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Witches and Witchcraft in Margaret Atwood's "Circe/Mud Poems" and Madeline Miller's
Circe

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Ayşe Nur BOZDOĞAN

Margaret Atwood'un "Circe/Mud Poems" ve Madeline Miller'in *Ben*, *Kirke* Eserlerinde
Cadılar ve Büyücülük

Danışman

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SUMMARY

Ecofeminism, which first appeared in the 1970s, makes a connection between patriarchy's exploitation of women and nature, and seeks to eliminate patriarchy's dominance over women and nature. Ecofeminism claims that dualities and the hierarchical system form the basis of male domination. Women are considered in an inferior position in the binary system. Since patriarchy perceives women close to nature in terms of their ability to reproduce, women and nature are considered inferior and therefore oppressed by the patriarchy. Ecofeminism objects to the idea that promotes the dualist way of thinking and degrades women due to their close relationship with nature.

In this thesis, it is aimed to analyze and discuss Margaret Atwood and Madeline Miller's works with an emphasis on their approach towards dualism, women-nature relationships, and Mother-Goddess culture in the ecofeminist framework. In Atwood's "Circe/Mud Poems"(1974), the major concern is to challenge the gender roles and destructive male power on women. From the beginning to the end, Circe advocates for a shift in patriarchal structures that affect women and the environment. In Miller's *Circe* (2019), patriarchal dualisms, hierarchical gender/power relations, and the women-nature relationship are explored via female identity, rape, witchcraft, and patriarchal oppressions. In both works, the stereotypical witch image is subverted by ecofeminist female voice.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Dualism, Witches, Circe, Nature

ÖZET

MARGARET ATWOOD’UN “CIRCE/MUD POEMS” VE MADELINE MILLER’IN *BEN, KIRKE* ESERLERİNDE CADILAR VE BÜYÜCÜLÜK

İlk olarak 1970'lerde ortaya çıkmış olan ekofeminizm, ataerkilliğin kadın ve doğayı sömürmesi arasında bir ilişki kurar ve ataerkilliğin kadın ve doğa üzerindeki egemenliğini ortadan kaldırmayı amaçlar. Ekofeminizm düalitelerin ve hiyerarşik sistemin erkek egemenliğinin temelini oluşturduğunu öne sürer. Kadınlar bu ikili sistemde daha düşük bir konumda görülmektedir. Kadınlar ve doğa, kadınları üreme yetenekleri açısından doğaya yakın gören ataerkillik tarafından aşağı kabul edilmekte ve dolayısıyla ezilmektedir. Bu sebeple, ekofeminizm, düalist düşüncüyü öne çıkaran ve kadınları doğayla yakın ilişkileri nedeniyle aşağılayan düşünceye karşı çıkarlar.

Bu çalışmada Margaret Atwood ve Madeline Miller'ın eserlerinin düalizm, kadın-doğa ilişkileri ve Ana-Tanrıça kültürüne yaklaşımları vurgulanarak ekofeminist çerçevede analiz edilmesi ve tartışılması amaçlanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Atwood'un “Circe/Mud Şiirleri”nde asıl sorun, toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine ve kadınlar üzerindeki yıkıcı erkek gücüne meydan okumak ile ilgilidir. Bu eserde Circe, başından sonuna kadar, kadınları ve çevreyi etkileyen ataerkil yapılarda bir değişimi savunmaktadır. Miller'ın *Ben, Kirke*'sinde (2019) ise ataerkil düaliteler, hiyerarşik cinsiyet/iktidar ilişkileri ve kadın-doğa ilişkisi kadın kimliği, tecavüz, büyücülük ve ataerkil baskılar üzerinden tartışılmaktadır. Her iki eserde de basmakalıp cadı imajı, ekofeminist kadın sesiyle altüst edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ekofeminizm, düalizm, Cadılar, Kirke, Doğa

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INTRODUCTION

Reconstructions of the witches in contemporary literary works have come into view that differ from traditional representations in the myths. Circe, one of the oldest witch figures in history who has a minor role in Homer's *Odyssey* as the terrible and cruel witch, is removed from the periphery and placed in the center in the works of "Circe/Mud Poems" (1974) and *Circe* (2019) by Margaret Atwood and by Madeline Miller. As a victimized witch, Circe, thanks to these contemporary stories, can express herself and make her voice heard. In these works, Circe inspires women and their struggle for existence, while challenging the well-known image of brutal and evil witches. In Atwood's "Circe/Mud Poems" (1974) and Miller's *Circe*, Circe retells her story with Odysseus since she believes that she has no voice in Homer's version. In this context, with a new and different representation of a witch, the poems and the novel encompass the oppressions of women and nature, the value of nature with its link to women in witchcraft and dualism. In these works, the concern is about finding a witch's non-constructed individual identity by challenging the constructed social and gender roles by cherishing the value of nature. Hence, this thesis aims to examine these works in relation to the theory of ecofeminism within the scope of witchcraft. While examining witchcraft, the term is used to refer to both magical powers and a religion with a capital W which is revived from ancient times by some ecofeminists such as Miriam Simos Starhawk, Irene Diamond and Gloria F. Orenstein. The relation between witchcraft and the female protagonist Circe in the selected literary works demonstrates that witchcraft is not only related to magical practices but also it is a way of empowerment for Circe. Furthermore, it is revealed that Circe in both literary works is oppressed by masculine domination. In this regard, it can be put that that Circe creates a way out of the patriarchal oppressions that she faces through her relationship with nature.

To comprehend the works adequately, it is unavoidable to elucidate the aforementioned theory and its connection with witchcraft and women. Therefore, firstly, the background information about Circe, witches and witchcraft in historical context is given, then the theory of ecofeminism and its related concepts are explained in the introductory part of this study.

The origins of Circe can serve as a starting point to get to know her identity. According to Yarnall (1994: 28), Circe (Kirke) in its literal meaning is "falcon or hawk" that "is the feminine form of *Kirkos*". Highlighting Circe's association to a bird, namely hawk, Yarnall (1994) suggests that although it is not known for certain, Circe's name has ornithological significance, as her brother Aietes' name comes from the Greek word *aietos*, which means

“eagle.” Also, her island's name, Aiaia, could be derived from the West Semitic word *ayya*, which means “hawk” (Yarnall, 1994: 28).

There might be some specific reasons behind the connection between the bird and Circe which is related to the Goddess culture. Marija Gimbutas (1974: 322) acknowledges that the birds are of importance since they represented the Mother Goddess in Europe and Asia Minor in the Paleolithic age. Gimbutas (1974: 322) also states that birds were seen as the “[m]ain epiphany of the Goddess as Giver-of-all, including life and death, happiness, and wealth”. What is mentioned here is the divine meanings given to the birds in the prehistoric ages. The image of the Goddess is that of a bird, and she is the creator of all things and gives life to all of nature. She is the one that not only has the ability to end life, but also to bestow prosperity and happiness. Yarnall (1994: 29) also explores this Bird Goddess through its connection with Circe related to the meaning of her name; falcon or hawk which are birds of prey as follows:

The tradition of a Vulture/Hawk Goddess who was indigenous to Asia Minor appears to stretch from Neolithic (Jatal Hüyük (ca. 7250-6250 B.C.E.) to Hellenistic times; Circe, with her intimate knowledge of the Underworld and her raptorial name, may well be one of her later incarnations.

In this statement, it is suggested that existing in the Asia Minor of the prehistoric times, the Goddess culture, which is associated with birds of prey, can be considered as the origin of Circe.

Another argument related to Circe's origin is about her connection to nature. Nanno Marinatos (2008: 10) argues that the origin of Circe may come from the Near East in the second millennium BCE where there was the Mistress of Animals who ruled nature by keeping the wild animals under control because they meant disorder in nature, and she ensured that everything was in order. Dominating the animals, the Mistress of Animal was also revealing her naked body, which signifies her power since as Marinatos (2008: 11) puts it, “[f]emale sexuality was perceived as dangerous for males, as a trap for men because it might lead to loss of control”. In other words, the Mistress of Animals accentuated her femininity and overcame the males who are attracted to female nudity. As a result, considering her female sexuality as a sign of power and controlling the wild animals, the Mistress of Animals resembles the image of Circe in Greek Mythology.

In her work *Mythology*, Edith Hamilton (1998: 305) describes Circe as “a most beautiful and most dangerous witch” and she adds that “[e]very man who approached her she turned into a beast”. This depiction highlights how Circe is mostly stereotyped in the myths and stories. Being the daughter of Helios, the God of the Sun, and Perse, the sea nymph, Circe is “a goddess known for her skill in magic and drugs” (Roman & Roman, 2010: 118). In other words, Circe

is more than a witch. She is the combination of divine power and witchcraft. Therefore, the themes of Circe's stories are generally about magical and evil practices of a witch Goddess.

Circe is seen in many stories such as *Odyssey* by Homer, and *Metamorphoses* by Ovid all of which tell the similar story about her. Referring to the story *Odyssey*, Marinatos (2008: 12) describes Circe as a witch as follows:

[M]agicians are marginal figures in society: women, outcasts, foreigners. Circe, although a goddess, fits this description well. She is an unmarried female, lives at the end of the world, near the gates of the Underworld, and she is a daughter of the Sun, a non-Olympian god.

Here, Circe is depicted as a marginal character with her witchcraft. She does not fit in and is ostracized among the Gods and Goddesses. She lives alone in her island Aeaea and is well-known for her malevolence, magic and sexual power.

In Homer's *Odyssey* (2007), it is accounted that Odysseus and his crew sail the island Aeaea, where Circe lives. The story goes on with the transformation of the half of the crew into the swine via magic performed by Circe after they go to Circe's house. Encountering Hermes who offers him an antidote to Circe's spell, Odysseus causes Circe to be failed in her bewitchment on him. In the end, they sleep together, and Circe transforms the men previously transformed to swine back into humans. They stay there for a year before sailing (Homer, 2007: 186).

One of Circe's most important stories concerns the sea nymph Scylla and the sea deity Glaucos. Although the similar story is seen in Homer's *Odyssey*, in his work, Daniel Ogden (2013: 131) notes that Ovid's *Metamorphoses* of 8 CE is the first collection of the entire story. As narrated in *Metamorphoses* (1958: 390), Glaucus falls in love with the sea nymph Scylla while she is in "a small rock pool" to bath. He tries to talk to her, but Scylla runs from him. He is desperate for Scylla. Therefore, he begs Circe for a love potion to make Scylla fall in love with him. However, being attracted to Glaucus, Circe who is "ready to make love at any hour" asks Glaucus to take her bed instead of loving Scylla (389-390). However, her love is unrequited which leads her to be filled with jealousy and fury for Scylla. Hence, she makes a magical poison with her herbs for her and adds it in the water in which Scylla has a bath. Just as Scylla enters into the water, the poison influences and turns her into a scary monster (Ovid, 1958: 389-390). This scary monster is described in Bolton's work (2002: 210) as follows: "She had six heads, each with a mouth that had three rows of teeth, and twelve feet. Quite hideous to look at, Scylla invoked fear into all those who had the unfortunate luck to come upon her". This tragic incident that happens to Scylla demonstrates how far Circe can go in her quest for vengeance. Scylla signifies that Circe is vicious, ruthless, and ambitious, as this story

demonstrates. As it can be seen, Circe can be so “dangerous” that she has the potential to do terrible harm to everyone, as she did to Scylla when she was angry or couldn't get what she wanted.

The concept of “witch” can be elaborated in order to understand the relationship between Circe and witchcraft. In *Cambridge Dictionary* (2021), the word “witch” is defined as “a woman who is believed to have magical powers and who uses them to harm or help other people”. According to Levack’s (2005: 2) definition, “a witch is a person who possesses a supernatural, occult, or mysterious power to cause misfortune or injury to others”. In other words, a witch is a person with supernatural skills to cause harm to others and to commit evil. Moreover, Guiley (2008: xi) points out that witches have had a notoriety since they have been known as evil and riotous by stating that “[w]itches are thought to be up to no good, interested in wreaking havoc and bringing misery to others”. It may be said that the general stereotypical or common sensical perception of witch connotes words such as ‘trouble’.

The depictions of the witches have different varieties in literary works. The most popular stereotypical image of a witch is a woman wearing a pointy hat, old and ugly with a hump in her back and using a broomstick to fly. The first depiction of this witch image with a broomstick was made by the French poet Martin Le Franc in his book *Le Champion des Dames* (1441-1442) translated as *The Defender of Ladies*, and it is claimed that he was the one who instilled in Europe such image of witches (Chollet, 2020:14). Although there is no clear reason why broomsticks are so popular in the depictions of the witches, Levack (2006: 49) connects the broom to the femaleness as follows:

[Brooms might] reflect nothing more than the preponderance of female witches. In this sense the broom serves the same symbolic function as the distaff, which also appears occasionally in descriptions of witchcraft...Last but not least, the broom served as a phallic symbol and therefore was appropriate in a scene that was suffused with sexuality.

