

Everlasting Duel of Nature & Culture: An Ecofeminist Comparative Analysis of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Daneshvar's *Island of Bewilderment* and *The Bewildered Cameleer*

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Abstract

This study undertakes a comparative ecofeminist analysis of Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* and Simin Daneshvar's *Island of Bewilderment* and *The Bewildered Cameleer*. Through a nuanced examination of these literary works, it explores the intricate interconnections among women, nature, and patriarchal cultural structures within English and Persian contexts, analyzes the narratives, interprets the symbolic motifs such as nature and paintings, analyzes the discourse between men and women, and exploring the intersections of genders. The analysis reveals how both authors symbolically represent nature as a conduit for women's emotional journeys and personal growth, while simultaneously critiquing the oppressive forces of patriarchal ideologies that subjugate women and the environment. Characters like Lily Briscoe and Hasti emerge as emblems of resistance, challenging societal norms and redefining their identities beyond the confines of traditional gender roles. The novels also highlight the pervasive influence of patriarchal structures within cultural traditions and celebrations, perpetuating gender stereotypes and marginalizing women's voices. However, the narratives offer alternative perspectives by portraying women as embodiment of "Mother Nature," possessing inherent strength, resilience, and a profound connection to the natural world. This ecofeminist lens challenges the binary opposition between culture and nature, advocating for a harmonious coexistence that recognizes the interdependence of all life. Ultimately, this comparative analysis contributes to the ongoing discourse on ecofeminism, gender studies, and environmental justice, underscoring the urgency of addressing the intertwined oppression of women and nature within patriarchal societies.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Patriarchal Culture, Daneshvar, Resistance, Woolf

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Introduction

Ecofeminism is a theoretical framework that explores the interconnected oppression of women and nature within patriarchal societal structures. It delves into the detrimental impact of patriarchal ideologies on both women and the environment, emphasizing the need to address the dual suppression of nature and women. Ecofeminism highlights the interdependence of all creation by advocating for the care of the environment and marginalized groups, with a focus on the connection between women and nature as central to its discourse. In literature, ecofeminism is manifested through the exploration of themes related to gender dynamics, nature, and culture. Authors often use nature as a symbolic backdrop to reflect the subjugation of women and challenge patriarchal norms, portraying female characters intertwined with the natural world to symbolize strength, resilience, and the potential for individuality beyond societal constraints. Through literary works, ecofeminism aims to shed light on the status of women and nature as ‘the other’ and ‘inferior’ within cultural and masculine paradigms, fostering discussions on gender equality, environmental preservation, and societal change.

Virginia Woolf’s novel, *To the Lighthouse* (TTL, 1927), is intricately linked to ecofeminism as the motifs such as culture, nature and the oppression of women are quite highlighted through the narrative. Woolf’s novel delves into the interconnectedness between women and nature, advocating for anti-anthropocentrism and equality for all beings. The characters in Woolf’s work interact with nature in a way that fosters mutual understanding, portraying nature as a source of inspiration and empowerment for women, as seen in Lily’s artistic pursuits. The symbol of the lighthouse in the novel, especially in Mrs. Ramsay’s quest for emotional harmony, serves as a metaphor for the journey towards self-realization and empowerment of women. Woolf uses symbols like the lighthouse, sea, and water to highlight the importance of nature as a nurturing force for life and the universe, emphasizing the vital connection between women and the environment. Overall, Woolf’s work aligns with ecofeminist principles by portraying women’s equitable understanding of the environment, challenging patriarchal norms, and emphasizing the significance of women’s relationships with nature in the context of societal and cultural constraints.

Similarly, Simin Daneshvar’s works holds significant importance in the realm of ecofeminism due to its exploration of feminist themes, the interconnectedness between women and nature, and the critique of patriarchal structures within Iranian society. Daneshvar’s novels, particularly *Island of Bewildering* (IOB, 1993) and its sequel *The Bewildered Cameleer* (TBC, 2001), delve into the protagonist’s quest for identity amidst political upheavals in a patriarchal society. Through her narratives, Daneshvar skillfully integrates natural motifs as reflective mirrors of the protagonist’s psyche such as Tootak (the imaginary bird), Hasti’s paintings of nature, emphasizing the inseparable connection between women and their natural environment. Furthermore, Daneshvar’s novels contribute to ecofeminism by highlighting the dual

suppression of nature and women, portraying them as ‘the other’ and ‘inferior’ within cultural and masculine paradigms. By intertwining themes of feminism, nature, and women’s issues, Daneshvar’s prose parallels the exploration of similar themes by renowned feminist writers like Virginia Woolf. The comparative analysis between Woolf’s and Daneshvar’s works reveals the universality of the oppression faced by women and nature, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive understanding of global ecofeminist concerns. In summary, Daneshvar’s literary contributions play a crucial role in advancing ecofeminist discourse by portraying the intricate relationship between women, nature, culture, and patriarchal structures within the context of Iranian society, thereby enriching the dialogue on gender equality, environmental conservation, and the interconnectedness of all beings.

