



ISSN Online: 2709-9180
ISSN Print: 2709-9172

**INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN
OF LITERATURE AND LINGUISTICS**

Vol. 9 No. 01 (March) 2026
Pages: 01-10

Published by: Research Syndicate

Email: researchsyndicate.vv@gmail.com Website: <http://ibll.com.pk/index.php/ibll/index>

**PATRIARCHAL DOMINATION AND CHAOTIC WORLD: AN ECOFEMINIST
ANALYSIS OF THE BLUE ANT TRILOGY BY WILLIAM GIBSON**

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Abstract

This study is an analytical study of William Gibson's Blue Ant trilogy in the backdrop of an ecofeminist framework. The research deals with the liberal ecofeminist stance proposed by Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies, and Karen J. Warren that links the suppression of women and the exploitation of land. The research is delimited to the analysis of Gibson's three novels: Pattern Recognition, Spook Country, and Zero History. The study aims to analyze the patriarchal exploitation of both women and land. Using textual analysis as the method for the investigation, the study explores the novels for the representations in terms of suppression amongst women and nature. It not only shows that these novels reveal the subjugation of land and exploitation of woman but also the patriarchal dominance nurture oppressive system that brings destruction and chaos. It focuses on the damages caused by patriarchal domination as man is habitual in seeing women and nature as "objects". The researcher concludes that destruction can only be healed by bringing change to the patriarchal system of oppression. This research will broaden the scope for future researchers in Ecology, Feminism, science fiction, and Ecofeminism.

Keywords: *ecofeminist framework, William Gibson, Blue Ant trilogy, textual analysis*

Introduction

This research will analyze the suppression and exploitation of women and land in William Gibson's novels: Pattern Recognition (2003), Spook Country (2007), and Zero History (2010) from the perspective of ecofeminism. These techno-thriller novels by Gibson are frequently called the Blue Ant series or trilogy. Blue Ant is named after the fictional advertising agency. The founder of the agency, Hubertus Bigend, plays a very important role in the novels. In this trilogy, Gibson attempts to present the picture of the modern age and focuses on the realities of network societies he "fantasized" about in his earlier works. The early 21st century is an age of growing connectivity, and Gibson, in this trilogy, uses all the modern technological tools, such as GPS, Google Earth, Wikipedia, social media networks, etc. The writer tries to portray the degradation and chaos that lies under this techno-advancement.



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The thesis aims to analyze the patriarchal exploitation of women and land in Gibson trilogy from the perspective of Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies, and Karen J. Warren's ecofeminism. Ecofeminism plays a significant role in highlighting the degradation of ecology and woman in the name of development. As Shiva in her book *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Survival in India* says, "humiliation of woman and earth go hand in hand" (Shiva, 1988). It focuses on the damages caused by patriarchal domination as man is habitual in seeing women and nature as "objects". Ecofeminism, a widely spread activist and academic movement, focuses on the interconnection between the suppression of women and nature caused by patriarchy. In line with this concept, the Blue Ant trilogy by Gibson has been examined with a major focus on the suppression of women and the exploitation of nature and the interconnection that exists between them.

The researcher will try to explore the dire destruction caused by male domination. In this trilogy. The writer has depicted a chaotic world. Everyone is running after technology. There is no true meaning in life. The leading character of the trilogy is male, named Hubertus Bigend. Who runs the advertising agency Blue Ant? He leads, exploits, and controls everyone in this trilogy. He is a symbol of patriarchal domination. He dominates and exploits the female characters of the series and causes chaos and meaninglessness. As Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies in their book *Ecofeminism* (1993) assert, the relationship of exploitation dominance between man and nature, and the exploitative and oppressive relationship between man and woman prevails in most patriarchal societies, even modern industrial ones (Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, 1993).