Clearly, broom imagery symbolically functions as an object to describe the witches in terms of their gender roles and sexuality. The witches are associated with a broomstick since they are mostly women, and their job is to do chores and are believed to be evil women who were engaged with sexual activities with others freely. Therefore, the broom might stand for the phallic image.

Another depiction of the witches is made with a cauldron. In the very beginning of his book, Raymond Buckland (2001: iii) highlights one of the common misrepresentations of witches who use a cauldron for evil purposes. He brings a very different perspective to this very common image of witches as follows:

We know from Shakespeare and other sources, that the Witches threw into their pots the most gruesome ingredients, right? There were things like the tongue of a snake, bloody fingers, catgut, donkey's eyes, frog's foot, goat's beard, a Jew's ear, mouse tail, snake head, swine snout, wolf's foot, and so on...In fact these were all the most innocuous of ingredients: normal plants and herbs (Buckland, 2001: iii).

As indicated, one should not take the names of the ingredients literally since they had nothing to do with the images that come to the contemporary minds. Buckland (2001: iii) supports his theory with examples, claiming that thousands of years ago, plants were named based on their appearance, hues, and shapes before the Latin language. For instance, today's bulbous buttercup was called a frog's foot, the hoary pea was called catguts, the cowage plant's seeds were called eyes of donkey and finally, the balmony was called a snake's head (Buckland, 2001: iii). Concisely, the contents of this cauldron, whose names contribute to the negative image of witches, were used for a herbal mixture for different purposes such as health and food. This demonstrates that people can revisit their understanding of witches in order to connect them with nature. Thus, it can be asserted that contrary to the popular belief, the cauldron symbolizes the witches' affinity with nature. Considering the fact that witches use herbs and plants for healing purposes, the cauldron can be regarded as a tool that connects them with nature.

Different from the above-mentioned common depictions of witches, Starhawk (1979: 260) focuses on women from the Paleolithic age to define witches. She demonstrates her approach to witches as follows:

From earliest times, women have been witches, *wicce*, 'wise ones'-priestesses, diviners, midwives, poets, healers, and singers of songs of power. Woman-centered culture, based on the worship of The Great Goddess, underlies the beginning of all civilization.

Starhawk's remarks about witches demonstrate that women from the matriarchal culture have been called "witches". Also, she acknowledges women as 'wise-ones' since in the Paleolithic Age, women were following the Mother Goddess as her priestesses and they were empowered by their abilities such as healing, midwifery, healing and singing.

It is noteworthy to explore witchcraft with which Circe is so closely identified in literary works. What is the concept of witchcraft? According to *Cambridge Dictionary*, witchcraft is a noun meaning "the activity of performing magic to help or harm other people" (2021). Moreover, Rosemary Guiley (2008: xi) defines witchcraft by stating that "[t]raditionally, witchcraft – with a small w – is a form of sorcery, concerned with spells and divination". She also adds that witchcraft is the practices of magic that witches and sorcerers did by learning it from their families or masters (xi). Basically, witchcraft is defined as any activity that uses

magic and evil intent to attain a desired goal. Other than that, to comprehend the concept of witchcraft, it may be necessary to examine it in historical context.

The origins of witchcraft date back to the Paleolithic Age. Buckland (2001: 3-26) draws attention to the fact that “Witchcraft is a religion” and it is called “the Old Religion”. In the same vein, defining Witchcraft with a capital “W” as a “religion”, in her work, Doreen Valiente (1986: 7) also states that “Witchcraft is as old as the human race”. In other words, Witchcraft can be defined as a religion which is older than most of the religions on Earth. Valiente (1986: 8) explains Witchcraft as follows:

Witchcraft belonged to the old half-forgotten days of the primeval matriarchy, when woman who tended the hearth-fire and stirred the cooking-pot was the first 'wise one', the seeker of herbs and binder of wounds, the seer of pictures in the fire, the hearer of voices in the wind, the interpreter of dreams and the caster of painted stones for divination, the worker of magic for hunting, and of the greatest magic of all, the magic of life.

In this sense, Witchcraft refers to matriarchal period of western history when women's status did not fall behind men's power. Valiente focuses on women's involvement in wisdom, health and magic which was performed to achieve the hunt. She reminds that women were well-known for their ability to inspire, heal and make things happen when matriarchy existed.

Moreover, defining witchcraft as a way of worshipping the Mother Goddess, Starhawk (1979: 261) notes that “[t]he old religion of witchcraft before the advent of Christianity, was an earth-centered, nature- oriented worship that venerated the Goddess, the source of life (...)”. Namely, Witchcraft is the Mother Goddess religion encompassing the female power as a source of life and it is based on nature. Therefore, the concept of witchcraft is intertwined with women and nature, and this highlights the necessity of reviving the Mother Goddess culture. Moreover, Buckland (2001: 3) draws attention to the fact that witchcraft derives from *Animism* as “the most potent factor in the evolution of religion” and it was believed that the sun, the moon, the stars and the natural phenomenon possessed their own minds. Regarded as the initial stages of the Witchcraft, *Animism* is expounded by Buckland as follows: “Out of awe, and respect, grew a belief in-for want of a better word-gods. A god controlled the gusting wind; a god was in the rushing, swirling river; a god swayed the mighty trees. This was *animism*” (Buckland, 2001: 3). As defined, the origin of Witchcraft comes from nature that human beings could not control back then. Nature was seen as godly power that existed inherently on earth.

Referring to Paleolithic Age, Valiente (1986: 7) examines some of the drawings in the caves in order to portray what life was like in those times. What is significant to mention regarding her analysis of the drawings is that there is a relationship between witchcraft, nature,

and women in respect to fertility and practicing magic. In relation to this, Valiente (1866: 7) describes a drawing from Algeria claiming that it is probably the earliest depiction of a witch as follows:

[It] depicts a woman standing with upraised arms, in an attitude of invocation. From her genital region a line runs across to the genitals of a man; he is shown half-crouched, and in the act of releasing an arrow from a bow. Around him are animals, and the arrow is being aimed at a large bird which looks like an ostrich.

According to the quotation, it can be inferred that working together to survive in nature, woman and man are collaborating in the drawing. While the man is hunting, the woman works with him through her power. As Julia Stonehouse puts, “[i]t's as if the power from her strengthens his ability to kill the ostrich” through the hunting magic. Therefore, it can be deduced that they could not survive without hunting and fertility since the man was responsible for food through hunting and the woman was the source of fertility thanks to her ability to give birth. Considering the significance of fertility and hunting in the Stone Age, Buckland (2001: 4) maintains that the people believed in the “God of Hunting” or “Horned God” who was believed to control the hunt and enabled them to succeed in it. The people in the Stone Age believed in gods who met their most basic needs: food and fertility. Allied with God of Hunting, “a Goddess- the Great Mother, the Goddess of Fertility,” “the Mother Goddess”, was of significance in the existence of tribes as well because there had to be food for their survival and children in the tribes for the continuation of life and protection (Buckland, 2001: 7-8). Women were the source of life which made them powerful. Moreover, in her work, Judith Yarnall (1994: 26) points out the female power in the Paleolithic age as follows:

Long ago, when human existence was precarious and fertility therefore paramount, a Great Goddess, as the archaeological record now persuasively suggests, was venerated almost everywhere. Our ancestors saw primal power as being Feminine because it was obvious to them that life originated with and was immediately nourished by the female sex.

As reported, human life was vulnerable, and its continuation was sustained by the women. Women's capability of life-giving was vital. Therefore, a Great Goddess was honored practically everywhere. Referring to Johann Jakob Bachofen remarking that the first period of human history was matriarchal, George Boas (1997:20)¹ mentions that mother was dominant not only in the family but also in the society where the mother's name was passed down to the children, and goods were passed down from mother to daughters. Bachofen puts forward ancient myths of the west as evidence of the matriarchal order. For instance, the Homeric

¹ Translations are by AB, unless otherwise attributed.

goddesses were by no means submissive slaves to Zeus. The stories in *Odyssey* also tell about women like Circe, Calypso, Penelope, who are not confined to the inner rooms of the palace (Boas: 1997:20)². That is, it can be deduced that the goddesses in the ancient myths can symbolize the matriarchy in the prehistoric periods.

The value and respect accorded to women's reproductive ability can be seen in works of art from Paleolithic Age. For instance, being drawn twenty thousand years ago in Austria, one of the most popular Mother Goddess depictions is the “Gravettian Venus” which presents The Mother Goddess with her fertility by emphasizing her big breasts, open vagina, buttocks and pregnant belly, whereas her face did not matter and was not given any shapes (Buckland, 2001: 8). What is emphasized here is the importance placed on the celebration of their productivity.

When the spreading policies of Christianity started in Europe, this celebratory approach of Witchcraft as the Old Religion to woman and nature came to an end. The most obvious policy applied for the acceptance of Christianity by the people was to destroy the belief system and practices of the Old Religion. Seeing the Old Religion as a threat, the followers of Christianity aimed to spread Christianity and they found a way to do this by destroying the practices and beliefs of the Old Religion. In Buckland's work (2001: 29), it is stated that the breaking point was achieved by the Pope Gregory the Great who wanted to create a huge transformation from the Old Religion to the new one by building churches in the places where the temples which belonged to The Old Religion were still standing during his ruling between 509-604 AD. Pope Gregory aimed to convert the Old Religion's holy places to gather people into churches so that the number of the churchgoers would have increased (Buckland, 2001: 29). Based on these actions, churches should replace temples and people should worship only one God in the Christian faith instead of seeing nature as holy and a whole as the Old Religion does. As a result, Christians vilified the Old Religion in order to promote their own belief.

Magic was also another practice that Christianity demonized and later criminalized for the development of Christianity. Bailey (2003: xxvii -xxviii) explains how Christianity sees magic by the fifth century C.E as follows:

Because, in Christian cosmology, all demons were evil spirits in the service of the one great evil, Satan, who was the enemy of both God and humankind, all magic, insofar as it entailed involvement with demonic forces, was inherently evil.

² Translations are by AB, unless otherwise attributed.

As it is stated, the notion of the magic was perceived as a work of the Devil since it was believed that the magic had power to make things happen in the early Middle Ages. Centuries later, this way of thinking would become more radical and harmful for the European women.

Over the centuries, the new religion, Christianity dominating Witchcraft, the Old Religion, became more and more radical in terms of the belief of demonic powers. Brian Levack (2006: 4) informs that when Europeans employed the term witchcraft in the Early Modern Period, it indicated “the practice of harmful, black or maleficent magic, the performance of harmful deeds by means of some sort of extraordinary, mysterious, occult, preternatural or supernatural power”. In other words, the witchcraft referred to evil deeds practiced by the witches such as killing, harming the other people by using a supernatural power which was called magic back then. The examples of these deeds are given by Levack (2006: 4) to illustrate the practice of witchcraft. According to early modern Europeans’ common beliefs, this kind of magic was used in many different ways. For instance, *malefici* or *maleficae* another name for black magic, was believed to have many variations such as pricking a doll which had the image of the target person to kill them, saying a spell to make a child ill, burning some things to give harm on crops with hails, putting a jinxed sword to set a fire in a house, tying knots on a leather cloth to cause sexual impotency in a bridegroom and putting it near them (Levack, 2006: 4). Namely, it was believed that magic was practiced with nefarious motives.

According to Buckland (2001: 42), the war against witchcraft started in December 1484 with the Bull of Pope Innocent VIII which paved the way for the persecutions of the witches. As Rosemary Ellen Guiley (2008: 175) illustrates:

Innocent VIII was approached by Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, two Dominican inquisitors, who persuaded him that they were being impeded by local ecclesiastical authorities in their efforts to prosecute witches. They asked for help, and the result was the Bull of 1484, which granted them full authority to carry out their inquisitions and demanded that they receive whatever support was necessary from local officials.

Kramer and Sprenger reached out to the Pope to ensure they were given full authority over the investigation of witches and made those persecutions legal. This starting point was accompanied by unfairly applied investigations that ended up in misogyny. *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) was written by Jakob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer. Sydney Anglo (2011: 15) acknowledges that these two Dominican inquisitors wrote about witchcraft itself and the prosecutions after Pope Innocent VIII encouraged them to tackle supposedly the devil followers.

Guiley (2008: 223-224) reviews this three-part book about these two authors' beliefs related to witches, what witches do, and how to ward off them as follows:

Part I concerns how the Devil and his witches, with “the permission of Almighty God,” perpetrate a variety of evils upon men and animals... Part II discusses how witches cast spells and bewitchments and do their *maleficia* and how these actions may be prevented or remedied... Part III sets forth the legal procedures for trying witches, including the taking of testimony, admission of evidence, procedures for interrogation and torture and guidelines for sentencing.

