



**Queer Ecofeminism: From Binary Feminist Environmental Endeavours to Postgender
Pursuits**

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Preface

I have no doubt that if people around the globe had full bodily autonomies the freedom and safety to express their gender identities and without fear, and if transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals had adequate access to healthcare and gender-affirming care, all studies and research on the gender aspects of how climate change affects people would have completely different results. But our world has not made this possible. However, issues regarding the gender binary and the importance of including queer, transgender, nonbinary, and gender-fluid people in all climate research data is starting to gain some prominence as researchers have finally begun to incorporate gender, not necessarily in its binary form, in ecological and climate-related research. Although this progress deserves recognition and encouragement, the accuracy of data will not be achieved unless people's gender identities are recognised all over the world. This may seem like an impossible milestone, but looking at the way our world and societies have been progressing in the past few decades, I will not be surprised that the gender binary will lose its weight in research and will be considered an inaccurate method of study. But for now, considering the lens that focuses either on males or females, I shall say that within this binary, it is the females who suffer the most from environmental degradation. Consequently, this project will rely heavily on research outcomes that are limited to the male/female gender binary, mainly because of the lack of gender-diverse data. There are, in fact, very few research publications revolving around climate politics or any field that falls under the umbrella of the environmental humanities that study the impacts on people who fall outside the male/female framework. Thus, this manuscript draws on ecofeminism, and it explores new perspectives for the future of the field. Despite the current revolutionary work that finally acknowledges the unequal impacts of climate change on people, the women/men binary, as useful as it has been to depict women's heavier

share of the suffering, is not enough to provide just and fair results. Acknowledging people's gender identities, and whether they have one in the first place, is important, especially in environmental research.

Everything is connected to everything else, and humans are part of the nature they have long been protecting, destroying and rebuilding. It is time to look at humans as diversified, continuously evolving and changing species that do not belong to a restricted binary. This will push ecofeminism's potency to another level: one that is fair, intersectional and just.

Temperatures are rising. The bushfire season in Australia in 2020 left at least twenty-eight people dead, with 2020 recorded as the hottest year in Australia's history, according to the country's temperature records. A novel virus has so far killed over a million people and is still threatening the lives of human beings. The wildfire season in California was prolonged in the midst of this pandemic. Beirut exploded because of neglect, with a warehouse in the city holding 2,700 metric tons of ammonium nitrate in the port area after it was seized from a Russian ship in 2014. The explosion did not only kill more than 200 people, wound 5,000 others, and leave 300,000 residents without a home, it also fuelled the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. Refugees around the world are severely affected by this same pandemic. For instance, the health of Rohingya refugees became a matter of concern as the virus reached the Cox's Bazar region in Bangladesh. The monsoon season has inflicted more damage than it did in previous years, as floods in Bangladesh, China, India, Japan, Pakistan, Nepal, South Korea, Turkey and Vietnam have forced millions of people to be displaced. The homicide of George Floyd in Minnesota has led to a global movement against violence against black bodies. COVID-19 restrictions in multiple countries have only reinforced existing inequalities. Imposing total lockdowns, restricting movements and forcing people to remain indoors for as long as possible has increased the numbers of domestic violence cases where the victims are mostly women abused by their male partners.

LGBTQ+ people have endured the unjust impacts of restricting movements and closing borders. Personally, as a queer person who identifies as nonbinary, having a birth certificate that states female, holding a Moroccan passport, and having been in a gay relationship with a person with whom I have been living for almost two years in Cork city, we found ourselves in difficult situations in 2020. As our relationship did not conform to the heteronormative rules, we have found difficulties formalizing our documents and having our relationship recognised, as my current citizenship restricts my ability to exercise many of the rights that I want and need, such as the right to work without restrictions. With Ireland going into total lockdown in March 2020, the emergency measures had significant impacts on me economically, psychologically, and professionally. I lost my part-time job, which was an essential source of income. I lost all physical support from the college where I have been pursuing a PhD as I no longer had access to my research space, to the computer that was assigned to me to work on my thesis or to the events that the postgraduate community uses to keep track of everyone's writing progress as well as research progress. By losing access to the postgraduate community, I lost the support of some people whom I consider dear friends because they decided a few weeks after the first lockdown in Ireland to return permanently to either their home countries or home cities in the Republic, as universities opted for online learning for the rest of the year. Without a financial income and with my ex-partner's need to be home among her family—as she lost her job as well—we wanted to go to Norway and quarantine with her mother who lives in Trondheim since she offered to take care of us and host us for as long as we needed. This scenario would have been ideal as I would not have had to worry about paying significantly high rental fees. I had already secured my multiple-entry Schengen visa, yet only a couple of days before our flight, the Norwegian government introduced a law where non-Norwegians could not enter Norway regardless of their travel

reason(s). As a result, I was not able to go to a place where I would have felt safer and had my basic needs met during times of uncertainty.

Travelling to Morocco was not an option either as I have nowhere to live since living with my mother who is responsible for three of my siblings has not been feasible for us financially for years before I even moved to Ireland. With the lack of space in her house and her underlying health conditions, risking contaminating her by travelling and moving in with her would have been life-threatening. Yet, even if I wanted to go to Morocco, it would have been impossible as the country had shut down its borders and airports to all travellers, nationals included, with no exceptions. As a result, paying rent and having my expenses covered in Ireland without an income became my worst nightmare. I never felt as unsafe as I did in 2020. The other issue that I had was the expiration of my Irish Residency Permit (IRP) in August 2020. Before the pandemic, I had always applied for a renewal many weeks in advance and was always in possession of a new IRP (Irish Residency Permit) before the expiration of the former one. Yet the Irish immigration services have not been helpful, and while I am writing this introduction, I am still not in possession of a valid residency card despite that I have already paid for it weeks ago after fighting for a renewal appointment for months. This has prevented me from securing a job as companies require proof of eligibility to work in the country which I have been unable to provide. Hundreds of job applications, tens of interviews, tens of congratulating emails only to be followed by apologetic ones when the human resource departments were unable to issue me a contract without a valid residency. This has been the situation for months.

Because of the pandemic, I found myself in financial difficulties caused by the multiple loans I took over the months. I turned out to be the least productive version of myself. And the heaviest impact of all, I fell into a deep depression where the doctor had no other choice but to put me on a heavy dose of SSRIs, as I reached the point where I had no more interest in

being alive. 2020 has certainly not been a year that I want to experience again. Yet when I think about my situation overall, my biggest challenges this year have been either because of my nationality, my sexuality, or my socioeconomic background. This has fuelled me to want to have this thesis written because I realised how much our world needs a queer intersectional ecofeminism and its engagement with a plethora of urgent social issues. As I have been following people's experiences around the world and having personally experienced the unfair repercussions of the pandemic, my willingness to make a change has been pushed to the forefront. I want the world to learn about inequality through the lens of ecofeminism. I want the readers of this work to know about ecofeminism and not to restrict it to women or to their own understanding of what nature or the natural are. I want you, the reader of this work, to understand that none of us are free until all of us—human and nonhuman—are. I want lecturers and teachers around the world to introduce their students to a queer, intersectional ecological feminism that leaves no one behind and that sees the interconnections between the different oppressive hierarchical systems.

The virus outbreak has affected people worldwide, yet the impacts have been and are still disproportionate, illustrating the interconnectedness of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and environmental degradation. The aim of this thesis is to dig deep into these oppressive systems, study them, examine their origins and their interlinkages, and offer new perspectives on the patterns of oppression among humans to secure a sustainable future. Our planet needs to heal, and so do we as a species. Centuries of oppression and segregation and decades of massive gas emissions and irreversible damage to the natural world cannot be erased or forgotten as we are still experiencing them all. Working towards a healing path is our only chance to recover what we have ruined socially and environmentally. Historically, humans have repeatedly failed to uphold basic human rights and planetary rights. Thus, our

hope for change needs novel perspectives, ones that are fuelled with empathy, care and humanity.

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I would also like to extend my gratitude for Mary Immaculate College for the multiple awards that the college granted me over the past five years. Without the financial support provided to me via the awards, completing this manuscript would have been far from attainable. I also want to acknowledge the support of my mother in particular, who believed in me and supported me especially at my lowest phases during the COVID-19 pandemic where I, several times, almost gave up on my work for mental health reasons. Having her as a solid reminder that no hardship is permanent was a driving force within me that kept me going.

And finally, I want to thank the researchers outside MIC with whom I either attended conferences, worked on projects with, or participated in workshops with. From Sweden, to Norway, all the way to Boston, Massachusetts, the exchange of thoughts and the priceless conversations we had have contributed in shaping the path this project took, so thank you for opening my eyes to new perspectives.

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Introduction

Growing up in a developing postcolonial country, I have always been aware of the impacts of the environment's impoverishment on marginalised communities, women and minoritised groups. I grew up in a country ruled by hegemonic masculinity that has been affecting all minorities (the Amazighs, the LGBTQ+ community, etc.) and women on many levels. Yet I also witnessed several social, political and environmental protests where people stood up against the violations of human and planetary rights. Moroccans protested the mining industry which has caused significant damage to fertile lands. They protested the lack of drinkable water in some regions, they resisted land grabbing and they fought other social injustices caused by environmental degradation. I was raised in Oujda, the capital city of the Oriental region of Morocco, yet I am originally from a village of indigenous people (the Amazighs) in Jerada's surroundings.

My father was born in Jerada, and we have always visited his hometown throughout the years. Located around sixty kilometers away from Oujda, Jerada is the capital city of the Jerada province, with an estimated population of 45,000 inhabitants. Jerada's extreme climate conditions, ranging from Siberian winter weather to scorching summer heatwaves, serve as a poignant reminder of the environmental challenges faced by its residents. In the context of climate justice, these conditions take on added significance. The people of Jerada are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to their harsh local climate, which poses health and safety risks during extreme weather events. Furthermore, Jerada's renown for its high-quality anthracite coal production underscores the complexity of the climate justice discussion. While coal has historically contributed to global climate change, it has also been a crucial economic lifeline for the region. This contrast highlights the need for a balanced approach that supports communities like Jerada in transitioning away from environmentally damaging industries while addressing the global climate crisis. Climate

justice emphasizes the fair distribution of resources to help communities adapt to changing climates and mitigate the root causes of climate change, making it a vital framework for addressing the challenges faced by Jerada and similar regions around the world. The carboniferous coal basin located in this area is rich, yet the mines closed their doors on February 18, 1998, leaving thousands of men without an income. Instead of flourishing through attracting foreign investment and improving the conditions of the laborers who are from different regions of the country, Jerada's economy declined drastically. After the cancellation of the project which led to the bankruptcy and subsequent closure of the mining company Charbonnage du Maroc, known as CdM, the Moroccan government made promises to provide several kinds of indemnification and the creation of job opportunities to the thousands of workers who were made redundant. Sadly, no promise was kept except the one related to some minor indemnities. This has led the city to a devastating state of deflation, making it the province most marked today by unemployment in the Oriental. As a result, migration has started: around 15,000 people went searching for work in other cities.

But most of the people of Jerada did not want to leave their homeland. Left with no other options, the men who remained found themselves prisoners of illegal mining as their only refuge because the mine continued to operate clandestinely without respecting any health and safety measures or legal norms. These men are victims of broken promises made by the government who promised that part of the plan, after the closure of CdM, would be to allow other private companies to continue the mining business in a legal way where workers would be employed and would have their rights. Greed was the reason why some businessmen did not fulfill the requirements and preferred to buy coal from illegal miners at extremely cheap prices (around 3 to 4 euros per ton), instead of investing money in a real and safe business.

Currently, the miners in Jerada, who are risking their lives digging the black gold by reaching a depth of around 70 meters just to find coal and sell it locally to whoever gives the best

price, are suffering from extreme health issues, mainly silicosis. This disease is caused by the inhalation of coal dust which leads to the inflammation and scarring of lungs. Regrettably, silicosis cannot be cured, and people end up dying from it when it is developed. I grew up seeing the suffering of my father's aunt who is settled in Jerada, whose husband worked in the mine and was paralysed for years until he died after being severely injured while mining coal. We visited her almost once every month or two. She took care of the family with as little as one can imagine, and I remember my father's long handshakes with her. After the long hugs and kisses, he would shake her hand, and she would start crying and thanking him. As a child, I never understood the reason why a woman would cry every time her nephew shakes her hand, yet it is only after I grew up that I understood that he was handing her money to help her financially.

Nevertheless, I always thought about the other women who perhaps have no nephews or other family members to check up on them. Who is asking about their conditions? Who is taking care of them? Especially the ones who lost their spouses in the mining industry. I grew up feeling privileged and thankful that I did not have to live in Jerada, since I always linked it with poverty, unbearable winters, illness and tears. However, growing up in a Muslim society, I, among thousands if not millions of other Moroccans, have always been subject to different kinds of oppressive laws that dictate people's bodily autonomy and choices. From the criminalisation of sex outside wedlock, the criminalisation of homosexuality, to the family laws in favor of men's best interests, I grew up understanding why environmentalism could not be a priority for people if their environment makes them feel inferior to others.

After finishing my undergraduate studies, during which I always demonstrated a strong interest in environmentalism, I secured a job at IFMERE SA (Institut de Formation aux Métiers des Énergies Renouvelables et de l'Efficacité Énergétique Oujda) as a technical English teacher/administrative assistant for one of the biggest renewable energy corporations

in the MENA region. This is because I have always believed in my determination to contribute to environmental activism. With a degree in English studies instead of environmental management, my job was the closest I could get at that time to being affiliated with an environmental body. Yet after working there for several months, I realised that corruption, neglect and turning a blind eye to gender-related environmental issues are among the reasons why some countries are not moving forward in mitigating the risks of climate change and environmental degradation. Thanks to my affiliation with IFMEREE SA, I had the opportunity to work at COP22 (Conference of Parties) which took place in November 2016 in Marrakesh, Morocco. Approximately 20,000 participants from 196 countries, including world leaders, presidents, and members of the UNFCCC, gathered as a follow-up to the Paris Agreement. Every day when I was leaving the venue, a group of protesters from *Imider*, a village located 300 kilometres away from Marrakesh, were protesting to draw attention to the irreversible damages caused by the mining activities in their land. Unfortunately, no one cared about their cry for help and the national security forces banned them from protesting after a few days. That was my wake-up call, followed by my resignation from the corporation.

After years of researching environmentalism, ecofeminism and other areas that fall under the environmental humanities umbrella, I realised that the enemy is not a *He* or a *She* or a *Them*: ecofeminism is not about praising and victimising women nor about blaming men. It is not about dividing men and women to contrast their behaviour and caring (in)abilities. The enemy is an *It*: a norm, a trend, a toxic form of masculinity or a hyper-feminised or hyper-masculinised expectation of being. These “its” have an impact on how gendered societies have become and how the politics of human-nature relationships are defined by a persistent gender binary: women who nurture, obey, and serve and men who build, drill and exploit. The reality is not this black and white because I am a firm believer that when a human baby

is born, gender roles and societal expectations are not embedded in their genetic code, meaning that the baby is born blank with natural tendencies of growing up to be a caring adult.

The new born initially depends on others to do its gender, and they come through in many different ways, not just as individuals but as part of socially structured communities that link individuals to social institutions and cultural ideologies. It is perhaps at this early life stage that it is clearest that gender is a collaborative affair – that one must learn to perform as a male or a female, and that these performances require support from one's surroundings. (Eckert and McConnell Ginnet, 2013)

Yet essentialist expectations of gender roles in different societies strongly influence people's needs to find their place in a hierarchical system that has already been established, in which white hyper-masculinised humans tend to be on top of the hierarchy. These hyper-masculinities have stripped humans from care by linking care to weakness, vulnerability, and femininity. As a result, people have either internalised or rejected femininities as the latter's associations would render them in the bottom part of the hierarchy pyramid.

During my MA program, I took different courses that ranged from political ecology and ecofeminism to posthuman ecology and much more. Ecofeminism caught my interest, as I was impressed by ecofeminist theories and the field itself as an activist movement and a philosophy. Yet what I also realised was the lack of intersectionality and inclusiveness, the almost absent intersections with queer theory and the lack of politicisation of the school of thought of ecofeminism. In most ecofeminist publications that I came across, the notion of the female has been essentialised and the only two genders explored are the ones belonging to the male/female binary. As fascinating as the field was to me, I could not help but see the potential it has in developing even further by closing the gaps that I was able to detect and working on enmeshing it with other schools of thought in the environmental humanities.

Thus, as a PhD project, I decided to study ecofeminism and explore how it has evolved over the decades as well as the significance of intersecting it with other schools of thought, hence the production of this thesis. Issues revolving around racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, as well as the oppression of indigenous communities, are strongly present in this work while still maintaining a major focus on climate and social justice. Since one of the principles that launched this project is Barry Commoner's quote "everything is connected to everything else. There is one ecosphere for all living organisms and what affects one, affects all. Everything must go somewhere. There is no 'waste' in nature and there is no 'away' to which things can be thrown." (Commoner 1971) I found it crucial to address a significant set of the social and classist issues that separate our race: The human race. Throughout this work, I occasionally refer to able-bodyism as one of the prejudices against humanity. I am aware that I have not dedicated an entire section to it, however, this does not mean its exclusion from the aforementioned issues. The reason behind such intersectionalities is because I believe that planetary justice will never be achieved if humans are incapable of ensuring justice among themselves. From misogyny to racism to homophobia and transphobia, a significant part of this work deconstructs the roots of such "isms" in an effort to push ecofeminism's potency to the forefront. I intentionally used multiple forms of art to deliver my arguments. From analysing movies to TV shows or art installations, my research partially draws from humans' (un)conscious expressions for the need for what I deem as an inevitability: a postgender, intersectional, queer ecofeminist future where socially just, bodily and environmental changes and adaptations are paramount to the survival of our species and the planet that sustains us.

Human bodies are diverse and complex, therefore, they cannot and should certainly not be put into polarised categories. Although the emergence of fields like ecocriticism, ecofeminism and queer ecology have brought significant contributions to environmental

humanities, they have missed a few matters that this thesis brings to the forefront. From questioning the logic behind assigning gender at birth, to intersex erasure, to the dismissal of nonbinary identities and the injustice towards transgender people, this work serves to bring justice to the voices that have for a long time not even been acknowledged as valid and equal. The aim is to give an insight into the experiences of multiple identities and bodies that have long been underrepresented and have not been given the space and safety to exist within the ecosystem that is meant to sustain every single human being regardless of the socially constructed racial, gender and sex dichotomies. Nature offers our species more than two binary biological sexes. However, Western societies have erased identities that exist outside the binary and have deemed bodies that do not fit within the binary biological sexes as unnatural and in need of intervention.

Ecofeminism has brought noteworthy insights into the study of humans and their environment. From questioning the feminisation of nature to unravelling the injustices between the Global North and the Global South, this suite of critical resources has been empowering the rise of intersectional ecological feminists. It provides a political framework that highlights the interconnection between neoliberal capital, militarism, corporate science, worker alienation, domestic violence, reproductive technologies, sex tourism, child molestation, neocolonialism, Islamophobia, extractivism, nuclear weapons, toxics, land and water grabs, deforestation, genetic engineering, climate change and the myth of modern progress (Mies and Shiva 1993). This research project aims, thus, to expand existing ecofeminist research by bringing it into a critical constellation with nonbinary gender identities and non-heteronormative bodies and sexualities. Humans are in a continuous journey of metamorphosis and development, which includes the evolution of how we experience ourselves, each other, and our environment. These experiences are shaped by bodily integrity and autonomy in a world that, since the genesis of human history, has

undergone eras shaped by systems that controlled people's choices of what happens to their own bodies. These systems have mostly been hierarchical, giving power and more autonomy to white, cisgender heterosexual men over anyone else that does not fit into the categories. This research aims to dismantle this hierarchy by digging into its origins, its impacts historically and in our contemporary world and how queering ecofeminism more than it has already been queered would be the step towards moving forward in the climate action movement. To give you an overview of the layout of this thesis, which comprises a total of five chapters, the following passages give you a summary of each chapter as well as the main matters it addresses.

The first chapter, 'Ecofeminism: Inception, Development and Challenges,' analyses the patriarchal oppression of nature, women and minoritized people. It provides readers with a background on different kinds of oppression such as, sexism, racism, environmental degradation, and misogyny. The chapter demonstrates the ways in which these exploitative subjugations are intertwined by using the lens of intersectionality. Concepts such as the Anthropocene, anthropocentrism, androcentrism and planetary boundaries are introduced considering that they represent the origin of some of the problems intersectional feminism aims to redress. With the goal of tracing back early oppressive behaviour towards women and feminine human beings, the genesis of the gender binary is explored through the examination of the story of Adam and Eve, the cosmogony of Hesiod and, finally, the witch trials in Ireland.

Such analyses bring forth a historical overview of the development of gender dichotomies throughout human history and how they have long reflected relationships between humans and nonhuman nature. The chapter continues to examine gender enmeshment with human and resource exploitation by focusing on patriarchal oppression. It moves on to more recent examples and addresses contemporary matters such as the oppression of the Uyghurs by the

Chinese government, a case study of a Bolivian queer environmentalist group and an analysis of the movie *Mother!* The diversity of the examples chosen for analysis in this chapter serves to give the reader an in-depth dive into the multifaceted system that has shaped humanity's history and relationships with the environment. In academia, ecocriticism is one of the fields that emerged in the 1970s and tackled human-nature relationships in literature. This field is introduced in this chapter as it preceded ecofeminism's emergence as a field of study. The introduction to the field is followed by an explanation of why a critical transfusion of feminist perspectives was required to complicate and to enhance the broad field of ecocriticism.

The second chapter of this thesis, 'On De-essentialising Ecofeminism,' tackles an important topic: essentialism and how it affects the potencies of ecofeminism. Ranging from essentialist entanglements in science, literature, and humans' relationships with themselves, one another and their environmental surroundings, the core purpose of this chapter is to draw attention to the dangers of essentialist approaches and to impress the urgency of the de-essentialising ecofeminism. The third chapter, 'Gendered Climate Politics: Between the Far Right and Social Justice,' provides detailed arguments that support the relevance of gender and sexuality to the discourse of climate change and all kinds of research within environmental scientific studies to the environmental humanities. It explores the relevance of gender to climate change by exploring the pertinence of gender identities to climate research. Gender is not the only concept analysed in this chapter; so is the gendered nature of climate data itself, which is due to the lack of gender-diverse studies on environmental degradation due to the male/female gender binary. This is because the lenses through which we have approached environmentalism have traditionally been either through masculinist or feminist perspectives. The criteria for the sex binary and gender binary are argued to have been defined to normalise inequality, and this inequality reflects the disproportionate impacts of natural disasters and

climate change on human beings. After this relevance is established, queering ecofeminism is brought to the table to highlight the dangers of heterosexism and heteronormativity in studying the relationships between humans and the environment. Iran's Qajar Dynasty is the example used to demonstrate the interconnections between oil companies, the exploitation of land and bodies, the oppression of sexuality and women and oppressive far-right politics. This chapter also argues that masculinities play an important role in how anthropogenic and heterosexist human behaviours have evolved and intertwined with the way we behave as a species on our planet. For the purposes of this section, the argument centres on theories of masculinity by Paul M. Pulé, Martin Hultman, and Cara Daggett. The final passages of this chapter bring the complexities of gender and masculinities to the forefront in relation to studying natural disasters. From addressing masculinism in the corporate world to the threatening nuances of recycling to white heteromascularity, the subchapter opens the discussion to the matters addressed in the chapter that follows.

The fourth chapter of this thesis, 'Postgender Semiotics and Queer Environmentalism,' is dedicated to exploring postgenderism and questioning the far right's interest in people's bodily agencies and identities. By introducing postgenderism to ecofeminism, the potency of achieving a wider state of inclusion takes a step forward, as this deconstructs several human and nonhuman hierarchies. The chapter begins by questioning biology, eugenics and how the hard sciences have historically, (un)intentionally, worked towards the erasure of the existence of genderqueer, transgender and intersex people. The chapter delves deeper into exploring identities that ecofeminism, despite its development, has failed to consider in its liberatory endeavours.

Postgenderism is then introduced as the field that is needed in ecofeminist research to break the gender binary. This introduction is followed by an analysis of transhumanist politics and how they affect the development of human enhancement, therefore the expansion of

postgenderism. Artwork is explored in this chapter as well. Doireann O'Malley's and Alok Vaid-Menon's poetry are used to help the reader look beyond gender dichotomies as art's potency to break these dichotomies is pushed to the forefront. The 2019 show *Years and Years* is also examined in the transhumanist part of the chapter. The fifth and final chapter, 'The Politics of the Gendered and the Sexual,' addresses the intricacies of environmental politics, gender, and sexuality. I conclude this thesis by re-examining what all chapters have, combined together, contributed to ecofeminism's development. This chapter not only serves as a concluding part of the research, but it also invites researchers from across all relevant disciplines whose work may intersect with ecofeminism to look deeper into the field and explore its intersections with other areas of research.

Chapter 1 :Ecofeminism: Inception; Development and Challenges

THE GENESIS OF PATRIARCHY

‘No tendrás otros dioses fuera de mí’

According to Newton’s third law of motion, there is an equal yet opposite reaction to each action. There is no surprise in the fact that humans have become dissatisfied with the workings of a society designed to serve a very specific set of economic and political interests. From a historical point of view, and especially in the Global North, the dominant forms of social system have been capitalist. This the capitalist system feeds on a pre-existing system of oppression: patriarchy, from where it draws many of its defining characteristics. This capitalist-patriarchal system has not only resulted in societal segregation and injustice, but also, according to Australian ecofeminist Val Plumwood, has deep ecological implications. In her 2002 book *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, Plumwood wrote that:

To the extent that we hyper-separate ourselves from nature and reduce it conceptually to justify domination, we not only lose the ability to empathize and to see the non-human sphere in ethical terms, but also get a false sense of our own character and location that includes an illusory sense of autonomy. (Plumwood 2002)

Ecofeminism involves the application of feminism to ecological crises by linking patriarchy to the domination of nature. This chapter engages with the origins of patriarchy, aiming to suggest why ecological feminism arose as the response to a system that devalued humans, raped their lands, overused natural resources, and destroyed their environment for the sake of serving a specific group. The focal topics of the upcoming subchapters range from analysing Abrahamic and Hesiod’s cosmogonies to interpreting Darren Aronofsky’s 2017 movie *Mother!*

Understanding where and when male-centeredness began is crucial to understanding the reasons behind extractivism, fossil-dependent masculinities and what feeds the polarised gendering of societies. Thus, the questioning of deities throughout the history of humankind serves to recognise the patterns that have heavily contributed to the culture-versus-nature dichotomy. Val Plumwood is one of the thinkers who not only rejected human-centered environmental ethics, but also took a stand against human chauvinism.

According to Plumwood, human chauvinistic and competitive colonisation of the Earth benefits certain humans at the expense of other species (Plumwood 1993). This hierarchical exploitation of the planet does not affect people equally and is not perpetrated by all humans either. In fact, while some benefit from this colonisation, others, human and nonhuman, are the victims of this masculine-dominated imperialism. Steven Goldberg focuses on the chauvinistic part of this colonisation to understand whether there are universal cross cultural differences of behaviour in order to theorise patriarchy.

In his 'The Theory of Patriarchy,' Goldberg's evidence of these differences manifests in the following: patriarchy, male attainment, and male dominance. Goldberg argues that all societies that have ever existed have associated patriarchal hierarchical dominance, with women occasionally attaining positions of power. This comes at the cost of the normalization of male success and the normalisation of exceptionalism whenever a woman attains a certain power position. Goldberg writes on male attainment as well, describing how important roles in society, for whatever cultural reasons they are deemed important, are associated with males (Goldberg 1989). Goldberg's work provides illustrative testimony on the gender-biased ways in which many human societies have developed and, of course, continue to operate. Indeed, such male-centred cultural and political paradigms are in evidence across global geographies and histories alike, and this domination requires a deeper critique that analyses masculine identities that go back all the way to creationism.

Recognising how humans have viewed themselves and made sense of their own existence and genesis will furnish new perspectives on the reasons behind the strength and persistence of patriarchal systems that have proven enduring and influential across a range of societies. When studying religions, it is hard not to notice that every God invalidated the one before them. It is as if male deities' fragile maleness depended on this invalidation. Richard Herley, author of *The Penal Colony* (1988), argues that "Man had created God in his own image" (Herley 1988).

In attempting to understand our purpose in the universe, humans have historically demonstrated a need for a superhuman power to justify their existence, as well as the existence of the world they live in, hence religions, mythology and creationism. The mythic explanations of the world are all marked with strong presences of God(s) in positions of supremacy. The relationships between creators and humans and male deities and female deities, have not been balanced. These relationships have long been marked with a lingering dualism that defined the divine and separated the spiritual from the natural. This imbalance, and the built-in superiority of the different male gods throughout history, have perhaps resulted in a patriarchal indoctrination that has been embedded in our societies for a long period of time. Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father* (1973) calls for the rejection of monotheistic religions for their immorality and lack of ethics. In her book, Daly called for a fight against the patriarchal principles of Christianity and their harmful impacts on women, rendering the religion in question as the reason behind male dominance in society: "As I have indicated, the myth takes on cosmic proportions since the male's viewpoint is metamorphosed into God's viewpoint. It amounts to a cosmic false naming. It misnames the mystery of evil, casting it into the distorted mold of the myth of feminine evil" (Daly 1973). Ancestral societies invented mythological stories populated by gods and goddesses, heroes and villains and other creatures. Yet was the creation of myths needed or coincidental?

Philosopher Friedrich Max Müller asked questions regarding the creation of myth over two centuries ago: How did people come to know of gods and goddesses? Is it easy enough to call the sun a god, or the dawn a goddess. But how were these predicates framed? How did people come to know of gods and goddesses, heroes, and nymphs, and what meaning did they originally connect with these terms? In fact, the real question which a philosophy of mythology must answer is this—Is the whole of mythology an invention, the fanciful poetry of a Homer or Hesiod, or is it a growth? Or, to speak more definitely, was mythology a mere accident, or was it inevitable? Was it only a false step, or was it a step that could not have been left out in the historical progress of the human mind? (Müller 1881).

To understand life, mythological systems were used to reflect social norms and to gain a deeper understanding of the world, nature, and the beginning of the universe. These myths differ depending on the eras when they were told as well as the geographic settings. Egyptian mythology, for instance, is quite different from Turkish or Persian. Egyptian mythology, rooted in ancient Egypt, reflects a civilization that dates back millennia, focusing on deities such as Ra, Osiris, and Isis, with themes revolving around life, death, and the afterlife. In contrast, Turkish mythology, influenced by diverse Turkic-speaking cultures across a vast region, features figures like Oghuz Khan and incorporates elements of animistic beliefs. Persian mythology, deeply rooted in Zoroastrianism within the Persian (Iranian) plateau, embraces dualistic themes with Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu and features epic heroes like Rostam in the "Shahnameh" (Book of Kings). These mythologies draw from their respective cultural heritages, historical developments, and geographical landscapes, leading to their distinct narratives and religious beliefs.

Societies were different, thus, their interpretation of life and their search for meaning depended on how their communities functioned. Among the most studied mythologies, Greek mythology holds a preeminent status in academic inquiry owing to its historical import,

intricate narrative fabric, and profound impact on Western civilization. The intricate tapestry of myths, pantheons, and heroic sagas contained within this mythological tradition offers scholars an abundant reservoir for meticulous investigation. As a foundational bedrock in the evolution of Western culture, Greek civilization has imprinted an enduring legacy across domains such as literature, art, philosophy, and political theory. Beyond its historical significance, Greek mythology provides an intellectual arena for probing philosophical and allegorical dimensions nestled within its narratives. Furthermore, its capacity to resonate with contemporary audiences and its comparative value with other global mythologies underscore its sustained prominence in academia, exemplifying its perpetual relevance and interdisciplinary significance.

The Greeks, who are key informants of the foundation of Western civilisation, have most certainly founded not only the artistic, psychological, cultural and philosophical basis of the Western world, but a misogynistic tradition that shaped the roles and positions of women. Dating back to more than six hundred centuries BC, the Greek polytheistic society was an agricultural one, which is a fair explanation for the strong presence of several agricultural deities. These divine creatures oversaw different natural and farming elements such as fertility, harvest, grain, the sowing of seed and the protection of flour mills. Society needed these gods as it depended heavily on what they had to offer: protecting their crops and ensuring a sustainable livelihood. However, given that creationism lacks a place within the realm of science, humanity has, for centuries if not millennia, perpetuated an inaccurate portrayal of women, often rooted in mythological beliefs. Mythology is society's view on how the world's social norms and systems work, thus, rereading it through an intersectional queer feminist lens is essential to understand the beginning and spread, of patriarchal societies around the globe. For centuries, and well into contemporary culture, the strong presence of hegemonic patriarchy has been the reason why women have been subjected to a

submissive role under male dominance (Milestone, et al. 2012; van Zoonen 2000; Annandale, et al. 1996), whereas men's roles have long been restricted to masculinity. When patriarchy is brought up as a subject of discussion, how often do we think that even the most progressive societies today are still patriarchies? How often do we question what gender equality is if the genders in question are limited to the binary male/female?

Perhaps patriarchy is not always a society where women are subdued but it is one that imposes toxic masculinity as a norm and pressures men to be oppressive by default. Perhaps it is a society that forbids men to be femme and forbids women to be anything but obedient and submissive. Perhaps, after all, it is a society that has not yet tasted the liberatory effects of postgenderism. The genesis of patriarchy has been a topic written about for decades by five writers from different backgrounds ranging from history to biology. People have long questioned the origins of the alpha male and the control of females: Is it part of our genetic code that has evolved with us? Does patriarchy have deep roots in our evolution?

Sarah Blaffer Hrdy's book *The Woman That Never Evolved* (1981) is an excellent example of works that emerged thanks to such questions. The author writes that

Humans, like other primates, are social animals, and their social strategies, past and present, are molded by selection. I suspect that during the human evolutionary past, as now, the arena of reproduction was more fluid and variable than the more traditional views of 'natural' human reproduction allow. In evolutionary perspective, our species is ancient, and patriarchy is not. (Blaffer, 1981)

Scientists, researchers in reproductive science, historians, anthropologists, and evolutionary psychologists have all found the roots of patriarchy in ancient societies starting from the postgender theory that views bodies as active participants and contributors to sex identification, formation and practice. However, it does not imply the existence of a species

uninterested in sex and sexuality. There is almost always proof of gender-based violence and domination. And in this context, Malcom Potts and Martha Campbell have written about the deep historical origins of patriarchy: Among the Yanomamo of Venezuela and Brazil, some men beat their wives with sticks, cut them with machetes, hold hot timbers against them, or even fire a barbed arrow into the buttocks. While the myth of some sort of ancestral matriarchal society has attracted some writers, it has no foundation in anthropology or history. For example, in some hunter-gatherer societies the girl's family decides whom she will marry, or in more war-like tribes, women are captured, raped and then assigned to a particular man. (Potts and Campbell 2008) Yet looking at our modern world through the lens of ecofeminism, proof that domination existed in the past throughout generations does not justify its presence in today's societies. Although male monkeys have long displayed submissive behaviour towards their females, this should not be used as a defence of the domination exercised by humans towards each other.

A study published in the journal *Animal Behaviour* in 2009 by P. P. M. McLennan and S. J. H. Teichroeb, the researchers observed Barbary macaques, a species of Old-World monkeys. The research found that male Barbary macaques often exhibit submissive behaviours, including grooming and presenting to females, as a strategy to gain access to mates. This submissive behaviour is a part of their social structure.

Our family trees have separated millions of years ago, meaning we are not to behave the same. This separation can be traced back to a common ancestor within the evolutionary history of primates, which began approximately 65 million years ago during the Paleocene epoch. A significant branching point occurred around 55-40 million years ago, leading to two primary groups: prosimians and anthropoids. Prosimians, encompassing modern lemurs, lorises, and tarsiers, represent one branch, while the other branch evolved into anthropoids, ultimately giving rise to New World monkeys (Platyrrhini) and Old-World monkeys and apes

(Catarrhini). A subsequent separation between New World monkeys and Catarrhini occurred approximately 40-30 million years ago. The Catarrhini group further bifurcated into Old World monkeys and hominoids, or apes, around 25-30 million years ago. The distinction between these two branches eventually culminated in the divergence of the human lineage (hominins) from that of the great apes (hominids) around 6-8 million years ago. This separation marked the inception of the evolutionary path leading to modern humans, emphasizing the considerable temporal gap between the evolutionary divergence of monkeys and humans. The precise timing of these events may vary slightly in different studies, reflecting the complexity of paleontological and genetic evidence.

Instead of repeating the data and research outcomes of scientists about the biological justifications of patriarchy and its roots, I will be looking at mythology instead. The reason why mythology should be analysed is because of its role in patterns of patriarchal indoctrination.

The Fall of Man: Lilith's and Eve's Feminism

Disobedience, wisdom, and curiosity: the three doors that females have long been forbidden to knock on. From Lilith and Eve to Pandora, mythology has taught us the different reasons why women's behaviour has long been problematic. As a species, we have collectively and individually opted for diverse methods to understand ourselves, others and the universe in which we live. Religion is among the most influential of these methods, as it helped our ancestors, and even some people today, to create meaning from their own existence. Yet while in the pursuit to find this meaning, rules have been established as a result, and interpretations have been made based on observations and material aspects. Monotheism, polytheism, or henotheism, the common feature most religions have is the belief that all aspects of life on Earth and beyond originated from miraculous acts of divine creation.

Another commonality is the gender differentiations that dictated the level of autonomy as well as religious participation. In all monotheistic religions, women have been delegated subordinate roles while men were offered power and dominant positions. To justify this power discrepancy, creationism played a massive role in reinforcing gender roles by introducing the notion of original sin. The fall of man in Christianity is perceived as the punishment that followed the original sin. Since humans, in the Christian tradition, are believed to be born sinful ever since, women have been bearing the guilt of the first fall: the fall of man. The prejudicial belief that they are the source of temptation is perhaps why women have been feared, perceived as malicious and executed for multiple moral transgressions.

The story of Adam and Eve is a typical example of the beginning of perceptions reflecting women's inferiority. Creationists believe that the whole universe and humankind are the result of a divine creation, therefore, God exists, and God decides. *He* has all the power. The persistent utilization of masculine pronouns ("He" and "Him") when denoting the divine within numerous religious traditions is grounded in multifaceted historical and cultural antecedents. These monotheistic faith systems, most notably Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, have their origins in societies characterized by patriarchal sociocultural structures, where male predominance was a prevailing norm. This cultural milieu has significantly influenced the development of language and metaphoric representations within religious texts such as the Bible and the Quran, wherein God is often portrayed using masculine imagery, as a paternal figure or authoritative ruler. These gendered references have become deeply entrenched in religious rituals, liturgical practices, and theological thought. Despite theological discourse advocating for gender-neutral theological language to challenge these established norms and gender stereotypes, endeavours to modify religious discourse are met with resistance, often grounded in concerns over potential theological ramifications.

Nonetheless, contemporary discourse increasingly underscores the necessity for adopting more inclusive and gender-neutral language within religious spheres, aligning with evolving conceptions of gender identity and the divine.

God decided to create a male first, and created a woman afterwards that will have all the flaws and lead the man to temptation and its eternal consequences. The narrative portraying God's creation of a male before a female, and the subsequent association of woman with leading man into temptation and its consequences, is notably embedded within certain religious texts, particularly within the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This narrative, most prominently exemplified by the biblical account of Adam and Eve, invites theological speculation regarding its underlying rationale. Theological scholars and interpreters engage in multifaceted analyses, and while interpretations may differ, several speculative perspectives emerge. Some theologians interpret the Adam and Eve narrative allegorically, symbolizing broader human experiences and free will. Others contend that the narrative serves theological objectives, emphasizing human obedience and the concept of original sin, essential in Christian theology. The narrative's socio-cultural context, reflective of patriarchal norms of its era, is also considered. Ultimately, diverse religious traditions and scholars may emphasize different aspects of the narrative, ranging from its moral lessons to its theological teachings, reflecting the varying interpretations within theological discourse.

In Genesis 3:12, Adam responded to God after committing the first sin: 'The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.' Adam damned Eve for the original sin and condemned her for humanity's fall from Heaven to Earth. Eve became me, her, them, all the women that have lived and all the women that are yet to live. The portrayal of Eve in the biblical narrative as the transgressor who disobeys divine command, leading to humanity's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, has historically been employed to rationalize the subjugation of women, casting Eve as emblematic of female disobedience and temptation.

Consequently, the narrative has reinforced stereotypes concerning women's moral inferiority and their role in leading men astray, contributing to the entrenchment of patriarchal norms and gender-based discrimination. Furthermore, some interpretations suggest that the narrative's emphasis on female culpability has been intertwined with broader issues such as femicide and violence against women, nurturing a culture of blame and harm directed towards women by perpetuating the notion that women bear inherent moral flaws or are accountable for societal ills. Nonetheless, it is imperative to recognize that not all religious interpretations or traditions endorse such perspectives, as diverse religious scholars and communities are engaged in efforts to reinterpret and challenge these narratives to foster gender equity and social justice. The argument presented here underscores the intricate interplay between religious narratives and prevailing attitudes toward women, drawing attention to assertions that these narratives have played a role in marginalizing and victimizing women within society.

Eve became infamous for being a sinner, yet this passage makes Eve a rebellious powerful woman who refused an order by a male deity.

In the realm of Jewish folklore, Lilith emerges as a prominent figure, notably absent from the Hebrew Bible but intricately woven into a tapestry of legends and narratives. A widely recognized narrative recounts the creation of both Adam and Lilith by the divine, forming them as equals from the same elemental dust. However, Lilith's steadfast refusal to acquiesce to Adam's authority precipitated her expulsion from the paradisiacal realm of the Garden of Eden. In certain interpretations, Lilith assumes the role of a symbol emblematic of female defiance and autonomy. Subsequently, within later Jewish folklore and the annals of Kabbalistic writings, Lilith undergoes a transformation, adopting malevolent attributes, and is portrayed as an enchantress and seductress. It is noteworthy that the character of Lilith has

exhibited a dynamic evolution across time, giving rise to a spectrum of interpretations discernible within various Jewish communities and literary sources.

Labelled as the first wife of Adam, Lilith was also a notorious demon and is today a feminist figure to several Jewish feminists. Defiant of the Divine law, Lilith's stories are not limited to Judaism only, but have been present in Babylonian, Assyrian and Sumerian populations. Known for her refusal to submit to Adam, hence her departure from Eden, Lilith's resistance to Adam's attempts to subdue her and force her into missionary intercourse (not saying that she wanted any sort of intercourse in the first place) is perhaps why there was a need for a submissive Eve in the first place. Adam wanted the upper hand and the idea of being defied by a woman was unacceptable for him. The Alphabet of Ben Sira, an early medieval Jewish text, is a commonly cited source in stories about Lilith. The earliest recorded writings about her can be found in this manuscript that dates back between 800 AD and 1000 AD. Written in the Middle Ages, it is considered among the most sophisticated and satirical Jewish writings. In Wojciech Kosior's article 'Tale of Two Sisters. The Image of Eve in Early Rabbinic Literature and its Influence on the Portrayal of Lilith in the Alphabet of Ben Sira,' the author provides an analysis of the role and portrayal of Lilith in Ben Sira's Alphabet:

Both women are portrayed as the first females on earth with the narrative of Lilith obviously utilizing the Midrashic tradition of the imperfect wife of Adam. . . . The most vivid difference between these characters lies in the negative traits attributed to them. While Eve is portrayed accumulating all the flaws one can think of, the main fault of Lilith is insubordination to her male company. (Kosior 2018)

Judith Plaskow's collection *The Coming of Lilith: Essays on Feminism, Judaism, and Sexual Ethics* is a perfect example of how Lilith shapes narratives of Jewish feminism. Lilith and Adam have the following exchange: "I will not lie below," and he said, "I will not lie below,

but above, since you are fit for being below and I for being above.” She said to him, “The two of us are equal, since we are both from the earth.” And they would not listen to each other.

Although Eve obeyed Adam and accepted herself as a part of him, she did not obey his God. Eve’s desire to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge that stood in the middle of the Garden of Eden resulted in the damnation of all humanity: she shall not be knowledgeable. (Jewish Women’s Archive. ‘Excerpt from the Alphabet of Ben Sira 78: Lilith.’)

Hesiod’s Cosmogony

Abrahamic stories of creationism revolving around the first man and the first woman are not the only paradigms of patriarchy. Greek narratives of supernatural acts of the divine resulting in the creation of the world as we know it have their share of gender issues. Hesiod’s poems are perhaps the writings that are most often referred to while discussing the genesis of the universe in Greek mythology. Scholars such as Sarah B. Pomeroy (1973), Kun Jung Lee (2006) and Suzanne Lye (2018) agree that Hesiod was indeed a misogynist.