Furthermore, the researcher will conclude that destruction can only be healed by bringing change to the patriarchal system of oppression. As Carolyn Merchant in her book *The Death of Nature* asserts, there exists an artificially constructed connection between nature and woman. The root cause for which both nature and women are kept in subjugation stems from the man-centered world outlook of "patriarchy". (Merchant, 1980)

Blue Ant trilogy

William Gibson is an American Canadian the writer. His Blue Ant trilogy consists of three novels: *Pattern Recognition* (2003), *Spook Country* (2007), and *Zero History* (2010). Unlike his early works, Gibson adopts a realist style. This trilogy is named after the advertising agency, Blue Ant, owned by Hubertus Bigend. He is the central figure of the trilogy who hires the protagonists of the novels to investigate different unexplained cultural trends.

Pattern Recognition

William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* (2003) revolves around the character of Cyce Pollard, who is a freelancer. Her detective power is incredibly strong; she can detect upcoming trends. Despite ability and skills, she suffers from anxiety attacks that are caused by the suspicion that



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everyone is plotting against her. Hubertus Bigend, who runs the advertising agency, is the center of the trilogy. He hires her to track down the creator of anonymous film clips. In order to fulfill tasks, she must travel to various cities. Throughout the novel, she remains sad and confused. She experiences emotional detachment. After meeting the person who created the film, she can solve emotional detachment and is able to recover her personal pattern. Her sadness can be seen in the outer world, too.

Spook Country

Spook Country (2007) is the second in the Blue Ant trilogy. Hollis Henry is the center of this novel. She was a rock vocalist and has become a journalist. The head of Blue At agency, Bigend, assigns her a task to find and interview an artist, Bobby Chombo, who is specialist in locative art and military navigation system. To accomplish the task, Hollis must travel to various cities. All techniques and knowledge are used to facilitate crime rather than redemption. The characters of the novel are not under any illusion. Emptiness is felt by everyone in the novel. The land also reveals that emptiness “The air full of dry and stringing detritus of the palms. You are, she told herself, crazy. (Gibson, Spook Country, 2009)

Zero History

In Zero History (2010) Hubertus Bigend hires Milgrim and Hollis to accomplish assignments. Hollis is hired to detect the person who designed Gabriel Hounds. Gabriel is another mysterious brand that attracts Bigend. Owing to her financial crisis, Hollis is forced to do that job. She realizes that she is leading a forced life and has no control over her life.

The above-mentioned novels depict the life of the early 21st century. They present a world in which little is left to change, and technological advancement cannot improve living conditions.

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a broader term, and it mainly focuses on the unjustified domination and exploitation of women, marginalized people, and nature. The term was created by French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne. Ecofeminism has been drawn from Feminism. Like feminism, ecofeminism has various versions. Every perspective of ecofeminism analyzes the relationship between humans and ecology. Liberal ecofeminism sheds light on the hasty development and man's inability to eradicate environmental issues. Whereas Cultural ecofeminism describes a link between women and nature based on their gender roles.

Social ecofeminism believes that dominating nature stems from the domination of humans by humans. Social ecofeminism acknowledges that patriarchy contributes to the exploitation of both women and the land. Women launched the movement against patriarchal thinking and multinational companies that exploit the environment in the name of development. Vandana Shiva terms it as “maldevelopment”. Vandana shiva in her book Ecofeminism, says,



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“Modern civilization is based on cosmology and anthropology that structurally dichotomizes reality, and hierarchically opposes the two parts to each other: the one always considered superior, always thriving, and progressing at the expense of the other. Thus, nature is subordinated to man; woman to man,” (Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, 1993, p. 5)

The stance that I adopt relates to the social ecofeminist perspective that there lies a close connection between the suppression of women and the exploitation of land.

Significance of the study:

The present research is very significant in various ways. Since the addition of ecofeminism in the domain of literary theory, many researchers and theorists have examined various literary texts from the perspective of the exploitation of women and land. Mostly, researchers and theorists are from the West. My research will incorporate ecofeminism from the perspectives of Vandana Shiva (Indian), Maria Mies (German), and Karen J. Warren (United States). In this way, this research will highlight the perspective and culture of the East and West regarding gender roles and patriarchy.

