



## From Earth to Page: Ecofeminist Themes in Diane Wilson's 'The Seed Keeper' and Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale"

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the ecofeminist themes present in Diane Wilson's novel "The Seed Keeper" and Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale". Ecofeminism, a theoretical framework that explores the interconnectedness of feminism and environmentalism, forms the basis of the analysis. It highlights the ways in which these authors address the intertwined oppressions of women and nature. The paper explores the concept of seed preservation and the nurturing of life as metaphors for both feminist resistance and environmental stewardship in Wilson's "the Seed Keeper." Through the lens of ecofeminism, the researcher analyzes how the characters in Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale," navigates oppressive patriarchal systems while also grappling with the exploitation and degradation of the natural world. Drawing on ecofeminist theories, the paper examines the ways in which these texts challenge dominant power structures, expose the intersections between gender and environmental issues, and offer alternative visions of a more equitable and sustainable future. It analyzes the characters' agency, resistance, and resilience in the face of patriarchal oppression and environmental destruction, exploring how their experiences reflect broader ecofeminist concerns. It uncovers how Wilson and Atwood employ the characters relations, and struggle to engage readers in critical reflections on gender, power, and the environment. By exploring the interconnectedness of gender and the environment, one gains insights into the potential for feminist and environmental activism, and envisions more inclusive and sustainable futures.

### **Introduction**

The environmental crisis and the struggle for gender equality are two pressing issues that have garnered significant attention in the contemporary world. Ecofeminism, a theoretical framework that examines the interconnectedness of feminism and environmentalism, offers a unique perspective to explore the deep-rooted connections between the oppression of women and the degradation of the natural world. Laurence Buell defines ecocriticism as "study of the

relationship between literature and the environment conducted in the spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis" which is mentioned in "Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice" by Bressler who provides us with another definition as well. He defines ecocriticism as a call to action that encourages us to make positive changes in our material world and to be guardians of our planet—not just for ourselves but also for our children's future (Bressler, 2010, p. 232). Ecofeminism posits that the domination and exploitation of women and nature are interrelated phenomena, stemming from similar structures of power and control. It highlights the ways in which patriarchal systems perpetuate the subjugation of both women and the environment. By analyzing the representation of ecofeminism the selected texts, the paper aims to uncover the nuanced and thought-provoking ways in which these authors explore these interconnected oppressions. This paper delves into the ecofeminist themes present in Diane Wilson's novel "The Seed Keeper" and Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale."

"The Seed Keeper" invites the readers into a world where seed preservation becomes a metaphor for feminist resistance and environmental stewardship. Through the narrative, Wilson weaves together themes of intergenerational knowledge, community, and the preservation of biodiversity. The paper delves into the ways in which these themes reflect ecofeminist concerns, emphasizing the importance of nurturing life and cultivating resilience in the face of patriarchal and ecological challenges.

"The Handmaid's Tale," has captivated readers with their dystopian portrayals of societies where women's rights and autonomy are severely restricted. While not solely focused on environmental concerns, Atwood's novel explores the ways in which the oppression of women is intimately tied to the exploitation and degradation of the natural world. By examining these novels through an ecofeminist lens, it uncover the themes of gendered control, reproductive rights, and the consequences of environmental degradation.

By bridging the literary works of Diane Wilson and Margaret Atwood with ecofeminist theory, this study contributes to the understanding of ecofeminism in literature. It underscores the significance of narratives in raising awareness, fostering critical reflections, and inspiring change in our relationship with both women's rights and the environment. Through this exploration, we hope to inspire readers to recognize and challenge the interconnected systems of oppression and envision alternative paths towards a more just and sustainable world.

### **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research approach to analyze the ecofeminist themes in Diane Wilson's "The Seed Keeper" and Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale." Qualitative research is particularly suited to explore the complex and nuanced aspects of literature, allowing for an in-depth examination of the texts and their underlying messages. The methodology consists of several key steps:

- **Selection of Texts:** The primary texts for analysis are identified, focusing on Diane Wilson's "The Seed Keeper" and Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale." The selection is based on the texts' relevance to the research objectives and their significant contributions to ecofeminist literature.
- **Close Textual Analysis:** The selected texts are analyzed through a process of close reading, examining the characters relations and struggle as employed by the authors to convey ecofeminist themes. The analysis pays particular attention to the representation of gender, power dynamics, nature, and environmental degradation.