As demonstrated, one of the beliefs the authors of *Malleus Maleficarum* had about the witches was that God knew about their evil acts and prevented them to destroy the whole world. Namely, God saw them cause to famine, infertility, diseases in livestock and natural disasters. To Sydney Anglo (2011), this book “establishes the truth of the existence of witchcraft and its heretical nature” (15). Accordingly, the book promotes a belief that perversion and witchcraft are intertwined. In the last part of the book, it is suggested that some legal actions had to be taken against them. Therefore, the book ends with the discussions about the ways of queries and tortures which should be applied as an encouragement when a witch was accused of witchcraft and did not admit their crime (Guiley, 2008: 223-224). In other words, torture was depicted as a routine and necessary part of the procedure. After its publication, *Malleus Maleficarum*, as Guiley argues, started to be used as the “guidebook” for the judges and inquisitors during the trials and, it provided a justification for the iniquitous actions of the witch-hunters and courts (2008: 224).

In Brian Levack’s work (2006: 1), it is stated that in the Early Modern Period of Europe, from 1450s to 1570s, thousands of people were on trial because of committing the crime of magic practices. Taking the people to court did not mean that they would be tried fairly. In the same work, Levack states that the judges sentenced almost half of these people to death by burning (2). As Guiley (2008: xi) puts it, “[f]rom the 14th to 18th centuries, thousands of people—perhaps hundreds of thousands—were tortured, jailed, maimed and executed on charges of witchcraft. Many of them were innocent, framed by personal enemies or tortured into confessions”. The tortures used to force these victims to confess led them to acknowledge that they had done horrible acts. For instance, the accused people admitted that they had a pact with the Devil which was one of the biggest accusations of the Christian church and a kind of celebration named Sabbaths in which they were believed to cook babies and kiss the Devil’s arse under the torture (Guiley, 2008: xi). As a result, witches were seen as people who had an evil power working with the Devil, whom they never met, in meetings in which they had sexual affairs randomly, ate infants and had fun with the values of Christianity at night. In another

work of Levack (2005: 2), it is stated that since the witches were a real threat against Christianity and its moral system, witchcraft became a major felony involving murder, illegitimate sex, and heresy. Between 1428 and 1782, the political response against witchcraft resulted in the executions of thousands of people, ranging from 40,000 to 50,000 (Hutton, 1999: 132).

As previously stated, both women and men were persecuted for the crime of witchcraft during the witch-hunt. Although thousands of men and women were subjected to these procedures, the majority of the accusations were women in Europe (Levack, 2006: 145). Namely, the number of women who were tortured, burned alive, killed was extremely high.

The victims of the witch hunts were predominantly women thousands of whom were imprisoned, killed, or burned as a result of charges of witchcraft. As Mona Chollet (2020: 14)³ underlines many women died due to the word "witch" being used as a pejorative descriptor to describe women accused of fraud in the past. Why did women, in particular, become the focus of this process? There are various responses to this question.

According to Michael D. Bailey (2002: 121), “[t]he writings of [Dominican theologian] Johannes Nider, the first authority to link witchcraft more profoundly to women than to men, shed much light on the initial emergence of this enduring connection” between the women and witchcraft. Nider’s work written in 1437, *Formicarius* was about the women’s supposedly weakness which made them inclined to magic more than men. By referring *Formicarius*, Bailey (2002: 122) maintains that the witch stereotype was described by Nider as follows:

Witches were regarded as powerful sorcerers who performed harmful *maleficium*, [wicked magic], against their neighbors—killing children, impeding fertility, withering crops, summoning lightning and hail, and spreading disease and pestilence. They were also servants of Satan, gathering at regular nocturnal assemblies known as sabbaths where they worshiped demons, renounced their belief in Christ and adherence to the true faith, and performed any number of vile and wanton acts.

As quoted, witches were represented as evildoers who posed a threat to the Christian society. As a result of such claims, *Formicarius* pioneered the creation of the female witch stereotype in the next centuries (Bailey, 2002: 122). Following Nider’s work, in 1486, Kramer and Sprenger penned *Malleus Maleficarum* which also addressed women with regard to witchcraft. Describing this work as “profoundly misogynist”, Bailey (2002: 120) underscores that Sprenger and Kramer considered women as weak, and they were inherently inclined to evil by emphasizing that there was a link between witchcraft and so-called unstoppable female sexuality. In the English translation of *Malleus*, referring to this connection, it is stated that

³ Translations are by AB, unless otherwise attributed.

“everything is governed by carnal lusting, which is insatiable in them [women]” (Mackay, 2009: 170). In other words, supposedly the ravenous lust of women is at the heart of witchcraft. In this sense, women were seen as weak bodies, and their purported proclivity for witchcraft was linked to the salacity. Chollet (2020: 17) explains the biggest factor in the spread of all these ideas with the printing press. She notes that the invention of the printing press in 1454 coincided with the birth of witchcraft slander, which played a significant role in propagating these slanders (17). *Malleus*, which was published thanks to the printing press, reached many people, and spread the rumors about witches.

Subsequently, thousands of European women were implicated in witch hunts. Chollet (2020: 18) illustrates what transpired during the witch-hunt and she argues that targeting women identified as a scapegoat for the source of the problems by the upper class entails the elimination of prominent women. Based on this argument, speaking out loud, freely enjoying sexuality, and greeting a male neighbor could all be enough to put a woman in danger as well as the frequency of their attending church services. As Collet (2020: 20-21) illustrates, after the women got arrested, they were stripped of their clothes, shaven, and taken to a guy who was in charge of searching for the devil's seal on the women's bodies, using a needle to locate a sign such as a mole or scar as evidence, and then torturing them. After all, their dignity was taken away (Collet, 2020: 20-21). At that rate, these women appear to have been denied the right to speak up and defend themselves.

Witchcraft trials were carried on for centuries. Levack (2006: 1) explains the chronology of the witchcraft trials by stating that there was “(...) a dramatic increase in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and finally a gradual decline in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries”. The number of witch hunts grew and even peaked between 1560 and 1630 (Levack, 2006: 207). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the persecutions continued. However, in the same period, all countries in Europe where the crime of witchcraft occurred saw a gradual decrease in the number of persecutions. The main reason for the decline was that evidence was required in the trial process of the witches (Levack, 2006: 253). In other words, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as individuals became more educated, the demand for evidence became increasingly prominent. What's crucial to note about proof for witchcraft is that accusing women of witchcraft and putting their lives in jeopardy was no longer easy. After 1782 when the final official execution occurred, witchcraft was not considered as a crime in most of the European countries (Levack, 2006: 253).

The questions about the underlying reasons why women were killed or punished more than men in witch hunts have been raised among some scholars. Among these, Mathilda Joslyn

Gage, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre Silvia Federici focus on maltreatment of women in the European society during the witch-hunts. Through a feminist critical perspective, they examine the rights of women concentrating mainly on witchcraft and gender roles.

English Mathilda Joslyn Gage in her book titled *Woman, Church and State* (2018), examines the witch-hunts from a feminist perspective in 1893 by opposing the Christian misogyny. She criticizes the sexist approach of the Western state, and the church as follows:

Woman is told that her present position in society is entirely due to Christianity; that it is superior to that of her sex at any prior age of the world, Church and State both maintaining that she has ever been inferior and dependent, man superior and ruler (2018:2).

Gage assesses women's social conditions, and she argues that Christianity and the Western state shaped women and their existence in society by telling them men were superior to women and women were dependent on and subordinate to men. Marion H. Gibson (2007: 114) remarks Gage's ideas as follows:

[Gage] became increasingly convinced that the oppression of women was linked to and inextricable from that of other disadvantaged groups by their representation in Christian texts and practices. Christianity had been used by some to denigrate women, ... she believed.

According to the quotation, Gage argues that certain people had exploited Christianity to demean and oppress women. Gage (2018: 158) also asserts that Christianity's misogynist attitudes towards women was connected to the crime of witchcraft in Europe as follows:

[A]s soon as a system of religion was adopted which taught the greater sinfulness of women, over whom authority had been given to man by God himself, the saying arose "one wizard to 10,000 witches" and the persecution for witchcraft became chiefly directed against women.

In other words, in Christianity, men were given complete control over women as a result of this mindset in which women were seen as creatures that had innate wickedness. Therefore, it can be inferred that one of the ways the church and the state suppressed women was through witchcraft. However, as Marion Gibson (2007: 119) puts it, "Matilda Joslyn Gage's views fell on deaf ears during her lifetime". Therefore, she did not attract the public attention with the feminist ideas in her book when she was alive. It took a long time for such ideas to gain traction.

Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English published a pamphlet in 1973 opposing the idea which associated the female gender with witchcraft by mentioning the accusations about the relationship between witchcraft and health. Just like Gage, these two writers acknowledge that the witch-hunts were organized against the women by the Church and State (1973: 7). The connection between witchcraft and medicine is brought up on the forefront by these two writers. In the very beginning of the pamphlet, it is stated that women "were abortionists, nurses and

counsellors. They were pharmacists, cultivating healing herbs and exchanging the secrets of their uses. They were midwives, travelling from home to home and village to village. For centuries women were doctors without degrees..." until women healers and midwives the "wise women" whom the society called once, were replaced by the male doctors (Ehrenreich & English, 1973: 1- 4). Based on the arguments of Kramer and Sprenger in *Malleus Maleficarum* remarking that "[n]o one harms the Catholic Faith more than do midwives" (Mackay, 2009: 212), Ehrenreich and English (1973: 8) point out that the midwives and healers posed a threat against the Church and State that thought they have "magical powers affecting health - of harming, but also of healing". In other words, midwives and healers were known for their healing practices. Notwithstanding, they were believed that they could practice magic to damage people.

Silvia Federici (2018: 23) approaches the relationship between women and witchcraft from an economic and political point of view. Federici argues that one of the reasons why women were in the spotlight was due to the transition from feudalism to capitalism in the Early Modern Period. She explains this transition to capitalism as follows:

...women were charged with witchcraft because the restructuring of rural Europe at the dawn of capitalism destroyed their means of livelihood and the basis of their social power, leaving them with no resort but dependence on the charity of the better-off at a time when communal bonds were disintegrating and a new morality was taking hold that criminalized begging and looked down upon charity, the reputed path to eternal salvation in the medieval world (2018: 23).

As reported, capitalism left women without a source of income in the Early Modern Period. Therefore, it can be inferred that in this system which prioritizes money over all social and cultural values, women were destined to be dependent on others. Federici also illustrates that "their means of livelihood" was simply "practicing magic as healers, folk doctors, herbalists, midwives, makers of love-philters" which were a source of income empowering the women (2018: 25). Namely, it can be said that the witch-hunts are not limited to misogyny in Federici's analysis on capitalism and witchcraft. Rather, she stresses how women were negatively affected by the shifting economic order in society. Federici's emphasis on the shift in economic and political system reflects that, women were targeted through witchcraft, and they were rendered powerless as a result. This approach demonstrates that witchcraft was the economic power of some women and capitalism took it away from them.

To summarize, there were numerous reasons why women became the target of witch-hunts in the Early Modern Period, including Christian misogyny, women's involvement in

health as a profession, and capitalism, which placed women in a subordinate position to men who participated in production and had economic freedom.

Along with the feminist approach towards witch-hunts, reflections on the concept of witch in literary works have also shifted. Rejecting the western traditional female ideals and witch representations, in their works, Margaret Atwood and Madeline Miller re-imagine the witches in order to give them their own voice. To do this, being influenced by mythological stories Atwood and Miller present Circe as the protagonist who has a leading role in her own story in “Circe/Mud Poems”(1974) and *Circe* (2019).

Margaret Atwood is a well-known Canadian author who has written fifteen remarkable books of poetry. As a feminist writer, Atwood touches upon gender issues, ecology, and landscape by demonstrating a particular interest in myths and fairy tales (Macpherson, 2010: 104). In 1974, Atwood published her collection *You Are Happy* offering a new perspective on the story of Odysseus and Circe in its sequence of “Circe/Mud Poems”. In this work, Atwood gives voice to Circe to tell Homer’s story from the standpoint of Circe. “Circe/Mud Poems” is series of poems which has feminist, and ecological elements within the framework of ecofeminism. In this work, Atwood revisits the story of Odysseus' visit to Circe's island in Homer's *Odyssey*. In the story of these poems, which do not go in linear order, Odysseus comes to Circe's island to find food, water, and shelter, as in the original story. However, Atwood recreates a fresh voice of Circe who is not the same as the one in *Odyssey*. Circe is portrayed as a witch who opposes the binary system emphasized by ecofeminism referring to depreciation of body, woman, and nature, questions gender roles and establishes a close relationship with nature by Atwood. In this story, Circe, commonly known as the dreaded witch who turns men into pigs, makes her voice heard in her own words thanks to Atwood.

