

"DELVING INTO THE DICHOTOMY OF MOTHER EARTH AND FATHERLAND IN 'THE WANDERGROUND' AND 'THE CLEFT'"

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Abstract: This study examines the relationship between women and nature in Doris Lessing's *The Cleft* and Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground* through using gender and ecofeminist lenses. Women's oppression is analogous to nature's oppression. Therefore, this article shows how a patriarchal (or male-dominated) society treats both nature and women and how society's standards unfairly dominate both. Both writers Sally Miller Gearhart and Doris Lessing argue that women and the environment, including (animals) are crucial to ecofeminism studies and practice; women may solve gender issues only by utilizing natural materials. The present piece portrays the female characters in both works acquiring an understanding of the underlying reasons behind every instance of misery they encounter in their lives. As a result, women attempt to escape the machismo society and create a nature-filled utopia (devoid of males). Although some women continue to live with men, they always opt for separation. Finally, this work shows how Gearhart's utopia is the outcome and redemption of *The Cleft's* dystopia.

Key Words: Mother Earth, *The Cleft* and *The Wanderground*, animal liberation, environmental safety.

"THE CLEFT VE THE WANDERGROUND ÇALIŞMALARINDA BULUNAN TOPRAK ANA VE BABA VATAN İKİLİSİ"

Öz: Bu çalışma, Doris Lessing'in *The Cleft* ve Sally Miller Gearhart'ın *The Wanderground* adlı eserlerinde kadın ve doğa arasındaki ilişkiyi toplumsal cinsiyet ve ekofeminist bakış açısıyla incelemektedir. Dolayısıyla bu makale, ataerkil (veya erkek dominantli veya üstünlüğünde) bir toplumun hem doğaya hem de kadına nasıl davrandığını ve toplum standartlarının her ikisine de nasıl adaletsiz bir şekilde hâkim olduğunu göstermektedir. Her iki yazar da kadınların ve doğanın (hayvanlar da dâhil) çevrenin ekofeminizm çalışmaları ve uygulaması için hayati öneme sahip olduğunu savunur; kadınlar toplumsal cinsiyet sorunlarını ancak doğa ile çözebilir. Bu eser, her iki kitaptaki kadın karakterleri, hayatlarında karşılaştıkları sefalet örneğinin arkasında yatan nedenleri anlayarak tasvir ediyor. Sonuç olarak, kadınlar eril toplumundan kaçmaya ve doğayla dolu (erkeklerden yoksun) bir ütopya yaratmaya çalışırlar. Bazı kadınlar erkeklerle yaşamaya devam etseler de her zaman ayrılığı tercih etmektedirler. Son olarak bu akademik çalışma Gearhart'ın ütopyasının nasıl *The Cleft*'in distopyasının sonucu ve kurtuluşu olduğunu ortaya çıkarıyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toprak Ana, *The Cleft* ve *The Wanderground*, hayvan özgürlüğü, çevre güvenliği.

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1. Introduction

Nature is thought to be everything found in green life; it refers to all the creatures, plants, and other natural phenomena that exist without the intervention of humans. As much as its preservation is valued by society, the concept of nature remains enigmatic. In its history, the term “nature” appears to have accumulated a variety of different and occasionally contradictory meanings. The Current Western use of the word ‘nature’ denotes something in opposition to humans. However, this opposition does not include women and children because women’s position is considered fundamentally closer to nature; under the gendered division of labour, women’s jobs have always included close interaction with nature. The idea leads some to feel that nature is not hostile to women and children; this perspective considers the relationship between women and nature as mutual exchange, symbiosis, and harmony (Shiva, 1989, p. 41).

Feminist ecologists are aware of the connection between women and nature. For instance, Chaia Heller, a social ecology and feminist theory professor, posits similar concepts. She argues, “Love of nature is a process of becoming aware of and unlearning ideologies of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism so that we may cease to reduce our idea of nature to a dark, heterosexual, ‘beautiful’ mother” (Heller, 1993, p. 231). In this aspect, Ellen O’Loughlin elaborates: “We have to examine how racism, heterosexism, classism, ageism, and sexism are all related to naturism,” (O’Loughlin, 1993, p. 148). Emerging from the groundwork of previous assumptions, feminist ecologists have flourished, meticulously examining the intricate web of interconnectivity between diverse issues. These include, but are not limited to, racism, environmental degradation, economic systems, electoral politics, animal liberation, reproductive rights, spirituality, and holistic healthcare practices. Additionally, this kind of activism has demonstrably impacted and collaborated with movements for environmental justice, and women’s spirituality.

The study of nature and women’s correlation is called Ecofeminism as Mellor (1997) states, “Ecofeminists who draw on radical and cultural feminism see this study as a near essentialist bond between women and the environment” (Mellor, 1997, p. 147). To comprehend the specific relationship between women and nonhumans, one must first understand women’s oppression, subjugation, or controlling their bodies (Warren, 2000, p. 1).

As a basis, ecofeminism starts with analyzing gender authorities; gender and environmentalism are related. Ecofeminists have investigated the impact of gender categories to demonstrate how social conventions oppress women and the environment. In her introduction, Mellor (1997) argues that ecofemi-

nism links the exploitation and destruction of the natural world and the subjugation and oppression of women. Ecofeminism, like greens, considers the natural world as interrelated and autonomous, and it, like feminism, considers humanity as systematically gendered in ways that subjugate, exploit, and abuse women. According to ecofeminists, gender inequality leads to a harmful connection between humankind and the rest of the natural world (Mellor, 1997, p. 1). As a result, ecofeminism has become generally recognized as a global warning for humanity over the last four decades. In recent years, researchers have become increasingly interested in the interaction between women and the environment and how it affects the other sex. Humans and nonhumans have long agreed that women and nature rule monuments differently. Several discourses have formed sustainability, and the role of women in developing these notions has increased over time.

Ecofeminist writers provide credible arguments as to why women are more suited to nature. Moreover, they illustrate that ecofeminism offers a remedy for arthritis in terms of the planet's ecological concerns. To restore environmental equilibrium and secure future generations' access to land, they increased awareness in society. Greta Gaard summarizes the preceding explanation: ecofeminism examines ecological degradation and social inequality based on the assumption that humans treat nature and how people treat one another are intrinsically linked (Gaard, 2001, p.158).

Many fictional novels, articles, essays, and other works have been published to highlight the notion of interpreting nature through gender theory. Some of these works, like Doris Lessing's *The Cleft* (2007) and Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground* (1979), focus on the relationship between women and the environment and stress ecofeminism and gender issues. In terms of these two works, both Doris Lessing and Sally Miller Gearhart have used similar aspects in their writings; the two novels are feminist separatist utopias. In both novels, women reject science as masculine and harmful; they prefer a green and more 'natural' way of life, living in loose communities outside of cities and connecting psychically with one another and the natural environment. Despite the distinctions between these two works, both authors seek to emphasize the ecological elements of nature and women throughout the ages. There is no requirement for males or their knowledge to assist women in surviving; women do this on their own, despite males' attempts to establish their socially built power. The stories of the two texts incorporate stereotypical gender identities into nature to assert the bond between women and nature.

Doris Lessing (1919-2013) is a fictional novel writer who is the Nobel Prize Laureate in literature (2007). Because she was born in Iran to British parents, Lessing was influenced by various cultures. She later relocated to South Africa

and Zimbabwe. She eventually settled in London and died there. Lessing is well-known as a writer of fiction, especially for works like *The Grass is Singing* (1950) and *The Golden Notebook* (1962). She has penned various works, including poems, novels, volumes, and most recently, *The Cleft*, published in 2007, which constitutes the central point of this study. Doris Lessing has made tremendous contributions to the realm of feminist literature. Although she has never claimed to be a feminist, she attempts to awaken the women's community to protest patriarchy through her writings. In this respect, Rapping (1975) states, "One can hardly think of Doris Lessing without thinking of feminine issues" (Rapping, 1975, p. 29). Besides, her literary production is highlighted as:

Doris Lessing writes from the point of view of someone who is part of the tradition of Western European literature, and yet distanced from it, writing from its margins. This 'marginal' perspective is one of her greatest strengths as a writer, giving her a freedom to explore and analyse the 'centres' of our culture which she has fully and imaginatively exploited. (King, 1989, p. ix)

Doris Lessing's novel *The Cleft* (2007) flips creation myths by portraying women as the first humans. Transit, an elderly Roman senator and a historian, devotes himself to writing the history of humanity's origins. He unavoidably leaves a record open to interpretation (Gendusa, 2014, p. 136). According to Lessing, the novel was inspired by a scientific report claiming that the fundamental and primal human stock is female. Because they cooperate with nature, women in *The Cleft* can rear children without the help of men. Lessing captures the reality of women as they exist in nature. The Cleft women emerge from nature to serve Mother Earth because women are the work product of nature. Even though Lessing portrays women as the first humans, a detailed examination of the text reveals that the author emphasizes traditional gender stereotypes and gender roles. By exploring the patriarchal structures depicted in the novel, the author seeks to uncover her stance on contemporary theories regarding gender socialization and the interconnectedness of gender and environmental issues.

