



Subversion of the Logic of Domination in Margaret Atwood and Forūğ Farroḳzād

تدمير كيان «منطق الهيمنة» عند مارجريت أتوود و فروغ فرخزاد

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Abstract	Article info
<p>Parallel to the approach of feminism that situates women's concerns as the pivotal ground, ecofeminism adds the violation of nature by human beings to the patriarchal suppression of women in society. As such, the "logic of domination" that sanctions and justifies the subordination of both women and nature spreads the veins of ecofeminism. The study at hand aptly selected the works of two environmental female writers Margaret Atwood's <i>Surfacing</i> (1972) and Forūğ Farroḳzād's "I Pity the Garden" to be studied with the lenses of ecofeminism. Therefore, the inferiority of women sided with the subordination of nature as the binary logic that perpetuates patriarchy are fully illustrated in a comparative study wherein the role of patriarchy as the reinforcement of anthropocentrism in the subordination of nature is revealed to the reader.</p>	Received 04/07/2023
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ملخص	Article info
<p>بالتزامن مع الحركة النسوية (الفميينيسم) التي تهتم بامرأة كجمال مركزي، جاءت حركة الإهتمام النسوية البيئية (اكوفيينيسم) تعتبر انتهاك الطبيعة من قبل البشر واضطهاد المرأة في المجتمع الأبوي على السواء. ولهذا تنقد هذه الحركة "منطق الهيمنة" الذي يجيز امتثال المرأة والطبيعة له. هذه الدراسة اتخذت منهج النسوية البيئية حتى تدرس أعمال الكاتبتين واهتماماتهما بالبيئة. رواية "على الأمواج" للكاتبة مارجريت أتوود (1972)، وقصيدة "أشفق على الجنينة" للشاعرة فروغ فرخزاد. لذلك، تهدف هذه الدراسة المقارنة إلى تبين دور الرجل في إخضاع المرأة والبيئة كمنطق مزدوج يقوي هذا العمل، بشكل تام.</p>	تاريخ الارسال: 2023/07/04
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1. Introduction

As a movement which started with Mary Wollstonecraft in the 18th century, feminism culminated in 1960s and 1970s with the manifestation of the first and second wave feminisms whose main objectives were political. The subject of the movements was women's experience in a patriarchal society (Rivkin and Ryan 2017, 527) and the problematic relationship between opposing genders i.e., man/woman bipolarity. Feminists then, attempted to call for ways out of this controversial situation, subverting patriarchal logic and putting an end to "sexist dominations in transforming society" (Selden, Widdowson, and Brooker 2016, 115).

On the other hand, with the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), concerns about environmental problems began to increase. During 1980s and as a reaction to post-structural philosophy which did not provide an alternative to reject objectivity and certainties of modernism, then, the modernist conception of individual as an agent capable of action was revived in order to make solutions to environmental crises.

According to Glotfelty, though several social movements like feminism rapidly integrated with literature, it took rather long for ecocriticism to appear as a concerted approach to literary criticism and for literature to embrace ecological perspectives (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996, 17). Finally, with collaborative projects in the field, particularly the foundation of ASLE and later on the magazine, *ISLE*, ecocriticism emerged as an independent approach to literature in 1993. Garrard defines ecocriticism as the study of the unequal relationship of human and the non-human nature throughout human cultural history (Garrard 2004, 5). *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996) assumes that there exists a connection between our culture and degeneration of the environment. In order to examine this relationship, ecocritics study the depiction of nature and ecological values in literature while they attempt to classify the environmental writings as a distinguished genre in addition to race, class and gender (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996, 19).

Hence, ecocriticism surveys a binary opposition in which human is superior to nature. As the study of a similar bipolarity, man/woman, is at the heart of feminism, they found a common ground to integrate under the new umbrella term "ecofeminism". According to Gaard

ecofeminism's main premise is that the ideology which authorizes oppressions over women and other inferior groups of the society, allows oppressions over nature (Gaard 2010, 1). Ecofeminists are prone to elaborate on the nature of dominations over women and nature, providing solutions to subvert the logic of domination.

