

The Interconnection between Ecofeminist Theory and Gaian Hypothesis: Women Saving the Earth

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Abstract

The Nobel prize winner (2007), Doris May Lessing (1919-2013) shows special attention to the injustice that is inflicted by men upon both women and nature. Women have always been linked to nature and men to civilization due to gendered divisions attributing to females the roles of nurturers and caretakers while classifying men as those who stand for reason. Throughout her novels, Lessing associates ecological concerns with feminist issues by referring to major global environmental calamities and their impact on her female protagonists. Her dystopian worlds shed light on the destruction of nature, and consequently, women at the hands of men. This article focuses on three novels by Lessing namely, *The Golden Notebook* (1962), *The Four-Gated City* (1969) and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974) that are to be tackled within the theoretical frame of ecofeminism and Gaia hypothesis. The methodology used in this paper is based on ecofeminist and Gaian approaches that perceive earth as a community of beings, in which all living organisms are equal. This article detects ecofeminist tendencies in Lessing's selected novels that are associated with Gaia hypothesis, which suggests a new way to look at life on earth and a subversion of patriarchy. This research will rely on primary sources such as Lessing's selected novels, interviews, and related writings. Major books on ecofeminism by Françoise D'Euabonne (1974), Greta Gaard (2017), Carolyn Merchant (1980, 1995), Maria Mies (2014), Ariel Salleh (1997), and Rosemary Radford Ruether (1994) among others, and on Gaia by James Lovelock (2000). It also relies on articles published in databases and academic journals based on the primary sources.

Keywords: patriarchy, ecofeminism, nature, dystopia, Gaia, women.

الملخص:

لطالما كانت الروائية دوريس ليسينج الحاصلة على جائزة نوبل لعام ٢٠٠٧ مهتمة بمستقبل الإنسانية، فتعرض من خلال الثلاث روايات المختارة الظلم الذي تتعرض له المرأة و الطبيعة من قبل الرجل. يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة الواقع المرير نتاج السيطرة الأبوية كما ترسمه ليسينج في الروايات المختارة ، وعلى هذا المنوال يتتبع البحث النزعة النسوية الإيكولوجية وطيدة العلاقة بفرضية جايا التي تحث على رؤية الكون من منظور جديد. يختص هذا البحث بدراسة ثلاث روايات مختارة لليسينج: *The Golden Notebook* (1962) و *The Four-Gated City* (1969) و *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974) من منظور نسوي إيكولوجي الذي يتفق مع فرضية جايا في النظر إلى كوكب الأرض كمجتمع تسوده المساواة بين جميع كائناته الحية. سيستفيد هذا البحث من مصادر رئيسية كروايات ليسينج ومقالات، وكتابات مرتبطة بموضوعنا هذا ؛ كما أنه سيعتمد على كتب هامة عن النسوية الإيكولوجية لدييون، و جارد، و ميرشانت، و مايز، و غيرهما، و كتب عن جايا للوفلوك. و سيعتمد هذا البحث أيضاً على مقالات تم نشرها في مجلات علمية وقواعد بيانات معتمدة ذات صلة بمصادر البحث الرئيسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية :

الأبوية، النسوية الإيكولوجية، الطبيعة، الديستوبيا، جايا، المرأة.

Introduction

Ecofeminism advocates the formulation of a new consciousness that necessitates a new relationship between humans and nature. Gretchen Legler defines it as a literary critical school that studies the representation of nature in literature (227). It also examines the link between gender, sexuality, and nature in literature. The ecofeminist critics signal out serious universal ecological catastrophes that threaten the life of our planet (Legler 227). Ecofeminist theory aims at creating a world where humans and nature are viewed as contributors in the same dialogue (229). Unlike the portrayal of women in the masculine discourse as “object[s] of study”, ecofeminist critics perceive them as “active subject[s]” (Legler 229).

In a similar vein, Gaya hypothesis assumes that, and in contrast to the masculine claims, earth is a female entity that ensures the suitability of “air, oceans, and soil” for life, and significantly, it has the ability to regulate its “climate” (Lovelock xiv). The critic and scientist Lynn Margulis clarifies that if earth’s surface was overheated by the sun, it can cool itself down (147). It is a powerful goddess that saves humanity and guarantees a fit life on earth (Spretnak as qtd. in Merchant 3).

This article tackles women’s responsibility in saving their planet from multiple perspectives such as the ecological and the domestic. It first pinpoints the significance of the ecofeminist and Gaian term “ethic of care” that mirrors the importance of the interspecies cooperation that is seen against the masculine domination and exploitation. It then analyzes women’s roles as carers, givers, and food sharers, which allow them to bond with earth and to have a sense of kinship

with human and non-human beings. It also exemplifies how women hold the burden of saving the earth by cleaning houses on the microcosm level and the environment on the macrocosm level. It explores the ecofeminist symbols of the bucket and the broom and their significance to the protagonists of the selected novels. Additionally, it investigates the motifs of planting and gardening as empowering tools for women and younger generations. Most importantly, this paper erases the boundaries between human and animals and shows that the two are participants in the Gaian community. In fact, the selected novels zoom out of the arbitrary individual and zoom in onto the whole community as a totality of living creatures. By presenting all creatures as equal in rights and importance, the novels obliterate androcentric and anthropocentric hierarchies and divisions. Thus, the scope of this research is mainly concerned with the rights of women and nature as active agents by attempting to address the following question: How women mend males' violent actions to ensure a harmonious and a habitable planet?

Overview of the Selected Novels in Relation to Ecofeminism and Gaia

Lessing lived most her life in South Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and came back to London in 1949. The selected novels echo themes that are central to ecofeminist and Gaian thoughts. Her novels connect different aspects together since they originally reflect an intersection between two fields of study namely ecology and feminism. Her novels force the readers to pause and contemplate the mundanity of life and the havoc caused by humans' actions. In an interview with Stephen Gray (1986) she stated that she lived with farmers in Africa "on the veld" (332). Thus, nature, as to be shown in the selected novels, permeates her writing and her consciousness as well. She mentioned that all her writings are based on her memories of the beautiful nature of Africa (335).

Prior to that, she recounts in an interview with Sedge Thomson that she had been connected with nature since she was two years old at her birthplace Persia. She is saddened to know that Persia's beautiful landscapes are now "battered flat by war" (189). She encountered several injustices in Africa as stated in her interview with Gray when she mentioned that she witnessed African farmers getting paid by being allowed a share of water instead of money (330). This has made her sensitive to inequalities in general whether related to social or environmental causes. She also states that after seeing the earth from space as a "beautifully coloured bubble floating in space," she gained a "new sensibility" (338). Her description corresponds to James Lovelock's description of earth as he looked at it from above while working for Nasa. This new perception of our planet triggered in him a curiosity of "What is life" (2) which eventually led him to develop Gaia hypothesis.

