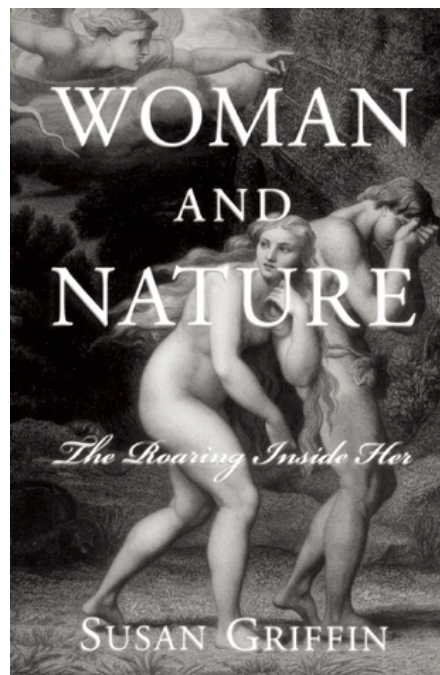




Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her

Susan Griffin

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In this famously provocative cornerstone of feminist literature, Susan Griffin explores the identification of women with the earth—both as sustenance for humanity and as victim of male rage. Starting from Plato's fateful division of the world into spirit and matter, her analysis of how patriarchal Western philosophy and religion have used language and science to bolster their power over both women and nature is brilliant and persuasive, coming alive in poetic prose.

Griffin draws on an astonishing range of sources—from timbering manuals to medical texts to Scripture and classical literature—in showing how destructive has been the impulse to disembody the human soul, and how the long separated might once more be rejoined. Poet Adrienne Rich calls *Woman and Nature* “perhaps the most extraordinary nonfiction work to have merged from the matrix of contemporary female consciousness—a fusion of patriarchal science, ecology, female history and feminism, written by a poet who has created a new form for her vision. ...The book has the impact of a great film or a fresco; yet it is intimately personal, touching to the quick of woman's experience.”

Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her Details

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Michael Currier says

re-reading this after first reading it a long long time ago: high school: I bought it in hard cover.
Have you ever read it?

Anne says

Perhaps if I read this book in a context outside of required reading for a college class, I may have enjoyed this book. But I doubt it. I am a proud and vocal feminist, but this book is painful. I am one of the students for whom this was a "tough read." Even after being prepared that I was to read this text as "images and feelings," I could not enjoy any aspect of the book - its style, its ideas, its themes. Really, just nothing. It is a collection of creative writing essays that portray women as helpless victims. It was a 200+ page long whimper and ended with a foot stomp. Only the quotes that lead into each section are annotated, so it is impossible to tell from which sources the author derives her statements. She uses quotations but then doesn't cite where the quotations come from. For example on page 24, she writes "'Nature is the art of God,' it is declared." She uses quotation marks but then doesn't write where the quote came from. Where is it declared? In whose speech was it declared? In which text was it written? Is it in the bible? Am I supposed to just recognize the quote as common knowledge as if it is "We hold these truths to be self-evident"? Additionally, the repetitive nature of the writing with the "it is said," "it is declared," "it is explained," blanket statements and the stream of consciousness style are unpleasant to read. Opening to a random page (38), the repetitive style of "it is said" or similar phrase was used thirteen times ON ONE PAGE. It is difficult for me to derive any useful ideas from the text because I cannot get past the tedious writing style. I cannot wait to leave this book in a random cafe for someone else to pick up and hopefully they can give this book the kind of love and admiration that I just cannot muster for it.

Richard says

As a man, this book has been incredibly insightful to me. Susan Griffin uses words to weave images beyond the words itself in order to illustrate a feminine perspective on our world and society. Beautifully crafted and communicated. This book not only moved me, but brought me wisdom and newfound respect for the feminine.

Elnaz says

"we are the rocks, we are soil, we are trees...we are solid elements, cause and effect, determinism and objectivity...matter. we are flesh, we breathe. we are her body: we speak"

excerpt from the book

Tatiana says

Powerful and poetic. Griffin looks at the history of the oppression of woman, going back and forth between a patriarchal voice, and a female voice that slowly grasps its own power. Amazing revelations about the role of witch hunts in the destruction of women's knowledge and community, as well as the disturbing similarities between the treatment of women and that of animals.

