

NATURE CALLING

Visualizing the bounded exploitation of nature and women in
the Anthropocene according to decolonial, ecofeminist and
post humanist theory



MASTER THESIS IN GENDER STUDIES

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Abstract

Since climate change is unfolding and women and girls experience the greatest impacts, I will in this thesis use film as a tool to draw attention on the bounded exploitation of nature and women. With the use of the method 'practice as research', I create a film plan for a short, fictional ecocritical film called *Nature Calling*, to answer the following question: How can *Nature Calling* visualize the bounded exploitation of nature and women in the Anthropocene according to post humanist, decolonial and ecofeminist theory, enabling spectators to empathize with the non-human? I use feminist film theory to understand how film has the capacity to change structures of cultural norms and values and analyze how film can affect spectators through phenomenology. The theoretical framework which consists of post humanist, decolonial and ecofeminist theory, informs the decisions made in the 'practice' part, in which the film plan is described. Finally, *Nature Calling* confronts the spectator with the human/non-human binary to eventually illustrate that this binary is a human creation and can therefore be made undone.

Keywords: anthropocentrism, climate change, ecofeminism, posthumanism, decolonial theory, phenomenology, practice as research, feminist film theory

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Introduction

The world is in a state of crisis: extreme weather conditions, drought and the massive extinction of species are examples of the results of climate change (Satgar 2019, 4). The warming of the earth and all other consequences of climate change are largely caused by human activity; ecologists have been noticing that since the late 19th century. Climate change affects people differently, but research has shown that women will take up 80 percent of climate refugees (Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser 2019, 47). The UN acknowledges that “women and girls experience the greatest impacts of climate change, which amplifies existing gender inequalities and poses unique threats to their livelihoods, health and safety” (UN 2022).

Building on decolonial (Vázquez and Huggan & Tiffin), post humanist (Braidotti and Haraway) and ecofeminist (Shiva and Mies) theory, I will in this thesis try to understand how the degradation of nature and the livelihoods of women is bounded. In the first chapter I will therefore research the categorization made during The Enlightenment between the human and the non-human, which created a hierarchal structure between the two. According to decolonial and post humanist theory, women and nature were since that period categorized as non-human and therefore were considered to be “worth less than” the rational man (Braidotti 2017, 23). According to Huggan & Tiffin, “The human sphere, was beyond the sphere of ‘nature’, with the consequence that ethics was ‘confined to the human, allowing the non-human to be treated instrumentally” (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 6). This anthropocentrism, of putting the human at the center and above all other non-humans has had and still has an immense impact on the way humans interact with what they consider as non-human.

Examples of this can be found in the way companies and governments postpone practical actions against climate change, and ignore regulations designed to slow down the process of climate change (Schulz 2021, 4). Would this be different if trees could talk, the grass could whisper, and the wind could scream? Would the ones exploiting earth listen, and act to take care of the non-human world when the non-human could speak in a human way? In this thesis I argue that during the Anthropocene, humans can only be touched when nature could use a human way of communication. Therefore, I will describe how film could be a tool to connect the human to the non-human.

Film has a great potential to touch people: “The enhanced role of sentiment within dramatic narratives, could provide audiences heightened emotions, which might offer a relatively safe space in which crucial issues could be researched and explored” (Smith 2009, 2). The effects of emotions and affect on humans are severe: “Emotions are amongst the most important ways in which humans are

both connected with and disconnected from their world (Smith 2009, 2). Additionally, “Film has an important role to play in promoting awareness around environmental ethics and helping to construct new modes of engagement through the visualization of environments” (Brereton 2015, 1). Therefore, my idea is to create a film (with the title *Nature Calling*) in which the non-human will speak to the human, to show its exploitation. The film must let humans empathize with the non-human, in order to create more awareness around climate change and the effects it has on women. However, as this thesis project is a written document, I will only describe the film plan. My research question will therefore be: How can *Nature Calling* visualize the bounded exploitation of nature and women during the Anthropocene according to post humanist, decolonial and ecofeminist theory, enabling spectators to empathize with the non-human?

To answer this question, I use the method of Practice as Research, since the answer to my research question can only be explored through the practice of creating a film plan: this practice part of the research therefore serves as primary evidence of the research insights (Scott 2016, 8). The research insights will contain a theoretical framework created in the first three chapters of the thesis. In the first chapter I use decolonial and post humanist theory to create a theoretical framework which clarifies what I consider as human and non-human, what I mean with Anthropocentrism and how colonialism made the binary of human and non-human hegemonical. In the second part of this chapter, I create a theoretical framework on phenomenology and the effects of film on the emotions of spectators. The methodology of Practice as Research will be described in the first chapter as well. In the second chapter I will focus mainly on the effects of climate change on the lives of women and analyze in what sense the exploitation of nature and women is bounded. Especially ecofeminist theory and social reproduction theory will be central to this chapter. In the third chapter I lay the foundation for the film plan which will be created in the last chapter. Here, I will focus on feminist film theory, which will inform me on how to visualize women and nature in a way which will not reproduce dominant stereotypes. In this chapter important decisions on characters, storyline and the goals of the film are being made and I will position myself as a feminist filmmaker.

The last chapter is the practice of the research. In this chapter, the film plan is being described, decisions on visuals are being made and the story will unfold. The film plan is created with the idea of actually making the film. I think film has the potential to reach many people in an emotional way, which is important in times of ecological devastation in which the tide can still be turned. As climate change has a profound effect on women, and humans do not seem to understand the communication of the non-human world (droughts, storms, extinction of species), I, as a feminist filmmaker, feel the urge to try and reconnect the human to the non-human with the creation of a film.

Chapter 1: Anthropocentrism and Film

Theoretical & methodological framework

In this chapter I give a short interpretation of the origin of Anthropocentrism and the created binary between the non-human and the human in Western culture with the use of post-humanist and decolonial theory. Since my aim is to connect the Western human to the non-human through film, I use phenomenology to research how to create an emotional response to ecocritical film. I believe in the importance of interdisciplinary research and therefore I focus on the overlapping aspects of different theoretical fields. For this reason, I will not elaborate on the differences between the fields, but mention their overlapping arguments which will inform my choices for the film.

1.1 Theoretical framework: Anthropocentrism & Posthumanism

‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’ (Genesis 1:28)

This quote from the Bible notes that humans must ‘subdue’ the earth and dominate every living thing that moves on the earth. This way of thinking would have probably been impossible without placing humans above all other non-humans. According to Butchvarov, Anthropocentrism, the idea that humans enjoy central, even cosmic significance, is part of Western Christian thought (Butchvarov 2015, 1). As Christianity was the dominant religion of Western culture for centuries, this way of thinking had a big influence on how the West considered Man as a creature above and apart from all other beings. During the Enlightenment, this Anthropocentrism started to change. The theory of Darwin showed how humans were just another species but were unique among all other organisms (Mayr 2004). Human intelligence was unmatched by any other creature, and this intelligence would therefore since The Enlightenment become important to what was be considered as the superior, intellectual ‘human’. According to the post-humanist thinker Rosi Braidotti, the ideal ‘human’ must, since the eighteenth century, have a sovereign notion of ‘reason’, which provided the basic unit of reference for what counted as human (Braidotti 2017, 22). According to Braidotti, this Western humanism, “qualified our species for the pursuit of both individual and collective self-improvement following scientific and moral criteria of perfectibility” (Braidotti 2017, 22).