- **Ecofeminist Framework:** The study employs an ecofeminist framework as a lens for analysis. Key ecofeminist theories, such as the connections between patriarchal oppression and environmental exploitation, are applied to interpret the selected texts.
- **Comparative Analysis:** A comparative analysis is conducted to identify similarities and differences in the representation of ecofeminist themes between the selected novels.

### **Comparative Backgrounds of Diane Wilson's and Margaret Atwood's Lives and Writings**

D. Wilson and M. Atwood are two accomplished novelists whose works engage with themes of ecofeminism, albeit in distinct ways. A comparative exploration of their backgrounds sheds light on the influences, experiences, and motivations that have shaped their writings and contributed to their distinct literary contributions. Diane Wilson's life and writings are deeply rooted in her personal experiences as an environmental activist and a fourth-generation fisherwoman from the Gulf Coast of Texas. Wilson's upbringing within a fishing community exposed her to the devastating effects of industrial pollution and the depletion of natural resources. These firsthand encounters with environmental degradation and social injustices have strongly influenced her activism and writing. Wilson's commitment to environmental conservation and social justice is evident in her novel "Seed Keeper"(2021) which intertwines themes of seed preservation, community resilience, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Her writing reflects her passion for ecological sustainability and the empowerment of marginalized communities. (LC, 2023)

On the other hand, M. Atwood's background and writings are shaped by her multifaceted exploration of feminism, speculative fiction, and social critique. Born and raised in Canada, Atwood's early exposure to literature, mythology, and feminist thought greatly influenced her artistic development. As a writer, she is known for her keen observation of social and political dynamics, particularly concerning gender and power. Through her acclaimed novel "The Handmaid's Tale"(1985) and, Atwood delves into dystopian worlds where patriarchal control and environmental degradation are intertwined. Her writings reflect her deep engagement with feminist theory, environmental concerns, and the exploration of power dynamics within societies.(Hoby,2013)

### **Theoretical Frame work**

Ecofeminism is a social and political theory that examines the intersections between feminism and environmentalism. It emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a response to the recognition that the exploitation and domination of women and the natural world are interconnected and rooted in similar systems of oppression.(Shiva, 2093)

"Environmental themes are very important subjects that have reflected in the writings of many writers since the last quarter of the previous century," asserted Abdullah & Abdullah (2021). A subfield of criticism known as ecocriticism studies works that address these issues. And ecofeminism is an interdisciplinary study related to the same matter. Moreover, "Nature writing" is the term for literature that idealizes or shows the natural environment in a favorable light. It is one of the central concepts of ecocriticism. Ecocritics contend that nature writing challenges the prevailing cultural narrative of human dominance over nature and represents a yearning to reestablish a connection with the natural world. (Almaarroof, & Madhi, 2024).

The pioneers of ecofeminism include scholars, thinkers, and activists who have contributed to the development and articulation of ecofeminist theory. Some notable pioneers are, Vandana Shiva: Shiva, an Indian scholar and environmental activist, has made significant contributions to ecofeminism through her work on the intersections of gender, agriculture, and ecology. She emphasizes the importance of recognizing women's traditional ecological knowledge and their roles in sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation. (Shiva, 1993) and (Shiva, 1986) Carolyn Merchant, an American environmental historian, played a crucial role in shaping ecofeminist theory through her book "The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution." She argues that the historical shift from an organic worldview to a mechanistic one has contributed to the subjugation of both women and nature. (Merchant, 1980). Ynestra King, an American ecofeminist scholar and activist, has explored the connections between patriarchy, capitalism, and environmental degradation. She highlights the importance of challenging dominant power structures and envisioning alternative, more egalitarian and sustainable systems. (King, 1989). And Maria Mies, a German feminist scholar and activist, has contributed to ecofeminism by examining the global impacts of capitalist patriarchy on women and the environment. She argues that the exploitation of women's labor and the exploitation of nature are interconnected processes. (Mies, 1986) and (Mies, 1991).

