

# Exploring Traces Of Patriarchal Cultural Hierarchy In John Keats' Ode To Melancholy

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## Abstract

This research aims to identify the devaluation of women and nature in the world of patriarchy. Using Ortner's (1974) cultural ecofeminism, this study examines how the exploitation of environment and the enslavement of women are being equally connected. According to Ortner's (1974) aforementioned argument, patriarchy is to be responsible for the concurrent suffering of women and environment. The poem of Keats, Ode to Melancholy is revealed for their cultural ecofeminism components in this research. For this reason, a qualitative analysis of the poems was done to show how Keats identified cultural ecofeminism elements through personification in various locations while using this tool Keats also portraying nature and women equally. The arguments in this research explore that cross-culturally and historically, it has been observed that women as opposed to men are closer to nature in their psychology, by their social participation and through their physiology. By making allusion to the conventional mental model that subordinated women and nature, the result shows that Keats has described the dualistic, patriarchal hierarchical culture in an effective and thoughtful manner.

**Keywords:** Keats, hierarchy, cultural eco-feminism, devaluation, nature and women.

## Introduction and background

According to cultural eco-feminism, women are connected to nature through their ability to procreate and as a source of comfort for the weary. Unfortunately, both are treated inhumanely all around the world and in different cultures. Cultural eco-feminism which has mainly spotlighted on the subject of awareness of the relations to nature divinity, witchcraft, holiness, devotion and the merriment of women's bodies. Ortner (1974) implicitly to draw on the correlation linking the women's reproductive biology (nature) and the male-intended knowledge (Gul, R., et al., 2023; Gul, R., & Khilji, G. K. 2022; Tahir, T. et al., 2023; Khan, H. 2023; Gul, R., et al, 2023). As it has been highlighted by Stone (1978) that the planet where

we all living things survive is dominated by the male-developed and male-controlled machinery, industry, and discipline. It is worth reflecting on and thinking about where this brutality against both parties came from ((Ahmad, Gul, & Kashif, 2022; Gul & Khilji, 2023; Salameh et al., 2022)

Looking from natural and non-equipment point of view, the relationship between nature and women is celebrated by cultural eco-feminism through the revival of ancient rituals on divinity worship, animals, the moon and the female reproductive system (Rani Gul et al., 2022; Rani Gul et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2022). With a focus on the mutual suffering of women and environment, this study seeks to evaluate Keats' poetry from the standpoint of cultural ecofeminism. The goal of the research is to identify potential strategies for

permanently changing this patriarchal worldview.

### Literature Review

One widely accepted explanation holds that women's lower position results from the patriarchal mindset that views nature as inferior to culture and women as inferior to males, which Ortner (1974) refers to as a *Art imitates life* in some way (Ahmad, Gul, & Imtiaz, 2022; Ali et al., 2021; Batool et al., 2022; Gul, Khan, et al., 2020; Gul, Kanwal, et al., 2020; Gul & Rafique, 2017; Khan et al., 2023)). Through their art, artists want to learn more about their surroundings, which also includes women and the natural world (Ayub, Gul, Malik, et al., 2021; Gul & Reba, 2017; Saleem et al., 2021; Sohail et al., 2018). Keats, a romantic poet, takes nature, women, and their shared oppression by the patriarchal system into account. When viewed through the lens of cultural ecofeminism, Keats' poetry emphasizes the parallel suffering of women and environment as well as ancillary themes of racial injustice, gender stereotyping, and ecological destruction (Ayub, Gul, Ali, et al., 2021; Gul, Tahir, et al., 2021).

Additionally, poetry that is culturally eco-feministic acknowledges and applauds the efforts made by feminists to counter centuries of harm to both women and the environment (Gul, Kanwal, et al., 2020; Gul & Rafique, 2017; Khan et al., 2023). However, Dixon (1996) has noted that comparing women to animals for the sake of likeness does not actually show that animals are subjugated, much less that they are oppressed by patriarchy. In addition to exploring the symbolic relationships, eco-feminists view women as being more emotional, physically, and in tune with nature than males (Ayub, Gul, Malik, et al., 2021; Batool et al., 2022; Gul, Ayub, et al., 2021). Nevertheless, in other definitions, the patriarchy may be summarized as a single man holding complete authority over the institution of

fatherhood, the "symbolic power" of the father as the patriarchal spirit within culture and the unconscious. Barrett et al. (2005), Moghadam (1992), Mendes (2011), Foord & Gregson (1986), Antonijevic (2011), and Mendes et al. (2011).