On the other hand, Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground* (1979) deals with the subjugation of nature and women. Gearhart (1931-2021) is a political activist, a science fiction writer, and a lesbian separatist. She is ultimately the one who breaks the stereotypes imposed on her. In the novel, she successfully distances women from a male-dominated culture and builds a universe where males are non-existent. The author depicts women as "hill women" (Stories of the hill women) scattered across the Wanderground (The name of the place) (Gearhart, 1979, p.4). The author relies on the label "hill women" to define female characters as lesbians who reject men and achieve harmony with nature,

potentially reinforcing stereotypes. She describes herself as a science fiction writer; however, she concedes that there are no hill women in science fiction. There is no feminist awareness (Gearhart & Sturgis, 1980, p. 24). Her stories, which explore and articulate “the ritual return to nature,” are visions and measures of the strength women experience when removing themselves from urban, technological society and living alone in the forest (Roberts, 1980, p. 74). *The Wanderground* is groundbreaking for lesbian separatists but is possibly more important and long-lasting for eco-feminists. Using nature’s elements, women have discovered ways to heal their afflictions using only natural remedies. They can reach the centre of the world, fly and make objects levitate, and bear children without men. In one of her interviews, Sally Miller Gearhart contends:

I have been a science fiction buff all my life and never found in science fiction anything like the hill women because there is no feminist consciousness in science fiction. I think it was a combination of coming into my feminism with my science fiction/ mystical mentality. (Gearhart,1980, p. 24)

In *The Wanderground*, there is also a small minority group of males known as “gentles”; they are distinct from the men who are the cause of this separation. As a result, Gearhart’s work also opens the door for gender theory, which evolves the queer theory as well; the subject will be thoroughly covered in the following chapters. As evidence, she writes as follows on her website: “I am proud to have been a part of the movement that secured greater visibility for society’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people” (Gearhart, 2021).

In this literary work, ecofeminism is introduced to depict women's relationship with nature and patriarchy which has an equal impact on both. The books of Sally Miller Gearhart and Doris Lessing express notions about women living as one with the broader natural environment and being able to control their fertility. The significance of ecofeminism in the novels emphasizes the importance of ecofeminism concerns in diverse manners. As a result of Western ideas that place men above women, *The Cleft* and *The Wanderground* perceive nature, women, and minority groups, and they are treated as second-class citizens. Both writers attempt to conclude similarly while using different techniques. Several issues related to the second theory will be mentioned, including how nature is captured in the texts. What are the novels’ settings? How are animals shown in both writings? Is there any difference between how women and men treat nature? What are the primary distinctions between the two texts? Nature has been feminized, while women have been naturalized. Aside from the sufferings and humiliations endured by women and nature in patri-

archal systems, there are experiential links between nature and women in literary works; ecofeminism and gender theory collaborate to investigate this connection in depth.

As comparative literature, this study analyses the works of Sally Miller Gearhart and Doris Lessing to anticipate women's struggles throughout history. Whereas Doris Lessing delves into the past and mythology of human beings by Roman Senator and reintroduces women to the planet as the earliest humans, Sally Miller Gearhart delves into women's current and modern life, away from cities and males. Both use imaginary characters to illustrate why women choose nature and a green lifestyle. They attempt to disentangle women from men and establish a universe populated entirely by females. They struggle to reach the desired outcome while developing their work.

2. Roots of Radical Care: Exploring the Theoretical Foundations of Ecofeminism

Ecofeminist theory has been created over the last decade by philosophers, scientists, activists, and academics worldwide. Many ecofeminists think that the urgency of contemporary social and ecological situations is sufficient for academics to become activists and instill a sense of social and environmental justice in every subject they teach (Gaard, 1996, p. 155). Greta Gaard draws attention to the subjugation of women and the environment in 1993, highlighting their parallels as ecofeminism advocates the abolition of all forms of oppression, believing that no endeavour to liberate women would succeed without an equal effort to liberate nature (Gaard, 1993, p. 1).

Like many other modern progressive movements, ecofeminism has its origins in the 1960s and 1970s social reform movements (Gaard & Gruen, 1993, p. 1). Essentially, the word 'ecofeminism' was developed in 1974 by the French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne feminism" to emphasize the need for women to bring about an ecological revolution and came up with the phrase "Feminism or death" [Le féminisme ou la mort]. Ecofeminism, in general, adheres to the core feminist ideas of gender equality (d'Eaubonne, 1974, p. 221). To combat environmental deterioration, d'Eaubonne especially appealed to women, claiming that the "egalitarian administration of a world" would be the key to both their and nature's freedom. Indeed, ecofeminism, like feminism, was promoted and enhanced by French feminists. To justify this claim, Glazebrook (2002) agrees that "ecofeminism has conceptual beginnings in the French tradition of feminist theory" (Glazebrook, 2002, p. 12). In addition, Karen J. Warren presents a range of facts about ecological feminism as an introduction:

Just as there is not one feminism, there is not one ecofeminism or one ecofeminist philosophy. Ecological feminism has roots in a wide variety of feminisms (e.g., liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, radical and socialist feminisms, black and Third World feminisms). What makes ecofeminism distinct is its insistence that nonhuman nature and naturism (i.e., the unjustified domination of nature) are feminist issues. Ecofeminist philosophy extends familiar feminist critiques of socialisms of domination (e.g., sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, anti-Semitism) to nature (i.e., naturism). (Warren, 1997, p. 4)

Ecofeminism has its own set of ideologies that may be summed up by its devotion to the environment and acknowledging the general public's link of women with nature. Trish Glazebrook states that although the word "ecofeminism" is commonly associated with Françoise d'Eaubonne, who introduced it in 1974, there have been earlier feminist supporters for the environment. Glazebrook also exemplifies the work of other beginnings such as Rosemary Radford Ruether. She argues that if women are to strive toward their emancipation, they must accept and work to remove nature's dominance (Glazebrook, 2002, pp. 12-13); "Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination" (Ruether, 1975, p. 204). Because of its distinctive and creative approaches, ecofeminism is a development of the third wave of feminism. It opposes all "-isms" and celebrates variety; in other words, ecofeminism addresses all forms of social dominance, such as sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, naturism, and so on.

While the connection between women and nature is a complex topic within ecofeminism, many ecofeminist writers indeed explore a deep affinity between them. They argue that both women and nature have historically been seen as "other" – subjugated, exploited, and undervalued by patriarchal systems. This shared experience of oppression fuels ecofeminist action, leading them to address environmental issues alongside all forms of gender injustice. They believe that dismantling harmful power structures that exploit women also paves the way for a more harmonious relationship with the natural world, fostering respect and sustainability for both. However, it is important to note that ecofeminism is not just about a romanticized connection between women and nature, but rather a nuanced framework for analyzing and resisting various forms of oppression (Merchant, 1995).

Ecofeminism contends that women's subjugation and the mistreatment of the natural environment are intrinsically linked (Mellor, 1997, pp. 1-2). Women and nature are inextricably linked; they are the creators of life. They also provide birth to organisms; women's wombs enable life to exist, as do forests,

thus providing habitats for a diversity of vegetation. In her book *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters* (2000), Warren remarks that trees, forests, water, drought, food production, and poverty are women's concerns. Additionally, she demonstrates, though ecofeminism begins with gender as a study category, that the relationship between nature and women is not inspired by gender oppression; the term "woman" elucidates critical aspects of the linked human control system. Warren also determines the reasons behind this: first, environmental degradation disproportionately affects people of colour, colonial people, the poor, and children. Often, women face more dangers than males. Second, female gender roles frequently coexist harmoniously with specific environmental concerns in ways that male gender roles do not. Third, some Western beliefs that underpin the conceptualization and dominance of nature are in ways that are unique from other forms of prejudice slanted toward men. As a result, ecofeminists focus on women to dissect the unique gender characteristics of human system dominance. In other words, they examine the role of women in the patriarchal structure of human society (Warren, 2000, pp.1-2).