Lessing in the selected novels outlines a path to a hopeful future (Vakoch xii). Although her novels tackle major catastrophes, which allow the readers to witness civilizations' collapse, it still provides an alternative spiritual route that will be the way to redemption. The novels work on developing the readers' active imagination to assist them envision an ecological friendly and egalitarian society;

this concurs with ecofeminist and Gaian tendencies (Andreu 326). Lessing's chief aim is to convey "the importance of being in harmony with the natural world and other human beings", and in this way she "subverts our definitions of reality" and most importantly patriarchy (329). Her novels function to "transform the world" (332). She shows the reader an extra-dimension of reality that is to be revealed through a new sensibility and an awareness of nature and its forces.

a. ***The Golden Notebook (1962)***

This novel narrates the story of Anna Wulf and her friend Molly. The two live in an apartment in London along with their children, the former's daughter Janet and the latter's son Tommy. The title of the novel within the novel is *Free Women*, which forms the frame of the main narrative. Anna keeps her diary recorded in four different notebooks that are colour coded. She categorizes and organizes her ideas and events in them as if she had "divided herself into four" (41). She feels emotionally and professionally blocked and is incapable of showing feelings. The first notebook we encounter is the black one, in which Anna narrates her past in Rhodesia. In this notebook, Anna lives in a colony in Africa with the British pilot Paul and Willy her ex-husband and father of her daughter. She also spends her time with locals such as Maryrose and the Boothbys who are the owners of the Mashopi hotel where they stayed. Then, Anna moves to write about her communist past and her disappointment by the communist cause, which forms the entries of her red notebook. In this notebook there is another novel within a novel which is the story of Anna and Molly's replicas namely the blocked writer Ella and her friend Julia. The two fictive characters are also single mothers, however, Ella who is Anna's replica has a son and Julia has a daughter. Next, Anna begins the blue notebook that is mostly around her therapy sessions and later on news of the world. In this notebook she moves from the personal to the collective consciousness. In the second part of the blue notebook, she pastes scraps of newspapers in her diary. Finally, the yellow notebook is Anna's account of madness. Within this notebook, she displays a long episode of madness along with the mental state of her new roommate and later on lover Saul Green whose surname refers to green activism.

Throughout the novel, Anna Wulf is trying to understand the chaos that surrounds her life. She does not see these notebooks as diaries, she states, "They aren't diaries." "Whatever they are." "Chaos, that's the point." (29). Lessing in her interview with Gray mentions the same feeling of chaos and hopelessness while writing *The Golden Notebook*; she states, "I was feeling despair ... I couldn't find a way of saying what I then knew about life" (336). This quote justifies her theme of the blocked writer who cannot find words to render her emotional and mental state. Anna in the quote admits that she was recording her internal sensation of chaos and the external chaos that was happening in the world.

b. ***The Four-Gated City (1969)***

This novel is the final volume of the series *Children of Violence* that narrates the story of Martha Quest from childhood in Rhodesia in Africa to middle-age in London. At the beginning of this novel, Martha after coming back from Africa, is presented as a lost soul aimlessly wandering around the streets of London. Martha suffers from partial amnesia where she reminds herself to remember her memories, she states “I must remember, I must, I must” (40). The ecofeminist critic Susan Griffin states that women’s memories are “locked in silence” (111). They must fight for it and claim it as their own; Martha does the same for she works on her mind with her mind to attain her memories back. She, due to rejecting job offers, shares an apartment with her friend Jack. He is mainly indulged in physical and sexual pleasures; she mentions that Jack was mad “about women” (49). She stays with Jack for a while and then accepts to work as a secretary for the writer Mark Coldridge. Martha becomes the housewife of the house taking care of Mark, his mentally ill wife Lynda, his son Francis and his nephew Paul. Martha describes Coldridge’s house as a “totality” which recalls to mind Lovelock’s description of Gaia (94). Each room had its own identity, like Val Plumwood description of “the myriad forms of nature” which uniqueness and purposes must be “acknowledged and respected” (65). Martha and Mark co-authored a novel *A City in the Desert*, which theme is the recurrent pattern of chaos and havoc caused by men. Towards the end of the novel, Martha and Coldridge’s wife, Lynda, develop prophetic powers and have visions about a catastrophe in the distant future about which they warned everyone. At the end of the novel, Mark Coldridge’s son, Francis, describes the post-disaster world where he lived. He states, “we use candles made from sheep’s fat for lightning, and soap made of fat and sand”; he adds that people “wear sheepskins or garments ... their food is what stone-age men ate” (933). He also mentions that people at that time were in a state of “terror” (935).

c. The Memoirs of a Survivor (1974)

This novel narrates the story of the anonymous middle-aged narrator who lives and tries to survive in a dystopian world. Her world had witnessed an unknown catastrophe that was not mentioned but only referred to by “It”. The world of the narrator is full of barbarian children who formed cannibal mobs migrating from one place to another and rejecting to settle. Suddenly, she found someone at her doorstep with a twelve-year-old child called Emily. The girl was accompanied by a strange animal called Hugo who is half cat and half dog and was often described to have human features (133). On that same day, the narrator had a different world opened in front of her that she can access while meditating on the patterns of the natural scenery on her living room’s wallpaper. This world behind the wall consists of two types of rooms the personal and the impersonal. The former has a suffocating atmosphere while the latter has a relevant freedom. The rooms need attentive work to be “habitable” (14). In addition, she was able to see the

unknown past of Emily in the personal rooms. Emily was sexually objectified by her father. Her mother was a cold and cynical woman towards her daughter or what Plumwood calls an associate to patriarchy. She describes Emily as an “old-fashioned” girl who was forced to be in such mold. The girl was not being herself as if she wants to be loveable and likable all the time, hence, she was greatly obedient to the narrator. Emily met her boyfriend Gerald on the pavement, and they gathered a group of children into a clan which Gerald tried to civilize but failed. Moreover, the rooms in the world behind the wall were in mess and needed amendments that the narrator embarked on providing. These impersonal rooms were in total chaos; however, she had the freedom to choose whether to clean them or not. On the contrary, the personal rooms are compared to a prison where she is helpless and is forced to watch Emily’s sad child memories.