This comparative analysis explores the ecofeminist themes present in the literary works of Virginia Woolf’s *TTL* and Simin Daneshvar’s *IOB* and its sequel *TBC*. Ecofeminism examines the interconnected oppression of women and nature within patriarchal societal structures. Both Woolf’s and Daneshvar’s novels provide rich grounds for such an analysis, as they delve into the complex relationships among female protagonists, their natural environments, and the constraining cultural norms imposed by male-dominated societies. The study investigates how these authors utilize nature as a central motif to reflect the subjugation of women and challenge patriarchal ideologies. Woolf’s *TTL* portrays the binary opposition between the male-centered culture represented by Mr. Ramsay and the feminine, nature aligned perspective of Mrs. Ramsay. Similarly, Daneshvar’s *IOB* depicts the protagonist Hasti’s intimate connection with her natural surroundings, which serves as a counterpoint to the pervasive patriarchal influences in Iranian society. Through a comparative lens, this analysis illuminates the shared ecofeminist concerns across diverse cultural contexts, highlighting the universal struggle for women’s emancipation and environmental preservation. In this sense, the paper aims to provide a comparative ecofeminist analysis of Woolf’s and Daneshvar’s novels, 1) illuminating the shared concerns for women’s rights and environmental justice across diverse cultural contexts through the lens of literary representation; 2) investigating the interconnected relationships among women, nature, and culture within the patriarchal societal structures depicted in the novels; 3) filling the critical lacuna in the ecofeminist evaluation of Daneshvar’s oeuvre, as existing studies have largely focused on feminism, writing style, and post-colonialist analyses, omitting an exploration of how ecological themes intersect with feminist perspectives. Overall, this study not only enriches our understanding of ecofeminist themes in literature but also highlights the universal struggle for gender equality and environmental justice, emphasizing the need to challenge patriarchal ideologies and embrace the interconnectedness between women, nature, and culture. The possible contribution of this study to the field of Comparative Literature lies in its nuanced exploration of ecofeminist themes in the literary works of Virginia Woolf and Simin Daneshvar.

By undertaking a comparative analysis of these two prominent female writers hailing from disparate societies, this study illuminates the intricate interconnectedness among women, nature, culture, and patriarchal structures within English and Persian contexts under the new suggested title as “Comparative-Ecofeminism” that can be regarded as an interdisciplinary field of the study. This endeavor can be regarded as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry, one that brings together women’s issues and eco-feminism under the broader umbrella of gender studies. Through a meticulous examination of the literary works of Virginia Woolf’s *TTL* and Simin Daneshvar’s *IOB* and its sequel *TBC*, this research delves into the multifaceted relationships that exist among the feminine experience, the natural world, and the socio-cultural milieu in which these narratives are situated. By juxtaposing the perspectives of these two influential female voices from distinct cultural backgrounds, this study aims to unravel the intricate tapestry of eco-feminist thought, revealing how the interplay among gender, environment, and societal norms manifests itself across diverse literary landscapes. Ultimately, this comparative ecofeminist analysis seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender studies by offering a nuanced and interdisciplinary lens through which to explore the complex intersections of feminism, environmentalism, and cultural dynamics. In doing so, it aspires to foster a deeper understanding of the multifaceted challenges women face in their pursuit of equity and harmony with the natural world, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries.

Review of Literature

Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* has garnered significant scholarly attention for its exploration of ecofeminist themes. In contrast, Simin Daneshvar’s novels have yet to be examined from this critical perspective. According to Ding et al. (2017), Woolf’s narrative in *TTL* delves into concepts of harmony with nature, advocating anti-anthropocentrism and equality for all creatures. The interplay between characters and the natural world fosters mutual understanding, with nature serving as a wellspring of inspiration, exemplified in Lily’s artistic endeavors. The symbolism of the lighthouse underscores Mrs. Ramsay’s pursuit of emotional harmony, portraying a metaphorical journey toward self-realization. Yajuan (2016) further posits that Woolf endeavors to illustrate women’s equitable comprehension of the environment through symbolic representations. The lighthouse is construed as a manifestation of men’s attitudes toward nature, reflecting love for its light, steadfastness for its tower, and determination for its hill. Nature, symbolized by the sea and water, is depicted as a vital source of nourishment for the universe and life. Additionally, Wilson (2017) discerns Woolf’s utilization of myths to depict Mrs. Ramsay in a triple aspect reminiscent of the goddesses Rhea, Demeter, and Persephone, symbolizing life, death, and rebirth. Tong (2019) concurs, emphasizing women’s emotional connection with nature and men’s apathy. Woolf attributes natural attributes to women, such as depicting Mrs. Ramsay as a fruit tree and Lily as a flower, accentuating their affinity with nature

– a connection exploited by men in their subjugation of both nature and women. Zhu & Shen (2020) extend this exploration, uncovering the relationship of characters with nature and the rationality of man in controlling it, juxtaposed with the innate closeness of women to nature. These analyses collectively delineate the intricate interplay among men, women, and nature, delving into stereotypical associations and the nuanced attachments between these entities. However, there remains an uncharted terrain in Woolf's language, replete with symbols and their manipulated meanings that buttress her feminist perspective through the lens of nature. The vital role of nature as a character facilitating the interconnectedness of characters, influencing their psyches in the construction of subjectivity, and shaping their interactions has received comparatively less scholarly attention.

While Woolf's use of natural symbols has received attention through an ecofeminist lens, Daneshvar's novels *IOB* and *TBC* have comparatively attracted less scholarly attention from an ecofeminist perspective. Existing studies on Daneshvar have primarily concentrated on feminism, writing style, and post-colonialist analyses. Mirzaeeyan & Bagheri (2014) emphasize Daneshvar's thematic focus on the portrayal of Iranian women and their quest for rights, aligning her works under the umbrella of feminism. Hasanli and Salari (2008) examine feminist elements, highlighting her resistance to patriarchy and the societal reassessment of women's status. Ghobadi & Noori (2008) consider Daneshvar a modern writer, citing her use of stream-of-consciousness and nonlinear plots with symbolic elements. In a comparative analysis, Bagheri (2012) identifies parallels between Woolf and Daneshvar in their lives, styles, and feminist inclinations, suggesting an unconscious influence. Notably, connections are drawn among characters like Hasti and Lily, and Mrs. Ramsay, exploring tensions between stereotypical and modern womanhood. However, a critical gap persists in the ecofeminist evaluation of Daneshvar's novels and a comparison between these novels and Woolf's. Existing studies largely omit an exploration of how ecological themes intersect with feminist perspectives within her literary corpus. This highlights a need to fill this scholarly gap with a comprehensive ecofeminist analysis of Daneshvar's work, examining the interplay between nature and feminist themes.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to conduct an in-depth exploration of the interconnected themes of women, nature, and patriarchal cultural structures in Virginia Woolf's novel *TTL* and Simin Daneshvar's novels *IOB* and *TBC*. The rationale for adopting a qualitative methodology lies in its ability to provide rich, nuanced insights into the symbolic representations and underlying meanings within literary texts. The primary data sources for this study are the selected literary works themselves - *TTL* by Woolf, and *IOB* and *TBC* both by Daneshvar. A comprehensive textual analysis and close reading of these novels were conducted to identify relevant passages, dialogues, and descriptions pertaining to the research focus on ecofeminist

themes, nature symbolism, gender dynamics, and cultural influences. The analysis is guided by an ecofeminist theoretical framework, drawing upon key concepts and perspectives from prominent ecofeminist scholars such as Warren (2000), Thompson (2017), Ruether (1983), Nhanenge (2007), Laksmitarukmi (2017), Merchant (2005), among others.