According to ecological feminists ("ecofeminists"), important connections exist between the treatment of women, people of color, and the underclass on one hand and the treatment of nonhuman nature on the other. Ecological feminists claim that any feminism, environmentalism, or environmental ethic which fails to take these connections seriously is grossly inadequate. (Warren, 2002, p. 1)

Penning new visions, Susan Griffin has long used a literary style to investigate the relationship between women and the environment, commonly referred to as "collage" combining biography, poetry, and research to examine ecology, politics, and feminism. Griffin also states that women do not only develop a close relationship with greens but also have close relationships with animals:

We are the bird's eggs. Bird's eggs, flowers, butterflies, rabbits, cows, sheep, we are caterpillars; we are leaves of ivy and springs of wildflowers. We are women. We rise from the wave. We are gazelle and doe, elephant and whale, lilies and roses and peach; we are air, we are flame, we are oyster and pearl, we are girls. We are women and nature. And he says he cannot hear us speak. but we hear. (Griffin, 1978, p. 1)

Catherine Roach makes two points on the woman-nature connection in her article "Loving Your Mother: On the Woman-Nature Relationship" (1991). To commence, the environmental slogan "Love Your Mother" is problematic because of the way "mother" or "motherhood" is defined under patriarchy; ne-

vertheless, the second one addresses the most frequently asked issue: Are women more connected to nature than men? Mothers are commonly left to raise their children without the support of a father. The caregiver appears all-powerful and compassionate to a newborn and capricious and malicious. As a result, the infant grows to love, desire, despise, and dread the caregiver. Because the woman is generally the primary caregiver, she is rarely a “clean” parent in the same way the father is. As a consequence, both men and women have difficulty viewing moms as independent persons. Conventional parenting arrangements, in which women are responsible for virtually all early childcare, ensure that people cling to the childhood concept that the first magical parent was a semi-human force of nature, and that nature is the semi-human mother. So, a mother is half-human. Therefore, it is similar to expecting affection from a mother and mother earth. “Love Your Mother” is an environmental phrase that maintains expectations intact. The image selected to be used alongside the tagline “Love Your Mother” is a meaningful choice. The image shows Earth from the vantage point of outer space as if the Earth appears in an isolated area with its atmosphere swirling in a complete circle (Roach, 1991, pp. 46-50). Most male writers have argued against referring to nature as “Mother Earth.” In contrast, the American physicist Richard Feynman asserts that the truth must be acknowledged: nature is “She” (Feynman, 1989, as cited in Karen Warren, 1996). As an outcome, nature is seen as an embodiment of all women’s virtues. Nature is also gendered as a result of society’s patriarchal nature. Because many romantic trip authors are males, travel writing is extremely gendered biased, and men are quite likely to endow nature with feminine characteristics: “The picturesque retained the assumptions of gender given to it by its founders, who imagined a male art of seeing that could correct and complete what a feminized landscape held forth” (Buzard, 1993, p. 16).

There are also material issues that develop due to this risky alignment of women and nature. In the global political arena, women pay the economic costs of deforestation and other types of international development in ways that men do not. Third-world affairs, poverty, food manufacturing and distribution, reproductive rights, environmental racism, and capitalism are all addressed in analyzing women and nature interaction (Gaard & Gruen, 1993, p. 7). The French philosopher Denis Diderot made this point in 1757: “Nature is like a woman who enjoys disguising herself, and whose different disguises, revealing now one part of her and now another, permit those who study her and assiduously to hope that one day they may know the whole of her person” (Diderot, 1999, p. 73). Nature is viewed as the personification of all the traits associated with women; both are chased and hunted by other humans.

3. Living in Harmony: Nature as Sanctuary and Empowerment in "The Wanderground " and "The Cleft"

Feminists and ecofeminists are unambiguously allies in the battle for women's equality. Ecofeminism developed and established an identity as a theory throughout the 1980s. Numerous ecofeminists have attempted to define ecofeminism uniquely; nevertheless, they agree that women remain connected to nature and animals. When the subject of "Mother Earth" is brought up, images of greens, planets, water, and life immediately spring to mind. One may reasonably inquire why Mother Earth is not called Father Earth. Before responding, as a planet that sustains life, preserving the earth and its ecosystem becomes critical since it supplies food and water for life. Humanity's well-being is entirely dependent on this planet; it provides food and water to all living creatures; therefore, it is the obligation of humans to take care of it. The globe is confronted with unprecedented natural resource and environmental obstacles: climate change, freshwater scarcity, air pollution, ocean overfishing, deforestation, water pollution, and the effort to feed a planet of millions (Scherff, 1991, pp. 101-103). Accordingly, ecofeminist arguments appear at the beginning and end of *The Cleft* and *The Wanderground* encouraging ecofeminist styles; ecofeminism, which encompasses both the feminine principle and mainstream theory in one accordant whole, is used to analyse the novels. Ecofeminist principles shed light on the narrations right away. For the sake of ecofeminism, there should be social reform among people for the well-being of nature, human beings, animals, and small pieces of nature. The cleft ladies describe what surrounds their land and caverns, using natural elements in such a way that everyone can identify they are from nature: "We are sea people, The sea made us. Our caves are warm, with sandy floors, and dry, and the fires outside each cave burn sea-brush and dry seaweed and wood from the cliffs" (Lessing, 2007, p. 8).

After sharing sexual lives with males in *The Cleft*, cleft women are enslaved by masculine values. They may soon revert to their natural state as Wanderground women. As the women in both works represent, the feminine civilization innovates life through a green philosophy, procreating and conserving life on the planet. The author of *The Wanderground* devotes the work to the theme of ecofeminism. The ideas portray women living in harmony with the natural environment and controlling their fertility. When a large cat comes out their way, one of the hill ladies' statements captures the most compelling evidence: Ursula defines the hill women as, "We are the forest women, the women from the hills-we have dealt you no harm and have pledged our lives to your protection save when you turn on us. Do you know us ?" (Gearhart, 1979, p. 56). Women

describe themselves as a part of nature; they should not be scared of any element of nature, even if it belongs to wildlife. Nature does not let them down, and the response comes quickly as “know you well” (Gearhart, 1979, p. 56); because nature knows what the conditions of women are, they are mothers in the same way as nature is. Mother Earth is aware of their situation and takes no action to harm them.

While nature nurtures all beings, women are depicted as having a special reverence and appreciation for its wonders. The moon, fish, trees, cats, water, and deer are presented as sources of empowerment for men and women, offering them solace, strength, and guidance. To begin, *The Cleft* is divided into numerous sections that emphasize the value of nature. For instance, the lunar cycle has a pronounced effect on women. The lunar cycle moves from a full moon to a new one, impacting women's moods and even reproductive characteristics. Women's bodies, in general, have a solid connection to and resemblance to nature, and they change in response to natural changes (Ruether, 1996, p. 4). There is a direct link between women's periods, lunar cycles, and the red flowers that shed a kind of red liquid at apparent times of the month. At the beginning of this novel, we see these flowers grow inside the Cleft; they are both the source of life and meaning for the Clefts, and release their liquid once a month, thereby signaling the beginning of menstruation for women. The moon may be referred to as feminine after observing how the cleft women deal with each new month:

When the moon is at its biggest and brightest, we climb up to above The Cleft where the red flowers grow, and we cut them, so there is a lot of red, and we let the water flow from the spring up there, and the water flushes the flowers down through The Cleft, from top to bottom, and we all have our blood flow. (Lessing, 2007, p. 9)

Gearhart's *The Wanderground* also includes a section on the moon's value. It does not contribute to the moon's significance through fertilization, but it does so in a way that makes the hill women feel so much better. Diana's story, an example of that, begins in a chapter titled 'Diana and the Moon.' Diana is a Roman and Hellenistic goddess primarily associated with the countryside, hunters, crossroads, and the Moon (Hughes, 1995, p. 215). With the assistance of the moon, Diana feels completely secure. Diana starts by telling her story to her other hill sisters about her encounter with the moon and how the moon treats her alluding to the relationship between mothers and grandmothers. Grandmother Moon is especially close to Diana, as the name is not random. During her journey to the moon, she can see and embrace the moon's whiteness. The author portrays her fictional character as a mother goddess as if the real Diana is a living, moon-worshipping deity and creates a moon-centric character: I greet you, she said to the bright face. Her arms reached out as if to

embrace the whiteness. She placed herself in the grainy light that stretched between herself and the moon. Her head vibrated. She felt joy rising from the earth beneath her, rising to meet the moon through her. (Gearhart, 1979, p. 95)

Diana, as a mother, reflects her feelings by entrusting her soul to the whiteness and spreading love all across the cruel world, "I love, I love a lunatic!" (Gearhart, 1979, p. 95). The moon influences the subject's ability to reflect and adapt. As the moon empowers women and instils confidence in them, trees also play a significant role in empowering women and human beings. Trees contribute to a place's unique character, and people are drawn to live, work, and invest in green spaces. However, the hill women's relationship with trees and plants is featured differently. Plants provide fresh oxygen and a bone to lay on to help the hill women breathe. As an outcome, when non-humans volunteer to assist the human women, they show a greater degree of autonomy than when they respond to human requests:

"I will warm you" she heard. Laughing, she turned to the tree. Gently she laid herself against the heavy bark, spreading her legs and arms about the big trunk. "I take what you give," said the tree. "I know," she said. "And I take what you give." She inhaled. (Gearhart, 1979, p. 13).