According to Huggan & Tiffin, the very definition of ‘humanity’, depended (and still depends) on the presence of the non-human, the uncivilized, the savage (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 3). Civilization needed an ‘Other’ which wasn’t civilized and was ‘primitive’ by its proximity to the

natural world (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 3). “Dialectically redefined as ‘other than’, difference is inscribed on a hierarchal scale that spells inferiority and means ‘to be worth less than’” (Braidotti 2017, 23). ‘The Other’ would be present in the uncivilized, the animal, the woman and nature. According to Braidotti, this hegemonical cultural model was instrumental to the colonial ideology of European expansion (Braidotti 2017, 23). According to this model, nature, Indigenous Peoples, women, and others weren’t considered as human, and therefore Western civilizations could rightfully conquer them. As Huggan and Tiffin argue: “The human sphere, was beyond the sphere of ‘nature’, with the consequence that ethics was ‘confined to the human, allowing the non-human to be treated instrumentally” (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 6). According to Braidotti, from this model of Western Humanism, the binary distinction of human/nonhuman became foundational for European thought (Braidotti, 2019, 5). According to the decolonial thinker Rolando Vasquez, the Western Anthropocentric philosophy got hegemonic due to the colonization of the Global South by the West. Vasquez argues that the period of colonization “has been an active historical movement of erasure, obliteration and oblivion, it actively characterizes the modern/colonial order” (Vasquez 2017, 78). Vasquez calls this the ‘design’ created by the Global North. As a result, other kinds of knowledge about the connection between humans and non-humans, were being eliminated by the colonizers. This Anthropocentrism of the Western human in combination with colonization had a big effect on ‘the non-humans’: environmentalist Alfred Crosby argued that the post- 1492 colonial European diasporic intrusions caused a continuing consequence of environmental change (Crosby 1986). The quest for rationality and the long tradition of what western culture defines as ‘human’ and the belief of superiority of that species, has left the earth drained, exploited and polluted, with all its consequences. With Western humanism, the modern/colonial order and Anthropocentrism in mind, will humans ever be able to empathize with the non-human?

Post humanist thinkers such as Braidotti and Donna Haraway try to find ways to break out of the human/non-human dichotomy. They critiqued the Western Humanism, because of the gendered human standard of the ‘Man of reason’ (Braidotti 2017, 23). According to Braidotti, the word ‘human’ never was a neutral or inclusive term: it has always been loaded with relationships of power, inclusion, and exclusion. According to Braidotti, the heritage of what is considered as human (The Man of Reason) is still present in the definition of the human (Braidotti 2017, 23). Therefore, Braidotti’s Posthumanism, discusses the question what we as humans want to become, as humans are always in process. She argues that humans need to open up their sense of identity, to relations and to a multiplicity of entities. The gendered definition of what counts as human, is being discussed by Haraway as well. In her writings she plays with the definitions of what is considered as human or

woman: in her famous *A Cyborg Manifesto* she argues that she would rather be a cyborg than a goddess (Haraway 2016, 68). According to these two post humanist thinkers, it is our task to choose what we as humans want to be; are we non-human? Are we cyborgs?

1.2 Theoretical framework: Ecocritical film and phenomenology

Opposed to the Western humanist idea that humans are rational beings described above, I support the idea that humans are driven by emotions. As Alexa Weik von Mossner argues: “Emotion and affect are the basic mechanisms that connect us to our environment, shape our knowledge, and motivate our actions” (Weik von Mossner 2014, 6). In this part, I argue how film has the ability to touch the emotions of people and why it therefore could function as an important instrument to move people. As Whitley argues; Film, a cultural arena with heightened emotions and humor, might offer a relatively safe space within which crucial issues could be researched and explored” (Whitley 2016, 2). Scholars researching how film affects people’s emotions, often focus mainly on cognitive psychology, semiotics, psychoanalytical theories or neuroscience. As empirical studies on how audiences’ response to specifically ecocritical films are limited (Weik von Mossner 2014, 8), I will try to understand how ecocritical film touch humans through phenomenology. Key literature for this part of the research will be *Moving Environments: Affect, Emotion, Ecology, and Film* by Alexa Weik von Mossner. She defines ecocritical film as “films that centrally feature natural environments and nonhuman actors” (Weik von Mossner 2014, 1).

Phenomenology is a philosophy in which lived experience of humans is considered to be the source of meaning. Phenomenology begins from first-person responses to a film by linking the individual perceiving body with its wider environment through the concept of ‘embodiment’ (Weik von Mossner 2014, 26). This concept takes into consideration subjective responses to films and acknowledges the personal variations within the responses when it’s applied to film studies. Phenomenology tends to put affect at the center of film analysis and appreciation. Affect, which I will interpret as ‘a viewer’s automatic, visceral response to a film’, is different from emotion. Emotion includes a cognitive element in addition to the bodily feeling of affect. Therefore, it could be said that affect happens automatically, and emotion follows. According to the book *Moving Environments: Affect, Emotion, Ecology, and Film*, affect and emotion are fundamental to what makes film artistically successful, rhetorically powerful, and culturally influential. However, how can one analyze the emotions and affects felt watching a film? To answer this question, I must first research what emotions and affect are.

For Tomkins (who introduced affect theory), affects have a complex and self-referential life that gives depth to human existence and “provides the individual with a way of narrating their own inner life (likes, dislikes, desires and revulsions) to themselves and others” (Hemmings 2005, 552). Thus, one of the main reasons affect has been taken up as the hopeful alternative to social determinism is its positioning of the individual as possessing a degree of control over their future, rather than as raw material responding rather passively to cognitive or learned phenomena (Hemmings 2005, 552). Laura Marks is a film and affect theorist whose version of phenomenological film theory suggests that everyone has their own response to film. Based on personal memories and experiences, their associations “are probably somewhat different from the artist’s and other viewers’ associations with them” (Laura Marks in: Weik von Mossner 2014, 26). Other Affect theorists such as Sara Ahmed and Lauren Berlant suggest that the cause of affect is not only personal, but that affect is socially determined and fashioned across histories of signification (Weik von Mossner 2014, 8). According to Ahmed, “Emotions show us how histories stay alive, even when they are not consciously remembered; how histories of colonialism, slavery and violence shape the lives and world in the present” (Ahmed 2014, 211). Therefore, Ahmed sees affect not only as a personal experience but as the politics of emotion as well: “The objects of emotions slide and stick and they join the intimate histories of bodies, with the public domain of justice and injustice” (Ahmed 2014, 211). The past can, according to Ahmed, be personal, but societal as well, and that past persists on the surface of bodies (Ahmed 2014, 211).

In the past decade, multiple ecocritical series and documentaries have been published. These films confront the viewer with for example climate change, industrialization of livestock or the extinction of species. One of them is the series *Our Planet*, which the streaming platform Netflix released with David Attenborough as narrator. With magnificent images of species which are almost extinct, Attenborough tells in every episode, how natural life is porous because of human intervention. From my point of view, ecocritical documentaries about nature and its destruction trigger emotions of powerlessness and guilt. Philosopher David Ingram suggests that “such films bring together a range of contradictory discourses around environmental issues while largely perpetuating romantic attitudes to nature” (Weik von Mossner 2014, 2). Other scholars are convinced by the fact that these films do not only produce emotions of private matters, but that they contain important cultural ramifications that need the attention as well. Personally, ecocritical films do not give me the same intense feelings as watching fiction films about human centered topics. Is ecocritical film able to move us similar to human-centered fiction and is it even possible to research emotional responses of others?

Marks wrote the book *The Skin of the Film*, wherein she notices how film can be tactile: “The circulation of a film among different viewers is like a series of skin contact that leave mutual traces” (Marks 2000, 12). She calls this ‘Haptic visuality’. Her theoretical work is based on the thought that humans hold memory in their senses and knowledge in their bodies. When watching a film, the visuals, sound or topic can address these memories and senses, and therefore, the body responds to the film. In her phenomenology, she explains the importance of films which evokes the senses of touch and smell as well as sight and hearing. Such multi-sensory films could, according to Marks, help to sharpen the audience’s sensory awareness and thereby contribute to a growing acuity for ecological awareness (Weik von Mossner 2014, 26).