Lye argues that:

Based on these negative depictions of mortal female characters and marriage, scholars have mostly taken Hesiod at his word and have designated him a misogynist. [. . .] Hesiod has framed mortal women as having too much power over the emotions and property of men. As an entity outside of man’s control, woman threatens his position (Zeitlin 1996, 71; Lye 2018)

As an entity outside of man’s control, woman threatens his position (Zeitlin 1996: 71). Hesiod’s representations of women, whether as divine beings or mortals, were marked by characteristics that, according to ecofeminist writers like Robert Rowan or Susanne Claxton, are mainstays of misogyny and patriarchy. These features range from fertility and nurturing

to madness, jealousy, treachery, and betrayal. All these features are presumed to have provoked men's desire to use their masculine dominance to control the females. Inferiorising women as a gender group is the result of a hierarchical system that craves control over property. Property here can take the form of land, animals, knowledge, power, women or even labour. The genesis of this system can be traced all the way back to cosmogony, where in most stories, power has been handed to man from the divine to conquer the world and to dominate and exploit Mother Earth. These stories are usually told to poets and narrators who manage to invoke muses who connect them to the divine. To gain a deeper understanding of the genesis of patriarchal discourses, looking at the portrayal of women in mythology is useful to showcase the established patriarchal order and the dominance of men over women and nature. Ancient Greek mythology, for instance, is full of narratives where the female characters are usually the troublesome ones. Although almost every cosmogony is full of hierarchical systems based on mortal/ immortal dualisms, the representation of females, mortal or immortal ones, is worth an examination. The prevalence of hierarchical systems and dualistic frameworks, particularly those grounded in distinctions between mortal and immortal entities, within cosmogonies and creation myths across various cultures reflects the historical structuring of belief systems and worldviews. These cosmogonies are multifaceted narratives that encompass not only religious or mythological themes but also encapsulate the societal values and norms inherent in the cultures that birthed them. The hierarchical constructs, including the dichotomy between mortals and immortals, often parallel the prevailing societal hierarchies and power dynamics. Consequently, an examination of the portrayal of females within these cosmogonies holds intrinsic value as it unveils profound insights into gender roles and the societal status of women within ancient contexts. Furthermore, these narratives, through their representation of females, serve as conduits for the perpetuation and reinforcement of established gender norms and stereotypes, thereby

influencing the perception and treatment of women within their respective societies. Additionally, they embrace symbolism and allegory, thereby conveying profound philosophical and moral messages, while also presenting challenges to conventional gender hierarchies. Ultimately, the study of female representation within cosmogonies offers a profound lens through which to explore the intersections of religion, mythology, culture, and gender, facilitating both the comprehension of the construction and transmission of belief systems and the complex narratives surrounding the roles of women in the societies of antiquity. Furthermore, it invites critical engagement with and evaluation of traditional gender norms and hierarchies, thereby contributing substantively to contemporary dialogues concerning gender equality and social equity.

This representation varies from one story to another, and female characters play different roles, ranging from villains, to victims, to heroes. This led to the birth of social gender roles, which, to some extent, still figure in some contemporary societies. Ancient poets and storytellers have always found their ways to make women accountable. Just like Lilith will perhaps be perceived for a long time as the disobedient one who refused to become subservient to Adam in Jewish mythology, and just like Eve carries the guilt of humanity's damnation in the creation myth in Abrahamic religions, Greek mythology has fascinating narratives where, again, the blame is put on the female. In many religions and mythologies, women are repeatedly found to be portrayed as lacking the ability to obey both God and man, leading to the fall of humanity. The allocation of blame carries intricate implications for both the accuser and the accused. The blamer, often representative of the societal and cultural context, employs blame as a moral explanation for human suffering, perpetuates power dynamics, and reinforces prevailing norms and values. On the other hand, for those being blamed, like Eve or female characters in Greek mythology, the consequences encompass stigmatization, subordination, and the reinforcement of negative stereotypes, contributing to

gender inequality and marginalization. However, evolving interpretations of these myths challenge conventional blame narratives, offering nuanced perspectives that empower and resist traditional gendered narratives. The attribution of blame within creation myths thus mirrors the socio-cultural dynamics of the originating society, reflecting both the complexities of human understanding and the potential for reinterpretation and empowerment. From Judaism to Christianity to Islam, women have been portrayed as inferior compared to the male superiority that ruled for centuries.

In addition to this, these religions have Biblical and Quranic interpretations that allow domestic abuse. Below are a few extracts from the New Testament, the Old Testament, and the Quran.

A cursory review of the Bible illustrates that women are ordered to accept marital submission by the Christian God: ‘Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour’ (Ephesians 5: 22–23); and ‘Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness I permit no woman to teach or have authority over a man; rather, she is to remain silent’ (Timothy 2: 11–12).

In Judaism, the Old Testament speaks of women as property and as less than humans. Women have no say in who they marry, whose child they bear, nor to reject the marital duties that were assigned to them.

6 Judah got a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. **7** But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the Lord’s sight; so the Lord put him to death. **8** Then Judah said to Onan, "Sleep with your brother’s wife and fulfil your duty to her as a brother-in-law to raise up offspring for your brother." **9** But Onan knew that the child would not be his; so whenever he slept with his brother’s wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from providing offspring for his brother. **10** What he did was wicked in the Lord’s sight; so the Lord put him to death also. (Genesis 38)

Monotheistic narratives are replete with instances where females are treated as property and child-bearers, not worthy of an opinion nor a decision. But when we return to Greek mythology, the first character that is feminised is Mother Earth. Gaia, the primal Mother Earth Goddess, has not missed her fair share of male dominance. Pandora, on the other hand, is the first human woman and she too has been represented as the source of evil and the reason behind humanity's suffering and mortality. This analysis aims to reveal the aetiology of the oppression of women and nature by analysing a few passages from Hesiod's two works *The Theogony* and *Works and Days*. In these poems, where an obvious hierarchical system is depicted between gods, men, women and animals, Hesiod tells the stories of the beginning of the world. The aim of examining his works is to trace the origin of gender-based dualistic structures based on the opposing characteristics of Chaos and Gaea, as well as other deities and mortal beings. Hesiod's poetry depicts what Karen Warren describes as 'the logic of domination' (Warren 1990). This logic is what justifies different kinds of oppression, given that the oppressed usually lack the features that the oppressor possesses.

Hesiod writes:

First of all Chawos [Gap] came into being. But then Gaia broad-chested,
always the unshakable seat of all the immortals who hold the peaks of snowy Olympus,
and dark Tartaros in the recesses of the wide-wayed earth, and Eros, the most
beautiful among the immortal gods, loosener of limbs, who subdues the mind
and prudent counsel in the chests of all gods and of all men.

In this above passage, we notice that, again, it is the male character that came first, in this case, Chaos, which is followed by:

From Chawos were born Erebos and black Night. From Night, again, were born
Aether and Day, whom she conceived and bore after mingling with Erebos in philotês.
Gaia first bore equal to herself starry Ouranos so that he may cover her all over like a veil,

to be always the unshakable seat for the blessed gods.

There is a noticeable depiction of the submissive role that is expected of Gaia. Out of all the masculine characters referred to above, it is Gaia's role to 'bear' a child, to be covered and to serve the gods as an 'unshakable seat.' Gaia's role is outlined below:

She bore the large mountains, pleasant haunts of the goddess Nymphs who dwell

up along the woody mountains, and he produced the unplowed (?)

open waters raging with swell, Pontos, without philotês.

But then bedded by Ouranos, she produced deep-eddying Okeanos and and Koios and Kreios and Hyperion and Iapetos and Thea and Rheia and Themis and Mnemosyne and golden-garlanded Phoebe and lovely Tethys.

And after them was born last Kronos of the crooked scheme, most fearful of children, and he hated his lusty father. (Hesiod 2006)

The repetitiveness of the word "bore" implies the emphasis on the expectations from Gaia. "Bedded by Ouranos" is another example of Gaia's passive portrayal as well as her subordinate role. Only after laying with Ouranos, she, again, reproduces, a cycle that keeps being repeated. The above passage shows that female figures are used for impregnation, reproduction, and service of the powerful male gods. Despite that all the characters are fictional and supernatural; the writer projected their own gender imbalance views into their writings. Even though the creation of all the characters could have occurred without the human reproductive pattern, Hesiod reflected the women's pregnancy and multiple reproductions by Gaia. All the extracts from Hesiod's Theogony tell the story of the creation of Chaos and Gaea and the result of their mating. At first, we learn that Gaea is not the first goddess to come into

existence as she is preceded by Chaos. Chaos could produce darkness and brightness, day, and night, without needing to mate with a female. Gaea has the same ability, as she does not need fertilisation to conceive Uranus: 'Earth produces Uranus, the Heaven, to cover or enclose her in all directions, as if she somehow required such delimitation in order to possess the localisation and solidity that characterize her' (Clay 2003).

The personification and feminisation of Gaia show that Planet Earth has long been perceived as an endless source of services to the masters, whoever they might be. The verbs that were given to Gaia imply that her roles range from producing resources, "She produced [...]," to serving whoever is superior to her: "Gaia first bore equal to herself starry Ouranos so that he may cover her all over like a veil, to be always the unshakable seat for the blessed Gods." Before the birth of Uranus, Gaea and Chaos had the ability to give life without the need to mate with another being. Yet when Uranus mates with Gaea to bring their children to life, he comes to the realisation that he is not capable of doing what Gaea did to him: conceiving him. Thus, the feature that Gaea possesses, which is life-giving, is what Uranus, the soon-to-be oppressor, lacks. Hesiod's tendency to create a male figure to 'cover' and 'complete' Gaea is itself an expression of his view of the female: incomplete. Gaea ends up mating with Uranus, giving birth to the twelve elder gods: the eldest son Oceanus, a water-stream personified as a Titan god of the river Okeanus, as well as to the other eleven Titans. Uranus tries his best to stop his children from being born. For Uranus, the fear of losing power and not being in control was too strong, "therefore, he imprisoned them in Tartara, a dark and cold place in the depths of the earth. Gaia, displeased by Uranus' violent behaviour against their children and by his violent daily embracing, produced a hard scythe from her interior and gave it to her sons, asking them to mutilate their father, thus depriving him of his reproductive power" (Theodosiou, Manimanis, Dimitrijavic, Mantarakis 2011).

The female character, Gaea, is presented as the source of betrayal, causing Uranus's loss of his reproductive and divine abilities by his own son Cronus: The primitive humans, by carefully observing the life cycle of plants, the seeding of Mother Earth and subsequent sprouting aided by rain from Uranus, discovered the corresponding cycle of animal sexual reproduction. Therefore, it was concluded that Earth was alive and in order to give birth 'she' needed to encounter the masculine entity. For this reason, humans personified Earth as a feminine entity, while the fertilising masculine entity was the sky with the rain, or some large river, such as the divine Nile in Egypt (Theodosiou, Manimanis, Dimitrijavic, Mantarakis 2011).

In the above passage, it is fair to perceive Earth then as receptive, while water as a penetrative element. Prior to bringing Uranus to life, Gaea had never been exposed to patriarchy nor had she faced a power that tended to subordinate her. It is only after she gave birth to the father sky that the universe learned about the obsession of being in control. As her son and husband, Uranus's desire to remain in power was portrayed in his actions. Gaea did not need a male figure to conceive him, which is perhaps the reason behind his gynophobia. As a male, he feared what other males, his own children included, could do to him because he knew that male figures have a masculine desire to be in control and strive to indulge in power. The fear of losing this power was portrayed multiple times in the cosmogony. Uranus feared his own children; thus he locked them up. Later, Zeus feared being overthrown; consequently, he swallowed his pregnant wife to prevent the children from being born. Introducing Pandora as the first mortal woman explains the genesis of mortal (human) patriarchal beginnings. Just like Eve, or any other 'first human female,' Pandora is blamed in Hesiod's poetry for humanity's mortality and is accused of deceit. 'In the *Works and Days*, the emphasis is laid upon the punishment of human beings, with Pandora responsible for ills that affect all human beings' (Most 2006). Pandora, as a mortal being, is introduced to man as

an eternal punishment. Thus, since the time of Ancient Greece, the views towards mortal women always bore a negative connotation. The significance of this character and the intentions behind her actions in Hesiod's cosmos have been debated strenuously by scholars. Hesiod tells the story of this first human woman in both his works *The Theogony* and *Works and Days*. In both poems, Pandora is created as a punishment to men. In *Works and Days*, Hermes is said to have given her a deceitful character. Gorgeous looking from the outside and evil on the inside, Hesiod makes sure that her character is perceived as a damnation to humans for humankind: men who supposedly lived without hardship or complications until the first woman was created. Her curiosity to see what is in the jar released all the misfortunes on humanity and marked an end to paradise. She is blamed for not being able to resist temptation and for having a tendency to disobey. Hesiod's misogynist mythology portrays both Gaea and Pandora as misfortunes after a clear struggle between matriarchy and patriarchy. Gaea is the traitor, and Pandora, just like Eve, is the reason for humankind's damnation. Giving them both supernatural characteristics that serve to harm others, Hesiod marked the female with sorcery and evil. In *Work and Days*, Hedioid writes:

Before this, the various kinds of humanity lived on earth without evils and without harsh labour, without wretched diseases that give disasters to men. But the woman took the great lid off the jar and scattered what was inside. She devised baneful anxieties for humankind. The only thing that stayed within the unbreakable contours of the jar was Elpis [Hope]. It did not fly out. Before it could, she put back the lid on top of the jar, according to the plans of aegis-bearing Zeus, the cloud-gatherer. But as for the other things, countless baneful things, they are randomly scattered all over humankind. Full is the earth of evils, full is the sea. Diseases for humans are a day-to-day thing.

The passage reflects the idea that women are the cause behind all evil and men's damnation. Used to showcase how females came to life, Pandora was used by Hesiod to justify men's existential agonies, which reflected Hesiod's anger towards women and his misogynistic views. Associating women with the supernatural, perceiving them as curses, may imply that they are themselves of occult origin and, consequently, dehumanises them. This is because associating women with the supernatural and framing them as carriers of curses can have dehumanizing consequences due to interconnected factors. Such associations often "other" women, marking them as different or even dangerous, leading to stigmatization and a loss of agency. Viewing women primarily as conduits for malevolent forces can devalue their worth and contributions to society, perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes and scapegoating women for societal ills. Additionally, these associations may legitimize control and oppression, leading to the denial of basic human rights and freedoms. Challenging these harmful perceptions requires raising awareness, promoting gender equality, and combatting stereotypes and superstitions that undermine women's humanity.

The Witch Trials: Ireland's Relic of Paganism

Witch trials have marked human history, especially during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Having taken place mostly in the Western world, these trials reflect the extent of patriarchy's harm towards women.

Across the centuries marked by these mass executions, almost one million individuals were killed for the crime of witchcraft. The hanging and mass executions of people who were falsely accused of sorcery was fuelled by multiple reasons, ranging from bad weather to economic deterioration, to any inconveniences that could probably not be explained at the time (Oster 2004). This subsection examines Ireland's share of this dark history, with the aim of demonstrating even further how the first wave of ecofeminism (essentialist/ cultural),

which linked women to nature, was not necessarily the best approach as nature has long been perceived as out of control and in need of taming, and, regrettably, so have women. Ireland's witch trial history is discussed here as the country's trials' history is explicit. Ireland was, according to historical documentation, one of the first countries where such trials took place. Dame Alice Kyteler for instance, born in 1263 and surviving past 1325, stands as the earliest documented individual to face condemnation for witchcraft within the historical records of Ireland.

Another example of such documentary record is William Renwick Riddell's 1917 article, 'First Execution for Witchcraft in Ireland.' This was the reality of thousands of women between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Across the two centuries, a period known as The Burning Times, a panic spread that witchcraft was the cause behind even the smallest misfortunes, the perfect justification for why anything went wrong. When the term 'witch' is brought up in a conversation, one may unconsciously assume the person's gender as well as their features and characteristics: female, not so good looking, with devilish abilities to inflict harm on others. As a result of this frenzy, thousands of people, mainly women, were executed. The Salem Witch Trials, or witch massacres to be exact, are perhaps the most infamous ones in history. In the late seventeenth century, some Salem women were accused of practicing witchcraft and worshipping the Devil, and some of the accused were sentenced to death. Yet one of the earliest recorded convictions for witchcraft was in Europe, in Ireland. Dame Alice Kyteler from Kilkenny, born in 1263, was the first recorded person to have been charged with witchcraft in Ireland. After inheriting a business and properties from her father, she married banker William Outlawe. Details about her life are laid out in *A Contemporary Narrative of the Proceedings Against Dame Alice Kyteler* (1843), a book written by Richard de Ledrede and published in 1843 by the Camden Society. Not only was this the first burning of a witch, since witches were hanged throughout Great Britain, but it was not Alice who was

hanged, rather her handmaiden, Petronella, on 3 November, 1324. The wealthy lady, Alice Kyteler, had remarried many times after William Outlowe died. Each time she remarried, her husband passed away and she remarried again four times in total. The rumors had it that she practiced sorcery and lured men to her house. Different biographies narrate the life and suspicions that circulated about Dame Kyteler. She was said to have been manipulative as she convinced her spouses, before their deaths, to disinherit their own children in favor of her son from her first marriage. A few marriages and deceased husbands later, Alice Kyteler had acquired a fortune and, as a consequence, had multiple conflicts with her stepchildren and their families, who accused her of murder but did not have sufficient evidence. They subsequently became convinced that Alice had Maleficium, the Latin term for supernatural powers, to perform witchcraft with the intent of harming others. They involved the Franciscan Bishop of Ossory, Richard Ledrede, who started a conspiracy that Kyteler was the head of a sorcery and crime group that included her servants, who rebuked Christianity and engaged in witchcraft. After building a case against her founded on accusations of heresy and sorcery, he ordered her arrest along with that of her and her co-conspirators. With the help from friends, Alice fled Kilkenny, some say to either the Netherlands or England. Others were arrested, including her handmaiden Petronella of Meath, who was tortured ruthlessly until she confessed to witchcraft and as a result, she was burned alive on 2 November in front of a crowd of people who had been waiting for a spectacle. Accusing women of sorcery did not end with the charges against Alice Kyteler or the burning of twenty-four-year-old Petronella. Superstitious beliefs continued for centuries. The story of Florence Newton, also known as The Witch of Youghal, is another example of a woman accused of witchcraft in Ireland. St. John D. Seymour writes in his book *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology* (originally published in 1913), that 'Florence Newton was committed to Youghal prison by the Mayor of the town, 24 March, 1661, for bewitching Mary Longdon' (Seymour 2016). Seymour tells the

story of how Florence Newton presumably bewitched Mary Langdon, who refused to give her a piece of beef. This angered Florence, and Mary claimed that a week later, Florence violently kissed her and said “I pray thee let thee and I be friends, for I bear thee no ill will and I pray thee do thou bear me none” (Seymour 1913). Later, Mary started claiming the impacts of Florence’s sorcery on her. She said she saw her along with the Devil by her bedside inviting her to become a witch. She also claimed that she would ‘vomit up needles, pins, horsenails, stubbs, wool, and straw.’ In addition to being accused of bewitching Mary, Florence was also accused of using witchcraft to kill the prison guard, David Jone. David’s wife testified that Florence kissed his hand and bewitched him, causing him pain in his arm, which later on spread to his heart. What happened to Florence is not confirmed. Nevertheless, Andrew Snedden published an article in 2019 in *Irish Historical Studies* titled ‘Select document: Florence Newton’s trial for witchcraft, Cork, 1661: Sir William Aston’s transcript,’ where he examined the set of signed witness statements of Florence’s trial. Aston suggests that Florence died before she was executed. One of the interesting aspects of Aston’s paper is that he acknowledges the sexism of the witch trials: It has been demonstrated that Irish women who displayed behaviour considered socially unacceptable for their sex in a male-dominated society were more susceptible to charges of witchcraft than women who did not challenge gender norms (Aston 2019). Aston focuses on the emphasis on the kiss in the records. Apparently, the fact that Florence kissed her proclaimed victims and therefore she was able to bewitch them. The act of kissing itself was not an acceptable behavior in patriarchal Youghal, as it displayed a woman’s sexuality.

The witches of Islandmagee in Northern Ireland are another example of witch trials in Ireland in the eighteenth century. The trial of the eight women took place between 1710 and 1711, and they were found guilty of witchcraft at Carrickfergus courthouse under the 1586 Witchcraft Act. They were accused by a woman called Mary Dunbar, who claimed that they

bewitched her and tormented her, and all women were sentenced to one year in jail and did time in the public stocks. The relationship between witches and nature has long been perceived as mystical since witches either control nature, use nature for their healing and harming practices, or belong to nature in an unnatural way.

In the 2004 book *Witch Craze*, Lynda Roper argues that old and infertile women who were accused of witchcraft were accused of harming infants and destroying fertility in the natural and human world (Roper 2004). For centuries witchcraft represented the obstacle that stands in the way of nature and has been perceived as an unusual way of having control over the wilderness. For a patriarchal system to work, people accused of witchcraft were thus a threat to the submissive femininity that was expected of women. With witches, the woman-nature relationship is reversed. It is no longer the traditional submissive one executed by patriarchy. It is one where women and nature rebel, present a threat to masculinity and the patriarchal notion of what the natural must be. Witchcraft in Ireland remains a useful case study, recollective of various other cases globally where women were imprisoned and killed for simply being suspected of having (super)natural abilities. In modern days, the word 'witch' is still used as a derogatory term to accuse women who do things outside the societal norms, who are more in tune with nature, and sometimes to super-naturalise their accomplishments, since an ordinary woman is not expected to achieve much. In Romania for instance, the word 'vrăjitoare' is a derogatory term synonymous with the word 'hag,' which is still used against women in Romania, mostly older ones, who do not conform to what Romanian society expects of them. Witchcraft's consequences are not as grave as they used to be centuries ago, yet in multiple parts of the world, women are unfortunately still put on trial for sorcery. In Morocco in 2020 for instance, four women were put on trial after being accused of witchcraft. In 2012, A Saudi man was executed for witchcraft and sorcery: "The execution took place in the southern Najran province [...] Mr Asiri was beheaded after his sentence was

upheld by the country's highest courts" (BBC 2012). Accusations of witchcraft are unfortunately not history for everyone. They remain present in several countries where local laws prosecute sorcery accusations as serious criminal offenses which are often targeting women and perpetrated by men who claim to be victims of such practices. Such defiance to the subordinate expectations of women from men has resulted in the growth of negative emotions towards all womb-bearing humans. Simultaneously, more attention started to be imposed on the importance of man and masculinities, known as androcentrism.

Destabilising the value and importance of all humans and nonhumans from equal to a hierarchical pyramid of value may justify the contemporary focus on men as the center of the universe. The following passages aim to deconstruct human-centeredness and male-centredness by questioning human and male superiority.

Anthropocentrism and Androcentrism: An Overview

Eurocentrism, egocentrism, Anglocentrism, heterocentrism, ethnocentrism: too many 'isms' for our species. Human identities are based on the labels that we identify with because what we are is defined by what we are not. According to self-concept theories, self-concept is learned and not inherent, and most importantly, it does not always align with reality (Ackerman 2018).

We simply build our identities by accumulating the impact of our experiences and allowing them to shape who we are. Every individual allegedly claims to have a self-concept that is unique to them. Daphna Oyserman states that "Who am I?" "Where do I belong?" and "How do I fit in" are questions that we constantly seek to answer and that by adolescence, we tend to realise that who we want to be and who others around us want us to be are two distinguished selves (Oyserman 2001). Social contexts enable and scaffold certain selves while disabling, suppressing, and dismantling others, even in the face of what might appear to be objective evidence of these self-dimensions. It is also becoming increasingly clear that the

social construction of the self depends not only on relationships or immediate situations but also on larger sociocultural and historical factors (Oyserman 2001). Oyserman also addresses the difference between having and being a self and the role of sociocultural impacts on the development of one's identity. Some societies prioritise and encourage individualism and self-autonomy, while others disregard the value of personal achievements and emphasise group memberships instead. In both cases, it is evident that the presence of the people around us has a huge impact on how we develop our self-concept and, thus, our identities as individuals. Humans often seek validation. In fact, sometimes our life revolves around it, especially in progressive societies where social media is controlling one's social status more than anything else. Thus, our identities are sometimes perceived and understood by others based on how we present on online platforms, for instance. This is rooted in the importance of genuine self-expression and the development of meaningful connections. Embracing authenticity allows individuals to present their true selves without fear of judgment or conformity to societal norms. By doing so, they can foster more authentic relationships with others who appreciate them for who they truly are, rather than for a carefully curated facade. It is fair to say that most of us have natural urges to belong, which is why we avoid exposing sides of ourselves that may raise questions about our individuality.

We perhaps tend to conform and hide any part of us that does not necessarily fit with society's expectations especially if we are highly influenced by the latter. Our evolution pushed our brain's survival instincts to the extreme, leading us to adopt destructive behaviours where the survival of the fittest developed to the survival of the richest, the whitest, the most religious and the straightest. Our evolutionary history, as articulated by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, has driven our brain's survival instincts to the extreme, resulting in the development of destructive behaviours. While Darwin's theory of natural selection emphasized the survival of the fittest within species, it is essential to note

that this concept was primarily applied to the natural world. However, over time, this principle has been extended into societal and economic contexts, leading to the idea of the survival of the richest, the whitest, the most religious, and the straightest. Scholars like Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Henry Adams have critiqued this extension of Darwinian principles into capitalism and society, offering insights into how economic systems can exacerbate inequalities and perpetuate harmful hierarchies based on wealth, race, religion, and sexual orientation.

This even expanded to a world of power structures where the distribution of power is based on who makes the largest profit, turning our societies into consumerist collectives. These 'centrism' may have divided us as a species and made us perceive the Other as a threat. The classification of genders, ethnicities, religions, cultures, and sexual orientations

became the norm even though humans are all similar on the genetic level: detailed information about the extent of our genetic similarities and differences did not reach the public's attention until the completion of the Human Genome Project. With base pair comparisons possible across the individuals sequenced, the estimate that any two humans are 99.9 percent the same has raised our awareness that all humans are incredibly similar at the genetic level (Blazer, Hernandez 2006).

Whether by remaining in the binary conceptualisations of black and white, female and male, heterosexual and homosexual, religious and nonreligious, or by breaking the binary by opting for other inclusive terms such as nonbinary, bisexual, interracial, spiritual, agnostic and so on, we still have the tendency to divide people based on what we assume defines them, a concept called social categorisation (Lieberman et al. 2017). This is because it makes it easier to determine where they fall on the hierarchy pyramid. Zoe Lieberman, Amanda L. Woodward and Katherine D. Kinzler have examined and discussed the origin of social categorisation, as well as its consequences.

According to their study on how social preferences develop from early childhood, infants and children may naturally be inclined to be biased regarding who they interact with, based on language and race. Yet this preference does not lead to categorisation, prejudice, nor unequal treatment. It is only over the course of growing up that classifications of people are influenced by adults who often have prejudice: children's social categories could be grounded in the stereotypes and beliefs of adult members of their social and cultural community. Indeed, input from adults clearly influences children's reasoning about social categories: children are more likely to see minimal social categories as informative when adults consistently label and use the categories functionally (Lieberman et al. 2017). The authors highlight the differences between social preference and social categorisation, and they point out essentialist reasoning as a factor that leads to prejudice. "Even if forming social categories and making social inferences based on these categories is a basic part of human cognition, prejudice is not inevitable" (Lieberman et al. 2017). Karen Warren refers to feminist theory as the theory that criticises essentialised notions and conceptualisations by addressing different types of centrism. Warren argues that: Concepts of centrism have been at the heart of modern liberation politics and theory. Feminism has focused on androcentrism, phallogocentrism and phallogocentrism as theoretical refinements of its central concept of sexism; it has also focused on the connection between these and other forms of centrism. Anti-racist theory critiques ethnocentrism, movements against European colonisation critique Eurocentrism, gay and lesbian activists critique heterocentrism and so on (Warren 1997).

Warren's points emphasise the problematic natures of these centrisms in the eyes of modern feminism. Warren argues that the critique of anthropocentrism continued to be denied legitimacy despite being at the heart of environmental philosophy and the defining task of ecophilosophy. Furthermore, Warren's awareness of the threats of anthropocentrism's dismissal led her to write about cosmic anthropocentrism. She defines the latter as the

morally relevant concept, where she argues against the strongest rejectionists of the legitimacy of the concept in green discourses. Warren's theorisations of oppression and domination, although sexist and binary in some ways, convey an important message. They suggest that as long as humans compete for a sense of superiority among themselves or other species, peaceful coexistence will remain a myth. This is because in contexts of nature exploitation, nature is seen as property belonging to the superior human. In the case of labour exploitation, the bodies and the time of workers are perceived the same way: humans have become able to create formal roles (such as chieftain, king, pharaoh, colonel etc.) which are independent of an actual individual, and (ii) among these formal roles, any kind of network of relations—that is, hierarchy—is conceivable, starting with complete egalitarianism up to the strictest dictatorship. Importantly, only the ability enabling the creation of such roles and their relations is coded genetically, meanwhile the specific nature of the hierarchy is not (Vicsek, Zafeiris 2017).

The roots of this rest in the fact that from a very young age, the importance of status is taught by schools, families, friends, and society in general. This in turn contributes to ideas around who gets to determine who owns what, who has access and who does not. Our planet has been sliced and borders were created where internationalism has no place. People who stood out of normativity were punished and even executed throughout our existence, leading to a rejectionist attitude towards any individual or group that differs from the norm. The Global North colonised the Global South, claiming that they are civilising primitive groups, while their sole interest was the exploitation of both resources and human beings. This leads us to think about the fascinating relationship we have with our planet. We switched from using our natural

habitat's resources sustainably to serve our basic needs to unsustainable pursuit of profit and destruction. In recent decades, there has been a notable shift in our collective priorities, with a

significant emphasis on power dynamics. This shift has manifested in various ways, including the notable focus on the development of nuclear weaponry, the proliferation of vehicles emitting harmful greenhouse gases, the production of excessive and often unnecessary plastic goods driven by consumerism, and a continuous stream of inventions that, regrettably, contribute to the degradation of our natural environment, encompassing our air, forests, and oceans. It's worth noting that these trends are not without their critiques, as some argue that they reflect a misguided belief in human dominion over Earth's resources, often attributed to the creation of deities that place humanity at the center of the natural world. As Kheel reflects: "I found the idea of a God who, through a divine act of nepotism, selects a 'chosen species' to manage the rest of the natural world deeply disturbing" (Kheel 2008).

These trends raise significant ethical and environmental concerns, prompting us to reconsider the impact of our actions on the planet. It is increasingly clear that the pursuit of power and dominion over nature should be balanced with a responsibility to protect and preserve the delicate ecosystems upon which all life depends. In the face of these challenges, it is imperative that we reflect on our choices and explore more sustainable and harmonious ways of coexisting with the natural world.

It is important to look at some of these 'centrisms' to understand the genesis of the numerous hierarchies and to grasp a wider understanding of what ecofeminism, as a political, social and literary criticism, opposes. According to some ecofeminists, the main oppressive ideologies that cause women's and nature's subordinations are anthropocentrism and androcentrism. Ecofeminists aim to dismantle the structural domination of women, nature and other marginalised groups, such as people who do not belong to the white race, people who do not fit in the heteronormative expectations of society, the working class and the poor and other groups that are socially and politically oppressed by different kinds of 'master identity' (Plumwood 1993).

The natural environment is perceived as wild and in need of domination and exploitation because of what it has to offer to humankind. Equally, the same features given to nature are attributed to females, since both can reproduce and to nurture. The result of these attributions is the classification of women at the bottom of the hierarchical pyramid alongside nature. The creation of such a pyramid is itself a result of patriarchal desires for maintaining power positions. Therefore, women face the same oppressive treatment as that which is considered wild and primitive: control, domination, and exploitation. While attempting to define what anthropocentrism is, one should bear in mind that no matter what the definition is, it has no room for an equal consideration of the interests of humans and nonhumans. A basic and simple definition would be what J. Baird Callicott described as ‘the doctrine that only human beings have intrinsic value, and all nonhuman natural entities have only instrumental value—that is, they have value if and only if they serve in some way as means to human ends’ (Callicott 2009). This fundamental concern in environmental philosophy has been the main discussion of environmentalists, ecocritics and ecofeminists. Nevertheless, some critics tend to examine religion and spirituality, while analysing human centrism to either defend, criticise or even attack the textbooks and the teachings of different religions and belief systems. In their paper ‘Astrosociology and the Capacity of Major World Religions to Contextualize the Possibility of Life Beyond Earth,’ E. M. McAdamis considers the anthropocentrism of religions by analysing Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic traditions. They maintain that: “the conviction that humans are part of nature itself vastly diverges from the supernatural teleology of Western religions, which presuppose a creator of the universe who appoints human beings as the central figures upon whom the whole of the natural order turns” (McAdamis 2011). Our current analysis will not enter the debate on whether these religions are for or against the exploitation of animals, women, and natural resources. As McAdamis outlines, however, within mainstream religious faiths there is a long-held and influential

belief that humanity is at the centre of God's creation, and, therefore, has dominion over the Earth and its natural resources. I am a firm believer that the Biblical Scala Naturae, known as the Great Chain of Being, Islam's standpoint that makes men the caretakers and maintainers of women, or the Bible's Parable of the Master and Servant, are major contributors to the creation of hierarchical structures.

As I noted above, humanity came to believe that we are the centre of everything, and that Homo sapiens are superior to any other living creatures. We have been using speciesism to separate ourselves from other species by identifying several contrasting features. We gave ourselves the right to use animals for our personal entertainment and made a profit from it. We are still killing millions of animals each year in the name of fashion, regardless of the endless alternatives that are animal cruelty-free. Even nowadays, we still use animals for a diversity of reasons such as emotional support pets. Blinded by our selfishness and anthropocentrism, many of us are the masters of ignoring the impacts of our decisions on other living creatures that we might perceive as inferior to us and thus not worthy of consideration. We disrupted the growth of plants and trees by deciding what forests to convert for capitalistic uses like mining industries, urbanisation, infrastructures, roads, and plantations of palm trees. Our limitless desire to make profit and exploit resources and other humans has blinded us to the damage we are causing, or to be more accurate, some of us could not care any less about this damage. The word 'sustainability' is nowadays being commercialised to make us feel better about our irreversible actions. Although it is hard for us to let go of the idea that we are chosen and to believe that we are, in fact, not superior to other nonhuman entities, the current state of our planet (climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, plastic pollution, pollution of air and water, loss of natural habitats, ocean acidification, resource depletion, and environmental justice concerns) requires us to think twice about whether the universe really revolves around our well-being.

In his book *Ecological Literature and the Critique of Anthropocentrism*, Bryan L. Moore believes that if we had a more complete understanding of our relative smallness, we would not trash our planet, we would be more concerned about the effects of burning fossil fuels, we would do as much as we could to save the few remaining wilderness areas for posterity, and a humbler view of ourselves would lead us to treating one another more fairly (Moore 2017). Anthropocentrism, thus, tends to favour the needs and the wants of humanity. The question that arises when discussing anthropocentrism is whether this latter is androcentric or not. Just as anthropocentrism is a major concern in environmental studies, androcentrism holds a similar position in feminist studies. Androcentrism is linked to male chauvinism yet is not necessarily exercised by males alone. It is, in fact, an ensemble of perspectives where the male is generically taken to be the norm of humanness (Ruether 1987). Androcentric thinking, in terms of gender and sexuality, has been challenged by numerous scholars. Sandra Lipsitz Bem, an American psychologist whose work focuses on androgyny and gender studies, discusses topics ranging from biological essentialism and androcentrism to the construction of gender identity and sexual inequality in her book *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality* (Bem 1993). She defines androcentrism as the privileging of male experience and the 'otherising' of the female by making this latter a deviation of the former. Bem provides a useful analysis that exposes the reality of female disadvantage, which she maintains is a result of an androcentric transformation of male/female difference.

In the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Rosemary Radford Ruether underscores the dualistic hierarchies that separate humans into two opposing sides: superior vs inferior. She discusses the origin of this male monopoly on leadership by going back to the Judeo-Christian traditions, which regard the male 'as the normative image of God in such a way as to make woman the image of either the lower or the fallen part of the self' (Ruether

1987). Yet the truth is that positioning males as the most important creatures and as the closest ones to resembling the divine dates back all the way to pre-monotheistic religions. April H. Bailey, Marianne LaFrance and John F. Dovidio argue that social power and categorisation are fundamental to understanding androcentrism. Representation, rapid association, order preferences and category-based induction are the four androcentric behaviours presented by Bailey, LaFrance, and Dovidio. Representation lies in the generic use of male terms such as 'he' or the high likeability for men to be generated as examples in categories that should not have a gender imbalance in the first place. Rapid association means that men are automatically thought of in discourses that are not gender specific per se. They also 'found preliminary evidence that participants are faster to pair gender-inclusive words like people with male faces than with female faces' (Bailey, LaFrance and Dovidio 2018).

This means that when women are used for representation, they are often seen as gender-specific, unlike men who are less gender-focused. Order preferences, according to the authors, are about the male-first bias: Men also tend to be named and depicted before women. Male and female name pairs (e.g., Adam and Eve) extracted through Google searches listed the man's name first more often than the reverse (Hegarty, Watson, Fletcher, and McQueen 2011). Similarly, images of famous heterosexual couples extracted through Google tended to depict the man on the left (Maass, Suitner, Favaretto and Cignacchi 2009). And finally, a content analysis of psychological articles in languages that read left-to-right found that tables and figures that showed a gender difference placed men on the left or above women 74 percent of the time (Hegarty and Buechel 2006; Bailey, La France and Dovidio 2018). This masculine ordering that places men before women in online searches, data, tables and other gender-divided representations goes back to the finding that the order of words depends on their semantic meaning. Put simply, the one with the most high-power connotation always comes first. The fourth and last behaviour is category-based induction, which means the

tendency to generalise more information about a category based on typical examples rather than less typical ones. For instance, when talking about birds, more-common birds come to mind before less-common ones (robins before ostriches). In the context of gender, this inductive reasoning means that men become the typical. This typicality has underlying male biases and thus, men are more often guessed first in gender nonspecific discourses. Yet these biases are rooted in patriarchy, as we shall see below in our discussion of the genesis of this social system.

Patriarchal Oppression of Nature, Women and Minoritized People

Civilization, very fundamentally, is the history of the domination of nature and of women. Patriarchy means rule over women and nature. Are the two institutions at base synonymous?

– John Zerzan

Karen J. Warren introduced conceptual frameworks as the socially and historically constructed world views that ‘explain, shape, and reflect our view of ourselves and our world’ (Warren 1988). Warren argues that even though these frameworks change, we still make meaning of our surroundings based on what we know and value within a specific frame of reference, which sets limitations to what we see. When these worldviews are oppressive, groups based on gender, sexuality, race, or ethnicity, end up being perceived as inferior, since diversity is not tolerated within these oppositional rather than complementary frameworks. While presenting her arguments, Warren introduces the logic of domination that justifies all kinds of domination such as racism, hegemonic masculinity, the conquest of nature and the oppression of ethnic minorities. The following passages dig into the roots of these frameworks to link the parties that are affected the most by patriarchy: women, nature and minoritized people. The subchapters start with an analysis of the anthropogenic breach of our planet’s boundaries and discusses the possibility of transformative change. The conversation

then moves to discuss the gender binary and the intertwinement of socio-biology with the matter. Minoritized people are discussed afterwards by highlighting the patriarchal system's effect on minority groups. The example discussed is the situation of the Uyghurs and the systemic patriarchal oppression they are facing today by the Chinese government. And, finally, continuing our use of artwork, film productions and works of fiction to examine human patterns within the ecofeminist framework, the movie *Mother!* is examined through an ecofeminist lens that incorporates aspects of James Lovelock's Gaia theory. The analysis of this movie will also showcase another facet of patriarchy by focusing on Christian cosmogony.

Of Nature: Planetary Survival in the Anthropocene

History has witnessed a persistence of systems that have exercised oppressive gender politics. Notions of civilisation might indicate progress, but does this progress cover all elements of human life? Or have we progressed in ensuring the highest levels of comfort or in fact regressed in being sustainable compared to agrarian and pre-industrial times? The idea that the other must be sacrificial is what results in domination and subjugation.

Human communities have always found it easy to subdue the human and nonhuman (i.e., animals and plants) if it is voiceless, powerless, and incapable of speaking up. Communities and societies managed to subdue humans by heterosexualising space, enforcing hierarchical thinking and exercising enough violence and domination to silence the constituencies who wanted to speak up. Slavery, human trafficking, forced prostitution and unpaid labour are just a few examples of what humans do to other humans for two main reasons: power and profit. Yet history over the centuries is also remarkable for the resistance and the activism that have tried to stand against violent threats to basic human rights. The real struggle is that of species who cannot speak and of a planet that has been subdued and exploited for centuries. Even during the current climate crisis, the circulated ideologies regarding climate action imply that

man must “save the Earth” for Earth’s sake, refusing to admit that it is, in fact, for humankind’s sake. The logic of domination is paradoxical: men dominate women yet still need them for humanity’s continuity, the same way they dominate the Earth and exploit it, yet it is their only habitat. Human activity has undoubtedly transformed our planet. In May 2018, Damian Carrington, the environment editor of *The Guardian*, published an alarming article titled: ‘Humans just 0.01% of all life but have destroyed 83% of wild mammals—study.’ The study referred to in the title was published in 2018 by *The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS)*, and it concluded that our planet has lost 83 percent of wild mammals, 80 percent of marine mammals, 50 percent of plants and 15 percent of fish due to anthropogenic activities such as the domestication of livestock and the industrial revolution, as well as overpopulation (*PNAS* 2018). It is when reading articles and publications like this one when the Anthropocene starts to make sense to some readers: we are living in an era where our very existence and activities have a significant and irreversible impact on our only habitat.

The Anthropocene is defined by Yadvinder Malhi as ‘the concept that the Earth has moved into a novel geological epoch characterized by human domination of the planetary system’ (Malhi 2017). Malhi further discusses the history of the term, as well as its different implications for culture, the biosphere and philosophy, and he ends his analysis on a personal note, asking whether the term is useful or not and whether its formalisation is necessary.

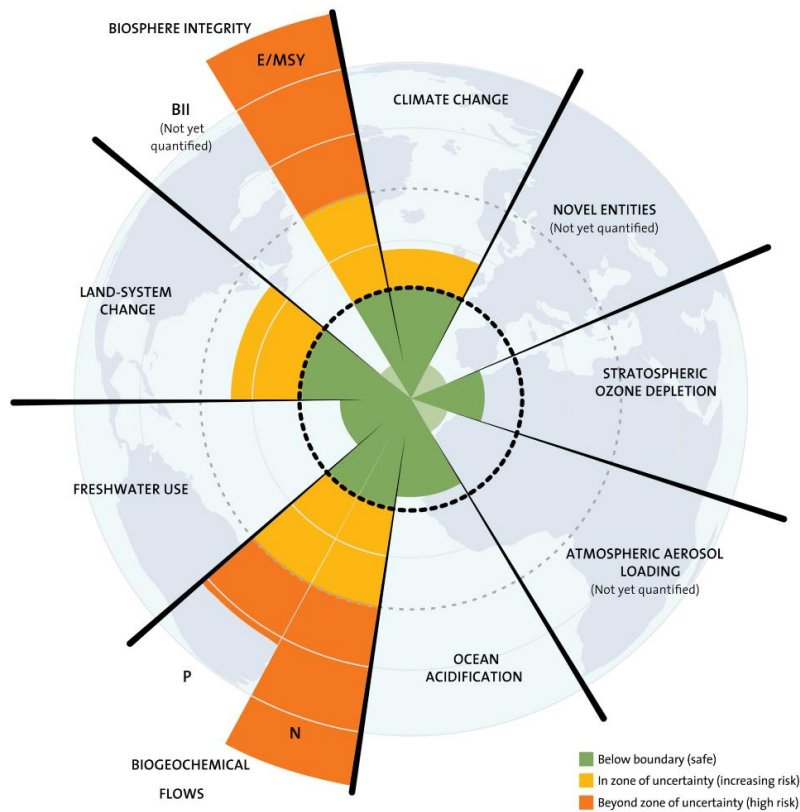
In his discussion about the Earth System Sciences perspective, he mentions planetary boundaries to draw attention to the fact that due to cumulative anthropogenic activities, the Earth’s ‘tipping points’ (Malhi 2017) are being challenged. He says that ‘The realization of planetary boundaries and dangerous feedback is something new in human history, and many of our modes of thinking, being, and behaving are challenged by it’ (Malhi 2017). Reading the term ‘planetary boundaries’ reminded me of a keynote speaker who gave a lecture during

my participation in the International Student Week in 2017 in Ilmenau, Germany. Organised by the Technical University of Ilmenau, the event focused on Global Justice as a core theme. The keynote speaker who introduced the term was Dr. Wolfgang Lucht, the cochair of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) research domain. Lucht's keynote session was titled 'Earth's Future—From Planetary Boundaries to Social Transformation.' During his talk, it was the first time that I heard the term and understood its meaning as well as its relevance to anthropogenic climate change. Before starting his presentation, Lucht emphasised how fantastic it is for European civilisation to have introduced the university as a body. His point overlooked the fact that the Moroccan university in Fes, *Al Karueein University*, which was founded in 895AD by a woman named Fatima Al-Fihriya, is in fact the oldest university in the world. So, technically, North Africa is the place where the university as a body was introduced by a fierce powerful woman, and that was one of the moments where the feminist in me started to question the exclusion of women and marginalised communities in history. Lucht introduced the framework of planetary system boundaries during the session. These boundaries, together, represent a safe and just operating space for humans on the planet. There are nine such boundaries (see image below):

Climate change, novel entities, stratospheric ozone depletion, atmospheric aerosol loading, ocean acidification, biochemical flows, freshwater use, land-system change and biosphere integrity (Stockholm Resilience Centre).

