

Ecofeminism and Power: Gender–Environment Dualities in The Poisonwood Bible by Barbara Kingsolver and Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood through the Lens of Vandana Shiva’s Ecofeminist Thought

Assist. Lect. Alaa Raheem Farhan

Dept of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, Sawa University

Almuthana, Iraq.

Alaa.raheem@sawauniversity.edu.iq

Abstract

This study examines the intersection of gender oppression and environmental degradation through an ecofeminist lens, focusing on Barbara Kingsolver’s *The Poisonwood Bible* and Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* in light of Vandana Shiva’s ecological thought. Ecofeminism argues that the domination of women and the exploitation of nature arise from the same patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist structures. Drawing on Shiva’s critique of “maldevelopment,” this research explores how capitalist and colonial ideologies systematically marginalize women while simultaneously destroying ecological systems. The study analyzes how both novels portray patriarchy and colonialism as interconnected mechanisms of power that reinforce environmental destruction and gender subjugation. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Nathan Price’s authoritarian control over his family and his failed agricultural practices symbolize the destructive imposition of Western patriarchal values on both women and nature. In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood presents a dystopian future shaped by corporate biotechnology, where nature is commodified and women, particularly Oryx, are reduced to objects within a profit-driven system. Using qualitative textual analysis grounded in ecofeminist theory, this research also investigates female agency and resistance in the novels. While characters such as Leah and Adah embody forms of ecofeminist resilience and resistance, Oryx represents constrained agency within an oppressive capitalist framework. Additionally, the study examines the role of Western science and biotechnology as instruments of domination, aligning with Shiva’s critique of reductionist science. Ultimately, this research demonstrates that both novels reflect and reinterpret Vandana Shiva’s ecofeminist arguments, highlighting the interconnected oppression of women and nature and emphasizing the need for ecological justice, gender equality, and alternative models of development.

Keywords : Ecofeminism, Vandana Shiva, Patriarchy, Environmental Degradation, Gender Oppression, Colonialism, Capitalism, Maldevelopment, Women and Nature, *The Poisonwood Bible*, *Oryx and Crake*, Biotechnology, Scientific Discourse, Female Agency.

النسوية البيئية والسلطة: ثنائيات النوع والبيئة في كتاب "إنجيل السم" لباربرا كينسيلفير و"أوريكس وكراك" لمارجريت أتوود من خلال عدسة الفكر النسوي البيئي لفاندانا شيفا

م:م علاء رحيم فرحان

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة ساوة

المثنى، العراق.

الملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة تقاطع قمع المرأة وتدهور البيئة من منظور نسوي بيئي، مع التركيز على روايتي The Poisonwood Bible لباربرا كينغسولفر و Oryx and Crake لمارجريت أتوود في ضوء الفكر البيئي لفاندانا شيفا. تنطلق النسوية البيئية من فكرة أن اضطهاد النساء واستغلال الطبيعة ينبعان من البنى نفسها المتمثلة في النظام الأبوي والاستعمار والرأسمالية. وبالاعتماد على نقد شيفا لمفهوم "سوء التنمية"، تبحث هذه الدراسة في كيفية مساهمة الأيديولوجيات الرأسمالية والاستعمارية في تهميش النساء وتدمير الأنظمة البيئية بشكل منهجي. تحلل الدراسة كيفية تصوير الروائيتين للأبوية والاستعمار بوصفهما آليتين مترابطتين للسلطة تؤديان إلى التخريب البيئي وإخضاع المرأة. ففي The Poisonwood Bible، يرمز تحكم ناثن برايس الاستبدادي بعائلته وفشله الزراعي إلى الآثار المدمرة لفرض القيم الأبوية الغربية على كل من المرأة والطبيعة. أما في Oryx and Crake، فتقدم أتوود مستقبلاً ديستوبياً تهيمن عليه التكنولوجيا الحيوية والشركات الكبرى، حيث تُسلع الطبيعة وتُحتزل المرأة، ولا سيما أوريكس، إلى مجرد سلعة ضمن نظام رأسمالي ربحي. تعتمد الدراسة على التحليل النصي النوعي المرتكز على النظرية النسوية البيئية، كما تستكشف أشكال الفاعلية والمقاومة النسوية في الروائيتين. فبينما تجسد شخصيات مثل ليا وأدا أنماطاً من الصمود والمقاومة النسوية البيئية، تمثل أوريكس نموذجاً لفاعلية مقيدة داخل نظام قمعي رأسمالي. كذلك، تناقش الدراسة دور العلم الغربي والتكنولوجيا الحيوية بوصفهما أدوات للهيمنة، بما ينسجم مع نقد شيفا للعلم الاختزالي. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن الروائيتين تعكسان وتعيدان صياغة أطروحات فاندانا شيفا النسوية البيئية، مبرزتين الترابط بين اضطهاد المرأة وتدمير الطبيعة، ومؤكدين الحاجة إلى العدالة البيئية، والمساواة الجندرية، ونماذج بديلة للتنمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: بيئة نسوية، فاندانا شيفا، أبوية، تدهور بيئي، اضطهاد جندي، استعمار، رأسمالية، سوء التنمية، النساء والطبيعة، "كتاب السم" (The Poisonwood Bible)، "أوريكس وكراك" (Oryx and Crake)، تكنولوجيا حيوية، خطاب علمي، قدرة النساء.

1. Background of the Research

Ecofeminism emerges as a critical framework that intertwines the oppression of women and nature, asserting that both stem from patriarchal and capitalist ideologies bent on domination. This perspective rejects the Western dualisms—man/woman, culture/nature—that have historically justified exploitation, advocating instead for interdependence and equity. Carolyn Merchant traces this dualistic mindset to the Enlightenment, noting, "The metaphor of the earth as a nurturing mother was gradually replaced by the image of nature as a machine" (Merchant 17). This shift, she argues, paved the way for mechanistic science to view nature as a passive entity ripe for control, a view ecofeminism seeks to dismantle by fostering a relational ethos.

Vandana Shiva stands as a cornerstone of this discourse, her ecological thought weaving together feminist, environmental, and postcolonial critiques. A physicist and activist from India, Shiva's work, such as *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and*

Development, anchors ecofeminism in the realities of women in the Global South. She writes, “The marginalization of women and the destruction of biodiversity go hand in hand” (Shiva 42), emphasizing that the violence inflicted on nature mirrors the subjugation of women who rely on it for survival. Her involvement in the Chipko movement, where women physically shielded trees from loggers, exemplifies this bond, as she recalls, “Women hugged the trees, saying, ‘These forests are our homes’” (Shiva 67). For Shiva, such acts reveal women’s unique stake in ecological preservation, rooted in their traditional roles as stewards of resources.

Shiva’s concept of “maldevelopment” critiques the Western paradigm of progress, which she sees as inherently destructive. She asserts, “Development based on the growth of the market economy destroys the economy of nature and the survival economy of the poor” (Shiva 112), linking capitalist exploitation to both environmental ruin and gender inequity. This maldevelopment, she argues, is underpinned by a patriarchal worldview that valorizes masculine traits—control, rationality—over feminine ones like nurturance. In *Earth Democracy*, she elaborates, “Patriarchy and capitalism combine to make wealth and power the ends, reducing life to a means” (Shiva 89). Her ecofeminism thus posits liberation as a dual process: freeing women and nature from the same oppressive structures.