One theorist whose opinions can be applied to the selected texts in this study is Vandana Shiva. Her emphasis on women's traditional ecological knowledge, sustainable agriculture, and biodiversity conservation aligns with the themes present in Wilson's "The Seed Keeper." Wilson's novel explores the significance of seed preservation, nurturing life, and community resilience. Shiva's perspectives can be used to analyze how Wilson's work highlights the importance of women's knowledge and agency in sustainable farming practices and the preservation of biodiversity. On the other hand, by using Shiva's perspectives, one can analyze how the novel underscores the importance of women's knowledge and agency in sustainable farming practices and the preservation of biodiversity. In the oppressive world of Gilead, women's knowledge of agriculture and ecological systems is suppressed and devalued. This lack of recognition and access to women's expertise results in unsustainable and environmentally destructive farming methods. V. Shiva's concepts and perspectives that will be followed to analyze the selected novels are as follows:

- Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Shiva emphasizes the importance of women's traditional ecological knowledge, which encompasses a deep understanding of the natural world and sustainable practices. This concept can be applied to analyze how Diane Wilson's "Seed Keeper" highlights the significance of preserving traditional seed varieties and the role of women in nurturing and passing down ecological knowledge through generations. (Shiva, 1993) and (Shiva, 1986)
- Sustainable Agriculture: Shiva advocates for sustainable agricultural practices that prioritize biodiversity, organic farming, and community resilience. This concept can be used to analyze how Wilson's novel explores sustainable farming methods, community-based agriculture, and the empowerment of women in food production and conservation. (Shiva, 1993) and (Shiva, 1986)
- Biodiversity Conservation: Shiva emphasizes the importance of preserving biodiversity as a foundation for ecological balance and resilience. This concept can be applied to analyze how Wilson's work addresses the preservation of biodiversity through seed saving and the recognition of the crucial role women play in safeguarding biodiversity. (Shiva, 1993) and (Shiva, 1986)
- Critique of Patriarchal Power Structures: Shiva's work critiques patriarchal power structures that exploit both women and the environment. This concept can be used to

analyze Atwood's novels, such as "The Handmaid's Tale," which depict dystopian societies where women's agency and reproductive rights are suppressed, highlighting the oppressive relationship between gender inequality and the exploitation of the environment. (Shiva, 1993) and (Shiva, 1986)

Ecofeminism as a theory examines the interconnectedness of feminism and environmentalism. Scholars like Vandana Shiva have contributed to ecofeminism by emphasizing the importance of women's ecological knowledge and their roles in sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation. Shiva's ideas can be applied to the selected texts, providing insights into the ecofeminist themes present in both Diane Wilson's "Seed Keeper" and Margaret Atwood's novels. Thus, by applying Shiva's concepts, the selected novels can be analyzed through an ecofeminist lens, exploring the themes of women's knowledge, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation, and the critique of patriarchal power structures in relation to the environment. Shiva's ideas can also be applied to Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale," which depicts dystopian societies where women's agency and reproductive rights are severely limited.

### Discussion

The relation between nature and human being is everlasting and inevitable, thus, the study of the relation is of great significance. Since "[e]cocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Gloffely and Fromm, 1996: xviii). Therefore, the discussion will go around the ecofeminist points that previously mentioned to be applied on the selected texts.

- Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) : In "The Seed Keeper," Wilson focuses on the preservation of indigenous agricultural practices and the significance of seeds as a form of cultural heritage. The story revolves around Rosalie Iron Wing, a Native American woman who inherits her family's seed collection and becomes the keeper of their traditional ecological knowledge. Wilson highlights the importance of maintaining a connection with the land, respecting natural cycles, and passing down ancestral wisdom to future generations. Through Rosalie's journey, the novel emphasizes the value of TEK in preserving biodiversity and ecological balance. It is clear in:

"We know these stories to be true because Dakhóta families have passed them from one generation to the next, all the way back to a time when herds of giant bison and woolly mammoth roamed this land. Do you know what a glacier is? Wašté. As far as your eye can see, this land was called Mní Sota Makhóche, named for water so clear you could see the clouds' reflection, like a mirror.