These nine planetary boundaries were introduced in 2009 by a group of twenty-eight scientists, led by Johan Rockström at The Stockholm Resilience Center. In 2010, Rockström introduced these boundaries during a TED Talk recorded by TED GLOBAL. According to Rockström, it is only once we entered the Holocene that we entered the only phase in the history of the planet that can support human development. Yet a switch from the Holocene to the Anthropocene did not happen out of mere coincidence. Rockström called our impact on

the planet the 'Quadruple Squeeze,' and it consists of demographic growth requirements, the global anthropogenic climate crisis, a global ecosystem crisis and a surprise in ecosystem change (Rockström 2010). In his TED Talk, he proposed the nine planetary boundaries as a safe operating space for humanity as a response to the unquestionable damage we have done to our planet, which led us to leave the Holocene behind and enter the new geological era, the Anthropocene. He suggested that transformative change is possible if all countries start moving simultaneously in the same direction and collaborating on a global level. His idea of transformation depends heavily on investment and advanced technologies, and that feeding the growing population of 9 billion people requires advances in agricultural technologies. As a solution, he offered the safe space bound by the 9 planetary boundaries which will make human life sustainable for operation. Wolfgang Lucht agrees with Rockström, referring to his work during the keynote speech. Yet Lucht insisted on the fact that in addition to these boundaries, social needs must be fulfilled as well. What was intriguing during his presentation is his critical mindset, since he ended up questioning the very existence of the green zone, the safe space that exists between a social foundation and an ecological ceiling, a zone that other scientists have been forming theoretically. What was even more provocative was when he questioned the success of a transformation into that green zone while maintaining ecological boundaries and meeting social needs, as well as the conditions under which this green zone exists if it exists in the first place.

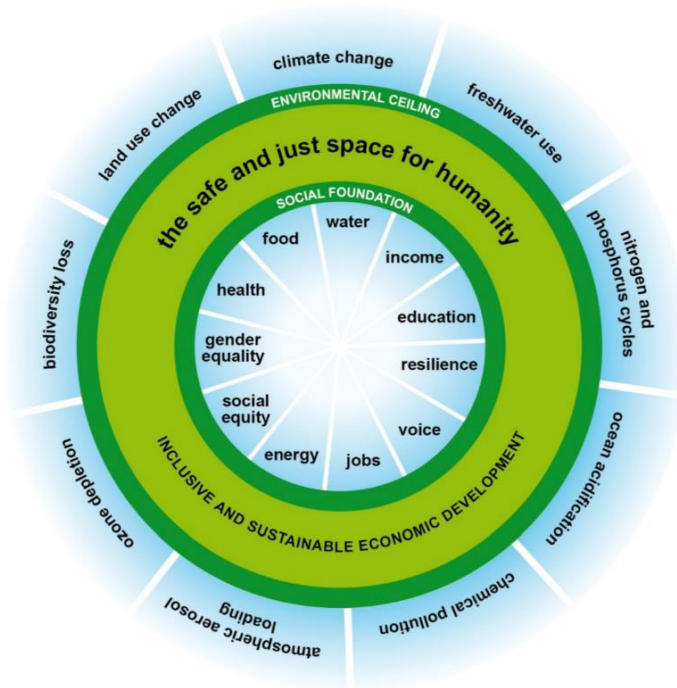


The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries.

Source: Raworth, Kate. Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-century Economist. London: Random House, 2017.

The most important thing that Lucht talked about during the last part of his presentation were the reasons why we care about who we are and where we came from. According to him, why should anyone care about astronomy, for instance, since it does not affect our lives, the same for caring about whether we descended from apes or not. But it changed everything, it began new ages and changed the way we perceive ourselves, thus understanding the Earth has the power to change the character of the upcoming civilisation. It is important because it is only then when we get to understand our position in the universe as well as our position on this planet.

Figure 4. A safe and just space for humanity to thrive in: a first illustration



The 9 Planetary Boundaries, Stockholm Resilience Center.

Source: Steffen et al. 2015.

Following the nine boundaries, Lucht presented Kate Raworth's illustration of a safe and just space for humanity to thrive in, one that was published in her 2012 discussion paper 'A Safe and Just Space for Humanity: Can we live within the doughnut?' (Raworth 2012). Her illustration (see image above) adds a social foundation that is complementary to the environmental ceiling required to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic development. Inclusiveness is a keyword for her because it leaves no room for marginalisation and exclusion. Understanding environmental justice in today's world in relation to the human domination of the Earth and its resources is inevitably linked to understanding the planet's boundaries that have been crossed by humankind. Humans have reached the domination level once they crossed their limits leaving sustainability behind. Driven by different factors, including but not limited to technology, industrial and agricultural advances and simply our continuous desire for more comfort and time-saving lifestyle, we left the just space for

humanity and entered a new kind of Anthropocene: one that is witnessing irreversible man-made natural disasters every year. Scientists are continuously working on providing solutions on how to slow down the rising temperatures, ongoing marine pollution and other harmful acts against nature.

Yet the fight is not merely against environmental degradation: it is about gender and social justice as well, whether we want to acknowledge it or not.

Of Gender: Biological and Social Biases in a Binary World

Exploring gender identities and how they interact with nature is important in understanding and shaping human behaviour and their interactions with the environment. Yet this exploration has long depended on gender binaries, where the two standards are either man or woman. Yet in this perception of a binary world, it has been the males who dominated not only the sciences and research fields that study and examine human-nonhuman-nature interactions but have reinforced divided and separatist theories rendering women unequal, different at most, to men. From deciding what a body with a uterus is and how such a body functions, all the way to politically and legally monitoring the freedom of these bodies (such as abortion laws, anti-transgender rights bills, etc.) began with male-initiated research. In the nineteenth century, J. Marion Sims, who is known as the father of modern gynaecology, used his white and male privilege to conduct experiments on enslaved black women in the United States. Although some may argue that the end justifies the means and that, in fact, these women volunteered for this research, their stories have never been recorded, rendering his narrative the only one available. In the contemporary context, there has been an overgeneralisation in medical research based mainly on male participants, with a total disregard of females. One example is the exclusion of pregnant and lactating people from the COVID-19 vaccine trials. In their 2021 paper 'Exclusion of pregnant and lactating women from COVID-19 vaccine trials: a missed opportunity,' the author writes that: 'The efficacy

and safety of the vaccines have been demonstrated in adults across a range of demographics, with the exception of those who are pregnant and lactating. This systematic exclusion—common in clinical trials—represents a missed opportunity to protect a group at risk of adverse outcomes in the setting of COVID-19 infection’ (Van Spall 2021).

Another germane historical example is the invention of the term ‘hysteria’ as a diagnosis. Hysteria was the first mental health issue attributed exclusively to women. This was supported by psychologist icons like Sigmund Freud. And ‘Until 1980, however, hysteria was a formally studied psychological disorder. Before its classification as a mental disorder, hysteria was considered a physical ailment, first described medically in 1880 by Jean-Martin Charcot’ (McVean 2017). The above are a couple of examples out of the many wrong steps humanity has taken towards providing factual results based on scientific research. This prevented people who were not born cisgender white males from having bodily autonomy for centuries. It is a historical truism in the West that men have always been considered the source of reliable information. This explains why even in women’s most intimate procedures, men had to be the leaders and experts in how to treat vagina-related medical problems. The same goes for our planet, since what Paul M. Pulé and Martin Hultman called “industrial breadwinner masculinity” (Pulé and Hultman 2019) dominates the world, extracting the planet’s resources is what supports men’s privileged social positions that they have been building for decades. Gaining control over fossil fuels and environmental spaces is what has been giving men power for centuries, thus, to protect their fragile masculinity, extractions and exploitations must go on. White male scientists have successfully gathered data over the past couple of decades, researching the causes and impacts of anthropogenic actions and measuring these impacts in accordance with pre-industrialisation. The results are indeed alarming. Vandana Shiva and the Kate Raworth realised that this scientific research will not affect any changes unless social and gender inequality are incorporated into climate activism

and environmental politics. The hard sciences are not the only areas of research that have witnessed an ongoing masculine domination.

The social sciences as well have had their share of revolving around men's perspectives and experiences. In his book *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today*, Steven Seidman writes that:

By making men's experiences and world view into the very nature of social experience and knowledge, sociology has contributed to erasing or devaluing women's distinctive experiences. By making a masculine sociology into general sociology, the discipline of sociology has served, perhaps unwittingly, as a vehicle for alienating women from their own lives. (Seidman 2016)

While Karla Elliott writes on engaging men in gender and sexual equality (Elliott 2015), men have, in fact, been far more than just engaged: they have been the determining factor and the measuring point of this equality. Man has long been the standard, the normative, the default. Equality is determined based on equalising non-male, non-heterosexual, non-white humans with the heterosexual white man. Yet why is it that men should 'engage' in ensuring equalities?

Moving towards a gendered and sexually equal world is integral to environmental and climate justice. Yet men can no longer be invited to be part of this transformation since this invitation implies the superiority of men as well as their demonisation in the eyes of feminists. This demonisation, however, must come to an end: The masculine is not always industrial, toxic, sexist, and heterosexual. The masculine is another facade of the feminine; it can be vulnerable, queer, caring, and progressive. And both the feminine and the masculine do not identify a person's gender or lack thereof. Thus, a queer postgender approach to environmental studies is needed to break from the resilient prejudices that have long defined masculinities and femininities. The overall conceptualisation of gender in relation to climate

studies is in urgent need of a fluid transmutation that fosters the dissolving of the dominant, inevitable gendering which essentialises the limitations and necessities of the feminine and masculine portions in every human being. One of the main reasons for this urgency is the necessity to nuance extant climate research data. I argue that this data is limited – hence false by default- since most of it (if not all of it) consulted and studied human experiences without allowing room for queer, transgender, and nonbinary voices. Women, especially in the Global South, became the farmers/food providers/carers/victims while men were either oppressors or victims as well. The focus has been too binary for too long, yet some researchers are breaking away from these stubborn binarisms.

An exemplary instance of this kind of research work has been produced by Ruolin E. Miao and Nicolette L. Cagle, who explored how gender and race impacted environmental identities. To conduct their study, they interviewed thirty undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds. The authors had a few interviewees that did not identify as either male or female. When providing results based on their interviews, the authors did not limit the results to male/female but added a third gender section labelled ‘other gender.’ The acknowledgment of having a gender diverse group and the inclusion of other people’s identities is what led to more explicit research outcomes. The table below details the demographic spread of their sample group.

Table 2. Sample demographics by subgroups.

Demographics	Subgroups	Gender	Race	SES
Gender	Male	–	8 (100%) racial minority	1 (12.5%) low SES, 7 (87.5%) high SES
	Female	–	5 (27.8%) racial majority, 13 (72.2%) racial minority	5 (27.8%) low SES, 13 (72.2%) high SES
	Other gender	–	1 (25%) racial majority, 3 (75%) racial minority	4 (100%) high SES
Race	Racial majority	5 (83.3%) female, 1 (16.7%) other gender	–	1 (16.7%) low SES, 5 (83.3%) high SES
	Racial majority	8 (33.3%) male, 13 (54.2%) female 3 (12.5%) other gender	–	6 (25%) low SES, 18 (75%) high SES
	Other gender	–	–	–
SES	Low SES	6 (85.7%) female, 1 (14.3%) male	1 (14.3%) racial majority, 6 (85.7%) racial minority	–
	High SES	7 (30.4%) male, 12 (52.2%) female, 4 (17.4%) other gender	5 (21.7%) racial majority, 18 (78.3%) racial minority	–

This, however, has not been done widely in the field of environmental research. This kind of awakening is edifying, and it is very likely that scientists, environmental historians and geographers will begin to question all binary data that they once worked with or developed. For their awakening to be followed by the production of amending research, they require a well-researched framework through which genders, sexualities, femininities, and masculinities intersect to enable a transformative praxis in any anthropofield.

Ecofeminists have focused on gender polarisation and have highlighted the experiences of women as the marginalised side of gender polarity. This means that experiences of people who do not identify as neither male nor female have been excluded. In *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, Warren discusses the issues that women of colour face in relation to environmental justice, and she introduces environmental racism as the oppressive system that discriminates against non-white people. Women from low socioeconomic backgrounds are more vulnerable than other less underprivileged ones. This may seem like a generalised statement, yet there are enough studies and figures produced by different organisations such as the United Nations or the Global Humanitarian Forum, researchers, and authors such as Susan Buckingham, Jane McAdam and Rachel Masika, that prove that females are certainly

more affected. During times of natural disasters, 80 percent of people displaced by climate change are women, according to official UN figures (Odedra 2019).

In the case of floods, for instance, it is easy to understand why there are more female victims than male ones: women are rarely taught how to swim in the first place. As for the aftermath of floods, females end up migrating due to issues related to landownership because of the gender-biased laws. This patriarchal oppression that leads to the violation of basic human rights is the root of women's and oppressed communities' suffering that is often underrepresented.

Using socio-biology to explain gender roles and patriarchy has been used to convince humanity into accepting a hierarchical lifestyle without questioning it. Steven Goldberg used biological explanations to justify male dominance by assuming that this latter is rooted in physiological differences between humans with penises and humans with vaginas. Goldberg believed that patriarchy is inevitable, hence the explanation of the book titles *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* (1973) and *Why Men Rule: A Theory of Male Dominance* (1999), which speak for themselves. In *Why Men Rule: A Theory of Male Dominance*, Goldberg writes that: 'Few women have been ruined by men; female endurance survives. Many men, however, have been destroyed by women who did not understand, or did not care to understand, male fragility' (Goldberg 1999). The term 'male fragility' is repeated multiple times throughout the book. Goldberg's irritation with feminists and persistence to impose biological and social contrasts between men and women can be translated to his own, what I perceive as, fragile masculinity, which he could only protect by asserting the belief that women are nurturing and central to life as they give life and that men should protect them. Goldberg's hypothesis that justifies patriarchy is based on alleged biological sex differences. Goldberg places men as 'naturally' more assertive, competitive, made to rule etc. and women as 'rationally' subordinate (Goldberg 1973). His essentialised notions on dominant behaviour based on

sexual differences conclude that patriarchy is a universal and inevitable feature among humans. Goldberg's argument underscores a pervasive pattern across societies, wherein men predominantly occupy positions of authority and power, forming what she identifies as the first institution. Within this framework, male physiology tends to correlate with higher-status roles, potentially reflecting a link between gender and occupational hierarchy, which constitutes the second institution. The third aspect of Goldberg's argument pertains to societal expectations, where leadership, dominance, and control are often attributed to males across genders, reinforcing the cultural norm of male leadership and influence. In essence, Goldberg's thesis highlights the intertwined nature of these three institutions, collectively contributing to the perpetuation of male dominance and hierarchical structures in various societies.

The reason behind these institutions? Testosterone, he claimed, and he believed that unless societies intervene biologically to remove the hormone, then patriarchy will always be present. This biological male-biased reductionism uses different theories, such as selective pressure to analyse the reasons behind the choices made by females in terms of mating partners. Males were under a pressure-based selection on who gains more and who has control over the maximum of resources. Food and shelter were humanity's main concerns because their survival depended on eating instead of being eaten. In his earlier book, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy: Why the Biological Difference Between Men and Women Always Produces Male Domination*, Goldberg writes that:

Men have a 'superiority' in height and women are superior at singing the upper register. American society is superior to that of the Mbuti Pygmy in the ability to produce consumer goods, while Mbuti society is superior to American society in the ability to inculcate hunting skills in its members. (Goldberg 1973)

In his analysis here, Goldberg collapses race with gender. Goldberg involves a tribe in the Congo region to make an argument, while completely dismissing the fact that the slavery and Belgian colonialism are the reasons why this tribe, like many others, is still hunting instead having had its fair time to join the industrial revolution. Indeed, arguing that patriarchy has always been universal in all societies throughout human history may be debatable. Goldberg provided enough arguments to support his view of this inevitability he defends. However, in simple words, attributing power to men, who were only capable of acquiring and using this power because they pushed and reinforced domesticated roles on women, who in return ensured the survival of our species, is like claiming that a predominantly white country, that has been built by enslaved people, was going to be developed anyways because of white superiority. Thus, there is nothing biological about differences in brains between people with high levels of melanin and others with lower levels. Yet such a biological claim has been used to justify slavery. The same goes for binary claims arguing that women's brains are different from those of men. Our species is heading towards revolutionary gender transformations, which I discuss later in Chapter III. Such transformations will render arguments about alleged biological differences in sex and gender as weak as the arguments once made about black or indigenous people. We are living in a time when gathering food and hunting are no longer survival mechanisms, where humans have developed urban areas serving as protective shields from the wilderness, and where there is no need for mating at an early age thanks to the current human life expectancy. So, it is time to disregard whatever primitive reasons some people use to justify gender and racial inequalities.

We now inhabit different ecological, cultural, and demographic environments worldwide. Our survival as a species is perhaps not thanks to our strength but thanks to our evolutionary genetics and our abilities to adjust to change, with our biggest flaw remaining our inability to let go of our obsession with control and power, and our blind desire to make profit, which

will probably cause our extinction. Yet evolution, in combination with civilisation, has changed us drastically: we have developed new notions and definitions and learned how to redirect our feelings. Most humans understand love, affection, respect, jealousy, consent, solidarity, companionship, anxiety, depression, and many other terms that did not exist before. Our desire for well-being knows no limit yet is still gender-biased: if it serves women only, we might reconsider it, and it will certainly not be free of charge. If it serves men, then let's put condoms everywhere for free. The same goes for contraceptive justice, where bodies with uteruses are the only bodies expected to alter their hormones to prevent pregnancy. In many parts of the world, the burden of family planning falls heavily on women only. Yet women will still face criminal charges if they choose abortion in many countries.

Research reveals a reality of criminalised abortion that reinforces inequalities of gender, race/ethnicity, and class. And this analysis has found that:

The living conditions of the population in Europe are better at the expense of exploitation and the precarious living conditions of workers living in peripheral economies [...] African women aged fifteen to forty-nine represent 14 percent of women worldwide and 62 percent of all deaths caused by abortion complications. One of the causes of this data is the low access and consumption of contraceptive methods, which indicates the inequalities, and the humanitarian and civilization crisis [...] The inequalities operated by the capital system at the international level and its appropriations of patriarchy and racism are expressed in the sexual and reproductive life of women, deepening the dimension of oppression and exploitation over them. (Cisne, M., et al. 2018)

Women are, however, slowly, and steadily gaining power over their bodies. The contraceptive pill, for instance, was a significant milestone for the feminist movement, since it enabled women to enjoy sexual freedom without the fear of pregnancy. Other long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) were introduced to women such as intrauterine devices

(IUDs) and etonogestrel single-rod contraceptive implants. Yet the challenge of having these options exclusive to women is the financial burden they represent, as women are expected to take care of the costs, as well as the health complications, the risk of unwanted infertility, UDIs slipping out of the uterus and physical side effects such as nausea, heavy bleeding and headaches. In an article published in 2019 titled ‘Long-acting reversible contraception: A route to reproductive justice or injustice,’ the reproductive health of women is analysed by focusing on unintended pregnancies and long-acting reversible contraception. Among the disadvantages of LARCs is that insertion is uncomfortable and sometimes painful, particularly among nulliparous women (Foran, Butcher, Kovacs, Bateson and O’Connor 2018), and the most effective method of pain control has not yet been established (see review in *American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, May 2018, pp. e134–135). LARCs also cause side effects such as menstrual pain and bleeding, spotting, headaches, nausea, and mood changes. In addition, the high cost of LARCs (depending on insurance coverage) and the need to see a doctor to insert and remove the devices may be off-putting to some women, especially if they are planning to have a baby soon. LARCs also do not protect women against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), so that in circumstances in which protection is wanted, a condom or other barrier contraception needs to be used along with a LARC.

This limits the convenience of LARCs and adds to the cost of contraception if it is not paid by insurance. In addition, not all women can safely use LARCs, particularly those with a current pelvic infection or an STD, gynaecologic cancers, or other serious illnesses (Curtis and Peipert 2017). The questions that remain are why have societies worked so hard on eliminating testosterone from females and punished them if they had a higher level of this hormone?

If men were confident enough that this hormone is what is moulding human behaviour, why has it always been a stigma for women to have what are perceived as male traits such as body

hair or muscles or short hair? Why is there a continuous and increasing demand for women to be presented to the public as nothing but a figure of estrogen? Why are gender-neutral, nonbinary and or agender people still not recognised? On the other hand, why is essentialised masculinity threatened with the slightest femininity in men. And what happens to ‘women with moustaches and men without beards’ (Najmabadi 2005)?

It seems like essentialising male genitals as the necessary element to benefit from the status that comes with having high levels of testosterone is what is still preventing women from accepting their own natural testosterone production and is still the reason behind the violence generated against transgender people. Waxing, shaving, laser surgery, intensive diets makeup: some female-identifying people would do anything to hide the effects of what is presumed to belong to the class of male hormones. Women are made to feel frightened of the symptoms of having an excess of testosterone production: they are made to fear having a ‘deeper voice,’ ‘smaller breast size,’ ‘abnormal hair growth throughout the body’ and ‘infertility’ (Everlywell) and are offered solutions to decrease the levels of this hormone such as liquorice, green tea and spearmint. The growing number of such articles increases insecurity in both cisgender and transgender women who believe that they must present as feminine as possible in order to be accepted by society. Victims of an ideology that prohibits females from acquiring any male related features, millions spend their lives fixing what is not meant to be fixed in the first place. The social pressure to fit in the anything-but-manlike image distracts women from questioning the reason why they are behaving this way. Yet not all women are too passive not to think. Not all women want to be fertile. Not all women want to be hair-free. Not all women want soft voices. Not all women are ashamed of being androgynous; some love it. And not all people born with vaginas identify as females. Yet a vast majority of the ones who identify as women tend to comply because it is easier to be part of a complying group that does not raise any questions. It is easy to abide by the norms and

accept oppression as the only way of being, especially when a society is governed by religious bodies. Yet patriarchy still lingers among us, and achieving global egalitarianism seems to be more of a fantasy rather than a reasonable goal. To understand the genesis of patriarchy in a nonfictional, non-mythological setting, perhaps looking at the gatherer-hunter communities in primeval societies might give us a clearer view on how gender oppression became the norm.

Anthropologists such as Eleanor Burke Leacock firmly believe that primeval societies were not dominated by aggression and, thus, the male gender did not dominate the female one (Leacock 1983). Her argument is that cooperation was the key to survival instead of violent competition, since small groups needed the contribution of every member regardless of their gender. She believes that instead of competing and being aggressive towards each other, they were more concerned about protecting themselves from nature's forces.

Leacock writes that:

Failure to appreciate the structure of egalitarian relations renders more difficult the problem of unravelling the complex processes that initiated class and state formation. Ethnohistorical research indicates that in precolonial horticultural societies where egalitarianism still prevailed, women continued to function publicly in making economic and social decisions, often through councils that mediated their reciprocal relations with men. (Leacock 1978)

More recently, in *Identity and Gender in Hunting and Gathering Societies* (Keen and Yamada 2011), a collection of eight papers presented at the eighth conference on hunting and gathering societies (CHAGS 8), a thorough analysis of identity in hunter-gatherer communities is presented based on a few case studies from different countries such as India, Japan, Australia, Canada and Russia. The authors dig into the historical backgrounds of diverse communities, as well as their diverse cultural and religious conflicts with the aim of

studying the construction and change of identity over time. This volume centres on the important roles of gender politics in shaping identities. Part II, 'Gender and the Dynamics of Culture,' includes rich and gendered ethnographic materials about different ethnic groups. Takako Yamada's 'Gender and Cultural Revitalization movements among the Ainu' asserts that gender is socially and culturally constructed. Digging into the roots of notions on dominance, gender differences and binary oppositions all the way back to animal ethology resulted in her conclusion that gender opposition does not always lead to oppression, but it can contribute to society's survival. Her case study revolves around analysing the Ainu, the indigenous people of Japan.

She begins by examining the genders of their deities and how even in mythology, gender roles have always been present: According to Ainu myths, male deities go hunting and fishing, build good houses, cut down big trees to make dugout boats, and go trading abroad in their boats as Ainu men do. Female deities do all kinds of housework, such as preparing food and wine, fetching water and firewood, weaving mats, doing all kinds of needlework and collecting edible plants, just the same as Ainu women (Yamada 2001).

Having deities that perform gender roles in tune with mainstream, and often misogynistic, expectations and standards leads to the cultivation of an obedient community that abides by divine representations which are nothing but a perfect justification of gender oppositions. Yet what makes the Ainu's deities more interesting is that they also included deities that could only perform in pairs: A male one alongside a female one, symbolising 'the unity and harmony of male and female genders' (Yamada 2001).

Alexandre Akulov's research delves into the intricate dynamics of gender roles within the Ainu community, with a specific focus on the concept of gender conversion, which parallels contemporary discussions surrounding gender transitioning. His exploration, rooted in folklore narratives, raises fundamental questions about the historical acceptance and

normality of gender conversion practices among the Ainu people, particularly before the Edo period (1603 – 1867). It is noteworthy that prior to this period, gender conversion appeared to coexist within a broader framework of cultural and religious practices, with the Ainu community embracing a certain fluidity in gender roles.

However, as Akulov's research indicates, significant shifts occurred with the advent of male-dominated governing structures, epitomized by the establishment of a male elders' theocracy. This transformation marked a pivotal turning point where gender roles became more rigid and the traditional role of shamans, particularly those who had undergone gender conversion, was marginalized. Moreover, the separation of females from certain cult practices during this period further underscored the entrenchment of gender distinctions.

It is essential to emphasize that although distinct gender roles were evident within Ainu society, these roles did not necessarily translate into systemic oppression or domination prior to theocratic influences. Instead, there existed a sense of complementarity, where the diverse contributions of both men and women were valued within the community. Akulov's research sheds light on the nuanced historical evolution of gender dynamics among the Ainu, revealing how external factors and governance systems could significantly impact the perception and treatment of gender diversity within a culture.

There is a clear difference between what was expected from men and what was expected from women, yet complementarity was present instead of domination. And similar patterns of behaviour are apparent when we turn our attention to hunter gatherer communities, who are known to have operated on an egalitarian basis: Observations made of several contemporary societies of hunter-gatherers—the Aché of Paraguay, the Agta of the Philippines, the Ju/'hoansi of Botswana, Namibia and Angola and the Mbendjele of the Republic of Congo—thus show that women there live in groups that include a number of their own relations that is equivalent to those of men. Clearly, this means that a comparable number of men are living in

the group of their companion, as women in that of theirs (International Viewpoint 2015). Men in these societies did not command or exploit women's labour. They did not appropriate or control their produce, nor prevent their free movement. They exerted little or no control over women's bodies or those of their children, making no fetish of virginity or chastity, and making no demands of women's sexual exclusivity. The common stock of the group's knowledge is not reserved for men only, nor is female creativity repressed or denied. Today's 'civilized' sisters of these 'primitive' women could with some justice look wistfully at this substantial array of the basic rights of women (Miles 2001).

Crusades, jihad and wars switching polytheism to monotheism, or any other imposed systems by force either by bloodshed or modern manipulation, have mostly been led by men and make sure that domination replaces any kind of complicity or complementarity between the people of the conquered community. Thus, women end up marginalised and subdued, nonconforming people end up rejected and excluded or even executed and men end up with ultimate power. Just as gender-based violence is carried out by such patriarchal systems, sustainability comes to an end and is replaced by exploitation and unsustainable practices or simply acts of overexploitation of resources.

Of Minoritised Peoples: The Oppression of the Uyghurs

It may be widely assumed that patriarchy is solely targeting women. However, patriarchal systems are designed to oppress anyone that does not represent the ideal image of who is exercising the patriarchy in the first place.

For the sake of expanding ecofeminism's definitions of all sorts of patriarchy that renders humans and their environments vulnerable, it is important to look at patriarchal oppression of minoritized groups. I use the term 'minoritized' because these groups, despite being called 'minorities,' are in fact not minorities, but a group of people that were forced into such a box. Whether it's genocide, colonialism, or both, some communities have been assigned the

descriptive term ‘minority,’ which does not do them justice as this term implies that there was no anthropogenic intervention that led to their subordination. This subsection takes an example of a minoritized group in Central and East Asia to demonstrate the impact of patriarchy on a community. The intersectional lens of ecofeminism is what makes this latter stand out as an approach to analyse oppressive systems. Although there is a feminism in ‘ecofeminism,’ it is not focused on gender inequality only, but includes all kinds of oppressed groups such as racial minoritized groups. Even in the most marginalised communities, women are perceived as the biological reproducers of the ethnic group, while men are the defenders of the collective and have the dominant voices. In the following passages, I will look at the suffering of the Uyghurs as a nation to examine the impact of patriarchy and oppression on minorities and ethnic groups. My interest in the oppression of the Uyghurs started when I met Dolkun Isa in Budapest during the Tom Lantos Institute’s Global Minority Rights Summer School in July 2019. The Uyghurs’ Xinjiang or East Turkestan, a region officially known as Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR) is home to different ethnic populations. The Uyghurs represent the largest repressed Muslim Turkic-speaking minoritized community in China. Dolkun Isa is an Uyghur politician and activist, and he is currently the president of the World Uyghur Congress. As a German citizen and resident, his stories about living away from home were hard to forget. He started fighting for the rights of the Uyghurs at a very young age, which led him to being put under house arrest, expelled from university, and later sent into exile. Isa’s mother was sent to one of the concentration camps where she died, and he only found out about it around a year later, as there was no possible way of contacting her. He is declared a terrorist by the Chinese government, which protested when the Interpol removed him from their wanted alert. The terrorist accusations caused Dolkun to be denied entry to several countries, deportation, and numerous arrests. Dolkun told me about the different issues that the Uyghurs face, including illegal detainment,

discrimination, and other gross human rights violations. The Chinese concentration camps are rarely represented.

The Global Minorities Summer School is organised by the Tom Lantos Institute in Budapest, Hungary. I was invited to present my research on ecofeminism and its relevance to the rights of ethnic minorities. During the forum, I had the opportunity to attend plenary sessions and to have deep conversations with other presenters including Dolkun Isa, who inspired me to dedicate a section on the oppression of minorities in this work by the media and are the largest mass incarceration of a minoritized population in the world today. According to a press release on 25 March 2019, by the Uyghur American Association, the Uyghur Human Rights Project has identified at least 386 Uyghur intellectuals detained and disappeared since early 2017, victims of the massive campaign of ethno-religious repression carried out by the Chinese government in the Uyghur homeland (UAA 2019). The Chinese Communist party made sure that Uyghurs residing in East Turkestan are under sophisticated camera surveillance. It released drones that resemble birds to keep an eye on the citizens of the region. This program, called Dove, targets the Uyghurs in particular, though it has been operating in other provinces as well. According to Sigal Samuel, 'The drones have wings that flap so realistically they're difficult to distinguish from actual birds' (Samuel 2018).

Samuel continues by revealing that 'The area is now subject to a heightened level of surveillance, with authorities collecting DNA samples, fingerprints, iris scans, voice samples, and blood types from residents' (Samuel 2018).

The Chinese government is pursuing a campaign of ethnic cleansing by preventing the Uyghurs from practicing their language (Turkic), by imposing Chinese as a mandatory language and sending their children to Chinese schools, banning them from practicing their religious beliefs (Islam), and by forcing them to eat pork, for instance, knowing that Muslims cannot eat it.

Those who refuse are sent to the detention centres. An estimated one million Uyghurs are reportedly being held without trial in detention camps, where they are forced to memorise Communist Party propaganda, criticise their own previous religious behaviour and renounce Islam by eating pork and drinking alcohol (Samuel 2018). China bombards them with Communist propaganda, compelling them to speak Hanzu Chinese and preventing their women from procreating Uyghurs by forcing them to marry Chinese men. This last statement made me question the privilege enjoyed by women who live in conflict-free and democratic areas: the freedom of choosing their partners. Besides forcing Uyghur women to marry Chinese men, the Chinese government has been conducting mass sterilisation and forcing abortions as well. In a report written by Adrien Zenz and published in 2020 by The Jamestown Foundation, the author gave an example of such cases:

After her release from internment, Zumrat Dawut, a Uyghur woman from Urumqi, paid a fine for having had three instead of two children, and was offered free surgical sterilization (*Washington Post* 17 November, 2019).

Threatened with internment if she refused, Dawut submitted to the procedure. (Zenz 2020) Zenz continues by emphasising the decline in the Uyghurs' population growth, which fell by 84 percent in the two largest Uyghur prefectures between 2015 and 2018 (Zenz 2020). Mass sterilisation in the form of surgical and nonsurgical methods is being imposed on women to reduce the birth rates among the Muslim community. Bodily integrity and autonomy are being denied to the Uyghurs due to the Chinese government's continuous patriarchal control of bodies depriving them from making choices on pregnancy. The questions that remain are what comes first? Human rights or economic interest? The latter is what seems to be winning since no country has managed to address the atrocities committed by the Chinese government against the Muslim ethnic minorities. There is profit behind everything, even the oppression of ethnic groups. When a group of people are oppressed, it is only a matter of time until it can

no longer be silent, thus leading them to fight back, protest and even attack the oppressor. But in situations where the oppressor is the world's second-largest economy, the oppressed group is easily labelled as a terrorist one. As a result, the oppressor is most likely to receive international aid to counter what it claims to be violent extremism and terrorism. According to the white paper, a document published by The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China titled 'The Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism and Human Rights Protection in Xinjiang,' since 2014, 'Xinjiang has destroyed 1,588 violent and terrorist gangs, arrested 12,995 terrorists, seized 2,052 explosive devices, punished 30,645 people for 4,858 illegal religious activities, and confiscated 345,229 copies of illegal religious materials' (XINHUANET 2019). Throughout the paper, it is stated multiple times that Xinjiang 'has long been an inseparable part of Chinese territory' (XINHUANET 2019). The document, which stresses the fact that Xinjiang has always been a Chinese territory and that the Uyghurs do not come from Turkic descent, also claims that numerous terrorist attacks occurred in the region due to the combined influence of separatist and religious leaders. In analysing the oppression of the Uyghurs by the Chinese government we highlight the violation of human rights, cultural genocide and ethnic cleansing all originating from the Chinese patriarchal system that uses the threat of separatism as the justification for myriad atrocities. The purpose behind such a brief yet significant analysis is to shed light on the necessity for ecofeminism's intersectionality to be inclusive not only of decolonising approaches but pro-indigenous ones as well. Ecofeminism, especially in its early, Western-dominated forms, borrows from indigenous communities and their relationships with their lands. The aim is to redirect indigenous rights and indigenous research from mere tenets that ecofeminism once borrowed from, to using the field's intersectionality to study the intertwined social and environmental issues that indigenous communities face globally. The next section takes the reader from the harsh reality of what is currently happening in Xinjiang to a journey to explore patriarchy in a

deeper sense through the analysis of a fictional movie production. The purpose of the following analysis is to investigate patriarchy's genesis from another standpoint: religion. As seen in the former sections, religion or religious fanaticism may be contributing factors to why China is forcing an ongoing ethnic cleansing of the Uyghurs. The upcoming passages will focus on creationism, masculinities and femininities and Gaia theory.

***Mother!* An Ecofeminist Reading of the Weird and the Oppressive in Christian Cosmogony**

Expanding ecofeminist theory from analysing literary texts to interrogating other forms of media, such as film, is important considering that our world has witnessed a significant digital transition. Undergraduate or postgraduate students may be required at some stage in their studies to write analytical pieces on a movie or a TV show while adhering to a certain theme or framework. This subsection serves two important goals: The first one is to strengthen the patriarchal oppression argument by incorporating other elements such as religion that endorses and nurtures this patriarchy. The second one is to demonstrate, throughout the following passages, how the lens of ecofeminism can intersect with other lenses; in this case, I chose the eerie and the weird as well as Gaia theory considering their relevance to the movie, *Mother!* The latter is a 2017 American-made movie that links patriarchy to environmental degradation and focuses on the eroticisation of the planet. A recurring feature of responses to planetary degradation has been the avoidance or transfer of blame and responsibility. In this section, we will consider the creation myth in Abrahamic cosmogony as the reason behind our changing planet. How many times have we linked the oppressive patriarchal ideologies of Abrahamic religions to the destructive behavioural patterns of humankind towards other species and our biosphere? Religion has shaped and reshaped our relationship with nature and has been a contributing factor to the continuous metamorphosis of our ecological system. Our role within the universe varies depending on

how we view and position ourselves within it. Yet speculative fiction has challenged the self-centredness of some people and produced alternative visions of our relative (in)significance. But the hierarchical mindset that leads humans to favor themselves as species is perhaps the same one that created a gap between genders leading to dualistic hierarchies that strengthened the oppression of women, the enslavement of people by others and the exploitation of resources. Thus, to examine our interactions with each other and with our environment, an intersectional feminist ecological lens is required.

As we established, ecofeminism is a branch of feminism that looks at the connections between the oppression of women and vulnerable groups and the domination of nature. It acknowledges the diversity of the natural world and rejects the natural/unnatural dualism as well as the culture/nature one.

Ecofeminism is about the ability to see the intersections of sexism, racism, colourism, speciesism, homophobia, and anthropogenic environmental degradation and how these oppressive dominating structures are conceptually linked. It emerged in the 1970s as a movement through the activism of groups like the Chipko Andolan in India. Indigenous women who were affected the most by the rapid deforestation in the 1970s led this forest conservation movement and fought for the rights of the trees. Another example is the Green Belt Movement in Kenya. Founded by Wangari Maathai in 1977, this ecofeminist movement was a response to the needs of women in rural areas of Kenya who reported that water and food supplies were drying up and no longer secure. Ecofeminism emerged as a literary theory as well and was conceptualised thanks to French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne, who coined the term in her 1974 book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (in English *Feminism or Death*). This was then followed by academic work from writers like Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies, Ariel Salleh, Greta Gaard and others.

During the 1970s, The Gaia hypothesis came to life alongside ecofeminism. It was formulated by James Lovelock and codeveloped by the microbiologist Lynn Margulis.

This Gaia principle suggests that all organisms and their inorganic environments on the planet are closely integrated to form a single and self-regulating complex system to maintain the conditions for life on Earth. Yet, naming the planet after a Greek goddess means feminising it and highlighting its maternal attributes. Ecofeminist theorists take different approaches in their arguments about the feminisation of the planet. Mary Daly and Susan Griffin, for instance, encourage women to assert the differences between women and men by urging them to reclaim their natural connections to the Earth and to be proud of their intuition, nurturing and reproductive abilities and spirituality. Engendering the Earth as a mother in patriarchal culture has been a strategy adopted by researchers who approached the Gaia theory with a spiritual cultural ecofeminist lens. Similarly, to Daly and Griffin, some ecofeminists, like Irene Diamond, saw and validated these connections, resulting in the creation of a visible binary opposition: Female versus male.

Her ecofeminist visions are based on the woman/nature relationship, and in *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, Diamond fostered the idea that women's biology of cycles, procreation and lactation, makes them connected to Earth, therefore giving them a unique ability to commune with and to intuit nature. Other ecofeminists reject these essentialised features as they block the way of ecofeminism's potency. They refuse the notion of the feminine as an empowering principle because it categorises women as submissive, passive, and essentially feminine. Ecofeminism is intended to serve as an activist intersectional, ecological, and feminist framework that triggers critical thinking. Using this ecological feminist lens, this section will be accompanied by an analysis of the weird and eerie scenes and elements of the film *Mother!* It is important thus to know beforehand the difference between

the two concepts. According to Fisher, the eerie is not characterised by a ‘should not exist’ feature, but it is simply a failure caused by either absence of presence. The weird, nevertheless, has a sensation of wrongness and should simply not exist as it is an anomaly that does not belong where it is (Fisher 2017). *Mother!* is explored, as this analysis frames Abrahamic creationism as a weird cosmology, one that is full of anomalies that led to irreversible actions that impacted the planet’s self-regulation. It will examine the way it shaped the conceptions of the world as well as the inevitability of an apocalypse.

Within the framework of ecofeminism, gender oppression and its connection to the domination of nature will be used to showcase the impacts of oppressive dualistic structures and binary oppositions.

About the Director and the Movie *Mother!*

Mother! is directed by Darren Aronofsky. Born in Brooklyn, New York, the American screenwriter, and filmmaker is known for the surreal elements of his productions. His work is marked with disturbing touches and controversial ideas After directing *Pi* (1998), *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), *Black Swan* (2010) and *Noah* (2014), he perplexed millions of viewers with his 2017 masterpiece *Mother!* This movie was released three years after *Noah*, and both movies have quite a few things in common. Firstly, both productions are based on Aronofsky’s interpretation and representation of Biblical tales.

In an interview shared by *The Atlantic* (2014), Aronofsky revealed that the story of Noah has impacted him ever since he was a child. He thought about a scenario where it is possible that he would not be one of the good ones to get on the boat and therefore recognised that there’s wickedness in all of us.

Another similarity between the two movies is Aronofsky’s environmentalism. Even though both movies derive from the Bible, the director has intentionally explored and criticised our relationship with nature. In the same interview, he said that ‘every seventh year we’re

supposed to give the land a rest. When's the last time our land has gotten a rest? We're way overdue for that jubilee.

And I think that's what I want. That's why I made the film' (Falsanki 2014). Weird cinema has been a medium for filmmakers to portray their conceptions of weird fiction and the supernatural. For Aronofsky, it allowed him to use the supernatural to reshape our perceptions of the natural, the divine and, in *Mother!*, our gender-based oppressive dynamics. Although weird fiction implies a certain instability through an openness to the outside, *Mother!*, as much as it is about instability, it is about an openness to the inside. Aronofsky's weird narrative takes the house as the space that reflects the universe but instead of outside perspectives, he takes the viewer on a journey to the depth of the space within. The movie is a climate change parable that aims to evoke critical feminist sympathies in its audience. Presented as an allegory about the Biblical God and Mother Earth, it portrays the way humans have been engaging in destroying their only habitat. The American psychological thriller takes the viewer on a journey towards an apocalypse, resulting from continuous unwanted destructive invasions of human beings. Full of disturbing and surreal scenes, the movie is not easy to watch as it takes the watcher on a rollercoaster ride of eerie events. The hermeneutics of the weird elements in the movie depend on the viewer's sense of belonging and understanding of the natural. As mentioned briefly earlier, Mark Fisher's work has expanded the weird and the eerie to a whole new level. He separated the two concepts from horror and science fiction, and by transforming them into a literary theory, he gave both the recognition they deserve. His book *The Weird and The Eerie* (2016) represents a guide to the terrain of weird fiction and eerie material. He believes that the two modes are 'constituted by a failure of absence or a failure of presence' (Fisher 2016) and that both 'allow us to see the inside from the perspective of the outside' (Fisher 2016). In other words, the weird should be a reminder of present

elements that are too strange and unfit to exist, while the eerie should evoke the thought of the absence of a certain element or being that led to a speculation.