A key facet of Shiva’s thought is her critique of Western science and biotechnology, which she views as tools of domination. In *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge*, she contends, “The new biotechnologies violate the integrity of life by treating living organisms as mere raw material” (Shiva 55). She sees this as a continuation of colonial plunder, with corporations patenting seeds and genes, dispossessing women of their traditional knowledge. Shiva contrasts this with indigenous systems, noting, “Women’s knowledge is ecological, based on intimate links with nature” (Shiva 33), and calls for its reclamation as a resistance strategy. This critique frames science not as neutral but as a gendered power structure reinforcing dualities.

Shiva’s ideas resonate deeply with Barbara Kingsolver’s *The Poisonwood Bible* and Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*, novels that explore these intersections through distinct lenses. Kingsolver’s tale of a missionary family in the Congo critiques colonial arrogance, while Atwood’s dystopia warns of corporate science unchecked. Both align with Shiva’s view that patriarchal and capitalist systems degrade ecosystems and women alike. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Nathan Price’s attempt to impose his will on the land fails miserably, as Orleanna reflects, “He meant to bend the Congo to his will, but it was the Congo that bent him” (Kingsolver 96). This echoes Shiva’s observation that “the violence to nature rebounds on the perpetrators” (Shiva 42). The female narrators, particularly Leah,

grow to see the land's rhythms, with Leah noting, "I've learned to love what's here, not what I can make it" (Kingsolver 522), reflecting Shiva's relational ethics.

In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood depicts a world where nature is a corporate plaything, mirroring Shiva's biotech critique. Crake's engineered apocalypse stems from a belief that "nature's chaos must be ordered" (Atwood 292), a stance Shiva condemns as "the patriarchal project of mastery" (Shiva 72). Oryx, commodified and enigmatic, complicates agency, yet her influence lingers, as Jimmy recalls, "She was a hinge, everything turned on her" (Atwood 311). This ambiguity aligns with Shiva's recognition that "women's resistance is often subtle, hidden within survival" (Shiva 145). Both novels thus grapple with Shiva's vision of ecofeminist resistance amid oppressive systems.

Shiva's lens highlights how these texts portray patriarchal and colonial structures as dual mechanisms of harm. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Nathan's garden symbolizes colonial agriculture's folly, with Adah observing, "The seeds rotted in the ground, like everything he touched" (Kingsolver 305). Shiva ties this to broader patterns, stating, "Colonialism displaced women's sustainable farming with cash crops" (Shiva 112). In *Oryx and Crake*, the corporate Compounds exploit nature and women alike, as Atwood writes, "Everything was for sale, even the air" (Atwood 147), paralleling Shiva's claim that "capitalism turns life into a commodity" (Shiva 89). These depictions affirm her argument that ecological and gender oppression are intertwined.

The female characters' responses further reflect Shiva's ecofeminist agency. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Leah's shift to allyship with the Congolese "I belong here now, not there" (Kingsolver 525)—embodies Shiva's call to "live in harmony with nature's laws" (Shiva 53). Adah's defiance, noting, "I am a mistake, but I am here" (Kingsolver 281), challenges patriarchal norms, aligning with Shiva's redefinition of worth beyond productivity (Shiva 98). In *Oryx and Crake*, Oryx's passivity "I don't judge, I just do" (Atwood 121)—contrasts with her subtle power, suggesting resilience within limits, as Shiva notes, "Women adapt to survive domination" (Shiva 124). These dynamics underscore the complexity of resistance Shiva champions.

Scientific discourse in the novels also ties to Shiva's critique. Nathan's rigid dogma in *The Poisonwood Bible*, believing "God's will be above nature" (Kingsolver 39), mirrors the reductionism Shiva decries: "Science divorces itself from life's complexity" (Shiva 33). Crake's genetic hubris in *Oryx and Crake*, declaring, "I'll perfect what nature botched" (Atwood 304), epitomizes Shiva's fear that "biotechnology usurps the feminine power of creation" (Shiva 55). Both reinforce her view that science, wielded patriarchally, deepens gender and environmental divides.

Shiva's ecological thought thus frames these novels as critiques of real-world power structures. Her concept of earth democracy "justice begins with those who suffer most" (Shiva 10)—finds echoes in Leah's solidarity and the Crakers' nascent innocence, though tempered by patriarchal shadows. Kingsolver's multi-voiced narrative and Atwood's apocalyptic warning align with Shiva's activism, bridging theory and practice. By exposing the violence of maldevelopment and the potential for resistance, these texts engage with Shiva's urgent call to reimagine humanity's bond with the earth and its women.

The combination of patriarchy, colonialism, and the environment reveals a critical concern within contemporary literature that needs attention—the systematic suppression of women alongside nature. These doctrines, crucial to Western ideologies, have historically rationalized the subjugation of what they deemed "other" humans and ecologies through binaries such as man/woman, colonizer/colonized, and culture/nature. These divisions have ensured a hierarchical system that thrives on exploitation.

Ecofeminist scholarship, particularly through the work of Vandana Shiva, has demonstrated that these dualities are not just human-made philosophies but actual power structures that destroy ecosystems and dominate women. Shiva argues, "The violence to nature, which seems intrinsic to the dominant development model, is also associated with violence... to women who depend on nature for drawing sustenance" (Shiva 42). This argument is profoundly reflected in Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, two novels that portray patriarchal and colonial violence through environmental and gender crises. These novels, set in postcolonial Congo and a dystopian world dominated by biotechnology, reveal the intertwined nature of suffering that emerges from these systems, supporting Shiva's analysis of capitalist exploitation as the foundation of ecological and social destruction.

As a primary form of social organization, patriarchy establishes a gendered hierarchy that associates men with rationality and control while categorizing women as passive and submissive—mirroring the treatment of nature. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Nathan Price embodies this patriarchal ethos, his missionary zeal driven by a belief that "God's will is above nature" (Kingsolver 39). His attempt to impose a Western agricultural model on the Congolese landscape, planting seeds that "rotted in the ground" (Kingsolver 305), reflects a refusal to engage with the land's ecological realities, a refusal rooted in a masculine impulse to dominate rather than adapt. This mirrors Shiva's observation that "patriarchy reduces nature to inert matter, to be shaped by man's will" (Shiva 53). Nathan's domination extends to his family, particularly his wife Orleanna and daughters, whom he views as extensions of his authority. Orleanna's lament, "I was his instrument, his animal" (Kingsolver 87), underscores how patriarchal power

conflates women with nature, both subject to male mastery. This gendered oppression parallels the environmental violence of colonial intervention, illustrating Shiva's argument that "the marginalization of women and the destruction of biodiversity go hand in hand" (Shiva 42).

Colonialism amplifies this patriarchal framework by imposing Western hegemony on indigenous landscapes and peoples, often under the guise of progress or salvation. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, the Belgian Congo serves as a backdrop where colonial legacies, mining, deforestation, and cultural erasure, intersect with Nathan's evangelical mission. His garden's failure is not merely personal but emblematic of colonial agriculture's broader assault, which Shiva critiques as "displacing women's sustainable farming with cash crops" (Shiva 112). The Congolese villagers, particularly the women who sustain their communities through traditional practices, are sidelined by Nathan's arrogance, echoing Shiva's contention that "colonialism disrupted the survival economies of the poor" (Shiva 112). Kingsolver writes of the land's resistance: "The vines grew faster than he could cut them" (Kingsolver 41), a subtle nod to nature's defiance against imposed order, akin to the resilience Shiva attributes to indigenous systems. This colonial-patriarchal nexus thus degrades both the environment and the women tied to it, reinforcing Shiva's view of maldevelopment as a dual violence.