"When the last glacier melted, it formed an immense lake that carved out the valley around the Mní Sota Wakpá, what is known today as the Minnesota River. (Wilson, 2021, Part I, Chapter I, p. 11)

On the other hand, "The Handmaid's Tale" presents a dystopian future where environmental degradation is one of the consequences of a totalitarian regime. While not explicitly centered on TEK, Atwood's novel touches upon the loss of ecological knowledge and the consequences of severing the human-nature connection. The protagonist, Offred, reminisces about her past when she had access to nature and the freedom to engage with the environment. The novel highlights this is when Offred describes a memory of walking in the woods with her daughter before the oppressive regime took over. She remembers the beauty of the natural world and the sense of freedom it brought her. Throughout the novel, Offred's

Traditional Ecological Knowledge is evident in her whole journey through her observations of the natural world around her. She notices the changing seasons, the behavior of animals, and the ways in which nature continues to thrive despite the dystopian society she lives in. One incident that shows Offred's connection to nature is when she sneaks out of the Commander's house to visit a hidden patch of tulips in the garden. This act of rebellion and her appreciation for the beauty of the flowers demonstrates her deep connection to the natural world and her desire for freedom. Offred's Traditional Ecological Knowledge serves as a source of solace and strength for her throughout the novel, reminding her of a time when she was free and connected to the earth: "*Whether this is my end or a new beginning I have no way of knowing: I have given myself over into the hands of stranger, because it can't be helped.*" (Atwood, 1985, Chapter 15, Page 307)

The quote reflects uncertainty and a sense of surrender to an unknown future. It portrays the protagonist's willingness to trust strangers despite the risks involved. In Shiva's work, she emphasizes the need for individuals, particularly women, to reclaim control over their food systems and reconnect with traditional agricultural practices. She argues that women, who have historically played a significant role in agriculture, possess valuable knowledge and skills that contribute to sustainable farming and the preservation of biodiversity. The protagonist's surrender in the quote can be seen as a metaphorical representation of the surrender of women's knowledge and agency in patriarchal systems. By relinquishing control and entrusting themselves to strangers, women may find themselves disconnected from their own expertise and marginalized in decision-making processes related to farming and environmental conservation. The novel suggests that the suppression of knowledge and control over women's bodies go hand in hand with the disregard for ecological wisdom, resulting in environmental devastation.

In terms of representation, "The Seed Keeper" provides a more direct and positive portrayal of TEK. It celebrates the wisdom embedded in indigenous cultures and highlights the importance of preserving and sharing that knowledge:

"Each seed held a trace of life that would spark when given water, when given the appropriate conditions. Everywhere I looked, I saw how seeds were holding the world together. [...] Each one was a miniature time capsule, capturing years of stories in its tender flesh." (Wilson, 2021, Part 4, Chapter 22, Page 238)

The passage emphasizes the significance of seeds as carriers of life and stories. This aligns with Shiva's views on the importance of seed sovereignty and the preservation of traditional and locally adapted seeds by recognizing their value in maintaining biodiversity and sustainable agricultural practices. Shiva advocates for the empowerment of women in preserving seed diversity and ecological knowledge. Women have often played a significant role in seed saving and traditional farming practices, passing down knowledge from generation to generation. Their agency and expertise are crucial in maintaining sustainable farming practices and ensuring the resilience of agricultural systems. Wilson's novel offers a hopeful narrative that encourages the revitalization of traditional practices for the benefit of both people and the environment.

"The Handmaid's Tale," on the other hand, offers a cautionary tale about the loss and suppression of ecological knowledge. While not explicitly focused on TEK, it underscores the consequences of disregarding the harmony between humans and nature. Atwood's novel

presents a bleak representation of a future where ecological imbalance is a symptom of a society that has severed its connection to the land.