The research will try to reconstruct the meaning of progress and development. As Shiva calls the technological “maldevelopment”. It will reveal the exploitation and suppression of women in the most advanced countries. It will highlight the intriguing ways of exploitation used by patriarchal systems. In the future, the research will show the importance of balance between natural and cultural development. It will contribute to the struggle for a peaceful world. It may pave the way for future researchers in this domain.

Research questions

1. How does William Gibson portray the women in the Blue Ant trilogy?
2. How has the exploitation of women been presented in the trilogy?
3. Is a woman treated as an object?
4. How does patriarchal domination lead to destruction?
5. How does Hubertus Bigend represent a patriarchal society?
6. To what extent is the dominance of technology linked with masculine traits?
7. How does the writer connect land and woman?
8. Which techniques are used to reveal this connection?
9. How do both women and land become the victims of patriarchal dominance?

Research objectives

- 1 To reveal the exploitation of women.
- 2 To describe the dire results caused by patriarchal dominance.
- 3 To reveal how technological advancement suppress mother land.
- 4 To show the connection between land and woman.



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Literature Review

Many articles, books and essays have been written by the different researchers and scholars on ecofeminism. I will discuss and review the available scholarship in the form of books and articles that relate to ecofeminist theory in terms of suppression against women and land. ecofeminist critics are of the view that investigation of ecofeminism provided the theoretical base of present ecological problems at the international level.

Hawkins in his essay *Ecofeminism and Nonhuman: continuity, Difference, Dualism, and Domination* figures out the presence of dualistic structures which are permeating in the culture of west and these structures are responsible for differences between humans and non-humans. (Hawkins, 1998)

Glazbrook in her work *Karen Warren's Ecofeminism* presents a critique of the position that Warren had defended with respect to ecofeminism. She appreciates the publication of Warren's voice about ecofeminism that reaches its culmination with the publication of "Ecofeminist Philosophy: A western perspective on what it is and why it matters" in this book Warren has summarized almost all of her previous works. Glazbrook supports her concept of patriarchy, which she mentions in the context of western culture. Patriarchy works at the back of notion that is use against women and nature. (Glazbrook, 2002)

Sterba in an article *On the possibility of Grounding a Defense of Ecofeminist Philosophy* acknowledges the defense of ecofeminist ideology that Warren advocates. She also discusses an analogy of quilt-making which ecofeminist takes as philosophy. The analogy is an invitation for all those who want to contribute to the ecofeminist theory that Warren proposes. Stern encourages from this invitation and adds his perspective of ecofeminism. (Sterba, 1997)

Maruyama in an essay *Deconstructive Ecofeminism: A Japanese critical Interpretation* explains deconstructive ecofeminist concept. He appreciates the efforts made by ecofeminist philosophers to "deconstruct dualism and promote as ethics for the natural world" (Maruyama, 2000)

Delimitation

William Gibson is an American Canadian fiction writer and essayist. He is credited with pioneering science fiction. He has written other trilogies such as *Sprawl* trilogy and *Bridge* trilogy. I have selected only one trilogy, consisting of three novels. Ecofeminism is an umbrella term. There are many branches of ecofeminism. But I have chosen liberal ecofeminism to analyze the works of Gibson.



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Theoretical framework

Ecofeminism as movement advocates social changes and finds that suppression of women is interlinked to the domination of nature with the same masculine centered practices to the patriarchal society. It was a French Feminist, Francoise d'Eaubonne, who coined the term "ecofeminism" in her book *Feminism or Death* (1974). This book has thrown the light on the importance of women and nature. Gender role, role of women and environmental issues have been discussed in this book. This book has encouraged the elimination of all social injustice, not particular injustice against women and environment.

This tradition includes other influential texts: *Women and Nature* (Susan Griffin 1978), *The Death of Nature* (Carolyn Merçant 1980), and *Gyn/Ecology* (Mary Daly 1978). With the help of these texts, the feminists' activists of 1980s connected ideas of ecology and the environment.