Another work which becomes the voice of Circe that is discussed in this thesis is *Circe*, by Madeline Miller. Madeline Miller is an American author who has gained popularity in recent years. Born in 1978, Miller taught Latin, Greek and Shakespeare at a high school and she studied on Classics in Brown University and has an MA degree from there. She is engaged in secondary characters of the ancient myths. Being her first published book in 2011, *The Song of Achilles* is about Patroclus in Homer’s *Iliad*. This book won the Orange Prize in 2012 and became a New York Times bestseller. *Circe* is Miller’s second book which has had a massive success. According to the information given in her official website, being a New York Times top best seller, *Circe* was shortlisted for the 2019 Women’s Prize for Fiction and received the Indies Choice Best Adult Fiction of the Year Award and the Indies Choice Best Audiobook of the Year Award. Apart from these, in her website, it is also mentioned hat *Circe* is lately being

adapted into an HBO Max series (Miller). The popularity of the book is considerably visible when the awards and top lists are taken into consideration. Thus, the book has received reviews from many prominent critics such as Claire Massud from *The New York Times* (2018) and Alex Preston from *The Guardian* (2018).

Miller, like Atwood, portrays the narrative of Circe and Odysseus from Circe's point of view in her novel. Beginning her account with her birth, Circe tells her life story by describing the anguish and oppressions she has through in great detail. Bullied, rejected, exiled, raped, Circe finds a way out to get rid of her submissive role which is given to her by her family. Eventually, she becomes stronger at the end of the story. Circe takes advantage of her witch identity and connection to nature, which she learns later.

Atwood and Miller liberate Circe from the mythological stories in which she is enslaved by the patriarchal ideals in the myths. Both writers give her a chance to tell her own story. These two writers, with their new perspectives and their own contributions, raised, even gave the opportunity and the space to a silenced female character to be heard, to be seen and to exist in literary and also cultural field. That made her an active central figure rather than marginalized and decentralized passive figure. In terms of the stories they account, apart from the patriarchal oppressions, "Circe/Mud Poems" and *Circe* foreground the role of nature and witchcraft in the formation of Circe's identity. Accordingly, the theory of ecofeminism forms the basis of this thesis and thus, ecofeminist elements will be discussed in "Circe/Mud Poems" and *Circe*. Ecofeminism directly aims to protect nature and women from the destructive power of the patriarchy. Patriarchy attributes gender roles to women and men and hierarchizes them. Whereas women are seen as closer to nature, men are put in a higher position of culture because they represent rationality. At this point, ecofeminism objects to this dualism and advocates the Earth and women against the exploitation. The ecofeminist solution to the gender and environmental problems is to terminate the dualism and reconstruct the negative perception of the women/ nature connection so that women can embrace their link to nature and see this relationship as a source of empowerment. So, ecofeminism takes the former attributions to woman-nature relation and reuses it to strengthen the role of women. Ecofeminist critics oppose dualism, and they also seek solutions for human beings to live in harmony with nature. They go back in time and revalue the perception of nature in the pre-modern world. Therefore, the Old Religion's Mother Goddess belief, known as Witchcraft before Christianity is revived by some ecofeminists in order to destroy the dichotomies, appreciate women's bond with nature and create a harmonious life between humans and non-humans with nature.

Emerging in 1970's, ecofeminism establishes a link between the patriarchy's exploitation of women and nature, and searches ways to eradicate the domination of patriarchy over women and nature. According to Barbara T. Gates (1996: 8), the feminist writer Françoise d'Eaubonne coined the term "ecoféminisme" in 1974 to highlight the environmental and gender problems created by the patriarchy. Moreover, the other scholarly works are *Gyn/Ecology* (1978), *Woman and Nature* (1978), *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Goddess* (1978), *Rape of the Wild* (1989), and *The Death of Nature* (1980), written by Mary Daly, Susan Griffin, Starhawk, Andree Collard and Joyce Contrucci, Carolyn Merchant respectively (Gaard & Oppermann, 2013: 4). Greta Gaard (1993: 1) informs that ecofeminism came into view with many movements such as labor movements, women health care, and peace movements. As mentioned in Noel Sturgeon's work *Movements of Ecofeminism* (1997: 239), the first examples of ecofeminism that link between the environmental issues and feminism appeared in 1974 when Sandra Maburg and Lisa Watson organized *Women and the Environment conference* at California University, Berkeley. However, according to Sturgeon (1997: 239), the most important event that initiated ecofeminism and inspired the other school of thoughts in the US was the conference titled *Women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the 1980s conference at Amherst in 1980* which was organized by the feminist critic Ynestra King to encourage women to take actions to change the common attitude towards nature and the environment. This conference, in which hundreds of women attended, had many workshops and panels on various issues such as feminist theory, racism, militarism, and ecology (Sturgeon, 1997: 239-240). In 1987, at a conference titled *The Ecofeminist Perspective*, convened by Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein, feminist anti-war movements were sparked by highlighting the necessity to unite the other movements such as "feminism, environmentalism, antiracism, animal liberation, anticolonialism, antimilitarism, and nontraditional spiritualities" with antimilitarism (as cited in, Sturgeon, 1997: 141). Diamond and Orenstein's later publication, *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (1990) has become a cornerstone for the ecofeminist thoughts. Moreover, Leonie Caldecott and Stephanie Leland's *Reclaim the Earth: Women Speak Out for Life on Earth* (1983) and Judith Plant and Petra Kelly's *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism* (1989) are some of the outstanding works about ecofeminism. These works basically elaborate the critical connection between militarism, racism, classism, sexism, and the destruction of nature (Sturgeon, 1997: 240). All these sources mentioned above have raised different arguments, touched upon numerous concerns, and struggled to argue that ecofeminism aims to eliminate the dualities created by the patriarchal oppressions on nature and women and to create a new life in harmony with nature.

Dominations and oppressions are some of the main concerns of ecofeminism. Karen Warren in her work *Ecofeminist Philosophy* (2000) states that ecofeminism utilizes “feminism, ecology and environmentalism and philosophy in its analyses of human systems of unjustified domination (“isms of domination”)” (43). Warren (2000) also believes that there is interconnectedness among these dominations which one should understand very well to deal with and solve the problems concerning the gender, humans, and nature (43). She asserts that ecofeminism is a term that embodies both gender and nature issues in culture by criticizing masculine domination (43). Therefore, ecofeminism is a theory which comprises many issues in terms of its perspectives. According to Warren (2000), ecofeminism takes its basis from “unjustified dominations of women, other human Others, and nonhuman nature” [which are neither reasonable nor inextricable] (43). In other words, ecofeminism sees all kinds of unfair dominations as a source of the problems related to nature, women and the othered humans.

Ecofeminism calls for the women to take care of the Earth. Carolyn Merchant (1990: 50) in her book *The Death of Nature* argues that the term ecofeminism was born to promote the idea of that “because of their biological connection to earth and lunar cycles, women were natural advocates of environmentalism”. More clearly, women take over the responsibility of protecting nature from patriarchy via ecofeminism. Also, Merchant (1990: xxiii) states that “[i]n both Western and non-Western cultures, nature was traditionally feminine”. Therefore, ecofeminism’s purpose is to scrutinize the feminized nature that is devalued by the culture. In general, ecofeminists’ aim is to stop all kinds of tyrannies caused by the patriarchy and it thrives to create a biological and social environment in which there are no superior and subordinate relationships.

To connect women with nature has been a significant point to discuss and analyze the women and nature’s position in culture. Simone de Beauvoir (1989: 163) also mentions this relevance in her book *The Second Sex*:

Man seeks in woman the Other as Nature and his fellow being. But we know what ambivalent feelings nature inspires in man. He exploits her; and she is the source of his being and the realm that he subjugates to his will; Nature is a vein gross material in which the soul is imprisoned, and he is the supreme reality (...).”

Beauvoir (1989: 16) categorizes the genders as “the Self and the Other”. According to her categorization, man sees himself as ‘the Self’ and women, animals, and nature as ‘the Other’ because he can continue his cultural existence thanks to this duality in which he can exploit women and nature (16). Nature and women, who are viewed as the other, are of secondary

importance in this situation when contrasted to the existence of men. Nature and women are both considered as tools that can be utilized to meet men's demands and needs.

In a similar vein, Greta Gaard (1993: 1) mentions the Self and the Other concepts to analyze the patriarchal oppressions. She sees “the sense of self” as a basis of ecofeminism (1). Therefore, the self is independent and except itself, sees everything as the other to oppress and dominate since the other is seen as something to be controlled. According to Gaard (1993: 1), ecofeminism is based on the idea that “the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature”. She argues that ecofeminism objects to oppressions which have many shapes, and its aim is to liberate both women and nature from patriarchy’s exploitative power (1). Ecofeminism, which opposes all kinds of oppression, regardless of species, defends the rights of women and every living being in nature that are oppressed and exploited.

Similarly, basing her ideas on dualities in western culture, Plumwood (2003: 43) lists male/female, reason/emotion, mind/ body (nature), human/non-human (nature) binaries to show how they contrast with one another by explaining the roots and shapes of the western oppressions. Referring to Plumwood’s opinions about the sources of western oppressions, Gaard (2001: 158) assesses that the cause of the oppression of women, the other subordinated humans and nature cannot be attributed to a single system of thoughts such as radical feminism, Marxism, deep ecology since these oppressions derive from a system that interconnect many different thoughts based on dualisms which have an order of hierarchy. In other words, the oppressions are the result of a system that integrates many diverse conceptions rooted in dualisms where hierarchy matters.

Plumwood (2013: 213) also mentions dualism that creates gender identities and explains the association between the women and nature as a result of binary classifications. She expands the dualities which contrast with one another, by underlining the exclusion of the other:

The sphere of rationality variously contrasts with and excludes the sphere of emotions, the body, the passions, nature, the non-human world, faith, matter and physicality, experience, and madness. The masculine rational sphere of public life, production, social and cultural life, and rational justice is contrasted with the feminine sphere of the private, domestic and reproductive life, the latter representing the natural and individual against the social and culture. Again, the rational masculine sphere is a sphere where human freedom and control are exercised over affairs and over nature, especially via science and in active struggle against nature and over circumstances. In contrast, the feminine natural and domestic sphere represents the area of immersion in life, the natural part of human being, the sphere of passivity,

acceptance of unchangeable human nature and human necessity, of reproduction and necessary and unfree labor (2013: 213-214).

In these opposite spheres, what one has is what the other lacks. Hence, it can be said that whereas there are “better” features in the domain of masculine rationality, the less idealized features are seen in the feminine realm. Accordingly, masculinity, culture and rationality are seen as preponderant over the femininity, nature, and emotions. Highlighting the power relations in these opposite dualities, Nancy Hartsock (1990: 161) remarks that the dualities represent

a way of looking at the world characteristic of the dominant, white, male Eurocentric ruling class, a way of dividing up the world that puts an omnipotent subject at the center and constructs marginal Others as sets of negative qualities.

To put it another way, dualities demonstrate the mindset of the European ruling class which divides the world into dichotomies as white/black, European/non-European, male/female and creates a system in which what is written in the second place is seen as the other and inferior.

According to Elizabeth Spelman (1982: 111), in Ancient Greece, Plato’s body and soul dualism could have created the origin of the negative connotations of the connection between the women and nature. Referring to Plato’s ideas, Spelman (1982: 111) explains soul-body dualism as follows: “According to Plato, the body, with its deceptive senses, keeps from real knowledge; it rivets us in a world of material which is far removed from the world of reality; and it tempts away from the virtuous life”. This actively demonstrates that Plato puts the soul in a higher position whereas he sees the body as inferior. Spelman (1982: 118) highlights Plato’s hierarchy between body and soul in terms of Plato’s misogynistic views on women whom he regards them as a representation of the body that has no ideal features to live a virtuous life. Moreover, Plumwood (2003: 72) maintains that following Plato, Aristotle had also binary approach towards the social, gender and class structures. Agreeing Spelman, Plumwood (2003: 72) believes that the origin of this dualist way of thinking as human/nature comes from the philosophy of Plato and also Aristotle as well. To specify the Greek roots of the dualism, Plumwood mentions Aristotle’s words from his work *Politics* where he justified slavery by connecting dualities with the domination of men, masters, and reason over females, slaves, and emotions. Quoting from *Politics*, Plumwood (2003: 46) demonstrates Aristotle’s philosophy which encourages the hierarchical dualism in the western society as follows:

(...) the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle of necessity extends to all mankind. Where then there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals (as is the case of those whose business it is to use their body, and

who can do nothing better), the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master.

Although this mentality, which regards men as superior by nature, dates back to the antiquity, dualities are still the root of the gender and environmental problems.

