Investigation of Binaries in Maleficent through Plumwood's Ecofeminist Theory of Dualism: An Ecocritical Analysis

Ayesha Farooqi [1] [ID]   Sundus Ijaz [2]

Check for updates

Abstract: *The human soul is a complex amalgamation of malice and benevolence, reflecting the duality inherent in human nature. As the most intelligent beings on Earth, humans exert control over various aspects of life, often subjugating what they dominate, thereby creating a continuum of binary relationships. Disney's 2014 production, Maleficent, eloquently captures this dualism by depicting the protagonist as a combination of ecological and feminine traits. This research study employs Val Plumwood's ecofeminist theory of dualism as the theoretical framework to explore Maleficent as an ecofeminist protagonist. Plumwood's theory is critical in that it questions the hierarchical dualisms present in Western philosophy, including the bifurcation of nature and culture and women and nature's domination by patriarchal institutions. Through this paradigm, the paper aims to reveal the manner in which the movie challenges conventional gender roles and pushes against the anthropocentric worldview. By highlighting the ways in which popular media can represent and influence notions of gender and environmental ethics and by depicting Maleficent as a figure of resistance and rebellion against ecological and gendered oppression, the research contributes to the broader discussion of ecofeminism. By this examination, the paper will illustrate how Maleficent is not only a tale of individual revenge but also an insightful commentary on the intersections between environmental and feminist issues.*

Key Words: Dualism, Human Nature, Val Plumwood, Ecofeminism, Ecocriticism, Anthropocentricism, Ecology

Introduction

Throughout history, man has positioned himself at the top of the food chain, exerting dominance over every ecosystem. This dominance has led to an exploitative relationship with nature, where the environment is treated as an endless resource to be consumed without regard for the consequences. Ecocriticism highlights that in the symbiotic relationship between humans and the natural world, one side often thrives at the expense of the other, nature being the one that is subjugated. When this dynamic is further divided along gender lines, the imbalance intensifies. Women, like nature, are positioned as passive entities to be controlled, reinforcing a patriarchal structure that exploits both. Literature, as a reflection of society, mirrors this perspective, frequently drawing parallels between women and nature. Across genres, literary works depict women as extensions of the natural world, sometimes even merging the two into a singular entity. In this way, the triadic relationship between man, woman, and nature often collapses into a binary opposition, with man on one side and nature—along with the feminine—on the other.

For centuries, the natural world has been personified as *Mother Nature*, reinforcing the notion that it is a passive, nurturing force existing solely to sustain life, much like the patriarchal representation of women. Raymond Williams ([1975](#)) discusses how Western literature and thought have long framed nature in relation to culture as a fundamental binary, assigning feminine traits to nature and masculine traits to culture. Within this framework, nature is perceived as a woman whose primary role is to reproduce and

---
[1] Lecturer of English, Department of English, National University of Modern Languages, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan. ✉ayeshafarooqi.eng@gmail.com
[2] Lecturer of English, Department of English, COMSATS University, Islamabad, Pakistan. ✉sunduskhan020.so@gmail.com

▪ **Corresponding Author:** Ayesha Farooqi (✉ayeshafarooqi.eng@gmail.com)

nurture, a role that has been ingrained in societal consciousness over generations. This constructed ideology has shaped women's identities, limiting their worth to their reproductive and caregiving roles. Yet, despite this association with life-giving and care, both women and nature are systematically exploited and betrayed within patriarchal structures, reduced to resources rather than recognized as autonomous entities.

Literature, as a reflection of society, showcases the discrimination of women as a secondary gender. For centuries, writers have alienated women from society by giving them non-active roles, such as portraying them as objects of admiration or subjugation. Women have often been depicted as passive beings, easily corrupted and manipulated as they possessed no consciousness, and considered sensuous, wild, and helpless, similar to nature, manipulated by the capitalist giants (Sinha & Mishra, 2019). In most literary works, both women and nature are represented as a space filler or a fancy backdrop for the male characters. Poets glorified the beauty of nature as they admired the beauty of their female lovers, often comparing the two alike. As a result, misconceptions about the inferiority of women and nature passed from generation to generation until ecofeminism emerged.

