

## Nature as a Psychiatric Phenomenon in Relation to Reconstruct the Traumatic Psychic Apparatuses of Women: Referencing from Atwood's "Surfacing"

Md Masud Mondal\*

\*Independent Researcher, Former Student of Department of English, Vidyasagar University, West Bengal, India.

Received August 21, 2024; Accepted September 03, 2024; Accepted September 06, 2024

### ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the concept of nature and its psychological impact on the formation of women's psyche through the lens of "Ecofeminism". How nature actively participate to form a human psyche and how it helps us in the required phase to heal our wounded psyche will be evaluated in this paper. We cannot detach ourselves from nature, we get the very initial knowledge of living a human life from nature, therefore nature becomes the constant companion to form our psyche. Especially, women are closely connected with nature, both are bearing some extraordinary aspect that nobody else does. Nature procreates, so do women, nature gets violated and dominated by capitalist colonial society, same as women, who get subjugated by the same male dominated patriarchal society. In order to control Nature, they destroy its balance and beauty, on the other hand in order to control women they deform and dismantle their psychic apparatus, which makes women's life agonized. All these aspects are present in the novel "Surfacing" by Canadian author Margaret Atwood. And it will be the main hypothesis of this paper, where we will discuss how the protagonist suffers in the patriarchal society, how she longs for solace and mental peace which she got at the end in the lap of nature, how Nature nurtures to revive her from madness to sanity, how her wounded psyche gets cured by the psychiatric treatment she got in her native village Quebec where she spent her childhood with her family will be discussed. This paper will also deal with the narrator's psychological and physical journey, where in the first case she was trying hard to flee from her past life which bears agony, and in the second she was heading towards something, a truth she was trying to dig up, which ultimately led her meet with nature which gave her success in both the cases, she found her father dead, and her dead child who was being killed in her womb by her and her lover. Thus, this paper will be multifaceted to discuss all these concepts which will ultimately serve the interest to build the theory of 'Ecofeminism' and 'Ecocriticism' which are here in this novel with great versatile disposition.

**Keywords:** Psychoanalysis, Nature and culture, Self-Discovery, Identity crisis, Ecofeminism, Empowerment, Environmentalism

The intricate relationships between humans, nature, and society have long been a subject of fascination in literary and philosophical discourse. Margaret Atwood's novel "Surfacing" offers a profound examination of these intersections, particularly in the context of women's experiences. This analysis will delve into the ecofeminist themes present in the novel, exploring how the protagonist's journey illustrates the transformative power of nature in healing the wounded psyche. Ecofeminism posits that the domination of nature and the subjugation of women are inextricably linked, perpetuating a cycle of violence and oppression. This perspective asserts that women's bodies and minds are deeply connected to the natural world, making them vulnerable to the destructive forces of patriarchal society. Atwood's narrative masterfully weaves together the threads of ecofeminism, highlighting the parallels between the degradation of nature and the disempowerment of

women. Atwood's protagonist reflects on the natural world, noting that "trees don't die to live, they don't believe in sacrifice, they simply exist [1]. This passage underscores the protagonist's growing affinity with nature, highlighting the contrasts between human and natural worlds. By emphasizing the trees' ability to thrive without sacrifice, Atwood critiques patriarchal values that often prioritize self-

**Corresponding author:** Md Masud Mondal, Independent Researcher, Former Student of Department of English, Vidyasagar University, West Bengal, India, Tel: 8372809214, E-mail: mdmasudmondal001@gmail.com

**Citation:** Mondal MdM. (2024) Nature as a Psychiatric Phenomenon in Relation to Reconstruct the Traumatic Psychic Apparatuses of Women: Referencing from Atwood's "Surfacing". J Womens Health Safety Res, 8(1): 323-325.

