T.C.
EGE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

SEARCHING FOR CONNECTIONS BETWEEN NATURE AND WOMAN: AN ECOFEMINIST READING OF SELECTED AMERICAN NOVELS

Doktora Tezi

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Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Zeynep Asya ALTUĞ

İZMİR

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AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI
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STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

I hereby declare that this thesis, titled *Searching for Connections Between Nature and Woman: An Ecofeminist Reading of Selected American Novels*, which I have submitted to the Institute of Social Sciences at Ege University, is my own original work; that I have acted in accordance with scientific ethical principles and rules at all stages of my study, including preparation, data collection, analysis, and presentation of information; and that I have cited all data and information obtained within the scope of this study and included these sources in the bibliography.

Ceren SİVİŞ EZER

PREFACE

This study grew out of my academic interest in literature, Nature, women, and the complex intersections among them. Ecofeminism has always fascinated me as it provides a useful theoretical framework for discussing environmental destruction, gender-based oppression, exploitation, and the hierarchical dualisms rooted in Western thought. My study focuses on selected American novels through themes such as women-Nature connections, body, community, exploitation, and healing. The process through which this thesis came into being has been both intellectually challenging and personally transformative, contributing to my emotional resilience, self-discipline, and individual growth. Hopefully, this dissertation will make a contribution to the field of ecofeminist literary criticism.

İzmir, 2026 Ceren SİVİŞ EZER

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the selected American novels: *Solar Storms* (1997) by Linda Hogan, *Prodigal Summer* (2001) and *Animal Dreams* (1992) by Barbara Kingsolver, *Parable of the Sower* (2019) by Octavia Butler, and *So Far From God* (2005) by Ana Castillo, within the framework of the ecofeminist perspective. It seeks to highlight how these novels portray the connections between women and Nature as well as systems of domination and oppression. The theoretical framework consists of Val Plumwood's, Karen J. Warren's, Greta Gaard's, Vandana Shiva's, and Maria Mies' thoughts on ecofeminism. By means of close reading as the principal method, the study is grounded in ecofeminist theory, specifically discussions on dualism, domination, control, relationality, interconnection, interdependency, care ethics, ecofeminist ethics, and material connection. The close reading and analysis of the novels problematize dualisms existing within the Western world of thought and foreground the interconnections between women and Nature, which are not essentialist; to the contrary, they are relational, political, historic, ethical, and material. The dualistic systems and the harms they cause to women and Nature are explored through metaphors of wounds and scars, whereas the female characters' determination to overcome these systems and find alternative ways of existing in harmony with all beings is explored through the metaphors of healing and restoring wholeness. This study contributes to ecofeminist literary criticism through the analysis of selected contemporary novels by foregrounding patriarchy's domination over women and Nature, as well as the female characters' non-anthropocentric perspectives on Nature, and the healing potential of these perspectives.

Keywords: ecofeminism, ecofeminist literary criticism, women-Nature connections, care ethics, ecofeminist ethics, metaphors of wounding and healing

ÖZET

Bu tez seçili Amerikan romanlarını ekofeminizm perspektifinden incelemektedir. Bu çalışma romanlarda var olan kadın ve Doğa bağlantılarını öne çıkararak, her ikisine de uygulanan tahakkümü göstermeyi amaçlar. Teorik çerçeve Val Plumwood, Karen J. Warren, Greta Gaard, Vandana Shiva ve Maria Mies' gibi ekofeminist düşünür ve filozofların fikirleri ile oluşturulmuştur. Seçili romanlar yakın okuma yöntemi ile incelenmiştir. Bu romanların analizi ile Batı düşünce dünyasında yer alan dualizm ve tahakkümü eleştirilirken, buna karşı duran kadın karakterlerin Doğa ile olan ilişkisel, politik, tarihsel, etik ve materyal bağlarını özcü olmayan bir yaklaşımla öne çıkarır. Düalist sistemler ve bunların kadınlara ve Doğaya verdiği zararlar, yara ve yara izi metaforları aracılığı ile incelenirken, kadın karakterlerin bu sistemlerin üstesinden gelme ve tüm varlıklarla uyum içinde var olmanın alternatif yollarını bulma konusundaki kararlılıkları ise iyileşme ve bütünlüğü yeniden sağlama metaforları aracılığı ile ele alınmaktadır. Bu çalışma ekofeminist edebiyat eleştirisine roman analizleri ile katkıda bulunurken aynı zamanda patriarkanın Doğa'yı ve kadını hakimiyet altına alışını, kadın karakterlerin buna rağmen Doğa'ya yönelik antroposentrik olmayan bakışlarını ve bu perspektifin iyileştirici yönünü görünür kılar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ekofeminizm, ekofeminist edebiyat eleştirisi, kadın-doğa bağlantıları, bakım etiği, ekofeminist etik, yaralama ve iyileşme metaforları

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE ..... **iv**

ABSTRACT ..... **v**

ÖZET ..... **vi**

TABLE OF CONTENTS ..... **vii**

INTRODUCTION **1**

CHAPTER ONE **13**

THEORY OF ECOFEMINISM AND ITS CONTEMPORARY EXTENSIONS **13**

1.1. Situating Ecofeminism as a Literary-Critical Framework **13**

1.2. Emergence of Ecofeminist Thought **16**

1.3. Dualism, Domination, and Control of Culture and Nature **20**

1.3.1 Understanding Dualism **20**

1.3.2 Domination: Establishing A System **29**

1.4. Searching for Connections between Women and Nature **40**

1.4.1. Revisiting the Woman and Nature's Connection **40**

1.4.1.1. Women and Nature: Sites for Material Connections **51**

1.4.1.2. Essentialism Debate **57**

1.4.1.3. Connection or Relationality: Nature in the "Flesh" **59**

1.4.2. Women and Animals: Oppression and Resistance **64**

1.4.3. Women and the Land **71**

1.4.4. Women and Water **75**

1.5. Care, Relationality, and Ethical Ecologies **79**

1.5.1. Ethics of Care **80**

1.5.2. Relational Ontologies **81**

1.6. Spiritual, Indigenous, and Alternative Ecologies **83**

1.7. Contemporary Expansion of Ecofeminist Philosophy **90**

1.8. Theoretical Positioning of the Present Dissertation **94**

CHAPTER TWO **96**

ANALYSIS OF LINDA HOGAN'S *SOLAR STORMS* **96**

2.1. Contextual Background **96**

2.2. Plot Overview and Key Elements of *Solar Storms*..... 98
2.3. Capitalism, Colonialism, and the Domination of Nature..... 101
2.4. Connections Between Women and Nature and Women's Stand Against Patriarchy..... 108
2.4.1. Woman's Body and Land..... 109
2.4.2. Women and Water and Water as a Connecting Element..... 113
2.4.3. Women and Animals..... 116
2.4.4. Defiance, Mending, and Survival Through Relationality..... 122
CHAPTER THREE..... 125
ANALYSIS OF BARBARA KINGSOLVER'S *PRODIGAL SUMMER*..... 125
3.1. Contextual Background..... 125
3.2. Plot Overview and Key Elements of Prodigal Summer..... 126
3.3. Points of Convergence Between Nature and Women..... 131
3.3.1. Fertility and Cycles of Woman and Nature..... 135
3.3.2. Nature and Women as a Subject as Opposed to an Object..... 143
3.4. Patriarchy, and Compulsion to Control Nature and Women: Ecofeminist Ethic against Patriarchy..... 152
3.4.1. Hunting Predators and Man as a Predator..... 164
3.5. Ecological Consciousness of Female Characters..... 168
3.5.1. Deanna Wolfe: Interconnection with the Wilderness..... 169
3.5.2. Nannie Rawley: Generational Ecological Wisdom..... 171
3.5.3. Lusa Maluf: An Entomologist and A Female Farmer..... 175
CHAPTER FOUR..... 179
ANALYSIS OF BARBARA KINGSOLVER'S *ANIMAL DREAMS*..... 179
4.1. Contextual Background..... 179
4.2. Plot Overview and Key Elements..... 179
4.3. Ego- or Eco-: Codi's Alienation and Estrangement..... 184
4.4. The Earth: A Site for Dead Things or An Organism Brimming with Vitality..... 187
4.5. Native Americans' Outlook on Nature..... 191
4.6. Identity and Sense of Belonging Through Connection to Female Community and Nature..... 197
CHAPTER FIVE..... 208

ANALYSIS OF OCTAVIA BUTLER'S *PARABLE OF THE SOWER*..... 208

5.1. Contextual Background..... 208

5.2. Plot Overview and Key Elements..... 211

5.3. Patriarchy's Exploitation and Subjugation of Nature and Women..... 216

5.4. Lauren Olamina: The Woman's Body, Vulnerability, and Ecological Consciousness and Ethics of Lauren..... 224

5.5. Earthseed: An Alternative Ecofeminist Belief System..... 228

5.6. Community, Care, and Ecofeminist Ethics of Earthseed..... 235

CHAPTER SIX..... 240

ANALYSIS OF ANA CASTILLO'S *SO FAR FROM GOD*..... 240

6.1. Contextual Background..... 240

6.2. Plot Overview and Key Elements..... 243

6.3. Connection with Animals and Nature..... 247

6.3.1. Caridad's Corazón (Heart)..... 249

6.3.1.1. Caridad's Connection to Earth..... 255

6.3.1.1.1. Caridad and Her Beloved's Departure from the Surface World into an Earthly Existence..... 261

6.3.2. La Loca and Her Connection to Nature..... 266

6.3.2.1. La Loca's Connection to Water..... 268

6.3.3. Shunning Her Roots and Choosing Materialism: Fe's Story and Her Demise..... 276

6.3.3.1. Fertility and Infertility of Women and the Earth..... 278

6.3.4. Sofi: *La Mayor* of Toma and The Mother of Saints..... 282

CONCLUSION..... 284

WORKS CITED..... 294

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS..... 306

TEŞEKKÜR..... 308

CURRICULUM VITAE..... 310

INTRODUCTION

Ecofeminism, a term coined by the French feminist writer Françoise d'Eaubonne, stems from the idea that patriarchy uses the same methods to dominate and control both women and Nature. This way of thinking has emerged and gained importance due to increasing concerns among feminists, especially since the 1970s. Some feminist thinkers noted the interconnectedness between the domination of women by patriarchal norms and domination of Nature by capitalism; therefore, they formulated what we call ecofeminism today at the intersection of environmental and feminist movements to liberate both the human and the non-human from the subjugation of the patriarchy and capitalism. Ecofeminism explores the methods used to dominate both women and Nature while also delving into the systematic and forcibly rendered invisible interconnectedness between the human and the non-human worlds.

Carolyn Merchant is one of the founding figures of ecofeminist thought. She explores the turning point when Nature lost her status as a sacred force to become a mechanical device at the service of humanity. In her book, *The Death of Nature, Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1990), Merchant points to the Scientific Revolution as the point of rupture in the human perspective of Nature, transforming her from organic to mechanistic. Merchant suggests that this worldview shift from the view of Nature as a "nurturing mother" to a machine. Criticizing modernity, Merchant lists the major figures of the Scientific Revolution such as Mersenne, Gassendi, Bacon, Descartes, Harvey, and Newton, as responsible for this final break.

According to the Australian ecofeminist thinker Val Plumwood, the system of domination is built through creating binary structures, which she calls dualism. These dualisms are hierarchical. The hierarchical structures existing within dualistic systems are used as forms of justification for the Western outlook on both women and Nature and the environmental problems caused by human activities. One significant result of these dualisms is that "human identity" is considered "outside" of Nature (1993, 2). This can be considered the root cause of all problems faced due to the dualistic way of considering the world. When *man*kind severed itself from the whole, the severance brought with itself many issues. The most significant one being

the fact that humanity no longer feels a sense of ethical responsibility toward the Earth. As an "outsider," *man*kind loots and pillages, plunders and ravages Nature for her resources without being burdened by guilt over its wrongdoing. Developing this concept further, Plumwood maintains that dualism has five characteristics: "backgrounding (denial)" (1993, 48), "radical exclusion (hyperseparation)" (1993, 49), "incorporation (relational definition)" (1993, 52), "instrumentalism (objectification)" (1993, 53), and "homogenisation or stereotyping" (1993, 53). By utilizing these methods, the patriarchy dominates and controls the masses, as well as maintaining this system of dualisms continuously.

Building on these conceptual foundations, Karen J. Warren calls the rationalization of oppression and control within the patriarchal framework the "logic of domination." Basically, in this outlook, hierarchical structures are created, and people are divided into groups of "Ups" and "Downs." Because *Ups* are endowed with faculties—such as "mind, reason or rationality"—purportedly non-existent in *Downs*, they supposedly become capable of dominating and subjugating *Downs*. In this structure, "value-hierarchical thinking" is also used to maintain the system of oppression, as it is another way of legitimizing the system (2000, 46-48). This logic of domination reveals that power asymmetries within patriarchal societies are created through dualisms and institutionalized inequality.

Together, ecofeminist theorists have demonstrated that women and Nature are dominated, oppressed, and abused in similar methods, thus making their oppression interconnected and structural, and the systems of legitimization follow the same paths as well. Ecofeminist scholarship soon started to see that not only those based on gender and species but *all* forms of domination are intimately interconnected. Greta Gaard theorizes that ecofeminism stands at the intersection of interlocking systems of oppressions, namely, "racism, sexism, classism, colonialism, speciesism, and the environment" (2011, 27). From this point of view, ecofeminism is not only the common ground for the oppression of women and Nature; it also attempts to address an array of complex issues consisting of many different subjugated and otherized groups.

Gaard's perspective is further reconfigured through Stacy Alaimo's concept of trans-corporeality. To explain, the term refers to the human body's embeddedness in its environment and the impossibility of separating them, as the bodies are thought of as porous and permeable, making the human body and the non-human world

entangled (2010, 2) in both visible and invisible webs. Put simply, even though dualisms attempt to deny the human body's interconnectedness with its environment and Nature, reality does not reflect the same conclusion. Humanity's futile attempt to describe its identity as separate from and above the more-than-human world arguably might result in catastrophe for all beings. Thereby, the idea of trans-corporeality challenges the patriarchal delusion of grandeur, uniqueness, and singularity of the human. Humans cannot be the one and only; they are one of many. Taken together, Warren illustrates the justification of domination, and Gaard expands the idea of domination to intersectional ecofeminism, while Alaimo materializes the interconnectedness of the human body as the site where all ideas above meet.

Another theorist who explores connections between human bodies and their environment is Astrida Neimanis. She mainly focuses on water as a medium and connector of all. She theorizes that "we are bodies of water." Because water goes through all and connects all, the idea of borders between different "bodies of water" is impossible to conceive. This is the opposite of Western belief that argues bodies are separate and individual (2017, 1, 2). Neimanis also points out the risk of dumping toxic waste in water and other environments. No water can be separated from other water sources. Furthermore, because it is impossible to distinguish between "breast milk" (2017, 37) and other water sources, the pollutants left in bodies of water find their way to human or animal bodies and go into the bodies of babies.

Carol J. Adams, an American writer, feminist, and animal rights activist, argues that consuming meat renders both animals and women as "absent referents" (2010, 66). Through consuming the dead bodies of animals, humans become a part of the patriarchal culture's political, symbolic, and ethical practices. These practices can never be aligned with feminism or ecofeminism, as in both philosophies, the theorists believe that patriarchy utilizes similar methods for oppression and domination of the masses.

Another significant ecofeminist theorist is Indian environmentalist and author Vandana Shiva. Her political views on the issues of gender, class, and race are groundbreaking in the ecofeminist field. Her ideas maintain that oppression does not happen in a vacuum; to the contrary, it happens simultaneously for many groups by utilizing the same methods, such as women, Nature, Indigenous or local communities, and colonized peoples. Additionally, she argues that the narration of development is another alibi for the former colonists in the postcolonial era, as they

use this narration to dominate the masses and further their objectives of accumulating more capital. Because this so-called development hurts more than it heals, Shiva calls this process "maldevelopment" (1988, 1-4). She also criticizes the Western scientific method and accuses it of being "reductionist" as it does not see Nature as a whole; to the contrary, it maintains that Nature is divisible, measurable, controllable, and exploitable (Shiva 2014, xviii).

Another theorist whose ideas align with ecofeminism and care ethics is Lori Gruen. Her idea of "entangled empathy" brings to the fore the connections between humans and animals and illustrates an alternative point of view regarding the non-human world. To her ethical understanding, the classical ethic or ethics of rights cannot be utilized to consider our relations to the more-than-human world; therefore, instead of an objective point of view, she suggests "caring perception" (Gruen 2015, 15), which aims to alter the way humans regard Nature. In this way of perceiving the world, relations and entanglements of humans with the non-human world must entail ethical responsibility.

A leading figure working on the idea of care ethics is Carol Gilligan. Her ideas about the differences between male and female identity formation are crucial for this study. According to her, the male sense of self is built upon success and reaching goals set in life rather than connections forged with one another (Gilligan 2003, 163). To the contrary, female identity formation is achieved through relations grounded in care and mutual attachment (Gilligan 2003, 164). To Gilligan, different ethical understandings of women and men stem from different identity formations of both sides. Female identity formation brings about what is referred to as ethics of care, which acknowledges the interdependence of all; that is, all are dependent and connected.

The spiritual, Indigenous, and alternative ecologies part of this dissertation are formulated through Paula Gunn Allen's, Winona LaDuke's, and Starhawk's ideas. Many scholars have found commonalities between ecofeminist thought and Indigenous and spiritual worldviews. These thought systems stand against patriarchal capitalism, maintaining that humanity is irrevocably interconnected with its environment. According to Allen, all beings are humans' relatives and "[l]ife is a circle, and everything has its place in it," and this is what she names "the sacred hoop" (1992, 16). To Allen, Native American cosmology follows the idea that the feminine is the driving force and core power, and it brings "harmony" for the people

and their relations with all beings (1992, 45, 46). Similarly to Allen, LaDuke contends that all beings, whether organic or inorganic, are humans' relatives. Furthermore, she states that these relations are the basis upon which their culture is built (1999, 2). This philosophy reflects the belief that Nature is not considered a mere background; to the contrary, humans are interconnected with the non-human world with closely knitted bonds, which is explained through familial bonds. Lastly, Starhawk explores a more spiritual understanding of ecofeminism. She believes that "sacred is immanent, embodied in the world" (2012, 8). That is, each being carries the sacred within itself. The idea of the immanence of the sacred stands in opposition to Western religious beliefs that consider the sacred as not material but divided from the material world and untouchable. Starhawk criticizes the "power-over" as it not only creates hierarchies but also justifies them. She challenges this vertical power structure with the idea of "power-from-within" (2012, 31). She calls this form of power "immanence" or "Goddess" (2012, 31). This calls forth a more harmonious living for the human and the non-human world, as there is no division or split between the two; that is, all beings are sacred and a part of the harmonious whole.

Expanding the ecofeminist thought and tracing its manifestations in the scene of contemporary ecological thought, this study focuses on Donna Haraway's ideas regarding humans' relationship with the more-than-human world. She points out the vulnerability of both humans and the more-than-human world, as we all share Earth; when it is harmed, all is affected by it. She suggests that humanity must not run from its responsibility toward Nature and its creatures. To her, it is important to "stay with the trouble" that is faced and "[live] and [die]" with the "damaged earth" (Haraway, 2016, 2). To explain, her philosophy maintains that humanity is a part of its environment and cannot be separated from it; therefore, humans must take responsibility and face the harm they inflicted on the Earth.

Together, these perspectives are applied in this dissertation to examine, explore, and analyze the selected American novels: *Solar Storms* (1997) by Linda Hogan, *Prodigal Summer* (2001) and *Animal Dreams* (1992) by Barbara Kingsolver, *Parable of the Sower* (2019) by Octavia Butler, and *So Far From God* (2005) by Ana Castillo through an ecofeminist lens. In these novels, the authors narrate representations of the relations and interconnectedness between women and Nature, depict patriarchal and capitalistic domination of women and Nature as well as other

otherized people, and illustrate how the severed bonds between women and Nature could be reconnected and reforged.

This study argues that ecofeminist reading of the selected American novels: *Solar Storms* (1997) by Linda Hogan, *Prodigal Summer* (2001) and *Animal Dreams* (1992) by Barbara Kingsolver, *Parable of the Sower* (2019) by Octavia Butler, and *So Far From God* (2005) by Ana Castillo exposes, and challenges hierarchical domination and anthropocentrism in patriarchal societies while searching for connections between women and Nature and simultaneously foregrounding interdependence and interconnectedness of the human and the non-human worlds, care ethics, and relationality. This particular argument will focus on the metaphors of wounds, fragmentation, and healing, in which capitalist-patriarchal norms are perpetrators of the wounded bodies of women and Nature, whereas the healing processes come from reestablishing the bonds between women and Nature as communities of wholeness. By doing so, this dissertation contributes to the present discussions of ecological relationality, interdependency, and interconnectedness of the human and the non-human worlds.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, the theoretical framework of ecofeminist philosophy, as well as its present-day echoes in academia, is presented. The chapter attempts to look at Western thought and the patriarchal system through a critical lens, highlighting the methods the system uses to dominate and control. Firstly, ecofeminism is explored as a literary critical framework by framing the existing scholarship, such as Patrick D. Murphy's and Josephine Donovan's ecofeminist literary critical theories. Next, the emergence of ecofeminist thought is discussed by referring to ecofeminist philosophers such as Carolyn Merchant, Karen J. Warren, Vandana Shiva, and Maria Mies. The next part of the chapter focuses on concepts such as dualism, domination, and control from an ecofeminist perspective. The philosophers and scholars that are referred to are Val Plumwood, especially her thoughts on dualistic structures existing within patriarchal society; Karen J. Warren's theory of the logic of domination, in which she argues the justification methods of domination; and Carolyn Merchant, who explains how the means of domination and superiority emerged in civilization are also discussed. Another much-quoted ecofeminist thinker, Shiva's theory of maldevelopment is also used to build the backbone of this work's critical outlook. Later, the connections between women and Nature are examined, though it is crucial to note that these connections do not stem

from essentialist perspectives; to the contrary, they are "conceptual, empirical, historical, and causal, linguistic, socioeconomic, epistemological, ethical, political, symbolic, and spiritual" (Warren 2000, 21). These connections will be examined during the analyses of the novels as they constitute the groundwork for close reading for this dissertation. Moreover, the material connections between Nature and women will be explored from Maria Mies' perspective on the exploitation of women's labor and the devaluation of Nature. Another ecofeminist thinker and writer, Ariel Salleh's thoughts on capitalist patriarchy's tendency to devalue women's subsistence work and the importance of local knowledge are examined. Another crucial part of the chapter answers the question of essentialism debates within both feminist and ecofeminist scholars by quoting Warren and Greta Gaard. Next, in an attempt to broaden the scope of ecofeminist perspectives and bring the theory to the present, Stacy Alaimo's trans-corporality theory is explored as it has many parallels and similarities with ecofeminist thought, which is also quoted in her book many times, helping her shape her theory. Another feminist, Lori Gruen's ideas on empathy and its contribution to creating a new and better-suited ethical outlook that does not discriminate will be discussed. Later, the connections between women, animals, land, and water will be discussed by foregrounding Gaard's, Carol J Adams', Josephine Donovan's, Marti Kheel's, Shiva's, and Astrida Neimanis' theoretical insights. Next, care ethics and relational ontology, and their implications for ecofeminist ethics, will be analyzed by centering Carol Gilligan's and Val Plumwood's notions on ethics. After that, a more spiritual as well as Indigenous perspective on the ecofeminist body of work will be highlighted by bringing to the fore the arguments of Paula Gunn Allen, Winona LaDuke, and Starhawk. Furthermore, the contemporary expansion of ecofeminist thought and theory will be discussed through Gaard's, Alaimo's, Gruen's, and Donna Haraway's theories.

In the second chapter of this study, Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* (1997) will be analyzed from an ecofeminist perspective. The chapter foregrounds the wounds left behind by the colonial-capitalist and patriarchal domination of the land and women. Angel is ripped from her family and land by the government as a small child. This leaves her marooned, isolated, and alienated. When she comes back to her land and the matriarchs of her family, the rupture in her psyche starts to heal through her reconnection. The study examines the Western concept of development as a form of oppression, trauma, and ecological violence reflected in the lives of the characters.

The ongoing dam project becomes a symbolic representation of capitalist patriarchal control. The dam building site is a laceration and a wound inflicted on Nature. The chapter also analyzes the connections between women characters and the land, water, and animals and how these connections heal the wound left behind by dualistic thinking. It foregrounds the links between Angel, Hannah, and Loretta's scars and traumas and the traumas and destruction the land faced at the hands of colonizers. Lastly, the chapter reads the women's stand against the dam builders as relational healing and collective female resistance against patriarchy. Moreover, Angel's personal healing and identity transformation are reflected in Nature and the ecosystem of the ancestral lands. By doing so, the chapter foregrounds the Nature-women connections and collective women's resistance against patriarchy. These connections and women's activism function as a healing force that brings together the demarcated whole.

The next chapter focuses on Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Prodigal Summer* (2001). The connections between women and Nature are examined through the characters Deanna, Nannie, and Lusa. The tensions between the ecologically conscious female characters and the male characters' indifference to Nature are explored by exemplifying ways of objectification of Nature versus endowing it with agency. In this context, the male characters are the inflicters of the wounds as they follow a dualistic worldview and separate themselves from Nature and become the controllers and dominators. Female characters, on the other hand, follow a holistic approach; thus, instead of looking from the outside, they prefer to see the connections they have with Nature. Furthermore, they forge even stronger connections by recognizing their ethical responsibility toward Nature and the more-than-human world and heal the wounds left behind by patriarchy and capitalism. Another tension in the novel is explored by comparing the ecofeminist ethical understanding against the patriarchal one. The female characters, Deanna, Nannie, and Lusa, are significantly more aware of Nature and its processes. Deanna is a ranger in the Appalachian Mountains. After an unsuccessful marriage, she decides to make use of her knowledge of predators, specifically coyotes, in the Zebulon region and save the ecosystem from poachers and hunters. Her unique position and physical closeness to Nature allow the novel to lay bare how patriarchal dualisms such as culture/Nature and man/woman result in wounds that are inflicted on both women and the natural world. In this context, her immediate and ideal relationship with

Nature becomes a means of exposing the logic of separation, objectification, and domination. Through Deanna and the female coyote family, the author emphasizes the importance and significance of even the smallest of creatures and the impossibility of solitude. At first glance, Deanna's situation might give the illusion of isolation; however, she is only isolated from human society. She is living as a part of the biotic community of Zebulon Mountain. Nannie is an elderly woman growing her apples using organic agricultural methods. The tension between her elderly neighbour, Garnett, who is a devout follower of so-called scientific methods of farming, and Nannie makes the readers question the outlook on Nature and the ethical consequences of every action taken. Garnett represents Western and patriarchal perspectives. Through him, the author highlights the limitedness and single-mindedness of the patriarchal parochial mindset. However, he is not without redeeming qualities. Even though Garnett comes across as almost hateful and irritable at first, as the novel comes to an end, Kingsolver illustrates these qualities cultivated with Nannie's brave endeavors. Thus, Kingsolver presents to her readers an inclusive perspective towards Nature, indicating that all hope might not be lost regarding the outlook on Nature. Another protagonist, Lusa, is an entomologist who is aware of the significance of even the seemingly most insignificant creatures for the web of life. She leaves her job at the university and moves to the Zebulon region to marry the love of her life; however, when he dies suddenly, she must face the fact that she is a stranger in a strange land that was bequeathed to her by her late husband. She must face the reality of Zebulon and her own principles, attempting to find common ground that she can ethically accept and live with.

The next chapter is another work written by Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams* (1991), focusing on the protagonist Codi and her reluctant reunion with her sick father and the community of Grace. This dissertation focuses on Codi's alienation and estrangement from both the female community of Grace and Nature. Later, she discovers her bonds, reforges the broken ones, and explores her identity as a part of the Graces' biotic community. Having gone through traumas of losing her mother and later her baby as a teenager, Codi loses her connection to her relational self and becomes an estranged individual following a patriarchal identity model. Her wounds, traumas, and the detachment from Nature are a reflection of the traumas Nature faces due to a patriarchal worldview that separates humans from Nature. Secretly admiring and looking up to her sister, Hallie, due to her more self-sacrificial

choices in life, Codi does not even remember that she used to be the model Hallie followed as they were little girls. Through the forgetfulness of both the individuals and the nation, the author attempts to foreground the dire consequences of severing one's connections to their environment in order to elevate the self above the other. These consequences are losing the original and relational self and the connection to both the human and the non-human communities. The wounds that are inflicted by cutting off bonds and connections to Nature result in Codi's detachment and alienation. However, as Codi becomes more attuned to her environment and finds the courage to heal and gain back her relational identity through her reforged connections with the female community of Grace and Nature, she helps heal the biotic community and the more-than-human world, thus mending the wound opened by patriarchy. Codi, though reluctantly at first, helps the Grace community stand against the Black Mountain Company, poisoning the land, causing both the human and the non-human communities harm. In the novel, the act of poisoning the land, water, human and non-human bodies is another materialization of the scar left by patriarchal capitalism. To repair the damage and reclaim their biotic community from the harm done to it by patriarchy, women raise money by selling handmade peacock piñatas, as well as collecting evidence to declare Grace a historical site. Realizing she was not as lonely and as rootless as she thought at first, Codi becomes a part of the community by taking action against patriarchal developmental projects that do more harm than good. Furthermore, she and Loyd rekindle their high school romance. The couple explores the area and Loyd's ingenious culture. By doing so, Loyd becomes another helping hand for Codi on her journey of rediscovering her true self by integrating with the female community of Grace, as well as the biotic community.

The fifth chapter explores Octavia Butler's novel, *Parable of the Sower* (2019), through an ecofeminist lens. Set in a dystopian world, the novel is read as a warning against dualism and other justification mechanisms existing within patriarchal society, as they might end in disaster for all beings, human and animal alike. The metaphor of scarred and wounded Earth manifests itself through the horrifying acts that take place in the novel. For example, drug users burn forests and human and non-human communities for pleasure; people are tortured and cannibalized, and women and girls are violated at every turn without remorse. The protagonist, a teenager named Lauren, living in a walled community, realizes that simply separating oneself from the horrible acts of humanity cannot heal the

gangrenous wound; to the contrary, it only covers it, and it keeps festering. Wise beyond her years, she sees that her father's way of dealing with the harsh reality of this dystopian world is not enough to overcome their impossible situation. She suffers from a syndrome called hyperempathy, which causes her to feel other beings' pain and pleasure. Even though society considers this a vulnerability, this dissertation reads it as a power that gives her a unique perspective and helps her become embedded in her environment. Through her empathetic perspective, she develops a new philosophy/religion called Earthseed that arguably follows an ecofeminist ethical outlook that will help heal the wound that is caused by the separation of humans and Nature. Earthseed's main tenet is "God is Change" (2019, 3), through which the novel explores themes such as survival, adaptability, and alternative spirituality from an ecofeminist perspective.

The last chapter is an ecofeminist reading of Ana Castillo's novel, *So Far From God* (2005). The novel is an example of magical realism, a trademark of telling stories in Chicana literature. Following a non-linear storytelling, the novel explores Sofia and her four daughters' trials and tribulations in a white patriarchal society. The metaphor of wounds left by patriarchy is demonstrated through the many misfortunes and violent acts that women face throughout the story. Furthermore, in the case of Fe's sickness and death, the novel illustrates that the same misfortunes are suffered by Nature as well. The chapter discusses La Loca's connection to Nature, especially through water and animals. She is depicted as a saint as she dies at the age of three and comes back to life a few hours later, claiming that she saw heaven and hell. Another story of a miracle takes place when Caridad is tortured and later restored to her former self. Following the restoration, she transforms into a woman connected with her environment. Through Caridad's strong bond with her mare, Corazon, and the earth, the author illustrates the impossibility of separating humans from Nature. Caridad's embeddedness and connections to Nature suggest that human existence can be relational, interdependent, and embedded within the natural world. The novel then foregrounds Sofia's empowerment as a woman and her taking action to save her community from poverty. Under her leadership, the community does organic agriculture and forms cooperatives that help women earn their own money. Sofia's actions help heal the wounds inflicted by patriarchy. While La Loca, Caridad, and Sofia are relational characters that can be considered following ecofeminist thought's principles in their lives, Fe is the opposite, as she rejects her culture and her

connections to her family as well as Nature, following her dreams of wealth and material aspirations. She gets a job at Acme International, which is a factory using highly harmful chemicals to clean arms. She gets cancer and dies a tragic death, proving that the system she dedicated herself to cares about neither her nor Nature, as due to the harmful chemical waste from the company, animals die as well. The chapter foregrounds the invisible suffering of women and Nature, and these women stand against the systems of domination by forging their own path to healing and living in harmony.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORY OF ECOFEMINISM AND ITS CONTEMPORARY EXTENSIONS

1.1. Situating Ecofeminism as a Literary-Critical Framework

Ecofeminism offers valuable insights into the plight of women and the non-human world. The philosophy foregrounds interconnected structures of oppression and domination that exist between mankind, women, and Nature. Literature plays an important role in bringing to the fore the relations existing between humanity and Nature. Therefore, literature can also further the relationship and help humanity consider the more-than-human world as well as women from a different and more relational and mutual point of view, rather than from an Anthropocene perspective. This part will attempt to locate ecofeminism as a literary criticism tool. By doing so, it will also endeavor to reveal the benefits of such an approach to literary texts.

Karen J. Warren, in her article *The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism* (1990), defines ecofeminism—also known as "ecological feminism" as "the position that there are important connections—historical, symbolic, theoretical—between the domination of women and the domination of nonhuman nature" (1990, 125). In other words, ecofeminism claims that patriarchy situates women and Nature hierarchically lower than men and creates ideal conditions for them to be oppressed in similar ways. Warren asserts that ecofeminism "*provides a distinctive framework both for reconceiving feminism and for developing an environmental ethic which takes seriously connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature*" (1990, 126; original emphasis). As such, ecofeminism presents the world of thought with a collective perspective, which consists of both environmental ethics and feminism, through which one can get a fresh view of the mutual oppression of women and Nature and the links forged through their shared fate and vulnerability. Warren furthers her argument by stating "[e]cofeminists insist that the sort of logic of domination used to justify the domination of humans by gender, racial or ethnic, or class status is also used to justify the domination of nature" (1990, 132). That is, the oppression of otherized

parties is built upon and justified by what is called "logic of domination," hence, attempting to liberate women or any other subjugated others cannot possibly be achieved without acknowledging the common destiny of all hierarchically lowered parties. It must be specifically noted that patriarchy does not use "logic of domination" only to control the masses through race, class, or gender, but rather the same justification mechanism is used to oppress Nature as well. Therefore, ecofeminism endeavors to liberate commonly oppressed women and Nature; first by revealing the interconnected systems used to dominate, then by unraveling the inner workings of said systems and coming up with a new environmental ethical understanding of Nature and humanity's location within it.

Patrick D. Murphy, in his book, *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* (1995), asserts that due to "the environmental movement" gaining "momentum throughout 1980s, … particularly as it is manifested by ecofeminism, will not only make its existence felt in literary studies in the 1990s but has the potential to alter such studies irrevocably" (1995, 19). Although much has changed since 1995, one thing was predicted correctly: Ecocriticism has left a huge impact on the literary world, and many works have been produced that were affected by ecofeminist and other ecological movements. Murphy further questions whether "literary theory and criticism are coming belatedly to ecofeminism that the educational exchange must occur in a single direction" (1995, 19). To clarify, he asks this rhetorical question to imply that the interaction between ecofeminist philosophy and literary criticism cannot be one-sided. To the contrary, he states that literature and literary criticism "can be immensely beneficial to the further development and elaboration of ecofeminist philosophy." He furthers his argument by asserting that literature's "role and place" must be recognized "as one element of ecofeminist activism" (1995, 19). To simplify, literary theoretical frameworks that are implemented by ecofeminist critics will be useful to improve and enrich ecofeminist philosophy. The last part of the passage locates literature as an important activity that produces new ideas and ideologies as well as reshapes humanity's perspective towards Nature; hence, literature can be considered as a part of ecofeminist activism.

While it is maintained by Murphy that ecocriticism as a literary criticism would be valuable to both ecofeminism philosophy and criticism, Josephine Donovan, in her article "Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Reading the Orange*"* (1996), locates the purpose of ecofeminism both as a worldview and potential literary

criticism method: “Ecofeminism … critiques the ontology of domination, whereby living beings are reduced to status of objects, which diminishes their moral significance, enabling their exploitation, abuse, and destruction” (1996, 161). To clarify, ecofeminism as a philosophy stands against “domination” and “objectification” of women and Nature, which has laid the groundwork for ecofeminist criticism. Donovan’s and other ecofeminist theoreticians’ ideas have also opened new ways of applying ecofeminist philosophy to literary works, ways that enrich both literature and ecofeminism as philosophy. Donovan argues that it is “[possible]” to apply ecofeminist philosophy to “literary and cultural practice, whereby the text is not reduced to an ‘it’ but rather recognized as a ‘thou,’ and where new modes of relationship—dialogue, conversation, and meditative attentiveness—are developed” (1996, 161). Though these attempts to locate ecofeminism as a literary criticism were brought to this text from 1996, they— and many others—have opened the way for critics and scholars to apply ecofeminist philosophy to literary works, which has created an area of research that has enriched both literature and the source philosophy. Donovan wishes ecofeminist critics to interact with the text; instead of seeing it as an “it,” the critic must consider the text as “you,” which paves the way for new opportunities and “new forms of relationships.” This repositioning of the text from an object to a ‘relatable’ subject is very similar to the ecofeminist approach to objectified others. Donovan argues that the Western mentality is a system structured by “dominati[on]” and she states that this domination can be observed even in “the institutions of literature and literary criticism.” To change this, she “explore[s] the nature of this domination and propose[s] the possibility of an ecofeminist literary and cultural practice whereby texts are reconceived as vehicles for the disclosure of being, rather than as mechanisms for its elision, thereby helping to reconstitute the ‘objects’ of discourse as ‘subjects.’” To clarify, having been structured by centering humanity (men), Western philosophy’s objectification of more-than-human Nature is often reflected in literature. Nature and animals become mere symbols and objects instead of subjects with their own story. However, the ecofeminist approach to literary works aims for the opposite: texts, cultural practices, and literature itself are seen through an ecofeminist lens, opening up new avenues of inquiry for reading and analyzing that are more relational and ethical. In this mode of reading, texts are not simply analyzed objects; to the contrary, they are “vehicles for the disclosure of being,” that is to say, the oppressed and hidden world of women and

Nature, with all its living, breathing elements, such as animals and plants, are brought out to the fore, thus, rather than being objects of analyses, their lives and experiences and interrelations are shared. Donovan believes that this "reconception will restore the absent referent as a 'thou' to the text" (1996, 162). Absent referent is a concept introduced by Carol J. Adams in her *Sexual Politics of Meat* (2010), according to which cruelty and its objects are made invisible by linguistic practices. Referring to this concept (which will be discussed in detail in the "Women and Animals: Oppression and Resistance" part), the author argues that ecofeminism as a literary criticism helps recover and revive the erased, objectified, and backgrounded animals and women, and foreground them as they are instead of what they signify.

To summarize, ecofeminist philosophy, which argues that with the logic of domination, patriarchy oppressed women and Nature in similar ways, can provide a critical framework for literary works and enable alternative readings. Besides, this application arguably enriches the philosophy itself. The ecofeminist lens as a literary critique helps literature become a site for restoring the unseen and erased women and non-human world. Texts are considered relational instead of objects of symbols. The absent referent is recovered and brought to the fore from the overlooked position put by patriarchy.

1.2. Emergence of Ecofeminist Thought

Ecofeminism, born of women's activism against the subjugation of Nature, evolved through the years and can be understood as an "umbrella term" (Warren 2000, xiv). Later evolving and developing, ecofeminism deals with connections and interrelatedness between gender and ecological issues. The philosophy is a reaction and response to Western patriarchal forms of domination and oppression. This part examines the emergence and the development of ecofeminism through key theoretical additions.

An ecofeminist thinker, Karen J. Warren, in her book *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective On What It Is and Why It Matters* (2000), calls " '[e]cological feminism' (or 'ecofeminism') … an umbrella term for a variety of different positions concerned with these connections, … women—other human Others—nature interconnections" (Ecofeminist, xiv). In other words, ecofeminism is a theory that

encompasses a range of theoretical perspectives that deal with the "interconnections" between women, other human others, and Nature. The theory stems from the claim that there exists a connection between "unjustified domination of women and 'other human Others' … [and] … non-human nature" (Warren 2000, xiv). Warren asserts that "[h]istorically, ecofeminism grew out of grass roots political actions initiated by women; it has found diverse expression in the arts, literature and language, science and technology, philosophy and religion, and non-governmental organizations" (2000, xiii). To elaborate, ecofeminism did not start as a theoritical idea; to the contrary, it emerged as a collection of "grassroot political actions" led by women. These were mostly environmental protection efforts, anti-nuclear protests, and local ecological struggles; that is, the thought was born not from academia but from women and their struggles to protect and care for the environment. However, it did not stay only in the realm of activism; it spread to other fields and paved the way for ecofeminist perspectives in multiple areas.

Arguably, ecofeminism emerged as a response to decades of oppression and subjugation by patriarchal society that has been structured in dualistic worldviews. One of the most cited theorists in ecofeminist theory, Carolyn Merchant, in her book *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1990), reveals the historical context and conditions that paved the way for ecofeminist thought. She points out the Scientific Revolution as the starting point of a worldview that considers Nature as a mechanistic being rather than organic. She asserts that "[t]he metaphor of the earth as a nurturing mother was gradually to vanish as a dominant image as the Scientific Revolution proceeded to mechanize and to rationalize the world view" (1990, 2). In other words, a living, breathing, and relational understanding of the Earth and Nature lends itself to a mechanical worldview that considers Nature a machine that has different parts that can be looked into and discovered. From a respectful mother to a resource, the transformation of the worldview brought about the destruction of Nature. To Merchant, "two ideas, those of mechanism and of the domination and mastery of nature, became core concepts of the modern world" (1990, 2). To clarify, when Nature began to be seen as a machine, which conveniently justifies the atrocities committed against it, hu*man* became its master and oppressor. Merchant furthers her argument by stating that "[a]n organically oriented mentality in which female principles played an important role was undermined and replaced by a mechanically oriented mentality that eliminated

or used female principles in an exploitative manner" (1990, 2). The earlier, organic worldview perceived Nature as a living whole and humans as a part of that relational harmonious existence. In the following mechanistic worldview; however, "female principles," such as fertility, care, nurturing, self-renewal of Nature, were undervalued and underestimated, or taken advantage of.

While Merchant illuminates the historical context and its implications in today's society's dismissal of Nature's demise, Mies foregrounds the connections between the exploitation of women and Nature as well as global capitalist structures and processes of accumulation. In her book, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour (1986),* she argues that "the woman question" must be understood "in the contexts of a global division of labour under the dictates of capital accumulation. The subordination and exploitation of women, nature, and colonies are the precondition for the continuation of this model" (2014, 2). To clarify, the capitalist system and systems that help accumulate capital are built upon the subjugation of women, Nature, and colonies. "Division of labour" organizes society in a way that some countries produce, some countries consume, while others provide low-cost labor. In this system, women are generally positioned in roles where they do unpaid reproductive labor or low-paid jobs. That is to say, women and Nature are sacrificed to accumulate capital and the continuous development of certain regions and classes. In this sense, domination is not only cultural and philosophical, but rather an economic system.

Ecofeminism's expansion can be followed through Indian philosopher and activist Vandana Shiva's work. Shiva's life's work demonstrates that ecofeminist thought emerged as both a critique of Western ways of thinking and a response to material struggles in the Global South. Therefore, ecofeminism can also be considered global. From her perspective, it is possible to trace the hardships faced by many due to patriarchal capitalism and its unending ambition for so-called development and progress. From an ecofeminist perspective, Shiva, in her book *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India* (1988), criticizes Western methods of acquiring knowledge. Like Merchant, Shiva also points out "the scientific revolution" as the responsible party. To her, the Scientific Revolution brought about a "reductionist paradigm with the subjugation and destruction of women's knowledge in the West, and the knowledge of non-Western cultures" (1988, 20). To elaborate, dividing and separating the whole to grasp it better and acquire knowledge from it

lies at the core of the Western way of knowing. It dismisses or destroys other perspectives, reducing and simplifying reality to measurable pieces. By doing so, it mechanizes Nature; complexity and diversity are overlooked and disregarded, and relationships and interrelatedness in any given ecosystem are rendered invisible. As a result, any abuse or violence inflicted upon any member of the web of life, whether women, other human Others, or the more-than-human world, is justified as it cannot easily be measured in a short period of time; as if they have never *been*. Criticizing Western patriarchy, Shiva asserts that the so-called Scientific Revolution and its

> "special epistemological tradition … [is] 'reductionist' because it reduced the capacity of humans to know nature both by excluding other knowers and other ways of knowing, and it reduced the capacity of nature to creatively regenerate and renew itself by manipulating it as inert and fragmented matter" (1988, 21).

In other words, the Western perspective and its methods for acquiring knowledge undermine humans' ability and potential to understand Nature since it omits "other knowers" apart from itself, such as women, Indigenous peoples, farmers, and "other ways of knowing," namely, traditional, ecological, and embodied knowledge and experience. This resulted in an epistemology that is narrowed down to only male and Western perspectives. This "reductionist" perspective not only undermines humans but also Nature itself, as it began to be seen as mechanical rather than a collective of organic beings whose living members "regenerate and renew" themselves repeatedly. Next, Shiva confronts scientific knowledge by stating that "[t]here is nothing like a neutral fact about nature *independent of the value determined by human cognitive and economic activity*" (1988, 27; original emphasis). To clarify, challenging one of the most well-known claims of Western epistemology and scientific method, the author argues that knowledge cannot be torn apart and become disengaged from its social and ecological contexts. Overall, Shiva asserts that modern knowledge and scientific paradigms disregard women's knowledge as well as alternative ways of knowing. This reductionist perspective marginalizes others along with Nature. Against these perspectives, Shiva suggests embodied and ecological knowledge of women and other human Others as they were acquired through material relations and connections over generations.

To conclude, in its evolution, ecofeminism has affected different fields as well as being affected by them. It presents the world of thought with interconnected

yet distinct perspectives. Ecofeminism's critiques of scientific rationality that erases others' perspectives and patriarchal capitalism's disregard for Nature, as well as the concept of dualism upon which Western society was built, will be discussed further in the following parts.

1.3. Dualism, Domination, and Control of Culture and Nature

This part will attempt to locate the concept of dualism —through Val Plumwood's theories—and the logic of domination in Western thought—through Warren, Carolyn Merchant, and Vandana Shiva's theories. Dualism is not a mere binarism that is caused by differences; on the contrary, it is a systematic severance of normally complementary parts by using different means of denial and an inferiorisation process of the otherized part as a result of *radical exclusion*, causing moral ranking. Furthermore, they are institutionalized through total control of the purported inferior parts. Thus, these structures are complex and present within every aspect of society. Domination, on the other hand, is institutionalized by highlighting the differences that exist between any given being. These differences are not accepted as complementary parts; on the contrary, their value is hierarchically measured, and the purportedly lacking parties are declared subordinate. These systems are justified by the West through a justificatory process that involves accepting the dominant party as morally superior, thereby more capable of ruling. Dualism and the logic of domination have become Western patriarchal civilization's means of control over Nature, women, and human others. This part will foreground the means and results of this social hierarchical structure.

1.3.1 Understanding Dualism

Val Plumwood, in her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993), argues that feminism and ecological feminism have included in themselves a critique of "dualism" as an understanding of the Western worldview. Within these philosophical frameworks, it is understood that society forms "a devalued and sharply demarcated other" to create a dualistic understanding of the world. Nevertheless, Plumwood takes the idea one step further by deepening the description

of dualism by deconstructing the process of the dualistic view in which the superior party "den[ies] dependency" to the inferior party by creating a conceptual framework where both "domina[nt] and subordina[te]" parties' "identit[ies]" are formed in relation to each other. In an attempt to explain and exemplify dualism's "logical formulation," the philosopher refers to different types of "oppression," namely, "gender, race and colonization." In the colonization process, "the colonized" party's values and culture are absorbed into the colonizer's "selfhood," hence enabling "the master" to "[form] their identity" in the dominant party's terms. Plumwood draws parallels between the previous master/colonized and "human/nature" dualisms that existed within Western philosophy. She states that it can be extremely challenging to "escape from dualised relationship[s] and dualised identity" as they are formed in a way that resembles a "logical maze" (1993, 41, 42). Plumwood explains the difficulty of redefining the self without the Western dualistic approach. She believes that Western oppression of "others" has created maze-like identities that are hard to reform in a way that rewrites the problematic and oppressive Western thought.

Western thinking's tendency to downplay, minimize, and ignore its "dependency" on the purported inferior within the dualized relation is recurrent in cases of "the feminine and nature" as well as other human groups that are perceived as closer to Nature. The process of forming dualized opposing parts has given way to an idea of a "master" whose "identity" is shaped by "excluding" others, namely the inferior parties. The master identity can be observed in the understanding of "reason," as reason is the only party that has dominion over the other. This understanding of the reason concept creates a "dualised structure of otherness and negation" that results in "classical prepositional [*sic*] logic" (Plumwood 1993, 42). It can be understood from Plumwood's claims that master identity is the only party in any given dualism that holds the power of reason. Reason negates Nature, hence becoming the dominant part of dualisms, opposing women, Nature, or other groups that are considered less than. The structure that is created through these dualisms results in propositional logic, meaning one thing is either is or is not. An idea of in-betweenness cannot exist in these realms. Plumwood asserts that dualism is presented as a means of deeming the different ones as "inferior and alien." Domination over the subordinate is achieved through "institutionalized and 'naturalized'" forms of "power" that lock onto already present "difference[s]." Having always existed in Western civilization, dualisms are shaped through years of

"domination and accumulation," functioning as "major cultural expressions and justifications" of the system (1993, 42). In other words, it can be inferred that the Western way of thinking has evolved into a systematic structure that self-regulates and continues to create dualisms that legitimize domination and oppression. Plumwood argues that both the "material sphere" and "cultural sphere" create together different forms of domination that function as a basis to sustain, reinforce, and construct specific forms of "social structures." The dualisms that shape Western philosophy are not separated from each other; to the contrary, they feed each other, hence creating a system that is "interrelated [and] mutually reinforcing." These mechanisms can be metaphorized as "an interlocking structure" (1993, 42, 43). That is to say, each dualism can emerge through others and cements both itself and other dualisms in societal structure. All elements together form a coherent whole that perpetuates the oppressive system. Plumwood maps Western civilization's major dualism pairs as follows:

> "culture/nature, reason/nature, male/female, mind/body (nature), master/slave, reason/matter (physicality), rationality/animality (nature), reason/emotion (nature), mind, spirit/nature, freedom/necessity (nature), universal/particular, human/nature (non-human), civilised/primitive (nature), production/reproduction (nature), public/private, subject/object, self/other" (1993, 43).

The major dualisms above are persistent ones in the Western worldview and tools of "oppression." Especially, in terms of "gender, class, race and nature oppressions," "the dualisms of male/female, … mind/body, civilized/primitive, human/nature" operate together to reinforce the domination and subjugation of the subordinate parties. Some of the dualisms have been shaped in "ancient" times, namely, the "reason/nature" dualism, whereas "human/nature and subject/object" dualisms are the result of the Enlightenment. As the times and conditions change, some of them diminish yet never entirely disappear; to the contrary, the diminished dualisms resemble "residues, layers of sediment deposited by past oppressions," paving the way for new forms of oppression. The list above can be read as genderized; as such, the former represent men and "male ideals" whereas the latter parties [represent] women" (Plumwood 1993, 43). Expressed differently, dualisms have been fundamental elements of the Western world of thought. They lay the groundwork for the civilization that is built around binary oppositions that feed each other. A recurring feature of each dualism that is given by Plumwood is that the dominant part

of the opposition is always male, while the subordinate part is always related to the female and the feminine. In cases where a dualism no longer functions due to a change in societal structure, its traces are left behind to help build new dualisms that will serve the system of oppression better.

According to Plumwood, every dualism can be a dichotomy, yet not every dichotomy is a dualism. It also cannot be defined as a "hierarchical relation." The reason for this is that dualism is a more structured and systematic process that the opposing "relata" go through to constitute the concept itself. To explain, the dominant part of each dualism consistently describes the "dualised other" as "inferior." In some cases, hierarchies can be revisited and revised, yet dualisms are most challenging to break, as the subordinate parts' identities are formed in a way that "internalize [the] inferiorisation," thereby they cooperate with "values of the centre, which form the dominant social values," ending up accepting their "low valuation" by the system. Defining dualism as "an intense, established and developed cultural expression," the author asserts that imagining concepts such as "equality and mutuality" becomes impossible since it is presented as a natural order of being. System is shaped by "separation and domination" that is made possible by "radical[ly] exclu[ding]" the purported inferior party. The relata in any given dualism are framed "as systematically higher and lower, as inferior and superior, as ruler and ruled, which treats the division as part of the natures of beings construed not merely as different but as belonging to radically different orders or kinds, hence as not open to change" (1993, 47, 48). Put differently, dualisms are a systematic cultural method of separating the inferiorised relatum. During the process of separation, the subordinate party is infused with the ideas of a sense of worthlessness and inferiorisation; thus, it becomes impossible to consider "equality and mutuality" with the dominant relatum. The central cultural values of civilization marginalize the supposed inferior parties further by foregrounding their differences that do not fit the central culture and making the process of inferiorisation seem natural, thus creating a deeply ingrained illusion of superiority.

By deconstructing the process of dualism, Plumwood concludes that there are five main "characteristics of dualism." These are "backgrounding (denial)," "radical exclusion (hyperseparation)," "incorporation (relational definition," "instrumentalism (objectification)," and "homogenisaiton or stereotyping" (1993, 48-55). *Backgrounding* is a method that "den[ies] the dependency" of the master on his

inferior. The “contribution[s]” of the subordinate party are minimized and trivialized to achieve backgrounding. As a result, the relational dynamic between the parties is “den[ied].” Creating “a strong hierarchy of activities” helps the system belittle and disregard the subordinate’s activities, thus establishing a system that considers the inferior as the master’s “[background]” where the master himself is the “[foreground].” From this point of view, the master and his “perspective” are “universal;” therefore, he cannot conceive of a world where “he is background.” Even so, this perspective is “an illusion” since “the master more than the slave requires the other in order to define his boundaries and identity, since these are defined against the inferiorised other.” Another point is that since the master delegated many tasks that his survival is predicated on to his slave, he has become perpetually “dependent on the slave for fulfilment of his needs.” Nevertheless, the master both “hate[s] and fear[s]” his “dependency,” thereby denying it (1993, 48, 49). To simplify, the master locates himself as the center and “foreground” of the civilization and backgrounds his purported interiors. By doing so, he disregards his slave’s activities as unimportant or not worthy of notice. Nevertheless, because he is reliant on his slave for material tasks, he is undeniably related to him/her. Yet he denies this fact by minimizing his/her efforts. On the other hand, he is afraid of his “dependency” as it is a challenge to the hierarchical order. Being in the center also renders him blind to the possibility of other perspectives apart from his own. Nonetheless, the master needs the slave more to describe his borders and selfhood.

The second characteristic of dualism is “radical exclusion” or “hyperseparation.” The differences between the relata in any given dualism are exaggerated “magnif[ied],… emphasis[ed], … and … maximis[ed]” by the master to exclude the inferior part of dualism. Another feature of this characterization is that the relata are separated in a way that is defined by Plumwood as “hyperseparation.” The radical exclusion is also done by the master, denying the “shared qualities” to secure “maximum separation.” As a result of “denial or minimization of continuity,” the parties in dualistic structures cannot “identif[y]” with each other, as well as feel “sympathy” for one another.” The purpose of this structure is “polarisation” which results in both beings rendered blind to the similarities between each other, hence, they cannot feel themselves “continuous or contiguous” (1993, 49). To summarize, radical exclusion or hyperseparation can be described as a process during which any resemblance or overlapping features between dualistic relata are erased in order to

achieve exclusion and separation. Reality becomes so distorted that even the relata cannot perceive similarities, and many intersections exist between them.

To Plumwood, another characteristic of dualism is "incorporation" or "relational definition." In this case, the master's "qualities" are considered "as primary and defining social value," whereas the slave's qualities are described "in relation to" their master. The slave's qualities are also considered to be "negat[ive]" or "lack[ing]." In this relational definition, the slave has no agency or purpose on their own. All agencies, purposes, and meanings come from their relation to the master. All features of the slave that do not serve the master are unacknowledged and erased, rendering the slave unable to "[resist]" or create "boundar[ies] for the self," which results in the slave's object status. The slave is defined through the master; hence the slave must be "assimilated to the self" and "colonized by the self"; otherwise, it cannot be accepted and defined as "[t]he master consciousness cannot tolerate unassimilated otherness" (1993, 52). That is to say, the master defines the slave in his terms and the slave's usefulness to himself. By assimilating the slave to the master's selfhood, the master denies any elements that have no place in his vision of civilization. The subordinate party's unfit features are cut off to make it fit into society, in relation to the dominant party.

According to Plumwood, the fourth feature of dualism is "instrumentalism" or "objectification." Even though it is demonstrated as benefiting both sides of any given dualism, the relationship between the master and the slave benefits the former immeasurably more than the latter. Any agency or will is taken away from the subordinate party, rendering them "instruments" and "means to [the master's] ends." They are reshaped as "a network of purposes which are defined in terms of … the master's purposes and needs." On the other hand, the subordinate part is "objectified, without ends of its own which demand consideration. … the ends are defined in terms of the master's ends." The master does not "empathi[ze]" with the subordinate party or consider them as "moral kin." The master cannot conceive the other side's personal wishes and "needs." This perspective results in the master's "impos[ition]" of his own needs on the other (1993, 53). In other words, the purported inferior side of dualism is made an object of the dominant side of dualism, which is the subject. The purpose and meaning come from the master; thus the slave has no agency of their own.

To Plumwood, the fifth characteristic of dualism is "homogenisation or stereotyping," which renders the subordinate party to a uniform and single type. Quoting from Hartsock, she states that any possible "differences are disregarded" and lost within the central culture, hence their identities are simplified in a manner that suits the hierarchical needs of the dominant part (1993, 53). Stated differently, the identities of the others are compressed and unified into one homogeneous element. Their diversity is either ignored or treated as irrelevant. By doing so, the dominant party reinforces hierarchical control.

By using the tools mentioned above, civilization is formed in a way that invites building hierarchical orders in every area and aspect of society to control the masses. To Plumwood, dualism has evolved beyond a cultural method of perceiving the world; it has become a "logical pattern" that uses "logical theory" to function (1993, 55). Plumwood explains how classical logic functions to foreground dualism's basic principles as well as how it functions in society. In a "p-centered" world, "~p" is the "negation" of "not-p," meaning something is either is or is not; both propositions cannot be true at the same time. She asserts that the "simplicity" of classical logic paved the way for it to be chosen above others (1993, 56). She states that "the phallic drama of p-centered account" has resulted in p becoming the only active part, thus making not-p "merely its receptacle." She explains the logic further with these words: "p penetrates a passive, undifferentiated, universal other which is specified as a lack, which offers no resistance, and whose behaviour it controls completely" (Plumwood, 1993, 57). To simplify, p is the center of everything, while ~p is everything not-p is not. P, as the center of the universe, perceives the world of the other from the center perspective only; hence, every other possibility of a different perspective is disregarded as impossible and erased.

According to Plumwood, this also results in "homogenisaiton" because not-p is "the other"; therefore, it can be perceived as "the rest." She claims that because classical logic disregards any "finer discriminations" and tends to homogenize, it can be considered problematic in areas where such discriminations are needed. "Radical exclusion" also stems from classical logic's "negation." Classical logic implies that p and not-p cannot be true at the same time. If it is, then any proposition can be proven. Therefore, the system "radical[ly] exclu[des]" p and not-p. That is why logic "keep[s] p and its other or negation at a maximum distance, so that they can never be brought together (even in thought), on pain of the maximum penalty a logical system

can provide, system collapse" (1993, 57). To explain, the rules of simple logic gave way to perceiving the world as self and the other, resulting in the homogenization of the other. Moreover, simple classical logic forbids merging between the self and the other. This tendency resulted in "radical exclusion" of the self and the other. The attempt to bring them together and accept the negation causes the "system [to] collapse." This oppositional logic applied to dualism as well. Since dualism and logic go hand in hand, attempting to unify the opposing sides in any given dualism becomes impossible to achieve. Accordingly, it is unthinkable to even imagine continuity and mutual reliance between the opposing sides.

Another point of convergence between classical logic and dualism is what Plumwood calls "truth-suppression implication." To explain, to reach a conclusion, some "true premises" can be implemented without disclosing them. In other words, Aristotelian logic approves "a suppressed premise" which stays hidden if it helps reach the results. This tendency to "truth-suppression" manifests itself in dualism as "*backgrounding*." Another manifestation of "truth-suppression" in classical logic is "truth interchangeability." To clarify, logic permits one truth to be changed with another as long as the results stay the same. This can be understood as "instrumental reason[ing]" or "means-ends reasoning," meaning that "means are interchangeable" as long as ends stay the same. She concludes that "logic of dualism" follows a similar pattern with "logic of instrumental reason" that reflects the "master identity" as well as "dominant logic of the market and the public sphere." There can be methods to escape from the fallacy of classical logic, which creates hierarchical structures. It is advised that the implementation of "relevant logic" might be the answer to solve the problematic hierarchies that result in collapse in the logic system, since it cannot tolerate p and not-p in the same proposition. In "relevant logic," a contradiction does not end in a system collapse since not-p in this case is not described as "the lack" or "negation" of p. This approach paves the way to think of the other having "non-hierarchical difference." This helps escape from "radical exclusion" and "homogenisation" (1993, 57, 58). That is to say, there exist certain parallels between classical logic and "logic of dualism." To summarize, "truth-suppression" shows itself as "backgrounding" in dualism, whereas "truth interchangeability" becomes "the master identity." It is also present in the market and public life, where means are changeable, provided they give the same results. To move away from hierarchy, *radical exclusion*, *and homogenization*, the author

suggests “relevant logic” instead of “classical logic,” which lets the differences exist without radically excluding the other, as well as preventing homogenization.

Plumwood shows the way to “escape” from dualism. According to her, eliminating the differences between the sides is not the correct way to move away from dualistic structures. This “merger strategy” results in “assimilation” instead of “liberation.” Therefore, she suggests rethinking the differences in a non-hierarchical way. She explains the formula for each characteristic of dualism mentioned above. For *backgrounding*, moving away from denial to “recogn[ition of] contribution of what has been backgrounded” and “acknowledg[ing] dependency” is necessary. To reverse *radical exclusion* or *hyperseparation,* one must acknowledge differences in a manner that does not involve hierarchy. Accepting the “continuity” of the sides that are in reality connected and share commonalities. *Hyperseparation* suggests that there are only two possibilities: one, separation of the two sides; two, total merging of the sides. Nonetheless, this is an illusion. A better way to overcome this is to acknowledge the space of “overlap” between the sides. Next is escaping *incorporation* or *relational definition*. One must recognize the identity of the subordinate party to depart from the definition of the subordinate party’s identity in relation to the dominant party. To do so, the subordinate must rediscover their own “stor[ies],” and voices which are “independent sources of [their own] identity.” The fourth characteristic of dualism that can be avoided by a “non-hierarchical concept of difference” is *instrumentalism*. The escape from this entails acknowledging “the other as a centre of needs, value and striving on its own account.” The other has its own goals and purposes apart from the self, and these must “be respected.” The last formula is made for *homogenization*. One must validate “the complexity and diversity of the ‘other nations’” that have been perceived as “the rest.” Plumwood asserts that escaping from dualism is not a simple and straight route, but rather it is similar to escaping from a labyrinth-like structure. There are “traps” that some fall into, such as “denial of difference” or “the reversal syndrome,” which entails just changing roles of the dominant and the subordinate; thus, one must be aware of them to avoid falling into these “traps” and losing one’s way to dualism-free existence (1993, 59, 60). To summarize, it is possible to move beyond dualistic structures existing in culture. To do this, a “non-hierarchical concept of difference” must be accepted rather than attempting to merge the differences between the sides, which can only end in *homogenization*. Instead of *backgrounding* the “dependency” on the

other side, one must acknowledge its need for the other. Rather than *radically excluding* the other, "continuity" and "overlaps" between the sides must be foregrounded. *Instrumentalism* can be eliminated by seeing the other as a being with purposes and agency rather than an object to be used. Lastly, *homogenization* can be eradicated by accepting the other's "diversity" and independent identity.

1.3.2 Domination: Establishing A System

This part will foreground how dualistic structures explained above have been transformed into a system that functions to dominate the masses. In the third part of her book *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters* (2000), Karen J. Warren discovers how power is wielded for oppression, calling it "an oppressive conceptual framework." She asserts that five characteristics can be identified as a part of an oppressive conceptual framework. The first is "value-hierarchical thinking," or as she calls it "'Up-Down' thinking." In this framework, "Up" is more valuable than "Down," thus hierarchically "higher." She gives examples from societal structures that involve Up-Down logic; these are men/women, whites/ "people of color," and culture/Nature, mind/body. In all these examples, the former are higher in hierarchy than the latter ones. This "organization of reality" acts as a "legitimi[zation]" method for "inequality." The second oppressive conceptual framework promotes "*oppositional value dualisms,*" which gives the higher part of the dualism more "value, status, and prestige." Each "[d]isjunctive pair" in dualisms is considered "exclusive rather than inclusive and oppositional rather than complementary." For instance, "male, white, rational, and culture" are granted "higher status" than female, black, emotional, and nature." The third framework is wielding "'power-over' power." In this case, subjugating systems wield and conceptualize "power" as "power of Ups over Downs." Warren highlights that not every "power-over power" is "unjustified." If "Downs" are purposefully subjugated by wielding "power-over power" on them, it means that the power is "unjustified." The next "oppressive conceptual framework" is keeping "privilege" as something that can only "[belong] to Ups and not to Downs." The privileges that are owned by Ups is used to "keep intact dominant-subordinate Up-Down relationships" that only benefits Ups. The last one is endorsing "a *logic of domination*" (original

emphasis). It is a thought system that is built upon the claim that the system of "domination and subordination" is "justifie[d]." This is "[a] logic of domination [that] assumes superiority justifies subordination." The "justification" process proceeds to attribute some features to "Ups" and "Downs" which legitimatizes keeping the down as subordinate party. To exemplify, western way of thinking values "mind, reason, or rationality," and organizes the reality in a way that attributes these to Ups, thereby, Downs' "subordination" becomes "justified." She highlights that not all forms of "power-over power" or domination is "unjustified." For example, parents authority over their children is "justified." They have to exercise power over them to protect them. The problematic side of "value-hierarchical thinking, value dualisms and conceptions of power" is that if it "systematically" gives power to Ups over Downs to oppress them and "justif[ies] the subordination of Downs by Ups." The biggest problem is to legitimize domination by thinking that "[s]uperiority justifies subordination" (2000, 46, 47, 48). In other words, Warren creates a framework that theorizes oppression and how it is implemented in society. "Unjustified domination" means that people, concepts and thought processes are divided into two categories as *Ups* and *Downs*. *Ups* systematically, subjugates *Downs* while having more privileges than them. They exercise "power-over power" on them to dominate them. Attributing concepts such as "reason" to Ups only, they earn the right to rule over them. This "logic of domination" legitimizes oppression and subjugation.

To overcome oppression, Warren invites her readers to "[reject] … logic of domination." The reason for this is explained in three steps. The first one, "superiority, even moral superiority, does not by itself justify subordination" (2000, 54). Humans might have moral superiority over the non-human world; however, this does not legitimize the subjugation. On the contrary, Warren asserts that this superiority manifests itself as "extraordinary responsibilities toward … others less capable" (2000, 49, 50). In other words, humans' capabilities translate to responsibility for those below their moral capacity. Warren states that the second reason for rejection of domination logic is "difference by itself does not justify domination" (2000, 54). "Logic of domination" is the necessary ingredient of transforming "diversity or difference into domination" (Warren 2000, 49). Being different does not make the other inferior. Therefore, by removing the *logic of domination* from the equation, one can achieve accepting "diversity" without

condemning the different into subordination. Thirdly, Warren asserts that "historically," Western civilization, which has been built upon patriarchal values, legitimized its subjugation of both women and Nature as it found connections between both and placed them lower than men hierarchically. Therefore, by rejecting the logic of domination, the justification of subjugation of both women and Nature would cease (2000, 54). In other words, having been described as being close to the body, the physical, animal, and Nature mean that women, along with the non-human world, are oppressed by a patriarchal mindset. Therefore, Warren suggests rejecting the logic of domination to take away the power of legitimization from patriarchy and reveal the immoral and unethical practice of the subjugation of women and Nature.

Warren describes "patriarchy as an unhealthy social system" which uses "power-over hierarchi[cal]" methods to oppress and dominate alleged Downs. A common feature of "unhealthy social systems" is that they "tend to be highly rigid, closed systems. Rules and roles tend to be nonnegotiable and to be determined by Ups." Furthermore, "a high value is placed on control and exaggerated concepts of rationality (even though, ironically, the system's survival may depend on irrational ideologies of denial and rationalization)." On the other hand, in "healthy social systems," "flexib[ility]," "open[ness]," and a lack of hierarchical *Up-Down* relationships are the key features. Instead of depending on hierarchy and power, relationships are "egalitarian, mutual, appropriate, and reciprocal." "Well-being of all members" is also the most important feature of these systems (2000, 204-206). To summarize, patriarchy is not merely a set of faulty beliefs; to the contrary, it is an *unhealthy social system* that civilization is built upon, which thrives on the domination of women along with the other and Nature. Since it is based on the logic of domination, it legitimizes the subjugation of *Downs*, claiming to be the only source of reason. Warren creates a diagram to highlight "patriarchy as an unhealthy social system." Patriarchy is a "closed circle" that keeps repeating and repeating the "faulty" behavior and "belief system." The diagram is as follows: "(a) Faulty Beliefs (Patriarchal Conceptual Framework), (b) Impaired thinking & Language of Domination, (c) Behaviors of Domination, (d) Unmanageability of Life." To explain further, Warren exemplifies wartime rape crimes committed by the U.S. military and some police forces. The horrible act is considered a way to dominate the losing nation and is almost normalized. Another act of the U.S. military that "makes life unmanageable for both human and ecological communities [is] by releasing toxins,

pollutants, and radioactive materials into the air, water, and food" (2000, 207-209). To clarify, patriarchy creates and maintains a vicious circle of violence towards women, humanity, and the non-human world. The acts of dominance and disregard for the health of the Earth make life "unmanageable" for every member of the world. The rape of women and Nature can be ceased only by rejecting the logic of domination and acknowledging the differences as diversity in a non-hierarchical conceptual plane instead of perpetuating violence and oppression.

While Warren explains domination as a concept and how it is perpetuated in social systems, Carolyn Merchant, the writer of *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1990), highlights how the domination concept becomes institutionalized with modern science. According to Merchant, domination evolves from the realm of epistemic concepts to scientific and economic structures. Whereas Warren has theorized the *logic of domination* by stating that "superiority justifies domination" (2000, 48), Merchant demonstrates how superiority and domination are produced by civilization. She explores how Nature is killed—both figuratively and literally—and turned into a mechanical being to use, abuse, and control.

In the chapter "Dominion over Nature," Merchant conceptualizes the transformation that redefines mankind's relationship with Nature with the Scientific Revolution. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) is known as the "father of modern science"; however, the author shows him in a different light, foregrounding how his thoughts concerning Nature brought irreversible harm to both the human and non-human world. Bacon used the "power of language" to create a new political outlook for exploiting Nature. In his imagery, "female nature" is "reduced … to a resource for economic production." Women were going through a similar "social transformation," and male-centered society started to view them as only "psychic and reproductive resources." Bacon's writings used the imagery of witches' interrogation techniques and coercion to describe the process of Nature's abuse. His writings were filled with imagery of "transformation of the earth as a nurturing mother and womb of life into a source of secrets to be extracted for economic advance" (1990, 164, 165). To explain, with the Scientific Revolution, women and Nature were redefined by the patriarchal order. While women are seen as either witches or tools for reproduction, Nature began to be regarded as a plane of many possibilities for those who are brave enough to use forceful methods to "extract" information and resources. According to

Merchant, Bacon encouraged mankind to "b[ind] [Nature] into service" (qtd. in Merchant 1990, 169) and "mold" it by "mechanical" (qtd. in Merchant 1990, 169) means. To Merchant, Bacon asserted that the "heavenly powers" and "dominion over creation" that are lost during the Fall of humanity can be reclaimed by using Nature's many resources extracted from it by forceful means (1990, 169, 170). Many "sexual imager[ies]" of Nature's "rape" by mankind's scientific methods were first used in those days, such as "'hard facts,' 'penetrating minds,' 'thrust of his argument'" (Bacon, qtd. in Merchant 1990, 171). Merchant points out that Nature used to be considered an "organic cosmology"; however, that changed with "the Scientific Revolution and the rise of market-oriented culture" (1990, xx). To summarize, the 16th and 17th centuries witnessed the transformation from organic to mechanical Nature and the rape and "death of nature" at the hands of mankind. Merchant observes that Bacon, leading the way for others, established the idea that Nature's many secrets that will help mankind regain his godly place must be revealed by "dissecti[ng]" it (1990, 189). Merchant concludes her chapter with a shocking metaphor of Nature's transformation. As the scientific method of discovery advanced, a change of Nature's "image" from "a female to be controlled and dissected through experiment" to a woman "coyly removing her own veil and exposing herself to science" occurred. As proof of her deduction, she exemplifies the French sculptor Louis-Ernest Barrias's statue named "Nature Reveals Herself." Consequently, Nature began to be perceived as "a mindless, submissive body" whereas she used to be "an active teacher and parent" (1990, 189, 190). To explain, the transformation of Nature from organic to mechanical paved the way for mankind to abuse it without any ethical consequences. Nature as a "coy" woman, opening her arms for mankind to ravage her body, is undoubtedly a shocking and saddening image for humanity. Transforming from "a nurturing mother" to a sexualized figure waiting to be *penetrated* by the questioning minds of scientists, Nature's intrinsic value was lost to mankind's ambition for more.