Other scholars take into account the personal response and dare to observe social constructions in film studies as well. For example, Don Ihde distinguishes between “body one” and “body two,” the biological and the culturally constructed body, arguing that both need to be taken into consideration in a comprehensive and plausible theory of phenomenological embodiment (Weik von Mossner 2014, 9). Some phenomenological film theorists therefore first analyze their own emotional response and afterwards move to the 3rd person. Vivian Sobchack is a film theorist who first researches her own bodily responses but does not exclude the cultural and historical contexts within which such responses are formed. According to David Ingram, “This extension of film studies beyond personal response to the social construction of such responses makes phenomenological film theory potentially useful for eco-film studies” (Weik von Mossner 2014, 7).

Since film affects spectators, ecocritical film could be a tool to change the way spectators think about ecological issues (Weik von Mossner 2014, 45). According to Alexa Weik von Mossner, spectators could even be encouraged to become active, by watching ecocritical film. Since I researched phenomenology as a basis for film analysis, I learned that not everyone has the same experience when watching a film. In this thesis I will mostly focus on the theory of Laura Marks, to create film plan which aims to be multi-sensory, which could according to Marks help to sharpen the audience’s sensory awareness and thereby contribute to a growing acuity for ecological awareness (Weik von Mossner 2014, 26). As my aim is to make a film in which spectators feel emotionally touched by the degradation of nature, I will try to evoke an emotional response trough ecocritical film, in order to make spectators empathize with nature. In any case, the response will depend on the private, cultural and historical contexts of the spectator, and therefore it will be difficult to create a story which touches every human living in the anthropocentric Western world.

1.3 Methodological framework: Practice as Research

Since film can be multi-sensory, the medium has the ability to affect and influence humans according to Laura Marks (Marks 2000, 12). As ecological devastation is evolving, and more attention on that topic is needed, I will try to show how film could be a tool to let spectators empathize with nature. As Brereton argues: “Film could, provoke responses for publics and communities across the world” (Brereton 2015, 2).

Besides the fact that film could be an interesting tool to provoke more active audiences and construct new modes of engagement around the environmental crisis, it is an accessible medium. Film is accessible because it is not bounded by language: visuals, sound and edit can tell a whole story. Moreover, living in a world in which digital devices are popular, (short) film can be shown on telephones, computers, televisions or in cinema. In addition, film can be played on different devices at the same time, all around the world. Therefore, it has the potential to reach many people. As time is scarce in the crisis of ecological devastation, I will use the methodology of Practice as Research, to work towards the creation of a short ecocritical film, resulting in ‘the practice’ of the research done in the first two chapters of this thesis.

Practice as research is a methodology “which comes from creative contexts and describes the research process that is framed as artistic practice and results in a creative output, such as a work of art, fictional writings or a performance” (Salmons 2022). An important element of practice as research is that it is shaped by interdisciplinary conventions. My theoretical framework is interdisciplinary: I use post-humanist, decolonial, ecofeminist, feminist film theory and phenomenology to support my motivations to create a short ecocritical film. The research and theories mentioned in the first three chapters of the thesis are the foundation for the decision making for the film plan in the last two chapters. Therefore, the research of this thesis will in the final chapter be put in practice: the film plan which I will describe in the last chapter, will be informed by the theories mentioned in the first two chapters. I selected the methodology of practice as research since it has the potential to externalize personally situated knowledge into an artwork which reveals theoretical philosophies and cultural contexts. The relevance to use this practice-based research, is that knowledge is being produced in a differently, becoming more accessible to people who aren’t part of the academic world. Further, I find it interesting how theory can be turned into practice, as a new way of designing knowledge and culture.

Chapter 2: Mother Earth

Theoretical Framework

In the following chapter I analyze the ways in which women have been associated with nature and how this led to the exploitation of both. Through the lens of decolonial, post-humanist, ecofeminist theory and social reproduction theory, I map out the reasons why the exploitation of women and nature is bounded and underline the importance of understanding how these two are interconnected in their endurance of climate change. This theoretical framework functions as the foundation of my motivation to make a short ecocritical film.

2.1 The human and the non-human

‘Humans never were humans’ states biologist Haraway in her book ‘When species meet’ (Haraway, 2007, 4). Followed by an explanation about how 90 percent of the cells in the human body are “filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such, of which play a symphony necessary to being alive at all”, she states that “to be one, is always to become with many”. Haraway tries to show the connectivity of humans and non-humans, to undo this binary and show the interconnectedness of the world. The binary of the human and the non-human is still very much alive, while research has shown that humans are part of nature. As my aim is to confront spectators with this binary thinking, I define ‘nature’ as everything which is considered to be non-human. This definition of ‘nature’ makes the created binary between the human and non-human even more obvious. Finally, the film must show the connectedness between humans and non-humans and clarify that humans are part of the natural world, just like all other beings on this earth.

As the last chapter has shown, the binary between the human and the nonhuman was, according to decolonial theory and post humanist theory, created during The Enlightenment, to create an ‘Other’ which wasn’t civilized (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 2). Everything which was non-human, was seen as ‘the Other’; inferior and able to be dominated by the human (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 2). Nature and women were two of those ‘others’ who were considered irrational and therefore not valued. One of the leading ecofeminist thinkers is Vandana Shiva, co-author of *Ecofeminism*, environmentalist and scholar, acknowledges this association made between women and nature as well: “Women all over the world, were 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 man” (Shiva 2014, 22).

According to Shiva, The West defines nature as dead matter to be exploited. The effects of that behavior are now to be witnessed in the warming of the earth and extinction of species; most scientists agree to the fact that climate change is caused by human activities such as energy use, urbanization, and land use changes (Karl and Trenberth 2003, 1719). Therefore, I use the FCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change)'s definition of 'climate change' as "a change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity, that alters the composition of the global atmosphere, and that is in addition to natural climate variability over comparable time periods" (Roger 2005, 516). According to this definition, the actions of humans play a major role in the changing climate. Other definitions such as the one made by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) define 'climate change' as "any change in climate over time whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity" (Roger 2005, 516). As I in this thesis only focus on the climatological effects caused by humans, I decided to use the FCCC's definition of climate change, which acknowledges human activity as the direct or indirect cause of climate change.

Climate change affects people differently. Research has shown that "women and girls experience the greatest impacts of climate change, which amplifies existing gender inequalities and poses unique threats to their livelihoods, health and safety" (UN 2022). Especially in rural areas, where women are held responsible for finding food and water, women are vulnerable to climate change: if a water source dries out, it is often the woman who searches for a different water source. Other identity markers such as race, class, sexual orientation, religion etc, gravely impact people's vulnerability to climate change as well. According to Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, who is a professor of Law at the University of California and famously introduced the term 'intersectionality' in 1989, these identity markers and different forms of inequality overlap and intersect with each other and create unique forms of domination (Crenshaw 1989). As a result, women with other identity markers such as black women, women with disabilities, poor and old women will be even more vulnerable to the changing climate.

2.2 The associations between women and nature

The fact that climate change affects women more than men, is recognized by the theoretical field of ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is concerned with the interconnected relationship between the domination of nature and the domination of women and how this connection came into being (Kings 2017, 70). Ecofeminism acknowledges that the associations which have been made between women and nature in the past are important factors (Miles 2018).

