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**ECOFEMINIST THEMES IN AMERICAN WOMEN'S  
NOVELS**

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## Yemin Metni

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## ÖZET

Tezli Yüksek Lisans

Amerikan Kadın Romanlarında Ekofeminist Temalar

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Doğa ve edebiyat birlikteliğinin örnekleri geçmiş yüzyıllarda görülmüş olsa da, son yıllarda gözle görülür olan çevresel kriz, doğaya önem veren ve krizin farkında olan yazarların edebi eserlerine yansımaktadır. Özellikle 1960 sonrası doğa tahribatına ve çevresel kötüleşmeye karşı yapılan ayaklanma hareketleri birçok çevresel kaygı içeren eserin çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Bu hareketlenmenin sonucunda, çevresel düşüncenin ve eleştirinin edebi çevrede ve akademiye kendine yer bulması çok uzun sürmemiştir.

Doğa ve edebiyat bağının feminizmde yansıması olan ekofeminizm de, ekolojik eleştiriyle beraber önemli bir teori olmuştur. Savunduğu ana fikir ise, doğa üzerinde egemenlik kurulmasının, kadın üzerinde egemenlik kurulmasıyla büyük bir bağı olduğudur. Ataerkil düzen eleştirisini hem kadın hem doğa üzerinden yapan ekofeminizm, birçok kadın yazarın eserlerine konu olmuştur. Ekofeminist akım, bu tezde üç Amerikalı kadın yazarın eserlerinde incelenecektir. Margaret Atwood'un *Surfacing*, Marge Piercy'nin *Woman on the Edge of Time* and Ursula K. Le Guin'in *Always Coming Home* romanları, hem feminist hem de ekolojik meseleler içermesi bakımından ekofeminist akıma dahil önemli örneklerdir. Sonuç olarak, bu üç eser ekofeminist teoriyi anlamak ve yerleştirmek için incelenebilecek önemli kaynaklardır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ekolojik düşünce, Ekolojik Eleştiri, Edebiyat ve Ekoloji, Feminizm ve Doğa, Ekofeminizm.

## **ABSTRACT**

**Master of Arts Degree**

**Ecofeminist Themes in American Women's Novels**

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Despite the fact that the examples of nature-literature combination were seen centuries ago, the visible environmental crisis of today has been recently reflected in the works of writers who are aware of this crisis. Especially the movements that were organized against the environmental destruction and deterioration have caused the appearance of many works that contain environmental concerns. As a result of these movements, it did not take long for ecological thinking and criticism to find a place in literary world and academia.

Ecofeminism, which is a reflection of nature and literature in feminism, has been an important theory along with ecocriticism. The main idea it supports is that there is a great link between domination of nature and domination of women. Ecofeminism, that criticizes patriarchy through women and nature, has been the subject of many women writers' works. In this thesis, ecofeminism will be analyzed through three women writers. Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* and Ursula K. Le Guin's *Always Coming Home* and are important examples that belong to ecofeminism in terms of their containing feminist and ecological issues. Consequently, these three examples are useful sources to understand and place the ecofeminist theory.

**Key Words:** Ecological Thinking, Ecocriticism, Literature and Ecology, Feminism and Nature, Ecofeminism.

# ECOFEMINIST THEMES IN AMERICAN WOMEN'S NOVELS

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## INTRODUCTION

The history of our world has started to be read ecologically in the last decades because of the rising awareness of the environmental issues. Today, this kind of awareness is noticeable because of the current environmental crisis and people fear possible disasters in the future. The gradual worsening of the earth throughout the world is making people think more cautiously about nature and human intervention on the environment. The deterioration of nature has many historical reasons; and especially after the beginning of colonization and mechanization which started in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Western societies have contributed a lot to today's ecological crisis. Above all, The United States of America is apparently the most important country where the overconsumption of natural resources is high and the waste culture is well-established.

The first chapter of this work is composed of the history of ecological thinking in the Western world and the definition of ecocriticism. Throughout the centuries, nature has had different positive and negative representations such as being life-giver, feeder, chaotic, uncivilized, etc.... Although nature is firstly seen as a life-giver, it is also seen as something to be fixed and tamed because of its unpredictable characteristics. Western culture is based on the idea of domination and exploitation so people has used nature limitlessly for their own good for centuries; especially after the colonization period and the Scientific Revolution in the Western world, nature has been deteriorating rapidly. The Scientific Revolution is a transition period that changes the lifestyles of the Westerners. Under the name of "culture" and "progress," the exploitation of nature and people are legitimized by white European males. They justify their desire for domination and exploitation of nature firstly by using the commandments of Bible, which declare nature as man's servant. The Scientific Revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and its supporters also see nature only as a nonliving thing to be used for humans' good. The hierarchy between humans and nonhumans clearly exists in the Western culture. Similarly, the interconnectedness of all living things and its vitality is denied. Besides, the rise of capitalist system, which depends on the limitless exploitation of natural resources and manpower, strengthens the deterioration of environment.

While nature represents uncivilized and primitive life for the Western societies, “culture” of man represents civilization, progress and advanced life. White European men think that anything is acceptable for the progress of their society and nature is only an instrument to use for their ideals. The white Westerners, who come to the America with these ideas, meet the Indian culture that has just the opposite characteristics of their lifestyle. Indian way of life stands as an example for a society in which there is no hierarchy, inequality or injustice. For Indian people both women and nature are sacred. It is not surprising that Indians’ different culture is not welcomed by Americans and seen as primitive.

The Western mind’s ideology that domination and exploitation of nature is the right of man has resulted in the deterioration of our environment. Nevertheless, the beginning of the environmental awareness did not appear many years ago. Especially after the 1970s, grassroots movements started against the contamination of earth. People who think in ecological terms have been trying to make people be aware of the current environmental crisis and possible disasters. A new criticism resulted from this rising ecological awareness. With the appearance of people who cared for nature and organized movements, the ecological thinking became a theory called *ecocriticism* in the academia. What ecocriticism and ecocritics want to do is to analyze the relationship between the human and nonhuman world in the works of many writers. In general, ecocriticism deals with the interconnection of nature and humans and how they affect each other. Nature writing has become important and many writers have chosen their subjects according to ecological concerns in the last decades. Ecological issues are very popular nowadays and especially literature departments are very interested in ecological theory.

In the second chapter, a sub-branch of ecocriticism that attaches feminism and ecological criticism named ecofeminism is studied. Ecofeminist theory is based on the assumption that there is a link between the degradation of nature and domination of women. Ecofeminist criticism has gained popularity after 1990s but the environmental movements that women made in the 1970s were the reason that helped it to flourish. The theory, found itself a place in the academy soon. Many feminist writers who were also interested in environmental subjects adopted



ecofeminist theory. Especially women writers started writing novels that included feminist and environmental problems. Theory books of ecofeminism have been published. Especially in the United States, American women writers have granted works that showed their sensibility for feminist and ecological problems to American literature. Another important kind of criticism to American culture and dominant system has been supplied by ecofeminists.

While the Western Culture announces nature as the “other” and “inferior” to humankind, it also declares women as the inferior sex to men. Western culture supports its dualistic and oppressive ideas on women (as they do for nature) with various justifications. Mc Andrew says that “[t]he destruction of the environment and the oppression of women are easy to do because nature and women have been objectified as ‘others’ ” (369). It is a widely known fact that Western societies and the United States have a patriarchal system. As well as exploiting nature, it is common and normal for them to dominate women. These inequalities are easy to see in Europe and America. Ecofeminists suggest that the gradually worsening nature is related to oppression of women and this deterioration of environment can be solved by a change in the patriarchal system. What most ecofeminists suggest for the problematic issues of ecofeminism is partnership. The partnership idea posits that the troubles resulted from the domination of women and nature by patriarchy can be solved by the destruction of hierarchical system. The equality of genders and the equality of all living and nonliving things on earth should be accepted.

In the last chapter, there are analyses of three important ecofeminist novels by American women writers. The first one is from a Canadian woman writer, Margaret Atwood: *Surfacing*. She is known as a feminist and interested in environmental subjects. Her important novel *Surfacing* contains feminist and ecological concerns that make it open for ecofeminist criticism. Although she is Canadian, Atwood criticizes American people and culture especially within the concept of ecological problems. The second one is Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* in which readers meet two different societies. Piercy creates a future utopia to show the reader the fallacy of her own time’s America. While women’s problems are shown through the life of the protagonist, environmental degradation of

America is reflected through the comparison of this utopian society and America. The last novel is *Always Coming Home*, from an American woman writer, Ursula K. Le Guin. With her works that were written in various genres, Le Guin, stands as a very important figure in American literature. Her fiction *Always Coming Home* is recognized as an outstanding example for ecofeminist criticism in terms of its feminist and ecological concerns. The issues in *Always Coming Home* allow people to criticize the established ideas and systems of the dominant culture. Through displaying two different cultures in the novel, Le Guin forces us to think about the current world order and an alternative one. These American women writers' works include feminist and ecological concerns and they show that American hierarchical system that depends on domination of women and nature is hazardous for the future of our earth.

# CHAPTER ONE

## ECOLOGICAL THINKING AND LITERATURE

### 1.1. The History of Ecological Thinking

The profusion of ecological thinking in the Western World for the last decades is neither a coincidence nor a surprise. The environmental crisis we have been witnessing has a history and its peak began to be felt in the 1970s throughout the world. Besides the awareness groups, the academic world has been thinking ecologically for the last decades. To study the reasons why this kind of thinking appeared in the last decades, one needs to have a look at the history of the environmental crisis of the Western World. The main focus in this paper will be on the environmental crisis in America as it is the center of globalization from which the life-threatening effects of technology have been spreading all over the world. Today America is a place where degradation of environment, pollution and waste can be mostly seen. The beginning of colonialism in the new land was a turning point for American ecological history as the deterioration of environment started soon after the arrival of Europeans. They carried their own system based on the exploitation of both the native land and people. These European colonizers based their ideas of colonization and exploitation on three basic elements. These are, according to Carolyn Merchant, Christianity, the Scientific Revolution and the rise of capitalism.

Christianity has been Europeans' religion for centuries. The influence of Christianity on Europeans, and later on Americans, has shaped their way of living a great deal. Christianity has a famous story to tell about the origin of humankind. The widely known story of Adam and Eve of Genesis, in which Eve misleads Adam to disobey God and causes their dismissal from the Garden of Eden, is generally used to justify man's need to work for redemption. Christians believe that because they are born with this original sin committed by Adam and Eve; they need to work hard in order to regain their human status before the original sin. Their resources in this process are living and nonliving things in nature, which are given as birthright according to Bible. There are two versions of Genesis. In Genesis 1, after the creation of man and woman, it is said that humans have the right to dominate God's

creations on earth; “[a]nd God blessed them, and God said unto them. Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis, 1:28). Nevertheless, in Genesis 2, it is said that; “[a]nd the LORD God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it” (Genesis, 2:15). About these two versions, Carolyn Merchant states in her article that:

The strong interventionist version in Genesis 1 legitimates recovery through domination, while the softer Genesis 2 version advocates dressing and keeping the garden through management (stewardship). Human labor would redeem the souls of men and women, while cultivation and domestication would redeem the earthly wilderness. (134)

Out of these two commandments, Christians chose the harsher one; the one which favored human’s domination of everything on earth. According to them, while searching for redemption, man should use nature endlessly in order to save himself. Puritans adopted this ideology while forming a large and influential society in the new land. They thought that cultivating the land and building “a city upon a hill” would be proof that God gave them grace. Christian religion relies on this myth that gave way to further unlimited exploitation of nature. By working hard, Christians would attain the recovery of the Garden of Eden. Therefore, Christianity justifies man’s right to use everything living and nonliving on earth. Since this right was given by God, working hard in the land without questioning the order of nature would bring their salvation. As such, with Christianity, nature becomes something to fight against. Nature represents wilderness to many societies since the ancient times and Christianity reinforces this idea by making nature “the other.” In his book Nash states that; “[a]fter the decline of Greece and Rome and the advent of Christianity, nature did not fare well in Western ethics. Increasingly people assumed that nature, animals included, had no rights and that non-human beings existed to serve human beings” (17). Nature had already been seen somewhat as evil, satanic and ungodly until Christianity, and this religion continued to support and strengthen further this kind of thinking. Nature is seen as chaotic because it is unknown to human’s

perception, therefore it should be domesticated. Christianity gives this job to people for salvation. Nature is chaotic; culture is order for the Western society. Man should bring order to the chaos under the name of God who gave earth to man's service. This ideology justifies the exploitation of land by Europeans both in their homeland and in America.