The late 20th century has acknowledged ecofeminism as a movement. There are various branches and theorists of ecofeminism. I have chosen Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies as major theorists for my research. I will incorporate Karen J. Warren's ecofeminist perspective. In the proposed research. Shiva presents a relationship among ecology, woman and environment and links nature to woman. She is of the view that the death of nature is in fact the death of women. She considers modern scientific progress as being associated with a new shape of dominance. She examines the very nature of modern science and presents a conclusion that it is embedded with patriarchal approach. Scientific development, she asserts, is also patriarchal as it comes out from western "western, masculine projects". Shiva also throws light on philosophies of the father of modern science, Sir Francis Bacon, who relates modern science with men. Shiva says that Baconian science sets a dichotomy of male and female, rational and emotional, mind and matter, and subjective and objective.

Maria Mies in her book *Ecofeminism* also talks about this classification done by men. She is of the view that since the beginning of patriarchy, women were treated like nature. They are being exploited and suppressed by male. she says,

"women all over the world, since the beginning of patriarchy, were also treated like 'nature', devoid of rationality, their bodies functioning in the same instinctive way as other mammals. Like nature they could be oppressed, exploited, and dominated by men. The tools for this are science technology and violence." (Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, 1993)

Similarly, Karen J. Warren in her book *Ecofeminist Philosophy* claims that "sexism, racism, and the degradation of the natural world are connected" bringing into light the effects contributing to degradation of women and nature. She asserts,

"Patriarchy is the systematic domination of women by the men through institution (including policies, practices, offices, position, roles), behaviors, and the ways of thinking



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(conceptual frameworks), which assigns higher value, privilege, and power to men(or to what historically is male-gender identified) than to that given to women (or to what historically is female-gender identified)". (Warren, 2000)

Research methodology

The research is qualitative in nature, and I have chosen an analytical tool to investigate the selected texts of Gibson. The novels of William Gibson will be investigated from the perspective of ecofeminism, with a major focus on the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature. Within the qualitative paradigm, my dissertation will be embedded in a text-oriented approach as well as an interpretative understanding of the texts. The model that will suit my thesis design is "Three Approaches to qualitative Content Analysis" by Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon. The key focus of this model is that it is useful in the field of qualitative investigation. My research is qualitative in nature and has the capacity to absorb this model for the analysis of selected texts. As authors say that content analysis is "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes and patterns." (E.Shannon, 2005)

Data Analysis

This section applies qualitative content analysis to William Gibson's *Blue Ant Trilogy*—*Pattern Recognition* (2003), *Spook Country* (2007), and *Zero History* (2010)—through an ecofeminist lens. Following the model proposed by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), the analysis is based on careful textual reading, coding of recurring motifs, and thematic interpretation. The purpose is to identify patterns that reveal the interconnected oppression of women and the exploitation of nature within a patriarchal and techno-capitalist framework.

A major theme that emerges across the trilogy is objectification and commodification, which operates at both the human and environmental levels. Female characters such as Cayce Pollard and Hollis Henry are not valued for their individuality but for their utility within corporate systems. In *Pattern Recognition*, Cayce's psychological sensitivity to branding—initially a personal and even burdensome trait—is appropriated by Hubertus Bigend as a marketable skill. Her identity becomes a tool for corporate surveillance and prediction of consumer trends. This reflects the ecofeminist argument, particularly advanced by Vandana Shiva, that capitalist patriarchy reduces both women and nature to resources for exploitation. Similarly, in *Zero History*, Hollis is compelled to accept assignments not out of personal choice but due to financial necessity, demonstrating how economic structures limit female autonomy. In both cases, women are subtly transformed into commodities within a larger system of production and consumption. Parallel to this, cultural and spatial environments are also commodified. Urban landscapes, subcultures, and even anonymity are turned into products, suggesting that nothing remains outside the reach of capitalist appropriation.