Therefore, despite their disagreement about the nature of interconnections between women and nature (Tong 2014, 262), ecofeminists including Ruether (1975), Plumwood (1993), and Warren (2000) believe that the sole way out of environmental crises is to take a feminist approach. The next step proves to rebuild a society based on responsibility and ethics rather than right. Warren believes that if women's movement and environmental movement intimately interconnect, they would be able to destabilize all systems of oppression and replace them with a value system in which difference and diversity will be respected (Warren 2000, 13). Her specific version of ecofeminist approach has grown out of the historical lived experience of women in the West, under an "oppressive conceptual framework" which legitimizes and interconnects the unjustified domination of women and others with the unjustified domination of the non-human nature (Warren 2000, 14).

2. Logic of Domination and Identity Formation

To examine Atwood's *Surfacing* and Farroḡzād's "I Pity the Garden" this study delves into the related literature investigating these authors and their works. As a novelist and poet, Atwood's oeuvre has been critically analyzed through the lens of environmental and gender perspectives. Studying selected novels of Atwood including *Surfacing*, Changizi and Ghasemi argue that human's existence is perceived as tragic which is fundamentally risen out of environmental concerns (Changizi and Ghasemi 2017). On the other side, from a feminist perspective, Bhalla points out to "power" in *Surfacing* as the cause for the domination of the protagonist when she recognizes the gap between natural femininity and her "self" constructed under a patriarchal culture (Bhalla 2012). However, according to Raj this natural setting as opposed to cultural milieu helps the narrator to perceive her dominated situation as a woman (Raj 2016). What

these studies have in common is a ray of hope Atwood shows about the future of the earth as well as female identity, despite the apocalyptic nature of her novels.

Similar to gender studies on Atwood, Farroḳzād's poetry, has also been the subject of several readings examining her creative and rebellious poems in establishing female identity under patriarchy. In this way, Ghasemi and Pourgiv argue that she accomplishes her female identity and breaks cultural boundaries in her encounter with male-dominated territories (Ghasemi and Pourgiv 2010). In another study by Jafari and Nosrati her poetry is said to be replete with personal and marital values while her contemporary female poets share certain social values aligned with patriarchy (Jafari and Nosrati 2015). But, the only ecofeminist reading of her poetry is explored by Zolfagharkhani where he demonstrates Farroḳzād's ecofeminist perspectives from a thematic point of view. He shows the depiction of natural elements in Farroḳzād's poetry and how the persona finds her ambivalent status as a woman in her connection with nature (Zolfagharkhani 2016). What is missing in this study is its failure in addressing "I Pity the Garden".

Aligned with these studies, this paper aims to compare Atwood's *Surfacing* and Farroḳzād's "I Pity the Garden" through an ecofeminist lens proposed by Karen J. Warren as the "logic of domination" in order to show their simultaneous literary, social and political involvement with femininity and nature. However, the significance of this study proves to be the fact that Farroḳzād's poems have been investigated much in Persian language and literature, thus reading her works according to a Western framework will be a novel contribution to literature beyond cultural boundaries.

3. Interconnection between Women and Nature

Born in Canada in 1939, Margaret Atwood is the author of more than forty books of fiction, poetry and collections of critical essays. She is also an environmental activist. The interconnection between woman and nature under a patriarchal society is a major theme in her novels and poetry. *Surfacing* (1972) is a semi-poetic novel that recounts the story of a woman travelling to an island with her friends in northern Quebec in search of her father.

Although Atwood has intentionally made use of ecofeminist perspectives in her works, this study will show Farroḳzād's involvement with woman and nature long before ecofeminism came into literature. As a Persian poet, Forūğ Farroḳzād has been known for her challenging and controversial poems expressed with a powerful and a courageous feminine voice, very unusual then for Iranian women. Born in the same year as Atwood, Farroḳzād, is the author of four collections of poetry. According to Dailey, with "The Wall" and "I Pity the Garden", Farroḳzād established her place in the literary canon both as a feminist and a woman with deep attitudes towards the domination over woman and nature (Dailey 2017, 26). "I Pity the Garden" is selected from her last collection, i.e., *Let Us Believe in the Dawn of the Cold Season* and will be investigated in this paper. The poem is about a garden which is left unattended by the persona's family and is in danger of death.