In *Oryx and Crake*, colonialism takes a futuristic form through corporate imperialism, where biotechnology replaces traditional colonial extraction with genetic plunder. The novel's Compounds, controlled by corporations like HelthWyzer, commodify nature entirely, "Everything was for sale, even the air" (Atwood 147), mirroring Shiva's warning that "capitalism turns life into a commodity" (Shiva 89). This corporate colonialism, driven by patriarchal figures like Crake, exploits women and nature alike. Oryx, trafficked and objectified, embodies this dual subjugation, her body a site of exploitation as she notes, "I don't judge, I just do" (Atwood 121). Her commodification parallels the genetic manipulation of organisms, which Shiva decries as "violating the integrity of life" (Shiva 55). The Crakers, engineered beings stripped of agency, further reflect this colonial logic, their creation a testament to Crake's belief that "nature's chaos must be ordered" (Atwood 292). Here, Atwood aligns with Shiva's critique of biotechnology as "a new form of colonialism" (Shiva 72), extending patriarchal control into the very fabric of life.

Environmental dualities, culture versus nature, civilization versus wilderness, underpin these patriarchal and colonial dynamics, framing nature as a resource to be conquered rather than a partner to be respected. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Nathan's insistence on baptizing the Congolese in a crocodile-infested river, "The water is God's, not the beast's" (Kingsolver 73), epitomizes this duality, casting nature as an adversary to be subdued. His failure to understand the ecosystem's

balance leads to ecological and familial ruin, a consequence Shiva links to “the violence to nature rebounding on the perpetrators” (Shiva 42). The novel’s female narrators, however, challenge this binary. Leah’s eventual integration into Congolese life, “I belong here now, not there” (Kingsolver 525), reflects a rejection of the culture/nature divide, aligning with Shiva’s relational ethos: “Living in harmony with nature’s laws is the path to justice” (Shiva 53). This shift underscores how dismantling dualities can foster resilience, a key tenet of Shiva’s ecofeminism.

Conversely, *Oryx and Crake* presents a world where environmental dualities have been obliterated by patriarchal overreach, yet the cost is apocalyptic. The pre-apocalypse society divides nature into the controlled Compounds and the chaotic Pleeblands, a split Crake seeks to “perfect” through bioengineering, “I’ll fix what nature botched” (Atwood 304). This mirrors Shiva’s critique of science as “divorcing itself from life’s complexity” (Shiva 33), a process that dehumanizes women like Oryx and eradicates natural ecosystems. The post-apocalyptic landscape, littered with synthetic survivors, reveals the sterility of this triumph over nature, echoing Shiva’s fear that “biotechnology usurps the feminine power of creation” (Shiva 55). Yet, the ambiguity of Jimmy’s survival and the Crakers’ innocence hints at a fragile renegotiation of these dualities, a possibility Shiva might see as “a seed of renewal amidst destruction” (Shiva 145).

The female characters in both novels navigate these patriarchal, colonial, and environmental dualities, their responses illuminating ecofeminist agency as Shiva envisions it. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Orleana’s retrospective guilt, “He meant to bend the Congo, but it was the Congo that bent him” (Kingsolver 96), signals an awakening to her complicity, a step toward the solidarity Shiva champions: “Justice begins with those who suffer most” (Shiva 10). Leah’s transformation into an advocate, “I’ve learned to love what’s here” (Kingsolver 522), embodies active resistance, rejecting her father’s dualistic worldview for an ecofeminist alignment with the land. Adah, with her disability and intellect, “I am a mistake, but I am here” (Kingsolver 281), defies patriarchal valuation, resonating with Shiva’s call to redefine worth beyond productivity (Shiva 98). These women collectively challenge the structures oppressing them, their resilience a testament to Shiva’s belief that “women’s intimate links with nature fuel resistance” (Shiva 33).

In *Oryx and Crake*, female agency is more constrained, reflecting the totalizing power of corporate patriarchy. Oryx’s apparent passivity, “I was sold, that’s how it works” (Atwood 91), suggests a succumbing to dualities, yet her subtle influence, “She was a hinge, everything turned on her” (Atwood 311), hints at a covert resilience Shiva recognizes: “Women adapt to survive domination” (Shiva 124). The absence of overt resistance among Atwood’s women underscores the suffocating weight of colonial-capitalist systems, a critique Shiva levels at

globalization: “It reduces women to mere labor for profit” (Shiva 89). However, the Crakers’ survival, guided by Jimmy’s memories of Oryx, offers a glimmer of ecofeminist potential, a reimagining of nature beyond patriarchal control, akin to Shiva’s “earth democracy” (Shiva 10).

Scientific discourse, as a tool of patriarchal and colonial power, reinforces these dualities in both texts, aligning with Shiva’s critique of Western science. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Nathan’s dogmatic faith in his methods, “The Bible says subdue the earth” (Kingsolver 189), parallels the reductionist science Shiva condemns: “It treats nature as inert, not alive” (Shiva 53). His failure to adapt to the Congo’s ecology mirrors colonial science’s disregard for indigenous knowledge, a harm Shiva ties to “the plunder of biodiversity” (Shiva 72). In *Oryx and Crake*, Crake’s biotechnological ambition, “We’ll eliminate the flaws of humanity” (Atwood 223), epitomizes Shiva’s feared “violation of life’s integrity” (Shiva 55). This scientific hubris, rooted in a patriarchal desire to transcend nature, devastates both women and ecosystems, affirming Shiva’s view that “science becomes a weapon of domination” (Shiva 33).

These novels thus serve as literary critiques of the real-world systems Shiva opposes. *The Poisonwood Bible* exposes the ecological and gendered toll of colonial patriarchy, its multi-voiced narrative reflecting Shiva’s emphasis on diverse resistance: “Women’s voices must shape justice” (Shiva 145). *Oryx and Crake* warns of a future where corporate colonialism erases natural and feminine agency, yet its ambiguity invites reflection on Shiva’s hope for renewal: “Even in collapse, life persists” (Shiva 89). Together, they align with her diagnosis of capitalist maldevelopment as the driver of dual oppression and her prescription of ecofeminist resistance as a path to healing. By embedding these themes in their narratives, Kingsolver and Atwood not only illustrate Shiva’s ecological thought but also amplify its urgency in confronting ongoing global crises.

2. Statement of Problem

Discussions of gender inequality have always focused on several issues, ranging from the interplay of nature and culture, capitalism-imperialism, and gender relations. This raises the question of how women's struggle against oppression intersects with preventing nature's degradation. Ecofeminism builds on the notions of feminism, ecology, and the social implications of science and technology. Vandana Shiva has provided invaluable insights into ecofeminism through her critique of environmental degradation and the subjugation of women in the context of capitalist development. Ecofeminism formulates critical perspectives on the nexus of environmental and social disjunctions created by imperialist and capitalist structures for the sole purpose of profit. It offers a lens to examine the intersection between the exploitation of women and non-human nature as products of globalization. Rather than adopting a head-in-the-sand approach by focusing solely

on Western feminism, ecofeminism serves as a tool to challenge the systemic oppression of women and nature. Ecofeminism envisions a harmonious world free from the exploitation of women's bodies and natural ecosystems. Speaking for the Global South, Vandana Shiva has been critical of how ecologists frame the development debate. As an ecofeminist activist, she has significantly contributed to constructing a discipline that engages with feminism, society, ecology, and capitalist development.

Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* reveal key aspects of ecofeminism, each telling a unique story that highlights the struggles of women and nature. Set in the Congolese landscape, Kingsolver's narrative portrays the collapse of a missionary family caught in the throes of colonialism's ecological and cultural upheavals. It follows the story of Nathan Price, a patriarch who wields absolute control over his wife, Orleanna, and daughters Leah, Adah, Rachel, and Ruth May. His rigid and domineering ways, combined with his colonial pretensions, result in devastation, first to the land and then to the women bound to it. In contrast, Atwood's narrative presents a dystopian world where women like Oryx are reduced to mere commodities in a patriarchal system that prioritizes capitalism, where corporate biotechnology supersedes natural ecosystems. These crises are the byproducts of an oppressive system driven by patriarchal and capitalist motives. Both novels provide valuable insights into the mechanisms of oppression, particularly in relation to gender and environmental power dynamics.