The association between women and nature was made before and after the enlightenment in other continents and periods of time as well. Images of goddesses who represent nature/the earth have been found in for example Europe and South America. The archaeologist Marija Gimbutas claims that during the Neolithic period (3000 BC) in Europe, 'Earth Mother' was being worshipped (Mies 2015, 174). Over 200 stone statues of 'Earth Mother' were found all over Europe. The Marxist professor Maria Mies, co-author of *Ecofeminism*, claims that this Earth Mother is one of the proofs of a matriarchal culture during the prehistory in Europe (Mies 2015, 176). In other parts of the world, such as the Andes region, nature/earth is still represented through the image of the woman. 'Pachamama' is what the indigenous people call her, usually translated in English as Mother Earth, or Earth Mother (Tola 2019, 194). However, 'Pachamama' is a powerful other-than-human being, and proposes to inhabit the earth without perceiving it as a storage of resources to be exploited (Tola 2019, 195). The Inca's believed that Pachamama could, when treated with respect, provide for abundant harvests (Tola 2019, 194). In Western culture nowadays, 'Mother Earth' is used by some to refer to the earth: the Pope Francis called upon Catholics to 'preserve' Mother Earth, and "Angela Merkel has "pledged to protect 'our Mother Earth' from Donald Trump's disastrous environmental agenda" (Tola 2019, 194). Opposed to both the worshipping of the goddess and Pachamama, in western culture, 'mother earth' is being seen as a fragile woman in need of saving (Tola 2019, 194). The examples of Pachamama and 'Earth Mother' show that associating women with nature don't have to lead a devaluation of women or nature. Only when both are being devalued and categorized as 'the Other', such as in Western culture, this association leads to the exploitation of both.

According to Marxist feminists such as Shiva, Mies and Tithi Bhattacharya, the exploitation of women and nature is incorporated into the capitalist economy which is built on producing profit. According to social reproduction theory, which was remapped by Bhattacharya and used by the writers of the manifesto *Feminism for the 99%*, women's labor is being unpaid in the capitalist economies. Since women are considered to be closer to nature, and 'naturally' can have children, they are in most parts of the world held responsible for social reproductive work such as care work, housework and the producing of food because they 'naturally' love their role as caretakers. Due to this naturalization, women are held responsible for the unpaid reproductive labor (Bhattacharya 2017, 13). This role makes women them dependent on nature for subsistence and survival. Moreover, women make big contributions to the capitalist economy because they produce and maintain current and future workers whilst not being paid for; "The tremendous amount of familial as well as communitarian work that goes on to sustain and reproduce the worker, or more specifically her labor power, is naturalized into nonexistence" (Bhattacharya 2017, 2). This

reproducing labor is unwaged and worldwide women are held responsible for this work. *Feminism for the 99%* states that capitalism doesn't only exploit the unwaged work, but also free rides on nature (Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser 2019, 47). Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser state that "capitalism seeks ways to bolster its profits by exploiting natural resources, which it treats as free and infinite" (Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser 2019, 46). Through the lens of social reproduction theory, climate change makes women more vulnerable. Firstly because of their difficult economic position due to their unwaged work and secondly because this work confronts them with climate change, as they are the first in line to find their land polluted and the water sources empty. Therefore, *Feminism for the 99%* addresses that women occupy the front lines of the present ecological crisis because "of their key role in producing food, clothing and shelter for their families, while coping with drought, pollution and the overexploitation of land" (Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser 2019, 47). Climate change worsens women's oppression: women take up 80 percent of climate refugees (Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser 2019, 47). Especially women in the Global South and poor women of color in the Global North are vulnerable.

2.3 Indigenous women protecting biodiversity

Women are not only victims of climate change, they also are at the forefront of protecting their natural resources. According to Braidotti, Indigenous communities around the world do not adopt the partition of the binary of the human/non-human (Braidotti 2017, 5). This results in Indigenous communities protecting nature, instead of exploiting it; multiple research has shown that "although Indigenous comprise less than 5% of the world population, they protect 80% of the Earth's biodiversity in the forests, deserts, grasslands, and marine environments in which they have lived for centuries" (UN 2017). As women in the Global South are the main food producers, they are the ones with the knowledge of biodiversity, seed growing and small-scale agriculture.

Indigenous women play a big role in the preservation of the planet, as their knowledge has been transmitted through generations. Since I do not want to speak for the Indigenous community, I will quote a passage of the Manukan Declaration of the Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network, which is written by Indigenous women from Africa, South America, North America, and Asia. This declaration points out the vital role of Indigenous women in the protection of global biodiversity. The manifesto of The Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network reads; "As Indigenous women, we have a fundamental role in environmental conservation and preservation throughout the history of our Peoples. We are the guardians of knowledge, wisdom and experience in relation to the environment." (IWBN 2004). Especially the elderly women in rural areas carry knowledge on

biodiversity according to Vandana Shiva. Their knowledge is being transmitted from older women to younger women orally and not through writing. ‘If their knowledge is not documented it will be lost forever’ (Shiva 2018, 134). Their knowledge is of great importance; “40 percent of the greenhouse (gas emission) is due to industrial agriculture and long-distance transport. Their answers on biodiverse farming could work as a solution to climate change” (Shiva 2018, 137). However, as Shiva and Vázquez argue, their knowledge is not being taken seriously. According to Vázquez, the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples often isn’t perceived as worthwhile scientific knowledge as it doesn’t fit the ‘design’ created by the Global North. Therefore, the knowledge which survived colonization, is seen as non-scientific and therefore not recognized as important.

This chapter has shown that women occupy the front lines of the present ecological crisis (Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser 2019, 47). My aim for the film is to draw more attention to the vulnerability of women’s lives in a changing climate without portraying them as victims, since women are at the forefront of protecting their natural resources. In the next chapter I will investigate how I can visualize this and create a script which demonstrates the bounded exploitation of nature and women.

Chapter 3: Imagining Exploitation and Climate Change

From theory to practice

In this chapter I analyze how the theories mentioned in the last chapters can be adopted in the film plan *Nature Calling*. With the use of feminist film theory, I investigate how to visualize women, without reproducing domination stereotypes around representations of women in film. The main function of this chapter is to build a foundation the initial story, cinematography and script of the film. This chapter is divided in several paragraphs: positionality, form & style and characters & storyline.

3.1 Positionality

Feminist film

Before I start creating a film plan, I aim to position myself and understand what my motivations are to make this film. Since Haraway argues that “Feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges” and I aim to be as objective as possible in the film, I must situate my knowledge (Haraway 1988, 581). Since I am a white feminist filmmaker from Amsterdam, I am conscious of the fact that this film will be made from my own position in society, and that I must therefore be critical of my own ideas, as I will later project them into a film. My father is a filmmaker and therefore I am in the privileged position to use his knowledge and equipment. In addition to this, I have friends working in the film industry who agreed working with me on this film. My motivation and personal situatedness of having a filmmaker as a father, made me think about making a film about the precariousness of nature and women during times of climate change. The way I visualize and articulate this in the film, is based on my vision, creativity, and knowledge on the topic. Since the making of film is a creative process, my way of visualizing and storytelling will be different from someone else who would create a film on this topic; my situatedness in this world has a big effect on how I envision the bounded exploitation of woman and nature.

Since I will be creating a film in which women have a central place in the story, I am aware that I, as a white woman, will have difficulties representing the stories of black women, migrant women and other (non) white people considering themselves woman. However, I aim to create a story which includes not only the white woman’s perspective but create a film in which other voices are heard as well. As chapter two has shown, women with other identity markers, such as poor, disabled, and black women, are more vulnerable to climate change (UN 2022). To empathize this, I want to include their voices in my film project. Therefore, the film will be intersectional; it must

show how “different forms of inequality overlap and intersect with each other and create unique forms of domination” (Crenshaw 1989). These different forms of domination determine the possibilities of women to survive the climate crisis and should therefore be incorporated in the film.