3.1 Hierarchical Thinking: Subordination of Women

Based on Warren, patriarchy as an "oppressive conceptual framework", provides a rationale, explains and sustains the improper relationships of domination and subordination in a way that one internalizes an established and a certain set of thoughts and beliefs. For instance, patriarchy authorizes and justifies the domination of man over woman followed by several other malignant dichotomies in a system of oppression. The basic characteristics of this oppressive conceptual framework include value-hierarchical thinking, value dualism, power, controlling unprivileged by privileged group and the logic of domination. However, ecofeminism seems inclusive to explain this domination system (Warren 2000, 46) and proposes that this unjust framework ought to be replaced by the one to make possible just decision.

One of those basic essentials of the oppressive conceptual framework which pervades throughout the novel and the poem is hierarchical thinking. Both fathers as an instance, represent the value system of thought in which man and culture are superior to woman and nature.

“Value-hierarchical thinking” or “up-down” order, according to Warren, is the one in which the significance belongs to what is up, not down. That is to say, when a conceptual framework clarifies certain boundary conditions to hold up dear in a community, indeed it normalizes the same principles for the whole society. Atwood has depicted the narrator’s father as connected to the authoritative socio-political structure. He is bound to the logic of domination as the result of a hierarchical value system that privileges the domination of man over woman and nature. Rigney asserts that reason, science and rationality are this father’s qualities as he believes in the mode of 18th century rationalists. Therefore, he is visualized to be a reasonable and logical man in his daughter’s mind (Rigney 1987, 54). Moreover, science was logically containing a great part of his life to the extent that he would fight for it “if he had been permitted” (Atwood 1972, 47). Finding his drawings, the narrator comes to this understanding that “his delusion with usefulness” (Ibid, 82) has possibly turned him into madness because they are replete with incomprehensible codes, numbers and body parts. Schaeffer also believes that “his knowledge is of logic; her father cuts off from emotional force of the wish with his logical unacceptable answers” (Schaeffer 1974, 321). Finally, after discovering his dead body drifted with his camera around his neck, the narrator makes sure that his innate insistence on defending science has given rise to his death with the weight of his camera (Ibid, 122) symbolically as a cultural and intellectual element.

3.2 Patriarchal Society: Inferiority of Nature

Same case holds true about the persona’s father in Farroḳzād’s poem. In an attempt to show patriarchal society’s disregard for ecological decline, the persona presents her father and his reaction to women and nature. She connects her father to the public sphere of masculine society. He obviously does not mind the garden, because he recognizes his role only as a protector of his family, just like the narrator’ father who tried to defend his family through reason (Ibid, 44). The persona’s father does not care about the garden since it excludes his defined duties according to his dominative role. As a retired employee he passes his time reading Ferdowsi’s “Epics of Kings or History of Histories” because he thinks he has “carried [his] burden” and is “done with [his] work” (16-17).

As Raoufzadeh et al. argue too, the head of the family, i.e., the father, controls women's labor, sexuality and production while his effect can be seen in politics and economy (Raoufzadeh, Hosein, and Birgani 2019, 60). As a result, he respects money, duty, work, bank account, culture and civilization and clearly imprecates nature believing that his death- as similar to the narrator's father obsessed with usefulness- is far more impressive than the death of the garden because he would be useful for the world whereas the garden is not:

Father says to Mother:

Damn every fish and every bird!

When I'm dead, what will it matter

If the garden lives or dies.

My pension is all that counts. (Wolpe 2007, 100)

Hierarchy, embodied in the characters of fathers in these two works, then, is the point for the whole society to fail in its attempt to speak for women and nature as it is already established that man and culture are morally superior to woman and nature. Therefore, this idea justifies and sanctions the latter's inferiority as a direct result of the logic of domination.