Despite their captivating narratives, *The Poisonwood Bible* and *Oryx and Crake* present challenges when examining their relationship with Vandana Shiva's ecological thought. Women and nature exist in a symbiotic relationship, and as Shiva contends, both life forms suffer oppression under the socio-patriarchal capitalist order. Her critique of development, which she terms "maldevelopment," highlights exploitative paradigms that replace sustainable, women-centered traditions with profit-driven models. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Nathan's failed agricultural attempts and the subsequent hardships of his family exemplify his misguided notions of development. His agricultural methods devastate both the environment and the people of the Congo. Similarly, in *Oryx and Crake*, Crake's bioengineered apocalypse aligns with Shiva's cautionary tales about the commodification of life, where biotechnology dehumanizes women like Oryx and obliterates natural ecosystems. While it is evident that women suffer the most under these systems, the crucial question remains: how do these novels frame and reinterpret Shiva's ecofeminist criticism of patriarchy and colonialism? What further analysis is needed to bridge the gap between literature and theory?

A key concern is how the novels depict patriarchy and colonialism as intertwined systems of ecological destruction and gender violence and how these portrayals

align with Shiva's argument that capitalist exploitation is deliberate rather than incidental. In Kingsolver's novel, Nathan's authoritarian rule leads to both ecological ruin and the silencing of women, who are only permitted to voice their anger or gain autonomy after his death. This pattern mirrors the modernization of the subjugation of both nature and women, which Shiva critiques by arguing that capitalist systems operate on "masculine" aggression rather than "feminine" care and nurturing. Atwood extends this critique into a dystopian future, where gendered corporate patriarchy takes the place of colonialism. The consequences, however, remain unchanged; nature is brutally subordinated, and women are reduced to tools for male ambition. This raises an important question: do these representations fully support Shiva's claim that such exploitation is primarily driven by capitalist motives, or do they suggest unintended consequences? Understanding the mechanisms of power in these narratives is crucial for answering this question.

Another aspect worth analyzing is the role of female characters and how their actions or inactions expose the limits and possibilities of ecofeminist activism, resilience, and resistance. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Leah emerges as an active participant in the fight for Congolese justice, symbolizing a rejection of her father's dualistic worldview. Similarly, Orleanna's awakening and Adah's intellectual defiance complicate the narrative of patriarchal and ecological oppression, revealing multiple pathways of resistance. Conversely, the passivity of Oryx in *Oryx and Crake* and the general suppression of female voices in Atwood's dystopia raise questions about the lack of agency in challenging systemic oppression. Shiva advocates ecofeminism as a celebration of women's resilience through their connection to nature, yet the novels introduce a tension. Do the female characters succumb to imposed dualities, or do they challenge them? What does this suggest about the practical feasibility of Shiva's vision for resistance in different socio-political contexts? The cynicism embedded in these narratives illustrates a critical challenge when analyzing literature through mono-idealized theories. How do different faces of oppression construct and limit agency? Moreover, scientific discourse emerges as a central theme that shapes the environmental and gender issues portrayed in both novels and invites scrutiny through Shiva's critique of Western science and the biotechnology industry.

In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Nathan's rigid adherence to a "scientific" worldview leads to ecological disaster, reflecting Shiva's assertion that Western science often functions as an agent of destruction rather than life preservation. His approach draws from patriarchal and colonial assumptions, which, as Shiva suggests, pervade Western knowledge systems and dismiss indigenous women's ecological wisdom. In *Oryx and Crake*, Crake's biotechnological hubris extends this critique into a dystopian future, where nature and humanity are remade to erase perceived defects at the expense of women like Oryx, who are objectified and dehumanized. Here,

the patriarchal subjugation of biotechnology transforms it into a tool of destruction rather than a means of enhancing nature's regenerative power. These novels align with Shiva's critique of Western science as an instrument of control, but they also introduce complexities. What power relations are at stake, and how do they intersect with Shiva's arguments? Such questions complicate ecofeminist interpretations of these texts, as they demand a nuanced understanding of science and its role in perpetuating hierarchical dualisms.

The broader socio-cultural context of the novels and Shiva's thought further exacerbates the challenge. Kingsolver's novel, published in 1998, reflects the postcolonial reckoning and environmental awareness of the late 20th century, while Atwood's novel, published in 2003, anticipates the increasing dominance of biotechnology and corporate power in the 21st century. Shiva's decades-long activism and writings focus on the consequences of these shifts for the Global South, where women suffer the most from ecological and economic displacement. While the novels depict various forms of oppression and resistance, their accuracy in representing Shiva's emphasis on grassroots, indigenous knowledge, and anti-capitalist strategies requires further clarification. Additionally, it remains uncertain whether these literary portrayals expand or limit the scope of Shiva's ecofeminist framework.

This dissertation seeks to address these issues by analyzing how ecofeminist critiques manifest in *The Poisonwood Bible* and *Oryx and Crake* through the lens of Shiva's ecological thought. The study will focus on four dimensions: the multifaceted subordination of women and nature, the role of governance and colonialism, female agency, and the scientific gaze. By examining how these texts reflect, resist, or reinterpret Shiva's arguments, this research situates them within a broader ecofeminist framework. The goal is to reconcile theoretical idealism with literary complexities, engaging with how fiction both shapes and critiques the realities of power. This inquiry is justified by the persistent global environmental and gender injustices that necessitate a reevaluation of the structures that sustain inequality and the literary interventions that can contribute to redress.

3. Literature Review

Ecofeminism is a critical theoretical perspective that integrates feminism and ecology, viewing the oppression of women and environmental degradation as interconnected issues caused by a patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist system. This interdisciplinary approach addresses culturally based dualistic distinctions such as man/woman, culture/nature, and subject/object, which have shaped Western civilization and facilitated the domination of both women and nature. According to scholars such as Val Plumwood, these dualisms produce a qualitative "logic of domination," which subjugates the feminine and the natural. She argues, "The inferiorization of nature and women is mutually reinforcing" (Plumwood 43).

Ecofeminism seeks to dismantle these hierarchies by advocating for a worldview based on interdependence and equity rather than domination and exploitation.

In this context, Vandana Shiva's ecological thinking represents an important contribution because she addresses gender, ecological, and social injustices that emerge from the intersection of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism in the Global South. Through her perspective, Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* can be analyzed as ecofeminist novels that expose intertwined oppression.

As an activist and scholar, particularly through movements like Chipko, where Indian women actively shielded forests from deforestation, Shiva draws a direct connection to ecofeminism. In her book *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development*, she asserts, "The marginalization of women and the destruction of biodiversity go hand in hand" (Shiva 42).

This assertion underscores her belief that women, especially those in rural and indigenous communities, bear a unique relationship with nature due to their traditional roles as caretakers of land, water, and food systems. She contends that patriarchal systems devalue these roles, aligning masculinity with rationality and control while relegating femininity to passivity and subservience. Shiva writes, "Patriarchy reduces nature to inert matter, to be shaped by man's will" (Shiva 53), linking this gendered hierarchy to environmental harm. Her critique extends to the cultural and economic structures that reinforce this domination, positioning patriarchy as a pervasive force that not only oppresses women but also justifies the exploitation of the natural world.

