

# **Ecofeminism: Exploring the correlation between how men treat women and how men treat nature**

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**I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.**

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## **Abstract**

This essay discusses how the patriarchy affects women by focusing on examples of misogyny in the past and present. It looks at key areas such as religion, art, education, and politics to reveal how patriarchal structures have attempted to control women's bodies, voices, and autonomy. This essay examines the works of philosophers, including Laura Mulvey and John Berger and feminist artists such as Marina Abramović, Barbara Kruger, and Jenny Saville. It examines historical events like the Salem witch trials, investigating how the connection women had to nature led to their persecution. This essay also considers how activism, protests, and artistic expression are important in challenging systems of oppression. It demonstrates the relevance of fighting for gender equality and ending the patriarchy.

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## **Introduction**

Patriarchal systems have dominated women and their relationship with the world throughout history. These systems have also expanded their control over the natural world, treating it with the same domination. This misogyny is entrenched in cultural, social, and political structures that have defined women's experiences across time.

This essay explores how the patriarchy maintains the subjugation of women. It focuses on events like the Salem witch trials, which expose men's fear of women's connection to nature, as well as how these ideas persist in contemporary struggles. The focus will be on ecofeminism, an activist framework linking the connections between the deprivation of women and nature under patriarchal systems. By examining these parallels, I wish to show how understanding this dual oppression can shed light on historical and modern struggles for women's rights and equality.

I will also examine key feminist activism and movements that have resisted these systems, showing how women have fought to reclaim their power and advocated for equality. By analysing historical and contemporary contexts through the lens of ecofeminism, this essay emphasises the need to dismantle patriarchal systems and to imagine a future based on equality.

The Salem witch trials are a historical example that showcases misogyny. Women who were seen as independent, outspoken, or educated about the natural world were often targeted and accused of witchcraft during this time. In *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, Carol Karlsen explains that a woman's bond to nature was seen as a threat to patriarchal authority. Silvia Federici also argues this point in *Caliban and the Witch* as she explains that the fear of women's control of nature was the main reason behind the witch-hunt. The persecution of this time on women was

about targeting any independence women had over their bodies. A woman who was targeted due to her race, class and cultural background was Tituba. She was seen as an easy target, which represents how the patriarchy exploited women's vulnerabilities to maintain its dominance.

Beyond the Salem witch trials, patriarchal forces have affected art and literature by reinforcing oppressive views of women's roles and worth in society. For example, Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* portrays women as objects of male desire, which reflects John Berger's concept of the male gaze theory. These portrayals contribute to the belief around women's value of being defined purely by their physical appearance and their obedience to male authority. In contrast, Feminist artists like Barbara Kruger aim to challenge these portrayals by advocating for women's rights and body positivity. Jenny Saville's work further confronts societal beauty standards, emphasising that women's bodies deserve more representation.

Education has also contributed to reinforcing misogyny. Dale Spender's *Learning to Lose: Sexism and Education* shows how gender biases in schools have historically discouraged women from pursuing leadership roles and academic success. These barriers promoted the belief that women were inferior, which limited women's participation in intellectual environments and denied them the opportunities to reach their full potential.

Misogyny is still present in contemporary society which is often through political systems that are in place to control women's bodies. Laws such as Texas's six-week abortion ban or the restrictions placed on women in Afghanistan under the Taliban demonstrate how patriarchal control over women's rights continues to exist to this

day, denying women social freedom. These examples show that misogyny, although evolving, remains deeply rooted and continues to restrict women in various ways.

Feminist activism has remained a powerful tool of resistance despite these ongoing struggles for women. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has worked to try to dismantle the patriarchy by using their platform to promote equality and to challenge traditional stereotypes placed on women. Also, Jenny Saville's art has pushed boundaries and continues to do so as she critiques beauty standards placed on women's bodies.

Feminist movements like #MeToo have brought attention to the sexual harassment so many women face, and it demands that men be held accountable. All these efforts show that women are refusing to stay silent and will continue to fight for their future, where gender equality is to be expected.

In this essay, I am going to explore examples of misogyny in both historical and contemporary contexts by examining how the patriarchy persists in controlling women and their connection to nature. I am going to explain how feminist movements are working to challenge these systems and they offer hope for women for a world without male domination.