3.3 Value Dualism: Subordination of the Denominator

In addition to this system of hierarchical thinking, value dualism seems to be another prevalent theme both in the novel and the poem. Based on Warren's explication, "oppositional value dualism" is defined as establishing unquestionable sets of binary oppositions in which the nominator is privileged over the denominator that is the explicit consequence of hierarchical thinking (Warren 2000, 46). These binary oppositions including rationality/emotion, man/woman and culture/nature are directly opposite to each other, mutually exclusive rather than complementary, and one of them is inevitably marginalized.

In addition to the privileging of man over woman, culture/nature dichotomy is what one might consider in both works under study here. They show how culture works in order to put nature into negligence. *Surfacing* clearly depicts a picture of the Americans who are trespassing the land in order to progress their business. Wherever there is a mention of Americans, she emphasizes their degenerative treatment toward nature and the way they have penetrated the environment in order to develop technology on the land. Hence, the first indication of the Americans is seen on narrator's way to the village when they "pass the turnoff to the pit the Americans hollowed out" and the "thick power lines running into the forest" (Ibid, 11).

Furthermore, Atwood expresses her environmental concerns about the extinction of the trees in these words: "The trees will never be allowed to grow tall again, they're killed as soon as they're valuable, big trees are scarce as whale" (Ibid, 39). Accordingly, Chandra believes that the natural environment of the novel is victimized by Americanism as a result of capitalism; in fact the Americans are "hunters who encroach the Canadian border to spread their self-centered ideologies" (Chandra 2020, 81). Therefore, as a direct consequence of capitalism, Americanism has been indicated to draw attentions to a widespread culture of consumerism which is also internalized by the people in town. The narrator believes that the Americans "spread themselves like virus" (Ibid, 101) implying that not only the Americans but also the society, are overwhelmed enough with the oppressive system that follows the culture the Americans have created. Atwood also declares that the Americans are "the kind who catch more than they can eat and they'd do it [fishing] with dynamite if they could get away with it" (Ibid, 53). In fact, as Lu maintains, Atwood is completely disappointed in capitalism and heavily criticizes the system (3) that is symbolically depicted by the role of the Americans in the novel. In doing so, Americans present and develop a capitalistic culture that not only authorizes environmental deterioration but also establishes an anthropocentric framework that places human at the center of the world to use up the earth. Americanism then in the novel disseminates capitalistic thoughts, thereby Homo-sapiens are the dominant creatures permitted to *consume* even more than their needs and the narrator confirms that "their kind of human" only matters.

Culture has been dichotomized against nature in Farroḳzād's "I Pity the Garden" too. The brother individually symbolizes a kind of modern culture. The brother "calls the garden a graveyard". Firstly, this statement shows the brother's detachment from the garden. He can only understand the nature by *counting* "the corpses of the fish / rotting beneath shallow water's dead skin" which points out to his inability to feel and sympathize with his natural surroundings. Besides, through the words of the speaker, he is identified as a man "addicted to philosophy" and when he is drunk "he beats his fists on the doors and the walls / says he is tired, pained and despondent". And interestingly enough, the brother "sees the healing of the garden in its death" which put more emphasis on his detached status to the nature and his closeness to philosophical theories. In view of that, Dailey assumes that the persona's brother deals more with theories as he cannot take a real action against the garden destruction (Dailey 2017, 32). This issue could prove that identifying with cultural matters -philosophical thoughts in this case- will result in a kind of passivity that holds one from taking action in support of nature.

Thus, culture has been proved to be superior to nature both in *Surfacing* and "I Pity the Garden", since in both cases the nature is ignored and it can hold a meaning as long as it serves human needs and his cultural attitudes. Both Atwood and Farroḳzād have focused on a male-centered view of nature. Atwood finds it in a pervasive culture developed by a large group of Americans, while Farroḳzād finds these cultural thoughts in the character of persona's brother, who identifies himself with counting and modern theories.

3.4 Women's Mastering the Language of Nature/Patriarchy

On the other hand, inferiority has been manifested in the characters of mothers in *Surfacing* as well as "I Pity the Garden". In fact men fail to consider the role of women as mothers because they are depicted as connected to the sphere of emotion and irrationality.