The conversation reminds the critical relationship between ecofeminist Greta Gaard and trees; as an environmental ethic, the dialogue is formal and should be conducted ethically. Gaard portrays trees as social creatures that communicate cooperatively and provide lessons to humans. Further, trees in a forest are frequently connected via an older tree referred to as a "mother" by ecofeminists (Gaard, 1995, p.45). As mentioned earlier, Gaard is one of the ecofeminists who vividly characterizes a close relationship replete with conversation and ethics, prompting readers to consider a variety of issues, such as how one communicates with nature. Gaard, like the hill women, is fond of transforming reality into fiction. Certain questions are unanswerable; they pertain to the manners and attitudes of the individual, as well as whether the individual genuinely cares about nature or not. According to Vakoch, the scientific community is establishing plant communication as a quantifiable biochemical phenomenon. Greta Gaard expands the avenues of nature-human communication along lines suggested by other ecofeminists, going beyond the relatively constrained pathway of pheromones and chemical receptors that science has begun to investigate (Vakoch, 2021, p. 141). Another part of nature emerges from Clana's path (the little girl) in *The Wanderground*, who is fatigued and decides to relax with a fern. She wishes to replace her exhaustion with the fern's vigor and vitality. Clana is fortunate enough to trap the fern, which provides her with an aesthetically pleasing and delicate sub-canopy. Even though

it may appear to readers that a fern is doing far more than simply conversing with a human, the author presents the scene as a regular thing: “Oh fern,” she said, “will you pretend you live on tiredness? And I will live on being excited?” The fern immediately agreed” (Gearhart, 1979, p. 134). The Euro-Western conception that many earth others "don't talk" is avoided in this incident. The fictional character's encounter with a fern is a challenge to the widely held belief that nature does not respond to human intervention “– ‘it works!’- she thought” (Gearhart, 1979, p. 134).

Our most important natural resources become clear when greens are taken into account; water is one of them. Both novels, *The Wanderground* and *The Cleft*, spot a higher premium on the water as the substance and matrix of life, a mother and a medium. The writers demonstrate that there is no life without water simply by allowing the text's characters to prove: “In stormy seas, you can stand on the cliffs and look down and think that water is everything, is everywhere” (Lessing, 2007, p. 8).

In *The Cleft*, water is critical for both males and females; after bringing baby boys to earth, water becomes urgent. The clefts spend their days swimming and lounging in the water, and similarly, baby boys develop an affinity for the sea and adopt the persona of “water babies” (Lessing, 2007, p. 197). At the most fundamental level, every living thing requires water to maintain the biological processes necessary for life. Theories of transnational water use, such as the community of interest and equitable utilization, are based on the premise that sovereignty and the benefits of water ownership are contingent upon a certain degree of cooperation and mutual respect. Sally Miller Gearhart substantiated this theory in her book *The Wanderground* by including a 'Red Waters' chapter. Red waters are portrayed as a place that empowers women by allowing them to swim beneath the water's surface and sing loudly.

Thereby, gender disparities in the water sector are pervasive and persist, implying severe consequences. Gender defines people's roles, responsibilities, and opportunities in society and frequently limits their potential. As a result, women and men have disparate levels of knowledge, abilities, opportunities, and needs. Gender also shapes one's relationship with water by influencing one's needs, access, use, and benefits from this vital resource (WSP, 2010, pp. 7-8). The hill women believe that protecting water will save the earth and women. Water will also put an end to racism and gender inequality; if the earth is happy, women will be as well:

With water and blood, we can wash away the slayer

With water and blood, we can wash away the race. (Gearhart, 1979, p. 195)

Besides, water introduces a new element of nature that is inextricably linked to water: rivers. Rivers are critical components of nature. They transport water

and nutrients to regions all over the globe: “flowing rivers and sprawling rice fields are symbols of energy and life-giving force for people” (Dewi, 2020, p. 1). The great river serves as a conduit for joy, festivals, and entertainment in *The Cleft*. Cleft women are accustomed to commemorating river events through dancing and feasts “we always do it this way” (Lessing, 2007, p. 153). Lessing emphasizes the significance of river festivals in women's lives, stating that women indicate their gratitude to the river by dancing in its presence. Rivers provide critical benefits such as drinking water, and more importantly, they provide habitat for fish, plants, and wildlife. Many species rely on rivers for survival: “[T]here were very large fish in the river” (Lessing, 2007, p. 38). Some researchers assert that freshwater fish are ecologically significant in stream ecosystems, providing significant food, recreation, and conservation value as a biological indicator of freshwater streams (Rashleigh et al., 2009, pp. 376-391).

The subject piques ecologists' interest and allows for an in-depth discussion within their frameworks. Fish and River Pollution is concerned with laboratory and field research on the effects of pollution on fish. The frequent capture of fish in the *The Cleft* clearly shows Lessing's desire to display the importance of fish and ecologists' lack of concern for this subject. In the text, the author presents fish as leaders and mothers. At first, when babies are born, women believe that large fish and the moon produce them (Lessing, 2007, 11). Moreover, Lessing includes a scene where females discover how babies are born. The author constructs a scene that teaches about men's and women's natures, and most importantly, how to engage in sexual intercourse, copulation, or vaginal sex. The players and teachers are two male and female fish, while the audience is two females who spread the idea to the rest: “they have tubes sticking out, like the monsters, and one of them stuck his tube into the other, and there were little eggs scattering through the water” (Lessing, 2007, p. 20). Lessing exemplifies the determination of sex in fish's life by demonstrating similarities between humans and nature, particularly in the sex aspect “the Monster's tubes were for making eggs” (Lessing, 2007, p. 20).

Not only sexual interaction resembles that of a human being, but gender group items can also be found in the fish world. Male homosexual behaviour—while present in the majority of extant clades throughout the Animal Kingdom—remains a conundrum, as same-sex mating should reduce male reproductive fitness. However, males who engage in same-sex sexual behaviour mate with females in the majority of species. In theory, same-sex mating may even improve male reproductive fitness by increasing males' chances of future heterosexual mating (Bierbach et al., 2013, p. 1). Sex-changing fish behave normally, engaging in male- or female-typical sexual behaviour depending on

their current gender assignment. Sexual behavioural plasticity can be also observed in fish that do not change sex naturally but are manipulated hormonally. Thus, sex determination and differentiation in fish are labile and can be conducted during the fertilization and hatching stages, respectively, by controlling ploidy and hormone levels (Pandian & Koteeswaran, 1999, p. 580). Gender is based on assumed sexual characteristics shaped by doubtful biological determinism, thus reminding us of Butler's assertions in gender and sex determination. Based on what has been said so far, we can posit from a discursive perspective that sex is contesting. In other words, Butler does not say that sexual organs do not exist, but rather that the meaning of sex is shaped by normative and coercive discourses (Butler, 1990, p. 7).

Fish plays different roles throughout both novels, including guide, influencer, and warner. Another ability of the fish is its ability to recognize human faces. A tropical fish species can discriminate between human faces; this is the first-time fish have shown this ability. The researchers discovered that fish, which lack primates' sophisticated visual cortex, are capable of discriminating between up to forty-four new faces (Newport et al. 2016, 1-2). Similarly, in the *Wanderground*, a fish recognizes one of the hill women who attempt to swim and ends up in a deep river. Alaka's hand comes into contact with a fish in the darkness. Soon after, she welcomes other river dwellers who are courageous enough to swim alongside and around her (Gearhart, 1979, p. 11). Ecofeminists think that women are better conservationists and more environmentally friendly than men. Gearhart says first that nature saves women. Then, women need to be empowered for climate action and the powerful change it can make. Therefore, in the novel, fish is a hero for the hill woman who gets into trouble: "you are in trouble"? "Yes," she sent back. "I need air and light". (Gearhart, 1979, p. 24). Generally speaking, fish serves as a warning and a guide for the hill women. Each of the elements of nature helps lead them on a journey of connecting with the earth's rhythms, healing and release, nourishing the soul, and long-lasting sisterhood. The author created a situation in which neither the *Wanderground* women nor the fish are dissatisfied, so they remain together "Thank you, water ones. May you go well and come again!" (Gearhart, 1979, p. 24).

In brief, everything plays a unique role in nature, which is why a biodiverse perspective is necessary to protect life on Earth. Nature's inanimate formations, such as seas, rivers, forests, mountains, valleys, rocks, and caves provide humans with food, shelter, clothing, and heating, or in a nutshell, 'life.' In the novels, women swim and forage for food from the sea and forest trees, relocating in the mountains. The concept of ecosystem services is well-established in the scientific and environmental communities, as depicted in both novels.

The natural world has provided everything that humans have required to survive and thrive. Thus, individuals should make every effort to safeguard and sustain life on Earth by preserving the natural balance and integrity of the planet. The clefts and the hill women are already aware of and concerned with the natural harmony, and they make every effort to protect it. In *The Wanderground*, women flee the violence perpetrated by men in 'the City' and establish a lesbian community in the mountains. They coexist with nature in harmony, communicating telepathically with one another and with plants and animals. They derive their strength and abilities from the Earth Mother's breathing. Their ability to communicate with nature enables them to live in safety and security. Regardless of how difficult life has been in the city, nature in the form of trees, ferns, fish, cats, and dogs is there to rescue and motivate the hill ladies. Similarly, *The Cleft* contains numerous instances of this eco-friendly practice. The Cleft women revere nature as a source of female fertility and protect it by keeping it clean and undamaged. They see a parallel between their genitalia and nature; therefore, they elevate it to the status of a deity that is responsible for the creation of life. In the end, both books define an ecosystem as a community in which producers (plants), consumers (animals), and decomposers (rocks, rivers, and water) work together to ensure their survival.