Elisa says

Poetic, angry and grating. I didn't enjoy reading most of it, but I had some inspiration at several points throughout.

Victoria Haf says

Este libro es una joya, una visión que abarca el todo del sufrimiento de la naturaleza y como se relaciona con el sufrimiento femenino. No está escrito de manera lineal sino muchas voces se entretienen, está dividido en varias partes donde vas viajando por el pensamiento occidental patriarcal, me gustó mucho el principio donde, mediante una línea del tiempo, empieza a comparar los acontecimientos históricos importantes y la idea que se tenía de las mujeres en ese momento (por ejemplo la caza a las brujas con el renacimiento, la mamá de Kepler acusada de ser bruja) y como el pensamiento cristiano va evolucionando en el pensamiento científico. Luego las voces del bosque, la tierra, las vacas, los caballos mezclada con las voces de las mujeres, la voz de la contaminación, de las consecuencias, de la interconexión, los elefantes. Es un libro que a veces resulta difícil por lo pesado que es el tema y por las múltiples tramas que están tejidas en un mismo párrafo pero también resulta esperanzador y muy bien investigado, la bibliografía es muy amplia y hay libros de todo tipo. Esta señora sabe escribir y sabe conectar y te hace sentir de todas cosas

Penthesilea says

Wonderful!

Mo says

It's not often you read a book that discards every rule, convention, and structure of narrative and analytical writing and yet remains narratively gripping and analytically piercing. *Woman and Nature* is a sort of book-length prose poem. The first part details the development of masculine Western thought about women, nature, and the relationship between the two, interspersed with fragments of the feminine perspective. The second part is the response of women, making sense of their own experience. The book is filled with reinterpretations of the human relationship to nature expressed in profoundly beautiful language. Example:

"and the sunlight in the grass enters the body of the bird, *enters us*, she wrote on this paper, and the sunlight is pouring into my eyes from your eyes. Your eyes. Your eyes. The sun is in your eyes. I have made you smile. Your lips part. The sunlight in your mouth. Have I made the sun come into your mouth?"

It's of course true that when you look into someone's eyes, photons are reflecting off them into your retinas. And if they open their mouth to smile, sunlight is filling their mouth, which is why you can see it. But it probably wouldn't occur to you to think about it that way. It occurred to Susan Griffin! One of the most fun bits about reading radical writers is that since they reject the existing paradigm wholesale, they have to come up with entirely new things to replace it. The results, like this book, are often immensely creative.

Tracy Howe says

This book got under my skin. I loved it. I hated it. It made me frighteningly angry and incredibly sad. It spoke to me. I'm not even sure that I would qualify it as a book, except for its traditional format of printed pages bound between covers. It's more a work of art, winding down staircases and through corridors that I never knew were in the deeper recesses of my mind. I recommend it if you're interested in the messages women internalize as part of living in a male dominated society, and especially if you're interested in their undoing.

Jamie Leigh says

Such an incredibly intense and visual book. I found this really hard to read. I was super proud of myself when I finished it.

jeremy says

one of the most extraordinarily vehement and beautifully composed texts in the entire feminist canon.

"...she reads stories that have never been written. sees whole cities grow up, and the new growth of forests that were razed long ago. she sees all kinds of marvels far beyond what we ask her to see, things, she says, we could not even dream. we would think her raving, but she speaks to us so sweetly of what she says can be, that we too begin to see these things. we know her clarity for our own, and as for the way things are now, we grow most impatient."

Richard says

This book was a difficult read for me. There are many reasons for this - it is written in a poetic style (and I'm not big into poetry), it weaves in and out of topics (and I'm more linear), it is about a woman's nature being suppressed (and I am a man).

With all of that said, I am very glad I read this book. I wish I had read it earlier in my life, when it first came out, but I wasn't much into reading then. It is a very different lens with which to see the world and what it shows is important to see. I believe I learned, I definitely felt, and I plan to pursue some of the topics raised in future readings. Of particular interest is the very long history of witch burning and it's relationship to the suppression of strong women. I had no idea that this practice was so entrenched and went on for so long in western society (my history classes made it seem to be a short lived practice in Salem, MA).