- **Sustainable Agriculture:** "The Seed Keeper," portrays sustainable agriculture as an integral part of indigenous cultural practices and the preservation of traditional ecological knowledge. The novel emphasizes the importance of sustainable farming techniques such as companion planting, crop rotation, and natural pest control methods. Wilson highlights the deep connection between indigenous communities and the land, underscoring the need for sustainable agricultural practices to maintain ecological balance and preserve biodiversity. "The Seed Keeper" promotes the idea that sustainable agriculture is not just about food production but also about cultural preservation and environmental stewardship. It is obvious in:

As I drove past the orchard, I ignored the branches that were in need of pruning. While my father believed that any plant not grown in the wild was nothing more than a weak cousin to its truer self, my years of caring for these trees had taught me differently. But it was just as well that he hadn't lived long enough to see me marry a white farmer, a descendent of the German immigrants that he ranted against for stealing Dakhóta land. (Wilson, 2021, Part I, Chapter 1, P.13)

"The Handmaid's Tale", in its turn, presents a dystopian future where sustainable agriculture has been disregarded and replaced by a highly controlled and exploitative system. The novel depicts a society where environmental degradation and the depletion of natural resources are consequences of a totalitarian regime. The agricultural practices in "The Handmaid's Tale" focus on maximizing productivity at the expense of sustainability and the well-being of the environment. This portrayal serves as a critique of industrialized agriculture and the disregard for ecological balance in pursuit of power and control.

In terms of representation, "The Seed Keeper" offers a more positive and proactive approach to sustainable agriculture. It celebrates indigenous knowledge and practices that promote sustainability, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship with the land:

"People don't understand how hard it is to be Indian. [...] I'm not talking about all the sad history. I'm talking about a way of life that demands your best every single day. Being Dakhóta means every step you take is a prayer." (Part 5, Chapter 34, Page 335)

It emphasizes the challenges and the cultural significance of being Indian, specifically being Dakhóta. The character expresses that being Indian is not just about the sad history but also about a way of life that demands one's best every day, where every step taken is considered a prayer. This sentiment can be connected to the idea that sustainable agriculture is not only ecologically sound but also culturally significant. Sustainable agriculture encompasses practices that prioritize environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic viability. It recognizes the interconnectedness of ecosystems, human well-being, and cultural heritage. The quote highlights the cultural aspect by emphasizing the importance of a way of life that demands one's best every day. This notion aligns with the idea that sustainable agriculture is not only about ecological considerations but also about respecting and preserving cultural traditions, including indigenous knowledge and practices. Indigenous communities, such as the Dakhóta mentioned in the quote, have often sustained agricultural practices that are deeply rooted in their cultures and traditions. These practices are intricately linked to their spiritual beliefs, worldview, and identity. Sustainable agriculture, therefore, acknowledges

and values the cultural significance of such practices, recognizing that they are not only ecologically beneficial but also play a vital role in preserving cultural heritage and maintaining community cohesion. By integrating sustainable agricultural practices that are culturally significant, communities can maintain their traditional ways of life, strengthen their cultural identities, and foster intergenerational knowledge transmission. This approach respects and honors the deep connections between people, land, and cultural practices, ensuring the preservation of diverse agricultural systems and cultural heritage. In this sense, the novel suggests that sustainable agriculture is not only ecologically sound but also culturally significant.

In contrast, "The Handmaid's Tale" provides a bleak and cautionary representation of unsustainable agricultural practices:

“This item—I hesitate to use the word document—was unearthed on the site of what was once the city of Bangor, in what, at the time prior to the inception of the Gileadean regime, would have been the State of Maine. We know that this city was a prominent way-station on what our author refers to as ‘The Underground Femaleroad.’” (“Historical Notes”, Page 313)