The white men from Europe came with this kind of culture. White Europeans, who came to the new land with their Christianity, found a very different kind of living in America. When the white settlers from Europe came to the new lands, they encountered a total opposite of their culture, The Native Indian tribes. Indian culture was entirely different from Christianity in terms of their idea of "unity of all living and nonliving things in the universe" unlike the anthropocentric idea of the Western culture. Native Americans recognized their reliance on nature and tried to keep this system alive. For the Natives, man is not the center of the universe but a part of it. Nevertheless, for the European, the Indian culture was backward and living in harmony with nature kept man primitive, which human beings should reject. Christianity should civilize the so-called primitive culture of Indians which relied on the order of nature.

Since everything in nature is seen as mere instruments to serve humanity, and nature as an inferior body of things, is reduced to a subservient position, science has served man as his major tool to domesticate and exploit nature for his own good. Now that nature is nothing but a servant for man, the scientific methods can unquestionably be used on it for the progress of civilization. Therefore America as an open/virgin land needs to be cultivated by white man's civilization. This ideology often called as "progress" shaped much of American history. In the book *Rereading America*, it is stated that:

"The myth of progress," divinely sanctioned, gave the United States the justification it needed to seize the land and its resources. It did so by implying a sharp difference between the natural world and the world of human endeavor. Nature, according to myth, is "other," and inferior to humans; land, river, minerals, plants and animals are simply

material made available for our use. And because our transformation of nature leads to “civilization,” that use is ultimately justified. (562)

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the Scientific Revolution was happening, nature was seen as a nonliving and a passive thing which awaited the domination of humankind. The Scientific Revolution which came with the fast-developing science, presented justifications for the intensified human desire to control and dominate nature. Gradually science gained power over nature and this was justified by the new modern worldview which is mechanistic and supports the Scientific Revolution. This scientific support was added to the religious worldview of Europeans. According to scientific thinking, similar to the leading school of thought in Christianity, it was man’s natural and unquestionable right to dominate nature. “[M]echanics, which gave man power over nature” made this a concept within the philosophy of the Western World and a new kind of order was established through science (Merchant, *Earthcare* 83).

The leading name in the Scientific Revolution was Francis Bacon (1561-1626), “[A] celebrated ‘father of modern science,’ Bacon transformed tendencies already extant in his own society into a total program of advocating the control of nature” (Merchant, *Earthcare* 80). Francis Bacon asserts that the man should have the right to progress through science even if it comes at the cost of the order of nature. “[s]cience as a method for revealing nature’s secrets” is certainly necessary for civilization’s progress (Merchant, *Earthcare* 68). This is how humankind can develop itself. He was such a figure at this transition period that his strong defense of science’s power over everything inspired many people.

After Americans’ justification of nature’s exploitation by religion and science, another element was added to the Western ideology that dominated relations with nature. With European settlement in the new land, which was made possible largely by scientific and technological progress, another element that affected the Western ecological history was taking root under the falling system of feudalism. After the beginning of colonization in the new land, a transition from the traditional economic system to capitalism began. Those were the times when western societies increased their exploitation of both nature and people under the name of progress in

the new world. This progress was reinforced by developing science and technology. Capitalism is very different than feudalism in terms of its excessive exploitation of nature and people. With the developing mechanization and mass production, capitalism caused much more exploitation than ever. With Christianity's ideology that offered nature to man's service and with developing science, capitalism started to have deadly effects on the environment. "[M]odern Europeans added to components to the Christian recovery project—mechanistic science and laissez faire capitalism—to create a grand master narrative of Enlightenment" (136), Merchant says. Today's established capitalist system of America originates from the beginning of European colonialism on the new land. Capitalism gradually proved to be a very effective agent in the destruction of nature up to the present.

To sum up, as Carolyn Merchant says in her article; "[T]he Genesis story of The Fall provides the beginning; science and capitalism, the middle; recovery of the garden, the end" (133). Nevertheless, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there appeared people who thought in ecological terms and questioned the malfunctioning system of America. These reactions resulted from the effects of enlightenment in both Europe and America. Nevertheless this should not lead to thinking that ecological thinking became the dominant thought. Although some thinkers saw the corruption in the environment, the common idea still favored the unlimited usage of nature for the good of humankind. Nash states that; "[t]he few Americans who did talk about nature in terms in the nineteenth century were not even dignified by ridicule; most often they were ignored completely" (34). Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the humane movements it brought with, nothing but man had rights in the world. The attempts favoring the rights of living and nonliving things on earth except man were not seriously mentioned until 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the intensified ecological movements which have been defending the rights of other living and nonliving things for decades, the seeds of ecological awareness were planted.

The origins of today's environmental crisis can be traced in the ideologies prepared by Christianity, uncontrolled growth of science and technology, and finally the new economic system established in the new world. The effects of this kind of change in ecological thought which gained momentum in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries

still continue today. Nevertheless, an ecological awareness has become visible especially in the last decades. The reason why people are aware of the ecological crisis is their real life experiences of the environmental corruption. Recently, the mechanical worldview has been challenged by some new ideas by people who do not see the environment as a nonliving thing and to be unquestionably dominated. Especially in the 1970s, environmental movements made more people aware of the consequences of uncontrolled growth of capitalism with the help of Christianity and science's justifications for dominating nature. After the grassroots' environmental movements, the academy started thinking of and studying nature more seriously. The ecological failure of the system was shown by ecologically minded academics. These ideologies and movements which gained momentum in the 1970s soon appeared in the academy as theories by critics, which will be the subject of the next chapter.

## **1.2. What is Ecocriticism?**

With the gradually-changing way of thinking about nature and with the growing awareness of the environmental crisis, the ecological thinking finally found its way into the world of academy. According to Cheryll Glotfelty, “[t]he term *ecocriticism* was possibly first coined by William Rueckert in his essay ‘Literature in Ecology: An Introduction in Ecocriticism’ ” (xx). Although the roots of ecocriticism go back to the 1970s, ecological theory started to affect the literary world in the 1990s. In symposiums, ecological approach gradually came to hold a place in the academy. Universities began to have environmental studies. The fear for possible natural disasters that appeared in the last decades made many people think on nature and its importance. A growing interest in nature is the main reason why literary critics came to analyze the effects of nature in the texts. Gradually, the ecological approach to texts in the literary world has gained popularity in recent years.

With the growing interest in environmental issues, departments of literature started studying the important role of nature in the literary works. The literary works in which the environment and nature have a major role have gained crucial importance in this process. To enable this approach, ecocriticism provides the tools



to reexamine a work through this brand new perspective. Ecocritics' job is to analyze any kind of literary work according to questions which aim to find the relationship between nature and humanity. Glen A. Love says that "[e]cological thinking about literature requires us to take the nonhuman world as seriously as previous modes of criticism have taken the human realm of society and culture" (561). Before the appearance of ecocriticism, there was not such awareness that living or nonliving things except humans can be analyzed in any field of studies. This is challenged by ecocritical theory.

Ecocriticism in general is the study of the relationship between literature and our physical environment. Humanity has so far alienated itself from nature and sees it as if it is something irrelevant to mankind. In the texts, this estrangement from nature has begun to be revealed by ecocritics who want to show the interrelatedness of nature and humans in their criticism. These critics aim to create 'eco-consciousness' by the help of the works which can be ecologically criticized (Phillips, 230). This completely transforms the views of critics on literature. Glen A. Love states that:

[...] there are signs of changing awareness, as writers and critics come to realize that a contemporary literature which claims to deal with the actual world might be expected to have an environmental component. Opportunities for scientifically-informed ecocriticism seem particularly appropriate today, for example, in the topics of environmental pollution, bioregionalism, and animal lives. (570)

In contemporary literature, we have begun to see environmental issues because of this awareness. Before this awareness, Western mind's ideology that nature is only a servant for humankind was accepted by everyone. Nevertheless in the last decades this idea has been challenged. Throughout the centuries, what nature meant before and means now to the American mind should be analyzed. Starting with the first settlements, land has held an economic value for European Americans. As the American continent is a vast territory, throughout the centuries, Americans have tried to shape nature. They believe in the idea of taming nature and civilizing the world. For Americans, untouched nature means the absence of civilization.

Limitless usage of nature and its resources was intensified when the Scientific Revolution suddenly changed the world. With the Scientific Revolution in Europe and America, people began to ignore the vital role of nature in their lives. Nature's exploitation was justified by scientists and many people. No criticism was made on the fate of the environment. Nevertheless, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with writers and philosophers like Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson, a kind of nature tradition which was special to American writing started. Michael Branch states that "[t]he early romantic connection between human and nonhuman nature also helped nurture the rise of natural history studies in America" (284). Of course we cannot talk about ecocriticism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the first seeds of nature writing were nonetheless planted. As such, although ecological theory is considered as a brand new approach, its field of study may include very early writers in history. Any literary work, new or old, can be a material for ecocritics. Most critics prefer to reread early works of literature and apply to them ecological criteria.

The pastoral tradition in American literature dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century but the importance of ecology in literature has just begun to be realized by academy. Lately the approaching crisis has become the subject of many works in literature. In some novels after the 80s, the fear which came with the ecological crisis reminded American writers that people had long forgotten about the vital role of nature. The texts, fiction or nonfiction, the subjects that talk about ecological disasters testify to a rising fear within humanity about the inevitable consequences of destroying nature. Similarly, humans' total alienation from nature and its later effects are the subjects in literature in the 80s. Cynthia Deitering claims that an ecological awakening took place both in academic and non-academic worlds:

What I see as a new "toxic consciousness" in fiction reflects a fundamental shift in historical consciousness; for at some point during the Reagan-Bush decade, something happened, some boundary was crossed beyond which Americans perceived themselves differently in their relation to the natural world and the ecosystems of the American Empire. What happened, I believe, is that we came to perceive, perhaps inchoately, our own complicity in preindustrial ecosystems,

both in personal and national, which are predicated on pollution and waste. My premise is that during the 1980s we began to perceive ourselves as inhabitants of a culture defined by its waste, and that a number of American novels written during this period reflect this ontological transformation. (197)

With people's realization of this shocking transformation, after the 80s, more and more writers began to be interested in pollution in American land. Writers began to reflect society's fear of an environmentally worsened America. They tried to raise people's consciousness of possible disasters and hoped that a great awareness could be created and some political action about this predicament could be taken. It is accepted that ecocriticism has an ethical stance. For most critics, ecocriticism's ethical duty is to lead people to ecological consciousness through their works. Phillips states that "[t]he most important function of literature today is to redirect human consciousness to a full consideration of its place in a threatened natural world" (237). Scott Slovic even claims that this criticism is a hope for the environment: "[n]ature writing is a 'literature of hope' in its assumption that the elevation of consciousness may lead to wholesome political change, but this literature is also concerned, and perhaps primarily so, with interior landscapes, with the mind itself" (368).

Then the writer, who directs us towards environmental criticism, appears. The writer's attitudes toward nature, his/her understanding of nature and its relationship with the characters, form the most important elements in ecocriticism. The writer's portrayal of the relatedness between the characters and nature helps reveal his/her ecological stance considering the writer's opinions on nature, how he/she represents and locates it into the text. Scott Russell talks about the place of writer in criticism:

Thus any writer who sees the world in ecological perspectives faces a hard problem: how, despite the perfection of our technological boxes, to make us feel the ache and tug of that organic web passing through us, how to situate the lives of characters—and therefore of readers—in nature.

The theory asks texts some questions to find out how the environment affects human beings and their culture and how human beings are affected by the environment. Ecocriticism's questions begin with the representation of nature in the text. The settings of a work can be classified as the "natural world" and the "man-made location." How the writer sees nature clearly shows his/her attitude toward nature. As well as the representations of nature, the characters of the work should be examined in detail according to ecological approach. Their relationship with the environment, how they affect and become affected by it, reveals not only the characters but also the writer's ecological stance, his/her opinions on nature. In short, in ecocriticism, the relationship among the writer, the living and nonliving things, culture and the physical environment are the main things to be studied. In general, in these kinds of works, we mostly see oppression and domination of nature by humankind. In the Western culture, the characters generally see nature as "the other". As mentioned before, "the other" not only consists of nature but it also includes all the nonhuman world, living or nonliving.

The western mind goes further in "other"ing; not only does this thinking define itself in opposition to the nonhuman world but it also creates hierarchies within the human world. For example, according to Euro-Americans, Native Americans are the human "other"s who are represented in degrading stereotypes. Ecocriticism criticizes also the pejorative representations of Native Americans, especially because Native Americans present a lifestyle that is based on the interconnectedness of the entire world, defying the hierarchies between the human and the nonhuman nature. They are thought to be primitive, uneducated and savage by the Western mind. Paula Gunn Allen states that "[s]tudent of traditional American Indian literatures have applied the terms primitive, savage, childlike, and pagan to these literatures" (241), but according to many ecocritics, Indian culture is exactly the opposite. They have a special wisdom which is irrelevant to American mind and their wisdom requires them to live in peace and harmony with nature. Indian cultural norms say that all living and nonliving things are interconnected to each other so that the world goes on perfectly. While the American mind's priority is "individuality," Indians' priority is "singular unity" in which all things in the universe are connected to each other in harmony. Allen also compares Indian religions to Judeo-Christian

traditions: “[t]he American Indian universe is based on dynamic self-esteem, while the Christian universe is based on a sense of separation and loss. For the American Indian, the ability of all creatures to share in the process of ongoing creation makes all things sacred” (244). The pagan religious practice of Indian culture strongly respects the protection of nature and all living and nonliving things in nature. On the contrary, in Christianity, the biggest care is given to humankind. For Christianity, nature is wild and dangerous.

