

Woman and Nature

Woman and Nature draws from a vast and enthralling array of literary, scientific, and philosophical texts in order to explore the relationship between the denigration of women and the disregard for the Earth. In this singular work of love, passion, rage, and beauty, Susan Griffin ingeniously blends history, feminist philosophy, and environmental concerns, employing her acclaimed poetic sensibilities to question the mores of Western society.

Griffin touches upon subjects as diverse as witch hunts, strip mining, Freudian psychology, and the suppression of sexuality to decry a long-standing history of misogyny and environmental abuse. A sometimes aggravating, often inspiring, and always insightful literary collage, this remarkable volume offers sanity, poetry, intelligence, and illumination.

“Nature is like a woman who enjoys disguising herself, and whose different disguises, revealing now one part of her and now another, permit those who study her and assiduously to hope that one day they may know the whole of her person”

Nature is feminized because it is seen as possessing the same qualities as women at the time when most of the romantic writing was produced

Women were seen as being domestic, pious, moral, pure, gentle, kind, graceful, simple and beautiful; this was according to the nature of separate spheres: men and women were fundamentally different in terms of their characteristics as men were seen as hard-working, industrial, rational, assertive, independent and proud; none of which is easily connected with nature

- Therefore nature was seen as the embodiment of all the characteristics that women possess and there are frequent references to this in literature, especially poetry

Nature is also feminized due to the patriarchal nature of society; many romantic travel writers were men, therefore travel writing was quite gender specific and the men were quite likely to bestow feminine qualities upon nature

-When nature is discussed in poetry there are usually feminine references issues of the life cycle such as fertility, bounty and reproduction

The references to reproduction and fertility may symbolize the continuity of nature; the continuity and change of seasons indicate that the earth continues in a balanced cycle, similar to the life cycle of humans

Because women are responsible for the continuity of the life cycle, they are often associated with seasons, for example the 'rebirth of the land' in the springtime.

The concept of connecting women with nature dates back to the times of ancient classical mythology, with several goddesses being strongly connected to the earth, eg. Persephone and mother Demeter.

The viewpoint of women as representations of nature is so connected that when we see nature, we are automatically supposed to associate them with nature and vice versa.