I wish to create a film in which women take up a central place in the story and script, thus, I will in this chapter use feminist film theory to research how to represent women in my film, without reproducing stereotypical ways of visualizing them. Since the seventies, “feminist theorists have been researching how film produced and reproduces normative ideas about gender roles and the power relations therein” (Olivieri 2017, 208). According to feminist film theorists Anneke Smelik, film actively constructs meanings of sexual difference and therefore, feminist film theory is an important tool to research representations of women in film (Smelik 2016, 1). Smelik argues that the ways women have been portrayed in film in the past, have largely been constructed through the male gaze (Smelik 2016, 1). ‘The male gaze’ is a term introduced by Laura Mulvey in 1975, which appoints the way spectators in (her case American) cinema were forced to look through the gaze of the male. Because the camera usually took the position of the man, the viewer was forced to look from this male point of view (Mulvey 1975, 65). The overall cinematic material, including music, edit and camera work objectify the woman in the image, making her a passive spectacle for the voyeuristic gaze (Smelik, 2017, 197).

Feminist film theorists have shown how film as a discourse, contributes to producing and reproducing cultural ideas and norms about gender, ethnicity, sexuality and other axes of difference (Olivieri 2017, 210). With this in mind, I take the power relations and subjectivity of film into account and try not to reproduce dominant discourses. Since film plays an important role in the creation of culture, and filmmakers therefore have a position in which they can little by little, create the stories and culture of tomorrow, I will try to make a change in the structures of our cultural norms and values.

Motivation

Since film has the ability to construct meaning and “has an important role to play in promoting awareness around environmental ethics”, it could be an interesting medium to create a feminist view on nature’s exploitation in relation to women’s exploitation (Brereton 2015, 1). Through film, I aim to produce a different cultural idea around the binary between the human/nonhuman and the exploitation of women and nature. To do so, I will translate the conducted research described in chapters one and two into a film plan. Since my methodology is

based on Practice as Research, this film plan will serve as primary evidence of my research findings (Scott 2016, 8).

The film plan is based on decolonial, post humanist and eco-feminist theory which shows how women and nature were since the period of the enlightenment both categorized as ‘The Other’ (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 3). This association with each other led to the devaluation and exploitation of both (Braidotti 2017, 23). In my film I want to highlight this bounded exploitation, while confronting the spectator with the cultural heritage of associating women with nature. Since both nature and women are being devalued, this association reproduces the exploitation of both nature and women and therefore this idea needs to be challenged. The second reason for me to create this film, is to find a way in which nature can ‘talk’ to humans in a humanly way, to communicate its exploitation. Living in a human-centered Anthropocentric world, it feels like people find it difficult to understand the signs and communication of the non-human one. My aim for this film is therefore to give nature a (human) voice, to express its oppression to the spectators watching the film and to hopefully let them empathize with the non-human which is suffering from exploitation. Therefore, I hope that this film could let spectators ‘listen’ to nature because they are being touched through film and make them understand the danger of the devaluation of women and nature and de bounded exploitation which it causes.

3.2 Form and Style

Imagining climate change

What kind of genre would fit best for the short ecocritical film? During the last decade, non-fictional environmental films such as *Cowspiracy*, *Seaspiracy* and *A Life on Our Planet* were broadcasted on popular streaming services such as Netflix which show the effects of human activities on the non-human world and call for action. According to Amitav Gosch, a writer and scholar who researches how climate change is being portrayed in culture (with a focus on literature), argues that books about climate change usually are non-fictional. In his book *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* he argues that there is enough information about climate change, to understand that something needs to be done (Gosch 2017, 8). The lack of information is not the problem. According to him, it is important to imagine a world living with the effects of climate change, to understand it and act against it. Imagining climate change in this world seems to be difficult. Gosh argues that when climate change is being described in culture, it usually becomes science-fiction. “It is as though in the imagination climate change were somehow akin to

extraterrestrials or interplanetary travel” (Gosch 2017, 8). Science fiction treats climate change as surreal or magical, while the problem is real and urgent. Gosch therefore advocates for more (in his case literary) fiction about climate change which doesn’t include the science fiction aspects (Gosch 2017, 8).

With that advocacy in mind, I choose to make a fictional ecocritical film without it becoming science fiction. My aim is to give nature a voice to express its exploitation which is real and urgent. Therefore, the story of the film will take place in the here and now, as the exploitation of nature and women is happening at this moment. I do not want to create the feeling of ‘interplanetary travel’, as Gosch calls it, but confront spectators with the current problems. Therefore, I choose to make a short, fictional film, imagining climate change and creating a voice of nature which humans will understand.

Envisioning exploitation

How could I visualize the exploitation of both nature and women in way that it feels like their exploitation is bounded? Ecofeminists such as Shiva and Mies describe the bounded exploitation in a way which speaks to the imagination; “Capitalism kills Mother Earth, divides the parts of her body into separate bits and pieces” (Shiva & Mies 2014, 14). And: “The rape of the Earth and rape of women are intimately linked - both metaphorically, in shaping world-views, and materially, in shaping women’s everyday lives” (Shiva & Mies 2014, 14). If I would follow this vocabulary of Shiva and Mies to visualize the exploitation of both women and nature, the film might become violent. Since the development of film, the female victim has been a reoccurring cinematic image (McGillvray 2013, 7). According to McGillvray, the female form has become the conventional site of suffering and pain in film. This has a misogynistic origin, as “genres such as horror or thrillers hinge on the spectacle of a sexually saturated and victimized body” (McGillvray 2013, 7). Hence, I will not create a film in which women are visible victims of exploitation, as I do not wish to contribute to more violence against women in film. Therefore, I choose not to focus on Mies and Shiva’s way of describing the exploitation of both women and nature.

How spectators react to film, depends on the memories and knowledge they hold in their bodies (Marks 2000, 12). The body reacts when those memories are being addressed in film. Building on Mark’s theory, I seek to create a story which people can identify with, and which could address the spectators’ memories and knowledge. To do so, I choose to tell a personal, emotional story between two characters, which could be a love story, or a story about a lost friendship. Again, people have different memories and experiences in life. Thus, as a filmmaker I can try to let

spectators feel a certain affect, but eventually it will depend on the private, cultural and historical context of the spectator if that affect will be felt or not.

3.3 Characters and Storyline

The two characters which I will use, are the representatives of the binary between the human and the non-human. As mentioned in the first chapter, according to decolonial theory, this binary was created during the times of colonization in which the human needed an ‘Other’ (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 3). ‘The Other’ would be the uncivilized, the savage, the animal, nature and women (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 3). They were considered to be non-human and could therefore be rightfully conquered by Western civilizations. The protagonist of the film is the character who represents ‘the Other’. When I mention this character, I will use captions (The Other), when I talk about the theory, I put the words in quotation marks (‘the Other’). The Other will only represent women and nature in my film. The uncivilized, the savage and the animal will be left out of this category since my film focusses on the exploitation of women and nature. The second character represents the heritage of what is considered as human. According to Braidotti, “the human standard was posited in the universal mode of the ‘Man of reason’” (Braidotti 2017, 23). Therefore, the second character I will use, is named The Man of Reason and represents Braidotti’s ‘Man of reason’. Likewise describing The Other character, I refer to the character of The Man of Reason in captions and when referring to the theory of Braidotti, I put ‘the Man of reason’ within quotation marks.