In her book's ninth chapter, "Mechanical Order," Merchant explains that new scientific methods and transformed perception concerning Nature laid the groundwork for a new understanding of "cosmos, society, and the self." This new understanding was summarized by her as "machine metaphor." "The new mechanical philosophy" was "developed by the French thinkers Mersenne, Gassendi, and Descartes in the 1620s and 1630s." The organic understanding of the world was that

each component acts in ways that are "determined by its nature," while being "within the larger whole." In this understanding of the world, power comes from "cosmic order," although there was a hierarchy within organic perception of the world; Nature's order was understood to come from within. However, "[i]n the mechanical world, order was redefined to mean the predictable behaviour of each part within a rationally determined system of laws, while power derived from active and immediate intervention in a secularizes world" (1990, 192,193) In other words, the matter did not act in its own nature with the power coming from the heavens anymore, to the contrary, each part act in a pre-determined "system of laws," and what gave this system the power was the hands-on intervention. Merchant highlights that in this new perception of the world, "[o]rder and power together constituted control." The domination over "nature, society, and the self" became possible due to the reinterpretation of "reality" as "machine" (1990, 193). To clarify, with the Scientific Revolution and new worldview, mankind no longer saw Nature as a morally considerable being; to the contrary, it began to be perceived as a machine that has many parts that can be manipulated to become useful for humanity without any consequences. Merchant points out that the rise of "mechanism" was due to post-Scientific Revolution uncertainty. People needed "a new rational basis for social stability." Mersenne, Gassendi, and Descartes theorized "a mechanical philosophy" as a solution for the instability and fear of the unknown. The idea of the mechanical universe was derived from ancient Greeks; however, the philosophers were careful to pick up only the ideas that bring "order, control, and manipulation, while rejecting those associated with change, uncertainty, and unpredictability." The mechanical philosophy absorbed ideas that are more "conservative," namely, "the passivity and manipulability of matter conductive to domination and control of nature," whereas "more radical vitalistic and animistic ideas" were not accepted. By doing so, Descartes and others' philosophy of the mechanical universe turned "the body of the world and its female soul, source of activity in the organic cosmos, into a mechanism of inert matter in motion." They changed "the world spirit into corpuscular ether." The mechanical view also casts "individual spirits" out of the non-human world. The emotional world and understanding were also changed from "sympathies and antipathies into efficient causes." The resulting image of Nature is likened to a "corpse" by Merchant. In this worldview, "dead corpuscles [were] set into motion by the Creator, so that each obeyed the law of inertia and moved only by external

contact with another moving body" (1990, 194, 195). As a result of the mechanistic view that was further theorized by Descartes and others, Nature was reconstituted from a lively being that contains spirit and life into a dead body of particles that move only with external motion instead of internal forces. This mentality brought with it the understanding that with the right tools, one can manipulate and "mold" Nature into forms that are more useful and profitable for mankind.

Merchant reveals the roots of today's worldview concerning Nature in Mersenne's ideas about the earth. To Merchant, Mersenne asserts that because "the earth did not have organs of sensation, it was not alive" (1990, 197). On the other hand, Merchant points out Gassendi's ideas regarding the soul of the world. Merchant argues that Gassendi believes "God was not the soul of the world inherent within it, but its governor or director" (1990, 202). Both Mersenne's and Gassendi's ideas about Nature paved the way to consider Nature as a lifeless mass of resources. Mersenne's claim about the earth not feeling anything might have given mankind the license to dig up the useful parts of it. Gassandi's ideas about God's soul not being present within the world, rather defining God as an outside presence who "govern[s]" "direct[s]" the world as an external force might have cause humanity, believing having been created in God's image, to take up the role of "governor" and "director" of Nature to manipulate it at will.

Merchant points out that Descartes was another philosopher who was looking for answers that would reshape reality into a mechanical world. Looking for "certainty of knowledge," Merchant points out that Descartes put forward the idea that God's "will and intellect" were the same thing. Therefore, because God created the universe by willing it into existence and using intellect, it is possible for mankind to "access" that "eternal truth" since they also have "intellect." In short, nature's laws were "unchanging and intelligible to human understanding" (1990, 203). These ideas brought about the belief that Nature is a pile of passive substance that has no inherent will. Will comes from external forces since Nature is not a being that governs itself. Governance is the outside force; therefore, Nature became open to human intervention.

Merchant discovers the effects of mechanistic philosophy on the social sphere in her book as well. A materialist, British philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, brought the mechanistic worldview into the social structure; therefore, he "transform[ed] the organic model of society into a mechanistic structure" (1990, 206). Merchant states

that in his book *Leviathan* (1990, 1651), Hobbes claimed that humans in their "state[s] of nature" cause "chaos, anarchy, and fear"; therefore, this state must be prevented by "a mechanical model of society." Nature was "disorderly" as much as humans, and both were "hostile, unfriendly, and violent" (1990, 209). The idea of a society as a mechanical structure that works within laws and regulations arguably brought about the last rupture of humanity from Nature. Humans became a part of a bigger machine that operates within their predetermined roles.

Consequently, mankind's perspective moved from an organic understanding of Nature and society to a mechanistic worldview that brought about a far different set of ethical approaches to Nature. Nature transformed from a nurturing mother into a machine. With the right technology and tools, it could submit its resources and secrets to mankind's will without any ethical repercussions.

Vandana Shiva criticizes patriarchal mentality and the ambition of mankind in her work *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India* (1988). In her book, Shiva frames "development as a new project of western patriarchy." She redefines development as "a post-colonial project" that could be universal to bring prosperity for all. However, "western style progress" cannot be defined as universal since it emerged from capitalism, industrialization, and "colonial power"; therefore, its application to recently decolonized nations was problematic. To sum up, "western style progress" is a new project of patriarchy to exploit the world under a new form of power that is presented as a universal project for the well-being of all (1988, 1). In other words, the Western project of progress could be considered as a new method of domination of patriarchy. Shiva states that Nature in its natural state, as well as forms of "organic agriculture," are considered "unproductive" without the intervention of the Western developmental project. Furthermore, the same mentality perceives "women, … tribal and peasant societies" that live within Nature as being "similarly unproductive." The reason for this presupposition is not because organic agriculture done by women or tribal societies "produce[s] less goods and services for needs"; on the contrary, it is because "'production' takes place only when mediated by technologies for commodity production, even when such technologies destroy life." (1988, 3). To explain, because the natural state of Nature is not described as a true form of production, patriarchal logic of domination molds Nature in the form that is most useful for them. Later, Shiva exemplifies the understanding of the patriarchal developmental project by stating how Nature is manipulated and dominated in the

name of progress. For instance, "a stable, clean river" is not considered "a productive resource," thus they build dams on it to make it a part of the progress. The worldview does not regard women "sharing the river as a commons" for "their families" and community as being "involved in productive labour"; therefore, they must be replaced with "engineering man" who will build the dam to "manage" the water. The same goes for "natural forests" as well. They must be turned "into monoculture plantations of commercial species" to be considered a part of a developmental project. Pointing out the irony of the situation, Shiva asserts that "[d]evelopment thus is equivalent to maldevelopment, a development bereft of the feminine, the conservation, the ecological principle." In this form of development, or more precisely "maldevelopment," "nature's work in renewing herself, and women's work in producing substance in the form of basic, vital needs" are unseen and undermined because the system "sees all work that does not produce profits and capital as non or unproductive work" (1988, 3, 4). To elaborate, using the logic of domination that Warren theorized in her book, patriarchal civilization utilizes the "value-hierarchical thinking" method to prioritize the so-called development projects that harm both the human and non-human world. *Backgrounding* and denying humanity's need for Nature, they opt for molding it into their ambitious need for capital. Nature's activities of "renewal" or women's activities of working with the land or water are denied and seen as primitive or basic labor. Any given activity is considered production only when technologies are involved, and the resulting products bring in capital. Shiva calls this process "maldevelopment" since it harms more than it benefits while destroying the lives of thousands of people as well as biotic communities in the name of progress.

Shiva maintains that "maldevelopment [is] the death of the feminine principle" (1988, 4). "Female principle" is described by Shiva as an "ancient Indian world-view in which nature is Prakriti, a living and creative process, the feminine principle from which all life arises" (1988, xv). The author states that Indian women stand against patriarchy—a gender-based ideology—to protect Nature. These women believe that Nature is alive and living. While the Western way of thinking considers "nature as an object of exploitation," women choose to stand by it to "protect" her as the source of life (1988, xv). Shiva calls Nature's creating and renewal process, and its interconnectedness, the "feminine principle." She goes further to situate the feminine principle against the oppressive Western way of thinking. However, she

also states that maldevelopment is “a new source of male female inequality.” It is asserted that the patriarchal worldview cannot possibly find “equality in diversity” as its ideology is based on “reductionism, duality and linearity.” “The reductionist mind” applies the Western patriarchal ideals to “women, all non-western peoples, … and nature.” When they are measured with these concepts and ideals, they are all found “‘deficient’ and in need of development.” Therefore, within these ideals of purported progress, which Shiva calls maldevelopment, “diversity,” and “harmony” become impossible to be considered as valid forms of existence for the system is formed in a way that is “reductionist,” linear, and growth-oriented. In this context, maldevelopment brings about dual destruction since it leads to “women’s underdevelopment,” which in turn “increase[s] sexist domination” as well as “nature’s depletion” that causes more “ecological crises.” Maldevelopment might result in economic growth; however, it also causes “nature [to] shr[ink].” It is also claimed that “the poverty crises” in the south are the result of a lessening of “water, food, fodder and fuel” since these are abused by civilization in the name of progress. Women are affected “most severely” by this poverty since “they are the poorest among the poor, and then because, with nature, they are the primary sustainers of society” (1988, 4, 5). To elaborate, even though the real world is complex, diverse, and full of differences that must be embraced instead of shunned, because the Western way of thinking is reductionist and full of dualities, they cannot perceive the real value of life. Patriarchy labels both women and Nature as “deficient.” Therefore, they aim to change them and mold them as desired. Maldevelopment is an epistemological crisis that reflects “underdevelopment of women,” depletion of Nature, and ecological crises. While capital is raised and accumulated more and more every day, Nature “shrinks.” Women are affected more than men since they are located closer to Nature due to the division of labor; hence, they are the first to be affected by violence against Nature.

Shiva explains “two kinds of poverty” in her book; these are “culturally perceived poverty” and “material poverty.” The former is a mere perception of the Western worldview. To clarify, when people eat the food they grow, live in the house they built themselves, and wear self-made clothes, the Western way of thinking considers them living in poverty. They do so “because [those people] do not participate overwhelmingly in the market economy, and do not consume commodities produced for and distributed through the market.” These are

"sustainable lifestyles" that are in harmony with Nature. However, Western development projects destroy them when they attempt to elevate their lifestyles and save them from perceived poverty. The attempt to save those people from poverty ironically condemns them to material poverty. The second category of poverty occurs due to development projects that take over lands, water, forests, and the lives of those people, resulting in ecological disasters as well as the collapse of the "sustainable economy" that local people established (1988, 8, 9). To clarify, because Western thought considers people living humble lives underdeveloped and in dire need of help, they put them in a position where they are truly helpless and in need of 'more developed' countries'intervention. That is to say, as the West tries to save those people from 'poverty,' they push them into a situation where they experience real poverty.

In conclusion, dualism creates hierarchical perspectives in society and culture. Hierarchy, in turn, brings about the logic of domination, which creates *moral superiority*. It must be noted that this is not an individualistic perspective but a societal system that is used to dominate the masses. Moral superiority is the legitimization that civilization needs in order to oppress and subjugate women, others, and the non-human world. Male-centered thinking tends to deny the dependency of each dualistic dominant on their subservient party. However, to actualize their project of development and progress, patriarchy needs those other halves of dualisms; therefore, they are objectified. Another characteristic of patriarchy's domination is its tendency to reduce the totality and diversity of women's labor as well as Nature's renewal work. Due to its "reductionist" perspective, Western civilization disregards women, non-Western people, and Nature's sustainable production and work of renewal as unproductive and aims to spread so-called development to underdeveloped places. This maldevelopment causes inequality, poverty, and interconnected oppression. All these processes and systematic forms of domination are a result of constantly built hierarchical relationships between dualisms that exist in the origins of Western philosophy.

1.4. Searching for Connections between Women and Nature

In a world where women and Nature are situated in inferior positions after being separated, which resulted in being dominated and exploited together, ecofeminist philosophy rethinks and revisits relations between women and Nature. As opposed to what is asserted by the patriarchal paradigm, ecofeminist thought believes that all humans are embedded in ecological networks. Ecofeminist theorists argue that there exist many interconnections between all beings. Even though it is denied by dualistic society, everything is interdependent on each other. The purpose of this part is to bring to the fore the historic, social, and political connections between women and Nature, namely, animals, the land, and water. It also looks at the claims of essentialism while attempting to prove that the connections are not essentialist.

1.4.1. Revisiting the Woman and Nature's Connection

In the very foundation of Western philosophy, male superiority over women and Nature has been established. The structure of the reason concept is built upon the shoulders—or in this case heads—of white men, *radically excluding* women and Nature. In her book, *Feminism and Mastery of Nature*, Val Plumwood opens the first chapter, "Feminism and Ecofeminism," by pointing out how canonical Western male philosophers have connected women and Nature. While Cato calls women "violent and uncontrolled animal[s]" (qtd. in Plumwood 1993, 19). Burke refers to them as "animal[s] not of the highest order" (qtd. in Plumwood 1993, 19). Moore connects men and science, whereas emotions are considered women's sphere. Freud believes "work of civilization" to be men's job while women are linked to "interests of the family and sexual life" (qtd. in Plumwood, 19). Moreover, Hegel somewhat accepts that "women are capable of learning," yet they are unsuitable for "higher forms of science, such as philosophy and certain types of creative activity; these require a universal ingredient" (qtd. in Plumwood, 19); an "ingredient" apparently women lack. Aquinas calls women "a necessary object" that humanity needs for things such as "preserv[ing] the species or to provide food and drink" (qtd. in Plumwood 1993, 19). By laying bare the link between women and Nature that was used as a means of

oppression, Plumwood states that "closeness to nature" was not a "compliment" (1993, 19). The common denominator in all these quotations from Plumwood proves that women and Nature's connection was used as a systematic method for *backgrounding*, *radically excluding*, and objectifying both women and Nature. While man is the universal, woman is the particular. Man represents culture and science, while woman represents Nature. Hence, the connection that will be revered later—due to women philosophers' contribution to the fields of feminism and later ecofeminism—did not start as a source of either reverence or inspiration; to the contrary, it was an inferiorisation mechanism of patriarchy.

Plumwood addresses two problematic approaches to the women-Nature connection that result in the inferiorisation of both. She asserts that the women-Nature connection is based on reason and Nature dualism. Nature is "excluded and devalued contrast of reason," thereby, it encompasses "the emotions, the body, the passions, animality, the primitive or uncivilized the non human world, matter, physicality and sense of experience, as well as the sphere of irrationality, of faith and of madness." Plumwood notes that, therefore, "nature includes everything that reason excludes." It is crucial to consider the "exclusion" process as "some ecofeminists" misguidedly support the connection between women and Nature by omitting the *radical exclusion* done by patriarchy. This might result in an essentialist approach, which is the main criticism toward ecofeminist philosophy, as well as romanticizing the connection. Another approach to women and Nature connection that is criticized by Plumwood is the fact that "equality feminists" attempt to elevate women to the sphere of "culture or reason" from the "sphere of nature." However, they attempt to do so by not considering the "problematic [and] oppositional nature of a concept of reason" that is the result of "exclusions." By framing the problems regarding the women-Nature connection, Plumwood points out another solution, that is, deconstructing the dualistic structure of civilization. By doing so, she escapes the traps of women-reason association, which inferiorizes Nature, as well as romanticization of Nature, which results in devaluation and exclusion of reason (1993, 19, 20). To clarify, accepting the women-Nature connection in a dualized world results in romanticizing the connection that is used to oppress both women and Nature. It is also highly criticized due to its essentialist structure. On the other hand, attempting to reject the connections to Nature and elevate women to culture and reason is also found problematic since *radical exclusion* and *backgrounding* are still

intact and unresolved; therefore, patriarchy and its *logic of domination* still persist. To overcome these, Plumwood suggests escaping dualistic and hierarchic structures of Western civilization.

Plumwood asserts that women and Nature's connection was formed by patriarchy. The purpose was to connect them and situate them below men and reason hierarchically. The connections such as "nature-as-body, … nature-as-primitive, … nature-as-animal, … nature as the feminine" still "disadvantage women, nature and the quality of life." The author suggests that "the mutual inferiorisation" of Nature and women still continues today. Men's activities that are related to reason and culture are foregrounded, whereas women's and Nature's activities are simply considered "necessity" and "background[ed]." This mentality of patriarchy causes irreversible harm to society and Nature because mankind's "denial of dependence on biospheric processes" and considering humanity "apart and outside of nature" result in "treat[ing nature] as a limitless provider without needs of its own." She points out this mentality as the source of ecological problems and "non-sustainable modes of using nature" (1993, 21). To summarize, women and Nature have been connected to push them out of the sphere of reason; hence, reason became a male occupation, whereas other inferior parts of dualistic representation came to be known as connected to women. The liberation lies within neither denying the connection to Nature nor romanticizing it; on the contrary, the deconstruction of dualisms is the only way. Furthermore, backgrounding women and Nature, patriarchal civilization causes devastation to Nature.

Plumwood argues that the definition of "humanity" itself is problematic since it was constructed by excluding women and Nature. Therefore, the attempt to include women inside this distorted form of "human" is impossible. The Western understanding of human excludes Nature, body, emotion, "subsistence," and the feminine. She calls this Western identity of humans a "master model." This model consists of "a white, largely male elite." Even though this "master model" is presented as human, it does not include women; on the contrary, "feminine is seen as a deviation from it." Therefore, keeping the foregoing in mind, provided that women are severed from Nature to elevate them, the problematic "master model" would persevere. Horrifically, this time, putting women in an oppressive role along with men. She asserts that accepting the "master model" and elevating women next to men in the existing system would mean that the oppression of Nature continues as it

has always been. Therefore, this can be called "a shallow feminism," since it does not "challenge" "the master model" that oppresses Nature (1993, 23). To clarify, aiming to advance women's status next to men is seen as problematic since it would only highlight "the master model," which is a white and male identity, and the oppression of Nature would continue as it is. Therefore, women must lift Nature with themselves. To do so, Plumwood suggests escaping the dualistic structure of civilization.

Using a metaphor of traveling in "the Mountains of Dualism" for the feminist and liberation theor[ists]" who wish to reach "the promised land," Plumwood asserts that "[t]he pilgrim's path to the promised land leads along a narrow way between these two hazards, and involves heeding both difference and continuity" (1993, 3). To clarify, the author argues that liberation from the world of dualisms and oppression can only be achieved by accepting difference and continuity without hierarchy. Plumwood suggests that in order to "resol[ve]" dualistic structures, "recognition of difference" might not be enough; one needs to "recogni[ze] … complex, interacting pattern of both continuity *and* difference." She asserts that dualism produces two opposites; these are *radical exclusion* (*hyperseparation*) and "incorporation," that is, total absorption (1993, 66, 67). Even though a *total merger* appears to be the solution to the problem of dualism, it is still a form of oppression since it denies diversity. Therefore, the real solution lies within accepting continuity along with differences, as well as interdependence with independence. By doing so, the relational structure that acknowledges both continuity and difference might deliver humanity from dualism.

In her book *Ecofeminist Philosophy* (2000), Karen J. Warren argues that in the same way that feminists cannot agree on one method for liberation and the word feminism is used as an umbrella term (mentioned previously in the "Emergence of Ecofeminist Thought" part) for each division of feminism such as "liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism," ecofeminists also have divisions within themselves regarding the connections between women and Nature. This is what gives them "strength and meaning." "Ten types of women-other human Others-nature interconnectedness" can be found within "the literature on ecofeminism." These are "historical (typically causal), conceptual, empirical, socioeconomic, linguistic, symbolic and literary, spiritual and religious, epistemological, political, and ethical interconnections" (2000, 21). This claim is one

of the main points of departure for this dissertation since Warren's ideas legitimize different points of view within ecofeminist philosophy as well as foreground multiple types of interconnectedness that exist between women and Nature.

The first connection to Nature is "historical (typically causal)." Warren states that the historical connections that exist between women and Nature foreground the patriarchal order's tendency to otherize Nature, women, and human others to oppress and dominate them. She points out two different points of view within this context. The first is illustrated by exemplifying Eisler's idea that metaphorizes "chalice and blade" (qtd. in Warren, 22). "Chalice" represents "a cooperative, peaceful egalitarian, partnership society characterized by nurturing relationships among human and nonhuman nature." However, the structure of society changes irrevocably when the "blade" began to be used by humans as a weapon, since it represents "an aggressive, violent, war-prone, male-dominated society characterized by unequal power relationships and militaristic domination." This point of view dates the start of patriarchy as far as the invention of metal weapons (Warren 2000, 22). On the other hand, Warren quotes Merchant's claims regarding the historical connections between women and Nature. As mentioned in the previous part of this dissertation, Merchant places the start of "death of nature" in the 16th-century Scientific Revolution. To Merchant, Nature's meaning was transformed by patriarchy from organic to mechanical. While Eisler situates the historic connection that started domination of both women and Nature to ancient times, Merchant claims that it started with the "death of nature" during the 16th-century Scientific Revolution. Warren asserts another point of view from Plumwood, claiming the world of dualisms started when "classical Greek philosophy [started] rationalist tradition" (2000, 23). To finish the explanation of historical connections between women and Nature, Warren states that the "onset of patriarchy" is a highly controversial topic that historians and philosophers cannot agree on. However, she asserts that when there is an inferiorisation of Nature and women as well as others, it is always used as a means of "justifi[cation]" of domination (2000, 24). To simplify, women and Nature's historical connections were forged by patriarchy. Even though critics cannot agree on when the exact moment was that the oppression started, they agree that patriarchy used hierarchically structured legitimation methods to subjugate women and Nature.

The second connection Warren asserts is "conceptual interconnections." She exemplifies Plumwood's dualism theory as *conceptual interconnections*. These

dualisms are "reason/emotion, mind/body, culture/nature, human/nature, and man/woman." As mentioned in the previous part, these "hierarchically organized value dualisms [put] an exaggerated focus on reason and rationality divorced from the realm of the body, nature, and the physical." Warren also exemplifies her own theory, which was also mentioned in the previous part, the *logic of domination*. Furthermore, she claims that some ecofeminists create different sorts of *conceptual interconnections* between women and Nature. To exemplify, since women are capable of giving birth and generally are given the role of primary caregivers, these "socially constructed female bodily experiences … situate women differently with respect to nonhuman nature than men." Hence, because women's experiences regarding "child rearing" are vastly different from men's, "these sex-gender differences are subsequently manifested in different sorts of consciousness in women and men, different 'ways of knowing' for women than for men" (2000, 24). Another ecofeminist Warren mentions is Ariel Salleh. She criticizes "deep ecology" for being male-centered and too "rationalist and technicist" (qtd. in Warren 2000, 25). To Salleh, "women's lived experience" should not be "overlooked" because they have an "alternative consciousness" due to their positioning in society (qtd. in Warren 2000, 25). Warren quotes from Salleh that "the unconscious connection between women and nature needs to be made conscious" (qtd. in Warren 2000, 25) to save the future of all (Warren 2000, 25). In other words, opposing the essentialism criticism toward ecofeminist philosophy, this analysis from Warren suggests that women and Nature are connected conceptually, not because women are 'closer to nature' due to their biology, but because they were "situated" closer to Nature by dominating a male-centered society. This position has given women a special opportunity to experience Nature and gain "different ways of knowing" as well as an "alternative consciousness."

Next, the women-Nature connection Warren mentions in her book is "empirical interconnectedness." This connection between women and Nature is proven by empirical data, which foregrounds the "link [between] women, people of color, the underclass, and children with environmental destruction." Exposure to "low-level radiation, pesticides, toxins, and other pollutants" affects the aforementioned groups more severely than any other. Furthermore, development policies and global economic structures' progress projects cause women to lose their ability to sustain themselves and their families (a similar claim was made by Shiva as

well in the previous part; she calls it “maldevelopment”). Moreover, Warren asserts that some ecofeminist animal rights activists claim “that factory farming, animal experimentation, hunting, and meat-eating are tied to patriarchal concepts and practices.” Others find links between “violence against women through rape and pornography [and] violence against nature.” Hence, these “empirical data” show that the link is not only symbolic or philosophical, to the contrary, but they are “lived ‘experiential’ interconnections” between women and Nature (2000, 25). To clarify further, the decisions made by patriarchal civilization, which was built upon the oppression of subservient others, cause more damage to disadvantaged groups such as women, children, and otherized groups. Ecofeminists dealing with the empirical evidence of this subjugation foreground the connection between Nature and the groups mentioned before. Another important connection originates from development projects that result in women or local people losing their ability to look after their families. In this case, both Nature—the space that the project is built in—and people, mostly women, are affected. Another connection that is recognized between women and Nature is violence against both; for the former, violence takes the form of rape and pornography, for the latter, violence is the destruction of biotic communities to extract resources. Because these can be proven with empirical data, they become strong representations of both a connection that originates from violence done by civilization, as well as the oppression of both groups that results in destruction.

Another connection between women and Nature that Warren argues is “socioeconomic interconnections.” To explain the connection, the author exemplifies the “empirical” data collected by Shiva that proves there exist “socioeconomical interconnections between exploitation of women, women’s bodies, and women’s labor, and the exploitation of nature” (2000, 25). Warren also mentions the “maldevelopment” concept by Shiva, which was mentioned in the previous part of the dissertation. Another theorist quoted by Warren is Maria Mies. She asserts that both “women’s bodies and labor” as well as Nature “are colonized by a combination of capitalism and patriarchy (or capitalist patriarchy)” (2000, 26). Next, Warren mentions Mary Mellor utilizing “a historical materialist approach to criticize capitalist patriarchy.” Women and men cannot be related to Nature under similar circumstances and “equally” since “the conditions of exploitation and domination affect women and nature differently than they affect men and culture.” The reason for

this is unequal "allocation of resources" between women and men. Mellor calls this "materialist ecofeminism" (qtd. in Warren, 27), which foregrounds that patriarchy is not only a form of "cultural domination" but also a form of "material or economic domination" (2000, 27). To summarize, the *socioeconomic interconnectedness* of Nature and women discovers links between the exploitation of women and Nature under capitalist patriarchy. This highlights the way women's bodies, labor, and subsistence practices are undermined in a similar manner to that which can be applied to Nature as it is treated as a resource for capital and profit.

An equally significant connection between women and Nature is named as "linguistic interconnections" by Warren. Because language is vital "in concept formation," it has the ability to form reality. Therefore, it can be used as a means of oppression. Ecofeminists argue that the power of language is used to "[keep] intact mutually reinforcing sexist, racist, and naturist views of women, people of color, and nonhuman nature." Since animals are considered inferior to humans in male-centered civilization, "patriarchal culture" likens women to animals to undermine them. Furthermore, the same mentality describes Nature in feminine terms, and because women are inferior to men, Nature is inferiorised in a similar manner. This opens the way to dominate Nature. To exemplify, "Mother Nature (not Father Nature) is raped, mastered, controlled, mined. Her (not his) secrets are penetrated, and her womb (men don't have one) is put into the service of the man of science." Warren states that patriarchal society "justif[ies]" domination and oppression "of nature and animals … by feminizing (not masculinizing) them" and oppression "of women … by naturalizing or animalizing (not masculinizing or culturalizing) them" (2000, 27). However, it must be noted that not all animal metaphors are negatively used, and it is not only women who are likened to animals. Men are described in terms of animal names as well. Another noteworthy deduction of Warren is that while women are described by animal names to identify them in inferior terms and a lack of agency and sexual availability, men are described using animal names in terms of their heightened "intellect," power, and their dominance (2000, 28). To sum up, *linguistic interconnections* illustrate one of the methods *cultural patriarchy* uses to dominate and subjugate both women and Nature, that is, feminizing Nature and naturalizing women. The way language is used not only reflects oppression but also maintains speciesism and hierarchical structures that exist in patriarchal society in terms of gender and Nature.

Next in Warren's list of links between women and Nature is "symbolic and literary interconnections." Quoting Merchant's organic and mechanical Nature images, the author states that when Nature is conceived organically, namely as a nurturing mother, it has ethical standing, yet when it is conceived as dead and mechanical, there exists no ethical limitation on destroying Nature for resources. As such, the shift in symbolic meanings is powerful enough to change the attitude towards Nature (2000, 28 29). Next, the author exemplifies Susan Griffin's symbolic and mystic writings. In the quotation, the woman can understand and even converse with Nature and animals, whereas the man cannot because he cuts himself off from the rest of the world, and by doing so, he has become "a stranger" as he "sets himself apart from woman and nature" (qtd. in Warren, 29). Another quotation is from Patrick Murphy claiming literary criticism should not be made from a human-centric perspective; to the contrary, it should be done from a perspective that consists of both Nature and women (qtd. in Warren, 29). In other words, symbolic and literary interconnections between women and Nature illustrate how cultural portrayals of women and Nature change the ethical approach to both. This happens in two opposing ways: first, it bolsters domination and subjugation; second, it foregrounds alternative relationalities and interconnections.

Another connection that Warren mentions in her book is "spiritual and religious interconnections." Quoting Elizabeth Dodson Gray's book *Green Paradise Lost* (1979), the author points out that "Judeo-Christian and Western intellectual traditions" tend to form society in hierarchies that are "destructive." "Biblical accounts of creation" suggest a hierarchical structure in which God is "at the top" (qtd. in Warren 2000, 30), below *him* (usage of the male pronoun is undoubtedly significant), men, followed by women, who are made from his bone. In the pyramid, children are after women. Ironically, they are not in the story of creation. After that, animals are in the pyramid. Although it must be noted that they do not have a soul. Then plants and Nature itself "which is the bottom of everything just as the heavens, the moon and the stars are close to God at the top of everything" (qtd. in Warren 2000, 30). By using religion, the Western way of thinking oppresses women and Nature (Warren 2000, 30). Another theorist Warren mentions is Rosemary Radford Ruether, who asserts that colonized women's desires to reclaim their previous spiritual beliefs prove that women are resisting colonizers' religious practices, which are patriarchal and Western-originated (2000, 31). Warren also states that spiritual

ecofeminism is the starting point of the philosophy in the United States; however, it is crucial to note that "spiritual ecofeminists" are also divided among themselves. For instance, they cannot reach a consensus on whether "mainstream" religions, namely Christianity, "can be reformed" in a way that is "more environmentally responsible." Another point of contention is whether ecofeminist spirituality should support "specific environmental practices" such as "vegetarianism, bans on hunting and animal experimentation, organic farming, population control" or not. Another point of disagreement is questions regarding "mystif[ication]" and "romanticiz[ation]" of Nature as well as cultural appropriation of indigenous spiritual beliefs. The author emphasizes that, regardless of the discussions and disagreements within spiritual ecofeminism, all agree that "symbols … such as Gaia and Goddess … are essential to ecofeminism" (2000, 31). Lastly, Warren asserts that almost all spiritual ecofeminists believe that the concept of "Goddess" should be at the forefront of this branch of philosophy since it forefronts the "sacredness of both nonhuman nature and the human body." The author claims that "Goddess worship brings about a shift in the sense of self… from an atomistic, purely self-interested, egoistic self to an ecological and spiritual self" (2000, 33). In other words, it can be interpreted that spiritual ecofeminism, which is the first form of ecofeminism in the United States, questions the creation story of patriarchal religious beliefs that are also Judeo-Christian. In these stories, women and Nature exist to serve man and are subservient to him since he was created in God's image. Another noteworthy point is the effects of colonizers' religious practices on the colonized, especially women and Nature. Bringing with them their patriarchal spiritual practices, colonizers suppressed local spiritual beliefs. However, spiritual ecofeminists attempt to reclaim them as a form of resistance against the colonizers and patriarchy. Finally, it is highlighted that "Goddess worship" evokes a view of the self in a more relational, interconnected, and part of a web of life instead of a selfish and *hyperseparated* self.

Beyond these, Warren asserts another link between women and Nature, which is called "epistemological interconnections." The philosophy questions the Western way of thinking concerning "knowledge: for example, that knowledge is objective; that the 'knower' is an objective, detached, independent, and rational observer; and that nonhuman nature is a passive object of knowledge" (2000, 33). To explain, the way the West perceives knowledge might be creating a diversion between humans and Nature. According to Warren, Sandra Harding argues that the social hierarchy of

the producers of knowledge is vital, especially in cases where they are located lower on the social pyramid, since they are the ones who experience oppression firsthand. These perspectives bring about a different outlook on the ecological issues our world is facing today. The author exemplifies the Chipko Movement. In this case, the "local women foresters" had firsthand "experience" concerning the problems compared to outsiders (Warren 2000, 34). Another philosopher Warren refers to is Lori Gruen. According to Warren, Gruen states that ecofeminism "grows out of and examines the social context in which moral and epistemological claims are generated" (Warren 2000, 34). Another reference is made to Donna Haraway, according to Warren, who argues "that modern Western conceptions of objectivity and nature-as-object are patriarchal ideologies of domination and control." Therefore, to Warren, Haraway suggests "an alternative, pluralistic, context-dependent view of knowledge" (Warren, 34) that is named "situated knowledges" (qtd. in Warren 2000, 34). To explain, Warren states that Nature cannot be viewed as "a mere object of resource to be studied," but it is an "active subject" that "contributes to what humans know about [it]" (2000, 34, 35). To summarize, in this form of interconnectedness, women's and Nature's oppression is not merely materialistic or economic; it is also epistemological, that is to say, it is rooted in systems of knowledge. Therefore, the method of defining, generating, and validating knowledge is vital since it might result in sustaining hierarchies. From this perspective, knowledge produced by oppressed peoples—in this case, women—and knowledge that considers Nature an "active subject" become critically important to unravel the oppressive patriarchal system and foreground relational, contextual, and value-laden instead of separated, and purportedly objective.

Next on Warren's list of connections between Nature and women is "political interconnections." The author describes ecofeminism as a "grassroots political movement" that encompasses concerns about "women's and environmental health, … science, development and technology, the treatment of animals, and peace, anti-nuclear, anti-militarism activism." The author refers to other theorists such as Stephanie Lahar and Plumwood who agree that ecofeminism cannot merely be a theory; to the contrary, it is an activist movement aiming to bring change and liberate women and Nature from the domination and oppression of patriarchy (2000, 35, 36). In other words, ecofeminism has always been a political movement whose purpose is

to transform patriarchal society from oppressive to liberating towards women and the non-human world.

The last connection Warren asserts is "ethical interconnections." The author declares that ecofeminists believe that "the interconnections among the conceptualizations and treatment of women, other subordinated humans, animals, and (the rest of) nature" cannot be perceived separately as their meanings and systems are intertwined; thereby, they call for "a feminist ethical analysis and response" (2000, 37). In light of this, the purpose of ecofeminist ethics is to formulate "theories and practices" regarding humanity and the non-human world "that are not male-biased and that provide a guide to action in the prefeminist present" (2000, 37). To simplify, ecofeminist ethics aim to transform the ethical outlook into the treatment of women and the non-human world. The purpose is to bring about an ethical understanding that is not male-centered and patriarchal; to the contrary, ecofeminists aspire to a pluralistic, all-inclusive, and non-anthropocentric approach in life.

1.4.1.1. Women and Nature: Sites for Material Connections

As outlined above, women and Nature's connections, or rather interconnections, are neither one-dimensional nor essentialist. A sociologist and writer, Maria Mies, in her book *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour (2014)*, touches upon the subjects of exploitation of women's labor and devaluation of Nature. She claims in her book that "the woman question" cannot merely focus on patriarchy or gender roles; to the contrary, one must focus on "all social relations that constitute our reality today." To explain, she states that these are "the context of a global division of labour under the dictates of capital accumulation." For this system to thrive, "[t]he subordination and exploitation of women, nature and colonies are the precondition" (2014, 2). In other words, to solve the issue of women's oppression, regarding the problem from one perspective is not sufficient, as the issue lies within a complex web of structural inequalities and oppressions that includes colonialism as well as women's and Nature's domination.

Mies criticizes the "dialectics of '[p]rogress and [r]etrogression'" in terms of the ironic meaning of the word "progress." To her, the story of development that is

told by the master narrative does not reflect reality. Especially, in terms of "division of labour" and "sexual division of labour," the process of establishing these systems "was/is not an evolutionary and peaceful process, based on the ever-progressing development of productive forces." On the contrary, the process was "a violent one" during which "certain categories of men" oppressed "women, other peoples, and classes" by means "of arms and warfare." This "predatory mode of production, which is intrinsically patriarchal," resulted in a horrifying perspective regarding "warfare and conquest," which were to "become the most 'productive' modes of production." It was understood that war helped with "accumulation of material wealth" faster and more efficiently than "regular subsistence work in one's community." As such, the conceptions that "subsistence technology" that consists of food production, housing, and clothing is "backward" relative "to the 'wonders' of the modern technology of warfare and conquest" have taken root. These understandings brought about "*separation* and *subordination*" (original emphasis) between men and women, and other peoples, who were called "'foreigners' or 'heathens'" and this situation finally "extended to a separation between MAN and NATURE" (2014, 74). To clarify, even though the development of mankind, especially the process of division of labor, has been narrated as a gradual and organic process that was "peaceful," it is far from the truth. In fact, it was a "violent" process that was carried out through the use of weapons and took place on the battlefields. When mankind realized that war brought more profit than daily toil for basic needs, they took over more land and subjugated more peoples, along with women and Nature.

Attempting to uncover the unseen part of "capitalist patriarchy or civilized society," Mies reveals the base on which the system is built, that is, women and Nature's oppression and colonization. For "the last four or five centuries women, nature and colonies were externalized, declared to be outside civilized society, pushed down, and thus made invisible as the under-water part of an iceberg is invisible, yet constitute the base of the whole." Unlike the modern methodology that divides the "relations" and examines them "as separate entities," Mies "trace[s] the 'underground connections' between the "exploit[ation]" of Nature and European women and colonization as a whole (2014, 77). In Mies's book, the connection between the oppression of Nature and women is made through Merchant's analysis of Bacon's work, which was mentioned above from the original source. To reiterate,

the methods used during “interrogation of witches” became an impetus for the improvement of the “new scientific method of extracting secrets from Mother Nature.” Mies also states that witch hunts were used as a means of accumulating capital. Although it was not as profitable as wars and “robbery of colonies,” the hunts were still profitable (2014, 87). To clarify, oppression of women, Nature, and colonization were a system consisting of an internally reinforcing web of interrelated mechanisms, and one of the main motivations was accumulating more capital and power.

Mies believes that “capitalism is the latest avatar of patriarchy.” According to her, “capitalist patriarchy” is the cause of “destruction of life” insofar as people follow the idea that “more money will bring a better life.” Nevertheless, to overcome this, she states that “the definition of economy” must be changed. She bases this claim on the root of the word economy, which “comes from the Greek word *oikonomia*, knowledge about the household.” (original emphasis) The main purpose of the “*oikonomia*” was the “satisfaction of basic needs of all members of the household,” which is the opposite of today’s meaning, which is “the accumulation of money” (2014, xxiii, xxiv). To clarify, the author describes “subsistence” (2014, xxiii) by foregrounding the transformation of the word economy, and she believes that the only way to save humanity is through a series of changes in meaning. In other words, the change from a subsistence economy to an accumulation economy has been destroying lives. The importance of the subsistence economy and the detrimental effects of its destruction on human and non-human lives were also mentioned previously by quoting Shiva’s theories.

As explained above, referring to valuable works from ecofeminist literature, women and Nature are interconnected in so many ways, all of which are complex and intricately woven together. However, because civilization is formed in a way that hides these connections, sometimes it is challenging to discover the connections and admit them. Another canon work of ecofeminist philosophy, named *Ecofeminism (Critique Influence Change)* (2014), was co-authored by Mies and Shiva and will surely add an important dimension to the theoretical context. They ask a vital question in the introduction of the book. The question is why some women—especially “middle-class women”—cannot see that “liberation of women and liberation of nature” must go hand in hand. The authors also add that women among themselves find it challenging to “see [a] common ground” because of social, racial,

and class differences. The reason for the failure to see these connections is that "capitalist patriarchy or 'modern' civilization['s]" ontological and anthropological frameworks were established in a way that "dichotomizes reality, and hierarchically opposes the two parts to each other: the one always considered superior, always thriving, and progressing at the expense of the other" (2014, 5). To clarify, women of all races and Nature can be liberated altogether provided that they recognize the hidden interconnections between each other as well as the *logic of domination* put in place. However, it becomes almost impossible to perceive these interlocking systems of "dichotomize[d] reality" since they were structured purposefully to be hidden.

In the preface of the same book, Shiva presents a binary choice that is vitally important for the future of all: in this "Anthropocene age," either "humanity chooses to be destructive or creative." She states that the book "raise[s] the issue of reductionist, mechanistic science and the attitude of mastery over and conquest of nature as an expression of capitalist patriarchy" (2014, xviii). In other words, she connects capitalist patriarchy's methods of domination of Nature; these are the scientific methods that are "reductionist," which divide Nature into sections to understand and study it objectively, objectifying it in the process; mechanistic methods, which consider nature a machine instead of an organic being brimming with life; and a controlling and suppressing approach to Nature. Shiva also states that "the contest between an ecological and feminist world-view and a world-view shaped by capitalist patriarchy is more intense than ever" (2014, xviii). The passage proves that the ecofeminist way of thinking is now standing against capitalist patriarchy to protect life against a mentality that has mechanized Nature to exploit it. Some women have realized their connections to Nature, which are not essentialist, but historical, political, and socioeconomical, and they are attempting to liberate both themselves and Nature from the "mastery" of capitalist patriarchy.

In part two, named "Subsistence v. Development," Mies argues that Western civilization imposes the idea of gradual development that models the Western way of life. In the myth of "catching-up development" (Rostow, qtd. in Mies 2014, 55), the "affluent societies of the North: the USA, Europe and Japan" are shown as examples to so-called Third World Countries of the South. The idea is that "by following the same path of industrialization, technological progress and capital accumulation taken by Europe and the USA and Japan, the same goal can be reached." The purpose is to "[attain] utopia of liberalism" in which men are "the dominant sex" and city

"lifestyles" are incentivized (2014, 55). To clarify, capitalist patriarchy's so-called development is based on the belief that all societies in the world must follow the same steps to reach a "utopia." The subsistence economy in the purported Third World Countries is seen as 'backward' and a thing to be developed and finally left behind. However, the author does not agree with that narrative. Both Mies and Shiva believe that capitalist patriarchy, which centers on "accumulation" of capital and power, destroys both Nature as a resource and more harmonious subsistence economies that are sustained by women. There is a shift in the meaning of 'backwardness' since these ideologies refuse to consider Nature and women's socioeconomical connections as such; to the contrary, they are the source of life that follows the framework of the *feminine principle*.

In the conclusion of the book, Mies situates ecofeminism as a political grassroots movement and asserts that Shiva follows the same ideology. They look for "a new vision—a new life for present and future generations, and for our fellow creatures on earth." Mies calls this new outlook "subsistence perspective." People who follow the same belief "actively participate in such movements, radically reject the industrialized countries' prevailing model of capitalist-patriarchal development." They reject these since this "blueprint" harms biotic communities; therefore, they desire "to preserve their subsistence base intact, under their own control" (2014, 297). Overall, the "subsistence perspective" and its defense put forward a new model of women and Nature interconnection. This is a model that sustains life, eco-friendly economic models, and basic ontological relationships between all. To clarify, under patriarchy, women and Nature are oppressed and placed lower than men hierarchically as subordinates, yet with ecofeminism, women and Nature's relationship and connections are perceived as a life-sustaining force that follows the *feminine principle* and *subsistence perspective*.

Another ecofeminist theorist who believes that women and Nature have a political and material link is Ariel Salleh. In her book, *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx and the Postmodern* (2017), she opens the twentieth-year edition of her book with important deductions. Referring to "green politics, European calls for degrowth, North American eco-socialisms, livelihood models from the global South, a feminist 'care revolution,' diverse alter-globalisation movements," it is stated that what has been foregrounded in the first edition of the book as critical came to be recognized to some extent (2017, 1). In other words, Salleh opens her book with a

hopeful message: the world has shifted to a more eco-friendly and feminist outlook. Later, she states that her book is "an eco-socialist argument that is at once decolonial and feminist." The book has a demand from its readers, that is "embodied materialism … [and] recognis[ing] the historical significance of 'othered labour', the unmade class of hands-on workers who catalyse natural processes" (2017,1). To clarify the term "embodied materialism," the author believes that politics should not be based on abstract theories; to the contrary, it must stem from the experiences of women workers, locals, and peasants. She calls these people's work "othered labour", that is, those people's toil which is backgrounded and devalued or made unseen. However, this is what life stems from; therefore, they must be recognized.

Salleh honors the unseen labor of women and otherized peoples, as well as ecologies, in her book. She asserts that "Indigenous knowledges at the 'periphery' and housekeeping skills at the 'centre' both typify meta-industrial connections between Man and Nature" (2017, 244, 245). To clarify, even though capitalist patriarchy attempts to deny them and foreground industrial labor as the main and most vital toil of mankind, Indigenous peoples' wisdom concerning Nature and land, as well as women's "housekeeping skills," collectively connect humanity to Nature. Salleh states that although patriarchal worldview dismisses these connections as if they are insignificant, ecofeminists raise their voices "about these *ways of doing and knowing*" (emphasis added). By doing so, they "honour *women's metabolic bridging of ecology and culture*. As opposed to mining and smelting or genetic engineering, which leave disorder and waste, women's subaltern labour give life back to the biosphere" (2017, 245; emphasis added). In other words, ecofeminists give back much deserved value to women's labor as a "bridge" between culture, humanity and Nature. While patriarchy's efforts bring about death and destruction to Nature and humanity, meta-industrial, reproductive labor of women is "metabolic," as such, it suggests circulation, exchange, regeneration, and life-sustaining processes, thereby, unlike capitalist patriarchy's labor, women's labor helps sustain biological and ecological cycles instead of disrupting them. What patriarchy considers real labor, such as "mining and smelting or genetic engineering," results in the breakage of natural systems, generates "waste", and increases ecological disorder. Hence, they remove value from Nature without restoring it. The striking opposition between women's "subaltern labours" and industrial labour makes one question what "progress" and "development" are. Is development industrial work that brings more

capital and accumulation of monetary wealth while destroying lives on Earth, or is it meta-industrial labor regenerating ecological systems and giving as much as one takes from Nature?

1.4.1.2. Essentialism Debate

Searching for connections between women and Nature is a risky endeavor, as one might lose sight of the principal purpose and succumb to essentialism, thus risking producing an essentialist relationship between women and Nature, which might hurt more than benefit both women and Nature in the long journey to liberation from the hierarchical structure of dualisms. Plumwood warns her readers against essentialist approaches in her book *Feminism and Mastery of Nature* (1993). According to Western patriarchal tradition, "the category of nature is a field of multiple exclusion and control, not only of non-humans, but of various groups of humans and aspects of human life which are cast as nature" (1993, 4). Therefore, one must exercise extra caution not to be categorized as such. To clarify, in cases where *hyperseparation* and *backgrounding* are still present, one's categorization with Nature only serves the hierarchical structure of patriarchal civilization and operates as a continuum of the *logic of domination*. This is why ecofeminist philosophers and theorists warn academics who dabble in ecofeminist theory against essentialist traps so vehemently.

Greta Gaard is another prominent figure in ecofeminist theory. She also advises against essentialism. In her essay, *Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-Placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism* (2011), she states that ecofeminism emerged in the 1980s and was popular during the 1990s. Although the popularity did not last long since it "was critiqued as essentialist and effectively discarded." The circumstances were so dire that "fearing their scholarship would be contaminated by association with the term 'ecofeminism,' feminists working on the intersections of feminism and environmentalism … rename[d] their approach" (2011, 26). In other words, even though ecofeminism started as an answer that fills the gap in the literature of feminism and environmentalism, the criticisms made scholars wary of essentialist assumptions. Hence, they started to avoid even the label of ecofeminism, although it perfectly embodied both Nature and women's liberation from dualisms and offered an

alternative ethical approach to the ethics of rights. Gaard states that ecofeminism was "very promising" at first, so much so that people saw ecofeminism as "the third wave" of feminism, building on and transforming the anthropocentric critiques of first- and second-wave feminisms with an ecological perspective." Yet people start to concentrate on the wrong aspects of ecofeminism and misunderstood some of the aspects, thus all ecofeminists were seen "as an exclusively essentialist equation of women with nature, discrediting ecofeminist's diversity of arguments and standpoints" (2011, 31). Gaard puts forward two main criticisms. The first argues that ecofeminism mixes up sex and gender thus ending up "homogenizing women's experiences." The second one objects to including "species and nature as analytical categories crucial for feminist thought." Gaard states that only the first one might be considered "legitimately grounded." Yet it must be noted that Gaard herself disproves the first criticism by exemplifying many scholars who saw the problem and addressed it properly, among whom are Plumwood, Merchant, Salleh, and Warren (2011, 35- 36), who were mentioned above in the previous parts of the dissertation. Gaard brings the discussion to a close by referring to the names above as well as Thompson, who states that ecofeminists do not link "women (sex), femininity (gender), and nature" in a "ahistorical and static" setting, to the contrary, the connection is considered "socially constructed" and it is "contextual and fluid" (2011, 32). To summarize, Gaard attempts to illustrate arguments of essentialism under a different light. The critiques of essentialism have already been addressed by many scholars studying in the field; thus, Gaard asks a vital question: "What have we lost by jettisoning these earlier feminist and ecofeminist bodies of knowledge?" (2011, 26). The main purpose of this dissertation is to answer this critical question. By dismissing ecofeminism as essentialist and anti-feminist, the critiques of the 1990s might have disregarded critical intersectional analyses, criticism of the *logic of domination*, and a new-materialist approach. Gaard later asks another question: "Are there features of ecofeminism that can helpfully be retrieved, restoring an intellectual and activist history, and enriching current theorizing and activisms?" (2011, 26) She also asserts that ecofeminism must be revitalized as "[r]ecuperating ecofeminist insights of the past thirty years provides feminist foundations for current liberatory theories and activisms" (2011, 26). In other words, today, ecofeminism has become relevant again. Therefore, Gaard calls for a recovery of the theory as it has many

valuable analyses and deductions regarding hierarchical societal structures and their harm to both humans and Nature.

1.4.1.3. Connection or Relationality: Nature in the "Flesh"

There exist some scholars who are not strictly called ecofeminists, although their outlooks correspond and can be related to contemporary ecofeminism. One of those writers is Stacy Alaimo. In her book, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (2010), she discusses relationality and connection to Nature between humans and Nature. Criticizing contemporary theory as it has "dematerializ[ed]" reality, she asserts that "matter" and "environment" have been made into abstract concepts that have no meaning without humanity's initiation. She believes that in order to give meaning back to Nature, "we need more potent, more complex understandings of materiality." Her book "explores the interconnections, interchanges, and transits between human bodies and nonhuman natures." She claims that foregrounding these "interconnections between the human and more-than-human world" will possibly bring about a new ethical understanding that is "not merely social but material—the emergent, ultimately unmappable landscapes of interacting biological, climactic, economic, and political forces" (2010, 1, 2). To explain further, "matter" and "environment" are understood as abstract concepts. This misunderstanding or distortion of environment and matter results in the separation of humans from Nature, which in turn causes flawed ethical approaches. A reconceptualization of "materiality" can possibly bring about a change in ethical understandings as well. As a result, ethics would be structured not only to contain "social" but also as "biological, climactic, economic, and political." Alaimo calls this "trans-corporeality." She defines the term with these words: "Imagining human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human-world, underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from the 'environment'" (2010, 2). Quoting Plumwood's "nature as a mere background" theory (which is mentioned above in "Understanding Dualism" part), Alaimo asserts that establishing "trans-corporeality" as a new definition of relationality between human and Nature would make it impossible to conceptualize Nature as background. By foregrounding the material connections between humans and Nature, she attempts to give Nature its state of liveliness back.

Nature "is too often imagined as inert, empty space or as a resource for human use, is in fact, a world of fleshy beings with their own needs, claims and actions" (2010, 2). The concept of "trans-corporeality" highlights "the movement across bodies … [and] reveals the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures." The prefix "*trans*" (original emphasis) implies "movement across different sites, trans-corporeality also opens up a mobile space that acknowledges the often unpredictable and unwanted actions of human bodies, nonhuman creatures, ecological systems, chemical agents, and other actors" (2010, 2). Taken together, Alaimo urges humanity to reconsider their relationality with Nature. Human bodies are materially entangled and connected with the non-human world. She names this material connection *trans-corporeality*. The philosophy of trans-corporeality paves the way for new possibilities for redefining humanity's relationship with Nature. Nature can no longer be considered dead, or simply a backdrop for humans' much-valued and important work; to the contrary, Nature and humans' relationships are rebuilt to reflect a dynamic, fluid, and transformative interconnectedness. To exemplify, the author puts forward the inherent behavior of harmful chemicals: that is, when they are present in the environment, they occupy all bodies present without differentiating between human or non-human bodies. This phenomenon illustrates the constant give and take and transition between Nature and bodies of human and non-human animals.

Similarly to Gaard, Alaimo also criticizes feminist theory for attempting to escape "from [n]ature and [b]iology. Western world has always given Nature an array of meanings; "philosophical, … ideological … and cultural" but always a "moralism against women, people of color, indigenous peoples, queers and the lower classes" (2010, 4). Referring to one of her previous works, *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space*, Alaimo asserts that "most feminist theory has worked to disentangle *women* and *nature*" (original emphasis). The attempt to "disentangle" them results in the opposite of desired effect as it reinforces "predominant dualisms" thus the theory ends up reproducing "a rigid opposition between nature and culture" (2010, 5). Exemplifying "concept of gender"—one of feminist theory's basic tenets, Alaimo states that conceptualizing gender and sex as respectively a product of society and biology, created "a sharp opposition between nature and culture." Feminist theory attempted to escape Nature and its meanings structuralized by society, however, "completely removed from culture, this nature—the repository of essentialism and statis—nonetheless remains dangerously intact."

Therefore, she suggests instead of staying away from Nature for the fear of essentialism, "gendered dualisms" structured by society can be transformed as they are the root of "denigrat[ion] and silenc[ing of] certain groups of human as well as nonhuman life" (2010, 5). Quoting Lynda Birke's theories, Alaimo states that the understanding of biology as an unchanging and static concept actually reinforces essentialism. She also quotes Birke's idea concerning the body's biology as she redefines it as "changing and changeable, as *transformable*" (qtd. in Alaimo 2010, 5; original emphasis). According to Birke, the body is ever-changing, "renew[ing]," "remodel[ing]" itself to align with itself and the environment (qtd. in Alaimo 2010, 5). Alaimo furthers her argument by stating that the "notion of biology" as a fixed and determined concept "which has long haunted feminism" can be replaced "by other models" of understanding the biology of bodies and Nature. She concludes her claims with these words: "Since biology, like nature, has long been drafted to serve as the armory for racist, sexist, and heterosexist norms, it is crucial that feminists recast the norms, values, and assumptions that permeate this field" (2010, 5). Later she suggests feminist theorists that instead of escaping from Nature and biology, it might prove better "to endow them with flesh, to materialize more fully, and to attend to their precise materializations" (2010, 6). To clarify, to further her arguments of reconceptualizing biology and Nature in order to reconsider humanity's outlook for materiality, the author attempts to illustrate the constant change bodies are going through every given minute. It is obvious that biology and Nature are not as static as philosophies made them out to be. In light of this, feminists should not be "haunted" by essentialism and Nature; their primary obligation is to focus on redefining humanity's relationship with their bodies as well as Nature. Pushing biology for fear of essentialism and Nature for fear of inferiorisation would only risk ending up as self-fulfilling prophecies do. The way to escape dualistic structures that act as hierarchical justification mechanisms would be by materializing biology as well as Nature or by "endow[ing] them with flesh." This would open the possibility to "attend to their precise materializations."

In this dissertation's search for connections between women and Nature, Plumwood, Warren, Mies, and Shiva illustrated that the connections and relationships were not essentialist, but rather historic, political, and social, and were formed as a result of hierarchically valued dualistic structures. Furthermore, it was shown that to save both women and Nature from the oppression of patriarchy,

unraveling these complex systems of domination is the key. Alaimo suggests that materializing Nature and biology is paramount to achieve the desired result; hence, she offers a new understanding of trans-corporeality in which bodies and Nature are never separated but entangled in a complex web of relationality. The last step taken to further the dissertation's argument about women and Nature's connection will be by focusing on *Lori Gruen's book Entangled Empathy: An Alternative Ethic for Our Relationships with Animals* (2015). By focusing on this book, the aim is to bring to the fore the relationality and entanglement between women, animals, and Nature. This will undoubtedly erase any suspicion of essentialism and create the groundwork for ethical responsibility for Nature. Gruen defines "entangled empathy" as

> "a type of caring perception focused on attending to another's experience of wellbeing. An experiential process involving a blend of emotion and cognition in which we recognize we are in relationships with others and are called upon to be responsive and responsible in these relationships by attending to another's needs, interests, desires, vulnerabilities, hopes, and sensitivities" (2015, 15).

To elaborate, the concept of empathy is not only an emotion but also a form of "caring perception." This carries Gruen's ethical understanding further than classical ethics, which generally asks the question of whether it is right or wrong to do something. However, "caring perception" opens the way for a new outlook to consider our relational others. The "caring perception" is concentrated on "another's experience of wellbeing"; thus, this is a way to empathize that is about the "experience" of the other. *Entangled empathy* is both about "emotion and cognition." The individual recognizes their relationality with the others and must be both "responsive and responsible" by addressing their physical and emotional beings. Overall, whereas traditional ethics focuses on self/other, universal principles, and moral codes consisting of rights or wrongs, Gruen explores relational self, a perception that is contextual, care-ethics, and responsibility rooted in entanglement. Therefore, ethics must be perceived as relational responsibility instead of external rules. Instead of looking for similarities between the self and the other to feel empathy, Gruen suggests relations and entanglements that result in ethical responsibility.

In her book, Gruen criticizes the traditional ethical way of perceiving the self as "the abstract individual." This individual considers herself separated from the others. Furthermore, she can "abstract herself from her own situation, cares, and

relationships and supposedly figure out who she is and what she wants without reference to any[thing] … like cultural, gendered, racialized influences. … That self is autonomous and independent" (2015, 54). To explain, the "abstract self" is an impossible ideal that can stand apart from not only other selves but also their own self and their "situation" in society; thereby, supposedly, they are non-dependent and can understand themselves and can be perceived by others as unrelated to anything. Opposing this idea of the self, Gruen proposes her understanding of the self who "is not under the illusion that we need to or even are able to escape the relationships we are in." She calls this "relational self." In this form of the self, "our relationships with human and animal others co-constitute who we are and how we configure our identities and agency, even our thoughts and desires" (2015, 54). In other words, the *abstract self* is separated not only from the other selves but also from themselves. Arguably, this perception of self might result in disastrous consequences for both humanity and the non-human world. On the other hand, the suggested identity formation, *relational self,* is formed through their relationships with human and non-human animals. In this case, identity is not formed prior to relationships; to the contrary, it is formed through the relationships, hence it is *relational*. Gruen furthers her argument by stating that humans cannot ascribe meaning to themselves, "living without others, and that includes other animals." She argues that attempting to "disentangle" from these relationships is a futile endeavor; hence "we would do better to think about how to be more perceptive and more responsive to the deeply entangled relationships we are in" (2015, 54). In other words, it is unattainable to become an objective observer, since one is "entangled in complex relationships" (2015, 54); one must focus on the betterment of other relational selves by becoming more attuned to them. This form of self suggests the deconstruction of the dualistic model of self. By doing so, it presents a new form of perception of the self, which is relational. *Relational self* does not allude to hierarchies, domination, or control; to the contrary, it suggests co-existence and the impossibility of detachment from human others as well as the non-human world. Plumwood's suggestion of acceptance of dependency also resonates within Gruen's theory of the self. Identity is formed through relationships and dependence on others; thus, *backgrounding*, *objectifying*, and *radically excluding* others become unimaginable. This is also the basis for care ethics.

To conclude, even though Western civilization was formed on the ideals of separation from Nature and the other, ecofeminism and new-materialist approaches suggest otherwise. As Alaimo suggests, humans are connected to their environment. Besides, to Gruen, these unbreakable connections must result in humanity's responsibilities to the non-human world. These perspectives that consider life in a web of relations might help overcome patriarchal oppression and problematic ethical approaches to the non-human world, as well as women and other human Others.

1.4.2. Women and Animals: Oppression and Resistance

Women and animals have been situated on the undermined side of dualistic structures, and thus, they have been oppressed by patriarchy in similar ways. In her book chapter, *Living Interconnections with Animals and Nature* (1993), stating that ecofeminism is an interdisciplinary field that grounded in "ecology, feminism, and socialism," Greta Gaard asserts that "ecofeminism's basic premise is that the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature" (1993, 1). As many others studying ecofeminist philosophy, she claims that "no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature" (1993, 1). To clarify, as mentioned before in the previous parts, the liberation of women, animals, and Nature, as well as otherized peoples, would only be possible if the problem is taken into consideration by seeing the whole picture. As mentioned above, by quoting Plumwood and Warren's theories, the system that dominates was built systematically and has been working in the same way for each oppressed group. Hence, concluding that women and animals are situated within the same *logic of domination* would not be inaccurate. This part will examine the connections between women and animals, as well as alternative ethical approaches to animals as forms of resistance.

As many other scholars have suggested, Gaard asserts that "feminizing nature and naturalizing or animalizing women has served as justification for the domination of women, animals, and the earth" (1993, 5). To elaborate, canonical Western philosophy conceptualizes the world through dualistic structures that are based on hierarchical value systems. Opposing reason, culture, and men; women, and animals

are embedded on the side of Nature in each dualism. Dualistic structures are inherently hierarchical; with this in mind, women and animals are on the inferior side of the dualisms. Their historical alignment stems from dualistic structures as well as the *logic of domination*. While men are connected to more abstract concepts such as mind, women have been described as more connected to the body—emotional and instinctual; all of which are considered more animalistic and inferior traits. Women and animals' placement as inferior and closer to Nature was put in place as a justification mechanism. By placing them close to Nature, their oppression seems almost natural and inevitable. Based on the foregoing discussion, women and animals' connection does not stem from a biological essentialist base, but from a shared space within the dualistic hierarchies.

Carol J. Adams materializes this shared space in her book *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (2010). Adams reconceptualizes Margaret Homans' concept of "absent referent" to cover the oppression of both women and animals. Adams defines her version of *absent referent* as the removal of live animals from the process of slaughtering and turning them into meat for consumption, hence "[a]nimals in name and body are made absent as *animals* for meat to exist. … Without animals there would be no meat eating, yet they are absent from the act of eating meat because they have been transformed into food" (2010, 66). In other words, animals are made invisible or, as Plumwood would suggest, *backgrounded*, meaning the dependency on them is denied in the process of meat consumption. Adams asserts that the absence of animals is constructed "through language that renames the dead bodies before consumers participate in eating them. … The absent referent permits us to forget about the animal as an independent entity; it also enables us to resist efforts to make animals present" (2010, 66). To elaborate, animals are not perceived as beings deserving consideration; to the contrary, they are completely erased from the picture of the consumption of their dead bodies as meat. As Plumwood might argue, they are also *homogenized* since they are not understood as "independent entit[ies]." Furthermore, Adams connects women and animals in the *absent referent* theory: that is, meat consumption renders animals invisible; that is to say that the animal whose body is being consumed is not present at the table. A similar mechanism works for "images of women butchered, fragmented, or consumable" (2010, 13). In other words, in both cases, animals are absent referents. In the first case, they are made invisible to become food, while in the second case,

they are erased to sexually objectify women. Hence, the connection between animals and women is situated as symbolic and structural.

Adams furthers her argument by drawing a parallel between women and animals: "[c]ycle of [o]bjectification, [f]ragmentation, and [c]onsumption" (2010, 73). The author criticizes radical feminist theory for using the "*imagery* of butchering" to describe women's oppression; however, they do not include "the *literal* oppression of animals into our analysis of patriarchal culture or to acknowledge the strong historical alliance between feminism and vegetarianism." Besides, women might "feel like pieces of meat, and be treated like pieces of meat … animals actually are made into pieces of meat." In this case, the metaphor of meat consumption used for women "alternates between a positive figurative activity and a negative activity of occlusion, negation, and omission in which the literal fate of the animal is elided." Then she asks whether the metaphor is used as a form of oppression. (2010, 72, 73). To elaborate, radical feminism is found lacking in its theoretical framework since the theory criticizes patriarchy for making women feel like "meat"; however, they never mention animals' "literally" slaughtered bodies. Hence, the usage of the meat metaphor simultaneously becomes "a positive figurative activity" because it is used to alleviate oppressed women's conditions, and "a negative activity of occlusion, negation, and omission" as animals' treatment and their killing are erased. On the other hand, radical feminism is criticized as the theory only addresses women's issues. Since patriarchy uses similar means of oppression on both women and animals, there could be a "strong alliance between feminism and vegetarianism." Refusing to partake in eating dead bodies of animals is a highly debated topic within feminist and ecofeminist circles.

Adams argues that women's and animals' oppression is "common," thereby she theorizes their treatment by patriarchy as "a cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption, which links butchering and sexual violence in … culture." "Objectification" happens when the "oppressor" perceives the other as an "object." Later, "the oppressor … violates this being by object-like treatment: e.g., the rape of women …, or butchering of animals that converts animals from living breathing beings into dead objects. This process allows fragmentation, or brutal dismemberment, and finally consumption" (2010, 73). To elaborate, women and animals' alignment stems from their "common oppression" by patriarchy. They are both "objectifi[ed], fragment[ed], and consume[d]." *Objectification* by patriarchy is

presented as a characterization of dualistically structured Western society by Plumwood as well. Fragmentation can be interpreted as taking a being out of its context or separating it into pieces for *consumption*. In the case of animals, it is done through cutting their dead bodies and turning them into meat—each part given a different name. In women's cases, their bodies and their capabilities are consumed in a metaphorical sense, through labor or reproductive purposes. At the end, both women and animals are "consumed" by patriarchy. To Addams, "[c]onsumption is the fulfillment of oppression, the annihilation of will, of separate identity" (2010, 73). To further the argument, *consumption* can be considered the last step of subjugation. By consuming both animals and women, society takes away their agency, their intrinsic value is denied, and they lose their own identity and selfhood. In other words, they are erased and *backgrounded* as well as *homogenized*. Adams also argues that language can be considered the architecture of this oppression. To exemplify, "a subject first viewed, or objectified, through metaphor. Through fragmentation, the object is severed from its ontological meaning" (73). This means that when society tears apart animals (literally), women (figuratively), they cause them to lose their capacity to exist as beings in their own right. When they are "fragmented," animals become pieces of meat, and women become sexualized body parts. The wholeness of each is gone and replaced by oppressors to serve better for their own ends. Adams concludes that after the "consumption," both women and animals "[exist] only through what [they] represent" (73). That is, women as a desire object, animals as food, and a nurturing substance. Finally, Adams asserts that "the consumption of the referent reiterates its annihilation as a subject of importance in itself" (2010, 73). This implies that when the real being who is the "referent" of language is consumed, it is erased not only physically but also as a "subject," hence, it loses its selfhood and "importance." Hence, women and animals' connection can be considered a result of historic, cultural, and political processes, not an essentialist connection. However, this does not mean that their connection is not ethical as well as emotional.

Josephine Donovan is a scholar focusing on the ethical treatment of animals. In her co-edited book with Carol J. Adams, named *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader,* in Chapter 7: *Attention to Suffering: Sympathy as a Basis for Ethical Treatment of Animals*, Donovan builds an ethical understanding regarding animals. Donovan criticizes Tom Regan's "natural rights doctrine" and Peter Singer's

"utilitarianism" even though they are "different"; both theories "unite in their rationalist rejection of emotion or sympathy as a legitimate base for ethical theory about animal treatment." Unlike the male outlook, feminists mostly claim the "opposite" of what is theorized by Regan and Singer, that is, "sympathy, compassion, and caring" must be the base that humans build their ethical outlook on animals (2007, 174). To elaborate, the author opens her chapter by foregrounding the differences between male and female ethical outlooks on animals. To manage this new understanding of animal ethics, Donovan proposes "a shift" in what is considered ethical. Furthermore, she asserts that modern ethics has a "male bias towards rationality." To overcome this "bias," she advises a different and feminist approach that is known as the "'caring' tradition." She states that "an alternative epistemology and ontology" can arise from women's lived "historical, social, and political" experiences (2007, 174, 175). Criticizing male partiality in ethical approach in modern times, it is suggested that an ethical understanding rooted within "care" would offer a more adequate outlook regarding the problems at hand. This new outlook emerges from women's lived experiences and connections that have been forged throughout history.

Donovan criticizes Immanuel Kant's "rationalist rights-based ethic" as she finds it lacking because it "rejects feeling or inclination as a morally worthy motive for ethical action"; to the contrary, the action "must be performed out of a sense of duty" (2007, 175). Another point Donovan criticizes is Kant's perspective on animals, as he considers them only "instrumental to human interests." To him, they are only "means to human ends but not ends in themselves worthy of moral consideration." Donovan asserts sympathy must be the base for ethics; however, unlike Scheler and Schopenhauer, who claim that "women are more able to exercise sympathetic understanding than men," she claims that "it is an intellectual and emotional practice that can be learned." "Sympathy theorists" believe that "sympathy is the sine qua non of ethical decision-making and action, [and] … sympathy precedes justice" (2007, 180). To elaborate, building ethical understanding on rationality arguably creates a distance between humans and, in this case, animals. Rationality that is *hyperseparated* from emotions results in an ethical understanding that considers animals tools for humanity's "ends." Against this cold ethical outlook, Donovan and other sympathy theorists propose that ethics should stem from sympathy and emotions, which can be taught, thus cancelling the essentialist idea

that women are better than men in the sphere of emotions. Arguably, this outlook would bring about a new perspective in which men's incapability of feeling emotions as deeply as women might cease to be used as an excuse for not caring enough. Men seemingly do not feel as deeply as women; however, it is crucial to note that they are unable to since society situates them in relation to reason, not because they are physically incapable. As suggested above, it is a skill that can be learned. Donovan contends, "what we need is a refocus in our moral vision—a shift in the cultural episteme—so that people will begin to see and attend to the suffering of animals" (2007, 175). In other words, the author proposes a transformation in the epistemic framework; hence, animals' suffering can be seen from a different perspective and finally can be responded to properly. An ethical approach that is nurtured by sympathy and emotions as opposed to cold rationality separated from feelings is a call for epistemic transformation that might bring about a change in perceiving animals, Nature, and our undeniable connections to them. It must be noted that emotions in this context are not described as patriarchy is wont to do; to the contrary, by quoting many theorists working in the field, Donovan concludes that even though Kant blames sympathy for being "irrational," and based on "volatile" emotions, the reality is quite more complex and differs from this assumption. Sympathy "involves an exercise of the moral imagination, an intense attentiveness to another's reality, which requires strong powers of observation and concentration, as well as faculties of evaluation and judgment. … It is a cognitive as well as emotional exercise" (2007, 179, 180). To elaborate, in spite of the fact that the Kantian perspective oversimplifies emotions and finds them too dangerous to be the base upon which ethical approaches are built, many theorists refuse this assumption. Sympathy, or the more contemporary version of the word empathy, is both a "cognitive" and "emotional exercise." The process requires decentering oneself to look from the other's perspective, an attempt to immerse oneself in the other. It is also "[attentive]" which entails seeing and noticing events from the other's point of view and acting upon what is seen by responding to the needs of the other. To conclude, Donovan argues that humanity must adopt sympathy, or empathy, as the core of the ethical outlook on animals' conditions. It can be understood from Donovan's ideas that even though it is believed that women are better at emotions, specifically sympathy, this deduction is an essentialist approach, as it is possible to teach emotions, especially sympathy and empathy.

Marti Kheel compares female and male ethics in his book *Nature Ethics: An Ecofeminist Perspective* (2008). Kheel asserts that male identity is formed through a "separation," which means that the male subject must separate himself from women and Nature to form his identity; only then can he reach "moral maturity." This process results in "superior[ity]" of the male. Male identity is represented with these figures: "the heroic warrior, the transcendent perceiver, and the sacrificer." All these identities are formed in a way that is hierarchically higher than Nature. Besides, the inferiorisation of Nature and the inferiorisation of "kinship ties and emotional bonds" are mutually reinforcing. Moreover, "moral philosophers" reiterate this "devaluation" of "ties of affection" whereas they "[elevate]" "rational rules and universal principles" (2008, 58). In other words, canon ethical understanding, which is inherently masculine, is based on "rationality" and abstract ideas, while ecofeminist ethics stems from personal bonds, care ethics, and connections. Kheel also asserts that "it is senseless to discuss moral conduct toward nature without acknowledging … gender differences in violence toward nature" (2008, 222). According to him, the reason for that is modernity. The process of the dismissal "of care" and accompanying "elevation of universalistic ethic" can be followed through history when "the view of the family of household as a personal enclave, distinct from the public sphere, arose with the modern state." Feminine was conceptualized in a way that involves the house and "the private realm," while masculine was linked to "non-personal law." This transformation paved the way for "the public arena of law [being] conceived as abstract, rational, and universal, free from the fluctuating contingencies of the private realm of personal desires" (57). Arguably, this bifurcation resulted in a difference between women's and men's ethical approaches to animals and Nature. That is to say, because of the historical context and political and social positioning of women, they care about animals and Nature more and are more closely linked to animals and Nature. Kheel also addresses the issue that occurred after the Enlightenment, that is, society's tendency to minimize care, dismissing it as in "the realm of personal relations," whereas elevating "universal law or reason" as a part of the "public sphere." That is why "beneficence" is dismissed because it "lack[s] the conceptual force of universal law or reason, and hence do[es] not qualify for the status of ethical theory" (2008, 223). In other words, care is marginalized historically and disregarded by patriarchy as a legitimate base for ethics. However, ecofeminists, along with other eco- activists, believe that caring

about animals and Nature is the spark that will ignite actual change of outlook toward the non-human world.

In conclusion, the connection between women and animals stems from historical, political, and social alignment by patriarchy. Both women and animals have been oppressed in similar ways as they are *objectified*, *fragmented,* and *consumed* by patriarchy. However, it must be noted that their shared oppression does not mean that they are weak; to the contrary, due to ecofeminists and other eco-thinkers and activists' efforts, their purported weakness lays the groundwork for a new ethical understanding that is relational instead of abstract and based on *hyperseparated* reason. As mentioned, care is not passive; to the contrary, it is a form of resistance in patriarchal society that disregards animals as inferior or transforms them into food. In the care context, each individual is inherently valuable, and there is no place for hierarchical structures that are based on a dualistic worldview. Care is the opposite of abstract reason; that is to say, it focuses on the individual and their condition. Using sympathy and empathy as ways to consider animals arises from women's perspectives and care ethics. However, the reason for this is not because women are biologically closer to animals; conversely, they have been marginalized and situated within the same dualistic structures by society, which resulted in their shared struggle and resistance.