The idea of ecofeminism was presented by Ynestra King in 1974. However, the term 'ecofeminism' was first used in Francoise d Eaubonne's famous book 'Le Feminismeou la Mort'. In this book, by utilizing the term "feminism or Death", she intended to direct females towards the ecological uprising (Sinha & Mishra, 2019). Hence, from here, the idea of feminism developed a link with the environment, and resultantly, the theory of ecofeminism evolved. Its major interest lies in analyzing the overlapping relationship present between women and nature and the impact of societal forces on this relationship. Ott and Mack (2020) also mention that society has long functioned as an oppressive force, exerting control over both women and the natural world.

According to Emile Durkheim, women are often perceived as belonging to nature rather than society, as society is considered the source of intellect and morality, while women are viewed as inherently asocial (Sinha & Mishra, 2019). In this perspective, women are aligned with the natural world rather than with the structures of civilization. Furthermore, Durkheim associates motherhood with virtues such as care and patience, suggesting that a mother cannot simultaneously embody both gentleness and power. This perspective reinforces a dichotomy that confines women to nurturing roles while denying them authority or strength.

In 1987, the philosopher Karen J. Warren critically examined Western ideologies and attitudes that perpetuate the subjugation of women and the domination of nature under a hierarchical, patriarchal order. She identified how this systemic oppression positions women's subordination as a cultural norm. By the 1990s, during the rise of third-wave feminism, the focus of feminist discourse shifted beyond issues of gender and sexuality to the broader relationship between women and their environment. This shift contributed to the increasing prominence of ecofeminism, a movement that integrates feminist theory with environmental concerns. Warren (1988) defines ecofeminism as a political, economic, and cultural movement aimed not only at advocating for gender equality but also at ensuring legal protections for women. Ecofeminism draws upon both feminist and environmentalist ideologies, emphasizing the interconnectedness of gender oppression and ecological exploitation. Vandana Shiva's (1993) concept of ecofeminism highlights how patriarchal systems, driven by capitalist and scientific rationality, have not only marginalized women's roles in ecological sustainability but have also exploited and commodified nature for economic gain. She argues that women's traditional knowledge, particularly in agriculture, medicine, and environmental stewardship, has been systematically devalued, much like nature itself, which is reduced to a mere resource for industrial progress. In this way, the oppression of women and the degradation of nature are deeply intertwined, reinforcing the need for an ecofeminist perspective that advocates for both gender justice and ecological sustainability. Therefore, like the feminist activists, eco-feminists asserted that the misogynist norms of society had appeared to be ignorant to women's knowledge, struggles, work and situatedness and as women had always been linked to nature, so by ignoring women's efforts, society had also denied the prestige of nature.

In the contemporary era, where modes of communication have been revolutionized, patterns of thought is also evolving. A key feature of postmodernism is its reimagining of nature as an entity capable

of responding through rage, revenge, and retaliation. The 2014 Disney film *Maleficent* exemplifies this shift, offering a reinterpretation of traditional narratives. Historically, Disney has been known for reinforcing patriarchal portrayals of society. However, with the growing influence of feminist discourse, the studio has altered its perspective, embracing themes of female empowerment. This transformation is evident in its depiction of women's roles in contemporary society, which are now intertwined with the symbolism of nature. Maleficent, much like the Greek goddess Nike (McCaughrean, 1998), embodies both authority and harmony—just as Nike's palm leaf and wings signify that peace and nature can reside in the hands of a powerful woman. Furthermore, Maleficent's character reflects elements of heteronormativity; as the guardian of the Moors, she is portrayed as an inseparable and essential force of nature itself.

Literature Review

Ecofeminism as a theoretical framework analyzes the deep roots of the relationships between the subjugation of women and the exploitation of nature, which lie in patriarchal structures and dualistic thinking. *Maleficent* is one of the strong texts that manifest these themes and portray its heroine as a victim of male chauvinism and a guardian of nature. Most of the previous research on *Maleficent* focused on the protagonist, exploring the ecofeminist dimensions of Maleficent's character. Some studies explore Maleficent as a complex figure who disrupts traditional gender roles. However, there is a lack of examination of how the film constructs and challenges the binary opposition of man/nature and male/female, engaging Val Plumwood's theory of dualism. It would be impossible to review the history of ecofeminism here, but the following literature review highlights some of the most important studies that explore it in *Maleficent*, providing grounds to move further into the ways it both reinforces and subverts such entrenched binaries.