The story in a nutshell

The movie follows the story of a couple. Veronica is the wife and is played by Jennifer Lawrence and her husband, referred to as Him, is played by Javier Bardem. The main character appears first: Jennifer Lawrence as Veronica. She calls 'baby' and leaves the bed and heads out to the front door of the house looking for Him. Barefoot, she takes a few steps outside and looks around her. There is nothing but trees, grass, and the sound of birds. It is heaven. It is Eden. A few seconds into staring at her surroundings, Him shows up behind her, and the viewer learns that they are the only ones living in the house. The first two guests who come to the house uninvited are played by Michelle Pfeiffer and Ed Harris, and they appear to represent Adam and Eve. They have two sons who join them later in the house and fight until one of them kills the other. This murder was the reason behind the human invasion of the house, which eventually led humanity to its end after fights, mass murders and wars. *Him* is a writer who has writer's block and is only inspired to write once Veronica is pregnant. The piece he writes gains fame and popularity, with the result that people invade the house and destroy it, kill the baby and beat Veronica until she sets the house on fire and dies, killing everyone in it, except Him, who does not seem to be mortal. Him's divine masculinities and Veronica's earthly femininities: Before diving into the masculinities and the femininities of the main characters, it is important to highlight the loneliness of *Him* and his wife. The absence of family and friends in their lives is what triggers feelings of the eerie in the viewer. Throughout the movie, which spans a period of at least ten months, several events occur that would have normally been a reason to call one's mother, father or any close family member. Starting with the first intrusion of the surgeon and his family, to Veronica's pregnancy, it does not seem like she has another person to talk to when she is in situations of distress or

joy. As the story begins, it is hard not to notice Him's self-absorption and obsession with his (in)ability to create another piece of literature. Along with his egocentrism manifests a toxic misogynist behaviour that he exercises on his wife. Aronofsky presents this oppressive dynamic by creating multiple scenes where Him ignores Veronica's needs and does not consult with her before making any decision, such as inviting people over the house continuously. He also expects her to take care of his guests, care for him and his needs, fix his house and bear his child. Veronica is always dressed in white or gray-ish colors and is always in a pure state of beauty. She does not wear any makeup, does not use any bras as her breast is visible through her clothes in multiple scenes and has no sexual energy. To Him, Veronica is the pure nurturing reproductive figure that he has control over. Her character is a strong argument why the feminine should not be essentialised nor assigned to women and the Earth. Although seen by some as empowerment, it becomes quite the opposite when it is expected. Veronica's attributes that are linked to the natural and the feminine are what made it easy for *Him* to subdue her and neglect her well-being. Reimagining the movie with a more masculine wife or a woman that had no interest in reproducing nor providing care for her partner would have led to a different ending.

Nevertheless, Aronofsky made sure that Veronica is presented with as many feminine attributes as possible. From her body shape, her facial traits, her cooking and nurturing nature, to the way she speaks, Veronica is the definition of an essentialised female identity. Her compliance with the assumptions of what she needs to be to please Him is about the dangers of essentialism.

This pervasive bias confirms the belief that people are not the same and are to be categorised based on a set of classifications such as race and gender. The belief that there are true forms of essences that are ahistorical, biologically inherent, innate, and unchanging is what is agreed upon by essentialists. For instance, the assumption that females, by virtue of their

biology and their potential as future potential child-bearers, are meant to mate with males only reinforces essentialised expectations of women. The essentialist expectations of what a female is meant to be and should provide are the same essentialised expectations of the planet when it is perceived as that feminine entity with an unlimited capacity to provide, nurture, heal and reproduce.

***Mother!* and the Gaia hypothesis:**

In climate science, it is acknowledged that the planet experiences cycles of cooling and warming that last approximately 100,000 years each. Over the course of each cycle, temperatures have fallen and then risen. These colossal comings and goings of climate oscillations characterized by extreme heat waves or glacial ages recur across the deep history of our planet. (Abe-Ouchi et al. 2013) The movie opens with a scene that may be Aronofsky's way of portraying the beginning of a new cycle. Veronica is in flames that are burning her flesh and hair, but she is standing still, oblivious to the fire. We learn later that Veronica has been restoring the house after it was destroyed in a fire. This could be a representation of the end of a glacial age and the beginning of a life-sustaining cycle. The Gaia hypothesis speculates that the Earth's surface is maintained in a habitable state thanks to its self-regulating mechanisms.

Although Lovelock has received quite a few critiques about this postulation, Aronofsky uses the notion of self-regulation and Earth's repeated recovery from multiple perturbations to prove that the planet always finds a way to bring life on Earth after every cycle. Very early in the movie, there is a scene where Veronica is painting the wall. Yet See James W. Krichner's 'The Gaia Hypothesis: Conjectures and Refutations' (2003) and Tyler Volk's 'Real Concerns, False Gods' (2006). She stops for a moment and puts her hands on it and has a vision where she sees a baby in a womb and can hear its heartbeat.

She opens her eyes but does not seem shocked. This is the first scene that exhibits Veronica's weird interactions with the house. The weirdness in this moment manifests in Veronica's attitude that normalises an unusual connection to her house, making this latter more than just concrete walls but a living entity. Her familiarity with such uncanny events is what tells the viewer from the beginning that this movie is not going to be plainly realistic. She adds a yellowish potion to the paint and tries painting again. She seems to like the wall better. Looking at this scene with Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis in mind, it is hard not to see that Veronica is self-regulating her home as we can see throughout the movie that her well-being as well as her discomfort are synchronised with the state of the house. This serves as a reminder to the viewer that life on Earth is connected to the biosphere since the survival of all living species depend on a regulated atmosphere. The Gaia hypothesis manifests in the movie as it shows the self-regulation of Veronica through her continuous use of the yellow potion. The golden substance that she uses every time she feels unwell is essential to her Gaian self-regulatory system. Questions have arisen about what the yellow potion is? A few critics came up with different theories ranging from love to contraception, to the sun. Yet looking at this from an ecological perspective, the yellow potion could represent sulphur.

Both substances are yellow, and sulphur is an essential macronutrient that plays a vital role in the regulation of plant growth and development, just like the potion is essential for Veronica to keep living and growing in the house. The sulphur is an essential element for her healing every time she needs to recover from an intrusion or any anthropogenic action that disturbs her well-being. The reflection of the Gaia hypothesis in Aronofsky's movie leads to viewing the planet as the obedient caregiver that does not know how to say 'no.' Veronica is the nurturing caring person that keeps offering all she has to maintain and repair the damaged parts of the house, care for the husband and eventually bear his child and care for the guests until she can no longer endure their destructive presence. This feminisation results in

anthropocentric perceptions of the planet as a feminised womb-bearing entity whose mere role is serving humankind. Therefore, Lovelock's choice of naming the hypothesis after a Greek goddess might not be the most favourable nomination from the perspective of radical ecofeminists. Aronofsky acknowledges the historic cycles that the planet has been through, and this is visible with the first thing the camera focuses on: the crystal stone. Indeed, in many interpretations, this stone is seen as the forbidden fruit. Yet looking at the geology of diamonds, these precious stones are created on Earth's mantle and take more than three billion years to form if given the right high pressure and temperature. This is exactly what *Him* has given to Veronica until she turned to ashes at the end of the movie and her heart transformed to a diamond. What we know about diamonds is that their history is far from being ethical, and their mining and extraction are far from being sustainable. Earth is thus shown to be a resource instead of the source of life itself.

Throughout the show, the couple is being told multiple times that the crystal stone is not to be touched and that Him's office is not to be entered without him, the surgeon and his wife do not listen and end up breaking the crystal.

The couple's fascination with the stone and their inability to resist touching it evokes the viewer's awareness of original sin. The Biblical, Quranic and Hebrew narratives about the fall from Eden all agree on the same misogynist perennialism: It was Eve's fault. Crucially, almost half of the world's population follows an Abrahamic religion, therefore blindly accepting the gender bias in the creation narrative. Aronofsky provokes the critical faculties of the audience by re-creating the story in a modern-day setting; the movie makes them question that perhaps the weirdest bond that helped these religions survive is the patriarchal power that divided people into tempter and tempted, blaming humanity's suffering on an entire gender. Aronofsky encourages the viewer to review the relationship religion has with the sense of entitlement felt and exhibited by humans in their exploitation of the Earth.

The idea of human exceptionalism has deep roots in the multiple religious beliefs that humans have adopted for centuries. Islam, for instance, highlights the fact that humans are God's noblest creation and are blessed with divine vice-regency over the Earth. In Aronofsky's movie, human exceptionalism manifests in the ways that the humans misuse, exploit and eventually destroy the house and Veronica. For quite a long time, the natural environment has been perceived as wild and in need of domination and exploitation because of the resources it has to offer to humankind such as the diverse set of resources that can be extracted. Equally, the same features given to nature are attributed to females, since both can reproduce and to nurture. The petrifying result of these attributions is the classification of women at the bottom of the human hierarchical pyramid alongside nature.

The creation of such a pyramid is itself a result of patriarchal desires for maintaining power positions. Therefore, women face the same oppressive treatment as that which is considered wild and primitive: control, domination, and exploitation. The Apocalypse: The final part of the movie is where the weirdest scenes play out. In one scene after another, the sense that a traumatic ending is coming is hinted, but the apocalypse did not happen overnight. Humanity's time on Earth has continuously altered the planet and disrupted its ecological systems. Their intrusion is the reason why its planetary boundaries have been crossed, challenging its regulatory system. In the movie, the first visitor is the surgeon. As soon as Him learns that the surgeon is a fan of his writing and that he did not come to the house by accident, as he initially claimed, he invites him to spend the night and develops a weird fascination with him that is beyond normal. The relationship that Him develops with the first man, his wife and, later, everyone else they bring to the house is the major reason behind the apocalyptic ending of the movie. Him did not have the ability to ask anyone to leave, no matter how grave the damage they caused, because, as viewers can tell, his need to be worshiped is stronger than his wife's well-being. The eeriness of the house manifests in its

unusual basement. As Fisher links the eerie to agency and wants the reader to question whether there is agency at all, viewers only grasp an understanding of what kind of agency controls the basement at the end of the film. Unlike the rest of the rooms, the basement is a space that Veronica has not touched or repaired despite it being the gloomiest part of the house, which eventually led to the start of the fire that destroyed it. The first scene where viewers are introduced to the basement is when Veronica goes to retrieve linen for the surgeon. It is the first time where the uncanny relationship that she has with that environment is revealed. The scene shows that she hears a soft rumble, sees the wall tremble, causing a loud thud, and notices that the fire has lit on its own in the oven. Despite the alarming scenes that should have frightened her, Veronica seems to be familiar with the weird liveliness of the house. Another basement scene is when Veronica notices the bloody spot on the floor that keeps appearing consistently throughout the movie. Out of curiosity to unravel what the spot is, she goes to the basement and turns the light on. The light bulb explodes, shattering blood all over the basement. She follows the blood trail and finds a metal door, opens it and sees a frog that scares her. Another scene in the movie that evokes the beginning of the end is the controversial bathroom scene. After the surgeon's bleeding rib incident, it is followed by a scene where Veronica must make sense of what is to come. The scene shows the bathroom floor full of bloody tissues that she grabs and flushes down the toilet. It is important to note that this toilet is the same one that Ed Harris used to puke the night before while his rib was wounded and Him was assisting him. It is this scene that tells Veronica that what she saw the night before was not going to be followed by anything good. The toilet gets clogged, and she starts unclogging it using a plunger. She then sees a fleshy piece showing up and when she looks closer, the piece starts bleeding and gets flushed in a second. Some critics have interpreted this disturbing bloody piece as the rib that Him took from Adam to create Eve the night before. Yet his fleshy piece can also be seen as a foetus that tells Veronica that more

humans are on their way. This scene is alarming, as when Veronica's instinct kicks in and her inner well-being is disrupted it is followed by blood. Hereby Aronofsky suggests from the beginning that Veronica's discomfort is not without consequences.

The film impresses the fact that Him could not accept the first humans leaving him, even though they broke the object most precious to him; he, thus, revealed his weakness which led to the destruction of the house, humanity and eventually his wife. Although Veronica did not hesitate to ask the couple to leave after the crystal incident, Him could not handle the thought of not being around them. He was ready to forgive everything if he retained worshipping apostles in the house. Giving them permission to remain quickly escalates into permission to unlimited invitees who keep destroying everything that Veronica has been repairing. From stealing food and decorations to breaking the house furniture, the destructive behaviour of the human was continuously justified by Him's permission and is a direct result of his open invitation and unlimited forgiveness. The house gets chaotic, driving Veronica crazy and testing her boundaries. She touches the wooden wall and connects to the house again, she feels the heartbeat, but the heart is burning and turning into ashes. This weird scene is a reminder of how strong the bond is between Veronica and her home. It is evident that the deterioration of the house is directly linked to her own.

Even though what he allowed to happen in the house came at the expense of Veronica's health, his expectations of her to keep up with his obsession with being worshiped came to an end when her baby was in danger. Veronica never opted for leaving the house, no matter how violent or chaotic it became. She kept trying to fix what everyone has been destroying and kept asking them to stop ruining her home. Yet not everyone was attacking the house, with a few people trying to paint the walls as a recognition of Him and Veronica's hospitality and generosity. Yet it is the moment when Veronica felt that she was about to give birth that she realised that her only way of surviving the chaos and the violence was to leave the house.

Unfortunately, Him would not allow her because, as we have clearly understood by now, he has some deep abandonment issues, and he cannot let anyone go. The weirdness in the movie is heightened significantly in the scene that depicts the baby's death. After Veronica has given birth to her baby, the cult environment in the house leads all the worshipping humans to adapt the biblical eating of the flesh and blood of the Messiah. Him manages to take her baby away from her and offers it to all his followers who end up dismembering the child and eating pieces of him. This scene is the most disturbing, representing the pain and helplessness of Veronica as a mother and a wife. Losing her new-born was the drop that spilled her glass resulting in her setting the house on fire killing everyone in it. The final scene confirms any doubts that the viewers might have had for almost two hours: Him is indeed an immortal deity whose only interest has always been what Veronica had to offer. By carrying her completely burned body to his office, he does not seem to be mourning her inevitable loss. On the contrary, the final weird scene happens when he manages to take her heart out of her body and transforms it to the exact same crystal that the couple destroyed at the beginning. The ending of the movie shows how irrelevant Veronica is to *Him*. He cares more about his mission to create humans who will follow him, while Veronica is disposable as viewers see another woman that resembles her waking up in his bed. The movie is indeed open to a host of interpretations. Aronofsky's use of religion, hints from the Gaia theory, and gender norms in this cinematic allegory is what makes this film a resonant text for ecofeminist readings. This subchapter examined the origins of humankind's sense of entitlement to exploit and to destroy the planet by analysing the idea that God is on their side and wants them to share the resources and exploit nature as they please. By highlighting the gender aspects of the story and how the feminisation of the planet is indeed in the way of ecofeminism's potency, this analysis invites further examinations of apocalyptic movies that fall in the category of

Mother! and seeks further answers regarding the intersections of gender oppression, religious fatalism, and environmental deterioration.

Women's Resistance: The Beginning of a New Movement

Ni la tierra ni las mujeres somos territorios de conquista. – Mujeres Creando

I looked at the genesis of patriarchy by taking Hesiod's cosmogony as an example in order to understand how humans, even millennia ago, had long been under the domination of patriarchal thinking. Males have always been the figures of authority and women the subjects of subordination. Gendered hierarchies ensured that the relationship between maleness and femaleness is oppressively dualistic. For some, it is quite tempting to assume that this is the natural state of affairs: it takes the male guilt away and makes women feel better about their past and their ongoing acceptance of oppression. The following section will focus on ecological feminist resistance, both in activist movements as well as in academia. Specifically, I address the rise of activist movements and environmental writings since the 1970s. The first part of our discussion introduces the 1970s as a particularly impactful decade in the growth of this field of thought, with a focus on the multiple events and publications that resulted in the genesis of a different wave of environmentalism.

The second part of our discussion draws attention to a Bolivian organisation called Mujeres Creando. The reason for choosing this NGO as the focus is because it furthers our argument's interest in thinkers and movements that have made advances in queering ecofeminism. The organisation in question was founded by lesbian Bolivian women who have been resisting their government's oppression of their bodies, their ethnicities as indigenous people and their country's resources. Their work represents the perfect example of what queer intersectional ecofeminist activism looks like in the real world. Women's resistance is then discussed in an academic setting where ecocriticism is put under the spotlight. Ecocriticism has become a

popular and effective mode of literary and cultural analysis within mainstream academia; however, it was not gendered until ecofeminism stepped in to fill in the gender-blindness gaps evident in the field of ecocriticism. And finally, this section of our discussion will conclude with a review of what is needed in terms of increased feminist awareness in environmental thought and activism.

The 1970s: She Has Had Enough

Intimate partner violence, sexual violence, female genital mutilation, femicide, human trafficking and harassment are just a few examples of the threats and experiences historically endured by women across all global communities.

Nevertheless, environmental violence against women, especially women of colour, deserves to be paid special attention. Due to our planet's current climatic metamorphosis, which is threatening the very existence of all living species, the United Nations has not stopped acting upon and raising awareness about the multiple issues revolving around climate change. What is worth noting is that it pushed the impact of this climate change on women to the forefront and highlighted the importance of incorporating gender perspectives in climate action. The UN's Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change fact sheet states that: 'Women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than men—primarily as they constitute the majority of the world's poor and are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change' (Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change n.d.).

The factors associated with violence against women are often labelled as societal, communal, or familial. These include several issues such as poverty, gender roles, polygamy, marital dissatisfaction, and low levels of education.

Nevertheless, the connection between these factors and women's subjugation have rarely been discussed or studied as potentially originating from a patriarchal capitalist system that is on an ongoing mission to destroy humanity's only habitat. Yet starting in the 1970s, an

environmentalist-informed critical approach to these issues began to take shape. Scientists, thinkers, and authors started publishing progressive works, leading to an explosion of environmentalism which has manifested in academic works as well as in civic engagement and activism. In 1962, the American marine biologist and ecologist Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, in which she exposed the impacts of the use of pesticides. In 1965, she published *The Sense of Wonder*, a book that explores the human-nature relationship and highlights the importance of teaching children how to have appreciative encounters with their environment.

Thanks to her work as a conservationist, she is recognised as the mother of modern environmentalism. Similarly, Canadian scientist and academic William Leiss, explored the culture versus nature dilemma in his book *The Domination of Nature*, which was initially published in 1972. He focused on tracing the roots of man-made environmental degradation, as well as the social consequences of the human subjugation of nature. Simultaneously, in the 1970s, the field of environmental ethics also began to emerge as an academic discipline questioning human-nature relationships. This area of environmental philosophy deals with opposing environmental perceptions, considering whether humans being granted dominion over nature or not is still a problematic topic. Environmental ethics questioned human chauvinism, Western domination and, most importantly, anthropocentrism. John Muir for instance is among the pioneers in the environmental ethics field. Muir believed that nature, as sacred and divine as it is, is fundamental to human wholeness and devoted a majority of his work to exploring the human-nature relationships. Famous for his devotion to the creation and preservation of Yosemite National Park in California, Muir became known for inspiring the rise of wilderness advocates thanks to his conservationism work and preservation ethic. 'Muir was instrumental in the formation of several other National Parks, including Sequoia and Grand Canyon. He soon co-founded the Sierra Club with the goal of furthering

preservation and filling in the gaps left by government conservation work' (Santa Clara University 2017).

On 22 April 1970, Gaylord Nelson founded Earth Day. Twenty million Americans took to the streets, parks, and auditoriums to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment in massive coast-to-coast rallies. Thousands of colleges and universities organised protests the deterioration of the environment. Groups that had been fighting against oil spills, polluting factories and power plants, raw sewage, toxic dumps, pesticides, freeways, the loss of wilderness and the extinction of wildlife suddenly realised they shared common values. Yet despite such publications and ongoing research, more resistance is needed by the most affected: women, LGBTQ+ people and other marginalised or minoritized communities.

A shift from mere environmentalism to a gender-conscious intersectional environmentalism may not seem feasible or necessary, especially by environmentalists who do not incorporate feminist and queer theories as well as intersectionality in their work.

Whether it is caused by natural disasters, colonisation, the exploitation of natural resources, or mining activities, there is a remarkable, unequal and sometimes limited access to resources for people who highly depend on it for a living. They are faced with challenges when it comes to securing water, food, or heating fuels and end up migrating, if they can, in numerous cases, to search for lands that would respond to their needs. Therefore, it is the indigenous people who have undergone and are still facing systematic exclusion, discrimination and marginalisation.

Bolivia's Mujeres Creando: She is Not a Mala Sombra!

Women have been resisting patriarchal extractivism and environmental degradation all over the world, especially in countries where multiple kinds of oppression intersect, and Bolivia is an example of such a country. If we look, for instance, at the country's mining industry and the constitution that was adopted in 2009, we notice that the management of

mining activities in the country has not improved despite the political changes. The mining activities began in the country centuries ago. The drawing of Potosí mines by Pedro Cieza de León shows these mines date back to 1553 and reflect the imprint of Spanish colonisers who forced thousands of indigenous people to work in extracting silver. Yet even though the country gained its independence from the Spanish two centuries ago, the unsustainable exploitation of the mineral wealth is still an ongoing issue impacting both Bolivians and their environment.

In the constitution, article 369 from chapter IV states that: 'The private mining industry and cooperative companies shall be recognized as productive actors of the state mining industry' and that 'The direction of the mining and metallurgy policy is the responsibility of the State, as well as the stimulation, promotion and control of mining activity.' While in article 370 from the same chapter, it is stated that 'The State shall promote and strengthen cooperative mines so that they contribute to the social and economic development of the country,' and other sections imply that any contractors should satisfy the country's economic interest otherwise their contract would be dissolved (Bolivia's Constitution of 2009). According to this constitution, the Bolivian government persists in expanding the mining industry by considering it an important factor for the country's economic development. As much as this document represents advocacy for the rights of the indigenous people by recognising their entitlement to land ownership, autonomy and self-governance and recognises the different tribes and languages, it has, in fact, neglected how they are impacted by the mining industry. Lake Poopó is a saltwater lake that dates back to the superior Pleistocene age, and it was Bolivia's second-biggest lake before it completely dried up. The social and economic impacts of this disaster on the indigenous people have not been taken seriously. According to the *New York Times* collections on climate refugees, 'The Lake was their primary food source and their income-generator. It was also the basis of their religion and the inspiration of names for

their babies' (Climate Refugees: How Global Change Is Displacing Millions n.d.). Furthermore, a study on the environmental hazards of this industry on the lake, indicates that there have been daily charges 'of the suspended solids and dissolved heavy metals' (Navarro Torres et al. 2012), which led to its dreadful degradation. Cerro Rico, known as the 'mountain that eats men alive,' has a drastic history of slavery and exploitation. It is estimated that millions of enslaved people died while working in the mines of Cerro Rico (Jenkins 2009), making this mountain a living example of the horrors of capitalist-driven activities.

Up until today, workers in the mine are still dying either directly due to the hard-working conditions or due to lung diseases. When men are no longer able to provide for their families, women are forced to replace them in the mines. Facing superstitious beliefs that female presence brings bad luck, women fought to defy these ideas because mining tin was their only way of making money to survive. For the miners, women are *banco ñawi*, a synonym to *mala sombra*, which translates to bad shadow (Absi 2002). Thus, entering the mining industry, which itself is a forced choice and perhaps the only option to make a living, was not an easy path for Bolivian women. Yet these women have always been aware of how environmental change impacts them not only as Bolivian citizens, but also as queer women. A piece of graffiti that became famous in Bolivia says: 'Evo, your consultation insults all the people.' This slogan was written by the feminist network Mujeres Creando, an anarcho-feminist group of women who have been using street art to express their political views in a creative way for decades. Opposing the patriarchal views of their homophobic president, who claimed that 'the presence of homosexual men around the world was a consequence of eating genetically modified chicken' (Gaard 2017), they refused to be silenced and rebelled against the system. They have long been fighting social injustice and opposing machismo, anti-gay prejudice, and neoliberalism. This group, which came to life in 1992, does not focus merely on issues

related to women, instead, it is concerned with racism, dictatorship, prostitution, the marginalisation of the indigenous and the subordination of women's bodies. They organise several marches and protests throughout the year to stand against all kinds of oppression. In 2011, when Evo Morales, the socialist president who governed Bolivia from 2006 until 2019, decided to open up Bolivia's national parks (which are considered ecological reserves) to oil and gas extraction and wanted to build a highway through the Isiboro Sécore National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS) national park, indigenous people did not remain quiet. Mujeres Creando joined the marches and collaborated with the TIPNIS protesters. During their decades of activism, Mujeres Creando have articulated slogans such as 'You cannot decolonize without depatriarchalizing' and 'I don't want to be queen, I don't want to be magnificent, I want to be free and commoner.' Likewise, they have turned to street activism to stand against neoliberal, patriarchal and colonial capitalism. This form of ecofeminist active advocacy requires the attention of academic criticism. Mujeres Creando may not have pursued academic publications, nor have they reached the English-speaking world with their ideologies and theories, yet their dynamic sociocultural interventions and mobilisations bring new insights for researchers. Mujeres Creando is therefore worthy of recognition as a pioneering ecofeminist activist group that brought intersectionality to life by seeing the implications of race, gender and sexuality in environmental activism.

Ecocriticism: From Gender-Blindness to Ecological Feminism

Ecocriticism, or ecological criticism, is an ecologically oriented criticism that emerged in the late 1970s and is based on the premise that human culture and the physical world are interconnected. It focuses on analysing the human-nature relationships in literature. In 1978, William Rueckert coined the word in the title of his article 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism' (Rueckert 1978), and defined it as 'the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology (as a science, as a

discipline, as the basis for human vision) has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world' (Oppermann 1999). After this publication, ecocriticism gained popularity in literary studies and became an integral part of the environmental humanities. This literary criticism focuses on eliminating the dichotomies between nature and culture. To achieve this, it urges the study and production of literary texts that engage with environmental matters including, but not limited to, climate change, politics, environmental justice, colonialism, post-colonialism, geography, natural resource distribution, environmental policy, capitalism, and other fields. As Glotfelty's summary definition clarifies, ecocriticism is 'the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment' (Glotfelty 1996). This is because ecological literary criticism sees the interconnectedness of fields of study and promotes interdisciplinarity as much as it believes in Barry Commoner's first law of ecology: 'Everything is connected to everything else. There is one ecosphere for all living organisms and what affects one, affects all' (Commoner 1972). It is much concerned with the way culture and society are constructed by the nonhuman world through the engagement of not only literary studies, but historical, social, economic, and political ones as well. It is committed to analysing the Anthropocene and the anthropogenic actions against the Earth, addressing the topics related to environmental degradation by considering science not only as a collection of facts but as culture and politics. Ecocriticism started deconstructing the romanticisation of nature and linking ecological issues to literary criticism and reintroduced literature as a tool for agency and awareness. Ultimately, then, ecocriticism is a critical approach that is concerned with the nonhuman in the text. It is an ecocritic's role thus to seek the ecological implications of the text and study the relationship between the human and the nonhuman. Therefore, ecocriticism decentres the human from being the focus of analysis in the text and pays attention to the nonhuman world.

Among the many principles ecocriticism strives for, connecting science with the humanities is one of the fundamental ones. In fact, “Ecocritics argue that a holistic and collaborative approach is necessary to grasp the complexity of environmental problems and solutions” (Matthewman 2010).

As cited above, a prominent example is Carson’s seminal publication *Silent Spring*, throughout which Carson raised global awareness about serious environmental issues, relying on a literary and narrative style (Matthewman 2010). Matthewman stresses the interdisciplinary nature and demands of an effective ecocritical approach: ‘If we all stayed neatly in our academic place then new connections and knowledge would never be made. One way for ecocritics would be to work more collaboratively with scientists rather than taking ideas second hand’ (Matthewman 2010). After all, the environment is not an exclusive subject for science; rather, it is the responsibility of all disciplines, and it is through working together that we see the different distinctions and intersections. As we argue across the thesis, we need to benefit from the insight of ecocriticism to dismantle the barriers that impede our understanding of the environment and our relation to it. More recently, ecocriticism has been folded into discussions within what is now termed the environmental humanities. This emerging arena of study has

much to do with exploring the divide between knowledge fields and addressing the question of how to bridge these gaps. In a rapidly changing society and environment, the environmental humanities seek to clear divides that hinder our action and understanding (Rose and Robbin 2004). In so doing, the environmental humanities give primary attention to the unity and connectivity of disciplines. In this context, Rose and Robbin make the point that:

Major ecological change, much of it in crisis, is situated across the nature/culture divide. Our academic division between arts and sciences compounds the problems of that

divide, inhibiting the work we need to be doing. So too, does the ranking of knowledge systems that places western science at the top of an epistemological ladder; it impedes our capacity for knowledge sharing within fields of plural and diverse knowledges. (Rose and Robbin 2004)

Opposing the destructive divide is fundamental for environmental humanists. It is in these ways that scholars within the environmental humanities seek to provide a common ground that serves both science and humanities. Indeed, scientists are already starting to glean knowledge and guidance. As a matter of fact, the field of humanities is proving to have significant usefulness to scientific colleagues. Again, Rose and Robbin argue:

Amongst ecologists, whose training is principally in the fields of science, the shifts in thinking are revolutionary: from concepts of climax and equilibrium to concepts of pervasive disequilibrium; from concepts of objectivity to concepts of intersubjectivity; from visions of deterministic prediction to an awareness of fundamental uncertainties such that predictions must be probabilistic. (Rose and Robbin 2004)

With the aim of defining what truly constitutes ecocomposition, Sidney I. Dobrin and Christian R. Weisser became pioneers in this field. The commonly acknowledged definition of this area of study is that it is a framework for studying the relationship between discourse and the environment. They explored different dimensions that impact language and composition studies, and how knowledge and identity are constructed based on the writing space. In their book *Natural Discourse Toward Ecocomposition* (2002), they dedicated their research to provide the reader with holistic definitions of ecocomposition. Starting from its very beginning to how nature writing evolved and how composition and ecology have always been interconnected, both researchers initiated a new field of research that requires critical thinking and engages ecological and spatial matters in the classroom. That was back in 2002, yet almost ten years later, Dobrin published *Postcomposition* (2011), in which he questioned

the ecological properties of writing again, and where he dedicated a section to the failure of ecocomposition as a discipline. He determined that this failure is due to a number of factors, including the absence of an ecological methodology, the focus on nature more than on the writing itself, the inability to avoid anthropocentric ecology and human-centred environmental matters and, last but not least, the negligence of this field as an actual academic research area that requires further development and support.

Writing is, according to Dobrin, an ecological phenomenon (Dobrin 2011). Yet it was only during the early 1990s that scholars started to consider the inclusion of ecological methodologies in teaching composition. Including an ecological methodology is essential for a successful ecocomposition class. This is because the absence of the right approach diminishes the potential of encouraging a healthy diversity of environmentalism in the classroom. The issue is that, despite that such methodologies were introduced to composition studies, ecocomposition diverged from revolving around ecology to revolving around nature writing and environmental topics. The focus was not put on writing since it focused on nature and neglected the necessity to give equal importance to composition. Teachers or instructors are free to choose whichever methodology they please if the pedagogical approach fits within what the teaching of ecocomposition requires. An ecofeminist approach, for instance, according to Greta Gaard, contributes ‘to an ecofeminist understanding of writing and writing pedagogies’ (Gaard 1998). This will allow the articulation of ecofeminist approaches through different classroom activities by permitting the students to obtain a range of diverse understandings from a text. These understandings will enable them to build their own ‘environmental ethics’ (Gaard 1998). Yet to achieve this, the methodology adopted by the teacher should be free from any teacher-centered approaches, as well as any other kinds of authoritative approaches. Thus, specific target-oriented approaches are required. For instance,

adopting an ecofeminist approach in teaching composition does not only explore environmental matters for what they are generally identified, but identity matters as well.

The inability to avoid anthropocentric ecology and human-centered environmental matters is another issue raised by Dobrin, which according to him, is causing the failure of ecocomposition. This is perhaps due to the desire to 'green' everything with the purpose of saving the planet. In a world where climate change became the buzz and will probably remain for the next upcoming decades, writing has also gone through the greening process when ecocomposition was introduced. The focus in the classroom has been put on matters such as sustainability, conservation, pollution and other environment related subjects. Yet the importance of experiencing the natural world and blending these experiences into composition has not been given enough importance (Weisser and Dobri 2001). The role of the natural world in constructing the language in which we write and the processes through which this language evolves in its natural environment are rarely explored throughout composition activities. The usual case in the classroom would be a teacher requiring students to write on a specific, green-related subject, without any consideration of the social backgrounds of the students. This eventually leads to an anthropocentric view of ecology, and the product of such an approach in the classroom would be deficient in terms of environmental ethics. To reach these ethics, students in the fields of ecology and environmental humanities and studies must first be able to relate to their natural world and connect to their environments throughout their everyday life experiences.

For instance, a student who has never been introduced to renewable energies, or a student who has never seen a solar panel or a wind turbine in his life, will never be able to conceive of an ecocentric viewpoint in their writing. On the other hand, another student who grew up on a farm would be perfectly fit to write about agriculture-related subjects as an example. Yet to be fair, it is not the fault of teachers for not knowing how to engage nature writing in the

proper way as an ethical activity in the classroom. Dobrin believes that this research area has always been neglected and has not been given the necessary attention for it to develop. Academicians from several universities have done important research to develop ecocomposition into an actual academic field, one that is as important as any other research area. All in all, the challenges faced in environmental writing go beyond what Dobrin stated. The lack of a more intersectional approach acknowledges that despite writing being an ecological phenomenon, it remains different from one person to another not only because of their environmental and geographical differences, but for their intersecting identities and sexualities as well. Ecocriticism, and ecocomposition included, came to the point where a queer feminist restoration was needed, which is what the upcoming passages discuss.

Time for a Feminist Restoration

Greta Gaard, among other researchers, saw the challenges that ecocriticism has failed to address. She brought ecofeminism to the forefront as the tool for a feminist restoration of climate change narratives. In her writings, she argues that mainstream US ecocriticism has failed to notice the race-based, class-based, and gendered perspectives in these climate change narratives. A feminist environmental justice perspective can inform the analysis of these additional features of climate change by expanding the genres and geographies of ecocritical analysis to include artists of colour and of diverse sexualities, as well as by including the practices of animal food production and consumption that are exacerbating climate change (Gaard 2014). Thus, instead of focusing merely on environmental issues and their roots, ecofeminism adds a feminist lens to ecocriticism by connecting gender-based subordination to environmental degradation and pushes problems generated from racism, colourism and sexism to the forefront when dealing with environmental matters. Women, in particular, as victims of a host of kinds of violence, are empowered by ecofeminism and encouraged to stand up for their rights.

The roots of this violence are deep and complex since they represent the accumulation of centuries of oppression and gender-based roles. Consequently, to fully understand the origins and reasons behind this violence, it is necessary to understand the patriarchal system that leads people and governments to perpetuate its forms. In the past few decades, feminists, who have always been aware of what patriarchy and sexism are capable of, have been struggling to change gender-based violence as well as a few other types of injustice, including the structural inequalities resulting from racial and socioeconomic differences. The factors associated with violence against women are often labelled as societal, communal or cultural and are sometimes even related to female fertility: Dealing with violence against infertile women and identifying influencing factors is important because along with anxiety imposed by infertility and its treatment process, violence has behavioural and psychological consequences that make the treatment of infertile women a challenge for healthcare professionals (Hajizade-Valokolaee et al. 2017).

Understanding systematic oppression is integral to understanding the need for resistance when a specific group of people receives unequal treatment and is denied access to a resource, a human right, or a fair justice system because of difference in gender, race, sexual orientation or any other feature; it is only a matter of time until that group shows resistance. Women have always been advocates for the planet. They have always understood the importance of balance, sustainability and the necessity of liberation. The same goes for indigenous peoples whose involvement in climate action cannot go unnoticed. Yet why is it that women and other marginalised people are the ones speaking up the most about the irreversible damage humans have done to our planet? Many ecofeminists would agree that women and nature have both been oppressed under patriarchal capitalism (Flannery 2016). Reduced to an inferior gender because of the institution of class-based society and perceived as a commodity because of capitalism, women have long been treated as unequal to men and

are still facing numerous gender-based violations of human rights daily. The feminist restoration of environmental humanities that this work calls for is not a traditional women-focused feminist one. It is an invitation to see the interconnections between all sorts of subordination and that if one remains unacknowledged or unaddressed, it threatens the progress that others may have made. This restoration requires new lenses to approach the existing social and environmental injustices. These new lenses are anti-essentialist, where notions that are usually taken for granted such as womanhood, femininity, the gender binary and the natural, are challenged and redefined.

Chapter 2 On De-Essentialising Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism might have assumed an essentialised gender ever since its genesis with a possible unconscious exclusion of intersex and transgender. In today's world where far-right politics are posing a threat to all vulnerable communities, it is time to reread ecofeminism by queering it and freeing it from all essentialist approaches in order to move on from its initial form: Cultural ecofeminism. The belief that there are true forms of essences that are ahistorical, biologically inherent, 'prosocial, innate, and unchanging' (Carlassare 1994) is what is agreed upon by essentialists. In ecofeminism, these essentialist thoughts pose serious problems, and the field itself has been criticised by feminist scholars ever since it emerged because of its essentialism. Nowadays, in a time when climate action is no longer a choice, environmental humanists, especially ecofeminists, came to understand that human-nature interactions as well as gender relationships must be restructured if we want planetary survival. This requires dismantling the existing set of features that link women to nature by feminising the status of nature, women, animals, bodies, people of color, and other groups (Gaard 2011) as well as liberating sexuality from criminalisation, stigmas and shame.

As Buckingham argues:

to accept that women had an irreducible 'female essence' would be tantamount to admitting that others distinguished by 'difference' (such as minority ethnic populations, disabled people or gay men and women, and men more widely) could be driven to behave in similarly 'essential' which, by definition, would be unchanging and unchangeable, an argument that social scientists have been working hard to refute for many years. (Buckingham 2004)

Before digging into the main reason underlying conflicted debates with the field of ecofeminism, around essentialist thinking, it is important to understand the two major

ecofeminist schools, as well as the main reason used to justify hierarchical oppression: dualistic power structures. And the next section is dedicated to deconstructing such essentialist concepts. From womanhood and manhood, to femininities and masculinities, natural and unnatural, they aim to cover most of the key terms that have for so long been essentialised. The first part focuses on deconstructing natural attributions to women. This is to assert that this work is far from in agreement with the first wave of ecofeminism, which was heavily based on collapsing women's characteristics into those of the planet. It questions the feminisation of the planet and why it is called 'Mother Earth' and raises questions about the power of language. Essentialism is then put under a magnifying glass: Its effects on the oppressed, the oppressors and the examiner are all brought to the conversation.

This latter moves to discussing scientific racism. Bodily oppression, whether it is sexual, gendered or racial, is important to ecofeminist research, therefore, scientific racism is pushed to the forefront where power and oppression are deemed among the reasons behind the falsification of scientific truths. The final part puts ecofeminism under the spotlight and de-essentialises it, presenting the reader with novel approaches on how to study humans and their environment through a more intersectional lens.

DECONSTRUCTING NATURAL ATTRIBUTIONS TO WOMEN AND DUALISTIC POWER STRUCTURES

Political leaders across the planet who enforce far-right ideologies are choosing to do so because those conservative ideologies serve their interests and profits one way or another. People who vote for them might not be able to see these interests yet are able to identify with them based on common beliefs such as sexism, conservatism, or homophobia. It is easy to believe in someone who shares the same values (or lacks them) like oneself. They say ignorance is bliss, but it is not when it comes to choosing people who will be making

decisions about our planet. We need to remake the hierarchal and oppressive lenses that were given to us at a very young age by families, schools, and society.

It is time to foster more laws that criminalise any kind of hate crimes and hate speech, any kind of abuse and exploitation, and for this to happen, we can start by changing our views of people who do not meet our expectations. According to Warren, both nature and humans can be dominated, but only humans (especially women and marginalised groups) can be oppressed. She defines oppressed groups as 'limited, inhibited, coerced, or prevented from mobilising resources for self-determined goals by limiting their choices and options' (Warren 2000).

A gender-conscious environmental perspective sees that women, especially ones living in marginalised areas, are the ones that are most impacted by global warming and natural disasters. This is due to social roles, sexism, and discrimination that they face daily. The gender roles that are assigned to them restrict their mobility and impose tasks on them that are associated with food production and caregiving, hence preventing them from acting. When ecofeminists examine the reasons behind this oppression and uncover the origins of the different kinds of domination, some lean toward the belief that women are in fact closer to nature due to their similarities, while others reject this idea by considering it a contradictory argument to that proposed by ecofeminism. Thus, during the 1980s, ecofeminism started to divide into two branches. The first one that emerged believed in the association between women and nature, while the second school of thought rejects this notion. The first branch, called cultural ecofeminism, believes that this association enables women to be more sensitive to the natural environment, meaning that they agree to abide by the constructed gender roles. On the other hand, the second branch, called radical ecofeminism, rejects this association and claims that this idea only reinforces the patriarchal ideology of domination and restricts ecofeminism's potency. This latter is what the world needs, because

essentialising women means essentialising their bodies, their social roles and their rights. This automatically results in exclusion. And this results in the exclusion of transgender women, lesbians, queer women, women who do not want to reproduce, women who want the right to abortion as healthcare, and of course, the exclusion of nonbinary and gender-fluid people who were assigned females at birth.

Oppressive dualistic structures are a major feature of systems that justify hierarchy and subordination. With the aim of understanding the roots of such structures, Warren refers to 'conceptual frameworks' to examine the interconnection between the domination of nature and the domination of women. She defines conceptual frameworks as a socially constructed set of beliefs or assumptions which shapes one's view of oneself, the other, or the world. This set of beliefs is influenced by several factors such as gender, race, class, age, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, and so on (Warren 2000).

When these frameworks become oppressive, they start serving as justifications for different kinds of domination. For instance, an oppressive religious conceptual framework justifies the domination and oppression of religious people over others who do not believe or practice. Another example would be an oppressive heteronormative conceptual framework, where the oppression of queer people is justified by what this framework defines as 'normal people.' Warren developed this argument by identifying five major features in oppressive conceptual frameworks: value hierarchical thinking, value dualisms, power-over power, the conception and practice of privilege, and the logic of domination. She initially discussed value-hierarchical thinking and explained this mindset by introducing the Up-Down power relationship to the table. Examples of this would include, "men Up and women Down, whites Up and people of colour Down, culture Up and nature Down, minds Up and bodies Down" (Warren 2000). Classifying and categorising people by using a superiority/inferiority strategy is the root of discrimination, racism misogyny, and other kinds of oppression including

resource and animal exploitation. On the other hand, the logic of domination is what Warren introduced as the premise that justifies the power and dominion of oppressors over oppressed, regardless of whether the oppressed individuals are women, people of colour, indigenous people, minoritized communities, natural resources or animals.

Essentialism: Until When?

Pervasive biases that have long marked humanity entails the belief that people are not the same and are to be categorised based on a set of classifications such as race and gender. Racial essentialism for instance divides people based on what is assumed to be biological and cultural differences into racial categories. Gender essentialism, on the other hand, believes in maleness and femaleness dismissing nonbinary and gender-nonconforming people. Social constructions and social prejudice are harmful to individuals and groups who do not fit in the essentialised categories and have pernicious lasting consequences.

This is because social constructions encourage domination, oppression, and stereotyping and invalidate cultures and groups that are different. The results then range from exoticism and racism to colourism, chauvinism, and homophobia, leading to prosecution, mistreatment, and colonialism. The same happens to nature when it is alienated, perceived as inferior, eroticised, or seen as an infinite access to limitless resources. Humans allowed themselves to become the centre of the universe by creating a hierarchical pyramid where they hold the highest position. Below them is everything else that is nonhuman, giving them the freedom to colonise, exploit and misuse resources for the sake of power and generating profit. Anthropocentrism is thus what is leading us to our own termination. The term refers to ‘the belief that that value is human- centred and that all other beings are means to human ends’ (Kopnina 2018). Scientific and biological theorisations have mostly been linked to social and sexual inequalities one way or another and have justified racist social policies to some extent.

In the history of science, evolutionary thought grew to scientific racism to justify racial superiority.

Essentialism in Scientific Racism

Robert A. Smith has studied polygenism and scientific racism in America during the nineteenth century. He focused on debating the theories of Josiah Clark Nott, an American slave owner and anthropologist who is known for defending slavery and the subjugation of black people. Smith called him a 'vocal proponent of white supremacy' (Smith 2014) and highlighted his influence on Samuel George Norton's *Crania Americana* (Morton 1839). He analysed Nott's writings and how the American anthropologist insisted on proving that Anglo-Saxons and Africans are, in fact, different species and that they were created separately by the Divine since blacks exist to serve the whites. Smith's analysis and criticism of Nott suggests that this latter created a controversy at his time by accusing the religious establishment of preventing science from conducting more developed research and investigations in natural history. It also suggests Nott's attempts to justify racism by accusing Africans of having brains that freeze in cold climate and that 'any attempt at cultivating or civilizing them was wasted.' In short, 'Nott tried to make Indigenous Races scientific. The subject of his essay was acclimatization, and its lesson was that races fail to acclimatize' (Erickson 1986). Nott rapidly gained popularity among scientists and thinkers after a few lectures and publications and became quite credible as a naturalist. There is no doubt that Nott was racist and elitist. Yet his intensive efforts to prove scientifically, historically, and anthropologically that humans are created separately and are thus either inferior or superior depending on their origin all require one common thing: essentialist arguments. From the ability to adjust to different climate conditions, to brain sizes, to skin colour and other characteristics, Nott was always dependent on baseless information that thrived on essentialist thinking.