Adams (1994), on the other hand, connected the sexual abuse of children, women, and animals with the brutality visible in a patriarchal culture (Bukhari et al., 2021; Gul & Khilji, 2021; Gul, Tahir, et al., 2021).

. As it had been noted, a philosophically informed account of the relationship between women and nature, together with the idea that male dominance is related to the dominance of nature, is significant and yet still presents a problem for women (Gul, Tahir, et al., 2020; Gul, Zakir, et al., 2021; Said et al., 2021). Furthermore, in order to focus on the environment and the state of women in the world today, Warren, (1997) has said that it is been observed that decisions are frequently made by men, mostly as a result of women's absence from positions of power and their severely curtailed access to formal education (Batool et al., 2021; Gul, Kanwal, et al., 2020; Gul et al., 2023; Muhammad Tufail et al., 2022; Salameh et al., 2022). Shiva (1990) has blamed the failure on the Western patriarchal wisdom of growth and improvement. According to Shiva, (1990) patriarchy has been labeling women, nature, and other groups for not increasing the financial system as "unproductive" for so long.

Ortner (1974) discusses why it is accepted as a universal and cultural truth that women hold physical bodies, as well as the elements of their physique that are based on society, are closer to nature than culture. The physical characteristics of a woman that allow her to reproduce, give birth to children, and breastfeed them all negatively impact her social standing and ability to contribute to society (Ahmad, Gul, & Zeb, 2022; Gul et al., 2022; Gul, Ayub, et al., 2021). She must have a close relationship with nature to be

accepted socially based on her physical prowess. She offers a really accurate and realistic assessment that is more practical than theoretical or abstract. Because of this process, women have been demoted to home issues, and anything that breaks a natural wave or process is seen as going against it (Ahmad & Gul, 2021; Gul, Ayub, et al., 2021; Gul, Muhammad, et al., 2021),

In addition, The Green Fuse (2016) as a critic has described ecofeminism very powerfully that associates the common position of women with the common rank of nature, to a certain extent the non-essentialist observation that women along with nature both possess male and female qualities, in the same way just as feminine qualities have over and over been seen as less worthy, nature in the same manner is as well seen as possessing lesser worth than culture.

### **Methodology**

This study project is focused on a qualitative and interpretive analysis to determine how men and women view social and cultural approaches to life. The critical approach is offered through qualitative textual facts because the qualitative and descriptive analysis method was applied in this study. According to Mckee's (2005) investigation, researchers who wish to characterize social behavior by drawing on a variety of cultural contexts by choosing a particular text for the purpose of study in the manner of studying language which reveals that what are the predictions of other people about the world.

The interpretation of nature along with the status of women is the foundation of the current study. The process of conducting interpretive research begins with belief that research to the fact that is strongly based upon the social structure which is none other than language, conscious intellectual aptitude. Ecofeminism is described by Howell (1997) as a link between women and nature. Link

has historically been valued as an empowerment tool. This paper aims to classify cultural eco-feminism's key essentials drawn from the patriarchal world.

Nevertheless Butler, (1998) emphasizes on the thoughtful philosophy that the core upon the interpretative move is found on hermeneutics. Interpretative research has been used to gain a deeper understanding of Keats' poetry because the study of interpretation is typically dependent on the meaning to comprehend the phenomenon. In order to identify the components of culture eco-feminism, the current study looks deeply into Keats' poetry, including one of the outstanding odes "Ode on Melancholy". By examining the personification in Keats's selected poem it has been absorbed that the individual human attributes or adjectives may be based on sensations, senses, feelings, and modes of thought. In other words, personification is also known as anthropomorphism when someone imbues an animal or other thing with human emotions.