The binary of human (‘Man of reason’)/non-human (‘the Other’) is being used in my film only to demonstrate that this binary thinking is part of our cultural heritage, and it could therefore be made undone. The film aims to show how the binary generated an exploitation of everything which was considered as non-human or ‘Other’ in this anthropocentric world. To undo this binary in the end of my film, I then propose a different connection to the non-human world; A symbiosis of the binary will be proclaimed. This is inspired by Haraway, who argues that humans never were humans, but always are in connection with others which are part of our body (Haraway 2007, 4). In the next chapter I will describe how this will be included in the story and visualization of the film.

The Man of Reason

The Man of Reason, who represents ‘humanity’, will in my film become to be known as the one who used to exploit The Other. As the ‘Man of reason’ considered himself to be ‘worth more than’ ‘the Other’, this character must become someone arrogant (Braidotti 2017, 23). This arrogance refers to the central place humans position themselves on earth in the Anthropocene as well.

Additionally, since men usually have taken up the central role in fictional film, this Man of Reason will play a smaller role (Smelik 2016, 1). It is time for The Other to speak.

The Other

A monologue in which The Other expresses the ways she was exploited, is central to the film. According to feminist film theorist Sharon Smith, “women who are the central character in film, are often portrayed as confused and helpless” (Smith 1999, 14). To prevent The Other becoming a helpless character being exploited, the monologue must sound fierce, with agency and poetic; anything but helpless.

Because the image of the woman as representative for nature was used in different cultures, I choose a female character to represent The Other, as spectators could then perhaps understand she is not only representing herself, but nature as well (Tola 2019, 194). Since the single character of ‘the Other’ represents both nature and women, I must find out how I can visualize her in the most effective way. To avoid the reproduction of stereotypical characteristics, I must be very careful with giving The Other a visual physical body. As the category of ‘the Other’ (in this case women and nature) is very broad and encompasses many physical forms, it is going to be difficult to find one sort of body which represents nature and women without being exclusive.

Intersectionality is important to take into notion when it comes to the reality of different forms of womanhood and the way inequalities overlap and create new forms of domination (Crenshaw 1989). Therefore, one visual body could never represent all the different female voices and experiences I want to include. Thus, I will not show a female figure in my film, but only include female voices. Since climate change touches the health of different women world-wide, and intersections have a large effect on the scale of safety during climate change, one voice could never ‘speak’ for all women under the effects of climate change. Therefore, I choose for a multiplicity of female voices to be heard. However, even the plurality of voices could never represent all women but could only give an indication of the diversity of womanhood. This patchwork of voices could hopefully nonetheless create a communal feeling of togetherness as women, despite all the existing differences.

Since there is no female figure visualized, but female voices are to be heard, spectators will probably imagine a physical woman themselves. My aim is to play with this imagination. At first, a smooth, high female voice is being heard. The spectator now has a certain kind of woman in mind. After a while, the voice changes; it goes to a low voice, to auto-tune, to mysterious, to loud, to soft, to robot-like. These different sounds of female voices must indicate the diversity of women, but also

refers to the post-humanism of Haraway and Braidotti. Haraway mentions in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* that “International women’s movements have constructed ‘women’s experience’, as well as uncovered or discovered this crucial collective object” (Haraway 1991, 149). She calls this constructed women’s experience both fiction and fact. Building upon this, my aim for this film is for the spectator to ask itself: what is this female voice I’m hearing? Is she a woman, robot, man, cyborg, non-human, both or everything at once? What is a woman?

Another reason for choosing a patchwork of voice-overs, is to counter the idea that women are ‘closer to nature’. As the female voice represents nature in the film, there is a chance that spectators who believe that ‘women are closer to nature’ feel confirmed in their beliefs. Since this idea reinforces gendered stereotypes and biologically determinist discourses, my aim is not to reproduce this (Tomalin 2017, 455). To counter this idea, The patchwork of voices (including robot-voices) therefore demonstrates the plurality of womanhood. Hopefully this is sufficient, to counter the idea that women stand closer to nature than other humans.

The different voices speak a multiplicity of languages. I chose English not be the dominant language in the film, as I built my film upon decolonial theory. English became the dominant language due to colonization and therefore, as Vázquez puts it, this language became hegemonical, being part of the modern order (Vázquez 2011, 39). Vázquez advocates for ‘untranslatability’, to not translate other languages into the hegemonic languages of English or Spanish (Vázquez 2011, 39). Therefore, it would be hypocritical to use the hegemonic English language to express a decolonial philosophy. However, English is a language multiple many women around the world speak, so I cannot neglect the language. Thus, I aim to create a monologue which is spoken in different languages, including Spanish and English.

Using the master’s tools

The way nature communicates its exploitation on earth is through storms, floods, droughts, biodiversity loss, the warming of the earth, and other symptoms of the climate crisis. However, the ones in power still postpone or ignore climate restrictions. In my film, nature tries to find a different way of communicating with the human. Through the female voices, in human languages, it proclaims its exploitation using the master’s tools. ‘Using the master’s tools’, comes from the famous saying “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” by the black lesbian feminist Audre Lorde (Lorde 2018). She claims that when the master’s tools are being used, only the narrowest perimeters of change are possible and allowable. This quote initially comes from at a conference, to show organizers the importance of intersectionality, which they did not integrate in

their program. I use this quote, as nature will, in the film, use the tools of the master's house (verbal communication and human languages) to draw attention to its exploitation. Since nature's own way of communication does not seem to touch people significantly, approaching them in a human way is an attempt to stimulate a different reaction to the exploitation of The Other.

To clarify that The Other is using The Man of Reason's tools, I decided to use a metaphor for entering his world; The Other will call The Man of Reason through a technological device. This technological device is a metaphor for the 'rationality' of the 'Man of reason' (Haraway 1988, 581). Mies describes technology in her book *Ecofeminism*, as "a science which knows neither feelings, nor morals, nor responsibility' and calls these his 'tools' to exploit and dominate women and nature" (Mies 2014, 16). The Other will use these tools in the hope of making The Man of Reason listen. Will the Man of Reason answer the phone when nature is calling?

Chapter 4:

N A T U R E C A L L I N G

Practice

Drawing from the theories mentioned in the first three chapters, this chapter describes the creation of the story of the film. It shows how the edit and text of the voice-over and storyline are embedded in and informed by theory. This chapter is divided into six different scenes, which all start with a creative description of the story of the scene, including choices made in the edit, voice over and images. A discussion of how theory informs the choices, follows. All the scenes begin with a still, giving an indication of what the visuals will look like. Through the description of the scenes, the film unfolds and tells a story of the bounded exploitation of nature and women according to decolonial, post humanist and ecofeminist theory.

Scene I: The missed call



Figure 1: *HER*, directed by Spike Jonze (Warner Bros. Pictures, 2013).

A telephone is ringing on a desk in a dark but luxurious apartment. The view from the window shows city life at nighttime. The owner of the phone doesn't pick up, so a message is being recorded through the answerphone. For a second, no voice is being heard. Slowly, a soft female voice starts to speak. It sounds like it is the 100th time she called: she sounds disappointed. The first thing she expresses, is that the owner of the phone never answers the phone and doesn't respond to her, but she is determined to talk.

In the first part of the story, The Other (embodied by the female voices) reaches out to The Man of Reason (the owner of the apartment and phone) through a telephone call. The Other is annoyed by the ignorance of The Man of Reason and therefore uses her agency to call him. The fact that the phone is not answered, refers to his neglect when it comes to the exploitation of nature and women. According to social reproduction theory, women's work is turned into non-existence and the resources of nature are considered infinite (Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser 2019, 46). By not paying attention to the exploitation The Man of Reason causes, he is not holding himself responsible for dealing with the effects of this exploitation, as he considers the work of women 'natural', and the resources of nature as 'infinite'. The fact that The Other is calling The Man of Reason, knows his telephone number and speaks to him in a personal and intimate manner, refers to a connection they have had. It shows their (former) exploitative relationship. In this manner, this scene visualizes the relationship between The Man of Reason and The Other, whilst not reproducing the stereotype of the victimized woman as she uses her agency in the form of a phone call to change their relationship.