Results and Discussion

Ecofeminism

Ecological feminism, often known as ecofeminism, is a phrase that refers to a “number of distinct perspectives on the relationship between the unjustified dominance of women, other races, and the poor, and the unjustified dominance of nature.” (Warren 2000: 1)

Ecofeminism underscores the interconnectivity of all creation by taking care of the environment and other marginalized groups (Thompson 2017:1). Regarding the connection between all of the oppressed groups includes women and nature, Nhanenge (2007) declares that:

The connection will be called ‘women-Others-nature’. “Others” is with a capital O in order to distinguish it from the general word “others”. “Others” conceptualises the diverse groups of subordinate people (130).

Thus, women and nature are the central focus of ecofeminism amongst all of the oppressed groups. Laksmitarukmi (2017) asserts that ecofeminists believe that nature and women possess overlapping qualities related to the ability to nurture, care for others, and reproduce (27) According to Soper (2000), “nature is the womb of all human production” (2000:141). Similar to nature, Laksmitarukmi points out that women have a uterus and may have children via it. Aside from that, just as nature utilizes its resources to nurture all living organisms, women do the same when they are mothers (27). Furthermore, the dominance of men and culture over women and nature has been made possible by these important parallels.

Feminism and Nature

According to Moore (2004), nature is a continuous thread that weaves through all waves of feminism (227) Also, Alaimo (2000) claims that engaging with the concept of nature has been a fundamental component of feminist theory since nature has been at the heart of countless sexist debates and concepts (3). Nevertheless, the interrelation between nature and women was not always compatible, and feminists’ attitudes towards nature have shifted throughout time. Khalil (2018) expresses that the first generation of feminists:

in the West were concerned with issues of suffragism and equality. They were concerned with the rights of women in education, work, political representation, and marriage. As all these issues of equality are related to the public sphere, almost all early feminists, such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Virginia Woolf,

challenged the patriarchal discourse which sought to domesticate women by relating them to nature and setting them apart from culture (2-3).

Grosz (2005) also indicates that nature has been predominantly considered in feminist studies and politics as a type of unchangeable impediment and resistant to any sort of developments including cultural, social, or historical (13). To put it another way, Plumwood (1993) argues that everything that reason denies is included in nature (20.) As a result, nature is seen as the cause of difficulties and an impediment to women's salvation and liberation. Khalil (2018) indicates that in early stages of feminism, nature was associated with illogic, insanity, feelings, instinct, backwardness, animal nature, and plenty of other bad associations (3). Plumwood explains that "To be defined as "nature" in this context is to be defined as passive, as non-agent and non-subject" (4).

Virginia Woolf, according to Khalil, is another feminist who sees nature as a barrier to women's independence. She argues that Woolf's main discussion in her well-known book called *A Room of One's Own* (1929), is that in order to be cultural creators, women must leave their domesticated position and become active in the public domain (5). In addition, Simone de Beauvoir claims that "Woman is related to nature, she incarnates it: the vale of blood, open rose, siren, the curve of a hill, she represents to man the fertile soil, the sap, the material beauty and the soul of the world. [...] She is doomed to immanence" (256).

The first wave of feminism challenges the patriarchal society's established character for women. The similarities between women and nature were considered nothing but a prison that limits women from where they truly belong to culture! However, the second wave of feminism has rejected this viewpoint. Christ (1990) points out that we have forgotten the fact that this is our actual home, and we have failed to acknowledge our fundamental connection to every creature (58). Hence, she suggests a major shift in consciousness: a return of more old beliefs that honor the radical interconnectedness of any and all creatures and a reassessment of the relationship between both mankind and nature's divinity (58).

The ideal stage in the second wave of feminism is the interconnectedness of all creatures, and nature and culture. According to Khalil (2018), culturally diverse feminists such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Alice Walker, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Toni Morrison, and Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa, many of whom experienced colonialism, have primarily focused on the liberation of both women and nature. Khalil explains that postcolonial ecofeminists, who began by aligning themselves with postcolonial feminism, have moved on to argue that no emancipation of working-class women, women of color, or women from the Third World could be realized without a concurrent freedom of the notion of nature (13). Shiva claims that colonialism reduced women's production by taking land, water, and forests from their administration and control, as well as by destroying these resources ecologically

(82). In addition, Stein asserts that “American conceptions of nature have always been deeply social, mirroring and reflecting hierarchic social relations, particularly those of gender and race, to the point where we cannot truly redress these social roles without reconceiving our notions of nature as well” (4).

Corollary, the issue of women’s oppression is entwined with the issue of nature. Ecofeminism, according to Plumwood (1993), suggests that the interdependence of women and environment should be seen positively rather than negatively, as was previously thought. Since the oppression of women was the outcome of such a link (8). Therefore, ecofeminism is an interdisciplinary field that seeks to put an end to the degradation of the world, and oppression of marginalized groups. Thompson (2017) states that the recognition of the interdependence of all creatures is one of Ecofeminism’s fundamental ideas. Based on this concept, nature is influenced by humans, and vice versa. Humans are reliant on the earth for their life (3).