The human-centered worldview that dominates Christianity licensed the Western settlers in America to exploit and destroy nature in the name of civilizing and taming it. In the meantime, Christian religion decreed the civilizing of Native Americans who are equated with nature. These efforts also created the exploitation and destruction of a whole race. Karen Warren posits that, native lands and reservations are the most destructed and depleted places in America, (22) because for Americans, these places are the last spots to which they have not yet been able to bring civilization. Therefore, while they are struggling with Indians, they struggle with nature. For the Western mind, primitive people are equal to nature so they have the right to dominate and educate them according to their own beliefs. Indians’ survival and way of thinking are endangered by the Western mind as they are not human-centered but nature-centered. Indian philosophy’s idea of unity of all things is a contradiction to Western dualism. Native people’s care for nature is a barrier against the progress of science and technology. Native American writing is ignored and seen as “prehistory” among ecological works. Anthologies include primarily white people’s writings. Cheryl Glotfelty talks about this dominance:

Ecocriticism has been dominantly a White movement. It will become a multi-ethnic movement when stronger connections are made between the environment and issues of social justice, and when a diversity of voices is encouraged to contribute to the discussion. (xxv)

Murphy suggests that Indian writing should not be excluded from ecological criticism (126). Indian culture stands as an important example for American ecocritics. They think that Indian writing also should be added to the American literature anthologies. Because most critics think that Indians’ wisdom and sensitivity

towards natural order can help solving the current problem. While the narratives of Natives are earth-centered, the narratives of White Americans are human-centered. This is why their writing is thought to be a good guidance against the ecological crisis.

In addition to racial hierarchies, the Western mind is also based on the hierarchy between the male and female. According to Western thinking, women, like Native Americans, are others that need to be dominated, tamed and civilized. This thinking unfortunately still exists even in ecologically minded male writers. Patrick Murphy says that the anthologies of ecology are under the domination of white males (126). For ecologically minded critics in America are not unfortunately wholly exempt from the Western patterns of thought.

In brief, although ecocriticism still has problems to overcome, today it is a very promising approach. Ecocriticism is a newly-established theory which can be added on. Its roots come from the movements which the protectors of environment started around the 1970s, and finally in the 1990s these movements turned into theories in academy. Universities started giving lectures on ecological approaches. The ecocritics' duty is to find the relationship between humanity and all the living and nonliving things in nature by studying the works of writers with ecological perspectives. In this context, the writer becomes very important as his/her attitudes toward nature revealed through the characters are the subjects to be analyzed by ecocritics.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ECOLOGY AND FEMINISM

#### 2.1. What is Ecofeminism?

The problematic issue of nature-human relationship, which was the subject of the previous chapter, rouses another problem: the connection between environmental politics and domination of women in many current social structures worldwide. The term ecofeminism, which is a sub-branch of ecocriticism, studies this connection. Ecofeminism is a kind of criticism whose roots are closely connected to ecological thinking and criticism. While ecocriticism deals with the issue of the connection between environmental destruction and human culture, ecofeminism deals with the connection between environmental destruction and the patriarchy, the prevailing system of most societies. Its concerns include variety of issues like racism, classism, heterosexism, imperialism, ethnocentrism, in short, all kinds of oppressions. Therefore, as Noel Sturgeon states, “[U].S. ecofeminism aims to be a multi-issue, globally oriented movement” (Sturgeon 24). In fact diversity is essentially important for ecofeminist theory, for inequality in any kind of relationships worldwide belongs to its concerns. Barbara Bennett posits in her article that “[e]cofeminists believe in the interconnectedness of all things: what happens in one part of the world, or in one life, will eventually affect all others in the way that all threads reverberate from movement at any spot in a web” (63). Why women, before everyone else, deal with all these kinds of inequalities is clear for ecofeminist thinkers: just like non-human nature under humans, women are the inferior species under male domination especially as they are defined by the western culture. This is why many important ecological movements around the world were started by women. Merchant says that, “[e]nvironmental issues that particularly affect women have contributed to the building of a feminist-environmental coalition” (Merchant, *Earthcare* 151). Primarily, then, eco-feminism is a political movement as it mostly started with the movements led by women against environmental problems. The combining of feminism and environmentalism should not come as a surprise, for the first groups who are exposed to environmental disasters are generally women as in patriarchy

they provide the connection with nature. As patriarchy dictates women to be caretakers of men and children, women are supposed to be responsible for general health of a society. Thus it is not surprising that it is mostly women throughout the world who have led ecological movements. Finally, ecofeminists tie the issues of the damage to nature and domination on women because they find that both of these oppressions are intimately connected, for in the ideology that ordains the domination of nature, nature is often given female qualities.

Like ecocriticism, ecofeminism first started as a political movement by women all around the world in the 1970s, and it later appeared in literary studies in the 1990s as a theory. Merchant states that “[t]he term ‘ecofeminism’ was coined in 1974 by French writer Françoise d’Eaubonne who called upon women to lead an ecological revolution to save the planet” (Merchant, *Earthcare* 5). Behind this call, there was the consciousness that came from observing the deterioration of nature as female, which held a mirror to the oppression that women had been experiencing under patriarchy.

For ecofeminists, the patriarchal system is apparently the most harming social form that has existed in the world. For this reason, ecofeminists look into other possible or actual social systems organized in a non-hierarchical manner. One of these cultures is the Native American culture. Andy Smith states that “[e]cofeminist thinkers often appropriate Native culture to advance their claims” (31). Before colonization Native Americans had a social order which was not relevant to Western societies. They were rather matriarchal, and lived in harmony with nature. Most ecofeminists give the Indian way of living as an example while positing the problems of current social order. While patriarchy has proved to be a harmful system for nature, Indian lifestyle provides an appropriate spiritual and ideological example for the betterment of the world and the holistic survival of humankind in harmony with non-human Nature, unlike the dualistic thought of Western mind.

Ecofeminism is a product of the third wave of feminism because of its deconstructive methods. It rejects all kinds of “-isms” and praises diversity. Nevertheless, as in the case of ecocriticism, ecofeminism also is still a theory in progress. The core of the theory is that there is an intimate link between the



domination of nature and domination of women. It is already known that the Western culture sees nature as inferior to humankind. "Humankind" in the Western thought is not, however, a homogenous term: it often excludes women, people of color, poor people around the world, in short, almost everyone who is not an upper class white male. Therefore, women, regardless of their colors, nationalities, and classes, make up the largest excluded group. Therefore, like nature, women make up a wide group dominated by men throughout the world. Nature has many things in common with women especially in the Western cultures. Male westerners see both nature and women as things to tame and dominate because they have been attributed with the same passive characteristics.

A wholesale acceptance of this association, however, is dangerous according to many thinkers because it creates essentialist representations of women and nature. The most important problem of ecofeminism to be firstly resolved is essentialist representations of women and nature in Western cultures. Just as Christianity, Scientific Revolution and capitalist system have been the reasons for the deterioration of nature; such representations are also the reasons for women's inferior representations in Western societies. If the connections between Nature and women are already unquestionably admitted, caretaking "naturally" falls in the domain of the female job descriptions. The essentialist view supports that women biologically display similar characteristics on earth. Besides the positive characteristics like being life-giving and life-sustaining of nature and women, the so-called negative characteristic of nature like being chaotic and unpredictable, justifies the domination of women along with nature. C. Merchant states that "[f]emale images such as Gaia, Eve and Isis [...] can be used to show how essentialist notions, such as the conflation of nature and women, are historically constructed over time and function to keep women in their place as 'natural' caretakers or green homemakers" (Merchant, *Earthcare* xxi)

By announcing women as the natural caretakers of humankind and environment, man is free from any responsibility. Equalizing nature and women not only gives men the right to control and dominate women but also makes women stay home without interfering in men's governance on earth. Noel Sturgeon thinks that

ecofeminism's main problem is these essentialist associations. She says that "[I] assume and refer to a current critique of eco-feminist essentialism and address the political dangers of using such symbols as 'mother nature', which may reinforce patriarchal assumptions about the more 'natural' status of women" (Sturgeon 59). Because of this danger, especially thinkers who support the ideas of eco-feminism should quit making essentialist associations. Nevertheless, many ecofeminist thinkers relate myths and historical characters to the theory. They generally do it to show that often women lead the movements against environmental destruction as they care for nature more than men. On the contrary, making essentialist associations causes sexism and inequality between man and woman. Noel Sturgeon especially criticizes essentialist notions about nature and woman. She posits that "[i]t is important always to foreground the fact that unmasking the essentialism of the sexist conception of women as more nurturing, more natural, more emotional, more passive, and more exploitable than men is a political critique aimed at producing equal and just relations between men and women" ( 9).

As ecofeminism belongs to third wave of feminism, it should construct its theory on deconstructive methods, not essentialist ones. The support of associations of nature and women justifies western mind's dualistic, exploitative and dominating worldview. With these essentialist worldviews, western males can easily continue identifying women with mothering, serving, life-sustaining qualities. Because of this identifications, the only ones who are responsible for caretaking become women, not men. Essentialism is an issue that has yet to be resolved to the satisfaction to the eco-feminist thinkers who both stress the importance of women in the environmentalist movements and wish to avoid a wholesale definition or essence of women and nature.

One of the clear suggestions the all ecofeminists would wholeheartedly agree to can be found in the idea of partnership. Neither nature nor women are partners for the white Western men; they are both inferior things to be dominated. What eco-feminism suggests is a partnership action against the current environmental crisis. Nonhierarchical methods should be activated against the problems. With these basic principles, ecofeminism can be examined in terms of some important issues: The

Western culture's attribution of female's characteristics to nature, patriarchal order's damages to the environment, and ecofeminism suggestions for the current environmental crisis are the matters to be studied to understand ecofeminism's discourse.

The age-old connection between nature and women can be clearly seen. Women have been represented through the words related to nature in many cultures, especially the Western culture. It has all been said for ages that *earth is mother*. Mythological characters like Gaia, Isis and the religious character Eve are basically nature-related characters. These women represent fertility, which is the first characteristic of nature. However, such associations with Nature have also been responsible for the inferior position allocated to women in culture. Merchant states that “[b]ecause women’s physiological functions of reproduction, nurture and childrearing are viewed as closer to nature, their social role is lower on the cultural scale than that of the male” (Merchant, *The Death of Nature* 144). The Western mind justifies itself by using these connections for announcing that both nature and women are things to serve mankind. Like nature, women are passive and should be dominated by the culture, the arena of the male creativity. Firstly, mythology made connections of nature and women, then Christianity legalized their domination of nature, and lastly Scientific Revolution, which resulted in the capitalist order, turned women into a species in Nature to be dominated. According to Carolyn Merchant, the female characters like Gaia, Isis and Eve have both positive and negative representations (Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* xv). While they are both natural life givers and sustainers, they have a chaotic side. They thus provide a challenge to the efforts of patriarchy to organize and systematically explain the universe. Therefore, this “wild” side has to be tamed and reshaped by the patriarchal institutions. Many of the “achievements” of the Western history, thus, require a more critical and questioning eye. For Merchant, for instance, the Renaissance thought was that “[l]ike wild chaotic nature, women needed to be subdued and kept in their place” (Merchant, *The Death of Nature* 132). In short, along with nature’s uncontrolled exploitation, women’s exploitation in western cultures was accepted as the right of the white western males.

The oppression on nature and women has also been reflected on to the language. Western males' description of women shows the dominant culture's thought. Karen Warren talks about this:

Women are described in animal terms as pets, cows, sows, foxes, chicks, serpents, bitches, beavers, old bats, old hens, pussycats, cats, cheetahs, birdbrains, and harebrain. Animalizing or naturalizing women in a (patriarchal) culture where animals are seen as inferior to humans (men) thereby reinforces and authorizes women's inferior status. Similarly, language which feminizes nature in a (patriarchal) culture where women are viewed as subordinate and inferior reinforces and authorizes the domination of nature. [...] The exploitation of nature and animals is justified by feminizing them; the exploitation of women is justified by naturalizing them. (Warren 12)

This kind of language that refers to women shows the attitude of the dominant culture to both women and nature, which justifies its exploitation of both by connecting them.

