



## An Ecocritical Reading of Muinar and Surfacing

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze ecocritical explorations and ecofeminist dialogics inherent in Latife Tekin's *Muinar* and Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*. These novels portray the two female characters who undergo important changes in awareness in their pursuits of their identities as both novels have a primary emphasis on critiquing the patriarchal perception of women and nature. This study sheds light on how the authors' sensitivities and concerns about women and the environment are manifested in the phases of the modifications in female protagonists — Elime, through her interaction with the internal voice of *Muinar*, who enters the minds of many women, in *Muinar*, and a nameless woman through her spiritual journey to her homeland in *Surfacing*, all influenced by their closeness to nature. This affiliation consequently results in the characters' independence, self-sufficiency, resistance to oppression, self-discovery, and environmental awareness. Focusing on female characters' encounters with patriarchal oppression and the necessity of their physical immersion in the land, the authors criticize the harmful and destructive effects of modernized and technologized city life. Asserting that alienation from nature and separation between body and mind has brought about the current crisis, these novels concomitantly put the emphasis on the wholeness of all beings on earth in order for women to complete their recuperation and recover from all the sickness threatening their lives.

Key Words: Nature, women, patriarchy, Surfacing, Muinar.

### *Muinar ve Surfacing* Adlı Eserlerin Ekoeleştirel Bir İncelemesi

### Özet

Bu çalışma, Latife Tekin'in *Muinar* ve Margaret Atwood'un *Surfacing* eserlerine özgü ekoeleştirel araştırmaları ve ekofeminist diyalojileri analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu romanlar, kimlik arayışlarında önemli farkındalık değişimleri geçiren kadın karakterleri tasvir etmektedir; her iki roman da öncelikli olarak ataerkil kadın ve doğa algısının eleştirisine vurgu yapmaktadır. Bu çalışma, yazarların kadın ve çevre konusundaki duyarlılık ve kaygılarının kadın kahramanlardaki değişim aşamalarıyla nasıl ortaya çıktığına ışık tutmaktadır. Bu değişimler Elime'nin, *Muinar* adlı romanda pek çok kadının aklına giren *Muinar*'in iç sesiyle etkileşimi ve *Surfacing*'de ise isimsiz bir kadının doğaya yaklaşmasının ardından memleketine yaptığı manevi yolculuk aracılığıyla gösterilmektedir. Doğaya yaklaşma sonuçta karakterlerin bağımsızlığını, kendilerine yetmelerini, baskıya karşı direnmelerini, kendilerini keşfetmelerini ve çevre bilincine sahip olmalarını da sağlar. Kadın karakterlerin ataerkil baskıyla karşılaşmalarına ve fiziksel olarak toprağa gömülmesinin gerekliliğine odaklanan yazarlar, modernleşen ve teknolojikleşen şehir yaşamının zararlı ve yıkıcı etkilerini eleştirmektedir. Doğaya yabancılaşmanın ve beden ile zihin arasındaki ayrılığın günümüz krizini beraberinde getirdiğini öne süren bu romanlar, aynı zamanda kadınların iyileşmelerini tamamlamaları ve hayatlarını tehdit eden tüm hastalıklardan kurtulmaları için dünyadaki tüm varlıklarla bütünlük sağlamaları gerektiği vurgusunu da yapmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Doğa, kadın, ataerkillik, Surfacing, Muinar.