The colonial dimension of Shiva's thought further enriches her ecofeminist critique, framing Western imperialism as a historical catalyst for ecological and gender oppression. She argues that colonialism disrupted sustainable, women-led economies by imposing extractive practices that prioritized profit over subsistence. In *Staying Alive*, she notes, "Colonialism displaced women's sustainable farming with cash crops, turning abundance into scarcity" (Shiva 112). This displacement, she contends, reflects a broader colonial ethos that viewed both indigenous peoples and their lands as resources to be conquered, a perspective rooted in patriarchal assumptions of superiority. Shiva's analysis aligns with postcolonial ecofeminist scholars like Chandra Talpade Mohanty, who assert that "colonial power structures gendered the landscape, feminizing the colonized as passive and exploitable" (Mohanty 77). By linking colonialism to the erosion of ecological and gendered autonomy, Shiva highlights its enduring legacy in modern development models, a theme resonant in literary depictions of colonial encounters.

Capitalism, for Shiva, is the contemporary engine of this dual oppression, amplifying patriarchal and colonial legacies through what she terms "maldevelopment." In *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*, she

critiques the capitalist paradigm, stating, “Development based on the growth of the market economy destroys the economy of nature and the survival economy of the poor” (Shiva 89). She argues that this model commodifies nature and marginalizes women, reducing both to tools for profit. Shiva’s concept of maldevelopment critiques the prioritization of economic growth over ecological and social well-being, a process she sees as inherently violent. “The violence to nature rebounds on the perpetrators,” she writes (Shiva 42), suggesting that capitalist exploitation creates a feedback loop of destruction that harms both the environment and the communities, often women, dependent on it. This critique resonates with ecofeminist thinkers like Maria Mies, who argue that “capitalism thrives on the unpaid labor of women and the unpriced resources of nature” (Mies 56), reinforcing Shiva’s view of an interconnected system of exploitation.

Shiva’s critique of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism finds vivid expression in *The Poisonwood Bible*, where Kingsolver explores these dynamics through the Price family’s encounter with the postcolonial Congo. Nathan Price, the patriarchal missionary, embodies the masculine impulse to dominate both his family and the land. His assertion that “God’s will is above nature” (Kingsolver 39) reflects Shiva’s observation of patriarchy’s reduction of nature to a passive entity, subject to male authority. Nathan’s failed garden, where “the seeds rotted in the ground” (Kingsolver 305), symbolizes the colonial imposition of Western agriculture, aligning with Shiva’s critique of cash-crop economies that displace sustainable practices. Orleanna’s lament, “I was his instrument, his animal” (Kingsolver 87), underscores the gendered parallel, as she and her daughters are subjugated under Nathan’s control, much like the Congolese landscape. The novel’s depiction of colonial violence, mining and deforestation, echoes Shiva’s argument that “colonialism disrupted the survival economies of the poor” (Shiva 112), illustrating how these forces converge to oppress both women and nature.

Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* extends this critique into a dystopian future, where capitalism replaces colonialism with corporate imperialism, yet the patriarchal underpinnings remain. The novel’s Compounds commodify nature entirely, as Atwood writes, “Everything was for sale, even the air” (Atwood 147), mirroring Shiva’s warning that “capitalism turns life into a commodity” (Shiva 89). Crake, the patriarchal architect of this world, exerts control through biotechnology, believing “nature’s chaos must be ordered” (Atwood 292), a stance that reflects Shiva’s critique of masculine rationality dominating natural processes. Oryx, trafficked and objectified, embodies the gendered toll of this system, her statement “I don’t judge, I just do” (Atwood 121) highlighting her reduction to a tool of capitalist exploitation. The Crakers, engineered beings stripped of agency, further illustrate Shiva’s contention that “the new biotechnologies violate the integrity of

life” (Shiva 55), linking capitalist innovation to the dual subjugation of women and nature.

Shiva’s ecological thought also critiques the scientific discourses that underpin these systems, viewing Western science and biotechnology as tools of patriarchal and capitalist domination. In *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge*, she argues, “Science divorces itself from life’s complexity, treating living organisms as mere raw material” (Shiva 33). She sees this reductionism as a legacy of colonial epistemology, which devalued indigenous knowledge, often held by women, in favor of a mechanistic worldview. Shiva contrasts this with “women’s knowledge, ecological and based on intimate links with nature” (Shiva 33), advocating its reclamation as a form of resistance. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Nathan’s rigid scientific-biblical approach, insisting “The Bible says subdue the earth” (Kingsolver 189), fails against the Congo’s ecological reality, aligning with Shiva’s view that such science leads to ruin. In *Oryx and Crake*, Crake’s bioengineering, claiming “I’ll fix what nature botched” (Atwood 304), epitomizes Shiva’s critique of biotechnology as “usurping the feminine power of creation” (Shiva 55), reinforcing patriarchal control over both nature and women.

The female characters in these novels navigate these oppressive structures, offering insights into ecofeminist agency as Shiva envisions it. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Leah’s transformation, “I belong here now, not there” (Kingsolver 525), rejects patriarchal and colonial dualities, embodying Shiva’s call to “live in harmony with nature’s laws” (Shiva 53). Adah’s defiance, “I am a mistake, but I am here” (Kingsolver 281), challenges patriarchal valuation, resonating with Shiva’s redefinition of worth beyond productivity (Shiva 98). Orleanna’s awakening, “He meant to bend the Congo, but it was the Congo that bent him” (Kingsolver 96), reflects Shiva’s emphasis on solidarity with the oppressed (Shiva 10). In *Oryx and Crake*, Oryx’s passivity, “I was sold, that’s how it works” (Atwood 91), contrasts with her subtle influence, “She was a hinge, everything turned on her” (Atwood 311), suggesting resilience within limits, as Shiva notes, “Women adapt to survive domination” (Shiva 124). These responses highlight the complexity of resistance within Shiva’s framework.

Shiva’s critique of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism thus provides a lens to interpret these novels’ ecofeminist themes. Her concept of “earth democracy,” “justice begins with those who suffer most” (Shiva 10), finds echoes in Leah’s advocacy and the Crakers’ potential renewal, though tempered by patriarchal legacies. Kingsolver’s multi-voiced narrative aligns with Shiva’s emphasis on diverse resistance, “Women’s voices must shape justice” (Shiva 145), while Atwood’s dystopia warns of capitalism’s totalizing power, yet hints at hope, as Shiva suggests, “Even in collapse, life persists” (Shiva 89). Both texts engage with

Shiva's triad of oppression, exposing how these forces degrade ecosystems and women, and how resistance emerges from their intersections.

This literary alignment with Shiva's thought builds on broader ecofeminist scholarship. Greta Gaard's work on narrative and ecofeminism posits that "stories can challenge the master narrative of domination" (Gaard 119), a role both novels fulfill. Karen Warren's ecological feminism emphasizes "the conceptual links between sexism and naturism" (Warren 22), reinforcing Shiva's interconnected critique. Yet, Shiva's focus on the Global South and grassroots activism distinguishes her contribution, grounding ecofeminism in material struggles that resonate with the Congo's postcolonial wounds and Atwood's corporate dystopia. Her critique of capitalism as maldevelopment extends Mies's analysis, offering a systemic view that frames the novels' environmental and gendered crises as outcomes of a deliberate economic logic.

So, Shiva's ecofeminism, with its incisive critique of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism, illuminates the thematic depth of *The Poisonwood Bible* and *Oryx and Crake*. These novels not only reflect her arguments about interconnected oppression but also explore the nuances of resistance and agency within oppressive systems. By situating literary analysis within Shiva's ecological thought, this review underscores the relevance of ecofeminism to understanding power dynamics in literature, bridging theoretical critique with narrative exploration.