Another racist and Nazi essentialist thinker is Hans Friedrich Karl Günther, who was a major contributor to Nazi racialist thought. His Nordicism ideologies, which view the Nordic race as superior and endangered, which encouraged the avoidance of racial mixing, have an echo that still lingers in Nordic countries even today. His book *The Racial Elements of European History*, firstly, ensured that the reader began the book with an essentialist mindset, but making sure that they would not confuse race with nationality or blood kinship. He defined race as:

A conception belonging to the comparative study of man (Anthropology), which in the first place (as Physical Anthropology) only inquiries into the measurable and calculable details of the bodily structure, and measures, for instance, the height, the length of the limbs, the skull and its parts, and determines the colour of the skin (after a colour scale), and of the hair and eyes. (Günther 1927)

This highly essentialised definition of race reflects the way that work such as that produced by Günther feeds directly into colourism and racial prejudice which led to genocides and ethnic cleansing throughout history. Classifying race was normalised by Günther who believed that entitlement to superiority and inevitable inferiority are essential among humans based on the mental and physical attributes that he has given to each of his proposed races. Such views are recalled and detailed in the first chapter, 'Origin Myths,' of Johann Chapoutot's *Greeks, Romans, Germans: How the Nazis Usurped Europe's Classical Past* (2016). Chapoutot revealed that some stories that are usually taken as a fact to be nothing but myths and stories generated to prove that nothing great has ever been achieved without the white race. He called the Aryan race the 'Prometheus of mankind,' and what is intriguing in his writing is his awareness of the impact of essentialist thinking: 'European nationalisms and nationalist historiographies in fact shared, in Germany as in France, a common essentialism that consisted of fixing national identity in some immutable substance immune from

evolution' (Chapoutot 2016). The question that remains is why have humans always been interested in studying race? Polygenism or monogenism, what is the purpose of proving the reason behind the physical differences of mankind? The answer might be a combination of two words: power and profit. These two Ps are what have been driving thinkers and researchers to even forge their findings, produce false information, and use their status to deviate the public opinion into accepting their purposely generated theories as undisputed facts.

De-essentialising Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism as a movement and as an academic discourse aims to bring non-hierarchical social organisation to the forefront by rejecting dualistic, binary and hierarchical thinking, oppression and domination. Ecofeminists criticise societies by analysing class structures, political inequalities, systemic oppression, racial segregation, sex segregation and socioeconomic differences between the Global North and the Global South. As a discipline, it uses gendered analytical frameworks for these analyses, highlighting the important connections between gender, race, colour, sexuality, nature and oppression.

Yet ecofeminists, as discussed previously, do not always agree on the adopted approaches. The dichotomy between essentialism and constructionism is what resulted in the division between scholars and activists, labelling some as cultural ecofeminists, others as socialist ecofeminists or radical ecofeminists.

My argument is that it is time to look at these labels differently and object to essentialism as an available lens since all ecofeminists have the same goal after all: liberating women, oppressed groups, and nature.

Thus, whether they identify as social, socialists, radical or cultural, the major difference between ecofeminists is the way they perceive the associations between gender oppression and environmental degradation. It is all about whether they believe in deconstructing the

similarities between female and the natural or whether they perceive these similarities as inevitable. My aim is thus to dig into the two approaches that ecofeminists use: both essentialist and the anti-essentialist varieties.

Fixing a group's identities through a specific denotation is what leads to essentialised notions on culture, creating a culture that is meant to be static. Yet humans are constantly changing, thus, the conflicts emerge from the social limitations that bound them to remain faithful to the constructed static culture in which they live. The expectations and roles that come with this limiting culture impose a specific lifestyle on individuals based on different categories and classifications such as race and gender. Yet the differences of race, gender, religion, and sexuality are not the only excuses for discrimination and oppression. Humans tend to be quite creative when coming up with reasons to exclude and segregate other individuals. For instance, in a society where the stigmatisation of divorced women is stronger than that of divorced men, some women-identifying people find it difficult to end their unhappy marriages and know that opting for a divorce as a solution comes with unwanted consequences. Naomi Gertsel's findings in her article 'Divorce and Stigma' (Gertsel 1987) analyses the impacts of divorce on human relationships.

Among her findings, she discovered that exclusion is perpetrated by married couples towards divorced individuals: 'The divorced developed explanations for their exclusion. Finding themselves as outsiders, some simply thought that their very presence destabilized the social life of couples' (Gertsel 1987).

Another example of reasons behind such social exclusions would be one's citizenship. The privilege that comes with holding a certain passport comes as well with the segregation of individuals who do not have the same status or no status at all. Yet humans rarely think about the roots of the slice-and-dice system that divided humans based on their geographical status, making some proud of their identities and pushing others to make the possession of a stronger

passport a priority in their lives. While some people in certain parts of the planet are focused on building careers, families, and leading normal lives, millions of people from underdeveloped countries are risking their lives by crossing borders and oceans illegally to start a life with better living conditions. Thus, in Global Northern countries, people who do not hold the same civil rights as the citizens of that certain country, that is to say coming from an underprivileged country, whether they are there for work, seeking asylum, joining a spouse or any other reason, they are seen as inferior and are sometimes (if not most of the time) put in situations where they feel this inferiority. We rarely ask ourselves ‘How did we get here? Who decided in the first place that individuals from some regions should not have the same freedom of travel as others?’ Some people take realities as they are without questioning them nor trying to change them. Nevertheless, those with a curiosity and desire for social justice that went beyond them and pushed them to dig for answers, will usually find themselves linking the past and current injustices around the world to colonisation, resource exploitation and capitalism.

If we opt for an essentialist standpoint, is it just to say that people who had no say in where they were born and what citizenship they acquired, have a social and civic status that is prosocial and inevitable? Is it nature’s way of maintaining a sustainable ecosystem? Or is it just to be anti-essentialists and see this divide as a man-made, greed-based, profit-based system that serves the capitalistic interests of some? Is it fair to say that a divorced person represents a threat to a married couple’s social life because they left the marital life? Maybe, the fairest thing to do after all is to opt for an anti-essentialist lens and deconstruct the stigmas that come with people’s social differences which are the reason behind the creation of class differences. Unfortunately, our world is not an ideal place and hoping for everyone to adopt an anti-essentialist mindset is a fantasy. Reality speaks another language, one of taught racism, taught homophobia, taught misogyny and other discriminatory attitudes. As a result,

exclusion is perpetrated instead of inclusion, binary oppositions are created to distinguish the wanted from the unwanted, the dominant from the submissive, and the righteous from the wicked.

In *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature & Difference* (1989), Diana Fuss addresses the nature versus culture debate by engaging with arguments of feminist, gay and African American critics and debating whether femininity, homosexuality and race have essential natures. She even argued that constructionism is just another 'sophisticated form of essentialism' (Fuss 1989). She discussed the 'risk of essence' as well, a sign that many theorists believe to be convenient since essentialism may after all be inevitable. Whether or not this 'risk' should be allowed is of high importance to ecofeminists, especially queer ecofeminists, as it determines the lens and the methodologies, they might deploy to build their arguments. Fuss used Peggy Kamuf's warning about this risk of essentialism. Kamuf argued that allowing room for essentialism as a 'risk' will only lead to people 'accidentally' falling into it by using the term 'risk' as an excuse. That gap of possibility and accidents will be the reason why theorists will not consider the consequences of essentialist statements as they will be protected by the 'it was an accident' response. She attempted to break the constructionist/essentialist binarism in feminism by discussing both the weakness and the strengths of each.

In the piece 'The Risk of Essence,' Kamuf began by discussing the definition of essentialism within the feminist discourse and followed it with a discussion of the opposing concept, constructionism. According to her, essentialism has the tendency to oppress women due to its 'totalizing symbolic system' (Fuss 1989). Maybe the fairest thing to do after all is to opt for an anti-essentialist lens and deconstruct the stigmas that come with people's social differences, which are the reason behind the creation of classism.

Unfortunately, our world is not an ideal place and hoping for everyone to adopt an anti-essentialist mindset is a fantasy. Reality speaks the language of taught racism, homophobia, misogyny, the normalisation of meat-eating, the justification of oil drilling and other discriminatory and oppressive attitudes.

As a result, exclusion is perpetrated instead of inclusion, binary oppositions are created to distinguish the wanted from the unwanted, the dominant from the submissive, and the righteous from the wicked. Ecofeminism might have assumed an essentialised gender ever since its genesis with possibly an unconscious exclusion of intersex and transgender.

Essentialism in all its forms fosters dangerous ideas such as the idealisation of womanhood, the superiority of heteronormativity, and racial prejudice leading to neo-nationalism. Nevertheless, rejecting it does not mean rejecting differences. We are not the same, we are different, but we are equal because we share the same thing: our humanity and 99.9 percent of our DNA. Thus, by dismantling essentialist ideologies and politics, we will leave room for equality to step in and for discrimination, oppression, and exclusion to step out. Far-right politicians reject the politics of difference and reinforce the politics of sameness. They refuse to quit anything else that does not support their capitalist-fuelled, “Industrial/Breadwinner” masculinist interests and do not trade these interests for the well-being of the planet or other living beings. This is perhaps to protect not only their financial profits, but their fragile, fossil-dependent masculinities that they may lose if they are ever not in control of resources anymore.

Chapter 3: Gendered Climate Politics Between the Far Right and Social Justice

This chapter answers questions relevant to gender and climate politics. Although ecofeminism has been introduced to the reader prior to this part as the environmentally and socially just approach and movement to counter climate change and its unequal impacts on people, this chapter answers questions that may be asked regarding the importance of the field itself as well as its problematics. The field emerged by connecting women and the natural to justify the mutual oppression they face, resulting in essentialised and binary notions of manhood and womanhood. Consequently, from Vandana Shiva's ecofeminist scholarship to recent publications like Anne Karpf's *How Women Can Save the Planet*, ecofeminism has produced a variety of texts that have stressed womankind's connections with nature.

The first subchapter below answers the question about the relevance of gender to climate change. Although the answer(s) may seem simple, they are complex, as gender in this section begins within a binary framework and breaks from it by its end. This is because most (if not all) of the work that has been produced that links sexism and gender studies to environmentalism has focused on women versus men experiences. However, white ecofeminism did not focus enough on the Global North versus the Global South, and the differences of the impacts of environmental degradation on women mainly due to the differences in their racial backgrounds, societal privileges and geographical locations. This is not the only matter that needed attention: Gender breaks its own binary in this section. The last part moves beyond the gender binary by questioning masculine and feminine attributions and the lack of gender diversity in climate research.

WHY IS GENDER RELEVANT TO CLIMATE CHANGE?

Or in other words, why is climate change a feminist issue that needs an intersectional, gender-diverse approach? (Asmae Ourkiya)

The threats and impacts of climate change are not gender neutral. The Global South's social and socioeconomic inequalities result in part from the disproportionate effects of environmental degradation and are mostly seen among women and vulnerable communities.

As we have entered an era where the acceleration of climate change's effects on our planet are almost irreversible, it is no longer about stopping it or fighting it but more about how to live with it and limit its damage. A new version of the Anthropocene where global sustainability is achieved has been discussed by numerous researchers in different disciplines. From Roisin Dally's edited collection *Sustainability in the Anthropocene: Philosophical Essays on Renewable Technologies* (2019) that addresses ecocide, to Eva Horn and Hanne Bergthaller's *The Anthropocene: Key Issues for the Humanities* (2019), scholars take different approaches ranging from technology to literary ecocriticism to look at possibilities such as radical ecofeminism; ecological masculinities; deep ecology; social ecology; environmental ethics; ecopsychology; for a sustainable Anthropocene.

Other critical interventions that address what our future might look like tend to present an alarming apocalyptic image that may give some readers a sense of discomfort or even paranoia. Narratives describing the end of the world have always existed. In ecological discourses, eco-apocalypse, or what Greg Garrard called environmental apocalypticism (Garrard 2004), is perceived as a powerful tool that labels environmentalism as an alarming movement.

Unlike Malthusian theories about overpopulation, James Lovelock's Gaia prophecies in his *The Revenge of Gaia* (2007) or Cormac McCarthy's apocalyptic imagination of the future in

The Road (2006), very few authors have intertwined apocalypticism with misogyny. Margaret Atwood is a notable exception in this regard. I may not fully agree nor disagree with the usefulness of apocalyptic thinking as people respond differently to alarms, but what I would like to point out is the relevance of gender to what is causing our current alarming environmentalism: climate change.

The major purpose of adopting an ecofeminist approach while analysing societal and environmental issues is to accent the value of critical intersectionality and to join feminism and environmentalism as interdependent movements. Moreover, it is about not remaining silent and deconstructing these hierarchical power structures causing different kinds of domination.

Environmental Apocalypticism's visions are simply not horrifying enough unless they are not neglecting the dangers of climate change on women. Will the world call female, non-binar, and gender non-conforming researchers hysterical because they see the intersectionality that explains the masculine domination of women and nature? Does it take a lot of work to see that gender-based inequalities and gender-defined roles in society result in women becoming disproportionately vulnerable to climate change? No wonder women are boldly leading climate justice both in the Global North and the Global South. The People's Climate March in 2014 was the largest climate mobilisation in history. And, as reported in Dana R. Fisher's report *Studying Large-Scale Protest: Understanding Mobilization and Participation at the People's Climate March* (Fisher 2014), more than 400,000 people turned up, with more than half of them identifying as females.

Susan Buckingham and Virginie Le Masson broach the issue of intersectionality and climate activism in their collection of essays *Understanding Climate Change Through Gender Relations* (Buckingham and Le Masson 2017). They called for more intersectional gender analyses to understand how men and women experience climate change differently,

especially women of colour. Intersectional environmental justice is perhaps, according to Anna Kaijser and Annica Kronsell in their article 'Climate change through the lens of intersectionality' (2014), the only way of revealing natural relationships, ones that leave room for inequalities (Kaijser and Kronsell 2014).

Their article is meant specifically to demonstrate how gender relations are producing man-made climate change and that we will not achieve the goals of our climate action plans unless gender inequality is addressed as well. It is important to examine not only women in rural areas, whose challenges revolve around farming and searching for clean water, but also unfair labour, unequal access to and distribution of natural resources and gender-based bias in climate policymaking.

Understanding the Linkages: Irene Dankelman's Reflections

Irene Dankelman, a Dutch researcher and ecologist and author of *Gender and Climate Change: An Introduction* (2010), is a pioneer in bringing gender to climate change. With over forty years of experience working for governmental agencies and nongovernmental organizations, academia and the United Nations as well as lecturing at Radboud University in Nijmegen, The Netherlands, Dankelman has contributed significantly in the way climatic impacts are studied and addressed. In her 2010 introductory book to gender and climate change, Dankelman described gender as a social stratifier, akin to age, race, class or religion: 'A stratifier that shapes the way the dynamic and context-specific relationships manifest between women and men based on the cultural notions of masculinity and femininity' (Dankelman 2010).

This definition, considering that it was written over a decade ago, does not meet present nor future perceptions of what gender is nor its relationships to climate change as the man/woman binary is evident. Yet despite this polarised definition, Dankelman continued flagging that the definition is subject to debate since its dichotomy divides human society into two as it

excludes the patterns of difference ‘among women and among men’ (Dankelman 2010). Moreover, Dankelman acknowledges that people’s assigned gender determines their access to resources, to work, and to political power. Dankelman dedicated her book to exploring these gender-induced inequalities in relation to environmental use and management. The relevance of this subchapter to the book lies in two main topics: The need for a post-gender ecofeminist approach to climate discourses, and the necessity to understand the complexities of gender to environmental use and management in times of crises.

When introducing the problematic that the book intended to address, Dankelman briefly analyses humankind’s history from the hunter-gatherer communities to modern times with a focus on human’s interactions with the environment. She then uses ecofeminist arguments to link the oppression of nature and that of women, and introduces her approach which stands out from former research as one that not only focuses on specific sectors like food production or water management, but one that provides ‘deep analyses and analytical frameworks to understand the nexus of gender–climate change– sustainable development at meta-level’ (Dankelman 2010).

By analysing Dankelman’s writings and core arguments on the topic, the following passages will attempt to draw attention to the missing post-genderist approach in gender and climate discourse. Dankelman’s analysis begins by looking at how labor has always shaped gender dynamics. With a focus on food production, consideration is given to societies and tribal communities and how the production, reproduction and distribution of resources were not gender neutral. Dankelman concludes that although women were the providers and carers, their access to and control over resources was limited and lower compared to men’s. She then moves on to introducing ecofeminism and arguing against the essentialist assumption that women are closer to nature and that men are closer to culture. The conversation then moves to food security by looking into women’s roles in food production, such as animal husbandry,

agriculture, other farming labour and fishing. Dankelman argues that even in the most male-dominant food-securing activities such as fishing, women have long provided between 50 percent to 70 percent pre- and post-harvest activities, since they do the mending and boatbuilding, fish processing and selling, firewood hauling and fish drying while men often do the actual fishing (Dankelman 2010). It is important to note the high significance of such an example since it serves not only as a reminder of the unmentioned labour that is often done by women, but also is strong evidence of potential misrepresentations of the gender divide in food security.

From food security, the analysis proceeds to examine household shores by highlighting the significance of the exclusive role women play in water security and transportation, which is avoided by men despite being a heavy and time-consuming task. An aspect worth looking into and that requires further research is energy, resource management and time, which Dankelman mentions briefly by arguing that men's 'input of time and energy is often substantially less than that of women' (Dankelman 2010). Thus, women have long been put in roles where their lives were unequally assigned the task of spending most of the time caring, providing and securing. Time distribution has consequently been unequal among the two polarised sides of gender, since some men have had more opportunities to spare time for other activities for their self-development.

After providing the reader with multiple valid arguments to support her statement that women's input in decision-making is limited although their input in the labor is essential and often disregarded, Dankelman blames the environmental issues on a masculinist culture. It is because of this culture that in times of calamities, men find it easier to migrate and escape the difficulties and lack of resources. Dankelman does not dismiss the challenges that men face when they are forced to opt for displacement to find sources of income, yet the fact that the option of moving is far easier for men than it is for women, who are often left to care for the

household and the families, speaks of the unequal gendered opportunities for people who are faced with environmental challenges.

Women and Climate Governance:

Social scientists have dug into climate governance and studied it extensively, recognising aspects of this field that the hard sciences have neglected, finding subjects worthy of criticism and challenge. Among these researchers are a few women researchers who linked power relationships to climate change by dismantling gender inequality and other forms of oppression such as racism.

In June 2019, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) published a report regarding the differentiated impacts of climate change on men and women, urging the integration of gender consideration in climate policies (UNFCCC 2019). The report paid special attention to marginalised communities and indigenous peoples with a focus on 'Integration of gender considerations into adaptation, mitigation, capacity-building, Action for Climate Empowerment, technology and finance policies, plans and actions' (UNFCCC 2019). The report indicated that even though parties expressed their awareness of the necessity of gender balance, no policies or processes were implemented. Their synthesis report suggested, based on the analysis of the submissions received, that gender inequalities contribute significantly to the differentiated impacts of climate change on men and women. Differences in vulnerability means differences in impact as well as in responding capacity. The report highlighted the vulnerability that is generated from gendered roles in the bioeconomy as well.

The harvesting and processing of biomass is predominantly performed by women, such as seaweed farmers in Zanzibar, 80 percent of whom are women. They are facing declines in the production of high-value seaweed as waters in the south of the island have become warmer due to climate change.

Thus, the vulnerability of seaweed farmers is primarily attributable to their reliance on a natural resource that is declining because of climate change, and not because the farmers are women. However, the fact that predominantly rural and indigenous women, and not men, are reliant on climate-vulnerable biomass industries for their livelihoods potentially gives their vulnerability a gender, place-based and ethnic perspective (UNFCCC 2019). It is important to understand the significant contributions of feminism to climate governance.

Having a balanced gender representation in climate decision-making advances climate governances towards gender equity and inclusion, all within a frame that considers environmental degradation and how it does not affect every individual in the same way. When women are present in decision-making, some may argue that their presence reduces the chances of producing neoliberal climate policies.

Annica Kronsell and Gunnhildur Lily Magnusdottir have published significant work related to the relevance of gender to climate governance. Their work, which is analysed in the next section, deals with the situations of women and climate governance in Scandinavia. Despite that those countries such as Germany, Sweden or Norway have longer progressive histories, they are far from being the perfect leading examples, especially when it comes to environmental and climate laws. The upcoming section discusses gender in climate in Scandinavia with a focus on Norway. The aim of this examination is to demonstrate the gender enmeshment with climate politics in countries where progressivism is what governments pride themselves on.

The Global North and Gendered Climate Politics: Scandinavia as an Example

Magnusdottir and Kronsell published ‘The (In)Visibility of Gender in Scandinavian Climate Policy-Making’ in 2015. Their argument begins by drawing attention to the fact that having

many women present and involved in climate policymaking does not mean that the decisions made are necessarily gender-conscious nor that the climate policymaking is gender-sensitive. This means that masculine norms are ‘deeply institutionalized in climate institutions; hence, policymakers adapt their actions to the masculinized institutional environment’ (Kronsell and Magnusdottir 2015). Thus, it is unquestionable that climate governance and gender representation and implication are linked. The following will examine Kronsell and Magnusdottir’s paper to gain a deeper understanding of gender’s implications in climate politics in the Global North by looking at Scandinavia as the case study.

Despite their acknowledgement that there is an equal gender representation in Scandinavian administrative and political units, the authors argue that this gender balance does not always lead to ‘gender-sensitive climate policymaking’ (Kronsell et al. 2015). As they tie climate issues to human activities and dependency on fossil fuels, they call for a more diversified representation of voices when it comes to policymaking. One of the reasons why their paper focuses on Norway, Sweden and Denmark is because these countries are already pioneering in gender equality. Since 2009, the Nordic council has been promoting a Nordic gender climate regime. One of the most important points that the authors discuss in their piece is that despite the great number of women in politics in Scandinavia, it is always important to note whether this representation is descriptive or substantive and what the links between the two are. Descriptive representation means that the elected official represents a group of people simply by sharing characteristics with the people they represent. For instance, an elected official of Buddhist faith can get the votes of most people who share the same faith as them solely because of the common practice of Buddhism. We can say for instance that an indigenous group of people is descriptively represented if their elected official is from the same indigenous background. Substantive representation, on the other hand, dismisses the characteristics of the elected official because voting is done through an informed process and

the focus is on the official's ideals, principles, and goals. For instance, a black queer disabled woman is said to be substantially represented even if her elected official is a white heterosexual well-built man if they both share the same leftist ideologies and want to solve the same issues. Therefore, the paper authors invalidate the value of the number of women since the sole focus on numbers is problematic: Having a woman on board does not guarantee that feminist issues will be solved.

Unlike several other countries, Kronsell et al. highlight the fact that Nordic countries stand out with their gender quotas since they do not focus merely on representation but also on including women's experiences as they are acknowledged to be different from men's. The authors then analyse and discuss both descriptive and substantive representations of women in the three Scandinavian countries. They confirmed their initial speculation that indeed, there is a surprising gender equal representation, yet 'A critical mass does not necessarily lead to critical acts' (Kronsell et al. 2015). The balanced representation of women in climate policymaking does not always serve environmental and social justice, because the elected women may be part of a high-consuming, high GHG-emitting elite with interests that do not match with middle-class working women or simply women and people who are aware of the climate issues and are demanding change. Their study concludes as well that masculine norms are deeply institutionalised in climate-relevant institutions and politics that regardless of a person's gender, there is a high chance they will adapt their views to the hegemonic masculine anti-environmental politics. Such findings suggest that there is a need to further explore the gender representation in Scandinavia as it is 'more multifaceted and complex' (Kronsell et al. 2015) than expected.

As thought-provoking as the foregoing analysis is, it is essential to note that there is a lack of two important elements: A gender-diverse approach and a non-traditional nontoxic masculinity. As the authors initiated by acknowledging the advancement of gender equality

in the Nordic countries, one would expect to find analyses on transgender and nonbinary people since the writers insisted on gender representation and voicing others. Nevertheless, the paper took cisgender women as the default without any references to the voices of transgender women. When researching LGBTQ+ representation among elected officials in the history of Norway for instance, it seems that there have been several openly gay men like during the past decades such as Nicholas Wilkinson, Trond Giske , Bent Høie and Øystein Mæland. There have also been a few openly gay women like Anette Trettebergstuen, who is the only openly lesbian politician in the Norwegian parliament. However, there seem to be no openly transgender elected politicians nor officials in the Norwegian parliament.

This blinding absence puts Norway behind the United States, where Sarah McBride was the first transgender woman to be elected as state senator or in Italy, where a transgender woman, Vladimir Luxuria was elected as MP for the Communist Refoundation Party in 2006.

Another point worth addressing is the toxic presence of two women politicians in Norway: Erna Solberg, leader of the Conservatives, and Siv Jensen, leader of the anti-immigration right-wing populist Progress Party. Their appointment as leaders of two far-right political groups is living proof that descriptive representation is in no way proof of fair policymaking. Scandinavian environmental politics and gender representation are indeed complex and multifaceted, however, gender itself should not be limited to a binary when it comes to equalising representation. I call for more research on gender identities not only in Nordic countries but in all countries that have progressed enough to acknowledge the diversity of genders and sexualities. The reason behind the importance of this call is that our world, with both its human and nonhuman beings, is a diverse one where all experiences should be considered to ensure just climate policymaking. If the voices of one or more groups are omitted or not acknowledged, the politics will be rendered elitist, unjust, and ecocide-promoting.

Gender and the Environment: Time to Move beyond the Binary

When gender is researched in the context of environmentalism and climate change, studies focus on gender as the biological sex and only address the different experiences between the two extremes of this binary: men and women. Very little research has been done to provide gender-diverse data as it is almost impossible to do so given that census data is focused on binary sex data. This means that any other gender identity that does not conform to the man/woman binary is excluded. Thus, women are inevitably placed in the vulnerable and passive box, while men's masculinities are perceived as the reason why they suffer less. Yet attributing masculinities to men only and femininities to women only is a binary that has long existed and should come to an end.

Firstly, environmental researchers need to have appropriate introductions to gender studies and queer studies and should be made aware of using terms sex and gender interchangeably in their publications. Dankelman's book, which was examined earlier in this chapter, is nothing but an illuminating, groundbreaking read. Yet for a book with a strong title, *Gender and Climate Change*, it seems that women were the sole focus of what gender signifies.

When introducing the problematic that the book intended to address, Dankelman briefly analyses humankind's history from the hunter-gatherer communities to modern times with a focus on human interactions with the environment. She then uses ecofeminist arguments to link the oppression of nature and that of women and introduces her approach, which stands out from former research as one that not only focuses on specific sectors like food production or water management, but one that provides 'deep analyses and analytical frameworks to understand the nexus gender-climate change-sustainable development at meta-level' (Dankelman). Yet, as I have intimated, there are limitations to the execution of this approach. As I detail further down this work, nonbinary identities, and gender-nonconforming bodies to transgender and intersex rights need to be considered in the context of climate change.

Equally, consideration will also be given to the importance of reaching bodily sovereignty and dignity as an essential part of the work of ecofeminism. Gender's relevance to climate change has been discussed in the above passage through a feminist-leaning scope. However, gender as a term is still a contested one. It dances between sex, relationships, reproduction, human rights, religion, politics: It is basically omnipresent among all aspects of life, yet not easily defined or agreed upon as a concept. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), gender is defined as: 'the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time' (WHO). The above definition is simple and perhaps easily understandable by all kinds of audiences. Yet one cannot help but notice the contrasting words used to describe gender: Either man or woman, girl, or boy.

It does not refer to any other identity despite acknowledging its variety from one culture to another. The World Health Organization continues in its definition of gender by saying that it: interacts with but is different from sex, which refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males, and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. Gender and sex are related to but different from gender identity. Gender identity refers to a person's deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's physiology or designated sex at birth. (WHO) It is interesting how the World Health Organization acknowledges intersex people in its extended definition of gender. It also acknowledges the fact that gender identity is separate from people's physical attributes. A more inclusive definition of gender, from someone who is gender-nonconforming with a nonbinary gender identity (myself), is:

- The combination of how we view our own bodies and how we care for others to view them.
- How we use our bodies and how we care to present them.
- Realising whether we have a gender identity in the first place.
- Our social interactions.
- Feelings about our physical appearances that range from body dysphoria to body euphoria.

Gender is complex indeed, which is why summarising it in a definition that comprises two polar concepts does not do it justice. Gender affects us from the day we are born, as it is automatically intertwined with our genitalia from birth. Even though gender has been fixated on two major chromosomes, X and Y, there are far more complex factors that determine one's sex let alone one's formed identity, as sexual development is nothing but binary.

Understanding gender means understanding that our acquired understandings of maleness and femaleness are in fact limited ones, and that what we expect from femininities and masculinities does harm several people directly by informing gendered assumptions. Understanding gender means being open to breaking sexual dichotomies that are limited to one's genitals and not perceiving intersex and transgender people as sexual anomalies but as part of our sexually diverse and gender-diverse species. And finally, understanding gender means understanding that it is not always fixed and that any person's gender identity is open to metamorphosis.

Gender is also political. This statement will be discussed thoroughly in this manuscript. The insistent policing of bodies, sexualities, and gender identities is not a mere coincidence: It is a restricting system that prevents many people from reaching their full potential as human beings by controlling their bodies, their appearances, and their sexual activities. Yet this section brings gender to your attention to link it to the environment. Gender diversity is natural, and if there is anything unnatural about the way humanity navigates gender, it is the

limitations we have set. The reason for stressing the importance of gender identity and its diversity within the ecofeminist framework is because gender has been proven to have a significant impact on one's environmental identity development. In Bruni, Schultz, and Woodcock's 'The Balanced Structure of Environmental Identity,' they refer to Ruolin Miao's work on the roles of gender and race in the development of gender identity. Miao's work is thoroughly examined in chapter 1, where I discussed biological and social biases in a binary system. Miao is among the few writers and researchers that identified the gap in environmental research where the impacts of gender and race on one's identity development is brought into question. In a related argument, Dan Yue et al. conducted a quantitative research experiment in which 170 males and 217 females were selected for online questionnaires. They provided a definition for environmental identity given by American scholars Stets and Biga, which is "a series of meanings given to themselves when people were associated with the natural environment." (Yue et al. 2021). Their research outcomes, however, were very limited and extremely binary. In their own words, "Females have a higher environmental identity than male." (Yue et al. 2021). The conclusion of their paper begins as follows: "Based on the analysis of the data, the main conclusions of this study are as follows: The environmental identity of the male group was slightly lower than that of the female group with a significant difference." (Yue et al. 2021). Not only is such a study lacking diversity and thorough analysis, but it also reinforces binary norms. Although I am not questioning the intention behind such research, the fact that it is published in an academic context means that a lot of development is needed academically when approaching topics that intersect environmentalism and gender studies. Ecofeminism has a responsibility as a field of study and research to detect this binary and acknowledge that environmental identity is complex, and that environmental behaviour is strongly influenced by the level of how humans feel connected to their ecosphere and how this connection impacts their level of care

for the system that sustains human and nonhuman life. This is why the next subchapter focuses on queering ecofeminism by revisiting queer theory and queer ecology in relation to environmentalism.

Chapter 4: Queering Ecofeminism Challenging Heteronormative Far-Right Politics

Queer ecologies: Another term to tell the world that what is presumed to be unnatural is, in fact, nothing but natural. From an ecofeminist standpoint, some researchers and activists might have their reservations regarding whether the oppression of sexuality is or is not the result of a heteronormative masculine hegemony that perceives women and nature as resources for reproduction and exploitation. Ecofeminism as an activist literary theory has always had some common ground with theories of queerness, yet not all ecofeminists agree that queering this discipline is of great importance to liberating women and nature. It is important to understand the significance of intersecting queer/gender studies, race theory, women's studies, and environmentalism because this intersectionality is required to have a strong established ecofeminism that envisages a world where environmental justice and social justice go together. The following passages will discuss the rise of the far-right politics with a focus on homophobia from an ecological feminist standpoint and will argue the reasons why any environmentalist movement should be queered to ensure environmental justice.

Who decides right from wrong? Who started the shame that comes with not abiding by the heteronormative expectations of society? Who established this compulsory heteronormativity in the first place by making it the only acceptable norm of being? Who created biological essentialism that feeds on exclusion? And why are there binary oppositions based on hierarchy and power struggle? And most importantly, why is the world, especially the Western one, witnessing the rise of authoritarian far-right politics accompanied by climate denialism? Nothing in this world is a mere coincidence, and the oppression of sexuality, the exploitation of bodies, and the domination of nature's resources are intertwined and represent an outcome of a complex system that has been growing for centuries. Gender-based and

sexuality-based oppression are perhaps the result of a capitalist masculine system that survives on patriarchal domination. Like Camille Bruneau wrote in a 2018 article: [...] capitalism and patriarchy are not independent systems but that capitalists (themselves having grown up in a patriarchal environment) find an interesting market in the application of patriarchal norms, are inspired from them, and simultaneously reinforce them. With the development of the welfare state, supposedly a great achievement of democratic and capitalist western societies, a gendered model is further-confirmed: women are essentially treated as mothers and wives. (Bruneau, 2018)¹

THE OPPRESSION OF QUEER WOMEN

Although the aim of this work is to expand research beyond the limitations of the gender binary, this section will focus mostly on women who have faced significant oppression, including sexual despotism. From masturbation to the freedom of mating, to homosexuality, women have always been discouraged from exploring their own bodies and have been expected to conform to what is expected from their uteruses: mating with men and reproducing. Anything that does not serve this purpose is considered shameful, and in different countries it is even a crime. Women are taught not to occupy space as much as other oppressed groups are taught to remain invisible and are forced to find spaces where they can belong for safety purposes. To comprehend the connection between the oppression of homosexual and queer women and that of nature, it is important to have some understanding of the objectification of the female body. Objectification theory ‘provides a framework for understanding the experience of being a female in a sociocultural context that sexually objectifies the female body’ (Dawn M. Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr 2011). This theory has long been used by feminists and psychologists to understand the different factors and impacts

¹ See link to article <https://www.cadtm.org/How-do-patriarchy-and-capitalism-jointly-reinforce-the-oppression-of-women> accessed August 2023

of the sexual objectification of women and how it impacts them. According to Fredrickson and Roberts, sexual objectification is in many cases internalised by women who end up objectifying themselves (1997). This issue dominates consumerist societies by developing different anxieties in women regarding their bodies such as eating disorders, the pressure to opt for plastic surgery, body shaming each other and appearance anxiety. And it originates with the initial idea that the female body should meet a certain set of features to be desirable. These features have long conformed to heterosexual femininity and have always dismissed androgyny despite the past few decades of feminist revolutions. This notion of hetero-womanhood serves a neoliberal oppressive system that seeks to feminise women and their fertility and commodifies their bodies by urging them to spend billions annually on the beauty industry. Yet in the queer world, some women choose not to conform and do not fall for the pressure of achieving a perfect heterofemininity and are not afraid of bending gender norms. Generally, lesbians reject the idea of being objectified by men and do not live their lives aiming to please men's expectations of their looks. It may take a whole other thesis to explore the roots of the sexual oppression of women and their objectification and to explore how queer women, particularly homosexual women of colour, may have it the hardest, especially in countries where women are still fighting for their basic human rights.

If we look, for instance, at Muslim women and women living in Muslim societies, they are still facing all kinds of discrimination including sexual oppression and inequalities: These range from cultural mores and psychological attitudes that condone bigotry or violence towards women, to laws that refuse to recognise them as legal and moral agents on a par with men, to the restriction or denial of political-economic rights and resources to them relative to men. What is more, discrimination, and even oppression, are often justified by recourse to sacred knowledge or, more accurately, knowledge claiming to derive from religion, including from Islam's Scripture, the Quran (Barlas 2001).

Understanding the negative attitude toward homosexuality in the Islamic world means understanding why any patriarchal system would want to impose heteronormativity. Men in such societies face heavy punishment when they engage in homosexual acts, but women are not expected to engage in any sexual act in the first place and are meant to pray for a husband, which is why their homosexuality is not acknowledged in the first place as it does not involve penetration and therefore cannot be considered real intercourse.

Within this cultural and religious context that so strongly condemns male homosexuality, female homosexuality is generally considered an unusual phenomenon, almost non-existent, scarcely mentioned in literature (Habib 2007, Siraj 2011). Compared with male homosexuality, female homosexuality is treated with more tolerance, because Islamic jurists define sexual intercourse only as penile penetration, so sexual acts between two women are not considered real intercourse and cannot constitute fornication (Bilancetti 2011). Dismissing the entire existence of same-sex attraction among women in Islam is just an example of how misogynist societies perceive the female body: A means to pleasure the male body and a biological machine meant for reproduction. Considering homosexuality and queerness as a heinous act against nature speaks of how strong heteronormativity has been fighting to maintain norms that serve reproductivity and hetero-masculinities and femininities. Our world has known the emergence of a feminist environmentalism.

The intersection of both women's rights and the planet's rights (as if we are somehow entitled to be the ones giving it rights!) can be traced all the way back to a few decades ago and is manifested in politics, academia, and activism. Some of these scholars or activists identify as ecofeminists because they can see the clear connection between the exploitation of resources, the degradation of the environment and the domination of groups that are considered unnatural, inferior, or nonconforming. These groups of people can be people of colour, women, queer or basically, anyone that is not conforming to the heteronormative

society because when toxic masculinity, heteronormativity and white supremacy combine, the rest of the living beings, humans, animals or plants, have no purpose on this planet but to serve this white masculinity's greed and desires.

Queer ecofeminism acknowledges the diversity of the natural world and rejects the natural/unnatural dualism because it sees a strong connection between the oppression of sexuality and the oppression of nature. It presents a new lens to look at nature and women in a queer theory framework and questions the reasons behind compulsory heterosexuality. By connecting diverse areas of study, it includes arguments from both hard sciences and environmental humanities to challenge the heterosexist notions of nature as well as to deconstruct the notion of the 'unnatural.' What if homosexuality was not criminalised in several countries? Would the problem of overpopulation cease to exist? Will women stop giving birth just to prove that they have completed their Gaia's mission of fertility, productivity, and nurturing? It is important to understand what erotophobia is to have a better understanding of the necessity of queering ecological feminism.

A queer ecofeminist perspective would argue that the reason/erotic and heterosexual/queer dualisms have now become part of the master identity, and that dismantling these dualisms is integral to the project of ecofeminism (Gaard 1997). It is hard to imagine the number of women, especially in the Global South, who are forced to follow a heteronormative lifestyle. This latter forces women to marry men and give birth to multiple children to be perceived by society as complete wives. The reason behind the pressure to be fertile can be explained as either to keep the husbands around for financial security since the male is usually the provider in the family, to avoid the agony of infertility, or simply the lack of contraceptive methods and sexual awareness. When the subject of overpopulation is brought to the table, the blame is often put on the poor contraceptive methods, lower child mortalities, vaccines, the increase of life expectancy or even agricultural productivity. Yet if we look at the issue

through a social lens, we can see that the increase of birth rates may be caused by social factors as well. Researchers rarely question heteronormativity's negative impacts on our planet's sustainability because homosexuality is usually thought of as an issue rather than another natural sexual orientation or an evolutionary technique of population control, what evolutionary psychologists call 'kin selection hypothesis' (Rahman 2005). India's population, for instance, has exceeded 1.3 billion, and in 2018, the country has finally decided to drop the section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) which criminalises homosexuality. This will probably not impact the social norms that have been adopted for centuries any time soon nor will it protect the LGBT community from daily harassment. Nevertheless, fearing imprisonment is no longer a threat, and queer people can be themselves without fearing the law. Yet a number of countries around the globe still perceive homosexuality as an act against nature and do not tolerate any same-gender relationships regardless of the fact that homosexuality is found in over 1,500 species. Yet humans in the capitalist era needed to prove their superiority over nature, meaning they needed a contrasting feature: heterosexuality. As a result, the shame and stigma that come with being queer forces women to marry men despite their homosexual nature due to the fear of the consequences of coming out as the Other. Forced marriages, honour-based abuse, and conversion therapy are some of the unwanted results that homosexual women face daily both in the Global North and the Global South simply because women who desire women do not fit in the feminine, fertile, reproductive figure that every woman should fit in. On the other hand, the number of men who deny their homosexuality and force themselves to marry women and have an 'ordinary' family is beyond imagination. Yet if the world had no issues regarding human sexuality adoption rates would increase, birth rates would decrease and perhaps humans would finally achieve a balanced and sustainable life. The following pages will argue, via the insights of queer ecofeminist theories, the necessity to consider heteronormativity/queerness

as one of the dualistic structures that need to be deconstructed.

Iran's Qajar Dynasty: When Politics and Queerness Collide

Ecofeminism's activists struggle to end the domination of nature and women depend on liberating themselves from patriarchy, ending natural and gender domination. Yet when it comes to the different paths taken to achieve this liberation, freeing women's sexuality is usually the road less travelled. Women have long been connected to nature for their supposedly common characteristics such as nurturing, reproduction, fertility, and passivity. Thus, a female who does not fit in this socially, religiously, and culturally constructed image is unquestionably considered out of the norm and unnatural. This calls for an anti-essentialist ecofeminism which stands against the different views of woman-ness and the natural. A perfect example to depict an anti-essentialist representation of women would be the *Amorous Couple* painting from the Qajar Dynasty during nineteenth-century Iran, which is an illustration in Afsaneh Najmabadi's book *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards* (2005). The painting represents two androgynous women who are supposedly lovers. In her book *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*, Janet Afary shows the normalisation of same-sex relationships in Iran and how the end of the nineteenth century meant the beginning of the war against queer and gender nonconforming people. The beginning of the twentieth century was the time when the perception of homosexuality in Iranian society started to change—a shift exacerbated by regime change and instability in Iran.

The discovery of oil in the country in 1908 led to the formation of the London-based Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) in 1909. This was followed by the establishment of the Pahlavin Dynasty after the Qajar one.

Research has shown that the British were involved in the enthronement of Reza Pahlavi as Shah, as well as the coup d'état that later overthrew him. Michael P. Zirinsky, for instance, writes on the political distress that Iran had gone through during the nineteenth and twentieth

century with a focus on the period between 1921 and 1926. He shows how Britain wanted to dominate the country especially after the establishment of APOC, which later in 1954 became British Petroleum Company (BP). Coincidence? Absolutely not. It is no secret that the 1953 coup d'état known as Operation Ajax, which occurred a year before Britain completely took over the oil company, was sparked by the nationalisation of APOC. Regardless of the US denial of its involvement in the coup, the result is evident: Iranian rulers were puppets manipulated by both Britain and the United States to serve financial profit from the oil. Evidently, right after the operation's success, oil revenues for both Americans and Europeans increased from \$34 million in 1954–1955 to \$181 million in 1956–1957—and kept on going up. Despite being the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty, Reza Pahlavi did not remain in charge for as long as he had hoped. His power came to an end a couple of decades later when he was overthrown by Khomeini. Once Reza Pahlavi no longer served Western interests, his time as Shah came to an end. He was replaced by someone sympathetic to selling oil to Britain and the United States, and who supported several oppressive social programmes, including anti-homosexuality and strict enforcement of gendered differences. Thus, Gilead became the reality of Iran due to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Homosexuality at this time became punishable by death, and women became enslaved to the Islamic rule. Before the revolution, homosexuality and same-sex encounters were practiced widely in Iran and were rarely perceived as taboo or sinful. In the wake of the revolution, thousands of LGBTQIA+ people have been prosecuted for their lifestyle, continuing to this day. The link between the profit generated from oil businesses and the exploitation of women and oppression of queer people can be traced back to the Shah Pahlavi's refusal to sell oil to Britain and the United States and his desire to nationalise it. Despite Khomeini's attempts at overthrowing the Shah and being exiled for fifteen years, he only succeeded after receiving support from both countries. The moment Pahlavi refused to abide by the rules that profited the West, he was replaced with

Khomeini because the latter agreed to export the oil instead of nationalising the resource. Looking back at Iran's history, less than three decades prior to this revolution, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) was founded. During the same year, NIOC took control over the country's petroleum industry. The 1979 oil crisis occurred due to the decline of oil output, which led to a huge increase in oil prices worldwide. These events made 1979 a remarkable year in Iran's history. Heterosexuality became the 'natural,' compulsory hijab led to more than 100,000 women protesting such an imposition, and humankind's exploitation of its most wanted natural resource increased. The interconnection between bringing foreign oil firms or nationalising the Iranian industry and the freeing of women and sexuality or oppressing both cannot be disregarded: When earth is being violated and used for profit, so are women. And so is their sexuality.