## **Women's link to nature**

In this chapter, I will explore the connection between women and nature, focusing on how it appears in paganism, literature, and art. I will examine the concept of 'mother nature' and its link to paganism, the moon, and the works of Ithell Colquhoun and Ana Mendieta. Through these examples, I argue that women have a natural bond with nature that has been suppressed under patriarchal systems, offering a perspective on reclaiming this connection.

I will also explore ecofeminism, which examines the connection between women and nature's oppression. Ecofeminism is how patriarchal systems use control over women and nature to maintain power. (Miles, 2018)

In pagan culture, nature is described as "mother nature/Gaia." Paige Vandebeek explores this in *Green Witchcraft* (2020), stating, "Mother nature is just that personification of the earth and the forces of nature." (pg.14). Vanderbeck explores how women often work alongside nature, such as herbalism and rituals.



Figure 1

The artist Ithell Colquhoun explored similar ideas within her art practice. She embeds feminine symbols in her work by intertwining the female form with a natural landscape. This is evident in her artwork *Scylla* (1938). Figure 1 features two large rock formations emerging from a body of water, creating a curved gap between them. Underneath the clear blue water is a patch of red seaweed on top of what appears to be sand. This landscape resembles Colquhoun's body as she said, "It was suggested by what I could see of myself in a bath" (Tate, n.d.). The rocks represent thighs, and the seaweed is pubic hair. This connection is explained by Colquhoun's interest in the "association between a woman's body and the landscape" (Ithellcolquhoun.co.uk, 2024).

This art piece references the Greek myth of Scylla, a woman who got turned into a six-headed monster because of the sexual jealousy of men. In the essay *Parody and Femininity in British Surrealism* (2020) wrote by Richard Shillitoe, he explains how Colquhoun reclaims the story of Scylla as it is traditionally centred on male aggression, by representing Scylla as a natural and organic force. Colquhoun's approach directly contrasts with the original myth's focus on punishment and monstrosity imposed on a female figure.

Shillitoe emphasises how Colquhoun's involving the female form with elements of nature in *Scylla* showcases the connection between women and the natural world. By doing this, Colquhoun critiques the patriarchy by presenting nature as a vital part of the female experience and challenging societal constraints on women. This reflects her broader practice of blending mysticism and femininity to challenge traditional power structures upheld by a patriarchal society.

I believe that women are connected to nature by how their menstrual cycles are linked to the moon which is clear as *The Scientist magazine* states this is linked because many cultures associate the moon with fertility and femininity, and the moon and women have matching cycles. "The average length of women's menstrual cycles matches the moon's 29.5-day waxing and waning cycle" (Jones, 2024). Feminist philosopher Monica Sjöö in *The Great Cosmic Mother* (1987) argues that the cycles of women's bodies are linked to lunar phases and the earth's fertility. Supporting *The Scientist* magazine, Sjöö also comments on how the menstrual cycle reflects the waxing and waning cycle of the moon. She explains that this is lost knowledge due to patriarchal societies suppressing this natural connection. According to Sjöö, the moon is seen as a spiritual symbol for women, guiding them to trust their intuition and their connection to nature.



Figure 2

Ana Mendieta's *Siluetas* series (1973-78) explores the connection between women's bodies and nature. This series features Mendieta's body imprinted into natural landscapes using earth elements, such as fire, mud, snow, and flowers. Although her body is absent in these photographs, she leaves behind imprinted silhouettes. The *Siluetas* series is an exploration of the connection between women's bodies and nature as her work reflects themes of fertility and the cyclical bond with the earth, like the scientific and philosophical ideas about the link between women and the moon. Mendieta explores how merged women are with the earth by expanding this connection into cosmic links which is reflected in the quote, "For Mendieta, the body and nature were not separate realms. She saw the body as an extension of the earth, and the earth as a reflection of the body's cycles and transformations" (Viso, *Ana Mendieta*, 2004)

## **Men's treatment of nature**

I am now going to explore how patriarchal systems have shaped men's relationship with nature throughout history. Through examining articles, books, and artworks, I will reveal how these systems have led to the destruction of nature and have been justified due to male domination. A key source for this analysis is Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch*, which explores the treatment of nature during the rise of capitalism. I will also explore the role of religious and agricultural frameworks reinforcing male domination over nature. Additionally, I will look at ecofeminist theories that offer insights into the connection between gender and nature.