1.4.3. Women and the Land

Women and the land or the earth have been connected symbolically and in many mythic stories. As mentioned before, Merchant argues that the change in the perception of Nature and land paved the way for the exploitation of Nature as a whole. As with other connections between Nature and women, the land and women connection similarly operates at historical, political, and social levels. The connection between women and the land is at a relational ontology level, as it connects instead of separating. Shiva's book, *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace* (2016), foregrounds the connections between women and the earth while situating their link through non-essentialist points, thus proving once again that ecofeminism is a legitimate philosophy that does not betray women.

In her book, Shiva defines Earth Democracy as a philosophy that emerged from "the timeless concept of human beings as part of *Vadushaiv Kutumbakam*, the Earth Community" (Earth, Preface; original emphasis). Acknowledging the Earth and everything on it as one community brings about many serious responsibilities. She declares that she and the other like-minded people are advocating "for the earth and all her species, … human rights, … freedom of people, not the freedom of corporations—the corporations that destroy the planet and people's lives, without hesitation." Furthermore, she states that they support "living democracies, based on the recognition that [they] are members of an earth community, and have common responsibilities to protect the earth, and common rights to be sustained by her, for our food and water, our lives and livelihoods" (2016, Preface). To explain, the author highlights a different worldview that looks out for the earth, animals, people (of all races, classes, and sexes), and Nature itself; in essence, the earth community. The concept of earth community prioritizes care for life and aims to live in a harmonious manner. The keyword in this philosophy is mutuality and sustainability. The relationships are not one-sided; that is to say, they are not exploitative. Conversely, they are relational and non-hierarchical. Moreover, the author argues that contemporary science has also confirmed that "life … [is] an interconnected web"; hence, "being earth citizens," humanity must look "beyond" the selfish worldview that considers humans at the center of the world, which is called "anthropocentrism" or, as Shiva asserts, "corporate anthropocentrism" (2016, Preface). Put differently, Earth Democracy is a philosophy that advocates for the Earth community and a species-inclusive perspective instead of Anthropocentrism. This outlook centers life itself instead of the growth of the economy and accumulation of capital.

Shiva develops a series of "Principles of Earth Democracy." One of the principles is maintained as "[T]he earth community is a democracy of all life." Expanding on it, she states that "[w]e are all members of the earth family, interconnected through the planet's fragile web of life. We all have a duty to live in a manner that protects the earth's ecological processes, and the rights and welfare of all species and all people" (2016, 9). The Earth and Nature are not defined or understood as passive resources; to the contrary, the Earth family and its every member have intrinsic value. Everything is interconnected, which can be perceived as a "web of life"; however, the connections can be "fragile" and easily unbalanced with the intervention of humans. Quoting the 2010 World People's Conference on Climate

Change and the Rights of Mother Earth's declaration, Shiva conveys that "1. Mother Earth is a living being. 2. Mother Earth is a unique indivisible, self-regulating community of interrelated beings that sustains, contains and reproduces all beings" (2016, xxvii). To elaborate, the Earth must be perceived as a collection of beings that are alive. These beings are life itself, as they are relational and mutual, from which all life comes and is reproduced in the cycle of life. It is a living community. This point of view is the opposite of patriarchy's paradigms that understand the earth or the land as inert matter where production takes place to purportedly sustain humanity; however, production is done in a manner that is disrespectful of the earth's and Nature's natural processes and cycles, hence ending up harming more than it produces.

Shiva discovers an alignment between local people and the land through the local subsistence economies, women maintain, and seed-keeping farmers. She criticizes the patented seed concept, implying the absurdity of putting "patents on life." Especially the 2004 Seed Act "prevent[s] farmers from using traditional varieties. Those laws could establish a seed dictatorship, forever destroying the biodiversity of our seeds and crops and robbing farmers of all freedoms" (2016, 150). Indian farmers' seed-keeping practices help maintain "indigenous varieties [of seeds that] are the basis of [their] ecological and food security" (2016, 151). In other words, capitalism takes over subsistence economies and changes the seeds that have been kept and developed by farmers for many generations. The local ecological knowledge is dismissed by the system by homogenizing the needs of earth communities.

Shiva once again criticizes the concept she calls *maldevelopment*. She maintains that "'[g]rowth that fails to take ecological and social destruction into account is no longer a measure of the health of the economy, but a measure of its sickness. …[This] is not development; it is maldevelopment" (2016, xv). To explain, as mentioned before in the previous part, "Domination: Establishing A System," from the point of view of the civilization, concepts such as "growth" and "development" are highly valued and pursued at any cost, regardless of the consequences. Nevertheless, from the perspective of Nature and women, as well as other people caring about life and sustainability, patriarchy's form of "development" and "growth" becomes "maldevelopment." For the sake of the so-called betterment of the

economy, both “ecological and social destruction” are willingly accepted yet made invisible or worse, dismissible.

Shiva is also strongly against “industrial agriculture” as it destroys the diversity in the areas where it is practiced, transforming them into “[monoculture]” (2016, 104) in which the only aim is to accumulate as much profit as possible. However, “[e]cological agriculture is based on mixed and rotational cropping, and production of diversity of crops” (2016, 105). That is to say, capitalism renders massive areas that are used to grow food with ecological farming methods into monocultured areas that are abused to grow a single type of food to gain more profit. However, local practices by women and agrarian communities are more sustainable since they respect the earth’s and Nature’s cycles and maintain the diversity and integrity of life. Shiva asserts that “[t]raditional agricultural systems have evolved polycultures because a greater yield can be harvested from an area planted with diverse crops than from an equivalent area consisting of separate patches of monocultures” (2016, 105). This proves that working in harmony with the land instead of working against it proves to be more fruitful for every being existing within the process. Even though it is not as profitable as monoculture practices of industrial farming, traditional farming that is more ecologically sustainable is an important part of a subsistence economy that is being taken over and destroyed by patriarchy.

To conclude, “living economies” are part of the whole, and they are ecological, community-based, as well as respectful of the integrity of the land and Nature. However, as mentioned in the previous parts, Western capitalist patriarchy dismisses those processes that are harmonious and mainly maintained by women. By attempting to “develop” them, capitalist patriarchy exploits both women and the land as well as local people. Women are the preservers and keepers of seeds, practitioners of subsistence agriculture, and, unfortunately, they are the first line of people facing exposure to maldevelopment when the subsistence economies are destroyed. As this part draws to a close, it is vital to note that women and the land's connection does not emerge from essentialist roots; to the contrary, it is the result of their common oppression and abuse by Western patriarchy, whose values are highly questionable from the perspective of the Earth communities.

1.4.4. Women and Water

Women and water have a connection similarly forged to other elements that have been touched upon in this dissertation. The links between them are historic, political, and social. This part will endeavor to present the links between them by foregrounding the points of convergence between women and water. Astrida Neimanis, in her book *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (2017), presents a striking outlook on bodies and their connection to water.

Neimanis opens her book with the claim that "we are bodies of water." She defines human bodies as the in-betweenness of "*embodied*" and "*comprising water.*" Normally, the former—outside of the water context—is the master narrative of "dominant Western and humanist understandings of embodiment," since this perspective defines human bodies as "individual subjects" separate from their environment and "fundamentally autonomous." Everything in Western civilization is built upon the fact that humans are separate subjects. Nevertheless, she redefines human bodies "as bodies of water [because] we leak and seethe, our borders always vulnerable to rupture and renegotiation" (2017, 1, 2). To elaborate, there is a comparison between the Western worldview and feminist or ecofeminist understanding of human bodies. While the former perceives bodies as "individuals" that are isolated from their environment, the latter considers bodies as "bodies of water" that might have "border[s]" though they are prone to change, whether by force or by mediation.

Neimanis asserts that although it is a "cliché, … human bodies are at least two-thirds water. … Our wet matters are in constant process of intake, transformation, and exchange—drinking, peeing, sweating, sponging, weeping. Discrete individualism is a rather dry, if convenient, myth" (2017, 2). To clarify, human bodies are not cut off from the other bodies of water in Nature, to the contrary, humans are connected to all water as they are continuously "exchanging" water with their environments as a result of biological processes. In this narrative, water is not only a part of bodies, but rather it is body itself. Neimanis argues that for humans, the "exchange" of water with the environment is not the only connection humanity has with the otherized objects for water also "connect [humans] to other bodies, to other worlds beyond our human selves." To exemplify, she states that kissing, "blood transfus[ion]," "nursing" a baby can all be considered "exchange" of

water between other human bodies. Additionally, she argues that the link that is forged through human bodies "are just as likely a sea, a cistern, and underground reservoir of once-was-rain." Next, she concludes that these seemingly endless connections and networks of water between all "bodies of water"— whether human or "more-than-human hydrocommons"— "present a challenge to anthropocentrism, and the privileging of the human as the sole or primary site of embodiment" (2017, 2). In essence, from this point of view, water is a medium that connects everything that it enters and leaves. The connection is not static; to the contrary, it is alive as it is always changing its intensity and the body that water passes through. Neimanis calls water a medium, and its movement from one body to the next a "hydrocommons" (2017, 2), as human bodies are "always more-than-human"(2017, 3), as well as, they are "simultaneously partaking in a hydrocommons of wet relations" (2017, 4). The word alludes to an existence that is almost devoid of borders, as they are permeable and porous. Every '*body*' is in a cycle of water. This relational mode of being resists the Anthropocentric perspective that defines human bodies as impermeable subjects that must be served by every other being.

Drawing on Alaimo's term that redefines human bodies' relationality with their environment, "transcorporeality" (mentioned in "Connection or Relationality: Nature in the 'Flesh'" part), Neimanis deepens the meaning and capacity of the word ontologically by incorporating water and its passage through all bodies. Against the idea of the human body as distanced and divided from others- the idea of the *individual* that was produced by "post-Enlightenment Western epistemological ocularcentrism," she suggests a different form of being for all, through which "water is … digging stealth channels." The link can "be immediate and direct, or delayed and removed, but nonetheless [it] reveals itself as a thread of interpermeation and commonality that facilitates the possibility of something like an *embodied hydrocommons*" (2017, 95). To clarify, water passes through everything; from one body to another, connecting them in unseeming ways. The permeation is not one-sided, to the contrary, it is all "bodies of water" that are in a state of permeation and overlap which is defined as "embodied hydrocommons." Hence, human bodies cannot be defined as bordered flesh, apart from their surroundings. They are "embodied hydrocommons" which maintain and include of other *bodies of water* within.

Drawing on Alaimo, Neimanis argues that transcorporeality connection points, which can be both a curse and a blessing, "are often invisible," as Ulrich Beck suggests; "risk is incalculable." Next, Neimanis questions the risks of polluting bodies of water, as all of them are connected to each other:

> "[D]o we calculate the risks of toxic breast milk, when these flows cannot be dissociated from cultural questions, and other kinds of flows? … [W]e can never track the trickle, definitely, back to its source. Milky fluids cannot be disengaged from Arctic currents or gastric juices, from amniotic seas or cisterns full of liquid waste" (2017, 37).

To clarify, as every water and "flow" is connected, one can never know the first polluted source. Most harmful chemicals stay in the land and water for decades, if not more. Every being sharing space or, in this case, *water* takes this pollutant—such as microplastics—and toxic materials and chemicals into their own bodies of water to be given to some other body, namely a newborn infant. Therefore, milk cannot be distinguished from other waters, be it bodily fluids—namely, "gastric juices"—or seas—namely, "Arctic currents." Given these considerations, "interpermeation" between all bodies of water can be observed better. In these types of complex relations, the responsible source cannot be found simply through cause-and-effect relationships, as there can be many unseen connections. Therefore, a relational ethical outlook would more adequately address the issues.

While Neimanis connects all beings, organic and inorganic, through the medium of water and foregrounds the lack of borders between all by laying bare the give-and-take relationships that are *watery* between everything, Shiva, in her book *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit* (2016), argues political, historical, and social connections between women and water. Nevertheless, it must be noted that Shiva, like many other scholars and thinkers, highlights water as a medium for connecting everything it flows through: "Water *is* life. Water is the thread that interconnects life itself—the forests, the soil, the atmosphere, plants, animals, and human beings. Water connects us all. We are primarily water, and we are all sustained by it. Water is a commons" (2016, 13; original emphasis). While the ecofeminist paradigm considers water as a *connecting* medium for every being, the Western capitalist patriarchal paradigm sees water as a "commodity" (2016, 9). Comparing the concepts of plastic bottled water and Indian "*Jal Mandirs* (water temples)," where everyone can get free water from, Shiva states that there is "a clash

between two cultures: a culture that sees water as sacred and treats its provision as a duty for the preservation of life and another that sees water as a commodity, and its ownership and trade as fundamental rights." The author calls this opposition "paradigm wars—conflict over how we perceive and experience water" (2016, 8). In other words, water is conceived differently by different cultures and societies. On the one hand, water is a "commons" that cannot be sold, only shared. On the other hand, water is a means of making a profit; therefore, it is sold in plastic bottles that further pollute the earth and water.

As a generally accepted historical fact, women are more closely associated with water since their gendered daily work requires them to bring water for the household. Therefore, it is only natural for them to be affected first by disruptions to water systems. Stating that she also contributed, Shiva exemplifies two women's movements of "Water Democracy" against the Western paradigm that sees water as a commodity. The first is "against Coca Cola in Plachimada," the second is "against the World Bank—driven water privatization of Delhi's water." She announces that in both movements, women were victorious as "The Coca Cola plant in Plachimada has been shut down, and Suez—the multinational corporation attempting to privatize Delhi's water—was not able to pirate Delhi's water supply" (2016, 13, 14). To elaborate, in both projects that Shiva and others stood against, the water of local people was attempted to be commodified. Nevertheless, water must be considered a commons, and assuming otherwise harms both human and other-than-human communities as well as Nature. The exemplified women-led water protests prove that because women are situated closer to water historically and politically, they are more conscientious when its freedom is threatened.

Shiva also criticizes huge dam projects in India that resulted in "displace[ment]" of people, between "16 million and 378 million." She asserts that "[e]ach water development project leaves behind evictees whose lives are violently overturned" (2016, 70). To elaborate, "displacement" results in the loss of local subsistence economies, which are generally women-led due to the gendered division of labor. Accessing water sources, bringing home water, and daily resource management are feminized duties; any disruption or relocation can be interpreted as gendered vulnerability.

In conclusion, Neimanis's outlook on bodies of water and water as a medium connecting everything can be rethought through Shiva's criticism of water as a

commodity mentality. When water is diverted with dams or made a private commodity, the flow of water is changed. This results in the disruption of many lives and many unseen consequences for the human and the non-human world. To Neimanis, water is not only a commons, but it is a *hydrocommons,* as it is a material that flows through everything. Both theoretical frameworks suggest that water must run free. Neimanis considers water an ontological medium while Shiva foregrounds its political dimensions. In light of these points, water presents material interconnections between all; in tandem, human intervention in bodies of water results in problems that are unevenly gendered at the expense of women.

1.5. Care, Relationality, and Ethical Ecologies

So far in the theoretical framework of this dissertation, ecofeminist and interdisciplinary theories have been highlighted from different perspectives. Plumwood's dualisms and her remedies to escape them, Warren's Ups and Downs, and her ideas regarding the logic of domination are a few examples of the way patriarchy controls and dominates women and Nature. Later, women and Nature's connections that have been forged through hundreds of years of common subjugation by mankind have been foregrounded and explained. All these pursuits must come to a conclusion that gives hope pertaining to the future, and this is a new kind of ethical understanding that reforges the perception of humanity toward Nature and Earth. According to ecofeminists and other ecological thinkers, instead of conceiving Nature as a collection of raw resources that must be processed to make it useful to mankind's developmental purposes, humanity must embody a different outlook towards Nature that respects the interconnectedness and shared interests of both parties. This part will attempt to outline the *ethics of care*—which started as purely human relationality—and its transformation to a more inclusive ethical outlook that considers humanity and the non-human world in an interconnected existence within a complex web of life.

1.5.1. Ethics of Care

A pioneer of care ethics, Carol Gilligan, in her much-quoted *book, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (2003), argues that "moral problems are problems of human relations" (2003, xix). That is, ethics must emerge from relationships and mutuality. As mentioned above, this outlook differs highly from classical ethical understandings that are built upon reason and the concepts of right or wrong stemming from laws and social rules.

Foregrounding the differences in identity development between women and men, Gilligan asserts that "men's descriptions of self, involvement with others is tied to a qualification of identity rather than its realization, instead of attachment, individual achievement rivets the male imagination" (2003, 163). Put differently, in men's identity formation, relationships and relations with others are not the foundation of their selfhood; to the contrary, they are conceived as complementary to their identity. With this in mind, it can be understood that the male subject is independent and separated from others; he is the center of his identity. Being successful is a driving force for a male subject, instead of connection and relationality. Gilligan further explains that "[p]ower and separation secure the man in an identity achieved through work" (2003, 163). Nevertheless, it must be noted that this type of identity formation entails a cost; that is, the male subject is "[left] … at a distance from others, who seem in some sense out of his sight" (2003, 163). To elaborate, the ethics of justice and abstraction stem from this perspective of self and the other. The male subject does not consider himself connected to others; a chasm between the self and the others creates the needed distance to judge what is right and what is wrong based on objective observation. Women, on the other hand, "define their identity through relationships of intimacy and care" (Gilligan 2003, 164). The difference between the male and the female subjects is the reason for different ethical outlooks in life. As Gilligan argues, "[t]hese different perspectives are reflected in two different moral ideologies; … separation is justified by an ethic of rights while attachment is supported by an ethic of care" (2003, 164). To clarify, the "ethic of rights" was formulated by an understanding that detaches the self from the others, whereas the ethic of care has emerged from the understanding of selfhood that is formed through interconnection to the others. Arguably, the separation of the self and the others caused an ethical understanding that is abstract and justice-oriented, which

in turn has given way to a perception of the world from a hierarchical point of view, resulting in unending domination of women, Nature, and otherized peoples.

Gilligan maintains that "ethic of care … reflects a cumulative knowledge of human relationships, evolves around a central insight, that self and other are interdependent" (2003, 74). In other words, "ethic of care" is a combination of collected "knowledge" gained from human relationships. In this perspective on moral approach, the "self" knows that s/he is interconnected and mutually dependent on others. Gillian asserts that the realization of interconnectedness results in other realizations as well: "[T]he fact of interconnection informs the central, recurring recognition that just as the incidence of violence is in the end destructive to all, so the activity of care enhances both others and self" (2003, 74). To elaborate, "ethic of care" creates endless cycles of nurturing as well as sustaining that are received by all sides related. While "care" is an approach that reinforces positive outcomes for everyone, the opposite is also true; that is, "violence" is detrimental "to all."

To conclude, it must be noted that while Gilligan's findings and discoveries regarding the *ethics of care* focus on human relationships and the necessity of depending on one another, ecofeminist thinkers expanded the scope of this relational ethical framework to include ecological relations by involving animals and the non-human world in the circle of relationships that are nurtured and grow mutually. The following part will foreground the relationality between all beings from an ecological perspective.

1.5.2. Relational Ontologies

In her book, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crises of Reason* (2005), Val Plumwood attempts to illustrate a new ethical perspective that is inclusive of the more-than-human world, instead of being human-centered. She suggests "ecological rationality" (2002, 69) rather than a rationality that values humans—especially men—more than all else. Instead of an individualist ontology, she suggests humanity pursue a relational ontological perspective foregrounding relational self, interdependence, and ecological embeddedness of all beings.

Plumwood asserts that "[e] cological rationality critiques those rationalist and dualistic forms of reason that deny social and ecological ground which supports our

lives and are unable to acknowledge their own insufficiency or the material and ecological conditions of their own production or continuation" (2002, 69). To clarify, as mentioned in the previous part about dualisms, hierarchically structured Western society has a tendency to deny its dependency on ecological processes and even social processes that are considered inferior. "Ecological rationality" stands against this mentality; as such, it foregrounds and centers relationality with and dependency on Nature and the more-than-human world. To her, human existence on Earth is "ecologically grounded."

Plumwood asserts that her book deals with two duties that emerged due to "the rationalist hyperseparation of human identity from nature: [these are] the tasks of (re)situating humans in ecological terms and non-humans in ethical terms" (2002, 8, 9). To explain, the author alludes to an attempt to bring humans to Nature and reunite humans with the non-human world in terms of ethics. Humans have come to believe that humanity is not ethically accountable to the non-human world. This attitude is justified by the hyperseparation of humans from Nature. Plumwood explains two tasks of humanity further with these words: "the first is the more urgent and self-evident, the task of prudence; the other is presented as optional, as supererogation, the inessential sphere of ethics. But this is a major error; the two tasks are interconnected" (2002, 9). To clarify, humanity's self-interests and survival instinct, and ethical responsibility towards the non-human world, which is regarded as beyond moral duty, are taken into account separately. Yet this is a mistake, as she believes they are "interconnected." To further her argument, Plumwood states that because these tasks are considered separate, humanity "not only lose[s] the ability to empathise and to see the non-human sphere in ethical terms, but also get a false sense of our own character and location that includes an illusory sense of autonomy." Nevertheless, humanity is not autonomous; to the contrary, they are interdependent and "interconnect[ed]" to the non-human world in terms of humanity's survival. Humanity mistakenly does not consider the more-than-human world in terms of "ethics," and they justify this approach by describing their relationships as "purely instrumental' relationships"; however, this results in "prudential hazard" (2002, 9). To put it differently, situating humans separate from Nature results in a blindness to our desperate need for the non-human world to survive. The perception of a more-than-human world is the result of an outlook that considers the otherized Nature mere instruments. However, that is a grave mistake, as utilizing them in ways that are

destroying and harming them without any consideration of their renewal abilities results in what can be called "prudential hazard," that is to say, humanity is actually harming itself in the process of instrumentalizing the non-human world. Seeing that both worlds, which are considered separated by western philosophy, are interdependent, "we can see that our ethical failures and our prudential failures are closely and interactively linked, casting doubt on any attempt to polorise or treat as sharply discontinuous human and non-human interests and ethics" (2002, 9). To clarify, humanity's ethical shortcomings and "prudential failures" are mutually entangled. Keeping this in mind, it is impossible to create clear cut boundaries between human and the non-human world as both sides' interests are "interdependent."

To conclude, while Gilligan attempts to bring about a different perspective by creating a framework for ethics of care between human relationships as opposed to ethics of rights, Plumwood's relational ethics must also be noted, as they are groundbreaking in ecofeminist ethics and other ecological ethical perspectives. A relational ontological framework, as opposed to the individual ontological worldview of the Anthropocene era, asserts that humanity's willful blindness to see the existing connections and interactivity between *hyperseparated* worlds of human and non-human will one day spell disaster for both as they share interests. Therefore, it is suggested that humanity must embrace a non-dualistic and non-hierarchical worldview in order to save both. Whether they accept the fact or not, humans are ecologically embedded in their environment. As mentioned in the previous parts, all beings' bodies are interconnected in so many ways, even though these interconnections can be invisible to the untrained or misled eye. Nonetheless, ecofeminists and other ecological thinkers foreground these connections and endeavor to formulate alternative ethical ontologies that can answer the needs of all beings equally, as the end of one world means the end for all.

1.6. Spiritual, Indigenous, and Alternative Ecologies

There exists a common point between ecofeminist thought and some Indigenous and spiritual worldviews, that is, relational cosmology. Both see the world formed as a web of relations instead of hierarchically structured dualisms. This

part will attempt to relocate power as a connecting force that enables all beings, instead of a force that controls and dominates. For Allen and Starhawk, relationships with the earth and the land are considered sacred, and they connect all beings. Everything is interdependent and mutually dependent on each other, just as in ecofeminist philosophy and ethics. For LaDuke, humanity has ecological responsibility, and ethics must be land-based. To summarize, Indigenous and ecofeminist worldviews stand against the Western dualistic worldview by highlighting relational ethics and cosmology, the sacredness of connection between all beings, and relationships with the earth, last but not least, spiritually grounded ecological responsibility.

Paula Gunn Allen, in her book, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (1992), explores an alternative relational ontology as opposed to the Western ontological framework that perceives the world through dualist lenses. She foregrounds Native cosmology and reveals the web of connections between all beings from matrilineal worldviews. The opening lines from the aforementioned book demonstrate her point of view, which was bequeathed to her by her mother: "animals, insects and plants are to be treated with the kind of respect one customarily accords to high-status adults. 'Life is a circle, and everything has its place in it.'" This philosophy is called "the sacred hoop" (1992, 16). To clarify, the perspective that is named "the sacred hoop" by Native American theorists is situated in a different ontological framework compared to Western canon philosophy. As such, it is believed that every being deserves the highest form of respect as everything has its own place in the "circle of life." This is a prime example of a relational worldview as it foregrounds more-than-human relations.

Even though it is highly flawed and misleading to assume or reflect all Native American People's worldviews as unified, Allen herself frankly asserts that "tribal world-views are more similar to one another than any of them are to the patriarchal world-view, and they have a better record of survival" (1992, 22). To elaborate, the author situates every tribe's perspective on life against the patriarchal system. Despite being very different from each other, they still agree on many things regarding humans' relationships with Nature, as their outlook is composed of a relational ontological framework, and they do not consider humans the center of the world. On the other hand, patriarchal philosophies consider humanity to be located above all else and at the center of everything. The passage highlights another

important historical fact: the colonizers' taking over the Americas and building their form of civilization is relatively new compared to ancient traditions of tribes, which have survived and thrived in the Americas for centuries before the colonizers' intervention.

To Allen, Native American spiritualisms, there exists a specific "spirit" that is "quintessential" in "everything." There are many names for her: "Old Spider Woman," "Serpent Woman," "Corn Woman," and "Earth Woman" (1992, 28). Although there are many names for her, the commonality between them is the fact that they are all female spirits, and they all mean "Creation, Earth, creatures, plants, and light" (Allen 1992, 28). Feminine is more central in Native American traditions and beliefs, so much so that Allen describes the essentiality of woman in everything with these words: "At the center of all is Woman, and no thing is sacred (cooked, ripe, as the Keres Indians of Laguna Pueblo say it) without her blessing, her thinking" (1992, 28). Women's existence in society is revered and respected, and her work of subsistence is seen in high regard, unlike in Western traditions, as exemplified many times above. She is not only her body and her body's capabilities of bringing life, but also her "power of intelligence" (Allen 1992, 28). Allen maintains that "[s]he is the necessary precondition for material creation, and she, like all of her creation, is fundamentally female—potential and primary" (1992, 29). What has been marginalized and desecrated by colonizers is being brought back with these words, as woman is "material creation" to the colonizer's concept of the abstract. Women's capabilities are respected in Native peoples' cosmology as they are the "precondition" for life.

Allen highlights the importance of "harmony" for tribes with these words:

> "the primary potency in the universe was female, and that understanding authorizes all tribal activities, religious or social. That power inevitably carries with it the requirement that the people live in cooperative harmony with each other and with beings and powers that surround them" (1992, 45, 46).

To explain, Native American cosmology centers the feminine as a fundamental power that ensures mutual balance between all beings. This points to a relational cosmos instead of the understanding of Western society, which has elevated man at the top of a hierarchical structure. For Native Americans, this worldview has shaped their societal structures as well. Theirs is not a pyramid but a circle in which each

member gives as much as they take. This implies that they maintain a way of life that embraces ecological responsibility instead of abusing Nature for personal gain. Allen furthers her arguments with these words, “For without peacefulness and harmony, which are the powers of a woman’s heart, the power of the light and of corn, of generativity and of ritual magic, cannot function” (1992, 46). In other words, at the heart of tribal beliefs and philosophies lies “harmony with beings.” Nothing is able to work without this energy of being in tune with each other and their surroundings. They gain power and meaning from their relations. The author connects these concepts, which create the “woman’s heart,” thus her ability to emit peace and balance is seen as the strongest feature that gives life.

In her book, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (1999), Winona LaDuke lays bare before her readers' eyes the difference between colonizers’ and her peoples’ outlook on Nature and life on Earth. Her and her peoples’ philosophy maintains that beings placed in life are not hierarchically structured, and humans are not separated from Nature; to the contrary, everything has the same value, and everything is connected through relations and even kinship. LaDuke perfectly describes this kinship in her book: “Native American teaching describes the relations all around—animals, fish, trees, and rocks—as our brothers, sisters, uncles, and grandpas. Our relations to each other, our prayers whispered across generations to our relatives, are what bind our cultures together” (1999, 2). To elaborate, Native cosmology does not perceive Nature as an object or as a background for human activities; to the contrary, they see relatives and familial bonds when they gaze upon Nature’s every member; they are kin. The relationships are not metaphorical, but rather ontological. Unlike Westerners who view culture and Nature as hyperseparated from each other, making up the opposites of dualism, Native peoples believe that Nature is included in their culture as well, for they are in their prayers that have been offered for generations. This relational web keeps cultures together. This worldview creates ethical relationality. LaDuke’s words suggest that her people’s understanding of land and identity differs greatly from Westerners’ outlook on land, and this is why they struggle against the Western way of development. As she explains her people’s understanding of environmentalism, she states that it is “[g]rassroots and land-based” (1999, 4), which arguably means that their feelings of kinship for and relationship with the land are the basis on which their efforts to safeguard Nature are founded. LaDuke asserts that “[w]e are nations of people with

distinct land areas, and our leadership and direction emerge from the land up. Our commitment and tenacity spring from our deep connection to the land" (1999, 4). To clarify, unlike colonizers who merely homogenize them or consider them as ethnic groups, Native Americans assert themselves as "nations of people" who all have their ancestral "land areas." Each nation is connected to its land, but not with assumptions of ownership as in Western traditions; to the contrary, they identify themselves through the land and their environment. Land is not a mere resource; on the contrary, it is a guide, a teacher, and director of their lives as it gives them "direction" and inspires them on how to "[lead]." Land is their home for their "deep connection" that forms their identity. Their relational ethical understanding also emerges from this special outlook on life; unsurprisingly, it is highly differentiated from Westerners' outlooks and ethical values. LaDuke conveys the word that describes that life philosophy with these words: "This relationship to land and water is continuously reaffirmed through prayer, deed, and our way of being—*minobimaatisiiwin*, the 'good life'" (1999, 4; original emphasis). Their ontological outlook surpasses the abstract world of thought and lends itself to their rituals, daily practices, and their "way of being"; thus, it has materialized and has been practiced daily, making it not only spiritual, but also an ethical and practical relationship. They call this "*minobimaatisiiwin*, the 'good life'" a cosmology that centers on harmony and the right way of living with "all [their] relations."

In her book, *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex, and Politics* (2012), Starhawk explores earth-centered spirituality, embodied knowledge, and sacred ecology. She asserts that "sacred is immanent, embodied in the world, in nature, in human culture, in action as well as contemplation. …. [T]he living world, the cycles of nature and human life, are sacred—that is, of primary importance, of a value that goes beyond human expediency" (2012, 8). With these words, the author situates sacredness within each being; that is, it is seen as embedded and inherent in all. This point of view creates an opposition to Western religious practices as well as their understandings of sacredness. To them, sacred is not material, and it is separated from the seen world and resides beyond; however, from the aforementioned perspective, sacred is material and common, as it is present in everything.

Starhawk challenges "power-over," which dominates and controls, and suggests "power-from-within," which she also calls "*immanence*" and "Goddess" (2012, 31). She describes the first form of power as bringing "annihilation," and it is

the "power of the gun and the bomb" (2012, 30). In other words, it is suggested that "power-over" power creates hierarchical structures and ends up as a killing and destroying force. It is external and does not come from the will of the being as opposed to what is called "immanence," which is from "within," thus more harmonious. To Starhawk, her book's purpose is to "[call] forth … power" that every being can "sense in a seed, in the growth of a child, the power we feel writing, weaving, working, creating, making choices." She associates this form of power with a different and softer meaning, which is "the root meaning of the word power from the (late popular) Latin, *podere* ('to be able'). It is the power that comes from within" (2012, 30). This type of "power" is not wielded to control or to oppress; to the contrary, it is the potential and capacity of each being "to be able" to do; thus, instead of suppressing, it en*ables*. Describing this form of power as "immanence" and "Goddess," Starhawk notes that the former is "somewhat cold and intellectual," whereas the latter might "[make] many people who would define themselves as 'political' uneasy" as it can be connected to "religion, secularism, and can be mistaken for the worship of an external being." Furthermore, it can be disturbing for "religious" or more "spiritual" people since "it smacks of Paganism, of blood, darkness, and sexuality, of lower powers" (2012, 31). To clarify, her choice of the word *Goddess*, though it might be disturbing for some circles, is a deliberate one as it originates from "lower powers" as opposed to higher or celestial powers of Judeo-Christian religions of Western societies. For Starhawk, *Goddess* is a good choice to name this *power-from-within*, since "the ancient images, symbols, and myths … [describe] Goddess as birth-giver, weaver, earth and growing plant, wind and ocean, flame, web, moon and milk, all speak to [Starhawk] of the powers of connectedness, sustenance, healing, creating" (2012, 31). To elaborate, the *Goddess* as a form of power is not transcendent and separated from Nature or hierarchically above; to the contrary, it is living in every process and cycle of Nature, thus located down to earth. Therefore, it is a relational ecological energy that goes through every being without detachment or alienation. Starhawk argues that power comes from our bodies with these words: "power-from within is the power of the low, the dark, the earth; the power that arises from our blood, and our lives, and our passionate desire for each other's living flesh" (2012, 31). To clarify, the author attempts to give back the power to "the low, the dark, the earth," all of which have been undermined by patriarchy for being related to animalistic bodies, as well as for being unknown and mysterious.

The last source of power, which is named "the earth," is considered inert and only a resource from which humanity must till or process to turn into profit, though the author shows the earth under a different light as a source of power. Starhawk suggests that "the political issues of our time are also issues of spirit, conflicts between paradigms or underlying principles" (2012, 31). In this context, the spiritual also becomes political, and vice versa. Realizing the detrimental effects of power-over-power, Starhawk suggests that the real question one must ask is "how do we overthrow, not those presently in power, but the principle of power-over? How do we shape a society based on the principle of power-from-within?" (2012, 31). To elaborate, the main issue is not about persons but about the philosophy that is implemented to rule over them. A more peaceful society would be formed, provided that *the power-from-within principle* is introduced.

Starhawk describes the Western world as almost a wasteland where everything has lost its meaning. She states that "[e]strangement permeates our society so strongly that to us it seems to be consciousness itself. Even the language for other possibilities has disappeared or been deliberately twisted" (2012, 36). In other words, living the life as alienated from one's environment has become normalized. A reality in which even language has been reshaped in a way that it has become impossible to think in a way that is undesirable to society. However, Starhawk assures her readers that "another form of consciousness is possible. … This is the consciousness I call *immanence*—the awareness of the world and everything in it as alive, dynamic, interdependent, interacting, and infused with moving energies. A living, a weaving dance" (2012, 36; original emphasis). Even though the Western patriarchal philosophies have divided humans from Nature and created alienated identities, the author states that there is still hope for a different way of thinking, calling it "immanence." In this form of consciousness, one realizes that "everything … [is] alive," which is similar to what Merchant calls the organic worldview before the Scientific Revolution and the idea that matter is inert. In this understanding of life, each member is "interdependent"; in other words, they are relational instead of individual. Every being "dances" with each other in a pattern that can be almost considered "weaving," which suggests that each member still maintains its separate features, yet it is entangled and intertwined with the other members. To summarize, Starhawk implies an alternative power that comes from within. By doing so, she suggests that building a society that depends on the principles of not power-over but

power-from within would change the way humanity perceives all-encompassing Nature and humans' location in it. This is a form of spiritual ecology that celebrates every being for the power that flows through from one to another in a web of relationships.

In conclusion, as an alternative to Western dualism, these three theorists suggest relational spiritual ecology in which all beings, organic or inorganic, are sacred and honored as they all have power-from-within. Humans and Nature are not hyperseparated and hierarchically situated; on the contrary, they are ecologically interdependent and interrelated forms of life. These ideas mentioned above collectively represent three of many non-Western ways of knowing, and they can be considered earth-centered knowledge. Taken together, they attempt to bring back the sacredness of relationships with the earth as well as all beings, as a result, reframing ecological and ethical responsibility to humanity's attention.

1.7. Contemporary Expansion of Ecofeminist Philosophy

Ecofeminist theory has evolved beyond its starting point. Some of those possible expansions were mentioned previously in this chapter. Ecofeminism has moved beyond essentialist interpretations and has long proved itself to be a legitimate theory. Starting as an intersection of ecological movement, environmental thought, and feminism, ecofeminism later included other intersectional approaches. It has expanded to incorporate material feminist perspectives, posthumanist thought, contemporary environmental humanities, and, last but not least, it has naturally become involved in Anthropocene debates. These developments can be seen in the body of work of Gaard, Alaimo, Gruen, and Haraway. This part will foreground these expansions by exemplifying the aforementioned theorists' thoughts.

As mentioned before in the "Essentialism Debate" part, against the disregard of ecofeminism as essentialist, Gaard attempts to reinstate ecofeminism by answering these claims, as it has a highly valuable body of knowledge and theories that have paved the way for many and "allegedly new fields such as animal studies and naturalized epistemology [which] are now 'discovering' theoretical perspectives on interspecies relations and standpoint theory that were developed by feminists and ecofeminists decades ago" (2011, 27). This passage can be interpreted by stating that

ecofeminism—even though it had been unluckily labelled as essentialist in 1990s—has given rise to "animal studies and naturalized epistemology." Hence, it can be argued that, even though ecofeminism was once dismissed as essentialist, it has branched out and helped open new fields of valuable research for the humanities. Gaard points out an important feature of ecofeminism, that is, "intersectionality." To her, "in the 1990s, ecofeminist theories continued to refine and ground their analyses, developing economic, material, international, and intersectional perspectives" (2011, 32). In other words, these words once again prove that ecofeminism—against all criticisms—has kept growing and exploring different intersections in the humanities. Furthering her argument, Gaard asserts that "[t]hroughout the 1980s, 1990s, and into the new millennium, vegetarian ecofeminists foregrounded species as they addressed the intersections of feminism, ecology, race, class, gender, and nation" (2011, 36). To elaborate, believing that all oppression stems from the mentality of *dualism*—as explained by Plumwood—or the *logic of domination*—as theorized by Warren—ecofeminists endeavor to investigate and engage with a variety of oppressions and problematic areas in society born from the Western world of thought. Vegetarian ecofeminists highlight the complex web of oppressions set in place by bringing to the fore the plight of animals, yet it must be noted that they see the systematic subjugation of many by patriarchy, and thus they attempt to address these intersections as well.

Staicy Alaimo's body of work, especially *trans-corporeality*, can be considered another expansion of ecofeminist philosophy in the contemporary era. As mentioned earlier in this chapter (in the "Connection or Relationality: Nature in the 'Flesh'"), she explores new materialism and asserts that humans and the more-than-human world are "intermeshed" and "inseparable" (Alaimo 2010, 2). In her theory of interconnectedness, humanity and Nature's material connections are alive, entangled, and always changing. This perspective, she believes, will bring about a new ethical understanding of the non-human world. She also criticizes feminism for trying to separate women from Nature and always escaping biology for the fear of being labeled essentialist. However, she believes that these escapist tendencies create the opposite effect and end up strengthening the dualistic structures. Quoting Birke, she argues that biology is not as fixed and concrete as the master narrative suggests; to the contrary, it is constantly changing with its environment (Alaimo 2010, 5). The idea of trans-corporeality and material interconnectedness between humans and

Nature challenges the claims of dualistic thought. As similar ideas and philosophies exist within the ecofeminist worldview, it can be concluded that ecofeminism has left its mark and expanded into other areas of thought, enriching them in the process.

Another expansion of ecofeminist thought and ethics could be found in Lori Gruen's work. As mentioned before in the part named "Connection or Relationality: Nature in the 'Flesh'", she focuses on bringing about an alternative perspective on humanity's relationship with Nature, especially animals. To her, one must approach every living being with the sensibilities of what she defines as entangled empathy in a form of "caring perception" (2015, 15). As ecofeminists do, she criticizes the classical formation of identity as self and the other and invites her readers to consider a "relational" identity (2015, 54). To summarize, in her ideas, one can discern multispecies ethics as an extension of ecofeminist ethics.

Another contemporary ecological thought that arguably has commonalities with ecofeminism can be considered Donna Haraway's ideas concerning more-than-human relations. In her book, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene* (2016), she stands against human-centered ontology, offers building multispecies worlds, and more-than-human relations. This can be traced back to ecofeminism's critiques of human domination of Nature, the anthropocentric worldview, and the dualistically structured patriarchal society. She opens her book, announcing that "[w]e—all of us on Terra—live in disturbing times… The task is to become capable, with each other in all of our bumptious kinds, of response" (2016, 1). To clarify, the urgency of finding a way to exist with each other—even in cases where human and non-human worlds are perceived as too different to mix well—is expressed in the passage. The ecological crises that the Earth has been going through need a proper and collective "response" born of the synergy from relations with the non-human world. This is a call for coming together to save "Terra" and everything on and within it. Even though humanity created an alternative reality in which they are separated from their fellow animals and Nature, they too reside on Terra; thus, when it is damaged, humanity hurts too. The author highlights the shared vulnerability between the more-than-human world and humanity.

Haraway explains her philosophy with these words: "Chthulucene is a simple word. It is a compound of two Greek roots (khthôn and kainos) that together name a kind of timeplace for learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying in response-ability on a damaged earth" (2016, 2). To clarify, she suggests a new

outlook on life, calling it "Chthulucene," against the idea of Antropocene. The meaning of the first word is explained as "*[k]ainos* means now, a time of beginnings, a time for ongoing, for freshness. Nothing in *kainos* must mean conventional pasts, presents, or futures. … Kainos can be full of inheritances, of remembering, and full of comings, of nurturing what might still be" (2016, 2). She explains the other word with these words:

> "[c]hthonic ones are beings of the earth, both ancient and up-to-the-minute. I imagine chthonic ones as replete with tentacles, feelers, digits, cords, whiptails, spider legs, and very unruly hair. Chthonic ones romp in multicritter humus but have no truck with sky-gazing Homo" (2016, 2).

To clarify all, the author stands against the idea of Anthropocene and highlights a worldview she named Chthulucene. This idea is not human-centered; to the contrary, it supports a multispecies and relational way of life. She describes "kainos" as "now, a time of beginnings, a time for ongoing, for freshness," that is to say, in this philosophy, time is perceived differently, as it has no division between past, present, and future; thus, time is not linear, but rather relational, nested, and intertwined. "Chthonic," on the other hand, means related to earth, coming from the earth, and earth-bound. Moreover, just as the previous word, this word also suggests a simultaneity of past and present by stating the creatures are both from "ancient" times and today. Purposefully, to foreground the unhierarchical structure of these earthly "critters," she mentions different body parts of different animals. Most strikingly, this philosophy rejects the idea of "sky-gazing" as homo-sapiens do, that is, it resists the idea of turning one's back to the earth and looking to the skies for answers to earthly questions and for separation from the earth-bound "critters." The first quotation in this paragraph suggests that both words from Greek create a worldview in which both "time" and "place" mesh together in a new form of worldly relation that contains both. Humanity discovers a way of living that does not deny either its "response" to the problems that are faced due to ecological issues or "responsibility" towards the Earth. "Stay[ing] with the trouble" suggests learning to accept the problems as well as dealing with them. "Living and dying" together imply the cycle of life through which all beings go. To summarize, she points to a way of living that accepts humanity's responsibility towards all beings that reside on a "damaged earth" with humans. All problems faced must be responded to in this new

era that accepts a multispecies point of view. This philosophy aligns with ecofeminist critiques of dualism and domination as well as a human-centered approach. Thereby, arguably, ecofeminism is not a theory that is finished; to the contrary, it lives within or rather evolves into other sister thought systems that critique the dualistic approach of Western thinking.

Taken together, these expansions suggest that the theory has evolved and expanded significantly, especially from the 1990s essentialism debates. Ecofeminist thought has always sustained its criticisms of domination and interconnected systems of oppression; however, it has transformed to include, and it has also affected, intersectional perspectives, material feminist approaches, posthumanist thought, multispecies relations, and relational ontologies.

1.8. Theoretical Positioning of the Present Dissertation

As mentioned above in detail, this dissertation positions itself within the ecofeminist framework. Searching for connections between women and Nature, this dissertation endeavors to foreground said links which have been forged through historical, political, economic, and societal means as a result of the patriarchal system's oppressive methods in place, rather than essentialist approaches to the special connections women and Nature have. The common oppression of women and Nature is made possible by different means. According to Plumwood, it is the dualistic structures in place that made it possible for patriarchy to otherize and subjugate women and Nature. She goes so far as to claim that even the classical logic adopted by civilization can be considered a tool for oppression, as it enables subjects to objectify others, thus preventing the formation of relational identities. On the other hand, Warren mentions Ups and Downs, and the way patriarchy justifies the subjugation of the masses by using a method she calls the *logic of domination*. Furthermore, Shiva argues that patriarchal capitalism sacrifices many people's way of living and their way of surviving through their subsistence economies as well as ecosystems by way of transforming diversity into monocultures. Western greed and audacity to develop the purportedly underdeveloped areas and nations have resulted in *maldevelopment*. Many women, along with other peasants and Nature, have been affected negatively. Another ecofeminist theorist, Mies, follows a similar vein of

thought as Shiva, and she argues that patriarchal capitalism forgoes the security and integrity of women and Nature to accumulate more capital.

Women and Nature's connections are a natural result of their shared oppression and vulnerability. This dissertation's theoretical framework, as mentioned above, in the part "Revisiting the Woman and Nature's Connection," by quoting Warren, attempts to highlight "historical (typically causal), conceptual, empirical, socioeconomic, linguistic, symbolic and literary, spiritual and religious, epistemological, political, and ethical interconnections" (2000, 21) between women and Nature. Simultaneously, this study foregrounds the wounds that are inflicted by capitalist patriarchy on women and Nature, and how the female characters in the novels heal the divided and fractured parts of dualisms and bring about alternative ethical outlooks that emphasize living together with harmony. These connections and the processes of healing will be brought to the fore by this dissertation through an ecofeminist reading of selected American novels; these are *Solar Storms* (1997) by Linda Hogan, *Prodigal Summer* (2001) and *Animal Dreams* (1992) by Barbara Kingsolver, *Parable of the Sower* (2019) by Octavia Butler, and *So Far From God* (2005) by Ana Castillo.

CHAPTER TWO

ANALYSIS OF LINDA HOGAN'S *SOLAR STORMS*

2.1. Contextual Background

Born in Denver, Colorado, U.S., on July 16, 1947, Linda Hogan is an American author and a poet of Chickasaw descent. She earned a BA at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. Later, in 1978, she got an MA in English and creative writing from the University of Colorado, Boulder. Recurring themes in her works are ecological issues, parenthood, and intergenerational care. Some of her best-known works are *Calling Myself Home* (1978), which was also her first publication after her graduation, and *Daughters I Love You* (1981), followed by *Eclipse* (1983). Later, she published *Mean Spirit* (1990), *Solar Storms* (1995), and *Dark. Sweet.* (2014) (Bitgood).

In an interview with Harrison, Hogan describes herself as "shy" and "a quiet child", as this was how children were raised in those days. Being "too self-conscious," she found herself writing poetry. She depicts the language of poetry "as it pertains to the earth" (2011, 163); that is, she thinks language must be considered land-oriented and earth-based. Hogan asserts that she attempts to combine different aspects in her writing, such as elements from "spirituality, … environmental justice, … indigenous world, and Anglo world." Next, she adds that she includes issues and tensions existing within white patriarchy and women's issues, as well as "minority" and "class" issues (Harrison and Hogan 2011, 164). In other words, Hogan's writing is multidimensional and creates a site in which the readers can witness many issues intersect, bringing about a collective ground that lends itself to a rich reading and analysis. When asked about her understanding of "tradition," Hogan states that it is about "respect for the world, and giving back." She furthers her description by asserting her philosophy of living is "do[ing] the least damage" (Harrison and Hogan 2011, 168). Hogan's words reflect her and her people's perspectives regarding living in this world. The word tradition resonates within her being a part of the world, not controlling or dominating it. In another interview, Hogan mentions she does not write

for a specific audience; however, she "keep[s] [her] own people, … family as part of the audience" as she "write[s] what would have integrity for the people" (Miller and Hogan 1990, 6). In other words, she foregrounds her and her family's "integrity" rather than writing to please a specific group of people. Her people and her family are important to her; therefore, in a way, she writes what will honor them.

First published in 1990, *Mean Spirit* (2015) is one of the most well-known novels of Hogan. A finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, the work focuses on murders around the Oklahoma Osage region. When people discovered oil beneath the Osage area, the people of Osage became a target for the greedy white men who were after their oil and riches. The novel revolves around Grace Blanket's death, witnessed by her daughter, Nola, along with other suspicious killings and deaths in the Osage region. These murders all point to systematic and premeditated murders that aim to take over the oil-rich land. The novel centers on racism, colonial greed, and legal corruption. Stace Red Hawk, a federal agent of Lakota descent, is assigned to the cases to solve them once and for all. However, as he digs deeper, he realizes that there are unseen structures and powers beneath the surface that stop him from revealing the truth. The novel also foregrounds the Osage people losing touch with their cultural heritage and land due to falling into the trap of greed, like the colonizers. However, as they start dying one by one, Nola and a few others start to reforge their bond with the land and their culture.

Solar Storms (1997), first published in 1995, is a coming-of-age story, dealing with seventeen-year-old Angel Wing's journey as she discovers her roots in a place she barely remembers due to being ripped from her people when she was a little child. The reason she was taken away from her mother was that her mother physically abused her by biting her face horribly, leaving horrible scars. She cannot remember how these scars occurred and looks for answers. When Angel comes back to Adam's Rib, she reconnects with the matriarchs of her family: Agnes Iron, Dora-Rouge, and Bush. She slowly heals due to her re-bonding with her female family and the land she was born in. She learns about the importance of Indigenous memory, family, tradition, the land, the water, and animals. The story takes a turn when two young men come to warn the people of Adam's Rib about the impending danger, as the government is building a dam that is destroying and devastating both human and non-human life. As a result of this horrible news, Angel's story of self-discovery, growth, and healing transforms from a family affair into an epic stand against the

white patriarchy and colonial greed to protect and preserve the human and non-human communities in the area.

Another coming-of-age novel, *Power* (1998), revolves around a sixteen-year-old named Omishto from the Taiga tribe. She sees her aunt Ama killing a Florida panther, considered sacred by their people, as well as a government-protected animal. The novel brings light to the clash between the Western judicial system and tribal law as Ama is being judged by both. Similar to the previous novel, Hogan examines the relationship between a female coming of age and Indigenous identity, as well as nonhuman life and ecological responsibility.

The next novel, *People of the Whale* (2009), centers on Indigenous people living in the area of the Pacific Northwest and their purportedly traditional whaling. Even though the male characters present whale hunting as a part of their culture, they sell the meat to Japan, thus killing majestic animals, symbolizing rebirth, in the name of economic gain. Thomas Witka Just returns from the Vietnam War to his homeland, expecting to reconnect with his family and land; however, he faces many conflicting emotions in the face of whale killing.

As illustrated above, environmental issues, conflicts between the Anglos and the Indigenous people in terms of their perspectives, as well as their laws, are some of the recurring themes and topics in Hogan's novels. She also tells stories of Indigenous women who are unseen in society. In Hogan's stories, young women discover themselves through their connections to their families, the female community, and Nature.

2.2. Plot Overview and Key Elements of *Solar Storms*

As previously noted, the novel *Solar Storms* (1998) explores Angela Wing's discovery of selfhood through her connection to her matriarchs, her land, and her willingness to save it from patriarchal capitalism. Angel was taken away from her mother and her family because her mother, Hannah, used to abuse her physically, biting her face violently. The novel starts when seventeen-year-old Angel comes back to live with her great-grandmother Agnes and great-great-grandmother Dora-Rouge in Adam's Rib. Angel's main purpose is to gain her lost memory of what happened to her deeply scarred face and to find out whether she has someone out there who is

capable of loving her. Having grown up in foster care, Angel feels detached, afraid, and angry (Hogan, 1998, 27) with life all the time. Later, she meets Bush, her grandfather's wife, who raised her until she was taken away by the government to protect her from Hannah. Each member of her family supports her identity development and her healing process through different means. Dora-Rouge brings with her the wisdom and knowledge of the old. Agnes introduces stability, care for both humans and animals, and the importance of connections between the female community. Bush guides Angel both in surviving in Nature and connecting to it. As Angel spends more time with her family of matriarchs, she starts to unravel and rediscover her selfhood in a wholly new context.

As Angel comes to understand her place in the world and starts to get used to her new life with her family, people are shaken to learn about the government's dam project ruining and ravaging the lives of both human and nonhuman inhabitants of their beloved lands. To stop this devastation and to raise their voices against the white patriarchy, the women leave Adam's Rib on a journey to the dam-building project taking place in Fat-Eaters to face the people destroying their lives. While the main purpose is to gain their lands back from the dam-building company, each women have other purposes in starting a journey full of hardships. Angel wants to meet her mother, who lives there, to understand why she abused her and left her. Dora-Rouge wants to go back to her place of birth to die there after seeing her beloved land one last time. Agnes joins them because she cannot leave her elderly mother alone on a perilous journey.

Towards the end of their travel, Agnes gets sick and passes away. Dora-Rouge feels responsible because of her deal with the water to let them pass. Furthermore, she realizes that Agnes would not leave if not for Dora-Rouge's insistence on going to her place of birth to die there peacefully. After a very long and illuminating journey, Angel learns so much about herself and the lands of her ancestors. She also gets to meet her mother, and she discovers the sources of her scars, learning that her mother bit her face as a young child. However, she learns to forgive her mother, realizing she was also the product of a generational trauma caused by colonizers. Hannah dies when Angel is still in the town. She goes to help bury her and finds out about her baby sister, whom she takes with her to raise with Bush and their extended family. They stay a long time in the land of the Fat-Eaters, witnessing many atrocities the government, police, and special forces commit against the Indigenous people and

Nature. Moreover, they stand against those atrocities to protect their land, as well as their way of life and subsistence economy. When Angel's baby sister, Aurora, gets sick, Angel, Bush, and the baby have to leave the town to get help (Hogan 1997, 328). They do not go back to the dam building site, as it gets more and more dangerous for a baby to be there due to the reckless and violent actions of the officials and the dam workers. They go back to Adam's Rib, realizing it is affected by the dam project as well. Fur Island, where Bush lives, is flooded along with many unique elements of Nature. Agnes' house is also flooded. Therefore, they go to live with the elders of the community on One Hundred
Road. The novel ends on a sad but somewhat hopeful note, as the protests produce results one year later. The characters are disappointed because the results will not bring back the animals, plants, and people's lives to their land.

Some existing scholarship on the novel *Solar Storms* (1997) evaluated the novel from ecofeminist perspectives. For example, Schultermandl focuses on Native American tribal culture and land connection, mother-daughter relationship, and environmental activism in the novel (2005, 67-82). Benabed, another scholar writing about the novel from an indigenous ecofeminist perspective, Benabed emphasizes female bonding, healing, "matrilineage," "indigenous 'survivance," "environmental protest," and "gynocritic community" (2020, 237). Tatar, on the other hand, reads the novel from a postcolonial ecofeminist perspective, mostly focusing on "Indigenous resistance," "ecological destruction," and anthropocentrism (2025, 1595-1607). Erickson's thesis explores *Mean Spirit*, *Solar Storms,* and *Power* by Linda Hogan, especially focusing on "silence, absence, … mystery" and "healing" by using theories of ecofeminism, ecocriticism, and ecopsychology (2006, iii). Furthermore, similarly looking through an ecofeminist perspective, Rizvi highlights "matrilineage," environmental destruction, colonial trauma, and the Medusa archetype (2010). Harrison emphasizes the concepts of trauma, storytelling, and environmental injustice. She asserts that in the novel, stories, official maps, and narratives of development and progress are used as justification methods for violence (2019, 1-25). This study touches upon these topics; however, it also attempts to expand the ecofeminist outlook by bringing it to the contemporary setting by including care, embodiment, relationality, domination, and multispecies relations. Furthermore, this chapter explores the wounds and scars that capitalist patriarchy leaves on women's bodies, the land, and water. The violence and onslaught of white

patriarchy that started with the colonization process has continued until present times by changing faces and names. The novel foregrounds this process by emphasizing the open wounds of dam-building projects and how those wounds left on the land and the water are transferred from those sites to women's minds and even bodies. Angel and her mothers do not endure this attack on themselves and their beloved land; to the contrary, they stand up to the mentality that harms and violates by bringing together and mending what is broken and fragmented, healing the wounds opened by patriarchy.

2.3. Capitalism, Colonialism, and the Domination of Nature

The novel opens with Angel coming to Adam's Rib, anxious and stressed. She makes noteworthy observations about her ancestral land and water. She relays that "[t]he elders said it was where *land and water* had joined together *in an ancient pact, now broken*" (1997, 21; emphasis added). This comment about the *broken pact* between the land and the water becomes one of the main themes and discussions Hogan presents to her readers. The question this part asks is what the *pact* is between the land and the water, and how it is broken. Hogan narrates her novel in a way that foregrounds the trauma the land has been going through for decades. This trauma has left many wounds that are both seen and unseen. It starts with the colonization process and continues under different names until modern times. This part will trace the ruin and trauma left behind by the colonizers and their descendants through Plumwood's ideas of dualism, Merchant's ideas on organic and mechanistic outlooks on Nature, Warren's logic of domination, and Shiva's idea of maldevelopment and reductionism.

The opening scene continues with the history of the waterways through which Angel is passing. She brings attention to the fact that she is not the first one to pass through these passages. On the contrary, other animals, namely moose, that passed over when the water was frozen, were traced by their natural predators, wolves. Next, she conveys the story of more sinister powers passing through the waters. For instance, French settlers traveled through the waters with "tons of fur" they took from the foxes and beavers, diminishing their numbers to accumulate money. Moreover, she mentions "logjams" caused by the British people, as well as the Swedes and Norwegians, resulting in devastation because they blocked "the flow of

water … from the lake … into the Otter River," thus the river's water became too shallow for fish, and they ended up dying en masse (1997, 21). This scene illustrates the first trauma that Nature witnessed at the hands of colonizers, stripping the land of its useful parts, plundering ruthlessly without ever thinking of the consequences for anyone other than themselves. These atrocities have been made possible and even morally acceptable by creating hierarchies in society. As noted earlier in the first chapter, part 1.3.1 Understanding Dualism, Plumwood suggests that the dualistic structures and their legitimizations are actualized through the concept of reason. At the base of reason lies "classical prepositional [*sic*] logic," which is basically a choice between one or the other (1993, 42). Hence, as long as people think and reason with the classical logic method of propositions, they are doomed to the world of dualisms and are blind to other perspectives and alternative ways of thinking regarding the non-human world and other otherized people. As exemplified in the scene, the colonizers commit crimes against Nature, killing animals without any consideration for their intrinsic value to their land and ecosystem. They also cause devastation, depriving the river of its life-giving water, killing fish along with many unseen or, at the time, unknown organisms living within the water.

In many scenes of the novel, Hogan uses the concept of "poison" and its dispersal patterns to reflect the colonizers' horrible acts toward Nature and women. Poison is another manifestation of the wounds left in the wake of capitalist patriarchy and the colonizers. Hannah's and her mother's poisoned bodies will be analyzed in the next part, while this part will present the poisoned land and its implications for non-human lives. The other significant feature of the town for Angel as a newcomer is a road called "Poison Road." As the narrator, she tells the story behind this name. Firstly, she mentions that the French people used to call the road "Poisson," which means "fish" in French, due to the fact that it once rained fish from the sky, a rare natural phenomenon that sometimes occurs. However, this *almost* innocent name transforms into something more sinister, reflecting the trauma, domination, and oppression the land went through. That is, the settlers poisoned foxes and wolves because they and their animals, "the pigs and the cattle," who could not withstand the extremely cold weather of the region, needed more space to settle. After this horrible mass poisoning of the animals and consequently the land, the place started to be called "Poison Road." Angel states that this is the only road that links to the "hilly peninsula." She feels regret for coming to Adam's Rib when she witnesses the

despondent atmosphere of the road and the houses lining it (Hogan 1997, 24). The poisoning incident took place decades ago when the first settlers came to the land; however, Angel can still feel the effects of such cruel acts. What is told and observable in this scene tells the story of cruelty and lack of consciousness. However, the untold and unseen is also noteworthy, as it brings to light two characteristics of dualism that Plumwood mentions: "incorporation" (1993, 52) and "objectification" (1993, 53). In the scene, Angel never tells the readers what the Indigenous people call the road, simply conveying the story from the point in time when the colonizers first came to the land. As noted previously in the first chapter, in part named 1.3.1 Understanding Dualism, Plumwood's ideas concerning the characteristics of dualism are explained. "Incorporation" or "relational definition" happens when the master and its "qualities" are foregrounded, and the slaves' are unseen. Everything related to the slave is described "in relation to" the master and is considered "negative" (Plumwood 1993, 52). The scene described above reflects this characteristic, as the French settlers named the road without any input from the Indigenous people in their own language, simply after their own observation of a natural phenomenon. The transformation of the name to poison from "poisson" reflects the "objectification" characteristic of dualism. This feature reflects a relationship between the master and the slave, where the dynamics are always in favor of the master. The slaves' agency is taken away, making them the objects of the master to be used and abused. This feature also makes it impossible for masters to empathize with the slaves (Plumwood 1993, 53). In the novel, the animals were killed to fit the place to the colonizers' needs, taking away the agency of both the non-human and the human animals. They also bring in other animals to consume and use in other ways, which results in them dying as they are not built to live in the cold winters of the region. They do not even consider empathizing with the injured party.

As previously noted, the novel and characters' lives, human or non-human, revolve around and are affected negatively by the dam project undertaken by BEEVCO and the government. It can be analyzed as a similar mentality to colonization. Both are in pursuit of self-interest at the expense of others they deem lower than themselves. In the novel, the characters find out about the project from two young men secretly trying to spread the news of the dam-building project that is destroying everything. They tell the people in Adam's Rib that when "the first flooding" happened, it resulted in the deaths of "thousands of caribou," geese, and

devastation of “healing plants.” The company or the government did not ask the locals about the project, as they would be the affected party. They just started the building (Hogan 1997, 57, 58). When the dam building starts, the whole area and its ecosystem are disrupted by it. Lake in Adam’s Rib’s water levels are significantly lower than ever before. Fish and otters die en masse (Hogan 1997, 70). Angel describes the land as “broken,” just like her life and her memories; everything is in “pieces.” However, she wishes to mend and heal them to make them whole once again as much as she can (Hogan 1997, 86). As noted earlier, hearing the news about the dam project, the women decide to leave for the Fat-Eater’s land to stand against the building of the dams, as they destroy the lives of many. When they arrive, they realize that the workers and police do not care about them and do everything in their power to make them change their minds. The officials bully them to change their minds about protesting and standing up to the system. Furthermore, the government and the company purposefully prevent media coverage to keep people from discovering the truth about the atrocities taking place and raising their voices. Angel exposes the contrast between a patriarchal worldview and an Indigenous outlook on life. She states that at first, people did not believe the two young men going around telling people about the project. When they realized that they were right and there was a project. Angel states that “[n]o one trusted the government and corporation officials. … They were clearly in cahoots and would go to unethical ends to get what they wanted” (1997, 279). These words prove that both sides have highly different outlooks on life, and their ethical understanding differs as well. The government and the company have no qualms about secretly colluding, as their perspectives are corrupted from the beginning. As mentioned in the first chapter, in the part named 1.3.2 Domination: Establishing A System, Warren calls this “oppressive conceptual framework,” and the third characteristic is “power of Ups over Downs.” It is legitimized through creating hierarchical structures and taking away the agency of the “Downs.” They legitimize this treatment through what is called “the logic of domination” (Warren 2000, 46, 47). The treatment of Indigenous people and the land they live on is not an ethical concern for the government. Their actions are legitimized as they are higher hierarchically than those people and Nature. Hence, there is no compelling need to change their minds about the dam projects, even if they are destroying everything. Moreover, they believe that these are useless lands and must be made useful for people in the name of development. The whites believe

themselves to be civilized and Natives to be barbarians; for this reason, they do not think twice before taking whatever they want, preaching that they are actually helping them in the process. The colonizers in the past and their descendants in the present do not think about Indigenous people's way of life, and how it is disrupted, even destroyed, when the land and the ecosystem are hurt. The reason for that is the fact that Natives are a part of the ecosystem they are living in, as they live from the land in a cycle of subsistence economy. Therefore, the whole cycle collapses when even one species is taken from the system. As mentioned in the first chapter, part 1.3.2 Domination: Establishing A System, Shiva critiques this Western narrative of development. Western thought assumes that if certain people do not have electricity or what is called modern comforts, and if they are eating the food they grow and wearing the clothes they make, they are considered poor, and the lands they reside on are "unproductive." Organic methods of growing food and women's subsistence work are also deemed "unproductive." Similarly, a river in its natural state is not useful; a dam must be built to make it "a productive resource." Shiva finds these ironic and calls this type of Western development "maldevelopment" (Shiva 1988, 3, 4). Hogan illustrates the unseen side of the story to her readers by depicting the devastation, deaths, and destruction the dam project causes humans, non-humans, the land, and the water, as well as culture and way of life. Since everything is interconnected to each other in a web of life, they cannot maintain their existence and subsistence economy when the land and animals are killed, and the way of the water is changed.

What is brought to the land with the colonizers keeps poisoning, hurting, and changing humans and the land they dwell on, even years after the actual atrocities took place. These changes result in many wounds and scars on the land and the people. During their journey to the Fat-Eaters, the women stop at an old trading post called "North House" to replenish themselves for a few days. They witness a peculiar thing there that brings to the fore the harm to the earth and the land in the name of capital gain and accumulation of wealth. The post is filled with people digging holes, looking for something. Each hole is another injury and harm to the earth. The woman who is in charge of the post, Gita, tells the journeying women that men are looking for the "Spanish silver." When Gita tells the women the story, they come to understand the cause of the silver craze in those men. Gita relays that someone found a couple of "silver coins" while "digging a grave" in the area a few years ago. When

the rumors spread about this, many men started to come, looking for “riches” beneath the earth. Angel describes them as “possessed.” She observes that because each secretly believes that they will be the one to claim the prize, they do not “[trust]” each other and cannot be “friends” (Hogan 1997, 200). This means that there exists an insurmountable division and separation between them, so they cannot connect to each other, let alone connect to the land they are scarring and disturbing with their digging. Having been immersed in Nature for so long and losing the worries of modern humans, such as “time and commerce,” Angel and Bush are especially surprised by this activity of looking for silver. Angel thinks that “men digging their ways to hell, thinking it was heaven” (1997, 201). Dora-Rouge and another woman came to visit her to talk about the old days when people were still one with the land, and so immersed that they “could merge with a cloud and help it rain.” Compared to those people of old times, these men looking for silver in a state of mania are so bizarre and disturbing to them. Dora-Rouge and the woman look at them with “brooding looks” and think that they are “br[eaking] open the ground” (1997, 203). As the women leave behind the North House, Bush ponders the men digging for silver coins. She questions their passion and obsession with the “precious metal” as well as the “mean[ing]” of “silver to them.” Agnes believes that “the world [is] ending.” Thinking about what her mentors and matriarchs said, Angel remembers a quote from Cortés: “We white men have a disease of the heart, and the only thing that can cure it is gold.” Remembering the quote, Angel comments that “with that disease, came the end of many worlds” (Hogan, 1997, 203). The scenes that take place in the North House are noteworthy, as they bring to the fore how colonial greed affected and is still affecting the Indigenous people. Capitalist exploitation of the land and brutally stripping the earth for its resources are settler colonial logic and a form of profit-driven violence against many. In this case, the land and the entirety of its contents and connections are objectified. Nature is reduced to use value and economic value. Angel, Bush, Agnes, and Dora-Rouge, on the other hand, are taken aback as they cannot comprehend seeing land as a commodity. Rather than treating land as an object to be owned, they prefer harmony and kinship with the land; an outlook that aligns with ecofeminist teachings. In their knowledge and wisdom, they can see the relationality between all beings and the intrinsic value of all. In this context, silver has no monetary value; it is just a part of the earth. They cannot see the “precious[ness]” of this “metal” as seen by the capitalist mind. When they think

of Nature and the land, they only see its life-sustaining power and their relational responsibility toward it. Therefore, it is impossible for them to consider extracting so-called precious metals from the earth for capital gain.

Among the many examples of *maldevelopment* in the novel is the building of asphalt roads. The government and the company do this without any consideration of the locals, similarly to the dam-building projects. Angel's thoughts on the matter summarize the reality of the situation clearly: "Everyone knew the heat of the sun on the dark pavement would melt the permafrost, and before long road, another 'improvement,' would cave in" (Hogan 1977, 277). In this quotation, the narrator illustrates the importance of local women's ecological wisdom and knowledge while simultaneously showing the futile and unnecessary intervention of the colonizers. Their interference is neither wanted nor needed; however, they intrude simply because they gain economic profit from this unwanted encroachment. The scene can also be analyzed through Shiva's ideas on Westerners' reductionist ideals. As noted in the first chapter, in part 1.2. Emergence of Ecofeminist Thought, Shiva points to "the scientific revolution" as the basis of reductionism. The "reductionist" perspective does not acknowledge "other ways of knowing" and it "exclude[es]" them (Shiva 1988, 21). From this perspective, Angel's reproach can be emphasized more clearly. She realizes that their knowledge as the local people living on the land has no value or wealth, as they are considered 'backward' people living off the land. The colonizers overlook their experiences as the people living on this land for generations. All the locals know that the weather gets too hot for an asphalt road, and it will be ruined and useless. It just hurts the land and the animals with its existence. However, their input is nothing compared to the Anglos' vast knowledge of the universe, which they have divided into small pieces to understand, dissecting it violently.

As noted earlier, at the end of the novel, the Indigenous people win their court case, and the project stops. However, what has happened prior to this is also acknowledged, as many have been lost, never to come back again. Hundreds of animals died, along with many species of plants; some of them became extinct, and many Islands are flooded. They cannot be salvaged or saved from the flood. Humans' lives alongside the non-human world have been destroyed. They were displaced and discarded. At the end of the novel, Angel notes that people who have "money, the investments, and the city power" must not have a notion of what their "decisions"

and ambitions do to the world. She also thinks that someone who realizes the disastrous results of these "decisions" and still does them anyway must be pure "evil." She states her emotions and thoughts on the matter with these words: "They were cannibals who consumed human flesh, set fire to worlds the gods had loved and asked the humans to care for" (1997, 343). This scene exemplifies the difference between a mechanistic worldview and an organic worldview. As mentioned before in the first chapter, Merchant points out that after the scientific revolution, Western thinking shifted from the organic view of the world to a mechanistic version where matter is inert and dead (1990, 2). To Merchant, after that shift in perspective, humanity no longer believed that everything is connected and that power comes and goes through everyone to make things work. In the mechanistic view, it is thought that matter is dead and it needs an outside intervention to be able to function.

To conclude, the broken pact between the land and the water is broken due to the colonizers and, later, their descendants' unending greed for progress and development. The concept of development is read as a discourse of domination. The novel reveals the inner workings and the convergence of colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy, and how women and Nature are wounded by the exploitation.

2.4. Connections Between Women and Nature and Women's Stand Against Patriarchy

Hogan's narrative brings to the fore the interconnectedness of women and Nature in terms of land, water, and the animals. The next parts will attempt to explore the connections and interdependencies existing between women and Nature, and how women gain different and "other ways of knowing" (Shiva 1988, 21) because of their position in society, and how this position helps them gain a different ethical understanding that enables them to heal and mend what is broken. The said connections are not essential or fixed biological connections; to the contrary, they stem from historical backgrounds, relationality, ethical considerations, and political situations.

2.4.1. Woman's Body and Land

The novel is narrated in a way that foregrounds Indigenous women's and the land's common oppression by white patriarchy. Both are wounded and carry the scars left behind not only by the colonizer's but also by the patriarchal systems put into place post colonization. This part will examine the interconnectedness of women and the land through Plumwood's and Alaimo's points of view, foregrounding non-essential connections between women and the land.

As previously noted, poison is a recurring motif used to shed light on the colonizers' abuse of the land, animals, and women. The poison brought upon the lands of the Americas circulates through the lands to animals to women's bodies. As a foreign body and toxic matter introduced to the web of life in the Americas, it reflects not only the physical trauma and the wounds but also the psychological trauma of oppression and abuse of patriarchy. As all bodies—whether human or non-human—are connected, the poison circulates and moves from body to body, distorting and alienating everything it goes through and lives in. It creates a connection of cursedness, linking all the traumatized parties together in their pain and suffering. Loretta's story is especially striking in reflecting how the poison diffuses from one to another and how it affects its hosts. Agnes relays the tragic story of Loretta and Hannah as well as the land at the hands of colonizers. Loretta Wing is Angel's maternal grandmother. Angel's grandfather, Harold, abandoned Bush to be with her. The woman came to their town unexpectedly, and nobody knew where she came from. They speculated that she must have "gr[own] out of the land" (1977, 37). Later, people deduced where she came from because she emitted some "sweet, almond odor," which is apparently "cyanide." The story behind the poison and the smell of cyanide is that the colonizers left poisoned bodies of dead deer on the land to get rid of the wolves. Loretta's people, the Elk Islanders, were starving because of the colonizers' cruel intervention on the ecosystem; therefore, they had no choice but to eat the poisoned deer (1997, 38). They perished along with the wolves; only several people did not die, keep on living a life of suffering. When Loretta came to Adam's Rib, she caused a big stir in the town, as men, young and old, found her alluring and intriguing. At the end, it was Harold who was ensnared by her. Agnes did not blame Loretta; to the contrary, she blamed the colonizers and other people who used and abused her for the alien and cursed thing she had become, while other

people blamed her and considered her evil. Agnes asserts that she "wasn't the original sin;" to the contrary, it was other people's fault for abusing her and "forc[ing] her," just as they did to the land and animals. When Loretta talked, people heard other voices from inside her: "men's voices speaking English." According to Agnes, after all the abuse she took, Loretta became something like an empty vessel that has "no love, … no belief, … [no] conscience" (Hogan 1997, 39). From Loretta's story, the readers witness the common oppression of women and Nature, which in this context manifests itself as a historical interconnectedness that still lives on in the present. Arguably, she symbolizes the land, as Agnes states that people suspected that she came from there. Many scholars find connections between the abuse of the land and Loretta as well. One of these scholars is Schultermandl, as she asserts "Loretta … [is] the personification of the settlers' exploitation both of the land and of its people" (2005, 73). Another reading of this story can be done from Alaimo's perspective of materiality. As mentioned in the first chapter, part "1.4.1.3. Connection or Relationality: Nature in the 'Flesh,'" Alaimo problematizes the otherization and backgrounding of Nature. She critiques the separation of humans from Nature and offers a reconceptualization of materialism. She foregrounds the interconnectedness of humans with Nature in a concept she calls "trans-corporeality." In this redefinition of relationality, it becomes untenable to separate humans from their environment. A closer analysis of the word illustrates that the prefix "*trans*" (original emphasis) foregrounds "movement across different sites, … [it] also opens up a mobile space that acknowledges the often unpredictable and unwanted actions of human bodies, nonhuman creatures, ecological systems, chemical agents, and other actors" (2010, 1, 2). In the novel, the movement of the poison from one body to another foregrounds the unseen connections between all. The colonizers, caring about only their own ends and needs, poison the land, the animals, and the humans. The consequences of their actions are vast and unending as it travels from one body to the next, and it is impossible to foresee the effects in their entirety because the colonizers' perspective does not allow them to see the reality of connections. Since they operate under a reality that distorts the truth and separates humans from Nature, and even among themselves, they carelessly and selfishly poison, destroy, and kill masses.