Warren (2000: 46) argues that ecofeminism has “an oppressive conceptual framework (OCF) which brings explanations to rationalize the unfair power over the women and nature and the other subjugated human groups”. She also adds that patriarchal OCF performs to produce justifications for the idea that the subordination of women is not wrong (46). Therefore, it can be said that this framework seeks some ways to demonstrate the patriarchy’s constructed realities as a fact and rational to predominate the others. Warren (2000: 46) also lists five elements of OCF to demonstrate how patriarchy justifies its tyranny over women and nature. The first one of them is “*value-hierarchical thinking*, that is, ‘Up-Down’ thinking, which attributes greater value to that which is higher, or Up, than to that which is lower, or Down” (Warren, 2000: 46). In this way of thinking, whatever is deemed valuable and significant is seen in a higher position to devalue the others’ existence. While giving importance something or someone, one degrades the other to higher themselves up in this framework. To be precise, Warren (2000: 46) maintains that the others, namely women, people of color, nature, and bodies, are reduced into the lower positions, therefore they are placed in “Down” whereas men, white people, culture and minds are seen as “Up”. The second point Warren (2000: 46) mentions is that OCF heartens *oppositional value dualisms* in which men, white people, culture, and minds are seen as members of outclass whereas their so-called opposites, women, people of color, nature, and bodies are put in the lower status. Hence, *value-hierarchical thinking* determines how one should be valued based on dichotomies existing in *oppositional value dualisms* where man is better than the other. The third element of OCF is “power is conceived (and exercised) as ‘power-over’ power” (Warren, 2000: 46). Here, power relations and subjugation of “downs” that are seen as inferior compared to the “Ups” are at stake. Highlighting the unjustified overpowering, Warren (2000: 46-47) gives “rapists over their victims” as an example. In this case, the rapist who has a power-advantageous position subordinates the victim. The fourth feature of the OCF is, as Warren (2000: 47) puts, “that it creates, maintains, or perpetuates a conception and practice of *privilege* as belonging to Ups and not to Downs”. In this oppressive system, those classified as “Ups” have some advantages that are peculiar to themselves. Some of these benefits, according to Warren (2000: 47), include driving, living in a desirable neighborhood that requires a high salary to afford, getting a place in a prestigious college as some of the examples of these privileges. The Ups have rights to

benefit from all the opportunities in life which forms the social and the financial gap between the Up and the Down. Last but not least, OCF affirms “a logic of domination, that is, a logical structure of argumentation that “justifies” domination and subordination” (Warren, 2000: 47). In other words, to maintain the power relations in which the one dominates the other in society, there has to be rationale behind it. Warren (2000: 47) argues that this rationale is based on the justification of the supremacy of the Up. A logic of domination provides some supposedly reasonable explanations why the Up is up. For instance, the members of the Up are associated with mind, reason, or rationality whereas the Down is seen as the group that has nothing to do with logic (Warren, 2000: 47). As demonstrated in the example, the domination is justified by creating a perception of superiority that prevails over the others.

Another issue that ecofeminism deals with is the religious side of the dualism in terms of the relationship between the humans and nature. When the Goddess culture was widespread, nature was considered sacred, and women were the source of life. Explaining why human beings see themselves as high ones in nature and keep damaging it, Carol Christ (1990) bases her ideas on the religion. She accepts that the reasons of the destruction of nature does not only drive from humans’ technological, social, economic, and political actions, but also from western religious beliefs (58). In the same work, Christ (1990: 58) argues that theological beliefs make human beings see themselves and the God as separate beings from nature. Therefore, these beliefs do not help to solve the environmental problems. In order to protect nature, there is a necessity of “a profound shift in consciousness” which encourages the idea of the inseparable integrity of all living things without superiority and inferiority (Christ, 1990: 58). As a result, there must be a major transformation in mindset to see all living beings as linked to each other. Accordingly, that contemptuous view of nature in Christianity has taken feminism in other directions.

Seen as inferior in the system of dualities, women and nature were given much more importance in the past. Some ecofeminists believe that today’s women should celebrate their connection to nature as in the past. In her article “Healing the Wounds” Ynestra King (1990: 111), mentions “feminist spirituality movement” which supports such ecofeminist ideas about cherishing the relationship between women and nature. This movement is “an eclectic potpourri of beliefs and practices, with an immanent Goddess (as opposed to the transcendental God)” (King, 1990: 112). Thus, there is no place for the God who sees everything the living beings do in this spirituality. It is also mentioned that this movement is grounded on the unity of the living beings as a whole and acknowledges the women’s connection with nature by seeing them as “earth-bound living beings” who should honor this association and use it for political existence

(King, 1990: 112). It is believed that women's affinity to nature, which the patriarchy has long viewed as a concept to be humiliated and exploited, might actually strengthen women's biological and political existence.

Connecting nature with the women and the pre-modern world, Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstien in their work *Reweaving the World* (1990: xi) state that women began to look for new ways to create harmony between humans and non-humans' life by involving nature:

In their hope for the new creation of new cultures that would live *with* the earth, many women in the West were inspired by the myths and symbols of ancient Goddess cultures in which creation was imaged as female and the Earth was revered as sacred.

The Goddess Culture of the Old Religion opens up a whole new universe for women, separating them from the patriarchy's perception of human beings as superior to nature. Apart from the Goddess culture, Diamond and Orenstein (1990: xi) add that retelling the myths are also one of the sources that inspired women to live with nature without the hierarchical dualities that the patriarchal culture has created. The recounting of old myths and other narratives has also been a way to connect women with nature, as explored in the works of Atwood and Miller in this study.

Referring to the pagan critic Miriam Simos as known as Starhawk, Carolyn Merchant (1990: xvi) states that creating her own feminist witchcraft, Starhawk celebrates the connection between the women and nature by writing about “the ancient goddesses [such as Greek Goddesses Gaia and Demeter] that became the basis for a renewed earth-rooted spirituality” because she believed the necessity of reinterpretation of the ancient myths in Paleolithic and Neolithic ages in which the women's connection with nature was appreciated through Mother Goddess-worshipping. In her article “Witchcraft and Women's Culture” Starhawk (1979: 260), argues that the roots of all civilized cultures come from the Mother Goddess who had the knowledge of nature. In the same work, mentioning many geographical regions like British Isles, Anatolia, Celtic countries, and Ireland, Starhawk maintains that the Mother Goddess is the core of the cultures and her priestesses had also the knowledge of healing power of nature on human body with the herbs that were good for pain, childbirth, and illnesses (261). Therefore, Starhawk bases her feminist thoughts on earth and nature within Witchcraft. In Witchcraft, described as earth religion by Starhawk (1979: 263), there is no room for the dualities that ecofeminism tries to destroy on the grounds of the unjustified dominations. Empowering and encouraging the women, Starhawk (1979: 263) associates the Mother Goddess with women to underline their strength as follows:

She is air---the winds that move in the trees and over the waves, breath. She is the fire of the hearth, of the blazing of bonfire and the fuming volcano; the power of transformation and change. And she is water---the sea, original source of life (...). She is mare, cow, cat, (...), flower, tree, woman. (...). Thou art Goddess. I am Goddess. All that lives (and all that is, lives), all that serves life, is Goddess.

In her other crucial work namely *The Spiral Dance* Starhawk (1989) associates the Goddess with nature itself. She distinguishes the Goddess from the Christian Father God in terms of that she exists inherently in nature. She also sees Witchcraft as a New Religion to bring the old myths and traditions that value nature and women:

The Goddess is not separate from the world. She is the world, and all things in it: moon, sun, earth, star, stone, seed, flowing river, wind, wave, leaf and branch, bud and blossom, fang and claw, woman and man. In Witchcraft, flesh and spirit are one (Starhawk, 1989: 35).

Referring to the remaining negative images of the witches after the persecutions, Starhawk (1989: 35-36) believes that they don't deserve such bad representations just because they were practicing the Old Religion. Therefore, women brought the concept of Goddess back to life today as a symbol of their power. (Starhawk, 1989: 35-36). Based on Starhawk's argument, it can be stated that belief of the Goddess motivates women to protect and care for nature. It underscores the strength that women possess to challenge the patriarchy.

Theorizing her ecofeminist ideas on the "Earth-Based Spirituality", Starhawk (1990: 73) argues that the earth is itself sacred and it derives from three concepts which are "immanence, interconnection, and community". To Starhawk, the notion that sees the world as a living being and accepts its sacredness refers to immanence. The concept of immanence means that there is not a separate God that is superior and controls everything. As Starhawk (1990: 73) puts in the same work, "... that spirit, Goddess, God-whatever you want to call it-is not found outside the world: it is the world, and it is us". In this case, instead of understanding of God that puts itself above all living things, Starhawk (1990: 73) emphasizes that every living thing is intertwined, and it should be understood that "the earth is alive". In order to be conscious about nature, one needs to see the earth as an independent living being. Moreover, interconnection refers to the notion of acknowledging that everything in nature is interconnected (Starhawk, 1990: 74). This means that what a living being experiences affects other living things on earth. Finally, Starhawk (1990: 74) sees the earth as a "living community" in order to create "a place in which [women] can be empowered and in which [women] can be connected to the earth and take action together to heal the Earth". Instead of dominating nature, being in harmony with it both strengthens all living creatures and reinforces the respect and love for nature. This point of view

put forward by Starhawk allows people to understand nature and its inherent value, and it also highlights that, human beings should not isolate themselves from nature.

In a similar vein, according to Zsuzsanna Budapest (1979: 272), the Mother Goddess symbolizes a different way of life without the masculine oppressions internalized by women and, the acknowledgement of women's power. Addressing women, she emphasizes the importance of self-worth in the process of overcoming the teachings and impositions of the Christian masculine system that sees men as superior over women. Hence, it is understood from her points, if women realize their value and strength originating from the Old Religion, their mind will be purified from what they have been taught about the male culture.

In her work "Ecofeminism: Our Roots and Flowering", Charlene Spretnak (1990: 5) mentions that with the help of historic and archeological sources, radical/cultural feminists realized Mother Goddess's religion which valued the women and nature. According to Spretnak (1990: 5), the Divine in this religion is "cosmologically wholesome and healing" and she was "immanent in and around us" rather than being a dominant godly figure controlling and judging everything and she had a sacred bond with nature. Realizing the existence of the ancient Goddess belief, some western feminists such as Starhawk, Spretnak, have found a way out from the male Christian God who domineers everything in life by valuing the male supremacy, and they embrace the Goddess who is immanent in all living beings' lives, namely in nature.

As a radical feminist philosopher, Susan Griffin (1979: xv) also believes that men see themselves in an upper-level position over nature by setting their existence apart from nature and this way of thinking orients their perspective on women as well because women are associated with nature and this connection puts women as well as nature in an inferior position in the patriarchal reasoning. Griffin (1979: 227) opposes this kind of masculine judgements and she embraces the idea of unity between nature and all living beings:

I know I am made from this earth, as my mother's hands were made from this earth, as her dreams came from this earth and all that I know, I know in this earth, the body of the bird, this pen, this paper, these hands, this tongue speaking, all that I know speaks to me through this earth and I long to tell you, you who are earth too (...).

As indicated, it is nature that gives life to living beings and ensures their existence. Every living thing is a part of nature's wholeness, not a distinct entity. By opposing the idea that men are superior to nature, Griffin highlights intrinsic feature of nature. She believes that women's involvement in nature is a challenge against the men and their exploitative power.

In the literary sense, Atwood's "Circe/Mud Poems" is a work concerning the female identity associated with nature as the poems explore the dualism, dominations, and the Goddess culture of Witchcraft. Although Atwood's work does not have a linear narrative, it provides an area of study to analyze the female identity in ecofeminist perspective. In the poems, the ecofeminism lies in Circe's desire to create a new identity and get rid of the role that is given to her. This pursuit ends up with the formation of an alternative island where she can live a harmonious life with nature. She imagines a second island which is free from patriarchal oppressions and, as a result, she builds a new life which unifies her with nature.

Similarly, Miller's *Circe* has also ecofeminist characteristics since Circe tries to get rid of dualities, oppressions and cherishes the women-nature relationship through witchcraft. Starting to tell her story from her childhood, Circe continues with how her physical appearance makes her less favorite in the family she lives in. She also includes his first love, Glaucos, and his first spell to Scylla, in her story. Being exiled to a desert island as a punishment for the spell, Circe gets raped, which becomes the turning point of her story in terms of Circe's witchcraft. Following that, the romantic relationship of Circe and Odysseus is also retold from her own perspective. All the while, the development of Circe's personality and identity becomes the main focus of the story. Circe's family who sees her as the other, projects the notion of the hierarchical dualism that is one of the main arguments of ecofeminism. Her exile might be the first step of Circe's liberation from the masculine and hierarchical order she is in. In this way, she may rule her own life by getting closer to nature. Reviving the Goddess Culture in her island, Circe embraces nature through her witchcraft.