Similar to the still from the film HER (figure 1), The Man of Reason lives in a luxurious apartment in an urban area. The luxurious appartement refers to the wealth The Man of Reason has gained from the exploitation of The Other. The visualization of the urban area (seen from the window), where The Man of Reason lives, functions as a metaphor for 'civilization'. This is the one side of the binary of civilization (The Man of Reason) and nature (The Other) created during the period of the Enlightenment (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 3). Urban areas, especially in parts with high-rise buildings like the ones in the still, are often very distant from nature. From high above in these buildings, The Man of Reason is looking down on the world. He lives high and dry, far away from The Other world which is 'less civilized' (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 3). I chose a dark/blueish atmosphere to start the film with to provoke a sense of coldness. The apartment of The Man of Reason must be associated with his arrogant and cold character. This arrogance is a reference to anthropocentrism.

Scene II: Living in symbiosis



Figure 2: Footage from Martijn Veldhoen, 2022

After the female voice expressed that she wants him to pick up the phone, she starts a poetic story/poem about their life together. In a poetic way she tells him how at first everything in herself seemed to live and how this period felt like an everlasting spring. The moment she begins telling this story, the camera switches to a sunny environment, into a natural environment. Images of sun in an old forest are shown, and fungi are growing, on the trees, in the earth, everywhere. Symbiotic creatures are shown, the togetherness of beings.

In this part of the film, the female voice starts telling her own story. The moment she begins to talk, the image switch from the cold apartment to a colorful natural environment. This environment visualizes her world and the time in which the relationship between The Other and The Man of Reason was balanced; when there was no distinction between who was rational and who wasn't. The image of fungi are a metaphor of how everything is connected; research has shown how fungi connect plants, trees, and other living beings (Giovannetti 2006, 6). This is a metaphor for the symbiosis of the human/nonhuman building on the theory of Haraway, who argues that "Humans never were human", as 90 percent of the human cells are shared with bacteria, fungi and other microorganisms (Haraway 2007, 4). The scene shows the symbiosis of The Man of Reason and The Other, depending on each other, breathing each other in. This scene will be very short but must feel like a paradise in which everything lives and melts together. This is the world of nature, of ecosystems, of a symbiotic world.

Scene III: Falling into pieces of categorization



Figure 3: Footage from Redactie Soesterberg, 2022.

Her voice starts to tremble. Something collapses in herself, but she puts herself together. She explains that at a certain moment, everything changed: the symbiosis fell apart into pieces of categorization. They were put into different boxes, far away from each other, separated. While she expresses this, the visuals become more abstract. Once more, visuals of nature are being shown, but the natural environment is now planned. Squared fields are viewed from above, maps of green stand out against brown regions.

This scene refers to the age of The Enlightenment in which the binary between humans and Others was created (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 3). In addition, it refers to the age of colonialism in which this categorization was used to justify exploitation (Braidotti 2017, 23). According to Vázquez, this period of colonization was a historical movement of erasure, obliteration and oblivion and characterizes the modern order (Vázquez 2017, 78). As a result, other kinds of knowledge about the connection between humans and non-humans were being eliminated by the colonizers.

This scene aims to clarify that the categorization of The Other and The Man of Reason was put into place by humans and didn't exist before. This will be emphasized by the visuals in the film. A sudden shift in the cinematography refers to this shift of thought. Coming from visualizations of lush old trees and other symbols of ancient connectivity, an abrupt shift to an image of abstract nature illustrates the categorization of nature and women. This categorization refers to the binary created between The Other and The Man of Reason. Visually, I choose a bird's eye view,

representing the gaze of The Man of Reason, overseeing the categorization he created between himself and The Other. It must feel like he looks down on the world, and sees himself as the savior of the land which, without his interference, would have stayed untouched, useless, non-profitable with resources hidden beneath the surface. This scene therefore refers to the colonial period as well, in which colonizers ‘discovered’ other continents, which they exploited because of their self-conceived superiority (Braidotti 2017, 23). The bird’s eye view refers to the ‘god trick’ introduced by Haraway. With this term she argued that objectivity was understood as a “view from above, from nowhere”, pretending to be neutral, while actually hiding the specific position of the male, white, heterosexual, human perspective, making this position universal (Haraway 1988, 581). The bird’s eye therefore functions as a reference to the ‘god trick’: The Man of Reason looks down on the world, seeing everything from nowhere, as if he was God.

Especially abstract images of Dutch polders are shown. This positions me as a Dutch filmmaker. The images refer to the colonial heritage of the Netherlands as well as its man-made nature: every little corner of nature in the Netherlands is organized, planned, and regulated by humans. As the Dutch created land that was previously under water, Dutch nature is a good metaphor of The Man or Reason bending nature to his will. This scene represents the implementation of the perceived superiority of rationality, and the devaluation and controllability of everything which was not considered rational.

Scene IV: Living exploitation



Figure 4: *Portrait de la un fille en Feu* directed by Céline Sciamma (Lilies Films, 2019).

The female voice sounds calm. This contrasts the images shown. Flames of a big bonfire are reaching higher and higher. The fire licks the wood, and the camera starts to zoom in very slowly. The female voice starts to tell how The Man of Reason started devaluating her and thought of her as a 'fragile woman in need of saving'. She explains how he claimed her time, space and energy as she would only then be useful. How he started controlling her in for the sake of her own safety. How she only was considered beautiful when untouched and how he didn't appreciate her work but wanted to make use of it anyway. As the camera gets closer to the fire, her voice speaks louder and louder. In the last sentence in this scene, she tells him that she will no longer accept this behavior. At this moment the camera is totally zoomed-in on the fire, the surroundings are out of view. After the voice abruptly stops screaming, only the sound of the crackling fire is audible as the flames burn.

In this scene, the female voice expresses the effects of the categorization between The Man of Reason and The Other. This part shows that the exploitation of nature and women is both bounded and similar. To understand how this exploitation is manifested in the lives of women and in nature, the female voice gives some examples of similar ways of exploiting by The Man of Reason. The text in which she expresses how he started to devalue her, refers to the self-declared superiority of The Man of Reason and the devaluation of The Other. As mentioned in chapter two, this devaluation of women and nature led to the exploitation of both, since The Man of Reason thought himself superior and could therefore treat the non-human instrumentally (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 6). The part in

which the female voice expresses that she was perceived as ‘a fragile woman in need of saving’, refers to this as well (Tola 2019, 195).

Another way in which women and nature are similarly exploited, according to social reproduction theory, is through the unpaid ‘work’ they do. Capitalism turns women’s work into non-existence and the resources of nature as infinite (Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser 2019, 46). The parts in which the female voice expresses how “he claimed her time, space and energy as she would only then be useful’ and ‘how he didn’t appreciate her work but wanted to make use of it anyway” refer to the work which is done by women (social reproduction work) and by nature (the producing of natural resources). This work is not appreciated (it is unpaid and devalued) but used to make profit.

Since *The Other* expresses her exploitation in this part and my aim is not to reproduce the stereotype of the victimized woman in film, the visuals are in direct opposition to her words. The images, sounds and edit will therefore not function as an extension of her words, but rather express her resistance. The exploitation of women and nature is in this scene visualized through an open fire in a dark wood. Since research has shown that climate change causes more wildfires, and wildfires are often used by the media when they visualize climate change, this bonfire represents the exploitation of nature, the burning of the world. Additionally, the fire refers to the exploitation of women as well. According to Federici, fire was used during the witch hunts to execute women who were condemned to be witches (Federici 2004, 181). Therefore, fire could function as a symbol for the devaluation of women, since it can serve as a reference to the period of the witch hunts.