Pasaribu Hb's (2020) ecofeminist analysis of Maleficent in Elisabeth Rudnick's novel underscores the character's role as a guardian of nature, symbolizing resistance against patriarchal exploitation. Through Vandana Shiva's ecofeminist framework, the study highlights Maleficent as a representation of the ethical relationship between women and the environment, advocating for an intrinsic connection that challenges systems of domination. The research identifies key themes of violence, oppression, and the reclamation of agency, illustrating how Maleficent's role aligns with the ecofeminist ideal of women as caretakers of the earth. By employing a qualitative descriptive method, Pasaribu Hb's work reinforces the necessity of interpreting Maleficent's character as an emblem of environmental justice and feminist empowerment, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach that integrates gender, nature, and resistance.

Arora (2020) explores Maleficent as an ecofeminist protagonist, offering a nuanced perspective on the character's transformation from victim to protector within a patriarchal framework. The study employs Plumwood's ecofeminist critique of dualism, demonstrating how the film disrupts traditional binaries by positioning Maleficent as both nurturing and destructive, mirroring the complex interplay between femininity and nature. By reclaiming her agency and fighting against human exploitation of the Moors, Maleficent personifies ecofeminist resistance, showing that women's empowerment is deeply rooted in environmental ethics. The paper by Arora argues that the movie subverts the dominant narratives through the character of Maleficent as a rich case study on ecofeminist identity, power, and resistance.

In the study of Hariyati and Tjahjono (2022), the cinematic representation of Maleficent is probed through Vandana Shiva's theoretical perspective to further advance the ecofeminist discourse. The study thus traces three phases of narrative development: harmony with nature, the oppression of a patriarchal state, and ultimate resistance. Therefore, Maleficent's trajectory could be regarded as a systemic dualism criticizing the tendency for dualisms such that the despoliation of nature equates with the enslavement of women. It also revalidates Maleficent as an insurrectionist text, disrupting hegemonic visions of womanliness as nurturing revolutionary energy. The study underlines Maleficent's importance in literature and film as an arena through which the intersections between gender, power, and environmental justice are explored by relating the film's themes to Shiva's ecofeminist critique.

While previous studies have examined *Maleficent* through various ecofeminist lenses, they have primarily focused on Vandana Shiva's framework, emphasizing the relationship between women and nature without extensively engaging with the concept of dualism. Research by Hb (2020) and Hariyati & Tjahjono (2022) highlights Maleficent as a guardian of nature and a symbol of female empowerment but

does not explicitly analyze how the film constructs and challenges the binary opposition of man versus nature. Similarly, Arora's (2020) study applies Plumwood's ecofeminist critique but does not fully explore how *Maleficent* subverts the entrenched dualisms of male/female and man/nature. This study bridges that gap by utilizing Val Plumwood's dualist theory to examine critically the reinforcement and deconstruction of these binaries in the film's narrative and characterizations. By doing this, it provides a richer understanding of Maleficent's ecofeminist rhetoric, especially in relation to hierarchical power relations and environmental ethics.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to examine the man-versus-nature binary through an examination of the character of Maleficent from an ecofeminist perspective, using Val Plumwood's theory of ecofeminism and dualistic oppositions, as well as showing how the movie is both a story of personal revenge and an effective commentary on the cross-connections between feminist and ecological issues.

Research Questions

1. How does Maleficent challenge or reinforce the binary opposition between man and nature through its characterization and narrative?
2. In what ways does the character of Maleficent embody ecofeminist resistance against dualistic hierarchies of male/female and man/nature?
3. How does *Maleficent* illustrate Val Plumwood's critique of dualism while simultaneously serving as a commentary on the interconnections between ecological and feminist concerns, particularly through the narrative of personal vengeance?

Analysis

The film *Maleficent* presents the transformation of a fairy into a so-called villain, challenging conventional narratives of good and evil. The concept of "Mother Nature" inherently intertwines femininity with nature, reinforcing two key representations: the feminization of nature and the naturalization of women. *Maleficent* embodies this duality, merging humanity and nature in a way that defies traditional binaries. She is both vengeful and compassionate, a figure who transcends the simplistic roles of hero and villain. As Gilbert & Gubar (2004, p. 53) observe, "It is debilitating to be any woman in a society where women are warned that if they do not behave like angels, they must be monsters." Maleficent's character exemplifies this struggle, resisting societal expectations that confine women to rigid archetypes.