Another is the impact of destroying nature and climate change on the weakest members of society, such as women and children. Gaard (2015) argues that this is due to the fact that those people who lack the infrastructure, safety safeguards, health care, clean water access, and food security would help reduce climate change and environmental degradation. This branch of feminism, also known as cultural ecofeminism, is concerned with women’s interrelation with nature in order to liberate both, as contrasted to radical ecofeminism which is associated with the first wave of feminism and is concerned with the negation of any connection between women and nature.

Due to the attention of feminists to ecocriticism, Thompson (2017) points that “to emphasize this link between women and nature, many Ecofeminists point to the term Mother Nature and the development of the term. Many also exclusively use this term when talking about nature” (2017: 4). Zein and Setiawan (2017) argue that

However, some ecofeminists believe in the closeness between Nature and women. One interpretation of ecofeminist theory is that capitalism reflects only paternalistic and patriarchal values. This notion implies that the effects of capitalism have not also benefited women and have led to a harmful split between nature and culture. In the 1970s, early ecofeminists discussed that the split can only be healed by the feminine instinct for nurture and holistic knowledge of nature’s processes (2).

Merchant (2005) also defines cultural ecofeminism as the celebration of the new figure of the old archetypical model of the closeness between women and nature and to value it not to consider it as a weak point for both women and nature. However, in cultural ecofeminism, the connection between women and nature is accepted due to their similarities such as nurturing and fertility. Plumwood (1993) negates this idea and explains that

A popular contemporary green version attributes to women a range of different but related virtues, those of empathy, nurturance, cooperativeness and connectedness to others and to nature, and usually finds the basis for these also in women's reproductive capacity. It replaces the 'angel in the house' version of women by the 'angel in the ecosystem' version. The myth of this angel is, like the Victorian version, of dubious value for women; unlike the more usual misogynist accounts which western culture provides of women, it recognizes strengths in women's way of being, but it does so in an unsatisfactory and unrealistic way, and again fails to recognize the dynamic of power (9).

What culture does to creatures and even nature, is the concern of another branch of ecofeminism called social ecofeminism which claims that all similarities between nature and women are socially constructed like gender, class, geographical features, and so on. (Warren, 2000) Zein and Setiawan (2017) explain:

Ecofeminism as materialist is another common dimension ecofeminism. A materialist view connects some institutions such as labor, power, and property as the source of domination over women and nature. There are connections made between these subjects because of the values of production and reproduction (4).

Merchant finds the solutions of overcoming the long-term suppression of women and nature by overcoming the social hierarchies in any aspects that have filled the lives of all creatures. Based on these ideas, specific analytical techniques employed to discuss the subject of this study are as follows: 1) Narrative Analysis: Examining the plot, characters, and narrative structures to uncover representations of women, nature, and their interconnections within patriarchal societal contexts. 2) Symbolic Interpretation: Identifying and interpreting symbolic motifs and metaphors related to nature, such as the lighthouse, windows, paintings, and natural elements, to understand their thematic significance. 3) Discourse Analysis: Analyzing the language, dialogues, and descriptions used to portray gender roles, cultural expectations, and power dynamics between men, women, and the natural world. 4) Intersectional Analysis: Exploring the intersections of gender with other social categories like race, class, and nationality in shaping the experiences and oppression of women and nature within the cultural contexts depicted. While this qualitative case study approach offers rich insights into the ecofeminist themes and representations within the selected literary works, it is important to acknowledge the following limitations: 1) The findings are specific to the chosen texts and may not be generalizable to all literary works or cultural contexts. 2) The interpretations are influenced by the researcher's subjective lens and theoretical orientations, despite efforts to maintain objectivity. 3) The analysis is limited to the textual representations and may not fully capture the authors' intended meanings or the reception of the works

by diverse audiences. Overall, by explicitly outlining the methodological approach and analytical techniques, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on ecofeminism, gender studies, and environmental justice through a comparative examination of influential literary works from distinct cultural contexts.

The Eternal Dance: Nature's Rhythms and Women's Emancipation

The omnipresent representation of nature in both *TTL* and *IOB* and *TBC* play a crucial role in shaping the narratives' thematic and symbolic dimensions. In *TTL*, the opening chapter, "The Window," sets the stage for a metaphorical portal between the internal and external realms. The window, where culture and nature converge, becomes a poignant motif, symbolizing the connection between the domestic sphere and the vastness of nature. Mrs. Ramsay's repeated insistence on keeping windows open and doors closed is rich with significance, potentially reflecting her internal conflict between the allure of the lighthouse's natural light and her commitment to familial and cultural bonds.

The fusion of nature with characters creates a sense of solace and excitement, particularly evident in Mrs. Ramsay's emotional response to the bay and trees. Nature, in its beauty and wildness, serves as a source of comfort for the characters, offering an escape from the complexities of human interactions. Marie's tears for the beauty of mountains further as "she (Marie) had said that last night looking out of the window with tears in her eyes. 'The mountains are so beautiful.'" underscore the characters' deep connection with nature, which acts as a sanctuary that enhances their introspective capacity and fosters personal growth. Mrs. Ramsay's interpretation of avian dynamics mirrors the complexities of her own marriage, illustrating how nature serves as a refuge for the characters. Lily's artistic portrayal of Mrs. Ramsay as a tree as she says "yes, I shall put the tree further in the middle;" (Woolf 1927: 155) reinforces the theme of unity between characters and nature. The central depiction of the tree in Lily's painting symbolizes the intertwining of Mrs. Ramsay's character with the natural world. This analogy extends to other characters, as seen in James perceiving his mother as a tree with branches representing her support for various individuals. In contrast, Mr. Ramsay is likened to a lion or a stone, evoking a contrasting, unfeeling nature.