Personification is a concrete example of an abstract idea, but it also applies to people. Through the use of personification and the concept of cultural eco-feminism, Keats' poem Ode on Melancholy is examined. It portrays him as a social constructivist who is charting a fresh path for research in Keats' fantastical, inventive, and unbelievable universe. Through the lens of Ortner's (1974), cultural eco-feminism, this goal has been accomplished. He believed that woman's essential rights are being violated, that is why the time has come to travel. However cultural ecofeminism is a nonviolent approach it bridges environmental issues with patriarchal society and gives other alternative of empowering male and female. Women and nature's presentation is observed as a part of art which is all around us to enhance the beauty, peace, value and purpose of life.

### **Theoretical framework**

According to Anne (1993), ecofeminism serves as a link between women and nature. Link has historically been valued as an empowerment tool. The goal of this study is to classify key aspects of cultural ecofeminism drawn from Keats poetry. The results of this research support Ortner's (1974) cultural ecofeminism. According to feminist ideology, women are taken advantage in relation to their fundamental rights that is why they feel the need to travel in order to take shelter in peace and harmony.

### **Analysis**

Personification is a tool which has been frequently used to spotlight on a various theme in any piece of art. Art has proved to exist in all societies and culture. According to Drlbaere, McQuarrie, and Phillips (2011) in the realm of art, the technique of personification presents living and non-living things such as the animals, humans, natural powers, objects in various of features which they possess.

Adjectives describe the characteristics that only people possess and are built around action verbs. These traits may be based on sensations, senses, moods, and modes of thought. In other words, personification is also known as anthropomorphism, which occurs when someone imbues an animal, any object or thought with human emotions. It is a concrete example of an abstract idea, but it also applies to people. The use of personification in the analysis of Keats' poem *Ode on Melancholy* highlights the presence of cultural ecofeminism in his poetry and positions it as a social constructivist, opening up new avenues for investigation into his imaginative universe.

### **Ode on Melancholy**

*Ode on Melancholy* is one of the odes by Keats in summer season of 1819 where he has explored the nature of sorrow, sheds light on the condition of women and looks for unexpected sources of joy. Melancholy which appears as a feminine

figure is seen as a weak creature that needs a strong support for her existence. Keats personifies "Melancholy" which is sadness, suffering, pain and misery in herself and is connected to nature as beauty, joy, good deed, pleasure, and love. Melancholy is everywhere as women and nature. It must not be ignored or neglected in any ways that man does with women and nature. Melancholy is like a famine figure and beautiful nature which are around us and need our serious attention and care in order to survive safely.

In the first stanza, Keats sympathetically address that no doubt that women and nature are weak but still they must not go towards the danger, and harm themselves. Keats here personifies 'Lethe' and 'Wolfs-bane' as powerful men who damagers innocence of nature and women when they get closer to them. Keats warn them do not allow any patriarchal power to fulfill their desires by taking advantage to come near to their weak body and emotions and consider them inferior like a "nightshade" which is personified as a powerful man. Ortner (1974) had tried to represent the fundamental judgment of cultural philosophy that believe the inferiority of women. She has attempted to focus upon the highly persuasive nature of the judgment, as if it had not been so influential, people would not remain promising to such judgments. But on the other hand, she also has tried to demonstrate the social and cultural foundations of that logic and has indicated wherein the potential for change lies in the social behavior. Cultural eco-feminism highlights the equal position of women and nature that gets more devalued when seek help from patriarchal power. Keats here encourages women and nature to achieve their targets by relying on their own abilities.

In the second stanza, Keats discovers and suggests that appreciating beauty is true response for melancholy, which according to him, is another name for same person, that as women, the

victim of the cruelties of patriarchal structure. Keats calls the Melancholy a weeping cloud which is falling from the heaven and this weeping of melancholy is none other than the women along with the nature who belong to heaven, a pure and peaceful place. Keats speaks of the suffering and the innocence of women. Keats highlights the pains of the both as a death in the beautiful month of April when green hills have forgotten its true existence. Keats console Melancholy by encouraging the men to collect their colors of kindness, love and care like rainbow. He says that bear the annoyed women behavior as an angry lover in order to start the new and peaceful environment. The speaker discovers in the final stanza that "Melancholy has her Sovran shrine" in "the very temple of delight." In the poem at hand, the poet employs personifications like as "Beauty," "Delight," "Joy," and "Pleasure" to highlight his imaginative universe where women and nature are present. Their emotions are felt, and difficulties are suggested through Keats' full mental approach and thoughts.