In the Western philosophy of dualism, culture is always attributed as masculine, whereas nature is granted feminist values because of its task to nurture and reproduce (Plumwood, 2002). This alignment of nature with femininity is evident in Maleficent's story, particularly in the moment when her love, Stefan, drugs her and severs her wings while she is unconscious. This violation strips her of her capacity for freedom and power, mirroring the historical oppression of both women and nature under patriarchal control. Her pain, bleeding, and profound sense of loss reflect the brutal consequences of domination over the feminine and the natural world. The betrayal Maleficent experiences at the hands of Stefan represents a broader pattern of patriarchal exploitation, where male figures exert control over women's bodies and autonomy. As Maulina & Nurhidayat, (2024) argue, the film serves as a commentary on gender oppression, illustrating how women are often marginalized and stripped of their rights within male-dominated societies. Maleficent's suffering is a kind of assault, both symbolic and physical, symbolizing the exploitation and oppression of feminine agency. This violence against her, much like the domination of nature, serves as the backdrop for her transformation. The effort to repress Maleficent's power reflects the broader effort of patriarchal cultures to dominate and exploit women and nature, supporting the ecofeminist position that the domination of nature and women are inextricably bound.

After this traumatic incident, Maleficent's behavior and surroundings also showcase a dramatic change. The previously radiant and golden tones that defined her magical aura change to a foreboding green, indicating her evolution from a friendly protector of nature to a force of vengeance. This color change has profound symbolic significance. The gold, conventionally linked with wisdom, prosperity, and warmth, is replaced by green, which represents renewal but also jealousy and anger. Maleficent's evolution

from a caretaking character to a revengeful entity signifies the repercussions of patriarchal domination. This reflects a key argument made by Maulina and Nurhidayat (2024), who assert that the film challenges traditional binaries by portraying femininity as both vulnerable and powerful, subverting conventional gender roles. Therefore, Maleficent's shift towards revenge does not disrupt her connection with nature; on the contrary, it strengthens her as an ecofeminist character. Even though she curses King Stefan's infant daughter, Aurora's maternal instincts toward Maleficent prevail to show that her anger does not overpower her maternal and nurturing side. When Aurora is in danger, Maleficent instinctively uses her powers to protect her, such as when she extends tree branches to save the child. This moment illustrates the coexistence of power and care within the feminine, contradicting patriarchal narratives that often depict nurturing as a sign of weakness. Maleficent's evolution from a nurturing protector to an avenger and ultimately a guardian again highlights the fluidity of female strength—challenging the rigid binaries of good/evil, weak/strong, and man/nature.

From here, it could be concluded that, however, her magic gained massive significance because now nature lay within her, and she fell in love with another womanly character, making her a product of ecofeminist interest. The ecological feminist fosters the view that women can be 'mothers' and 'powerful' at the same time and thus create a dualist pair. They could be absolute women and, at the same time, smart and rigid enough to not lose their femininity. However, this idea slightly diverges from Emile Durkheim's views regarding mother and nature. The notion of power and femininity could be observed as firmly woven in the character of Maleficent. Her dominance over the Moors establishes her as a sovereign figure closely connected to nature, demonstrating an intrinsic link between feminine authority and the natural world. Her ability to command the elements, particularly her use of magic, reinforces her as a powerful force that challenges patriarchal control. Despite her initial vengeful intentions, Maleficent takes on a protective role for Aurora, subverting the traditional "evil fairy" trope. Her maternal connection to Aurora does not weaken her but instead highlights a different dimension of feminine power—one rooted in care, guidance, and emotional strength.

The early ecofeminist writings, including those of Val Plumwood, accredited women with possessing a closer linkage with the environment. However, during the 20th century, one of the early dualist pairs that played a crucial part in the eruption of new waves of feminism by excluding women from academia was the dualistic pair, 'reason/nature.' This binary opposition is central to Plumwood's critique of dualism. According to her,

"Dualism is the process by which contrasting concepts are formed by domination/subordination and are constructed as oppositional and exclusive" (Plumwood cited in Mathews, 2017).

Moreover, all occurring concepts or ideas in the world are interlinked in a complicated woven network of many other contrasting ideas that appear to be mutually reinforcing. This notion can be better understood in light of Hegel's view on women. According to him,

"Women are certainly capable of learning, but they are not made for the higher forms of science, such as philosophy and certain types of creative activity; these require a universal ingredient" (Mathews, 2017).