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denial. This ecofeminist theme resonates throughout the novel, advocating for a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. The protagonist's odyssey in "Surfacing" is a testament to the human need for connection with nature. As she navigates the Quebec wilderness, she seeks to escape the traumas of her past and find solace in the natural world. Her experiences underscore the ecofeminist notion that women's identities are deeply rooted in the natural world, and that this connection is essential for healing and growth. The protagonist's search for her father becomes a metaphor for self-discovery, as she admits, "I'm searching for something more, something hidden in the woods" [1]. This quote reveals the protagonist's longing for identity and meaning beyond societal expectations. Her quest to find her father symbolizes her desire to reconnect with nature and her feminine self. The woods represent a space for freedom and self-exploration, where the protagonist can transcend patriarchal constraints and find her true self. Atwood's portrayal of nature as a therapeutic agent is a recurring theme in "Surfacing." The protagonist's connection with nature serves as a catalyst for her healing process, allowing her to confront and overcome the traumatic events of her past. This narrative thread supports the ecofeminist argument that nature has the power to nurture and revive the wounded psyche, highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding of the intricate relationships between humans and the natural world. As the protagonist immerses herself in the lake's waters, she experiences a transformative rebirth, describing the sensation as "a cold, nurturing womb" [1]. This passage illustrates the protagonist's spiritual renewal through her connection with nature. The lake's feminine and fertile qualities symbolize the nurturing power of the natural world. By embracing this energy, the protagonist rejects patriarchal norms and finds solace in the cyclical rhythms of nature. The protagonist's return to her native village in Quebec marks a pivotal moment in her journey. The village, with its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty, serves as a site of healing and reconnection. Her experiences in the village allow her to reclaim her identity and reconnect with her roots, which had been severed by the forces of patriarchal society. This narrative thread underscores the importance of cultural and environmental context in shaping women's experiences and promoting healing. Atwood's critique of patriarchal society is a central theme in "Surfacing." The novel exposes the ways in which patriarchal structures perpetuate the subjugation of women, erasing their identities and silencing their voices. The protagonist's experiences serve as a powerful indictment of patriarchal society, highlighting the need for a more equitable and just world. Ecofeminism offers a powerful framework for understanding the intersections between nature, culture, and society. Atwood's narrative illustrates the ways in which ecofeminism can inform our understanding of the natural world and our place within it. By highlighting the interconnectedness of human and natural worlds, ecofeminism offers a compelling vision for a more

sustainable and equitable future. To survive, the protagonist must adopt the cunning and adaptability of the natural world, resolving to "be like the animals, like the trees" [1]. This quote demonstrates the protagonist's growing awareness of her place within the ecosystem. By embracing the resilience and harmony of nature, she rejects patriarchal values and seeks balance with the environment. This ecofeminist theme underscores the importance of coexisting with nature, rather than dominating it. As the protagonist navigates the woods, memories of her painful past resurface, including her mother's death and her own abandonment. However, the natural world offers a comforting escape, as she observes the trees' ability to thrive without sacrifice. Following a distressing encounter with her past, the protagonist seeks solace in the lake's waters, finding a sense of rebirth and renewal. The lake's soothing energy helps her cope with the trauma, providing a moment of respite. As the protagonist grapples with her past, she finds refuge on the forest floor, surrounded by the calming presence of leaves and twigs. The forest becomes a sanctuary, offering a sense of peace and tranquility. During her isolation, the protagonist forms connections with animals, including a deer and a bird, which provide comfort and understanding [2]. These encounters help her heal and find solace, as she recognizes a shared sense of vulnerability. As the protagonist observes the natural world, she begins to understand the cyclical nature of life and death, which helps her process her traumatic past. This newfound understanding brings her a sense of peace, as she recognizes the interconnectedness of all living beings. "Surfacing" remains a seminal work in contemporary ecofeminist discourse. Atwood's novel has inspired generations of scholars, activists, and writers, offering a powerful vision for a more just and sustainable world. The novel's exploration of the intersections between nature, culture, and society continues to resonate with contemporary debates, highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding of the intricate relationships between humans and the natural world. In Margaret Atwood's "Surfacing," the narrator's dive into the lake marks a pivotal moment, where her search for her father transforms into an introspective journey. Nature's intervention guides her towards a profound self-discovery, revealing the depths of her own psyche. The narrator's primary drive for diving is to confront the past and resolve unresolved issues related to her father's disappearance. This external goal represents her attempt to grasp and understand the world around her. As she dives, the natural world envelops her, mirroring the unknown territories of her subconscious. The lake's depths symbolize the complexities of her inner world, where memories, emotions, and desires reside. The dive represents a journey into the narrator's inner self, where she confronts repressed emotions and desires [3]. The water's intensity and darkness symbolize the profundity of her inner world, forcing her to confront her true self. As the narrator dives deeper, her focus shifts from her father to her own thoughts, emotions, and experiences. This internal exploration marks a