Review of Literature

Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook* (1962), *The Four-Gated City* (1969) and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974) are often considered as one of the pillars of radical feminist movements that document and highlight women’s rights and lives. Other critics analyzed the texts from the approach of psychological realism. Mostly, a large number of scholars viewed her work as part and parcel of the science-fiction genre. However, this research is only limited to the analysis of the selected novels from an ecofeminist and a Gaian lens.

***The Golden Notebook* (1962):**

In her article titled “Going on Fifty: Doris Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook*” (2012) Roberta Rubenstein contends that this novel is mainly viewed from a feminist perspective. Rubenstein states that the novel is essentially about “lives [of] women” and adds that it discusses a variety of female related topics such as “female friendship, motherhood, and single parenting” (24). From her perspective, Anna is a female protagonist who recorded her life and inner feelings in an “imaginative verbal form” (24), which she compares to today’s recording of private aspects of people’s lives on social media platforms. Rubenstein views Anna’s four notebooks as channels of expression, yet, they fail to record objective reality as if her words do not suffice to render reality as it is. She believes that Anna is emotionally and artistically paralyzed due to the cyclic repetition of “old patriarchal arrangement of male privilege” (25). She argues that Anna is particularly attracted to unsuitable married men which increases the complexity of rupturing these recurrent patriarchal patterns. She notices that Anna unconsciously collaborates to endorse the male power. Therefore, Rubenstein praises the ability of Lessing to tackle the controversial issue of gender roles in a brilliant manner. She believes Lessing was successful in writing about a topic such as the relation between men and women that can never be outdated.

In a similar vein, Tonya Krouse, in her article “Freedom as Effacement in *The Golden Notebook*: Theorizing Pleasure, Subjectivity, and Authority” (2006) states that this novel is one of the “canonical texts of feminism” (40). The main narrative in the novel titled *Free Women*, according to Krouse, shows Lessing’s obsession with women’s freedom. It is noteworthy to mention that Krouse considers *The Golden Notebook* as a signal of the shift between modernism and post-modernism and hence justifies the multileveled complex structure of the novel. Krouse adds that this text mainly subverts the “authoritarian repressive phallogocentric discourse” (42).

***The Four-Gated City* (1969):**

In the article titled “Martha Hesse of *The Four-Gated City*: A Bildungsroman Already behind Her” (1978), the researcher Susan A. Gohlman focuses on the structure and content of the bildungsroman genre as reflected in previous volumes of *The Children of Violence* in relation to the fifth and final volume *The Four-Gated City*. This article expansively investigated this novel as part of the bildungsroman genre which shows Martha’s moral and psychological growth from childhood not into maturity but into insanity. She considers Martha Quest as the heroine of a long series of bildungsroman novels which were usually presented by young male heroes and not middle-aged women (95).

On the other hand, Sophia Barnes, in her article “Novel worlds: Tracing the Ripples in Doris Lessing’s *The Four-Gated City*” (2016), perceives *The Four-Gated City* as an integral part of the science-fiction genre. In this article, she investigates the tension between the novel’s “physical boundaries” and its “capacity to conjure worlds” (153). Barnes explores the sci-fi elements in the novel such as futuristic events and telepathy. She purports that telepathy turns the narrative world into one “shared mind” (160). Barnes adds that this novel begins as a typical novel then “elements of the science-fictional are gradually introduced” (156). In fact, she notices in the second half of the novel the events started to take place in the years between 1995 and 2000 which is thirty years after the novel was first published. All the events thereafter are related to an “imagined future” (155).

***The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974):**

The researcher Emily De Rango in her article “Clothing in Doris Lessing’s *The Memoirs of a Survivor*” (2013) made an interesting connection between clothes and Emily Cartwright’s self-image from a feminist perspective. She suggests that Emily’s outfits reflect a decaying culture. In addition to this she also believes that Emily uses clothes as method or a tool of “self-discovery” (259). Clothes, according to De Rango, is a means for Emily to explore and express herself. She views Emily’s collection of trash items to design a dress as an act of recreation of the already collapsed civilization. She believes that this action also shows the same recurrent “patterns” of the female role in history (259).

On the other hand, Sheila C. Conboy in her article “The Limits of Transcendental Experience in Doris Lessing’s *The Memoirs of a Survivor*” (1990) relates Lessing’s *The Memoirs of a Survivor* to the genre of psychological realism. She perceives the two worlds of the narrator as dichotomous. She explains that the world behind the wall disrupts “[the narrator’s] ordinary way of looking at life” (69). Conboy believes that the narrator is a delusional character who cannot differentiate between her imagination and her real life (69). The narrator, according to Conboy, wants to find a safe way to legitimize her “exploration in the inner world” (69). She compares the imageries, such as being in an eggshell, which Lessing used to describe her experience in the inner world in *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, to the images used by the psychologist R.D Laing in describing entering a transcendental experience. Thus, Conboy assumes that the narrator is reliving her own memories through Emily’s (71).

Methodology

a) Ecofeminism: Gender Inequality and Ecological Concerns

This paper aims at mapping the ecofeminist, and subsequently Gaian tendencies and in particular women’s vibrant roles in maintaining a fit habitat in Doris Lessing’s selected novels, *The Golden Notebook* (1962), *The Four-Gated City* (1969) and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974). The term ecofeminism was first coined by Françoise D’Eaubonne in 1974. In *Feminism or Death* (1974), she mentions that the future of humanity is jeopardized under men’s rule. She raises awareness to pressing ecological threats such as “worldwide population explosion, worldwide pollution, urban crowding and violence” (12). Plumwood defines it as a “common, integrated framework for the critique of both human domination and the domination of nature” (9 1993). It was initiated by women as a movement to protect the natural habitat of humans and animals (Murphy 1). Later, it became connected with the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature (1). It includes theoretical and activist aspects, and it investigates and revises the global and mutual oppression of women and nature at the hands of patriarchy (Murphy 1; Ahmed 997).

Legler mentions that the main tenets of ecofeminism are the effacement and extinguishment of the distinctions between the inner space of the psyche and outer space of the physical nature (230). In addition, the ecofeminist thought blurs the demarcation between self and other and human and non-human (230). In this view, the relationship between humans and the natural world is one of “friendship and care” based on “loving perception” (233). Ecofeminists are “interpreters” of nature; they have the ability to understand its “distress and joy” (351). They can transfer nature’s needs to those who are deaf and blind due to being indulged in themselves within the human-centered framework (351).