From here, the reason versus nature binary takes on a new form: science versus nature, where science indicates qualities conventionally associated with men, and nature represents qualities linked to women. In every contrast set, virtually everything on the superior side is depicted as reason, while everything on the subordinate side is depicted as nature. A gender-based reason/nature contrast is overarching, forming the most general and fundamental structure of dualism, capable of further elaboration and evolution. The framework behind reason/nature depends upon the outlook of power, as represented by Nancy Hartsock:

"A way of looking at the world characteristic of the dominant, white, male Eurocentric ruling class, a way of dividing up the world that puts an omnipotent subject at the centre and constructs marginal Others assets of negative qualities" (Hartsock cited in Plumwood, 2002).

Some dualist pairs, while not immediately justified as variants of the reason/nature binary, can be derived from or connected to it through implicit assumptions, known as linking postulates, such as culture/nature and human/nature. Typically, the male is considered superior and the female inferior. One governs, while the other is governed. This philosophy of necessity extends to all humankind. Aristotle, in

Politics (Book 1, Chaps. 4–5), reinforces this hierarchy, arguing that lower sorts are, by nature, meant to be ruled over by their superiors.

As per dualistic thought, the character of Maleficent, when examined through the binary lens of either nature or womanhood, initially appears to be positioned on the inferior side of the hierarchy. However, unlike traditional representations of subjugated figures, Maleficent resists this imposed inferiority. While lower beings in the dualistic framework are expected to obey, Maleficent reacts with immense power, forging her own path rather than submitting to control. Much like a slave is used to serve the needs of a master, Maleficent is manipulated by Stefan, yet her intrinsic power remains undeniable. Though she initially remains dormant, neither transforming nor resisting, the turning point occurs when the human king, threatened by the growing power of the Moors, seeks to destroy it. His actions mirror the historical tendency of men to curb nature's influence, disregarding the consequences of disturbing natural equilibrium. This moment catalyzes Maleficent's full transformation—from a passive force to an active agent of power.

According to Val Plumwood, ecofeminism provides a heuristic approach to exploring the overlapping relations between nature and women (Plumwood cited in Mathews, 2017). It focuses on the hierarchical and dualistic thinking that has historically placed both women and nature in positions of subjugation. In *Maleficent*, these dualistic structures are evident in the opposition between culture (men) and nature (women), where the male-dominated world seeks to oppress both. Nature, like women, is expected to be nurturing and passive, yet when it resists control, it is deemed dangerous. This imbalance leads to inevitable destruction when nature retaliates. Maleficent embodies this retaliation—her wrath against Stefan's betrayal is not merely personal but symbolic of nature's resistance against human exploitation. However, her story does not end in destruction; rather, her character evolves, demonstrating the ecofeminist assertion that nature and women possess agency beyond the victimhood often ascribed to them.

Furthermore, Plumwood's concept of ecofeminist dualism emphasizes that women form their distinct identities by reclaiming power (Mathews, 2017). Maleficent exemplifies this process by using her supernatural abilities and strategic intelligence to establish herself as an autonomous force. Unlike traditional portrayals of female power, which often equate strength with masculine traits, Maleficent's power is inherently linked to her feminine essence. She does not forsake her emotional depth or connection to nature; rather, these qualities become the foundation of her strength. This challenges the patriarchal notion that power and femininity are incompatible, offering an alternative model where women can embody both vengeance and nurturing instincts. In contrast to Emile Durkheim's perspective, which primarily associates women with caregiving roles, Maleficent's arc suggests that maternal love and power are not mutually exclusive.

'Backgrounding' is another crucial aspect of Plumwood's ecofeminist theory. It describes how dominant groups dismiss their dependency on subjugated groups, rendering their contributions invisible (Plumwood, 2002). This is evident in the devaluation of women's labor, care, and environmental stewardship. As Marilyn Frye states:

"Women's existence is a background against which phallocratic reality is a foreground.... I imagine phallocratic reality to be the space that constitutes the foreground, and the constant repetitive, uneventful activities of women constitute the background against which this foreground plays. It is essential to the maintenance of the foreground reality that nothing within it refer in any way to anything in the background, and yet it depends absolutely upon the existence of the background" (Frye, 1983).