Throughout history, men have looked at nature through a lens of domination as they are driven by misogynistic systems designed to uphold control. This view has enabled men to exploit natural resources for their gain, often disregarding the impact on the environment and other living beings. Evidence of this perspective can be seen in religion and agriculture.

Philosopher Lynn White Jr critiques Judeo-Christian traditions and how they have shaped humans' connection with nature to this day. He has suggested that these traditions have promoted the idea of humans being superior to the natural world. In his essay, *The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis* (1967), White reflects on a biblical verse which he says has a significant role in shaping these attitudes. "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing." (Genesis 1:28). White interprets this verse as placing humans above all other life forms, putting nature as a resource to be controlled for human gain.

This mindset is also evident within agriculture, where farming practices have led humans to manipulate the land for their gain, often at significant environmental cost.

Deforestation became widespread, affecting ecosystems and causing long-term environmental damage (And, 2023). Men have historically dominated agricultural decision-making, prioritising economic gains even when it resulted in negative outcomes like degraded ecosystems due to harmful chemicals. This male authority in agriculture has marginalised women, whose knowledge of sustainable farming practices has been undervalued, overlooked, and suppressed (Global Forest Coalition and GFC Admin, 2021).

This relates to the male domination theory, which first emerged in the twentieth century and is defined as a "conceptual label to characterise the unequal power relations between men as a group and women as a group" (*ScienceDirect*, n.d.). Simone de Beauvoir explores this theory in her book *The Second Sex* (1949), arguing that throughout history, men have positioned themselves as the primary subject while putting women in the role of the "Other." Under this theory, women are portrayed as reliant on men and submissive, enabling men to maintain power over them.

Regarding men's treatment of nature, Beauvoir explains that patriarchal societies have historically used nature as a tool to assert and reinforce dominance. She argues that women are often seen as being connected to nature, leading men to perceive women as extensions of the natural world, which is something that must be controlled.



Figure 3

An artwork that explores the male domination theory regarding nature is *What Is Missing?* (2009–present) by Maya Lin. This multi-media, ongoing project addresses environmental degradation caused by humanity's relationship with nature. The artwork takes various forms, from physical installations to an interactive website. Lin uses plaques, maps, stories, and statistics to effectively convey her message, making it accessible and thought-provoking for her audience.

Through this project, Lin aims to promote thoughtful engagement among her viewers, encouraging them to reflect on the potential for ecological recovery. Rather than using fear to inspire action, she uses a calm storytelling approach that emphasises collective responsibility and hope. Her work highlights the importance of the planet depending on humanity's willingness to change its behaviours and restore its relationship with the natural world. ([www.whatismissing.org](http://www.whatismissing.org), n.d.)

## **Men's treatment of women**

In this chapter, I am going to explore how men have historically treated women under a patriarchy and how it is still present to this day. I will be exploring how men's need to control women has come from their fear of women by discussing religion, art, politics and societal structures. Additionally, I will address contemporary issues such as abortion laws to highlight how misogyny continues to affect women today.

To begin this discussion, I am introducing the importance of the male gaze theory. This theory was first introduced by Laura Mulvey in 1975. Mulvey describes the male gaze as the portrayal of women through an objectified lens designed to satisfy the desires of men within a patriarchal society. While her critique initially focused on commercial film, the concept also applies to art, literature, and other media (Rodriguez, 2019).

Bell Hooks also analyses this in her book *Feminism Is for Everybody* (2000). She expands on Mulvey's theory by explaining how the male gaze affects women differently based on race and class. Hooks highlights that women of colour often face further objectification due to their marginalised status. She argues that the male gaze is connected to racism and classism, framing it as an intersectional issue.

The male gaze has led to the creation of beauty standards placed on women. Naomi Wolf explores this connection in her work *The Beauty Myth* (1990). Wolf argues that beauty standards were developed as a tool created by men to control women and reinforce gender hierarchies. She argues that the societal pressure for women to conform to these standards intensified after the second wave of feminism when women were making strides toward equality. In response, men sought to reinforce dominance by distracting women from achieving true equality.