Likewise, ecofeminism is considered as an interdisciplinary field as it relates environmental studies to humanities. It links human to the environment, gender to

species, and the personal to the political (xvii). According to Greta Gaard, ecofeminism is not merely a theory, but it is a call for action (xviii). Similar to Lessing's patriarchal and environmental concerns, ecofeminist critics echo their aims at achieving environmental sustainability and gender equality. In a similar note, Gaia prevails as a scientific, philosophical, and spiritual answer to ecofeminist and ecological concerns.

b) Gaia as a Safeguard against Dystopia

Gaia in Greek mythology is the goddess of earth, life, and death (Primavesi 125). This hypothesis was first formulated by the scientist Lovelock in the nineteen sixties. Lovelock's friend and neighbour, the novelist William Golding, suggested the name Gaia to connote that earth is a living mega-organism (10). This hypothesis postulates that Gaia is the "totality" of the entire ecological system (Primavesi 124). Lovelock, in *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (1979), explains that humans are partners of Gaia and should strive to keep it "a fit and comfortable habitat for life" (1). It represents the "sacred bond" between humans and earth (Primavesi 126). It is compatible with ecofeminist tendencies as both are concerned with the future of the planet earth. Moreover, it studies the "continuous interactions between life and the environment" (Primavesi 3). It also renders the consequences such as climate change, atmospheric pollution, and loss of biodiversity that resulted due to the drainage of the natural resources and humans' recklessness (3). In the Gaian perspective, life is a gift and a blessing that must be appreciated and contemplated.

Gaian hypothesis is infused with spirituality as it interprets life from logical and mystical perspectives (130). The world in this view is construed via rational and intuitive faculties. Lovelock asserts that same concept and explains that science needs poetical insight and emotions to fully conduct its investigation on life (xiii). He confirms that Gaia hypothesis is "part of science with a moral dimension" (xi). Gaia can save the world from catastrophic disasters, and it also can defy patriarchal logic in which women are represented as the other, and men are perceived as godlike (as qtd. in Merchant 3). This metaphor of women as Gaia, is empowering and not demeaning as portrayed in the masculine discourse.

Merchant maintains that Gaia hypothesis and ecofeminist theory are interrelated approaches that initiate a new mode of understanding the earth which fuses spiritual and scientific aspects (4). Similar to ecofeminist tendencies, Gaia also refuses to perceive nature as a "primitive force to be subdued and conquered" (Lovelock 11). On the contrary, Lovelock suggests that nature "arouses [in humans] ... pleasurable feelings" (134).

This pleasure in sensing nature is instigated by the ethic of care, which combats the ruling patriarchal oppression of women and nature. The Gaian and ecofeminist ethic of care is used as a tool to overcome the impasse of patriarchy that entraps women in the roles of carers and nurturers. Anna Bedford postulates that the ethic of care should not be exclusively attributed to

women per se but to all humanity (201). This ethic ensures the survival of humanity as it bonds humans to non-humans at a meta-level.

c) **Ecofeminist and Gaian definitions of the ethic of care**

Ecofeminism and Gaia hypothesis advocate the ethic of care, which is defined by Patrick Murphy as a mindset that counterbalances the “subjugation, domination, and exploitation” by patriarchy (197). Similarly, Karen Warren defines it as an ethic that is free of the bias of men about women and nature (qtd. in Merchant 7). Merchant argues that this ethic is essential in viewing women and nature/animals as equal to men personally and politically (8). She explains that obtaining this ethic allows humans to consider nature as “personal and intimate” to them as their loved ones (8). This view requires humans to drop their ego and attempt to fulfill their needs along with nature’s needs. Thus, from this perspective the “non-human nature [is] an autonomous actor” (Merchant 56). In a similar note, Lovelock emphasizes the importance of loving Gaia as a family member (viii). He recounts his father’s instinctual feeling of kinship with all living things, which he passed on to him (133). Similarly, the ecofeminist critic Rosemary Radford Ruether stresses this kinship between the human entity and the whole cosmos that is evidenced by earth science and astrophysics (48). Likewise, Carolyn Merchant proposes that this ethic of partnership will ensure a balanced relationship between human and non-human beings.

The novels’ protagonists demonstrate that this feeling of care about and compassion to nature open a new doorway to sensing the emotions of the other whether human or non-human, which leads to empowerment and harmony. Ariel Salleh explicates that little girls are taught at an early stage to take care of others, “mend hurt feelings”, and “massage egos” (81). For instance, in *The Golden Notebook* (1962), Anna and her best friend Molly feel the pain of other characters that is overlooked by their male counterparts. Molly’s son Tommy was depressed due to the political turbulence in his country; his mother empathizes with him, whereas his father only sees him as a useless son that spends his time “brooding” (22). Likewise, Anna can sense her boyfriend Saul Green’s anxiety through the walls, “it was as if a stranger, afflicted with symptoms I had never experienced, had taken of my body” (724). Similarly, Martha in *The Four-Gated City* (1969), defines love and compassion to her friend Jack, “love ... a pulse of little feeling, like an animal impulse towards another, a warmth” (107). This quote describes best the ecofeminist and Gaian term ethic of care, for it shows that this feeling is an instinctual sensation that does not differentiate human from animals; it is an impulse that all creatures have by default. Likewise, through this ethic of care, the anonymous narrator in *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974) was able to empathize with Emily’s memories and her traumatizing childhood. She exemplifies, “[Emily’s] condition was as close to me as my own memories” (60).

Analysis

I. An interactive ethic of care as conveyed in the selected novels

In a similar vein, the novels emphasize the significance of the human-nature codependence. The novels connect people to animals and the personal to the political. They skillfully and consciously explicate the interconnected relationship between systems of domination such as sexism and speciesism. The protagonists combine ecology and feminism in a spiritual frame that leads to salvation and ends the apocalypse.

In *The Golden Notebook* (1962), Anna has a special bond with nature; she spends countless hours wandering through the grasses “fingering them, smelling them, and letting the sun fall on her face” (273). This tactile and olfactory imagery allows the reader to bond with nature too. In fact, Anna deploys this imagery twice, once by establishing a connection between herself and nature, and second by stimulating the readers’ imagination to link them with the natural world. Nature permeates Anna’s unconsciousness as well; she dreams of the “red earth” of Africa and its nature (332). Her dream also includes the image of a crocodile in a casket whose tears transform to diamonds. Anna describes the dream as follows:

At last I looked and I saw that there was something in the box. It was a small green crocodile with a winking sardonic snout. I thought it was the image of a crocodile, made of jade, or emeralds, then I saw it was alive, for large frozen tears rolled down its cheeks and turned into diamonds. (Lessing, 1962, 332)

This scene conveys Anna’s resentment against the mining of diamonds in Africa and the overall exploitation of its nature. Not only that but also Anna’s character identifies with the crocodile in the casket “there was a wry look on my face which I recognized as the grin on the snout of that ... little green crocodile” (333). Thus, as shown in this scene both Anna - the female protagonist - and the crocodile are exploited by patriarchal systems of domination. Both are feeling pain and crying but they must comply with the system. Plumwood attributes men’s brutality and exploitation to their separation from nature and their ethical nihilism; they have no compassion with neither women nor nature as both are alienated (68).

