



## ECOFEMINISM IN THE POEMS OF GENEVIEVE ASENJO: ITS POLITICAL, CULTURAL, AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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### ABSTRACT

Anchors on Genevieve Asenjo's ten (10) selected poems from her published book "Sa Gihapon, Palangga, Ang Uran," the study identified the deep connections between women and nature through ecofeminism's lens and their political, cultural, and social implications. A descriptive-qualitative design was used in the analysis of the literary text. The research involved three literary experts to identify and validate ecofeminist themes in the ten selected poems through content analysis. The study identified three dominant ecofeminist themes: dominations of women and nature by capitalist patriarchy, interconnections between women and nature, and the roles and representations of women and nature. The study further revealed the political, cultural, and social implications of the ten selected poems using ecofeminism: women are included in the ecological dialogue, women are not inferior, women are cultural bearers of knowledge, women are writers of their own experience, and both women and men have a shared responsibility towards nature.

**Keywords:** *Ecofeminism, Genevieve Asenjo, Ecofeminist, Poems*

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the major concerns of the world today is the destruction of the environment due to human activities that aim for economic development. In effect, the world has experienced a lot of changes not only in climate but also in the widespread pollution, scarcity of food and water supply which greatly affects the lives of the people.

Because of the changes in the environment, there is also a shift of interests among feminist writers on the discussion of ecological crisis. According to one report from the United Nations, women are more likely displaced by climate change because they have less monetary wealth and they depend more on natural environment (Regan, 2020). The connection between women and the ecology brought a new movement which is ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism claims how women are the immediate victims of the degradation of nature because of their close association and dependency on it (Mies & Shiva, 2014). It means that the sociopolitical and economic mechanisms that condemn a large number of women to poverty, environmental degradation and financial helplessness are examined by the ecofeminist empirical claim.

In the Philippines, there is a limited production of literary works that presents the interconnection between literature and the environment (Benitez, 2024). This is due to the fact that creative works are viewed and discussed separately in ecocriticism and feminist studies.

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There is also scarcity in the study of Filipino women as a construct and subject of self-representation of contemporary Filipino poetry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Jocson, 2020). A study in women poetry is necessary to enable people to have an understanding of Filipino women's experience represented in verse. In addition, a further study on women literature put emphasis on women sensitivities that would lead to the shaping of female tradition in the Philippines. By studying Filipino women's poetry, it reveals women's position in the society as they continue to voice out their experiences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Chin & Daud, 2018).

The researcher has observed themes of environmental concerns and roles of women in nature in the poems of Genevieve Asenjo. Hence the researcher would like to identify ecofeminism in the poems of Genevieve Asenjo and its political, cultural, and social implications.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research method, research design, participants of the study, sources of data, data-gathering procedures, and data analysis.

### Research Method

The research method used in the study was descriptive-qualitative research method using Content Analysis. The purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of Ecofeminism and its cultural, political and social implications on the selected poems of Genevieve Asenjo from her book *Sa Gihapon, Palangga, Ang Uran*

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Quantitative research involves identifying variables, stating a hypothesis and conducting experiments, resulting in numerical data that can be statistically analyzed (Creswell, 2009). In contrast, qualitative research is the traditional method for discovering a deep understanding of society or human nature. Qualitative researchers often use lens to view their studies, such as the concept of culture, central to ethnography, or gendered, racial, or class differences from the theoretical orientations. Sometimes, the study may be organized around identifying the social, political, or historical context of the problem under study (Creswell, 2009).

Because the study focused on the analysis of ecofeminist themes in the selected poems of Genevieve Asenjo, a qualitative research method fitted best.

## Research Design

The study aimed to identify ecofeminist themes and analyzed the cultural, political and social implications of the ten selected poems of Genevieve Asenjo from her book *Sa Gihapon, Palangga, Ang Uran*.

Qualitative content analysis research design was employed in the study, chiefly because content analysis is a research method that centers on recorded human artefacts such as literary texts, manuscripts, and journals, which investigates written, spoken, and visual aspects without explicitly extracting data from participants. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research includes a set of interpretive and material practices that transform the world. It study things in their natural settings and challenges various interpretations of

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people as they make sense of the world. Specifically, the research method used is content analysis through close reading of the literary texts.