Agnes continues her story of Loretta and her poisoned body, as she describes that years later, another stranger came out of nowhere. It was Loretta's daughter, and

Angel's mother, Hannah, and she had the same smell of almonds as her mother. About ten years old, she was already traumatized beyond saving. Agnes, Bush, and Dora-Rouge tried to help her, washing her many times to get rid of the "odor," but they could not manage. Agnes says that the smell "was deeper than skin. It was blood-deep. It was history-deep." Although Hannah was the product of her husband's disloyalty, Bush accepted her as her daughter and "loved [her] poison and all" (1997, 40). One interpretation of this is that trauma is passed down from one generation to another, which is called generational trauma. Just as the poison travels from one body to another, trauma, almost inherited, passes from one to another as well. Hannah is so badly broken and abused that she attempts to create a barrier between herself and the outside world, as her borders were so violently and inhumanely ripped from her. On Bush's account, as a little girl, Hannah stole clothes and put them on top of each other, becoming a shapeless lump to protect herself from the outside (1997, 98). Because she has so many layers, Hannah needed a bath so badly, as her smell became unbearable. Bush saw all her scars, which she calls "signatures of her torturers," and was "overcome" with emotion and shocked (1997, 99). Hannah bequeaths those scars to her daughters. In Angel's case, biting her face and scarring it beyond repair. Hannah has other daughters to whom she leaves a piece of her despair. Another daughter is Henriet, and a bit younger than Angel. Angel hopes for a connection, as she finds her in another town before coming to Adam's Rib. However, their only connection is the trauma left to them by their mother. Angel cannot share Henriet's story with anyone else because Henriet hurts herself, cutting herself with scissors and knives. She puts out cigarettes by pinching them between her fingers (1997, 118). The trauma left on the land moves from there to animals and humans, generation after generation.

A few other scholars have seen the pattern that the abuse and trauma move from one to another, as Hogan has laid before her readers. Benabed finds similarities between Hannah's rape and abuse and the exhaustion of her land's resources. The scholar also states that by her mother's and her grandmother's example, Angel sees that her community bears the burden of "intergenerational trauma" (2020, 242, 243). Another scholar, Harrison, analyses Hannah and her abused body, finding similarities between her and the land. Hannah, whose body bears the scars of her abuse just as her mother before her, is similar to the land that has been taken and abused for years by the colonizers. To Harrison, when the readers consider the body of Hannah and

the land, both damaged and abused, it is plain to see that the damage done to the land and Nature is not an abstract process; to the contrary, it must be understood as an assault inflicted upon the body of a living entity (2019, 20). Another example of parallels between the women's bodies and the land's abuse is illustrated when Bush and Angel wash Hannah's broken and now dead body. After washing her, they laid her body on sheets of newspaper. Angel finds it "appropriate … to place her on words of war, obituaries, stories of carnage and misery. … Some words stuck to her body, dark ink, but we did not wash them off; it was suitable skin" (1997, 253). In this striking scene, all the negativity and toxicity of the patriarchal system that has been published on paper is stuck on Hannah's broken body, representing the dualistic structures' hierarchical systems' neglect and oppression of women and the world.

As noted earlier, Alaimo's trans-corporeality concept fits in the case of poison and trauma transfer from one body to another, as well as from one generation to another. A chemical matter left unchecked in any given environment has unforeseeable effects and horrifying results for all sharing the same ecosystem. Furthermore, expanding the definition of the concept, the foreign bodies and foreign materials are able to move and be transferred not only through space, but also across time, from one generation to another. The effects are not easily dismissed as the master narrative is wont to do. To the contrary, both the physical and the psychological effects are transferred from one space to another, from the human body to the animal body, from inorganic matter to organic matter, and last but not least from past to present and unavoidably to future. Read from this perspective, the novel draws a bleak picture of the future. By poisoning the land and the deer, the colonizers poisoned the future of all living beings.

In conclusion, from an ecofeminist and new materialist perspective, Hogan critiques the dualistic structures and the divisions between humans and the land by narrating the tragic story of Loretta, Hannah, and Angel. The movement and transmission of the poison left by colonizers from one to another illustrates the denied connections between the land, the animals, and the humans. The poison is also a representation of the trauma left by colonizers and their Western ideals. The damage they inflict upon the land becomes the damage done to the animals and, in turn, to the humans. This unending cycle of violence and abuse risks erasing the possibility of a future for all.

2.4.2. Women and Water and Water as a Connecting Element

Another oppressed element of Nature in the novel is water. As previously noted in the first chapter from Shiva's perspective, water is the connector of all. Every entity needs water. Thus, it is a "commons" (2016, 13). Shiva points out that, contrary to other cultures and practices, the Western perspective considers water to be a "commodity" (2016, 9). The novel reflects this paradigm contradiction between the oppressors and the oppressed through the building of the dams and the ecological and cultural disasters they cause. Hence, this part reads water as a connecting medium of all, especially the political, social, and historical connections between women and Nature. Lastly, this part will endeavour to read water from Neimanis's perspective, diving deep into the water's journey through all bodies.

As previously noted, the novel opens by informing the readers about "an ancient pact" between water and the land, a "join[ing];" however, curiously, this pact is "now broken" (1997, 21). The previous part has touched upon how the land was wounded along with Indigenous women's bodies; moreover, this part will continue to examine water and women and the broken pact between water and land. The colonizers brought with them many sacrilegious perspectives and practices, and among them was changing the direction of the waters; undoubtedly, it must be one of the most horrifying ones. In the novel, the water's way is cut and changed forcefully by the colonizers and later their descendants. As previously noted, since water is the connector of all, intervening with its natural flow results in many ecological disturbances and destroys the human communities' lives as well. The author's almost poetic narrative lays bare before her readers' eyes how water is not only a resource but also a mirror that reflects the interdependence and interconnectedness of all life on Earth.

Hogan weaves an intricate web of watery connections in the narrative. When coming to the Fur Island, where Bush lives, for the first time, Angel thinks about what Bush said to her about oceans: "there were [those] who believed oceans from one side of earth entered oceans of the other." Moreover, she speculated that the lake she is travelling through must be "a sister" to another "lake on the other side of the world" (1997, 64). As a web of life, circling the globe with its life-giving force, water is described beautifully, as if embracing the world all around within the caring arms of sisters. In another example, water is described as "a god that ruled [people's]

lives" (1997, 62), a powerful entity that every living being needs in order to survive. Next, Angel relays the tragic story of "milkstone" that used to be on Fur Island. According to stories, there used to be a white flow of waters came from a stream beneath the Island. The water was coming from "milkstone," and it was white as milk. People were healed after drinking from these "milky waters." However, a bishop ordered his people to "dynamite" the stone, destroying the healing spring of milk flowing from the bosom of the Island. The reason for this senseless violence is that he believed it must be "the devil" who healed those people. The people called this act "killing of the waters." Angel relays that the healing milk still exists under the Island, though it does not have a spring to come forward (1997, 66). Furthermore, in a previous scene, Agnes, while attempting to explain to Angel the source of evil and trauma, says that "I don't know where the beginning was, your story, ours. Maybe it came down in the milk of the mothers" (1997, 40). These instances are only a few examples of the many similar approaches to water and its connecting power throughout the novel. The author binds and links all watery sources as relatives to each other by calling them sisters. Next, she highlights water's strength and power by calling it a god. Later, she mentions healing waters, calling them milk. Moreover, in the last quote, she foregrounds human milk and the trauma that it has even endured due to colonizers' oppression. In another scene of the novel, Angel mentions that the fish is dying at a horrifyingly rapid rate because of the "damming of water and mercury had been released from the stones and rotting vegetation" (1997, 273, 274). Furthermore, the settlers poisoned animals, land, and the waters with poison or heavy chemicals. This approach closely aligns with Neimanis' theoretical reflections on water. It can be concluded that because all these are connected, harming one, the colonizers and their descendants ended up harming all. As mentioned in the first chapter, in the part named "1.4.4. Women and Water," Neimanis has a unique approach to water, since she believes that it both flows through and resides in all beings; so much so that she asserts that "we are bodies of water." To her, humans are hybrid beings who are both embodied and watery. She challenges the Western philosophy and identity model of the self and the other, as it claims that the self is separate from both the other and its environment. She maintains the idea that human bodies' borders are prone to change as water flows through them. She asserts that it is impossible to separate the mother's milk from "a sea, a cistern, and underground reservoir once-was-rain." All is connected and creates connections between human

bodies as well as other bodies of water, whether organic or inorganic. This perspective is a stand against anthropocentrism. She calls this attitude of water "hydrocommons," the way water moves from one body to another without a stop to its flow, weaving an intricate web (2017, 1, 2). Starting from this point, Neimanis expands her theory by questioning the risks humanity takes by polluting bodies of water. As it is impossible to discern milk from other sources of water, she asserts that "[m]ilky fluids cannot be disengaged from Arctic currents of gastric juices, from amniotic seas of cisterns full of liquid waste" (2017, 37). This perspective calls for a relational ethical outlook whilst dealing with Nature; however, the separators of humans from their environments cannot see this fact. Hogan exemplifies this blindness to reality and the atrocities of colonizers and their descendants against water in the scenes described above. However, standing in opposition to this mentality, the Native cosmology is so immersed in Nature that Angel considers herself water and her matriarchs as the lake she falls into. She describes her understanding with these words: "Water going back to itself. I was water falling into a lake, and these women were that lake" (1997, 55). The sisterhood between the women and the water is described in the quoted scene. Their relations to water are beautiful and striking. The cycle of water is the cycle of life, linking everything as hydrocommons.

Another similar perspective to the interconnectedness between all beings is from LaDuke. As previously noted in the first chapter, in part 1.6. Spiritual, Indigenous, and Alternative Ecologies, LaDuke maintains that Native cosmology does not see the world from a hierarchical point of view. To them, all beings are related and relatives. Instead of considering their relationships to their environments as metaphorical, they see them as ontological (1999, 2). Furthermore, she paints a picture of abuse in her book by giving examples of real-life events and how big corporations are poisoning the land, the waters, the animals, and the bodies of Indigenous people, as well as their babies. She relays her experience with the Mohawk Nation, specifically her meeting with Katsi Cook, a "midwife" and an "environmental justice activist." During their meeting, the women talk about "the process of bioaccumulation of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in breast milk" (1999, 11). Cook explains to LaDuke her stand against General Motors, because she wants to stop them, as they have contaminated their lands (1999, 12). Cook calls women "the first environment" as women's bodies "accumulate toxic materials like

PCBs, DDT, Mirex, HCBs, etc., dumped into the waters by various industries. They are stored in our body fat and are excreted primarily through breast milk" (1999, 18). It is another "sacred natural link" (1999, 19) desecrated and wounded by the capitalist patriarchy. From LaDuke's and Neimanis' perspectives, it is possible to conclude what ecofeminists have been theorizing about regarding the connections between women and Nature. They are both oppressed and subjugated similarly, and they are both vulnerable to harm. Because all is connected when one is damaged, harmed, or poisoned, all is jeopardized. The novel explores water as a relation to all and humans as a part of ecological continuity. From this perspective, water and its disruption and contamination become political and cultural issues. Changing the water's flow by damming it or poisoning it with waste causes contamination in women's bodies, and through them, their babies, animals' bodies, plants, and trees. This cycle of destruction and trauma cannot be stopped unless the Western ideology is transformed into a more inclusive ethical outlook that does not see the world through the lenses of separating humans from their environments and considering the water as a commodity and something to be made a profit from.

2.4.3. Women and Animals

> *"[T]he division between humans and animals [is] a false one. There were times, even recent times, they both spoke the same language."*
> *Linda Hogan 1997, 81, 82*

The novel foregrounds another interdependence and interconnectedness between women and Nature through female characters' kinship to animals. This kinship and connection is a healing and inspiring force that foregrounds alternative ethical understanding. The narrative is filled with examples of humans and animals' multispecies relations, and their shared vulnerability as well as standing against the patriarchal systems. This part will attempt to bring to the fore these anti-anthropocentric relations and more-than-human kinship through Haraway's and Gruen's perspectives.

Hogan narrates a beautiful connection, a sisterhood, between Agnes and a glacier bear, the last of its kind, according to the story. Tatar reads this bond between Agnes and the bear both as a sign of her deep "compassion" towards animals and Nature but also "resistance of female character[s]" against colonizers (2025, 1600). Agnes always wears a fur coat of a blue bear. Throughout the story, she goes through

many daily rituals with this coat. She brushes it, sings to it, and pets it on many occasions. When she is confused or tired, she puts the coat on and leaves the house to meditate and be alone in a peaceful environment, and she comes back "renewed and refreshed" (1997, 44). One day, Dora-Rouge tells the story of the bear and Agnes to Angel. According to Dora-Rouge's account, the bear was the mother of twins. Even though her natural habitat is Southwest Alaska and the northwestern edges of Canada, she drifted down to California. In Indigenous cultures and teachings, bears are seldom hunted and only during specific times of the year and for medicine, food, and fur. However, not followers of relational ethics of Indigenous people, as a descendant of the colonizers, a Frenchman named Beauregard did not have such worries about other creatures of Earth. When he saw the rare glacier bear, he captured her and put her in a cage, making her "fight dogs" to earn money from the spectacle. Men would watch those fights and place bets on who the winner would be. The Frenchman did not let her hibernate, keeping her awake the whole year against her nature. Due to a poor diet and the unending fights, she weakened physically and mentally. When she could no longer fight dogs, they made her wrestle men. When she could not do that as well, they just displayed her in the cage and made a profit out of the act of looking at this poor animal. One day, the bear was brought to their village, and after seeing her, Agnes loved her and started visiting her daily. Later, the Frenchman realized that she had an ability to look after the bear, and "hired her to feed" her. Agnes took really good care of the bear. The fur she lost came back, and she gained weight. However, due to captivity, her spirit was damaged. Young boys tormented the bear outside the cage, hitting and ridiculing her. Dora-Rouge states that "they were jealous of what's wild and strong." Agnes tried to protect the bear from the boys, fighting tooth and nail. To make the bear understand her better and to gain her trust, Agnes showed the bear her breasts to prove that "she was a woman" and she "had compassion." No matter how much care Agnes gave her, the bear's "heart" "was ruined." There was no way for the bear to heal and feel whole again; therefore, one day, Agnes went to the cage and killed the bear to save her from captivity and cruel men and senseless boys. She cried as she killed her; however, the bear was "grateful" to be saved from this existence. At the end, Dora-Rouge helped her skin the bear and take the body away from the cage. Dora-Rouge was shocked; however, Agnes would not leave her behind. The Frenchman and his friends forcefully reclaimed the dead body of the bear and its fur because it would fetch a

good price. Agnes refused to submit to the Frenchman and said she would wait for him to die to get the fur back. And when her died, she stole the fur from his house (1997, 45-47). This tragic and beautiful story illustrates another connection between women and Nature. Their shared vulnerability in the face of patriarchy and their common oppression bring them together. Agnes stands against the Frenchmen to protect the bear. Her stance is born of care ethics and what Gruen calls "entangled empathy." As mentioned in the first chapter, in part 1.4.1.3. Connection or Relationality: Nature in the "Flesh," Gruen theorizes an alternative ethics for relationships between animals and humans. It foregrounds a "caring perception focused on attending to another's experience of wellbeing." It also highlights "attendşng to another's needs, interests, desires, vulnerabilities, hopes, and sensitivities" (2015, 15). The story from the novel reflects this outlook on relationships with animals. Agnes cares for the bear as if she is her sister. She empathizes with her completely, as she herself is also oppressed by the same people. She "attend[s]" to her every need, even when she had to kill her to save her from the cruelty and torture. Another perspective on the relationship with animals in the novel is kinship between them and the women. LaDuke describes this in the quotation from the first chapter, in part 1.6. Spiritual, Indigenous, and Alternative Ecologies. She states that Native American tenets perceive animals and other elements of Nature as kin and relatives (1999, 2). However, even though Native American cosmology considers animals as kin to humanity, in the novel, most Indigenous men lost this closeness and started to follow Western ideals.

An example of the unideal relationship with animals and Nature, not only from the colonizer's perspective but also from another Native American's perspective, could be considered the character named La Rue. La Rue, who is hated by Bush due to his blindness toward Nature and its creatures, fought in the Vietnam War, and he adopted many Anglo traditions and beliefs during his time in the Army. While Native cosmology followers in the novel "[believe] that everything [is] alive" (Hogan 1997, 81), La Rue does not even believe that animals can feel pain. When Angel and La Rue go fishing, he lets the animal suffer instead of killing them respectfully, as is done in Indigenous culture. When Angel warns him about his behaviour, he claims that "[t]hey don't feel anything. They don't have nervous systems." According to Bush, he cannot catch or hunt animals because he does not "respect the bond" between humans and animals; his "luck [is taken] away." She

calls him “the dealer in bones and hides and preserved fetuses” (1997, 82, 83). La Rue has romantic feelings toward Bush, but she never returns them because of his unethical treatment of everything alive. Therefore, instead of a romantic relationship as La Rue hopes for, they have a professional relationship. They work together. La Rue brings Bush bones of animals, and she pieces them together with rituals and respect, even feeding them ritualistic food. They sell these to museums and schools. La Rue, on the other hand, has no respect for life or death. One day, Angel and Bush visit his house. Although there are no living animals in the house, Angel hears “the sound of animal paws scuttle away to hide” (1997, 95), which suggests that their spirits are trapped in the house. His home is described as if it is a house of horrors. Angel is deeply disturbed by what she sees there. He exhibits taxidermied animals in his home: “a pheasant with a red face. Curiosities, he called them. A stuffed bobcat with a cigar in its mouth” (1997, 95). The comparison of La Rue and Bush brings to the fore the differences between the two ethical outlooks. Whereas Bush has a sacred regard for their animal companions and believes that humans and animals have a bond, La Rue objectifies animals’ bodies by reducing them to mere exhibitions with no respect for their nature in a grotesque display and an act of mockery. Bush connects and heals what is desecrated by this mentality. As she cares for them, she exemplifies ecofeminist and care ethics through her actions of compassion, even toward dead animals.

During their journey to the Fat-Eaters to protest against the dam builders, Angel, formerly alien to the land and animals as well as to her human relatives, becomes more immersed in nature, and her senses change. The more time she spends with her matriarchs and Nature, the more she heals. She describes their embeddedness and entanglement with their immediate environment deep in the woods with these words: “We were in the hands of nature.” Everything is turning into another in a cycle at the bosom of the woods. She states that “[n]ew senses came to me. I was equal to the other animals, hearing as they heard, moving as they moved, seeing as they saw” (Hogan 1997, 172). This scene highlights the difference between the Native’s ontologies and how Western thought positions humanity above all. As previously mentioned in the first chapter, in part 1.6. Spiritual, Indigenous, and Alternative Ecologies, LaDuke asserts that Native ontologies and ethical understandings “emerge from land up” (1999, 4), unlike the Western worldview, which centers humanity above all else and in the middle of all. The more time Angel

spends embedded within the bosom of her family and Nature, the more acclimated she feels, shifting from the self and the other Western identity model to a more relational identity.

After Angel earns her new senses in the middle of the wilderness, she explores more of this new perspective and way of existing immersed in the world's materiality. In the scene of their description of total embeddedness and immersion in Nature, Angel starts by describing the transformation Bush goes through. As observed by Angel, Bush starts to immerse herself in Nature, all "borders" fall away from her, and she starts to look at Nature as if seeing "herself" in the mirror. She becomes one with her immediate environment, so much so that she almost "vanish[es]" from sight among trees, plants, and animals. The way she carries herself changes as she starts to move "stealthily like an animal." Most importantly, "time dropped away from her" (1997, 176). Next, Angel describes Agnes as she converses with her beloved bear's spirit. Dora-Rouge sings songs that "[sound] like wind." She also looks at the waters and sees what others cannot comprehend. Lastly, Angel relays her state of involvement with Nature. She says that she "was awake in time that was measured from before axes, before traps, flint, and carpenter's nails. It was this gap in time we entered, and it was a place between words" (1997, 177). In a poetic narration, Hogan describes the complete relational involvement of the women journeying through the wilderness to face the destroyers of the Earth. From her narration, it is possible to deduce that Angel is in awe of the state they are in, almost exempt from time and space, but witnessing Nature in all its glory and themselves enmeshed within it. She observes that "I was under the spell of wilderness, close to what no one had ever been able to call by name. *Everything merged and united*. … Water and air became the same thing, *as did water and land in the marshy broth of creation*" (1997, 177; emphasis added). This coalescence of all living beings, and the merging and blending of time and space, almost as if both are suspended, is perfectly reflected in Haraway's worldview of Chthulucene, which she theorized against the Anthropocene. Haraway's theory of a new understanding and ethical outlook on Nature and humans' relations against the Anthropocene is explained in detail in the first chapter, in part 1.7. Contemporary Expansion of Ecofeminist Philosophy. To summarize once again, Haraway's philosophy combines the Greek word "*kainos,*" which means the present and "a time for ongoing, for freshness," and "*chthonic,*" which means "beings of the earth, both ancient and up-to-the-minute. … [They]

romp in multicritter humus but have no truck with sky-gazing Homo" (2016, 2). As noted earlier, combined, these words mean the simultaneity of past and present, as well as animals of the old and the present. There exists no division between those, as everything is immediate and spontaneous in a "multicritter humus." Furthermore, it is crucial to note that this philosophy rejects the idea of "sky-gazing" and division between the human and the non-human worlds, as it is earth-bound. Through her philosophy, Haraway suggests that "learning to stay with the trouble and dying in response-ability on a damaged earth" (2016, 2). This points out a thought process that must be adopted to take responsibility for what happens to the Earth into humanity's hands. That is, humanity accepts the damage done to the environment and faces the consequences of their actions, as well as looking for methods to resolve the issues that have been faced without a time limit of the past, present, and future. Returning to the scene from the novel from the perspective of Chutulucene, it is possible to analyze the total immersion of women from an enlightening point. They move beyond worries like time and the otherness of their environment by adopting, almost evolving, animalistic characteristics or even characteristics of Nature in the case of Dora-Rouge as she sings like the wind. They are a part of "the marshy broth of creation," not separate from it, just as Haraway suggested in the idea of a "multicritter of humus." Most important of all, their eyes are not gazing upwards, to the celestial realm; to the contrary, they are earth-bound and water-bound, and they aim to take "response-ability" and face the dam builders for damaging the Earth and its inhabitants, and "stay with the trouble." Angel maintains that "[t]he four of [them] bec[ome] like one animal" following the wisdom and insight born from the lands and interconnectedness to earth. Their knowledge comes from their immediate surroundings and their matriarchs; they stop checking for maps and directions. They start following Dora-Rouge's directions: "when [she] pointed a bony finger and said, 'This way,' [they] instinctively followed that crooked finger" (1997, 177).

In conclusion, the female characters in the novel are depicted in ways that foreground their relationality, respect, interdependence, and interconnectedness with the animals with whom they share their lives. These connections do not stem from an essentialist point; to the contrary, they are rooted in historical, political, ethical, social, and cultural outlooks and circumstances. These women consider animals as their relatives and kin, and by doing so, they display an anti-anthropocentric

standpoint to the readers. The novel's narrative restores nonhuman agency by highlighting multispecies relations with them.

2.4.4. Defiance, Mending, and Survival Through Relationality

As noted in the previous parts of the chapter, the connections forged between women and Nature through years of oppression by the white patriarchy result in a sisterhood between the female characters and Nature. Even though their culture readily taught and promoted a kinship and harmonious living with Nature, most male characters are depicted in ways that are suggestive that they are the ones who turn their backs on their culture, while female characters maintain even a stronger bond due to their common subjugation beneath white patriarchy. This part will examine Angel's and Nature's healing in relation to women's stand against the dam projects and how her embodiment within her matriarchs and Nature helps her shape a relational identity.

The more time Angel spends with the women in her family, the more she heals from the scars of her past. At the beginning of the novel, she was deeply disturbed by her her appearence, which is why she tries to hide it with her hair and make-up (Hogan 1997, 25). She keeps a small mirror that she uses to look at her scarred face from time to time and "tr[ies] to imagine what [she'd] look like without scars." However, one day, she breaks the mirror accidentally. At first, she is reluctant to get rid of the pieces of the mirror and still uses them to look at her fragmented self, like the "fragments of stories." She imagines that her body parts are attempting to come together from "a great brokenness… toward wholeness," like "Bush put[s] together the animal bones." The turning point happens when Angel gets rid of the broken pieces of the mirror and stops looking at any "surface." From this point onward, she feels more whole, and she starts to see beyond the surface. She looks into people's eyes to really see and understand them. She even sees "inside water" and where the fish swims deep in the lake (Hogan 1997, 85). This scene is noteworthy as it signifies the beginning of Angel's healing process. She finds her selfhood by giving up hiding behind her hair and make-up, and forging bonds with the matriarchs of her family and the female community of Adam's Ribs as well as her culture. Another factor in her healing process is her embodiment of Nature and the

fact that she stands up to the system to protect and heal it. The matrilineal ties she forges and her return to her community and land help her feel a sense of belonging. She regains cultural memory, as well as reclaiming her identity. Therefore, she heals through female kinship as well as her relational connection with the land.

When the women decide to take the long and dangerous journey to the Fat-Eaters' land, Angel doubts their ability to get there; however, as previously noted, during their journey, she and others feel enmeshed in Nature more and more. As such, the tragedy ironically brings together the women and Nature, arming the women with the strength and confidence to stand against the government and the corporation undertaking the project. When they first get to the town, they are taken in by Tulik, a "tribal judge" and a good man (1997, 233). Tulik has a daughter called Auntie. She is one of the leaders of the resistance. She and Bush get along well with each other as they are both women standing against the system to protect Nature and their way of life. Other female characters also resist the patriarchy and stand against the system. For instance, Luce, normally a quiet and well-read woman, always says, regarding the oppression and exploitation of Nature, "It's time we stop this. … This must end" (1997, 233, 234). Another example is an elderly woman called Miss Nett. One day, she comes from another affected village to Tulik's house. When she hears Angel's radio interview about the policeman's unlawful detention of her, she decides to help them with her own experience with the dam builders and the police and military forces (1997, 293, 294). These women, along with many others, stand together in their determinedness to care for their lands both as a survival practice and a form of resistance. As the resistance persists and gains more supporters, some men, who desire more aggressive methods for fighting against the government, are stopped by women protesters. La Rue, who joins them later, becomes a leading figure for those desiring harsher methods. However, women, along with Tulik and some other men who are more in tune with them, do not approve of this aggression and prefer non-violent and ethical methods of protesting (1997, 316, 317). One day, Dora-Rouge and Miss Nett stop two young men from joining the protests because they are drunk and might be prone to violence. Angel observes that the men "had been drinking and violence was always a seed the women did not want planted" (1997, 306). These are significant as they prove that the women whose eyes are open to the interconnectedness and relationality of the human and the non-human worlds aligned their ethical understanding with care and ecofeminist ethical outlooks. The

women's care for other women extends into care for land, water, animals, and their future generations. This has parallels with Gruen's identity formation theory, called *relational self*, mentioned in the first chapter, in part 1.4.1.3. Connection or Relationality: Nature in the "Flesh." She theorizes that traditional ethical understanding promotes an abstract and separated self from its environment and relationships. This standpoint lacks empathy for the nonhuman worlds. Therefore, she suggests a relational self as an ideal identity formation. In this case, the identity is formed through the relationships forged within the human and the non-human worlds. The individual is not abstract as it is "entangled in complex relationships" (Gruen 2015, 54). The female characters' identity formations follow a similar pattern to what Gruen theorizes. Coming back to Adam's Rib without any memory of her past and any roots to her family and lands, Angel transforms into a young woman who heals and forges her relational identity through her connections to her matrilineal side as well as herself and Nature.

As the protests and collective resistance against the dam builders continue, the people feel increasingly proud of themselves and their heritage. As a result, they start to call themselves Beautiful Ones instead of Fat-Eaters (1997, 313), a name colonizer gave them, thus reclaiming their heritage and identity. As previously noted in the first chapter, LaDuke suggests that Indigenous people's drive to protect and their loyalty to their cause stems from their "deep connection to the land" (1999, 4). The novel reflects this perfectly through the characters' willingness to fight for their beloved land, not because it has monetary value, but because they are a part of it. When the colonial name, the Fat-Eaters, is replaced by the original name, the Beautiful Ones, Angel's personal transformation reaches completion. She sees Nature's beauty reflected in her own body. Although both are scarred and wounded and have gone through trauma, they have both recovered and healed. The novel's last paragraph reflects the beauty Angel sees in both: "We are tree. We are frog in amber. … Something beautiful lives inside us. You will see. Just believe it. You will see" (1997, 351).

To conclude, the narrative reflects the various manifestations of the wounds inflicted by first colonizers and later by dam-building companies. What is divided, dismantled, and fragmented by capitalist patriarchy is healed, mended, re*paired,* and made whole by Angel and her mothers through their activism and ecofeminist ethics and care ethics.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS OF BARBARA KINGSOLVER'S *PRODIGAL SUMMER*

3.1. Contextual Background

Born on April 8, 1955, in Annapolis, Maryland, U.S, Barbara Kingsolver is an American writer, poet, and activist. She graduated from DePauw University with a biology degree. Later, she received her master's degree from the University of Arizona, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. With her degrees and expertise in biology, she could have had a regular job with a salary; however, she decided to "pursue [her] passions" and left her job to become a journalist and writer (Kingsolver).

Later, she got married to a chemist, and they moved to a cabin outside of Tucson in the desert. They worked for an activist organization that investigates human rights violations against Latin American refugees on the border. The same year, she started writing poems and short fiction. At the time, there was a mine strike in Arizona. Kingsolver took a keen interest in the issue and covered the strike in her writings. Later, she compiled her work and the interviews she conducted with the strikers into a book called *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983* (1989). The book tells the story of local women and workers who attempted to stand against capitalism and the mining company (Kingsolver).

Her first novel, *The Bean Trees*, which she wrote during her pregnancy, was published in 1988. The novel tells the story of a young woman, Taylor Greer, from Kentucky. Not wanting a child and trying to avoid pregnancy, Taylor's destiny takes her to Tucson, Arizona, where she acquires a three-year-old American Indian toddler named Turtle. Kingsolver takes her readers on a journey of coming to terms with being a mother as well as friendship, love, and belonging.

Her second novel, also one of the novels that will be analyzed in this dissertation, *Animal Dreams* (1991), came out in 1990. The novel revolves around Cosima Noline, who returns to the land she was born in to look after her ailing father. Feeling lost and unrooted ever since her mother's death as well as her own

miscarriage during her teenage years, Codi, short for Cosima, starts to learn about her origins and roots. She discovers her connection with the land and the local women, as a female-only club named the *Stitch and Bitch* takes a stand against the mining company whose activities are poisoning Earth and the environment, and killing the ecosystem day by day. Save for her close relationship with her beloved sister Halimeda, Codi has always felt alienated not only from other people but also from her environment. However, she comes to understand she was not alone and has the support she has needed all along in this small town called Grace.

Her most popular novel is undoubtedly *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998). The work is about a Baptist minister named Nathan Price and his wife, Orleanna, and four daughters. Nathan takes his family to Congo, Africa, on a mission. Thinking their way of life could be useful to survive in Congo, the American family is shocked to realize they are sadly ill-equipped to survive the conditions in Africa. Looking down on villagers, the Price family believes they can thrive. However, they soon realize that even their plants do not bear fruit since they are unsuitable for African pollinators. Thus, their journey to postcolonial Africa triggers a transforming journey in which the readers witness their collapse and reform, confronted with this foreign land.

Another novel by Kingsolver, which will also be explored in this dissertation, is *Prodigal Summer* (2001). The novel tells the story of Deanna, Lusa, and Garnett, who live in Zebulon Valley. All their relationships with the human and the non-human world, whether positive or negative, are revealed by the author, making the readers question humanity's place in Nature and the earth.

3.2. Plot Overview and Key Elements of Prodigal Summer

Barbara Kingsolver's one of the most loved novels, *Prodigal Summer* (2001), tells the story of three main characters and the non-human world they encounter on a daily basis. The novel makes the reader question the connections we have with the more-than-human world as well as our communities. It opens with one of Deanna's parts, which is called "Predators." Deanna Wolfe used to be a teacher, going through life's motions, questioning if things could be different. She married her university professor; however, after years of emotionless marriage, she realizes that this life is

not for her. After divorcing her husband, she leaves human society and starts working as a ranger in Zebulon Forest in the Appalachian Mountains with the company of many creatures that live in the mountains. She is a wildlife biologist who has written her master's dissertation on coyotes. She is wholly isolated from human society and is happy with protecting the mountain from hunters and poachers. She can understand the language of Nature better than she can understand people. The most significant topic her part draws the reader's attention to is the complexity of ecosystems and how human intervention causes them to collapse. She is especially interested in predators, namely coyotes. She knows that people hunt predator animals to stop them from stealing their sheep or chickens; however, she underlines the importance of keystone predators in any given ecosystem. Every ecosystem has a keystone predator. In case they are gone—due to illegal hunting or other reasons—the whole ecosystem collapses because the prey animals' population is left unchecked, and this results in the local fauna being eaten away by the prey animals. The same tragedy occurred in her beloved Appalachian Mountains when people hunted the red wolf to extinction. However, she has been hoping for a replacement predator. Her wish is fulfilled when she realizes a coyote family with new pups has chosen her mountains as their new home. As she tries to see with her own eyes to prove her theories correct, she encounters Eddie Bondo, a young man in his mid-twenties, wandering around with a rifle in the mountains. For the rest of the novel, the tension between the man and Deanna is depicted, reflecting the opposing worldviews of ecological ethics and patriarchal ethics. The former is a predator killer, which Deanna considers to be the gravest of sins; the latter is the protector of predators and Nature. Each tries to prove the other one wrong while also maintaining a sexual relationship.

Lusa Landowski is the protagonist of the parts named "Moth Love." She is a scholar and an avid researcher of insects with a profession focused on moths. When the farmer Cole Widener is sent by his community to the city to attend a workshop at the university that might be useful for their failing farming techniques, Cole and Lusa fall in love with each other and get married after a year. However, the love that started so passionately and powerfully turns into bitterness and constant quarrels between the young couple. Although she was very enthusiastic about moving to a ranch and living the life of a farmer prior to their marriage, Lusa's academic mind starts to find farming life dull and unfulfilling. She also finds the local people's

attitude towards Nature and animals ignorant and dangerous for the well-being of the collective. Besides, locals and especially Cole's family, consisting of four sisters and their husbands and children, never truly accept her amongst themselves. Suddenly, her life is turned upside down with Cole's death in an accident. After his death, Lusa starts to see her new life from a different perspective and forges new bonds with her in-laws while also learning to earn a living as a farmer without harming the ecosystem of the mountains.

Garnett Walker is another character who has his own part, called "Old Chestnuts." He is depicted as an old and bitter man who is backward-minded. He and his wife unexpectedly had a son at an advanced age. Not knowing how to raise a son in modern times, they have a fallout with their rebellious son, who refuses to follow their old beliefs and strict rules. His wife dies due to lung cancer, leaving him alone in the world. One of the few things that occupy his mind after his wife's death is his life's project to raise an American chestnut immune to the blight. His interest in bringing back the chestnuts is a family legacy. He is the son of the man who used to own half of the mountains. However, their wealth is gone when American chestnuts are hit by the blight and become extinct. Although his purpose in life seems noble at first, he only wants to bring back American chestnuts to reclaim his family's lost glorious days. He supports chemical agriculture and constantly quarrels with his neighbor, Nanni Rawley, an organic farmer as well as an avid protector of Nature. Set in his old ways, which he thinks are the only way for a farmer to do his job, Garnett represents the white patriarchy and Anthropocene way of thinking. His actions and beliefs leave many wounds and scars on Earth, damaging the delicately balanced ecosystem. He believes that humans are placed on Earth by God to use the resources without restraint and without considering the consequences. He follows the belief that God created the universe for the sake of mankind; thus, animals, plants, and wildlife are present to serve humanity's interests. Nevertheless, in the end, his constant arguments and fights with Nannie teach him a new perspective to perceive Nature and people, thus concluding his part on a higher note, symbolizing a better future where civilization learns to accept the non-human world as an equal.

Even though Nannie Rawley does not have her own part, she is a significant character since her efforts cause Garnett to transform from his set ways into a milder man who is a bit more open to possibilities outside of his own perspective. Nannie is portrayed as a wise and educated woman with a university degree. She uses

environmentally friendly techniques to grow her organic apples. Drawing on her passion for learning, she finds better methods for organic farming so that she can better take care of the more-than-human world she feels a huge responsibility for. Although Garnett tries to put her down at every turn, she always manages to defend her way of thinking against him. Years ago, when she was a young woman, she used to have a relationship with Deanna's father. They never got married, which was frowned upon in those years. They had a daughter named Rachel Carson Rawley, after the well-known scientist and writer of *Silent Spring*. Many complications due to a genetic syndrome caused the daughter to die young, leaving her parents devastated. In a scene, Garnett thinks to himself that Nannie's "terror of chemicals" comes from birthing a "deformed child" long ago (Kingsolver 2001, 136). Garnett blames the birth of her baby for Nannie's so-called obsession with anti-chemical farming. He states that she must have been a "normal" person once; however, having a child with health issues made her lose control. To him, she started to talk about the dangers of pesticides to ecosystems, and how they are poisonous after the birth of her unfortunate baby.

As the novel progresses, the reader realizes that every creature of Nature has a connection with every other. The web of life becomes visible as the author foregrounds the connections. She reveals those connections layer by layer. While human characters connect to Nature in different ways, they are also connected to each other. Seemingly having no connection or relationship with each other at first glance, the human characters turn out to be relatives or old friends. Nannie is Deanna's father's partner; thus, she is the only mother figure Deanna can think of from her childhood and teenage years. Garnett turns out to be the estranged father-in-law of Jewel, Cole's sister with cancer. The storyline starts at the beginning of summer with the depiction of many plants and animals engaged in reproduction of the next generation of their species, using their respective forms of mating rituals. Meanwhile, the human animals, also irrevocably bound to Nature, cannot help but answer Nature's call.

Previous studies on Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Prodigal Summer* (2001) focus on similar points to this study. Atallah Khalifa Ali and Ismael analyze Kingsolver's contribution to ecofeminism through her novels *Animal Dreams*, *Prodigal Summer*, and *Flight Behaviour*. They focus on environmental degradation, patriarchal exploitation, "ecological activism," and "ecological consciousness."

Overall, they highlight symbolic and ethical connections between women and Nature and environmental activism (2019, 65-81). Van Tassel analyzes *Prodigal Summer* from an ecofeminist and new agranarian perspective. The author highlights sustainable farming, women's relationships with land and community, and ecological interdependence (2008, 83-100). Yang reads *Prodigal Summer* with an ecofeminist and new materialist lens, also making use of care theory. She emphasizes "dialogical connectivity," "multispecies entanglement," "emotional engagement," and interconnected relationships between the human and the non-human world (2021, 74-84). Shen foregrounds ecological interconnectedness, anti-anthropocentrism, environmental spirituality, and the sacredness of Nature through the framework of green religion in *Prodigal Summer* (2020, 306-313). Narduzzi examines the novel from an ecofeminist point of view and through Derrida's concept of spectrality. The author centers on environmental mourning, ecological responsibility, "haunting," interconnectedness, and human relationships with land and the extinction of animals (2008, 59-80). Paul and Sarveswaran focus on Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams* (which will be analyzed in the next chapter) and *Prodigal Summer* along with three other novels through an ecofeminist partnership ethics lens, highlighting interconnectedness, an anti-dualistic approach, women and Nature relations, ecological care, and interdependence of the human and the non-human worlds (2023, 1-11). This study conducts a close reading of *Prodigal Summer* (2001), foregrounding the points of convergence between Nature and women. It also highlights the moments in the novel that give women and Nature their agency back. The chapter explores the patriarchy's compulsion to control and dominate Nature as wounds and scars on Earth. While capitalist patriarchy and the Western way of thinking bring about senseless violence and hurt, the female characters facilitate acts of healing and mending through their actions that align with care ethics and ecofeminist ethics. Due to their ecological consciousness, the leading female characters are able to see the wounds left behind, and they attempt to repair the damaged tissue by means of their alternative ways of caring for the more-than-human world.

3.3. Points of Convergence Between Nature and Women

The novel helps the readers discover many connections and bonds that exist between women and Nature. At every turn, the reader faces Nature's vitality and the crowded place that is Earth. According to Plumwood, the patriarchy believes itself to be separated from the ones it perceives to be lesser and inferior. In each dualism, one side is inferior to the other. She highlights patriarchal civilization's method for dividing man from woman, Nature from culture, reason from emotions, and so on. To her, the process is called *hyperseparation,* as mentioned before in the dissertation. To summarize, hyperseparation is the key to dualism. 'Self' and 'other' are not only separated but also hierarchically placed. The 'other' is a lower and inferior being to the self. Through this process, the civilization redefines the human male subject as "radically exclu[ded]" (1993, 49) and "hyperseparated" (1993, 49) from the other. The act of dividing or separating is actualized through the process of "minimizing overlap qualities and activities and by erection of rigid barriers to prevent contact" (1993, 50). However, Kingsolver disproves the biggest illusion and fallacy in this philosophy of hyperseparation through her amazing narrative of Nature as a whole. In this narration, the wounds of fragmentation and division disappear, along with the barriers and borders set by civilization. The characters, especially women, engage with Nature and its creatures at every turn. By foregrounding the similarities between not only women and Nature but also men and Nature, she tells her readers that humanity has never been alone on Earth, as it has been reflected in human-centric ways of thinking. Conversely, even when mankind is willfully blind to the other creatures, big and small, it does not mean they do not exist, or that they are less important than humans. Writing about "dialogical connectivity" in *Prodigal Summer*, Karen Ya-Chu Yang states that the novel highlights "a more dialogically connective and sustainable relationship among humans, nonhuman animals, and environments" (2021, 75). She also explores the "dialogical inter- and intra-connectivity" between Deanna and the female coyote by exemplifying the opening and closing scenes of the novel. She states that these scenes create a "material and cognitive conflation" between women and animals that is based on "[empathy]" and "identification" of both parties (2021, 75). In other words, in the novel, Deanna's relationship can be read as a new way of connection to the non-human world. Her ability to empathize and identify with animals threatens the dualistic structure of civilization.

Deanna's interest in the coyote family taking up residence in the mountains surmounts the borders of her intellectual interest as a biologist. She is overjoyed when she first encounters the family in the forest. First, she thinks it must be humans talking, but then she realizes that it is "*coyote* women" (2001, 200; original emphasis) talking to their pups, teaching them their language and skills to survive in the forest, especially hunting. In the scene, the deduction is made by Deanna herself, implying that she understands their language. This understanding comes from a form of sisterhood between herself and the mother of the pups. The scene concludes as Deanna keeps her vigil over the beloved family of coyotes. She remembers her late father and wishes that he were watching "through [her] eyes from the cells of genesis he planted in [her]" (2001, 203). Although not a scientist, her father was a man who knew almost everything worth knowing in Zebulon's biotic community. She states that he was also a man who knew what love is; thus, he would have been as exhilarated as Deanna to see "this tightly knotted pack of survival and nurture. Not to dissect their history and nature; she has done that already, what she craved to explain was how much they felt like family" (2001, 203). As demonstrated in the passage, Deanna feels closely bonded with the coyote family. She can discern their language, their love for one another, and their desire to survive and nurture each other. With this one scene, Kingsolver dismantles the idea of human superiority over animals and Nature, as well as cementing the idea that humans have more in common with animals than they have differences from them.

Even though she is a stranger to the land, Lusa comes to understand the mountains as locals do due to becoming more connected to the land and the mountains. Before she came to live in the Zebulon Valley, she used to approach their belief in the mountains breathing daily with suspicion. Nevertheless, the more she submerges herself in her new life that is closely connected to Nature, the more she finds the locals' beliefs to be true. With her new bond to Nature, she listens to the mountains inhaling and exhaling, "one full breath each day" (2001, 31). Furthermore, she can "tell time with her skin" (2001, 31). Her connection to this place has become so visceral that she "had come to think of Zebulon as another man in her life, larger and steadier than any other companion she had known" (2001, 32). Her deep attachment to the place leads her to claim that she is "married to a piece of land named Widener" (2001, 383). Her connection to Nature is also integrated with her strengthening bonds with the locals and her late husband's sisters and their families.

Van Tassel asserts that Lusa's decision to adopt Jewel's children as she is slowly dying of cancer forges another significant kind of bond to the local people as well as the land. Furthermore, Lusa decides to include Garnett—the children's "estranged grandfather"— in their lives. It is implied that Lusa will probably meet Nannie, living so close to Garnett, as well as Deanna, who will relocate to Nannie's house for her impending birth. This probable meeting of "intelligent and progressive women … promises an additional strengthening of community ties and further reiterates the ecofeminist notion of the interconnections between people" (Van Tassel 2008, 89). In other words, their hopeful meeting in the future will form a community of like-minded women who follow the ethics of care, forging connections with both the human and non-human world.

Nannie's connection to Nature is grounded in her care for the land and Nature's creatures. Notably, her second name is "Land," which becomes apparent as she signs her letter to Garnett (2001, 217). This choice from the author alludes to Nannie's connection to the land and Nature. As mentioned above, Lusa's "marriage" to the land takes place later as she learns more and more about the life so close to Nature; however, Nannie's connection to it was forged as she was born. She is a loved and respected member of her community, awakening positive feelings in everyone—except for Garnett at the beginning.

Another striking bond between women and Nature—which was also found significant by Karen Ya-Chu Yang as mentioned above—is forged as the narrator opens the novel with a description of Deanna following the tracks of the elusive coyote she has been trailing. She knows that the mountains need a new keystone predator to save their ecosystem and desperately hopes to be right about her guess. As she is walking through the forest, the narrator states that "… solitude is only a human presumption. Every quiet step is a thunder to beetle life underfoot; every choice is a world made new for the chosen" (2001, 1). The narrator, then, alludes to the existence of "a man with a gun" watching her moving through the forest with the presumption that she looks angry, so she must be trailing "something hateful" (2001, 1). However, the narrator states quickly after that the hunter is "wrong" about her (2001, 1). Deanna is not angry; on the contrary, she is hopeful as well as desperate to find the keystone predator that the forest needs. Interestingly, the narrator finishes the novel with almost an identical scene, yet this time the female is not a human animal but a female coyote that is being trailed by the same hunter. Hence, this time, the

readers' lesson comes from the female coyote observing the forest and humanity. She thinks to herself that if a man watches her through the forest to hunt her down with his gun, he might think to himself that the coyote and he are alone in the forest. He would be "wrong" in that presumption:

> "… he believed himself and … [the coyote] in his sight to be the only two creatures left here in this forest of dripping leaves, breathing in some separate atmosphere that was somehow more rarefied and important than the world of air silently exhaled by the leaves all around them. But he would have been wrong. *Solitude is a human presumption. Every quiet step is thunder to beetle life underfoot,* a tug of impalpable thread on the web pulling mate to mate and predator to prey, a beginning or an end. *Every choice is a world made new for the chosen*" (2001, 444; emphasis added).

In other words, the man—as a representation of patriarchy—has chosen to be blind to reality; however, by looking through the perspective of the female coyote, it can be understood that the man's perspective is too narrow and almost ludicrous in the face of the complexity of life. The man in the scene believes that he is living in another plane of existence, so much so that he even supposes that the "air" he breathes is "more rarefied and important." The belief in fragmented existence from Nature is one of the main problems the world faces, as it causes the wounds reflected in the novel. It makes it possible to act recklessly toward the non-human world and damage it more and more each passing day. Although his blind vision makes it impossible to see, the man with the gun is breathing the "world of air" that is "exhaled by the leaves"; hence, just by breathing the "exhaled" air by the plants, he is included in the web of life. In this scene, Kingsolver foregrounds what is backgrounded by patriarchy. The *denial of dependency* is reversed. Another analysis of the parallels that has been made by the narrator would be that women and Nature are linked in a way that cannot be severed or inferiorised by patriarchy. Both Deanna and the female coyote walk through the forest, and they both realize that they are being followed by a hunter. As they both walk, they also realize that even the smallest change they make around their environment might change another creature's whole existence. An unbreakable link—whether it is acknowledged or not—exists between every creature. Although men are in this link as well, they chose to pull it apart by becoming the opposing force against Nature and women. Supposing that they have the power to control and dominate Nature and women, their existence has become one that is severely lacking due to their disregard for the possibility of

accepting their kinship with Nature. By taking the gun in hand and choosing violence over harmony, and wounding over healing, they have caused irreparable damage to the planet Earth. With these powerful scenes, Kingsolver lays bare before her readers' eyes the root of one of the biggest problems humanity faces today. Despite the fact that men choose to stand against their basic natures, the novel's female characters are more ecologically conscious, and they realize and internalize their own inextricable connection to it; namely, they follow *the feminine principle* Shiva mentioned. This part will analyze these healing bonds and the connection between women and Nature through different characters' perspectives, as well as compare it with the male characters' damaging perspective towards Nature.

3.3.1. Fertility and Cycles of Woman and Nature

> *"[P]rodigal summer, the season of extravagant procreation. It could wear out everything in its path with its passionate excesses, but nothing alive with wings or a heart or a seed curled into itself in the ground could resist welcoming it back when it came" Barbara Kingsolver-Prodigal Summer 2001 51*

The novel presents fertility, cycles, and procreation as "eternal life" (16). Due to the author's background as a biologist, she fictionalizes Nature in a way that is more representative of scientific and biological facts. Based on scientific facts, human and non- human animals, as well as plant life, have one main purpose, which is to procreate. By having offspring and passing on their genetic codes to the next generation, Nature's creatures become immortal in a sense; thus, they have "eternal life." Although patriarchy denies humanity's link to Nature, the novel lays bare those links, even if they are accepted or not. The novel's name, *Prodigal Summer,* is an allusion to a long and abundant summer mating season that draws every creature into its current. This part will analyze the concepts of fertility and cycles by giving examples from the novel to foreground the connection between women and Nature that represents Warren's *symbolic and literary interconnectedness* mentioned in the first chapter.

As mentioned before, Deanna and Eddie encounter each other in the Zebulon Forest while Eddie is looking for coyotes to hunt. However, he is drawn into Deanna's magnetism in her natural environment and starts to follow her instead. Judging by societal standards, being forty-seven, she is too old for him and at the end

of her fertile window. Nevertheless, they are overcome by the impulses of their nature, and they fall into the mating season's allure the first time they meet each other and get into a sexual relationship over the course of summer. The magnetism between the characters when they first hold hands is described by the narrator with these words: "… this new thing between them, their clasped hands, alive with nerve endings like some fresh animal born with its own volition, pulling them forward" (2001, 20). As illustrated in the passage, the author creates another parallel between humans and animals. The animality of the body and its instinctual desires to procreate with the other party are foregrounded. Two characters are away from civilization; thus, they move beyond expectations, such as their age gap or society's expectations of them, and fall under the magic of "prodigal summer."

Emphasizing the fertility of Nature, plant life is described sensually and suggestively in many different scenes in the novel. Moreover, even though plants and mammals procreate in different ways, the author discovers similarities to emphasize the points of convergence between all living beings. At the beginning of their courtship, while Deanna and Eddie are walking in the forest, they come across a field of different species of flowers and mushrooms, the result of hot summer days and rainy days just after those. Mushrooms of many different colors and shapes are present. The narrator highlights the carnality of the scene: "[the mushrooms'] bulbous heads pushed up through the leaf mold, announcing the eroticism of a fecund woods at the height of spring, the beginning of the world" (2001, 20). As exemplified by the quotation, mushrooms are depicted in a way that alludes to the shape of male genitalia to once again bring into focus the "fecund[ity]" of Nature during the summer season. The mating season is defined as "the beginning of the world" to draw attention to the cycle of life that includes every creature. Another allusive description is made through the orchid called a lady's slipper: "… dozens of delicately wrinkled oval pouches held erect on stems, all the way up the ridge. [Deanna] pressed her lips together, inclined to avert her eyes from so many pink scrota" (2001, 21). The look of the orchid is almost too sexualized even for Deanna, who is depicted as an uninhibited woman who does not shy away from Nature and its cycles. Later, the orchid's pollination process is sensually described by the characters. By describing the reproduction process of the orchid, the author brings to the fore another species' fertility during the time of the reproductive season. Furthermore, Eddie realizes that he knows a similar flower to the lady's slipper that

"traps bugs" inside to pollinate it. Until the bees find a way to leave the trap of pollination, they have to stay inside and spread the pollen. Eddie shows Deanna "the raised knob where this orchid would force its pollinator to drag his abdomen before allowing him to flee for his life. [Deanna] felt a sympathetic ache in the ridge of her pubic bone" (2001, 22). In this quotation, Kingsolver draws a parallel between pollination and fertilization—plants' method for reproduction—and sexual reproduction of the mammals. By doing so, she leads her readers to discover the similarities between all life forms. These similarities are normally disregarded by society, with the purpose of situating humanity—especially men—at a higher level than Nature. As Plumwood states, Nature is "backgrounded" in today's societies. "Backgrounding" is frequently observed in "denial of women and nature." To her, women and Nature's "treatment … provid[es] the background to a dominant, foregrounded sphere of recognized achievement or causation" (Plumwood 1993, 21). Arguably, in her novel, Kingsolver reverses this process of "backgrounding" by foregrounding the similarities between every living entity, as well as our dependency on Nature and reproduction. Moreover, Plumwood lists the parts of Nature that are being "backgrounded:"

> "[T]he denial of dependence on biospheric processes, and a view of humans as apart, outside of nature, which is treated as a limitless provider without needs of its own. Dominant western culture has systematically inferiorised, backgrounded and denied dependence on the whole sphere of reproduction and subsistence" (Plumwood 1993, 21).

In other words, patriarchy disavows humanity's dependence on Nature. In this way of thinking, Nature is an unlimited and passive resource that has no agency or faculties of its own. Humans are not only "apart [and] outside of nature," but also, they are higher and more important. Another way for patriarchy to devalue Nature is by refusing to acknowledge the "sphere of reproduction and subsistence." Kingsolver, on the other hand, emphasizes the disregarded processes in her narrative. Reproduction processes of different species are depicted in a way that also illustrates and highlights the common points between humanity and Nature. The following scene from the novel illustrates this point. Deanna and Eddie's courtship, which is full of imagery from Nature's different creatures' sensual descriptions, reaches its peak. Although they barely know each other, they are enthralled by the summer's call. Even Deanna is surprised by the ease of their bodies coming together: "*It's that*

simple then. […] *It's that possible*. It was the body's decision, a body with no more choice of its natural history than an orchid has, or the bee it needs, and so they both get lost here, she would let him in, anywhere he wanted to go" (2001, 24; original emphasis). The human body's animality is made salient in this scene. Even though patriarchy aims to sever the bonds of human and Nature and prioritize 'human,' the human body, which is the result of hundreds of years of "natural history," is animal at its core. It is the result of thousands of years of collective choices made by others of the same species. The "simple[ness]" and the "possib[ility]" of the sexuality between the two bodies that have lost themselves to the call of Nature is highlighted.

Another symbolic and literary interconnection foregrounded by Kingsolver between women and Nature is the cycles. Kingsolver strategically positions women 'closer to Nature' by foregrounding their cycles and fertility; however, she also foregrounds men's animality along with women. Therefore, she manages to deconstruct the dualistic structure of patriarchy since she positions men along with women within Nature, repairing and healing the division. Despite being positioned very close to Nature, male characters might still be blind to those connections because they do not embody the *ethics of care,* or they are simply not ready to acknowledge the interconnectedness. This point will be discussed further in the following parts. The novel takes place during a summer month when it is time for many animals and plants to procreate. The author constructs a narrational connection between Nature's cycles and women's menstrual cycles through her female characters. After their first encounter, Deanna and Eddie do not see each other for a few days. When Deanna comes across him in the forest again, she is surprised to see him there. When she questions this, Eddie tells her that he "sniffed [her] out" because she is "a sweet … trail" (2001, 92). Deanna realizes that he must have followed her scent instinctually since she is in her fertile window. She thinks to herself that even though "nobody liked to talk about it" (2001, 92), the reason for this kind of sexual realization towards the opposite sex is due to pheromones. This scene is noteworthy because it is also about Deanna being conscious of her body and its cycles. She realizes that "[her] body is talking to [Eddie's]" (2001, 93), alerting him to the exact "timing" (2001, 93) of her menstrual cycle. When Eddie questions how she can know those things, she finds it humorous that he might think it bizarre. She answers him: "I sleep outside a lot. … I'm on the same schedule as the moon" (2001, 93). After connecting moon cycles with women's cycles, Deanna continues to explain the

connection between the moon and women: “Any woman will ovulate with the full moon if she’s exposed to enough moonlight. It’s the pituitary gland does it. It takes a while to get there, but then you stay” (2001, 93). Although it has not been scientifically proven or disproven that women’s cycles are affected by the moon’s cycles, women’s menstrual cycles and the lunar cycle have long been associated. Hence, this connection points to another way that women and Natural events are linked. In many languages, the words for the moon and menstruation share the same root. The word menstruation comes from “stem of Late Latin *menstruare*, from *menstruus* ‘monthly’ (from *mensis* ‘month;’ [also] moon)” (“Menstruation”; original emphasis). The connection is there since both cycles are approximately 29-30 days (Periods 2022). The other female protagonist, Lusa, is also affected by the lunar cycle. The scene takes place six weeks after her husband’s death. Lusa has been taking an oral contraceptive ever since she was a teenager; however, with her husband’s death, she stopped taking them. During the Fourth of July celebrations, she invites her husband’s sisters and their families to the farmhouse. When the sun sets, she realizes “a fullness … a constant small twinge on the left side of her belly” (2001, 230). Under the full moon, she becomes aware of her body coming out of years of “hibernation” and ovulating (2001, 230). She then understands the reason behind the men “fluttering around her like moths;” it is because “she [is] fertile” (2001, 230). As illustrated in the scene, women’s menstrual cycles and the lunar cycles are connected in a way that foregrounds the human body’s embeddedness in Nature. However, it must be noted that Kingsolver foregrounds this ancient connection forged between women and the moon by adding men to the equation. She does it in a way that deconstructs the dualistic structures that patriarchal society is built upon. Therefore, this scene emphasizes animality in both women and men by creating a link between female fertility and its appeal to males. According to Helfrich-Förster et al., many different species of animals align their

> “reproductive behavior with a particular phase of the lunar cycle. The human cycle also has a period close to that of the lunar cycle, and recent studies suggest a temporary synchrony between menstrual and lunar cycles. Nevertheless, lunar influence on human reproductive behavior remains controversial” (Helfrich-Förster et al. 2025).

As seen in the passage, though a highly “controversial” topic for human animals due to the lack of enough evidence, many creatures of Nature follow the cycles of the moon. They are connected to each other as well as natural conditions. Humans are

not exempt from that influence. Even though it has not been scientifically proven or disproven, the author takes creative license to create a bond between humans' sexual behavior and the lunar cycles, thus attempting to break the dominant narrative and what Plumwood calls the "master model" that claims men are above Nature and women.

As an entomologist who is especially interested in moths, Lusa finds many similarities between "moth love" and the love between her husband and her. Besides, she points out her husband's physical intelligence for lovemaking, being a farmer who "judged breeding animals with his hands" (2001, 37). By emphasizing human sexuality and foregrounding the similarities between humans and animals, the author reaffirms the idea that all living beings are connected, and thus she attempts to break the dominant narrative. In Cole's hands, Lusa feels like her body, "her earthy scents," her "damp places," are being discovered anew. Her body is also likened to the earth, being "turn[ed] … like fresh earth toward the glory of new growth" (2001, 37). Not only is Lusa's body likened to animals, but her body is also reimagined as the earth that symbolizes "new growth." The couple also talks about "scent cues animals use to find and identify their mates" (2001, 37). Cole finds the topic of pheromones very interesting, and he concludes with humor: "So it's all about sex. All you people in that laboratory, all the livelong day. And getting paid for it" (2001, 37). Lusa tells him that she researches "moth love" (2001, 37). Cole gets more enthusiastic about the topic as he learns that sometimes humans "rely on certain pheromonal cues" just like animals; however, most people do not understand the meaning behind those cues most of the time (2001, 37). At this moment in the scene, Lusa decides that Cole must be one of those people who have an "inclination" to understand the pheromones' messages and the animal side of our bodies. Lusa thinks that "[Cole] could only love sex more if he had antennae the shape of feathers, like a moth, for combing the air around her, elaborately branched coremata he could evert from his abdomen for the purpose of calling back to her with his own scent" (2001, 37). Another imagery described by the author suggests human-animal fusion to foreground the primal side of humans. In the quotation, Kingsolver uses specialist jargon to describe a male moth's sexual organ, the coremata. Also known as "hair pencils," *coremata* are an organ that is placed inside the abdomen and pushed out during the search for a mate or courting process to secrete pheromones that function as an aphrodisiac (Crew 2017). Lusa's musings about moths' sexual behavior and the

parallels she draws between Cole and the insects create another bridge between the animal domain and humanity. Following this discussion, Cole questions the reason behind the women's tendency to "cover up what [they] really [smell] like" (2001, 38), referring to the pheromone issue. Lusa is also puzzled since she knows personal hygiene practices, especially "shaving armpits defeats the purpose … [of] increas[ing] the surface area for scent molecules" (2001, 38). As illustrated in the quotation, the author alludes to the grooming practices of humans and probably their desire to emit less "scent," thus becoming less animalistic. At the end of the scene, Lusa draws another comparison between Cole and Nature by likening his beard to the "nectar guides on the throat of flowers that show bees the path to the sweet place where the nectar resides" (2001, 38). By doing so, she depicts human reproductive behavior as plant reproductive behavior during which the nectar's purpose is to "attract pollinators" (Petruzzello).

As mentioned before, Cole and Lusa's love, which started so passionately and intensely, starts to lose its potency and become bitter as they spend more time together after their marriage. The reason for this is their different social, cultural, and educational backgrounds. They simply have different worldviews and cannot bridge the gap between contrasting social positions. Intellectually, Lusa realizes that her marvel for farming life and Cole's earnest animality in their physical relationship start to lose their appeal. So much so that "she felt like a frontier mail-order bride" (2001, 46). She regrets leaving "her city and beloved career for the narrow place rural county holds open for a farmer's wife" (2001, 46). The quoted scene is noteworthy since it reflects patriarchal culture and its inclination to minimize women. It "narrow[s]" down their spaces in society and makes their position inferior. Plumwood refers to this tendency in her book:

> "The inferiorisation of human qualities and aspects of life associated with necessity, nature and women—of nature-as-body, of nature-as-passion or emotion, of nature as the pre-symbolic, of nature-as-primitive, of nature-as-animal and of nature as the feminine—continues to operate to the disadvantage of women, nature and the quality of human life. The connection between women and nature and their mutual inferiorisation is by no means a thing of the past, and continues to drive, for example, the denial of women's activity and indeed of the whole sphere of reproduction" (1993, 21).

As exemplified in the novel, as well as Plumwood's book, women and Nature are devalued and disparaged in society. Their place is small and insignificant in the face

of so-called serious matters of men. Body, emotions, "pre-symbolic" and "primitive" Nature are used against Nature and women to denigrate them collectively. Ever since she was a child, it has been Lusa's dream to live close to Nature. City life is not satisfactory to her. She wanted to chase the insects and observe them. Nevertheless, her dream of "pasture" is shattered by patriarchy's propensity to trivialize and downplay women and Nature.

Following the scene reflecting Lusa's bitterness towards patriarchy, she has an epiphany concerning their relationship, but more broadly, human opposite sex relationships and reasons for their failure. The scene takes place after a particularly heated argument between the fed-up couple. In the scene, as Lusa is watching Cole through their house's window across the field in the distance, he snaps off a branch of flowers to bring them to Lusa. She smells the flowers from afar, and remembers "the full, straight truth about their attachment. Her *heart emptied of words*, for once, and filled with *a new species of feelings*" (2001, 46; emphasis added). An undeniable fact about humans, biologically speaking, we are all considered animals. The plenitude of similarities between human animals and other animals surmounts the scarcity of differences. Nevertheless, Kingsolver points out that one difference is that the root cause of many arguments and fights that occur in human relationships is seemingly complex human language and symbolic capacities. Just as moths do, Lusa can smell Cole across the field and knows of his existence. Lusa is "marveled: This is how moths speak to each other. They tell their love across the fields by scent. There is no mouth, the wrong words are impossible, either a mate is there, or he is not, and if so, the pair will find each other in the dark" (2001, 47). The purity of moths' love language affects Lusa deeply and makes her long for a similar level of honesty that comes from the simplicity of the language. Lusa is astonished by her epiphany; thus, she sits there unmoving and "consider[s] a language that could carry nothing but love and simple truth" (2001, 47). Until this part, Kingsolver places humanity and the animal realm on an equal footing in the wilderness. However, this scene changes the equation since, due to the introduction of patriarchy and human culture—dominated by a male-oriented way of thinking— complex human language is illustrated as lesser or at least less functional. It is inadequate to express more basic needs of humans' animal bodies; thus, human language hinders communication with one's mate. Moths' language of love is superior to humans since they can only relay the message of "love and simple truths." This is also significant since human

languages have generally evolved under patriarchal civilization; therefore, they dominate and subjugate women and Nature as mentioned in the first chapter. Warren names this phenomenon *linguistic interconnections,* and she claims that patriarchy uses language to undermine both Nature and women. However, by highlighting the inability of human language to convey emotions of love and affection, Kingsolver artfully lays bare before her readers' eyes the inadequacy of human language, thus cancelling its dominating and controlling features.

Lusa and Cole's relationship ends with Cole dying in an accident. Although their marriage was strained, she is devastated by the loss of her husband. She cannot sleep for days due to her grief. Jewel, Lusa's favorite among Cole's five sisters, gives her a sleeping pill to help her sleep. Interestingly, Lusa dreams of a sensual man who is sending her messages with scent, much like she believed her late husband did. Later in the dream, she realizes that it is "not a man at all but a mountain with the silky, pale-green extremities and maroon shoulders of a luna moth. He wrapped her in his softness, touched her face with what seemed to be the movement of trees" (2001, 79). Here, the author alludes to another connection between Nature and humans, specifically men. Portraying the mountain as a male figure that has moth-like characteristics, Kingsolver draws attention to the relationship between humanity and Nature. By doing so, she endeavors to bring about a new way of thinking about our relationship with Nature. The scene of sexual intimacy between the moth-like mountain and Lusa is almost graphically depicted to give prominence to the link between women and Nature. Besides, during the scene, she is at the precipice of choosing to build a life in the Zebulan Valley without her partner or going back to her life in the city. After the dream, she realizes that she does not wish to leave life in the pasture. Arguably, during her time of grief, Lusa turns to Nature as the sole aspect of reliability, constancy, and permanence in life; thus, choosing to go back to her old life might mean she is even more isolated since she finds solace in the presence of insects, trees, and different species of animals of the Appalachia.

3.3.2. Nature and Women as a Subject as Opposed to an Object

According to Vandana Shiva, the patriarchal way of thinking considers man the "measure of all value" (Women's Indigenous 2014, 164). In this worldview, there is no space for "diversity" of Nature; on the contrary, Nature is made "[uniform] and

homogene[ous]" to fit in their hierarchical order, which places man at the top. Women are "unequal and inferior" to men since they are considered "different" and their "expertise" is considered diverse, thus inferior (Women's Indigenous 2014, 165). The diversity of Nature is "not intrinsically valuable," rather its "value" is assessed in terms of economic benefit. Regarding Nature as a means to gain more wealth construes "diversity" as a problematic aspect of Nature. Hence, annihilation of Nature's diversity, and formation of "monoculture" proves essential for the prosperity of "capitalist patriarchy" (Women's Indigenous 2014, 164). In light of all this, Nature, with all its multiplicity and heterogeneity, becomes a tool that must be "uniformed" to be used and abused by patriarchy to intensify the profitability of Nature's alleged resources for the industry. A similar process is applied to women since their "expertise" is diverse, and it is less valued. Giving Nature no agency, male supremacy reduces Nature and its components to an object instead of a subject. By constructing her novel in a way that lays bare the Appalachian Mountains' ecosystem's diversity, she manages to subjectify Nature and endows it with agency, along with her female characters, whose connection as well as protective stand regarding Nature is undeniably apparent.

Another theorist who mentions the *objectification* of Nature and women is Plumwood. As noted in the first chapter, Plumwood's dualism theory formulates five features of dualisms. The fourth feature is "instrumentalism" or "objectification." Agency and will are taken away from the subservient party of the dualism, declaring them mere "instruments." There is no "empathy" from the dominant party towards the subordinate party.

As mentioned before, in her book *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1990), Merchant theorizes that the worldview changed from Nature as an organic being to mechanic being with the Scientific Revolution, through series of alleged developments and changes in areas such as "ecolog[y], commerc[e], technolog[y], and social" during the mid-seventeenth century. Within this worldview, everything could be explained with "certain and consistent" "logic" since Nature was not an "organic process" but the formation of "mathematical laws and identities." Hence, "[f]orce was external to matter rather than imminent within it. Matter was corpuscular, passive, and inert. … Because it viewed nature as dead and matter as passive, mechanism could function as a subtle sanction for exploitation and manipulation of nature and its resources" (1990, 102, 103). As outlined by Merchant,

Nature's agency and its will are taken away from it and placed in the patriarchal order's hands by using the means of technology and other purported developments. The nonhuman world is henceforth considered a mechanical being that is the object, where the male-centered order is the subject and doer of everything concerning the nonhuman world. Dynamic and ecological processes have become simplified to a "causal nexus" (Merchant 1990, 103) that is initiated by outside "forces," instead of internal catalysts embedded in them. Consequently, Nature is being killed by patriarchy both figuratively, in the realm of philosophy, and literally, due to being used as a resource that has no agency or rights. The novel *Prodigal Summer* (2001) reverses the conception of Nature as mechanical and presents it instead as organic, giving the more-than-human world its subjectivity and its autonomy, healing the wounds left in the wake of patriarchy.

Garnett is the representation of patriarchy in the novel. He considers Nature as a collective of resources that was put there by a higher power, namely God, for humanity's use and abuse without constraint. Kingsolver addresses another bleeding wound caused by capitalist patriarchy, the death of American chestnuts, in her novel through her character Garnett. He is descended from the Walker family that used to own half the mountains. Their main income from the mountain was harvesting the American chestnuts for lumber and other profitable uses. However, as mentioned before, due to the introduction of an exotic species of chestnut from Japan, the American chestnuts got sick with a blight fungus (*Cryphonectria parasitica)* brought with the exotic trees. It was a large-scale devastation and destruction of the region's ecosystem, resulting in the extinction of the species. The blight fungus was brought to the region in 1904, and as the calendar marked the year 1950, virtually all American Chestnut trees were dead (National Park Service). Both in the novel and in real life, when people realized that chestnuts were becoming sick and there was no cure, they cut down the healthy ones to be able to make use of the last standing members of a big family of trees (2001, 96). Deanna is especially resentful about the fact that people rushed to cut down the last living species of chestnuts, harming and wounding Earth irreversibly, as she knows that if the healthy ones were left alone, there was a possibility that those were immune to the blight fungus. Hence, American chestnuts would be alive today (2001, 174). As a representation of ecofeminist ethical principles and perspective of the world in the novel, Deanna simply cannot stand the fact that humans are selfish and destructive of Nature. Eddie claims that the

reason for her isolation in the mountains is that she "can't stand how people are" (2001, 175). She agrees with his assessment of her, adding that she "do[esn't] *want* to feel that way" (2001, 175; original emphasis). Nevertheless, she cannot help it: "There's people I love. But there's so many other kinds of life I love, too. And people act so hateful to every kind but their own" (2001, 175). Her heart is open to every living being because she does not distinguish between the human and the nonhuman world. To her, life is holistic and indivisible. That is why she cannot forgive and forget people's greed and lack of foresight concerning the American chestnut.

Garnett's ultimate purpose in his life is to bring back the American Chestnut that is resistant to the blight fungus. However, his desire for a stronger chestnut does not stem from his concern for the ecosystem; quite the opposite, he feels driven to reclaim his ancestors' source of wealth. He plans to cross the American chestnut seeds he found with Chinese chestnuts, and the result would be blight-resistant American chestnuts. Then, he plans on selling them via mail-order, helping to recover the destroyed landscape of American chestnuts all over the United States. By doing so, "[t]he landscape of *his father's manhood would be restored* (2001,130; emphasis added). As illustrated in the quotation, Garnett believes that by losing his wealth due to a sickness, "his father's manhood" is damaged since he lost his dominion over Nature, resulting in emasculation. A perverse way of thinking, Warren's theory of *logic of domination* can be witnessed in this scene. Dominion over Nature gave Garnett's ancestors power, and this fact is a consolation for him; however, losing this power gives him a strong sense of shame. Additionally, he mourns the loss of this power instead of mourning the loss of the entire species of American chestnuts.