Margaret Atwood, the Canadian novelist, was aware of the catastrophic impacts of what was happening in Iran at that time. She was also worried about other oppressive regimes such as the Decree 770 imposed by Nicolae Ceaușescu in Romania which banned women from contraception and abortion and forced them to have a pregnancy test every month: 'Decree 770, which came into being on 1 October, 1966, instituted severe measures and punishments with the goal of eradicating abortion, effectively subordinating the people to the power of the state, with the first becoming the property of the latter' (Flister 2013). Atwood was concerned about the antiabortion legislation which deprived women of the right to choose what to do with their own bodies: 'The resulting cohort experienced a period of overpopulation of schools, hospitals and public services, along with a lack of investment in the infrastructure that was needed to take in the sudden population growth' (Flister 2013).

Opposing patriarchy means opposing the continuous expectation that women serve the needs of heteronormative society as well as those of Planet Earth to maximise humankind's profiteering. Humans have tried to heterosexualise nature for centuries so that it can fit their

capitalistic expectations of reproduction, hence, the subjection of Gaia's resources and women leading to the domination of both. Their liberation will not be achieved unless queer women and their sexualities are perceived as equally natural as the heterosexual ones. This means that disregarding procreation as an essential result of female sexual encounters is the only way to put an end to the eroticisation of nature, considering that procreation is an essential characteristic for both in the point of view of essentialists. Homosexuality shifted in developed societies from being perceived as a sin, to a crime against the natural, and later, a natural variation in human sexuality. Yet more than seventy countries around the world have anti-LGBTQ laws, meaning that the patriarchal system is still preventing thousands if not millions of women from freeing themselves from the mate=> reproduce=> nurture=> repeat cycle. In *Eros and the Mechanisms of Eco-defense*, Patrice Jones questions the desire to control reproduction of both humans and nonhumans, and states that: 'Rooted in patriarchal pastoralism, globalised via colonialism, serving the aims of capitalism, and furthered by slice-and-dice-style science, the hegemonic economy of (re)production and consumption is the catastrophic antithesis of exuberant eros' (Adams and Gruen 2014).

To challenge this Western social norm, which believes in heteronormativity as the default sexual orientation, Greta Gaard devotes attention to the liberation of women's sexuality. In 'Toward a Queer Ecofeminism' Gaard discusses the impacts of erotophobia and how this is connected to other kinds of oppression. In her initial discussion of dualism, Gaard references Karen Warren and Val Plumwood to explain the superiority that is usually attributed to one of the opposing sides in dualistic structures. Gaard highlights the importance of noticing the conceptual linkages between women and other subjugated categories such as bodies, nature, and animals. Gaard makes the point that 'while all categories of the other share these qualities of being feminised, animalised, and naturalised, socialist ecofeminists have rejected any claims of primacy for one oppression or another, embracing instead the understanding that all

forms of oppression are now so inextricably linked that liberation efforts must be aimed at dismantling the system itself' (Gaard,1997). With a focus on the Western culture, Plumwood's theories of nature's oppression is discussed thoroughly in Gaard's writings. She explores the homology of women's oppression and the environment's domination found in Plumwood's book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, which was initially published in 1993. Plumwood provided a 'thorough grounding for a feminist environmental philosophy' (Plumwood 1993), as well as an in-depth analysis of dualistic structures. Plumwood was not referred to by Gaard only in the context of queering ecofeminism. Elsewhere, Caitlin Doak refers to Plumwood's master model, a system of dualisms that favors and privileges the master identity which dominates each dualism. Doak and Gaard both use Plumwood's anti-essentialist and anti-dualist philosophy to suggest a theoretical means of queering nature. Even though Plumwood did not specifically write on queerness in feminist environmentalism, her focus on dismantling male-centredness and polarised understandings of humans and nature as well as acknowledging the diversity of ecology was the opening step towards thoroughly exploring this diversity.

The Importance of Queering Ecofeminism as a Response to Far-Right Politics

The current rise of far-right politics is threatening security and global democracy. Countries such as Brazil, Hungary, Poland, and the United States are currently influenced by right-wing politics and have been rolling back democratic norms ever since they elected right-wing politicians. Yet some of the things that these politicians have in common are climate skepticism, the need to sustain fossil fuel cultures, hegemonic masculinity, and a re-enforcement of heteronormative models of homemaking. Researchers in environmental humanities such as Paul M. Pulé, Martin Hultman, and Kari Marie Norgaard have long been aware of the connections between climate denialism among conservative white men, right-wing nationalism, and masculinities within a patriarchal system. They write about how

gender and sexual oppression are linked to climate denialism. In their co-publication ‘Cool dudes in Norway: climate change denial among conservative Norwegian men,’ Martin Hultman, along with Olve Krange and Brørn P. Kaltenobrg, conducted a study on males and climate change denialism in Norway. Their research findings show that white males score significantly higher than women and that this denialism increases with increasing age (Krange et al. 2018). The authors firmly believe that: the attitudes of this group of conservative men towards climate change are part of a larger attitude complex expressing resistance against changing societal conditions, such as immigration and increasing ethnic and cultural diversity.

This is a tendency also found in the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Sweden of lately connected more broadly to right-wing nationalist sentiments. (Krange et al. 2018)

While for Norgaard, climate denialism was discussed in her writing through a psychological lens, trying to decipher the reason behind denialism. Norgaard wrote that:

The notion that people are not acting against global warming because they do not know reinforces a sense of their innocence in the face of these activities, thereby maintaining the invisibility of the power relations that are upheld by so-called apathy about global warming. Within this context, to ‘not know’ too much about climate change maintains the sense that if one knew, one would have acted more responsibly. This can be seen as a classic example of what Opatow and Weiss (2000) call ‘denial of self-involvement’: “Denial of self-involvement minimizes the extent to which an environmental dispute is relevant to oneself or one’s group . . . By casting themselves as ‘clean’ and insignificant contributors to pollution, they assert their nonrelevance to environmental controversy” (Opatow and Weiss 2000, 485). (Norgaard 2006)

In fact, looking at the current or past political regimes that adopt right-wing ideologies, one can immediately observe that climate scepticism rarely appears on its own. Religious

apocalypticism poses a serious threat to how humans as a species classify the importance of sustainability and climate action. From Nostradamus all the way to the Book of Revelations, people have been predicting the end of the world. Eschatology in religions differs, yet all religions meet at a certain point: The world will come to an end. In Buddhism, the return of the Maitreya Buddha is expected to be the end of the world. In Christianity, Jesus's apocalyptic teachings are the reason why Christians want salvation and prepare for the Last Judgement. In Islam, the Day of Judgement known as Yawm al-Qiyāmah is expected to happen any time and it is the day all life will be annihilated, and all humans will be judged based on their actions. Other religions throughout human history embraced Doomsday and developed fatalism from one generation to another. This has allowed people to overcome the fear of death by believing in eternity. The problem is, with this belief, life on earth becomes unfortunately a pit stop in their journey towards eternity in heaven. This religious fatalism gives a free pass to any individual not to fight against climate change since everything that is happening to our planet is perceived as a predetermined fate (Costello et al. 2011). Yet if we look at the genesis of religions, we notice that most people who claimed prophecy, especially the Abrahamic religions, are men who gave permission to other men to use natural resources, women, and power as their God-given right. Power then became linked to oppressing other people, extracting resources, and imposing ideologies to dominate and rule. This combination may have led to an obsession with profit and an infinite need for more power, more money and higher status regardless of the cost in terms of planetary deterioration. Yet it is only when numbers became alarming regarding anthropogenic actions and how they crossed our ecosystem's boundaries that people started to fight for climate justice. As Costello et al suggest: 'Action must not be delayed by contrarians, nor by catastrophic fatalists who say it is too late' (Costello et al. 2011). In the United States of America for instance, 77 percent of Democrats wanted stricter environmental laws versus 36 percent of Republicans in a 2017

poll by the Pew Research Centre. The reasons behind this gap go beyond the lack of awareness especially in our digitalised world where information is only one click away. As climate change is becoming a concern for voters across the world, right-wing parties are beginning to incorporate green politics into their agendas. Nevertheless, this far-right environmentalism is sexist, homophobic, racist, and oppressive, and stands against everything that queer ecological feminism brings to the table. In their paper ‘Alliance of Antagonism: Counter Publics and Polarization in Online Climate Change Communication,’ Jonas Kaiser and Cornelius Puschmann discuss climate scepticism and mainstream representations of climate change. They argue that ‘the skeptic counter public is not restricted to voices pertaining to climate change but forms an alliance of antagonism with other extreme factions such as misogynists, racists, and conspiracy theorists, that is, radical positions which are also not represented in mainstream public communication’ (Kaiser and Puschmann 2017). Researchers like Sarah E. Myhre who see the link between climate denialism, racism, homophobia and resistance to LGBTQ rights speculate that the rise of far-right politics is connected to what Cara Daggett calls ‘petro-masculinities’ (Daggett 2018) and what Martin Hultman calls ‘Industrial/Bread-winner masculinities’ (Forchtner 2019). The concept of petro-masculinity means that fossil fuels, white patriarchal order and hegemonic masculinity are entangled. Like other masculinities, it sustains power relations between men and women, yet the difference is the way it sustains this power relation: It fuels it with petro-culture and fossil burning. On the other hand, Industrial Bread-winner masculinities can be explained as follows: A category of men involved in industrial extractive activities that are energy-intensive, profit-generating, fossil fuel-dependent and ecologically destructive. Climate sceptics have been emerging in the past few years even in the most developed countries like Sweden and Norway. In ‘The Far Right and Climate Change Denial,’ a contribution to Bernhard Forchtner’s *The Far Right and the Environment: Politics, Discourse and*

Communication (Frochtner 2019), Martin Hultman, Anna Björk and Tanya Vünikka analyse the reasons for the development of climate denialism in Sweden by looking deeply into the climate politics of their right-wing party. It all began with the Sweden Democrats, a racist nationalist conservative party that resulted, after its split, in the formation of the Swedish Democrats in 1988. Unsurprisingly, its board was formed of men only and has fostered, until today, ideas of anti-feminism, anti-immigration, ethno-nationalism and right-wing populism. Once they made it to the parliament, they expressed their need for reducing the climate change budget, and they declared the Green Party as their main enemy and accused climate scientists of corruption.

Queering Environmental Literary Theory

Studying literature and the environment has emerged and has been known in the past few decades as ecocriticism. Environmental humanities are now emerging in numerous universities worldwide as full degree courses, modules within a course, or departmental initiatives such as clubs, workshops and events. The University of Plymouth's MA in environmental humanities course details, for instance, do not cover anything related to queer theory or queer ecology, making heteronormativity the default norm in their modules.

Another MA course with the same title offered by Bath Spa University offers a range of fifteen modules, and none of them introduces queer ecology nor ecofeminism as a subject. The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE), on the other hand, is an excellent platform for researchers working on multiple fields that revolve around environmental humanities.

Environmental justice, the Anthropocene, ecopoetics, ecocriticism and natural history are among the recurring topics in their teaching resource databases.

The one word that cannot be found except within past calls for papers that the association shared is the word queer. Queer ecological thinking is not introduced when it comes to

teaching environmental literary criticism. Therefore, to what extent can one say that the students would develop critical thinking skills if the notions of nature itself, the natural, and heteronormativity, within an ecological and social framework, have not been challenged?

Despite the existence of Queer Ecology as the opposing side of all heterosexist notions of nature, some researchers, who are leading voices in the fields in question, questioned the absence of queerness in ecocriticism. Catriona Sandilands's 'Queer Life? Ecocriticism After the Fire,' a chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, examines the relevance of queer theory to ecocriticism. According to Sandilands, ecocriticism, among others, is an uncritically heteronormative ecological school of thought (Sandilands 2014). In 2018, University of Nebraska Press published Kyle Bladlow and Jennifer Ladino's book *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*. This collection of interdisciplinary essays brought new perspectives to ecocritical scholarship that revolve around emotion, feminist theory, and queer theory. Bladlow and Ladino edited this book since they wanted to consider the ways in which places shape our emotional lives. They combined entries from researchers who brought interconnected grounds for social and environmental justice by integrating psychology, feminist, and queer theories. As they suggest: "The 'affective turn' has deep roots in Marxist, psychoanalytic, feminist, and queer theory and is understood at least in part as a corrective to a poststructuralist overemphasis on discourse at the expense of embodied experience" (Bladlow and Ladino 2018). Yet this book lacks a considered focus on gendered ecologies and has a major focus on the psychology and anxieties of living in and coping with the Anthropocene. Nicole Seymour's 'The Queerness of Environmental Affect' brought queerness to ecocritical scholarship. Influenced by the 2016 Orlando shooting inside the gay nightclub Pulse, Seymour dives into the melancholy that comes with the shame, guilt and regret that accompany homosexuality and focuses on the negative. She refers to Sandilands's work to connect homophobia's melancholic political impacts and the negative emotions that

emerge from the environmental crisis. Even though queer theory, according to Seymour, has not been interested in environmental questions, she linked the anxieties that come with both. This invites the reader to think critically about the way we perceive our environment and how our perceptions have historically been in continuous metamorphosis depending on our prejudices against queer bodies. Seymour sees potential in queering ecocriticism, believing that queer theory and ecocritical scholarship can inform one another. This first part of her essay challenges ecocriticism to look beyond the wilderness as a potential space worthy of ecocritical analysis and offers gay and queer spaces to ecocritical scholarship to be examined with the inclusion of affect in the analysis. The second part of Seymour's essay moves to visual culture to look at the representation of queer bodies in nature. She takes Kim Anno's short films that represent post-sea level rise societies in port cities and looks at the queer presence in them and the emotional state they bring her. The presence of a black transgender woman in Anno's 2013 film *Water City* reflects the kind of ecosystem she wanted to create. It is one that is not anthropocentric, and not queer-centric either. It is simply one where humans are part of the whole, and queer people are a vital part of this whole, not a part that should draw attention for examination. The essay in general may serve as a critique to ecocriticism and what it has been missing for decades. Via the examples she discussed, Seymour invites us to link queer theory to ecocritical scholarship based on the premise that natural spaces have always and will always be queer. Understanding heteronormativity and heterosexuality as oppressive and unnatural is vital to understanding the necessity of queering environment literary theory. Queer bodies have been invalidated and punished for their unnatural sexualities throughout history and are still perceived in most societies as unnatural, filthy, and deviant. In her 2020 NiCHE article, 'Black Lives, Black Birds, and the Unfinished Work of Queer Ecologies,' Seymour intersects the dynamics of radicalisation with queerness. She calls for queer ecology to 'include tackling white supremacy, anti-blackness, and

environmental (in)justice' (Seymour 2020). While a significant number of publications have done the work to de-heteronormatise nature and remove queerness from the 'unnatural' category. Seymour's insights, akin to those of Kimberlé Crenshaw, underscore the critical recognition of the inevitable intersections among race, gender, and sexuality issues. Within the realm of environmental humanities, a profound interconnectedness emerges, linking violence against the environment to violence against marginalized bodies, including those who identify as queer, black, brown, or beyond the boundaries of white, male, cisgender, or able-bodied identities. This list of intersecting identities is expansive, encompassing anyone who does not fit the mold of the traditionally privileged categories. Neglecting to confront the complexity of oppression and failing to perceive the overarching hierarchical system as a mechanism that simultaneously targets multiple marginalized communities deprives us of crucial strides toward achieving both environmental and social justice. Recognizing these interconnections is pivotal in addressing the multifaceted challenges that our world faces today.

The Importance of Addressing Masculinities in Climate Change

Masculinities and femininities have been brought up in various environmental debates revolving around ecofeminism and queer ecology. Yet very few researchers, apart from critics such as Martin Hultman, Paul M. Pulé and Bob Pease, have attempted to deconstruct masculinities within an ecological framework. Therefore, the work of the authors is going to be discussed thoroughly in this subchapter. It is a fact that our planet's temperature is rising, and warnings about the future of life on Earth are found all over the media. Nevertheless, many individuals find it much easier to blame companies, industries, and governments instead of reflecting on their own environmental ethics. What they probably never think about is that they might belong to one of those bodies that they are blaming. For example, choosing petroleum engineering for a career is considered by many as a lucrative choice. It is highly

paid, the demand for engineers is growing year after year and chances for being unemployed are quite low. Therefore, it is little wonder that thousands of students all over the world choose to pursue a degree in this field. Nutrition science that focuses on developing genetically modified food tempts a lot of young people to pursue a career in genetic engineering. According to healthgrad.com: 'The BLS has reported that biomedical engineers can expect to see a 23% growth in demand for years between 2014 and 2024, which is one of the fastest rates. According to Indeed.com, the average national salary of jobs for Genetic Engineering was \$69,000.00 with a high confidence ranking based on over 250 sources' (Health Grad by Robert Sanchez). However, this industry remains male-dominated, from leadership roles to roles working in mines and oil rigs, much like other industries (Cappello 2011). This masculinist domination has deeper issues than just gender imbalance. It is rooted in the interconnection between defined conceptions of the masculine, domination of resources and expected social and industrial performances.

The upcoming passages examine masculinities with the aim of dismantling the origins of sexist, masculine-praising social and cultural hierarchies that inevitably had, and still have, impacts on climate justice. The first part is dedicated to studying hegemonic ecological masculinities. By drawing on the views of Paul M. Pulé, an alternative yet complementary view to ecofeminism is the focus. Just like femininities have been deconstructed and de-essentialised in ecofeminism, masculinities are the target of the first part of this subchapter within the field of ecological masculinities. The part that follows continues this deconstruction by showcasing these masculinities in men of colour to avoid the assumption that white men are the sole perpetrators of toxic masculinity. The third part then introduces masculinities as part of the corporate world and uses political ecology as the lens to examine the masculinist influences of corporate bodies on indigenous people. The final part focuses on race in connection to gender. Despite it being a risky and controversial subject to include in

an academic work like this one, whiteness, masculinity, and their fragility are presented via Cara Daggett's writings on extractivism.

Hegemonic Ecological Masculinities

Achieving masculine status makes sense only in a social context. The top managers of the corporations pouring out greenhouse gasses and poisoning river systems are not necessarily doing so from inner evil. Perhaps these men love babies and puppies and would sing in a church choir if only they could find the time. But they are working in an insane elite world that institutionalized competitive, power-oriented masculinity, and they are doing whatever it takes—Connell 2017 While the initial mainstream ecofeminism that emerged in the 1970s highlights the complex relationships between women and nature either by linking their similar nurturing features or blaming this similarity for their oppression, ecological masculinity plays the role of complementing ecological feminism. This completion lies in the way ecological masculinities address oppressive masculine hegemonies that people have long used to dominate the Earth, women, indigenous peoples, people of color, LGBTQI+ communities and other marginalised groups. Yet the reality is not black and white, as not all oppressed groups fall under the umbrella of woman/close to nature and not all oppressing individuals or institutions fall under the umbrella of man/close to culture. Gender identities are diverse and so should be the theories to address these identities within any ecological framework. Masculinities and femininities can be found in people regardless of how they identify: Identifying as a female does not exclude the presence of masculinity, identifying as a male does not exclude the presence of femininities, and identifying as nonbinary, two-spirited or agender does not preclude the absence nor the presence of any/both.

Ecofemininities have been explored for decades throughout ecofeminist writings starting from the works of Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies, Val Plumwood, Greta Gaard and Karen Warren to the most recent work of researchers like Nick Rumens and Douglas Vakoch. It

seems that the more publications on ecofeminism, the more interest male researchers have developed in the field. From gendering ecocriticism to queering, politicising and globalising ecofeminism, half a century has been enough to revolutionise environmental humanities by gendering them. This gendering, however, has been focused on the feminine, the female, the woman, as if gender is exclusive to women while men are the norm. Nevertheless, recent years have seen the emergence of ecomasculinities, which as a field has finally begun to stand on its own.

The main reason behind the need for a specific focus on masculinities is to remind the world that the masculine is gendered, has feelings, can be oppressed, and can care and nurture just like its contrasting feminine. Thus, to move towards a post-gender nonbinary approach, an ironically binary work needs to be completed by giving equal attention to masculinities in the study of ecology and the nonhuman world. The need for such research will help our species understand the roots of why our existence has long been polarised and divided. Therefore, ecological masculinities were introduced to reshape men's relationships with nature. Dr. Paul M. Pulé, for instance wrote his PhD thesis in 2013 on ecological masculinism. The project, 'A Declaration of Caring: Towards Ecological Masculinism,' constructs the theoretical framework ecological masculinities and addresses malestream norms and hypermasculinities. 'A Declaration of Caring: Towards Ecological Masculinism' constructs the theoretical framework ecological masculinities and addresses malestream norms and hypermasculinities. These two terms are presented as the underlying reasons behind environmental degradation since they restrict men's abilities to care and are consequently standing in the way of sustainability and planetary recovery. Instead of painting men as the devil in the story of nature's destruction, the thesis puts the oppression of men under the spotlight as the main reason why men are taught to restrict their caring and nurturing capacities. Not being allowed to show care, love and nurture prevents individuals from fostering selfless and caring

relationships with other humans and nonhumans. Paul Mark Pulé does not use the term ‘masculinism’ anymore. He wrote in a footnote in his 2018 book: It is worth noting that I (Paul speaking here) deferred to the use of the term ‘ecological masculinism’ in my doctoral dissertation (Pulé 2013). This pains me to admit now. I’m sorry to say that it was the product of graduate student naïveté; I was not supervised by a gender scholar and did not do the very appropriate and necessary filtering of the term that I should have. I got excited about the idea of positioning my research as the mirror image to ecological feminism, not realizing that the-ism suffix referred to emboldening *Logics of Domination* (Plumwood 1993). I take full responsibility for that miss (sharing an embarrassing facepalm with you here). My thesis has consequently been received by some, prior to reading the content, as a men’s rights treatise, which has been the source of great consternation for me, since that research, limited as it was and a solid steppingstone as all good PhD journeys ought to be, proposed exactly the opposite! I hope those of you who are well-grounded (eco)(pro)feminists and would understandably take issue with my earlier use of ecological masculinism can look past my graduate student folly. (Pulé 2018)

As a result, the emotions that are allowed and accepted in multiple societies, especially Western ones, revolve around anger, frustration, and oppression as they are not viewed as emotions in the first place. Martin Hultman and Pulé wrote *Ecological Masculinities: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Guidance* (2018) together where they brought important theories and perspectives to the complexities of the interrelation of gender and the environment. As a response to the numerous publications where the hegemonic masculinities became the ultimate cause of environmental crises, both authors produced a pioneering work where gendered ecologies took a new turn. Unlike prior publications that remained within the circle of providing sufficient arguments to support masculinities, Hultman and Pulé took a step forward by conceptualising these masculinities and have not left nonbinary people out of

the gender and the environment debate. The book comprises three sections: The first one introduces conceptual foundations where the authors dismantle masculinities as a term and link it to ecological matters.

The second section, 'Four Streams,' sees gender and sexuality, ecofeminism, deep ecology, and care used to explore how masculinities intertwine with the politicisation and gendering of nature. The third and final section throws the reader initially back to the former research that has already been done on masculinities and the environment and proposes the model of ADAM-n (Awareness, Deconstruction, Amendment, Modification, and Nourishing new masculinities) which consists of five precepts to 'facilitate masculine ecologisation' (Hultman and Pulé 2018). This vigorous and versatile model aims to raise people's (men mainly) capacities to learn how to care about others, be it humans or nonhumans.

The work brings the complexities of masculinities to the table and simplifies these complexities by deconstructing them and de-essentialising them. The book's prologue argues that being born into malestream norms forces people to reject emotions and adopt rationality since emotions imply weakness and rationality implies strength. This message has long been directed to males, while females have been the target of imposed femininity and were encouraged, if not forced, to rid themselves from any masculine traits. However, this does not mean that women-identifying people cannot be the product of Western malestream norms, and, as an example, malestream female leaders are examined in the next section. This gendered conditioning of people based on their biological sexes does not serve social hierarchies only; it serves the corporate world in the finest ways. These malestream norms restrict their followers emotionally and socially while caring becomes limited to very specific topics such as caring about one's sports team, career, family, employer, or professional identity (Hultman and Pulé 2018). Yet if this masculine care crosses the limit and moves beyond caring about the previous topics, the masculine identity becomes threatened. This can

be seen when one displays queerness in gender or sexual orientation to society, when one talks about their feelings and mental health, when one acknowledges or admits weaknesses such as phobias or past traumas or when one pursues love while not knowing whether it is going to be reciprocated.

Vulnerability becomes weakness, and weakness has no room in malestreamness. Hultman and Pulé described this care as ‘myopic’ (Hultman, Pulé 2018), as it is blinded by the set of rules that prioritise ego, money, power, and oppression over being true to oneself. People, regardless of their gender identity and who either willingly or reluctantly find themselves in positions where they must follow these rules, end up living restricted lives. The definition of being human has long been polarised by gender and heteronormativity, leaving little room for nonconformity because apparently, this latter transforms one’s status from being a human to becoming subhuman. According to both authors, masculinities are not linear: They are ‘structural, personal and unavoidably plural’ (Hultman, Pulé 2018). The upcoming passages move us from a white/male-centered analysis of hegemonic masculinities to have a deeper look into these masculinities in non-white/female leaders. The reason behind this analysis is to avoid any conjectures that may form that generalise white male masculinism and may result in speculations that render women and people of color as exempt from these masculinities.

Oppressive Masculinities in Non-White and Non-Male Leaders

Hultman and Pulé devote attention to what they term ‘White, Male, and in denial,’ in which the discussion revolves around men who occupy the most privileged positions in the Global North and how they are driven towards climate denialism. Yet the ADAM-n model should not be directed towards men or white men only since there are female-identifying leaders in the Global North and leaders of color in the Global South who need it as much. This is because the masculine hegemonisation of politics means that politicians, regardless of their

gender identities and sexual orientations, must be willing to adopt this hegemonic mindset to achieve their goals and work on their political agendas. Consequently, the Earth's planetary boundaries are crossed, and natural resources and human labor become under the control and distribution of white, industrialist, corporate, capitalist, misogynist and heterosexist regimes. These regimes, however, do not recruit white males only, but welcome anyone who is willing to serve its interests. If we look closely at the features that climate change deniers have in common, whiteness, maleness, wealth and social/political status are present in the forefront: consider the demography of climate change denialists, who have taken it upon themselves to disproportionately confuse the climate science debate in order to protect and preserve their own socio-political and economic interests.

This well-resourced and vocal cadre of corporate leaders, industrial capitalists, special interest groups and public relations firms continue to try to convince us that global warming is nothing other than a 'normal geological cycle.' They claim that climate science is simply hysteria drummed up by the politically correct left to the detriment of the supposed 'good life' that is the great promise of male domination. (Hultman and Pulé 2018)

Yet although the terms male, maleness and masculinity have long been associated with men, they are in fact agender. An example of a female leader who follows malestream norms would be Sylvi Listhaug, who was appointed as Norwegian Minister of Petroleum and Energy in 2019. The Norwegian politician, who belongs to the right-wing Progress party, supports the conservative-led government's pro-oil policies. As a person with climate denial ideologies that date back to a decade ago, Listhaug said in an interview with Verdens Gang 'Det er ikke bevist at menneskelige CO2-utslipp fører til klimaendringer. Det er først og fremst en unnskyldning for å innføre mer skatter og avgifter.' (Vaage and Fangen 2018) As the Minister of Immigration and Integration from December 2015 until January 2018, a role she stepped away from after causing an uproar when she accused the Labour Party of putting

‘terrorists’ rights’ before national security. During this period, Listhaug proposed restrictive policies towards refugees and asylum seekers aiming to make the Norwegian policy the strictest one in Europe. Even though right-wing populism propagates an anachronistic image of women, it did not stop women like Sylvi Listhaug or Sit Jensen from achieving high status in the conservative parties in Norway. The reason why both some female voters and politicians find the politics of the far right appealing may be a deep psychological issue that lies in the internalised sexism that women have endured long enough they adopted it as their own and their possible attraction to the traits of the oppressor who imposed this sexism.

The oppressor, which I refer to here as right-wing masculinism, is not only sexist, but Islamophobic, homophobic, chauvinist, and anti-environmentalist. A societal traumatic attachment is a speculation worth investigating when it comes to women and the resentment of the female gender. Working in this area, Christine Regnier-Bachand, has studied the implications of female gender resentment (Regnier-Bachand 2015, looking at women’s sexist practices.

Using psychological research Regnier-Bachand examines why women view women that are different from them either as a threat or competitors. For instance, traditional homemaker women, as described by Regnier-Bachand, may develop hostile feelings towards feminists and more open and rebellious women since the latter are seen as norm-deviant. One Facebook post from Sylvi Listhaug on 14 November, 2016, after the *New York Times* post on Norway’s strict asylum policies:



Sylvi Listhaug

November 14, 2016 · 🌐



Dette er viktig signal som når ut til hele verden gjennom *New York Times*. Trøkket på tvangsretur og kursendringen i norsk asylpolitikk under FrP og denne regjeringen blir lagt merke til. Det er bra! Tiden for prat er forbi - nå er det handlekraft som gjelder 👍 Vi skal føre en streng politikk, og det betyr at de som får avslag skal ut. Enten frivillig eller med tvang! Lik og del hvis du er enig!



8.9K

1.2K Comments 743 Shares

The above text written by Lysthaug is in Norwegian. (translation: It is not proven that human CO2 emissions lead to climate change. It is first and foremost an excuse to introduce more taxes and fees.) Before replacing Kjell Børge Freiberg as Norwegian Minister of Oil and Energy, Listhaug was appointed in ‘a newly created ministerial post) This is an important signal that reaches the whole world through the *New York Times*. The threat of forced return and the change of course in Norwegian asylum policy under FrP and this government is being noticed. That is a good thing! The time for talk is over—now it’s time for action. We will pursue a strict policy, and that means that those who are refused asylum will be deported. Either voluntarily or by force! Like and share if you agree! One of the basic definitions of ‘Stockholm Syndrome’ (traumatic attachment) is the psychological response of an oppressed person by identifying closely with their oppressor. In the case of societal traumatic attachment where the bank is a gendered society, the captors are people leading malestream, oppressive, toxic norms and the captives are women, nonconforming people, and other oppressed groups, the syndrome’s definition makes sense: Proximity to whiteness by people of colour, sexism exercised by women, the attraction by Western culture, and so on.

Thus, in the case of women, it is understandable that feminism has not always been viable nor acceptable. As Regnier-Bachand concludes: “If a woman’s husband endorses traditional

sexism and takes the stance that women belong in the home and need a man to survive, then the homemaker will adopt this ideology as a coping mechanism to survive with a dominant and traditional spouse” (Regnier-Bachand 2015). Sylvi Listhaug or Siv Jensen are just a couple of examples among many others where women willingly serve a system that does not even perceive them as equal to men. In the world of politics, where transparency and justice are often buried by various forms of corruption, the key to success for women is sometimes the adoption of this societal traumatic attachment. Despite coming from what is meant to be one of the most progressive societies, Listhaug and Jensen publicly support the politics of oppression, therefore, oppressing and contributing heavily to environmental degradation perpetrated by Western economics and capitalism. When it comes to proximity to whiteness, another response to racial traumatic bonding with one’s oppressor, Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro is another example that proves that one does not have to be in the Global North to adopt white male hegemonic toxicities. Although the Brazilian population is quite diverse, the racial identity in the country is not purely white. Yet despite the country’s multiracialism, multiculturalism and multiethnicity, the racist, sexist, and homophobic former army captain Jair Bolsonaro was sworn in as president on 1 January 2019. Like Donald Trump in the extent of his sexism, homophobia, and rhetoric against minoritized people, Bolsonaro has gained political popularity and won the presidential elections despite the many scandals he caused. It seems like a similar story has been happening in both the United States and Brazil, as two white males fuelled with homophobia, sexism, racism, and elitism came to power, causing suffering for the most vulnerable people. These success of two men depended on empowering the richest, the whitest and the strongest at the expense of the rights of anyone else who does not fall under the rich/white/male umbrella. From LGBT+ rights and healthcare, strict migration policies, to notorious anti-environmental decisions, the right-wing politicians found themselves mirroring each other in decision-making. The sixth-most-

populated country in the world is perhaps the most racially mixed one. With a population of around 211,715,973 people, the country's multiple ethnic groups form the majority as only 43 percent are of white European descent. However, the man that was voted to lead the country seems to not have any interest in climate change, human rights, or gender equality. Despite the rising fires in the Amazon as well as the concerning deforestation, the populist president almost pulled out of the Paris Agreement on climate change and agreed to respect the accord if he does not have to cede sovereignty to native tribes or international jurisdiction over the Andes mountains, Amazon rainforest and Atlantic Ocean, known as the Triple A region.

Regardless of one's gender identity, a person can adopt an oppressive masculinist mindset especially when in positions of power where such a mindset serves one's personal and professional interests. Denying climate change does not mean denying the rising temperatures around the planet only, but it also means denying its unequal impact on people and how the Global South suffers significantly more than the Global North. Denying climate change means refusing to acknowledge the impacts of environmental degradation on indigenous people and continuing with anthropogenic actions such as drilling oils, deforestation and dumping toxic waste in the lands of the least fortunate and the voiceless. Denying climate change means accepting hierarchical thinking and oppressive mindsets as defaults. It means accepting ongoing profit even if it is at the expense of others who are less fortunate. It means exploiting endlessly without a sustainable vision. This is why an inclusive intersectional feminist revolution is needed. One that wants to put an end not only to environmental deterioration, but to all kinds of human failures to be sustainable, liberal and democratic and, most importantly, our failure to maintain our humaneness.

The Masculinities of Corporations: Insight from Political Ecology

Political ecology is a field of research that sheds the light on the global political economy in relation to the environment. It is a field of scholarship that is mainly based on the research and analysis of the geographer David Harvey, and it promises increased democracy and participation by dismantling restrictive state structures and practices. It envisions the protection of rural communities by guaranteeing their property rights and helping them enter conservation-oriented business ventures. It proposes the promotion of green business practices, by demonstrating to corporations that green is also profitable (Igoe and Brockington 2007). This political theory challenges neoliberal conservation, which is the current capitalist economic process by which biodiversity conservation is being approached. Neoliberal conservation is criticised by social science critics from a political ecology standpoint. They believe that the current conservation practices should rather be controlled within a more supervised and conceptualised framework. The infusion of environmental protection with capitalism during the past few decades has resulted in capitalist markets gaining power with respect to natural resources distribution, the privatisation of these resources, and has seen a lack of governmental intervention in resource management. As a result, marginalised communities end up paying the price of the so-called conservation. The various ways of responding to the risks of climate change are extending vertically on political levels ranging from local to global, as well as horizontally, in segments of society far beyond the core environmental ones. It is becoming more visible that authority over the deterioration of the atmosphere resides in multiple locations. . . . ‘Environmental governance has mainly been thought of in terms of activities by and within global civil society, and cases of private, market-based, environmental governance have received less attention’ (Jagers and Striiple 2002) One of the strongest examples to showcase the intimate relationship between a renowned NGO and a polluting corporation is to dig into the work of the World Wildlife

Fund, the world's large environmental NGO and its involvement in greenwashing polluting businesses.

The Silence of the Pandas (2011) is an excellent documentary that exposes the ugly face of WWF by explaining how this international organisation is in fact collaborating with companies to destroy tropical forests. One good example of the contradictions of WWF is the way they handle the management of the lives of tigers and how they bribe the inhabitants of the forest to make them leave it. Contrary to the assertions on their website, WWF's actions have a detrimental rather than a beneficial impact on endangered animals. In the documentary, during an interview with Vasudha Chakravarthi, a nature photographer and Ullash Kumar, an environmentalist, we understand that the tigers do not benefit at all from the money that WWF pulls in for their sake. Instead of spending the money on preserving the lives of the species in the jungle, they spend it on buildings to promote ecotourism, which is itself a for-profit business. People have been forced to leave. In his article, John Vidal, the *Guardian's* environment editor, says that: 'WWF's conservation philosophy has changed considerably in 50 years, but until recently it was widely thought that people and wildlife could not live together, which led to the group being accused of complicity in evictions of indigenous peoples from Indian and African forests' (*The Guardian* 2014).

This is just one of many cases where climate governance and conservation do not consider social justice since profit comes before the main goal of the organisation itself. Jagers and Stripple raise some valid points when discussing the privatisation of regimes in climate governance. They praise the role of the insurance industry in climate governance and how the private sector is complementary to the governmental one. However, in their attempts to define climate governance and defend the privatisation of authority, they fail to mention anything related to the gender and social implications of this privatisation. This might have not been their main purpose yet praising an industry that has long been known for its

bankruptcy worldwide without addressing how this same industry neglects marginalised communities is perhaps not what contemporary environmental researchers need to rely on.

The survival of indigenous people depends heavily on their ownership of and access to resources. From medical practices to tribal traditional celebrations, to cooking traditions, their daily life is based on their management and distribution of what their natural environment has to offer. Thus, change in climate or resourcefulness impacts them directly, resulting in daily survival challenges which often lead to forced migration. The following passages will examine the ongoing consequences of climate change on ethnic minoritized people and the different coping mechanisms they are forced to develop to survive. A resolute political response to climate change is becoming increasingly important in creating a sense of alarm in people. As a response to these alarming events that are threatening our survival, organisations and governments worldwide have been taking initiatives to protect our habitat, to prevent the extinction of species and to ensure that climate action is effective. According to Jagers and Striiple: Global climate governance should refer to all purposeful mechanisms and measures aimed at steering social systems toward preventing, mitigating, or adapting to the risks posed by climate change. Proceeding from such a conception, global (climate) governance must not be performed by states only; it is also a matter for other authorities? For example, nongovernmental organizations and epistemic communities. (Jagers and Striiple 2003)

Yet in a world controlled by capitalism, even the most noble actions are capitalised and remain far from achieving social justice. Conservation has moved from being chained to natural sciences alone to becoming the concern of political and social studies as well. And just like it has affected education, health care and many other sectors, neoliberalism believes in free markets, corporate power and globalisation and acts as a virus which places workers in the world of competition, including the field of environmentalism. But the truth is, neoliberal

conservation is nothing but the tip of the iceberg: an everlasting interconnectedness between capitalism and environmental protection.

As a result of this relationship, the commodification of nature led to the territorialisation of resources and lands as the new regulation of nature, negatively altering the life of the poor, especially vulnerable communities, and women. Even though there is national and international environmental legislation dedicated to fighting global warming and other anthropogenic climate change-related degradations, questions related to the distribution of resources and protection of the ecosystem are still unanswered.

Environmentalism, White Fragility and Fragile Masculinities

Cara Daggett is a researcher and assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at Virginia Tech, where she researches feminist political ecology. Daggett is particularly interested in the politics of energy in an era of planetary disruption, and her work focuses on science, energy, technology, and the more-than-human world. But Daggett is also concerned with what she has called petro-masculinity. As previously defined, the concept of petro-masculinity that Daggett introduced means that fossil fuels, white patriarchal order and hegemonic masculinity are intertwined. Like other masculinities, it sustains a power relation between men and women, yet the difference is the way it sustains this power relation: It fuels it with petroculture and fossil burning. The following passages explore the interrelations of white supremacy, climate denialism and fragile masculinities with reference to Daggett's work and will examine the hegemony of masculinities and its interrelation with fossil fuel dependency. Daggett claims that because of the money and privilege that gets put at stake every time fossil fuel extraction is questioned and opposed, the ethos demanded to achieve environmental justice is resisted (Daggett 2018). She links Trump's election and his administration's climate decisions on how climate denialism fuels capitalist interests, and then talks about authoritarianism and how this latter is the result of the dependent relationship

with fossil fuels. Authoritarianism is blind submission even if it comes at the expense of abandoning one's freedom or one's own interests. In the case of the United States, for instance, people who voted for Trump and his climate fascism submitted to his views and climate denialism and did not oppose his withdrawal of the Paris climate agreement. With a focus on the United States, Daggett's discussion revolves around fossil fuel systems, white patriarchal rule, and authoritarianism. Daggett wrote about petro-masculinity and stated that: Petro-masculinity approaches masculinity as a socially constructed identity that emerges within a gender order that defines masculinity in opposition to femininity, and in so doing, sustains a power relation between men and women as groups! . . . Petro-masculinity draws upon aspects of a traditionally hegemonic masculinity, but at the same time, its appearance in the American far right today is better understood as a kind of hypermasculinity, which is a more reactionary stance. It arises when agents of hegemonic masculinity feel threatened or undermined, thereby needing to inflate, exaggerate, or otherwise distort their traditional masculinity.' (Daggett 2018)

Her work addresses authoritarian politics' entanglement with fossil fuels and how the latter are a threat to democracy by pointing out examples of extremist regimes in the MENA region: Where there is oil, there is democratic hijacking.

By referring to carbon democracy, Daggett echoes the work of Timothy Mitchell in his 2011 book *Carbon Democracy*. In this book, Mitchell rethinks the politics of energy and argues that extraction of oil and fossil fuels sabotage humanity's ability to effectively address the current environmental crises.

Daggett's theories on the intersection of hegemonic masculinities and oil extraction and control match resonate with the earlier discussion of the oil dictatorship in Iran. In Iran, the hegemonic masculinities are not necessarily linked to men but imposed on men through a system that was designed to oppress the feminine and impose extreme gender roles.

Right-wing nationalists have always been a threat to democracy. Trump supporters attempted a fascist coup at the US Capitol in Washington, DC on 6 January 2021, which was the date set aside for lawmakers to count the presidential electoral votes. Before the counting began, Donald Trump spoke to a large crowd of his supporters, where he called the 2020 presidential election the most corrupt one in the nation's history.

Trump used theories and accusations to support his claim, yet none of his claims of fraud were proven at the Supreme Court. Trump ended his speech by encouraging his followers to march down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol. When the white confederates stormed into the Capitol, they created a state of complete chaos in the building, and rioters flew Trump flags and Confederate flags. These rioters took over chairs in the senate, made their way into lawmakers' offices, and five people were killed during the event.

The storming of the US Capitol is the result of white fragility. Far-right nationalists dominated the crowds and proudly showed their bigotry and racist symbols which they wore with pride. The people were not protesting for freedom nor were they standing up against injustice. They were fighting to maintain and legitimise white supremacy. This event was not surprising. White supremacy has always been in control, and the fact that these rioters were escorted gently off the grounds of the building without repercussions in contrast to the beating and killing that people of colour endured in 2020 during the BLM movement is proof that change is still needed on political and social levels. Similarly, climate change protesters, even ones who are still attending high school, have been arrested on several occasions during the Friday for

Future climate protests. Yet researchers like Hultman and Daggett have long noted the links between white supremacy and climate denialism. Before digging into Daggett's writings on petro-masculinities, it is important to recall the multiple observations and writings on how fragile masculinity affects environmentalism, as these ideas have received widespread

attention in the media and in academia. In 2019, Owen Jones wrote a piece for the *Guardian* titled ‘How can men be too straight to recycle?’ In this piece Jones relied on the research of Jent K. Swim on the masculinities and femininities of environmentalism and eco-conscious behaviour. Swim has published several articles on social psychology and climate change where she studied human responses to how they should behave in the time of a global crisis in relation to gender conformity. In Jones’s piece for the *Guardian*, men’s tendencies to avoid recycling and carrying reusable bags are linked to their fear of being perceived as feminine or homosexual.

Caring about the environment is perceived as a feminine behaviour, and for men whose gender identity is fixated on the traditional essentialist masculinities, caring means threatening this identity. In addition to linking femininities and masculinities to environmentalism, researchers have also explored conservatism and whiteness’s impacts. In their 2011 paper ‘Cool Dudes: The Denial of Climate Change among Conservative White Males in the United States,’ Aaron M. McCright and Riley E. Dunlap examined the demographic makeup of climate deniers which turned out to be overwhelmingly conservative white men (Dunlap and McCright 2011). Another paper written by Brent K. Marshall in 2004, “Gender, Race, and Perceived Environmental Risk: The ‘White Male’ Effect in Cancer Alley, LA,” Marshall studied gender and race in relation to environmentalism and deduced that women and people of color perceive environmental risks as more of a serious matter than white people and men (Marshall 2004):

Perhaps white males see less risk in the world because they create, manage, control and benefit from many of the major technologies and activities. Perhaps women and non-white men see the world as more dangerous because in many ways they are more vulnerable, because they benefit less from many of its technologies and institutions, and because they

have less power and control over what happens in their communities and their lives. (Marshall 2004)

In a related vein and in a piece that focuses on whiteness, Emily Atkin considers the links between the Proud Boys and petro-masculinity. The Proud Boys, an alt-right organisation created by Gavin McInnes and led by Enrique Tarrio, is a far-right, male-only Western chauvinist group known for political violence. Joining this group requires men to take an oath where they claim pride in being Western chauvinists and pride in the society created by the modern white man. In her work, Atkin sees the Trumpism that fuels the alt-right group: ‘Trump, a climate denier, shares the Proud Boys’ vision of what it means to be a man: strength-obsessed, fearful of looking weak, careless about risk, nostalgic about “the old ways”’ (Atkins 2020).