Ecofeminism in literature provides a rich terrain for exploring the interconnected oppression of women and nature, a theme that emerges powerfully in Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*. This theoretical framework critiques the patriarchal and capitalist structures that perpetuate environmental degradation and gender subjugation, emphasizing the dualities such as man/woman, culture/nature that underpin these systems. Vandana Shiva's ecological thought offers a critical lens for this analysis, arguing that "the marginalization of women and the destruction of biodiversity go hand in hand" (Shiva 42). Her work highlights how Western science, patriarchal control, and capitalist exploitation converge to devalue both women and the natural world, a perspective that resonates with the narratives of Kingsolver and Atwood. These novels, set in distinct contexts, the postcolonial Congo and a dystopian biotech-driven future, engage with ecofeminist concerns by illustrating how gender dynamics, scientific discourse, and environmental dualities shape power structures, aligning with Shiva's critique while offering nuanced literary explorations of agency and resistance.

In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Kingsolver weaves a narrative that exposes the ecological and gendered toll of patriarchal and colonial domination. Nathan Price, the missionary patriarch, embodies a masculine ethos of control, asserting, "God's will is above nature" (Kingsolver 39). His attempt to impose Western agriculture

on the Congolese landscape, where “the seeds rotted in the ground” (Kingsolver 305), mirrors Shiva’s critique of colonial practices that “displaced women’s sustainable farming with cash crops” (Shiva 112). This environmental failure parallels his subjugation of his wife Orleanna and daughters, whom he views as extensions of his authority. Orleanna’s reflection, “I was his instrument, his animal” (Kingsolver 87), underscores the ecofeminist parallel between the domination of women and nature, a connection Shiva articulates when she writes, “Patriarchy reduces nature to inert matter, to be shaped by man’s will” (Shiva 53). The novel’s setting in the Belgian Congo, scarred by colonial extraction, amplifies this critique, aligning with Shiva’s view that “colonialism disrupted the survival economies of the poor” (Shiva 112). Kingsolver thus illustrates how environmental dualities, culture versus nature, reinforce gendered oppression under patriarchal and colonial frameworks.

Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* extends this ecofeminist critique into a speculative future, where capitalist-driven biotechnology supplants natural ecosystems, perpetuating gendered and environmental harm. The novel’s Compounds, ruled by corporations, commodify nature entirely, “Everything was for sale, even the air” (Atwood 147), echoing Shiva’s warning that “capitalism turns life into a commodity” (Shiva 89). Crake, the patriarchal scientist, seeks to dominate nature, declaring, “I’ll fix what nature botched” (Atwood 304), a stance that reflects Shiva’s critique of masculine rationality overriding natural processes (Shiva 53). Oryx, a trafficked woman reduced to a sexual and labor commodity, embodies this dual exploitation, her resigned statement, “I don’t judge, I just do” (Atwood 121), highlighting her subordination. The Crakers, bioengineered beings stripped of autonomy, further illustrate Shiva’s contention that “the new biotechnologies violate the integrity of life” (Shiva 55). Atwood’s dystopia thus critiques the environmental duality of natural versus artificial, showing how capitalist science reinforces patriarchal power over women and nature.

Gender dynamics in both novels reveal the complexities of ecofeminist agency, as female characters navigate these oppressive dualities with varying degrees of resistance and resilience. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Leah Price’s transformation from a compliant daughter to an advocate for Congolese justice, “I belong here now, not there” (Kingsolver 525), rejects the patriarchal and colonial imposition of her father’s worldview. Her alignment with the land echoes Shiva’s call to “live in harmony with nature’s laws” (Shiva 53), embodying ecofeminist agency through solidarity with the oppressed ecosystem and its people. Adah, with her physical disability and intellectual defiance, “I am a mistake, but I am here” (Kingsolver 281), challenges patriarchal norms of productivity, resonating with Shiva’s redefinition of worth beyond capitalist metrics (Shiva 98). Orleanna’s retrospective awakening, “He meant to bend the Congo, but it was the Congo that bent him”

(Kingsolver 96), signals a shift toward ecofeminist consciousness, aligning with Shiva's emphasis on "justice beginning with those who suffer most" (Shiva 10). These responses illustrate a spectrum of resistance against gendered and environmental dualities.

In *Oryx and Crake*, gender dynamics present a starker challenge to ecofeminist agency, reflecting the suffocating grip of corporate patriarchy. Oryx's apparent passivity, "I was sold, that's how it works" (Atwood 91), suggests a succumbing to the dualities of victimhood and commodification, yet her subtle influence, "She was a hinge, everything turned on her" (Atwood 311), hints at a covert resilience. Shiva recognizes such adaptation, noting, "Women adapt to survive domination" (Shiva 124), framing Oryx's role as a survival strategy within an oppressive system. The marginalization of other female voices, like Jimmy's mother Sharon, who flees the Compounds in protest, "I can't live like this anymore" (Atwood 57), underscores the limited scope for overt resistance, a critique Shiva levels at capitalist globalization: "It reduces women to mere labor for profit" (Shiva 89). The Crakers' survival, shaped by Oryx's legacy, offers a faint ecofeminist potential, suggesting a reimagining of nature beyond patriarchal control, akin to Shiva's "earth democracy" (Shiva 10). These contrasting depictions highlight the tension between agency and constraint in ecofeminist narratives.

Scientific discourse plays a pivotal role in shaping these gender and environmental dynamics, inviting analysis through Shiva's critique of Western science and biotechnology. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Nathan's reliance on a rigid, biblical-scientific framework, "The Bible says subdue the earth" (Kingsolver 189), drives his ecological failure, reflecting Shiva's view that "science divorces itself from life's complexity" (Shiva 33). His approach, steeped in patriarchal and colonial assumptions, dismisses the Congo's ecological rhythms, mirroring Shiva's critique of Western epistemology that devalues indigenous knowledge, often preserved by women (Shiva 33). Kingsolver's portrayal aligns with ecofeminist scholar Carolyn Merchant's argument that "the scientific revolution mechanized nature, stripping it of its feminine essence" (Merchant 17), a shift Nathan embodies in his futile attempts to dominate the land. This scientific hubris reinforces the culture/nature duality, perpetuating both environmental ruin and gendered oppression within the Price family.

In *Oryx and Crake*, scientific discourse takes a more extreme form through Crake's biotechnological ambitions, which Shiva critiques as "usurping the feminine power of creation" (Shiva 55). Crake's declaration, "We'll eliminate the flaws of humanity" (Atwood 223), epitomizes the patriarchal impulse to transcend nature, a process that dehumanizes women like Oryx and eradicates natural ecosystems. Shiva's rejection of biotechnology as a tool of domination, "treating living organisms as mere raw material" (Shiva 33), finds a stark parallel in the novel's

post-apocalyptic landscape, where synthetic life replaces the organic. Atwood's critique resonates with Donna Haraway's ecofeminist perspective on science, which warns that "technoscience redraws boundaries between human and nonhuman, often at the expense of the marginalized" (Haraway 152). The scientific duality of natural versus engineered in *Oryx and Crake* thus amplifies patriarchal power, aligning with Shiva's broader indictment of Western science as a mechanism of ecological and gender subjugation.