I note that the reviews of this book by men are less enthusiastic than those by women. I believe that is due to the experiential and emotional nature of this book. Men in our society are much more limited in this regard. In other words, the reviews speak directly to the points Griffin writes about.

Peter Crockett says

The most important book I've read. I'm telling all my friends.

Steven says

In a variety of different voices and a very poetic prose style, Susan Griffin shows the damaging effects of being female in a patriarchal society and calls women to reclaim their bodies and voices to forge a future that pays homage to the mothers who fought in the past and sets a path for the daughters who will come to fight until "no trace is left [of life under patriarchy]" (218). The first section of the book is a litany of hypotheses men in science have made throughout history regarding such diverse topics as forestry, gynecology and manifest destiny. Interspersed with these lists are narratives that show how these scientific assumptions relate to the perception of women and men's often misogynistic association of the female with nature. The effect of this style inundates the reader with man's superior attitude and is therefore similar to what Griffin asserts is the experience of being raised as a female overwhelmed by these negative messages. Subtly, this collage effect also reveals the amazing strengths and gifts that women, such as Sacajawea (50-51), contributed to society, while at the same time exposing how the system of patriarchy exploited these women's skills and often took credit for their accomplishments. The rest of the book explores the history of the women's movement, mapping it mostly through metaphoric passages evoking women's self-discovery and the forming of a community in which mothers and daughters can support and foster positive self-esteem for generations of women to come.

Overall, this book outlines the same material and comes to the same conclusions as Adrienne Rich's *Woman Born*, the only major difference being that Ms. Griffin uses less direct language and more poetic devices to show and not tell the reader about the experiences and conditions of women in the world today. Usually this is a positive strategy in writing, but in this case, I'm not sure my reading of this text would have been as immediately lucid had I not read Ms. Rich's exceptional book. There were many sections of Griffin's writing where its generalities and overuse of third person pronouns made it very easy to disengage from the text and its messages. Ultimately though, aside from this one distraction, this book is a valuable study in both its theme and style and peaks my interest to seek out other poetry and prose by this fresh and engaging author.

Chris says

3.5 rounded up

Disclaimer: ARC via Netgalley, courtesy of Open Road Media.

This book is not going to be to everyone's tastes. It is part fiction, part fact, part essay, part poem. Griffin's style, at least in this volume, reminds one of Eduardo Galeano's style when writing about the discovery of the Americas. It is almost episodic, but no less powerful for that.

The book links women to nature, drawing upon what various philosophers, rulers, and historians wrote or

said. Of course, the majority of these writers are men. Griffin, however, takes it further; she compares the domestication of nature to the role of women. One of the most powerful sequences is about horses and dressage. It's an interesting concept. While the casual reader might think that Griffin makes up most of her information, this is far from the case. The book also includes notes, which can be quickly adapted into a further reading list.

While Griffin's book didn't teach me anything new about women in history, her writing is powerful and compelling.

Ashley says

One of the best books I have read in a long time. Susan Griffin's writing is poetic, haunting, visceral. The history and experience of women, revealed so beautifully and juxtaposed elegantly with the development of scientific thoughts about the universe, are unforgettable and significant for anyone interested in "expos[ing] the hypocrisy of standard assumptions of gender and the environment."

Bryan says

I realize this is considered a classic in feminist literature, but it is not anything like what I was expecting and I found Griffin's stream of consciousness style to be very distracting. This is not a coherent narrative of any sort, and might more properly be described as "prose poetry," at times somewhat in the direction of beat poetry. There were parts I found quite profound, when some aspects of traditional misogyny were contrasted, by free association, with cows and other domesticated animals. Women have traditionally been subjugated in ways that make them more animal than human in terms of the way that men seem to view their role, and this is where Griffin speaks powerful truth. My problem is that these moments of insight were lost in the tangle of, at times, numbing tumble of words and ideas.

Sierra Mollenkopf says

Experimental and poetic!

Louise Hewett says

I read this incredible book over two weeks and it cut me to the core. I was in the middle of writing my second book and it clarified so many things for me, encouraging me to write with my own voice without fear. A true gift.