In *IOB/TBC*, nature plays a pivotal role as an inseparable narrative element. Hasti's dreams and nightmares involving nature mirror the turmoil within her psyche. For example, at the beginning of the story, she is awakened from a nightmare, and as light streams through the window onto her eyes, a glimmer of hope begins to stir in her heart (Daneshvar 1993: 5). Similar to Mrs. Ramsay, Hasti has a connection with light. It warms her heart and causes her hope and happiness. Not only light, but also water keeps Hasti calm and reminds her of goodness. For her, water's pats were like enunciations of good things to happen. (Daneshvar 1993: 20). In another instance, when Hasti and Mourad are stranded on a wandering island, she observes teasels that

have turned green and claims that spring also visits a place like this. It represents a ray of hope. People are happier when nature is happy (Daneshvar 2001: 94). Hasti also wishes “that island be full of flowers” (Daneshvar 2001: 98) in order to avoid the abyss of death. As a result, nature is portrayed as being essential to human existence. Additionally, Tooran has planted pine and cypress trees so that she may see their wintertime foliage and feel more ease (Daneshvar, 1993: 104). Moreover, Simin talks about the nature and mountain with Hasti. She says that she likes to watch the mountain and climb them up in order to feel the stones with her feet. As the stone is receptor and calm. When her feet and the stones are touching together, their unity is like marriage (Daneshvar 1993: 261) .

Indeed, the indirect connection with nature is also comforting, as the picture of a cypress besides the lines of the holy book, the *Quran*, enunciates calmness to the readers (Daneshvar, 1993: 12). Moreover, the colors that connote nature such as green makes people calm. Since, Hasti has thought about painting her mother’s room in green to create a sense of peace, even Bijan declares that colors are useful for people’s visions and she says that the dark and neuter colors make people depressed. Hasti thinks that nature can calm humans if only they open their eyes to see it (Daneshvar,1993: 12). The novel’s title serves as an allegory for the planet’s wandering in the vastness of the galaxy and cosmos. Hasti’s interactions with nature in her dreams reflect her internal struggles, evoking feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability. Aghaei (2017) emphasizes that Hasti’s dreams symbolize her inner turmoil, highlighting the deep connection between her emotional turmoil and the overarching theme of wandering. Such inspiration is mostly evident in the novel, when Hasti in her loneliness, sees a psittaceous bird and talks to it. It is coming from her mind and, in a way, inspiring for her. She talks to it, and it gives her information about future. She is close to nature and her wise spirit appears in a form of a bird whose name is “Tootak” (Daneshvar 2001: 132). Tootak also offers Hasti some words of wisdom towards liberating her beautiful spirit from tyranny and discovering her own identity. Hasti is advised by Tootak to examine one’s spirit on a deeper level than simply their outward look. Consequently, wandering is the first stage in completing a self-journey (Daneshvar 2001: 133).

The significance of water, both as a vital element in the human body and a fundamental component of nature, enhances the narrative’s exploration of the symbiotic relationship between humanity and the natural world. Mourad’s emotional response to receiving water underscores the shared essence between human tears and the Earth’s life-sustaining waters, emphasizing the interconnectedness between human life and the broader ecosystem. These narratives portray the unity between nature and humans, with the nature, as a cleansing force that shapes identity and spirit. This unity, predominantly associated with women, faces a looming challenge from culture. The conflict between the nurturing embrace of nature and the encroaching influence of culture adds complexity to the characters’ existential journeys, offering a

critical examination of the delicate balance between humanity and the natural world.

Shattering the Dichotomy: Culture, Nature, and the Feminine Continuum

The concept of culture, as defined by Gaard (2017), embodies a belief system that views humans as distinct from and superior to nature, emphasizing control over the natural world. This cultural perspective, deeply rooted in Euro-Western heteromascularity, manifests in various forms of dominance, including physical, economic, political, military, ecological, psychological, emotional, and sexual realms. In essence, culture imposes restrictions on human life, reshaping the natural order to align it with human desires and societal constructs. Examples of such cultural damage abound, ranging from the exploitation of animals for food and clothing to the destruction of natural habitats to make way for human endeavors.

Ecofeminism, as a theoretical framework, highlights the detrimental impact of culture on nature, attributing this ecological degradation to the patriarchal paradigm. Patriarchy, according to ecofeminism, is the primary catalyst behind the pervasive damage inflicted on nature and its inhabitants. The subjugation of nature, women, and children serves as a means for men to assert dominance, fulfilling their own aspirations. Instances of cultural superiority over nature are evident in various facets of life, such as Mr. Ramsay's dismissal of Mr. Tansley's involvement in planting flowers due to the perceived priority of his dissertation. The values and standards set by society, often synonymous with culture, become the yardstick by which individuals measure themselves and others. Mrs. Ramsay's desire for Mr. Tansley to plant flowers clashes with Mr. Ramsay's insistence on academic pursuits, highlighting the societal expectations that guide human behavior. The societal-defined values influence people's perspectives and actions, diverting attention from fundamental aspects of life, including the interconnectedness of all living beings.

Mr. Ramsay's unwavering faith in factual accuracy, a trait highly valued in patriarchal societies, contrasts sharply with Mrs. Ramsay's emphasis on emotions and empathy. The narrative underscores the patriarchal tendency to prioritize logic over emotions, reflecting the broader societal struggle between rational, male-dominated culture and emotive, feminine experiences. The imposition of patriarchal values extends to child-rearing, as evidenced by Mrs. Ramsay's observation that young men emulate her husband's behavior. This replication reinforces patriarchal norms, marginalizing women's perspectives and associating emotional expression with weakness, further silencing women and children.

The narrative portrays science as triumphant over nature, symbolized by Mr. Ramsay's scientific pursuits representing humanity's dominance over the natural world. His relentless pursuit of academic milestones reflects a drive to surpass nature's constraints. This intricate narrative weaves together patriarchal norms, cultural expectations, and the ecological repercussions of a human-centric worldview. Through the characters' interactions, the story serves as a microcosm of broader

societal dynamics, offering insights into the damaging impact of culture on nature and the marginalization of women within patriarchal structures, viewed through the critical lens of ecofeminism.