Environmental dualities, culture versus nature, natural versus artificial, underpin these narratives, reflecting Shiva's contention that such binaries enable exploitation. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Nathan's insistence on baptizing the Congolese in a crocodile-infested river, "The water is God's, not the beast's" (Kingsolver 73), casts nature as an adversary to be subdued, a stance that leads to ecological and familial collapse. Shiva links this to "the violence to nature rebounding on the perpetrators" (Shiva 42), a consequence Kingsolver illustrates through Nathan's downfall. The female narrators, however, challenge this duality: Leah's integration into Congolese life and Adah's intellectual resistance reject the separation of human and natural worlds, aligning with Shiva's relational ethos (Shiva 53). In *Oryx and Crake*, the pre-apocalypse split between the controlled Compounds and chaotic Pleeblands evolves into a post-apocalyptic erasure of nature, where Crake's engineered order triumphs, "Nature's gone, we've improved it" (Atwood 202). Yet, Jimmy's survival and the Crakers' innocence suggest a fragile renegotiation, a possibility Shiva might see as "a seed of renewal amidst destruction" (Shiva 145).

These novels thus engage with ecofeminist scholarship beyond Shiva, enriching the analysis of gender, science, and environmental dualities. Greta Gaard's work on ecofeminist narrative argues that "literature can subvert the master narrative of domination" (Gaard 119), a role both texts fulfill through their critique of patriarchal and scientific overreach. Karen Warren's ecological feminism emphasizes "the conceptual links between sexism and naturism" (Warren 22), a connection evident in Nathan's control over his family and land, and Crake's commodification of Oryx and nature. Val Plumwood's critique of dualisms, "The inferiorization of nature and women is mutually reinforcing" (Plumwood 43), frames the novels' portrayal of interconnected oppression. Shiva's unique contribution, however, lies in her focus on capitalist maldevelopment and grassroots resistance, grounding these literary explorations in a material critique of power.

The interplay of gender, science, and environmental dualities in *The Poisonwood Bible* and *Oryx and Crake* thus illustrates ecofeminist concerns with precision and depth. Kingsolver's multi-voiced narrative exposes the ecological and gendered wounds of patriarchy and colonialism, offering a spectrum of female resilience that

aligns with Shiva's vision of agency. Atwood's dystopia warns of a future where capitalist science obliterates natural and feminine autonomy, yet hints at subtle resistance within its bleakness. Both texts reflect Shiva's argument that "the violence to nature is associated with violence to women" (Shiva 42), while exploring how scientific discourse and environmental dualities reinforce these harms. By situating these narratives within Shiva's ecological thought, this analysis reveals their capacity to both mirror and extend ecofeminist critiques, offering insights into the enduring struggle against oppressive power structures.

4. Research Questions

This study examines the intersection of gender oppression and environmental degradation through an ecofeminist lens, focusing on Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*. Utilizing Vandana Shiva's ecological thought, which links the subjugation of women and nature to capitalist maldevelopment, the research explores how these novels reflect ecofeminist critiques. It investigates how patriarchal and colonial structures drive ecological and gender inequity, aligning with Shiva's views on capitalist exploitation, and assesses female characters' agency and resistance against environmental and gendered dualities, as per Shiva's ecofeminist vision. Additionally, it analyzes the role of scientific discourse, particularly Western science and biotechnology, in shaping power dynamics, informed by Shiva's critique. The study aims to connect literary analysis with ecofeminist theory, highlighting how Kingsolver and Atwood engage with Shiva's framework to address global issues.

So the research questions are as the following:

RQ1- How do Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* illustrate ecofeminist critiques of the interconnected oppression of women and nature, particularly through the lens of Vandana Shiva's ecological thought?

RQ2- In what ways do the novels depict patriarchal and colonial structures as mechanisms of both environmental degradation and gender subjugation, and how do these align with Vandana Shiva's arguments on the relationship between capitalist exploitation and ecological destruction?

RQ3- How do the female characters in *The Poisonwood Bible* and *Oryx and Crake* challenge or succumb to environmental and gendered dualities, and what does this suggest about ecofeminist agency, resilience, and resistance in the context of Shiva's ecofeminism?

RQ4- What role does scientific discourse play in shaping environmental and gender dynamics in the novels, and how does Vandana Shiva's critique of Western

science and biotechnology inform an ecofeminist reading of power structures within these narratives?

5. Research Objectives

1. To analyze how *The Poisonwood Bible* and *Oryx and Crake* illustrate ecofeminist critiques of women's and nature's oppression using Vandana Shiva's ecological thought, highlighting their contributions to the discourse.
2. To examine the depiction of patriarchal and colonial structures in the novels as drivers of environmental and gender harm, assessing their alignment with Shiva's views on capitalist exploitation and ecological destruction.
3. To explore how female characters in the novels respond to environmental and gendered dualities, evaluating implications for ecofeminist agency and resistance in Shiva's framework.
4. To investigate the role of scientific discourse in shaping gender and environmental dynamics in the texts, using Shiva's critique of Western science and biotechnology to interpret power structures.

6. Research Hypothesis

The ecofeminism explored in this thesis focuses on Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* as ecofeminist fiction inspired by Vandana Shiva's ecological thinking. It attempts to show how these novels embody Shiva's arguments regarding the anti-ecological, colonial, capitalist patriarchy that suppresses women and the many ways in which women exercise power, resist, and survive within these systems. Additionally, it claims that the scientific components of the stories capture the essence of Shiva's critique of Western science and biotechnology as systems of patriarchy, further expanding the ecofeminist critique of sovereignty and power relations that Shiva critiques. This hypothesis connects literary theory and criticism by claiming that Shiva's ecofeminist perspective informs these works.

The primary contention of the hypothesis is that the novels depict the experiences of women and nature as a product of plebeian and capitalist violence, which is a significant aspect of Shiva's theory. Nathan Price's violent domination of his wife and daughters, as well as his Western-style gardening failure, constitutes Shiva's argument in which there is intertwined oppression of women and exploitation of nature. Likewise, in *Oryx and Crake*, Oryx as a corporate commodity represents the dualistic nature of women and nature exploitation under capitalism. This supports Shiva's ideology because both systems sustain the environment and women with equal neglect and contempt. The hypothesis proposes further that colonial and patriarchal violence depicted in the novels are forms of multi-layered violence, which parallel Shiva's claim that capitalism has no mercy. The ecological damage and gender-based violence resulting from Crake's exploitative ethnonationalist corporate bioengineering missionary fantasies represent bioengineering as an

attacking philosophy towards nature. This alignment supports Shiva's argument on maldevelopment by revealing the violation of women and a sustainable development approach, thus spreading her criticism beyond the borders of literary and cultural issues.

For the female characters, the assumption is that their responses to oppressive binaries elicit ecofeminist activism and grit, which is similar to what Shiva posits regarding women's resistance. Leah's immersion in Congolese society and Adah's defiant intellectualism differ from Oryx's repressed, yet arguably powerful, influence to dispute Shiva's claim of women's resistance being taken for granted. This spectrum of responses suggests that the novels engage with whether and how one constructs and performs Shiva's ideal amid different oppressive systems. Also, the hypothesis argues that the scientific discussion in the texts, ranging from Nathan's narrow and simplistic worldview to Crake's biotechnical imperialism, illustrates Shiva's critique of ascribing science to men's domains where they brutally overpower women and nature. Addressing these issues, the hypothesis seeks to show how the novels illustrate and expand on Shiva's ecofeminist criticism of science and literature regarding the triad of gender, nature, and power.

7. Methodology

Ecofeminism is an approach that combines feminism and ecology. In this regard, women and nature are equally subordinated to oppression by patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism, all of which have a pluralistic essence. This approach dismantles the hierarchical dualities of man/woman, culture/nature, and reason/emotion in the Western world. To eliminate the oppressive outcomes, ecofeminism tries to reconstruct these frameworks and proposes a new ethic of interdependence that allows for a profound and reciprocal relationship between humanity and nature.