The quote shows that the whole novel serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of prioritizing power and control at the expense of environmental well-being. The Gileadean regime, depicted in the novel, is characterized by its oppressive treatment of women, restriction of freedoms, and disregard for the natural world. The regime's focus on dominance and control results in the degradation of the environment, as sustainable practices are neglected or overridden in favor of maintaining power. The discovery of the document in Bangor, a once-prominent city, signifies the remnants of a resistance movement that operated through an underground network. The reference to "The Underground Femaleroad" suggests that this network was specifically focused on assisting women in their escape from the oppressive regime. The document likely contains stories, records, or testimonies that shed light on the experiences of those involved in the resistance and their efforts to challenge the exploitative systems in place. By connecting these two elements, one can see that the document's discovery emphasizes the existence of a resistance movement that fought against the oppressive Gileadean regime. This aligns with the novel's critique of exploitative agricultural systems and its warning about the consequences of prioritizing power and control over environmental well-being. The resistance movement, symbolized by "The Underground Female road," represents a resistance to the oppressive regime's disregard for sustainability and ecological balance. The novel warns against the consequences of prioritizing power and control over environmental well-being. It serves as a critique of exploitative agricultural systems that neglect sustainability and contribute to ecological degradation.

- **Biodiversity Conservation:** In "The Seed Keeper," Wilson emphasizes the importance of biodiversity conservation through the preservation and cultivation of heirloom seeds. The novel highlights the significance of maintaining diverse seed varieties as a means to safeguard genetic diversity and promote ecological resilience. Wilson portrays the seed collection inherited by Rosalie Iron Wing as a repository of cultural heritage and a tool for preserving plant biodiversity:

“I had begun to see that when we save these seeds, when we select which ones will be planted again, our lives become braided into the life of these plants.” (Part 4, Chapter 22, Page 239)

Through Rosalie's efforts to protect and share the seeds, the novel promotes the idea that biodiversity conservation is vital for sustainable agriculture and the overall health of ecosystems.

On the other hand, "The Handmaid's Tale" indirectly touches upon the theme of biodiversity conservation by presenting a dystopian future where environmental degradation is one of the consequences of a totalitarian regime. Although not explicitly focused on biodiversity, the novel suggests that the oppressive society depicted in the story has led to the depletion and homogenization of the natural world. It is clear in:

"Is that how we lived, then? But we lived as usual. Everyone does, most of the time. Whatever is going on is as usual. Even this is as usual, now. We lived, as usual, by ignoring. Ignoring isn't the same as ignorance, you have to work at it. Nothing changes instantly: in a gradually heating bathtub you'd be boiled to death before you knew it." (Atwood, 2005, Chapter XXXII)

Offred thinks back to a college chat she had with Moira. She finds it difficult to comprehend that, in contrast to Gilead, they were once so easygoing and informal. Here, she acknowledges that they were aware of the changes taking place in their surroundings. Like everyone else, they would have wanted to go on with their lives as normal, pretending that nothing had changed. The growth of Gilead ultimately resulted from the willful ignorance, demonstrating the risk of choosing to ignore a problem. This portrayal serves as a cautionary message about the consequences of neglecting biodiversity and the potential loss of ecological balance.

In terms of representation, "The Seed Keeper" provides a more direct and proactive approach to biodiversity conservation. It highlights the value of preserving diverse seed varieties and emphasizes the role of individuals in safeguarding biodiversity through seed saving and cultivation. The novel celebrates the importance of maintaining genetic diversity for the resilience and sustainability of ecosystems. In contrast, "The Handmaid's Tale" presents a more implicit representation of biodiversity conservation. It serves as a warning about the potential consequences of disregarding the preservation of biodiversity, as the totalitarian regime in the story has resulted in environmental degradation and the loss of natural diversity.

- **Critique of Patriarchal Power Structures:** In "The Seed Keeper," Wilson addresses patriarchal power structures through the experiences of the female characters in the novel. The story explores the challenges faced by Rosalie Iron Wing and other women in preserving traditional ecological knowledge and indigenous agricultural practices. Wilson highlights the ways in which patriarchal systems can limit women's agency and control over their own lives and bodies:

"Thakóža, you've had no one to teach you, not even how to be part of a family or community. You know what the grandmothers went through to save the seeds. That's how tough you have to be as an Indian woman. And as a seed keeper."  
(Part 5, Chapter 36, Page 352)