Ultimately, it is worth concluding by returning to Daggett, whose work crystallises the core of these observations when she describes petro-masculinity as a form of hypermasculinity. This petro-masculinity is highly dependent on industrialist pride, progress, control, dominance and accelerationism. From machinery to the exploitation of natural resources and fossil fuels, the exploitation of human labor, consumerism, and the dependency on cheap energy supplies, the male identity became linked to the masculinity of industrial modernity, especially in the United States. According to Daggett, making America great again is about making men great again: Taking steps backwards where white men were proudly and unapologetically superior, where unpaid or underpaid labor was not a problem, and where climate change was a nonexistent problem. Accepting climate change as fact means accepting the individual and global responsibilities that come with this acceptance. This is why denialism is often present among people whose acceptance can only happen at the expense of losing parts of their white, conservative, heterosexist masculinities.

Chapter 5: Post-Gender Semiotics

The following sections question the logic behind assigning gender at birth, intersex erasure, the dismissal of nonbinary identities, and the injustice towards transgender people. The aim of such introductory passages is to give an in-depth insight into multiple identities and bodies that have long been underrepresented and have not been given just attention. One may question the relevance of incorporating post-gender semiotics into an ecofeminist manuscript. The answer is quite simple: Everything is connected, and post-genderism presents a window to continue expanding ecofeminism without the constraints of the gender binary. This chapter does not in any way imply that gender identities must be eradicated or invalidated; on the contrary, it aims to shed light on the existence of more than just two identities, as well as the fact that humans do not necessarily have a gender identity in the first place. Living in a post-gender society means that gender will be rendered casual, valid but significant, important to those who value it but not imposed on those who do not. The ensuing subchapters will navigate transhumanism, posthumanism, post-genderism and far-right politics to demonstrate the entanglement of all and reveal how ecofeminism's awareness of such an enmeshment can lead to the evolution of the field.

INTRODUCTION TO POST-GENDERISM

Post-genderism, in simple words, started as a social, cultural, and political movement that arose from the desire to move beyond the constraints of gender. Although some may understand this as a call for the erosion of gender, I want to clarify before moving forward in this work that post-genderism does not call for gender elimination, but for moving beyond the multiple ways gender restricts our species. It calls for the celebration of gender diversity and the acknowledgement that among humans, some may not have a gender identity at all. Gender, since it has had a strong binary presence, is seen by advocates of post-genderism as an obstacle to unlocking human potencies and capacities. The compulsory gendering of humans from their birth is seen as socially and culturally limiting, which is why post-genderism calls for the minimisation, if not elimination, of the impact gender identities should have in determining one's role as a member of humanity. Intersecting post-genderism with ecofeminism is an approach that has not been developed heretofore. Therefore, this attempt is far from being perfect and calls for further contributions and further similar attempts. The reason why ecofeminism could potentially benefit from such an intersection is the lifting of the victimisation of humans mainly because of their genitals. It aims at redirecting ecofeminism towards viewing all humans as equal, despite their diverse bodies and identities.

It aims at countering the politics of differences that target the separation and division of our species and at encouraging the fact that we do, in fact, share 99.9 percent of our DNA regardless of our hormones, chromosomes, body shapes, body abilities, environmental experiences or life choice. This is why before jumping into post-genderism as a field, a few concepts will be introduced and analysed to provide a theoretical background to the intersectional work broached in this chapter. The first part of this latter topic questions biological facts. From chromosomes to binary sex-determined brain differences, it raises

questions regarding the accuracy of scientific research as well as the possible political agendas behind neglecting gender diversity and the persistence of maintaining polarised results where a hierarchy is created and reinforced among humans. The second part answers this question by starting with an analysis of transgender and intersex bodies as a part of what makes our species diverse and nonbinary. The eradication of people that have not conformed to Westernised definitions of male and female is brought to the readers' attention and the section calls for the decolonisation of nonconforming bodies.

How Logical Is Biological?

Only our beliefs about gender—not science—defines our sex.

– Fausto-Sterling 2020

Scientific factual conclusions in biology and related fields have been weaponised to nurture and empower masculinity. As strong and debatable as this statement may be, several research papers and publications have argued in its favour. Brian Martin published *The Bias of Science* in 1979, and his book opens with a case study of two scientific research papers, in which there is an analysis of the way the authors forward their arguments by using technical assumptions. Identifying presupposition, selective use of evidence, as well as selective use of results and alternative arguments references are the main problematic approaches that the author pursued as the reasons behind structural biases in science. Presuppositions, according to the author, can shape scientific arguments and influence the scientific determination of what matters are worthy of studying in the first place (Martin 1979).

The author, while arguing that bias is a result of presuppositions, suggests that 'One's own presuppositions strongly influence one's reaction to scientific work. If one disagrees with the assumptions built into a bit of scientific work, one is much more likely to consider its author

to be biased' (Martin 1979). Later, in 1985, Martin published an article, with Jill Bowling, titled 'Science: A Masculine Disorder.' Martin and Bowling opened the article with the following statement:

Patriarchy within the scientific community is manifested through male control of elite positions and various exclusionary devices. The scientific method incorporates masculine features such as the objectification of nature. Scientific knowledge is masculine in its neglect of women's experience and its adoption of paradigms built on assumptions of competition and hierarchy. (Bowling and Martin 1985)

Biological essentialism, as discussed previously, has long determined a hierarchical system among humans. From birth to death, a person's assigned gender and, in most cases, expected (if not imposed) sexuality are not explored by the person, but imposed by their surroundings. However, Western society has a proven history of denying nonbinary and nonconforming truths for the sake of control. As discussed earlier in the Qajar dynasty's section regarding gender and queerness, beauty before European imperialism had different standards and was undifferentiated by gender. Societies all over the world, usually before they became colonised by Europeans, have a proven history of gender heterogeneity. An ideal example of British colonial rule's impacts on people's sexuality and gender expressions is section 377 (S377) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which criminalises homosexuality. This law was introduced to India during British imperialism in 1864 and targeted the Hijra community. Hijras are gender-bending people who, at that time, were very powerful people and were involved in important roles such as collecting taxes or being involved in court matters. Hijras are often born males and present in a more feminine manner, unlike what is expected of men. Some even undergo a castration ceremony where they offer their genitalia to the Hindu deity of fertility Bahuchara Mata. Not limited by binary views, the hijras are perceived in Indian society as a third gender, one independent from the male/ female dichotomy. The British

colonised most of South Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. When exposed to a third gender, which goes against the Christian perceptions of gender, the British named all hijras criminals in 1871, and ordered colonial authorities to arrest them on sight. Biological facts have always been enmeshed with racism and colonial rule. In his 2007 book *The Sexual Demon of Colonial Power: Pan-African Embodiment and Erotic Schemes of Empire*, Greg Thomas analysed sexuality in history, ranging from a diverse set of examples and references dating all the way back to ancient Greece and moving all the way forward to industrial Europe. Insisting that the notions of men and women did not start without race and class entanglements, the author calls for a rejection of European discourses of sex and gender as part of colonial resistance. Thomas argues that:

The sex of a black Athena could never serve the same purpose. The embrace of any erotic identified as African would produce an entirely different outcome. Positing scientific reason as the gift of classical Greece to modern Europe has entailed the conceptualization of Black people, in particular, as an undisciplined mass of sexual savages. The very notion of Western civilization is therefore founded on a primary opposition between white and non-white persons that is graphically sexualized. (Thomas 2007)

Western notions of gender did not include Black people to dehumanise and demonise them. As a result, accepting gender discourses without questioning them is part of accepting the historic brutality that occurred in the name of the white man's burden. To pursue and impose binary gender and sexual expectations of people, Western morality kept embedding scientific research into the colonial invention of the gender binary with the aim of maintaining it. In *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (2020), Anne Fausto-Sterling challenges the widespread misapprehension that although gender is a social construct, sex is firmly biological and fixed. And as shocking as it may come to many, the 'M' or 'F' letters on national identity cards, driving licenses, and travel documents are mere

political acts, not biological truths. This is because nature has never been binary and has never limited us to two sexes only. Fausto-Sterling refers to Foucault's writing on biopolitics, a key concept in challenging 'the natural' in sex and gender theories. Biopolitics introduces a political rationality that examines the mechanisms 'through which human life processes are managed under regimes of authority over knowledge, power, and the processes of subjectivation' ('The Anthropology of Biopolitics' 2013). When it comes to the genetic binary of the X and Y chromosomes, Sarah S. Richardson unpacked the history of genetic research in her book *Sex Itself: The Search for Male and Female in the Human Genome* (2013). In this study, Richardson intersects gender and genetic studies, considering how the two chromosomes were gendered and anchored as 'a conception of sex as a biologically fixed and unalterable binary' (Richardson 2013). Richardson proceeds to identify the multiple words that have been used to describe the X chromosome such as 'she' that is 'more sociable,' 'controlling' and 'motherly.'

By way of contrast, the Y chromosome became a 'he' and has been attributed 'macho,' 'active,' 'dominant' and 'hyperactive' qualities (Richardson 2013).

According to the author, this resulted in the portrayal of both chromosomes as a heterosexual couple. What Richardson reveals is the political agenda behind the enforcement of the gender-sex binary by using the X and Y to define essences of maleness and femaleness, even though this difference in chromosomes does not alter the facts that human genomes are 99.9 percent identical. The X and Y chromosomes are not the only sex-determining factors in the natural world. Richardson details several examples of reptiles, for instance, where the sex is dependent upon the temperature of the environment during early development rather than the absence or the presence of the Y chromosome. Some species, like the New Mexico whiptail lizards who are only females, are one sex only. Other species like clownfish are born hermaphrodites and can carry all reproductive organs. The X and Y chromosomes were

discovered in 1890 and 1905 and were, in fact, labelled as ‘odd chromosomes’ or ‘accessory chromosomes’ (Richardson 2013). This is because sex was observed as fluid and complex, and certainly not dependent on binary chromosomes only. However, this co-complexity was dismissed, leading to the denotation of X and Y as sex chromosomes which were highly influenced by cultural gender stereotypes. Richardson’s overall argument is that the gendering of the chromosomes was pushed by cultural factors and not solid biological substantiations and scientific evidence.

A recent work published by *Genetics in Medicine* on 9 June 2022, linked chromosomes to health issues. The article, ‘Detection and characterization of male sex chromosome abnormalities in the UK Biobank study,’ focused on ‘men,’ and has shown that one out of every five hundred men carries an extra chromosome. Although the study is significantly male-oriented and has neglected other types of bodies by solely focusing on the normative cisgender male, it has shifted the focus from linking chromosomes to gender to acknowledging the need for more extensive chromosome-oriented research as this latter has been revealing nongendered health matters. Rebecca M. Jordan-Young tackles similar issues to Richardson in her book *Brain Storm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Differences* (2011). This latter publication challenges misinformation about the male/female brains and the difference in the way they are wired. Again, the author contradicts the assumed contrast in brains by stating that there is no comprehensive and valid scientific proof that brains are inherently sex differentiated. In a chapter titled ‘Sexual Bodies and Body Politics,’ Jordan-Young discusses the authoritative and “dominant scientific tale of sexual differences” (Jordan-Young 2011) when referring to the brain organisation theory. Jordan-Young urges the reopening of questions that have been closed by accepting this theory as factual since the evidence of this latter was proven to be disjointed. In scientific studies, biology has rarely allowed room for gender variability, and geneticism closed doors for questions. As a result,

intersex children, for instance, were labelled as anomalies without proposing that they constitute a category other than M or F; the world was introduced to the wandering uterus myth, testosterone was labelled as a male sex hormone and much more scientific, oppression-driven errors were normalised. It is time for scientific research to question the relevance of the existence of dichotomy in research methodologies in the first place. Secondly, the ethics of medical practices could be brought into question and require an evaluation to determine whether what has for so long been taken as a granted ethic is, in fact, ethical. The upcoming passages will focus more on intersex people. This is because the research up to the present day shows that queer ecofeminism has a significant focus on homosexual and transgender people, and little light is shed on intersex bodies. Continuing to argue against the dangers of biological essentialism and the gender binary, the passages address the importance of decolonising nonconforming bodies.

Intersex and Transgender Bodies: Time for Decolonisation

Cisheteropatriarchy holds its roots in colonialism, and dismantling and unlearning these Western agendas forced upon us is a necessary action in the liberation of all oppressed peoples. If we are to obliterate white supremacy, a key component of that necessary project is recognizing and dismantling transphobia as an ongoing destructive phenomenon directly rooted in colonialism (Paramo 2018)

The history of settler colonisation is predominantly rooted in white supremacy, racism, and obsession over slavery and extractivism generated profits. The dehumanisation of colonised bodies was hence inevitable since colonised bodies were portrayed as savage, incapable of autonomy, and in need of control. Consequently, even in recent times, not all bodies are dignified.

Belonging to humanity is, unfortunately, not a key to accessing dignity and elevation. Bodies that are nonconforming belong to a group of marginalised bodies, simply because they challenge normativity. The roots of climate issues are deeply intertwined with multiple kinds of oppression, including the oppression of the LGBTQIA+ community. Recognizing that oppression doesn't occur in isolation but rather at the intersections of various identities, it becomes clear that individuals may simultaneously face environmental injustice and discrimination based on their LGBTQIA+ identity or their status as members of minoritized groups. This intersectionality amplifies vulnerability, as minoritized communities, including LGBTQIA+ individuals, often find themselves disproportionately impacted by climate change, residing in environmentally vulnerable areas with limited access to healthcare and resources. Consequently, addressing these underlying injustices becomes not only a matter of social equity but also a cornerstone of effective climate justice. In this context, queer liberation and justice for minoritized groups are inseparable from the broader fight for a sustainable planet, underscoring the fact that climate justice is heavily dependent on achieving justice for all. The roots of climate issues are deeply intertwined with multiple kinds of oppression, including the oppression of the LGBTQIA+ community. Hence, climate justice is heavily dependent on queer liberation and justice for minoritized groups. According to Surya Monro:

Intersex people face a wide variety of barriers to social justice on the basis of their variance, including infanticide and murder (Carpenter 2020) and abortion on the grounds of chromosomal 'abnormality' (Jeon, Chen and Goodson 2012).

Structural inequalities also manifest in the form of surgery and related interventions carried out on babies and children which are typically reported as having poor and/or damaging outcomes (see for example Creighton, Minto and Steele 2001; Diamond and Garland 2014) and which may lead to 'unacceptable levels of physical and psychological trauma in patients'

(Ferrara and Casper 2018, 1). The cultural and institutional oppression of intersex people is apparent in the continuation of non-consensual and medically unnecessary so-called ‘normalizing’ surgeries on infants and children. Surgical intervention aimed at making intersex infants and children conform to sex binaries is also linked to the erasure of intersex at legal and cultural levels (Travis 2015). These ‘invisibilities’ remain largely unnoticed because of social and cultural forces that render intersex people beyond the protocols and frameworks that protect people in many states internationally. (Monro 2021)

Monro brings into question the medicalisation of intersex people and the stigma that revolves around what some may call ambiguous genitals. Understanding the variations in sex characteristics means overcoming the binary and essentialist conceptualisations of man and woman. Intersex people are living proof that our species is a diverse one and that human bodies have not been, and will never be, limited to polarised features. However, intersex people remain the targets of compulsory dyadism via irreversible medical interventions that lead to the erasure of nonbinary and nonconforming bodies.

Haley McEwen and Tommaso M. Milani authored an engaging piece in 2015, ‘queer & trans Art-iculations: Decolonising gender and sexualities in the Global South,’ in which they analysed the intertwining of heteronormativity, gender binary and violence. The article was a result of an exhibition, a project with the title *queer & trans Art-iculations*, which was coordinated by the Wits Centre for Diversity Studies. The exhibition was held at the Wits Art Museum (WAM) in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 31 January to 30 March 2014, and was attended, according to the authors, by over 3,500 people. The exhibition, according to the writers, served as a reminder to cisgender and heterosexual people of their own privilege, as well as serving as a space for queer and nonconforming people to feel represented and celebrated. The article starts with a strong defiance of heterosexuality and its normalisation, with a focus on how it devalues same-sex attractions and eventually perpetuates violence.

They point out another unwanted outcome of this normalisation, which is directly linked to gender. In their words, such normalisation ‘erases the complexity of gender identification, which is not reducible to a simplistic dualistic model of men/ masculinity and women/femininity’ (McEwen and Milani 2015). While their research in this article is focused on the South African communities, they call out gender non-normativity as a ‘imperial western import’ (McEwen and Milani 2015). By using art and exhibitions as their main source for their arguments, they intersect with the use of multiple forms of art (film, art installations, folk stories and mythology etc.) across our argument. This mode of analysis offers a holistic understanding of the environmentally shaped dynamics of humans and other-than-humans, within an environmental framework through the prism of a reinvented ecofeminism. The authors then bring up the precolonial sexualities and how these latter have been policed and controlled by Western constructions of notions of anomaly and deviance when it comes to African sexual practices and dynamics.

In ‘Ecological Crisis, or ‘Intersex Panic,’ as Answer of the Real?’ Stephanie Hsu writes that however, as trans studies scholars such as Julian Gill-Peterson vigilantly point out, endocrinology has also accommodated scientific racism by assigning racial/ethnic meaning to differences that can be linked to the body’s hormone production (e.g., genital shape and size, or emotion and mood regulation). Cal’s particular intersex variation straddles these genealogies, since 5-alpha-reductase deficiency syndrome is a hereditary condition observable in the Global South (Hsu 2018). By calling for the decolonisation of bodies in the Global South, the authors remind the reader that when colonisation occurs, it does not simply target the lands, resources, or labours of bodies. It targets existing gender and sexual dynamics with the intent to limit the colonised bodily autonomies by imposing western ideologies of what gender and sex must be. Thus, since ecofeminism, in all its waves, calls woodenly for the decolonisation of lands, indigenous communities, and women’s bodies, it is

important that it incorporates queer bodies in its decolonisation discourse to take a step further in its efforts to be truly intersectional and inclusive. It has already been established in the previous chapters that gender equality and climate justice are intertwined. Yet sexual health and sexual rights are blurred in the conversation even though they are equally, if not more, inextricably linked to environmental issues.

Nonbinary and Gender-Nonconforming Identities

Transgender and gender-nonconforming people have always existed. Yet far too many people have been compelled to suppress and to deny either their feminine or masculine traits to survive in societies that enforce gender norms and to fit into people's fantasies of what they should look like and of how they ought to behave. Unlike what some may believe, nonbinary people are not the product of liberalism: They have long existed before imperialism and the histories of colonialism. In fact, people defying gender conforming date back all the way to ancient Egypt, naming Hatshepsut as an example. This gender-bending pharaoh was born female yet chose to rule as a male. Kelly- Anne Diamond published an article in 2020 titled 'Hatshepsut: Transcending Gender in Ancient Egypt' in which she examined the pharaoh's gender identity, which lasted for circa twenty years. According to the author, 'Hatshepsut exemplified the virile woman who broke the bond between masculinity and the male body' (Diamond 2020). Diamond's piece discusses the female king's gender representation, and how researchers and historians have attempted diverse justifications for the pharaoh's bending of femininity and masculinity. In the article, Diamond analyses Hatshepsut's challenge to hegemonic masculinity:

Hatshepsut disrupted the structural aspect of patriarchy by then elevating herself to king within the first seven years—a position traditionally held by men and consisting of one occupant [...] There was a strong need for her and her administration to validate her reign

and to display her legitimacy. She accomplished this in several ways. The most controversial method, manipulating her gender, was only one component of a complex campaign. Hatshepsut not only took the throne unexpectedly, but she also exercised her power through the office of the king. (Diamond 2020)

Even though there is not enough evidence to confirm whether Egyptian society was strongly persistent on gender binary norms, nor whether Hatshepsut was transgender, this pharaoh remains one of the gender-nonconforming historical figures who publicly challenged masculinity and separated it from men, presenting androgyny as a way of being and ruling. This also proves that the fact that there is a rise in people coming out as nonbinary and gender nonconforming is not, like many would assume, a trend. In fact, the rise of the Western civilisation, and the way it imposed binary dichotomies among people based on their genitals, has had a significant impact on Western languages as well by gendering pronouns, items, humans, and nonhumans. Thus, this made it challenging for people to articulate their own feelings as they were forced to choose between polarised possibilities to be considered civilised.

Ahebe Ugbabi is another example of a gender-defying individual who left a mark on history. Known as the female King of Colonial Nigeria (and perhaps all of colonial Africa), Ahebe Ugbabi's story was told by many, including the author Nwando Ahebe who wrote the 2011 book *The Female King of Colonial Nigeria*. Rising from a sex worker to village headman, Ahebe was born into an Igbo community and led a remarkable life where she challenged gender norms and used masculinity in her favor. The author's book documents Ugbabi's life and, throughout it, the author highlights the differences between Western and African concepts of gender and sexuality. Reintroduced to Nigerian society as a man, Ugbabi benefitted from the pleasures and rights as well as the tasks accorded to men only. She even married women and eventually became king of Enugu-Ezike, an event that did not please her

community (Ahebe 2011). However, despite this occurring in colonial Nigeria, Ugbabi was not faced with violence or threats to end her life due to her gender shift from femaleness to maleness, which is unfortunately an issue that transgender and gender- nonconforming people face nowadays. One thing that Hatshepsut and Ahebe Ugbabi have in common is the embodiment of what Halberstam describes as female masculinity. Female masculinity is a term coined by Jack Halberstam in 1998 and defined as women who are more masculine than feminine. In his book *Female Masculinity*, Halberstam argues that female masculinity has been ‘blatantly ignored both in the culture at large and within academic studies of masculinity’ (Halberstam 1998 [2019]).

According to the author, ‘This widespread indifference to female masculinity . . . has clearly ideological motivations and has sustained the complex social structures that wed masculinity to maleness and to power and domination’ (Halberstam 1998 [2019]).

Introducing this term de-essentialised maleness and attributed masculinity to all humans regardless of their genitals. Considering that earlier ecofeminist research has adopted an essentialist approach to femaleness by associating it with nature, the field could benefit from a variegated lens that does not link masculinities and femininities to any specific gender nor deprive any gender from acquiring them. This will result in the field’s inclusivity of all people and will enable the deconstruction of other layers of oppressions that some humans exercised on others in human history. Liberating nature means first if all liberating the definition of the term by not linking it anymore to any concepts of ‘natural.’ This liberation will not occur unless humans are finally free from the constraints that demonise them and mark them as anomalous.

By attaining a level of serenity and freedom, we will altogether as a species finally be able to coexist harmonically on a planet, within a system, that does indeed represent us: A queer and diverse planet with queer and diverse species.

However, even though the modern world has made steps forward when it comes to the validation of other than two genders, the acknowledgement of nonbinary people and their liberation from binary constraints is still far from attainable. In their 2016 article, 'What's the Story? Exploring Online Narratives of Non-binary Gender Identities,' Tracy Yeadon-Lee highlights the knowledge gap across the fields within the social sciences, diagnosing a lack of research on anything other than binary gender identities. In their paper, Yeadon-Lee draws attention to the need for further research that focuses on different generations and age-groups, as well as an insight into blogs and forums. They define nonbinary identities as an umbrella term that encompasses a range of identities that do not fit in the gender/sex binary (Yeadon-Lee 2016). Transgender people who transition within the gender binary, especially those who decide to undergo physical changes and reaffirming procedures (or have the privilege to access them) have been gaining more recognition by both global health and human rights organisations. Fortunately, this recognition has been extending lately to acknowledging and validating nonbinary and gender-nonconforming bodies and identities. Countries like Australia, Nepal and Germany have legally introduced a third gender option that defies the limitations of the male/female. However, as a species, we are far from reaching social and gender justice for people who fall under a nonconforming gender umbrella. In academia, there is a significant dearth of research that focuses on the identities. Such a situation makes it more challenging to question binary norms in undertaking intersectional work. And this is particularly acute in efforts to broaden the gender lens operative within ecofeminism as it addresses social and environmental matters.

Nonbinary identities can be defined as a suite of identities that do not fit in the mainstream male/female categories. Being nonbinary means identifying as both female and male, more than female and male, or neither. It also means that some people may experience gender dysphoria, and some may even opt for surgical and hormonal procedures to affirm their

identities without necessarily identifying as transgender. This makes nonbinary identities variable and non-restrictive; in short, there is no set of criteria that determines nonbinarism. Unlike popular misconceptions, being nonbinary does not mean being androgenous nor does it mean that one tends towards the opposite spectrum than the one attributed at birth. As a nonbinary person, myself, I can define my experience as follows: As a nonbinary gay person of colour, navigating the world as an environmental activist, researcher, educator, and writer has allowed me to explore multiple environmental matters through a gender and social justice lens. I do not feel like I am a woman, nor that I am a man. I do not fit in either definition as I see myself beyond the limitations that maleness and femaleness impose. I experience gender dysphoria from time to time, mainly because my body tends to remind me every month that I have reproductive organs that I have no intention of using for the sake of reproduction. I entertained once the thought of top surgery, however, at this point in my life, I do not see it as a necessary measure to affirm how I feel as I reached a level of comfort with what my body looks like. Although being gay, my gender identity does not determine my sexuality: I am certain that even if my sexual orientation was heterosexual-leaning, I would still feel the same about how I want to present to the world. This presentation is diverse: There are days where I embrace and celebrate my femininity and there are others where I am more masculine in my appearance. I was not aware of nonbinarism and gender nonconformity almost my entire life until I reached my early twenties and started resonating more with it until I finally realised that I am in fact a gender-nonconforming person. Reaching this level of awareness came with a lot of pressure as I started to question everything: My given name, my pronouns, my family's expectations of me, as well as the way I was preparing to reintroduce myself to the world and the not new me, but the authentic me. Coming from a country that does not acknowledge more than two genders, I found it hard to be open about my gender. I started experimenting with clothing that matched with how I feel. I disposed of all the

clothing items that I wore mainly because I was encouraged to buy them by friends or my direct family members.

I began rebuilding myself all over again after I finally gathered the courage to demolish the version of me that was shaped, for years, by social and cultural norms. One of the common misconceptions about nonbinary identities is the incorporation of intersex people in the spectrum: Intersex people are not necessarily nonbinary, although they may identify as such regardless of their genitals. There are several terms that fall under the nonbinary spectrum, terms that people use to describe their identities as closely as they can: gender neutral, agender, gender fluid or bigender. The former terms are not exhaustive, as the English language is evolving and expanding to include more accurate and relatable labels to those who want them. While ecofeminism initially began with essentialist and binary perspectives, it has since evolved towards a more inclusive, non-binary approach. This evolving perspective challenges patriarchal, capitalist, exploitative, and sexist systems, addressing the various forms of oppression they perpetuate. Ecofeminism is a transformative, inclusive, and activist movement that has landed a strong place in academia and redefined environmentalism by fusing it with an intersectional lens that called for paying equal attention to the impacts of environmental degradation on women, LGBTQ+ people, indigenous people, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups. It analyses oppressive hierarchical systems and examines how they are intertwined.

This is what the world needs right now in its state of climate, environmental and pandemic emergency. Climate solutions presented in technological and scientific advancements or the promotion of a low-carbon energy future through the energy transition are only half of the answer. The other half lies in ensuring climate justice through social justice. Through the egalitarian lens of modern, intersectional ecofeminism, researchers, activists, educators, and

decision-makers can, together, draw a path towards a less segregated, more inclusive world where people are seen and treated equally.

Post-Genderism: Breaking the Binary

Within the ecofeminist framework, femininities and masculinities have been explored thoroughly in the previous sections of this work. This section will move beyond the binary limitations of ecofeminism by intersecting with the field of post-genderism. But before fully engaging with post-genderism, we need to alight upon a related field of theoretical labor, namely queer ecology.

Queer ecologies help us understand sexual dynamics across a spectrum of nonbinary sexualities among all species. Their applications resonate with some aspects of feminist interpretations of evolutionary biology and gendered scientific publications. Evolutionary biologist Joan Roughgarden exposed the sexual activities and gender roles that exist outside of traditional and binary understandings of gender among humans and other-than-humans. Paying close attention to those other-than-human species that—like humans—have more than two biological sexes, along with those species who live a life of constant metamorphosis, changing sexes and sexual roles throughout their lives, demonstrated that a wide variety of gendered interactions can be normalised. These insights furnish just cause to recognise non-essentialist diversity and heterogeneity as a spectrum of possibilities for human identities that persists throughout the other-than-human world and can be considered entirely ‘normal.’ The intimacy between species that queer ecologies reveal reminds us that we are decentred, immersed, dependent on, and affected by myriad others all the time—indeed our lives depend on complexity and heterogeneity and yet—oddly—we refer to this reality as weird, abnormal, or queer (Gaard 2021; Hauk 2021). Masculinities and femininities are present in people regardless of how they self-identify. Therefore, we must transcend the femininities/masculinities schism, especially when taking steps towards studying

environmental matters via a gendered lens. Without this transcendence, it may become impossible for our species to attain a level of authenticity in each individual as we would be operating from a state of— mostly—imposed conformity to essentialised expectations of performing feminine and masculine roles.

Post-genderism takes us beyond these curtailments without calling for an end to gender. It facilitates the choice to either identify, or not, with any, or none of all identities under the gender umbrella. Lucy Nicholas, a pioneer in the field of post-genderism, published their revolutionising book *Queer Post-Gender Ethics: The Shape of Selves to Come* in 2014. Drawing from queer theory, philosophy, new materialism, and other fields, their intersectional methodology shed light on questions related to self-understanding and understanding others around us without gender. Nicholas also argues that bigenderism is resilient and pervasive because it has, for so long, been a compulsory understanding of selfhood. The fact that intersex babies undergo non-consensual surgeries, for example, reflects the ‘inextricability of gender, sex, and sexual orientation’ (Nicholas 2014). Such medical interventions define sexual intercourse as penetrative intercourse: for sex to be valid, there needs to be a penetrating person and one to be penetrated by this latter. Such an expectation of how bodies are meant to interact sexually imposes a rigid binary division by assigning not only femininities and masculinities but also reinforcing the ‘naturalness’ of heteronormative sex acts, denying the fact that some of us, if not most of us, live lives of continuous fluidity, changing our gender expressions, our gender identities, and our sexualities. In their 2008 publication ‘Post-Genderism: Beyond the Gender Binary,’ J. J. Hughes and George Dvorsky defined post-genderism as ‘an extrapolation of ways that technology is eroding the biological, psychological and social role of gender, and an argument for why the erosion of binary gender will be liberatory’ (Dvorsky and Hughes

2008) What is significant about their argument, and simultaneously relevant to our argument, is their brief reference to early ecofeminism's biological gender essentialism. Pointing out the dangers of the gender binary, the authors refer to post-genderism's liberatory tools, such as biotechnology and reproductive technologies as freeing to all humans, and not a 'suppressive superstructure of male patriarchy' (Dvorsky and Hughes 2008). Thus, post-genderism looks beyond the ascendancy of androgyny and advocates for gender to be experienced as heterogeneous, fluid, evolving, constantly changing instead of committing to and enforcing a fixed identity that one is coupled with at birth. A post-gender future is one where diversity is encouraged to thrive, and all bodies and identities coexist without the supremacy of some over others. Such a future enables inclusive expressions of one's authentic self and creates a versatility that could potentially transcend the limits of sex and biology where cybernetic, virtual, and nebulous gender expressions and gender-neutral identifications become part of the normative. Shulamit Firestone indicated in her 1970 book *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* that humanity could reach a level of evolution where differences in genitalia would no longer hold sociocultural significance (Firestone 1970). Post-genderism has thus had the capacity to permeate liberatory movements. Drawing from transhumanist technologies that are rendering gender irrelevant to human reproduction, our species is slowly and steadily dissolving the biological, psychological, and social roles of the gender binary. By slowly discontinuing the arbitrary labels that have long constrained some individuals who do not conform to either end of the gender binary, a neo-gender(less) alternative has been (re)emerging.

This latter is not merely outgrowing the limitations of traditional gender but is approaching a post-gender future where the agency of all life is equal. In these ways, it is safe to say that post-genderism is undoubtedly needed for better human-nonhuman-nature interrelations. By working towards the annihilation of anthropocentrism and androcentrism, and by

emphasising commonalities rather than differences, it leads humanity towards finding inner and communal peace, where power relations are no longer perpetrated to validate/invalidate people.

Transgender/Posthuman Ideologies

Who are the new revolutionaries of our time? They are the geneticists, biologists, physicists, cryonologists, biotechnologists, nuclear scientists, cosmologists, radio astronomers, cosmonauts, social scientists, youth corps volunteers, internationalists, humanists, science fiction writers, normative thinkers, inventors. They and others are revolutionising the human condition in a fundamental way. Their achievements and goals go far beyond the most radical ideologies of the Old Order (Esfandiary 1970). It is inevitable to cross post-gender studies with transhumanist schools of thought. Not only do both ideologies advocate for the eradication of suboptimal differences among people, they also both promote the liberation of defined, unchangeable characteristics of what it means to be human. Through the channel of metamorphosis, be it physiological, technological, psychological or all, human potencies are encouraged to be unbarred by discarding outdated and traditional social, religious and cultural constraints that have, for so long, prevented a large number of people from living their truth and exploring their identities and orientations. The upcoming subsections aim to present examples of the intersections of gender in a transhumanist world. In the form of discussing arts, politics and sciences, the following passages navigate across the fields of transhumanism and post-genderism with the aim of demonstrating the intersectionality of both.

On Transhumanist Politics

Before we dive into the politics of the movement, it is important to give a brief introduction to transhumanism. According to Max More, transhumanism is a class of philosophies that seek to guide us towards a posthuman condition. Transhumanism shares many elements of humanism, including a respect for reason and science, a commitment to progress, and a valuing of human (or transhuman) existence in this life rather than in some supernatural 'afterlife.' Transhumanism differs from humanism in recognising and anticipating the radical alterations in the nature and possibilities of our lives resulting from various sciences and technologies such as neuroscience and neuropharmacology, life extension, nanotechnology, artificial ultra intelligence, and space habitation, combined with a rational philosophy and value system (More 1990).

Transhumanism, thus, seeks the acceleration of our species' evolution by advancing human capabilities and longevity. Thanks to the ongoing technological advancements and the evolution of science, humans have crossed the threshold to a new kind of existence. As a species, we have been transcending by realising new possibilities and creating new potentialities of what it means to be human. Our desire to evolve and acquire new capacities has pushed our efforts to the forefront, leading us to challenge our own limitations. Our bodies, minds, and behaviours have been constantly metamorphosing, adjusting to the rapidly growing scientific evolution. From experiencing virtual reality, to crafting one's own future child, to accessing wearables and implants, life as we know it today is beyond what our ancestors could have possibly imagined. We are now able to replace vital body parts with prostheses when a body part is damaged. We are capable, thanks to IVF, of selecting the smartest embryos to avoid any chromosome abnormalities. However, regardless of how long the list of benefits and advances of human enhancements might be, not everyone is in favour of challenging our potencies as a species or of equal access to such technologies. Our

diverging views regarding the ethics, accessibility, and adaptability, as well as the social impacts of technological enhancements of the human body and mind, remain a subject of controversy.

Gender-affirming procedures have been developing and ameliorating, giving a wide range of choices for people who seek them. Achieving bodily transformations has unlocked unlimited possibilities: from implants to gender-reassignment surgeries, to voice therapy, to hormonal therapy, transgender, and gender nonconforming people can finally access the care they have long needed to feel aligned with their identities. Yet are transgender people transhumans? Transhumans, in transhumanist philosopher and futurist F. M. Esfandiary's words, are:

[...]the earliest manifestations of new evolutionary beings. They are like those earliest hominids who many millions of years ago came down from the trees and began to look around. Transhumans are not necessarily committed to accelerating the evolution to higher life forms. Many of them are not even aware of their bridging role in evolution. (FM-2030 1989)

Esfandiary's definition resonates with perceptions extant in our contemporary world. It may have sounded extreme or exaggerated at the time, yet now, we have moved from looking around to looking down, linked to our mobile phones, which, whether we want to acknowledge it or not, have become wireless body parts of ours that service the commands of our brains.

However, as discussed in the earlier chapter, transgender people are not new evolutionary beings. They have long existed among us. Susan Stryker, for instance, a historian and author known for her work on transgender history, wrote the book *Transgender History* which is a valuable resource that discusses the existence of transgender and gender-diverse individuals throughout history. In this book, Stryker provides historical evidence and documentation of

transgender people in various cultures and time periods, demonstrating that transgender identities are not a recent phenomenon but have existed across different societies for centuries. However, transgender bodies who have undergone gender-reassuring procedures are novel bodies who, knowingly or not, have certainly been bridging roles in the evolution of our species. In 'A History of Transhumanist Thought,' Bostrom argues that:

The human desire to acquire new capacities is as ancient as our species itself. We have always sought to expand the boundaries of our existence, be it socially, geographically, or mentally. There is a tendency in at least some individuals to always search for a way around every obstacle and limitation to human life and happiness. (Bostrom 2005)

Bostrom's opening statement takes a gender-blind approach to its engagement with transhumanism. Yet it also speaks for every human being who sought material improvements of their body regardless of the reason. Despite surveying a field of inquiry that revolves around the politics and history of transhumanism, Bostrom does not include specific reference to gender or sexuality in their analysis. Starting off their statement with a focus on humanity's obsession with mortality and their endeavours to seek ways to live forever, the author reminds the reader of our conflicted relationship with death. As a species, we have successfully, and progressively, achieved longer durations of life. However, life expectancy has not been equal for all humans: transgender lives have a life expectancy that rarely exceeds thirty years, which is why it is important to intersect gender justice with transhumanist politics, especially in ecofeminist research. This is because the latter field of study and activism is primarily exercised by pursuing the protection of women and the environment.

The protection of non-white-cis-hetero-men, in order to ensure the survival of our species has to do with reducing suicide, murder, and violence rates among gender-nonconforming people.

From an ecological perspective, environmental justice will not reach its maximum potency unless social justice does, hence gender justice and the fight against trans-misogyny.

If we move to contemporary popular culture, there is evidence of an engagement with transhumanism. A relevant example of this that can be related to our overall discussion is the rise of anti-trans legislation in the United States is actively trying to erase transgender people and invalidate their existence. Sometimes in the name of feminism, these legislations are passed under the pretense of protecting the people. Yet, they enforce a binary existence of humans and demonise, dehumanise, and ridicule anyone that does not conform to the hetero-binarism. J. J. Hughes navigates the politics of this philosophical movement. From leftist democratic standpoints to neo-Nazi ones, his work offers political insights into the direction our species is heading to with technology-assisted bodily transformations. Beginning with *Libertarian Transhumanism*, the author introduces the emergence of extropianism in the 1980s, followed by the publication of *Extropy: The Journal of Transhumanist Thought* in 1988, extropy, antonym of entropy, is defined as ‘the extent of a living or organisational system’s intelligence, functional order, vitality, energy, life, experience, capacity and drive for improvement and growth’ (Cordeiro 2013). Thereafter, the author introduces liberal democratic transhumanism by introducing the World Transhumanist Association. Hughes calls for democratic transhumanism, one that is available, safe, and accommodating to everyone. For Hughes, technoprogressivism must be socio-democratic and egalitarian. For this to be attainable, one must be critical of the unequal power dynamics in any society which is based on gender, race, class, health, religion and so on. The inequalities pose a threat to a democratic process of making life-enhancing technologies not strictly designed for an elite class of people. The representation of transhumanism in art inspires thought and critical thinking. It opens the discussion on possibilities, benefits, and potential complications.

Film art for instance has long anticipated many transhumanist ideas that became subject of serious consideration by transhumanists and scientists. The artistic representations deal with more than just the science fiction part of transhumanism, but with the ethical dilemmas and sinister consequences that could face humanity. The following passages examine transhumanism in the context of art, giving the reader a diverse range of perspectives on how transhumanist philosophy is subject to the issues discussed previously in this work like essentialism, dualisms, and a set of other 'isms.'

Transhumanism's Art Manifestations

With the progress of technological interventions to enhance both human bodies, minds, and levels of comfort, our perceptions as a species of what it means to exist within an ecosystem undergo changes as well. The following analyses examine selected art productions to study the interactions of humans when they become entangled with technology and how this latter shapes their humanity as well as their environments. While posthumanism, as seen in the previous section, is centred on moving beyond the philosophical conceptualisations of human ontology, transhumanism focuses more on overcoming the biological dictates of what it means to be human. Therefore, to move from definitions of the 'natural' and the 'biological,' technology is incorporated to redefine humanness. In order to study the gender implications of transhumanism through an ecofeminist lens, this section dives into transhumanism when manifested in art productions such as film or other forms of visual presentations.

I chose to analyse a TV series production in this subchapter. The show is the 2019 dystopian futuristic HBO program *Years and Years*, created by Russell T. Davis. Set in Britain and beginning in 2019, the show is a six-part series that follows the lives of the Lyons family, fifteen years into the future. The series portrays the development of human relationships with technology and transhumanism from a mere philosophical concept to a reality. Bethany, a

character played by Lydia West, is the perfect depiction of Donna Haraway's cyborg. At the beginning of the show, she comes out to her parents as trans. The parents welcome their daughter's coming out until she interrupts them saying, 'I am not transsexual. I am transhuman! . . . I don't want to be flesh!'

The scene continues with Bethany explaining that she is not comfortable in her body and that she wants to become data. She said she heard about a clinic in Switzerland where they can transform her brain into a digital form and upload it to the cloud. Her mother replies by asking her if she wants to kill herself. Bethany responds: 'I want to live! Forever!' It is evident from the scene that Bethany's desire for comfort, belonging, as well as longevity are pushing her need to change her body to the forefront. And this need tallies with many of the insights offered by the field of new materialism.

New materialism, in a simple definition, is an interdisciplinary field that challenges assumptions about the human and nonhuman material world and emphasises that matter is in fact active, lively, and agentive. What makes new materialism even more attractive to ecofeminism is its non-anthropocentric approach, which recognises matter's intrinsic nature.

In addition to this, new materialism's relevance lies within its fluidity in perception since it goes against binaries and dichotomies. Brett Smith and Javier Monforte write that: 'Further dualisms are collapsed within new materialism, including human/non-human, human/environment, reason/ emotion, and mind/matter. Likewise, the conventional view of the social, the psychological, the biological, the economical and the emotional as separate domains of reality is abandoned' (Monforte and Smith 2020). In the world of Bethany, matter and its transformation challenge the average perception of what humans are made of, rendering her behaviour as reckless to her parents. In the second episode Bethany meets her mother for lunch, and her mother tells her that she is being made redundant because artificial intelligence can do her job now. Uninterested, Bethany interrupts her and says "Will you call

me? . . . This is why I wanted to have lunch. Will you phone me? Now?” The mother picks up her phone and calls her. Bethany uses her hand gesturing a mobile phone and answers. The mother is confused as although Bethany is not holding a phone, she can hear her through her phone. The surprise is that Bethany had just undergone surgery. She explains that she had her phone implanted in her via subdermal implants. The implants charge themselves with motion. When her mother shows frustration with her eighteen-year-old daughter’s decision to have skinplants at such a young age, Bethany compares her decision to her mother’s tattoo.

In another episode, we can see Bethany having a conversation with her friend about her parents not accepting her as transhuman. Her friend asks her ‘How far would you go, Beth? To be transhuman?’ Bethany describes how air filling her lungs when she breathes feels thick and that she could be “so much better than this.” Her friend then asks her if she has enough money to pay for the upload procedure, and they both agree that they would do it since Bethany has enough money to pay for both of them. Bethany and her friend then go aboard a Russian ship to undergo an operation, which later was revealed as an eye transplant. However, after Bethany watched what happened to her friend, she helped her escape. The viewers can see the operation went wrong and Bethany’s friend lost her eye to what was apparently a human trafficking ring. This scene raises questions about the safety and accessibility of body enhancement technologies. The same way that the unavailability of safe abortions leads to opting for unsafe methods, the probability of pursuing the same pattern is the same when it comes to self-surgery, buying hormones and other drugs off the market.

Bethany’s implants go beyond that as she opts for governmental-paid operations.

She has interaction nodes implanted on the front of her fingers. She explains to her parents that she can now use multiple functions without the aid of physical cards or devices. To demonstrate that, she blinks at her dad, then blinks at her mom, and then says ‘send.’ Straight away, both her parents get pictures of themselves which Bethany captured with her eyes. She

then grabs a tablet and shows them her new capacities, such as mentally being able to track the financial transactions of everyone in her contacts. Impressed, her parents try to understand why their daughter chose to undergo such changes. Bethany then explains that she can feel the tides, the planets, a young girl uploading her first song online, and these feelings, all together, “it’s joy. In my head, it’s absolute joy,” she says with a big smile. This thought-provoking show reflects the multiple realities towards which our species is heading.

From social controversy regarding transhumanism to the unethical and criminal side of running the accessibility world to those who, for whichever reason, were not able to access it. The scene where the surgery went wrong on the Russian boat for Bethany’s friend reminds us of the many at-home attempts at gender reassignment procedures.