In *Maleficent*, this backgrounding is visible in how she is initially marginalized and exploited; her presence is only acknowledged when it serves male interests. Stefan benefits from her trust and power, yet once his ambition demands it, he discards her, mirroring the way society has historically extracted resources from both women and nature without recognition or reciprocity. However, Maleficent does not remain in the background. Her eventual assertion of power disrupts the established dualistic structure, proving that the marginalized—whether women or nature—are not passive entities but forces capable of altering the dominant order.

Maleficent's transformation throughout the film serves as a direct challenge to the binary opposition between man and nature. Traditionally, within dualistic hierarchies, nature is portrayed as passive, nurturing, and subjugated by human (primarily male) control. However, Maleficent disrupts this power dynamic by embodying both the nurturing and destructive forces of nature. Her initial trust in Stefan represents nature's vulnerability to human exploitation, and his act of severing her wings symbolizes humanity's historical domination over the natural world. This violent disempowerment mirrors Plumwood's critique of dualism, where nature—much like women—is positioned as subordinate, and its agency is denied (Plumwood, 2002). However, Maleficent does not remain within this imposed passivity. Instead, she reclaims her power, demonstrating that nature, much like the feminine, is not merely an object to be controlled but an active force capable of resistance.

This defiance of dualism is further reinforced through Maleficent's dominion over the Moors, a mystical realm that thrives under her rule. Unlike the human kingdom, which seeks to control and exploit, the Moors exist in harmony, emphasizing an ecofeminist model of coexistence rather than domination. By taking the role of Moors' protector, Maleficent challenges the traditional narrative where nature is an entity to be conquered. Instead, she presents herself as the guardian and the very embodiment of nature, thereby subverting the hierarchical structure that places man above nature. The change in her supernatural aura, from golden to green, further signifies this process. Although golden is usually associated with wisdom and purity, green, commonly related to jealousy and revenge, also indicates nature's comeback. This manner of taking back nature's power, not by submission but by self-assertion, reflects Plumwood's argument that the feminine and the natural must be understood as active agents, not passive resources.

Moreover, Maleficent's characterization exemplifies ecofeminist resistance against dualistic hierarchies, particularly the male/female binary. The film initially casts her as the archetypal fairy—ethereal, benevolent, and deeply connected to nature—aligning her with traditional feminine virtues. However, Stefan's betrayal forces her into the monstrous role, reflecting the dichotomy that society often imposes on women: they are either nurturing caregivers or vengeful threats. This echoes Gilbert & Gubar's (2004, p. 53). assertion that women in patriarchal narratives are forced into the roles of either "angels" or "monsters" Yet, Maleficent refuses to be confined by either category. She is neither entirely the benevolent maternal figure nor the unfeeling villain. Instead, she embodies both vengeance and love, demonstrating that feminine power is complex and multifaceted.

Her evolving relationship with Aurora further reinforces this rejection of strict binaries. Although she initially curses Aurora out of rage and pain, Maleficent ultimately becomes her protector, demonstrating that power and care are not mutually exclusive. This contrasts with the patriarchal narrative that makes strength a masculine characteristic and caregiving a feminine weakness. Maleficent's love for Aurora does not weaken her power but reinforces it. In this way, the movie espouses Plumwood's (2002) ecofeminist view that portrays women's ability to be both destructive and restorative.

Moreover, the story of *Maleficent* is a powerful critique of the connections between environmental and feminist issues, especially through the perspective of personal vengeance. Stefan's behavior is not only an attack on Maleficent as a person; it is also a representation of the larger history of patriarchal and ecological exploitation. His unremitting ambition causes him to hurt both a woman and the natural world, which supports Plumwood's view (2002) that the dominance of nature and the oppression of women are produced from the same hierarchical systems. Maleficent's reaction, which is her initial anger and ultimate reconciliation, is reflective of the ability of nature to both destroy and create. The return of balance at the end of the film, wherein Maleficent regains her wings, and the Moors thrive again, reflects an alternative framework of power, one that depends not on dominance but upon coexistence.

Through this analysis, *Maleficent* becomes a film that not only deconstructs but also moves beyond dualistic frameworks. It challenges the strict man vs. nature opposition by showing nature to be not passive but active, capable of taking care of and withstanding. It also subverts the male vs female opposition by showing a female lead who is equally strong, vengeful, yet loving. Finally, it supports Plumwood's ecofeminism through the ways it shows that feminist and ecological conflicts are intertwined, leveraging Maleficent's vengeance as a lens through which broader issues of resistance, transformation and balance are studied.