His line of thought is illustrated with the following scene from the novel. He remembers from his childhood years that there was a giant felled chestnut that was hollowed out. Children used to call it "the Indian Tunnel" and play inside without even "bending their heads" (2001, 81). Garnett and his friends considered the tree "theirs, for a ten-year-old boy will happily presume ownership of a miracle of nature, and then carve on it with his knife" (2001, 81). This quotation is significant since it reflects the mentality of patriarchy by highlighting the *objectification* of Nature, the constant occurrence of apathetic and unconcerned violence against it, and wounds left behind by the careless slashes of the knives wielded by the representations of patriarchy. As Garnett thinks about the past, he thinks it is unusual for his grandfather

to leave a felled tree uselessly in the forest, while it could bring high profit as lumber. Then he realizes the underlying reason for the existence of a giant felled chestnut in the forest; it must be because it is too big for them to carry out and sell it, as they did not have the technology to do so in those days. He later ponders the grueling labor of felling a tree as big as this. It was most probably a full day of working for his grandfather and his sons with a "crosscut saw. Besides, they were probably extremely angry when they realized they had to leave it behind" (2001, 82). In this scene, Garnett appreciates the full day of labor his grandfather and his sons did to cut down a tree for lumber. However, he does not even consider the decades that it takes for a tree to grow so huge that children can walk through it without bending. Alternatively, he is also blind to the tree's intrinsic value and contribution to the mountain's ecosystem. It used to be alive, an organic being that lived in the mountains, a home for the birds and insects, as well as lifeblood for the environment. For Garnett and the patriarchal order, that tree's purpose is to become lumber to bring even more profit for the already wealthy Walker family. Plumwood's theory of *homogenisation*, mentioned in the first chapter, applies to this scene. The diversity of the tree's life purposes is hidden beneath the unified purpose of capitalism. The tree is also objectified; thus it has no agency, and it is not considered a living being that must be approached with ethical consideration. Later, Garnett reflects on the lack of today's technological means—such as a tractor that can be used to carry the cut-down chestnut—in those years. To carry heavy loads and do hard work, "mules or men" were used. Next, he compares mules and tractors that did not exist in those days. He comes to the conclusion that "[s]ome things could be wrought with *horsepower* that were *beyond the power of horseflesh*" (2001, 82; emphasis added). He regrets the lack of modern technology that could have helped his grandfather carry that tree out of the forest to sell; in doing so, "that tree would not have gone to waste as boy-tunnel and bear den. Yes, sometimes *horsepower can do what horseflesh cannot*" (2001, 82; emphasis added). This quotation is another example of how patriarchy functions. Forests, animals, and entire ecosystems are only considered means of resources and tools that have the potential to bring profit. According to this way of thinking, a mule—though an animal and a creature that must have its own agency—is as much a tool as a tractor. As Merchant explains in her book, this is an example of the death of Nature as an organic being. Functioning within this mindset, patriarchy deprives sentient creatures of agency and reduces

them to nothing more than mechanical tools that must do their masters' bidding. This oversimplified way of considering the wondrous Nature and its creatures leaves behind lasting wounds and scars. Another noteworthy part of the quotation is Garnett's comparison between "horseflesh" and "horsepower." Garnett holds the modern developments and technologies in high regard. However, from an ecofeminist perspective, these so-called developments are destroying women, otherized people, and Nature; Shiva calls this "maldevelopment." Within the framework of maldevelopment, patriarchy values the so-called progress for humanity more than Nature's demise beneath the shadow of those developments. The capitalist system does everything possible to reach a goal that is set by modern needs that were invented by the system itself, much like an unending vicious cycle. The more they take from Nature, the more they need; thus, *horseflesh* is no longer as useful as *horsepower*. Plumwood suggests that our world is beginning to resemble "feminist dystopias, where technological mastery extinguishes both nature and less technologically 'rational' cultures" (1993, 7). Man, who considers himself so "rational," destroys the diversity of Nature along with culture. The so-called "progress" causes "inequality as inexorably as it produces pollution and waste" (1993, 7). Hence, "the dominance of 'rational' man threatens ultimately to produce the most irrational of results, the extinction of our species along with many others" (1993, 7). Mankind's purported rationality serves as a smokescreen since it only brings more destruction to Nature and its creatures. In the novel, Garnett is willfully blind to the fact that the very thing, namely technological developments, he almost holds sacred, are the results of many species' confinement, abuse, and extinction. Even though he realizes that the more-than-human world is being harmed for the sake of humanity, he believes that it is their purpose to serve humanity.

Compared to Garnett, Deanna lives by different ethical principles that can be considered within the framework of ecofeminism. Living in the forest up the mountain, she is another character who has adopted the felled American chestnut that Garnett ponders upon. However, both characters attribute different meanings to the unfortunate tree. For Deanna, the tree is a safe place of seclusion for her. She calls it a "womb" (2001, 96) in the forest. Moreover, other animals and the earth also have a claim on the felled tree. As its body slowly dissolves into the earth, the borders of ownership and usefulness blur and get erased, as is the case in all ecosystems, since every member needs another member to survive and hopefully thrive. Fifteen days

after their first encounter, Eddie finds her next to the felled tree that Deanna loves so dearly. They share intimate moments inside the hollowed-out tree; however, Deanna regrets sharing the tree with Eddie, believing her pure connection to it is contaminated by another human. She is almost ashamed of her claim on this tree she loves "fiercely" as she believes that the mountain and everything in it, along with the trees, belong to the original inhabitants of the mountain: "These trees were the lungs of her mountain—not her mountain, *nobody's* damn mountain, this mountain that belonged to scarlet tanagers, puffballs, luna moths, and coyotes. This shadowy, spirited world she lived in was preparing to exhale" (2001, 100; original emphasis). As exemplified in the scene, Deanna considers Nature and its every member as the agent of their own lives. She corrects herself even when she claims the log as an object of love and a source of healing comfort, as she believes she is introduced to the ecosystem later; thus, she is an outsider. Therefore, she seeks to treat all fairly, being afraid of depriving the rightful owners of their place. She considers each different species that lives in the forest and the mountains, whether big or small, as she views the forest and everything in it as their birthright. By doing so, she proves that her ethical standards surmount Garnett's worldview regarding Nature. To Deanna, Nature, with its diversity of all creatures, is everything that encompasses life. Instead of considering the non-human world as an object and passive, Deanna perceives it as an entity that is life itself.

Deanna is deeply disturbed by humanity's subjugation of the non-human world as she witnesses, every day, many wounds inflicted on the mountains by the patriarchy. From her point of view, Nature is brimming with life, not the mechanical entity mentioned in Merchant's book. She devoted her life to protecting the integrity of Nature and healing what was damaged by the careless hunters and poachers in the mountains. Her devotion to the wholeness of Nature is so much so that she even mourns the extinct animals, seeing the many festering wounds left by their untimely departure due to mankind's unwelcome intervention and degradation. Her story of becoming a ranger in the mountains starts when she sees a coyote being displayed in a zoo near Knoxville. The coyote lives alone as a captive in a cage. She is so disturbed by the poor creature's demise that she "plead[ed] with the curator to change the exhibit, explaining that coyotes were social, and displaying a single animal was therefore not just cruel but also inaccurate" (2001, 59). Nevertheless, unsurprisingly, no matter what Deanna says or offers to the curator, he does not change his mind,

telling her to go west to see "coyotes in groups" since there are so many coyotes that people run them over with their vehicles (2001, 59). She feels so strongly about the issue that when she cannot do anything for the lone coyote in the cage, she gets a "stomachache" (59). After the unfortunate exchange of words between her and the curator, she decides to write a grant proposal "invent[ing her] job" (2001, 59). Doing her job and protecting the mountains from hunters and poachers bore fruit since, for the last two years she has been in service, "one of the most heavily poached ranges of southern Appalachia was becoming an intact ecosystem again" (2001, 59). Nevertheless, she is not satisfied with these results since she cannot bring back what is already lost. When she wanders the mountain checking the creatures under her care, she feels a sense of wonderment hearing a magnolia warbler sing, which makes her think that the bird has "risen from the dead" (2001, 59). She uses these words to describe her happiness in hearing the birds sing because when the region was left alone by the poachers due to her diligent and healing work, all the species have been multiplying and living freely. That reminds her of "[s]o many others never would rise again:

> "Bachman's warbler, passenger pigeon, Caroline parakeet, Flint's stonefly, Apamea moth—so many extinct moved through the leaves just outside her peripheral vision, for Deanna knew enough to realize that she lived among ghosts. She deferred to the extinct as she would to the spirits of deceased relatives, paying her quiet respects in the places where they might have once been" (2001, 59, 60).

Not reducing her fellow animals to a unified or homogeneous state, or objectifying them, Deanna mentions each and every one of the extinct animals by their names, hence honoring them. She realizes that their absence has left behind a void that probably will not be filled by any other. They were subjects of their own important everyday life and work. Each is a protagonist of their stories. She regards them as her "relatives" since she recognizes the links between every creature of Nature. Her respect for them illustrates her worldview, ethical understanding, and her recognition of those animals' intrinsic worth because she sees the bleeding wounds left behind in the places they used to live. Kingsolver creates a juxtaposition between her female characters, Deanna, Lusa, and Nannie, and male characters Garnett and Eddie. This juxtaposition serves as a mirror that reflects humanity's worst mistakes and, despite everything, shows the small hope that if the ethical outlook changes, everything could be saved, healed, and made whole. Nevertheless, what has been lost will still

be lost, and that is why Kingsolver narrates Deanna's scene paying her respects to the lost animals.

Another ideological conflict about the non-human world and its meaning to us takes place between Garnett and Nannie. It is about the salamander species that are native to the Zebulon region. In the scene, Garnett sees the bait store in town put up a sign saying "LIZARDS, TEN FOR A $" (2001, 138). As he sees the sign, he remembers his—according to him—annoying neighbor, Nannie Rawley, and how every month she comes here to purchase all the salamanders in the tank and return them to the wilderness, behind her orchard. When asked by Garnett, she reasoned that there are about fifteen different species of salamanders in the region, and using them as bait for bass fishing means killing endangered species. She tells him that she does it to protect the diversity of the region and "doing her part to save the environment" (2001, 138). This explanation by Nannie makes Garrett especially angry as he questions by himself what her "impl[ication]" might be. He feels there is an accusation in her actions and concludes that, according to her logic, "What … anyone who went bass fishing with salamanders was an enemy of God's plan?" (2001, 138). Later, Garnett starts a tirade in his head about the ideological differences between him and Nannie. He attempts to "tell her a thing or two about God's plan" (2001, 138). This short passage from the novel is another noteworthy tendency of patriarchy as it reflects how religions are abused, misdirected, or misunderstood in order to serve the system's interests. Garnett's focus then shifts to explain the laws of Nature as he perceives them from God's plan: "The creatures of the earth came to pass and sometimes passed on" (2001, 139). The quotation is a simplified version of the cycle of life from Garnett's perspective as he attempts to translate God's plan. It also oversimplifies the cycle of life and death. Even though life and death are a normal part of life, mankind's atrocities toward animals are not a normal part of the cycle. At this point in the scene, Garnett shifts to Nannie's worldview. Garnett thinks to himself that if humans are "merely one more species among our brethren, the animals," just like Nannie argues, mankind has no responsibility towards animals since they are equals. Garnett finds this logic faulty and wrong. Nevertheless, he thinks about his own perspective: "if we were *not* the equal of animals, if we were meant instead to be masters and keepers of Eden, as the Bible said, then 'lizards' were put here for a man to go bass fishing with, and that was that" (2001, 139). Garnett follows mentality that is represented in Genesis 1:26: "Then God said, 'Let

us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may *rule over* the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground'" (International Version, Genesis; New; emphasis added). In the passage, mankind is invited to "rule over" all kinds of animals. Garnett's thoughts represent the 'man as the master' mentality. He believes that the universe and the planet Earth, with its entirety, were created to serve mankind. This mentality marginalizes and *backgrounds* both Nature and women since it is a male-centered way of thinking, and as highlighted many times in this dissertation, women are considered inferior, and they are not equal to men in any way. They are more similar to Nature and animals.

To summarize, in the novel, *backgrounded*, *homogenized,* and *objectified* Nature and women are foregrounded by deconstructing dualisms and the *master model* narrative. Kingsolver lays bare before her readers' eyes that civilization's domination project is merely a distortion of reality and does not reflect the real bonds existing between every living being. To escape from a dualistic worldview, the author highlights the dependency on Nature, as well as the diversity and agency of the biotic community.

3.4. Patriarchy, and Compulsion to Control Nature and Women: Ecofeminist Ethic against Patriarchy

> "[Garnett Walker III:] Miss Rawley, as the poet said, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'
> [Nannie Land Rawley:] 'Oh, people just adore fences, but Nature doesn't give a hoot.'"
> Barbara Kingsolver-*Prodigal Summer* 2001, 86.

In the novel, mankind's desire and compulsion to dominate Nature are exemplified many times. Furthermore, this damaging mentality and worldview are conveyed through Garnett and the predator hunter Eddie. Patriarchal ethical principles generally focus on abstract and human-made and constructed concepts such as rules, laws, and liberty. This way of considering the world brings about harm and damages the more-than-human world almost beyond saving because these concepts have proved insufficient and inefficient in covering much-needed areas of life, namely relationships, responsibilities to other parties, care, and a holistic outlook

on life. Feminism has brought about a new way of looking at the ethical responsibilities to the world beyond the self: *care ethics*. The female characters Deanna, Nannie, and Lusa express their frustration and disappointment with mankind's disregard for the non-human world, and through their actions and worldviews, represent an ecofeminist ethic against patriarchy. This part will analyze these characters' different outlooks in life concerning the more-than-human world, as well as the roots of those actions by making use of ecofeminist theory.

Because Garnett gets so frustrated and angry talking to Nannie about their seemingly incompatible worldviews, he decides to write a letter to her, explaining his perspective and disproving her claim that he believes to be faulty with all his heart. In his letter to Nannie, he raises three questions. Firstly, if humans are "merely … one species among many" as Nannie suggests, and humans are supposed to "live in 'harmony' with 'nature'" (2001, 186), how can humans get rid of unwanted insects such as Japanese beetles from their trees? Besides, he asks, "Do you believe a human holds no more special authority in this world than, say, a Japanese beetle or a salamander?" (2001, 186). If humans are just one of the animals, is it humanity's responsibility to set salamanders free? While the first question is raised as a method to refute Nannie's argument regarding human and non-human animal equality, the second question is designed to present his views by quoting the Bible: "Or are we to think ourselves as keepers and guardians of the earth, as God instructed us to do in Genesis 1:27-30, 'So God created man in his *own* image; … and God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it!" (2001, 186) The quotation from Genesis continues to describe how God gave humanity everything on the face of the earth as "meat," meaning to consume. Garnett states that "we must view God's creatures as gifts to his favored children and use them for our own purposes." Even though these "gifts" are sometimes "go extinct after" being used by humanity (2001, 186, 187). This mentality is specific to this particular worldview of the non-human world. According to this perspective, Earth and everything on it are humans' to freely control and use. This is a plan that does not consider sustainability or the cycles of renewal of Nature. Patriarchy simply considers humans to be the masters of the universe and Nature, and women (who are exempt from the "master model") as their subordinates and slaves to their whims. Therefore, ethical repercussions or the lives lost during the process of reaching their aim are not considered, and if they are considered, they are found insignificant or a

necessary sacrifice for the greater good. Besides, the word choice to describe humans' place in God's eyes is also interesting. Garnett calls humans "the favored children" of God; by doing so, he reveals his point of view regarding non-human animals and other creatures of Nature. To Garnett, God has chosen mankind as his "favored children," disregarding all others in favor of one species. The last question is the shortest and simplest for Garnett: "If one species or another of those muddly little salamanders went extinct, who would care anyway?" (2001, 187) He simply cannot comprehend the essentiality of every being for their own environment or community. He is a classic follower of Anthropocentrism. Nannie writes a reply letter and leaves it along with a pie for Garnett to find on his front porch. In her letter, she explains that humans "hold a special place in the world" (2001, 215), just like Garnett said in his letter. However, there is a crucial difference between the two worldviews, for Nannie believes that "every creature alive believes this: The center of everything is *me*" (2001, 215; original emphasis). She states that assuming salamanders worship a God created in humans' image is absurd since for a salamander, "a man's shadowy nuisance (if anything) compared to the sacred business of finding food and a mate and making progeny to rule the mud for all times. To themselves and one another, those muddly little salamander lives mean everything" (2001, 215). In other words, Nannie attempts to explain to Garnett that for every living being, their own life and the life of their community are sacred, essential, and indispensable. Moreover, she highlights the fact that just as humans regard salamanders as insignificant, the reverse can be applied to salamanders. For them, humans are a "shadowy nuisance". By reversing his logic, Nannie proves not only that every living being "holds a special place" in the world, but also that, by being human-centered, Garnett-minded people prove that humans are indeed simply one of the creatures of this world and no more than that, since every living being has the same instinct regarding survival. Garnett's third question appalls Nannie, specifically since he believes that just one species of salamander is insignificant. Hence, she reminds Garnett of his family's loss of fortune when the blight destroyed American chestnuts. She attempts to make him empathize with salamanders by presenting a hypothetical scenario:

> "Suppose some city Yank said to you: 'Well, sir, American chestnut was just one tree—why, the woods are full of trees!' You'd get so mad you'd spit. It would take you a day and a night to try and explain why the chestnut was a tree unlike any other, that held a purpose in our

> world that nothing else can replace. Well sir, the loss of one kind of salamander would be a tragedy on the same order to some other creature that was depending on it. It wouldn't be *you* this time, but I assume you care about all tragedies, not just the ones that affect the Walker fortunes" (2001, 215).

In other words, Nannie tries to make Garnett empathize with the seemingly insignificant "muddly salamander." The ecosystems are built through the mutual needs of different species of animals and plants. By placing human beings above all else, patriarchal systems break the web of life and betray their fellow animals. Nannie continues her letter by stating that: "Everything alive is connected to every other by fine invisible threads. Things you don't see help you plenty, and things you try to control will rear back and bite you, and that's the moral of the story" (2001, 216). Nannie believes that trying to control Nature will result in catastrophe since trying to fix something perceived as a problem by humans might result in another creature's demise.

Later, she answers his questions regarding God's plan and humanity's mastery above all else. Referring to Garnett's heavy usage of herbicides and pesticides, which result in many wounds on Earth and in the lives of every being sharing the negatively affected ecosystem, she states that even if God gave every creature to mankind "to use for his own ends, he also counseled that gluttony is a sin—and he did say, flat out, 'Thou shalt not kill'" (2001, 216). Since Garnett identifies as a religious man, Nannie tries to explain the gravity of the situation from his perspective and beliefs. Later, she explains that by using pesticide to "murder every beetle or caterpillar that wants to eat what we eat (and by the way, other insects that *pollinate* what we eat)," (2001, 216) people and governments that use these methods are killing not only what is considered harmful from humanity's point of view but every insect that is a part of the web of life. Furthermore, she gives noteworthy examples of humanity's greed. One of the most harmful actions mentioned is out-of-season agriculture, which can cause intensive usage and abuse of energy and land. Moreover, to import and export the out-of-season food that has been produced with little regard for the ecosystem, humans abuse Nature more during food transportation, leaving even larger carbon footprint, which can be consşdered another wound left by capitalist patriarchy. Additionally, Nannie writes about humans' tendency to move species of plants or animals across the globe to

ecosystems they do not belong in, thus harming the diversity of local fauna and ecosystems, even causing extinction. Later, she makes an analogy between humans and exotic species that are taken from their land and brought to some other biotic community, thus becoming invasive species:

> "To our dominion over the earth, Mr. Walker, we owe our thanks for the chestnut blight. Our thanks for kudzu, honey suckle, and the Japanese beetle also. I think that's all God's little joke on us for getting too big for our britches. We love to declare that God made us in his image, but even so, he's three billion years old, and we're just babies. … We're that foolish, to think we know how to rule the world" (2001, 216, 217).

Humans' "dominion over the earth" can be interpreted as the alien species of plants and animals that are imported all over the globe, causing unprecedented damage. Much like alien plants, humans invade natural areas and habitats to abuse those in different ways, triggering unforeseeable negative impacts and disruption to local life. The quotation above can also be interpreted in another way. Against Garnett's arrogance and self-importance, reflecting his beliefs about the non-human world, Nannie writes about the consequences of mankind's greed. The invasive species she writes about are examples of this greed, tragic miscalculation, and grave error. Assuming the role of master of Nature, mankind has been manipulating the forces it should have left alone. As a result, kudzu, a plant that originates from Japan, has invaded all over the South of the United States, so much so that it is known as the "vine that ate the south." Kudzu was brought to the States as a decorative plant and advertised as having properties such as "ground cover[age]" and "soil stabiliz[ation]." Nevertheless, since it grows so fast, it has become an invasive species. In many regions in the south, people have been dealing with kudzu for over seventy years (Tennessee Department of Agriculture, "Kudzu"). Another invasive plant Nannie mentions is Japanese honeysuckle. It is another vine that originated from Japan in the 1800s. It endangers the local biotic communities all over the United States. Since it has no biological control agent in the area, it has invaded beyond the gardens. It has many negative impacts on local plant "diversity" and "habitat quality" (Tennessee Department of Agriculture, "Japanese Honeysuckle"). Japanese beetle, another invasive species in the United States and some European countries, originated from Japan. It was discovered in the United States in 1916 and spread quickly; it colonized the east and the west of the Mississippi River (National

Invasive Species Information Center). It probably came with the exotic plants imported from Japan. Much like other invasive species, due to the lack of natural predators, the Japanese beetle poses a threat to the local plant species or agricultural activities (California Department of Food and Agriculture). By highlighting the invasive species that harm the local ecosystems and Garnett's American chestnut nursery, where he attempts to raise a chestnut immune to the blight that came from Japan, Nannie proves the dire consequences of human intervention on Nature. By doing so, she also illustrates her ethical principles concerning the non-human world.

Another character who has strong opinions concerning exotic species is Lusa. She resents the fact that the people of Zebulon Valley seem to be killing every plant, insect, or animal that does not suit their interests. During one of her arguments with Cole, she quotes from a local paper's column, ironically named "'Gardening in Eden' whose main concern, week after week, was with murdering things" (2001, 32). In the column that Lusa is reading in the scene, the writer advises the readers about the ways to get rid of Japanese honeysuckle: "Be vigilant! The project will require repeated applications of a stout chemical defoliant" (2001, 32). The column has given advice about how to get rid of other species as well, such as blue jays and phoebes. Lusa is seriously annoyed by this mentality and likens it to "rituals of spring cleaning," calling it "pastimes of Zebulon County" (2001, 33). The repeated and systematic attack against Nature is demonstrated through this column named "Gardening in Eden," a wordplay alluding to the Garden of Eden. A mythical garden mentioned in *the Book of Genesis*, the Garden of Eden was created by God on Earth for Adam, who was created "from the dust of the ground" (New Life Version, Genesis, 2:7) and his "helpers" (first, animals, and when they are found unsuitable, the first woman Eve) to live freely. As God did not wish Adam to be alone and go hungry, he created fruitful trees, four rivers, and "helper" animals of all species, from birds to ground animals. God asked Adam to name the animals (New Life Version, Genesis, 2:4-19). According to Nilsen Gökçen's analysis of the naming of animals by Adam: "Naming poses serious problems to a harmonious and egalitarian relationship [in the Garden] since calling something is also calling something into being, an imitation of God's act of creation from word to being" (2015, 46). Thus the "harmonious" existence in the Garden is thrown off balance. Man becomes the Master of Animals and later master of women when the first one is created. Later, God perceives that animals are "not right for him" (New Life Version, Genesis,

2:20). Therefore, God creates the Woman using one of Adam's "bones from his side" (New Life Version, Genesis, 2:22) as his true "helper." Kingsolver's usage of allusive wordplay on the Garden of Eden highlights important points in the novel. The Garden of Eden is described as a place of abundance, so much so that people start to assume it is in heaven, though it is on Earth. Man and Woman want for nothing in this heavenly location. When God put Adam in the Garden, he asked Adam to "work the ground and care for it" (New Life Version, Genesis, 2:15), basically asking him to do agricultural activities by also caring for the earth since he is a part of the earth himself, being made from it. Nevertheless, Kingsolver changes the phrase into "Gardening in Eden," alluding to the total and systematic domination of mankind over the non-human world. The column summarizes the atrocities of mankind and the wounds they inflict by referring to their acts of killing birds and their fledglings, killing plants using herbicides, and doing all these on a regular basis, almost like a "ritual of spring cleaning." Besides, humans bringing alien species to ecosystems where they do not belong is overtaking the role of God. By moving animal or plant species that do not belong there, humans are playing God. The act of relocating species is a grave mistake for the local ecosystems; however, attempting to cover up this mistake with another by using another herbicide or pesticide is an even worse choice, since when herbicides or pesticides are used, it is not only the exotic species that die; to the contrary, all species in the spray zone die. Hence, the author's pun reflects mankind's thirst for control and domination, their greed and disregard for the non-human world.

In her book, *The Death of Nature* (1990), in the chapter "Dominion Over Nature," Merchant points out British philosopher and statesman Francis Bacon (1561-1626) as one of the origins of today's systematic atrocities against Nature. He is considered the "father of modern science," and his ideas are valorized as the catalyst of humanity's technological developments. Bacon put forward a new set of ethical principles that are based on "exploitation of nature." Even though he is held in high regard by the "middle-class male entrepreneur" that his ideas mostly benefited, "from the perspective of nature, women, and the lower orders of society emerges a less favorable image of Bacon" (1990, 164, 165). Under his philosophy, "female nature" was transformed into a source of profit. His worldview and work bring about a new understanding of Nature. Instead of "a nurturing mother and womb of life," Nature is perceived as "a source of secrets" that needs to "be

extracted for economic advance" (1990, 165). Referring to the Fall, Merchant states that if a woman's curiosity resulted in "man's fall from his God-given dominion, the relentless interrogation of another female, nature, could be used to regain it" (1990, 170). In other words, mankind blames women for the downfall of humanity and takes it out on Nature, thus equating women and Nature and placing mankind hierarchically above both. "The relentless interrogation" still continues today to the detriment of everything on the planet Earth, and due to improvements in space travel, that results in orbital debris, mankind's destructive hands reach even space. Merchant quotes from one of Bacon's *De Augmentis* regarding the states of Nature. These must be "at liberty, in error, or in bondage:"

> "She is either free and follows her ordinary course of development as in the heavens, in the animal and vegetable creation, and in the general array of the universe; or she is driven out of her ordinary course by the perverseness, insolence, and forwardness of matter and violence of impediments, as in the case of monsters; or lastly, she is put in constraint, molded, and made as it were new by art and the hand of man; as in things artificial" (Bacon, qtd. in Merchant 1990, 170).

As illustrated in the passage, from the beginning, this worldview's purpose was to "mold" Nature in whatever shape or tool would best serve their gain to create artificial things out of Nature. Leaving Nature in "her ordinary course" is regarded as a misuse of Nature's purported resources; therefore, Nature must be reconstructed through efforts of "man" and technology (called art in the passage). The "error" occurs in Nature when matter is out of hand or "insolen[t]" and this "perverseness" results in "monsters." As mentioned before, Garnett briefly refers to Nannie's special needs daughter, calling her "deformed" (2001, 136). He genuinely believes that the child is the reason for Nannie's so-called problematic beliefs and personality:

> "The troubles were evident at birth, the Mongol features and so forth, and Nannie had named it Rachel Carson Rawley, after that lady scientist who cried wolf about DDT. Everything in Nannie's life since seemed to turn on the birth of that child. … The woman had probably been normal once. The child has launched her off the deep end" (2001, 136).

Sadly, behind Garnett's backward and ruthless thoughts lies what Bacon calls "error [of Nature]." He goes so far as to call Nannie's daughter "deformed" and not even use the appropriate pronoun; "her" instead, referring to her as "it," a pronoun used for babies or animals of unknown genders. He also points out Nannie's daughter as

the reason for Nannie's downfall, explicitly stating that she was "probably normal once." The description of "normal" here is what conforms to the patriarchal society. Garnett believes that Nannie could have been a woman who is happy with the role the patriarchy ascribed to her; however, she has become "a burgeoning plague" that Garnett has to "bear … on his old age" (2001, 136) due to her daughter's genetic anomaly. He is truly appalled by Nannie's actions and constantly questions them in his inner dialogues: "What made Nannie do the things she did, before God and Man and sometimes on Garnett's property?" (2001, 136). Trivializing and minimizing both the real threat of pesticide DDT and the scientist revealing the damage it causes, as well as Nannie's worldviews, Garnett sincerely cannot stand the idea of living in harmony with Nature. In the novel, Nannie represents the first state of Nature ("at liberty") as she longs for a harmonious existence with the non-human world that she considers to be organic as opposed to mechanical. Nevertheless, Garnett represents the third state of Nature ("in bondage") since he believes that humans have a "special place" on Earth, and they are unparalleled by other animals. Indeed, they are not considered animals since they are above all with their philosophies and science. They are the center; thus, if they desire to "mold" Nature into their vision to serve their interests, they are free to do so without any ethical implications or repercussions due to hundreds of years of persuasion done by themselves. Even though Nannie tries to prove to Garnett that every part of Nature is precious and essential, her efforts yield no results until the end, since Garnett is set in his ways.

The patriarchal order creates borders for both women and Nature. When these borders are violated or ignored by the repressed parties, feeling threatened, society pushes back by using different means. Garnett's attitude toward women and Nature is a suitable example for the case explained above. Representing patriarchy, Garnett tends to demonstrate similar behavioral patterns when his beliefs are threatened. In Nature's case, it is pushed back to its perceived confined space in the wilderness by means of chemical pesticides or herbicides that result in the destruction and death of plants and animals. In women's cases, they are called names and perceived as evil or as witches. A scene in which Garnett thinks about his unending misgivings about Nannie again exemplifies his attitude toward women who think differently from him and mainstream culture. Regarding Nannie's religious and spiritual beliefs, he knows that she goes to "the Unitarian place" (2001, 131). Despite its status as a church, Garnett refuses to call it such. Garnett's description and derisive tone of the women

following these church principles are especially enlightening: "a den of coffee-drinking women in slacks making high-toned conversation along godless lines. Evolution, transcendentalism, things of that nature" (2001, 131). In the quotation, women are criticized for both their appearances and their intellectual sphere. Garnett is critical of women's clothing choices, since he does not approve of pants as a suitable garment for women. Furthermore, he is disgusted by the idea of evolution as he follows Creation science, which is why he calls these women "godless," despite being corrected by Nannie many times that she believes in God. He also targets transcendental philosophy since it foregrounds individualism, intuition, human and Nature's special connection, and distances itself from institutionalized religions. In the following, Garnett relays one of the town's women, Oda Black's account regarding the Unitarian women who go to college. According to her, "the Unitarian women refused to wear *foundation garments* and dabbled in witchcraft" (2001, 132; emphasis added). The quotation illustrates another critical point of view in relation to women's choice of clothing. As critics have long argued, the woman's body is sexualized and objectified by society since, in its natural form, it is considered a far too tempting object for the *male gaze*[1]. To make it less 'inviting', a form of "foundation garment" must be used. It is an umbrella term for clothing items—e.g., previously corsets, recently bras—used to reshape and mold women's bodies to a more acceptable form. An apparatus of a form of male control, bras are considered essential for women. Garnett relays how Oda Black is appalled by two young university student women who visit her store, "talking right out loud to each other about witchcraft, … their flesh jiggl[ing] under their T-shirts like jelly out of its jar" (2001, 132). Oda's description of the two female students' bodies' motions as "jiggling" can be considered a highly objectifying and sexualized way of looking at female form. She metaphorizes their bodies as "jelly out of its jar," thereby inviting further analyses regarding society's desire to mold, shape, and constrain female bodies in a way that suits societal norms. Ultimately, the female form must present itself only in preconditioned terms and trapped inside foundational garments to please society's sensibilities. The only thing that Garnett is thankful for is that these women and their witchcraft are away from Zebulon County. They are encountered in Franklin County, where a college is located. He states that "[t]hat college was asking

[1] For first usage of the term "male gaze" (see Mulvey 1975).

for it when they let women in" (2001, 132). The last comment overtly highlights Garnett's intolerance for higher education for women. Arguably, he believes that they challenge the indoctrinated rules of patriarchal order and disrupt control mechanisms, becoming unruly and uncontrollable.

As mentioned above, Garnett's laments do not only consist of dealings of Nature and mankind, but he is also disturbed when women do not fit in their supposed places in society, and he has very strong opinions concerning women. In the novel, he criticizes Nannie many times for having a relationship with his neighbor and having a baby out of wedlock. Additionally, he states in his response letter that Nannie is probably Unitarian and accepts Evolutionary Theory; he believes that she is destined to go to hell to "the jaws of Satan" (2001, 219). He also labels her and her female friends as "bra-burning Unitarian[s]" (2001, 219, 220), once again touching the subject of clothing items for females. "Bra-burners" is a slang term used to minimize and ridicule the 1960-1970 second-wave feminist movement, later called radical feminism. A protest took place in Atlantic City regarding the oppression women face. The symbols of oppression, such as bras, wigs, women's magazines, and false eyelashes, were thrown into a trash can called "Freedom Trash Can." Even though there were no fires that day, to belittle and mock the protest and the women's march, mainstream media called them "bra-burners" (Kreydatus 2008, 490). Upholding the idea of minimizing women's agency, Garnett uses the same term to refer to Nannie. Nannie's university education, her principles and ethical values concerning the non-human world and organic agriculture, distort the image of the proper woman he has in his mind, and he is highly disturbed by this distortion, which is illustrated through his irritable behavior toward Nannie. Since he cannot "mold" Nannie into a proper woman image, he keeps quarreling with her, even going so far as to call her a bra-burner or saying she will go to hell. However, Nannie refuses to be objectified by these patriarchal ideas, and she reclaims her land and does her agricultural activities, upholding her principles.

In his first letter to Nannie, Garnett states that he has served his community for many years as "vo-ag[2] teacher for 21 years, [and] 4-H adviser more than 10 years" (2001, 186). As mentioned before, he is a firm believer in heavy usage of herbicides and pesticides. As such, unfortunately, his teaching career was probably

[2] Short for "vocational agriculture" ("vo-ag")

filled with him teaching people so-called modern agriculture in which human intervention in the natural environment and processes is highly encouraged for more productivity and maximum exploitation of Nature. Moreover, in industrial agriculture methods, harmful chemicals are heavily used. Interestingly, his other profession is ironically named after body parts, referring to separated features of humanity, bringing to mind the patriarchal tendency to separate, divide, and fracture concepts to attribute different features or duties to them. Plumwood, like many others studying in the area, points to Descartes and his division of "mind and body." According to Plumwood, Descartes separates mind from body as well as mind from Nature "through radical exclusion" by creating hierarchical relationships between them. Furthermore, mind, body, and Nature are defined in "relational" terms; "defining Nature as lack" also defines the body, which is related to Nature as the lacking party in these dualisms (1993, 112). Explaining Cartesian philosophy regarding the separation of mind from body and Nature, Plumwood notes that: "Descartes is plainly the heir of the Platonic and rationalist flight from and devaluation of the body, nature, and the feminine. Like these earlier rationalists, he defines the real self as alien to the body and nature, and treats the body in the fashion of a devalued and denied dependency" (1993, 112). To put it differently, the mind is divided from the animal body, and Nature as well as the feminine. Being placed lower in the hierarchy than men, women are also connected to the inferior party, Nature. Mind or rational thought is regarded in men's sphere, and he is entirely disconnected from his 'inferiors,' even his "dependency" on his surroundings is "denied" or "devalued." Arguably, being "alien[ated]" from his environment, the male subject's mind is set free to discover and conquer Nature without any moral conscience or ethical implications. Metaphorically, this detachment is the direst wound that keeps bleeding because the male subject is decapitated and his head is cleaved from his body; thus, he can neither perceive his embodiment in his environment nor the non-human world as a whole. In the novel, Kingsolver points to the 4-H organization, which is the namesake of the ultimate separation of body. 4-H refers to "head, heart, hands, and health" (National 4-H Council). In 1902, 4-H started as a youth organization that aimed to teach young generations about basic agricultural science in Ohio. For boys, it focused on instilling farming skills and the contemporary science of agriculture. On the other hand, the organization taught girls domestic economy. One of the main tenets of the organization was to raise

“productive members [for] the community” (Ohio State University Extension). Later, the organization grew and branched out all over the United States, and even into eighty other countries. Hence, it no longer focuses on agriculture, but different areas” (Ohio State University Extension). Interestingly, 4-H’s national pledge reflects the separation of human’s faculties: “I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living, for my club, my community, my country, and my world” (National 4-H Council). In other words, “head” is the representation of reason while “heart” is the representation of emotions which is devoted to “greater loyalty.” “Hands” are the workers and doers, whereas “health” represents “better living.” In this way of thinking, a holistic understanding of the human body and its embodiment in a healthy and whole ecosystem cannot be perceived. Different parts refer to different characteristics, thus enabling decision-making based on just reason and so-called rational thinking without taking into account emotions or feeling empathy. This way of thinking and decision-making is another characteristic of patriarchy, which is so common and normalized that it is almost impossible to see the fault in the process and the wounds that it has been causing. Nevertheless, ecofeminism and other eco- ways of thinking attempt to reconceptualize and reclaim a human state that is unfragmented and undivided by patriarchy. In this worldview, the human subject is whole and holistically connected within their body, as well as their immediate surroundings and biotic communities. This way of thinking heals and merges instead of wounding and scarring.

3.4.1. Hunting Predators and Man as a Predator

When Deanna realizes that her suspicions regarding Eddie Bondo’s motives in coming to the Appalachian Mountains are correct, she feels angry and hopeless. Although both characters share many intimate moments between one another, their outlook on life vastly differs. As mentioned before, Deanna’s ethical principles coincide with eco-centric worldviews, whereas Eddie’s outlook in life stems from patriarchal ethical understanding. As such, as a sheep rancher, he has no inherent issue with killing carnivorous animals, allegedly to protect his sheep and means of livelihood. Deanna is so appalled by Eddie’s cold-blooded approach to killing

predators that she asks herself whether "male and female [are] from different worlds" (2001, 175). This question and their positioning in the debate over the sparing or killing of predators is the main conflict between the characters. Being a wildlife biologist, Deanna cannot comprehend Eddie's intentional refusal to acknowledge the facts of life on Earth. Even though Deanna and Eddie are not "from different worlds," they embrace different codes of ethical principles. Eddie's ideology of killing coyotes because they are the "enemy" (2001, 176) stems from patriarchy's desire to control and "mold" Nature. Deanna questions the number of sheep that are lost to him due to coyotes, and the answer is "maybe a dozen" in nearly thirty years' time, and he is not sure that all the sheep were taken away by coyotes, as there might be other reasons, such as dogs, barn owls, or bald eagles. When Deanna points that out, Eddie cannot give her an answer and realizes that coyotes might not be to blame. Deanna presses on: "A coyote is just something you can blame. He's nobody's pet; he doesn't belong to anybody but himself. So, great, put a bullet in him" (2001, 176). Arguably, regarding the farmers and sheep ranchers' hostility toward coyotes and other wild animals, the former party represents Nature in its purest form, which, as mentioned many times before, is detested by and feared by patriarchy and civilization; therefore, it is separated from civilization and hunted when encountered. It evokes fear of the unknown, and since they cannot control it, they consider it a "pest" and kill it without remorse. On the other hand, for Deanna, "kill[ing] a natural predator is a sin" (2001, 179). She explains her logic behind these passionate words:

> "Simple math, Eddie Bondo. … One mosquito can make a bat happy for, what, fifteen seconds before it starts looking for another one? But one bat might eat two hundred mosquitoes in a night. Figure it out, where's the gold standard here? Who has bigger influence on lives?" (2001, 179)

Eddie states that in case he is a "bug rancher," he automatically has "the right to shoot the bats off [his] ranch" (2001, 179). Arguably, Eddie's mentality stems from the capitalistic system. Afraid of losing his livelihood, he lashes out at the only "enemy" he can get easily. Deanna points out that due to many circumstances, such as "bad luck, bad weather, chestnut blight, change, economics, the antitobacco lobby," a lot of people have lost their farms and farmlands. Through this scene, Kingsolver points out a national problem in the United States. Analyzing the novel from the perspective of struggling farmers, Van Tassel states that the concept of

"self-sufficient" farmer has lost its meaning in the national context since "[t]he farming population currently constitutes less than two percent of the national total"; the agrarian times for the States are left behind" (2008, 83). Nevertheless, she believes that Kingsolver suggests a new way of looking at agricultural activities. Van Tassel points out Nannie's organic farming practices (2008, 87) and Lusa's transformative farming practices (2008, 88) as Kingsolver's solutions to the problematic collapse of American farming. Eco-centered practices of agriculture open the way to a more harmonious, healing, and sustainable living with Nature. Instead of driving certain species perceived as harmful to agriculture to extinction, eco-centered agriculture focuses on the mutual and healing relationships between all living beings and endeavors not to harm but to make whole and healthy. Kingsolver is aware of the possibility of humanity leaving behind these harmful practices that support only one species over all else and thrive on dominion over Nature. As Deanna questions whether the men and women are from "different worlds," she likens Eddie and herself to a bird species, the indigo bunting. As can be observed in many different species in Nature, the male is bright blue while the female is "mud-colored" (2001, 175). Despite having highly differentiated feathers, the birds are from the same species. Arguably, even though men and women have different outlooks in life due to their positioning by the patriarchal order, they have the potential to overcome the differences of worldviews and arrive at a shared understanding for the good of all. Instead of seeing Nature as an "enemy," Deanna wishes that Eddie could have seen the potential value a different perspective could bring.

Deanna, due to her profession as a wildlife biologist, is especially mindful of predator hunters' activities and their dire consequences for Nature. She uses a specialist term, *keystone predator*, which was derived by P. T. Paine in 1969. In his essay regarding "community stability" of experimental sites, he mentions the term to highlight the vitality of some keystone species for their biotic communities. In the experiments, the starfish *Pisaster ochraceus* and the triton *Charonia spp* were taken out of their biotic communities, respectively. The absence of these two predators causes their respective ecosystems to collapse. Paine states that: "These individual populations [the predators mentioned above] are the keystone of the community's structure, and the integrity of the community and its unaltered persistence through time, that is, stability, are determined by their activities and abundances" (1969, 92).

Deanna is hopeful that if the coyotes, displaced by human interaction, relocate to the mountain and become the keystone predator of their biotic community, they might heal the wounds caused by the absence of red wolves, who were hunted to extinction two hundred years ago. This relocation might start a process of recovery and mending. As a result, the mountain's ecosystem might balance itself, and many species on the brink of extinction might recover. She also mentions the many other incidents where the keystone species died off, causing a chain reaction that resulted in the collapse of their communities. One example is the mountain lions' extinction in the Grand Canyon. The removal of the lions "had rendered [the Grand Canyon] a monoculture of prolific, starving deer that outbred all other herbivores and gnawed the landscape down to granite" (2001, 62, 63). The collapsed ecosystems due to predator hunting were also on Leo Leopold's agenda. Analyzing the novel by applying the principles mentioned in Aldo Leopold's most cited essay, *The Land Ethic* (1949), Wenz also highlights Deanna's opinions concerning the harmful effects of killing carnivorous animals on their biotic communities (2003, 107, 108). In the novel, the incident of coyotes moving into the mountains portrays Nature's struggle to balance everything out. Nature, the sum of life on the planet, is considered to be made of mechanical systems that contain no soul. Nevertheless, Deanna describes the process of "restoration" (2001, 64) with these words: "The ghost of a creature long extinct was coming in on silent footprints, returning to the place it had once held in the complex anatomy of its forest like a beating heart returned to its body" (2001, 63, 64). In this passage, she highlights the vitality of a keystone predator to the well-being and integrity of the mountains' ecosystems by likening it to a heart. Additionally, the homecoming is described as a process the opposite of separation: a heart is joined with its body, thus reaching the lost unity. She combined science with her emotions, unlike Garnett and his tendency to follow the thought patterns of patriarchy.

Contrary to Deanna's deepest desires for coyotes relocating to the mountains and reorganizing the ecosystem as the keystone predators, Eddie wishes to get rid of all predator animals, as mentioned before. Unsurprisingly, during their first encounter in the forest, Deanna likens Eddie to kudzu vines, "an outsider, intruding on this place" (2001, 4). As noted above, Kudzu is an invasive species, causing irreparable damage to the local ecosystems. This comparison is meaningful since it forces the reader to question patriarchal civilization's disregard for wild spaces and the wounds

caused by this way of thinking. Humanity has long been an invader on this planet, travelling from one place to another, exploring any new thing they encounter as though it is their birthright to do so. As the human population rises, civilization takes over even more space, disrupting the biotic communities as they claim more and more. The patriarchal civilization's ambition to control everything and destroy what they cannot is represented in the novel through Eddie and his blinding rage toward coyotes.

3.5. Ecological Consciousness of Female Characters

The female characters in the novel are constructed as more ecologically conscious than the male characters, who represent the human-centric outlooks in life and become the agents who are responsible for the wounds inflicted on Earth. The female characters' tendency to care more about the non-human world makes it possible for the narrative to foreground ecofeminist ethics. Their alternative ethical outlook consists of practices of care and healing, as well as bringing together and mending what is broken and fragmented by patriarchal ideals. Moreover, that gendered pattern between the female characters and the male characters invites the readers to consider a highly controversial issue that stemmed from ecofeminism. The theory was found sexist by some critics, thus shunned from the world of thought for many years. However, it must be noted that women's connection to Nature stems from patriarchy's double oppression of both Nature and women. Recent years have seen a rise in theory again; hence critics are reconsidering a rich body of ecofeminist literature that came out during its height. Furthermore, much research has been done regarding gender distribution in environmental awareness. The empirical data indicate that women are more likely to demonstrate environmental awareness and concern, sustainable approaches toward Nature, and support policies concerning climate. The reason for these approaches probably stems from higher empathy skills, social norms, and cultural gender roles. Nevertheless, it must be noted that those results cannot be applied to all cultures across the world. For discussions of gender distribution in ecological consciousness in different countries and regions, see (May et al. 2021 [data from the United States of America along with seven different countries], Echavarren 2023 [data from 45 different countries], Milfont 2016 [data

from New Zealand], Mandarić et al. 2024 [data from Croatia], Ren et al. 2025 [data from China], Dhenge et. al. 2022 [data from India]).

While ecofeminism is found controversial by critics, some writers like Kingsolver still present their female characters as more connected and/or more ecologically conscious (As it is indicated above, the female population is more likely to show concern for ecology). As mentioned previously in the first chapter, Warren states that women and Nature are interconnected due to their positioning in patriarchal society, which refutes the claims of essentialism in ecofeminism. Kingsolver's characters decenter humans and attempt to redefine humanity in relation to other species. As noted earlier, they consider humans as one of the species sharing Earth with many others. They do not perceive Nature as a resource; to the contrary, they see each member's intrinsic value. They acknowledge that humanity is as dependent on Nature as any other species, if not more; thus each species has an interdependent relationship with one another, which is generally called a web of life. The author's ecologically conscious female characters have a vastly different ethical understanding compared to characters following patriarchal social values. Besides, they acknowledge Nature and its every component as ethical subjects rather than mechanical beings created to serve humanity's whims. This perspective is the source of healing and harmony in the novel. This part will analyze Deanna, Lusa, and Nannie as ecologically conscious characters as opposed to male characters.

3.5.1. Deanna Wolfe: Interconnection with the Wilderness

Deanna's solitude in the wilderness of the mountains is emphasized many times in the novel. She only gets a few packages of food and bare-minimum necessities from civilization through a man who visits her once every few months. Other than that, she cuts herself off from civilization, which she remembers from time to time in less than fond terms. When she separates herself from patriarchal civilization and relocates within the heart of the wilderness, she has started to live her life in a new manner in which she is no longer self-conscious, but what can be called Nature-conscious. Her solitude in Nature transforms her in many ways. The author describes Deanna as she follows the trail of the coyote she has been trying to locate: "Her body was free to follow its own rules: a long-legged gait too fast for

companionship, *unself-conscious* squats in the path … to touch broken foliage" (2001, 2; emphasis added). In the passage, she is described as grounded in her animal body. Being away from civilization has helped her to be embodied and physically grounded, and this has resulted in her being able to operate by her body's rules. Her movements are "unself-conscious," hence no longer following a pattern set by society for women; to the contrary, she listens to her body and Nature and moves accordingly, no longer performing. Arguably, losing the self-consciousness and performative acts of being in front of other people with expectations from her, she has become more conscious of Nature, surrounding her and within her. Such that she is not even aware of her own facial expressions. A frown, which normally might be considered the result of anger or disappointment, simply means she is deliberate in her actions. She feels herself when she is out in the world and always aware of her surroundings: "Her limbs rejoiced to be outdoors again. … The frown was pure concentration, nothing more. Two years alone had given her a blind person's indifference to the look on her own face" (2001, 2). To clarify, her "self" is no longer the main concern for her as she has merged with her surroundings and become a part of the web of life. Accordingly, her consciousness and awareness of the "self" have expanded to include her fellow neighbors in the wilderness of the mountains.

Deanna's ecological consciousness and sensitivity are rooted in her ethical understanding. Unlike a patriarchal approach, hers stems from adaptation and acclimation to her surroundings. As such, instead of "molding" Nature for her needs, she has adapted to Nature in its wildest and uncontrolled form. Her actions are care-based. She prioritizes protecting the mountains from poachers, but she does not do this in a way that positions the biotic community of the mountains in a passive role; to the contrary, she is one of the members of this natural community fighting against poachers and hunters for every member's rights. As mentioned before, she believes that killing animals is wrong, especially killing predator animals, which results in unseeable and most often than not irreparable damage to ecosystems. Therefore, she does everything she can to stop that from happening.

Karen Ya-Chu Yang states that, as a female scientist, her outlook is not as distant as that of her male counterparts. She looks after the biotic community of the mountains "not only [for] biological reasoning but also due to emotional engagement" (82). That is to say, her ethical understanding leads her to become intertwined with her surroundings without any need for separation of reason and

engagement. This process leads her to want to protect Nature as an internal element as opposed to an external one. Karen Ya-Chu Yang summarizes this merge of reason and emotion as "dialogically intra-connected entanglements of matter and mind, emotion and cognition" (2021, 82). In other words, Deanna becomes the perfect balance between cold, hard science and care ethics that the field so desperately needs. Objectivity of science and her loyalty toward her biotic community come together in perfect harmony, resulting in a purely female ecological consciousness and practice of care and healing. She attempts to instill these ethical principles and perspectives in Eddie to some degree. However, she is not successful, unlike Nannie's efforts regarding Garnett, which will be explained later.

3.5.2. Nannie Rawley: Generational Ecological Wisdom

A wise woman when it comes to her actions and decisions regarding the biotic community, Nannie rejects the so-called scientific method of agriculture, which is internalized by Garnett as the only way to tame Nature and get rid of the unwanted and invasive species. Nevertheless, Nannie refuses to follow the exploitative methods of farming. She is an organic farmer of apple trees who follows generational wisdom to live alongside Nature, not against it. She also embodies the ethics of care, and through her harmonious farming practices, she helps heal the wounds. She believes that Nature and humans should not be separated from each other; to the contrary, humans should stand together with their biotic communities and honor each member's integrity. Her beliefs are the opposite of patriarchal ideals; she intends to bring together and repair what is broken and divided. She can understand Nature's language, so instead of working against it, she works alongside it.

As mentioned before, Nannie does not have her own part in the novel like Deanna, Lusa, and Garnett. She is Garnett's neighbor, and as his complete opposite in all things agriculture, politics, religion, and ethics. She plays a vital role in the novel as a means of comparing two different perspectives. Garnett describes her as the "bane of his life" (2001, 82) because she refuses to follow purported scientific methods of farming that Garnett considers the only way to grow things. In one scene, Garnett complains endlessly about Nannie and her old ways. He believes "there [is]

no end to her ignorance or her zeal" (2001, 86) when it comes to herbicides and pesticides. Garnett calls her "the sworn friend and protector of all creatures great and small, right down to the ticks and fleas, and corn maggots" (2001, 86). Even though he means it as an insult and a way to ridicule her love for every being, it highlights that Nannie is indeed an ecologically conscious woman whose purpose in life is to live in harmony with the non-human world. In the scene, Garnett thinks about how Zebulon County Road workers spray herbicide to kill off weeds in order to help the roads look respectable and clean. However, because Nannie put up a sign saying, "NO SPRAY ZONE," not only on her property but also on his, his front yard is full of weeds and all kinds of insects: "this tangle of briars harboring vermin of every kind known to man, breeding in here" (2001, 85). Garnett also accuses Nannie of witchcraft since she knows when the road sprayers will pass by and puts up the sign in the middle of the night without him realizing; "working in the darkness like the witch she [is]" (2001, 85). It can be inferred from Garnett's complaint about Nannie that even though she has a neighbor who is against her organic farming methods and who insists on using herbicides and pesticides on the land, she does not give up her fight against the harmful methods of farming and agriculture. Although she is also an elderly woman and most possibly does not have the mobility of her younger self, she does not give up putting up a sign to stop the workers from poisoning the land, along with animals and plants. When Garnett questions her motives behind putting up a sign not only on her land but also his, she states that Nature "doesn't give hoot" about fences and property lines that humans are so fond of hence when his side is sprayed with chemicals to kill off weeds or insects, her side is affected and this is not acceptable for she grows organic apples and there cannot be any chemicals involved. Nannie puts forward this argument since she knows it is the only way a single-minded man like Garnett can understand her motives. If she argues the chemicals jeopardize her livelihood, he is less likely to object compared to her other worldviews regarding Nature.

Van Tassel describes her as "a long-time resident of the area," which is why she feels responsible for her biotic community. She is absolutely against the chemical methods of farming, and she also takes part in "local marketing" (2008, 87). She uses organic methods for insect control, which is called "integrated pest management" (Wenz 2003, 109). She explains the logic behind her no-chemical method to Garnett in a scene. There are two kinds of insects: plant-eating insects and predatory insects.

The plant-eating kind is what humans call “pests” due to their harmful effects on agricultural activities. If a “broad-spectrum insecticide” is used in an area, all the insects will die. Plant-eating bugs reproduce at a faster rate than predator bugs; hence, their population is much higher. However, in an untouched ecosystem, both types of insect populations are “in balance” (Kingsolver 2001, 275). The unfortunate introduction of pesticides to the area results in the plant-eating kind’s population boosting in a higher rate since they have no natural predators. On the other hand, predator species are at a disadvantage since their food supply has dropped dramatically, and as a result of this, their numbers drop. The more pesticides are used in an area, the worse the situation gets, resulting in even more plant-eating insects reproducing. This phenomenon is called “the Volterra principle” (2001, 275). Wenz uses the scene mentioned above to cite one of Leopold’s ideas: “the biotic pyramid” (2003, 109). The knowledge and awareness of this pyramid (balance between predator and prey species) help Nannie manage the population of plant-eating insects, rendering pesticides unnecessary. Therefore, “integrated pest management” is superior to chemical methods in farming (Wenz 2003, 109). After Nannie explains the Volterra principle to Garnett, Garnett is surprised to realize that he cannot find any “fault in [her] thinking” (2001, 275). Additionally, thinks to himself that in the old days, “they’d burned her for a witch” (2001, 275). His surprise stems from her vast knowledge, which combines very old and eco-centered methods of farming and new scientific knowledge regarding organic farming. However, being a patriarchal man, he cannot accept that she has the wisdom that is the answer to all his questions; hence, he calls her a witch. Nevertheless, though reluctantly, Garnett grudgingly accepts for the first time that Nannie might probably know what she has been talking about for years.

Despite Garnett’s stubborn insistence on his selfish worldview, Nannie never gives up on trying to explain to him a better way to look at the non-human world. She attempts to explain to Garnett that farming families have to give up their ancestral occupation and work in factories due to the so-called scientific methods of farming that cause the land to become less fertile day by day (2001, 276). Later, she questions his refusal to see the “beauty in [nature]” (2001, 277). Nannie appreciates “the glory of evolving world” (2001, 277). However, Garnett gets angry again when evolution is mentioned. As a result, they have a heated debate about creation science and the theory of evolution. Whereas Garnett considers evolution as “helter-skelter”

(279), thereby too random to be an accurate way of explaining existence, Nannie states that "[i]t's a business of choosing things out, just like how [Garnett] do[es] with [his] chestnuts" (2001, 279). She explains to him that, due to his choosing the best surviving tree in each generation, every generation he comes closer to a blight-resistant tree. This is a form of evolution. The difference between the natural one and Garnett's method is that Nature evolves in a much "slower" (2001, 280) pace and not due to "artificial selection" (2001, 280) but due to "predators … [and] weather that cull out the weaker genes and leave the strong ones to pass on" (2001, 280). Garnett cannot accept Nannie's point of view and blames her for being a "godless woman" (2001, 281). She states that, unlike him, who is always unhappy and unappreciative, when she looks at Nature, she wants to "praise glory" (2001, 281), alluding to the fact that she sees Nature and its "dependable" (2001, 280) rules as almost sacred and praiseworthy.

To conclude, Nannie follows an ethical understanding that is parallel to ecofeminism. She cares about Nature and its creatures not because of their use value but because they have intrinsic value. Desiring to live in harmony with the biotic community she resides in and heal the wounds left by chemical farming, she uses organic methods for farming apples. She follows the old methods of farming that had been used prior to purported scientific developments in agriculture, which have unfortunately resulted in so much destruction and devastation. Furthermore, she combines these methods with the new methods of organic farming, thereby proving that she is loyal to her land and willing to learn more about new ways to protect the wholeness of Nature. In the end, she manages to form a bond of tentative friendship with Garnett, even changing his mind about organic farming and possibly Nature. Deanna sends her a letter giving Nannie the news of her pregnancy and her desire to give birth and raise her baby in her home. Meanwhile, affected by Nannie's questions and accusations about his estranged son and his two grandchildren, Garnett accepts Lusa's offer to meet Chrystal and Lowell. As a result, two elderly neighbors feel content and hopeful about the future since they will no longer be alone. Nannie's story ends on a hopeful note, signaling a better future for the continuity of their lineage and ideally, a next generation that will learn from Nannie how to love, respect, and heal the land.

3.5.3. Lusa Maluf: An Entomologist and A Female Farmer

Lusa is a woman who has always longed to be close to Nature and its creatures. Her ancestors used to own a farm; however, it was lost before she was born. That is why she has always felt like something was taken away from her. The reason she chose her career was that she wanted to be close to animals. Although she loves her profession, she accepted Cole's proposal and became a farmer's wife since she is magnetized by rural life that is closer to Nature. Narduzzi draws a parallel between her attraction to the Zebulon Valley and the reproductive behaviors of moths. Even though moving from city life to rural life is a hard adjustment for her, Lusa cannot help but feel drawn to her new home in a more instinctual way, just as moths do with their potential mates (2008, 59). Although it must be noted that Narduzzi's analysis of Lusa's connection to the land can be interpreted as an essentialist approach. This dissertation positions Lusa's love for the land beyond instinctual means. In other words, the passage foregrounds not only Lusa's love for farming life but also her connection to animals in terms of symbolic interconnections. Her loyalty and sensitivity to all animals, especially insects, the smallest members of the animal world, highlight her personality as an ecologically conscious woman.

Having a mixed heritage—Arab mother and Polish father—and coming to live in a place foreign to her, Lusa can be likened to an exotic species. Even Garnett feels sorry for her when she calls for advice about goat farming. He also realizes her struggles to fit in and calls her misfitting situation "petunia in the onion patch" (2001, 397). Lusa gets a lot of pushback from Cole's sisters as well. They cannot accept her and struggle to consider her a good match for their beloved brother, except for Jewel, who has always acted warm toward her. Van Tassel calls her an "urban transplant" (2001, 87) in her article, highlighting her status as an alien to the land of Zebulon and its people. Nevertheless, Lusa does not give in and leave after her husband's death. On the contrary, she does everything to become a local instead of an invasive species that people consider her to be. Namely, she adapts to her environment and copes with the hardships of being a farmer in financial difficulties. Meanwhile, being an environmentally conscious woman, she lives in harmony with her biotic community.

Magee describes Lusa as a "modern, educated woman" utilizing her intelligence, tenacity, and her ties to the Widener family "to become a more ecologically sensitive farmer" compared to farmer men around her (2008, 18). She aims to save her late husband's family farm from bankruptcy, which befalls most farmers in the area. While doing so, she aspires not to abandon her ethical principles concerning Nature. To exemplify, being a farmer, she owns cows. However, instead of milking a mother cow, she lets her graze with her calf, so that the baby can nurse from its mother. She does this since that way "all that milk can go to the stomach it was made for" (2001, 150). In this short scene, she acknowledges the calf's right to its mother's milk, which is produced for the offspring in the first place. By doing so, she proves that she cares about animals' intrinsic value. Furthermore, her action reforges and heals a wounded and broken bond between the mother and the baby. Instead of consuming the milk herself for her own well-being or selling it for profit, she cares about the baby animal's well-being, saying "[the milk] doesn't do much for [her own stomach]" (2001, 150).

Another scene that highlights Lusa's sensitivity and protectiveness regarding the non-human world takes place when she and Jewel's daughter, Crystal, catch insects with a net to observe them. As she teaches Crystal about insects, she mentions the destruction pesticides cause to the integrity of the biotic community. She is shocked and appalled by the behavior, and thus says to the little girl that "[l]ook at all the beautiful creatures that die. [Using pesticides] is like dropping a bomb on a city just to get rid of a couple of bad guys" (2001, 299). As seen in the quotation, she realizes the wounds humanity cruelly inflicts on Nature and is disgusted by it. Another scene reflecting Lusa's ecological awareness takes place between Crystal and her again. Crystal says to her that if she "cut down all these trees," she could "make a pile of money" (2001, 353). Lusa answers her, saying, "I could … [t]hen I'd have a pile of money and no trees" (2001, 353). When the girl questions the necessity of trees by saying "[w]ho needs trees?" (2001, 353), Lusa states that "[a]bout nineteen million bugs, for starters. They live in the trees, under the bark, everywhere" (2001, 353). Next, she inquires about the necessity of bugs, getting the answer from Lusa: "[n]ineteen thousand birds that eat them" (2001, 353). When the girl keeps questioning the necessity of each member of the biotic community, Lusa attempts to explain the ecosystem and the importance of each member of the biotic community by mentioning the trees' other function, holding the soil. If the trees are

cut down, “the rain would run straight down the mountain and take all the topsoil off … [the] fields,” making their fields “a dead place” (2001, 354). Crystal is still unconvinced since she has never been educated on important topics such as ecology and Nature. She says that if cut down, “[t]rees [can] grow back” (2001, 354). Lusa corrects her by stating it takes centuries for forests to grow like the trees on her land. She explains that a forest ecosystem is “a whole complicated thing with parts that all need each other, like a living body. … Every animal needs its own special plant to live on” (2001, 355). The described scene is significant since not only does it foreground Lusa’s attachment to her biotic community, but it also demonstrates her educating the little girl. Lusa is making a huge contribution to the integrity of the non-human world of Zebulon since Crystal is the future generation that will be raised on the farm by Lusa herself, as her mother’s death is imminent due to cancer. Therefore, Lusa passes on her knowledge of Nature, her will to heal and make whole, and her protectiveness to the next generation that will inherit the land, guaranteeing a better future for the Earth community.

Lusa is also mindful of how scientific agriculture affects ecology, and because it works against Nature instead of creating a harmonious cause-and-effect relationship with it, it exploits the land and makes it deteriorate day by day. She is disgusted by the idea of big industrial farms using ecologically harmful methods to exploit the land. Due to those big farms, owners of small farms went bankrupt and stopped fighting against the current. Therefore, they sell their land and become workers at factories. As Lusa and Crystal look for the insect nets in the barn among old things the Widener family long forgot about, they see a bee smoker and bee boxes for raising bees. Crystal has no idea where honey comes from and asks the most peculiar questions, surprising Lusa with her “generation’s ignorance” (2001, 293) about one of the most basic occupations of farmers. Lusa teaches Crystal that everyone used to raise bees around Zebulon; however, now they do not bother themselves with it since “it … comes in a jar” (2001, 293) from supermarkets. What is most disturbing for Lusa is that “[n]obody cares” (2001, 293). She explains that “[she] used to live in a city. … City people do not think this is their problem. They think food comes from the supermarket, period, and always will” (2001, 293). The scene illustrates Lusa’s sensitivity and sensibility regarding sustainability. She sees that the current exploitation and monoculturalization of land cannot continue and

longs for a better method to survive and thrive not only for humankind but also for the non-human world.

Even though Lusa is relatively a novice in her new occupation, her vegetable and fruit garden yields abundant produce. Because she uses organic methods and refuses to add any poison to her garden, she is rewarded with a bountiful harvest. Even Jewel is surprised; she states that no one had ever had this much harvest from this land since her mother died (2001, 401). Presumably, it is because Jewel's mother did not use chemicals in her garden; however, after her death, Cole and any other member of the family discontinued this habit. Lusa's ecological awareness and her ethical care for the land become apparent in many cases throughout the novel.

The novel ultimately foregrounds the existing relationship between humans and Nature. Even though these relationships have been rendered invisible by patriarchy, it does not mean that they are lost and gone. When the bonds are made invisible and attempted to be erased, all beings suffer the consequences, since mankind feels no remorse for the wound they left behind as a result of their careless actions. As the male characters and their perspectives harm and wound, the female characters' connections to Nature heal, make visible, and bring together what was divided. On the one hand, the author opens her readers' eyes to the dualisms existing within society that distort reality, enable the domination of women and Nature, and leave lasting scars on both. On the other hand, through practices of care, healing and restoration—such as protecting the ecosystem of the mountains from hunters and poachers, using organic farming methods, and educating and setting positive examples for the younger generation— the female characters illustrate an alternative way to exist in harmony with the more-than-human world.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF BARBARA KINGSOLVER'S *ANIMAL DREAMS*

4.1. Contextual Background

Barbara Kingsolver has an activist background. Her previous work with people desiring justice seems to have laid the groundwork for her second novel, *Animal Dreams* (1991). During the Arizona copper mine strike, which started due to a labor dispute, the writer not only witnessed but also recorded the hardships the people of Arizona faced on the picket line. She wanted to cover the story of these people in her book *Holding the Line* (Kingsolver 1989, 5). Similarly, in her fictional Arizona town of Grace, she portrays the women rejecting the authority of the copper mining company, which has been destroying the environment with poison. Nevertheless, women of Grace take action and make a cunning plan to upend the company's effect on their home.

As previously stated in the third chapter, the writer lived outside of Tucson in a deserted area where she witnessed the people's way of living. Her experiences undoubtedly left a strong and lasting impression, thus paving the way for her writing of *Animal Dreams* (1991). The Arizona region's rich culture, which consists of American Indian peoples as well as Mexican culture, can be observed in her literary works. Her literary persona was nurtured by her experiences there, hence generating her unique voice and daring plot points.

4.2. Plot Overview and Key Elements

Animal Dreams (1991), written by Barbara Kingsolver and published in 1990, is a successful and well-loved novel that takes place in Arizona in a fictional desert town called Grace. As previously stated, the writer lived in the region and has an in-depth knowledge of the area and its culture. The novel mainly takes place in 1985 when the protagonist Cosima Noline and her sister Halimeda leave Tucson, Arizona; the former to go back to Grace, where she was born, to look after her estranged

father, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, and the latter to Nicaragua to help the people and the new revolutionary government learn sustainable and natural ways to farm and feed themselves. The novel deals with themes such as alienation, sense of belonging, loss of a loved one and grief, memory and forgetfulness, both individually and as a community, the endangered ecosystem of the river, and Grace, and standing against environmental injustice. The novel does not follow a linear sequence of events. On the contrary, the reader is taken through a journey in Codi's present and past through flashbacks. Codi's past and memory are problematic since she has forgotten her childhood and teenage years. This forgetfulness causes her to lose her sense of self and identity, making her feel helpless and rootless for most of her life.

When she arrives at Grace years after leaving it, Codi has no connection with anybody except for her father, Dr. Noline, and her friend Emelina. Not feeling close enough to her father, she decides to stay with her old friend Emelina, who has five sons. Although Emelina is her closest connection to her hometown and past life, Codi's relationship to her feels like it's not close enough, as Emelina has a big family and always has children around the house. Codi always watches them from the detached house, even though Emelina invites her to stay in the main house. She is forever a stranger and feels alienated. She becomes the detached observer, watching life go by without becoming a part of it.

When she comes to the town, Codi starts working at the local high school as a biology teacher. Although she has no degree for the job, she almost graduated from medical school to become a doctor, just like his father, so the high school board granted her a special certificate to be able to teach at the school. Despite not trusting herself to be a good teacher, she excels at her job, even receiving a letter from the school board offering to extend her temporary teaching certificate for the upcoming fall term. (Kingsolver 1991, 289, 290). Until the end of the novel, Codi's only desire is to look after her father for a year, then go back to her life, and once more run away from Grace. She does not feel any sense of belonging to this town or its people. Therefore, the teaching job, looking after his father, and her romantic relationship with Native American Loyd Peregrina are all means to an end. Due to her traumas of losing her mother at the age of three and losing her baby at the age of fifteen, Codi becomes an alienated individual who struggles to connect with people. The only person she feels a genuine connection with is her sister Hallie, whom she loses due to an act of cruelty. Through the novel, the reader witnesses Codi making strong

connections with other people in Grace while remembering she was not alone during her childhood since the town's women become her mothers. These connections are forged through fighting against environmental injustice together. At the end, she decides to stay in her hometown, finding peace.

Another significant character is Codi's sister, Halimeda "Hallie" Noline. Codi has immense respect for Hallie and always considers her a wholesome, selfless person who knows her purpose in life, contrary to herself, who cannot find a meaningful course and purpose. As noted above, Hallie leaves for Nicaragua to teach local people and the new revolutionary government how to practice sustainable agriculture. In the novel, she exists through Codi's memories and the letter exchange between sisters. Codi always looks up to her, even going so far as to claim that every man she had a relationship with loved her sister more than herself, which she has made peace with long ago, thinking to herself, "I could understand it. I loved her too." She describes her sister as her and her ex-lover Carlo's "center of gravity" (1991, 9, 10). Everything that ties Codi to this world or her identity and sense of self is connected to her sister; however, she is shocked and devastated to find out that her sister was abducted by Nicaraguan contras who are—despite being denied—supported by the U.S. government. Codi does everything she can to get her sister back. She writes letters to high places. She even writes to the U.S. President; however, at the end, she gets the devastating news of her sister's death. Hallie was executed with a gunshot to the head by the contras and left by a road (1991, 316).

Homero Noline, another noteworthy character, is Codi and Hallie's father as well as the town's doctor. His Alzheimer's disease is the reason Codi comes back to Grace. He is an enigmatic character who is made even more puzzling because of Codi's resentful and bitter feelings towards him. Codi describes his father as a cold man who does not love his daughters. Yet Dr. Noline loves his daughters so much; even so, he is a withdrawn character and cannot show his affection physically. The fact that he loves his daughters becomes obvious only when he is the narrator. He even questions "why does mortal man have children?" and continues to think "[I]t is senseless to love anything this much" (1991, 21). As noted earlier, Codi lost her mother when she was three years old, after Hallie was born. The girls grow up without a mother and a distant father who cannot express his feelings.

Another significant character, Loyd Peregrina, has a mixed and rich cultural background. He is part Navajo, part Apache, and part Pueblo and embraces all of

these cultures. Loyd and Codi have a short relationship during their high school years, which resulted in Codi's pregnancy, unbeknownst to Loyd until the end of the novel. When Codi comes back to Grace, their reacquaintance leads to another romantic relationship. Although Codi does not consider their relationship to be a serious one since she aims to leave the town at the end of the school year, Loyd is serious about Codi and loves her. He teaches her about Native American culture and their outlook on natural life and land. According to him, people are "houseguest[s] on the earth." Therefore, everyone "better remember how to put everything back how [they] found it" (1991, 204). This perspective is one of the elements that arguably helps Codi connect to the lands she was born in.

All central characters are described above; however, it is essential to mention the *Stitch and Bitch* club, whose members are the capable women of Grace. Codi leads her students to collect samples from the river for a school project. When she examines the sample under a microscope, instead of seeing microorganisms that live in every river, Codi shockingly sees nothing and realizes that their "water is dead. [The sample] might as well have come from a river on the moon." She files an affidavit in the courthouse about the "PH levels and biotic death of the river." Later, she talks to Viola, Emelina's mother-in-law, also one of the members of the *Stitch and Bitch Club*, about what happened to the river and learns that the Black Mountain Company plans to "divert the river" from inhabited areas simply to avoid paying any fines for poisoning the river (1991, 110, 111). As a result, the Club is made aware of the direness of the situation, and they decided to take action. Codi is invited as a guest scientist to talk about the PH levels of the river (1991, 174). Later, they decide to take action and not leave the destiny of the river and their town in the men's hands since they believe men would just leave everything to the officials and lawyers, which would prove useless (1991, 178, 179). To raise awareness of the town's destiny and history, the Club's members decide to make piñatas by using real peacock feathers. They attach the town's story and description to the peacock piñatas and sell them to people in the city (1991, 192,193). It becomes a huge success, even attracting artists' and collectors' attention. Another way to save the town is to have it accepted as a historic place by the government. This way, the town and the surrounding area would be untouchable. To be able to manage this, every member gathers evidence that proves the town's historical significance. At the end, their efforts prove fruitful, thus saving the town and the river.

Black Mountain Mining Company is a crucial antagonist in the novel. The company extracts copper from the mountains. During the process, they "[run] sulfuric acid, which is a clear, corrosive, water-miscible acid, through their tailings piles to recover extra copper." This substance is known to be highly corrosive and damaging to the environment. It is used to "kill rats and pond algae" (1991, 176). The river that flows through Grace is fed by snowmelt from the mountains. However, due to the company's extraction techniques, the snow, hence the water, becomes poisonous and full of acid. The town's people use this water to water their orchards, which is their main source of income. Since the pecan trees are watered with acidic and "dead water," they are damaged, which results in a phenomenon called fruit drop, meaning a tree loses its fruit prematurely. As noted in the previous paragraph, the town's women take a stand against the company and become victorious at the end, thus saving the region's ecosystem and their future.

