested in the woods at all, they're interested in board feet, in volume. They've got their tapes hanging off their belts like guns, they've got scale sticks in their pockets...They're a certain kind of man, they're men who want something, they're here because of things, things that can be cut down and measured, and then the numbers registered somewhere, so they can be bought and sold (Atwood 1972: 92).

Here, we see the narrator rejecting the dominant patriarchal system that values productivity and material gain over the health of the natural world. She observes that the men are only interested in the trees as a commodity to be exploited, and in doing so, they are prolonging the same system of oppression that devalues women and other marginalized groups. Furthermore, the narrator's own experiences in the natural world and her attempts to reconnect with it can be seen as a rejection of the patriarchal values that have dominated her life. By embracing her own connection to the natural world, she is able to challenge the assumptions and beliefs that have kept her trapped in a cycle of violence and oppression.

Also, one relevant quotation from Karen J. Warren that can be applied to the analysis of *Surfacing* is that, "Both nature and women have been objectified by a logic that has favored dominating and exploiting them. At the same time, both have been mystified as that which men supposedly do not have and thus need to possess" (Warren 1990: 81). In *Surfacing*, Atwood explores the complex relationship between the protagonist and the natural environment, highlighting the ways in which both the protagonist and nature have been commodified by patriarchal systems.

The citation suggests that men have historically viewed both women and nature as possessions, perpetuating a hierarchical relationship of dominance and exploitation. In the novel, the protagonist's journey into the wilderness actually mirrors her internal struggle to reclaim her agency and challenge the patriarchal constructs that seek to control and subjugate her. Through the exploration of these themes, Atwood exposes the interconnectedness of the oppression of women and the degradation of the environment, exemplifying an ecofeminist perspective.

### 1.3 Discussing *The Handmaid's Tale*

#### 1.3.1 Unraveling the ecofeminist resonance in d'Eaubonne's ecological feminism and its impact on the novel

*The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) is set in a dark future where themes like gender oppression, social control, and reproductive rights are explored (Köylüoğlu 2022: 23). The novel is set in the Republic of Gilead, a totalitarian regime that has established a strict hierarchy based on gender and fertility (Isomaa, Korpua and Teittinen 2020: 70). In this society, women are divided into strict social classes, and their individual identities are subsumed by their role as wives, handmaids, or servants. The main character, Offred, is a handmaid, which means that she has been assigned to a high-ranking man in order to bear his child, due to the fact that she is one of the few remaining women who is fertile. She is stripped of her name, forced to wear a red dress and a white bonnet, and subjected to ritualistic sexual intercourse with her assigned "Commander".

In her novel, Atwood probes into the intersectionality of gender and social control, examining how individuals can be conditioned to embrace oppressive systems (Kołodziejuk 2020: 67-85). She portrays a world in which the government has created a false reality in which women are supposedly protected but are actually deeply oppressed and have limited agency. By controlling women's bodies and reproductive rights, the government intends to reinforce its own power and maintain social order. Atwood's juxtaposition of the dystopian world of Gilead with the pre-Gilead world in flashbacks, shows the gradual escalation towards totalitarianism. The protagonist's reminiscences about their past life in Gilead provide perception into a society that shares similarities with our own. However, as their rights and freedoms gradually diminish after a staged terrorist incident, it functions as a cautionary tale, reminding us of the potential consequences if we neglect to value our rights and let extremist ideologies become dominant in society (Begum 2021: 36).

Also, the choice of a female narrator in *The Handmaid's Tale* is meant to turn the conventionally "masculine dystopian genre upside down" (Howells 2021:164). Atwood aims to present a unique narrative through the perspective of a handmaid who has been pushed to the periphery of political influence (Mirzayee 2019: 115). This narrative policy converses the organizational relations amid public and private worlds of the dystopia, enabling Atwood to retrieve a feminine space of personal feelings and discrete individuality, which is emphasized by her first-person narrative (Howells 2021:164). Furthermore, environmental concerns are clearly noticed in *The Handmaid's Tale*; in fact, in many of her books, the environment is



portrayed as a victim of human greed and negligence. This is why her works serve as a warning to readers about the potential consequences of our actions and the need to take responsibility for our environment.