This fusion of ecological and feminist resistance in the character of Maleficent not only overthrows patriarchal norms but also functions as an allegory for actual fights against environmental exploitation and gender repression. By eschewing conformity to the limiting roles of dualism, *Maleficent* portrays a different view: one in which power is not identified with domination but with salvage and harmony

Conclusion

Maleficent is a story of vengeance, transformation, and resistance that integrates femininity and nature into a single powerful entity. The film portrays the idea how patriarchy tends to dominate both women and nature, reinforcing the hierarchical dualism that is criticized by Val Plumwood. Maleficent's journey, from betrayal and suffering to justice and ultimately reconciliation, demonstrates that the exploitation of nature and women has consequences, leading not only to the destruction but also to the inevitable assertion of their power.

The film's resolution, where Maleficent and Aurora form a bond of selfless love, presents an alternative to the destructive cycle of patriarchal domination. The film underscores the idea that feminine power, once suppressed, will inevitably reclaim its agency. The resolution of the film, where Maleficent's bond with Aurora triumphs over patriarchal structures, aligns with the broader feminist critique of gender oppression in media. Instead of reinforcing the man/nature binary, *Maleficent* suggests that harmony can exist when human interactions with nature and femininity are based on respect rather than control. This aligns with the ecofeminist perspective that nature, despite its exploitation, retains its agency and will ultimately assert itself against oppression.

One limitation of this research is its focus on *Maleficent* as a singular case study, which may limit the generalizability of its findings to other ecofeminist narratives in film and literature. Additionally, while this study primarily applies Val Plumwood's theory of dualism, incorporating a broader range of feminist and ecological frameworks could provide a more comprehensive analysis of the film's themes. Nevertheless, this research provides a foundation for further exploration of ecofeminism in contemporary media. Future studies could compare *Maleficent* with other narratives that challenge or reinforce patriarchal dualisms, such as the films *Avatar* or *Pocahontas*. Additionally, an analysis of how different cultural contexts interpret ecofeminist themes in literature and film could provide a broader understanding of the intersection between gender, power, and nature.

References

Arora, P., & Yadav, M. (2019). Maleficent as an Ecofeminist Protagonist: A Holistic Vision. *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, *11*. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4553799

Frye, M. (1983). *Politics of reality: Essays in feminist theory.* Crossing Press.

Gilbert, S., & Gubar, S. (2004). *The madwoman in the attic.* Yale University Press.

Hariyati, N. R., & Tjahjono, T. (2022). Implementation of Vandana Shiva's Ecofeminism in 'Maleficent' Film on Literature Learning. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, *9*(1). https://waqafilmunusantara.com/index.php/2022/06/08/implementation-of-vandana-shivas-ecofeminism-in-maleficent-film-on-literature-learning/

Hb, G. P. (2020). *An Ecofeminism Analysis of the Relationship Between Woman and Nature in Maleficent Novel: Feminist Approach* [Doctoral dissertation]. Prodi Sastra Inggris.

Maria, M., & Vandana, S. (1993). Ecofeminism. *Halifax: Fernwood.* https://feministarchives.isiswomen.org/isispub/wia/wia1996-1/WIA19961_10EcoFeminism.pdf

Mathews, F. (2017). The dilemma of dualism. In *Routledge Handbook of Gender and Environment* (pp. 54–70). Routledge.

Maulina, R. D., & Nurhidayat, S. P. (2024). *Gender Oppression in the Maleficent Movie by Robert Stromberg: A Feminist Perspective* [Doctoral dissertation]. Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta.

McCaughrean, G. (1998). *Greek Gods and Goddesses.* Simon and Schuster.

Ott, B. L., & Mack, R. L. (2020). *Critical media studies: An introduction.* John Wiley & Sons.

Plumwood, V. (2002). *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature.* Routledge.

Sinha, A., & Mishra, P. (2019). Love, Desire and Ecstasy In Kalidasa's Play Malvikagnimitram. *Think India Journal*, *22*(14), 16664–16672. https://thinkindiaquarterly.org/index.php/think-india/article/view/18058

Warren, K. J. (1988). Toward an ecofeminist ethic. *Studies in the Humanities*, *15*(2), 140. https://www.proquest.com/openview/d0a35135ac81f4d3b425b7f3d1cb5e56/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=1817297

Williams, R. (1975). *The country and the city* (Vol. 423). Oxford University Press.