Later, in 2008, Stacy Alaimo coined the term trans-corporeality based on that ecofeminist concept of care. In “States of Suspension: Trans-corporeality at Sea” (2012), she interprets the interdependence between species. She indicates that human bodies are interconnected, and this interconnectedness can be extended to non-human bodies as well. According to her, the water and the vast oceans of earth are closer to us than we think; being in our blood and in the oxygen, we breathe, water forms a sense of kinship with us (477). Similarly, this sense of kinship with non-human

organisms is stressed in the novels. For instance, in *The Four-Gated City* (1969), the distinction between Martha and other non-human beings is blurred:

On the white, near the window, the black cat sat in the sunlight, washing its face. On the opposite corner, a black fly cleaned its head with its arms. Cat and fly used the same movements ... Martha reached out for a brush, sat up, brushed her hair ... Fly, cat, woman, their images were shaped in no-light. (Lessing, 1969, 155)

In this quote the cat, fly, and Martha are equated through the same sensory movement of grooming. In a similar note, Legler demonstrates that the patriarchal system of domination attempts to imprison women in nature, which led ecofeminist critics to devise “emancipatory strategies” to free them from this imprisonment (230). The most effective strategy of which is the blurring of the distinction between the inner psychological state and the outer geographical landscape (230). Likewise, Maria Mies highlights the importance of having a “benevolent and reciprocal” relationship with nature (96). Plumwood concurs that human beings ought to be aware of nature’s needs and respect it to maintain this relationship (346). She expounds that communicating with nature is an essential step towards eradicating “centric world view(s)” such as androcentrism and anthropocentrism (347). Similarly, Primavesi indicates that from a Gaian point of view all forms of living beings depend on one another and exchange the gift of life (6).

According to Gaian critics, givenness is a characteristic that is imprinted in all creatures alike (128); yet, it is suppressed due to patriarchal domination. From a Gaian perspective, the ethic of care is attributed to environmental and social justice, for it promotes equality among all living beings. All creatures are deserving of love and care; in fact, if a person is not attentive to her well-being, she will automatically discard the well-being of other creatures (Gaard 2017; June 2020).

The Golden Notebook (1962) counters dualistic views that attribute care solely to women. Instead, the novel presents some male and female characters that care about other creatures and treat them accordingly. In the black notebook, Ted, the ex-English officer whom Anna met in Africa, is portrayed as a selfless person who rescues butterflies that in return have “affectionate respect for him” (102). In this scene, the butterflies have autonomy because they can feel and show respect towards humans. In another incident in the same novel, during his stay in Nigeria, Emma’s boyfriend, Paul, used to put “ointment on the wounds of an old animal that hasn’t the vitality anymore to heal itself” (295). As shown in these two scenes, male characters go beyond the set of characteristics assigned to each gender. This same notion is echoed in *The Four-Gated City* (1969) by Martha:

Martha looked up back at the sky, shutting out the street, and walked fast. The sky, oh the sky! and the trees in the square, whose branches moving in gentle air sent her messages of such joy, such peace, till she cried, Oh trees, I love you, and sky I love you! and the cloud up there, so absurd, so sweet, so softly, whitely, deliciously lolloping up there in blue air, she wished to take it in her arms and kiss it. Oh Lord! she prayed, Let me keep this, let me not lose it, oh, how could I have borne it all these years, all this life, being dead and asleep and not seeing, seeing nothing; for now everything was so much there, present, existing in an effulgence of delight, offering themselves to her, till she felt they were extensions of her and she of them, or at least, their joy and hers sang together, so that she felt they might almost cry out Martha! (Lessing, 1969, 742)

Martha's euphoric identification with nature exemplifies her awareness of its beauty. This scene is reflected in Lovelock's indication that humans and animals share a set of instincts that allow them to recognize each other (3); he explains that the Gaian hypothesis traces the convergence of human, flora, and fauna entities (16). Lovelock's (2000) conveys the kinship between human and animals, highlighting the importance of loving our habitat earth and all its creatures (viii). Likewise and in the same context, Ruether epitomizes this sense of kinship by referring to her personal experience "my body, stretching in the sun, notices a tiny flower pushing up through the soil to greet that same sun" (252).

This identification with nature is recurrent in *The Four-Gated City* (1969). Martha describes herself as, "a breathing individuality of faceted green, reflecting sky ... cloud, man, woman and dog" (796). Lovelock postulates that nature arouses pleasure in the human self; in fact, he perceives that it is instinctual to be good to Gaia and going against this instinct will give us a feeling of emptiness and a loss of purpose in life (134). Moreover, this bond redefines the boundaries between the self and other (June 18). In this connection, the human being is no longer distanced from the environment in which she lives. As the ecofeminist critic Pamela B. June demonstrates people are "in constant exchange with the natural and nonhuman world" (18).

The same ethic of care is traced in *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974) and specifically in the protagonists' relationship with their pet Hugo. Ruether argues that discarding the importance of the pet-human relationship must be rejected by the urban and civilized societies (219). She opines that it is the only space where animals' personhood is recognized. Hugo in this novel is depicted as half human and half animal. The anonymous narrator identifies with Hugo as she narrates,

Now I was thankful Hugo was there. He was not a difficult animal (I nearly said person!) to share a home with. He did not seem to sleep much: he kept watch. I believe this was how he saw his function: he was

to look after her [Emily] ... he preferred the remains from our plates and showed that he did (Lessing, 1974, 66)

This scene demonstrates the effacement of boundaries between humans and animals. Likewise, June indicates that literature improves and increases compassion, and she specifies that narrating animal's experience is the onset of raising human's awareness to animals' rights (52). This is mirrored in the way the anonymous narrator speaks about Hugo, "I was always finding myself staring at him, trying to come to terms with him and understand the right he assumed to be there in my life" (79). She evidently extends her care for Emily to Hugo as well, who she perceives as equal to her in importance as to Emily.