The portrayal of culture in *Wandering, the Island* vividly illustrates the deep entrenchment of patriarchy, which permeates traditions, obligations, education, knowledge dissemination, social activities, and politics. Within this pervasive male-centric system, women are relegated to the status of ‘other,’ devoid of significant agency or recognition. The manifestation of patriarchy is evident when Tooran, desiring to share her opinions about poetry, encounters resistance from her male teacher, who dismisses her by emphasizing her age and gender—a condescension not extended to male counterparts (Daneshvar 1993: 149). Salim’s astonishment at the knowledge and education of Iranian women underscores the prevailing underestimation of women’s capabilities and intellectual prowess.

The societal obligation imposed on women to marry and prioritize motherhood further exemplifies the patriarchal paradigm. Tooran’s disdain for Simin, fueled by Simin’s childlessness, reveals how deeply ingrained the expectation of women to fulfill traditional roles has become. Even within the female community, the pressure to conform to societal expectations is palpable, with women themselves perpetuating the narrative that a woman’s primary purpose is marriage and childbearing.

Traditions, such as the Nowruz celebration, reflect the patriarchal values embedded in Iranian culture. The Haft-sin table, a symbolic representation of nature, is laden with elements that reinforce traditional gender roles and satisfy male-centric perspectives. Each item on the table, as elucidated by Mr. Ganjoor, is imbued with patriarchal symbolism. For instance, the pomegranate, representing women’s breasts during childbirth, is reduced to a symbol of fertility closely associated with women as “Mother Nature.” Similarly, wheat, lentils, and apples are designated as symbols of fertility, emphasizing women’s reproductive capabilities rather than their broader wisdom or power.

Bijan’s observation that the Nowruz celebration incites sexual desires among the audience further underscores the patriarchal lens through which such cultural rituals are interpreted. Even in a celebration ostensibly dedicated to nature and spring, the perspective on women and nature remains subordinated to male desires. The patriarchal framework persists, dictating societal norms and shaping cultural expressions, ultimately marginalizing women and restricting their agency within the cultural milieu.

The depiction of culture in *IOB* serves as a poignant commentary on the deeply entrenched patriarchal structures within Iranian society, where women find themselves confined to prescribed roles and cultural celebrations perpetuate traditional gender norms. The narrative highlights the need for societal introspection and a reevaluation of cultural paradigms to foster a more equitable and inclusive environment.

The other sign of dominating nature is what is described about Tehran, where

Hasti lives, which is one of the most polluted cities in the world, and no one cares about it while people keep on driving their cars, adding to the pollution. Culture ruins nature. Hasti also says that Tehran, as a city, is without identity. It is culturalized and it has no spirit similar to its people. But is there any hope for that? (Daneshvar 1993: 167-172) However, Bijan believes that the only solution for this problem is the presence of nature in the city (See Daneshvar 1993: 172). Therefore, culture itself is not the golden key for a better life. It makes humans feel lost like wandering islands, because of its hegemony and the variety of ideologies imposed by it, as Bijan and Hasti wandered and were lost in many streets in the city (Daneshvar 1993: 173). And Salim remarks that humans with industrialization may destroy their life and destiny even though he is not completely disappointed (Daneshvar 1993: 34).

Therefore, as culture has a destructive approach to nature, the question is: what is the solution? The culture itself. Nature in Iranian culture and traditions has a positive connotation, too. For example, when someone wants to leave a place to travel, people threw water on the ground behind them. This tradition has some mythological roots and signifies protection from dangers on the way. Tooran does it for her neighbors too (Daneshvar.1993: 230). Hence, correcting the old wrongs may be possible by highlighting the positive aspects of culture and creating interconnectedness among creature. One of most referred solutions by the selected narrations is ART.

Artistic Expressions of the Earthly Muse: Nature's Influence on the Creative Feminine

Art, which is the outcome of culture, can connect nature with humans again. In *TTL*, Mrs. Ramsay by reading a poem thinks that a poem about nature is so peaceful. It is important to note that poems are a component part of culture. But at the same time they can mediate between human and nature. She feels she is a part of nature and the sonnet makes her mind clean:

All the odds and ends of the day stuck to this magnet; her mind felt swept, felt clean. And then there it was, suddenly entire; she held it in her hands, beautiful and reasonable, clear and complete, here--the sonnet. (Woolf 1927: 163)

The intersection of poetry, art, and nature in *Island of Bewilderment* emerges as a compelling theme, offering profound insights into the relationship between humans, culture, and the natural world. The connection between Arabs and poetry, as highlighted by the Cameleer's assertion that Arabs are poets due to their historical association with camels in the deserts, underscores the intimate bond between cultural expression and the natural environment (Daneshvar 2001:200). This symbiosis extends to Hasti's own appreciation for poetry and painting, with her artistic endeavors serving as a means to grapple with her internal struggles and engage with the surrounding society (Daneshvar 1993: 46). Hasti's paintings become a visual manifestation of her complex emotions and reflections on the societal challenges she faces. The second painting, depicting a tree laden with bergamots surrounded by

devils, symbolizes the turbulent social milieu in which Hasti finds herself entangled (Daneshvar 1993: 197). The juxtaposition of natural elements and ominous figures speaks to the destructive influences of ideologies and societal forces on the purity of nature. The painting on Mrs. Hiti's Nowruz egg, featuring the Statue of Liberty with an extinguished torch, becomes a poignant commentary on the loss of freedom and vitality in the face of cultural dominance (Daneshvar 1993: 121-2). Here, Hasti employs art to convey a profound message about the erosion of freedom, using the symbol of a dormant flame as a metaphor for the extinguished spirit of liberty.