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## Introduction

Throughout history, Earth has often been anthropomorphized as feminine since women have the characteristics of giving life and caring. The organic world that we once had is gone now as we already lost our connection to nature with a severe reduction in our communities' interaction with it. With the Scientific Revolution, the roles of women and nature have been minimized and undermined while men have enhanced their right to control and dominate. Carolyn Merchant claims "[t]he female earth was central to the organic cosmology that was undermined by the Scientific Revolution and the rise of a market-oriented culture in early modern Europe" (1996, p. 76). This mechanistic worldview has ultimately led to the acknowledgment of both women and nature as passive and subordinate. The concept of the world as a living organism has perished: "The ecological model and its associated ethics make possible a fresh and critical interpretation of the rise of modern science in the crucial period when our cosmos ceased to be viewed as an organism and became instead a machine" (Merchant, 1996, p. 76). Women and nature have been associated with each other because of the inherent bond they have in terms of giving birth to new lives and caring. This supposedly innate connection between women and nature is believed to stem from their physical nature, including the menstrual cycle, the experiences of pregnancy and childbirth, and the acts of nurturing and breastfeeding, which are the processes that result in a special bond with Mother Earth and a natural alignment with the rhythms of other natural phenomena (Hay, 2002, p. 76). However, this association between women and nature has led to the objectification of women, so it is no longer supported. Moreover, this association restricts women to preconceived roles and stereotypes, strengthening patriarchal norms where women are supposed to be nurturing, passive, and obedient, similar to the misconceptions of nature.

Owing to the dualistic form of the patriarchal framework, the role and place of women in society have been underestimated and minimized while men have been positioned to be leaders, identified with power and superiority. Muinar distressingly mentions women who suffered from the pressure of patriarchal power structures, but at the same time, some women are described to be outside of this system such as Belinur, who is adored by men around her through her intellect and charm including her sympathetic husband who lets her spend time with her extramarital boyfriends. Though the unnamed protagonist in *Surfacing* seems lost and broken at the beginning, she later becomes self-aware. With the examples of the unnamed female narrator in *Surfacing* and the old woman, *Muinar*, who does not belong to a specific period or geography, both authors seem to depict female characters who represent all women. Moreover, Muinar mentions some women she has contacted have no names (Tekin, 2006, p. 155), which points to the subjugation of women deprived of their social rights under male dominancy. Criticizing patriarchal understanding of women and nature, this paper aims to examine ecocritical and ecofeminist investigations of *Muinar* by Latife Tekin and *Surfacing* by Margaret Atwood by delving into the profound transformations of female protagonists during their quests to define their identities.

### **An Ecocritical Comparison of *Muinar* and *Surfacing***

Latife Tekin wrote *Muinar* after she moved to a small district away from the hectic urban life to the serenity of the rural, namely of Gümüşlük, Bodrum in Türkiye, where the author has always felt closer to nature, which plays a significant role in the dialogues between Elime and Muinar. The author transfers contemporary problems regarding women, nature, petroleum, religion, and politics through the complaints of Muinar, continuously emphasizing the necessity of constructing female unity as a solution to oppose these problems. Her concern for environmental problems is depicted in her focus on nuclear power plants, deforestation, and the gradual destruction of nature in the novel. Muinar, who appears and asserts to be all-knowing, in an attempt to inform women, wants to convey her wisdom and her worldly knowledge she has acquired all those years to the women. Muinar is a wise, old, and very talkative spirit who suddenly and miraculously shows up in the mind of Elime, a struggling female author, and shapes the way she thinks as she has done to a lot of women for years. Muinar, a timeless spirit, wisely transfers her sageness and perceptiveness in regard to women and nature, which are the gifts provided to her by her experiences in different periods of history. Throughout history, she has had the opportunity to observe and witness the changes women and nature gradually have gone through. When she is reading the story Elime has written, she says she has seen and experienced a lot during all those years, and if she had written them all, it would have been a great story. She thinks she could have written a better story. Though she never writes her experiences and observations down, she always talks about them to Elime.

Similar to Elime, who undergoes a spiritual transformation, the unnamed protagonist in *Surfacing*, the representative of all women, happens to discover herself and reaches self-awareness through her journey to Canada while looking for her dead father. According to Terry Burrige, despite all the information she provides about her life, the reason why she stays nameless is that “she is waiting to find a name and an identity that she has chosen for herself. She seems to be defined by others” (2015, p. 62). Though she is together with her boyfriend, Joe, and her married friends, Anna and David, she achieves to turn to her true self with the help of nature while also recovering from the trauma of the abortion she had upon the request of her ex-husband. Throughout her spiritual journey, she gradually becomes more aligned with natural life in the wilderness, rejecting to eat any artificial food and observing other life forms. She even refuses to eat fish since she considers that to be a violation of rights: “We didn't need it, our proper food was tin cans” Atwood, 1972, p. 88). Moreover, her immersion in nature makes her realize her own identity as a woman, independent from others.