This is depicted in contrast to the violent patriarchal attitudes displayed against animals in the scene of shooting pigeons in *The Golden Notebook* (1962). In this scene, Anna portrays a massacre where pigeons are described as "corpses" covered in blood. The pigeon through its gaze condemns its violators. It not only presents compassion towards these creatures but also directs a condemnation to the powerful male figure whose love of violence is described as "disgusting" (556). On the contrary, the caring relationship between Hugo, the narrator, and Emily materializes Lovelock's definition of the ethic of care through which he considers humans as "a species within diverse environments" that ought to "evolve towards a ... nonviolent way of life" (23). He insists on maintaining respect between human and non-human beings (22). Similarly, Mies contends that our species is in a "living relationship" with other species; one which is based on mutual respect and care (121).

The same views are mirrored in *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974), when the narrator admits that "our emotional life is shared with the animals" (99). She also indicates that animals' "perceptions and understanding have been so far in advance of anything we have been able to accept, because of our vanity" (101). The novel strongly rebukes human's arrogance and bluntly demonstrates that human and other creatures are equal.

Likewise, Ruether perceives animals as individual persons whose rights must be included within civil rights (218). Gaard further explains that animals' rights are materialized since they have a nervous system and humans' five senses (29). Ecofeminist critics clarify that animals are able to reason and to feel various emotions such as pain, love, anger, grief, loneliness, and jealousy (Gaard 29; Ruether 222). In many incidents in *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974), Hugo displayed similar emotions like in the scene where he expresses jealousy towards Emily's pavement friends. The narrator elucidates, "he wished to be her only friend and love" (66).

The care provided by the narrator and Emily sharply contrasts the savage behavior exhibited by the pavement children. These children are cannibals who looked at Hugo as food rather than a living soul. They at first

enticed Emily to get Hugo out of the house who was “standing close against [her] legs, fearful for himself” (47). Emily pledges not to let anything bad happen to him as long as she lives. This is mirrored in Gaard’s words when she reveals that animals feel the pain and do have a consciousness of their own (36). The anonymous narrator here connects Emily to Hugo’s body “she could not leave him without harm to herself” (97). This also clarifies the interconnectedness between human and animals from the ecofeminist and Gaian perspectives as explained by Lovelock who unites human and animals in their “capacity of movement, sensory behaviour, and ... unpredictable response” (17).

Not only that but also ecofeminist critics stress the intersection of “gender, race ... species” rights (Gaard 4). They expose the intricate web of oppression across various categories that has a direct effect on women and nature. This network of oppression is mirrored through the racist attitudes Martha’s mother displays in *The Four-Gated City* (1969). Mrs. Quest at first was presented as a ruthless character who often calls slaves as “dirty black” people (376). She has been trained by the patriarchal society to suppress her compassion to the other, and as a result she was blinded by the mechanistic view of life that only works in opposition such as man versus woman, human versus nature, and black versus white. In this view, black, women, and animals are considered peripheral others whose existences are insignificant in comparison to the centric perceiver.

In a similar note, the ecofeminist critic Gwen Hunnicutt explains that the ill-treatment of the other is attributed to its association with animality. Similarly, June indicates that people of colour are denigrated because they are compared to “farm animals or the land itself” (55). Ascribing animality to human others, justifies violence, abuse, and racist attitudes. Mrs. Quest witnessed a life changing experience when she allowed herself to have the ethic of care. She metamorphosed once she started to be compassionate towards her slave child, who she considered later as one of her grandchildren. She is portrayed as a character who is struggling to fight long held patriarchal and cultural values that are deeply entrenched in her psyche. She failed to strike the balance that Martha succeeded to achieve, which requires depending on both rational and intuitive/emotional faculties. In her attempt to redeem herself via therapy, Mrs. Quest opens a new entrance of empathy and “out of her flooded years and years and years of resentment” (422).

The same thing is echoed by Lovelock who sees beauty in all creatures even predators (135). The ethic of care projects the beauty in Mrs. Quest’s slave and in Anna’s tiger who she sees as “a beautiful glossy animal” (790). Anna, in *The Golden Notebook* (1962), was determined to write a play about herself, Saul, and the tiger. The protagonists of this play mirror the equality of this trio including men, women, and animals. Similarly, Ruether clarifies that living beings ought to abolish the dualistic negation of the other, whether it be

woman, animal, or insignificant other for the purpose of empowering the centric perceiver (256). She elaborates the significance of being in harmony with other creatures while being a one community (256).

Finally, the critic Ratna Raman indicates that women can explore new worlds via their “connectivity, care, and nurture” (245). This is exemplified in the last scene of *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974) when Emily and Hugo led all the characters in the novel to the way “out of this collapsed little world into another order of world altogether” (261). This world order is utopian in nature and allows all characters to be transmuted into their best selves.

II. The Role of the Protagonists in Saving Earth

In her book *Doris Lessing: Sufi Equilibrium and the Form of the Novel* (1994), Shadia S. Fahim demonstrates that the protagonists of *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974) undergo a Sufi journey that is characterized by a descent and an ascent of their personas in a spiritual experience, which can only be achieved by striking a balance between the faculties of reason, intuition, and psychological knowledge (51). However, this research attempts to shed light on the protagonists’ roles in cleaning the mess of their planet that is mainly caused by the patriarchal mindset.

a) Imageries of cleaning: the ecofeminist and Gaian symbols of the broom and bucket

Merchant explains that women are able to ensure the rights of men, women, and nature and introduce a fit habitat for living. She indicates, “we can take our brooms and sweep the earth ... we can clean up the atmosphere with our brooms” (23). The ecofeminist symbols of the broom and the bucket represent women’s efforts to restore life post several patriarchal massacres. The brilliant depiction of the protagonists’ roles in the novels and the utilization of those symbols reveal the female vibrant participation in balancing life.

In *The Golden Notebook* (1962), Anna’s replica Ella is portrayed as a typical housewife who embarks on cleaning and tidying her house. She sits with her son in a “big ugly dirty flat which she ... has to clean and paint” (573). Similarly, in *The Four-Gated City* (1969) Martha’s main role as the Coldridge’s housekeeper is to clean their house. She spends most days in cleaning and arranging the basement (170). She exclaims the fact that this house had always been renovated by “amiably incompetent men” (178) who are clueless in comparison to her who is the “right kind of woman in the house” (186). She would receive comments from Mark Coldridge such as the curtains need cleaning. Nonetheless, Martha feels that her role as housekeeper is not compulsory. In several incidents, she admits to herself that taking care of the house is not her responsibility and never was (156). She allows chaos to happen like in Mark’s study room which her mother voluntarily “cleaned every inch of” (483).