It is also “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

In the study, content analysis was used to identify and validate the ecofeminist themes and analyze the cultural, political, and social implications of the ten selected poems of Genevieve Asenjo from her book *Sa Gihapon, Palangga, Ang Uran*.

### Participants of the Study

The selection of the participants of the study was based on a strategy referred to as “purposeful selection” (Maxwell, 2005). It is “a selection strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that cannot be gotten from other choices”. The participants of the study were the (3) literary experts who have backgrounds in Literary Theory and Criticism and graduated with a degree in Bachelor of Arts in Literature with undergraduate thesis in literary analysis. One of the literary experts has published his poetry in online magazines and literary folio and the other has translated children’s books into Kinaray-a. The third literary expert is an environmental planner who took a Diploma in Urban and Regional Planning as postgraduate studies.

### Sources of Data

The sources of data are the ten selected poems of Genevieve Asenjo from her book *Sa Gihapon, Palangga, Ang Uran*. The following are the ten selected poems: *Pagpangita kang*

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*Lasang I, II, III, Sa Kahawaan kang Panay, Dao I and II, Nagadumdum Ako Kang mga Bilin, Ang KInalain kang Kato kag Kadya, Pangayaw ang Tubig nga Akon Palangga, Ang Ginhalinan kang Pagbulaganay Nanday Toto kag Inday, Ang Bukid kag Baybay, Ang Pagsukob sa Sulod kang Pinggan kag Baso and Pagpangilala sa Ka-tribu*

The said ten poems were one of the best literary texts to be utilized in ecofeminism because they were written by a female Western Visayan writer who writes about the present environmental conditions in her province of Antique. The poems depicted ecofeminist themes such as, male-dominance of nature, degradation of the environment, capitalist patriarchy, climate change, environmental justice, unsustainable enrichment, globalization, and displacement of marginalized groups.

## Data Gathering Procedures

To gather accurate data, the data collection procedure of the researcher consisted of an in-depth content analysis and validation of ecofeminist themes by three literary experts on the ten selected poems of Genevieve Asenjo from her book *Sa Gihapon, Palangga, Ang Uran* using ecofeminism.

A letter signed by the researcher and noted by the research adviser and Dean of the Graduate School was sent to the three literary experts to validate ecofeminist themes in the ten selected poems. The letter was sent through their messengers. Attached in their letters were copies of the ten selected of poems of Genevieve Asenjo. Their analysis included not only ecofeminist themes but also proofs of the themes done by citing lines from the poems. The literary experts have also provided a brief analysis of the poems.

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A letter was also sent to Genevieve Asenjo, writer of the poems, through her email.

The letter sought for the writer's approval to use her poems as subject of the research study and also to ask permission for the inclusion and publication of the ten selected poems from her book *Sa Gihapon, Palangga, Ang Uran* in the researcher's thesis.

After the ecofeminist themes were identified and validated by the three literary experts, they were then returned to the researcher for analysis.

### Data Analyses

The data gathered were analyzed by the three literary experts. The literary experts read the ten selected poems of Genevieve Asejo in Kinaray-a and English. Common strategy used by the literary experts in the analysis of the poems is Close Reading.

Close Reading is citing "specific textual evidence" to "support conclusions drawn from the text ("What Is Close Reading?" || Definition and Strategies, 2024.) This process focuses on analyzing the content and context of the texts. It also includes annotations as the process requires specific textual evidence to support the reader's claims about the the texts.

On the other hand, the three literary experts had also practice annotations by underlining and citing specific lines from the ten selected poems to support the themes they have identified. After citing specifying lines, the three literary experts have also provided a brief explanation of the meaning of the lines in connection to ecofeminism.

Based on the themes identified and validated, the researcher explained the social, cultural, and political implications of ecofeminism not only in terms of women's experience in

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the Philippines but of the social, cultural and political responsibilities of the women in Western Visayas.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of the study was to identify and validate ecofeminist themes in the ten selected poems of Genevieve Asenjo and their cultural, political and social implications.