As acknowledged by Howells, environmental destruction has been a recurrent theme in Atwood's works; however, *Oryx and Crake* could be interpreted as a continuation of *The Handmaid's Tale*. The environmental degradation and pollution that posed a threat to a specific region in the previous book have now intensified, leading to worldwide climate change and global warming. Additionally, the excesses of consumerism that Gilead attempted to counteract with its strict ideologies and emphasis on "moral values" have resulted in an American society characterized by extravagant consumerism within a technologically advanced world. Ultimately, this world is on the brink of destruction due to one man's ambitious bioterrorism project (2021: 161).

As stated already, In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood presents a dystopian world (Atwood 1985: 513-517) in which the United States has been overthrown by a religious fundamentalist group, and women's rights are entirely revoked (Burack 1988: 278). The novel explores themes related to women's subjugation and the danger of environmental degradation. Ecofeminist analysis of the novel, through d'Eaubonne's perspectives, could be centered on the notion that the patriarchal structures preserved in the novel contribute to environmental destruction because they are based on domination and exploitation of both women and nature. The handmaids, who are forced to bear children for their masters, are explicitly controlled and exploited, and their bodies are objectified and instrumentalized.

The Commander's wife, Serena Joy, is portrayed as a woman who has internalized the values of patriarchal society and supports the oppression of women. These structures are linked to the exploitation of nature, as evidenced by the toxic environment in which the handmaids live, symbolized by the polluted air and rivers. In d'Eaubonne's perspective, such exploitive relationships have their roots in capitalist and patriarchal systems that dominate society and cause significant harm to women and the environment. She argues that the subjugation of women and nature are thoroughly intertwined in a cycle of exploitation that is driven by the same system violence.

There is a scene in the novel where Offred has flashbacks to her college days when she attended a feminist rally. In this scene, Offred reminisces about the energy and passion of the women advocating for gender equality and reproductive rights. This scene can be examined through Françoise d'Eaubonne's theory of ecofeminism, which highlights the interconnectedness of the oppression of women and environmental degradation. First, we can identify elements of gender oppression in the scene. Women are explicitly rallying for their rights, acknowledging the inequality and oppression they face in Gilead, the dystopian society in which *The Handmaid's Tale* is set. The fact that they had to gather and protest for these basic rights points to the systematic oppression of women in that society. This aligns with d'Eaubonne's ecofeminist view, which suggests that patriarchal power structures contribute to the degradation of women's rights.

Additionally, the scene can be analyzed in terms of environmental degradation. Although the specific environmental aspects may not be directly referenced, the ideals of ecofeminism indicate that the oppression of women and the destruction of the environment are interconnected. In the context of Gilead, the regime's control over reproduction and the strict hierarchy of women's roles effectively subjugates them. This oppression is further reflected in the state's disregard for the environment, as they prioritize power and control over the well-being of the planet. d'Eaubonne's theory suggests that the domination and exploitation of women and nature go hand in hand (2022: 179-184). By reflecting on this scene through d'Eaubonne's ecofeminism, we can see how the oppression of women in Gilead and the degradation of the environment are interconnected. The rally highlights the inherent discrimination against women, while also indicating the consequences of a society that values dominance and control over nurturing and sustainability.

In sum, a feminist eco-critical lens that applies d'Eaubonne's ideas, facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the novel's intricate interplay between oppressive societal structures, the exploitation of women, and environmental destruction. It shows that we cannot address discrimination against women without addressing environmental concerns, as they are interconnected. Furthermore, by applying an ecofeminist framework to *The Handmaid's Tale*, the readers can understand the magnitude of the novel's warning on the dangers of patriarchal and capitalist systems.