Patriarchal societies justified their exploitation of nature and domination of women also by using religious and scientific reasons. As being the builders of "culture," white western males see themselves with an entitlement to exploit both nature and women for the betterment of societies, without considering the harm they are doing on the environment and women. The established connections between nature and women have provided men with the right to dominate them for the almost-sacred concept of "progress." The dualistic worldview of the West never stopped seeing nature and women as "the other" and opposite of "culture." It is obvious that for the teleological view of the Western culture, progress is the highest goal, and in the process the harmony with nature and equality of the sexes are often sacrificed to this sacred end, or at best they are only secondary, therefore, not subjects that deserve serious consideration.

Ecofeminism was started by women who were deeply worried about the environmental crisis. Women's positive and negative representations related to

nature make them take an action against the degradation of nature because, as said before, they are the primary sufferers of the crisis.

The other group who suffers patriarchy is Native Indians. After the beginning of colonization in America, Indian way of living changed because of the white Americans' forcing to establish the new system. Indian people met a system opposite to theirs and patriarchy was against their beliefs. For many ecofeminist thinkers, Native American people are the ultimate ecofeminists. Eco-feminists want to use Indian spiritualism to support their ideas. It has been mentioned in the previous chapters that natives live their lives in harmony with nature, so their view of life is not like the Westerners. Their deeds do not cause permanent harm in nature, for they respect the rights of other species to live. In Indian culture, just as the harmony of all living things is the essential rule, equality between man and woman is unquestionably part of their lives. Unlike patriarchal systems, Indians are matriarchal, classless and communal. Therefore, as Noel Sturgeon states "[n]ative American cultures appear so often in eco-feminist writings because they represent ecological cultures that in some instances can also make claims to relative equality between man and woman" (269). Therefore, she also states, "[i]ndigenous cultures are seen as possible examples of more feminist societies" (114).

The potential danger of the feminization of the Native American cultures, however, may enhance the Western dichotomy and hierarchy between male and female. For example, as Jaimes Guerrero states, "[n]ative men were considered less masculine according to androcentric European standards which placed women beneath men and held them to be the property of men, along with children, servants/slaves, animals, and all of nature" (67). This is a point to which one should approach with caution.

After colonization, western white males tried to impose their patriarchal order on Indian people. White American males thought that women were inferior to men and their role on earth was to take care of males and children so that men can work outdoors for the progress of culture. This ideology was something that Native Americans could not understand. Their culture valued women a lot. White Americans tried to destroy Indian culture and made Indians adopt the new system

which was patriarchal and capitalist. With this change, Indian women had new problems. They were humiliated as they were colored and they were humiliated as they were born as women. Indian women were not familiar with such treatment before colonization. Patriarchal order that was imposed by white Americans added to the Indian women's oppression.

While the Western ideology of nature-women association justifies the domination of women along with nature, patriarchy, which has for long dominated the Western societies, strengthens domination of women. According to ecofeminists, patriarchal order has a link with environmental degradation. Patriarchal societies are the ones in which the environmental crisis is noticeably seen. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva state in their book that “[w]e began to see that the relationship of exploitative dominance between men and nature, (shaped by reductionist and oppressive relationship between men and women that prevails in most patriarchal societies, even modern industrial ones, were closely connected” (*Ecofeminism* 3). Patriarchy has been justifying the dominance of nature and women with the support of Christianity, scientific revolution and capitalism for centuries. Especially after the scientific revolution when white male scientists greatly supported the unlimited usage of nature, women had no right to speak about this progress as their duties belonged to the domestic sphere.

Western people established their initial hierarchy on the Native American cultures on the premise that their culture was inferior to the West. What that implied in one sense was that the Natives were not as technologically and scientifically advanced as the West. As such, science and technology have been the tools of the West to dominate not only non-Western cultures but also women. Mies and Shiva posit that “[s]cience's whole paradigm is characteristically patriarchal, anti-nature and colonial and aims to dispossess women of their generative capacity as it does the productive capacities of nature” (16). While white male westerners used nature without limits and kept women at home, environmental crisis grew bigger and bigger until today. In patriarchal societies, starting with Europe then in USA, the inequalities like sexism, racism, oppression and all kinds of dualisms obviously exist. Western culture never attached importance to the harm they have been doing to

nature and women. Vandana Shiva says that “[t]he negative impact of economic development and environment goes largely unrecognized and unrecorded” (Shiva, “The Impoverishment of the Environment: Women and Children Last” 75). Especially in America after colonization, patriarchal order’s power quickly grew. White males in America represented culture which was empowered by scientific progress and gave the role of housekeeping and taking care of the environment to women. After the scientific revolution, men thought that they had no time for moral considerations and expected women to be moral models for the American society. As women were responsible for childrearing and housekeeping, they were again strongly identified with nature and announced as caretakers for earth. According to Carolyn Merchant, because “[m]oral virtues are attributed to women, . . . [their] role as moral model, however, emphasized the daily care of the family and the socialization of children” (Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* 103). On the contrary, Merchant again states, “[m]an’s role was to compete in the marketplace or provide labor for a male entrepreneur” (Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* 103). In this capitalist system which is embedded in patriarchal order, women are supposed to be the responsible for the survival of children and men, but they are not allowed to take part in the social life outside the domestic sphere. American women after colonial times were supposed to be the followers of men as men were responsible for the progress of the society by the help of developing science and technology. That required, as C. Merchant underlines, “[u]nder colonial patriarchy, a good wife must be submissive, humble, modest, silent and revere her husband” (Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* 100). Being the representative of culture and progress, white males never recognized women’s public identity because women’s only duty was to take care of the housework, children and men without leaving home. Patriarchy dictates women to do their best in inner sphere and not to interfere with men’s business. While men were busy with scientific progress, which was gradually turning earth impossible to survive, women could only worry about the health of their children and husbands. With the obvious appearance of environmental crisis in the last decades, women have started to lead the movements against environmental degradation.

The norms of capitalism manage to conquer the resistance of women by targeting them with its consumerist agenda. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva say that “[m]any women too, also understood that their consumerist lifestyle was also very much part of this system of war against nature, women, foreign peoples and future generations” (15). Consumerism has become a tool to further pacify women who mistakenly think that they are given a stake in the system and end only in deepening their own inferior positions. However, as women become more and more conscious of the dangerous results of the patriarchal order’s dictates, they decide to take action against the current lifestyle in which they too were included. Eco-feminism is one of the strongest of these active rebellions.

As Lori Gruen states “[e]cofeminism, not only critically evaluates the history of belief systems that have fostered continued environmental exploitation but also proposes alternative visions of how humans can live nondestructively with the planet” (216). To solve both the environmental crisis and the inequality between men and women, the eco-feminist solution is “partnership action.” The basis of the eco-feminist theory is the acceptance of the relation between the dominant patriarchal culture that rules over females and the destruction of nature. Therefore, the solution for the betterment of the world we live in is to take an action against the crisis together—men and women. Maria Mies says that “[a]s man’s domination over nature is related to man’s domination over women and other human beings, a different, non-exploitative relationship to nature cannot be established without a change in human relationships, particularly between women and men” (Mies, “The Need for a New Vision: the Subsistence Perspective” 319). Ecofeminism is against all kinds of oppressions on earth but the most dominant social structures of Western societies are based on oppression. The current environmental problem of the world arises from these established social structures like patriarchy and capitalism which are based on dualistic worldviews and domination. Ecofeminists suggest that with the equalization of genders, the progress towards the betterment of the environment becomes easier. Because of the dichotomies which are dominant in Western ideology, nonhuman life, nature and women are denied an equal or just place in their relationships with the human and man. Carolyn Merchant posits that “[a] partnership ethic calls for a new balance in which both humans and nonhuman nature are equal partners, neither



having the upper hand, yet cooperating with each other” (Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* 218). Essentialist notions of the western mind make the establishment of partnership action difficult. Essentialist associations of women-nature is a big problem as they are both seen as inferior by white western males therefore they cannot take an action for the betterment of the world together with women. This dualistic worldview of Western societies is needed to be destroyed in order to maintain a well-arranged harmonious world order without an environmental crisis. The necessity of interconnectedness of all species on earth should be accepted. USA and other societies that adopted the patriarchal system should understand the need for equalities of genders and all living things on earth. Partnership ethic should deconstruct these socially constructed ideologies. Ecofeminist thinkers think that unlike the dominant ideology of the Western mind, human beings should think non-oppositionally and non-hierarchically for the future of our ecosystem. Barbara Bennett states that “[e]cofeminists believe that until we change our perspective of community and see it as a system of cooperation for the betterment of all rather than competition for the success of a few, our world will experience an intensive of these serious problems” (64). Obviously, then, partnership requires not only the involvement of the oppressed or the disadvantaged parties, but first and foremost the whole-hearted involvement of the privileged groups. Therefore, as Carolyn Merchant maintains in *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* care for earth should be taken together, men and women, for “both sexes can participate in the recovery” (52). A genderless planet is necessary for the salvation of earth because gender roles are in fact deeply ingrained in the hierarchical thought. As Carolyn Merchant states:

Unless the home is liberated from its status as “women’s sphere” to that of “human habitat”, the feminist movement cannot succeed. Unless the Earth is liberated from the overkill of certain kinds of high technologies and renovated with low-impact “appropriate” technologies, the environmental movement cannot succeed. Environmental, technological, social and linguistic revolutions must all take place simultaneously. In this way perhaps the future of life on Earth may be sustained. (Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* 166)

Agreeing with Merchant, P. Murphy states “[t]he alternative to patriarchy is not matriarchy, but heterarchy” (139). A system in which no gender is superior to the other is necessary for the future of healthy relationships in the world.

As the fast growing environmental crisis especially in the United States is apparent, ecocritics has started to question the dominant system and begun to think of solutions for the crisis. Besides ecocritics, what ecofeminists basically propose to solve the current crisis of the environment is cooperation for the recovery of nature. This has profound implications for the way we think. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva suggest that “[a]n ecofeminist perspective propounds the need for a new cosmology and a new anthropology which recognizes that life in nature (which includes human beings) is maintained by means of cooperation, and mutual care and love” (6). The partnership ethic is applicable for all the organisms on earth. The equality of man and woman should be maintained. The interconnectedness of everything on earth should be accepted and respected. In this way the errors of patriarchy can be corrected and the crisis can be solved. Women and men should be equalized in terms of caring for environment, and the harm human beings do to nature should be cut down immediately. Integration of all these solutions will lessen the gradual deterioration of nature according to ecofeminists.

In summary, ecofeminist theory deals with the current environmental problems and suggests solutions to them as ecocriticism does. Ecofeminists posit that there is an irrefutable link between the degradation of nature and domination of women in patriarchal Western societies. Due to the dualistic worldview of the West, women and nature have become the victims of the dominant patriarchal culture. Both have been considered “others” and things to be dominated under the name of progress. Due to such equations and connections between nature and women, it is not surprising that one of the first groups among the environmentalist supporters is made up of women, who address both the issues of the rights of women and nature; in fact for ecofeminists these issues are closely connected because in both we see similar hierarchical dynamics at work. Christianity, Western science and capitalism all contribute to this hierarchical structure that keeps both women and nature under subordination and regards both as resources to be used efficiently at best.

Ecofeminism suggests a deconstructive approach to the current environmental crisis as it posits that patriarchal system proved to be based on a flawed rationale and therefore has resulted in a complete destruction of nature and subordination of women. A system which degrades nature and women is the reason for the growing crisis. Ecofeminists suggest that this is not the only possible way of life, for a better, egalitarian and ecologically-conscious living exists in some ancient and contemporary cultures. For such examples, they take especially Native Americans, who constructed a culture defined not in opposition to but in harmony with nature. As Native Americans adopted a non-patriarchal system and they lived in peace with nature, their ideology is similar to what ecofeminists suggest. For both environmental and women's problems, most ecofeminists suggest a solution called "partnership." This requires a challenge to the Western thought that women are inferior to men and should be dominated as well as to the idea that nature is "other" and a dead thing to be exploited by humankind. The equality of genders and equality of all living and nonliving things in nature is a necessity for ecofeminists. It is only by recognizing this can humans achieve victory in the face of the present environmental crisis.