In this thesis, the primary arguments of ecofeminism are demonstrated by analyzing Circe's motivations to create her own identity and make her voice heard in the works of Atwood and Miller. In this respect, the first chapter explores Margaret Atwood's "Circe/Mud Poems" and reveals that Circe's objections to the given gender roles and male oppressions through dualities overlap with the motivations of ecofeminist theory. In a similar vein, in the second chapter, Madeline Miller's *Circe* is examined within the ecofeminist framework in terms of dualities, male oppressions, and dominations. Moreover, it is explored that the source of Circe's witchcraft may come from nature. Thus, the relationship between Circe and nature is observed through her witchcraft within the scope of ecofeminism.

CHAPTER I
ECOFEMINIST READING OF CIRCE AS A WITCH IN MARGARET
ATWOOD'S "CIRCE/MUD POEMS" (1974)

"The old myths are not wrong, we see; only incomplete."

(Juhasz, 1979: 27)

Being a series of poems retelling the story of the ancient witch Goddess Circe and Odysseus, "Circe/ Mud Poems" in Atwood's collection of *You are Happy* (1974) was written during the second wave of feminism. In her work *Transformations in Feminist Poetry* (1979), Suzanne Juhasz (1979) examines the alterations on feminist poetry in different periods of feminism. She states that the first-wave feminist poetry has its own characteristics related to its form and themes:

The emergence of feminist poetry can be characterized by directness and accessibility in form; a rhetoric of statement and honesty; a personal voice; language literal or symbolic rather than figurative. For subject matter, lives: the personal, private lives of women (1979: 23).

Grounding her work on some works of the female poets written between the years 1968 and 1978 to analyze the second-wave feminist poetry, Juhasz (1979: 23) asserts that in the second wave feminist poetry, "[d]omestic interiors give way to inner places" by referring to the mind consisting of dreams, imaginations, and thoughts along with the combination of "myth and history". Juhasz (1979: 23) extends her analysis by stating that in this poetry, in order to define the source of the women's wisdom and power, the images which connect women with nature and archetypal myths were used.

In this period, rewriting Homer's *Odyssey* "to explore the story's sexual politics, rather than its implications for art making", Margaret Atwood "saw in it a metaphor for the meeting (or collision) of patriarchal manhood and feminine power occurring in her own time" (Yarnall, 1994: 186). The story that Atwood accounts can be analyzed from the ecofeminist perspective since *Circe/ Mud Poems* was written through the lens of a witch, Circe. As mentioned before, ecofeminism brings ecological issues and feminist point of view together by aiming not only to protect nature and destroy the dualities which direct the creation of gender identities but also constructing a new way of life in which there is no oppression of women and nature. Instead, there is harmony among all living beings. Dilek Direnç⁴ (2008: 129) states that "Circe/Mud

⁴ Translations are by AB, unless otherwise attributed.

Poems” is a collection of poems written on the alteration of ideologies, culture, society and gender perceptions. Accordingly, *Circe/ Mud Poems* (1974) addresses to the concerns of ecofeminism in terms of the oppressions of women and nature, the sacredness of nature and its connection with women, and dualities creating the hierarchy between culture and nature.

Veronica House (2014: 77), in the chapter “Margaret Atwood’s Transformed Circe”, reveals that Atwood deals with unveiling negative constructed gender roles and also, she tries to change the perception of the myths which are believed not to be changed:

[S]he sought to expose the dangerous gender constructions within the existing stories that she felt had become so engrained that they not only reflected human behavior but influenced her contemporaries’ actions, ensnaring them in limiting and dehumanizing roles. She wanted to shatter the belief that archetypes are inflexible, that the familiar endings to stories are fixed, that the gender roles assigned to the sexes through the ages are inevitable.

Atwood tries to unveil the gender problems in the old stories. The reason for this is that the old stories affect contemporary human demeanors and therefore constrain the gender roles that can even be “dehumanizing”. In regard to these archaic stories, Atwood does not ignore or abandon them just because their ends are fixed; she used them as a challenge against the patriarchy (House, 2014: 77). In a similar vein, analyzing the same work of Atwood from the feminist point of view, Madison Rozells (2020: 62) argues that while unveiling the gender stereotyping which put the women in an inferior position to men, Atwood presents Circe as a witch woman who sometimes opposes these gender roles, and sometimes she conforms them passively in the poems. This depiction of Circe may imply that to change and standing against is not always that easy for a woman; she needs to make an effort. Although Atwood still sticks to the original story in order not to lose its importance, she lets Circe look for a different role in her version so that Circe can have her own voice (Rozells, 2020: 62). In other words, instead of removing the myths which can be seen as the source of the contemporary patriarchal behaviors, Atwood sees their value and foregrounds their female point of view. Therefore, in the series of “Circe/Mud Poems”, initially seeming to have accepted the gender role assigned to her, Circe presents an alternative world, an island at the end of the series. Circe’s concern about the gender roles and conflicts is manifested in her desire to have a different island.

Susan Carpenter Conner (1982: 1) examines Circe in Atwood’s *Circe/ Mud Poems* as a woman who can assist contemporary women in discovering their actual identities which are not constructed by males and the patriarchal society. Carpenter (1982: 4-5) asserts that *Circe/ Mud Poems* demonstrates “the woman's struggle to identify, define, and adapt to her world”. In the process of male and female identity construction, it is crucial to recognize both genders’ roles

in the past and present. Circe as a witch woman can be examined as a traditional female image in the past to shed light on contemporary women. In this regard, connecting her ideas about women's behaviors to witch-hunts, Mona Chollet⁵ (2020: 38) argues that today's women have inherited the oppressed behaviors which have been developed and maintained for centuries because women, in the past, were forced to repress themselves as a result of witch hunts exposing prejudices against them. In the same vein, Carpenter (1982: 5) notes that Atwood revives Circe in her poems to "reexamine women's inherited roles". Being oppressed and passive, hiding their identities and following the gender expectations have been passed down to women for years. Atwood analyzes and challenges what has been done to women's social behaviors for ages. As John Wilson Foster (1977: 18) puts it, "[Circe] is a contemporary woman renouncing the roles men have created for her". In other words, Circe is not pleased with what is attributed to her; she looks for a way to change it in "Circe/Mud Poems". This point concerns the horror and oppression women faced during the witch hunts in the past and how it is reflected in the behavior of women in the contemporary world. In this sense, what is emphasized here is that passing down from generation to generation after witch-hunts, women's some social attitudes regarding what is expected from them might be reflected in the series through Circe.

As a criticism of the masculine dominance over femininity and nature, the first poem of "Circe/Mud Poems" is of importance in the series. Describing the environment in a dark tone, Circe tells the beginning of the story in italics. According to Rozells (2020: 62-63), this poem is written in italics because it is Circe's foresight of Odysseus' visit to Circe's island rather than a story that actually happened. It is Circe's vision about what is going to happen. As mentioned in the introduction of this study, masculinity formed by dualities has the power over women and nature. In this regard, this poem foresees the femininity and masculinity conflicts arising from male hierarchical dualism.

In the first poem, Circe's forest is portrayed as "burned and sparse" instead of a forest where lush dense trees commonly come to mind by Atwood (1974: 46). Considering that this poem is an oracle, "burned and sparse" forest implies the upcoming destruction. Rozells (2020: 63) argues that "[n]ot only does this poem prophesize the arrival of Odysseus to Circe's island, but it also seems to predict the havoc that his arrival will wreak on Circe and her territory". In other words, this poem foreshadows the chaos and the conflicts arriving with a man in a female world. Circe knows what will happen to her from the original stories such as Homer's. Therefore, she tells the end of the story from the very beginning. The story begins when "[t]he

⁵ Translations are by AB, unless otherwise attributed.

boat glides as if there is water” (Atwood, 1974: 46). With the arrival of this boat, there comes the power that gives harm the forest as a representation of nature in the poem:

Red fireweed splatters the air

it is power, power

impinging, breaking over the seared rock

in a slow collapse of petals (Atwood, 1974: 46, original italics)

Rozells (2020: 63) maintains that “boat” represents the masculine power in culture referring to Odysseus and the “petals” refers to Circe since flowers’ petals are often linked to femininity. Therefore, petals can be viewed as an image of female genital organ, which will be damaged soon. It is implied that through the rape that will happen to Circe later in the story, femininity will be overpowered “*in a slow collapse of petals*” (Atwood, 1974: 46, original italics). As a result, it is observed that masculinity will dominate and gradually overwhelm femininity in Circe’s vision. Apart from being a foresight, this poem implies the previous story from Homer’s where Circe had a passive role and was manipulated by Odysseus.

As it is mentioned in the introduction, both in mythology and Atwood’s poem, Circe is associated with nature from which she gets her power. Referring to this connection, in Rozzels’ (2020: 63) analysis, the poem prophesies that along with the “*petals*”, the forest will also be damaged by the destructive male power: it will be “*burned and sparse* (Atwood, 1974: 46, original italics). That is to say, representing masculinity and culture, Odysseus is against femininity and nature represented by Circe. In terms of the dualities of femininity/masculinity and culture/nature, this poem foreshadows the gender conflicts and male oppressions on women and nature through the story of Circe and Odysseus. Yarnall (1994: 187-188) analyzes the first poem as follows:

The first poem I interpret as a comment on the disaster of patriarchal history (46), Odysseus approaches Circe through a charred landscape, where the trees are sparse and blunted Atwood does not tell us explicitly what disasters have seared this Aiaia, made it into a place that can barely sustain life; she assumes that we already know. Because Circe is identified with her island’s landscape throughout the series, the wounded state of the environment reflects her own condition and, even more widely, that of other powerful women for whom history has been a wasteland.

In other words, Circe relates with her island throughout the series, and the damaged condition of the island symbolizes her own plight as a woman. Yarnall’s emphasis on “the disaster of patriarchal history” demonstrates that male domination not only keeps women subordinated but also damages women’s identities. Although it is not mentioned clearly, the negative effects

of masculinity such as gender inequalities, masculine violence on women, the conflicts that the cultural dualities create are implied through the feminine representation of the island, Aiaia which draws parallelism with Circe.

In the second poem of Atwood's *Circe Mud Poems* (1974), Circe describes how the male visitors of her island have been the same as one another (47). She tells what kind of men she is not interested in anymore by mentioning fantastic male characters:

Men with the head of eagles
no longer interest me
or pig-men, or those who can fly
with the air of wax and feathers

Or those who take off their clothes
To reveal other clothes
Or those with skin of blue leather (Atwood, 1974: 47).

Towards the end of the poem, she informs the readers about what she actually wants:

I search instead for the others,
the ones left over,
the ones who have escaped from these
mythologies with barely their lives;
they have real faces and hands, they think
of themselves as
wrong somehow, they would rather be trees. (Atwood, 1979: 47)

According to Gordon Johnston (1980), Circe is not into the men who have supernatural features like Daedalus or Superman. Daedalus is the one "who can fly with the air of wax and feathers" and Superman is the one "with skin of blue leather" (Atwood, 1974: 47). As it is stated in the same work, this kind of men seem usual to her and she looks for a way out from these violent, damaging men. From the beginning of the series, Circe starts to imply her desire to alter her life in this myth. This witch is fed up with the men who oppress her (Johnston, 1980). She looks "instead for the others/the ones left over, /the ones who have escaped from these/mythologies with barely their lives;/ they have real faces and hands, they think/ of themselves as /wrong somehow, they would rather be trees." (Atwood, 1974: 47). According to Rozells (2020: 66), "the others" Circe mentions are "the ones" who have no patriarchal values to oppress women

and nature. Therefore, it can be argued that Circe refers to the “*value-hierarchical thinking*” here that classifies all living beings as ‘Up’ and ‘Down’ as Karen Warren (2000: 46) argues. Circe and “the others” are devalued as “down” of the culture while men with masculine power are seen as “Up”. Accordingly, Circe puts herself and “the others” in the same class where the culture sees them as “the other” and makes them “think of themselves as somehow wrong” (Atwood, 1979: 47). However, Circe would rather be with the ones whom she shares the similar experiences like being the other and esteeming nature as she does. She says that “they would rather be trees” so that Circe as a witch associated with nature, could challenge against the unjustified dominations over women, the others and nature by creating a new life which is in harmony with human beings and nature.

In the third poem’s first and second stanzas, Circe repeatedly says “It was not my fault” by referring to her transformations (Atwood, 1974: 48). In this poem, readers hear Circe’s defense on what happened to the travelers visiting her and being turned into swine. Nicola Leporini (2015: 40) assesses that Circe’s traditional witch role, which is turning the men into pigs, was rejected by herself in the first two stanzas as follows:

It was not my fault, these animals
who once were lovers

it was not my fault, the snouts
and hooves, the tongues
thickening and rough, the mouths grown over
with teeth and fur (Atwood 48).