Figure 4

An artist who has powerfully explored the effects of misogyny is Marina Abramović. Abramović is a performance artist known for confronting societal taboos through

works that address human behaviour, gender roles, and power dynamics. An example is her performance *Rhythm 0* (1974), in which she stood motionless for six hours without speaking or resisting as seventy-two objects were placed behind her with instructions for the audience to interact with her as they wished. She laid out directions, stating: *"I am the object. During this period I take full responsibility."*

The objects ranged from harmless items like feathers and a rose to dangerous ones, such as scissors, a knife, and even a loaded gun. As the hours passed, the audience's actions escalated, with many of them becoming aggressive. Men sexually assaulted and dehumanised her which shows the disturbing aspects of human nature under patriarchal influence. By the end of the six hours, Abramović was visibly emotional, with tears in her eyes, yet the audience members fled when she regained agency by moving toward them.

This performance reveals the ways patriarchal systems enable and encourage the objectification and mistreatment of women, particularly when they are perceived as submissive or powerless. Abramović's experiment demonstrated how quickly societal norms break down when individuals are given unlimited power which is evident in this observation:

*"Men played with the objects, touched Abramović's body, ogled and laughed at her with their friends, as she stood there alone, tears filling her eyes."*(Hessel, 2023)

Furthermore, another way men attempt to control women is through governmental politics. Across the globe, some laws continue to limit women's opportunities, which further reinforces a patriarchal society. These issues persist in contemporary contexts as some U.S. laws represent a step back for feminism as they are designed to keep women in their place. For example, while the legal age to marry in the U.S. is

eighteen, exceptions allow child marriage with parental consent or in cases of pregnancy. Over the last 15 years, 200,000 underage children have been married in the U.S. Additionally, in Massachusetts, advertising birth control through the mail remains illegal (Sohnngen, 2017). A more recent example is Texas's ban on abortions after six weeks, with no exceptions for incest or rape. This law has resulted in the death of a pregnant teenager due to the fact she could not access the necessary care due to the loss of abortion rights (Dunbar, 2024). This example shows the extent of misogyny and the urgency to address this issue in society

The U.S. is not the only country restricting women's rights. Afghanistan faces the Taliban's new rules, which aim to silence women completely. These laws prohibit women from hearing each other's voices in public or private spaces, driving, showing their faces in public, and attending high school or university. This list continues, denying women fundamental human rights. Nazifa Haqpal is a former Afghan diplomat and described the situation as "surpassing misogyny" (Ward, 2024).



Figure 5

An additional artist who explores this theme is Barbara Kruger. Kruger is an American artist known for her bold pieces that combine text and imagery to challenge societal norms and patriarchal power structures. *Untitled (Your Body is a Battleground)* (1989) is a piece that features a close-up image of a woman's face, divided into two halves—one in grey positive and the other in negative. The image is

overlaid with bold white text framed by a red border that states, "Your body is a battleground." This text dominates the composition in Figure 5, immediately drawing the viewer's attention and emphasising its powerful message about autonomy and resistance. This piece is a call to action as it urges viewers to challenge the control men have over women's bodies. It was created to support the 1989 Women's March in Washington, which advocates for reproductive rights. Kruger's use of a striking colour palette and a short message effectively captures the viewer's attention, prompting societal change (Kruger & Linker, 1996)