### **1.3.2 Untying Rosemary Radford Ruether's ecological feminism through *The Handmaid's Tale***

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### **1.3.3 Exploring Karen J. Warren's ecological feminism in *The Handmaid's Tale***

An ecofeminist study of *The Handmaid's Tale*, in the light of Karen J. Warren's perspectives, has various implications. Firstly, it highlights the interconnectedness of oppression and domination. The novel portrays how patriarchal societies exploit and dominate both women and the environment. Ecofeminism helps understand how the degradation of the natural world is connected to patriarchal domination and how a shift towards a more environmentally-friendly society should also include

the empowerment of women. Secondly, the analysis brings attention to the importance of recognizing the intersectionality of oppression.

Oppression and domination occur at various levels of society, and the intersection of different forms of oppression, such as gender and environmental degradation, can compound their effects. An ecofeminist approach can thus help in understanding these complex intersections and how they intersect in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Thirdly, reading *The Handmaid's Tale* through an ecofeminist lens shows the importance of challenging the traditional Western view of human superiority over nature. This view is at the core of the patriarchal domination and exploitation that the novel portrays. Ecofeminism can help rethink our relationship with nature and move towards more sustainable, cooperative ways of living.

As noticed, in *The Handmaid's Tale*, we witness a totalitarian society called Gilead, where women are assigned specific roles and severely oppressed. The dominating male elite control women's bodies, fertility, and agency for their own benefit. This portrayal aligns with Warren's analysis of how patriarchal ideologies exploit and control women and nature. Warren highlights the importance of recognizing the shared experiences of women and nature. Her ecofeminism argues that patriarchal systems view both women and the environment as passive objects to be subjugated for the benefit of those in power. When women are denied agency and control over their own bodies, it mirrors the exploitation and degradation of the environment.

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, we see a parallel between the control of women's reproductive capacities and the destruction of nature. Gilead's regime limits women's reproductive rights, reducing them to mere vessels for procreation. This control over women's bodies extends to the environment, as Gilead disregards ecological sustainability for short-term gains. Warren would mostly emphasize the importance of dismantling patriarchal systems to challenge the oppression of both women and the environment. She also argued that creating more just and ecologically sustainable societies requires recognizing and valuing the interconnectedness of social and ecological issues.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that analyzing *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Surfacing* through the lens of ecofeminism, particularly the works of d'Eaubonne, Ruether, and Warren can provide insights that can be applied in various areas related to environmental and social justice. Françoise d'Eaubonne's theory of ecofeminism highlights the importance of incorporating the voices and perspectives of marginalized groups in the fight for environmental justice. An ecofeminist analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Surfacing* through this lens emphasizes the need to include marginalized voices in the struggle for social and environmental justice.

Rosemary Radford Ruether's work highlights the link between religious traditions and environmental issues. With respect to *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Surfacing*, an ecofeminist analysis of Atwood's novels through Ruether's perspective can provide insights into how religious ideologies and fundamentalism contribute to the oppression and marginalization of women and the destruction of

nature. Moreover, Karen J. Warren's perspective emphasizes the connection between patriarchal domination and environmental degradation.

An analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Surfacing* from this perspective can offer a cautionary tale about the potential consequences of unchecked patriarchy and a reminder of the importance of empowering women in the fight for environmental justice. A deeper understanding of ecofeminist theory can inform policy changes towards more equitable socio-economic structures that value the environment. In summary, analyzing *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Surfacing* through ecofeminist theories of d'Eaubonne, Ruether, and Warren can offer insights into the intersection between patriarchal domination, environmental degradation, and social inequality.

Margaret Atwood's novels thus suggest that ecofeminist activism can be an effective means of promoting ecological sustainability and social justice. Her works highlight the interconnectedness of environmental issues and gender inequality. For instance, in *The Handmaid's Tale*, the oppression of women is used as a metaphor for the exploitation and destruction of the environment. The novel demonstrates how the patriarchal society in Gilead perpetuates the illusion of ecological stability while actually causing irreversible harm to the natural world. In sum, Atwood's novels contribute to broader conversations about environmentalism and feminism by highlighting the ways in which the two are interconnected. They suggest that in order to achieve true ecological sustainability and social justice, we must address both environmental issues and gender inequality.

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