4. Women's Ecological Responsibilities:

Tasks to Save the Mother Earth

There is a belief that females exhibit greater concern for environmental issues and are more actively involved in conservation efforts when compared to males. Women are essential in the management of natural resources within the context of families and communities. Indigenous communities in developing countries bear a disproportionate burden of environmental degradation and play a crucial role in managing and conserving resources for their family. They dedicate a significant amount of effort to gathering and stockpiling water, ensuring the availability of fuel, food, and animal feed, and overseeing land management. Additionally, they exert significant influence in tackling urgent environmental concerns. Furthermore, their intimate connection with the local environment is fostered by their occupation as agriculturalists and gatherers of water and firewood. They frequently experience environmental issues (Aditya, 2016, p. 141).

In both novels, women are assigned tasks and responsibilities to save the planet. Because the authors are aware of the dangers of eco-friendly life, they want female characters to be in charge of specific tasks to protect wild and green energy. *The Cleft* primarily depicts reflections of tasks or jobs; we are told at the beginning of the book that the clefts do not have names. The Cleft

women are referred to as the ancestors of "mankind" by the novel's female protagonist, Maire. They are an anonymous group without individual or family names and are classified solely by their tasks, thereby implying that their jobs take precedence over their personal information. The cleft women have been entrusted with the mother earth; nature falls upon women. The individuals are categorized into separate factions based on their assigned duties, which encompass Cleft Watchers, Fish Catchers, Net Makers, Fish Skin Curers, and Seaweed Collectors. They live a benign and uncomplicated life that is embraced by nature (Lessing, 2007, pp. 10-11).

Cleft women do not work solely to save the earth; catching fish is their primary objective. They hunt fish and gather seafood to eat and survive. Another dualism emerges from analysing the cleft as fish catchers because food inequality is also a factor when discussing the connections between veganism and ecofeminism. One of the frequently used arguments in feminist-vegan conflicts is that the entire animal industry is built on exploiting the female reproductive system. As an outcome, feminists should champion animal rights (Adams, 1991, p. 125). One of the central feminist values is that women should not be held accountable for their private and personal choices. In most scenes, men and women are captured beside the sea, eating fish and occasionally becoming enraged due to a lack of fish (Lessing, 2007, p. 13).

Additionally, one could argue that Lessing does not only assign duties to the cleft women but also emphasizes that nature greatly benefits mankind humankind. Nature works for humans more than cleft women. Each item in the book has a purpose. Nature does not simply provide food and water; it also regulates the air we breathe, controls water levels, and, most importantly, keeps us sane. The writer makes us aware of the fact that nature saves human beings at specific points: "The eagle let itself down from the sky and took the body in its claws and went off with it back in the direction of the Eagle's Hills" – "the eagles watched us all the time, and we had to keep the body Monster out of their sight" (Lessing, 2007, pp. 16-17). Here, we get to address the tasks that animals perform for humans once more. Because the eagle saves humans, it represents rebirth, dawn, the direction of spring, and renewed life for us. For those who have been through difficult times in life, the eagle symbol represents new beginnings. It was purposefully chosen for the novel because eagles generally have a fierce demeanour and are large in size. In *The Cleft*, eagles have long been revered as a symbol of power and grace by diverse societies worldwide. Humans' roles, in this case, are to respect what eagles harmoniously accomplish. Additionally, it is possible to approach that *The Cleft* proves that nature's historical purpose is to serve human beings. In contrast, in *The Wanderground*, women become aware of the cruelty they have committed

throughout collective memory. The most critical aspect is identifying women and their roles to accomplish the writers' objectives. Nature has provided numerous benefits to humans, and we also rely on them for a variety of other goods and services, but now is the time to seek out the opposite, which is human for nature. Such facets are present in *The Wanderground*, where Gearhart assigns numerous tasks to the hill women. Each chapter introduces us to new characters and jobs. The chapter in which Krueva and the pony are placed focuses heavily on women's responsibilities to nature. The delicate moments between the two create a bond between women and nature. Gearhart assigns a great deal of responsibility for protecting an animal on the verge of death. The hill woman is acutely sensitive to animal pain, and given the scope and persistence of animal pain, unsurprisingly, her story ends tragically: "Krueva felt the animal's frustration, its puzzlement" (Gearhart, 1979, p. 56). Their mission is ingrained in their minds, and they make sound judgments. Women have been assigned to assist in keeping the animals alive, and they make every effort to save them: "I will hold you better, Pony. I will hold you and rock you" (Gearhart, 1979, p. 55). The part makes another attempt to convey the message clearly, which is that while animals undoubtedly suffer and die during experiments, apologists for animal experimentation argue that pain, suffering, and death are intentional, not gratuitous.

The Wanderground women are not limited to protecting animals or greenery; instead, Gearhart has set work activities for hill women for ecology. Each task is assigned to a distinct character. In this section, Seja carries out her duty by collecting books. The author empowers women by allowing them to create educational activities. Books and knowledge should play a role in the lives of hill women; there is no limitation to a single genre; they cover a wide variety of subjects and topics:

Books. Hundreds of them, stacked at different thicknesses within rectangular wood sections. "Best insulation ever," Seja had said, "and quite an experience to be walking on all that knowledge." To Alaka's amazement Seja had demonstrated a remarkable recall of what books were where and could quickly lay hands on any title she had. Now she noted that Seja's reading had rendered the floor pretty uneven in places. Two children's books, open by the door, had left a gap that a French grammar was failing to fill and next to two texts on plant diseases right near her reach was a long hole whose bottom, Alaka could see, was the dark earth itself. She picked up a book and examined it. (Gearhart, 1979, pp. 18-19)

Besides, the settings of the books also allude to the gravity of the situation for hill women. They are not placed randomly throughout the *Wanderground*, as Gearhart explains. Instead, she has created a special wall for the books, which surprises other characters with its appearance. The neatness and specificity of the concept evoke memories of hill women's concern for both nature and themselves. By taking care of the Earth and all life on it, they take care of themselves by looking after some of the city's favourites. Humanity can become a conscious healing force by embracing our inherent nature as expressions of Nature. By bearing in mind the limitations of our knowledge, we can humbly contribute to the flourishing rather than immiseration of Life: “[T]he walls were secured between the four-round poles” (Gearhart, 1979, p. 19). The most significant consideration for nature is proved in *The Cleft*, where Lessing commands the cleft women to be responsible for the land's cleaning. Even after encountering monsters (men), the cleft women's liability extends to the novel's end. Lessing's goal in allowing the cleft women to be in men's lives is fully grasped in this section; women should be with men for the sake of nature: “teach them how to keep their shelters clean” (Lessing, 2007, p. 75). Some believe that a woman's responsibility is to clean her home, so nature is included in her responsibilities. However, in this opinion, ecofeminism does not approach this level of closeness. A woman's bond with nature is strong; it cannot conceal such an erroneous notion. Ecofeminists raise awareness of their essentialism in connecting women to nature and valuing women's role as nurturers in the early 1900s. Additionally, ecofeminism implies that women should be held accountable for resolving environmental problems caused by men and that men are incapable of developing a close relationship with nature (Sachs et al., 2016, p. 23).

Sally Miller Gearhart acknowledges that ecofeminism impacts our approach to justice by highlighting the interrelated origins of racism, sexism, poverty, and other societal challenges with ecological decline. Hill women have a special affinity toward animals. Their responsibility to protect animals indicates that there is a theoretical connection between feminism and animal rights, which animals and women explore. An effective task in *The Wanderground* is women's dog care; the hill women have been commissioned with the responsibility of rescuing a dog named Cassandra. The dog prefers the softer tones of women's voices and is drawn to a particular set of behaviours exhibited primarily by hill women. When the dog is injured, she requires packs of blood on earth: she requires her sister's blood. Ona is responsible for the dog's rescue, and Cassandra simply prefers female treatment: “[F]or the first time, she felt real hope for Cassandra's recovery” (Gearhart, 1979, p. 35). Although there is no such close relationship between the cleft women and animals, there is a

connection between the natural elements and the women in *The Cleft*. For example, the presence of rock is critical, and women should pay more attention to it. The clefts' rock represents god and is one of the best fuel and power sources. Women perceive every aspect of their surroundings as sacred and heavenly when there are no threats or dangers present. At this juncture, the rock that exists in *The Cleft* becomes a representation of the Clefts' limited association with their sexual orientation; "They lay around on their rocks, and they swam" (Doris Lessing, 2007, 22). They reclined on the rocks, shrinking or moaning, railing at anything and everything. Lessing's rock formations generally provide suitable resting conditions by providing cover, protection from heat or cold, and inaccessibility to humans and women.