In fact, Mrs. Quest, Martha's mother, neurotically cleaned the Coldridge's house in her short visit to her daughter as described in the following scene:

Mrs. Quest examined the whole house and concluded that it was shockingly badly run ... She worked from seven in the morning, for she was waking early, she cleaned and washed and scrubbed ... She worked until after lunch when she slept all afternoon. (Lessing, 1969, 484)

Unlike her mother, Martha willfully cleans the house whenever she feels suitable. She once notices that "the ascending stairs ... and the carpet needed renewing ... needed to be scrapped off" but she did not do it (519). Martha's nagging need for cleaning and renovation is attributed to her perception of the house as a "mass of fragments" (520). However, the most chaos existed in the house's basement that was its heart, and the birthplace of all the visions that she and Lynda shared. This place is confusing to Martha's mechanized and dogmatic mother who had an urge to clean it (414). In some incidents, when Martha is overwhelmed by a similar sensation of chaos in her mind, she mimics her mother and reacts to this by jumping up "as if galvanized by conscience or command into some kind of frenzied but absurd activity, such as *sweeping the floor*" (915).

These same imageries of neurotic cleaning are deployed in *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974). The narrator describes some rooms in the world beyond as dirty and whose air is stale (21). She clarifies that the inhabitant of these rooms is a female presence who cannot possibly stand living in such condition. The narrator portrays the impersonal rooms of the world beyond as a total mess. She points out that all items "have to be replaced or mended or cleaned, for nothing was whole or fresh" (33). She further elaborates that these rooms looked "as if savages had been in it" (52). This mess and disorder made her sick and afraid. So, the narrator decides to collaborate with other natural elements to clean this room which had remnants of a bloody massacre such as "feather, blood, bits of offal" (52). She narrates,

I began cleaning it. I laboured, used many buckets of hot water, scrubbed, mended. I opened tall windows to an eighteenth-century garden where plants grew in patterns of squares among low hedges. Sun and wind were invited into that room and cleaned it ... Then it was done. The old sofas and chairs stood there repaired and clean. (Lessing, 1974, 52)

The collaboration with nature in cleaning the room mirrors the significance of the cooperation with the environment to maintain a fit and a sustainable planet. The narrator resumes other episodes of cleaning, "I scrubbed down the ceiling and walls with sugar soap, with hot water, with detergents ... It was like standing inside a cleaned-out eggshell" (82). Yet, like Martha the narrator emphasizes the fact that she did so out of her free-will; she stresses "one could refuse to clean that room, clear the patch of earth" (53).

This quote shows that women are no longer forced to clean up after men's mess.

While this was happening in the world behind the wall, Emily in the real outer world is sweeping away "dead leaves" (191). This stands in contrast to the actions of Emily's father who is a symbol of toxic masculinity; he feels entitled to drop his cigarette's ash on the carpet without paying attention to the mess he is leaving behind (85). In fact, women, as represented in the novels, do these acts as a gesture to save the earth and make it a habitable planet.

Primavesi explains that houses were usually used as a symbol of the cosmos. Merchant as well often describes earth as a home that is shared with others (56). The same symbol is used in the novels to show the effect of the patriarchal actions on the environment and the role of women in restoring our planet. We see Anna describing London's houses as "white dirtied buildings" whose occupants including herself are screaming silently without anyone hearing (819).

Likewise, in several incidents, Martha compares earth to houses. She receives a vision of herself at the opening of the novel, in which she was responsible for children that she knows nothing about. The house in her vision was surrounded by trees; yet, she feels that she was trapped in it or "shut inside an atmosphere" (126). This vision was actualized later in the Coldridge's house, which like earth consists of several layers and has the basement at its center. Martha perceives this house differently than other houses because it is a "totality" that has solidity and in which "nothing could crack, fray, fall apart" (184). It is interesting to notice that this description fits Lovelock's description of earth as a totality as well (10).

In the same connection, the selected novels stress the significance of the walls surrounding these houses, which are considered obstacles that women need to overcome. As a matter of fact, the walls represented in the novels are the patriarchal social confinements that entrap women in their roles as mothers, carers, and nurturers.

In *The Golden Notebook* (1962), the imagery of the wall is most evident in the dry well's scene. Anna dreams of being trapped in a well where its water is completely dry, and its walls are all dust (531). In this dream, Anna tells herself that she must find the spring of water. This dream signifies Anna's psychological fear of being "trapped and tamed by [the walls of] domesticity" (162). In *The Four-Gated City* (1969), Martha and Lynda bang on the walls of the basement to free themselves (715). Lynda in the basement "pressed her palms against [the wall] in a desperate urgent way, as if doing this would ... let her step out of the room" (715). In *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974), the narrator succeeds in dissolving these walls that existed between the real world and the world beyond and led herself out of the patriarchal domination.

D'Euabonne explains that women's existence is threatened by the patriarchal menace; thus, earth must be pulled away from "the male today in order to restore it for humanity of tomorrow" (264). Conversely, Merchant sees this role of female restoration of the planet as problematic. She explains that this role will automatically consider women as servants or housekeeping goddesses, which aligns with the masculine set of ideas (5). Most importantly, Plumwood argues that according to the ecofeminist thinking, women "consciously position themselves with nature" (17). Thus, they voluntarily decide to clean their habitat and are not forced to do so by the patriarchal system. In that logic, women need to see themselves as "fully human" and must have autonomy to be able to save their planet (19). Mies indicates that this self-determination of women free them of the patriarchal social grip (119). In addition, this mindset allows them to willfully choose to reverse environmental damage and help clean the planet.

According to Krouse, Lessing's novels "disrupt the hierarchies of patriarchal discursive systems" (42). The protagonists of the three novels subvert the roles of housekeepers to which they were assigned by the masculine system. In fact, all protagonists defy authority in one way or another. For instance, Anna defies patriarchal characters whose role is controlling women whether emotionally or economically. Similarly, and in connection to the subversion of women's societal roles, Martha and Lynda become saviours of the planet by warning people of a catastrophe that they had foreseen in a vision. Martha defies the authority of her therapist Dr. Lamb who was often described as an emotionless devil. Likewise, the narrator challenges the authority of Gerald over Emily, who she sees more worthy of ruling the pavement clans.

Gaard explains that the most significant cause that ecofeminist critics fight for is achieving environmental and social justice. In the same vein, Bedford explicates that discussing the "effects of environmental toxins" is a milestone in the development of the ecofeminist research (197). In this manner, ecofeminism introduces a clean way of living to people in which sustainable attitude and lifestyle pave the way to a better world (Salleh 41).