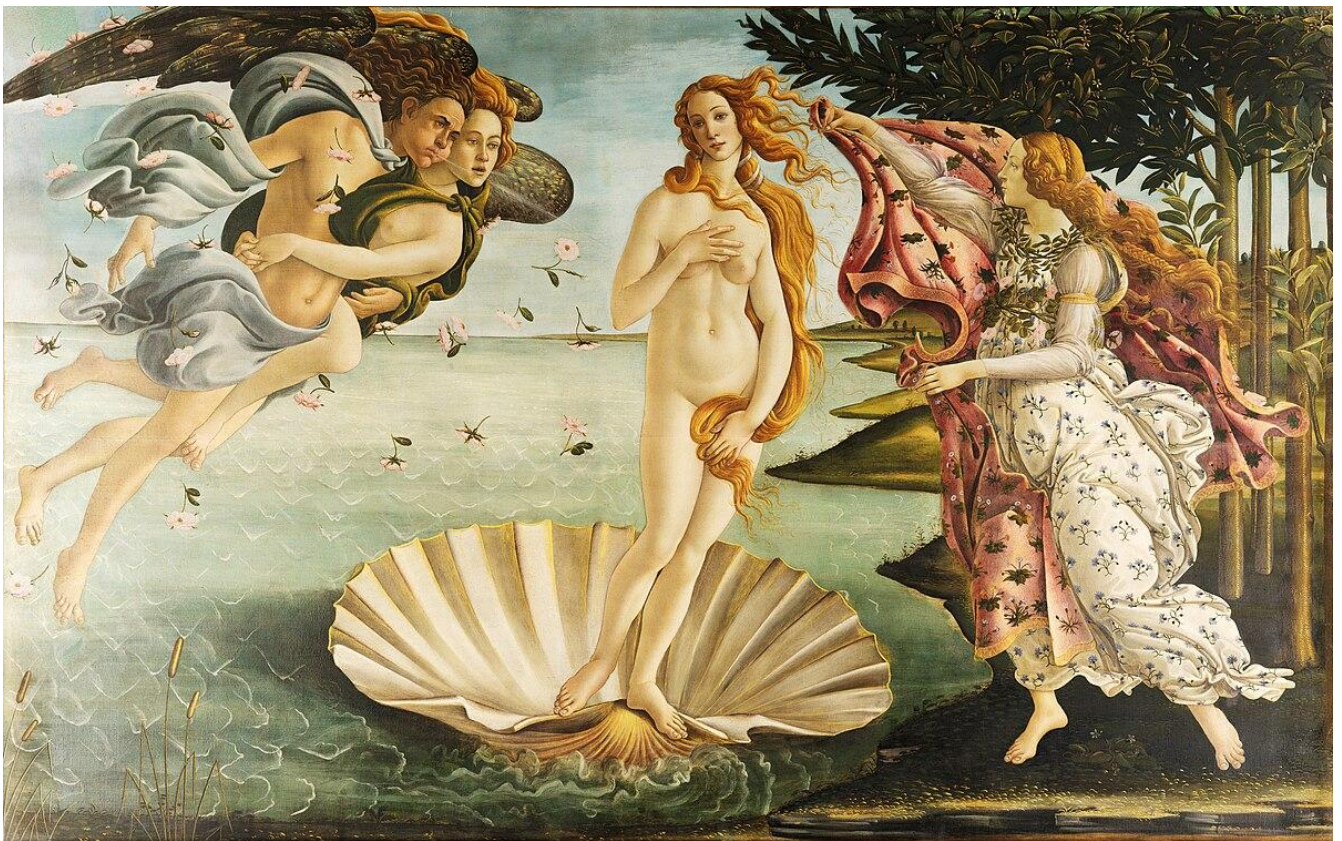


Figure 6

The depiction of women in artwork created by men often reflects a different perspective. Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (1485) depicts a nude woman standing on a shell floating in the sea. Her hands are placed covering her right

breast and vagina, while she remains partially exposed. Venus is central to the composition, making her the piece's focal point, which naturally draws the viewer's attention to her. The other figures in the painting are all directed toward her which further intensifies her role as the main subject. The serene backdrop of the sea creates a harmonious mood to portray an idealised femininity. This reflects the male gaze as it reinforces patriarchal views of women being objects and submissive.

Philosopher John Berger analyses *The Birth of Venus* in his book *Ways of Seeing* (1972) as he highlights how Venus's portrayal reflects societal attitudes toward women. Berger argues that Venus is presented as an object of admiration which is a consistent pattern throughout art history. He explains that this serves to appeal to men's consumption of women. Berger also notes that the Renaissance period marked a time when female nudity became a central theme in art, with the primary audience being men. Women's bodies were idealised and displayed as passive objects, denying women agency over their representation.

Berger observes: "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at" (*Ways of Seeing*, Chapter 3). This critique reveals how art has historically shaped perceptions of women as existing primarily for male validation and influencing societal attitudes toward gender and power.