Hasti's portrayal of a building with lights and an abandoned boat in another painting suggests a narrative of a society preoccupied with culture and life, devoid of direction or purpose (Daneshvar 1993: 121-2). The absence of a destination for the boat and the lack of a sailor speak to the aimlessness and disconnection prevalent in a culture dominated by societal expectations. The connection between nature and art is emphasized as Hasti's artistic expressions serve as a means of preserving and beautifying the natural world. Nature, it seems, compels Hasti to paint, suggesting that through artistic creation, beauty can endure, and nature can be safeguarded. This highlights the intermediary role of individuals who, through their artistic endeavors, bridge the gap between culture and nature (Daneshvar 1993: 122). Beyond aesthetics, the presence of nature in culture becomes a necessity for expressing human emotions and thoughts that elude explanation within the constraints of patriarchal language. Hasti's painting of Salim, featuring a bergamot with branches, becomes a poignant example of how art and nature can articulate complex inner feelings that resist verbal articulation (Daneshvar 1993: 140). In this way, the fusion of nature and artistic expression becomes a language of its own, offering a profound means of communication that transcends the limitations of traditional cultural discourse.

Lily also paints and up to the end of the novel, she cannot finish her painting. According to Zhu & Shen (2020):

Lily finally completes self-reconciliation by fusing rationality and sensibility. She succeeds in combining characteristics of both men and women...Lily's change and self-reconciliation reflect the important feature of ecofeminism named androgyny, which means that one achieves the combination of sexual characteristics of both men and women (152).

Through harmony and connection with nature she accomplishes her painting which alludes to her struggle for identity. Therefore, the narratives offer two solutions. First one is being an artist because they can see better than the others. That is why both protagonists, Hasti and Lily, are painters. The second solution is interconnectedness of individuals and breaking man/woman dichotomy in order to break that of culture/nature. However, it seems that art and nature are mostly connected to each other by women. Perhaps, in the narratives, emancipation of nature and women is possible by

women's movements. As the protagonists figure out their identity and discover the imposed ideologies through their art and nature, men's status in society should also be considered.

Deconstructing the Patriarchal Gaze: Reclaiming the Feminine and the Natural

The concept of the male gaze emerges as a pervasive force in the narratives, underscoring how women's individuality is threatened by the fixation on their physical appearance. In *To the Lighthouse*, characters' perceptions of Mrs. Ramsay are dominated by her beauty. Mr. Tansley views her as the most beautiful person he has ever seen, and others, including Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Bankes, attribute to her the beauty of a goddess (Woolf 1927: 21). This emphasis on beauty becomes a defining feature for women, limiting their identity to societal standards. Mrs. Ramsay, weary of being defined solely by her attractiveness, seeks to cleanse herself of this restrictive label. The narrative suggests that for women, beauty can be a double-edged sword, often viewed as a curse that defines them in the eyes of others. The fixation on external beauty influences marriage prospects, as seen in Mrs. Ramsay's concern for Lily's future because of her appearance. The patriarchal lens limits the possibilities for women, reducing them to a few predetermined positive adjectives, such as a caring mother or a beautiful goddess, thereby hindering their personal development.

Another dimension of beauty emerges when women find satisfaction in their lives. When Mrs. Ramsay helps others, her internal satisfaction becomes visible in her appearance. After assisting fellow women, Mr. Tansley sees her as a woman in her fifties with eight children, yet she retains her beauty. This transformation highlights the link between internal fulfillment and external attractiveness. Beauty, it seems, is not solely the domain of youth; it emanates from within when women find contentment in their actions, distancing themselves from societal norms.

The parallel drawn between the attractiveness of women and the nature underscores the objectification of both entities. Men, in their fixation on beauty, often overlook the right of both women and nature to exist on their terms. Mr. Ramsay's son, symbolically representing this attitude, kills birds for his hobby without consideration for their existence. The novel suggests that societal standards of attractiveness dominate people's perceptions, whether applied to women or the wild of nature. In the absence of human care, the garden in the second chapter of "Time Passes" loses its attractiveness, reinforcing the notion that people only accept nature based on their predefined standards. This emphasis on external appearance becomes a limiting factor for both women and nature, overshadowing their intrinsic value and right to exist independently of societal expectations.

In *IOB* also men treat women as objects. Simin says that all people who come to visit her as a writer, in fact want to watch a beautiful girl like Hasti. She is the object of their desires (Daneshvar 1993: 50). Also, Mr. Ganjoor looks at Eshrat and Pacita only for their beauty as he calls his wife not by her name, but by nick names that

are related to her beauty such as *Khoshgel Khanum* (Pretty lady). Moreover, Moori looks at Eshrat and says she is like a tree with blossoms (123-4). The patriarchal perspective extends beyond women, encompassing any being that does not conform to beauty standards set by those in power. Mr. Kerasly's derogatory comment about "Haji Firuz," deeming him an ugly black man, exemplifies how individuals in positions of authority judge the world based on their personal preferences. In this context, even a person of color is marginalized and denied basic human rights due to their appearance, underscoring the pervasive influence of aesthetic biases. The male gaze, in this context, is not confined to women but extends to any appearance that patriarchal men prefer (Daneshvar 1993: 132).

Men, within this narrative, are often depicted through the lens of their sexual desires, reducing their interests primarily to sexual enjoyment. The narrative suggests that males are singularly fixated on sex, with women serving as mere objects of their desires. Figures like Mardan Khan exemplify this perspective, with Hasti noting that he pursues sexual encounters since his return from America as he says my father says since his arrival from the US, he has attacked women, whether single or married (119). Notably, there are men who, in a seemingly modern guise, advocate for women's equality while simultaneously exploiting them for personal pleasure. This duplicitous behavior is evident in Mardan Khan's encouragement for women's equality, which, in reality, serves as a pretext for pursuing extramarital affairs, as seen in Eshrat's case (254). Other characters, including Bijan, Mr. Ganjoor, Salim's father, and Mourad's father, share similar exploitative attitudes towards women. The following section delves into the portrayal of women as Mother Nature, a central theme in ecofeminist studies.