Anna, on the other hand, is described to be anti-natural, an ignorant woman whose personality depends on her husband, which is declared by the protagonist's observation: When Anna is asked about what she does, she sometimes just says "I'm David's wife" (Atwood, 1972, p. 58). Moreover, she always wears make-up as she asserts her husband does not want to see her without it. She agrees to hide her natural face all the time in order to be acknowledged by him. When the protagonist tells David her wife loves him and suggests him to talk to her more in private, he starts insulting his wife by declaring there is nothing they can talk about as she is not smart enough to understand him: "... Jesus, she moves her lips when she watches the T.V. even. She doesn't know anything, ... I'm all for the equality of women; she just doesn't happen to be equal and that's not my fault, is it?" (Atwood, 1972, p. 138) The attitude of her husband towards Anna is cold, unaffectionate, and humiliating. He does not think she is someone worth talking to, yet he does not seem to care, either since he just says "that's life" (p. 138) and gives a Woody Woodpecker laugh, which hints that he does not expect more from a wife.

Unlike Anna, who defines herself in relation to her husband, Muinar emphasizes the importance of being an independent woman. As soon as she appears in Elime's mind, she foreshadows that their conversation will focus on women and nature when she states that "you love sky, I love earth" (Tekin, 2006, p. 9)<sup>††††</sup>. When Muinar is asked if she is from the city, she answers "I'm not, I'm a crone whose geography is hidden, inside every woman there is a crone sleeping like me deep inside, her awakening is a matter of luck, it's conditional" (Tekin, 2006, p. 11). She implies that having such an old and wise spirit requires a certain level of awareness and a high level of readiness to listen to what she suggests. She does not consider herself to be an urban woman despite her stories taking place in the city, so she alludes to her connection to nature away from city life. Focusing on the stories of women, she tells what has happened to the women who were beaten by men and deprived of their rights by being otherized and ostracized. She states she "wakes up inside women who walk to the cliff, but not in the ones who go into a cage and chirp to men" (Tekin, 2006, p. 212). Elime gets frightened that Muinar is with her to kill her when she hears the stories of other women whose minds Muinar entered. The connection between nature and humans is always emphasized in the novel:

I got up lightly on my bed and looked out of the darkness of the room at the newly leafed oak tree outside the window, the tree started to move slowly as if the full moon was flickering at the tips of the twigs, our gaze seemed confused for a moment, I shuddered, Muinar was mumbling in a language I

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†††† All the Turkish-English translations from Latife Tekin's *Muinar* are done by the author of this article.

did not understand, the tree was dancing to the rhythm of her calling, the oak extending its branch to my paper. (Tekin, 2006, p. 167)

Elime, beginning to pay attention to the natural world, realizes that it is a living organism. The fact that tree responds by swaying in harmony with Muinar's mumbling shows an interplay between humans and nature.

In addition to her concern for nature, the author criticizes the assigning of gender roles by addressing various issues such as patriarchal oppression, the process of integrating women into society, the dominance of male-dominated institutions, and the perpetuation of sexual stereotypes. Muinar defines the power of women using words: "The female being first inflicts wounds in the heart of man with words" (Tekin, 2006, p. 60). She warns Elime of the significance of her vocabulary: "You cannot taste and smell the words, how will you separate the young words from the old ones, the courage of the young ones will increase" (p. 128). The Cartesian separation between mind and body, reason and emotion, nature and culture has brought about the otherization and commodification of women and nature. The objectification of women as others facilitates "the destruction of the environment and the oppression of women" owing to the binary oppositions which have formed Western patriarchal institutions (McAndrew, 1996, p. 369). The dualism separating nature from culture by highlighting the superiority of culture has only "benefited men of privilege because it gave them free rein — indeed, an almost divine mandate — to exploit and subdue the inferior others" including women (Vance, 1993, p. 125). Women and non-white men who have no privileges have been exposed to being subjugated and controlled by "men of privilege". These binary oppositions "prioritise the male figures with strong and positive attributes while connecting females, and the natural landscape in this context, to any weak and unfavorable qualities" (Özsert, 2023, p. 1220). Liberating women and nature from the inferior status imposed upon them necessitates a change in the male-dominated and socially acknowledged structures of society. In order to cease this oppression and domination of women and nature, social systems anchored in patriarchal mindset need to be reconstructed.