In addition, men's treatment of women is evident through misogyny within education. For example, in *Learning to Lose: Sexism and Education* (1982), Dale Spender explores how sexism is embedded within the educational system. Spender explains that the education system encourages girls to be passive and supportive and the leadership roles often reserved for boys. Teachers often assume girls are less capable, even when evidence suggests otherwise. Spender highlights how girls are

more likely to be disciplined in a classroom which reduces their confidence and eagerness to participate. Furthermore, she points out that educational materials, such as textbooks, portray men as authoritative figures while women are often placed in supportive roles, further silencing and excluding women's contributions and worth.

Dale Spender also explores how the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BCE) contributed to misogyny within education systems. Spender explains that Aristotle, known for his work in ethics, politics, and many other fields, viewed women as “inferior to men.” Spender highlights how these beliefs have shaped educational systems, structuring them to favour male leadership while undermining women’s potential.

## **The Salem witch trials**

Building on men's treatment of women, this chapter will explore the Salem witch trials and examine why women were specifically targeted and executed. I believe that these events were rooted in misogyny and men's fear of both women and the natural world. Driven by a desire for control and domination, men saw women and their connection to nature as threats to their authority. Women's ties to the natural world were central to this fear as nature was seen as a source of independence and intuition for them and this was seen as a challenge for patriarchal power structures.

Many factors could lead to an accusation of witchcraft, including physical signs such as having a mole, violating biblical laws, or engaging in premarital sex. These were commonly recognised indications of witchcraft but there were also other subtle factors driven by the patriarchy, such as being independent, outspoken, or simply old. These women had little chance of escape and were often sentenced to death.

In *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* (1987), Carol Karlsen examines how many of the women accused of witchcraft did not conform to traditional domestic roles assigned by a patriarchal society. It was commonly believed that women with strong connections to nature were more vulnerable to the influence of the devil. This view is supported by Silvia Federici in *Caliban and the Witch* (2004), who quotes, "Their claim to magical power undermined the power of the authorities and the state." (pg. 174).

I will examine a case study of Tituba who is a woman accused during the Salem witch trials. In Elaine G. Breslaw's book *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem* (1995), Tituba's life and role in Salem are explained through a historical analysis. The book dives into Tituba's persecution in Salem and the reasons behind it. Breslaw argues

that the accusation of her being a witch was because of her African and Indigenous descent, which was seen as sinful by Puritan society. Additionally, her cultural background played a role in her being accused as it gave her knowledge of herbal medicines and folklore. While these practices were standard within her traditions, they were perceived by Puritans as magical and linked to satanic influences.

Her position as an enslaved person further heightened her vulnerability, as her lack of power or protection made her an easy target. Breslaw explains that these factors are evidence of women having less power during these times, especially those marginalised by race and status. This power imbalance allowed the witch trials to escalate which made women like Tituba scapegoats for the fears and anxieties of the time. This case study demonstrates how women's independence and knowledge of nature have been weaponised to maintain their oppression. This shows the importance in reclaiming this and bringing awareness to what these trials were like for these women.

In addition, Breslaw explains how religious teachings of the time played a significant role in justifying the misogyny and persecution of women. Religious authorities often approved of the orders to kill women due to their beliefs that women were linked to the devil. In Christian doctrine, the devil was perceived as the embodiment of evil (Oldridge, 2012), and women's knowledge of nature, healing, and intuition—qualities often associated with femininity—were viewed as evidence of their supposed connection to the devil. This perception ultimately contributed to their persecution as witches.

During this time, many women were falsely accused of witchcraft due to the societal standards imposed on them. These expectations made women more easy targets for

scapegoating, allowing the blame for social problems to be directed toward an already marginalised group. Those in power used scapegoating to maintain control over women and deflecting attention from issues such as diseases and crop failures. This practice caused not only emotional and psychological distress for the women accused but also reinforced patriarchal structures by positioning women as inherently inferior and blameworthy.