Integrating ecological tasks with gender theory emphasizes how the patriarchal society treats both nature and women. Ecofeminists investigate the effect of gender categories to demonstrate how social norms unfairly dominate women and nature. Women exist to assist men in changing or dying alone:

Work to stay the slayer's hand,
 Helping him to change
 Or helping him to die,

Work as if the earth, the mother, can be saved. (Gearhart, 1979, p. 195)

164 Women are frequently more concerned with basic needs and social issues than men - they are inextricably linked to a healthy natural environment. When the wind's noise irritates the clefts, both the clefts and the monsters believe it is a supernatural intervention. What in nature can generate such wind as engulfing that island? Such inquiries are made to ascertain the source of the noise. The wind does not reach the women's caves, but the boys in their flimsy shelters are helpless as the wind tosses them over and into the river. They cannot find a haven other than the clefts' caves, where the girls welcome them (Lessing, 2007, pp. 138-139). The wind is the source of the earth's power, women's screams, and their inner voices. In her book *Woman and Nature*, Susan Griffin mentions: "They say our fate is with the wind" (Griffin, 1978, p. 222). Wind provides energy to women and enables the attainment of major social, economic, and environmental goals outlined in society. A more fabulous female presence and voice in the energy sector benefits society. However, women are frequently more vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change. Climate change poses an increasing threat to their livelihoods, as they make up a large proportion of the world's poor and rely more heavily on natural resources. Furthermore, these people face several social, economic, and political restraints. These assumptions are based on Karen J. Warren's views, which, although hard to comprehend, state that environmental degradation is a feminist

concern because of the worldwide effects on women's lives (Warren, 1996, p. 20).

In conclusion, women's works and roles in both novels open up a whole new world of possibilities for addressing environmental and social challenges concurrently. In a book titled *Why Women Will Save the Planet* (2015), writers who are named Friends of the Earth (the well-being of people and the planet go hand in hand) state that women have been pioneers of the environmental movement. Much of this campaigning has centred on human and public health issues: clean water and air, green spaces, and pesticide controls in food. Additionally, they argue that ensuring women's sexual and reproductive health and rights is critical in empowering women to act as investigators of environmental change (Friends of the Earth, 2015, pp. 1-5). Doris Lessing begins this study with an eco/feminist perspective on her novel *The Cleft*. Ecofeminism and green legislation are presented in the novel to start a new life following the previous examinations of feminism and its connection to environmentalism. Women are committed to using nature's resources to help save the planet. In the beginning, they comprise all the society, but later, they become half of the society. Nonetheless, they will always be the solution to problems that Mother Earth faces. The clefts play an essential role in household and community resource management. Similarly, the hill women's tasks are pictured in such a way that the women want to overcome their sorrowful memories by simply working hard to protect nature. Women can help solve nature's degradation crisis by fighting for gender equality. They are the solution to the climate crisis – but not because they should add to their workload by fixing it for others. Instead, Gearhart tries to convey the message that gender equality comes first. To ensure everyone can contribute to solving progressive environmental problems, we must eliminate gender bias in our culture and society. Furthermore, Gearhart instructs that big cities do not have to be synonymous with a dystopian future. They can be transformed into well-being and environmental powerhouses if women are empowered. *The Wanderground*, in general, explores themes of women's inherent connections to the Earth and one another. Thus, the theme reappears by evaluating women's roles in saving the Earth. Regardless of their circumstances, women in both works maintain their commitment to protecting nature from the male-dominated society in which they live. Finally, it can be said that nature works for women because women work together with nature. Both books reaffirm that environmental degradation and exploitation are feminist issues since they contribute to a better understanding of oppression.

5. Hegemonic and Eco Masculinity

Research on ecological services has mostly ignored gender concerns, with a few notable exceptions. How men and women view and value ecosystem services differently has been the subject of a great deal of research. Ecosystems are influenced by gender norms, relationships, and roles, which in turn influence the behaviour of men and women. Gendered behaviours allow for the management of ecosystems to enhance desired ecological services. It is common for women to cultivate crops or gather firewood, whereas men are more likely to use consumptive resources, hunting, fishing, and logging in a forest (Fortnam et al., 2019, pp. 313-314).

Lessing and Gearhart are both fiction writers who create utopias based on ecological and gender studies. Prehistoric novels with utopian elements were isolated, simple, all-female societies in which women give birth exclusively to female children. Similarly, dystopia persists in both the *Cleft* and the *Wanderground* (Geographical names); this conveys the traditional utopian works and that the boundary with reality is an important element. Both novels contain passages that are entirely unsuitable for female characters. These locations are known as the Dangerland and the Killing Rock. Initially, the Killing Rock lives up to its name by becoming a hotspot for murders and assassinations. It is also a dividing line between male and female districts, where rivalries and plots against one another are common: "The youths ran to the top of the mountain and watched how the girls went down the other side, past the Killing Rock and then reached their shore" (Lessing, 2007, p. 77). *Cleft* ladies comprehend the rationale behind the recent survival of males since they have been collaborating with eagles, offering them fish in return for rescuing undesired infants. Subsequently, their moral awareness is aroused, leading them to refrain from discarding the infants into the water. Instead, they opt to abandon them on Killing Rock, where eagles may prey upon them. Thus, this location is dangerous, as it contains some dead monsters, twins, and defeated infants. Regardless of how courageous some women are to stand on the rim of the Killing Rock and observe the male community "though they were in danger" (Lessing, 2007, p. 83), what is critical is discovering what lies beyond this land designated as male territory. Is nature content with the lifestyles of monsters?

As monsters mature, they begin creating a new life and enforcing new rules on the clefts. Similar to their distaste for everything settled and harmonious, but because they are extremely deep and fatally out of reach, they cause their minds to destroy by throwing rocks even unconsciously. There is no consideration for the border or the rocks that have historically served as a representation of god for women. Then, the *Cleft* turns out to be the place of the explosion. Indeed, it is a volcano damaged by boys and hunters who throw boulders

into the pit. Rocks, trees, and the Cleft are gone: “[I]t’s our place, you have destroyed our place” (Lessing, 2007, p. 254). Maronna’s speech spells the end of women; they, along with nature, are annihilated by males. A man in general, according to Hubert Reeves, is the most insane species. He worships an unseen God and slaughters visible nature without realizing that the visible nature he kills is in direct opposition to the unseen God he worships (qtd. In Corinne Gaffner Garcia, 2019, p. 106).

Lessing’s novel discusses several human activities that directly impact the global environment, including population growth, overexploitation, pollution, and deforestation. For instance, the great forest is an ecosystem comprised of numerous plants and animals. On the other hand, Forests become home to monsters, and many trees and plants are taken for granted.

At first, the forest is dense with trees and animals, such as pigs and porkers; however, after dividing the forest into men and the seashore into women, animals begin to be hunted, and monsters damage trees. Cooking flesh killed and fires are frequently witnessed by clefts and the forest, which have grown tired of the numerous oppressions of men hunters. There is a reference to patriarchy and men’s dominance over nature and women. In contrast to men, women are more likely to eat a diet high in fruits and vegetables, grains, and legumes in their eating habits. There are discourses in which masculinity is praised, where the concept of claiming power and killing through hunting and conquering is dominant; “feminist animal rights scholars argue that factory farming, animal experimentation, hunting, and meat-eating are tied to patriarchal concepts and practices” (Warren, 1996, P. xiii). When monsters become fearful of wild animals, they flee forests temporarily, while women flock to the forest to witness the beauty of green life. Things are not as they have previously seen; trees have grown taller and more powerful, and animals have returned to their land as if watching them. Nothing is harmful to women, as they are not hunters; they simply fetch fruits and ,a task that boys find ridiculous (Lessing, 2007, pp. 153-183).

In an article titled “Forests, Women, and Health: Opportunities and Challenges for Conservation” (2011), women represent a huge potential human resource as half of the global human population. Tropical forest women typically have little access to labour-saving devices and cannot limit their reproductive roles. As a result, vast amounts of female creativity, energy, and knowledge have been unavailable to those attempting to manage or protect forest areas more effectively and sustainably. Furthermore, because women are often the caregivers for sick family members, they have a particular interest in improving the health of their communities (Wan et al., 2011, pp. 369-387).