The novels in this study exemplify that such a change could only be initiated with the awareness of women. *Surfacing* exemplifies the patriarchal need to control and dominate with the unnamed protagonist's ex-partner who only aims to copy himself even when he seems to care for the baby they expect. Even though he cleverly keeps saying he loves her, she, never considering the baby to be of her own, senses she will not be useful to him after the birth: "[The unborn child] was my husband's, he imposed it on me, all the time it was growing in me I felt like an incubator. He measured everything he would let me eat, he was feeding it to me, he wanted a replica of himself" (Atwood, 1972, p. 39). She feels subordinate to him,

passively agreeing to his wishes which later include the abortion of the child with whom he has no emotional connection as for him the baby is like an animal, not a person. She deeply regrets accepting the abortion by reluctantly yielding to his demands regarding her body. She has not taken the chance to say no, which results in her being one of them, a killer as she calls it. She carries that guilt with her:

After the slaughter, the murder, he couldn't believe I didn't want to see him anymore; it bewildered him, he resented me for it, he expected gratitude. ... Since then I'd carried that death around inside me, layering it over, a cyst, a tumour, black pearl... (p. 185).

She later realizes that “man’s unreliable language represents the patriarchal world where woman is suppressed” (Ekler, 2021, p. 125). His interference with her body, making a claim on it and depriving her of the natural right to give birth, leads her to a depressed and suppressed state of being. The protagonist’s description of Anna, who seems to be locked in, illustrates another example of this patriarchal control: “She takes her clothes off or puts them on, paper doll wardrobe, she copulates under strobe lights with the man’s torso while his brain watches from its glassed-in control cubicle at the other end of the room” (Atwood, 1972, p. 165). Unfortunately, Anna is completely unaware of this confinement and the way she gets dehumanized and objectified by her husband who reduces her agency and personality. As a submissive victim, she is deprived of any rights over her own body to such an extent that he even denies her the power to give birth, a role assigned only to females.

The female power to give birth is also touched upon in *Muinar*. The existence of the ancient bond between women and nature in their relation to giving birth is emphasized by Muinar, narrating the story of Hurraniabar and her two philosopher sons who conduct a philosophical argument on the light one night. The eldest son says that the human soul is created when ideas from the active mind reach people with a divine light beam. Furthermore, he claims to have the most perfect soul created with that light. On the other hand, the other son argues the divine being gives birth to the universe and “it is an endless flow of existence that rotates, and the symbol of this flow is light”, and he continues that “There are people who can reach the position of being mirrors where the divine being is reflected. ... Every age has a pole, and I am the most perfect pole of this age” (Tekin, 2006, p. 115). Despite the patriarchal argument of these two men about who has the divine light, their mother Hurraniabar, emphasizing her connection to divine powers in terms of generating lives, concludes this meaningless competition as well as accusing them of neglecting her power:

You two are the weight of my stomach... Go to your beds, brats! Did the light of God flow on you and not me, is it you and not me, you fell to the ground between my legs and then you saw the light. (p. 115)

She questions patriarchal authority denying women of reaching divine light which she claims to belong to women but not to men owing to the alignment of the female body with the natural processes of the earth. Muinar tells the story of man's irresistible and ongoing desire to dominate women and nature and the adverse consequences this anthropocentric attitude has induced for centuries. She explains to Elime there are people who believe that the world is fully alive whereas there are also those who only look for ways to prove their power over Earth by considering it to be passive and subordinate. Her narration is a reminder of two choices that the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess points out humans have to make: "to contribute to the maintenance and development of the richness of life on Earth," or "to fritter away our chances, and leave development to blind forces" (2003, p. 23).