## **2.2. What is Ecofeminist Writing?**

Ecofeminist writing is a new approach as it has only appeared after the 1990s. Ecofeminist issues have recently been seen in some works of American women writers such as Ursula Le Guin, Margaret Atwood, and Barbara Kingsolver, Sheri S. Tepper, Marge Piercy ...etc. Ecofeminist criticism deals mainly with the hazards of patriarchal societies on nature and its relationship with the domination of women. Hence when the theory is applied to a work, these connections are studied by critics. As mentioned earlier, anthologies of nature writing are under the dominance of white males, which is in contradiction with the basic ideology of ecological thinking: diversity. Ecofeminists maintain that women's, Native Indians', colored people or third world people's writings should be added to anthologies. Therefore the recent appearance of ecofeminist thinking in literature is a reaction to the dominant patriarchal system especially in the USA. Ecofeminist critique of the system echoes

in its critical and deconstructive approach to the generic tradition in literature. Patrick Murphy argues, for example that:

In order to have a women's nature writing, there must be a breaking of genre conventions established by men, and accepted by women, working within patriarchal structures. Such efforts have always been imperiled by the dominant culture's variegated ideological stratagems for silencing women's voices, or straining them through male normative discourses to conflate and deny difference. Today, this imperilment takes the form of codifying a patriarchal definition of nature writing. But, unlike previous pivotal moments, women today have the benefit of an increasingly sophisticated conception of dialogical methods of discourse and critique, and a voice from within the realm of nature philosophy itself, ecofeminism. A few examples will help to clarify how women writers have been and continue to be breaking the traditional bounds of nature writing, what we have to gain from their efforts, and the ways in which both feminism and dialogic inform not only our understanding of these texts but the texts themselves. (35)

As Murphy suggests, the ecological writing's dominance by men should be definitely broken by women who should be able to have the chance to write about concerns for nature and criticize the elements that harm the environment.

Most novels by women American writers belong to the genre of science-fiction or they are utopian novels because these particular novel genres enable the writers to show the dangers of possible environmental disasters caused by the current dominant system. P. Murphy says that "[i]t seems to be the case that the majority of the most daring ecological and feminist novels have been written in some other mode than realism, with almost all of the feminist utopias and dystopias created in the past two decades predicated upon ecological disaster" (26).

In the next chapters, the ecofeminist concerns can be seen in the novels of women American writers of the last decades. The works that will be studied are

*Surfacing* by Margaret Atwood, *Woman on the Edge of Time* by Marge Piercy, and *Always Coming Home* by Ursula LeGuin. These novels will be analyzed in a row according to their chronological order.

## CHAPTER THREE

### EXAMPLES OF ECOFEMINIST WRITING

#### 3.1. MARGARET ATWOOD'S *SURFACING*

##### 3.1.1 Margaret Atwood

Margaret Atwood is a Canadian writer who was born in November, 18 1939 in Ottawa, Canada. She has spent her life in different places such as Canada, Europe, and USA and currently she lives in Toronto. She is also a very influential academic authority on Canadian Literature, for she is very interested in the issue of defining Canadian identity in her works. According to Kiley Kapuscinski she is “[i]nfluential in shaping the way Canadian view themselves” (98). In addition to her local and national concerns, she is a feminist, an ecofeminist; her writing follows a similar wide-ranging path: she is a critic, an essayist as well as being a fiction writer. She has written many important works in prose and poetry ranging from children’s literature to dystopian and science fiction and from fiction to nonfiction. Atwood makes extensive use of myths and fairy tales in her works. In her works, nature and animal issues are frequently embedded in her desire to become united with nature. She particularly questions the issue of animal-eating and what the place of animals should be on earth.

Like many ecofeminists such as Ursula Le Guin, Atwood also challenges the conventions of realistic fiction and creates a utopian and dystopian fantasy world. Patrick Murphy notes that her fantastic fiction involves a profound concern with ecological issues:

Atwood has come to be known as a writer of fantastic or speculative rather than realistic prose. And it seems to be the case that the majority of the most daring ecological and feminist novels have been written in some other mode than realism, with almost all of the feminist utopias and dystopias created in the past two decades predicated upon ecological disaster. (26)

Among her novels in which such ecofeminist themes and concerns can be observed, we may list *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Blind Assassin*, *The Edible Woman*, *Lady Oracle*, *Surfacing* and so on.

Her 1972 novel *Surfacing* is one of the earliest examples of eco-feminist fiction. Although the novel takes place primarily in Canada, throughout the novel, many references to America and the characteristics of American people can also be clearly observed. Since *Surfacing* requires a vision of the world through a woman's eyes, it provides an outstanding example for ecofeminist study, which will be the subject of the following pages.

### **3.1.2. An Ecofeminist Reading of *Surfacing***

*Surfacing* involves a story of an unnamed narrator-protagonist who comes to Quebec in search of her missing father. Her job is to draw illustrations for books. She travels with her boyfriend, Joe and a couple whose names are David and Anna. Atwood employs the relationships between these two couples for exploring the place and problems of women. For instance, the social role of woman is questioned especially with the analysis of Anna, whose husband frequently teases and humiliates her. Anna is psychologically forced to do whatever David says. David is a self-confident person and wants to control Anna as well as cheating on her. The relationship between the narrator and her boyfriend Joe also has issues that can be defined as communication problems. Joe seems like a nice person but he is not talkative and unable to understand the narrator's problems. For this reason, this couple too has an unhealthy relationship. The problems of this relationship reach back to the protagonist's former relationship with a married man which ended in an abortion. Especially due to this unresolved problem with her previous relationship, the protagonist suffers from alienation not only from her boyfriend but from society in general. For this reason, she chooses to keep to herself during her stay in her father's island.

The protagonist finds a solution to her problem of her alienation by uniting with nature. The narrator experiences a metamorphosis in the novel during their visit

in the island. The place where the narrator spent her childhood becomes a place where she finds herself. The place is closely connected to nature and she unites with nature near the end of the story.

In her novel, Margaret Atwood addresses the consumer culture in America along with the feminist and environmental issues in a related context. As a feminist, Margaret Atwood employs feminist concerns in this novel by choosing the subjects of a woman's feeling alienated from society and patriarchy's burdens on women. Her alienation stems from her recent past experiences and because of her questioning women's gender roles imposed by patriarchal society. In the beginning of the novel, while she is traveling with her friends to her homeland, she feels isolated even from her closest friends, who agreed to take this trip with her. She cannot feel that she is one of them. She expresses her feelings as a total stranger: "[t]o brace myself and so I can get out quickly if I have to. I've driven in the same car with them before but on this road it doesn't seem right, either the three of them are in the wrong place or I am" (8). Although she admits that she prefers to take the trip with them to doing it alone, she wants to escape from them. This journey is meant to be a spiritual one for the narrator as she tries to change herself completely.

Her desire to run away from people also comes from her desire to escape from the social norms which have been forced on her throughout the years. No one around her seems to be bothered because of this social order and this makes her stay away from them. She muses that "[b]eing socially retarded is like being mentally retarded, it arouses in others disgust and pity and the desire to torment and reform" (72). The most comfortable people in society as it is, are those who are numbed and blinded to its injustices; those who are aware of them are, however, are further marginalized by the people who they try to awaken to a similar understanding. Therefore, she criticizes such people because they label non-conforming people who reject the established rules as mad. She herself experiences a kind of madness and numbness in the story. This is how she feels, isolated from people because she rejects the system she lives in. The narrator is a person who tries to find her true self in spite of the difficulties people set around her. Towards the end of the novel, she revolts and totally alienates herself from the rest of the people. She considered herself as a



common thing in nature and rejects to be one of the people she criticizes: “[i]t’s too late, I no longer have a name. I tried for all those years to be civilized but I’m not and I’m through pretending” (168). At the end of the story, she undergoes her metamorphosis away from people, attached to nature.

She always questions the conventional, established social roles of women. The narrator’s ideas concerning the relationship of Anna and David, her previous and current relationship and marriage reveal her thoughts on society that she feels alienated from. One of the unhealthy relationships she witnesses is Anna and David’s, which is based on David’s psychological domination on Anna. David psychologically tortures Anna by constantly teasing and humiliating her. David has a typical behavior of a sexist produced by patriarchal norms. He sees women in the service of men: “[h]e says, ‘somebody break me out a beer’. Anna brings him one and he pats her on the rear ‘That’s what I like, service’” (36). The protagonist finds their relationship terrific; while she is angry with David for his behavior, she cannot understand why Anna continues taking this.

The most important reason for her disbelief in relationships is her previous relationship which was with a married man. Their relationship ends with an abortion forced by him as he is married. She says she also got married once and he was a kind of person who discouraged her sometime in her life. Actually there is a doubt that these two men can be the same person. The protagonist says that:

For a while I was going to be a real artist; he thought that was cute but misguided, he said I should study something I’d be able to use because there have never been any important woman artists. That was before we were married and I still listened to what he said, so I went into Design and did fabric patterns. But he was right, there never have been any. (52)

Her husband thinks that women cannot be successful artists so her chance to be one is nonexistent. Because he discourages her, she is forced to choose to be an anonymous figure as an illustrator for children’s books that will not make her a famous artist.

How others think about your relationship status is very important in conservative societies. In conservative and patriarchal societies, you should be married instead of living together without a ring. When the narrator comes to Quebec and their neighbors see her, she does not tell them she is divorced and lives with her boyfriend. She states that “[m]y status is a problem, they obviously think I’m married, but I’m safe, I’m wearing my ring, I never threw it out, it’s useful for landladies” (23). In this society, being a single woman is dangerous and she protects herself by carrying a ring. In this way people will not exclude her.

Males in this novel represent the patriarchal structure. The protagonist also talks about the characteristic of males in the novel. She mentions their dependence on and obsession for technology and machines. They think that, like Renaissance men, these men can do anything with technology. While they do not find a woman’s being an artist appropriate, they choose themselves jobs that require mastery. She talks about David and Joe:

They’re making a movie, Joe is doing the camera work, he’s never done it before but David says they’re the new Renaissance Man, you teach yourself what you need to learn. It was mostly David’s idea, he calls himself the director: they already have the credits worked out.  
(10)

These men believe that they can accomplish everything by their technological inventions. This belief stems from 17<sup>th</sup> century scientific revolution which in fact caused various sorts of exploitations and dominations. Men were and are empowered by technology. Frequently the narrator mentions the word “power” in the novel; she says she wants to reach the power that is owned by men. This power was given to men years ago by patriarchy and scientific progress that was only for the benefit of men. About her desire for and reservations about power, she remembers an incident in her childhood:

I would be all-powerful, but later when I was tall enough and could finally reach to pick them (pebbles) it didn’t work. Just as well, I

think, as I had no idea what I would do with the power once I got it; if I'd turned out like others with power I would have been evil. (37)

She thinks that those who have power—and these are not quite incidentally all men—have a tendency to misuse their power. Therefore, she concludes, those who have power are meant to be evil. Her experiences make her think so. The power that patriarchy gives to men also makes them evil.

Secondly, the narrator shows a great care for both nature and animals. She cares for them because as she knows the injustices of patriarchy, she knows that the hierarchy between humans and nonhumans is wrong. She is totally against any abuse and waste of animals and plants, and she questions animal eating. When she turns back to the place where she grew up, she gets upset because it has changed in a bad way. She says “[t]he tress will never be allowed to tall again, they’re killed as soon as they’re valuable, big trees are scarce as whales” (46). She worries about the future of earth and gets angry at ones who destroy nature. She also talks about animal-killing “[t]he animals die that we may live, they are substitute people” (140). By saying this, she implies that animals and humans have the same importance in nature. Nevertheless, for others, animals are not as important as humans. Kiley Kapuscinski comments on the human’s destructive intentions in the novel:

Like the mutilated heron, which stands most powerfully as a testament to the potential victimhood of nature, the animals and vegetation that the narrator variously annihilates suggest how violence against the natural world is no longer a matter of survival or indifference but a manifestation of the human desire to inflict torture and suffering and the willingness to end life in order to satisfy one’s own appetite for destruction. (111)

The narrator tries to spend time as much as possible in nature. The protagonist experiences a profound transformation in nature. Attempting to escape from the established rules of patriarchy and the man-made world, she chooses to unite with nature. Especially towards the end of the novel, she undergoes her metamorphosis. She hides herself on the island, free from other people and she feels

as a true part of nature. She says that “I am a part of the landscape, I could be anything, a tree, a deer skeleton, a rock” (187). She does not think that she is superior to nonhumans and unites with nature. About her change in this process, Patrick Murphy comments that “[n]ear the end of the novel she experiences a rebirth through submersion in a lake, which causes a spiritual regression to a virtually pre-cultured state” (26). The lake scene of the novel is an escape from a society which is oppressive on women and nature. With this climax, the narrator acquires a new state of being. Kiley Kapuscinski states that “[t]he narrator attempts to discover a way to live in harmony with her human and non-human surroundings and to see beyond the binate options she had previously imagined” (116). After the metamorphosis, her worldview and way of living will not be the same with “her new understanding of ecological interconnection, which includes human interconnection” (26). The answers to her problems which stems from dominant culture, are given by reunion with nature.