In conclusion, returning to Grace transforms both Codi's life as an individual and Grace's future as a collective. Before coming back to her old town, Codi felt lonely, purposeless, and alienated. Nevertheless, her experiences with the Grace community help her transform into a full-fledged part of the community and heal both her and the non-human world. She feels she is part of a bigger purpose and begins to feel a strong sense of belonging. She starts to live her life without fear of attachment, even deciding to grow her family with a new baby from her boyfriend Loyd, thus ending the novel in a hopeful and positive tone. Codi's transformation happens through her bond to other women in the novel. Her scientific knowledge helps the *Stitch and Bitch Club* make vital decisions concerning the river and its ecosystem, bringing about the second pivotal transformation and healing of the novel. Due to Grace and the Club's unending efforts, the river and Grace are saved. With her compelling novel, Kingsolver attempts to instill in her readers both the significance of being sensitive about ecological problems and being hopeful toward the future of Earth. As Codi is healed through her connections to her hometown's women and Nature, Nature is healed by the town's women's valiant efforts, creating a cycle of healing and love.

Previous studies on Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Animal Dreams* (1992) focus on similar points to this study. Comer criticizes the ecofeminist and ecocritical perspectives in the novel for romanticizing wilderness. To her, the novel's plot foregrounds environmental injustice, yet it uses the "wilderness plot" by engaging

Native mysticism and healing landscapes (1997, 73-96). Magee explores both *Animal Dreams* and *Prodigal Summer* by engaging in ecofeminist theory and community-based environmentalism. He focuses on women's activism, interdependence, and environmental justice, and the community and Nature relationship. He also criticizes seemingly essentialist points in the novels and Kingsolver's approach to ecofeminist theory through her works (2008, 15-25). Applying early ecofeminist theory, Swartz's article centers on concepts such as interconnectedness, "political commitment," activism, spirituality, and community action in *Animal Dreams* (1993, 65-78). Ali and Sasani examine both novels from an ecofeminist perspective, focusing on similar points to the previously mentioned works; however, they occasionally use essentialist arguments that position women as "nurture[ers]" and also as "vital to the development of children" (2024, 145). Tang examines *Animal Dreams* through environmental justice issues such as pollution, environmental inequity, "cultural activism," and grassroots resistance (2012, 42-46). This study conducts a close reading of the novel and brings to the fore the stark differences between the ethical approaches of ecofeminism and patriarchy. The wounds inflicted on women and Nature by capitalist patriarchy are foregrounded. Moreover, it brings to the fore the healing transformation of Codi's identity from hyperseparated to relational. It also examines Codi's healing alongside the ecological healing of the non-human world, highlighting from an ecofeminist perspective how her bonds with the female community and Nature support this interconnected process of recovery. Lastly, it explores the Native American outlook on Nature versus the white outlook.

4.3. Ego- or Eco-: Codi's Alienation and Estrangement

During her childhood years, Codi used to be more connected to both Nature and her community. Having lost her mother at a very young age, Codi and her sister were raised by the women of Grace, so her relationship with her community was healthy and strong. She also felt one with Nature and animals. To exemplify, risking her own life and her sister's, she tried to save coyote pups during a flood (Kingsolver 1991, 20, 21). However, she did not have a strong bond with her father because her father was a quiet, emotionally unexpressive man, having a hard time communicating his love toward her daughters. The problematic relationship she had with her father

resulted in feelings of resentment toward him. Codi was also having a hard time fitting in with her peers. Additionally, going through a pregnancy secretly as a fifteen-year-old teenager, then losing the baby due to a late miscarriage, was the breaking point that resulted in her total alienation and estrangement from her surroundings as well as her "*ecological self*" (Plumwood 1993, 142; emphasis added). Her healing process and ecological self as an identity formation will be elaborated on in the "Identity and Sense of Belonging Through Connection to Female Community and Nature" part. This part will discuss Codi's identity formation as a self/other binary format prior to her healing and how this affects her outlook on life.

In the years preceding her transformation into her ecological self, she was suffering emotionally and drifting from one place to another because she could not find her purpose in life. She has even lost her memory and cannot remember anything before she was fifteen years old. In one of her letters to Hallie, Codi describes her miserable existence to her sister with these words: "My life is a pitiful, mechanical thing without a past, like a little wind-up car, ready to run any direction somebody points at me" (Kingsolver 1991, 199). She is isolated, alienated, and estranged from her environment and people. From an ecofeminist perspective, estrangement and alienation are detrimental to all living things. Stephanie Lahar explains this isolation in her book chapter, "[e]cofeminism sees as destructive not only the perceptual distancing and isolation of different peoples from each other, but also the habits of dualistic thought that separate human society from nature" (1993, 96). Due to her trauma, Codi conforms to society and starts to follow the self/other identity formation mode that is considered normal within the patriarchy. She loses her connection to her environment and people, and this process leaves wounds on her psyche. Lahar believes that "[w]hen we set ourselves apart from nature, we disembody human experience and sever it from an organic context" (1993, 96). As a consequence of "set[ting] apart" her "self" from nature, Codi no longer feels human because her "human experience" is "disembody[ied"] from the "organic context." She feels like a "mechanical thing without a past" (Kingsolver 1991, 199) and out of context.

As mentioned above, after her trauma, Codi veers off course and feels alienated from her environment, thus becoming an egoist individual, whose identity formation follows the generally accepted self/other dualism approach. Codi neither

wants to accept responsibility for Grace and its endangered biotic community nor desires to take over her father's practice (Kingsolver 1991, 151). She has strayed so far from her original self in her childhood that, because of her egoistic and *hyperseparated* (Plumwood 1993, 49, 52) self/other identity, she cannot fathom her sister's actions in Nicaragua, so she idolizes her and likens her to "God" (Kingsolver 1991, 224). Val Plumwood theorizes the concepts of egoism and altruism in her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993). According to her, modern and liberal thinking introduces egoism "as an unfortunate fact of human nature, and egoism and self-denying altruism are presented as an exhaustive set of alternatives" (1993, 143). Since Codi's morals and ethical understanding go through a change after her childhood, she starts to see the world from a patriarchal perspective. Hence, her own self-serving way of living becomes the norm for her. Because the egotistical worldview does not leave space for any other way of thinking, Codi describes what her sister is doing in Nicaragua as "SAVING THE WORLD" and says in her letters that Hallie is like a "God" (1991, 224). Hallie is enraged after reading these comments and tells her as much in her letter, explaining she is just doing what she does because she wants to live a life that "will let [her] breathe in & out and love somebody or something and not run off screaming into the woods" (1991, 224). As is clearly evident from her letter, Hallie does not consider herself a hero or savior since her purpose is to live a full life. Nevertheless, Codi cannot understand this fact since she is a *hyperseparated* individual who cannot perceive Hallie's relationship with her community as well as Nature. After reading the letter, crying, Codi concludes that she has no "ground orientation" (1991, 225), a term which is used in aviation, "refer[ring] … to an awareness of the attitude and spatial position of the aircraft relative to […] the flat surface of the earth" (Stott 2013). She thinks to herself, "I'd spent a long time circling above the clouds, looking for life, while Hallie was living it" (1991, 225). This scene is noteworthy since Codi realizes her shortcomings and inadequacies regarding her outlook on life. Her usage of the metaphor "circling above the clouds" proves that she does not feel the connection to Nature and her community, and this detached existence hurts and scars her. While Hallie is more in tune with life, Codi is disconnected and feels miserable because of this. Later in the "Identity and Sense of Belonging Through Connection to Female Community and Nature" part, Codi will realize that Hallie's identity formation model follows

mutual/ecological self, and she genuinely believes that she is not the hero Codi sees her as; she is just a part of the earth community doing her part as best as she can.

Codi views herself as an outsider as she thinks about the *Stitch and Bitch Club*'s fundraising event mentioned above. Believing that selling peacock piñatas is just an act of charity and a result of a "self-denying altruism" (Plumwood 1993, 143), Codi writes to her sister, "[t]oday I thought I was a hero. We sold fifty peacock piñatas to raise money for the Stitch and Bitch Club, which will somehow save the town of Grace. But it's not my cause, I'm leaving. I have no idea how to save a town. I only came along today because it looked like a party and I was invited" (1991, 200). In this quote, she devalues her own contribution, using the word "hero" in an almost mocking tone. She does not believe her involvement in the fundraising event is valuable or noteworthy, and even further, she is skeptical of the success of the event, which is apparent in her word choice of "somehow." Further diminishing her role, she finishes her sentence with an almost lie and says she "only came along […] because it looked like a party" (1991, 200). Her demeanor in this scene proves that she is still afraid of becoming a part of Grace's, what Shiva calls, *Earth community*. Refusing to embrace the responsibility of the town and its people, she still has an escapist tendency. Nevertheless, this will change drastically as she is immersed in the local people and the natural world. When Codi's healing process is completed, she will consider their cause as her cause.

To sum up, before her reconnection to Nature and the people of Grace, Codi was meandering through life without direction. She could not find any joy in living. Without her connection to her past, she could not forge any connection to her present, thus staying blind to the people and Grace's biotic community that needed her. Later, she will start to heal, remember, and reforge her connections to Nature and the people of Grace with the help of the female community of Grace and her lover Loyd.

4.4. The Earth: A Site for Dead Things or An Organism Brimming with Vitality

As mentioned in the first chapter, according to Carolyn Merchant, a shift occurred from the sixteenth century to the seventeenth century. The idea of "organic cosmos" changed into "mechanistic universe" (1990, 105). Due to the Scientific

Revolution, people started to consider Nature as a machine that has different parts that can be manipulated and controlled by external forces. Nature consists of "dead, inert particles moved by external, rather than inherent forces, the mechanical framework itself could legitimate the manipulation of nature" (1990, 193). According to Merchant, this way of thinking makes the patriarchal system undermine Nature and use and abuse it without conscience. Val Plumwood has similar beliefs and explains them in her book with these words, "[t]he treatment of nature as no more than a resource for human ends, and as having its significance and value conferred by or through human interests, presents the class of humans as the master" (1993, 147). To put it simply, humans have become the masters of Nature and perceive Nature as their "resource" to be used for their own purposes. In this mentality, Nature's value is not intrinsic; on the contrary, it is measured "through human interests." Plumwood points out that "western culture ha[s] viewed relationship to plants, rivers, animals, places and ecosystem as entirely instrumental, and defined human relations to others in nature […] only as a means to satisfy essentially self-contained human interests" (1993, 147). In other words, Nature and all its components are considered instruments to be used for humanity's ends. Their agency is denied, and the glaring reality of their similarity to humans is lost in the cacophony of the master narrative that justifies domination through nefarious means. This part will analyze the novel, *Animal Dreams* (1990), and bring to the fore how patriarchy and capitalist systems consider Nature as a resource and the wounds and scars this attitude left on both the Grace community and Nature.

In the novel that is the focus of this chapter, Black Mountain Mining Company's and the government's disregard for Grace's biotic community and the people's demise is a notable example of patriarchy's mentality concerning Nature. To them, it is a resource that must be exploited to reach their goal of development and betterment of humankind. As mentioned before in the first chapter, Shiva calls this "maldevelopment" as it hurts both the local people, either by relocating them or by destroying their means of survival, and the diversity of the biotic community; thus, calling this process development would be both ironic and wrong since it only serves the ends of patriarchal capitalist systems. The most devastating harm that is mentioned in the novel is caused by sulfuric acid that the company uses to "recover extra copper" from the tailings. That substance is highly corrosive and harmful to organic matter. When the snow melts in the mountains, the sulfuric acid mixes with

the river that passes through Grace, harming both people and trees. The river's water is dead due to this substance. The company is warned by the EPA, saying that it is too dangerous for both people and orchards. However, the company's solution is not to stop its activities. They decided to build a dam to change the route of the river, further damaging and wounding both Nature and people (Kingsolver 1991, 176). Drawing on similar points discussed above and Shiva's notion of "maldevelopment," Tang likewise concludes that in the novel, "Nature becomes the resources subjected to the domination of anthropocentric men. Besides, the whole process of exploiting the natural resources is also the process of marginalizing the underprivileged" (2012, 44). In other words, Nature, along with all its components, loses its intrinsic value and comes to be acknowledged as a collection of resources. The government also does not care about the local people's demise, as they are of Hispanic origin and are already a "marginalized" people. The abuse of Nature and otherization of people are closely interconnected by Tang. Moreover, Tang states that because the "local people who have no idea about their inviolable rights to property legislated in the constitution, they are deceived by the company to sell their water rights at an extremely low price" (2012, 44). To put it simply, because the people of Grace do not know their rights, and there exists an undeniable power imbalance between them and the company, they are manipulated to give up their rights to one of the commons and the most basic need of all: water.

The company's selfish activities that cause harm to the human community are exemplified further in the novel. In the Day of the Dead festival, when Codi sees Grace from above, she realizes that over the years, the mining company shaped and reshaped Grace and Gracela Canyon for its purpose to get more copper from the earth. Some settlements were left to ruin and abandoned, and "[a] lot of them had been torn right up when Black Mountain chased a vein of copper under their floors; others had been buried; the company had an old habit of digging and dumping where it pleased" (Kingsolver 1991, 161). The earth is scarred and wounded by each cruel strike aimed at digging the ground. However, because capitalist patriarchy does not consider the earth alive, they do not think their actions are harming it. Getting more copper, thus more capital, from the earth is the crucial mission of the company. Therefore, in the event that something stands in the way of completing this mission, the company eradicates it. Codi notes that it was not only the houses and people that were torn apart but also the main cemetery of Grace, which was relocated to "the

opposite side of the canyon, as far as possible from the mine […]. Not even the graveyards were sacred" (1991, 161). Nothing is sacred or noteworthy for the system except for getting more out of the rich and resourceful earth.

Ironically, the activities that are hurtful to the local biotic community and human community are demonstrated as beneficial developments for the local people. Codi observes this in the same scene mentioned in the previous paragraph. When the people from Grace filed an official complaint about the acid that was released by the mining company that is destroying the river and the trees, the company decided to build a dam to divert the river, thus saving both the people and the trees of Grace. However, the dam project would strip people of Grace of their water, hence depriving them of their source of income, the orchards. Inflicting an additional blow, the company presented this as a "community-improvement project." Announced in the local newspaper, Codi recalls the "ridiculous photo" in which "the company president and a couple of managers at a ground-breaking ceremony, wearing ties, stepping delicately on shovels with their wingtip shoes. […] They all had broad salesman's smiles" (1991, 161) pretending it was "some kind of community-improvement project, from where […] [Codi] stood it looked like exactly what it was a huge grave." She also thinks that the plot of ground looks "scarred" (1991, 161). While the patriarchy considers the earth as an inorganic entity that can be taken advantage of to reach certain goals of improvement of humanity and making money, ecofeminist philosophy realizes that the earth is alive and an irreplaceable part of the bigger biotic community. Since the dam project tears apart and wounds the earth with the objective of diverting the river, Codi believes that the project site looks like a "grave" and the ground seems "scarred." This implies that she acknowledges that the earth and Nature are alive and they get hurt like any other organic being.

When read from the perspective of Merchant's insightful comments about society's shift from perceiving Nature as an organic being to a mechanical entity that is waiting to serve humankind, the novel reveals another irony for the readers. Because people believe Nature to be a mechanical and dead entity that can be torn apart, used, and abused to further their accomplishments, despite being alive and bountiful when untouched by intervening human technology and so-called improvement projects, Nature is actually dying and becoming the "dead entity" they perceive it to be. The river's water dies due to sulfuric acid, and because of that, the trees in the orchards of Grace die along with it, opening the door to a causal chain

reaction, disturbing the lives of both human and non-human. Unfortunately, Kingsolver's male characters are not disturbed by the fact that their environment is being poisoned. According to the *Stitch and Bitch Club* members, their husbands "think the trees can die and [they] can just go somewhere else, and as long as [the women] fry up the bacon for them in the same old pan, they think it would be […] home" (1991, 179). This mentality does not consider Nature and the earth community as organic beings. Since everything is alive and organic, instead of mechanical, everything is interwoven. Changing locations to reach, obtain, and abuse more of the earth's resources does not change the fact that the new location is not affected by what happened to the previous one. The female characters intrinsically realize that everything is linked and thus influenced by each other; therefore, they try to save their community, instead of escaping from their mistakes and responsibilities as a part of this earth's community.

4.5. Native Americans' Outlook on Nature

Kingsolver contrasts the white patriarchy's immoral and unethical approach to Nature with the Native Americans' holistic, healthy, and more "balanced" (1991, 241) approach to Nature and the land they live on. Heise reinforces this idea by claiming that Loyd "most clearly embodies the novel's ideal environmental ethic, in that his connection to the land reaches so deep that he even declares himself ready to die for it" (2008, 392). To elaborate, Kingsolver arguably illustrates the ideal ethical approach to Nature and the land they live on through Loyd and the indigenous peoples' outlook on the more-than-human world. Furthermore, a dialogue between Codi and her Native American lover Loyd about how whites versus natives perceive the land highlights this contrast dramatically. According to Richard M. Magee, this comparison of two cultures leads the way for Codi to "[understand] the environment," and the fact that a man helps a woman understand it better "demolishes the simplistic matriarchal/patriarchal categories as she seeks spiritual guidance from her old boyfriend, Loyd" (2008, 21). In other words, the gender roles are disrupted, and any possibility of the novel being read from an essentialist perspective has been rendered impossible.

Codi and Loyd go to the Navajo Reservation for a visit, and Loyd shows Codi around the land. She sees that they have fruit trees in their canyon as well. This

seems peculiar since she realizes that they have been in this same canyon raising fruit trees and engaging in other agricultural activities for at least a thousand years, yet her people "can't even live in Grace for one century without screwing it up" (Kingsolver 1991, 215). Loyd claims that he would explain the reason for this later, though instead of explaining, he shows her the harmonious life his people embrace and how this way of living is more in tune with Nature.

One example is that, in the reservation, as an old tradition and way of life, the old houses are not fixed since, like everything else, they are supposed to go back to earth whence they come. According to Loyd, the houses themselves are not important because if the person has the "ability to make" a house, s/he would never be homeless. This is distinctly different from Western culture concerning ownership of a house and land. Loyd's people believe that "[t]he greatest honor you can give a house is to let it fall back down into the ground, [t]hat's where everything comes from in the first place" (Kingsolver 1991, 235). Another example is that during the traditional corn dance, Loyd explains the nuances of the natives' way of thinking regarding the land and Nature. Everything is about balance; the natives acknowledge that the spirits are generous for having the people as "guests." Therefore, the people should show their appreciation for the rain, the sun, and the deer they hunt to the spirits by praying and "be[ing] good guests" and showing remorse for the things they "messed up" (1991, 239). The usage of the houseguest analogy is expanded further. Loyd believes that a good house guest "[b]etter remember how to put everything back how [they] found it" (1991, 240). Hearing this from Loyd, Codi feels "embarrassed for [her] bluntly utilitarian culture." She explains how they are taught: "[t]he way they tell it to us Anglos, God put the earth here for us to use, westward-ho. Like a special little playground." Then she questions, "where do you go when you've pissed in every corner of your playground?" (1991, 240) In this specific scene, Kingsolver emphasizes the fact that there is no other place for us to go; the harm humanity does would affect everything since all is connected to each other. This implies that disposing of the waste that is generated in the U.S. in other countries does not solve the U.S.'s waste problem; on the contrary, it just delays the inevitable imbalance that would affect every entity one day. The U.S. and other so-called First World countries also dispose of their unwanted agricultural chemicals and wastes into Central America and countries such as Nicaragua. In her letter, Hallie says that the country has become "a toilet bowl of agricultural chemicals," revealing

the dire circumstances. During Somoza and the U.S. Marine regime in the seventies, Nicaragua was the "world's number-one consumer of DDT" (1991, 223). These examples also showcase the government not only harming its own country, but also other poorer countries by making them into its waste disposal site. Codi compares Loyd and his people's perspective with the white Americans' with these words: "[t]o people who think themselves as God's house guests, American enterprise must seem arrogant beyond belief. Or stupid. A nation of amnesiacs, proceeding as if there were no other day but today. Assuming the land could also forget what has been done to it" (1991, 240, 241). This scene emphasizes an important message Kingsolver gives throughout the novel: the importance of remembering and acknowledging what happens to all living beings along with the land. Her characters lose their memories when they are traumatized. Because of the loss of memory, they lose their direction in life. She discovers the resemblance between the individual losing their memory and the whole nation losing its memory. This amnesia that encompasses the whole nation is the reason people do not care about other creatures apart from themselves. Arguably, they lose their memories due to denying their interconnectedness with Nature and fellow creatures. In stark contrast to this, Native Americans honor their traditions and old way of life, as well as the unavoidable connection every human being has with Nature. Instead of forgetting, they try to forge even stronger bonds through their rituals and dances, thus acknowledging the non-substitutable place Nature has in both human and non-human animals' lives. Witnessing how Native Americans perceive Nature and humans' place in it is one of the critical factors that pave the way for Codi's healing and her rediscovery of her selfhood through her bonds to Nature.

Kingsolver's observations and interpretations about the American government, along with those of the other First World countries, are indisputable facts and well-known by everyone to be accurate. To discover the reasons and motivations behind such cruel actions that wound Earth, drawing on Vandana Shiva's theories can prove useful. As mentioned many times before, a well-known Indian ecofeminist theorist, Shiva, focuses on the unethical approach to Nature and women that has been normalized by those in power and societies. According to her, knowledge is "fragmented and divided" with the scientific revolution. She calls this a "deception" since it considers "non-specialist knowledge as ignorant." She describes epistemological approach of modern Western-originated science as "reductionist"

since “1) it reduced the capacity of humans to know nature both by excluding other knowers and other ways of knowing; and 2) by manipulating it as inert and fragmented matter, nature’s capacity for creative regeneration and renewal was reduced” (2014, Reductionism, 23). Reductionism’s ontological and epistemological premises are homogenously formed, hence they consider “all systems as comprising the same basic constituents, discrete, and atomistic, and assuming all basic processes to be mechanical.” This way of perceiving Nature “have socially reconstituted nature and society.” Shiva points out that “the metaphor of nature as a machine” presumes Nature’s “divisibility and manipulability” while “organic metaphors” were built upon the beliefs of “interdependence and reciprocity” (2014, Reductionism, 23). She believes that “[r]eductionist science is a source of violence against nature and women, in so far as it subjugates and dispossesses them of their full productivity, power and potential” (2014, Reductionism, 24). These imply that considering Nature a mechanical entity and dividing its components to gather knowledge in the name of science resulted in a distorted worldview, which can be used to manipulate it without feeling remorse or having a guilty conscience.

Shiva highlights that reductionism brings about other problematic ways of thinking in economic and political areas. Both private and state-owned firms and companies focus only on their “efficiency and profits.” The determination of “efficiency” is done through “maximiz[ing] [the firm’s] profits, regardless of the maximization of social and ecological costs. Reductionism has provided the logic of this efficiency.” The systems and methods that produce the most profit are welcomed and supported, even though they use “exploitation and extraction” to produce, while eco-friendly and ecologically balancing systems are not taken into account since they are mostly “commercially non-profit generating” (2014, Reductionism, 24). Similarly, Kingsolver reflects this process of reductionism in her novel. Watering the orchards by using the river’s water is an eco-friendly way to deal with the need for food production. However, this activity is not as profitable as mining copper from the ground and damming the river, so the system inevitably chooses to prioritize the interests of the mining company over the biotic community of Grace and the Gracela Canyon. However, as mentioned before, the women of Grace do not give up and try to save their town and the canyon, proving that there are more important things than efficiency and making a profit. A character, interested in folk art and the piñatas made by the Club members, named Mr. Rideheart, is invited as a guest speaker to

one of the club meetings. Having spent a lot of time in the town and with the Club members, he has a deep understanding of the town and its importance. According to him, as well as Codi, Grace owns "a spirit and disposition completely apart from its economic identity as an outpost of the Black Mountain Mining Company. During the last century, while men labored underground to rob the canyon of its wealth, the women up above had been paying it back in kind" (1991, 277). His explanations emphasize that the women have added to an already rich canyon with their culture, making it richer and creating a community where humans live in harmony with the biotic community. Magee emphasizes women's desire to "take action" (2008, 23) and the fact that they become representatives of culture. To exemplify his point, Magee asserts that the usage of piñatas, "an old cultural tradition in the town," proves that "the women are the guardians and teachers of the tradition" (2008, 23). This distorts the age-old dualism, nature/culture, in which nature is represented by women, whereas culture is represented by men. Moreover, Magee states that "[b]y using the pinatas to represent both cultural traditions of the community and its environmental problems, the club also challenges the notion that nature and culture are discreet entities" (2008, 23). To elaborate, these perspectives arguably create a context where the nature/culture dualism is challenged and destroyed. Female characters represent the rich culture of the region as well as use it to protect and reclaim what has been harmed by patriarchal capitalism. To manage that, Mr. Rideheart comes up with the idea of registering the Gracela Canyon in the National Register of Historic Places. The registration would protect the canyon "from the onslaught of the industry, as if they were endangered species" (1991, 277). He also claims that not only do their houses have historic importance, but also their trees. Later, he explains how to manage the registration process. The Club members decide to use the money they raised by selling the peacock piñatas to start the registration process. At the end, the women of Grace only save their biotic community and their way of life by using a loophole in the law.

Shiva points out that "commercial capitalism is based on specialized commodity production and therefore demands uniformity in production, and the uni-functional use of natural resources. Reductionism thus reduces complex ecosystems to a single component, and a single component to a single function" (2014, Reductionism, 24). In other words, from a capitalist point of view, Nature is a resource to be used for the production of necessary products. This mentality single-

mindedly reduces every function and system of the earth's biotic communities to parts that are useful and manipulable. In essence, in the novel, the Gracela Canyon is a land that is rich in copper; therefore, the copper must be extracted from the land since it is both a resource and a product. The "single function" of the Canyon is to be the place where the much-needed copper is mined from. There is no mention of the "complex ecosystem" of Grace and the river that passes through, as well as the humans and animals that reside there. Shiva continues her analysis with these words: "[i]n the reductionist paradigm, a forest is reduced to commercial wood, and wood is reduced to cellulose fibre for the pulp and paper industry. Forests, land and genetic resources are then manipulated to increase the production of pulpwood." This gross misinterpretation of reality is scientifically validated and justified as "overall productivity increase." The reductionist mentality disregards the said forest's wellbeing and its "diversity of life forms." Therefore, "reductionist science is at the root of the growing ecological crises, because it entails a transformation of nature that destroys its organic processes and rhythms and regenerative capacities" (2014, Reductionism, 25). To put it simply, reductionism can be considered the center of the ecological problems faced since the Industrial Revolution. The system has put in place justifications and mechanisms to legitimize its actions. It is mechanical and has no consciousness since it was designed that way; therefore, it took a tragically long time to realize the damage that is being done to Nature and its creatures.

According to Shiva, ecological feminism or ecofeminism's perspective of Nature and ecological crises is vastly different from that of capitalist patriarchy because it manages to find previously severed connections and heal, mend, and reforge them. It "relate[s] issues that have so far been treated as separate […] by making these links, ecological feminism creates the possibility of viewing the world as an active subject, not merely as a resource to be manipulated and appropriated" (2014, Reductionism, 33, 34). In simpler words, ecofeminism attempts to relocate the lost and help it regain its integrity. Kingsolver reflects this in her novel symbolically; the *Stitch and Bitch Club* members make piñatas by using the real feathers of peacocks. They do not hurt the integrity of peacocks by plucking the birds' feathers; on the contrary, they collect already lost feathers to show their beauty to the people who purchase their handmade, one-of-a-kind piñata. By doing so, they help save the entire ecosystem of Grace and the surrounding area. These piñatas are not "[uniform]" or "reduced"; quite the opposite, they are differently formed and still

carry the artistic interpretation of their maker. Thus, they are not products, but a piece of Grace and its culture and history rendered by the maker.

In conclusion, the turn from an organic to mechanical universe affected how societies perceive Nature. The change in perception resulted in a distorted ethical approach to Nature and its creatures, thus enabling those in power to use and abuse the earth. Additionally, a reductionist approach helps legitimize said unethical and dishonorable acts of patriarchy toward Nature and women. Observing these, Kingsolver reflects in her novel how Codi struggles with her own perception. As a child, she used to look from the organic universe's point of view. However, as an adult, she starts seeing things from the patriarchy's point of view. Nevertheless, coming to Grace and meeting the members of the *Stitch and Bitch Club*, she starts to remember the things she has forgotten. She remembers that she actually has a community of women who raised her and became her mothers when she needed them. Reconnecting both with her "mothers" and Loyd, Codi starts to see that she has been drifting away from one place to another. She realizes that she was born and raised in Grace and this community, and the land deserves her support to thrive.

4.6. Identity and Sense of Belonging Through Connection to Female Community and Nature

Codi's alienated and estranged personality makes way for a more connected individual who cares about other people, animals, and ecological problems that Grace faces. This dissertation asserts that the historical, political, and social connections between women and Nature create a base on which Codi's alienated existence is transformed into a more interconnected existence. Ali and Sasani also argue that Kingsolver, in both *Animal Dreams* (1991) and *Prodigal Summer* (2001), "recurrently highlight[s] the significant role of nature in human beings' mental and transcendent growth, and how respectable affiliation with nature assists them to get united to both the mystical and societal domains" (2024, 147). In other words, humans need both human and non-human others to grow mentally and become healthy individuals. Besides, Ecofeminism claims that liberation for women could happen only by liberating Nature as well. Therefore, Codi liberates her "self" by liberating Nature and forging a connection to Grace's human and non-human communities without dualistic hierarchies. This part analyzes how Codi reforms and

heals her fragmented identity and sense of self, and starts to feel a sense of belonging with Grace and its community of women by employing Val Plumwood's theoretical framework of *mutual self* and *ecological self*, as opposed to *self/other dualism*. At the end of her healing journey, Codi's sense of self transforms into an ecological and mutual self, whereas she used to have a fragmented self formation, especially after her trauma of losing her mother and baby, which can be an example of self/other dualism.

When she was a little girl, Codi was more in tune with the biotic community that surrounded her. Although due to her amnesia, she could not remember at first, she was the one who wanted to save the seven coyote cubs from the flood as a little girl, putting both herself and her sister's lives in grave danger. By doing that, she proved that her selfhood was that of *relational self or mutual self,* as Val Plumwood called it in her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993). From Homero's perspective, girls were devastated since they could not save the coyote pups from drowning. Both Codi and Hallie were "crying as if they [were] drowning themselves" (Kingsolver 1991, 21). Both girls could empathize with non-human animals, proving their identities are formed as relational self or mutual self instead of a self/other dualistic approach. Another instance is reminded to Codi by her friend Emelina when she and her sons kill a chicken to consume the dead body. At the beginning of the scene, Emelina warns Codi that they are going to kill the chicken with an axe. Later, when the animal is dead, Emelina is surprised since Codi watches the killing without any reaction. Emelina reminds Codi that Codi "used to have a hissy fit when [they]'d go over to Abuelita's and she'd be killing chickens." Nevertheless, Codi denies that by saying it was actually Hallie who had "such a soft heart" (1991, 29). After a while, Emelina does not give up on her attempts to remind Codi that it was she who always started the "fit over the chickens," then Hallie would "[copy her] like a picture" (1991, 31). Although Codi cannot remember, according to Emelina's account, Codi would even organize boycotts against Abuelita's chicken and rice. However, present Codi says to Emelina, "[w]ell, you are the witness here. Blood all over the driveway and I didn't faint" (1991, 31). This scene is specific and notable because Kingsolver creates a striking contrast between the little girl Codi, who was beginning to form her identity in relation to both human and non-human animals, as well as Nature, and adult Codi, who lost her identity and sense of belonging along with her memories due to her trauma over losing her baby. The adult

Codi's identity is formed in a *self/other dualistic* format, meaning she perceives herself as *hyperseparated* from her environment and others, as Plumwood explains in her book (1993, 49, 52). Her first trauma was losing her mother when she was just three years old. However, she somehow hung on through her relationships with other adult women in the Grace community and had a relational self. She and her sister became every female member's daughters. However, she loses that identity after her trauma of losing her baby at the age of fifteen and starts to gain it back only after she reforges her connection with her people and Grace.

Codi's reintegration and merging with others and Nature is initiated when she comes back to Grace. At first, the reader witnesses her *hyperseparated* sense of self. She feels "uncomfortable" when people put her in the role of a doctor and expect her to help them in this manner (Kingsolver 1991, 84). Another example is Codi's determination to go back to her life, in which she drifted from one place to another without any purpose, instead of staying to build a new life while helping Grace stand against the Black Mountain Company. When she writes to her sister Hallie about her discovery of acidic river water and out of the norm PH levels, as well as the river being dammed, Hallie urges her to respond proactively against the company, almost "admonishing" her. Nevertheless, she is reluctant to help since, in her own words, Codi is not "brave" enough. She is "[a] good citizen of the nation in love with forgetting" (Kingsolver 1991, 149). The amnesia that takes over every citizen takes over Codi as well. She lives day by day, afraid to question what is happening to other people or Nature.

Codi does not hide the fact that she is extremely reluctant to stay or help the community of women on their quest to fight against the mining company and the damming of the river. However, having the scientific knowledge to deduce the danger the river and Grace are under makes Codi accountable to help. As mentioned before, she is invited as the speaker to a meeting of the *Stitch and Bitch Club*. She was surprised that the club is not only about stitching, but the community of women discusses the problems their community faces, and sometimes they mobilize against the threat and find solutions. The Club realizes that the men's approach to a class-action lawsuit as a solution to their problems is not the answer, since it would take ten years to be concluded. Therefore, the women do not trust the men to solve the problem, or as Codi puts it, "[t]he Stitch and Bitch Club wasn't banking on the good old boys" (Kingsolver 1991, 176). Therefore, they decide to take matters into their

own hands by hand-making peacock piñatas and selling them as a community fundraiser. After the first day of the fundraiser event, they decided to come back with more piñatas, and this time there would be "a written history of Grace and its heroic struggle against the Black Mountain Company." Codi is chosen to write the script and get it mimeographed by the kids at school, making her even a bigger part of the cause and the community (Kingsolver 1991, 192, 195). This marks the beginning of Codi's reintegration into her community and reformation of her identity as a *mutual* and *ecological self*.

As stated by Plumwood, it is not sensible to consider the self as separated from its environment. On the contrary, the self should be understood in relation to its environment because it is "relational", and this is the true meaning of being social. The self cannot be a "closed system" since this would only lead to a distorted picture of the "social experience." A more accurate description of social life would be by considering "individuals as having interdependent interests and needs which make essential and not merely accidental or contingent reference to those of others" (1993, 153, 154). In other words, an individual cannot be self-contained; in contrast, s/he is relational. The interactions that each individual has shape and form the self. Plumwood later explains the mother-child relationship as an example of non-egoistical relationships. When the child is sick, the mother wants her child to get better, not for her personal gain or any hidden agenda, just for the child's own good. In Plumwood's words, this desire for the child to "flourish" is "internal," not just "external, interchangeable means to some other end." Furthermore, these kinds of "intrinsic or essential relationships" can be seen in other areas of life. For instance, the people caring about Nature feel misery and anguish when they witness the "devastated natural and social environment." This "cannot be explained in terms of isolable interests" (1993, 154). As her relationship with the Grace community of women progresses, Codi starts to care and worry about Grace's demise more. Her feelings stem from her belief that Nature and the river of Grace have intrinsic value, not because their freedom would serve her self-interests.

Plumwood states that an individual can be perceived only in relation to others. Humans are not isolated entities that exist within themselves; rather, they can only be understood by their relationship with others and Nature. "Self-in-relationship" is a crucial concept since it can be the foundation upon which the "ecological self" will be formed. This form of self is demonstrated as a means of

eschewing instrumentalism. Understanding an individual is possible only through analyzing their "social and ecological embedment"; in other words, one cannot be perceived out of their context; quite the opposite, they are the sub-total of their relationship and their mutuality with their environments. Criticizing the instrumental model and self/other dualism, Plumwood asserts that this dualism not only creates "radical exclusion" or "hyperseparation," making the other alien and impossible to connect to, but also "incorporation," denying the differences and unseeing them. In the former, radical exclusion, the relationship and continuity are rejected and refuted; while in the latter, otherness is denied, and by doing so, the differences are erased or nullified, and only the useful parts are seen. As mentioned in the first chapter, Plumwood offers two methods of overcoming these dualisms: the first is "recognizing kinship" by creating connections and/or accepting them; the second is "recognizing difference" by respecting the differences and acknowledging them. Relational self and ecological self have a non-instrumental relationship with Nature; to put it simply, the form of self does not follow its own gain, but the betterment of "earth others" and "earth community." Therefore, "concepts of care, solidarity, and friendship" put forward different options to the "instrumental mode" of liberal societies (1993, 154, 155). This ethical understanding and approach to Nature would undoubtedly create a better future for every part of the Earth community. Codi finds, forges, and creates these kinds of relationships with the Grace community that consists of both humans and Nature. Fighting against the company that has been destroying the biotic community for years and doing this with the Club members who raised her when her mother died makes Codi realize she was not as alone and as isolated as she thought. She starts to see herself in others' mirrors, and because she analyzes her surroundings, she begins to understand herself better through her relationships. Through all this, slowly she faces the trauma of losing her baby and starts healing and remembering everything she has forgotten. Swartz also draws attention to similar points, noting that both newly acquired and reforged relationships in Codi's life helped her become more "interconnect[ed]" (1993, 69). Furthermore, Swartz asserts that "a reclamation of her past changed Codi's way of interacting with the world. Codi's story is in many ways like the river that flowed through the canyon, giving and gaining life" (1993, 69). To expand on this, both her relationships and remembering her past help her heal herself and her surroundings; that is, she becomes a whole individual no longer separated from her environment, and she helps

heal her environment, seeing beyond human selfishness and helping the non-human world.

In one of the scenes, while Uda—a character who looks after Codi's father as well as her when she was little—and Codi look for photographs to prove that Grace is a historic site, Codi finds her and her sister's newborn pictures taken minutes after birth. In the novel, Dr. Homer writes a scientific paper about a genetic eye color anomaly that occurs in pure Gracela babies. They have "marble-white eyes" that go back to normal after a few hours of birth. Both Hallie's and Codi's eyes have the same discoloration in the picture. This phenomenon shows they have "Gracela heritage on both sides." Codi is shocked to find out that her father has been trying to prove he and his family were one of the townspeople all along, as opposed to what she believed. She has always thought that he was trying to "set himself apart" from the people of Grace, thinking himself to be better than them (1991, 283, 284). This scene is notable since, at the end, even though it is virtually impossible, she believes she hears the flash of her first-ever photo taken. For someone who cannot even remember her teenage years, remembering her newborn moments is worth mentioning. This marks the first time she feels like she belongs, and she starts to remember her memories from the past, thus proceeding toward forming her mutual and ecological selfhood with steady determination.

In another scene with Loyd, Codi talks about her memory loss after she was fifteen years old. She confesses that even after starting to remember everything, she still does not "feel any better" (1991, 296). On the contrary, she realizes that she "couldn't touch that happiness anymore, [she'd] changed so much. That was some other little bright-eyed, righteous girl parading around trying to rescue drowning coyotes and save chickens from the stewpot" (1991, 297). When Loyd questions her about the reason for her memory loss, she answers without telling him she has lost her baby, "I guess it finally hit me that nobody was going to take care of me" (1991, 297). Because she could not confess to anybody about her pregnancy and later her late miscarriage, she had been feeling alone and without company. The "concepts of care, solidarity, and friendship" that Plumwood mentions in her explanation of mutual and ecological self are missing. Hence, she forgets everything and starts to form a new identity that can be considered hyperseparated, as Plumwood theorizes. She divides her "self" from others, and this leads to an alienated person who has lost her purpose in life. Loyd reminds her that "for everybody that's gone away, there is

somebody that's come to you. Emelina thinks you're her long-lost sister. […] She loves you to death" (1991, 297). Since she lost her mother at the tender age of three and her father is an emotionally stunted man, she has a hard time grasping the concept of forging new bonds with her environment and loving other people and Nature because of the void left by her lost loved ones. Therefore, she says to Loyd, "[y]ou can't replace people you love with other people. […] They're not like old shoes or something" (1991, 297). To that, Loyd replies with these words, "[n]o. But you can trust that you're not going to run out of people to love" (1991, 297). Wisely, even though he has lost his twin due to a murder, he realizes that life is worth living only when you create bonds with other people and your environment. Although Codi starts to realize this as well because of her new bonds to the Club members, as well as Grace's biotic community, at this point in the novel, she still tries to hold on to her old habits.

Later, she finds the courage to read her sister's letters. She could not look at them after getting the phone call about her kidnapping. As mentioned before in the "Ego- or Eco-: Codi's Alienation and Estrangement" part, Codi perceived her sister's actions in Nicaragua as heroic and altruistic because her selfhood was formed as a self/other dualism. She goes so far as to say that Hallie is "SAVING THE WORLD." When she rereads the letter with new eyes and a new perspective, the final pieces have fallen into place, and the final stage of her transformation is completed. Hallie says that "I don't expect to see perfection before I die. What keeps you going isn't some fine destination but just the road you are on, and the fact that you know how to drive" (1991, 298). After the initial letter, Hallie sends an apology letter to Codi, and she reads it in this scene. As mentioned above, the letter is specific since Codi completes her transformation after reading it and dreaming about her baby that night. In the letter, Hallie explains the reason for her anger about being seen as "saving the world." She genuinely believes that she is "doing the only thing [she] can live with under the circumstances. The circumstances being that in Tucson, [she] was dying among garden pests. Working with refugees, and also subsidizing the war that was killing them. [She] had to get out" (1991, 299). These words prove that Hallie's identity formed as an ecological and mutual self, and she does not separate her selfhood from her environment. In her letter, she points out that she tries to "[figure] out what to do that won't clear a path for worse problems next week." She implies that she is helping Nicaraguan people to apply environmentally sustainable farming

practices. Additionally, from her words, it can be inferred that she acknowledges that she is a guest who must be respectful of the boundaries of being welcome in this world, similar to Native Americans, who were mentioned in the previous part. Hallie believes that "[t]he daily work—that goes on, it adds up. It goes into the ground, into crops, into children's bellies and their bright eyes. Good things don't get lost" (1991, 299). These ideas are the opposite of heroism and altruism that the patriarchal system allows in its limited and restricted worldview. Hallie finishes her apology letter with these striking words: "figure out what you hope for [in life]. And live inside this hope. […] What I want is so simple I almost can't say it: elementary kindness. Enough to eat, enough to go around. The possibility that kids might one day grow up to be neither the destroyers nor the destroyed" (1991, 299). With these words, she reflects a worldview that can be aligned with ecofeminist ethics. She wishes for "enough to eat" and just "enough to go around." This desire to live off the land and not accumulate wealth and material riches can be found in Mies's ideas mentioned in the first chapter. Mies believes that subsistence economies are the answer to patriarchal capitalist destruction. Another important idea in Hallie's words is that she wishes to break the vicious cycle of death and destruction, a cycle that is so normalized that it conceals and justifies violence within. She calls for a stop to being "the destroyer" and "the destroyed." Hierarchically structured dualistic systems and the logic of domination make every member of the system both "the destroyer" and "the destroyed." However, ecofeminist and other relational ethics, which are rooted in sympathy and empathy instead of rights, envision each individual as interrelated to their human and non-human surroundings through bonds of love, understanding, and respect instead of relationships based on self-interest. Even more remarkable is the fact that Hallie advises her sister to "stop beating [herself] up for being selfish, really *be* selfish" (1991, 299). The concept of selfishness here is different than the everyday meaning. Hallie is inviting her sister to discover her "selfhood" and live in this new identity freely. Subsequent to her advice, Hallie says to her sister, "I wish you knew how to squander yourself" (1991, 299). The verb squander is also used in a different sense from its conventional meaning. Hallie wants her sister to invite what she perceives to be "other" and "alien" to her life and selfhood, thus living freely and sharing her life with others, as well as being shared.

Codi is deeply affected by the letter and her sister's advice. Having pondered her sister's letter, Codi dreams one of her recurring dreams that night. She hears the

flash of the first photograph taken of her pop. Prior to gaining back her memory, she had always thought she was going blind and woke herself up because she was too afraid. However, in this scene, she realizes that it is just her father taking her photo as a newborn to prove that she is one of the Grace people, so she stays in the dream, finding the courage to face what is to come. She dreams of her late daughter as a seventeen-year-old girl, her skin "glow[ing] white" (1991, 301). She is "walking up the path toward [Codi's childhood] house" (1991, 301). Codi goes out of the house to help her daughter since she thinks that she is going to "evaporate" if she comes into the house (1991, 301). She takes her daughter in her arms, "a ridiculous bundle of long arms and legs" (1991, 301). In this scene, Kingsolver implies that the grief Codi has felt for seventeen long years after losing her baby is too big a burden to carry for her anymore. In the dream, Hallie warns Codi with these words, "Codi, stop. She's too heavy. You can put her down now" (1991, 301). To these words, Codi replies, "'No, I can't, she'll fall.' [Hallie says] 'Let her go. Let go. She'll rise'" (1991, 301). The symbolic and allegorical dream ends with Codi waking up "with empty arms" (1991, 301). Just as Codi's daughter rose toward the sky in her dream, Codi too starts to put down her roots and grows upward in Grace.

Codi, being stubborn and resistant to change, decides to leave against Loyd's and Emelina's wishes after finding out that her sister was killed by the contras. On her way to the airport, she talks to a woman sitting next to her on the bus. Uncharacteristically, she opens up to the woman about her life and her sister. Although it was normally Hallie's job, she even gives her advice about getting rid of slugs to help her tend her garden. Later, she gets on the plane; however, one of the plane's engines broke down, forcing them to make an emergency landing. After the traumatic landing, Codi perceives that "[t]he rush of adrenaline ha[s] rinsed [her] clean" (1991, 320). For the first time since Hallie is gone, Codi sees color. She recovers from her depression and realizes there are a lot of things that still link her to her mother and her sister that she has been blind to, such as her fear of heights and flying, and her knowledge of how to get rid of bugs and slugs in an eco-friendly manner. All along, she has been "practicing all this family business without a license" (1991, 321). At the end, she decides to never leave again, "[i]f [she] got to the ground in one piece" (1991, 321). Later, she takes a train to go back to Grace, her home and family, which she made for herself. Similarly, analysing Codi's healing process, Heise argues that Codi "finds her own identity and her social and ecological

niche by immersing herself deeply in the town where both sisters were born, returning to her roots and … turning into an environmental activist" (2008, 391). In other words, Codi finds peace by "immersing herself" with her community, both human and non-human. She finds pieces of her mother and her sister both in her newly formed relational self and in the Grace community.

The next chapter in the novel is called "The Fifty Mothers" and is one of the most remarkable chapters in Codi's story of discovering her home and her connection to the community there. In this chapter, she grasps that even though she lost her mother, she earned "fifty mothers" in her absence. All the Club members, she remembers now clearly, stepped up whenever she and Hallie needed them in whatever role (1991, 328). Drawing attention to a similar point, Heise also argues that the women are "replacements for" (2008, 392) the girl's dead mother. They become the "extended family that not only helps Codi find her own identity, but also forms the backbone of the environmental activism that is, in the end, able to avert the ecological hazard threatening the town" (2008, 392). To elaborate, together the community of women forms an attachment and bond with each other that can be described as a familial bond, and through this bond, they become strong enough to stand against the Black Mountain Company, saving their biotic community. These bonds that they form with both each other and the non-human world help Codi discover her*self*.

The previously mentioned chapter also describes Hallie's heartfelt funeral that takes place in a plum orchard. Since Hallie wanted to be "buried in Nicaragua […] to enrich the soil of a jungle" (1991, 325), Codi has no body to bury, so she asks everyone to bring something that reminds them of Hallie. Knowing Hallie's strong affinity and connection to trees and Nature, Codi decides to do the memorial service under a "supernaturally blessed [tree]" (1991, 324). And with every piece that is added to the pile, it is solidified in Codi's mind that these people are her family, and she finally finds peace. Kingsolver brings the novel to its final moment through another Day of the Dead celebration scene. In the scene, Codi is cleaning her late father's and other Nolinas' graves. She is pregnant and so elated with her situation that she describes that she "[has] been torn asunder, invested with an ancient, incomprehensible magic. It's one thing we never quite get over: that we contain our own future" (1991, 341). She is content and whole. The author also emphasizes a hope for the future of humanity in this scene since Codi believes "we contain our

own future" (1991, 341). Later, Codi remembers seeing her mother being taken to the hospital with a helicopter in a "white bundle." Watching everything again through her mind's eye, she remembers "it isn't tragedy [they] are watching, really. Just a finished life" (1991, 342). This scene is also specific since the reader witnesses her making peace with her mother's death as well. The writer illustrates the natural life and death cycle through Codi's mother's death and Codi's pregnancy. The novel ends with a high and hopeful note.

To sum up, Codi is no longer separated from her environment and other people. She finds her "self-in-relationship" (1993, 154) as Plumwood theorizes in her book. However, her immersion in the people and the environment mentioned above does not mean that she is not an individual. She stops seeing the world as other or alien and forges and heals the connection between herself and her environment. Nevertheless, there is no "dissolution of distinction" (Plumwood 1993, 126) in this act of immersion. She becomes a functioning part of the Earth community in Grace, still preserving her differences and individuality. Against the Cartesian and Newtonian worldview of atomism and dualism, instead of being two polar opposites—hyperseparated or indistinguishable—Plumwood strongly suggests "giving a richer account of individuals in nature as both agentic and essentially relational, as well as acknowledging the *irreducibility of wholes*" (1993, 126; emphasis added). As Plumwood cautions against, attempting to reduce the "whole" might prove dangerous to the well-being of communities. Grace's earth community was wounded and was broken by the system into useful parts; however, Codi and her "fifty mothers" stand against this system to break the vicious cycle, and in the process of healing, Codi rediscovers herself in relation to her community of people and Nature. According to Plumwood, "[w]e must acknowledge continuity and cease to view the other as alien" (1993, 126). Indeed, Codi stops seeing "the other as alien" and finds the connections she has been longing for all along.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF OCTAVIA BUTLER'S *PARABLE OF THE SOWER*

5.1. Contextual Background

Born to a financially disadvantaged family in Pasadena, California, in 1947, Octavia Estelle Butler suffered from dyslexia and had to overcome many hardships concerning her school life. However, she liked reading and exploring, so her mother got her a library card so that she could spend almost all her time in the library, reading stories. From a very young age, she showed a proclivity not only for reading stories of other writers but also for writing her own stories. With one of her teachers' encouragement, she sent one of her stories to a magazine to be published at the age of thirteen ("Octavia Estelle Butler").

Butler got an Associate's Degree in 1968 from Pasadena City College. She continued her higher education after her graduation by taking additional classes from California State University and the University of California. Having had various interests, Butler took writing classes along with "stud[ying] anthropology, psychology, physics, biology, and geology." She is one of the most read and taught writers, especially in the field of Afrofuturism and science fiction today; however, unfortunately, it was not always the case during her prime. She struggled to find publishers who would publish her works at times. However, she never gave up on writing and "won Nebula and Hugo Awards, the two highest honors for science fiction." Unfortunately, she passed away in 2006. Her works live on and keep growing in "popularity" ("Octavia Estelle Butler"). She discovered themes such as "Black injustice, global warming, women's rights, and political disparity" ("Butler, Octavia E."). She wrote many short stories, standalone novels, and novel series dealing with topics such as time travel, hybridity, alien versus human, slavery, symbioticism, gene manipulation, and vampirism.

First published in 1979, one of her most well-known works is *Kindred* (2009). The novel's plot revolves around the protagonist Dana, who is an African American woman living in the 20th century, who mysteriously travels through time and lands in

the antebellum South when slavery was not yet abolished. As the plot progresses, she realizes that she is pulled back in time to save Rufus's life, who is the son of a plantation owner. When she goes back to the antebellum South, she is treated as a slave on the plantation. Fearing that Rufus's death would result in her ceasing to exist, as he is one of her ancestors, Dana saves the violent child, later a cruel man, many times. Even though Dana helps him and saves him, Rufus tries to sexually assault her, hence forcing Dana to save herself by stabbing him. When Dana is pushed back to her own time in 1976, fortunately, she only loses her arm instead of her life. The book challenges ideas of race and class, as well as the denied relations and dependence of the masters on their slaves.

Another popular novel, also the topic of this chapter, first published in 1993, the first of the series known as *Earthseed*, is *Parable of the Sower* (2019). The novel is a dystopian one, focusing on fifteen-year-old Lauren Olamina, who lives inside a walled community, trying to survive day by day when society has collapsed and chaos has ensued. Her father is a Baptist minister, and her stepmother is a teacher in their small community. As a result of her mother abusing drugs whilst she was pregnant with Lauren, the girl suffers from a syndrome called hyperempathy, which causes her to feel other people's and animals' pain and pleasure. Although this condition is considered a weakness and abhorred by society, it provides her with a unique perspective, differing from the violent, dystopian patriarchal society. Because of her unique position and perspective, she is able to create a new religion and philosophy, which she calls Earthseed.

The next novel that will be mentioned by Butler is *Fledgling* (2007). The novel was first published in 2005. The story explores the protagonist, Shori Matthews, who is a fifty-three-year-old vampire who looks like a ten-year-old black girl. The novel starts with Shori waking up disoriented; she cannot remember anything about herself or her people. As the story progresses, she realizes that she is one of the Inas, who are a vampire species feeding on humans. This relationship is considered a symbiotic one as the human Ina feeds to earn a longer lifespan. She finds out that her mother was killed in an attack meant for her as well, because some vampires among the Ina are against her existence, as she is genetically altered to withstand light and has black skin among the white and pale Ina. The novel deals with themes such as racism, dependency, and power relations between the symbionts.

In an interview with Rowell, Butler asserts that she is a writer because she loves writing, not because she has a "talent" for it. She states that "I had to learn my craft. And I mean I had to learn it, bit by bit, by doing things wrong, and by collecting years of rejection slips" (1997, 47). She worked many different jobs; "from blue collar to low grade white collar" (1997, 47). She states that she worked in those "jobs because [she] had to live, but always while [she] was doing them … [she] wrote, because it was the only thing [she] actually cared about doing" (1997, 47). Put differently, Butler worked hard to become the writer she was. As she stated herself, she did not have a special "talent" for writing. However, she had a passion for writing, so to be able to write professionally, she worked hard and did not give up after being rejected by publishers. This tenacity and resilient nature can be seen in her main characters, especially Lauren.

In the interview with Rowell, Butler also mentions her writing process of *Parable of the Sower* (1993). She states that while she was writing the novel, she listened to "a lot of ecological audio tapes" (1997, 61). She listened to those tapes that focus on "ecological problems, because those play a big part" in her novel (1997, 61), so much so that she considers "the ecology, especially global warming, … [as] almost a character in" the novel (1997, 61). To elaborate, due to Butler's writing style and her persistent approach to writing, ecological crises and problems faced today and will likely be faced in the future become almost their own entities. Nature and its abuse are not backgrounded or passivized; to the contrary, they are foregrounded as a "character" in the story.

In another interview with Potts, Butler also talks about the novel. She states that the novel deals with "the problems," especially "the things [humanity has] done wrong … and where those things can lead us" (1996, 336). She asserts that she "made a real effort to talk about what could actually happen or is in the process of happening: the walled communities, and the illiteracy and the global warming" (1996, 336). In other words, from the writer's perspective, the novel explores themes and issues such as climate crises, social collapse, and inequality. She penned the novel almost as a warning narrative; therefore, it comes as no surprise that it is a dystopian novel. Unfortunately, some of the things mentioned in it have become a reality today. In the interview with Potts, Butler argues regarding the novel that humanity "either going to continue to play the same record until it shatters" or it is going to change the system (1996, 336). To elaborate, in the current system that is

called the logic of domination by Warren or the dualistic hierarchical system by Plumwood, humanity will likely be reaching similar fates as the civilizations before; that is, history keeps repeating itself because when the system of domination is standing, it is unlikely that the result will change for the better.

5.2. Plot Overview and Key Elements

As mentioned above, the novel revolves around Lauren Olamina, a teenage girl living in a walled community in Los Angeles, Robledo, in a dystopian future. Having been written in 1993, the novel's starting point in time is the near future of 2024. Society has collapsed. Outside of their barely secure walled community, people are killing for food, even eating other people to survive. Rape is a daily, almost normal occurrence. A street drug that gives people almost sexual pleasure watching fires is circling the streets. The abusers of this drug burn everything standing in their way: people, animals, trees, houses.

As mentioned before, Lauren has hyperempathy syndrome due to her late mother abusing a drug during her pregnancy. Originally, the drug was developed to fight Alzheimer's disease, but later it was abused. Hyperempathy syndrome means that she feels other people's and animals' pain and pleasure as if it were her own. The syndrome is so serious that she used to bleed when someone else was bleeding in front of her. However, this changed as she grew up. This syndrome makes her dangerously vulnerable as she becomes incapacitated when other people are seriously injured. Hence, the outside world is even more dangerous to her than regular people because violence, pain, and death on the streets are normalized. Because Lauren's father wants to protect Lauren from abuse and the vulnerability of the sufferer of this syndrome, he forbids his daughter to share the information with anyone outside of their immediate family, consisting of Lauren, her four half-brothers, her stepmother, and her father.

As noted earlier, Lauren's father is a Baptist minister as well as a teacher at the university. Reverend Olamina is seen as a leader in the community. His main objective is to keep their community together and safe. He teaches people how to use guns to protect themselves when they have to leave the community. Besides, knowing that their survival is dependent on them staying together, he attempts to

instill in people self-discipline, solidarity, and the importance of mutual support. However, from the beginning of the novel, his own daughter realizes that his methods and contingency plans are not enough to save them from the vicious world outside.

Lauren is a smart young girl, and she even teaches at school with her stepmother, Cory, who used to work at the university like her husband. At the very young age of fifteen, she sees that her father's Baptist teachings are faulty and do not reflect reality. Her research for the truth, her experiences, and observations only prove one thing: "God is Change" (2019, 3); therefore, she decides to come up with her own set of philosophies and spiritual teachings. The whole novel is from her journal, and at the beginning of each entry, she shares a verse from her spiritual belief system called Earthseed.

As the feeling of security in the neighborhoods gets more fragile every day, Lauren makes plans for an emergency escape, as well as attempting to learn how to better survive in the outside world. As Lauren makes plans for survival outside, her problematic brother, Keith, thirteen years old, runs away from the community to the outside world. He kills people without remorse and steals their belongings to survive. He engages in criminal activities to earn a lot of money and brings some of the money to his mother. After a few years of having good luck surviving, his horribly tortured body is found close to their community. His escape from the community and subsequent death create a rift in the family, especially between Cory and the Reverend Olamina, as well as the community. Furthermore, one day, Reverend Olamina is lost while going to work. He never comes back; thus, he is assumed dead. His death becomes both an emotional and structural catalyst for the community, as people realize they are not as safe as they thought they were.

The novel not only portrays the corruption on the streets but also mentions how the patriarchal hierarchical system resulted in the disintegration of society and the non-human world. To exemplify corruption with a few instances, big corporations take over towns and cities with promises of a better future and job opportunities. However, when people start working for them little by little, the company makes its employees indebted to the system. In order to pay their debt, the workers become indentured slaves to the company. Another problem the world is facing is that corporations take over commons such as water and turn them into commodities, causing people to die of dehydration or as a result of poisoning due to

toxic water resources. Everything becomes very expensive and unaffordable for people. Desperation and survival instinct result in chaos.

One day, Lauren's worst fear becomes a reality when Robledo is attacked by drug addicts called Pyros. Her people are killed viciously, and she is unable to save her stepmother and her three brothers. A horrifyingly graphic description of the chaos is seen through Lauren's eyes. Even babies are taken from their mothers to be thrown into the fire. The next day, Lauren realizes that only two people from her community are alive. One of the survivors is Harry Balter, one of the members of the only white family in the community. The other survivor is Zahra Moss, a woman who was one of the three wives of her husband. She says that her husband bought her from her mother when she was only a teenager to become his wife. They set off on a journey to the north. The roads are horrible and highly unsafe. Having been left to their own devices when society collapsed, as no one can afford to look after them, dogs, loyal friends of men, have become feral. Dogs attack and kill people to eat them. People attack each other. Women and little girls of all ages are sexually assaulted. Trees and crops are burned without any thought, just for pleasure. In summary, every toxic aspect of patriarchal capitalism that exists was built up to the point where it exploded, taking everything with it.

During their journey, the trio encounters other people whom they consider worthy enough to include in their small group. These are Travis and Natividad Douglas and their baby, Dominic. Later, Bankole, a fifty-seven-year-old doctor, becomes Lauren's lover. Allies, Jill, Justin, Emery, and her daughter Tori, Grayson, and his daughter Doe. During the dangerous journey, Lauren shares Earthseed with other members of their small group, finding some receptive people among them. By doing so, she transforms Earthseed into a belief system that foregrounds tenets such as change, adaptation, and creating a future. All these tenets are built around forming a community that can make these a reality. According to Lauren, the Earth is too far gone to be able to survive and thrive there; thus, she believes that the future is among the stars on another planet.

During the journey, Bankole mentions his land where his sister, her husband, and their three children live. They decide to go there as Bankole generously accepts everyone staying on his land. As they near their destination, they are attacked by Pyros once again; this time they lose Jill to the attacks as she dies whilst she was trying to protect Emery's daughter, Tori. Although the rest of the group manages to

drive the attackers away, the attackers follow them and start fires on the way. The fires grow and spread rapidly. As there are no governmental institutions that deal with these kinds of emergencies, they soon become impossible to control, and they destroy everything in their way. Humans and animals alike run away from the fires to save themselves. During the struggle to survive, no one—human, dog, or other animals—attacks each other. Miraculously, they escape from the fires and manage to reach Bankole's land in Northern California. Though they thought they would meet Bankole's sister and her family, terrible news awaits them when they reach the land. The houses were burned along with the unfortunate family. Despite the warnings of Lauren and others, Bankole goes to the police. Corrupted along with all the institutions of the government, the police rob Bankole of his money, claiming it is the fee for their services, and they send him on his way.

Life on this land would be dangerous, and it would be hard to settle down, as there is almost nothing, no accommodations, and very little food, but they are still hopeful since the land has a well and means of reaching water for free. Everyone votes for staying and trying to create their own communities. Lauren brought with her a wide variety of seeds from her previous home. They will plant those seeds and will attempt to create a winter garden. The novel ends on a hopeful but tragic note, as they decide to do a funeral service for all the people they have lost, along with Bankole's sister and her family. Lauren suggests planting oak tree seeds for each person they have lost. By doing so, they guarantee that their memories will live on. They decide to name the place "Acorn" (2019, 311), bringing the cycle of life to completion, as acorns are oak trees' seeds.

Existing scholarship on *Parable of the Sower* (2019) largely focuses on the dystopian society from different perspectives. However, some articles look through various branches of the ecofeminist lens to read the novel. Sands reads the novel with a postmodern theoretical framework, focusing on rhetoric, cannibalism, otherness, and body boundaries (2003, 1-11). Miller analyzes *Parable of the Sower* along with her three other works, combining post-apocalyptic elements and possibilities of a new beginning as a form of utopia. The novels are considered a kind of "critical dystopia." Through all, they are based on "reciprocity," "diversity," and "non-hierarchical" forms of collective existence, and "hybridity" (1998, 336-358). Phillips creates a theoretical framework by applying utopian/dystopian theory and argues that the novel is a critique of neoliberal capitalism, fascistic tendencies, social

fragmentation, and "privatized" social structures. He also foregrounds Earthseed as collective ethics, survival of the collective, and hyperempathy (2002, 299-309). Nilges' article stands in opposition to this dissertation, as he explores the novel from a "post-Fordist" theoretical point of view. To him, the concept of "change," which Lauren considers God, is not ideal, as it is the source of "anxiety" in a "chaotic" society. Hence, Nilges theorizes that the characters are yearning for "paternalistic" stability, "centralized" authority, and "teleological" structures of the Earthseed (2009, 1332-1351). Agraso reads the Parable Series through a spiritual ecofeminist lens. The author highlights that Butler criticizes the system of domination and humans' separateness from Nature, foregrounding the importance of interconnectedness, adaptability, collective survival, and ecological spirituality (2013, 163-170). Shahnavaz reads the novel from an ecofeminist perspective, suggesting that the author foregrounds environmental destruction and "violence against women," whereas Earthseed is presented as a collection of ecofeminist teachings that highlight hyperempathy, care, and cooperation. The author risks sounding essentialist by using analogies such as Earth "as the mother" or "womb" (2017, 40-45). Divya reads the novel similarly to Shahnavaz's approach, contending that patriarchal domination and "environmental destruction" serve as systems of oppression. Divya also reads Earthseed as an alternative model rooted in care and sustainability (2025, 5-8). Reading the novel through an ecowomanist point of view, Heard highlights embodied interdependence, care ethics, Black feminism, and ecological spirituality. She also foregrounds Earthseed's opposition to hierarchy and "oppression" (Heard 2024). This dissertation touches upon some of these concepts and themes. Moreover, it foregrounds the common oppression of Nature and women, Lauren's body as a trans-corporeal and porous entity, and the perspective this permeability wins her in creating the Earthseed tenets. In the novel, the unprecedented violence and damage that patriarchal capitalist way of thinking causes leaves scars and wounds on the bodies of women, animals, and Nature. However, with her philosophy of Earthseed, Lauren imagines a community that heals the wounds of this way of thinking. Furthermore, due to her hyperempathy, Lauren's body becomes a guide to the journey of healing, as it foregrounds the embodiment and immediate connection of the self to its environment.

5.3. Patriarchy's Exploitation and Subjugation of Nature and Women

In her book, *Feminism and Mastery of Nature* (1993), Plumwood mentions ecological feminist utopias. In those narratives, "women live at peace with themselves and with the natural world" (1993, 7). To Plumwood, every being obtains its intrinsic value. Patriarchal forces such as military or technological developments are not the main powers that "rule the earth" (1993, 7). The story's conflict comes from the striking differences between the ecofeminist perspective and the patriarchal capitalist point of view. These contrasting concepts are described by Plumwood with these words: This utopic land "is seen as a beleaguered one, surviving against the hostile intent of men, who control a world of power and inequality, of military and technological might and screaming poverty, where power is the game, and power means domination of both nature and people" (1993, 7). To put it simply, this feminist utopia stands against its antithesis, violent patriarchal forces that legitimize their right to rule with their ability to obtain and hold power over perceivedly weaker or lesser. In these hierarchical systems, the weaker and the silent become targets, namely, women, other otherized people, and Nature. However, Plumwood adds, the world today and the understanding of society are far from the feminist utopia that is aspired to. To her, "[w]e do live in a world increasingly and distressingly like the feminist dystopia, … where the dominance of 'rational' man threatens ultimately to produce the most irrational of results, the extinction of our species along with many others" (1993, 7). In other words, purportedly "rational man" ends up destroying Nature due to his disregard for anything else apart from himself, as a result preparing both his and every one else's demise. Male dominance, patriarchal control, exploitation of Nature, women, and other otherized people result in an unsustainable system which will destroy everything. Butler's dystopian novel reflects a very similar future where the problematic nature of patriarchy's hierarchical tendencies has resulted in chaos and destruction in both human and non-human systems. This part analyzes the subjugation and exploitation of women and Nature in the novel, as well as the wounds inflicted by this way of thinking.

The walled communities in the novel are reflected as safe havens for their residents. The narrative portrays them in a positive light, even though it is explicitly mentioned that they are a source of envy and hatred for the people outside of the walls. These walls that separate certain people from the perceived 'others' mirror a

dualistic understanding of the self/other mentioned in the first chapter. This understanding of one's identity or a community's identity might be conceived as innocuous at first glance; however, it must be noted that this way of perceiving the world comes from hierarchical thinking, thus, it has the potential to result in a highly hostile environment where the self and the other will clash in most horrendous displays of violence and violent acts. Butler sees patriarchal and hierarchical societies' flaws and shortcomings; hence, she portrays those shortcomings in most striking and unforgettable ways in her narrative. The boundaries set in the form of literal walls in the novel create an unfathomable chasm between the outside world, where the human and the non-human are dying and killing each other in various violent displays, and the inside community, where people are cut off from the outside and the non-human world. The community is mostly ignorant of what has become of the world in the wake of power-hungry politicians and corporations. They selfishly try to maintain the status quo and save themselves from the horrors of the dystopian world. Arguably, the only means that can protect people from the threats of the patriarchy also make them a target for the less advantaged people who have to confront the terrors of the outside world daily.

The novel is filled with deplorable imagery of girls and women of all ages (from infancy to old age) being used, abused, sold, raped, and killed. The occurrence of these terrifying acts is so frequent that people have become desensitized to them. The readers witness these acts from Lauren's point of view. Lauren sees "a little girl, naked, maybe seven years old, with blood running down her bare tights. A woman with a swollen, bloody, beaten face" (2019, 12). Another little girl named Amy, who is just a three-year-old toddler, from Lauren's neighbourhood, is shot and killed through the gate (2019, 45, 46). Lauren feels especially bad, as Amy's own family did not care about her. That is why she was trying to teach her and keep her busy during school hours. Another example is Zahra, as she was sold to her husband to become his third wife when she was fifteen years old (2019, 159). Allie and Jill run away from home because their father forces them into sex work (2019, 222), exploiting their bodies as objects. The next incident occurs when the neighbourhood is attacked by Pyros, who sexually assault twelve-year-old Robin Baiter as well as eight-year-old Lidia Cruz and brutally kill them. According to Zahra, the same night, they stab another woman "forty or fifty times" (2019, 152-154). Zahra, Lauren, and Hary talk about what happened the night of the vicious attack on their community.

Zahra recounts what she has been through. While she was running away from the attack with her infant daughter Bibi in her arms, a Pyro, who painted his face blue, shot the baby, killing her. Zahra thinks that the man had the "expression … of a man having sex" (2019, 158). These scenes are hard to comprehend, profoundly unsettling, and disturbing, and the fact that people are accustomed to this or expect these kinds of events to take place on a daily basis also almost defies language and is difficult to process. In the following part of the scene, Zahra realized that her baby had been shot and her blood was all over both of them. Another painted-faced man took the baby from her mother and threw her into a burning house, then another man forced Zahra to the ground and raped her (2019, 158). These scenes undoubtedly might be some of the most troubling and disturbing imagery in this dissertation. Butler's narrative reveals the extent of the violence inherent in hierarchical systems. The violation and exploitation committed against women are laid bare before the readers, becoming the representation of the fallacy of the logic of domination and the dangers posed by patriarchal control.

Shahnavaz similarly states that in the novel, "rape and the mistreatment of women fall in line with the mistreatment of the Earth in a constant and senseless cycle, so often in the background that it becomes common" (2017, 43). Put simply, she also foregrounds ecofeminist analyses of the novel and the violence of patriarchy towards women and Nature go hand in hand, as all violence stems from similar mechanisms in place in such societies. The logic of domination, as mentioned previously in the first chapter, creates and recreates the basis for the justification of domination and ruthless control of the masses. Whilst Lauren, along with other teenagers of the same age, is being taken to be baptized, they have to leave the community, and the reader witnesses the outside world through Lauren's eyes. She describes a "young woman" passing them by with these words: "A woman, young, naked, and filthy stumbled along past us. I got a look at her slack expression and realized that she was dazed or drunk or something. Maybe she had been raped so much that she was crazy. I'd heard stories of that happening" (2019, 9). The scene is both tragic and shocking, as it can be understood from Lauren's perspective, a fifteen-year-old girl at the time, that the horrible act of rape is normalized in this dystopian future. In the scene, no one stops to help the young woman; to the contrary, they watch her almost without any emotion, except for lust from the boys in the group who are on the way to be baptized. Lauren thinks to herself: "The boys in

our group almost fell off their bikes, staring at her. What wonderful religious thoughts they would be having for a while" (2019, 9). This scene sheds light on one of the biggest issues of patriarchy ecofeminism deals with, that is, identity formation of the self/other and other dualisms established in patriarchal society. As previously noted, Lauren's walled community erected walls to protect themselves from the others; in doing so, they separated themselves from them both physically and emotionally. Because they have no relation to this woman, they do not feel the need to stop and help her. This concept is incomprehensible to them. This act of staying neutral and objective in such dire circumstances is the exact opposite of ecofeminist ethical understandings, which stem from sympathy, empathy, and care for all beings. Furthermore, in the scene, due to her hyperempathy syndrome, Lauren feels increasingly miserable as she witnesses the atrocities of the outside world. Her father attempts to encourage her every once in a while by saying, "You can beat this thing. You don't have to give in to it" (2019, 9). It is almost ironic that her father is trying to teach her not to feel bad for others' pain. The perspective is so cold and self-serving that it is no wonder the society in the novel has collapsed as a result of this way of thinking. Moreover, Reverend Olamina claims that once he and Cora attempted "to help an injured woman …, and the guys who had injured her jumped out from behind a wall and almost killed them" (2019, 10). The mechanisms of patriarchy and toxic masculinity are established in a way that the problematic behaviours and contexts tend to spread to the parties that do not think similarly. Under these codes, every individual becomes a part of the system, as they cannot escape it. In Reverend Olamina's and Cory's case, they attempted once and were almost killed. Since they are punished by the system once, they refuse a second attempt out of fear that they might not survive.

Humans are not the only species that are under constant threat of patriarchy and the destructive system of domination and exploitation. As mentioned many times before, the system uses similar methods for the subjugation of women, otherized people, and Nature. The novel provides its readers with many instances of Nature's abuse and their horrifying consequences for all. As mentioned in the part named "5.1. Contextual Background," Butler reflected on climate crises in her novel and considers it almost a "character" in her story. She also portrayed the abuse of Nature by people who are ethically corrupted in the most profound ways. While doing so, Butler highlights the intrinsic value of Nature and its creatures through Lauren. In a

scene, as the group sits under the shade of oak trees to rest and eat, Lauren describes the trees as “half dead” as they have “been robbed of a great number of branches” (2019, 280). She also observes “their many jagged wounds” (2019, 280). From this perspective, two analyses can be made. Firstly, Lauren can see that trees are not merely background, but, to the contrary, they are living beings in their own right, and they are hurt by humans’ actions. Secondly, the people who “wounded” and “robbed” those trees cannot see the harm they did by ripping apart their branches. They only see trees’ potential as resources to be used for survival. The removal of the branches and the wounds they endure also remind many people whose limbs are ripped apart in the novel. Both sides are tortured and wounded at the hands of abusers.