What the narrator explicates about female characters in the village is almost self-explanatory about their inferior situation within a traditional social context specifically when she highlights that “none of the women had names then” including her mother and herself; all were called Madam (Ibid, 24) at the time. However, since naming according to Watanabe works as a part of patriarchal language system, it seems that the protagonist is intentionally unnamed both in order to show her inferior role and keep her away from this system, simultaneously (Watanabe 2009, 8). Notwithstanding the fact that her mother was domesticated as a caring mother and wife similar to other women in the village, she seems to characterize distinctive features that the narrator thinks she must have been “either ten thousand years behind the rest or fifty years ahead of them” (Ibid, 42). Furthermore, as Bhalla maintains, in her visions the narrator sees her mother as a jay (Bhalla 2012, 3) which is a part of nature and is inherently connected with it.

Encompassing emotional naturalistic attitudes, her mother was also a pacifist (Ibid, 52). As an abstruse character, according to Tolan, she had mysterious powers and was aligned with nature (Fiona 2007, 44). To put it another way, the narrator thinks of her reception of the natural environment and the animals around in such a way as though she has mastered the language of nature. Next, what impressed the narrator in relation to her mother was her routine bird-feeding in the tray “waiting for the jays, standing quiet as a tree” during the day as well as having her sudden walking off into the forest (Ibid, 42). In emphasizing her mother’s intimate relationship with the wildlife around, she recalls the time when they used to live in a tent. Hearing a voice at night, the family was startled by a bear intending to rush towards. Her mother “stood up and walked towards it; it hesitated and grunted. She yelled a word at it that sounded like 'Scat!' and waved her arms, and it turned around and thudded off into the forest” as if “she knew a foolproof magic formula” (Ibid, 63). According to Raj, she recalls her mother’s images as if to obtain her inner power (Raj 2016, 4).

On the other side, in “I Pity the Garden”, the persona introduces her mother as a religious traditional woman who has been affected by the notion of the male-dominated system and is deprived of her agency. In response to her husband, she keeps silent because as a religious wife

she needs to be obedient and thus waits for somebody, “a savior”, to come and save the garden. Farroḳzād asserts that being feminine *per se* is a sin in her patriarchal society (Dailey 3), so “mother is a sinner by nature”. As a woman living under the dominance of a hierarchical value system, the mother has internalized her role as an inferior but Farroḳzād does not accept such an internalization for women as she admits that they are involved with superstitions (Tamimdari, Notash, and Kazemi Nasab 2018, 18). The mother character, thus symbolizes a woman whose only reaction to the garden is waiting for a male savior to emerge and save the human and the earth: “She awaits the Promised One / And the forgiveness / He is to bring”. This idea becomes significant specifically in relation to the garden as it asserts how passive the mother is, regarding her femininity and the environment.

Therefore, the only difference between the two mothers is that the narrator’s mother connects herself to nature even if she acts passively in relation to her role in the society; whereas the persona’s mother does not involve herself in any way, neither with her female role nor her natural environment and awaits for a man to save her and the garden, implying that she believes that the logic of patriarchy works. Instead, she is highly influenced by religion as another substantial aspect of patriarchy in an Eastern society. As Perales and Bouma say, “in the context of gender relation, religion involves supporting the maintenance of a status quo that emphasizes patriarchal gender roles for men and women in the social system” (Perales and Bouma 2019, 324).

4. Subversion of the Logical Domination across Cultures

Last but not least, this study explores the role of Atwood’s protagonist and Farroḳzād’s persona in order to show their consciousness and success in subverting the logical domination, although in two different cultures. Both characters share awareness regarding their ambivalent situation in patriarchy and adverse ecological status.

Like what Viies argues, from the very beginning of the novel it is clear that the city life- as opposed to nature- has brought traumatic problems for the narrator (Viies, 13). Under such

traumatic circumstances, she only remembers some oppressive stereotypical ideologies like “Killing certain things is all right, food and enemies, fish and mosquitos” (Ibid, 52), and therefore she successfully participates in killing a fish her friend has caught, something she had never committed before.