Lastly, the last target for serious criticism in the novel is American society which represents the epitome of technological advancement, scientific development and their destructive results on nature. David voices a paranoid position towards the US, but he seems to be unable to see the far-reaching roots of the environmental problem in all the Western culture. Along with the narrator he thinks that Americans are the ones who have been polluting the earth starting with their own land and they spread their waste culture to other lands within their reach. David seems to hate all Americans insulting and humiliating them at every opportunity he finds. He does not realize that he himself turns into a kind of Canadian fascist when he says in the novel, “[i]f we could only kick out the fascist pig Yanks and the capitalists this would be a neat country. But then, who would be left?” (39). David never wants Americans to reside in Canada as he is afraid that Americans will invade Canada sometime in the future because of a possible environmental crisis. When Americans ask the narrator if she wants to sell her father’s island, David comments on these people:

It’s obvious. They’re running out of water, clean water, they’re dirtying up all of theirs, right? Which is what we have a lot of, this

country is almost all water if you look at a map. So in a while, I give it ten years, they'll be up against the wall. They'll try to swing a deal with the government, get us to give them the water cheap or for nothing in exchange for more soapflakes or something, and the government will give in, they'll be a bunch of puppets as usual. But by that time the Nationalist Movement will be strong enough so they'll force the government to back town; riots or kidnappings or something. Then the young pigs will send in the Marines, they'll have to; people in New York and Chicago will be dropping like flies, industry will be stalled, there'll be a black market in water, they'll be shipping it in tankers from Alaska. They'll come in through Quebec, it will have separated by then; the Pepsis will even help them, they'll be having a good old laugh. They'll hit the big cities and knock out communications and take over, maybe shoot a few kids, and the Movement guerillas will go into the bush and start blowing up the water pipelines the Yanks will be building in places like this, to get the water down there. (96-97)

David fears that Canada will be in immediate danger because of its proximity to the US, but since he only focuses on Canada, he is far from seeing the worldwide effects of environmental crisis, which requires a much grander perspective based on the interconnectedness of all living and non-living forms universally.

It is the narrator who achieves the universal perspective that David is unable to achieve. When she starts her journey, she vents her anger and frustration on to men, especially the ones she has had relationships with. She thinks it is men who are responsible for her alienation from society. At this stage, her worldview is based on a narrow feminism. Later, along with her friends, Americans become the target of her negative feelings. It is during this stage that she adopts an ecological perspective. At some points, she vehemently expresses her anger at Americans. For instance, four of them see some people while they are fishing in the lake and they think they are Americans. The protagonist says that “[i] warned them not to say anything about the fish, if they do, this part of the lake will be swarming with Americans, they have an

uncanny way of passing the word, like ants about sugar, or lobsters” (71). She, however, later finds out that these people are not Americans but Canadians. Similarly, when they see a murdered heron, firstly they think the murderers are Americans, but they are not. Therefore, she reaches the conclusion that it is not Americans, it is everybody who acts like Americans, who are responsible for the ecological crisis. Like men, Americans come to be a symbol that embodies the most destructive habits that the patriarchal and capitalist society encourages:

But they'd killed the heron anyway. It doesn't matter what country they're from, my head said, they're still Americans, they're what's in store for us, what we are turning into. They spread themselves like a virus, they get into the brain and take over the cells and the cells change from inside and the ones that have the disease can't tell the difference. (129)

In the novel, Americans are the representatives for anyone who ignorantly pollutes and damages nature. Being an “American” is then a state of mind; it is not limited to a national border, identity or a passport. There are “Americans” all over the world, anyone who contaminates the world can be an American. Since America is the leader of capitalist system, it is Americans who carry its banner around the world, exemplifying the worst characteristics of its hierarchies, such as seeing the rest of the world as a dumping ground to spread their waste culture. As the heron example makes clear, “[t]he narrator's descriptions of her violence against nature draw attention to Canadians' participation in the natural ruination that has widely been attributed to Americans' behaviours and lifestyles” (Kapusinski 111). Realizing that environmental disaster is not monopolized by a national or geographical group of people, the narrator reaches the worldwide perspective that David is unable to achieve:

I realized it wasn't the men I hated, it was the Americans, the human beings, men and women both. They'd had their chance but they had turned against the gods, and it was time for me to choose sides. I wanted there to be a machine that could make them vanish, a button I could press that would evaporate them without disturbing anything

else, that way there would be more room for the animals, they would be rescued. (154)

At the end of the novel, the narrator feels affiliated with nonhuman life rather than human beings. She thinks that humans are the ones who are the most destructive creatures on earth. She finally realizes that behind her alienation from men and women in her life stands her alienation from the way of life that the human beings, as she has experienced them, have constructed. She knows that there are Canadians who harm nature but such behavior is attributed to Americans because they are used as symbols of destroying nature.

In conclusion, *Surfacing* is a novel in which we can follow the gradual awakening of the narrator-protagonist towards an environmental consciousness. By cutting off all her relationships with human beings and seeking refuge, instead in nature, she points towards the true home of humanity, a home that they often have chose to or been forced to forget. It is in the natural world that one can achieve sisterhood with the rest of beings, living or non-living, without a hierarchical order. This is what feminism tries to achieve in male-female relationships, but because classic feminists limit their action within human relations alone, a permanent success is certainly impossible to attain. A much larger perspective that includes issues that pertain to the roots of all hierarchies on earth should be addressed, according to Atwood's narrator, and this is suggested by ecofeminism. It is only in a world that does completely away with power relations that her alienation can be healed. This is the true sisterhood, not with white women, or all women, or with all humans, but with everything on earth that contributes to life.

## **3.2. MARGE PIERCY'S *WOMAN ON THE EDGE OF TIME***

### **3.2.1. Marge Piercy**

Marge Piercy is an American woman writer and poet, born on March 31, 1936 in Detroit, Michigan. She comes from a family affected by the Great Depression, and she is the first person to study at a college from her family. She is a

writer of science fiction, historical novels and social criticism. She is the writer of seventeen volumes of poems and fifteen novels that mostly include the themes of feminism and social issues. In the anthology of *American Women Writers* it is stated that “[ P.] Forcefully confronts the important social issues of our time, exposing sexual, economic, and political injustices” (389).

Piercy is an activist. She is strongly committed herself to the feminist movement and important social issues of her time. While all of her works contain feminist issues, they also contain criticism of social injustices. Bonnie Lyons says that “[a]mid all the writing, Piercy has been a political and social activist for decades, protesting the Vietnam War and more recently the War in Iraq, working in the women’s movement, and working for social justice and for environmental causes” (327). Her criticism is generally on the hierarchies in all parts of life.

In 1976 Piercy wrote an important novel which includes the issues of feminism, environmentalism and social injustices. *Woman on the Edge of Time* is a story of a woman who is colored, poor and oppressed by males and social hierarchies. In the anthology of *American Women Writers*, it is stated that “[W]oman on the Edge of Time (1976) combines feminism with other social issues, particularly economic inequality” (390). As well as having these issues, environmental problems are analyzed in the novel. Piercy not only criticizes the dominance of males in her novel but also compares her time’s lifestyle with a utopian society that she locates sometime in the future. While reflecting the male oppression on females, Piercy also shows the unjust and oppressive order of the world that values neither large portions of humanity nor nature’s own balance.

### **3.2.2. An Ecofeminist Reading of *Woman on the Edge of Time***

Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* contains a wide range of issues such as feminism, hierarchy, ethnicity, consumerism, American social order, racism and environmental problems. The main character of the novel is Connie who is in her mid-thirties, single, colored and poor. She is a Puerto Rican who lives in the USA. The story starts with her fight with a man named Geraldo who sells her niece, whose



name is Dolly, to men and beats both Connie and Dolly. After this serious fight, Connie is taken to an asylum because of Geraldo's false information to the police. Since the beginning of the story, Connie time travels. A woman called Luciente occasionally takes Connie to her community named Mattapoissett which is just the opposite of Connie's own society. Meanwhile Connie is taken to a mental hospital and she is given strong drugs that make her numb. Piercy does not really tell us if Connie is taken by Luciente to the year of 2137 or her travels are just her visions. The place where Luciente lives is a utopia where there is no injustice. While comparing her own time and society with Luciente's, Connie shows the readers what kind of injustices her country's current social systems have.

Giving two different ways of living as examples, Piercy makes the reader aware of the problems of women, other oppressed groups and the environment in the USA in Connie's own time, while offering an alternative social system by telling the way of living in Luciente's future society.

Firstly, the United States of America has a system that is full of injustices. Connie is "guilty" because she was born woman, colored and poor in America. As a woman, she primarily carries the burdens of patriarchy. She suffers from all of the men throughout her life including her father, brother, husband and Geraldo who is the reason for her being in the asylum. Booker refers Connie as "[a] victim of the white male power structure in America throughout her life" (339). As a woman, she is oppressed by men around her, and as a colored person, she is forced to live in the suburbs, for she cannot have a proper job to take care of herself. Actually, unlike her mother who is a domesticated female, she revolts against domination of men. After doing what Geraldo says, "[s]he resented obeying him automatically, instinctively jerking at the loud masculine order" (14). Connie has a daughter whose name is Angie. She is also worried about her daughter as she is a colored female in American society. Connie feels uncomfortable for having a child like her in her society and fears that her daughter will suffer in this hierarchical system: "[t]hat she had borne herself all over again, and it was a crime to be poor as it was a crime to be born brown. She had caused a new woman to grow where she had grown, and that was a crime" (62). Connie is in depression for a long time after the only man who behaves

her nicely dies. Meanwhile her daughter is taken from her by the government and this situation worsens her psychology day by day. After her daughter's departure, she lives alone.

Connie is taken by the police after a fight. Her fight with Geraldo results in her being taken to the asylum; the police choose to believe Geraldo who claims that Connie is the one who is violent, not him. In the hospital, Connie is given excessive drugs that make her feel numb all the time. The people who work there behave badly towards Connie. Firstly suffers as she is a woman and colored, secondly she suffer the oppression of the white doctors in the hospital. The other patients there do not belong to white rich families. There, Connie stays with different kinds of people who are not from white class. As in the outside world, different groups suffer more in this mental hospital. The inmates are all made up of marginal and colored groups; as they occupy the lowest strata of American society, they will be used in a new experiment which may do permanent damage to their brains. Connie states that “[t]hey like to try out medicine on poor people. Especially brown people and black people. Inmates in prisons too” (251). For the doctors who are white and upper class, colored and poor people in asylums are either trouble or subjects to be used in experiments. American hierarchical system is a dystopia for colored and black people. Booker states that “[*W*]oman on the Edge of Time presents Piercy's contemporary America as a society that is already a dystopia for marginal members of society like her protagonist Connie Ramos [...]” (339). Connie is a victim in her society along with others in the asylum, as she is female, colored and poor. America is a land of white males and they have the right to dominate women and other ethnic groups as it is the rule of their system. She is victimized by the hierarchical society she lives in.

Not surprisingly, in Connie's society, a hierarchy between human and nonhuman exists. As America is a land of white males, women and nature are their servant in the name of progress that only proves useful for men. Science is in the hands of white men, and they use nature and lower groups for the progress of science. In the novel, Luciente is surprised at America's understanding of science: “[y]our scientists were so...childish? Carefully brought up through a course of study entered on early never to ask consequences, never to consider a broad range of

effects, never to ask on whose behalf..." (196). Unlike Luciente's society, America is a place where nature is degraded by human beings and seen only as a material to exploit for a better life for a certain small portion of humanity. Through Connie's eyes, America is represented as a place where women, minorities and nature are dominated and exploited.

As opposed to the unjust world we live in, the second society in the novel is a utopian society which is only seen by Connie. Since the beginning of the novel, she experiences telepathic trips to a future community by the help of a woman named Luciente. The time is 2137 in Luciente's society Mattapoissett, and this community has just the opposite characteristics of Connie's contemporary America. The more she learns about this utopian society, the more Connie is surprised and fascinated by it. There she finds the solution to much of the known evils of Piercy's, Connie's, and our world. Booker states that "[R]amos's telepathic trips to the future utopian community of Mattapoissett place her very much in the vein of the classic visitor to utopia, and what she encounters there is an idealized vision that clearly grows out of a number of political movements in Ramos's (and Piercy's) own time, including feminism, socialism and environmentalism" (339). In Mattapoissett, inequality of genders is out of the question. They have babies in a machine so that men and women do not feel less or more responsible for the children, all of the people regardless of their gender can be mothers. None of the hierarchies Connie suffers from in America exist in Mattapoissett. There is equality between genders, ethnic groups and human and nonhuman world. Booker describes Luciente's community as "[a]n ideal 22<sup>nd</sup>-century utopia based on tolerance, nurturing, communality, ecological responsibility, and the complete effacement of conventional gender differences" (339). While acquiring the gender equalization, they also accept the equal importance of all living and nonliving things on earth. These characteristics of Mattapoissett shock Connie day by day. Booker says that "[t]his society accepts and even welcomes precisely the differences that have marginalized Ramos in her own world" (340). Seeing such a utopian society makes Connie see clearly the fallacy of hierarchical order in America. Nevertheless, this seemingly perfect society did not appear all of a sudden. According to Luciente, people of Mattapoissett worked hard to

establish this nonhierarchical system. For example, Luciente explains how they destroyed racism:

At grandcil—grand council—decisions were made forty years back to breed a high proportion of darker skinned people to mix the genes well through the population. At the same time, we decided to hold on to separate cultural identities. But we broke the bond between genes and culture, broke it forever. We want there to be no chance of racism again. But we don't want the melting pot where everybody ends up with thin gruel. We want diversity, for strangeness breeds richness. (103)

While trying to destroy racism in their culture, Mattapoissett people also want diversity which they believe is vital for the richness of life. According to Luciente, different cultures can live in perfect harmony. Luciente's society seems to have established a non-hierarchical system that is totally opposite to Connie's.