The personifications that have been used by Keats in the poem under consideration and in the other poems justifies the content related to them in a different way. He describes how grief and joy, traits of women and nature, cannot be separated in any way. He personifies melancholy as dejected nature and weeping ladies. "No, no, don't twist or go to Lethe. For its poisonous wine, wolf's-bane, tights rooted" (Stanza 1, lines 1-2).

The poet uses word "No, no", very frequently here, which signifies that patriarchal society is treating women and nature in a wrong and unjustified way. The poem takes a very abrupt start when receives it as a conclusion, highlighting the mental conflict of the poet, Although "Ode on Grecian Urn" and "Ode to Nightingale" served as the poem's foreground and background, respectively, the current poem starts off as a drama of thoughts in Medias.

However, the conflict has brought the poet into a resolution. As in other words Ortner (1974) consider obvious from her approach that it is injudicious attempt to make the center of attention only upon women's genuine. It despites the fact that culturally unrecognized and unvalued powers in any given society, devoid of accepting the overarching philosophy and profound supposition which is connected to culture and has rendered such powers trivial.

Keats is trying to give consolation to both nature and women and relieve their depression which they have faced due to patriarchy. Interestingly, he finds the problem and the solution and in the same object and looks for some remedy to make them unconscious of sadness and pain. He suggests that higher level of sense and increasing consciousness know how to make them practice hard efforts along with the misfortune of life. The speaker in the poem is asking women time and again, not to take hard steps that may destroy their lives in any way, keeping in view the decline in the darkness of

life. Keats has suggested all sensual methods of experiencing in the second stanza: "glut "Let her rave" for the aural (hearing), "thy misses some rich anger shows" for the visual, "thy sorrow" for the gustatory (tasting), "imprison her soft hand" for the tactile (touch), "morning rose" for the connotation of the olfactory (smelling) perception.

In the given sensuous stimulants of joy, the text explains the feminine and nature in its own circle to help readers understand how all these things of pleasure, sensitivity, emotions, and pains naturally lead women into the sorrow of the 'soul' via the tragic realization of their humanity.

This is prime way to reach to the true experience of melancholy with the help of the conflict. It is clear that there is no element of surprise and confusion as the mind works in the contradictory as like, true and false, tainted or pure, life and

death, all are fed with contradictory meaning. The uniqueness of the poet lies in the "Culture eco-feminism", observation where nature and women are under opponent control and depressed by the hands of patriarchy. Since it is always culture's project to subsume and transcend nature, if women were considered part of nature, then culture would find it "natural" to subordinate, not to say oppress, them (Ortner, 1974).

The tragedy of the live of women lies in the fact which takes Keats into depth of strong feelings. He is so close to nature and women's thoughts in the valley of death. Another aspect of nature is also attempting to comfort her for the injustice that society has meted out to them, giving them hope by illuminating the natural world around them as a means of escaping the patriarchal society and proving to be the best friend of women in real life.

When Keats states that the mistress "dwells with Beauty," he provides another personification of beauty. He asks the patriarchal men to be merciful towards women and nature since they are sensitive and emotionally freak. Furthermore, their existence and presence is on another hand very significant. In the given words, the poet also suggests through personification that Joy is like a happy women and delighted nature who always forget their own sufferings while ready to console the others in trouble in the adverse situation. In addition, Ortner, (1974) thought of the issue when says that it is the universality of woman second class status and the reality which exists within every kind of social and financial understanding. In such societies every degree of complexity which indicates to sensitive beings that we are up next to somewhat extremely thoughtful, incredibly stubborn, something in which it is not an easy task to arrange the social setup, or to bring things in proper order to reform the entire economic arrangement. Keats sympathizes with women's fears and urges patriarchal men to quit oppressing living things (such as women and nature) because these two

give up their movements of pleasure for the sake of their companion, friend and near and dear ones. He strongly speaks of the fact that though women along with the nature sacrifice their own wishes, happily, dreams, career, future even life to fulfill the needs of their family and companion. They pay respect to others thoughts joyfully but remain unnoticed and their efforts are thrown into vain in the patriarchal society.