Among ecofeminist scholars, Vandana Shiva's contribution to gender and ecology from the perspective of the Global South stands out. In the context of the Global South, her work explains the mechanisms of power through gendered and ecological exploitation. In her view, women's ecological violence and the violence done to nature should be seen as resultant outcomes of systematic oppression. This approach underscores the importance of gender and nature relations and allows both to be studied as an outcome of one dominating structure.

Shiva's integration of ecological concerns into day-to-day activities stems from her activism and scholarship, especially her participation in the Chipko movement. In this unique grassroots movement in India, women physically hugged trees to stop their deforestation. This shows her assertion that women, especially those in rural and indigenous communities, have a deep connection to nature because of their roles in farming, water, and food production. Her critique is that a patriarchal system does not accept these connections as valid, as they only link femininity with

subservient docility and masculinity with authority and reason. The intersection of these relations of power with environmental issues makes the web of oppression more complex.

Shiva's criticism focuses on the interplay of these power relations having a gender dimension, arguing that they go far beyond the confines of social and cultural norms to the economic and political systems that enable unsustainability. She refers to a system that enables such change as 'maldevelopment,' a Western-centered notion of advancement that is heavily fixated on profit without considering the social or environmental impacts. This is especially harmful to women who mostly anchor subsistence economies by using their agricultural acumen and resource management for local communities.

Shiva also highlights the role of colonial history in contemporary ecofeminist activism, which has emerged in the context of globalization. She argues that dualistic hierarchies were exacerbated during the age of imperialism due to the disruption of self-sustaining, women-centric agrarian societies and the introduction of Imperial-level cash crop economies, which destroyed local ecosystems. This process feminized colonized landscapes, making them submissive and malleable, in the same way that women suffer under patriarchy. By viewing colonialism as a capitalist venture that undermined women's freedom, Shiva Green sheds light on how power structures continue to operate during the age of globalization. Now, Western multinational companies perpetrate the same plunder of the natural wealth of the colonies, like a brute force of nature, while oppressing the very people who are reliant on nature for their existence.

Vandana Shiva claims that capitalism is the prevailing economic system of the world today, aggravating the existing colonial and patriarchal systems. She reproaches capitalism for its dependency on a mechanistic worldview that reductively treats nature as a resource while valuing women's labor less or engaging in its exploitation. According to her, the root of both ecological crises and gender inequality is commodification. Her concept of maldevelopment critiques the capitalist paradigm of profit as violent to the bone, condemning women to misery and poverty while simultaneously destroying the environment and deteriorating their welfare. Contrarily, she stresses the holistic and restorative nature of indigenous knowledge systems, which are predominantly preserved by women, unlike capitalist development's ruthless and myopic tendencies. Shiva belongs to this strand of ecofeminism, viewing capitalism as another form of oppression accentuated by patriarchy and colonialism deepening structural contradictions.

Shiva's ecofeminist approach operates on the premise that the three forms of oppression function in tandem to make power the cause and cure for violence against nature and women. Women and anything natural are subordinated under patriarchal systems and colonial powers that extend this domination to cultures and

ecosystems, while capitalist structures and control solidify these systems with profit-centric economies. Still, her perspective of nature is not just along diagnostic lines but also prescriptive. Instead, she offers alternative forms of resistance in advocating earth democracies, a form of governance founded on social and ecological justice. Such a paradigm shift is recommended because those negatively impacted by the ecological crisis, especially women, suffer the most from social and ecological injustices. For Shiva, power is constructive and restorative, focusing on resilience and agency as the change rather than the adaptation. Ecofeminist theorists argue for women's agency to be used for ecological renewal and restoration. However, more than that, Shiva argues that transcending these entrenched dualities is more than critique; it is reordering the relationship a new humanity has with nature.

Shiva focuses on the impact of scientific debate in her critique, depicting Western science and biotechnology as tools for repression by patriarchy and capitalism. She believes contemporary science has a reductionist view, treating life as a fragmented and separable object rather than a cohesive system. This change and loss of value suppress ecological knowledge, which is feminine, and substitutes it with mechanistic and exploitative forms. Biotech's life commodification through genetic manipulation and patenting is the crown jewel of this form of subjugation, which also counters indigenous people's and women's systems of knowledge. Shiva compares this with ecological wisdom, which is rooted in people's practical reality and communal experiences as a way of combating scientific imperialism. This critique of science from ecofeminism puts the legitimacy of science as an objective and unbiased domain into question, evidencing that the processes of knowledge production are inherently political spaces in which gender and nature-based discrimination hierarchies are established and sustained.

Within Shiva Shadan's view, the interaction of gender and nature depicts a worrying blend of oppression and resistance. Ecofeminism, rooted in her theories, contends that these dualities are neither natural nor organic but socially created to perpetuate patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist systems. Within these structures, women and nature, who are classified as "the other," are the most oppressed. They are, however, some of the most influential changemakers. Shiva's stance reveals that none of these oppressive systems can be addressed independently; to deal with one requires dealing with the others. This calls for a holistic response to gender violence and environmental destruction as interrelated issues. Ecofeminism, in this sense, is overtly actionist and rests on the assumption that existing power relations should and can be changed.

Shivam's ecological framing encourages contemplation of agency and resilience, crucial for comprehending why specific individuals and communities resist deeply entrenched oppressive dualities. From acts of insubordination, such as physical

violence like the Chipko movement, to the more cerebral violence of preserving ecological knowledge, she celebrates them all. This form of violence, which stands in contradiction to established norms, reveals women's dual roles as sufferers of systemic violence and transformative change makers. This lens reveals the contested positioning of women in ecofeminist discourse who try to balance oppression and liberation. In Shivas' interpretation, resilience transforms the notion that power only rests with the oppressor. Instead, she conceives power to rest within collective action and a reimagined sense of coexistence that speaks to ecological and gender-based violence.

Applying gender and nature frameworks to Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* is complex and requires thorough scrutiny. Headed by Shiva, these frameworks contain grave patriarchal capitalism as a key informant. In this regard, the critique on development malfeasance is the primary basis of the study. Especially per Nathan Price's case study, when he emulated the behavior of patriarchal colonization in the Congo. The Price family's struggle offers an insight into the far-reaching ramifications of the neo-colonial project in which Orleana and the daughters are left to suffer for the sake of Nathan's oppression. It is Leah and Adah's boldness that undermines their father's oppressive masculinity, thereby providing counterfactuals Shapiro's prophecies will never overturn. Further, this is explained as a result of invoking Patricia Collins' Western feminism, which regards domination as the ideal means to an end.

Through *Crake*'s bio power and the sexual exploitation of *Oryx*, the American capitalistic system depicts true patriarchy, thereby confirming Shaskan's claims that biotechnology indiscriminately vilifies life. This dystopian society shines a spotlight on *Oryx*'s limited freedom while tearing the facade of false agency that claims to be free from the grasp of capitalist patriarchal oppression. The possibility of her surviving strategies begs whether Shiva's analysis had failed: the countering *Oryx* poses towards maldevelopment suggests there is less worrying about and more anti-fifes-com for the boundaries of defiance within this cruel epoch. This novel by Atwood acts as a counter-text but simultaneously depicts foils and pseudo-eco-feminism paradigms that have yet to be explored.

Every argument on patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism, and science needs to be evaluated within the logical structure of Shiva's ecofeminist critique. The novels under discussion represent the consequences of patriarchal and capitalist systems and depict ecofeminism as coined by Shiva. They are devices that contest and reflect Shiva's ecofeminist concepts and provide a platform for the further progress of ecofeminist discourse.

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