

## **Abstract**

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**PhD topic – ‘Greening’ Films and Feminism:  
The Environment in Movies through Ecofeminism**

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**Manuscript:** For a feminist student of literature, there are a number of ingress opinions open for commencing an ecofeminist investigation. Cinema is one of them. Yet, for some peculiar reason, conventional ecofeminist films are, in spite of everything, regarded as pure humdrum fare by a majority of viewers and censors. Such an assessment has reinforced the predispositions against this genre of films to the point that they are usually neglected, not only by the film critics who deem them too trivial to be considered sincerely, but also by serious environmental analysts. Implicit in such an understanding is the belief that not only are these movies uninspiring and repetitive, but they are also totally divorced from reality and exist in a fantasy land of their own. Their environmental relevance, the argument goes, is minimal and they are at best exotic creations of another world, patronised by people of dreary intellectual capabilities. Although ecofeminism accommodates a diversity of perspectives, its deployment of pagan rituals and symbols in direct actions as well as its revaluing of qualities traditionally associated with women are read by some materialist feminists as signs that this philosophy is regressive, essentialist, homogenizing, or, in reality, unfeminist – that it rests on a degenerating notion of women as innate nurturing caretakers. Ecological feminists have repeatedly observed that the openness and diversity of the movement’s politics exist in tension with the universalist, essentialist, formulations of a great deal of the movement’s

rhetoric. This condescension of critics and the resolute indifference of the academic community is, however, slowly diminishing.

Increasing number of people are realising that ecofeminism is developing in scope and in influence; it is spreading beyond its original home in literary studies and colonizing new niches in related fields, such as film criticism. Many ecocritics have taken an interest in visual media.

Any in-depth and fruitful study of cinema has to be focussed on its multi-layered and multi-dimensional structure. Mass media are not simply the sum total of all actions they portray or of the message beamed through these actions. Mass media also consist of various layers of meanings superimposed on one another, all of which contribute to the aggregate effect. In fact, the hidden message may be more important than the overt, since the hidden message escapes the controls of consciousness, is not looked through, and is likely to imperceptibly sink into the spectator's mind. This is in accordance with the assumption shared by some social scientists that certain political and social trends of our times feed, to a considerable extent, on irrational and, very often, on unconscious motivations. Thus, the hidden message frequently aims at reinforcing conventionally rigid attitudes similar to the accepted ideas more rationally propagated by the surface message.

Conversely, a number of repressed gratifications which play an important latent role are somehow allowed to manifest themselves in jests, suggestive situations, and similar devices. All these interactions at various levels are pointers to the attempts to channelize audience reaction in particular directions and for particular purposes. It is important to focus on the ideological role of films by locating them within a larger social and political matrix.

This work attempts to take a close look at the relationship between a dominant single view of the future and modernity in the present context of commercial transformation of Western visual culture and media, specifically the American genre of the movies, with respect to

cofeminism. It tries to explore prospective images in a small number of contemporary films, with attention to movies about phantasmagorias of the ecological future in depictions of landscape, food, and animals versus movies concerning contemporaneous ecological problems, in addition to women's roles in society as indicators of social justice and equality. Motion-pictures impart us a perceptiveness to observe through visualisation and to examine how it affects future developments. As Paul Valery says in "Aesthetics, The Conquest of Ubiquity":

"We must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the arts, thereby affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an amazing change in our very notion of art."

Ecofeminism makes available a hypothetical station from which one may detect zones of supremacy of women, other living and non-living beings, and Mother Earth. Combined with futures studies, it arranges direction on supernumerary means to envisage times to come — futures which rejoice in and shelter local human and biological diversity.

In principle, a work of art has always been reproducible. In terms of the treatment of gender, the evaluation has simultaneously shown some disparate forces at work: there is advocacy of women's resistance to patriarchal norms, as well as reinforcement of a status quo. There remains then, no simple way to characterise the modernity of these movies, they become chalk-and-cheese sites of an analogous opposition.