In *Surfacing*, the protagonist's ex-partner, another patriarchal figure denying women their rights, does not show any faith in the possibility of his partner's success as an artist:

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. (Atwood, 1972, p. 52)

Disregarding her desire to be an artist, she chooses to be an illustrator, a commercial artist which she solely prefers out of financial concerns: "I brush my hair in front of the mirror, delaying; then I turn back to my work, my deadline, the career I suddenly found myself having, I didn't intend to but I had to find something I could sell. I'm still awkward with it, I don't know what clothes to wear to interviews" (p. 52). Conforming to her society and acknowledging societal and material priorities, she gives up her dream career, drifting away into a purposeless job and a life that does not contribute to her core identity and expectations. When the narrator looks at Anna, she thinks her old self resembles her: "[S]he could be me, sulking on the dock, resentful at being away from the city and the boyfriend I'd proved my normality by obtaining" (51). Having a male partner functions as an indicator of her assimilation into societal norms, reflecting her conformity to traditional standards of normalcy. But her alienation in the wilderness in Northern Quebec provides her the opportunity to find her true self. Having a space for herself to think and grow, she connects with her inner self and experiences a significant shift in self-discovery with the transformative power of wilderness.

When Elime asks Muinar about who she fought for, Muinar responds that those who believe that the world is alive and advocate that

We were against those who make the distinction between living and non-living, this is the essence of the war between men and women, we were fighting against those who broke the bones of the mountains and plucked the hairs of the plains” (Tekin, 2006, p. 70).

The interconnectedness of everything is highlighted in the novel. The theoretical physicist David Bohm (1917-1992), highlighting the significance of the philosophical interpretation of physics, defines the universe as “undivided” in which there is no break or division: “Thus, the classical idea of the separability of the world into distinct but interacting parts is no longer valid or relevant. Rather, we have to regard the universe as an undivided and unbroken whole” (2005, p. 158). This new observation of the universe, the new order presented by quantum theory is substantially different from that of Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) and Isaac Newton (1642-1727). This idea of the wholeness of the universe suggests the interdependence of everything and necessitates all living things to be valued, which has been progressively undermined by capitalist technology. Muinar draws attention to the world concealing something within as it hides in space veiled by clouds and fog. It advises against disturbing its essence, urging the water to flow in its authentic style. She describes and elucidates some current environmental issues with some horrifying metaphors:

Earth is raped morning and evening, she is the inner planet of the universe, the walnut with moon and sun, man senses that the world is female, he smells and feels it, he cannot grasp it and bring it to his consciousness, that smell hits their heads as it reaches somewhere. Where is the end of crazy, senseless desire and lust, it is the bloody sex murder, they killed your mountain, missile perverts are after fresh planet now, don't shut your ears to my words, men have such a business with the world. (Tekin, 2006, p. 120)

She dwells on the catastrophic results of those desecrating the earth and disrupting its equilibrium by misusing their intellectual capacity.

There were two dominant images of nature in the past: nature as a caring and nurturing female that gives comfort to mankind providing their needs, and wild and unmanageable nature that could generate violent, powerful, and dangerous natural occurrences leading to general chaos. What Merchant argues is the vanishing of the first image with the mechanization and rationalization of the worldview which has caused “an important modern idea, that of power over nature” (1996, p. 77). With the mechanization of Western culture in the seventeenth century, the image of



female earth started to change, and this new image of the nature of the modern world that seeks to dominate and control it has also begotten a modification in the behaviors and manners of humans in their relation to earth:

Whereas the nurturing earth image can be viewed as a cultural constraint restricting the types of socially and morally sanctioned human actions allowable with respect to the earth, the new images of mastery and domination functioned as cultural sanctions for the denudation of nature” (Merchant, 1996, p. 77).