But as the novel proceeds, the narrator starts remembering her past experiences and in this way she achieves an understanding and awareness about her identity as a female and actively pays attention to environmental degradation around her. In other words, recalling her past memories in contrast to modern lifestyle is equivalent of her search for her identity as a woman (Malathi, 5). As a result, the narrator confirms her unconscious status by confessing that in her engagement with dominant principles, she had not been feeling awful: “I realized I didn’t feel much of anything, I hadn’t for a long time” (Ibid, 83). Subsequently, in her struggle to come over her mental system of patriarchy, she realizes that her father’s heritage for her is no more practical because it is “complicated, tangled” and “gave only knowledge” (Ibid, 119). Therefore, she starts to recollect more of her mother’s memories to find her own way (Ibid, 117) that will lead to her involvement with the natural surroundings like feeding the birds.

According to Changizi and Ghasemi, “Atwood asserted that the narrator wishes to be not human because being human inevitably involves being guilty” (Changizi and Ghasemi 2017, 55). That is why in the climactic moment of the emergence of the dead heron her emotional and mental status change to an extent that she feels guilty about her complicity in the heron’s death: “I felt a sickening complicity, sticky as glue, blood on my hands as though I had been there and watched without saying No or doing anything to stop it” (Ibid, 103). This scene becomes her departure point to fight against oppression and domination.

She goes ahead to live an animalistic life, putting off the clothes as a reaction to cultural conventions that are established to distinguish human from animal. She associates herself with nature and animals and in doing so she realizes both women and nature are subjugated by patriarchy (Niranjani 2012, 196). Consequently, the narrator rejects her passive status as a woman to call for attention toward the inferiority of women and nature through a reunion with her natural circumference. In doing so, she relies on her emotions given the fact that “from any

rational point of view I am absurd; but there are no longer any rational points of view” (Ibid, 133). Contrary to what Gautam and Sinha argue that the narrator attempts to reunite feminine characteristics with masculine world (Gautam and Sinha 2012, 3), it seems that she intends to abandon patriarchal hierarchy and value dualism, and to achieve this goal, she delves into an animalistic life.

Like Atwood’s protagonist, in her endeavor to resist against dominative state of patriarchy, the persona in Farroḡzād’s “I Pity the Garden”, is the only character in the poem who is actively searching for her femininity and a way out of natural destruction. Therefore, in spite of what Talebi puts that the persona is a child (Talebi 2020, 300), she seems to be a mature female who cares about the “garden’s heart” while her parents are involved with logic and rationality.

In being concerned with the garden, the persona finds herself alone: she “fears the age that has lost its heart / the idleness of so many hands / the alienation in so many faces”. In line with Bakhtiary’s statement that Farroḡzād’s persona sympathizes with nature (Bakhtiary 2014, 21), one finds her here sympathizing with the garden’s heart that “has swollen in the heat of this sun / its mind slowly drains of its lush memories”. Although there seems no hope on behalf of human beings, she thinks of the possible solutions like “taking the garden to a hospital” to change the situation. This notion displays her successful and active understanding of her agency not only in relation to her female character but also to nature’s revival. She intends to really do something to revive the garden and one might find it rather optimistic as Farroḡzād maintains this confidence about future and people’s awareness about natural aggravation.

As it was stated above, unlike their family members, Atwood’s protagonist and Farroḡzād’s poetic persona come to this consciousness that the only way out of patriarchal framework is to subvert its logic of domination, and adopt their female identity through an interconnection with nature, because in sympathizing with nature, they perceive their inferior situation as opposed to male dominance. Furthermore, it is the nature that reveals their true self, not the system which supports the logic of domination.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it has been contended that both Atwood and Farroḳzād have shared a concurrent literary, social and political awareness in their works in terms of femininity and environmental concerns. This way, they perceive that hegemonic premises of the oppressive conceptual framework in the society have dominated both their femininity and nature in similar ways. Therefore, both writers testify their success as they accomplish to subvert a dominant patriarchal system in their works that relates men with culture and regards them as dominant over women and nature. In doing so, Atwood's protagonist and Farroḳzād's poetic persona are led by their intuition and feelings to obtain a novel outlook that guides them in their interconnection with the natural environment.

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