Furthermore, this systemic scapegoating led to the social isolation of women, as fear and suspicion made it difficult for them to form supportive relationships or networks. This isolation further fuelled the patriarchy, as it weakened the collective strength of women and ensured their dependence on the male-dominated society for survival. Scapegoating, therefore, served as a tool not just for individual oppression but for societal control, shaping perceptions of women as less capable and perpetuating their marginalisation. (Docmckee.com, 2023)



Figure 7

An art piece that portrays the misogyny during the Salem witch trials is *Witch Hill (The Salem Martyr)* (1869) by Thomas Satterwhite Noble. Figure 7 centres on a young woman with her hands bound by rope. Her calm, neutral expression connotes innocence among the chaos surrounding her. Standing behind her are stern Puritan men with cold expressions that reflect the misogynistic values of the society that condemned her. The setting is an open grassland under a grey sky, likely representing the site of executions. The dark colour palette of black and grey creates a serious, heavy, and depressing mood. However, the woman is illuminated by a soft, ethereal light that draws the viewer's attention to her, emphasising her victimhood and making her the composition's focal point.

This piece has been analysed by James D. Birchfield (1988) in his monograph *Thomas Satterwhite Noble (1835-1907)*. Birchfield interprets this artwork as a key piece that symbolises the injustices of society during the Salem witch trials. He explains that the central figure's serene expression emphasises her innocence as it contrasts directly with her accusers, despite her being the one accused of witchcraft. Birchfield argues that the painting effectively captures the dangers of the witch hysteria fuelled by misogyny, highlighting the devastating impact this had on women during that time.

The Salem witch trials expose the clear link between men's control over nature and women by showing how any woman with knowledge of natural remedies, such as herbs, was immediately viewed as a threat by the patriarchy. These women who were often seen as healers or those connected to the natural world, were targeted—even if they were innocent—because their autonomy and intellect challenged male dominance. By targeting these women, the patriarchy sought to maintain control over

both nature and women, ensuring that any form of independent power or knowledge was suppressed.

## **Disassembling the patriarchy**

Finally, I will explore ways in which the patriarchy can be broken down by exploring the work of feminist activists. I will analyse how protests, art, and literature have been used to resist misogyny and to fight for equality. This chapter will show how collective action in a society can play a massive role in moving towards a world where women and nature are free from control and domination.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a writer and feminist activist focusing on misogyny, societal norms, and identity. Through her creative practice, she advocates for gender equality by raising awareness. Adichie addresses how the patriarchy limits women's freedom and explains it is important to dismantle this system. She envisions a future where men and women are treated as equals, breaking down harmful stereotypes of women. (Ngozi Adichie, 2013)

Adichie encourages her audience to challenge societal norms and confront the structures that uphold gender inequality. She emphasises the need to address the persistent barriers women face and advocates for recognising women's rights to build an improved world.

Jenny Saville is an artist who works to dismantle the patriarchy through her work. Saville is a British painter known for her large-scale depictions of the human body, often portraying unconventional, plus-size women. Through her art, she questions

societal norms surrounding beauty standards imposed on women, using her bold compositions to emphasise specific aspects of the female form. She brings awareness to these harmful ideals and advocates for change by doing so. Her work confronts viewers, urging them to reassess traditional concepts of femininity and beauty, emphasising that beauty exists in all shapes and sizes. Saville's art is aimed at those who have struggled with their body image due to patriarchal pressures, and she aims to empower individuals to embrace their natural form. Saville states this in the quote: "I am painting women who have been made to think they are big and disgusting, who imagine their thighs go on forever". (Davies, 2011)



Figure 8

One

significant piece to examine is *Propped* (1992), a nude self-portrait by Jenny Saville.

Saville sits on a small stool in this oil-on-canvas piece, her exaggerated and distorted features dominating the canvas, drawing the viewer's gaze directly to her body. Her skin comprises thick, layered brushstrokes, creating a raw, textured surface that adds intense realism to the painting. Saville's posture—her arms crossed over her legs in a contorted, uncomfortable position—emphasises a sense

of tension and pain. Lightly scratched into the piece's surface is a quote from feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray: "If we continue to speak in this sameness – speak as men have spoken for centuries, we will fail each other." The quote adds a feminist perspective, emphasising the critique of societal expectations.