In several incidents in the novels, the female protagonists are perceived tête-à-tête with their male counterparts. They even collaborate in building new societies. Thus, we see Anna in the black notebook working hand in hand with other male characters in the African Mashopi hotel. Similarly, Martha coauthors a novel with Mark that she sees as a "proof of a change of heart" (364). Martha's 'Edenic vision' remains unrealized in reality; nevertheless, she endeavors to bring it to life on the stranded island, where she eventually settles at the end of the novel. Moreover, Emily attempts to create her own utopia like Martha. She first crosses the narrator's flat, then the world behind the wall; until she finally reaches a utopian new world post her transformation in the final scene of the novel (Park 19).

b) **The communal collaboration to realize a better world**

Ecofeminism and Gaia hypothesis weave a better world to humanity via several means such as cleaning houses (the cosmos) and/or cultivating lands in order to make the earth habitable. Rene Dubos argues that humans' role on earth is compared to the role of a "grand gardener" (qtd. In Lovelock 115). In a similar note, Lovelock shares the same optimistic vision of the future that is conveyed in the novels. He aspires that young generations will take better care of Gaia (142). Thus, the protagonists, in *The Four-Gated City* (1969) and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974), are presented as gardening gurus who pledge to teach planting to younger generations. After the catastrophe that occurred in *The Four-Gated City* (1969), Martha found refuge on an island where survivors brought their own seeds (932). To begin a new civilization, she invited people to attend "courses on gardening" (940). Martha's actions here exemplify an ecofeminist trend that suggests that the only way to survive is to go green.

Similarly, in *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974), Emily takes on a role parallel to Martha's in *The Four-Gated City* (1969). Both characters teach young children how to plant seeds, with Martha doing so on the island and Emily instructing pavement children on planting buildings' rooftops. The narrator appreciates Emily's effort and describes the children's garden as, "a fine garden in every way, planned, prepared, organized, full of good things all for use" (162). Before being a responsible gardener, Emily was described as a gluttonous person who overconsumes food excessively; "her mouth was always in movement, chewing, tasting, absorbed in itself" (67). Emily's new gardening role resists this mindset of overconsumption. Thus, the battle against consumerism conveys the protagonist's active role to maintain a green planet. This aligns with Gaia hypothesis that sees food as a gift and not a product to be consumed (Primavesi 131). Ruether indicates that women were the ones who discovered the "breakthrough to agriculture," which she opines instigated a new stage of earth's history (45). Likewise, Elizabeth Gould Davis highlights that woman in ancient societies accomplished all the hard work including planting, gathering crops, and making meals (41).

By teaching farming, women work in solidarity to ensure the existence of an egalitarian society without the male-female struggle (169). Ecofeminist critics suggest that garden metaphors in literature reinforce the call to save earth (Hall & Kirk 18). In this context, Raman explains that environmental pollution is a result of lack of sustainability and spirituality; it also indicates the damage of the inner psyche of the person committing crimes against nature (229). In a number of interviews, Lessing discussed the role of the novelist who she considers as an "architect of the soul" or an "instrument of change", as materialized in the selected novels (qtd. in Schlueter 52). In *The Golden Notebook* (1962), Ella's father is represented as a spiritual mystic whose passion is planting and who is "absorbed in his garden" (596). His character

sharply contrasts Ella's friend the medical doctor West who she describes as an emotionless practical man whose garden is untidy, for he has "no time for gardens" (229).

Likewise, the carpet scene in *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974), is a significant metaphor that sheds light on the importance of cooperation to revive earth. In this scene the narrator enters one room in the inner world behind the walls and finds people collaborating in revitalizing a lifeless carpet. The narrator describes the scene as follows,

On the floor was spread a carpet, but it was a carpet without its life ... Some people were standing about the room. At first it seemed that they were doing nothing at all; they looked idle and undecided. Then one of them detached a piece of material from the jumble on the trestles, and bent to match it with the carpet- behold, the pattern answered that part of the carpet. This piece was laid exactly on the design, and brought it to life (Lessing, 1974, 97)

According to Kirk and Hall, the carpet is a symbol of earth (9). They suggest that similar symbols such as maps, quilts, and gardens are deployed in ecofeminist imageries to demonstrate "collaborative work that has grown and developed over time" (9). In this scene, those people were not competing against one another but were interacting in "most loving cooperation" (98). This scene shows that living beings are one community, in which they all collaborate in making the carpet alive, and consequently making the earth habitable.

Interacting with nature empowers the protagonists; Anna saves Saul Green by showing him that madness is doorway to a new sensibility. She also saves herself from the patriarchal trap of domesticity (167). Martha and Lynda as well save themselves from the dogmatic patriarchal cage; in addition, they attempt saving their community by their "premonition [of the catastrophe] in the shape of a vision" about which they warned others (913). Likewise, Emily and the narrator also save all the characters in the novel leading them to a utopian world order. Saving people and the planet is a continuous work that the protagonists pledged on realizing in the novels.

Conclusion

This paper evidently highlights women's significant role in repairing the mess of patriarchy by mapping the ecofeminist, and subsequently Gaian tendencies in Doris Lessing's selected novels, *The Golden Notebook* (1962), *The Four-Gated City* (1969) and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974). Ecofeminism perceives the world as one community in which all creatures feel care and compassion towards one another. It studies the oppression network of women, nature, and other interrelated species. It seeks to create an egalitarian society in which humans are equated to animals and to nature. In the same manner, Gaia theory postulates that all species are equal and interdependent.

According to Lovelock, Gaia is what makes earth a habitable planet. In the Gaian view, earth is a mega-organism that ought to be revered for its gifts of food and life.

The novels demonstrate that women are able to abolish long held androcentric and anthropocentric dogmatic hierarchies via the ethic of care. Moreover, they succeed in blurring the boundaries between humans and animals as both are equal participants in the Gaian community. Significantly, the protagonists of the novels consciously and willingly deploy images of cleaning and symbols of the bucket and broom to enhance the quality of life on earth. In addition, they showcase that the motifs of gardening and farming are significant tools of empowerment to save the planet.

Most importantly, women in the three novels strive to save their planet under harsh conditions of gender inequality and environmental threats. In fact, the selected novels disrupt the traditional scheme of the patriarchal male hero who is perceived as the savior of earth and all living beings. They present a new mode of knowledge which deepens the urge of treating earth as a living entity. In fact, they interrupt reckless patriarchal actions that exacerbate the status of women and nature leading to crises.

In conclusion, a number of ecofeminist critics and Gaia theorists assert humanity's capability of existing in harmony with its environmental surrounding. This is contingent on the human race's feelings of care towards other species and other organic beings. In a similar vein, this paper demonstrates that Lessing's chief aims in the selected novels correlate with the objectives of ecofeminism and Gaia theories, which both seek to make earth a suitable and habitable planet for all species. What counts in this respect is the role of human beings on earth towards one another and other species.

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