turning point, where she begins to understand herself and her place in the world. The natural world facilitates the narrator's self-discovery, illustrating the interconnectedness of human and natural worlds. The lake's energy and rhythms mirror her own, enabling a deeper understanding of herself and her emotions. This scene can be seen as a manifestation of the narrator's unconscious mind, where repressed memories and desires resurface. The dive represents a symbolic descent into the unconscious, where she confronts her true self. From an ecofeminist perspective, this scene highlights the interconnectedness of human and natural worlds [4]. The narrator's journey into the lake's depths symbolizes a return to the feminine, nurturing aspects of nature, where she finds solace and self-awareness. The narrator's dive into the lake is a powerful symbol of self-discovery, guided by the natural world. As she searches for her father, she instead uncovers the depths of her own psyche, confronting repressed emotions and desires. This scene marks a turning point in the narrative, where the narrator begins to understand herself and her place in the world [5]. The naked scene in Margaret Atwood's "Surfacing" is a pivotal moment, symbolizing the protagonist's rejection of societal norms and her journey towards self-discovery [6]. This act of defiance liberates the protagonist from the constraints of civilization, allowing her to reconnect with her primal self. By shedding her clothes, she transcends the boundaries between human and environment, forging a deeper connection with nature. The scene also represents the protagonist's empowerment, granting her autonomy over her body and desires. This newfound freedom enables her to challenge patriarchal norms and forge her own path. However, some interpretations suggest that the scene perpetuates the objectification of female bodies, reinforcing societal beauty standards. The protagonist's nudity can be seen as a form of self-objectification, reinforcing the notion that women's bodies are subject to scrutiny. The significance of the scene is context-dependent, open to interpretation based on the reader's perspective [7]. A nuanced understanding of the scene's context and implications is essential to fully appreciate its importance in the novel. Margaret Atwood's "Surfacing" offers a powerful exploration of the intersections between humans, nature, and society. Through the lens of ecofeminism, this analysis has demonstrated how the protagonist's journey illustrates the transformative power of nature in healing the wounded psyche. The novel serves as a testament to the enduring power of nature to heal and transform, highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding of the intricate relationships between humans and the natural world. This research paper has examined the intricate relationships between identity, nature, and the human psyche in Margaret Atwood's "Surfacing". Through a critical analysis of the novel's themes, symbols, and narrative techniques, this study has highlighted the protagonist's transformative journey towards self-discovery and her complex connection with nature [8]. The findings of this research underscore the significance of nature as a

catalyst for the protagonist's empowerment and self-awareness. However, this study also acknowledges the nuances and complexities inherent in the novel, including the potential for objectification and the limitations of individual introspection. Ultimately, this research demonstrates that "Surfacing" offers a profound critique of societal norms and expectations, providing a timely and timeless meditation on the importance of autonomy, self-awareness, and the interconnectedness of human and natural worlds. The implications of this research extend beyond literary studies, speaking to broader cultural and environmental contexts. By examining the intersections of identity, nature, and the human psyche, this study contributes to ongoing scholarly discussions about Atwood's work, offering a fresh perspective on the enduring relevance and significance of "Surfacing".

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