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Closely related to commodification is the theme of patriarchal control and surveillance, most clearly embodied in the character of Hubertus Bigend. He functions as a symbolic representation of modern patriarchy—less overtly authoritarian, yet deeply controlling through information networks, corporate power, and psychological manipulation. Bigend rarely exerts physical force; instead, he governs through knowledge, access, and economic leverage. This form of control aligns with Karen J. Warren’s conception of patriarchy as a system embedded in institutions, behaviors, and conceptual frameworks that privilege masculine authority. In *Spook Country*, surveillance technologies such as GPS tracking, locative art, and military systems highlight how space itself becomes controlled and monitored. Individuals, particularly women, operate within these invisible structures of power, where their movements and choices are subtly directed. This technological surveillance extends ecofeminist concerns into the digital age, suggesting that domination is no longer confined to physical spaces but has permeated virtual and informational realms as well.

Another significant pattern is alienation and psychological fragmentation, which affects both characters and their environments. The protagonists frequently experience anxiety, disorientation, and a sense of detachment from reality. Cayce Pollard’s emotional instability in *Pattern Recognition* reflects a broader cultural condition in which individuals are disconnected from authentic experiences. Her constant movement across global cities and digital spaces creates a sense of placelessness. Similarly, Hollis Henry in *Spook Country* and *Zero History* exhibits a lack of rooted identity, drifting between assignments without a clear sense of purpose. This fragmentation can be interpreted through an ecofeminist perspective as a consequence of separation from nature and organic relationships. When both women and the environment are reduced to objects within a system, meaningful connections are lost, resulting in psychological emptiness. The chaotic world depicted by Gibson is therefore not only external but internal, manifesting in the fractured identities of his characters.

The analysis also reveals a recurring theme of environmental abstraction and disconnection from nature. Unlike traditional eco-literature that foregrounds natural landscapes, Gibson’s novels depict environments that are heavily mediated by technology. Nature is largely absent, replaced by urban settings, digital interfaces, and artificial spaces. This absence itself is significant. It reflects what ecofeminists describe as the erasure of ecological consciousness in modern industrial societies. The environment is no longer experienced directly but is filtered through screens, data, and simulations. In *Spook Country*, for instance, locative art projects overlay digital images onto physical spaces, blurring the boundary between reality and representation. This suggests that the natural world has been subsumed into technological systems, losing its autonomy and intrinsic value. From an ecofeminist standpoint, this abstraction parallels the treatment of women, whose identities are also mediated and constructed within patriarchal frameworks.



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Furthermore, the trilogy demonstrates how technology reinforces patriarchal and capitalist domination rather than liberating individuals. While technology is often associated with progress and empowerment, Gibson portrays it as a tool that intensifies control, surveillance, and commodification. The global networks that connect characters also trap them within systems of constant observation and economic dependency. This aligns with Maria Mies' critique of modern science and technology as instruments of patriarchal exploitation. The technological world in the trilogy does not offer escape or transformation; instead, it deepens existing inequalities and disconnections.

In synthesizing these themes, it becomes evident that Gibson's *Blue Ant Trilogy* presents a world where the boundaries between human and non-human, natural and artificial, have been destabilized under the pressures of patriarchal capitalism. Women and the environment are subjected to similar processes of objectification, control, and exploitation. The absence of stable identities, meaningful relationships, and ecological balance contributes to a pervasive sense of chaos. From an ecofeminist perspective, this chaos is not accidental but is the direct result of a system that prioritizes domination, profit, and technological control over harmony and sustainability.

Thus, the data analysis supports the central argument of this research: that the oppression of women and the degradation of the environment in Gibson's trilogy are interconnected phenomena rooted in patriarchal ideology. The novels serve as a critique of contemporary society, revealing how deeply entrenched structures of power continue to shape both human and ecological realities.

Conclusion

The Blue Ant trilogy by William Gibson does justice to the notion of ecofeminism and how the masculine traits can devastate the lives of women who bear the horrible exploitation in various forms. These novels depict technological advancement and the dominance of masculine traits as an inevitable cause of the destruction of land and the degradation of women. These novels depict the drastic loss resulting from the exploitation of land and women. As Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies suggest, healing can only be possible by starting the process to bring changes in masculine thinking and the patriarchal system of domination.

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