The intense thick brushstrokes, the body focus, and the discomfort in figure 8 heightens the emotional intensity. Saville uses her work as a powerful tool to combat the patriarchy, opening a new perspective on women's bodies and striving to give women a voice. In an interview, Saville encapsulates her mission: "I want to trespass on every area that is a no-go for women because that will open it up and make it free" (Dalley, 2020). Her work serves as a bold and unapologetic reclamation of female agency and autonomy in the face of restrictive societal norms.

Another way women seek to dismantle the patriarchy is through protests. Protests have been a powerful tool throughout history, with movements such as the suffragettes during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their primary goal was to challenge the patriarchal systems that denied women access to political equality, particularly the right to vote. The suffragettes used various tactics, ranging from peaceful demonstrations like petitions and public speeches to more extreme actions such as property damage. In *The Woman's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote* (2018), Elaine Weiss highlights the difficulty of the suffragette movement, emphasising that their persistence ultimately led to the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, granting women the right to vote.

A contemporary example is the #MeToo movement, which gained popularity in 2017. This movement aimed to raise awareness of sexual harassment and abuse experienced by women and provide a platform for their voices to be heard. Primarily

driven by social media, the #MeToo movement brought about significant cultural shifts, leading to increased accountability and the implementation of workplace safeguards designed to address and prevent harmful behaviour (Brittain, 2023).

These examples demonstrate that protests remain effective in challenging patriarchal structures and driving social change.

In this chapter, I have explored how women have challenged the patriarchy by using powerful tools to expose inequality. Despite the progress women have made for feminism, misogyny persists in various forms, and there is still much work to be done. The historical activism that feminists have fought for provides hope for a future where the patriarchy continues to be dismantled, paving the way for a more equal society.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion to this statement: 'Ecofeminism: Exploring the correlation between how men treat women and how men treat nature'. This essay's exploration of misogyny shows how it has led to women's struggles over their bodies and identities. The Salem witch trials highlight how women's connections to nature made them seen as threats to male authority. Carol Karlsen and Silvia Federici have shown how patriarchal systems suppress women's ties to the natural world. The oppression of women like Tituba demonstrates how these patriarchal systems exploit vulnerable groups to maintain their power. Ecofeminist thinkers like Vandana Shiva and Susan Griffin argue that the subjugation of women is closely linked to the exploitation of the environment, as both are targets of control by men.

Artistic and literary representations of women have often reinforced misogynistic ideals. From Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* to contemporary works like Jenny Saville's *Propped*, these visual expressions have contributed to the objectification and control of women. However, feminist artists and thinkers have challenged these patriarchal portrayals. Saville's bold, raw depictions of women's bodies disrupt traditional beauty standards and call attention to the need for representation that acknowledges women's diverse experiences. This shift reflects women's ongoing efforts to reclaim power and break free from restrictive patriarchal narratives.

Ecofeminist artists emphasise the connection between women and the earth by showing how the exploitation of both is linked. They advocate for the protection of women's rights and the environment as part of a shared struggle against patriarchal domination.

Also, education has historically contributed to the reinforcement of gender inequalities. Dale Spender's *Learning to Lose: Sexism and Education* underscores how institutional barriers in schools have limited women's access to leadership roles

and knowledge, leading to beliefs of female inferiority. This has limited women's full participation in society and intellectual life, deepening patriarchal control.

Ecofeminists like Vandana Shiva and Val Plumwood argue that the suppression of women's knowledge and the exploitation of nature are linked, both stemming from a common system that seeks to dominate the natural world and those closely connected to it.

Misogyny continues to appear in society, particularly in political and legal systems that seek to control women's bodies. Laws restricting access to abortion highlight how women's autonomy is still being undermined. Movements like #MeToo show that, despite these challenges, women are pushing back, holding men accountable and demanding change. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie advocates for a future where women are respected and treated as equals to men, free from the traditional gender roles imposed on them.

The persistence of misogyny highlights the need for ongoing feminist activism to challenge systems that seek to control both women and nature. The ecofeminist perspective demonstrates that these struggles are deeply connected. While progress has been made, much more work is needed to create a world where women and the environment are free from oppression. Women's historical struggles serve as reminders of the ongoing fight they continue to face. After reflecting on these issues, it is essential to advocate for women's empowerment in order to create a society that values the women and environment.

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