Embodiment of the Earth Mother: Women as Vessels of Nature's Resilience

The strong interconnectedness between women and nature, is mentioned in the novels several times. In *TTL*, Mrs. Ramsay is always compared to a tree which holds everyone together. She is the one who understands nature and is a friend to other living things such as animals and birds. Also, when Lily figures out what she has missed in her character, she draws a tree in the center of her painting, as Mrs. Ramsay can only be described by nature. Even when Mrs. Ramsay is dead, the nature sounds strange:

In spring the garden urns, casually filled with wind-blown plants, were gay as ever. Violets came and daffodils. But the stillness and the brightness of the day were as strange as the chaos and tumult of night (Woolf 1927: 183).

In *IOB*, Mr. Hiti posits that a person's soul is feminine, associating emotions with women, while logic is masculine, aligning power and superiority with men (Daneshvar 1993: 199). Hasti's name, meaning the entire universe, suggests that

women, symbolized as Mother Nature, hold a superior role. The narrative emphasizes the idea that life is impossible without femininity, portraying women, such as Hasti, as the providers of life for men (17). Salim acknowledges that men need women not solely for sexual desires but because women serve as a comfort zone for them (31). Additionally, when Salim speaks of God, he likens God to a maternal figure, reinforcing the notion that creation and nurturing are akin to a mother's role. This prompts Hasti to question God's gender, to which he responds that he has no gender (36-7).

Contrary to conventional views that associate femininity with weakness, the narrative suggests that women's femininity is a source of strength and necessity for men in society. Hasti identifies herself with nature, finding solace in it, and befriends rooks while in jail (93). In her poem, Hasti describes her spirit as the scent of a flower. Salim sees Hasti as a twin of the bergamot, consistently referring to her by that name, while Mourad declares that the universe is summarized in Hasti for him, reinforcing the close connection between women and nature (105). Simin and Tooran, too, exhibit a closeness to nature, with Simin expressing concern for the lives of nature and birds, and Tooran comparing herself to a thousand-year-old tree (313).

In conclusion, both narratives underscore the value of femininity, portraying it as closely linked to nature and as the source of life for all creatures. Far from being a weakness, femininity is presented as a powerful force, challenging traditional views and emphasizing the importance of environmental consciousness.

Transcending Boundaries: The Feminine Journey from Oppression to Harmony

In the conflict between nature and culture, nature ultimately prevails. In the second chapter of *TTL*, when the characters have left the house, nature conquers the house, a symbol of culture. In the third chapter, when Cam looks at the island from their boat, she observes:

It lay like that on the sea, did it, with a dent in the middle and two sharp crags, and the sea swept in there, and spread away for miles and miles on either side of the island. It was very small; shaped something like a leaf stood on end (Woolf 1927: 254).

Cam perceives the island, surrounded by the vast sea, as small compared to the greatness of nature. This suggests that their island, where their culture resists, appears insignificant in the face of nature's grandeur. They are within nature and cannot be separated from it. Lily reflects that Mr. Ramsay and his children in the boat to the lighthouse are now part of nature, "Distance had an extraordinary power; they had been swallowed up in it, she felt, they were gone forever, they had become part of the nature of things" (253-4).

Apparently, the only thing that remains is nature, not culture. As Cam drifts into sleep, her mind conjures a vision of a valley full of birds and flowers: “It was a hanging garden; it was a valley, full of birds, and flowers, and antelopes... She was falling asleep” (275). Furthermore, it is suggested that the nature is wild and free forever. While James and his father are in the boat, he starts to sing a poem that his father repeats: “We are driving before a gale—we must sink” (274). They acknowledge that there is no escape from nature’s domain. Death is another powerful force by which nature threatens the lives of people, as seen with Mrs. Ramsay, Prue, and Andrew. Metaphorically, what culture compels them to do results only in their own destruction.

In *IOB*, nature has the upper hand too. Hasti calls the dead, hunted by the earth (Daneshvar, 1993: 7). Thus, humans are from nature, and they finally become a part of nature after they die. (242). Finally, according to the novels, even if the final winner is nature, the binary opposition culture/nature acts like a double-edged sword. Both of them can have destructive effects on one another. Since living on this planet requires a refuge in which all of the creatures can live peacefully and equally together, it totally depends on what everyone does, as that is what the culture is made of.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of ecofeminist themes in Woolf’s *TTL* and Daneshvar’s *IOB/TBC* reveals intricate connections between nature, gender dynamics, and culture. Both authors present women as closely connected with nature, symbolizing strength, resilience, and the potential for individuality beyond patriarchal constraints. The novels highlight the oppressive nature of culture, where patriarchal ideologies restrict women and nature alike. The characters Lily and Hasti emerge as symbols of resistance, striving to redefine their identities and challenge societal norms. This exploration contributes to our understanding of ecofeminism in literature and underscores the ongoing struggle for gender equality. Based on the detailed information provided above, this study tried to take into consideration the following points:

- 1. Interconnected Oppression of Women and Nature:** it emphasized the need to address the dual suppression of women and the environment, recognizing their interdependence and shared struggle for emancipation.
- 2. Symbolic Representations of Nature:** Such as natural motifs which serve as conduits for the characters’ emotional journeys, personal growth, and the tension between culture and the natural world.
- 3. Gender and Patriarchal Structures:** The study highlighted the marginalization of women and the perpetuation of traditional gender norms. Moreover, it examined how patriarchal ideologies, cultural expectations, and

the male gaze limit women's agency and individuality.

4. Women's Resistance and Empowerment: Characters like Lily and Hasti are portrayed as modern figures who strive to redefine their identities and challenge patriarchal norms, despite facing resistance from other women who have internalized patriarchal values.

5. Interdependence of Nature and Humanity: The study explored the interconnectedness of all living beings and the need for harmonious coexistence. Also, it suggested that the ultimate victory may lie with nature, as the narratives depict the inevitability of human mortality and the enduring power of the natural world.

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