As the image of fire has a special role in Western culture (since it represents a strong character or someone with a strong will), I choose fire as a way of showing the strength of nature and women for this reason as well. This strength refers to the anger of women and nature caused by their imposed inferiority. The fire has two functions in this scene because it is at first a sign of exploitation but changes into a sign of resistance and strength. This can be linked to social reproduction theory, which realizes that the capitalist system depends on women’s unpaid social reproductive work and that women therefore have a tool to dismantle the capitalist system if they would seize to do that work (Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser 2019, 5). It shows how exploitation can lead to revolution, to change.

Scene V: Returning



Figure 5: Footage of Martijn Veldhoen, 2022

In this scene the female voice returns to the symbiotic world. The images of the ancient trees and fungi are shown again. This causes a moment of homecoming and of calmness, especially after the images of the fire and the loud female voice. Her voice sounds calm and clear again. She asks The Man of Reason to remember the period before everything went wrong. When they lived in symbiosis, when superiority didn't exist, and everything was valued in its own existence. She expresses how they now live in a constructed fantasy, a myth which doesn't exist. She expresses how his myth needs to be revised, to save 'us'. She expresses that he is a part of her and that the destruction of her means the destruction of both of them. This scene feels very soft and caring, while she expresses the value of symbiosis and de-categorization.

In this part of the film, the female voice tries to show the importance of undoing the categorization made between The Other and The Man of Reason. As the film returns to the symbiotic world, it becomes clear that this binary was created and didn't always exist.

The part in which the female voice explains to The Man of Reason that the destruction of her, means the destruction of them both, refers to the fact that humans are part of the non-human world and that they are in such a way connected that the human cannot live without the non-human. The word 'us' is being used, to avoid the binary of 'me and you', and underlines the all-encompassing natural world, including the human species. This is the part of the film in which I intend to undo the binary of human/nonhuman.

To inspire the spectator, who perhaps still thinks in binaries of human/nonhuman, to feel optimistic while watching the symbiosis scenes, these scenes must create a sense of ‘homecoming’. This soft scene must therefore feel natural and comfortable to the spectator. Hopefully after seeing this, the spectator understands how the human is part of the non-human and how this creates a dependence which enforces responsibility for caring for each other.

Scene VI: The end



Figure 6: *HER*, directed by Spike Jonze (Warner Bros. Pictures, 2013).

This scene begins with a close-up of a high-tech telephone from which the voice-over is being heard. The female voice slowly says that she still hopes for him to pick up the phone. Silence is the answer. During this part, the camera zooms out, to finally end on the first shot of the film: the dark apartment of The Man of Reason. The female voice starts speaking again. She says: "... I ask you to call me back, for our future is at stake." The camera moves a bit to the left and a silhouette of someone sitting on a sofa is visible. It feels like the person has been sitting there for a long time. The silhouette stands up and walks up to the phone. The film ends with The Man of Reason holding the phone in his hand, and as the female voice is still in the middle of a sentence, he pushes the red button after which the female voice abruptly vanishes. The Man of Reason walks back to his sofa, out of the frame. The film ends with the first scene of the film: the 'empty' apartment of The Man of Reason.

This closing scene is mainly focused on visualizing the arrogance and ignorance of The Man of Reason. As the spectator sees the silhouette of The Man of Reason in the end, it becomes clear

that he was in his apartment all the while The Other was speaking through the answerphone. He is positioned on a sofa, to exaggerate his 'laziness' and his refusal to listen and respond.

This refers to Gosch: the problem about climate change isn't about the lacking information (Gosch 2016, 8). According to Gosch, there is enough information about climate change to understand something needs to be done. The Man of Reason knows what happens to The Other, as he heard her through the answerphone, but does not react or act against it and stays in his lazy sofa. First, he doesn't pick up the phone, then listens to the answerphone, after which he pushes the red button, cutting off the call of The Other; he has got all the information about the effects of exploitation, but he actively ignores the call of The Other to change something. Since the film is focused on the female voices, the spectator hopefully builds a positive relationship with the female voice and likes the character. When these voices are abruptly cut off by The Man of Reason, the spectator could feel irritated and annoyed by The Man of Reason. In addition to this, a feeling of empathy towards The Other could be triggered. As mentioned before, my aim for this film was for spectators to empathize with The Other. This scene is the final push in that direction.

Conclusion

In this thesis I've proposed a visualization of the bounded exploitation of nature and women during the Anthropocene according to post humanist, decolonial and ecofeminist theory. I used the method of practice as research, in order to find an answer to the research question. The result from the practice part of my research is a film plan of a short fictional ecocritical film, called *Nature Calling*, in which nature and women in the Anthropocene confront the spectator with their exploitation. According to decolonial and post humanist theory mentioned in chapter one, nature and women were both categorized as 'the Other' in times of The Enlightenment (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 3). This devaluation of both women and nature led to their bounded exploitation, as both were seen as non-human and therefore could be treated instrumentally (Huggan & Tiffin 2007, 6). The boundedness of their exploitation is visualized in the film plan through the character The Other, representing both nature and women. The Other takes form as female voices, who call upon The Man of Reason (representative for humanity), to express the exploitation she endures because he categorized her as 'worth less than'. In the scene 'living exploitation' different kinds of manners of exploitation which nature and women both endure are being named, while a big fire fills the screen. This fire represents the burning of the world; climate change and the exploitation of women.

With the aim of enabling spectators to empathize with the non-human in my film, I chose for a human character to be the representative of nature in the film plan. Since we, including the spectators, are living in the Anthropocene, I thought it would be easier for spectators to empathize with the non-human when a human is the representative. Secondly, I chose female voices to speak for nature because the image of the woman as representative for nature was used before in different cultures. Finally, I decided to create a story people could identify with, in order to address the spectators' memories and knowledge to trigger emotions (Marks 2000, 12). Therefore, I chose to tell a personal, emotional story between the two characters The Other and The Man of Reason. To stimulate the spectator to feel empathy for the non-human, which is represented through the character of The Other, I decided to make the character of The Man of Reason arrogant and The Other sympathetic. However, since the response of spectators depends on their private, cultural and historical contexts, and therefore cannot determine the effects of this film on the emotions of the people that will watch it.

Since film has the ability to produce and reproduce normative ideas about gender roles and the power relations therein and since it has the capacity to change the structures of our cultural norms and values, I've used feminist film theory to counter stereotypes and dominant beliefs (Olivieri 2017,

208). Thus, I decided not to visualize women in one body or voice, to show the plurality of womanhood and de-essentialize the woman in my film plan. To counter the idea that the binary between the human and the non-human is natural, I created a storyline which follows the historical periods in which the categorization between the human and the non-human was produced according to decolonial and post humanist theory, to show that this binary has been constructed and therefore could be deconstructed as well. To undo the belief that humans are superior to the non-human, I decided to create a dream-like non-human world in the film plan, opposed to the cold world of the humans, represented through the appartement of The Man of Reason.

As my film plan is based on my own position in society, lived experience, used theories and vision on this topic, my visualization of the bounded exploitation of women and nature is specific and situated. To make a real change in the structures of our cultural norms and values, more cultural outputs that counter normative ideas around women and nature are needed, especially during the current climate crisis. In order to change how humans interact with nature, new stories which describe a different connection to the non-human are needed. Therefore, I call upon other artists, writers and filmmakers to create the stories and culture of tomorrow, in which the human does not place itself in the center anymore but shares the world with all Others.

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