Following the preceding explanation, one can also discern a reference to men's worlds, which are influenced by patriarchy and toxic masculinity, rejecting eco-friendly behaviour. Men are afraid of being labelled as feminine because environmental charity and selflessness make them feel less manly. The same concept is evident in the Dangerland: a border between the Wanderground and the predominantly male-populated city. The hill women have reclaimed their rightful ownership of the land on which they live. They can accomplish what was previously impossible due to the presence of monsters. However, some Wanderground women's memories of the old days may not be distant; the passage of time is how men own everything: "the stories, the mind pictures, the pain of some not-so-ancient days when the men owned all things, even the forests and hills" (Gearhart, 1979, p. 2). Monsters manifest in *The Wanderground* and continue to wreak havoc on nature, particularly on animals. The hill women report from Dangerland tales of pointless killings, particularly deer, and the continued beheading of does. Men intentionally injure animals through slaughter, pest control, hunting, and toxicology testing (Gearhart, 1979, p. 127). As a reference to veganism, both Lessing and Gearhart add to the animal advocacy movement, laboratory politics, and experimentation ethics. It is important to remember that veganism is not a substitute for other forms of animal rights activism because it is part of a more extensive socio-economic and oppressive system supported by oppressive ideologies (Alloun, 2015, p. 150). I would like to use an ecofeminist lens to examine veganism as a first step in developing ethical relationships with human and nonhuman Others. Environmental feminist theories can also help us think more deeply about the way we treat animals, our fight to abolish oppression, and how to put this into reality, particularly in the field of food.

The Cleft also exemplifies the theme of environmental degradation through human actions. In the novel, the young men constantly invent daring feats and challenges for themselves, and they come up with something that drives the clefts half insane. They discover how to create fumes by tying a rope around their waists and jumping down onto the platform, where fumes from the ossuary below quickly overcome them. The initial attempt to obtain fumes has resulted in today's chaos. Although monsters do not smoke, the way they generate fumes and enjoy them proves their fascination with tobacco. Women and children find this intolerable and frequently attempt to escape from it (Lessing, 2007, pp. 163-165). I can argue against this passage by comparing it to today, as all smoke from the combustion of nicotine products contains harmful chemicals that make a child more susceptible to future exposure to air pollution.

Besides that, it affects women's reproductive systems, resulting in various health problems, such as an increased risk of infertility, preterm delivery, and stillbirth.

Although there are frequent allusions to alcoholic scenes and men's drunken attitudes, monsters and men in *The Wanderground* do share certain characteristics. To continue, Lessing affirms how men use forests and plants to create alcohol for recreational purposes: “[W]e know that they all feasted, drank and alcoholic syrup invented by the men, ate forest fruit” (Lessing, 2007, p. 191). However, they are unaware that alcohol causes intoxication, which is associated with impaired judgment and coordination, and that women are at a significantly greater risk of sexual harassment as a result of drunk men “with spotlights and scope rifles, often drunk, often loud, always together, and always dangerous” (Gearhart, 1979, p. 160). To the extent that nature heals women, Gearhart's and Lessing's examples indicate what it truly means for nature and women to share certain characteristics. The novel's female characters are familiar with misogyny: hatred of women, but women gain the right to hate men in this section. When gentlemen take a trip to the Wanderground, women express their dislike for males; their distrust is immense and unfathomable even if they are female males (Gearhart, 1979, p. 180).

The reason why women distrust men is not because of the oppression and gender abuse they subject women to; their distrust is rooted in the fact that male-dominated societies abuse the majority of animals. One of the best examples is in *Remember Rooms*, where the subject is intended to be humorous but soon turns out to be tragic. The hill women remember horses' state in cities, where men are accustomed to riding horses in the most elaborate quadrille and committing animal abuse. Horses are incapable of enduring man's mistreatment and thus choose to make men fall. Gearhart is not advocating the abolition of riding; on the contrary, horses are fine with being ridden as long as they enjoy it. It is likely that most horses simply tolerate being ridden. The issue is entirely related to treatment and gender preference, “and the ladies were clean as a whistle, riding just as smooth...” (Gearhart, 1979, p. 159).

What is more, animals also have psychology; at times, they are unable to find their own way to work for humans. Certain individuals do exploit horses. They compel them to perform regardless of their physical capability, mental preparedness, or emotional investment in the event. Animal cruelty is believed to be a symptom of a more serious mental illness. The hill women witness men lose their temper and shoot at the horses; they vividly see animals' bellow (Gearhart, 1979, p. 159). Psychological and criminological research demonstrates that individuals who commit acts of cruelty toward animals do not stop there; many continue to their fellow humans. Murderers frequently begin their

careers by killing and torturing animals as children (Hermann, 2017, p. 1). The author Sally Miller Gearhart makes a reference not only to the lack of animal liberation in cities but also to hegemonic masculinity handguns. Men in the city use guns to murder animals, women, and occasionally even members of their gender. The distribution of cross-gender violence and its repercussions is unbalanced. Males exhibit a far higher propensity than females to engage in acts of violence against women. The adverse consequences of male violence towards women are far more substantial compared to those of female violence towards males. Men employ weapons against women who have either compromised their moral principles or openly revealed their actual gender. The novel's portrayal of the hill ladies sheds light on other detrimental aspects of men's perspectives on women and the environment:

Machine guns, Cissy! That's a bullet wound! Melva jerked back the covers from the small sleeping woman and pointed to her thigh. "Blood in streets, real live honest-to-god blood running all over the sidewalks and cars. I'm paying my goddam taxes to have them spill women's blood!" (Gearhart, 1979, p. 147).

According to Stroud, there are six million concealed gun license owners in the United States, which means they have the legal right to bear arms. Holders are men, and men are more likely to support guns compared to women (Stroud, 2012, p. 216). Pulling the trigger has a detrimental effect on the environment, such as air pollution. There are numerous ways in which a hail of bullets can endanger the health of a community. The people and creatures who live nearby are at the greatest risk of developing health problems. Shooting ranges have the potential to poison humans and contaminate nearby soil or water. However, weapons are not limited to firearms; early humans used ancient weapons in *The Cleft*. Men (monsters) employ a variety of weapons, including stones to dispatch small animals, knives made of seashells, splinters, and sharpened bones, a sort of catapult for large animals, and bows and arrows. Ecofeminists are concerned with the broader issue of animal oppression and the connection between this form of oppression and women's oppression. Examples of animal oppression can be seen in *The Cleft*, whereby monsters (males) are constantly looking for opportunities to use their tools. They can hunt alongside hunters and track beside the truckers, specifically to kill animals (Lessing, 2007, pp. 90-247). The most heinous aspect of weapon use is hunting animals and harvesting their skins. Although the cleft women are cold, they are unwilling to wear animal furs or pelts, whereas men typically wear their familiar animal pelts, beards, or the tails of some forest beast. In a sexualized society, both women and nature are viewed as objects to be exploited and brutalized to increase men's power (Lessing, 2007, p. 191). For example, humans use sexist

rhetoric to justify the slaughter of fur-bearing animals for their skins. At the same time, menopausal women are encouraged to take the drug Premarin, which is manufactured through the mass exploitation of pregnant horses (Beckoff & Meaney, 2013, p. 49). The Monsters engage in sexual relations with women, impregnate them, and then compel them to take care of the infants. Similarly, they devastate and exploit nature by raping and hunting its animals, cutting its trees, polluting its forests and rivers, and disturbing the island's natural peace with their growing numbers (Lessing, 2017, p. 37).

Depending on the women's discourses in both novels, men will not act to prevent pollution or harm unless they value the particular aspect of nature being injured or killed. Examining men's antagonistic relationship with nature reveals that women are to develop sensitivities and empathy, whereas men's work develops cruelty and tragedy. Since female bodies are designed for specific purposes, women have a moral awareness that is not based on the fact that they are female. Because they are a part of this earth, they have to protect it:

Because we know ourselves to be made from this earth. See this grass. The patches of silver and brown. Worn by the wind. The grass reflecting all that lives in the soil. The light. The grass needing the soil. With roots deep in the earth. And patches of silver. Like the patches of silver in our hair. Worn by time. This bird flying low over the grass. Over the tules. The cattails, sedges, rushes, reeds, over the marsh. Because we know ourselves to be made from this earth. (Griffin, 1978, p. 223)

In final remarks, one might assume that men do not desire to live on a safe and secure planet where plants and animals coexist peacefully with humans. Due to the prevalence of gender norms in domestic and household labour, the difference in responsibilities between women and men is called the Eco gender gap. Both Dangerland and the Killing Rock are at risk of being attacked by monsters and men in the city. They are today's global threat and arguably the primary source of environmental degradation. Men's carefree behaviour is exemplified by women who identify obstacles that must be overcome to advance our understanding of the human dimensions of global change, presenting findings and suggestions. Males are inherent in nature, but they act against it, thereby emancipating themselves from it. They are both a part of and distinct from nature. Analysing the distinct territories and tribes depicted in both works, women in male-dominated occupations report having a poor work environment, whereas the majority of males in female-dominated occupations report having a positive work environment. Although the clefts women in Lessing's novel do not view men as foes as they are at the start of the paradox, they do evaluate the monster's unrestrained behaviour toward them and nature. When women are in the forest, they are not at risk of being harmed by wild

creatures or the wind; however, males do. On the contrary, the hill women in Gearhart's novel are certain that men are nature's and women's enemies. They have witnessed disasters in the city and investigated how men have harmed animals as well. Their arguments suggest that men are not more connected to nature but to culture. Finally, neither nature nor women are pleased with the male partnership.