Apart from being a non-hierarchical society, Mattapoissett has an order that parallels nature's balance. Mattapoissett people live in harmony with nature, for they have made nature their home without distinguishing nature from culture. They believe that hierarchy between humans and nonhumans is dangerous for the nature's balance. Connie finds this world rather pastoral. A society that is not wholly covered by technology is a primitive one according to her. She says "[h]ow different was it really from rural Mexico with its dusty villages rubbing their behinds into the dust?" (73). Brought up in a culture which dictates that nature is primitive, she habitually thinks that living hand in hand with nature is primitive life, and the more progressed human life is, the more distant it becomes from nature. However, she sees in this utopian world that a culturally developed world is possible without cutting humans off nature. She shows her surprise to Luciente: " '[m]ore evolved!' Connie snorted. 'I'd say things have gone backward!' " (125). At the beginning of her journey to this future community, Connie cannot perceive that a progress without doing harm to nature is possible. Nevertheless, it does not mean that they have limited technological knowledge. On the contrary, their technology is much more advanced than Connie's America. Booker states that "[P]iercy's Mattapoissett is actually quite

high-tech, but its technology is decidedly kinder, gentler, and more biodegradable than that of the Western patriarchal tradition” (343). After all, the idea of progress she experiences in America is the opposite of Mattapoisett. Similarly, Luciente is surprised at how Americans treat nature and nonhuman things. For the people in Mattapoisett, respect for nature is indispensable as they are aware that life cannot continue without human beings’ living in harmony with nature. They do not over consume; instead they exchange things, so that they do not waste natural resources.

As a conclusion, by showing the problems of current American system and offering an alternative utopian community, *Woman on the Edge of Time* criticizes the hierarchical order of the United States of America. Issues of gender, hierarchy, ethnic groups, racism, consumerism and environment are the main themes of Piercy’s novel. Feminist concerns are provided through Connie’s life next to other minority groups’ problems. As well as having inequalities in all parts of social life in America, American people also show their ignorance of nature’s vital role in the future of earth. On the other hand, the future community of Mattapoisett offers an ideal way of life. This society has neither any kind of hierarchy nor disrespect for nature. They do not regard nature as a material to exploit. This utopian community shows the reader that there’s an alternative to the current Western social system.

### **3.3. URSULA LE GUIN’S *ALWAYS COMING HOME***

#### **3.3.1. Ursula Le Guin**

Ursula K. Le Guin is an American woman writer who was born in October 21, 1929 in California, USA. Since her early childhood, she has been interested in writing. Le Guin’s specialty is science-fiction and fantasy. She has written many works in the genres of novel, children’s literature, poetry, essays and short stories, all of which belong to sorts of science fiction and fantasy. In her article, Lisa Hammond Rashley states that “[U]rsula K. Le Guin, one of the most honored contemporary American authors, is best known for her science fiction and fantasy, though she has done extensive work in other genres, including poetry and nonfiction, as well as

some writing that is difficult to categorize, borrowing from the realms of mainstream realistic fiction, science fiction, and magical realism” (22). The themes she uses in her works include sociology, social sciences, anthropology, feminist issues and ecology. In her works, she deals with the subjects like possible lives of different worlds, cultures and she is interested in the exploration of sexual identity. Most of her characters are unusual ones who have to undergo important changes about his/her life and character. She generally creates characters and societies which are anarchist and matriarchal.

Rashley says that “Since the late 1960s, Le Guin has challenged numerous conventions of science fiction in her novels, depicting characters who redefine our understanding of gender and race and creating plots with clear political subtexts” (22). Science-fiction genre has generally used male heroes and this was challenged by Ursula Le Guin, who had initially employed male heroes in her fictions but who later began to employ heroines. She questions the fact that science-fiction genre is too under the dominance of males and male characters. According to Rashley, Le Guin aims to create a “woman’s tongue” by which to challenge the dominant patriarchal culture:

Le Guin attempts to refigure language to include all those disempowered in our cultural structures, including women, the poor, and Native Americans, but her metaphorical naming of these types of language is grounded first and foremost in a gendered perspective: a woman’s tongue, our language, our native tongue. (31)

Inevitably, then, in addition to challenging gender roles and definitions, Le Guin is deeply concerned with environmental issues. P. Murphy states that “[L]e Guin takes a further step into ecological decentering, attacking anthropocentrism as well as androcentricism, through the inclusion of other animals as well as natural elements in her conception of family” (118). For Le Guin, too, everything on earth is interconnected: man and woman, human and non-human nature, living and non-living nature, from the tiniest to its largest components. Her ecological as well as her feminist concerns are visible in her works. Her novel *Always Coming Home* (1985) involves her most typical issues woven around a female character, such as creating a

woman's tongue, criticism of patriarchy, and environmental issues. Announcing the book to be not only typical of Ursula Le Guin's fiction, Patrick Murphy also regards it among the most typical of ecofeminist fiction: "[a]nyone wishing to gain a comprehensive vision of a possible ecofeminist culture must read *Always Coming Home*" (28). Therefore, an analysis of this book will also help bring out much of the ecofeminist concerns at work.

### **3.3.2. An Ecofeminist Reading of *Always Coming Home***

*Always Coming Home* is Ursula Le Guin's novel which tells of the story of a girl whose mother and father belong to totally different cultural groups. The protagonist, Stone Telling, lives with her mother in her mother's community called Kesh but when she is very young she meets her father from whom she had been apart with her mother, she decides to go and live with him in his community called Condor. The story takes place in a post-apocalyptic time. The communities told in the novel, Kesh and Condor, are completely different cultures. The Kesh culture in which the protagonist grows up is one that has innate respect for the interconnectedness of everything in nature. In Kesh culture, there is no gender inequality. In addition, they have a great respect for every living and nonliving thing on earth. Kesh people live harmoniously with nature and they consider everything in nature equal along to humans. As such, gender and human-nature equality is the basis of Kesh culture. The Native Indian patterns are seen in the way of living of Kesh people. On the contrary, Condor culture is patriarchal and they also have a slavery system. Stone Telling has to get to know the Condor culture when she becomes curious about her father and his way of living with the Condor people. Women and slaves have no connection with males in Condor community, and equality of genders is out of discussion. Besides the inequality of genders in Condor society, nature is nothing but a passive thing to be dominated and exploited for the progress of Condors. It is her curiosity that leads Stone Telling to live with her father and the Condors. The novel is built upon her journey and her realization that the Condor society is full of injustices after experiencing these two different cultures. Stone Telling's journey involves major difficulties after moving to her father's

community because she encounters a life in which there is no respect for women and nature. After a harmonious and peaceful life with Kesh people, she is shocked upon seeing the lifestyle of Condors. Nevertheless she spends many years with Condors and these years help Stone Telling's characteristics to develop. In the novel, the personal change of a girl and her maturation in two different cultures is told. Patrick Murphy states that "[t]his inner narrative is feminist bildungsroman detailing the experiences of a girl who chooses between her father's patriarchal culture and her mother's matrifocal one. [...]" (28).

*Always Coming Home* stands as a perfect example for ecofeminist criticism because Stone Telling's experiences in the two culturally different societies reveal the book's two major concerns as ecology and feminism. While Kesh culture's harmonious life with nature and the existence of equality of genders keep them away from ecological disasters, Condor culture's patriarchal and domineering attitudes towards nature and women harms not only nature but also inevitably themselves. By showing these two cultures in her novel, Le Guin aims to show the dangers of patriarchy and how the opposite system maintains a smooth survival of humankind.

Firstly, the novel starts with the community where Stone Telling was born and grew up. She lives with her mother and grandmother whose names' meanings are all related to nature. In her native Kesh community, Stone Telling's first name was North Owl. Her mother's name is Willow and her grandmother's name is Valiant. They give themselves names according to their own characteristics and changes in their lives. This practice is similar to Native Americans. In Kesh culture, home is very important and it belongs to women, who have the right to decide whether to take men inside their home or not. Clearly Kesh people are rather matriarchal and women are respected a lot. All of the houses have different names and the mothers and daughters live in the same houses called "Nine Point." According to valley people, earth has five houses and all of them are connected to nature and natural events. Kesh people live in a valley called Na in peace with nature and they have special occasions, celebrations, rituals and dances based on the cycles of nature. Nature and its rituals are always celebrated by Kesh people. They are agricultural people and animals are very important to them. Kesh people are never



afraid of nature; on the contrary nature is their friend who supplies their needs as long as they treat it properly. Kesh society, their houses, their lifestyle are all in harmony with the environment. They are careful with their deeds; when they want to build something, they first check if it harms nature or not. They use technology and science where necessary, not excessively. Kesh people strongly oppose the idea of destroying nature's order. When Condor men come to their valley in desire of building a bridge, they reject it to the last. One of the Kesh women says that; “[i]f a bridge at this place were appropriate, there would be one,” said White Peach from Ounmalin” (36). Kesh people find the bridge harmful to Nature so everyone refuses it. Kesh culture also refuses overpopulation as well as refusing the overuse of natural sources. They criticize the obsession for possession and they do not like people who keep on possessing unnecessary things at home. The narrator states that:

The Kesh idea of property was so different from ours that any mention of it entails explanations. What one made, or gained, or owned, in the valley, belonged to one; but one belonged to one's House, and house, and town, and people. Wealth consisted not in things but in an act: the act of giving. (117)

They try not to waste materials of earth. About their religion, Kesh people do not have a specific religion but instead of it the valley life and thinking are related to sacredness. About the religion issue, Le Guin states that:

I do not refer to the system of the Nine Houses as a religion or the heyimas as religious houses, despite the obvious and continuous relation of Valley living and thinking with the sacred. They had no god; they had no faith. What they appear to have had is a working metaphor. The idea that comes nearest the center of the vision is the House; the sign is the hinged spiral or heyiya-if; the word is the word of praise and change, the word at the center, heya!” (52)

Kesh people are interested in art, they have a theatre and they love to sing songs and dance in special occasions generally according to periodical changes of nature. Marriage is not forced in Kesh culture; homosexual relationships are normal. For

these people, everything on earth is alive. Nonhumans are as respectable as humans in their culture. Kesh people believe that disasters happen to people because they deserve it, they must have done something wrong. The narrator says that:

The people of Valley did not conceive that such acts as they saw and felt much evidence of in their world—the permanent desolation of vast regions through release of radioactive or poisonous substances, the permanent genetic impairment from which they suffered most directly in the form of sterility, stillbirth, and congenital disease—had not been deliberate. In their view, human beings did not do things accidentally. Accidents happened to people, but what people did they were responsible for. So those things human beings had done to the world must have been deliberate and conscious acts of evil, serving the purposes of wrong understanding, fear and greed. The people who had done these things had done wrong mindfully. They had had their heads on wrong. (167)

This way of thinking shows that Kesh culture believes that as long as you act in a right way in nature, it will give you back a life free of problems. But if your deeds in nature or towards nature are inappropriate, you deserve disasters. Respect for the natural environment is the basis of Kesh culture as well as their non-dominating lifestyle in terms of gender relationship and human-nature relationships. As seen in their culture, way of living, and relationships of species, Kesh people prove the ecofeminist idea that a society that has peaceful, harmonious, nonhierarchical and non-dominative system helps people have a better life than the opposite cultures. Kesh culture has the characteristics of Native Americans which ecofeminists use to support as an ideal lifestyle. In this sense, Kesh society is an ecofeminist utopia. Not having a slightest intent for domination of women or exploitation of nature, Kesh culture is a very good example for ecofeminist suggestions for a perfect society.