In the novel, as noted previously, drug abusers who are called pyros, short for pyromaniac, burn everything on their way, as they get pleasure from the act of watching the burning of people and the environment. After their group is attacked by the pyros, next to the copse of oak trees that are wounded, the pyros get angry and start fires, burning down trees, animals, and people alike. Emery says that Pyros “will burn everything” to reach their group and as a form of revenge and pleasure. However, Emery states that pyros cannot tell people apart; “[T]o them [they are] all the same. Traveler is a traveler” (2019, 288). She also mentions that the pyros “hate everybody who isn’t them” (2019, 288). These observations by Emery are crucial as they remind the readers of humanity’s tendency to disregard all species apart from themselves. The pointless act of burning everything for their own pleasure is also another hedonistic act that is telling since it signifies their selfishness. Similarly to the patriarchal perspective, their perspective is the most valuable and valid one for them. That is why they do not even consider others’ comfort or right to live. So much so that they cannot even tell other people apart. No one knows why they set fires exactly, though they speculate. Lauren asks other people, and most seem to think “that they d[o] it to fight for the poor, to expose or destroy the goods hoarded by the rich” (2019, 202). However, Lauren does not agree with this as she witnessed them burning parts of the beautiful park with trees. She thinks that “a park by the sea wasn’t goods. It was open to everyone. Why burn it?” (2019, 202). This scene proves that pyros, just as patriarchal structures, situate themselves and their benefits higher than any other, be it humans or Nature. They even justify their meaningless destruction and abuse by making it seem like they are doing it for the poor. Their main objective is to maintain this unsustainable system of abuse and domination.

However, in a way, Butler warns the followers of these systems by drawing parallels between their behavior and that of drug-abusing pyros. The followers of the logic of domination are almost high on power, just like pyros.

The pyros start the fire by burning the wounded trees mentioned previously. It spreads quickly, following the group. They try to run away from it for a few days, but because it is too fast, at one point, Lauren thinks that they will not be able to run away from it. Everything descended into chaos. Dogs, normally feral and dangerous for humans, do not care about hunting them and run alongside them to get away from the fire. Other animals, too, attempt to escape from the hell created by pyros, such as cats, deer, and skunks. Lauren observes the pandemonium in the wake of fire and says that "[n]eiter humans nor animals were foolish enough to waste time attacking one another" (2019, 291). This scene is ironic since it illustrates the perverted instincts of pyros, or patriarchal mentality. What is real and visceral in life is the desire to live, which is possessed by all living beings, whether human or non-human. However, pyros unleash death on every form of life for meaningless and absurd pursuits, blind and intolerant to every other possibility of existence. Ironically, their extreme act of destruction brings together animals and humans in pursuit of life and the quest for survival.

Butler also showcases the disregard for both the human and the nonhuman world by exemplifying working conditions in the factories. Factories use slave labor and make the people work under the worst conditions. The toxic fumes and waste from the production process prove disregard for Nature as well. People work with "poisons," and they "breathe toxic fumes or drink contaminated water or get caught in unshielded machinery" (2019, 307). As mentioned previously in the first chapter in part "1.4.1.3. Connection or Relationality: Nature in the 'Flesh,'" Alaimo criticizes the patriarchal perspective that considers "environment" as a meaningless concept. She thus believes that humanity must discover a new form of materiality that gives meaning back to both the human and the non-human worlds. She asserts that the connections between both worlds must be reclaimed and understood from a different perspective. She creates a concept called "trans-corporeality," which basically explores the interconnections and undeniable inseparability of the human and the non-human world (2010, 1, 2). From this point of view, it is then possible to lay bare the horrible scene described previously. Because humans are interconnected with their environments, when the environment is full of toxic fumes, they get into

humans' bodies as well. Another perspective is from Neimanis, also previously explained in the first chapter part named "1.4.4. Women and Water." She claims that all bodies are "bodies of water." There cannot exist any meaningful borders between beings, organic or inorganic, since they are all connected with water (2010, 1, 2). The impossibility of erecting borders between beings also makes it improbable, if not futile, to spare the body from the effects of toxic water. As the body, whether human or non-human, is also a body of water and porous, it is poisoned as well.

There exist other examples of polluted bodies of water. In one of the entries to her journal, Lauren mentions that they can only get "safe water" from "commercial water stations" (2019, 190). Later, she writes that water bought from "a water peddler" should "be boiled." However, boiling might not be enough, as it only terminates microbes, "but may do nothing to get rid of chemical residue—fuel, pesticide, herbicide, whatever else has been in the bottles that peddlers use" (2019, 190). To elaborate, water, which must be a commons as it is essential for life (Shiva 2016, Water, 13), is only safe to drink when it is bought from commercial water stations. As previously mentioned in the first chapter, part "1.4.4. Women and Water," Shiva compares plastic-bottled water and "water temples." She states that Western society and the capitalist patriarchal paradigm consider water a "commodity," whereas her culture, along with many others, considers water a right (2016, Water, 9). To clarify, due to the patriarchal society's neglect and the abuse of water, it has become something to approach with extreme caution. In a society where no water is safe except for commercial water, certain otherized groups are doomed to die of thirst or be poisoned. As noted previously, water is a connector of all. In light of this, if a water resource is poisoned and contaminated, everything becomes contaminated along with it. The connections denied and repressed by the patriarchal dualistic mindset reveal themselves in unseemly and revengeful ways. In Butler's dystopic setting, Nature takes revenge on people who neglected and wounded it.

In another instance of the effects of subjugation, Nature reciprocates humanity's deplorable actions through dogs. One of the first to be domesticated by men, dogs have been considered the most loyal subjects to the kingdom of male domination. However, in their drive to survive, humanity neglects dogs and leaves them to their own devices. Dogs become feral and revert to their wild state, becoming predators of humans, especially babies and children. In many scenes of the novel, dogs attack and kill children, eating them. In a scene, the group sees a dog

"wandering down toward [them] with the fresh-looking, bloody hand and forearm of a child in its mouth" (2019, 256). Some children are no less feral in some cases. Surviving in the harsh realities of this dystopian world under the questionable ethics of what is left by the patriarchal civilization, they also become predators of their own kind, devolving into cannibals. In a scene described by Lauren, they come upon

> "four ragged, filthy kids huddled around a campfire. …Kids the age of [her] brothers—twelve, thirteen, maybe fourteen years old, three boys and a girl. The girl was pregnant, … would be giving birth any day. … [T]hese kids were roasting a severed human leg, maneuvering it where it lay in the middle of their fire … by twisting its foot. As [they] watched, the girl pulled a sliver of charred flesh from the thigh and stuffed it into her mouth" (2019, 256).

In these graphic and highly disturbing scenes, Butler summarizes the possible future state of the world under a patriarchal society structure. In the novel, time and time again, the reader witnesses the horror of severed body parts (both humans' and trees'), the torture and killing of many humans or non-humans, and sexual assault against girls and women. The clear division and hyperseparation of the self and the other, along with many other dualisms functioning in society as tools of domination and control, result in an explosive counterreaction when left unchecked for so many years. The dogs are eating their former masters, and by doing so, they are violently tearing down the walls between human and animal. A pregnant teenager is participating in another human's flesh with gusto, thereby erasing the boundaries between the self and the other by taking the other into her own body, in a most chilling imagery. The boundaries of bodies are blurred repeatedly and violently, criticizing one of the most problematic characteristics of patriarchal structures. Sands also highlights the cannibalism in the novel along with Butler's other works. To him, cannibalism is a "rhetoric strategy by which narratives signify voracity, hunger, and the dissolution of Self into Other" (2003, 7). Sands describes this as a "conflict between the sides of a binary" (2003, 7). To elaborate, the separated patriarchal identity formation, creating a tension between the self and the other, results in a collapse of rigid boundaries. The self is dissolved into the other by a violent act as a result of denying the interdependence so rigidly previously.

To summarize, the novel lays before the readers' eyes the abuse, subjugation, and domination over women, otherized peoples, and Nature and violently inflicted wounds this way of perceiving the world results in. The unsustainability of the

current system and warnings of ecofeminists, as well as other followers of ecological ethics, resonate within this dystopian novel. The selfishness of the anthropocentric perspective is revealed in all its rawness and shrill intensity.

5.4. Lauren Olamina: The Woman's Body, Vulnerability, and Ecological Consciousness and Ethics of Lauren

As some critics suggested before, Lauren can be read as a character who embodies the interconnectedness of all beings in her body. Her connection to Nature is her empathy and her embeddedness in her environment. She really is present. The fact that she can feel other humans' and non-humans' pain and pleasure is significant as it suggests a healed and whole world without dualisms, hierarchies, and the boundaries set by the patriarchal worldview. Her existence erases and distorts the boundaries and dualisms. This part will foreground Lauren's hyperempathy and will attempt to illustrate it as a foundation for the ecofeminist worldview and ethics.

As mentioned previously, because of her mother's drug abuse during her pregnancy, Lauren has a syndrome named hyperempathy. Also, previously noted, the syndrome is considered a weakness and a disease instead of a desirable thing. Lauren's father forbade her from sharing the fact that she has the syndrome with others. Moreover, he believes that it is something she can "shake off and forget about" (2019, 11). Nevertheless, the fact that she can feel other people's pain and pleasure shapes her entire personality. Her desire to create a new religion and to stand against age-old belief systems can be considered examples of her unique perspective. Even though most of the time she wants to look out for herself and survive, her ability to feel for others in the most visceral form results in her caring about everyone, whether human, animal, or plant. This resonates with ecofeminist ethics and the ethics of care. Shahnavaz describes her perceived weakness as a strength, as through "her hyperempathy … she becomes not only one person but many; she is herself, and she is the rest of them too" (2017, 42). To elaborate, she becomes interconnected and entangled with both the human and the non-human world. The fact that it is considered a weakness is also significant since it suggests the patriarchy's outlook on alternative ways of perceiving the environment. Lauren's hyperempathy results in connecting her to the perceived others, namely, other people, animals, and Nature, whereas the patriarchal perspective's basic understanding and

perception of the world is built upon dualism and the logic of domination, as mentioned previously in the first chapter.

Hyperempathy is also called "sharing" in the novel. This word suggests almost an act of sacrifice, as in a dystopian world, there exists so much pain for both the human and the non-human animals. Lauren, at times, must endure the pain inflicted on her person. However, she also feels their pain along with others, though not on purpose; thus becoming the very representation of Alaimo's theory of *trans-corporeality*. As mentioned in the first chapter, in the part "1.4.1.3. Connection or Relationality: Nature in the 'Flesh'", humans have undeniable material connections with other humans and non-humans. This point of view paves the way for a new outlook on Nature and perceived others, as it becomes impossible to separate them from the self since the self is entangled with the others, making the concept of the other almost impossible to comprehend or imagine. From this perspective, Lauren's "sharing" with others can no longer be conceived as a weakness because it creates a web of connections and entanglements with the environment, resulting in her distinct ethical outlook and ecological consciousness.

The striking difference between the patriarchal perspective and the ecofeminist perspective can be observed in many cases. Butler juxtaposes Lauren's "sharing" and her ethical outlook, and her, most probably, psychotic brother, Keith's disregard and cold approach to anything but his own wants and desires. By doing so, the author reveals the dramatic contrast between the two parties. Drawing on a similar perspective, Divya argues that "Keith's dismissive and mocking attitude" is the opposite of Lauren's empathy. Her brother is the "embod[iment of] a detached masculinity incapable of feeling what she feels" (2025, 8). To elaborate, Keith is an example of what a closed-off individual can become in an extreme case. He has no empathy. He uses a practice gun to kill birds and other animals, and cannot wait to be old enough to use a real gun. When he runs away from the community for good and only comes back to give money to his mother, he tells Lauren how he survives outside. He explains that he talked to a friendly man who wanted to go to Alaska to save himself. However, when the opportunity presented itself, Keith shot him and took his money. He says that "I didn't feel nothing [*sic*]. Nobody saw me do it. I just took his stuff and left him there" (2019, 103). Killing a man or animals is equally insignificant to him since he does not feel anything for either; his only desire is to prove that he is a man. He represents toxic masculinity. He does not listen to any

rules and endangers the community with his actions by running away from the safety of the community. When he comes back, his shoes have been stolen, and he is beaten up by the thief. Reverend Olamina gets very angry and questions him about his actions, but he refuses to own them and accuses other people. He perceives staying behind the walls as a weakness and wants to prove himself with an undying and unquenchable ambition. He cries and tells his father in defense, "I wanted to show you. … You always let Lauren do stuff! … I'm a man! I shouldn't be hiding in the house, hiding in the wall; I'm a man!" (2019, 87) Keith is only twelve years old at the time; however, he already demonstrates the characteristics of toxic patriarchal behaviour. Witnessing the scene, Lauren thinks to herself, "he wanted to show he was a man, not a scared girl" (2019, 87). This quotation represents society's perspective on women and men. Staying behind to protect the community, the web of relations, and living for others, sometimes even giving up on one's own dreams and desires, are perceived as weakness and vulnerability. Keith puts everyone in danger by leaving the community unguarded with the key to the gates. He later loses the keys, endangering the people further. Contrasting his behaviour, Lauren feels empathy even for Keith and cannot help but care for him and attend to his needs, even though she does not like him. Similarly, Divya also states that "[d]espite viewing her condition as a burden, Lauren's empathy extends to others, even to Keith when he is punished by their father" (2025, 8). To further explain, Lauren's hyperempathy is all-inclusive; that is, whether she likes it or not, she must feel for everyone around her. This signifies a form of perfect ethics of care and an ecofeminist perspective.

After Lauren's brother is tortured and killed, Lauren realizes that even though he did not enjoy his company much, she did not wish him dead. Furthermore, she reflects on the cruelty of Keith's death and every other senseless killing and torture taking place in the world. She comes to a very significant and notable conclusion: she no longer hates her hyperempathy as she did previously. She thinks that no one would want to kill or torture if they could feel the exact pain they inflict upon the other. She even imagines "giv[ing] [the syndrome] to others" (2019, 108), spreading it like a contagious disease. However, in this case, it is not a disease, but a kind of healing perspective that can be taught to others to create the Earthseed community. She finishes her thoughts on the issue with these significant words: "A biological consciousness is better than no consciousness at all" (2019, 108). To elaborate, she

realizes that in this dystopian society, the violence and horror are enabled due to the emotional and environmental detachment of the individual. Even though her condition is seen as a vulnerability by society, since the widespread pain and torture can incapacitate those who share them, it is also what makes us human. With empathy comes the consciousness and awareness of the interdependence of life. Lauren can see that, and she rebels against the societal norm that considers feeling for others as a weakness or as irrational. It is not a weakness or vulnerability; to the contrary, it is what ethics must stem from, as previously mentioned in the first chapter, in part "1.4.2. Women and Animals: Oppression and Resistance." To summarize, Lauren's body, despite being seen as vulnerable to pain that is not hers, becomes a site from which ecofeminist and ecological ethical understandings can stem due to being able to experience what others are experiencing. In the following of the scene mentioned above, she concludes her thoughts by observing that the day her father beat Keith for running away a second time, "was the end of something precious in the family" (2019, 108). Lauren also states that her father could not cry for Keith. This also illustrates that her father is also a part of patriarchal tradition, which teaches that emotions and feelings are irrational and not for men.

As previously mentioned, Lauren can feel the pain of animals as well, which reinforces the idea that her body and her hyperempathy are representations of the interconnectedness of all beings. In the scene where she has to kill a dog for attacking Dominic to eat him, Lauren shoots the dog. However, as the dog falls on the sands of the beach, they are camping "without a sound." Lauren falls with it, "gasping, feeling kicked in the chest" (2019, 197). In another scene, she describes that she feels the pain of birds or squirrels (although milder than dogs') when she shoots them. Notably, it is her father who made her shoot them "to see whether or not [she] could do it—whether shooting [them] … would trigger [her] hyperempathy" (2019, 35). To elaborate, both scenes illustrate the entanglement of life and relationality. Even though it is denied by the patriarchy and canonical Western philosophy, humans, along with other species, are ecologically embedded in their environments. It is also notable that, although Lauren lives in a walled community with borders from the outside world, her bodily boundaries are nonexistent; that is, she cannot keep the misery of the outside world out of her selfhood. That is why she can be read as an ecofeminist character, as her selfhood begins with the dissolution of the self/other dualism. Her so-called syndrome shows the readers an escape from

the dualistic structure of patriarchy. In parallel with this argument, Heard argues that the dog shooting scene is a prime example of an Earthseed care ethic. Lauren explores the fact that "interdependency is not limited to humans." As a matter of fact, killing the dog shows that "harm and exploitation against non-human entities directly impacts human life; universal care, tenderness, and love are essential in a violent and oppressive world" (Heard 2024). In other words, Lauren and her boundaryless body can be presented as the answer to all the violence and hatred in this dystopian world. Her limits are permeable and porous; hence she contains everything within her selfhood without excluding anything. Arguably, that is the reason for her insistence on God being the change. She herself goes through change each time she shares other people's pain and pleasure.

5.5. Earthseed: An Alternative Ecofeminist Belief System

"Consider: Whether you're a human being, an insect, a microbe, or a stone, this verse is true.
All that you touch,
You Change.
All that you Change,
Changes you.
The only lasting truth
Is Change.
God
Is Change."
Octavia Butler-Parable of the Sower 2019 (75)

Lauren's Earthseed teachings can be read in parallel with ecofeminist philosophy. A similar approach is adopted by Shahnavaz, as she reads the Earthseed "teachings" and "ecofeminist teachings" (2017, 40). Earthseed rejects dualism and the Nature/culture divide. The verses of the belief system criticize hierarchical binaries and the logic of domination, exposing these systems' contradictions and failures. It promotes adaptation and relationality instead of control and individuality. By decentralizing authority, Earthseed aims to build anti-hierarchical structures in response to ecological problems. This part will analyze Lauren's teachings of Earthseed and will attempt to highlight the differences between Earthseed and

patriarchal religions by exemplifying Lauren's relationship and interactions with his father.

The novel's opening scene is a "recurring dream" of Lauren (2019, 3). She sees this dream the day before her baptism, which she is reluctant to be a part of since she stopped believing in her father's religion three years ago. However, she goes with her father's plan due to her reluctance to stand against him. She goes so far as to call herself a "coward" (2019, 7). She writes in her journal that it is a dream she sees when she "struggle[s]." It is notable that the dream can be read as a symbolic representation of Lauren's frustrations with her father's religion, which is a patriarchal religion. Lauren dreams that she "is learning to fly." With each dream she has, she learns a bit more. In the dream, she tries to go through a door, yet she hits a burning wall. She also catches fire and starts to burn as well. Next, all she sees is "darkness," then she sees the stars (2019, 3, 4). To elaborate, her dream arguably summarizes Lauren's transformation from her "father's daughter" (2019, 3) to a young woman who knows her mind and refuses to follow patriarchal worldviews. It is worth noting that Lauren's and her father's birthdays are on the same day (2019, 3). This suggests that she started as a part of her father's legacy; however, because of her hyperempathy and her strong observation skills, she becomes something more. The burning wall in the dream is also significant since a wall suggests a boundary and border. Drawing on this, the fact that it is burning indicates that borders are collapsing. She also catches fire along with the wall. This points to her old self dying and her new self, aligned with the principles of ecofeminism, is born. Agraso approaches the issue from a parallel perspective and argues that Lauren moves away from Christianity and chooses to follow Earthseed as her religion because Earthseed is the "more reasonable option" compared to the others. The reason for this is that Christianity is "based on … passiveness and hierarchy," while Earthseed stands for taking "action and equality" (2013, 169). These are important features, especially for women (Agraso 2013, 169), who would be dominated under the other systems along with Nature.

The baptism scene is also meaningful as it illustrates a few key points of the patriarchal worldview, namely its disregard for anything other than human and the hierarchical structure of patriarchy. The water used for the baptism was bought, and it is "fresh, clean, potable" since Lauren's father "insisted on" it. The water is an extremely expensive commodity in this dystopian world. Humans and animals alike

die of thirst or due to drinking contaminated water. This extravagance and waste of water can be thought of as the patriarchy's disregard for Nature and otherized peoples. Moreover, Reverend Olamina makes Lauren go last during the baptism ceremony. Other children go first; next, Lauren's brothers, and lastly Lauren herself. Lauren believes that the fact that she is the last person to be dipped into the water must be her "father's idea," as her father "thinks that [she] need[s] more humility." Though she does not agree with her father and believes that her "biological humility … is more than enough" (2019, 13, 14). The word "humility" is derived from the Latin words "*humus,*" which literally means "earth," and "humilis," which means "on the ground" (Harper). Thus, Lauren's lament about her "biological humility" can be interpreted differently than she intended it. At the time, hating her syndrome because of her father, she states her displeasure with it. However, "biological humility" can also be interpreted as her being bound to earth and her environment instead of being separated from it. Another notable analysis of this scene can be done by foregrounding Lauren's father's—a representative of patriarchal belief systems—discontent and disapproval of the different and boundaryless. As mentioned previously, Lauren's hyperempathy syndrome is hated by her father. He believes that it is something she can be trained out of. Because of her condition, Lauren cannot be put into a mold by her father. This disturbs his beliefs' basic tenets. That is why the father thinks that Lauren needs more "humility." To him, she does not follow the rules of his ideal world, where everything has its own place and is walled in; to the contrary, she breaks down these walls and blends in with the perceived other and intermingles with the previously separated. Lauren and her body make it impossible for hierarchies to exist. Her ideal world and belief system, which has many parallels with ecofeminism, are horizontal and egalitarian.

Lauren's Earthseed belief system is based on God being the concept of change. However, before she reaches that point in her belief, she considers what other people and mainstream belief systems conceptualize the idea of God. During the baptism ceremony, Lauren thinks that there are many different points of view regarding what or who God is. She expresses this with these words: "A lot of people seem to believe in a big-daddy-God or a big-cop-God or a big-king-God. They believe in a kind of super-person. A few believe God is another word for nature, and nature turns out to mean just about anything they happen not to understand or feel in control of" (2019, 14). This scene is significant as it illustrates how Lauren's

perspective differs from the mainstream belief system. She denies following the idea of a patriarchal God. To her, God is not a patriarch whose children follow his word. Moreover, she rejects an authority figure and a system of power that feeds from monitoring, correction, and coercion. Besides, likening God to a king also disturbs her since she sees that it is based on hierarchy, which she can never be a supporter of due to her hyperempathy. She criticizes the logic of domination and patriarchal control structures in place in society. Because the system cannot understand Nature, it is afraid of its fluidity and strength; thus, some people following this principle believe that God is Nature. Therefore, to control it or to make it so that it can be understood by the system, they separate it from humanity and build their belief systems around a male-centered image. This results in God being imagined as a man-like figure that has "super-person" powers. Nevertheless, Lauren rejects the idea of hierarchical divinity and deconstructs patriarchal theology, worshiping God as a man. Instead, she decenters the man and the anthropocentric worldview. Her belief system is in tune with ecofeminism, as she aims to replace the hierarchy with relationality. This scene is notable as it shows the reader the epistemological break that results in Lauren's founding of Earthseed. Agraso, drawing on a parallel line of thought, argues that Lauren rejects the idea of the Christian God, as she realizes that people use the idea to legitimize their deplorable actions; hence Lauren "believes it is time for a new ideology, a new religion based on interdependence, responsibility and action" (2013, 167). In other words, Lauren realizes the power structure within her father's religion and rejects following her father's steps as she sees that its hierarchical structure and legitimization methods only end in disaster, since it is susceptible to misuse.

Lauren writes the verses of her religion or philosophy—she is not sure which one it is (2019, 25). In one of those verses is worded as follows: "We do not worship God. /We perceive and attend God. /We learn from God. /With forethought and work,/ We shape God. /In the end, we yield to God. /We adapt and endure, /For we are Earthseed /And God is Change" (2019, 17). As can be interpreted from the verse, Lauren refuses to believe in a God that is personified; to the contrary, she believes that God is a process rather than a male being. It is a fluid and dynamic existence. It is the transformation that everything goes through at any moment in time. Her God is not transcendent; conversely, it is imminent and can be perceived by anyone. As quoted by Starhawk in the first chapter, part "1.6. Spiritual, Indigenous, and

Alternative Ecologies." Starhawk challenges "power-over" by claiming that "power from within" is more in tune with reality (2012, 31). The power is within every being. Similar to Starhawk's idea of God, Lauren's belief system foregrounds non-hierarchical spirituality and relationality by highlighting the fact that everything goes under constant change, and nothing is static. By claiming that this process is God, Lauren deconstructs the idea of a higher authority creating the universe; to the contrary, change, which is a process that connects everything, is what the real power is, and it is within everything. To summarize, Lauren's philosophy adapts and evolves together as a collective instead of controlling and dominating from a higher and singular point of power.

Earthseed's teachings clearly stand in opposition to Lauren's father's patriarchal church. While Christianity believes that humans are created in God's image, Lauren's philosophy, like ecofeminism, asserts that God is in every being of the universe, and God is all-encompassing. It is expressed as follows:

> "Create no images of God. /Accept the images /that God has provided. /They are everywhere, /in everything. /God is Change— /Seed to tree, /tree to forest; /Rain to river, /river to sea; /Grubs to bees, /bees to swarm. /From one, many; from many, one; /Forever uniting, growing, dissolving— /forever Changing, /The universe /is God's self-portrait" (2019, 299).

To build on this, the lines deny an image of God that is made by man. It suggests that God can be found in everything, from the biggest forest to the smallest of grubs. This is a summary of the web of life and interconnectedness of all beings. It also suggests that the universe, as its own creator, illustrates the meaning of life by simply being; there is no need for further explanations or acts of interpretation on humans' part. It is self-explanatory in its simple glory.

Another example of Lauren's denial of hierarchy and dualism and acceptance of and desire to follow relationality, horizontal power, and egalitarian structure is evident in another one of her verses. She expresses her ideals with these words: "We are all Godseed, but no more or less so than any other aspect of the universe, Godseed is all there is—all that Changes" (2019, 73). To elaborate on the quotation, Lauren decenters human exceptionalism by stating that humans are just one among many in terms of being a part of God. She uses the concept of God as Starhawk does; to Lauren, God is a power that is within every being. No being owns a higher power or has any privilege over any other being. Humans are embedded in the universe

among other species without any anthropocentric ideal. In this philosophy, dualisms collapse and cannot exist, as every being is interconnected in a web of life as giver and container of life.

Butler attempts to deconstruct hierarchies and power-over powers through Lauren's Earthseed philosophy. In another verse, Lauren expresses her observation of power struggles with these words: "All struggles /Are essentially /power struggles. /Who will rule, /Who will lead, /Who will define, /refine, /confine, /design, /Who will dominate. /All struggles /Are essentially power struggles, /And most are no more intellectual /than two rams /knocking their heads together" (2019, 89). To expand on this, this verse can be read as a rejection of the logic of domination and hierarchical dualisms and control. Butler criticizes the power-over structures existing in society that subjugate the masses. Warren's idea of the logic of domination, as mentioned previously in the first chapter, gains its legitimacy by creating hierarchies and a selected rational party, Ups, that can exert its power on the Downs. Butler exposes this desire to create hierarchical structures and power-over ideals by arguing that it is only a primitive competition concealed behind the façade of so-called reason. Power struggles in society can simply be read as violence veiled as intellectualism.

Another verse from Lauren's Earthseed religion/philosophy highlights how her belief system is focused on life instead of death. She calls her book "*Earthseed: The Book of the Living*" (2019, 117), as opposed to "Tibetan and Egyptian Books of the Dead" (2019, 117). In her verse, she expresses her desire for interconnection and spreading life with these words: "All successful life is /Adaptable, /Opportunistic, /Tenacious, /Interconnected, and /Fecund. /Understand this, /Use it. /Shape God" (2019, 117). The relational ontology, which is at the heart of ecofeminism as well, forms the backbone of this belief system. Every being must coexist instead of isolating itself from its immediate environment. The idea of interdependence is also affirmed by Lauren's teachings, as she believes adaptation, interdependence, and interconnection are what help every being survive. As can be observed from her choice of name for her book, she realizes that hierarchical structures and dualism within society almost always end in tragedy and death for all: human, non-human, and Nature itself alike. Therefore, she wants to celebrate the "fecundity" of life and life-affirming processes. She hopes for a future where life grows in abundance. Moreover, Lauren finishes her verse by advising her readers to apply this important

knowledge to their lives. God is made of all, thus it is possible to "shape" it with one's actions. Though it must be noted that these actions should follow the principles mentioned before. That is, they should be linear and flat instead of hierarchical. Secondly, they should decenter humanity and put it along with all others. Last but not least, they should realize that everything is connected and power comes from within, not from a higher place.

Unlike other novels in this dissertation, *Parable of the Sower's* dystopian setting calls for a different approach to healing. Growing up and witnessing the atrocities taking place in the world, Lauren has almost no hope of redeeming this world as she observes that things are going to become worse instead of moving in a better direction. The little that is saved from one destructive factor is annihilated the next time by another. Taking all these factors into account, it is no surprise that Lauren believes that the future is among the stars. Advancing a similar argument, Agraso reads this "as a wake-up call for our generation" from Butler. She maintains that Butler is warning humanity that "we are no longer connected to the Earth, to nature; we don't feel the necessity to heal its wounds. Lauren had to set her aim on the stars precisely because she felt the Earth could not be saved" (2013, 169). To elaborate, humanity's separation from its environment and its carelessness towards Nature might end in tragedy for all. Seeing the future as hopeless in an Anthropocentric world, Butler cautions against following the same path as our forefathers. She does this by presenting Lauren and her father's contradicting religious outlooks in life. As noted earlier, Lauren refuses to follow her father's footsteps. Butler, arguably, shows the way of deliverance from a future foreseen in the novel.

Butler's cautionary tale is named after the Parable of the Sower, a parable in the Gospel of Mathew. Comparing the original story and the Bible version might bring to the fore some of the critical points that might be useful for analysis of the novel. In the Bible, Jesus tells his disciples and other people gathered around him the sower's parable. It's the story of a farmer sowing his seed. When he threw the seeds,

> "some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But … [they] … withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown" (Matthew 13:3-8).

Arguably, Lauren realizes that whatever seed falls to the ground encounters innumerable dangers and is halted from taking root in the unpromising soil of patriarchy, following principles of domination and control. Since she desires to survive and thrive, she believes that she needs a soil untouched by these principles that are so destructive for both the human and the non-human worlds. Originally, in the sower's parable, Jesus alludes to seed as God's word and soil as people who hear his word. However, rereading the parable from Butler's perspective, it might be possible to deduce that seed or Earthseed are the people who believe in following the principles of a non-hierarchical system that denies patriarchy, the logic of domination, and control. Where the seed falls can be analyzed differently as well. That is, the ones that cannot take root because of dangers or impossibility end up failing due to the inhospitable environment of patriarchy's male-centered power structure and hierarchical systems. The last seeds are able to take root as they were received well due to a system devoid of hierarchies, dualisms, and the logic of domination. This healing system is parallel with ecofeminist philosophy and ethics; that is, it follows a relational identity formation, it escapes from dualism and domination by incorporating empathy and sympathy within its ethical systems. Next, it believes in the interdependency and interconnectivity of all species. It refuses to otherize women and Nature.

5.6. Community, Care, and Ecofeminist Ethics of Earthseed

Another tension in the novel lies in the conflict between the understandings of patriarchal communities and communities that have parallel structures with ecofeminism and other ecologies. While the former values survival of the collective as well, it does so in a manner that always prioritizes its own self-interests. The latter, on the other hand, prioritizes the care, relationality, and interconnectedness between all members of the community, thus ensuring a non-hierarchical egalitarian society. Lauren's Earthseed community has connections and a sense of kinship beyond blood. This part will analyze the features of the Earthseed community and will attempt to foreground the similarities and parallels between it and the ecofeminist philosophy.

When Lauren's brother, Keith, is brutally killed, the community starts to lose all hope and their sense of unity. Lauren describes it with these words: "We are coming apart. The community, the families, individual family members … We are a rope, breaking, a single strand at a time" (2019, 109). Elaborating on this disintegration of Lauren's community, it is possible to deduce that since the people of Robledo are used to a leader-dependent structure, and they rely on a central authority with power for their sense of security and unity, which are common features of patriarchal societies, they fall apart and collapse when they first lose their leader's son, realizing that their leader's power was not indefinite. The collapse process is finalized when the leader himself goes missing and is assumed dead. This can be considered one of the vulnerabilities of hierarchical structures, as they are unable to sustain the same structure with the power vacuum left in the wake of their leader's death. As opposed to this type of community, Lauren's vision of the Earthseed community is significantly different from that of her father's.

As previously noted, Lauren's personality and her ethical outlook stem from her hyperempathy. Feeling others' pain and pleasure makes her a natural leader for her people and the Earthseed community. However, a leader in the Earthseed context must not be interpreted as a leader in hierarchically structured systems; to the contrary, she imagines her community following care ethics as well as being interconnected and egalitarian. Echoing this claim, Agraso asserts that despite being young, Lauren "takes care of everybody in the group because she knows their pain is also her pain. Her compassion, combined with her intelligence and her education, makes her a powerful leader people were searching for" (2013, 167). Due to her hyperempathy, she looks from a unique perspective and can see the problematic structures that have existed in society. She desires to break the vicious cycle and heal the wounds by bringing an end to the corrupted system through helping create a community that values the responsibility of the collective, cooperation, solidarity, and interdependence on one another. Even though she can be perceived as a leader at first glance, she imagines a shared authority as the whole group makes decisions together and follows along with them as a group.

Another principle and teaching of the Earthseed is to unite and survive collectively instead of dividing and controlling. This point of view aligns with ecofeminist philosophy in terms of standing against dualistic structures in society and the objectification of women, otherized people, and Nature. This is exemplified in

one of the verses, which is worded as follows: “Embrace diversity. /Unite— /or be divided, /robbed, /ruled, /killed, /By those who see you as prey. /Embrace diversity /Or be destroyed.” (2019, 185). One of the ecofeminists who highlights the importance of embracing diversity and criticizes Western civilization for not doing so is Plumwood. As mentioned earlier in the first chapter, part “1.3.1 Understanding Dualism,” Plumwood asserts that one of the characteristics of dualism is homogenization. In this method of hierarchical control, the identities of each being are put into one mold and unified in a manner that makes it impossible to see the differences of each component. Earthseed philosophy stands against homogenization and strongly encourages that the only way to survive and thrive is to celebrate and adopt the diversity of all beings.

When Lauren helps a couple named Natividad and Travis and their baby, Dominic. At first, Harry is surprised, as he saw Lauren kill people to save herself or their group; he thought she was a more selfish person. However, Lauren’s main objective is to eliminate the threats against their chosen family and help every person who can become a part of their community to grow it. After getting help from Lauren a few times, the couple with the baby join their group as well. Collective effort and sharing are two important tenets of the Earthseed teachings. In the scene in which Lauren first saves the family, two men, who are identified as “two-legged coyotes” by Lauren, steal a water bottle that has just been filled from a commercial water station from the woman with the baby. Lauren takes the water from the thief and gives it back to the man with the woman. Harry calls her a “Good Samaritan” and expresses his surprise (2019, 190,191). However, while Harry may not be aware of this at first, Lauren is a caring person and a follower of care ethics. This characteristic feature manifests itself in her Earthseed teachings and the community she brings together and unites under the name of Acorn.

Lauren’s desire to form the Earthseed community stems from her will to live and let live. She wants to create and exist within a community that has enough clean water and enough food for everyone. She expresses her desire for a community of Earthseed with these words: “We must have arable land, a dependable water supply, and enough freedom to let us establish ourselves and grow” (2019, 210). To elaborate, she aims to have a community that lives in harmony with the environment and that has a simple subsistence economy. As previously noted in the first chapter, Mies and Shiva suggest that patriarchal capitalism is too violent for sustainability

and for the good of the human and the non-human worlds. A subsistence economy, on the other hand, provides the basic needs of all beings within its system and creates the basis for kinship networks and community-based living. It is sustainable in terms of ecology and in harmony with Nature and its creatures. Its purpose is not to make a profit or accumulate wealth; to the contrary, it revolves around sharing practices and survival of the collective with the lowest environmental impact. Hence, it provides healing and restoration for the fragmented and broken.

Lauren explains the concept of an Earthseed community and how to "be good members of" it to Bankole with the following words: "The essentials … are to learn to shape God with forethought, care, and work; to educate and benefit their community, their families, and themselves; and to contribute to the fulfillment of the Destiny" (2019, 246). To build on Lauren's words, she wants to create a community that is based on care ethics and hard work. Each member supports the others for every member's well-being. Moreover, everyone is interdependent on the other members. Lauren asserts that "[a] unifying, purposeful life here on Earth" is also crucial for the "Earthseed community" (2019, 246). In such a community, each member is committed to their own well-being as well as that of others. People purposefully live to mutually support their growth as a community and shape their future through education and commitment to contributing to others' well-being. Zahra, one of the first followers of Earthseed, also voices her motivation to become a part of the Earthseed community as follows: "I don't care about no [*sic*] outer space. You can keep that part of it. But if you want to put together some kind of community where people look out for each other and don't have to take being pushed around, I'm with you" (2019, 209). This clearly demonstrates that people are fed up with the system that wounds, kills, and dominates. They are longing for a community where the rules of care ethics are followed, as it is apparent that these principles can heal the wounds inflicted by patriarchy.

At the end of the novel, when the budding Earthseed community reaches Bankole's land, Lauren reveals that she has been "carrying and collecting" seed, which she intends to start a new winter garden and maybe more in the near future. She put the seed along with other necessary items that will one day "save [her] life" (2019, 302). When the group comes, the land is ravaged and stripped of its resources. The houses are burnt down along with their inhabitants (2019, 297). To interpret these scenes, Lauren has brought hope and means of the future in the form of seeds

to the vacant and abandoned land. The different types of seeds that have been protected and carried by Lauren are the potential that will ensure the community's future. From just a packet of seeds, Lauren and the rest of the community will help create and maintain many human and non-human lives, also creating a new ecosystem where they relocate. Seeds ensure the continuity of life, and the act of seed saving alone is a form of resistance to the capitalist patriarchy. As noted in the first chapter, part "1.4.3. Women and the Land," similarly, Shiva highlights seed saving and "seed-keeping" as crucial "practices" that ensure "ecological and food security" (2016, Earth, 151). She also maintains that these practices are methods of subsistence economies. In light of this, it is possible to conclude that Lauren's resistance to the system is multidimensional. One of the many actions she takes is keeping the seeds from being burned in her old walled community and saving them to bring them to a new life. Hence, the survival of the seeds—and many seedlings and later trees and plants that will surely grow from them—along with the community and their mutual growth, is a political statement in itself. They persist through many hardships and violent acts, and resist by caring for one another. The novel ends with every member of the community planting an acorn carried by Lauren in memory of their dead. The idea comes from Lauren. Instead of gravestones, Lauren suggests that "[t]rees are better than stone—life commemorating life" (2019, 309). When the meaningful ceremony ends, Lauren urges Bankole to leave the area as they have "work to do" (2019, 311). Indeed, a community standing against the capitalist patriarchy has a lot of wounds they must heal. Consequently, the novel ends on a higher note, as they find a safe place and have the means of survival and even growth. The seeds collected and saved also suggest the same. Thus, Earthseed embeds itself in the fertile soil, and the beginning of a journey of healing and merging the fragmented and divided.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS OF ANA CASTILLO'S *SO FAR FROM GOD*

6.1. Contextual Background

Born on June 15, 1953, in Chicago, U.S., Ana Castillo is an activist Chicano poet, author, editor, and translator. She earned her B.A. degree from Northeastern Illinois University in art, her M.A. from the University of Chicago in social sciences, and finally, her Ph.D. from the University of Bremen, Germany ("Ana Castillo").

In her extensive collection of literary works, she deals with themes such as race, class, and gender. She foregrounds Chicano culture and women in her writings and explores the meaning of being a Chicana woman in American society through her colorful, provocative, and unconventional characters. She has a significant impact on Chicana/o literature. Among her most notable poetry works are *Otro Canto* (1977), *The Invitation* (1979), *Women Are Not Roses* (1984), and *My Father Was a Toltec* (1988). Her most acclaimed novels include *The Mixquiahuala Letters* (1986; reprinted 1992), *So Far from God* (1993), *Peel My Love Like an Onion* (1999), *My Daughter, My Son, the Eagle, the Dove: An Aztec Chant* (2000), *The Guardians* (2007), and *Give It to Me* (2014).

Castillo's first novella, written in an epistolary form, is *The Mixquiahuala Letters* (1986; reprinted 1992). The novella's narrative unfolds around protagonist Tereasa's letters to her friend Alicia. The novel is especially interesting because at the beginning of the novel, in the content part, Castillo gives her readers a series of suggestions regarding the reading process. The readers are supposed to read the letters in three different suggested orders as per their preference: a conformist, a cynic, and a quixotic. The novel foregrounds Chicana women's voices by delving into two female friends' most private form of communication, letters. Themes such as female friendship and sisterhood, identity formation of Chicana women, and Chicana culture are explored.

Another novel by Castillo, also the topic of this chapter, *So Far from God* (2005), revolves around a wondrous and bizarre family that lives in a town named

Tome in New Mexico. The lives of the mother, Sofia (also called Sofi), and her remarkably unusual daughters—Esperanza, Fe, Caridad, and La Loca—are narrated through an amazingly structured narrative style of magical realism, which is one of the most acclaimed forms of Chicana writing. The novel opens with the most unfortunate event of three-year-old La Loca's death (at the time she was called something else) and resurrection in front of the whole church. All Sofia's daughters – except for Fe— are extraordinary in some way. La Loca can communicate with animals and feel more at home with them than she does with human beings. She has an uncanny ability to train horses. It is almost as if they understand each other. La Loca is also a healer and looks after the home and feeds her family. She cannot stand the touch of another human except for her mother. She thinks that humans smell. Caridad marries the love of her life, Memo, but she finds out about his betrayal with a former girlfriend. She divorces him and gets an abortion with La Loca's help. Later, she starts to have casual sexual relationships with every man she thinks looks like Memo. One day, she is found tortured and left in a ditch. She was violently assaulted and raped. The doctors at the hospital try to treat her, but the damage is so extensive that they cannot do much. Sofi brings her back home, and they start looking after her. One day, miraculously, she is healed and restored to her former beauty. After the healing, she loses interest in men and humanity in general and starts to have visions like her sister La Loca and is trained by another healer, Doña Felicia (Castillo 2005, 53). Sofi's eldest daughter, Esperanza, is a news reporter. She earned a degree in Chicana Studies and an M.A. in communications. She had a boyfriend named Ruben, but he betrayed her and left her. She is successful in her career, and she accepts a position to become a war reporter in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War. She is taken hostage and later killed gruesomely. After her death, she comes back as a ghost and visits her family regularly. It becomes such an ordinary incident that even the people outside the family could see her transparent ghost. Another daughter is named Fe. She is the most ordinary girl in the family. She desired to be normal and unlike (according to Fe) her crazy sisters. She falls in love with Tom, and they plan to marry. With only a short time remaining until the wedding, Tom leaves her with a letter. She starts screaming day and night, and no one can stop her for one year. The same night, Caridad is healed and restored to her beautiful self, and Fe stops screaming. Later, she marries her cousin and starts to work in a company named Acme. Dealing with highly dangerous and banned chemicals, she becomes sicker day

by day. At the end, she loses her life most horrifically. A most compelling novel, *So Far from God* (2005), reflects Chicana women's connection to animals, Nature, and each other as well as their struggles against patriarchy, Catholic religion, and white American society.

Among Castillo's other works is *My Daughter, My Son, the Eagle, the Dove: An Aztec Chant* (2000). Inspired by the Aztec chants, the author pens her advice to her daughter and son as a mother. The work foregrounds the importance of finding one's voice and the formation of one's identity as a Chicana in the United States. The novel consists of two sections, one for a daughter and one for a son. The important milestones, such as graduations and crucial events such as a quinceañera, are reflected and celebrated. This collection of a mother's advice attempts to foreground the vitality of one's cultural roots and heritage, as well as paving one's own path in life to become a more well-rounded person.

In one of her interviews, Castillo states that she has "never written for a white audience. As a woman from the margins of mainstream society, it's critical for [her] to give voice to [her] experience" (Montellano). In her works, she reflects the experience of a Chicana woman. In her novel, *So Far From God* (2005), she writes about people from Northern New Mexico. It is an annexed state in the relatively recent past, 1912; therefore, the intensive usage of Spanish in the novel is only natural since people in this region constantly code-switch in their daily lives, and this becomes their norm. Castillo points out that W.W. Norton Publishing House honored her wishes regarding the usage of Spanish in the novel and not italicizing the Spanish words (Montellano). She asserts that people "think that language is only an aesthetic choice or a matter of personal expression, but for Mexicans and the people in the U.S. who share that history, suppression of [their] culture is political. This is the reason [she] choose[s] the language/s [she] choose[s], and when" (Montellano). In other words, her choice of Spanish language usage and code-switching is not only a concern of beauty or artistic expression but also a way to raise her voice as a marginalized woman and author against her suppressors.

In another interview with MELUS, Castillo asserts that "one does not only undermine the status quo by stating it, but you undermine it by virtue of the language that you've chosen to write in, and by your acts. […] I think that I've been an insurgent […] in terms of the language that I use. My language is not white standard English" (Saeta and Castillo 1997, 141). To put it differently, Castillo believes that

the language one uses can be wielded in a way that shows discontent towards the status quo. She imparts her experiences as a Chicana woman through her unique voice and language, opting to do so in such a manner that shows her dissatisfaction and resentment towards Anglo-American society's mainstream worldview.

6.2. Plot Overview and Key Elements

Ana Castillo's *So Far From God* (2005), first published in 1993, is one of her best-loved works. The novel takes place in New Mexico, in a very small town called Tome. Being on the border, Tome carries the cultural markers of liminality and transitionality. Catholicism, indigenous beliefs, and English and Spanish are always affected by each other and interconnected in a manner that creates a new way of expressing oneself and experiencing the world around. As mentioned above briefly, the novel revolves around Sofi and her four daughters, Esperanza, Fe, Caridad, and La Loca. It opens with a strikingly bizarre scene in which the youngest, La Loca, dies after undergoing a seizure. Sofi, the family, and the loved ones are devastated by the tragedy of the death of a three-year-old baby. However, their misery is cut short since during the Funeral Mass at the church, the little girl is resurrected. This miracle sets the tone for the whole work, and throughout the novel, the family finds themselves facing increasingly bizarre events.

The first character worth mentioning is Sofi. Her husband leaves her with four daughters and little means of financial gain as a result of his gambling problems. Sofi is a strong woman who faces life head-on, and she never gives up raising remarkable daughters by herself. Throughout the novel, she increasingly realizes her own empowerment and decides to take matters of poverty into her own hands. She declares herself the unofficial La Mayor of the town of Tome and starts a series of projects to bring more income to the town, which was left destitute due to the government's careless acts. Tragically, Sofi loses all her daughters one by one to different types of deaths, and she outlives them all her daughters. Despite facing and living through many hardships and sorrowful ends of her beloved daughters, Sofi perceives and stands against the injustices she faces as a Chicana woman. She becomes the unofficial Mayor of the town of Tome and creates many job opportunities for the poor town's people. At the end, after she loses her beloved La

Loca to AIDS, she founds the M.O.M.A.S., short for Mothers of Martyrs and Saints. The organization accepts mothers of all martyrs and saints. The only thing you have to do to get in is to say that you have lost your child and s/he was a saint or she became a martyr as a result of her death. Having been written in a magical realism style and carrying a more ironic narrative tone, the novel makes use of bizarre and unrealistic plot points to tell its story. Nevertheless, the mother, Sofi, unfortunately loses her daughter Esperanza to war, Fe to cancer, which resulted in highly toxic and illegal chemicals used in a factory causing environmental disasters as well, while Caridad simply disappears with her lover when they jump off a cliff, and La Loca's second and final death is the result of AIDS.

Sofi's eldest daughter, Esperanza, holds a B.A. in Chicana studies and an M.A. in communications. She works as a local news reporter. As she works hard, she advances in her career and gets a job offer to work as a war reporter in Saudi Arabia. Unfortunately, she gets lost during the conflict in the war. The unfortunate family finds out about their daughter's death from the officials. Instead of bringing her body and telling them the reason for her death, they just give them a medal of honor. The officials "claimed not to be able to locate her body so as to send it home" (Castillo 2005, 160). However, it is implied that she was tortured and killed, so the government chose not to show her body to the family. As mentioned above, she becomes an American hero and gets a medal posthumously for her actions and bravery (2005, 159). She visits her family as a ghost many times and is with them during important moments. Ironically, Caridad claims that she has a better relationship with Esperanza after her death compared to when she was alive.

The second daughter is Caridad. She is the most beautiful one among her sisters. She works as an orderly at a hospital. As mentioned above, she and her beloved boyfriend, Memo, got married, but they got divorced soon after the act due to Memo's unfaithfulness. Caridad was pregnant when she discovered the betrayal. She aborts the baby with her sister La Loca's help, although it is a taboo and grave sin in the Catholic religion. After her divorce, she tries to find solace in the arms of random men. One day, she is attacked and tortured in the most horrible ways and probably raped by an unknown person or persons. The identity is never revealed; however, Caridad describes the attacker not as a person but as a monster. After her attack, she is taken to a hospital. Caridad is half dead and almost unrecognizable. After a while, the doctors release her, claiming they have done everything they can.

Sofi takes her beloved daughter to their home, where Fe is still screaming relentlessly. One day, another miracle takes place in the house, and Caridad recovers from her horrible wounds, and she turns back to her beautiful self. The same day, Fe stops screaming. After her miraculous recovery, Caridad gains supernatural powers similar to her sister La Loca. She moves from the house and starts living in a rented trailer owned by Doña Felicia. Felicia is a curandera[3], and she realizes Caridad's potential and trains her as one. During the Holy Week, she sees a young woman named Esmeralda and falls in love with her. Despite the fact that she is deeply in love with her, she never tells her of her feelings, and she keeps loving her from afar. After her pilgrimage, her hopeless love for the unaware woman is the last straw. She claims that she is going to the springs for a bath and does not come back for a whole year. For the duration of this year, she lives in a cave. Doña Felicia's nephew Francisco, who is a Santero[4], and his friends find her coincidentally. They try to take her away from the cave, but they give up after trying to lift her from the ground since she is unnaturally heavy and cannot be lifted. Francisco calls her a "handmaiden of Christ" and tells his friends to leave her alone. (2005, 86). People start to call her the "Holy Hermit" and visit her in her cave as a kind of pilgrimage. She becomes like a prophet (2005, 87). When she comes back from the cave, she meets Esmeralda again. In the meantime, Francisco develops an unnatural obsession with Caridad and starts to stalk her. When he realizes that she is in love with Esmeralda, he abducts the woman, and it is implied that he rapes her. Later, Esmeralda and Caridad run away from him, and he follows. To get away from him, the women jump from a mesa and disappear from the face of the earth. Their bodies are not found.

Fe is Sofi's third daughter. It is implied many times in the novel that she is embarrassed by her family. She also aspires to whiteness (2005, 157, 158) and looks down on her own people. She works at a bank and imagines settling down with her beloved boyfriend, Tom. However, as mentioned previously, right before their wedding, Tom breaks up with her via letter. Heartbroken and disappointed beyond measure, Fe starts screaming and does not stop for a whole year. Miraculously, she stops on the same night her sister Caridad recovers from her scars and wounds. As a result, her speech becomes broken and hard to decipher. Later, she finds another boyfriend, also her cousin, named Casey, and they get married. Then, she leaves her

[3] "Traditional healer, witch doctor" ("Curandero")
[4] "1. a priest of Santeria 2. *Southwestern US* a person who makes religious images" ("Santero")

bank job and starts to work at a company named Acme International. Since the company pays more than the bank, they buy everything they desire for their home and start living the American Dream. However, their dream turns into a nightmare when Fe starts to get sicker day by day due to the very dangerous and illegal chemicals the company makes its workers use to clean guns and arms. At the end, Fe dies terribly and painfully. Due to the waste the company so carelessly disposes of into nature, birds drop from the sky, and cows and other animals get sick and die along with people. Thus, the "Land of Enchantment" that used to "smell of chiles" turns into the "Land of Entrapment" that kills all that is alive (2005, 172).

The last and the youngest daughter of Sofi, La Loca,[5] is given this name because she isolates herself from everyone and does not let anybody touch her after her resurrection incident at the age of three. When she comes back from death, she claims that she has seen hell, purgatory, and heaven (2005, 24). In a way befitting her family, La Loca is full of miracles and the central figure of bizarre events that happen to this unusual family. She has a very keen aptitude for domestic tasks, such as cooking and keeping her home. She is a caregiver of the family. She also has a strong connection with the animals dwelling in the home of Sofi and her daughters. Another tie she forged worth mentioning is her relationship with water. As mentioned before, just like her unfortunate sisters, she also dies too young from AIDS. People mocked her and called her crazy in her lifetime, yet they declare her a saint posthumously.

To conclude, through this seemingly chaotic novel, Castillo brings to the fore the lives of marginalized women, otherized peoples, as well as Nature. Therefore, an ecofeminist reading of this novel will surely bring forth the existing historical, political, and social connections between women and Nature.

Previous studies on *So Far From God* (2005) explore representations of Chicano culture and issues such as gender, class, and race. It must be noted that there are a few studies that explore ecological perspectives in the novel. Manríquez reads the novel from an absurd fiction perspective. Analyzing Castillo's characters as ironic, "allegorical figures," and as "parod[ies]", the author subverts the fixed meanings of "virtue" and "identity" in Chicana cultural experience (2002, 37-48). Caminero-Santangelo stands against the idea that magical realism is associated with "political resistance," claiming the novel foregrounds "collective agency," material

[5] Spanish for the lunatic, crazy, insane, mad ("La Loca")

activism, and environmental protest (2005, 81-95). Comparing Castillo's novel with Sylvia Lopez-Medina's *Cantora*, Sirias, and McGarry codes the former as "rebellious" to patriarchy and the latter "traditional." To them, the novel foregrounds women's empowerment and women-centered collective organization (2000, 83-99). Lanza examines the novel through concepts such as "home," "domestic" space, women's "spirituality," and "resistance," using bell hooks' "homeplace" concept (1998, 65-78). Delgadillo explores the novel through feminist resistance and hybrid spirituality (1998, 888-914). Amir examines the novel from an "anarcho-ecofeminist" lens, foregrounding patriarchy, toxic industrialism, hierarchy, Sofia's stand against the system, and the interconnected domination and "oppression" of Nature and women (2023, 58-69). Platt approaches the novel from "environmental justice" and "environmental racism" perspectives, especially centering on toxic labor, the worker Chicana experience, and gender-based consequences of ecological "degradation" (1996, 67-94). Reading the novel as an "earth-binding consciousness" of the ecofeminist perspective, Olmedo focuses on Indigenous spirituality and women's closeness to Nature (2012, 1-19). Parra's dissertation deals with "ecotheologies of liberation" in Chicana culture and explores Castillo, Moraga, and Anzaldua through spirituality, ecofeminist ethics, and Chicana "political consciousness" (2003, 1-6). This dissertation focuses on some of the themes and concepts mentioned above. It also conducts a close reading of the novel, revealing the interconnectedness and embeddedness of the female characters with their environments and animals, as well as the common subjugation of women and Nature. The analysis also highlights the wounds patriarchy inflicts on the bodies of women and Nature. Whereas the patriarchy harms and hurts, Sofia, Caridad, La Loca, and Doña Felicia seek to heal and repair the separated and divided.

6.3. Connection with Animals and Nature

"Los animales entienden más que la gente a veces."
"Animals understand more than people sometimes."
Doña Felicia
So Far From God by Ana Castillo

In the novel, the characters live and exist together with their companion animals. There is no border between their home and the animals' barns or doghouses. The opening scene is striking in this aspect since it destroys the boundaries between

conceived human spaces, which are normally inside the home in a cleaner and more hygienic area, and animal spaces, outside the home of humans and dirtier and less hygienic in human standards. The scene is specific not only because it destroys the norms, but also because a very climactic event occurs; as mentioned previously, in the middle of the night, Sofi's youngest daughter, La Loca, dies at the age of three. Warned by the animals, the mother wakes up "to the howling and neighing of the five dogs, six cats, and four horses, whose custom it was to go freely in and out of the house. […] The animals were kicking and crying and running back and forth with their ears back and fur standing on end" (Castillo 2005, 19). The companion animals of the family realize that the baby is in danger and attempt to alert Sofia of the situation. When Sofia sees her baby having a seizure, she screams, and hearing their mother, the other daughters come to the bedroom. Castillo creates another parallel between the non-human animals and human animals of the novel at this point with these words: "[a]nd then everyone was screaming and moaning because the baby had stopped moving, lay perfectly still, and they knew she was dead" (2005, 19). In this specific scene, the crises and the death of La Loca act as an equalizer between human and animal characters. Firstly, there is no boundary set for the family animals to live outside of their home. They come and go as they please, living wherever they desire as Nature intended. Secondly, the animals communicate with the matriarch, warning her that another member of their mixed-up family is in danger. This is another point in the narrative that demonstrates the closeness and connection to Nature of the female characters in the novel. Last but not least, the death of a beloved member creates a basis for both human and non-human animals to be equals in their grief since both groups express their immense sadness through "crying" and "moaning". Olmedo, adopting a similar perspective, states that "[r]epeatedly the animals show a sensitivity that humans do not have and the animals attempt to communicate with humans" (2012, 3). To elaborate, the animals of the family are companions instead of property that the patriarchal worldview considers them to be; thus, they help their humans during hardships by using their superior senses.

Olmedo also believes that the novel's main characters, especially Sofia, Caridad (also her mentor, Doña Felicia), and Loca, have a strong connection with Nature, and their relation to Nature is similar to that of "Native American worldviews" (2012, 1). They are connected to the earth and animals. This connection is exemplified many times in the novel, sometimes through a simple conversation

between a human and non-human animal, other times more systematically through Native American or pre-colonial myths of female Goddesses. In the next parts, these examples will be analyzed in detail to bring to the fore the ecofeminist aspects of the novel.

6.3.1. Caridad's Corazón (Heart)

> *"In trying to become "objective," Western culture made "objects" of things and people when it distanced itself from them, thereby losing "touch" with them. This dichotomy is the root of all violence."*
> *Gloria Anzaldúa-Borderlands/LaFrontera 2012, (59)*

After she is attacked by *malogra*,[6] Caridad is half dead and in need of her family's constant care. After a year, when she is miraculously healed, her mother starts to call this healing "Holy Restoration" (Castillo 2005, 43). Various critics refer to this attack as more of a symbol for patriarchy's attack on females and their values (see Olmedo 2012). Whether it is a physical attack and torture or more of a symbolic reference to male dominance, violence, and the wounds inflicted by this mentality, Caridad is mutilated and tortured, and the results on her body are graphically depicted in the novel. Ultimately, the perpetrator or perpetrators are of male origin. After her "restoration," as a result of her family's care, Caridad and a mare called Corazón (Spanish for heart) grow very close. The closeness of their relationship is exemplified on many occasions in the narrative. The mare "[becomes] Caridad's only companion" (2005, 44). Caridad decides to leave her family home and live somewhere else with her mare companion. Interestingly, Sofia is more worried about Corazón than she is about her daughter. Since she believes Caridad is more resilient and can "survive" almost everything, while Corazón has never left her home since she was born (2005, 44). It is noteworthy that Sofia shows her capacity to care about an animal more than her daughter. The family does not look for the use-value of their companion animals. For instance, "Corazón had never been ridden and did not seem ready for the idea" (2005, 51). Respecting her wish not to be ridden, the family leaves her just to be herself and co-exist with them. This proves the family does not follow a dualistic perspective, which is the topic of Plumwood's work (see the first

[6] "1. to spoil, to ruin, 2. To neglect, to waste" ("Malograr")

chapter). They refuse to abide by one of the characteristics of dualism that was framed by Plumwood, the objectification or instrumentalization. Unlike done by patriarchal worldviews, they "empathize" with their animals (Feminism, 53). In this example, the family does not objectify their companion animals. With both sides having equal footing, there is no *master-slave relationship* (Plumwood 1993, 53) between them and their animals.

Caridad and Corazón's relationship can be interpreted literally as a strong companionship between a human and a non-human animal. Another way to interpret the relationship is figuratively; Corazón symbolizes Caridad's heart. Horses have strong symbolic meanings in Native American myths and culture. Castillo uses Native American myths and culture in other parts of her novel; therefore, she might be referring to local culture in this relationship as well. Emma Brence summarizes horses' significance in Native American lore with these words: "horses [are] respected as partners in life, symbols of freedom, and carriers of tradition." In addition, "horses symbolized healing, strength, and a deep emotional intelligence that transcended the physical world" (Brence 2025). Given this consideration, her relationship with the mare is beyond companionship and might carry a more symbolic meaning. Caridad's heart wants to be free after her trauma and experience the world on her own, and she wishes to make sense of what happened to her and heal herself. However, it is also crucial to note that she intends to do this with her heart. She no longer conceives of the world from a patriarchal perspective; to the contrary, she now has the capacity to look at things with new eyes. This new perspective, however, might put her in a more vulnerable position. The narrator hints at this with these words: "Caridad's Corazón […] was easily frightened by strangers, the revving up of car engines and other loud noises, even the playful shrieks of small children" (Castillo 2005, 44, 45). Therefore, one might conclude that Sofia and Doña Felicia worry about Caridad's Corazón can be interpreted as a worry towards Caridad's emotional well-being after the attack. They want to look after her body and soul, and being more mature matriarchs, they wish to protect her from any more damage that might be caused by the patriarchy.

Right after her "restoration," Caridad feels sick for weeks and only occasionally speaks. She starts using her body language, not unlike a horse, "[s]he respond[s] with little nods and shakes of the head" (2005, 45). Gaining miraculous powers like her sister La Loca, Caridad starts to go into trances for hours. When she

comes back from these trances, she foretells something that will happen to a family member in the future. After one of those trances, Caridad dreams of "her horse Corazón leading a herd of one hundred and thirteen horses along a creek. […] the horses were all at a gallop, happy and free. 'It was magnificent,' she sa[ys], stroking Corazón's dark mane. 'I felt like I was one with them'" (2005, 49). As the scene illustrates, Caridad's experience with male-originated violence and trauma leaves in its wake someone who desires to be closely connected to Nature. The wounds left behind by the horrible attack are healed through being closer to Nature. As ecofeminism suggests, patriarchy discriminates against women and Nature; however, if women acknowledge and bond with the other excluded and dismissed party, it is possible to grow together and find a superior ethical way to exist and heal together. She perceives herself as a free galloping horse and sees the world from a different perspective. She is "one with" the animals. Her heart is a wild horse, and she is ready to start a new chapter in her life.

She starts her new life as a tenant in Doña Felicia's old trailer. She lives a happy life with her animal companion. She cannot open up to anyone; yet, having become best friends with her mare, Caridad shares her deepest secrets with her friend Corazón. The mutual understanding and friendship between friends grow in the course of time. The mare lives as she pleases, putting her head through any window of the trailer and doing whatever her heart desires (2005, 51). However, their lovely story takes a turn for the worse when one night Corazón takes off and leaves the trailer area. Doña Felicia realizes that, and she looks for the mare, finding her halfway to Sofia's house. Thankfully, she uses the back road, not the freeway. This worries Doña Felicia and Sofia since they do not want anything bad to happen to Corazón. On the one hand, they want to protect the horse from harm. On the other hand, they do not desire to separate the kindred souls by taking away Corazón from Caridad, thus deciding to leave the matter for now.

Eight days after her first attempt to go back to Sofia's house, Corazón dies at the hands of the sheriff's deputy. Everyone is devastated by the news of Corazón's death. Spooked by the loud noises of a nearby party, Corazón takes off again to go back to Tome. Caridad is at work, working a long shift at the hospital. When she comes back in the morning, the sheriff's deputy tells her of Corazón's demise. By the deputy's account, "he and his partner had found the horse lying by the road, having broken its hoof jumping over the cattle guard. They did what they thought they had

to do and shot it. One bullet just above its left nostril" (Castillo 2005, 53). Caridad is devastated by this and questions in a small voice, "My Corazón is dead?" (2005, 53). The male mentality's insensibility is exemplified with this heartbreaking scene. Shooting or euthanizing a horse or any other animal that cannot perform their supposed "duties" toward their owners is an age-old practice. Simple internet research reveals the dark side of taking charge of an animal in a patriarchal society. Being responsible for another living being, whether human or animal, might be an overwhelming moral responsibility. There are many ethical ramifications that one must consider before deciding to become an authority over one's life and death. However, patriarchy and today's society at large do not consider owning and using another living being as a major decision since getting rid of the said animal is always an option when it is no longer useful. Claiming that it is the "humane" thing to do, many governments' websites advise on how to mercy kill various animals. Describing with illustrations, exactly where their brains are located to inform the reader where to shoot to kill the animal instantly. To give one example of many, the Queensland government's official website gives detailed information on "humanely killing of injured livestock" ("Humane Killing of Injured Livestock"). The description of such animals is listed as horses and goats, cattle, sheep, pigs, unwanted calves, premature, and day-old calves. The website states that, "[t]here are situations when it is appropriate to *humanely* kill livestock to prevent suffering. […] The killing must: be humane; [and] cause the animal to die quickly and without unreasonable pain" ("Humane Killing of Injured Livestock"; emphasis added). The presupposition of killing them "without unreasonable pain" is indeed a highly problematic way of thinking that lacks basic empathy, sensitivity to others, and compassion. Just because the death is caused by a gunshot to the brain and is swift, it does not mean that the animal does not suffer. In addition, ecofeminist ethics maintains that any living being has intrinsic value and a right to their life. However, patriarchy only sees the use-value of animals. That is why, when they are injured and the treatment is too costly, they choose the simple method of killing them. It can be argued that calling this practice "humane" is a way of justification. In an article explaining the wondrous healing process of a broken-legged racehorse named Barbaros, Steve Twomey states that "swift death after such a severe injury is still the fate of many, many racehorses. By virtue of size and anatomy, they make challenging patients and *healing them often costs more than they are worth or their owners can afford*" (Twomey 2007;

emphasis added). As evidenced in the article and so many others, when the time and money cannot be spared, the horses are simply shot. Their worth is measured by their usefulness to humankind and their owner. This method of "humanely" getting rid of what patriarchy considers a burden promises an oversimplified, so-called solution to a very complex and ethically entangled issue.

Following the previously mentioned scene, Caridad cannot even stand up as she is devastated by what happened to her Corazón. Doña Felicia attempts to console her. She also asks Caridad about her ability to see the future since she thinks that the death of the mare could have been prevented if Caridad had foreseen it. Caridad says that she indeed foresaw the "tragedy,"; however, she cannot prevent it and explains this with these words: "knowing and preventing are two very different things, aren't they, doña Felicia?" (2005, 54). Doña Felicia realizes that Caridad is a wise young woman who knows "these two important aspects of the laws of the universe" (2005, 54, 55). This scene indicates that there are things that cannot be changed, even if one knows ultimately what will occur, because this is how patriarchal societies work. The rules of a male-dominated society leave little room for women or Nature to express themselves in their own ways. However, Doña Felicia is a traditional healer, and after her wise words, she decides to teach Caridad her craft of healing so that she can become a "true healer" (Sa Far, 55). Regrettably, Doña Felicia has always had the ability to heal the unfortunate mare. She says that "Esos Salvages del sherif's department did not have to shoot your horse. […] I could have set its bones. If it's true where they say its hoof was broken, it could have been mended" (2005, 55). Caridad is "revitalized" by the news, and after that, it is decided she will be trained by Doña Felicia to become a healer. After she decides to become a healer, she feels depressed about the loss of her companion. "The death of her heart" (2005, 58) is so heavy a burden for her to carry that when Doña Felicia puts her to bed to have some rest, Caridad sleeps for fourteen days without stirring (2005, 58).

As Doña Felicia mentors Caridad, she transforms into a new person. Her diet, for instance, consists "of mostly fruits and vegetables; once a week she and Doña Felicia shared a small piece of medium-rare hormone-free steak for added protein" (2005, 64). Due to Doña Felicia's teachings, Caridad cleanses her body and spirit, living the life of a spiritually awakened *curandera*. Before her attack, she used to drink every night, and her physical and mental health were not in good condition. After the *malogra* attack, her body carried the horrible scars and reminders of the

male-originated violence. However, when her "restoration" gives her a second chance, becoming a *curandera* and cleaning her body and spirit of acts of violence is one of the first things she does. Another highly controversial topic among feminists as well as ecofeminists is whether to choose a plant-based diet or not. Eating meat is an act of violence, according to many feminists and ecofeminists who choose a meat-free diet. As mentioned in the first chapter, Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan are prominent figures who support vegetarianism and veganism for feminists. Donovan answers Kathryn Paxton George's question "Should Feminists Be Vegetarians?" with a simple "Yes" and moves on to explain that she and "others [Carol J. Adams, Greta Gaard] [argue] that feminism must take a stand against animal suffering and exploitation, including human consumption of meat" (1995, Comment, 228). Caridad's mostly vegetarian diet adds another layer to her ethical stand regarding Nature and its creatures. She and Doña Felicia do not do harm indiscriminately. On the contrary, they live mostly in tune with Nature, even using only natural ingredients to heal their patients: Doña Felicia teaches Caridad that "[e]verything we need for healing is found in our natural surroundings" (2005, 62). Being together with Nature instead of standing against it, the two women live a peaceful and harmonious life.

Another notable part of the unfortunate death of Corazon is Doña Felicia's comment on the differences between the roles of women and men in society. Doña Felicia was a healer during the *Revolución*, and she mentions healing injured soldiers and, unfortunately, sending them back to battle. Later, she argues that

> "women endure the labor of childbirth, and men send themselves to war! But I gave birth to eight children and never once did I cry like I saw some of those men out there before they even fired their first shot! I think it has something to do with the unnaturalness of killing compared to the naturalness of giving birth" (2005, 55).

In this scene, Castillo creates a striking juxtaposition between bringing life to the world and taking one's life. The former is natural as breathing, and the latter is cruel and unnatural. Doña Felicia has seen the pattern of toxic male behavior all her life. Irrespective of whether the destruction happens in wars or the killing of animals, patriarchy does not discriminate because value comes from function, usefulness, and labor. This scene represents the core value of ecofeminism and what it stands against in society. Ecofeminism believes in Nature's capacity to create life, and does not consider it an inorganic entity; on the contrary, it brims with life. Women, due to

their reproductive capacity, might be considered closer to Nature in this respect. As mentioned in the first chapter, Warren refers to this by stating that women's experiences regarding "child rearing" are different from men's as they are positioned socially to be the primary caregivers (2000, 24). These responsibilities can mean that women will be closely associated with Nature as a result of their daily work. This results in different "ways of knowing" for women regarding Nature than men (Warren 2000, 24). The writer creates an opposition between women's capacity to create life and patriarchy's tendency to start wars and cause the death of many innocent people and animals, as well as ecological damage by instrumentalizing soldiers and arms. As Doña Felicia suggests, the men cry and do not want to go back to the battlefield. However, they are bound by their duties and do what they are told to do anyway. She cares for the soldiers and heals them only to send them back to die. Healing others, giving birth, and creating life are noteworthy keywords of ecofeminism. This specific scene showcases one of the main arguments of this dissertation; while patriarchy is scarring, harming, and killing, the female characters are healing, mending, and bringing together what is fragmented and broken. According to Mies and Shiva, we must "[recognize] that life in nature (which includes human beings) is maintained by means of co-operation, and mutual care and love. Only in this way can we be enabled to respect and preserve the diversity of all life forms" (Ecofeminism 2014, 6). The critics believe that this is why "ecofeminists use metaphors like 'reweaving the world', 'healing the wounds', and reconnecting and interconnecting the 'web'" (Mies and Shiva 2014, Ecofeminism, 6). As suggested above, the way Castillo depicts her female characters as healers and creators of life foregrounds the juxtaposition between ecofeminist ethics, ethics of care, and patriarchy. While ecofeminist ethics' purpose is to heal, protect, look after, care for, create mutual bonds, and mend, society is built upon the devaluation of natural life by using it as a resource for its endeavors. To give a few examples of many, raising farm animals and killing them *en masse* for food, cutting down trees for various reasons, and sending men to war to be killed.

6.3.1.1. Caridad's Connection to Earth

Critics writing about Caridad's year-long seclusion in a cave state that her connection to the cave is depicted as a sacred experience. This conclusion is

unsurprising since Castillo relays the events as a mythical experience. There are many symbols from Catholicism, Native American spiritual beliefs, as well as their Goddesses and myths. Castillo creates a narrative that is a hybrid of the belief systems of the region, both pre-and post-colonial periods, thus reflecting the eclectic diversity of Chicanas, while she creates another strong bond between one of her characters and Nature. This part of the dissertation will analyze Caridad's connection to earth and her reunion with it. As mentioned, Castillo makes use of myths and religious symbols; therefore, this part will also shed light on those myths and consider whether they bring to the fore the bonds between women and Nature as well.

As mentioned several times before, ecofeminism is a theory that has many contradictory points within, since different academics and critics have wanted to shape it into various standpoints. Sturgeon attempts to categorize different outlooks within the ecofeminist philosophy under five different positions. The first position argues that women and Nature are equated by patriarchy, hence "where women are degraded, nature will be degraded, and where women are thought to be eternally giving and nurturing, nature will be thought of as endlessly fertile and exploitable" (1997, 263). Secondly, under conditions in which women and Nature are associated closely, women are "doom[ed] […] to an inferior position," thus feminist struggle to gain equal footing is made into "passive, disembodied, and objectified" as Nature is understood by patriarchy (1997, 263). The third point of view states that since historically women's daily labor consists of things such as childcare, animal care, agriculture, household economy, in sum, domestic house chores, women are the first to realize environmental issues; additionally, they are the first to be affected negatively by them. The fourth position believes that due to our biology, such as "menstrual cycles, lactation, birth", women are more closely connected to Nature. Even though this is one of the most controversial positions within the theory, "[e]cofeminists who are comfortable with this position feel that women potentially have greater access than men do to sympathy with nature and will benefit themselves and the environment by identifying with nature" (1997, 264). The last standpoint is that of spiritual ecofeminism. This discourse is made up of "nature-based religions'" outlook in life; these religions and spiritualisms are "paganism, witchcraft, and Native American spiritual traditions" (1997, 264). This tendency can be attributed to the "strong images of female power" withing these beliefs" (1997, 264). Sturgeon

points out that positions one, two, and four contradict each other. According to Sturgeon, "[t]he first two positions see the equation of women and nature as patriarchal; the fourth [also fifth] position[s] sees this equation as empowering to women and as providing resources for a feminist environmentalism" (1997, 264). Rebeca Rosell Olmedo quotes Sturgeon as well and states that her analysis of the novel is based on the fourth and fifth positions. She also believes that the connection between women and Nature is "empowering" (2012, 2). Caridad's yearlong seclusion in the cave up the mountain is interpreted as "return[ing] to the primal warmth of womb and breast by retreating to the feminine landscape" because she falls in love with Esmeralda and struggles to face "the awareness of a new sexual orientation" (2012, 4). Moreover, as mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, it must be noted that women's and Nature's connections come not from an essentialist point but from a "social construction." Because women are located closer to Nature by patriarchy, due to their bodily functions, such as giving birth and "child rearing", they experience different "ways of knowing" than men. This interconnection can be considered a conceptual interconnection (Warren 2000, 24). This part assumes a similar standpoint to Olmedo and also adds that Caridad's seclusion is an escape from the patriarchal order's cruelty towards women and animals alike. She longs for a rest from the world in which she is attacked and her "nipples had been bitten off. She had also been scourged with something, branded like cattle. […] She has also been stabbed in the throat" (2005, 33). The harm is not only done to her person but to her beloved mare Corazon (heart) since she is mercilessly shot to be killed by men for breaking her hoof. Therefore, arguably, compounding everything else, falling in love with a woman proves to be the tipping point for her psyche; as a result, she desires to feel a connection to the beginning and the end of existence, Nature.