Thakóža's lack of guidance and support reflects the limitations imposed on her as an Indian woman within patriarchal systems. The absence of mentors and intergenerational knowledge transfer suggests a disruption in the transmission of traditional practices and cultural heritage. This can be understood as a consequence of patriarchal power structures that may devalue the roles and contributions of women, including their vital role as seed keepers. By highlighting the resilience and strength required of Indian women, the quote challenges the patriarchal

notion that women are passive or powerless. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing the knowledge, experiences, and contributions of women within their communities. In this context, being a seed keeper becomes symbolic of the agency and empowerment of Indian women, as they actively preserve and pass on traditional practices, cultural heritage, and ecological knowledge. The novel critiques the gender inequalities embedded within societies and emphasizes the importance of empowering women in order to foster sustainable relationships with the land and promote cultural preservation.

"The Handmaid's Tale" provides a more explicit critique of patriarchal power structures in a dystopian setting. The novel depicts a totalitarian society where women are subjugated, reduced to the roles of reproductive vessels, and stripped of their autonomy and rights.

"A sigh goes up from us; despite myself I feel my hands clench. It is too much, this violation. The baby too, after what we go through. It's true, there is a bloodlust; I want to tear, gouge, rend." (Chapter 14, Pages 290 - 291)

Atwood's story explores the extreme consequences of patriarchal control, examining the ways in which oppressive power structures can exploit and dehumanize women. It is quite obvious in:

"We were the people who were not in the papers. We lived in the blank white spaces at the edges of print. It gave us more freedom. We lived in the gaps between the stories." (Atwood, 2005, Chapter X)

By presenting a society that enforces strict gender roles and suppresses female agency, the novel serves as a powerful critique of patriarchal oppression and the dangers of unchecked male-dominated systems.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, both texts touch upon the theme of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, although with different approaches. While "The Seed Keeper" celebrates and promotes the preservation of TEK, "The Handmaid's Tale" serves as a warning about the consequences of severing the human-nature connection and the loss of ecological wisdom.

While both "The Seed Keeper" and "The Handmaid's Tale" touch upon the theme of sustainable agriculture, they present contrasting perspectives. "The Seed Keeper" celebrates sustainable agricultural practices as an essential part of cultural preservation and environmental stewardship, while "The Handmaid's Tale" offers a critique of unsustainable agricultural systems and their detrimental impact on the environment.

While both "The Seed Keeper" and "The Handmaid's Tale" touch upon the theme of biodiversity conservation, they do so in different ways. "The Seed Keeper" focuses on the active preservation and cultivation of diverse seed varieties, promoting biodiversity as essential for sustainable agriculture. "The Handmaid's Tale" indirectly highlights the potential consequences of neglecting biodiversity through its portrayal of a dystopian society marked by environmental degradation.

While both novels offer critiques of patriarchal power structures, Wilson focuses more specifically on the intersections of gender, culture, and the environment. It highlights the ways in which patriarchal control can impact sustainable practices and cultural preservation. In contrast, Atwood presents a broader critique of patriarchal oppression, examining its consequences on society as a whole. Both novelists shed light on the negative effects of

patriarchal power structures, illustrating the need to challenge and dismantle such systems in order to achieve gender equality, cultural preservation, and a more just society.

While Wilson's and Atwood's writings both touch upon ecofeminist themes, their approaches differ in terms of personal experiences, cultural contexts, and narrative styles. Wilson's work draws heavily upon her lived experiences and activism, providing an authentic portrayal of the environmental and social challenges faced by marginalized communities, especially the red Indians. Atwood, on the other hand, weaves together speculative elements and literary craftsmanship to create thought-provoking narratives that prompt readers to critically examine the intersections of gender, power, and the environment. Despite these differences, both writers share a commitment to raising awareness about the interconnectedness of gender oppression and environmental degradation. Their writings challenge societal norms, question power structures, and offer alternative visions of more equitable and sustainable futures. Through their distinct backgrounds and literary approaches, they contribute to the broader ecofeminist discourse, inspiring readers to reflect on the urgent need for environmental stewardship and gender equality.

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