Clearly, Circe draws attention to her notorious acts. She describes the animals she transformed from men and openly says that she has nothing to do with them. According to Direnç (2008: 128), Circe talks about her responsibility which was to watch the transformations of men without doing anything by saying that she was not the person who turned these men into beasts because those men turned themselves into the creatures without her contributions; they have been already creatures. In a similar vein, Foster (1977: 18) says that “it was not she who turned the men into swine, she asserts, but their own masculine nature no longer at one with the female sea on whose rim they have been spilled”. Circe states in Atwood’s poem that the transformations are not her fault, but rather the men’s masculinity. It implies that if they did not have the oppressive power on her, these men would not have been turned into beasts. Besides, in her work Judith Yarnall (1994: 188) questions whether women’s unresponsiveness also

contributes to men's cruelty. That is, did Circe's passivity strengthen the cruel attitude of men towards her? Yarnall answers this as that women's passivity and male "bestiality" are "two moves in the same game" (188). Namely, the more women become submissive, the more men will be cruel and oppressive or vice versa. These two interdependent reactions are the cause and effect of one another. Though it was not her fault, but she had a part in it by being passive. Moreover, Lake (2015: 21) argues that Circe states her passivity in these lines by giving impression of being passive as her only choice in the myth. All she did was just to sit and watch what was going on around her regardless of her consent and she did not do anything because this role was given to her in this story (Lake, 2015: 21). As a result, it can be argued that Circe represents "the feminine natural and domestic sphere" that Plumwood (2013: 213-214) suggests in which passivity is attributed to the women against the active power of masculinity over women and nature. In this duality, Circe's passivity makes the men more like beasts that are oppressive and cruel towards women and nature because she did not say anything to stand against the patriarchy: "I did not say anything, / I sat and watched, they happened/ because I did not say anything" (Atwood, 1974: 50).

In the fourth poem, Circe draws attention to how people benefit from her power as a witch when they need her. For healing purposes, people visit Circe and expect her to treat them:

People come from all over to consult me, bringing their limbs which have
unaccountably fallen off, they don't know why, my front porch is waist deep in
hands, bringing their blood hoarded in pickle jars, bringing their fears about their
hearts, which they either can or can't hear at night (Atwood, 1974: 49).

As the poem proceeds, Circe highlights people's ungrateful attitude towards her. They come and see her for their pain and expect magic or spell from Circe despite their hatred towards her existence as a witch.

They offer me their pain,
hoping in return for a word, a word, any word from those they have assaulted
daily, with shovels, axes, electric saws, the silent ones the ones they accused of
being silent because they would not speak in the received language (Atwood, 1974: 49).

In these lines, holding "shovels, axes, electric saws," in their hands, those people represent the men exploiting nature seeing themselves as the one what only matters in life. They hold women and nature in contempt since they are "the silent ones" who do not speak the same dualistic patriarchal language in which culture subdues nature. Therefore, Circe refers to the devaluation of women and nature seen as the other in society.

This poem also presents Circe as a challenge against her traditional role of a witch. As Leporini (2015: 41) suggests, Atwood's Circe is a "prophetess" who is in touch with nature, not a scary witch who enchants her visitors in this poem. In other words, Circe follows the philosophy of the Mother Goddess in Witchcraft through whom the women's connection with nature was appreciated back in the day. In the prehistorical societies, women were believed to have a special, unique power in nature thanks to their ability for reproduction and they were appreciated for this (Federici, 2019: 25-28). In this respect, following the Mother Goddess who exists inherently in nature, Circe symbolizes the witches who practiced Witchcraft and took their healing power from nature: "I spend my days with my head pressed to the earth, to stones, to shrubs, /collecting the few muted syllables left over; in the evenings I dispense them" (Atwood, 1979: 49). By calling Circe "priestess rather than a goddess", Yarnall (1994: 187) suggests that "she is connected with sacred natural forces, with the moon -to which she has built temples- and with the earth- to which she keeps her head pressed, hoping to collect 'the few muted syllables left over'". Yarnall's words may refer to the Mother Goddess. In this case, Circe may be seen as a priestess of Witchcraft. Thus, Circe revives the image of the women who were associated with nature and appreciated for their power in the prehistoric times (Juhasz, 1979: 27). Through the end of the poem, the nature association of Circe becomes clearer: "Come away with me, he said, we will live on a desert island. / I said, I am a desert island. It was not what he had in mind" (Atwood, 1974: 49). Circe is the desert island where "everything is worn down, the grass, the roots, the soil, nothing is left but the bared rock" (Atwood, 1974: 49). In other words, Circe draws a parallelism between herself and the island in terms of being exploited and harmed. Circe refers to herself as "a desert island" not only to emphasize her connection to nature, but also to show how patriarchy damages both women and nature. As a result, recognizing that patriarchy exploits both nature and women, Circe underlines that she and the island are both oppressed by the male domination.

In the fifth poem, Circe bemoans her inaction, Odysseus' arrival, and the exploitative power and identity he wields. As Rozells (2020: 70) assesses, Circe starts with a direct tone when she starts to talk about her passiveness: "I made no choice / I decided nothing" (Atwood, 1974: 50). These lines show that she had no active response against what Odysseus has done to her. With the arrival of Odysseus, Circe and her island are being exploited by the destructive male power (House, 2014: 94). Odysseus comes to the island "in [his] stupid boat" (Atwood, 1974: 50). Leporini (2015: 43) assesses this arrival as [t]he metaphor of territorial invasion" like taking control of somewhere one does not own. Odysseus enters into Circe's island with an intrusive effect. Circe is angry at his boat since it represents his superiority, which is "stupid".

It can be deduced that Odysseus comes to the island to oppress Circe and her island because he represents Warren's "Ups" who are better than "Downs" and he acts in "a logic of domination" (2000: 46). Because Odysseus has his boat as a product of culture, he presents himself as the superior one and he justifies his oppressive power in this way. As a result, his boat gives him right to be in the island without asking Circe's opinion or consent.

As the poem proceeds, Circe tells that Odysseus appeared in the island as if he needed help: "your disjointed body, jagged / as a shipwreck, / skinny-ribbed, blue-eyed, scorched, thirsty, the usual, / pretending to be – what? A survivor? (Atwood, 1974: 50). Circe senses Odysseus's intention to have whatever Circe owns:

Those who say they want nothing

Want everything.

It was not this greed

That offended me, it was the lies (Atwood, 1974: 50).

Circe uses her own experiences to explain Odysseus and his men's avarice. Circe recognizes that, despite their seeming need for assistance, their demands will never cease because they "want everything". The greed of the men does not offend Circe since she implies that being greedy is a typical behavior of men. What Circe is angry at is that he lies to benefit from her: "You said you planned; but you planned no journey/ and we both knew it" (Atwood, 1974: 50). She also blames Odysseus by saying "you think of nothing, / your mind, you say, / is like your hands, vacant: / vacant is not innocent" (Atwood, 1974: 50). Rozells (2020: 72) argues that "Vacant is not innocent" because Circe considers that Odysseus does not do anything to change his limiting gender role as a masculine violent power that is programmed to take advantage of the female gender and nature. In other words, Odysseus is not innocent although he seems he does not do anything. He uses his exploitative masculine power on Circe and her island.

In the sixth poem, Circe questions Odysseus' capabilities by the following words: "There must be more for you to do" (Atwood, 1974: 51). Even these initial words imply that Circe thinks she has better abilities that do not set limits on herself. Also, as Yarnall (1994: 188) puts it, "Circe has no respect for Odysseus's supposedly heroic deeds". Circe says that all Odysseus does is to allow himself "to be shoved/ by the wind from coast to coast to coast, /boot on the boat prow/ to hold the wooden body/ under, soul in control" (Atwood, 1974: 51). Suzanne Juhasz (1979: 27) argues that these lines show his "goal-oriented" and "violent" side without spirituality. This feature of Odysseus may refer to Plumwood's (2013: 213) "masculine rational sphere" in which there is no room for feelings and values. As it is mentioned before,

nature and the non-human world are excluded in this rational sphere. Therefore, Odysseus is busy with being a hero and travelling in his boat by associating himself with mind which controls his soul. However, as Juhasz (1979: 27) assesses, compared to Odysseus; Circe is represented as a mythical figure whose wisdom and knowledge are mentioned in the lines as follows: “Ask who keeps the wind/ Ask what is sacred” (Atwood, 1974: 51). Asked by Circe, these questions are expected to lead Odysseus to a different direction. Circe asks Odysseus these thought-provoking rhetorical questions in order to remind him that there are more important values in life than becoming a hero, such as the sacredness of nature. From the ecofeminist perspective, it can be stated that Goddess belief is revealed in the sixth poem through Circe’s questions. According to Starhawk (1989: 35), the Goddess and nature are intertwined concepts since the Goddess can be found inherently in nature (35). Starhawk (1990: 73) also notes that nature is sacred and immanent, which means that there is no superior God figure that controls every living thing. That is, she emphasizes that the Goddess and nature are not distinct from one another. Accordingly, Circe may demonstrate her ecofeminist belief here by alluding that what is sacred and keeps the wind is nature itself. According to Circe, Odysseus must get rid of his worldly ambitions and return to nature. She implies that returning to nature might be a way for him to be more than a traveler.

Atwood, through Circe, implies Odysseus’s “secular” attitude towards life with a question (Juhasz, 1974: 27): “Don't you get tired of wanting to live forever?” (Atwood, 1974: 51). Also, Circe asks him when he is going to stop being violent: “Don't you get tired of killing/those whose deaths have been predicted/and are therefore dead already?” (Atwood, 1974: 51). Again, through Circe, Atwood indicates these two characters’ roles that confined them in this myth that there is no escape. Circe’s questions demonstrate this confinement of the gender roles given to Odysseus (Lake, 2015: 21): “Don't you get tired of wanting to live forever?” / “Don’t you get tired of wanting / to live forever?”, “Don’t you get tired of saying Onward?” (Atwood, 1974: 50). Lake (2015: 23) maintains that these questions underscore that Odysseus’s role is also constructed by the patriarchal society because he is the one who oppresses, and Circe is the afflicted one and it seems that they were confined within this story with its gender inequalities. Lake (2015: 21) continues that if they stay in this myth forever, their roles are not going to be changed and they will be stuck to the gender roles which make them follow “the same patriarchy-driven, stereotype-fueled routine” which is not what Circe wants in these poems. In regard to the roles, Rozells (2020: 72) asserts that by inviting Odysseus to find the meaning of life in nature, Circe wants to convince Odysseus to believe that life is more than pursuing secular actions such as travelling on the boat to reach and get new places

as it was written in the original myth. As a representation of the Mother Goddess, Circe sees flesh and spirit as one; they cannot separate from each other, as stated by Starhawk (1989: 35) referring to Witchcraft. Therefore, she wants him to question what is sacred than the power since she believes in nature and its holiness (Rozells, 2020: 72-73). As Yarnall (1994: 188-189) analyses, Circe “perceives the poverty of the dualistic, over-under way of thinking and living that has resulted in a massive devaluation of body, woman, and nature in Western culture”. Therefore, the superior position of man and culture against woman and nature in dualities is criticized in this poem.

In the eighth poem, Odysseus shows up with his best look: “You stand at the door, / bright as an icon, / dressed in your thorax” (Atwood, 1974: 53). He wears his war costume. Direnç (2008: 125) states that constructed gender identities of men and women formed in inequalities, keep women and men away from being themselves and confine both genders to the molds. Namely, men and women might find themselves trapped in the roles constructed in inequalities for them. This is just like Odysseus’s thorax that “fits [him] almost like a real skin” (Atwood, 1974: 53). Odysseus so strongly adopts this violent character written to him in this mythical story that his thorax is almost like a part of his body. Rozells (2020) argues that the description of Odysseus’s appearance implies “a physical representation of destruction and danger” (74). To put it another way, Odysseus’s look may symbolize the physical harm and male aggression. Besides, the emphasis on Odysseus’s thorax might reflect his potential behaviors. Gaard (2001: 158) states that the way human beings treat one another and the way they act towards nature are linked. Just as Odysseus does not hesitate to inflict violence in wars, it can be said that he may treat nature the same way because of the place of nature in dualism.