6. Conclusions

The main goal of feminism and ecofeminism is to make a big change in society because the current and past social orders make many people, especially women, live limited, unhappy lives. In this kind of society, women are not seen; therefore, ecofeminists and feminists realise that society needs to change in terms of environment, human interactions and relationships, and cultural & social institutions. *The Cleft* by Doris Lessing and *The Wanderground* by Sally Miller Gearhart are significant to the history of gender and ecofeminism because they reflect the theories' fundamental claims. Feminist concepts such as gender equality and the revaluation of non-patriarchal or non-linear structures form the basis of ecofeminist thought. Ecology and feminism can be combined to create a new social theory and a political movement that addresses gender inequality. The associations (between women and the environment) encourage women to be more aware of the purity and devastation of the domain. This study compares and contrasts the works of Sally Miller Gearhart and Doris Lessing as comparative literature to foresee the difficulties of women throughout history till the current day. In contrast to Doris Lessing, who explores human history and mythology through the Roman Senator and reintroduces women to the world as the first humans, Sally Miller Gearhart focuses on women's contemporary and modern lives away from cities and males. Women's preference for nature and a green lifestyle is depicted in both stories using fictional characters. The writers find it challenging to get the desired output working on respective projects. They are trying to separate women from men to create a world populated solely by women.

In her latest novel, *The Cleft*, Lessing retells the story of human genesis, and what makes her work so compelling is that she does not openly side with females or males (the monsters) or even with nature. She does not assert her femininity verbally; instead, she watches objectively as a narrator who is unfamiliar with the novel's events and exemplifies the social and psychological changes and developments that the cleft and monster societies undergo. The alterations in *The Cleft* contribute significantly to analysing gender inequalities and stereotypes in the newly revealed dystopia. After the Clefs deliver their

first baby boy, natural and unnatural changes occur among the Cleft tribe. Women seek to rid themselves of their babies by murdering and torturing infant boys; however, Lessing initially does not fit into any of the theories examined in this study and produces dualities in the Cleft.

Lessing, on the other hand, is obligated to take a stance for women in other instances. When female characters begin interacting with male characters and having children, the fundamental motivation of animosity becomes apparent (sex). Lessing frequently asserts that women and men are two distinct species and that readers should brace themselves for an early war between them following the birth of baby boys. In *The Cleft*, she crafts a peripheral plot and deconstructs stereotypes. Lessing showcases how society advances by using the tale of the Clefts and Squirts as a metaphor for the dawn of human civilization. Whenever there is a discussion on women's issues, patriarchy, society, and gender norms inevitably come up. The account is given by a Roman Senator who pays great attention to these tribes and applies all events to his own life. The senator is poring over literature ostensibly relating to the narrative of our forefathers, an all-female tribe known as the Clefts. He is fearful of this happening if his account is published. The conflict between a man and an enslaved woman is accurate; men are clumsy, while women are enraged. Men are perpetually insatiably sexual, and they walk away and are certain to return to a woman's bed later. Such a scene encapsulates the endless conflict between the sexes. The Roman senator says, "Females are worshipped as goddesses, while in ordinary life they are kept secondary and thought inferior" (Lessing, 2007, p. 27).

Sally Miller Gearhart authored the novel *The Wanderground* in 1979, during a period when the women's liberation movement, a broad social movement centred mainly in the United States, sought equal rights and opportunities for women, as well as increased personal freedom. Gearhart displays her feminism in this work; as a result, she constructs a men-free utopia. *The Wanderground* is replete with feminist insights. Gearhart indicates that a conversation between men and women is not a possibility. There is also a small minority group of guys in the novel who are referred to as "gentles". They are the only hope for the earth's survival; nevertheless, a discussion with them is typically rebuffed, and some hill women are opposed to engaging with gentles: "[T]hey cried for the ministrations of the women[. . .] yet always the women stood by, friends from a distance, the midwives of death who would ease their passing" (Gearhart, 1979, p. 3).

The hill women recollect previous occurrences in which men utilize violence against women. Raping, torturing, and killing are characteristics of the men in the novel. They also punish and pursue lesbians, who must disguise

their sexual preferences because they are all under control everywhere, and there are even testing parties to verify that they are straight. The writer can design a utopia utilizing science fiction components. *The Wanderground* women have extraordinary abilities, including interacting without speaking, flying, swimming deep in the sea, and connecting with nature. They oppose technology because they regard it as a tool of masculine dominance. Strangely, it becomes clear that they have become capable of achieving all that technology once made possible by developing their psychic skills. It is said that they have constructed a Western civilization in which they believe technology is superfluous and harmful (Gearhart, 1979, p. 145). In this sense, the Wanderground women are the strongest examples of feminist separatism. Feminist anti-patriarchy activism is predicated on the idea that women can be liberated from men's worldviews by separating themselves from them. Since the Hill Women's Separation is so closely tied to lesbian feminism, the term "lesbian separatism" is sometimes used to refer to this movement. Cleft women who live in a cage with newborn girls and boys are one example of how feminist separatists have had an impact on the feminist movement as well.

Unlike the hill ladies in *The Wanderground*, the clefts like to spend their time swimming, lying down, and fishing, thereby generating binary opposition between males and females in the community. Old and young clefts are not in the same boat, which may explain why they allow males to have authority over them. While the older clefts despise monsters, the young ones press themselves to be with men, hoping one day they may change. Nature is highly valued in both utopias because both countries' female populations derive their strength from the natural world. Nevertheless, both utopias emphasize nature as women of both lands feed their power by nature. The power is not employed only for their safety but also for the world, unlike the males of the society who have practically ruined it. They have built a culture distinguished by respect for one another and other forms of life and even natural elements like rock, air, sea, trees, and fern. Women and nature have an emotional tie; females are clean and safe for nature, giving what they take.

Furthermore, animate nature plays a vital role in both novels. Animal studies, according to Gaard, begin with feminist notions about how we should interact with and think about animals—through an ethics of care, empathy, and kindness. Animal liberation rights should be accomplished because the concept is utopia. The Garden of Eden is one of the first documented and well-known utopias, and women in both regions are gentle with animals, feeling like they are in The Garden of Eden. The clefts in dystopia have difficulty caring for animals because they are forbidden to touch anything built by males. Animals are damaged in men's world, and while the hill women take no credit for this,

they can heal any creature that men have harmed. Since the term “ecofeminism” was first created by the French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974, ecofeminists have advocated what they see to be a superior approach to animal ethics. According to ecofeminism, women's oppression and environmental degradation are intertwined, mutually reinforcing systems. According to some ecofeminists, nonhuman animal persecution and women's oppression are linked, and they argue that the same logic of dominance is responsible for both. Ecofeminists argue that the liberation of the environment and nonhuman creatures cannot be achieved without giving due consideration to the oppression of women. Also, we cannot liberate women without liberating nature (or, specifically, nonhuman animals). The concept becomes evident when the Dangerland and the Killing Rock emerge in the two passages. These two distinct areas demonstrate why ecofeminists support women and the environment. The Dangerland is a border in the Wanderground and is close to city men; the name refers to men's harm to nature and women. While the Killing Rock provides a home for monsters in *The Cleft*, the expanding population of monsters has caused nature to wreak havoc. Because of man's actions, ecosystems and life's fabric are rapidly deteriorating. On the other hand, women are nature's last hope for saving Mother Earth.

Ecofeminism considers patriarchal social institutions as displaying hierarchy in gender interactions. The subordination of women, the poor, indigenous peoples, and production and consumption systems can be attributed to patriarchy. A male, a father, a son, a spouse, or a boyfriend has power over a woman and nature; they desire to own everything related to women and nature. For example, the clefts and the hill women are unfazed by the presence of wild creatures; they are startled by the friendliness of animals like snakes and huge cats as they approach them. It is common for urban men to warn against wild creatures, but women see nothing wrong with submitting to them. Aside from the dreadful and violent lifestyles of wild animals, men in the new world commonly make documentary programs that feature gender discrimination. Untrue belief is a patriarchal societal stereotype in which nature is also an institutionalized social order over which males have dominion. The second section of the first chapter discusses the ecofeminism theory, which is defined as a fusion of feminism and ecology in which women and nature take centre stage.

In terms of feminism and ecological philosophy, these novels are key examples of ecofeminist writing and theory. Evaluating these two works aims to convey how environmental issues exist in Western civilizations. Each author has a different aspect of gender and eco studies, but the most significant point is that they both believe that a misogynist society oppresses women and to save the earth's future, hierarchies must be destroyed. Ecofeminism is the solution

to gender issues; in other words, the mother earth is more important than the fatherland. Feminists and ecofeminists draw a deep connection between the oppression faced by women, animals, and the environment. They believe that a significant part of the solution lies in fostering a deeper engagement with and respect for the natural world.

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