Keats personifies "Delight" in the third stanza of the poem, "Ay, in the very temple of delight" (Stanza 3, line 6) as gods, that one may worship the god with Delight, and still find a "shrine" Although Veil'd Melancholy has a sovrain shrine—a sacred location—she does not adhere to the teachings of mercy, respect, and care that are intended for Melancholy as a woman and a deep nature. The shrine to melancholy is where he claims that women and nature have their unique roles in God's creation or kept hidden in partial, not in a whole in the temple of Delight, not visible to everyone. However, Ortner (1974) focuses on the elements of cultural philosophy and informants' declaration which has openly devalued women. Patriarchy fails to recognize the roles of women and nature, their social environment, their products and their tasks which are less prestige than are accorded men and the male associates.

The poet points out here that the gentleman who is a member of society but is anti-patriarchal notes that the person who has the ability to burst the "grapes of Joy" (which represent respect for women and care for nature) may perceive how melancholy is connected with Delight. The real pleasure of life is hidden in the respect and understanding of those beings who are devalued by implementing the cultural ideology and patriarchal mind set which places them on the lowest position and rank them on the bottom in order to prove themselves superior in so called society. As Ortner (1974) says that it is the universal reality of culturally attributed in which

women are placed on second-class position in every society.

The last part of the poem suggests that only those gentlemen will understand the power, pleasure and importance of melancholy (women) who understand that melancholy (women and nature) are joined with joy and pleasure. As in this beautiful line it is said, "His soul shalt taste the sadness of her might, "And be among her cloudy trophies hung". (Stanz-3, line, 9-10). Keats is of the opinion that the true and real winner of the world is the one who understands the position of a women being a mother, wife, daughter or any other relation. He develops the notion that the inner satisfaction and one's soul is the trophy that s/he wins. The personification of emotion in the end of the poem suggests that everyone who experiences the pleasure of women and nature is like some sort of winner of the emotion, like a deer head mounted on a wall. Keats encourages the women and nature and says that do not be disheartened by the negative thoughts because it is the brutal way of dealing that weak society belong to, and are stick to its social structure and the culture philosophy which they posses. In every society the particular beliefs, symbolizations, and social-structural arrangements which are relevant to women that has varied extensively from one culture to another. (Ortner, 1974)

In the final stanza, the poet personifies the depressed and melancholy mind as a goddess and describes her in terms of the friends who surround herself with, including Beauty, Joy, and Pleasure. These three make an odd trio for a serious case of melancholy. It's interesting to note that each of them holds the germ of its opposite, which could be interpreted as melancholy. The sensitive mind has the insight that joy is actually another face of sorrow. The only choice that one is left with between oblivion and awareness. Keats is of the opinion that experiencing pain and joy both, is the real valuable thing. One must give significantly equal value to both of them.

The real meaning of life lies in the fact which is to savor these diversified experiences.

The person who can experience the intensity of joy can experience melancholy, and vice versa. These both are conflicting phenomena. Keats navigates the new way for the humanity to continue the journey toward happy and beautiful life, keeping in view the complete the whole reality of life that has its beauty with the phenomena of "Cultural eco-feminism".

### Conclusion

In view of the foregoing debate, it may be stated that Keats skillfully compares nature and women. He draws this comparison via personification. Keats has brought attention to the patriarchal mindset through cultural ecofeminism, which undermines cultural ideas in order to bring about changes in social behavior. He has highlighted the archaic cultural tendencies that place nature and women in the background and, of course, into practices that are not human. Keats continues the torturous sadness of women with the company of nature. Additionally, he expresses the long-standing static and unchanging relationship between women and nature. His subconscious prompts strong man to draw attention to the two in order to bring about improvements. According to Ortner (1974) Woman who has been created naturally from within her own being, while man has been found free to, or required to, generate synthetically, that is, from side to side in cultural means, and in such a way at the same time as to sustain culture. To bring reform in the society Keats subconscious forces men to write about the needs for cursing the damages that are given to the weak beings who are connected to him.

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