The ten selected poems were taken from the book of Genevieve Asenjo entitled *Sa Gihapon, Palangga, Ang Uran*. The poems are namely *Looking for the Forest I, II, and III, Overlooking Panay Island, Dao I and II, Remember the Instructions, The Water I Love is a Stranger, The Difference Between Then and Now, The Origin of the Separation of Toto and Inday, The Mountain and the Sea, The Scraping of the Plate and the Cup, and Getting to Know My People*.

The study used Content Analysis to identify ecofeminist themes in the ten selected poems of Genevieve Asenjo. The themes were further validated by three literary experts through the reading of the literary texts, identifying ecofeminist themes and citing lines and analysis of the ten selected poems.

The following are the findings of the study:

The ecofeminist themes identified in the ten selected poems of Genevieve Asenjo are dominations of women and nature by capitalist patriarchy, interconnections of women and nature, and the roles and representations of women and nature.

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Three literary experts who have knowledge and expertise in Literary Theory and Criticism, who are also writers, and environmental advocates, have validated the ecofeminist themes in the ten selected poems of Genevieve Asenjo from her book *Sa Gihapon, Palangga, Ang Uran* through content analysis which involves citing lines from the poems.

As to the political, cultural, and social implications of the ten selected poems, it was found out that women are included in the ecological dialogue, women are not inferior, women are cultural bearers of knowledge, women are writers of their own experience, and both women and men have a shared responsibility towards nature.

Based on the result of the study, the following insights were drawn:

The interconnected relationship of the degradation of the environment and domination of women also exists in the Philippines specifically in Western Visayas as reflected in the selected poems of Genevieve Asenjo. The study of her poems reveals that she is a significant female contemporary writer who produces literary works representing social issues and female experiences in Western Visayas.

The ecofeminist themes in Genevieve Asenjo's poems revealed that the cause of the destruction of the environment is an economic system that is patriarchal in nature. By writing her experiences, observations, and her femininity in poetry, her poems present a need for the revival of traditional knowledge and practices, the reappraisal of economic activities towards development, and the inclusion of women in environmental dialogue in relation to the

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ecological issues in the country. Moreover, her poems also showed that ecofeminism emphasizes the importance of a shared responsibility towards nature.

Women played a significant role in society particularly towards nature. In the past, Philippine pre-colonial society recognized the value, power, and roles of women in the community. Thus, today women are given equal opportunities to become leaders from the barangay to the national level of governance. This only shows they are now part of the policy-making, planning, managing, and leading aspects of the society.

Though there are still traces of male dominance, gradually women's voice are now being articulated and recognized in literature. Asenjo's poems contribute to the female tradition in Philippine literature and are representative of 21<sup>st</sup> century Philippine literature that embodies issues in the society.

The poems of Genevieve Asenjo further strengthened the concept of Ecofeminism that environmental concerns and effects of the destruction of nature cut across gender, culture, politics and the economy.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the insights generated from the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

English and literary teachers may use and integrate the poems of Genevieve Asenjo as representative texts of Western Visayan literature in teaching 21<sup>st</sup> Century Philippine from the Regions and as a springboard in teaching social issues reflected in literature which are

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prevalent in the country and in the region. They may also introduce the concept of Ecofeminism as a growing literary tradition and approach in various fields of studies.

School heads may utilize the poems of Genevieve Asenjo as literary texts written in English by a Western Visayan writer in the schools' reading program activities and gender and development activities. Aside from developing the learner's reading skills, learners may develop awareness of environmental problems and gender inequality. They may also develop appreciation of Kinaray-a literature through reading a particular literary text with a touch of their native and rural language which may eventually help them appreciate their own culture.

Ecofeminist studies on other Western Visayan literary texts written by other female writers may be conducted to further develop and enrich Ecofeminist tradition in literature and Ecofeminist approach in other fields of study in the region and, subsequently, in the country.

Another ecofeminist study of literary texts written by male writers may also be conducted to identify and validate a shared experience on the effects of the destruction of nature and to allow male perspective on the ecological and gender inequality issue as reflected in Western Visayan literature.

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