These newly generated images have been instrumental in order to make alterations on the earth and to develop an industrialized world through the help of technological tools at the expense of exploiting natural resources. Nature is no longer considered to be “an independent force that has intrinsic value” (Biderci Dinç, 2023, p. 142), which makes it exposed to be dominated and exploited. The diversity of nature is attempted to be erased by the supremacy of patriarchy.

The concerns relating to women and nature go hand in hand as for many decades and three crises have been dealt with by society which are “civil rights, women’s liberation and environmental degradation” (Love, 1996, p. 226). In an ecofeminist framework, it can be stated that “the rights of the land, the rights of nature, and women’s rights are all part of human rights” (Merchant, 1996, p. 23). Women need to claim to be in charge of reconstructing society and putting an end to the destructive results of anthropocentric practices. Muinar encourages Elime to worry about other women and natural problems and to take action to solve them. She cannot stand with romantic concerns of women when they are supposed to and need to be concerned with the earth. People’s carelessness for and insensitivity to the way the earth has been insulted and degenerated have reached such a critical limit that now they have to face the alarming consequences. Naess emphasizes the necessity of building societies where the aspects of equilibrium are valued and respected by giving more significance to our link to other life forms without attempting to kill and exploit them (2003, p. 24). In adapting to urbanized and techno-industrial society, we have decreased the value of other life forms and devastated the diversity of the earth for the market value of the resources which could be depleted soon owing to these reckless actions. Like Muinar, the narrator of *Surfacing* seems more concerned about nature than romanticism as she confesses that she does not love her boyfriend but she wishes she “could tell him how to change so he could get where she was” (Atwood, 1972, p. 146), by which she declares her noticing her own affiliation with the natural world.

The unbridled consumption of nature based on its monetary value is also criticized by the author in *Surfacing*, where the protagonist expresses her disappointment: “The trees will never be allowed to grow tall again, they’re killed

as soon as they're valuable, big trees are scarce as whale" (Atwood, 1972, p. 10). Foregrounding the urgent change in our limited knowledge of ecology and the ecopolitical consequences this unawareness causes, Naess also hopes that the environmental crisis might be an inspiration for "a new renaissance; new social forms for co-existence together with a high level of culturally integrated technology, economic progress (with less interference), and a less restricted experience of life" (p. 26). A new consideration of our priorities and our perception of technology and economy in harmony with environmental sustainability seems urgent for a necessary societal transformation.

Muinar, concerned about environmental degradation and exploitation as well as suppression of women, is highly critical of political actions that endanger natural equilibrium and serve patriarchal institutions. The undeniable negative effect of political, scientific, and technological powers on earth has brought about this environmental crisis, which is explained by William Rueckert, who argues "the means by which we use the ecosphere to produce wealth are destructive to the ecosystem itself. The present system of production is self-destructive. The present course of human civilization is suicidal" (1996, p. 116). Our unreasonable ecological suicide has resulted in the absence of options. Rueckert concludes that humans have soared beyond the natural cycle of life, propelled not by their biological necessities but by the social systems they have designated to thrive on the forces of nature (p. 116). The unnecessary disturbance of the natural circle of life is illustrated in *Surfacing*, in which the narrator and her friends see a heron which has been killed for no biological reason: "I said 'it's a heron. You can't eat them' I couldn't tell how it had been done, bullet, smashed with a stone, hit with a stick" (Atwood, 1972, p. 83). According to the narrator, the only reason why they kill this animal and leave its body there is just to prove the "power to kill. Otherwise, it was valueless: beautiful from a distance but it couldn't be tamed or cooked or trained to talk, the only relation they could have to a thing like that was to destroy it" (1972, p. 83). Neglecting ecological values, humans may find it acceptable to damage ecological balance just to show that they can exert their power on animals. The author's blame for human actions for environmental problems is also supported by Donald Worster, drawing attention to our ethical systems as the cause of global crisis rather than ecosystems (1993, p. 27). As a solution, he emphasizes the necessity to understand these ethical systems in order to make reformations and improvements in them.