The other community in the novel is Condor (also referred as Dayao) people who display just the opposite characteristics of Kesh people. Stone Telling's tie with this community comes from his father's being a Condor man. Condor community is an extremely patriarchal society in which all women and slaves are kept in homes

and closed places while men are always on the road in search of food and for the progress of their culture by their high technologies. Condor men are big, tall, dressed in black warriors, all of whom have weapons with them. Stone Tellings's father is one of the Condor warriors whose name is Abhao, which means "kills" in the Valley language. He is the commander of a great army of Condors. Unlike the agricultural Kesh community, Condors are nomadic and they settle wherever they find fertile. They do not have a stable life; they are always on the road to search for new materials and foods. The Condors population also grows so quickly that Condor men need to search for new places to exploit all the time. To multiply is essential because Condors are warrior people and because of the overpopulation they have to conquer more places and exploit them. They only act on behalf of their own community and other peoples are just communities to derive benefit from. Condor community's way of communication with other communities depends on this exploitation ideology. The narrator states that:

The Condor people seem to have been unusually self-isolated; their form of communication with other peoples was through aggression, domination, exploitation, and enforced acculturation. In this respect they were at a distinct disadvantage among the introverted but cooperative peoples native to the region. (404)

Condor culture and governing systems are based on domination and exploitation. They can exploit anything good for themselves. Using their military power and technology, Condors make other societies obey them by force. The other peoples are aware of the danger that may come from Condors and warn each other against possible invasions. Authority concept is very important for Condors. Consequently, for Condors nature represents nothing but a material to use and limitlessly exploit. They think of women, children and slaves in similar terms as they think of nature. Therefore culture and progress are for Condor men, not for women. Women are not allowed to do anything but housework, they are not even allowed to read or write. This oppression is valid for their slaves called "Hontik" who work at homes with women. The narrator says:

The Dayao will blind the eye or cut off the head of a woman or a farmer who tries a single word. Only the true Condors may write or read, and of them I think only the ones called the One-Warriors, who officiate at the Wakwa, learn how to write and read freely. (204)

Not surprisingly, then, for Condor men, listening to and talking to a woman is a great shame. Stone Telling says that “[m]y father did not like to talk to women in front of Condor men” (36). Condor men live in different houses than women and slaves when they come for a rest after conquers and wars they have made. These men detest women and their slaves. The narrator describes: “[t]he hontik, that is women and foreigners and animals [...] they are purutik, unclean, dirt people. They were made by One to obey and serve the sons” (213). All the work is done by women and slaves. Doing any work related to home is a disgrace for a Condor man. The only ones who stay home are women; men are always on the road, outdoor. Condor is a consumerist society. Condor families like to keep things without giving anything away. This is why they have a lot of possessions. Condor people have no respect for nature, earth, all nature represents for them is food and material it gives to them. They do not have much knowledge about nature, farming or hunting. Agricultural work is so inferior that no Condor man should involve in it. When Abhoa comes to see Willow and his daughter years later, they have a conversation which shows Abhao’s disrespect for earth:

“Blue clay, red clay, what does it matter!” he said. “Any fool can dig black mud!”

My mother sat spinning awhile and said at last; “That’s crazy talk.”

She laughed again. “If any fool can, why can’t you, my dear?”

My father said stiffly. “I am not a tyon.”

“What is that?”

“A man who digs dirt.”

“A farmer?”

“I’m not a farmer, Willow. I am a commander of three hundred, in charge of an army, I am—There are things a man can do and cannot do. Surely you understand that!” (33)

Instead of agriculture, Condor society has a high technology. Condors are great engineers. They are technologically developed, so the machines they use are advanced. This is how they can dominate other people, exploit other places. The narrator gives information about their technology and exploitation: “[m]etals and other raw materials needed for their physical plants and technical experimentation were mined by their robot extensions in poisoned areas or on the moon and other planets; this exploitation seems to have been as careful as it was efficient” (157). By the help of their high technology, they attack peoples and natural resources. Condors, under the name of progress, continue their invasions and exploitation of nature without thinking of their negative effects on nature. As well as being talented warriors, having such a technology makes other communities worried about possible invasions. In the novel there is an occasion about Condors’ desire for a bridge and Kesh people’s disapproval. As mentioned before, Kesh people do not like to overuse technology. Unless necessary, they avoid technology. There occurs an event when Stone Telling’s father Abhoa comes to Kesh territory for the second time after her first relationship with Willow that caused Stone Telling’s birth. Abhoa comes with his Condor army to this territory because they are again on the road to search for new materials for Condor people. Kesh people strongly oppose the Condors’ intention to build a bridge in their valley because they think that it is not necessary and may violate nature’s order. But Condors cannot perceive such a thing that to harm nature is inappropriate. Condors think that the bridge will help their own benefit so if nature is harmed or not is not a problem.

Condors’ religion is monotheism. All Condors work, serve, exploit for “One” and they do whatever he orders without questioning. It is One who always orders Condor men to be on the road to search for new materials and food; likewise One commands wars against any society who opposes them. Condor warriors fight, exploit, kill, oppress for the glory of One and the community’s affluence. The narrator states that:

True Condor warriors were to be one thing only, reflections of One, setting themselves apart from all the rest of existence, washing it from their minds and souls, killing the world, so that they could remain perfectly pure. That is why my father was named Kills. He was to live outside the world, killing it, to show the glory of One. (213)

Condor men act according to the orders of One because of their faith. One's orders resemble Judeo-Christianity's orders such as to multiply, to dominate animals and the earth. One of the reasons of their domineering system is that, for the glory of their God, Condors conquer, exploit and kill anything without thinking of the consequences. Another reason why Condors always have to find new places and fight wars is their overgrowing population and their overconsumption. There is a vicious circle in their system. Overpopulation brings overconsumption.

Condor people's civic life is very important to analyze. The cities Condor people live are called "Kach." There are two kinds of cities in Condors. One is the city of mind "Yaivkach", the other is the city of man "Tavkach". Yaivkach is important because there are eleven thousand of them all around the universe. These are cities connected to each other for exchange of information. Their job is to collect information of anything all the time. They constantly develop themselves by the help of technology. The city never interacts with people, animals or plants; it only exchanges information. Yaivkach represents the power of Condor culture. The narrator says that; "Endless knowledge was there, if one could get at it; for the goal of the Mind was to become a total mental model or replica of the universe" (159). The city of Mind knows everything, its memory is limitless. Its reason of existence is to collect information of everything. It wants to show the universe that it can equal or even surpass it in creation. Because the city of Mind is man-made, it sees humankind as the superior specie:

If the people of the Valley took the City of Mind for granted as a "natural thing", as we would say, the City itself seemed to recognize its ancient origins in human artifacts by the TOK word for the human species and its members, which translates as "makers". And the City's maintenance of the Exchanges for human use seems to show that it

recognized humankind as related to itself by the capacity for mentation, language, and mathematics, a primitive ancestor, or divergent and retarded kindred, left far behind in the March of Mind. There would of course be no ethical or emotional color in such an assumption of evolutionary superiority. The assumption would be strictly rational, in an entity that was strictly rational, as well as being several lightyears larger than the solar system, and immortal. (159)

City of Mind believes in evolution and sees people as “makers” and the superior species. It represents Condor’s great capacity for science, technology, and war. With the assistance of their high technology, all the information of the universe is in their hands and thanks to their advanced war techniques; they can easily dominate other communities and exploit them. This is why Condor men are strongly feared and hated among other cultures. Unlike the other communities like Kesh people, Condors do not have respect for nature and its order; the only thing Condors think is to serve One and Condor men by exploiting earth.

Tavkach, the city of man, is the name of their cities where Condors lead a strict patriarchal life based on dominating women and slaves. As well as dominating cultures and exploiting nature, Condors consider women as the inferior gender as they consider animals as the inferior species. Except Condor men, women, animals and nonliving things have no significance for Condors. Their patriarchal system sees women only as servants for men. The narrator states that “[d]ayao women lived under siege all their lives” (207). When Stone Telling decides to live with her father, she does not know what kind of lifestyle she is going to experience. She gets shocked when she sees the way of living in Condor houses; at first she cannot understand why women behave so strangely and why men behave towards them so rudely. Growing up in a culture that values women a lot, Stone Telling has big difficulties in living with Condor people. All women live together inside houses, and they are not allowed to go outside. They only know how to do house chores, and they have no idea about the outside world. Stone Telling’s name is changed by her father when she moves to Condors and she becomes Ayatyu which means “woman born above others.” (198). When Stone Telling starts living in a Condor house, she is forced to wear scarves,

and she feels like a slave only because she is a woman. Ayatyu states that; “Women have no part in the intellectual life of Dayao; they are kept in, but left out. It was not men there, but women, who told me that women have no souls” (213). Here in this society, men are the ones who speak on behalf of women. What Stone Telling is angry at is women’s acceptance of this situation. She believes that if Condor women did not allow Condor men to oppress them, men could not do it. She says that “[t]here is no way that men could make women into slaves and dependents if the women did not choose to be so. I had hated the Dayao men for always giving orders, but the women were more hateful for taking them” (377). Her father, Abhao, also treats her strictly and finally she is obliged to get married to one of Condor men. She gives birth to a girl, whom she educates according to Kesh culture. She no longer bears with Condor oppression after seven years, and she runs away with her daughter to her own community, Kesh. Finally Condor people suffer lack of food and malnutrition because of overpopulation and their maltreatment towards women and earth. Their system that is based on domination and overconsumption of natural resources causes the disappearance of their own society.

In conclusion, as well as Le Guin’s feminist concerns, *Always Coming Home* has ecological concerns which have been on the agenda of the United States for the last decades. By showing two opposite cultures, Le Guin shows us the differences in the systems in terms of ecology and feminism. The narrator, Stone Telling experiences the way of living in both cultures. On the one hand, the Kesh society lives in harmony with nature and they have equality of genders, for Condor people nature and women are just passive things to dominate and exploit for the good of Condor men and their progress. Kesh society’s relationship with nature is harmonious for they believe in the interconnectedness of everything in nature. They avoid harming nature and they use technology and machines when necessary, not excessively. They are not fond of having possessions. Because Kesh culture respects women, men cannot think of dominating neither women nor nature. These Kesh characteristics provide a good example for ecofeminists because their lifestyle is exactly what ecofeminists suggest: a culture that rejects domination and hierarchy. On the contrary, Condor culture has a patriarchal, hierarchical and dominating system. Condors are warriors who are always on the road for exploiting nature and



other peoples for their own good. Condor society is marked by overpopulation and overconsumption because their religion commands Condor men to multiply and conquer more. They have high technology which is used for finding materials and killing nature for the progress of Condors. In Condor culture women have no rights and they are kept inside homes like slaves. They also have slaves. Condor women only give birth and work inside houses for their men and their god One. All of the characteristics of Condor culture are what ecofeminism criticizes. Their having patriarchy and exploitation of nature not only ends their own society but also causes earth to be harmed a lot. Ecofeminism suggests that there is a link between the domination of women and exploitation of nature which can lead to possible disasters; and Condor society in the novel confirms this suggestion.

## CONCLUSION

The growing interest in ecological thinking and criticism also affected feminists. As a result, the feminists who were also interested in environmental issues, created a brand new theory called ecofeminism which strongly defends the idea that exploitation of nature and domination of women are related. Ecofeminists suggest that the patriarchal order which has been the dominant system of Western societies and the USA is the reason of environmental degradation for centuries. Patriarchy is based on the oppression of women. Besides, according to ecofeminists, patriarchal countries have caused the environmental crisis of today that started with the Scientific Revolution. Since the Western associations of nature with women have been accepted by Western cultures, patriarchal Western societies have always regarded the domination women along with nature as their right. According to Western male, nature and women are the tools for the progress of culture. Nevertheless, the last decades have proven that this dominant system is wrong and possible environmental disasters are on their way. This is why ecofeminist theory has become very popular in the academy and many American writers created works that contained feminist and ecological issues. As seen in the previous chapters, *Surfacing*, *Woman on the Edge of Time* and *Always Coming Home* are three important works by American women writers that contain ecofeminist issues. These writers try to show the ill-functioning system of Western societies. Margaret Atwood, Marge Piercy and Ursula K. LeGuin show in their novels that there is a connection between patriarchal societies and degradation of nature. In *Surfacing*, Atwood gives examples of patriarchal order and how people treat nature. In the novel, the woman who alienates herself from her patriarchal society finally reunites with nature and understands that all living and nonliving things on earth have equal importance. Finally, she decides that everyone is responsible for nature's degradation. Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* also adds the racism issue to the problems of domination of women and nature. While *Surfacing* contains a white female's alienation from society and environmental problems, in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, the female character's burdens double as she is colored. Piercy's Connie not only suffers from gender hierarchy but also suffers from racism. In addition Piercy also employs a utopian society to show that all kinds of hierarchies are hazardous for the nature's balance. In her fiction, Le Guin

gives us two different communities to show us the fallacy of patriarchy. The patriarchal one limitlessly exploits nature as well as dominating women; therefore in the end they jeopardize their own survival. Nevertheless, the other society that respects nature and women continues living without danger of vanishing. Like ecofeminist theory suggests, Le Guin tells the reader that where there is no respect for nature in a society, there is no respect for women. These novels are important examples for ecofeminist writing and theory in terms of their containing of feminism and ecological thinking. The aim of analyzing these novels in this work is to show that feminist and ecological problems coexist in the Western societies. To save the future of the earth depends on the destruction of hierarchies and this is supported by ecofeminists' idea of "partnership."

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