As previously mentioned, Caridad was not always so strongly connected to Nature. The narrator explains La Loca's connection to and feelings about her sister Caridad in a foreshadowing scene. La Loca's uncanny sense of smell detects strange things on people. For instance, she says her runaway father smells of hell when he comes back twenty years later. Likewise, her sister Caridad smells like hell when she is first restored. However, as time goes on and Caridad learns how to be a healer from Doña Felicia, "her hands and breath smelled now of laurel and sage. Her eyes and voice smelled very sad but always soothing, like a lullaby with no words" (2005, 152). As illustrated in the scene, Caridad changes for the better when she is

connected to the Earth and Nature and the healing powers of Nature. She smells of herbs and not of "hell". In this instance, hell is a metaphor that is used to describe the distance put between the individual and Nature, family, or traditions, which is evidenced by the father's absence from their lives for twenty years, and as mentioned above, he "smells of hell" too. However, as depicted in the scene, La Loca cannot detect the smell of hell on Caridad anymore; instead, she smells of earthly things, herbs such as sage and laurel. Unfortunately, Caridad's passing from this world is foreshadowed in La Loca's thoughts: "Loca never said nothing about it to no one, how much she liked her sister's presence more and more, because above all she knew that nothing that exquisite could last in the vulgarity of the big world very long" (2005, 152). The scene is noteworthy since it brings to the forefront the author's thoughts about the system and patriarchy. She illustrates that the system is unforgiving, and it eliminates anything different. For instance, after becoming a healer and a more connected woman, Caridad forges the ultimate connection to the Earth by going back to it with her lover. Indeed, all Sofia's daughters die before the novel ends. By killing her characters one by one, Castillo reminds the reader of the patriarchy's violent and ruthless ways. She foregrounds the unfairness of the system and how it destroys anything that is different or marginalized.

The events leading to Caridad's yearlong seclusion begin with a yearly pilgrimage to Chimayo. Chimayo is a syncretic sacred space where both pre- and post-colonial religions and beliefs meet. Tewa-speaking Native Americans believed "the dirt of the region to be sacred, for they would rub it on their bodies or eat it to cure various ailments." Not only the dirt but also the long "dried up" "hot springs" were also considered to have "valued healing properties" (Ricketts 2011, 242). Castillo retells a similar story by alluding to the earth's healing properties. Almost two hundred years ago, a Penitente Brother saw a mysterious "light coming out of the ground not far from the river." When he digs up the dirt, he sees "a statue of Our Lord of Esquipulas" (2005, 73). Lord Esquipulas is known as the "black Christ" of Guatemala, which is so far from Chimayo; thus, the narrator questions the reason for his presence here and concludes that he is here to teach "people […] of the healing powers of the sacred earth of *Tsimayo*" (2005, 73; emphasis added). Significantly, the spelling change from "Chimayo" to "Tsimayo" can be interpreted as a reference to the Native pronunciation of the village's name (Harrington 1920, 346). The writer of the novel hints at the ancient traditions, customs, and language of the region, and

reclaims the region from usurpers. Delgadillo highlights the same spelling change from a slightly different perspective. To her, the different way of spelling the words signifies "distinct cultural, social, political, and economic history of divergent populations defining the same space for themselves" (1998, 896). To clarify, the same site is claimed by two different cultures. This work suggests that it is a reclaiming when the author changes the spelling; however, Delgadillo foregrounds the layered sacredness of the space. Subsequently, supporting the previous claim, the narrator points out the local knowledge about the sacred earth with these words: "the Catholic Church endorsed [the earth] as sacred; [however,] the Native peoples had already known all along since the beginning of time" (2005, 73). The sacredness of the earth and the fact that this knowledge precedes Catholicism is significant from an ecofeminist perspective since Native peoples were already aware of the vitality of Nature. To them, Nature was life itself, and it contained everything within. It could not be separated from humans or animals as is done in today's patriarchal societies, which perceive Nature as a separate entity that can be used for humanity's betterment. It should be contained and pulled apart and cleaved from humanity. The "holy earth" can be reached only from the inside of the adobe chapel through a small opening on the floor. Yet again, a part of Nature is contained within the borders of a human-made structure and concept. According to the Native peoples, the earth of the region was sacred and had healing properties; however, Catholicism appropriates this myth and reverence towards Nature and constrains it into a small hole on the floor. From the small pit mentioned, Doña Felicia and Caridad take the holy earth and apply it on their brows, faces, and even eat a small amount to "[heal] both their bodies and spirits" (2005, 75). They use the holy dirt to heal themselves by rubbing it on their bodies, meaning they look for healing and wholesomeness from the earth and Nature, not from the sky like in Catholicism.

Just before the anointment scene, Caridad sees a woman on the wall of the chapel. She falls in love with her instantly, and she is still under her thrall and cannot make sense of what is happening around her. She barely finds the courage to talk to the woman. Even though it is the shortest of interactions, consisting of only a "hi", Caridad cannot forget her and thinks about her constantly. When she comes back to her house, she cleans everything meticulously and still cannot get rid of the excess energy. She starts to pray and falls asleep, only to be awakened by Doña Felicia. She advises Caridad to go take a mineral bath to clean her body and soul. However,

instead of going to cleanse her "self", she retreats into seclusion inside a cave up the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

When Doña Felicia's Penitente nephew Francisco and two of his friends discover Caridad almost a year later, they want to take her to her family, who are worried about her. However, when they try to lift her from the earth, though trying with all their might, they cannot manage it. Symbolically, Caridad becomes one with the earth during her time up on the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. As noted earlier, colonialism and the introduction of patriarchal religion to the region resulted in a constructed and minimized understanding of Nature and its vitality. However, Caridad's *elopement*[7] to the cave and earth reunited her "self" with Nature, just as her ancestors in the pre-colonial times—thus, men cannot sever her body from Nature anymore. A similar perspective appears in Olmedo's analysis of the scene. To her, she "has become one with Mother Earth, the primal womb and cannot be separated. […] Caridad's ability to become imbedded [*sic*] with nature refutes Cartesian logic" (2012, 5). She also connects the three men who try to take her from her secluded place to "[symbols] of the trinity and patriarchal Christianity" (2012, 13). Against this backdrop, the three men's inability to separate Caridad from the earth can be interpreted as a message from Castillo to her readers. Even though colonizers brought their beliefs, traditions, and rules to these regions and enforced them upon the Natives, Caridad, as a woman of these regions, has a strong connection with Nature as her ancestors had before her. Although her connection to the earth is construed as a connection to Christ, as the scene unfolds, the narrator relays that some liken her to "Lozen, Warm Spring Apache mystic woman warrior" (2005, 88). As a last comment on the issue, the narrator states that Caridad is not "a handmaiden of Christ" as the Penitente Brothers assume, "but a spirit-memory and that was why she was not overcome by them" (2005, 88). Taking the last comment of the narrator into account, the analysis made by this dissertation becomes even more plausible. Because Caridad embodies the "memory" of her ancestors, she can be neither defeated nor conquered by invasive forces, as her connection is well-established,

[7] When Caridad disappears, Sofia is worried and "out of desperation" asks Fe—only one of her daughters who has no "clairvoyant faculties." Surprisingly, she is very calm and collected about her sister's sudden disappearance. She thinks Caridad might have eloped. Sofia is puzzled and asks "to whom" has she eloped? To emphasize the narrator asks the same question and subsequently answers it in the next paragraph. Caridad has been in a cave up the Sangre de Cristo Mountains (2005, 85, 86). Due to this scene, it can be interpreted that Caridad *gets married* or joins her "self" to the earth. In fact, she no longer exists only on the surface, rather, she lives inside, surrounded by it, within a cave.

substantial, and made through generation after generation of understanding of Nature. To facilitate a clearer understanding of Castillo's reference to Lozen, looking into her story may prove useful. Donald L. Fixico writes about the significance of women and the earth in his book chapter named *Power of Earth and Women* (2013). He states that, unlike in the patriarchal social order that was introduced to Native peoples, Native women had an equal footing in their respective tribes, and men respected them for their places in their societies. The power of creation comes from women, and they pass it to their children. "Like the earth, women have the power to create, and this virtuous gift is not taken for granted" (2013, 157). The essentiality of the earth and its existence in human life is never questioned by Native peoples. They do not consider the earth as a "background"; instead, it is everything that life flows through. During the nineteenth century, Lozen was a female Apache warrior who fought against whites to protect the earth and the land she and her people respected as their "grandmother." Lozen, much like Caridad, could see into the future and tell that the enemy was coming (Fixico 2013, 158). Hence, unsurprisingly, people draw parallels between Caridad and Lozen. Caridad's connection to the earth, her ability of clairvoyance, and the way she stands against "invaders" of her peace must have inspired the people to call her a "spirit-memory" of Lozen, the great warrior.

6.3.1.1.1. Caridad and Her Beloved's Departure from the Surface World into an Earthly Existence

> *"The Catholic and Protestant religions encourage fear and distrust of life and of the body; they encourage a split between the body and the spirit and totally ignore the soul; they encourage us to kill off parts of ourselves. We are taught that the body is an ignorant animal; intelligence dwells only in the head. But the body is smart."*
> *Gloria Anzaldúa-Borderlands/LaFrontera 2012, (59, 60)*

Francisco, a member of the Penitente Brotherhood, is a character representing male-dominant culture against Nature as well as women. To gain a clearer understanding of this character's motives behind his obsessive love and hatred towards Caridad, and his "hideous crime" (2005, 190) of rape of Caridad's beloved Esmeralda, examining his cult may be useful. The Penitente Brotherhood was

founded in the early nineteenth century (Weigle 1977, 135), filling a power vacuum left by the priests in the local communities of northeastern New Mexico, where the population was scarce (Hernandez 1963, 218). There are highly contradictory claims concerning the Brotherhood; however, they have a dark reputation due to their strict religious beliefs and customs, such as reenacting Christ's crucifixion on one of their members every year during the Holy Week. They also perform self-flagellation, fasting, and cross-bearing, which are called "Passion of Jesus" (Weigle 1977, 135) as well as "mortification of the flesh" ("Mortification of the Flesh"). These bloody forms of self-punishment on the body are especially significant since many feminist and ecofeminist theoreticians have focused on patriarchy's tendency to divide body and mind, female and male, Nature and culture, as explained many times in the dissertation before. Thus, Francisco's Brotherhood's hatred towards the body and the flesh and their desire to "mortify" it can be interpreted as an extreme and unfortunate result of patriarchy's aversion and antagonism towards the human body's animality. In other words, patriarchy conceives the human body and its needs as too animalistic; therefore, the same mentality resurfaces in cultic practices, such as punishing the flesh by means of self-flagellation. In the novel, considered extremely "strange" by people around him, Francisco abstains from every pleasure of the body. For instance, to not taste the food, he mixes ash from the fireplace before he eats his food (2005, 191). After the first time he sees Caridad, he becomes obsessed with her. The more he is fixated on her, the more he tries to punish himself; however, he cannot get the thought of her out of his mind, much like a "pine splinter that stayed lodged in his palms" (2005, 191). The narrator describes his determination not to think about her anymore as trying to "exorcise her out at whatever price to her body and soul" (2005, 191). He compares the thought of Caridad to a demonic spirit in his mind; this is how much he abhors her. Later, he recites a verse from Ecclesiastes, the Old Testament. The verse is advice to men to stay away from women: "More bitter than death I find the woman who is a hunter's trap, whose heart is a snare and whose hands are prison bonds. […] He who is pleasing to God will escape her, but sinner will be entrapped by her" (2005, 191). In Francisco's mind, love felt for a woman is considered a weakness. He believes that women are hunters of unsuspecting men, and only sinners let themselves fall for their "vile". On the other hand, virtuous men are capable of escaping from women's so-called deception. In patriarchal societies, misogyny is sometimes hidden and hard to detect at first, but not in these verses, and not in the

acts of Francisco. He is suspended between his animalistic desires and the cultic religion's beliefs. As someone who has been punishing his body as a form of penance, he cannot comprehend his desire for Caridad. Gloria Anzaldúa, in her most well-known feminist manuscript *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, explains religion and culture's aversion toward women with these words:

> "Humans fear the supernatural, both the undivine (the animal impulses such as sexuality, the unconscious, the unknown, the alien) and the divine (the superhuman, the god in us). Culture and religion seek to protect us from these two forces. The female, by virtue of creating entities of flesh and blood in her stomach (she bleeds every month but does not die), by virtue of being in tune with nature's cycles, is feared. Because, according to Christianity and most other major religions, woman is carnal, animal, and closer to the undivine, she must be protected. Protected from herself. Woman is the stranger, the other. She is man's recognized nightmarish pieces, his Shadow-Beast. The sight of her sends him into a frenzy of anger and fear" (2012, 39).

Having to face his humanity, animality, and connection to Nature as a result of his desire for Caridad, Francisco panics and tries to distance himself and disassociate even more from his own flesh. The followers of these beliefs punish their bodies to become clean of sinful intent, namely, basic needs. They do this because they aspire for a higher form of existence, which they call the soul. As they believe that the body is the source of base desires such as hunger for food, sex, and sleep, they want to erase their desires by putting their bodies in great pain in order to move away from their body. By doing so, they believe they can reach sanctification. On the other hand, indigenous tribes' general idea is that their bodies and desires are sacred, as they are reminders of being a part of Nature. Especially, the female body is considered sacred because it has the ability to create life, much like Nature. Francisco's desire for Caridad is also a source of bipolar emotions, namely, love and hatred, because it reminds him of his animal side, which is abhorred by his religion. In sum, two opposing beliefs clash here. On one side, the body is the source of sin and uncontrollable carnal desires; therefore, it is punished and wounded; on the other side, the body is everything wholesome and earthly, hence it is sacred.

Another significant point in Caridad's character is that prior to her attack, she used to date a different man every night to forget her first love's betrayal. Therefore, due to following ideals of patriarchal culture, the Chicana community considered her

a "puta[8]" (2005, 135). Later, when she is found out in the cave she has been staying in for a year, people visit her as a part of Holy Week rituals instead of the "holy earth," and some call her "Virgen De Guadalupe,[9]" referring to the Virgin Mary. Hence, she is both considered a whore and a virgin, evoking the *virgen/puta* dichotomy. Caridad is perceived as a *virgen* by Francisco. He imagines her as "handmaiden of Christ"; furthermore, he "look[s] upon her […] as Mary. In Francisco's eyes, Caridad [has] proven herself to be all that [is] chaste and humble" (2005, 192); in other words, the image of a perfect woman. The Chicanas' female community is oppressed by the Church with the image of Lady Guadalupe to make them "docile and enduring" (Anzaldua 2012, 53). The ideal woman for the community is exemplified as the Virgin Mary. However, after stalking her for a long time, he realizes that she is not what he envisioned her to be in his troubled mind; to the contrary, she is in love with a woman, and not the virtuous female he is obsessed with. When he realizes that Caridad cannot be his, he starts stalking her beloved Esmeralda, who works as an Assistant Director of the Rape Crisis Center. One day, he abducts Esmeralda from the rape crisis center as she is leaving work and sexually assaults her.

After Francisco's "hideous crime," Esmeralda comes back and immediately finds Caridad. They leave together for the Americas' oldest city, Sky City in Acoma Pueblo. Caridad realizes that Francisco is following them, but since she does not know what happened to Esmeralda at the hands of Francisco does not care about his presence. When they arrive, Esmeralda talks to her grandmother and tells her about what happened. Hearing the sexual assault Esmeralda had to endure, Caridad starts crying. When Esmeralda realizes that Francisco followed them and is attempting to hide between the tourists, much like a "lonely coyote," she starts running for the edge of the mesa with Caridad. They both jump off the mesa when they hear "*Tsichtinako was calling!"* (2005, 211; original emphasis) The crowd, along with Francisco, looks down from the edge to see what happened to the young women, expecting to see "morbid remains of splintered bodies tossed to the ground" (2005, 211); however, there is nothing to see. The women simply vanish to the amazement of the crowd. Everybody present there hears the "calling of Tsichtinako" (2005, 211).

[8] Spanish for whore ("Puta").
[9] Virgen de Guadalupe or Our Lady of Guadalupe refers to when the Virgin Mary visits Saint Juan Diego four times as a vision ("Our Lady of Guadalupe").

She "guid[es] the two women *back*, not out toward the sun's rays or *up the clouds* but *down, deep within the soft, moist dark earth* where Esmeralda and Caridad would be safe and live forever" (2005, 211; emphasis added). Tsichtinako, a.k.a. Spider Woman or Thought Woman, is "the most primal of the Pueblo Earth Goddesses"; much like a spider spinning her web, she "spins the world into existence by thinking." Everything is linked through her web of thoughts (Todd 1995, 157). The narrator explains who the Spider Woman is: "[She is] the Invisible One who had nourished the first two humans, who were also both female" (2005, 211). The Goddess of all creation, Tsichtinako, takes her daughters from the hands of Francisco, the embodiment of patriarchy and colonizers' religious practices, and brings them "back" to the earth, where it is safe. Olmedo believes that there is a clash of opposing sides of spiritual beliefs. On the one side is a member of the Penitente Brotherhood—Catholicism in one of the most extreme forms—whereas on the other side is "female spirituality connected to American ecosystem" (2012, 16). Women think of "the land as a nurturing Mother Goddess" and a safe space to "find strength and healing power." Their spirituality is "earth-bound" (2012, 16). In the end, Francisco commits suicide by hanging himself from a pinyon tree. Interestingly, people compare him to a "crow-picked pear" (2012, 212), which is not a local fruit, but an exotic species, unlike the pinyon tree. Arguably, by separating himself from his roots as a Chicana and his people's beliefs regarding Nature and women, Francisco becomes a stranger to his own land. Since he is "dangling sorrowful-like" (2005, 212) from the pinyon tree, he never reunites with the earth, which takes the two women back to its bosom; he forever stays in the air, not touching and connecting with the dirt of his people's land, even in death. The narrator states that this scene is how everybody remembers him forever. Consequently, Francisco, symbolizing the colonizers and patriarchal philosophy, cannot understand Caridad's spirituality and tries to connect her to the colonizer's beliefs. Nevertheless, Caridad cannot be defined with the symbol of the Virgin Mary, for she is neither a *virgen* nor a *puta*. She has her own spirituality that connects her to her ancestors, her community, and most importantly, to Nature. Her immortality beneath the earth and Francisco's "dangling" from a pinyon tree as a dead fruit create a striking juxtaposition of the opposing forces of the colonizers' set of beliefs and the colonized's set of beliefs. In the end, Caridad and Esmeralda live forever, whereas Francisco goes mad and commits the gravest sin in his own religion.

6.3.2. La Loca and Her Connection to Nature

La Loca is another character who has a very strong connection with Nature and animals. As mentioned before, after her death at the age of three and her subsequent resurrection, she has lost her ability to connect with humans except for her family. She states many times in the novel that humans smell bad and do not want to come close to them. While she hates humans' smell, she finds animals' smell comforting, sleeping in the barn with them most of the time to find solace and companionship. For instance, she sleeps between the horses in the barn when she sees *malogra* (Caridad's attacker) in her dreams (2005, 77). Her place is her home with her family, which consists not only of her mother and sisters, but also many animals that coexist with them. The narrator depicts her with these words, "[s]he had grown up in a world of women who went out into the bigger world and came back disappointed, disillusioned, devastated, and eventually not at all" (2005, 51, 52). According to the narrator, Loca "did not regret being a part of that society, never having found any use for it. At home, she had everything she needed. Her mother's care and love, her sisters, who […] had shown their affection and concern for her, and she, in turn, for them" (2005, 52). Her world is made of different values than society has, as evidenced by the character's thoughts. Society is useless to her. She finds her home life more enriching and natural than the outside world, living with the love of her mother and sisters, as well as the love of their companion animals and Nature, and the acequia that passes behind her house.

She is named La Loca (meaning 'mad' in Spanish) by the community since her dealings, areas of interest, and how she lives her life are found bizarre and inferior. Dealing with the domestic tasks at her home, looking after and healing her sisters when they are sick, connecting with animals and water and the earth, her areas of interest and her work of subsistence are repeatedly downplayed by society. Although her community is from Chicana culture as well, they have been assimilated over the years and cannot comprehend her great value. Paula Gunn Allen, in her book *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in Indian American Traditions* (1992), remarks on the issue with these words:

> "Westerners have for a long time discounted the importance of background. The earth herself, which is our most inclusive background, is dealt with summarily as a source of food, metals, water, and profit, while the fact that she is the fundamental agent of all

> planetary life is blithely ignored. Similarly, women's activities—cooking, planting, harvesting, preservation, storage, homebuilding, decorating, maintaining, doctoring, nursing, soothing, and healing, along with the bearing, nurturing, and rearing of children—are devalued as blithely" (Allen 1992, 323, 324).

As Allen so clearly notes, the canon Western way of thinking asserts that men must be situated at the center of this world. Nature, as well as women, exists to serve them and be the background in their dealings. Similarly, domestic activities, which are vital to life and are life-giving, are deemed insignificant and worthless. Not only her community, but also her own sister Fe underplays and minimizes La Loca's worth. She believes that La Loca is in need of a doctor, and her so-called miracles are a part of her own mental health issues. One day, she and Sofia see Loca going around in circles around the cottonwood tree next to the acequia. She has a disheveled appearance, is barefoot, and very stressed. Fe gets angry and lectures Loca on proper behavior and tells her to stop her "eccentric behavior" (2005, 156). Sofia gets even angrier and tells Fe that it is Loca who looked after her when she was screaming for a whole year and did not know herself (2005, 157). Fe's sense of superiority and her demise will be explained in detail in the latter parts.

La Loca also loves all animals, and she is especially close to horses. She has trained many horses, and she can ride very well. Just like her sister, Caridad, La Loca's best friend is also a horse (2005, 152). She is so close to animals that some of them even attend her funeral after her tragic death. The narrator relays the event of her funeral, stating people from all backgrounds and different religions attended her funeral, "even non-human[s]" (2005, 232). During the funeral, people are carrying her picture on her beloved horse Negro Gato, wearing blue. People light the candles with her picture on "to petition help from her as the new emissary to heaven" (2005, 232). She begins to be known as La Loca Santa, "'Patrona's de todas las criaturas'—Patron of all God's creatures, animal and human alike" (2005, 232).

6.3.2.1. La Loca's Connection to Water

> *"My Chinana identity is grounded in the Indian woman's history of resistance. The Aztec female rites of mourning were rites of defiance protesting the cultural changes which disrupted the equality and balance between female and male, protesting their demotion to a lesser status, their denigration. Like La Llorona, the Indian woman's only means of protest was wailing."*
> *Gloria Anzaldúa-Borderlands/LaFrontera 2012, 43*

La Loca's connection to water is exemplified many times in the novel. When she wants solitude or is bothered by the heat, she "seek[s] at least a little comfort from the shade of a cottonwood near the acequia that ran by her mother's house. Sometimes one of the dogs or a horse […] went along to keep her company" (2005, 150). Loca is "comforted" by Nature and her companion animals. She goes near water to stay connected to it. The narrator continues by stating that "[t]he acequia was as far as Loca had ever drifted from home, and her place to play and hide since she learned to walk. Consequently, she knew everything about it" (2005, 151). Loca and the acequia are very closely associated. After her home, it is the only other place she feels safe and secure since she frequently visits and stays there for hours. Therefore, spending so much time there, "[s]he knew its quiet nature in summer, its coolness in spring; and she didn't mind it in winter when the muddy water was frozen most of the time. It was her own place to be" (2005, 151). Accepting all forms of this body of water in different seasons, Loca has a generous heart and open-minded nature. Water, as the life-giving source on which all living beings are dependent, has many symbolic and metaphorical meanings in both myths, folklore, and literature. This part analyzes the connection between women and water by exemplifying Loca's relationship to it.

As mentioned in the first chapter, especially from Shiva's point of view, from the Westerners' perspective, water is nothing but a resource to be consumed and distributed. The Western point of view goes so far as to take water from an area and direct it to somewhere else, making it more useful for their own ends. Most of the time, water is manipulated as a result of large-scale dam projects that harm and destroy natural life and human settlements that stand in their way. However, in the novel, unlike what is done in Western practices that consider water a commodity, local people consider it a *commons*, as mentioned in the first chapter: Shiva's

example of how Indians share water free of any capital gain. The locals relocate water by using more gentle and ecologically sound ways, helping both humans and Nature. As a result, water is shared between all beings, connecting them all as "bodies of water" (Neimanis, 1). In the novel, water manifests in the form of acequias. Acequia means "an irrigation ditch or canal" ("Acequia"). The word acequia derives from Spanish, "borrowed from Arabic *al-sāqiya,* from *al,* definite article (here *as-* by assimilation to the following *s*) + *sāqiya* 'irrigation ditch,' from feminine active participle of *saqā* 'to give to drink, irrigate'" ("Acequia"). It is an irrigation system that helps "arid-land farming communities" (Atencio). The system was introduced to the New Mexico area by Spanish settlers in 1598. It was hybridized by using the Pueblo Indians' techniques (Atencio). According to Atencio, acequias are a vital part of New Mexico culture and traditions. They embody hundreds of years of cultural exchange and spiritual traditions. They still exist today and shape the cultural rituals and local agriculture. They are considered vital to "sustainable agriculture" as well as act as a "social glue" that brings people together. Acequias are considered a part of a "living institution" and rural "Hispano cultural identity." Over the years, they have become an intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Every year for the last four hundred years, the communities come together for a form of communal "rite of passage" to do their "annual ditch cleaning". Completing a long and hard day of labor is regarded as a coming-of-age ritual. By being a part of this, the young ones feel more closely connected to their community (Atencio).

In light of the information about the acequias above, La Loca's close bond to the one passing through the back of their house gains even greater importance. Although she feels isolated from her community, her relationship with the communal water irrigation system proves the opposite. She is in contact with her community in an indirect manner through water, which has cleansing, purifying, life-sustaining, and revitalizing properties. Arguably, she needs this distance from her community to protect herself. Nevertheless, she still becomes a part of the bigger community through the acequia. She needs the distance and the cleansing properties of water to interact with her community since society tries to contain her and put her in easily understandable and acceptable stereotypes. Because she does not desire to be contained, she prefers to live at the margins. However, by showing her readers Loca's relationship with the acequia, Castillo gives the message that Loca is still a

part of her community as well as Nature. In this context, the acequia becomes the perfect embodiment of both Nature and human community, bringing them together in harmony.

Loca's bond to the water is also depicted as a mystical and mythical connection in the novel. When she goes near the water to find relief from the heat, she sees a "lady with the long white dress" (2005, 159), and the mysterious woman tells her that her eldest sister, Esperanza, who went to the Gulf War as a reporter, died due to torture. Sofia and Fe are devastated by the news. However, after the incident, Sofia is curious about the "mysterious lady" and her identity. The narrator reveals the lady's identity as the Weeping Woman, La Llorona. La Llorona is an important figure in Chicana culture. She has been attributed to many different stories and has gone through many changes. Her identity transformation through the ages is explained by the narrator with these words: "a woman whom everyone knows, who has existed under many names, who has cried over the loss of thousands but who was finally relegated to a kind of 'boogy-woman,' to scare children into behaving themselves, into not straying too far from their mothers' watchful eyes" (2005, 160). In this passage, La Llorona's character's conceptual shift is apparent. Sofia thinks to herself that La Llorona used to be a woman who cried for the bad things that happened to their people, yet, over the years, she becomes a figure of horror, a simple means to scare children into following rules. The shift from a mourning and loving figure to a horror story is explained in more detail below.

Building on the scene above, Loca reveals that she has been seeing La Llorona when she goes to the acequia ever since she was a little girl. At this point in the novel, La Loca, La Llorona, and water's relationship carries a deeper cultural and theoretical symbolic significance. La Llorona appears in local folktales. As Sofia thinks to herself in the novel, La Llorona's story is not a happy one. In most narratives, she is a mother who drowned her two unfortunate children in the river to run away with her lover. Regretting her grave sin, she dies of grief herself and is punished by God to wander around bodies of water and weep for eternity (2005, 160). Castillo guides the reader through different narratives regarding La Llorona, almost holding the reader in suspension with both pre- and post-colonial versions of La Llorona, creating binary meanings in which La Llorona is both a Goddess of fertility and a woman scorned. Besides, Castillo offers a subtle critic to colonization process, which forcefully changes both the names of the countries and "the names of

their legends" (2005, 161). Pre-colonial La Llorona, the Weeping Woman, does not have the same name. The narrator ponders the names of different Goddesses:

> "Once, La Llorona may have been Matlaciuahtl, the goddess of the Mexica who was said to prey upon men like a vampire! Or she might have been Ciuapipiltin, the goddess in flowing robes who stole babies from their cradles and left in their place an obsidian blade, or Cihuacoatl, the patron of women who died in childbirth, who all wailed and wept and moaned in the night air" (2005, 161).

In this passage, La Llorona is not a simple, misogynistic, and scary story for children; quite the opposite, the narrator ponders the possibility that the La Llorona myth comes from a Goddess. She is depicted as several different Goddesses, an enemy of men, a thief of babies, and last but not least, a "patron of women who dies in childbirth." In all of the representations above, she is a powerful figure, definitions far removed from a simple horror story.

Florentine Codex, written by Bernardino de Sahagún in the 16th century, is cited frequently by writers focusing on La Llorona and her origins and describes similar female figures. According to the *Florentine Codex, Book Twelve, Conquest of Mexico*, which describes the omens observed prior to the Spaniards taking over the land, the sixth omen was "often was heard a woman going weeping, going crying out. Loudly did she cry out at night. She walked about saying: 'My beloved sons, now we are about to go!' Sometimes she said: 'My sons, whither am I to take you?" (Sahagún 2023, 2v) In the quotation, the female is in panic and scared for the safety of her sons. She wants to protect them from danger by running away. It is a depiction that is significantly different from the contemporary versions of the story. Today's version of La Llorona killed her children monstrously in an act of complete lack of compassion. She is the antithesis of motherhood and creating life.

Quoting the same source, the *Florentine Codex*, Mariana Trujillo Marquez also connects La Llorona to Cihuacoatl, as Castillo does. Cihuacoatl is the Goddess of motherhood, childbirth, and fertility. Trujillo, like many others, believes that "Cihuacoatl—cloaked in white, walking at night, weeping, and bringing omens—lays the mythic and visual groundwork for La Llorona" (2025, 336). In addition, similarly to Castillo, Trujillo also links La Llorona's "transformation from fertility goddess to spectre of sorrow" to colonialism and the changing values of the people of the land (2025, 336). Due to the change of circumstances, trauma and loss, "[t]he white dress shifts from sacred regalia to a shroud of mourning; divine warnings

become maternal lamentations. As both patron of childbirth and omen of war, she embodies the Mesoamerican view of women's bodies as sites of creation and cataclysm" (2025, 336). The fluid and ambivalent nature of La Llorona is summarized in the passage. The body of a woman is likened to Nature since it carries within itself the opposition of "creation and cataclysm" (2025, 336). La Llorona's negative reputation and notoriety are dismantled with these passages. She is a figure that tells the story of Hispanic culture and history. La Loca's story is told in an equally ambivalent way. The reader constantly questions her legitimacy. Some characters in the novels declare her a saint, while others call her mad or a liar, a recluse woman who has no means in society.

Since water is so essential to life, it has been the subject of various meanings and symbolisms in myths and folklore. Colleen Kattau describes water and its fluidity and its essentiality with these words:

> "[l]ife gathers around water and water creates the circumstances for life to gather. Human, plant, and animal life seek out water. […] [W]ater itself is the ultimate "shape shifter" in its varying forms of vapor, liquid, and ice. […] It moves in all directions around the globe […] the atmosphere and beyond the planet into the universe" (2006, 120).

As is commonly accepted and acknowledged, water is essential to all living beings. It is everywhere in Nature, shifting its own shape as well as the places it goes through. It is so powerful that, in some cases, it brings life; in other cases, it brings large-scale destruction. However, one thing is certain: it always connects everything with its existence since it is in every living thing in the world, as claimed by Neimanis, which is explained in the first chapter. Being so necessary and indispensable, water and different bodies of water have been given many meanings. Rivers, for instance, are a "duality [… both] a symbol of creation and destruction, facilitate[ing] a reading of La Llorona as a legend materializing through the environment" (Trujillo, 340). La Llorona's relationship with "[f]lowing water represents the fundamental ambivalence of existence, embodying the contrasting and interconnected aspects of the natural world and human experience" (Trujillo, 340). La Loca's close relationship with La Llorona and the acequia concretizes her connection to her culture, community, and Nature. They are inextricably intertwined in the narrative, so much so that an effort to separate them in order to understand or analyze them separately is simply pointless. As mentioned before, she, too, has many different meanings and roles that

she is fitted into by society. Her resemblance to La Llorona during the scene in which she gets the bad news about her sister, and the way she cries, going around in circles, is all proof that her identity reflects the women of her ancestors. She is almost untouched by colonization; in her pure form, she is one with water, animals, and the goddesses of old. To build on the foregoing analysis, Castillo draws parallels between La Llorona and Sofia and Fe. Having been told the news of Esperanza's death by La Loca, Sofia and Fe are shocked at first. When they realize how dire the news is, Sofia, Fe, and La Loca "began to wail and moan like Cihuacoatls, holding each other and grieving over the loss of Sofi's oldest child" (2005, 162). In their grief, the three women forget their differences and become one, feeling the sorrow of their lost beloved one. The parallels between the novel's characters and Hispanic myths are apparent. Trujillo finds a strong connection between human emotions and the fluidity of water as well. She states that "La Llorona, materialized through water, embodies the emotional ambivalence of human experience—grief, rage, sorrow, and the porous line between madness and mourning" (2025, 340). Castillo's characters' sorrow and grief, their "madness and mourning," are illustrated with an age-old tale of La Llorona.

Concluding La Llorona's part in the story, Castillo ascribes one last meaning to her in a light-hearted, almost humorous, manner. The narrator acknowledges that it is Esperanza's spirit sending the news of her own demise "via La Llorona, Chicana international astral-traveler" (2005, 162). Described as almost a way to connect with other Chicanas around the globe, La Llorona here is a helpful spirit, going around with news from the beyond. The narrator emphasizes the patriarchy's tendency to minimize, corrupt, and demonize female figures and Nature, and summarizes the situation regarding La Llorona, La Loca, and the water:

> "Who better but La Llorona could the spirit of Esperanza have found, come to think of it, if not a woman who had been given a bad rap by every generation of her people since the beginning of time and yet, to Esperanza's spirit-mind, *La Llorona in the beginning (before men got in the way of it all) may have been nothing short of a loving mother goddess*. So it was she whom Esperanza sent to deliver the news to her dear mother in Tome, knowing by then that La Llorona was on a first-name basis with her little sister, who had always hung out by the acequia. And everyone knows, if you want to find La Llorona, go hang out down by the río, or its nearest equivalent, especially when no one else is around. At night" (2005, 162-163; emphasis added).

As seen in the passage, La Llorona is innocent of the sins that are mentioned above. She is simply "a loving mother goddess," a protector and helper of her people. Prior to colonization and the establishment of systematic patriarchy, she used to be revered and called upon by women in need. She used to mourn the unfortunate women dying during childbirth. She used to be a powerful entity that had her own faculties. However, as was similarly done to Nature, undermined, objectified, and cast aside; La Llorona, too, was minimized, underplayed, and turned into an object of horror. Nevertheless, Castillo reclaims, heals, and restores both her and Nature to their former glory and almost advises her readers to see through her perspective by wandering around near bodies of water, pondering by themselves in Nature to witness her.

Like all of her sisters, La Loca, unfortunately, dies too. Esperanza dies in the war; Caridad is taken back to Earth; Fe dies because of toxic materials she worked with at the Acme Company; lastly, La Loca dies due to AIDS. Even though every death that occurs in the family is unusual and far from being the peaceful end every human being hopes for, La Loca's death might be the most unusual of all. She has no connection to humans except for her mother and sisters, who have no HIV. Then, it is only natural to question the source of her disease. According to an official US federal health agency, CDS's official website, short for Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV, human immunodeficiency virus, can only be transmitted through "certain body fluids"; these are semen, pre-seminal fluid, blood, vaginal or rectal fluids, and human milk. "These fluids must come into contact with a mucous membrane or damaged tissue or be directly injected into the bloodstream (from a needle or syringe) for transmission to occur. There are mucous membranes inside the rectum, vagina, penis, and mouth" ("How HIV Spreads" 2024). As evidenced by the quotation and also the information from the novel, it is impossible for La Loca to come into contact with this virus. Therefore, the author must be using HIV in a more metaphorical sense. Other academics found her death bizarre as well, even though they did not analyze it in depth or from an ecofeminist perspective. To exemplify a few, Manríquez remarks upon La Loca's death, but simply calls it an "absurd death" (2002, 44). Lanza also comments on La Loca's unexplained death due to AIDS. She observes Loca's isolation and the fact that she has never left her home in her life. Lastly, although she had never come into contact with the world, "the world comes to Loca in the shape of a disease, AIDS" (1998, 77). This dissertation argues that La

Loca contracted the virus from the acequia she frequently visits. AIDS here is an allegorical representation of human corruption, the destruction of Nature, and most importantly, a wound of patriarchy. Furthermore, from Neimanis' perspective mentioned in the first chapter, because all water is connected to other bodies of water, it is impossible to determine the first source of either poisoned water or a mother's milk. Therefore, it is plausible to analyse this scene from this perspective and to conclude that the patriarchy's ambition to develop more can be translated as polluted bodies of water. These waters can be either acequias or humans and animals.

As mentioned before, acequia is the only means of contact Loca has with the outside world and her community. Water's metaphorical and folkloric meanings in the novel are discussed above. However, this part discusses women around the world living in disadvantaged areas where access to clean water is impossible or too challenging. In those areas, women and girls are responsible for bringing water by walking for kilometers from their villages and back. It is a widely accepted fact that "[t]he global water and sanitation crisis affects everyone – but not equally" ("Water and Gender"). Tyrone Burke, in his article, *Women and Water*, states that clean and fresh water is hard to obtain. Because some water resources are "polluted or contaminated with disease-causing pathogens," women are the first to be affected by these pathogens. Due to the division of labor based on gender, "[w]omen are disproportionately impacted. […] Women are also more likely to be responsible for household tasks like cooking, cleaning, or laundry that can expose them to contaminated water and make them sick" (Burke). In another article, named *Water and Women: The inextricable link that's often overlooked,* by Syed Munir Khasru, it is declared that "[a]cross the globe, women are disproportionately affected by water shortages, contamination and climate change-related disruptions. […] [They are] more vulnerable to unsafe water sources, facing higher mortality rates than men" (Khasru 2025). In light of these articles, it is a fact that water pollution affects women more than men. Women who are the water fetchers and caretakers of their families are impacted by the unsafe and polluted water resources more than men.

From an ecofeminist perspective, A two-fold oppression can be observed regarding this issue. First, Nature itself is affected by pollution caused by patriarchy's unethical practices, such as disposing of toxic wastes, and its disregard for ecologically sound practices and a more harmonious way of life with the environment. Second, due to gendered labor imposed upon women by patriarchy,

women are disproportionately and negatively affected by fetching water, risking coming into contact with contaminated or toxic water resources. In the novel, Acme International dumps its toxic waste without any regard for Nature, human, or animal life (A more in-depth analysis of Acme International and its effects on the biotic community will be discussed in the next part). The narrator describes the destruction and pollution caused by the practice. As the only woman in her family coming into contact with the acequia, Loca is contaminated with a sickness that kills her. It can be argued that the novel encodes a metaphorical disease that kills La Loca as a result of the oppression of patriarchy.

6.3.3. Shunning Her Roots and Choosing Materialism: Fe's Story and Her Demise

Sofia's third daughter, Fe, is one of the most complex and in-between characters in the novel. As mentioned before, she was left by her fiancé close to her wedding via a letter. Shocked and devastated, she starts screaming and becomes bedridden for a whole year. When miraculously she wakes up from her scream-induced coma-like state, she has lost most of her voice and does not remember anything regarding her affliction. She is described as emotionally distant from her multispecies family consisting of her mother, sisters, and their animals. She describes them as "self-defeating" and "unambitious" (2005, 28). Moreover, for La Loca, Fe never "feels compassion"; on the contrary, she feels "disappointment and disgust […] for her 'mental illness' and believes that she is a "soulless creature" (2005, 29). When it comes to her sister Esperanza, probably the only family member she might slightly feel better about being related to due to her local fame related to her television persona, Fe cannot understand her "La Raza[10]" politics, thus cannot relate to her either. She does not even consider choosing her three sisters as her bridesmaids; instead, she picks three of her colleagues, who are called "gabachas" (2005, 29) by the narrator, a slang term for white people from the US ("Gabachas"). After almost a year of screaming, Fe stops all of a sudden on the same night her mutilated sister is miraculously restored and healed. She continues her life as if

[10] means: Spanish, (*used with a pl. v.*) ("La Raza")
Mexican Americans collectively (Collins Dictionary)

nothing happened, except for her broken voice and her unending desire to get together with her ex-fiancé again.

As mentioned before, she is an alienated character. She is alienated from her sisters and mother, as well as Nature and animals. Olmedo remarks on her dissociation with her family and their animals with these words: "[i]n contrast to her sister (Loca), Fe does not associate with the animals, is very clean, […] and buys into consumerism and the American Dream. She unconsciously subscribes to a vision that degrades women closely connected with nature" (2012, 4). This part will focus on Fe's alienation from her culture, family, and Nature, and the circumstances leading to her unfortunate death.

Fe is a loyal follower of the established system and refuses to see the inconsistencies or the parts that hurt her biotic community and her family. She has an unending ambition to live the American Dream with her future husband. Although the novel mentions several times that she loves Tom (her ex-fiancé) and was devastated when he left her, arguably, it is the crushed idea of a husband and her "picket fence dreams" that destroyed her. Soon, she finds a replacement husband, and that provides the evidence for the previous claim. As a believer in the system, she gets married, using the benefits of her new and higher-paying job; she buys every house appliance she has "long dreamed" of (2005, 171). Her new job, however, would destroy everything, cause her to miscarry her baby, and eventually kill her. During the process of her being literally poisoned by hazardous chemicals used in Acme, getting cancer, and dying, she is betrayed by the system in the worst way. In this case, both the female workers and the ecosystem surrounding the factory are harmed in irreparable ways. Unfortunately, this is not just an exaggeration or artistic license of the author; on the contrary, Acme and what happened to Fe, her colleagues, and Toma's ecosystem, as well as animals and the earth, are a representation of the real events that occur all around the world. Kamala Platt agrees and claims that Castillo uses the word "Acme" on purpose as a reference to U.S. popular culture from the 1960s cartoon Roadrunner. In the cartoon, the name of the company that produces everything was Acme. A similar allusion is used by Kurt Vonnegut for "corporate bureaucracy." Platt suggests that both writers were using the name on purpose to criticize the U.S.' modernization and industrialization process. She states that "Castillo's use of the anonymous acronym acts as a smoke screen to veil the 'real life' corporation that figures in an incident of environmental injustice upon

which Castillo bases this chapter" (1996, 93). As expressed in the quotation, it is the author's message that what happened to Fe and her hometown is just a symbolic representation in her literary work. Environmental injustice, racism, sexism, and gendered environmental harm will also be discussed and exemplified from the novel in this part of the dissertation.

6.3.3.1. Fertility and Infertility of Women and the Earth

"Like a compass needle that
points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman."
Khaled Hosseini- A Thousand Splendid Suns (2008)

One of the most striking scenes in the novel takes place undoubtedly in Fe's workplace, Acme International. Fe's female colleagues have similar symptoms due to harmful and illegal chemicals they are made to use in the workplace with little to no protective gear or preventative measures; these symptoms are endless nausea and headaches. When they visit the company's nurse to get some kind of treatment or to learn what is happening to them "the nurse gave them each ibuprofen tablets, and advice about pre-menopause and the dropping of estrogen levels in women over thirty, and pretty much that *it was just about being a woman* and had mothing to do with working with chemicals" (2005, 178; emphasis added). As seen in the quotation, when women in the workplace complain about the bizarre symptoms they are getting, their symptoms are blamed on for "being a woman" and they are sent back to working with the dangerous chemicals that caused them harm in the first place. Fe, because of her naïve trust in the rules and regulations, thinks to herself that she is "not over thirty," and has a "clean bill of health at her pre-wedding gyn exam," (2005, 179) therefore, she is not among the risk group. Unbeknownst to her, she would lose her "clean bill of health" in less than a year and die a horrible death.

Fe gets pregnant and only finds out about it after she miscarries the baby. She takes a few days off work, and when she comes back, she tells what happened to her to some of her lunchtime friends. They respond to her bad news almost callously—as if this is something that happens a lot around here—and tell her, "Well, at least you can still have babies. […] I had a hysterectomy[11] last summer. Before Fe could say nothing [*sic*], although she didn't know what to say to that anyway, two of the other

[11] A medical operation to remove part or all of a woman's womb ("Hysterectomy").

women said the same thing" (2005, 179). The conversation between the women is concerning since at least three women had to get their uteruses removed, probably due to cancer, and most of them cannot have children anymore since they are infertile. This is the cost of industrial modernity on female bodies. However, Fe is still not concerned and keeps working at the same company, even taking harder jobs with more dangerous chemicals.

The apathy regarding the usage of dangerous chemicals and their obvious effect on the workers is meant to reflect actual lived experience, especially in the economically disadvantaged and marginalized regions. When a company is complicit in environmental injustice or environmental sexism, the people facing these are disadvantaged; that is, they do not have any other choice but to work there to earn a living wage. Castillo exemplifies this by stating that people either do not want to think that they are slowly dying, or they do not understand what is happening and do not know a way out of their situation. Thus, they "went on like that, despite dead cows in the pasture, or sick sheep, and one week late in winter when people woke up each morning to find it raining starlings. Little birds dropped dead mid-flight" (2005, 172). It is a gruesome sight depicted in this passage. The animals get sick or die suddenly without warning. The company's disregard for human and animal life alike is ethically repugnant and abhorrent. It is almost impossible to understand the logic behind such reckless actions. Val Plumwood summarizes the reason for this reckless behavior of modern societies: "Nature is represented as inessential and massively denied as the unconsidered background to technological society. Since anthropocentric culture sees non-human nature as a basically inessential constituent of the universe, nature's needs are systematically omitted from account and consideration in decision-making" (2002, 108). As previously discussed in the first chapter, she calls this process "backgrounding." Society puts forth its own needs—males, especially the ruling class—first, as it carries their will, and it is the center; it becomes tragically inevitable, as well as justified, to make a decision that might kill hundreds of animals and natural life in a region.

Castillo uses other strong depictions to illustrate how the company contaminates the surrounding ecosystems. Castillo constructs a linguistic play on the officially recognized state slogan "Land of Enchantment." She starts her chapter by describing an enchanting place indeed; the smell of roasted chili is everywhere. In front of every door and on the patios, people hang chilies to dry them. Roasting

machines are working overtime, and people buy roasted chili to send it to their loved ones who live far from their hometown. This is also the month Fe gets married. However, her death just after her first anniversary casts a shadow on the almost festive month full of the strong smell of chili. The celebratory mood crashes when Castillo starts describing how Acme International emits poisonous fumes that sicken and kill all living beings. Hence, arguably, the smell of roasted chili is erased by the smell of toxic chemicals. She calls the area "The Land of Entrapment" (2005, 172). Several things are unfolding here simultaneously; firstly, the roasted chili smell, a vital part of local culture, is masked and erased. Secondly, she describes a land that used to "enchant," meaning attract people with its almost magical qualities, whereas now people are "trapped" in this land like prey since they have nowhere else to go and have to earn their living somehow. Finally, this "Land of Entrapment" is not only trapping them but also killing them with poison. In the end, a beautiful environment full of life and culture turns into a dark place that kills everything. Evidently, in the novel, Castillo shows how women's labor and Nature are exploited simultaneously; hence, the illustration is a strong example of what ecofeminists have been theorizing. These exploitations result in wounds on women's and animals' bodies, even killing them.

Determined to prove that she can move up within her new career, Fe becomes the most hardworking worker in the company. One of her supervisors tells her that people get "raises on the sheer basis of 'utilization and efficiency'" (2005, 178). "Utilization" is a term that summarizes the exploitation of blue-collar workers in the novel and in real life. As Plumwood suggests, modernity divides humans and Nature into two different categories: "waste" and "resource." Nature, in this categorization, is a resource. If one is unemployed, that person is considered a "waste." Nevertheless, it is possible to move from the waste category to the resource category, for instance, as a low-paid worker. Plumwood's warning, in this passage, sheds light on the main issue in Fe's unfortunate end: "Whichever category you are in, it is bad news to find yourself on the wrong side of the nature/culture and person/property boundaries, for you will either be discarded or instrumentalised, thrown away or eaten" (2002, 111). What happens to Fe is not far from what Plumwood describes here. She decidedly commits herself to being utilized and efficient for a company without universal ethics; to the contrary, the company follows the anthropocentric ethics, hence she becomes "instrumentalized" by it, and as a result, she is "eaten". Fe

is given a mysterious chemical that is so dangerous that it is forbidden in many states. The foreman, giving her the substance, lies to her and tells her it is ether, which will only make her sleepy. However, working with it in the basement (away from the general population of the company since no one can stand the smell of the substance), she not only loses her working gloves during the gruesome cleaning process of the weapon parts, but also her manicure, and even her nails are gone at the end (2005, 183). The substance is so strong, and it is emitted into her body so completely that even her "breath smells of glue" (2005, 181). She has worked with this substance for months. On the first day, she pours the leftover substance down the drain, not knowing what to do. Nonetheless, Foreman gets angry when he hears what she has done, which is surprising to her since they told her the substance was mostly harmless. She is told to leave it out in the open and let it "evaporate" (2005, 184). At the end of long and hard months of working with the substance, she gets so sick that she is constantly in pain. When she is taken to the hospital by her mother and new husband, they find out that she has cancer all over her body, inside and out. They cannot sue the company on a technicality; that is, she already has had melanoma on her skin; therefore, she technically has had a form of cancer. Even though she obviously got the cancer from "her chemical joyride at Acme International" (2005, 186). She dies "shortly after her first prognosis." She is cremated, which Acme International paid for "because at the time of her death there was so little left of Fe to be buried anyway" (2005, 186). As Plumwood states, "find[ing] yourself on the wrong side" might mean that "you will either be discarded or instrumentalised, thrown away or eaten" (2002, 111). First, Fe's nails and parts of her fingers are eaten by the chemical. Next, her body is eaten away by the cancer from inside and out, so much so that there is almost nothing "left of Fe to be buried." Her body is eaten by the system as Plumwood suggests. Tragically, the narrator explains that she is not resurrected like Loca or comes back as a ghost like her "earth-bound sister Esperanza" (2005, 186). She is just "plain dead," which the narrator finds hard to talk about due to its finality (2005, 186). Arguably, she does not come back like her sisters since even her soul is eaten away by the chemicals and the system.

6.3.4. Sofi: *La Mayor* of Toma and The Mother of Saints

In the novel, Tome is a very poor village. People cannot "live off their land for the better part of the last fifty years" (2005, 139). For this reason, they sell it to outsiders. As a result, the "original families" (2005, 139) whose ancestors have acres of land have to sell them to outsiders to survive. Sofia is fed up with this order of events, so she decides to become *La Mayor* of Tome. She can only become an unofficial mayor as Tome is not officially accepted as a separate town. Sofia realizes that her town needs improvement, so she takes it upon herself as the unofficial Mayor to start projects that will create jobs for the locals and save them from "destitution" (2005, 146). They founded the Ganados Y Lana Cooperative, which is a cooperative that does sheep grazing and wool weaving. The wool weaving cooperative is founded by twelve women and grows so fast that they have "more than two dozen women" earning their "livelihoods" and getting degrees from the local college at the same time (2005, 147). Some people start growing organic vegetables, which results in people being able to buy healthy food for a lower price. Additionally, because no pesticides are used and it is grown locally, it has a smaller carbon footprint, which is good for the biotic community. These actions are a few examples of the care ethics they embody and the responsibility they take upon themselves to become a part of the healing and mending process.

As Sofia manages to organize and mobilize her community to save their town, her confidence grows. She decides to divorce her husband, Don Domingo, due to his gambling problem, and even the threat of being excommunicated does not stop her. However, when she finds out about La Loca's sickness as well, she is devastated and realizes that she will die alone after her beloved daughters. After the news of La Loca's sickness spread, the community holds a spontaneous procession, La Loca looking like a saint on her horse's back, wearing a holy blue color. However, during this procession, people do not sing religious songs; they sing songs about women's rights and workers' rights. People whose loved ones died from "toxic exposure" from Acme International carry their loved ones' pictures (2005, 241). Castillo, a powerful writer, describes one of the most moving scenes in the novel. Through the narrator's voice, she compares the tragic events that are endured by the community and Nature to the crucifixion of Jesus. During the scene, for each ecological disaster that is talked about, which is "killing their land and turning the people of those lands into endangered species" (2005, 242), a scene from the stages of Jesus's crucifixion is

stated graphically. Each wound inflicted on the body of Christ is reflected in the metaphorical wounds that capitalist patriarchy leaves on the bodies of women, children, animals, and Nature. The environmental disasters and the problems people face mentioned are "dumping radioactive waste in the sewer," people and the land dying because of "toxic exposure" from factories, "uranium contamination on the reservation" and how it causes babies to be born with "brain damage and cancer, " animals drinking the water from "contaminated canals" and swimming in them, children playing in the same canals, air pollution from said companies, AIDS killing hundreds of people, "nuclear power plants" build on their lands, "deadly pesticides" being used on "vegetables and fruits" by "spray[ing] directly from helicopters" as a result people who are working during the process as poisoned and pregnant women lose their babies "from poisoning", civilian news reporters, such as Esperanza dying in wars that no one knows the reason for (2005, 242, 243). As noted in the passage, the novel, coming to a close, declares the irresponsible and reckless behavior of powers-that-be that results in the destruction of Nature, along with animals, humans, Earth, and even the air we breathe. The deep lacerations left behind due to the selfishness of Western ideals and the senseless suffering of every being targeted with the onslaught of capitalist patriarchy are reflected in this striking comparison of the crucifixion of Christ and environmental destruction. As the scene closes, "Jesus die[s] on the cross" (2005, 243). Arguably, Castillo gives the message that, as Jesus died for people's sins, Chicano and Native people and Nature are dying because of the white patriarchy's sins.

The novel ends with Sofia and other mothers of people who died due to the recklessness of the government founding an organization called "M.O.M.A.S., Mothers of Martyrs and Saints" (2005, 247). Although it is claimed that the organization is a sexist one, meaning Sofi and the board of the organization only accept applications from mothers whose daughters died and became a saint or martyr, the narrator assures the reader that mothers of sons and daughters are equally represented. The author gives the message that humanity is affected by what is happening equally; therefore, every individual, whether female or male, is affected by the damage done to Nature and is equally responsible for our planet. This organization can be considered a part of the healing and mending as the members share their common oppression and raise their voices about the senseless deaths caused by reckless actions of the patriarchal system.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has explored selected American novels through an ecofeminist critical framework, attempting to reveal how these novels address interconnected systems of domination and oppression on women and Nature, and expose anthropocentric modes of thinking while also foregrounding the historic, political, social, and symbolic connections between women and Nature as well as alternative ecological and ecofeminist ethics. The selected novels are *Solar Storms* (1997) by Linda Hogan, *Prodigal Summer* (2001) and *Animal Dreams* (1992) by Barbara Kingsolver, *Parable of the Sower* (2019) by Octavia Butler, and *So Far From God* (2005) by Ana Castillo. These prominent and influential authors lay bare before their readers' eyes how the logic of domination works silently and quietly to control the hierarchically lesser, also illuminating ways to dismantle, disrupt, and unsettle those systems to overcome the subjugation of women and Nature under patriarchy. The ecofeminist framework used in this work is composed of critiques of dualism, ecofeminist literary criticism, the logic of domination, anthropocentrism, the women and Nature connection, care ethics, ethics of entanglement, and interdependence. This work has argued that patriarchy and established systems of domination and control use and abuse women, other otherized peoples, and Nature for the gain of a selected few and legitimize its violent methods of abuse under the name of development, creating dualistic perspectives to control the masses; however, there must exist another way of approaching and understanding the self and its inevitable and inescapable connections, dependence, and relations with its environment. Through a close reading of the aforementioned novels, both the complex systemic oppression and how the characters stand against it while simultaneously maintaining and reforging their connections and relations to their biotic communities are revealed. The specific argument of this study emphasizes the different forms of wounds and scars the capitalist patriarchy inflicts on the bodies and psyches of women and the more-than-human world by dividing and fragmenting what was supposed to be kept whole. The female characters stand against this senseless suffering, which both they themselves and Nature face, and explore ways to dismantle and overcome patriarchy's cruel treatment of them through practices of care and healing.

The theoretical framework of this dissertation has been employed in ecofeminist literary criticism. Concepts such as dualism from Plumwood's perspective, the logic of domination from Warren's perspective, and maldevelopment from Shiva's perspective have been applied to explore the complex system of common oppression of women and Nature. It is apparent that in the wake of this abuse and violence of patriarchy and the wounds it causes, ecofeminists, along with the non-human world, stand against these seemingly overwhelming systems by exploring alternative outlooks and identity formations that consider Nature and humans from a more harmonious perspective. Hence, this work not only searches the systems of destruction and abuse but also reveals and celebrates systems that foreground the interconnectedness and interdependency of the human and the non-human worlds. While doing so, it also investigates and analyzes alternatives to the ethics of rights, which fall short of protecting and caring aspects of humans towards Nature. These alternatives are the ethics of care and ethics grounded in sympathy, empathy, and relationality, and these shun dualistic thinking and support the process of healing and making whole what is fragmented. The ecofeminist framework of this dissertation is also grounded in spiritual, Indigenous, and alternative ecologies to broaden the scope of the ecofeminist outlook. Lastly, to bring in a more contemporary perspective to the ecofeminist framework, this work is grounded in new materialist approaches of Alaimo and Neimanis, and posthumanist and multispecies approaches of Haraway.

Taken together with the framework of this dissertation, the selected novels reveal some patterns and common ecofeminist concerns, and alternative ways of considering the world. Although the selected novels have been written in different narrative styles, by different writers, and at different times, they explore and bring to the fore many common ecofeminist concerns and themes. Most commonly, all the novels analyzed explore dualistic structures existing in patriarchal societies and the harm this way of considering the world brings to all. Furthermore, the logic of domination is used in order to justify the means of abuse and the hierarchical structures within society. Interwoven within every inch of the very fabric of patriarchal societies, this way of perceiving the world has caused and, unfortunately, will continue to cause many wounds on women, other otherized people, and Nature. In *Solar Storms* (1997), the U.S. government considers the Native people as the other; therefore, they do not hesitate to build the dam, disregarding the damage to

both the local people and women, as they are situated closer to the water due to their subsistence work, and last but not least, the biotic community consisting of many different species of plants and animals. This approach is disguised as development and made legitimate through the logic of the domination process. However, it only results in deep scars on the lives of the local people and the local biotic community. The next novel, *Prodigal Summer* (2001), also exposes a similar pattern, revealing it through Garnett and his dismissive attitude toward the possibility of the lizard species' extinction. To him, they are inconsequential and too small to be cared about in the big scheme of things. Another example is the hunters and poachers depicted in the novel. They trivialize their actions or simply do not care enough to give up killing predators, causing many wounds and irreparable damage to Nature. In *Animal Dreams* (1992), the Black Mining Company poisons the biotic community of Grace to make more profit from mining copper, digging the bosom of the earth, hurting and wounding her. Moreover, the chemicals used cause more widespread harm, killing the river, the trees, and threatening the livelihood of the local people. The next novel, *Parable of the Sower* (2019), is also filled with images of the government and corporate greed oppressing both the human and the non-human world. Namely, big corporations take over cities, building their factories emitting poisonous gas and toxic waste. They make people work there as indentured slaves. All die of exposure to toxic fumes when their time comes, only to be replaced by another. Both the human and the non-human are violently abused and controlled by the hierarchical system. The last novel, *So Far From God* (2005), likewise portrays the dualistic structures and how the hierarchies and abuse are legitimized through its narrative. Fe works at a company named Acme International, which forces its workers to use highly corrosive, damaging, and poisonous substances on both human and non-human lives. After a few months, she dies of cancer due to long exposure to a very dangerous and forbidden chemical. The doctors tell the family she already had skin cancer, and the company cannot be sued for causing her death. The knowledge of doctors, creating a hierarchy and and help maintaing power over Fe's family, results in them being oppressed by the company.

Another common theme across the novels is revealing the anthropocentric, patriarchal, capitalist, and colonial domination and control mechanisms. Domination and control mechanisms used to oppress result in wounds and scars. Hogan's novel exposes the ecological disaster caused by the dam project, killing countless animals

and plants, and disrupting many local people's lives. It can be interpreted as an example of maldevelopment. Subsistence economies are considered lower in the hierarchy of importance for the U.S. government, as the so-called betterment of humanity takes precedence over anything else. This narrative reveals interconnected and enmeshed systems of domination. The third chapter uncovers the reasoning behind the anthropocentric perspective through Garnett and Eddie. The former believes that humans are the most important species on the face of the earth, clashing with his neighbor Nannie about this belief again and again, whereas the latter is one of the predator hunters who kills due to his fear of losing his sheep to coyotes, starting a chain reaction that will surely result in the collapse of all ecosystems in the area. Both plot points bring to light the selfish partiality of mankind and their reductive attitude toward Nature. In the fourth chapter, the mining company's crime against the biotic community of Grace helps the readers see the patriarchal capitalistic structures whose sole purpose is to accumulate more capital. The next novel illustrates how these aforementioned systems of oppression and domination might result in the future. Butler describes a future where global warming has destroyed the ecosystems, corporations are taking over cities, and are making people slaves. The last novel exposes the systems of domination by illustrating how Acme International disregards both human and non-human life through the use of harmful chemicals that result in the deaths of women, animals, and the land. When considered together, the analyses of these novels from this perspective make visible systems of domination, oppression, and how the anthropocentric worldview produces and reproduces systematic violence that results in at once seen and unseen catastrophic events for all.

Another recurring pattern in all the novels is that they all reflect the connections between women and Nature. These connections are not approached from an essentialist context; to the contrary, they exist and persist due to women's and Nature's positions within the historic, political, economic, conceptual, relational, and ethical contexts. Furthermore, these bonds that are forged function as healing and mending forces, as they unify, reintegrate, and make whole the wounded and fragmented. In the second chapter, knowing the oppression and abuse of the system, and as she is on the receiving end of them, Agnes forges a beautiful and healing bond with a captive bear, reflecting the interconnectedness and relationality of all beings. In the next chapter, Deanna understands "*coyote* women['s]" (Kingsolver 2001,200;

original emphasis) language and relates to them, seeing their way of life and culture of raising their pups. She protects them as she knows they are there to heal the wound left behind when the red wolves went extinct due to predator hunters. The following chapter witnesses Codi and her sister almost sacrificing their lives when they try to save the coyote pups from the flood. Butler's novel conveys Lauren's connection and embeddedness to her environment through her empathy, feeling the pain and pleasure of others, both human and animal. Her body functions as the manifestation of wholeness and embeddedness. Castillo's character, Caridad, has a strong and healing bond consisting of understanding, respect, and love between herself and the mare she calls Corazon; so much so that when she loses her to the violent act of the sheriff, she does not wake up for days, mourning.

The next common pattern across the novels is the ecofeminist characters' refusal to consider Nature as a mere collection of resources. Their actions both heal and endow the non-human world with agency, as they have opened their eyes to alternative perspectives that can be put briefly as spiritual and Indigenous ecologies that are in line with ecofeminist ethics. These alternative considerations of the more-than-human world shun anthropocentric thought and bring about both the old and new ways of forging relations with Nature, thus making whole what is violently separated. In Hogan's novel, while the government takes away not only the agency of the local people but also the local non-human life, the activists are aware of the significance and intrinsic value of even the smallest plant, and they fight for not only their own rights but also for the agency of the non-human life they share their lives with. In the next novel, Kingsolver narrates Nannie in a way that foregrounds her relational ethical outlook as she acknowledges that animals, big or small, are significant in their own ways and in their own environments. When Garnett attempts to minimize their usefulness apart from being fish bait, she asserts that humans must be insignificant to the lizards as well, and she gives them back their agency with these words men is a "shadowy nuisance (if anything) compared to the sacred business of finding food and a mate and making progeny" (Kingsolver 2001, 215). Nannie's perspective is also reflected in the next novel, through the actions of the Stitch and Bitch Club, as the club realizes that the damage done to the mountains is the damage done to all. Therefore, they take action to save their biotic community from ruin and give it back its agency. Butler's character Lauren empathizes with trees that were "robbed" and "wound[ed]" (2019, 280) by people seeing them only as

resources that serve their ends. Castillo's characters, Sofia and her daughters, refuse to ride Corazon, as she is unwilling to be "ridden" (2005, 51), respecting her wishes, thus giving her the agency she was robbed of by the logic of dualism.

Through the analysis of all the selected novels, it became apparent that the women-Nature connection theme is common in each of them. Nevertheless, it is crucial to distinguish the essentialist connections and other types of connections between women and Nature. For it would be a grave mistake and a huge disservice to the collective literature of ecofeminism to simply construct a connection between women and Nature by stating 'women are naturally closer to Nature.' Every human being is 'close' to Nature as they are already a part of it. However, as previously mentioned, dualistic and hierarchical structures of the West have placed mankind at the top, dismissing every other being, women included, as subservient and an unavoidable necessity. This dissertation denies any essentialist connection and situates itself along with Warren and Gaard, and other ecofeminist theorists like them, to explore non-essentialist connections within the novels. Yet, it must be noted that not every connection encountered within these novels' narrations originates from the same root. As Warren asserts, these interconnections can be classified under different categories. To her, the list of interconnections is as follows: "historical (typically causal), conceptual, empirical, socioeconomic, linguistic, symbolic and literary, spiritual and religious, epistemological, political, and ethical interconnections" (2000, 21). The connections the female characters forge with Nature stand in opposition to patriarchy's violence and harms; thus, they heal, bind together, and mend. In the second chapter, these connections become visible in Indigenous women's connections to land, water, animals, and resistance. They are conceptual and based on care and other relational ethical approaches. In the third chapter, female characters are connected to Nature through their care ethics and ecofeminist ethics against patriarchal ethical outlooks. The novel explores connections between all beings and foregrounds the invisible bonds between all species in a web of life. The novel also highlights the importance of other ways of knowing and how these ways connect the human and the non-human world through epistemological and ethical interconnections. The fourth chapter witnesses the transformation of Codi's identity from a self/other identity model to a relational model through the reforging of her selfhood with the local community, both human and non-human. As she becomes aware of the ecological disaster Grace is facing, she

remembers her immersed self from her childhood and stands against the company poisoning the land, water, and the biotic community of Grace and the surrounding towns. In the fifth novel, both women and Nature, along with other otherized people, are subjugated; therefore, it is possible to infer that their connection stems from conceptual interconnectedness due to the logic of domination. Another connection stems from relationality and ethical frameworks. Lauren's empathy results in a special perspective toward her environment, consisting of all beings, the human and the non-human. The Earthseed community is connected and dependent on each other as well as their environments. The last chapter explores the conceptual, socioeconomic, symbolic, and ethical links between women and Nature, simultaneously bringing to the fore both the female characters' and Nature's common oppression and how the characters deal with the problems occurring due to their place in the hierarchy. Collectively, all these novels portray various connections existing between women and Nature. Searching for these connections and exposing some of the historical, conceptual, socioeconomic, and empirical connections reveals the dualistic structures and how the logic of domination works. More significantly, analysing other types of connections, such as ethical, political, epistemological, spiritual, and symbolic, explores and brings to light alternative standpoints of conceiving the material world as an all-encompassing, integrated, and relational, simultaneously offering non-anthropocentric ways of co-existing with the non-human world. Rather than living apart from the more-than-human world and abusing it for the wellbeing of a selected group, these alternative existing modes are modelled in a way that foregrounds healing, restoration, wholeness, and harmony of all beings.

Another significant finding of the analyses of the selected novels is that they illuminate how humanity can escape from dualistic and hierarchical structures prevailing in patriarchal societies by presenting alternative ethics, such as care and ecofeminist ethics, foregrounding healing, relationality, and alternative ways of conceiving the world. In the first novel, Logan reflects on the difference between patriarchal identity and identity based on relationality and care ethics. Her protagonist, Angel, depicts the men working for the dam project as "shortsighted" and feels sorry for them because "their hearts [are] not brave enough" (1997, 280, 281) because she sees that their values in life are significantly different than hers and her people's. While she can see and appreciate the intrinsic value of all life, functioning under different values that only care about the so-called development and

betterment of mankind, the dam builders only see the monetary value of the river's potential power. In the second novel, Deanna still mourns the long-extinct species of animals, acknowledging the relationality between them and herself. Nannie's ethics of care reveals itself through her refusal to use any kind of pesticide or herbicide. She realizes that all is connected and that using these chemicals does more harm than good. Lusa sees the web of life, thus refusing to cut down the trees for money. She explains to her niece that every creature needs the other to survive. As all is connected, cutting down trees will result in the death of innumerable insects, which will cause many birds to go hungry. The third novel explores Indigenous people's ethical outlook through Loyd as an alternative to the patriarchal perspective. Loyd relays to Codi that his people consider themselves as "houseguest[s] on the earth" (1992, 204). This perspective differs significantly compared to the patriarchal capitalistic perspective as it considers the world and all its components something to be conquered and make profit from without abandon. In the fifth chapter, Lauren's whole being is read as a representation of care and ecofeminist ethics. Her body is entangled with her environment in ways that cannot be divided. She is enmeshed with all the misery others feel all the time. Having no borders, her being shows the way to escape from the dualistic and hierarchical structures of dystopian society. In the last novel, Castillo narrates her characters in a way that foregrounds care practices of ecofeminist ethics. When one of the family members is sick, even when the established healthcare system gives up on her, the family does not give up. Doña Felicia, La Loca, and Caridad are described as healers and caretakers. These characters represent the crucial but mostly unseen part of being human, which is caring for one another without distinguishing between human and non-human. Viewed together, these novels illuminate through their characters' struggle and perseverance the importance of care ethics, relationality, interdependence, and community in the face of hierarchy and dualism. These ways of conceiving the world might bring about the survival and healing of both the human and the non-human communities. They offer alternatives to the anthropocentric perspectives, as they care about the intrinsic value of all life, not just one species. Offering these alternative standpoints and possibilities of conceiving reality, the novels illustrate material interconnection, spiritual ecology, land-based and water ethics, and, last but not least, restore nonhuman agency and bring together the fragmented and divided.

This dissertation contributes to ecofeminist literary criticism by exploring conceptual, political, ethical, socioeconomic, relational, and symbolic connections between women and Nature, as well as foregrounding the importance of discovering those non-essentialist connections to better understand the ecofeminist philosophy and its seminal role in the literature of ecologies and material feminism. Moreover, it analyzes capitalist patriarchal ideals and their effects on women and Nature as metaphors of wounds. The female characters in the novels do not simply accept the abuse and harm; on the contrary, they explore ways to bring down the dualistic systems that are hurting both the human and the non-human worlds and to bring about healing and a state of wholeness within their communities. Exploring these paves the way for further analyses of contemporary fiction through intersectional points of Nature, gender, power, and ecological destruction.

Even though the selected novels seem to belong to different fictional genres, reading these together made visible how contemporary fiction reflects the damage done by systems of domination and how the characters explore ways to heal and ways of transformation from anthropocentric perspectives to ecofeminist perspectives. By doing so, they illustrate ways of caring, discovering the interconnectedness between all beings, and relating to them in sympathy and empathy.

This work also contributes by discovering ecofeminism's contemporary reflections, branches, and echoes by reading ecological destruction, material interdependence, interconnections, and multispecies relations. By doing so, it shows that ecofeminism, once shunned for being essentialist, is still relevant at present, as the contemporary age is witnessing many atrocities against Nature, inequalities in society, and the world is in dire need of a relational outlook that can help change the direction in which humanity is going, dragging the more-than-human world along with it.

The scope of this study has been limited to ecofeminist literary criticism of the selected contemporary American novels to highlight the interconnectedness of women and Nature along with alternative ethical outlooks. Therefore, it leaves out other authors, historical periods, and cultures. Hence, future research and studies might be able to expand this scope by exploring ecofeminist theory and its concerns in different genres, such as poetry, drama, or other cultural representations. Furthermore, contemporary expansion of ecofeminism and other ecologies also

offers new areas for studies that are relevant to the present. Stacy Alaimo's concept of trans-corporeality and the material self, as well as Astrida Neimanis' posthuman approach to water and bodies of water, provide insight into a relevant theoretical framework for climate fiction. Lori Gruen's perspective on relationality with animals and the concept of entangled empathy is invaluable in discovering and applying different ethical outlooks in our perception of the other. This framework can be applied to further study and analysis of other fictional forms of writing, hence helping raise awareness of non-anthropocentric standpoints.

In the end, analyses of the selected novels from an ecofeminist theoretical standpoint highlighted and uncovered seemingly unrelated issues of ecological destruction, gender, embodiment, power, hierarchy, care, and relationality. Foregrounding the imagery of poisoned lands, animals, and humans, flooded towns, and destroyed ecosystems due to dam projects, poached lands, and hunted-to-extinction animals, vulnerable bodies of both the animals and women, this study examined both the wounds inflicted and the complex web of points of convergence between ecology, gender, class, and race. Furthermore, it discovered many healing philosophies and alternatives to dualistic approaches by foregrounding care ethics, entangled ethics, ecofeminist philosophy, relationality, and new materialism. By doing so, it offers different ways for the human and the non-human worlds to co-exist, and makes healing and mending possible, offering hope for a more harmonious present and future for all beings.

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