In *Surfacing*, the narrator attains self-discovery by acknowledging her connection to nature, confessing that "It'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" (Atwood, 1972, p. 168). In the end, when she achieves her self-realization by noticing that

she belongs to the natural world, she decides to be pregnant again and promises herself to raise this baby as a part of wild nature:

the baby will slip out easily as an egg, a kitten and I'll lick it off and bite the cord, the blood returning to the ground where it belongs; the moon will be full, pulling. In the morning I will be able to see it, it will be covered with shining fur, as god, I will never teach it any words. (p. 209)

Her becoming whole with nature is clarified by her description of her new self and the wild nature surrounding her:

Through the trees the sun glances; the swamp around me smoulders, energy of decay turning to growth, green fire. I remember the heron; by now it will be insects, frogs, fish and other herons. My body also changes, the creature in me, plant-animal, sends out filaments in me, I ferry it secure between death and life, I multiply. (p. 217)

She associates herself with animals feeding on plants. She becomes so aligned with nature, acknowledging herself to be an inseparable part of it that she considers herself a tree: "The animals have no need for speech, why talk when you are a word. I lean against a tree, I am a tree leaning" (p. 181). She prefers not to join David and Anna to go back to the city: "[W]hat are they saying about me now? That I was running away; but to go with them would have been running away, the truth is here" (p. 170). She seems to have completed her journey of spiritual growth and development, assuring herself that she would be happier in her homeland, rejoicing in her independence as the only person on the island without city rules. In *Muinar*, Elime achieves to destruct her societal and personal boundaries and finally starts to write again with the help of Muinar, who assists Elime in overcoming her self-doubts. Muinar advises her to let herself go to the pace of her words and then "look what magic happens, does your soul rise to the sky, we used to tell the gods what we would say, we wouldn't talk to people like you do" (Tekin, 2006, p. 35). It is hinted that story telling's redemptive power for the protagonist is a heavenly artistic expression and inventive endeavor, transcending the world of the ordinary.

### **Conclusion**

In *Muinar* and *Surfacing*, the authors criticize how humans posit themselves at the center of the universe, which consequently justifies their dominating other beings on Earth. Emphasizing the catastrophic results of human-centeredness that leads to the destruction of ecology, Val Plumwood claims that reason has been used as "a vehicle for domination and death," but she at the same time advises "it can and must become a vehicle for liberation and life" (2002, p. 5). Unfortunately, patriarchy has gained its power from reason and rational thinking whereas women and nature have been suppressed as they are claimed to lack these qualities. This association has caused the degradation of women and nature: "women have been associated with nature, the material, the emotional, and the particular, while men

have been associated with culture, the nonmaterial, the rational, and the abstract” (Davion, 1994, p. 9). Due to this degradation and suppression, some feminists have been against women’s association with nature. For Plumwood, the view that connecting women and nature is considered to be degrading stems from “an unstated set of assumptions about the inferior status of the non-human world. In modern discourses of liberation, things are deplored or praised in terms of conformity to a concept of ‘full humanity’” (1993, p. 26). According to her, in order to maintain the dignity of humanity, the class of non-humans has been interiorized, in contrast to humans.

Seeking to promote a balanced coexistence between humans and nature, ecocriticism aims at preserving and enhancing the environment. Atwood and Tekin highlight the mistreatment of nature and subjugation of women by applying thoughtful and insightful methods to address these problems. The novels skillfully share a concern for the well-being of women and nature while criticizing the negative impacts of patriarchal systems on them. It is criticized that the modern way of living has a negative impact on humans that become dissociated from nature, pointing out the irreversible ecological damage brought about by capitalist and industrial values. In their quests for seeking spiritual identities, both women liberate themselves from the confines of their environment, exploring their identities and articulating their uniqueness through the journey of self-discovery. Disrupting the patriarchal modes of thinking shaped predominantly by power dynamics, a new way of understanding is introduced that emphasizes physical involvement and a deep connection with nature.

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