When we think of ecology or nature, we may instinctively think of greenery, plants, animals, and wilderness. However, we have altered our ecosystem and mutated it with the digital. We now live in a world where being part of the digital one is almost inevitable. Technology has not only enabled us to alter our bodies and enhance their abilities; it has also opened doors to altering our realities, environments and perceptions. Researchers have, for over two decades, attempted writing about technology and the environment. In 1996, Dominique Furay and Arnulf Grübler published a paper titled ‘Technology and the Environment: An Overview,’ in which they explored the interactions of both by analysing a couple of articles within their own paper. In their paper, Furay and Grübler write that ‘The newly emerging environmental movement also considered technology a major source of environmental degradation that would continue to generate unintended and unwanted side effects’ (Furay and Grübler 1996). Environmental degradation has been partially attributed to technological advancements. In parallel, the latter have also enabled remedies for anthropogenic planetary degeneration. Yet even in the mid-1990s, technology has been perceived by researchers as a hopeful resource that could potentially present diverse solutions. Although the authors point out the negative

implication technology has for the natural environment, they also acknowledge that a shift is possible when technologies are used: The problem is rather to accelerate and to increase the speed of diffusion of technologies that could become socially beneficial for diagnostic (e.g., environmental monitoring), explicative (environmental simulations), and 'curative' measures; to increase the availability of options; to search for alternative solutions; and to create sufficient 'escape velocity' from current entrenchments in undesirable technologies and practices. (Furay and Grübler 1996)

The authors point out the beneficial impacts of technology within the environmental protection and conservation discourse. They present three themes which they consider as their three lines of argument: Technology as a mode of knowledge, the environment as a driving force for technological change, and technology policy for environmental monitoring. Thus, technology does not have to be an enemy of humanity nor the environment. Despite the concern of the environmentalists who see it as a threat, it can also be perceived as 'an instrument to reveal the nature and the extent of undesirable (environmental) side effects of technologies and as a possible solution to alleviate them through both incremental and radical change' (Furay and Grübler 1996). On another note, the production of data nowadays is being produced in dramatic amounts. The term 'deep technology' emerged because of the digitalisation that has dominated our contemporary world. This production of data is opening questions regarding possibilities of uploading human consciousness into the cloud. The term 'mind uploading' is also known as whole brain emulation (WBE), is a theoretical futuristic process that asserts that it could potentially transfer a whole mind from its physiological form to a digital one which may or may not embody a biomechanical humanoid, also known as a synthetic. With virtual reality tools becoming more and more accessible, the possibility of such uploads is perhaps closer in the future than humans are anticipating. This revolutionises

the conceptions we have around immortality and changes our environmental and ecological needs as well. Our understanding of sexual attractions, sexual encounters, reproduction, and multiple biological needs that range from clean air, to clean water and food, will change drastically. However, accessibility will most likely follow the patterns that humanity has known: Only the rich, privileged, citizens of the Global North will be able to have access and be prioritised.

Another significant artist that has brought gender into dialogue with transhumanism is Doireann O'Malley. Their work, *Prototypes: Quantum leaps in trans-semiotics through psycho-analytical snail serum* is a speculative futurist, multiscreen film installation by the Irish artist and researcher who is currently residing in Berlin. Their work, which ranges from installations to video productions, revolves around intersecting trans experiences, bodily transformations, nature and technology and gendered perspectives within biotechnology, cybernetics and quantum physics. Focused on giving room to manifestations of difference and offering a portal at the end of *Prototypes II*. In *Prototypes I*, the patient who is sitting with the psychologist is describing their dream, describing the experiences as holding their own tongue, and this latter being attached to another tongue placed in its root. The patient, who is gender nonconforming, is trying to understand why they had this dream. The therapist's analysis links the metaphoric loss of one's voice to being disconnected from one's world. Losing one's tongue, being voiceless in a world where heteronormativity rules, means taking a step back and instead of engaging and being an active element of the whole ecosystem, one simply dwells within their own, most of the time lonesome, universe.

After hearing the therapist's interpretation, the patient agreed that they have difficulties communicating what they want, their aspirations, their wants, and their desires. They continued by describing what they did after holding their own tongue. They tried to put it back in their mouth and, suddenly, the tongue started expanding, and it filled their whole

mouth. The therapist responds by interpreting what the 'female' mouth stands for: A signifier of receptivity, inviting penetration and representing control and transformation. This scene from the installation shows how gender nonconformity and one's inability to develop a sense of belonging affects the way one relates to the world. Though it is easy to imagine how health is tied to income for the very poor or the very rich, the relationship between income and health is a gradient: they are connected stepwise at every level of the economic ladder. *Prototypes II: The Institute for the Enrichment of Computer Aided Post Gendered Prototypes* is a one-hour-long installation of two screens, both depicting the same setting, and revolves around the complexities of the relationship between bodies and gender. *Prototypes II* is set in an institute where participants are welcomed, by a hologram, to the Post-gender Prototypes program. The hologram expresses his hopes that they have all 'prepared their minds and their bodies.' It continues to explain the program to the participants and tells them they are the prototypes. When talking about gender, the hologram starts by describing a room in terms of the importance of the invisible. A room, as the hologram states, is made up of walls, a ceiling, and a floor. However, it is the part of the room that is not made of walls that is able to contain us: 'Gender can be like a room, offering shelter and security. A defined place to be, to move, to explore. It can also be a prison. The walls were built by countless others as well as by yourselves. To change the room in any way, can take a lifetime of more' (*Prototypes II*).

This scene represents the intangibility of a concept that highly impacts every human being from the moment they are born. This concept has conjured polarised notions of maleness and femaleness, reason and wilderness, passivity and top loftiness, and production and reproduction. Gender is presented in this scene as nonrestricted yet restricting by oneself as much as by others, and the difficulties of navigating it and denouncing its impositions may take a while as one undergoes a process of unlearning, deconstructing, and building again. The hologram then offers the prototypes a chance to explore themselves in different

multiverses where other versions of themselves exist. The participants are afterwards invited to feel their bodies in connection to the room they are in and the hologram asks them about their relationships to their bodies. The hologram asks the prototypes: “What do you think of when you think of your environment? Do you think of yourself as different? . . . How does difference make you feel? . . . What is natural? What feels natural to you?”

Humans, as a species, exist in the form of bodies within a space. These bodies, despite sharing 99.9 percent of DNA, are uniquely shaped and navigate their lifetime in distinctive manners. Ecofeminism has, for more than half a century, called for the liberation of nature and the freeing of humans and nonhumans from exploitation and oppression. Attaining this utopian sense of liberation will not be possible if humans are disconnected from their authentic selves and are expected, and sometimes forced, to follow a gender and sexuality political Bible that dictates what they may and may not do with their bodies.

Alok Vaid-Menon is an internationally acclaimed artist, writer and activist and the author of *Femme in Public* (2017), *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) and *Your Wound/My Garden* (2021). Known for starting a movement to de-gender fashion, Alok is a transfemme, person of color, nonbinary influencer and scholar who is currently challenging gender norms through their art, writings, performances and mere existence as a continuously metamorphosing human. In the *Man Enough* podcast, with Justin Baldoni, Menon discusses the urgent need for compassion. According to Menon, some people, especially male-identifying individuals, feel the pressure to be ‘masculine, strong, and all-knowing’ (V. Menon 2021). They do not know how to receive the type of love that tells them it is okay to be vulnerable. When discussing violence against transgender and nonbinary people, which is mostly committed by cisgender heterosexual men, Menon identifies the source of this violence as these men’s inability to love themselves and heal their inner wounds. As a result, they try to erase

nonbinary and transgender people because they did that to themselves first. Instead of seeing other people for who they truly are, some of us see them for what we think they should be. Alok discusses dignity at the beginning of the episode and points out that many of us only see value in ourselves and in others if we, and they, emulate a set of ‘standards that were created by someone else’ (V. Menon 2021). Unlike gender-nonconforming people who have committed themselves to addressing their own wounds and aligning themselves in a way that they would not have to compromise themselves and their identities for other people’s validation, most cisgender men do not necessarily have the language to articulate their wounds in the first place. Addressing the violence against transgender and gender-nonconforming people, according to the activist, has never been about accepting them, but about accepting oneself. This is because when one has not reached a certain level of self-acceptance and self-love, other people’s abilities to live authentically and thrive may be perceived as a threat. Menon points out the differences between putting gender-nonconforming people in the entertainment box and listening to what they have to say. From drag shows to other performances, Menon invites people to listen to their experiences. They refer to the sexist antisuffragist postcards in the United States that expressed men’s threats regarding women taking space. The liberation of women, according to Menon, represented a threat of feminisation and a menace of power loss for men. Menon addresses the ubiquity of bigenderism in their 2020 book *Beyond the Gender Binary*, noting ‘The reality that many gender non-conforming people cannot go outside without fear of being attacked is unacceptable. The issue is not that we are failing to be men or women. It’s that the criteria used to evaluate us to begin with is the problem’ (Menon 2020). One of the most relevant parts of Menon’s book to this thesis is the section where they discuss dismissal based on ‘common sense.’ As I discussed earlier, environmental identity remains a complex matter affected and shaped by internal and external factors. Amanda M. Dewey wrote in their 2020

article ‘Shaping the Environmental Self: The Role of Childhood Experiences in Shaping Identity Standards of Environmental Behavior in Adulthood,’ that:

Identities are shaped through all stages of the life course as people receive information from others about their role performances through interaction and behave accordingly [...] Research has demonstrated that identities influence behavior related to social issues and that relationships and social context influence the content and salience of these identities (Cerulo 1997).

In the case of environmental behaviour, people can be expected to shift expectations for their own behavior as they develop new identity standards through interactions with others. Experiences and interactions offer opportunities for people to receive information from others about their relationship to the natural environment, influencing the ways they perceive themselves in relation to identity standards and leading to behavior or identity change. (Dewey 2020)

Environmental identity is thus an ongoing process of shaping and reshaping one’s understanding of themselves, their environment, and the living beings around them: humans and nonhumans. Yet when one’s attempts at self-exploration are faced with dismissal, disapproval, invalidation, and even threat, it is safe to expect challenges in forming a healthy identity as one is forced to follow a difficult, imposed path of conformity since challenging the status quo is a privilege not given to everyone. Menon reminds the readers of their book that the dismissal of gender nonconformity based on novelty and trendiness can be answered with historical facts: ‘Indigenous people and people outside the Western world have long existed outside the gender binary: two-spirit among American Indians, Hijra in South Asia, waria in Indonesia, muxe in Mexico’ (Menon 2020). According to their argument, nonconforming identities have always existed, however, they have been purposely erased to validate the Western-imposed gender binarism. When it comes to dismissals based on science

or biology, Menon argues that the thought of humans having a binary sex is relatively recent. Before the 1700s, they state that experts believed that humans were inherently male and female. Fast-forward to the 1900s, and scientists believed that binary sex differences are only possible in white people, who were supposedly more evolved than other races.

Considering, as I argued in earlier passages, that the gender binary has long been reinforced by weak evidence, later on confirmed by professionals, questioning these scientific findings is the best response to biology-based dismissals.

Menon is a pioneer when it comes to advocating for compassion towards nonconformity of all its shapes and forms. As a species, we are collectively marching towards evolutionary self-enhancements that may or may not involve technological and medical interventions. It is no surprise that questions regarding ethics, acceptance, tolerance, and freedom of choice will accompany this journey we are on and, therefore, it is important to nurture the advocacy for choice, respect, and empathy to foster cultures of safety, where people are not attacked for living authentically and making choices to align their physical bodies with their identities.

Ecofeminism's Echoes in Posthumanist Theory

While transhumanism's continuous evolution and even necessity in maintaining and improving human life is significant, it has been succeeded by posthumanism. This latter has been labelled as a desideratum by posthumanists as not only a means to healing the aperture between older definitions of 'human,' the human, and the nonhuman, but also a means for survival and continuity. Therefore, it is only fair to say that not embracing it may signify willingly marching towards our own extinction. In the 2019 paper 'For Those to Come: An Introduction to Why Posthumanism Matters,' the authors argued for the importance of posthumanism. They introduced the ecological and climate emergency as a solid reason to consider alternative ways of living:

Our present moment bears witness to the troublingness of humanism and increasing uncertainties regarding the status of our species amidst mounting ecological, social, and political crises [...] Coupled with the current transmutation of advanced, global capitalism into bio-genetic, neural, and various techno-scientific regimes of profitability and exploitation, we must re-evaluate “the basic unit of common reference for our species, our polity and our relationship to the other inhabitants of this planet.” (Kumm et al. 2019)

The authors focus on the anthropogenic forces that have crossed planetary boundaries and have been posing a growing threat to sustainable life as we know it. Consequently, anthropogenic solutions are needed to face anthropogenic catastrophes, otherwise, nature will, as it always has, re-establish balance with a global climatic event that may lead to the eradication of the human race. By defying humanism’s binaries, the authors sought refuge in posthumanism’s abilities to “invent new forms of subjectivity, new ways of existing, defining our species and its belonging within the material world” (Kumm et al. 2019). The ontology proposed in their paper works against the traditional dichotomies of culture/nature, man/woman, or life/death.

Posthumanism, thus, represents hope to our species, an acknowledgement that adaptation and metamorphosis for survival are essential and should be pushed, perhaps, with the same speed that we are accelerating an inevitable extinction event. This extinction “prompts a recognition of the profound interdependency between various types of bodies—dead and alive—including human, animal, plant, as well as bodies of land and water. It also prompts questions of extinction and survival, risk and shared vulnerability, responsibility and care” (Cielemeńska and Daigle 2019). Posthumanism is also highly relevant in ecofeminist conversation, particularly within the frame of challenging the binary and essentialism as seen previously in this manuscript.

Ecofeminism and posthumanism both respond to the complexities of anthropocentrism as a major driving factor in climate and environmental crises. They also share a critique of dualisms—nature/culture, mind/body, micro/ macro, traditional/modern—laying the foundations to think about scenarios of coexistence in a post-anthropocentric world (Ferrando 2013).

Considering that continuously emerging and rapidly growing technologies have attracted the criticism of scholars from the humanities, matters that revolve around gender, materialism, and social justice were inevitable as questions arose about how these technological developments define and redefine humans and their place in the world. From initially criticising the definition of the word ‘anthropos’ to redefining what it means to be human, the criticism resulted in revealing the controversies of humanism. The perplexity of this latter lies in its celebration of the white, imperialist, cisgender, heterosexual, able man and the dismissal or dehumanisation of other forms of human existence. Posthumanism offers alternative celebrations for what it means to be human. As a result, it has ‘been all too readily dismissed by feminists for producing gendered theories and falsely essentializing women’ (Stavro-Pearse and Cunningham 1994). Such critical interventions took the road towards transhumanist theory, focusing on materialistic embodiments and finding physiological distinctions that separate the human from the nonhuman.

The focus was thus on the transition and what defines the beginning of this transitioning journey of change and enhancement. However, scholars and thinkers who were focused on the masculinist, sexist, racist and classist problematics of humanism took more of a philosophical approach, birthing diverse yet complex posthumanist schools of thought. Posthumanism became thus about the destination, unlike transhumanism’s focus on the journey. Posthumanism is about a state of becoming, beyond the traditional definitions of being human. The reason why posthumanism and transhumanism are always entangled is

because becoming posthuman may, often, require a transhumanist journey. Posthumanism is also marked by reminding us that we are in a constant metamorphosis, always changing, continuously evolving: ‘We need to think of the posthuman present as both the record of what we are ceasing to be (the actual) and the seed of what we are in the process of becoming (the virtual)’ (Braidotti 2017). Considering that posthumanism and ecofeminism have the capacity to redefine humanity as it has been known as well as shape the future of the relationships between the human and the nonhuman, this section aims to intersect ecofeminism with posthumanist thought. Although the work of scholars such as Stacy Alaimo on feminist materialism and Cecilia Åsberg’s work on feminist posthumanities renegotiated what it means to be human by incorporating feminism into the field, the aim is to bring new insights so as to permit a productive dialogue between ecofeminism and posthumanist theory. While editing a chapter I submitted for *The Routledge Handbook of Ecofeminism and Literature*, edited by Douglas Vakosh, I had the opportunity to read the chapter written by Kerim Can Yazgünoglu on ‘Posthuman Literature and Ecofeminism.’ The chapter offers an intensive analysis of the relationship between ecofeminism and posthumanism by reimagining bodies and natures and rethinking the human as ‘rational, cultural, and historical, male subject’ (Can Yazgünoglu 2022). One commonality that the author found between ecofeminism and posthumanism is that both schools of thought perturb the Cartesian dualisms such as “nature and culture, human and nonhuman, problematizing what might count as ‘the human’” (Can Yazgünoglu 2022). Both ecofeminism and posthumanism challenge the glorification of the Greek man by humanism. Humanism was by definition anthropocentric; humanism as a historical phenomenon drew on a renewed and reinterpreted appreciation for the rhetoric and civilisation of Greece and Rome, in placing man (rather than God) at the center of its literary and philosophical project. Modern science beginning in the Renaissance sought to achieve an understanding of the natural world that

depended on human powers of observation and reason to uncover universal laws. As a Cartesian thinking subject, man could examine the world and explain its workings with scientific detachment, as Galileo famously put it, in the language of mathematics.

This view of man as an autonomous agent, separate from though still engaged with nature, flourished in the Enlightenment. Bolter addresses anthropocentrism in the above passage as a flawed approach towards the way humans chose to view the world. Anthropocentrism is therefore a blindfold that misleads anyone wearing it into thinking that one has the ultimate power and that one has the capacity to control nature as well as the right to exploit it. Cartesianism is therefore the ultimate companion to anthropocentrism, yet the irony is, if humans, or anthropoi, had the capacity to master their environment, we would not be in a climate emergency that clearly rendered global warming not-so-in our control. Another premise of posthumanism that the author mentions, which is also germane to ecofeminism, is the decentralisation and de-essentialisation of the notion of the human. Throughout this work, I focused on de-essentialising ecofeminism by de-essentialising womanhood, gender roles, biological essentialism, and many more notions that I deemed harmful. Within the sphere of ecofeminism, posthumanism introduces new possibilities while maintaining the awareness that the same challenges that ecofeminism faces, posthumanism does too. Thus, both ecofeminism and posthumanism are thus two soldiers serving on the same team in a war in a battlefield against global warming's anthropogenic acceleration, sexist and bodily dichotomies, as well as patriarchal, essentialist oppression of humans, nonhumans, and nature. Both draw attention to the importance of intersectionality as well as the dangers of essentialising the worthiness of living beings. Just like my earlier attempt with crossing post-gender theory with ecofeminism, the upcoming section aims to do the same with posthumanism.

Post-Gender Posthumanism

Posthumanism, as a field of study, deconstructs definitions of the human and how these definitions shaped our privileged position as a species. The definition of what it means to be human has itself been exposed to several changes throughout history, proving that the notion of *human* is constantly evolving.

The following passages will define posthumanism and will intersect it with post-genderism, with the aim of expanding and nuancing ecofeminist thought in terms of its own approaches to bodily agency and transgender rights. Devoting attention to historical definitions of the human and the posthuman is important to ecofeminist research considering that earlier definitions (and current ones) have consistently enshrined uneven hierarchical systems. This is explicit when we look at Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, for instance, which represents the exceptional image of a human. This representation reflects the superiority of the body of a white heterosexual cisgender able bodied man, compared to other humans and non-humans. Influenced by Renaissance humanism, da Vinci aimed to reflect the universe (macrocosm) through the (hu)man being (microcosm) and vice versa. Recent work in this area problematises such historically sanctioned notions. For instance, Francesca Ferrando (2019) explores different definitions of what it does and does not mean to be human. She assesses the ethical, theoretical, and practical aspects of posthuman studies as an onto-epistemological lifestyle or attitude.

Ferrando decentres the meaning of humanity, especially notions of white, heterosexual, dominating, othering man. In doing so, she revalorises 'life in itself and desire' as antidotes to the 'rational and logical powers' that have driven industrialisation, colonisation and capitalism. These are notions that lay at the very foundations of our social and ecological crises. Pondering the posthuman after the human, they acknowledge the importance of material and immaterial agency not only throughout humanity and our social constructions,

but also for other-than-humans as well. Posthumanism confronts bifurcations (i.e., of the body-mind divide) and hegemonisation (i.e., of human/human and human/nature divides) in support of post-anthropocentric and post-dualistic alternatives that argue for ‘holistic or continuous concept of embodied mind (and life for that matter) that may include technological agency as well [as] organic life . . . by embracing the openness of the concept of being human and embracing all kinds of embodiments, neural diversity or gender diversity’ (Förster 2019, 1079–80).

As an intentional defiance of human supremacy, Ferrando’s posthumanism considers social standing, sexuality, race, and biotechnology through gender-queer poetics of bodies, cultures, and ways of thinking beyond traditional social constructs of what it means to be human. Ferrando’s work notes that ‘posthuman’ is often evoked in a generic and all-inclusive way, . . . creating methodological and theoretical confusion between experts and nonexperts alike,’ and thereby serving as:

an umbrella term to include (philosophical, cultural, and critical) posthumanism, transhumanism (in its variants as extropianism, liberal and democratic transhumanism, among other currents), new materialisms (a specific feminist development within the posthumanist frame), and the heterogeneous landscapes of antihumanism, posthumanities, and metahumanities. (Ferrando 2013, 26)

Ferrando continues to address the interweaving of gender, technology, and embodiment with a vision of what the future of humanity might become on an equal footing with other-than-human nature. Significantly, Ferrando’s work acknowledges the role of posthumanism in shaping human futures, noting that any transition to a posthuman society requires moving beyond binary identities. This includes the transformation of meaning and matter, or more precisely, the body and its many associated gender-affirming practices, since we live in cycles of change, dissolution and rebirth that are constantly morphing into new, enhanced

versions of our species as much as the self, a process that is being rapidly accelerated with the aid of technology (Haraway 1985). This acceleration is pointing us towards post-gender futures.

The Gendered and the Sexual are Ecopolitical

They say the personal is political. I say the sexual and the gendered are too. In fact, they're eco-political. (Asmae Ourkiya)

In *The Land Ethic*, Aldo Leopold wrote that 'We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in' (Leopold 1949). People within the environmental movement are expected to care deeply about their planet and think more sustainably. Yet how can people develop environmental awareness and genuine care for the planet if they are still fighting to free their internal authentic selves? Ecofeminism's multifaceted critique of global environmental politics focused on women's experiences and participation in decision-making and politics by suggesting a gendered approach to environmentalism. When intersecting with political and economic affairs, ecofeminism, particularly the liberal strand of the field, emphasised the importance of engaging women in policymaking since the Global North's accelerated economic growth is behind the acceleration of global warming. The invitation for the othered gender to join the power of impact may have been the outcome of an intended gender balance.

Nevertheless, boarding the ship of an existing system that serves a hierarchy of profit and dismisses the aftermath of environmental neglect and exploitation on the Global South and marginalised communities is not the solution.

The solution is dismantling the system itself. This system has not only oppressed women since its genesis. It has dismissed the existence and agency of transgender people, people of colour, and indigenous communities. So, when women are finally acknowledged as equals to

men and are pursued to contribute to environmental governance, it is white, cisgender, heterosexual women that dominate the category. Consequently, women of colour, queer women, transgender women, and other people who do not fit in the binary gender spectrum nor heteronormativity seldom given a voice, and sometimes, if not all the time, not even recognised as equally important. This section intersects nuances of ecofascism with the dichotomies found in ecofeminism.

On Ecofascism: The Oxymoron of Conservative Ecologism (FRE)

Above we noted how some world political leaders enforce climate denialism and are pro-extractivism, as they stand in the way, powerfully, of slowing down the anthropogenic acceleration of our planet's warming. Yet climate denialists are not the only threat to climate justice. If we look for instance at politicians who have the power to make pro-environmental changes and enforce environmental laws, not everyone seems to even have accurate knowledge of the seriousness of climate issues. On 31 December 2022, French president Emmanuel Macron said during his annual New Year's Eve speech '*Qui aurait pu prédire la crise climatique aux effets spectaculaires?*' (*L'indépendant* 2023) The quote translates to 'Who could have predicted a climate crisis with such spectacular effects?.' These words came out of a man who actually believes in climate change and has a proven track record of enforcing environmental policies. Macron's address to the nation shows that even the environmentally 'woke' politicians still do not fully grasp the gravity of the climate crisis and are, hence, surprised when climate catastrophes take place. Yet some of the politicians who seem to be fully aware of the issues have chosen different paths to where to put the blame on the climate crisis.

Their approaches are fuelled with racism, sexism, xenophobia, and homophobia, causing their environmentalism to become rightist. Yet an intersectional and inclusive ecologism cannot and should not be conservative. Conservatism, as a political and philosophical

ideology, is not inherently against inclusivity. However, it's important to understand that conservatism, like any broad ideology, encompasses a range of perspectives, and individuals within the conservative movement may have differing views on inclusivity and how it should be approached. Conservatism is often associated with a desire to preserve traditional values, institutions, and social norms. This can sometimes create tension with inclusivity when there are conflicts between traditional beliefs or practices and efforts to include or accommodate marginalized groups. Some conservatives may argue that rapid social change or efforts to be more inclusive can undermine traditional values and institutions.

It is as simple as the sentence reads. It is contradictory and does raise questions about the agenda behind conservatism's involvement in environmentalism in the first place.

The rise of the far right has had its impact on climate debates, policymaking, and climate governance. This is because what defines a climate crisis or a climate emergency differs from one person to another, one group of people to another, based on a set of factors that range from socioeconomic backgrounds, geographical positions that differ in environmental conditions, race, and gender.

For the far right, the need to capitalise on what nature has to offer comes above the price humanity would pay for this capitalisation. Furthermore, such capitalisation is enmeshed with the existing sexist and racial hierarchies that the far right feeds on to expand its power. Consequently, like the exotification of women, BIPOC and queer people, nature becomes alienated, perceived as a threat and simultaneously as in need of exploitation, management and control. In 2020, *Vice* published an article in which they defined ecofascism as 'an ideology experiencing a revival among the far-right, which blames the demise of the environment on overpopulation, immigration, and over-industrialisation, problems that followers think could be partly remedied through the mass murder of refugees in Western countries' (*Vice* 2020). Ecofascism is, in other words, embracing climate change denialism,

and when confronted with its reality, shifting from denialism to blaming the Global South and justifying the Global North's exploitative past and present. Ecofascism justifies the Global North's exploitative colonial histories and vindicates its climate footprint.

It denies the realities of postcolonial lands and the adversities their people have been facing due to the unethical, forced, and exaggerated capitalisation of their resources. Madison Grant is one of the names associated with the ecofascist movement. Grant is best known for his 1916 book *The Passing of the Great Race, or The Racial Basis of European History*, a pseudoscientific work in which he expressed his concern about the decline of the Nordic race by deeming this latter a natural aristocracy at risk of being overtaken by the Mediterranean people. 'The book is my Bible' is how Adolf Hitler described the book when he wrote a letter to Grant to thank him for his outstanding work. Grant represents the ideal example of intersectionality through the opposite of a liberal lens. Being an advocate for eugenics while simultaneously presenting as a wildlife conservationist makes him one of the infamous faces that embody the oxymoron the coming passages aim to examine.

The purpose of ending this work with a look into how the previously outlined topics intersect with politics is because of the need to push the liberatory agenda of ecofeminism into global politics. The need for such a push lies in the fact that unlike some politicians who enforce extractivism and care about profit more than sustainability, others use environmentalism to enforce racial, sexist, and anti-LGBTQ+ propaganda under the pretext of essentialised notions of nature and this latter's purity. The phrase 'far-right environmentalism' may sound absurd, as why would far-right politicians endorse the climate justice cause? Like in the example I mentioned earlier about Madison Grant, conservatism and racism are historically intertwined. In their 1996 publication *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience*, Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier investigate German fascism and argue that environmentalism is not always necessarily progressive. The pamphlet comprises two essays,

“Fascist Ideology: The ‘Green Wing’ of the Nazi Party and its Historical Antecedents” and ‘Ecology and the Modernization of Fascism in the German Ultra-Right’ authored individually by Staudenmaier and Biehl respectively. The authors investigate the history of environmentalism and argue that ‘ecological ideas have a history of being distorted and placed in the service of highly regressive ends—even of fascism itself’ (Biehl and Staudenmaier 1996).

Far-right ecology makes claims about the damaging capacities of third world migration to the Global North, as migrants are perceived to be interfering with the natural environment. Biehl and Staudenmaier call this ‘social darwinist ecology,’ stating that:

For the far right’s notion of ecology is in fact nothing more than social Darwinism, the reactionary ideology that biology dictates the form of society, that genes rather than environment determine culture. Social Darwinist ecology can then advance the seemingly ecological reasons for keeping out immigrants and for asserting ethnic or national identity while avoiding the terminology of race. (Biehl and Staudenmaier 1996)

Environmentalism is thus not always opposed by conservatives and ultra-right leaders. Some of them have separated the non-white, non-male, non-cis/heterosexual human from the equation and focused merely on conservatism strengthened by the far right by sanctifying nature and racial purity. Consequently, neo-nationalism becomes intertwined with environmental activism, deeming some humans more worthy of being part of nature and others as a threat to the latter. Sexualising nature occurs when environmentalism is led by fascists. The connection that ecofeminism needs to address and deconstruct is the feminisation and sexualisation of nature and how this is nuanced in the preservation of women’s purity.

The Policing of Bodies and Sexuality

The policing of bodies has been living in parallel with organised societies since the beginning of human history. From controlling what people wear to who they can engage sexually with and when, such enforcements have either been justified by religion, the greater good of the society, or reproductive visions of the government. For instance, the systematic persecution of homosexual men under the Nazi regime was one of the notorious consequences imposed by state policy on residents and citizens of Germany. In 'Politics of Gender: Women in Nazi Germany,' Charu Gupta writes that:

The obsession with motherhood comes out clearly in Nazi writings. Just as men served the state by fighting, so women served by bearing children. The theme of childbirth as an analogue to battle was a popular one in Nazi ideology . . . later. The notion of 'private woman' and 'public man,' masculine/feminine: strong/weak dichotomy was a part of this concept of sexual polarity. The married pair came to be viewed as complementary: husband representing strength, domination, the world; the wife weakness, sexuality, subordination, the home, i.e., her supposedly 'natural' or 'biological' domains. (Gupta 1991)

It appears thus that heteronormativity was the only expected and imposed way of life which dictated people's sexuality for the sake of the state's vision. The far-right ideologies made it a top priority to set clear legislation that prosecutes homosexual people, as well as Germans who chose sexual mates that were not of the Aryan race (they were called race defilers). In this vein, Patricia Szobar writes that:

Once in power, Nazi Party members immediately began to appeal to the new regime to enact legislation criminalizing relations between 'German' women and Jews, suggesting that 'attempted contact should be punished by stripping the woman of her German citizenship and turning her over to the work camp, and by sterilisation in cases of actual physical contact.

The German Volk will survive only if it immediately undertakes measures to remain racially pure in spirit and body.’ (Szobar 2002)

The Nuremberg Laws were enacted in Germany on 15 September, 1935. The laws were about the protection of German Blood and German honour. The neo-nationalist movement which sought to preserve the Aryan race instituted these laws, which forbade marriages and sexual intercourse between the Germans and the Jewish population. Romani and Black people were added to the laws in November 1935, as they were declared enemies of the race-based state. Szobar continues, stating that the:

[...] passage of the Nuremberg Laws was thus a tragic blow for many mixed couples. For many, the Nuremberg Laws dashed hopes of marriage. An investigation for race defilement, even in instances where no charges were filed, brought with it a great deal of unwelcome official attention and, for Jews, often presaged later investigation and official harassment for any number of supposed offences against the Jewish regulations. (Szobar 2002)

The intersecting issues of race and expected heterosexuality are not the only issues raised during the peak of far-right politics in Germany. Bodily autonomy was altered with legislation regarding the rights of women to access contraceptive methods as well as abortion.



‘A Healthy Woman, A Healthy People,’ black and white caricature picture on the ban of abortion during the Nazi regime.

The image above was part of the exhibition ‘A healthy woman, A healthy people’ in 1932–1933. The text in German translates to ‘A pregnancy must not be terminated! Beware of counseling and treatment by unqualified persons!’

Szobar explores the policing of interracial sexuality (called race defilement) as well in her article. What makes the cases of race defilement a feminist matter is not only the policing of people’s bodies based on their colour, but the fact that women were the ones, regardless of their ethnicity, who bore the consequences of interracial relationships. Szobar writes that ‘In the case of race defilement, what remains particularly striking is the gendered dimension of

the phenomenon of denunciation. Although it was ultimately the Aryan or Jewish man who was charged, for example, in many instances the target of the denunciation was the woman rather than the man' (Szobar 2002).

The rise of right-wing politics globally and throughout history has known a pattern: Creating a cultlike regime, creating hierarchy among people based on either biological sex or skin colour and policing their sexualities and autonomy.

The following sections dig deeper into the reason behind such policing and why ecofeminism needs to be incorporated in climate governance and environmental politics.

Why Do Politics Care?

One of the questions that is worth concluding our arguments with is why does the alt-right care about people's sexuality? And why does fascism put such emphasis on sexual control. A 2017 *Vice* article brought a similar question to the table, raising objections to the obsession of the far right with the demonisation of homosexuality. 'The Alt-Right's Ongoing Obsession with Demonizing Gay People as Predators,' written by Steven Blum, addresses the far-right's obsession with demonising queer people by linking pedophilia to Antifa. Blum wrote that:

The stunt, in fact, drew on a rich history of demonizing gay people by calling them sexual predators. Before the 1970s, gay men in particular were branded by their opponents as 'sexual perverts.' But despite a preponderance of studies that have sought to find a link between homosexuality and pedophilia, researchers have been consistently unable to prove the association. As Gregory Herek, an emeritus professor of social psychology at the University of California at Davis, writes on his blog: 'The empirical research does not show that gay or bisexual men are any more likely than heterosexual men to molest children.' (Blum 2017)

Vice published a video in May 2022 on YouTube where they questioned, again, the far right's attitude to sex, especially women's sexual liberation and how femicide can be the result of

men's sexual frustration. The video refers to the term 'manosphere' as an online subculture dominated by the belief that men are victims of a society that is set up to favour women. Jacob Ware says that 'Feminism is seen as something that's eroding the rights of the white man. And so it has allowed both incels and the far right to create an enemy . . . and women fit neatly into that framing' (Ware 2022). The video continues to explain that the people who are most likely to join far-right movements are not necessarily the most marginalised in society, but the ones who feel that their positions of relative privilege are under threat (*Vice* 2022).

Scott Burnett, a researcher at Gothenburg University, states in the video that thinking about gender roles is central to thinking about what fascism and far-right politics are, since one cannot think about race without thinking of reproduction (Burnett 2022). Reproduction is thus one of the main concerns of far-right ideologies. Considering that issues regarding sex, race, and bodily autonomy do intersect, it is the alt-right's mission to preserve the white race by controlling what people, especially women who are expected to submissively reproduce, do with their bodies. Unsurprisingly, it is not only the women who are targets of losing their bodily agency. Men, who are members for instance of the Proud Boys are discouraged from masturbation.

#NoWanks is the movement they began which allegedly helps them overcome porn addiction, develop discipline, and channel their focus towards their family members.

It is a fact that sexual politics have been proven to be a means to govern bodies by honouring some and putting others in states of vulnerability.

Wilhelm Reich, writing in his 1980 book *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, suggests that 'sexual repression aids political reaction not only through this process which makes the mass individual passive and unpolitical but also by creating in his structure an interest in actively supporting the authoritarian order. The suppression of natural sexual gratification leads to various kinds of substitute gratifications' (Reich 1980). The quote from Reich's book reflects

that the oppression of sexuality in all its forms is in fact a political measure to render people passive and subordinate to an authoritarian order that dictates the level of freedom (or absence of this latter) regarding bodily autonomy.

Reich paid close attention to the sexual frustrations that were the outcome of political manipulations which resulted in extremely violent racist and sexist ends. The strategic use of sexual frustration is a political weapon commonly used by fascist movements. In fact, I mentioned this notion in the discussion above of Iran's Qajar Dynasty: When politics and queerness collide. There, I alighted upon how extractivism is intertwined with the oppression of bodies and sexuality by taking Iran as a case study. The passages analyse the transformation of the country's queer history to one of the most oppressed nations in the world by pointing out to the parallel factors of having found oil in the country and the power and greed that came with the discovery.

Towards Queer, Post-Gender, Political Ecofeminism

This is the final subchapter of this work, where the three of the main topics of this thesis meet again: ecofeminism, queer theory, and post-genderism. Ecofeminism has always been political. It started as a movement of resistance and shifted into academia as a response to gender-blindness in environmental research. Yet during its genesis, despite its strong opposition to dualism and polarisations, it (un)intentionally saw the world through a binary lens when it comes to gender. A queer approach, inclusive of transgender, intersex, gender-nonconforming and nonbinary people's experiences would expand ecofeminism by breaking the constraints of essentialist expectations of bodies, and scholars have begun to do valuable work in this direction. It is time to move beyond the binary limitations of ecofeminism by intersecting the field with not only queer ecologies but also post-genderism, which will bring novel perspectives to the field. Throughout these analyses, ecofeminism has been intersected with several other schools of thought. It broke from its traditional constraints that limited its

scopes to a binary gender. It also drew from politics and anthropology. It was indeed a courageous step to even dare crossing post-genderism with ecofeminism. Post-genderism remains radically novel to academia, and our argument is perhaps one of the first attempts ever made to break the binary in ecofeminist literary work.

The queering of the field itself emerged from the lack of representation of people who do not fall under the cis-heteronormativity umbrella. Considering that ecofeminism's ecological philosophy is not limited to literary theory only but expands to being a social and environmental movement as well, it is crucial to acknowledge the impact the school of thought can and should have on politics.

Ecofeminism is not novel to the political world. In 1992, Mary Mellor published an article with the title, 'Green Politics: Ecofeminist, Ecofeminine or Ecomasculine?.' Although quite comparative and essentialist in its contrastive approach to women and men, Mellor made thought-provoking points by questioning the presence (or lack of) of women in green politics. Mellor has also raised questions regarding the efficacy of women's participation in green politics, as this participation does not necessarily mean that a political party or the movement are embracing feminism. Mellor wrote that, "Women may be present in large numbers in the green movement, but they are not really on the political agenda as women. The mere presence of women does not imply a feminist perspective as testified by the large number of women supporting 'traditional' values in the churches and the Conservative Party" (Mellor 1993). Mellor's article has a dedicated subsection where she writes about ecofeminism and, despite writing in 1993, she was aware of the dangers of essentialism in ecofeminism as it could 'become a reaffirmation of women's present position' (Mellor 1993). This ecofeminist section in the article dives into the details of why the association of females with the natural does more harm than good. From discussing motherhood, fertility, naturalness, and sexuality,

the author draws attention to the lack of bodily autonomy that emerges because of viewing women and their roles as predetermined. As Mellor concludes: 'If green politics is to escape patriarchal society and the destructive patterns it has created it must begin with the realities of women's lives and experiences' (Mellor 1993).

Mellor is not the only one who perceived ecofeminism as needed in the world of politics. In 1997, Ariel Salleh published *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx and the Postmodern*, in which she explored the philosophical and political challenges for ecofeminism. Drawing from Marxist politics, sociology, political economy, deep ecology, postcolonial studies and the politics of social movements, she established a viewpoint that centres Eurocentric capitalism and patriarchy as the roots of global climate and environmental issues. She brought sex and gender inequalities to the forefront as political issues which are rarely if ever addressed adequately by environmentalists. The book serves to advocate for ecofeminism to step out of its ecology/ feminism limitations and move towards embracing the political world as the most impactful decisions are being made there. The book can be regarded as a manifesto that re-hypothesises the connections between feminism and environmentalism. By addressing discourses on class, science, bodies, nature, and cultures, Salleh took a big controversial step almost two decades ago to push the necessity of incorporating ecofeminism into politics to the forefront.

In that vein, this thesis hopes to have taken the above steps even further in politicising the field. It urges readers who are researching ecofeminism or one or more of the fields that have been incorporated in this series of discussions.

The work that has been progressing and evolving during the past few decades has attracted the curiosity and the commitment of researchers from different departments and areas of research. The goal is that one day, ecofeminism will be an established area of research and study that can be found across several departments in higher education so that scholars can be

specialised in the field. The queering of ecofeminism was an inevitable step that had to be taken for the field's evolution. However, its queering has remained somewhat essentialist and quite binary in its approach to gender. Therefore, this work insisted heavily on representing the nonconformity that our species has always known. Without such a representation and the chartering of post-genderism, ecofeminism would have remained an exclusionary movement that cares about the needs of some while overlooking the needs of many other marginalised communities. By breaking false misconceptions about womanhood, nature, patriarchy's association with men and the nurturing and caring capacities of our species, ecofeminism is reborn as whole.

Conclusion

Writing this manuscript started with the aim of applying the existing ecofeminist research to literary texts. Yet throughout the literature review process, it has slowly and steadily transformed from mere applications of the school of thought to questioning the latter's potency itself. Thus, the book has undergone a transformation from solely literature-focused into a political work that redefined ecofeminism and intersected it with multiple other fields and schools of thought. Although the field has had attempts at being queered and becoming more intersectional, a step was needed towards de-essentialising it and lifting the focus off the gender binary. The journey that this thesis has taken me on exceeded my expectations. I moved from merely wanting to highlight the importance of ecofeminism to the global climate justice movements to questioning the field itself since its binary and essentialised notions of gender rendered myself and a large number of people invisible. I wrote and fought for a neo-ecofeminism, one that surpasses outdated notions of gender, one that stands for all humans and does not essentialise womanhood, manhood, femininities, and masculinities. I wrote about a school of thought and a movement that does not use the gender binary for a victim/abuser dichotomy but introduces nonbinary gender identities to climate justice to free humanity from the binary limitations of gender which often leads to the segregation of transgender and gender nonconforming bodies.

While undergoing extensive research, reading, and critical analysis periods, the past few years were simultaneously self-exploratory years. While this work is far from being perfect, it is thanks to this project that I came to the realisation that I belong outside the gender binary identities. It is thanks to this project that I developed awareness of the lacking data in climate research as all humans on the planet are only given the choice of choosing among to cisgender binary options when sharing their experiences, especially the ones related to environmental impacts. This thesis does not follow an extensive research/cite/repeat model of

writing. Instead, it intersects political writings, arts analysis, history and mythology, as well as the hard sciences, all in relation to the umbrella of ecofeminist literature. As the product of an intersectional lens, this thesis has something for everyone: Be it an interest in gender and the environment, neo-ecofeminism, queer ecology, bodies and sexuality, ecological masculinities and much more, this work offers it all.

From writing on issues revolving around environmental racism, the rise of ecofeminism, queer bodies and ecology, and the gendered impacts of climate change, my approach to such issues have long been a queer, anti-essentialist, alter-globalist, and ecofeminist. As a nonbinary, gay, researcher of colour, I have been faced, by some former research colleagues whom I choose not to name, with the criticism of having a misandric approach to environmentalism, that is, an approach based on contempt for men. However, my message is: queer intersectional ecofeminism is not built on a juxtaposition.

Queering and intersectionalising ecological feminism means actively unlearning binary ways of thinking such as ones that lead to blaming men and victimising women or demonising culture and celebrating nature.

De-essentialising ecofeminism has been a significant part of this work, as essentialised terms and notions that are highly relevant to the field were working against its progression and expansion. This de-essentialisation process enabled me to review an intensive amount of ecofeminist literature with a lens that deemed dichotomies more harmful than beneficial as some researchers have. Essentialism made ecofeminism divisive and non inclusive, and it is my pride to have contributed to the field's process of becoming inclusive of people who fall outside the gender binary. Consequently, a queer approach that includes transgender and nonbinary people's experiences served this work by expanding ecofeminism and breaking the constraints of essentialist expectations of bodies. Numerous scholars have begun to do valuable work in this direction despite not linking their work directly to ecofeminism.

Catriona Sandilands, Greta Gaard, Marna Hauk, Paul M. Pulé, Martin Hultman, and Lucy Nicholas are some of the researchers who have revolutionised queer theory, gender studies, and environmental humanities. I proudly took the step towards moving beyond the binary limitations of ecofeminism and intersecting the field with not only queer ecology but also postgenderism, which brings novel perspectives to the field. Merging postgenderism with ecofeminism may seem futuristic and, dare I say, even surreal. However, we already have access to biotechnology, reproductive technologies, and queer ecological scientific findings that render essentialist arguments about sex, gender, and sexuality obsolete. It is time that ecofeminism moves beyond the gender binary, the victimisation of females and demonisation of males, and essentialist approaches to gender and climate matters. By intersecting it with postgenderism, ecofeminism will finally, and holistically, consider the diversity of human bodies and shift away from a system that normalises hetero-cisgender-conformity.

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