As the poem proceeds, Circe tells that Odysseus comes to her island with some expectations: “You are impervious / with hope, it hardens you,” (Atwood, 1974: 53). These expectations shine “in [his] hands like axes” (Atwood, 1974: 53). In these lines, Circe emphasizes that she is aware of what Odysseus is capable of doing to her and the island, as well as his eagerness to meet his expectations. Considering that axes refer to the power of damaging, it can be said that Odysseus’s expectation is to damage, to hurt Circe and her island representing nature to benefit from them (Lake, 2015: 22). As the superior power in dualism, Odysseus brings his destructive behaviors to the woman and nature. Although the words “hope” and “joy” evoke the good, Odysseus utilizes them for noxious purposes on Circe and her island since he draws the portrayal of physical violence in this poem (Rozells, 2020: 74). Circe is aware of this bitter truth (Lake, 2015: 22). Referring to the dualities between men and women, Direnç (2008:

125)⁶ explains this bitter truth by stating that men's representation of power and his using it over women force men to certain learned behaviors. Therefore, Circe asks Odysseus: "If I allow you what you say / you want, even the day after / this, will you hurt me?" (Atwood, 1974: 53). Here, hurting a woman is one of the learned male behaviors that Odysseus has. According to Lake (2015: 22), given that Circe already knows the answers to these questions because she has been through this before, it can be argued that these questions are asked rhetorically by Circe knowing that Odysseus will harm her. Lake (2015: 23) considers that Circe possibly desires a different end in this story by taking Odysseus's attention to their roles through the questions. Therefore, she wants Odysseus to think about his role given to him by the society since he has no intention to change the existing pattern that he follows whereas Circe seeks a way to change it (Lake, 2015: 22-23). In a similar vein, Susan Carpenter Conner (1982: 4) argues in her work that Circe demands a different identity for both of them throughout the poems. The options of these two characters are limited in this traditional story. If Odysseus hurts her, she will be scared of him, if he doesn't, she will hate him. There are no other options in this myth for Odysseus and the particular reason for this circumstance is the gender roles which are given to them in the story to construct male and female identities (Lake, 2015: 23): "to be feared, to be despised, / these are your choices" (Atwood, 1974: 53).

In the ninth poem, Circe directly talks to Odysseus about her possessions. She seems that she introduces her island to him by showing herself that she is ready to share as follows:

There are so many things I want
you to have. This is mine, this
tree, I give you its name (Atwood, 1974),

As demonstrated, Circe is willing to share what she has in the island. According to Leporini (2015: 43), Circe makes an effort to share what she has in the island for the sake of ending the conflicts between her and Odysseus. Circe is aware of the conflicts created by the dualities between women, men and nature. Therefore, she would like to reconcile by sharing. She continues as follows:

This is mine, this island, you can have
the rocks, the plants
that spread themselves flat over
the thin soil, I renounce them

⁶ Translations are by AB, unless otherwise attributed.

You can have this water,

This flesh, I abdicate,

I watch you, you claim

Without noticing it,

You know how to take (Atwood, 1974: 54).

Odysseus is entitled to have everything he desires because he believes it is his natural right. Plumwood (2013) explains this with the masculine sphere “where human freedom and control are exercised over affairs and over nature, ...” (213). Odysseus comes to the island and claims whatever there is. Circe knows that Odysseus will demand her body and the island by referring to the male oppressions over women and nature. She acts ahead and gives what she has. Besides, As Direnç (2008: 123) argues, there is a stress on the women’s roles which are giving, renouncing, abdicating in the hierarchical dualities while men can “have”, “claim” and, “take”: Circe is open to share; Odysseus is to take (123). In short, this poem refers to the gender roles, male oppressions and the ecofeminist dualities related to the genders and nature.

Veronica House (2014: 93) explains Circe’s abdication in the ninth poem with the female inherited behaviors by describing her as “self-destructive” which is a kind of a deep-rooted cultural behavior of women. Namely, according to House, women have inherited behaviors that harm themselves emotionally or physically from women in the past. House (2014: 93) explains her argument by stating that although Circe would like to get rid of the dualities, she stays with the social norms as for Atwood’s Circe is not only a woman who is victimized by a man, but also a woman who gives the full authority to a man by her choice for the sake of reconciliation. House’s emphasis on self-destruction refers to Circe’s offering of everything she owns to Odysseus. This kind of attitude might have negative consequences for Circe. Her desire to give whatever she has may cause Odysseus to assume complete power. In this way, Circe would create a world ruled by a man. This seems dangerous in terms of creating power relations based on dualism. As a giver, Circe would be placed in an inferior position while Odysseus would become superior as a taker in the dualism.

In the tenth poem, Odysseus sexually abuses Circe as he has the role of the oppressor. Lake (2015: 23) analyzes that seeing her body as another object to take from Circe, Odysseus demands it by sexually assaulting her to take her power, her words, and turn her into a victim in this story:

Holding my arms down
 holding my head down by the hair
 mouth gouging my face
 and neck, fingers groping into my flesh.

(Let go, this is extortion, you force my body to confess
 too fast and
 incompletely, its words
 tongueless and broken) (Atwood, 1974: 55).

This scene perfectly fits in Warren's 'Oppressive Conceptual Framework' in terms of the power exercised as "'power-over' power" by Odysseus (Warren, 2000: 46). Odysseus's rape on Circe represents the unjustified overpowering of men over women and nature. Odysseus has a power-advantageous position and subordinates Circe by sexually victimizing her. Considering that Circe signifies nature throughout the series, it can also be argued that this assault is against nature as well. Towards the end of the poem, Circe says "[i]f I stop believing you/ this would be hate/ why do you need this? / What do you want me to admit? (Atwood, 1974: 55). These questions are for the oppressor who can be analyzed as the "Self" of Beauvoir (1989: 163) who wants to dominate and exploit the one whom he sees as "the other". It can be seen that how much Circe would like to end all this male tyranny over herself and nature in these questions.

In the eleventh poem, Circe is talking about what happens after the rape. She is forced to put herself under the domination of Odysseus's desires. Lake assesses that Odysseus's face is everywhere Circe looks. "Stretching" Circe's face over his "face of steel" "like rubber", Odysseus in this way, could see himself on Circe's face (Lake, 2015: 24). Here, being a powerful goddess who has magical powers, Circe is overpowered by a man and degraded to a reflecting object which mirrors the rapist's image (Lake, 2015: 24). Circe tells how she succumbs to the male oppression and domination:

My face, my other faces stretching over
 Stretching over it like
 Rubber, like flowers opening
 And closing, like rubber,
 Like liquid steel,
 Like steel. Face of steel

Look at me and see your reflection (Atwood, 1979: 56).

As reflected in the last line, Circe's identity is wiped away by Odysseus who dominates Circe through the rape, and she becomes like him: "Look at me and see your reflection" (Rozells, 2020: 76). After the rape, Circe can't get it off her mind and feels that her own identity has been erased. She sees herself as if she has given in to male dominance.

In the twelfth poem, there is a contrast between Odysseus and Circe. The poem starts as follows:

The fist, withered and strung
on a chain around my neck
wishes to hold on
to me, commands
your transformation (Atwood, 1974: 57)

Whereas Odysseus is strong, Circe is powerless. Circe's fist, "her talisman" as Alessandra Occhiolini (2016: 10) puts, which allows her to practice her magical power on men to transform them in Atwood's universe is seized by Odysseus. Meanwhile, nothing happens to Odysseus' strength, he comes out of this situation stronger. The poem gives her strength as follows:

but you are protected,
you do not snarl
you do not change

In the hard slot of your mouth
your teeth remain fixed,
zippered to a silver curve;
nothing rusts (Atwood, 1974: 57).

Odysseus's power does not "rust". Circe cannot stand up to this never-ending power. In the end, "the fist stutters, and gives up" (Atwood, 1974: 57). Addressing the men who never get harmed while oppressing women, Circe repeats "you" and "your" in the poem to blame the patriarchy that leaves her choiceless and powerless (Rozells, 2020: 77). As a result, Circe becomes voiceless without her talisman around her neck, and she cannot defend herself. Veronica House (2014: 96) assesses that this fist both refers to the emblem of Women's

Liberation Movement⁷ and “a woman’s power to fight back against her aggressor”. When her talisman is taken from her, Circe becomes vulnerable to the male domination, and she cannot fight back. Yarnall (1994: 189) asserts this talisman image in the twelfth poem as follows:

Up to this point she has worn a sacred talisman around her neck, a withered fist whose fingers rub together in the “worn moon rituals” of goddess-based religion. This charm may well be Circe’s moly. Now Odysseus unbuckles the fist, symbolically breaking her connection with the angry ancient powers that have protected and sustained her.

According to these remarks, the talisman is the connection between Mother Goddess and Circe. Odysseus overpowers Circe who is under the protection of the Mother Goddess who cherishes the relationship between nature and women. Hence, she gets no longer power and protection from nature.

However, in the thirteenth poem, Circe does not give up her freedom which is something she thinks she must have. She yearns for freedom through her fist (Lake, 2015: 24). Although it is painful, her fist has the ability to get rid of the patriarchal oppressions caused by dualities in which men overpower women:

This is not something that can be renounced
it must renounce,

It lets go of me
And I open
I open like a hand cut off at the wrist

(It is the arm
feels pain

But the severed hand
the hand clutches at freedom) (Atwood, 1974: 58).

Circe has the urge to escape from the role she was given. She would like to get out of this Homeric patriarchal story in which she is stuck and subjugated (Lake, 2015: 24). Here, she totally understands that she must go away from the patriarchy, and she has to work hard to get rid of her passivity and earn her independence.

⁷ The emblem of the second-wave feminism on which there is a female symbol with a fist in it.

In the sixteenth poem, there is a reference to the title, *Circe/ Mud Poems*, signifying woman /nature association. Circe tells a story which a traveler once told her about “mud woman” made of mud, as her name suggests, by him and his friend:

These two boys created this mud woman for their sexual needs: She began at the neck and ended at the knees and elbows: they stuck to the essentials, Every sunny day they would row the across to the island where she lived, in the afternoon when the sun had warmed her, and make love to her, sinking with ecstasy into her soft moist belly, her brown wormy flesh where small weeds had already rooted. [...]. Afterwards they would repair her, making her hips more spacious, enlarging her breasts with their shining stone nipples (Atwood, 1974: 61).

According to Lake (2015: 25), the act of creating a woman out of mud is insulting for women since it refers to the male power which shapes a woman based on men’s desires and ideals without accepting women’s existence as human beings and degrades her to an object whose function is just to satisfy men. In this sub-story, which implies that the social and political existence of women is ignored, the men reconstruct a woman according to their wishes. The two boys created this mud woman as sexually target-oriented by being stuck “to the essentials” referring to the female parts like hips, vagina and breasts that sexually attract men stereotypically (Lake, 2015: 25). After they have sex with her, they reshape her again and again and turn her into the woman they want in their imagination.

According to Jeri Kroll (2001: 127), dominating the woman who does not take a stand against their demands, this traveler’s love for the mud woman was impeccable because she is an obedient silent woman since she has got no head and mouth:

His love for her was perfect, he could say anything to her,
into her he spilled his entire life. She was swept away in a
sudden flood. He said no woman since then has equaled her (Atwood, 1974: 61).

It can be stated that women have changed since then and they are no more overpowered by men (Lake, 2015: 26). The traveler sees the mud woman as the perfect one who fits his patriarchal ideals since this woman does not think or talk about their domination. Those boys just can do whatever they want to her to fulfill their sexual desires.

The symbol of the mud woman is one of the most significant elements in the series. According to Jeri Kroll (2001: 127), the mud woman can be associated with Circe. Also, Lake (2015) suggests that it is seen in the title of the poems, “*Circe/Mud Poems*”, Circe is the Mud Woman (26). Just like Circe and her visitors such as Odysseus, the mud woman also lives in an island where some visitors (the two boys in the traveler’s story) comes to her for some benefits. Moreover, as Circe implies that she is nature in the fourth poem by saying “I am a desert island”

(Atwood, 1974: 49), the mud woman also symbolizes nature where “small weeds” are growing to maintain life. Therefore, this story signifies the exploitation of nature as well as women. There is a superior/inferior relationship between the boys and the mud woman. Representing mind against body in Plumwood’s binary categorization, the boys see themselves as more valued than the woman and nature. So, they justify their domination in this dualistic way of thinking, and they take the advantage of them.

At the end of the poem, Circe implies that living a life without thinking or expressing the thoughts like the headless mud woman would be easy (House, 2014: 97). “Is this what you would like me to be, this mud woman? /Is this what I would like to be? It would be so simple” (Atwood, 1974: 61). These questions demonstrate Circe’s difference from the mud woman in terms of her own voice. Thanks to Atwood, Circe speaks up for herself and highlights her rejection of her role in her story (Lake, 2015: 26). As Kroll (2001: 129) puts it, “[a]s a contemporary woman, as a mythological construct, Circe is doomed, too, unless she can imagine a totally different scenario”. In this “scenario”, it seems that she is planning something dangerous to remind her power that Odysseus does not give attention: “it is not finished, that saga. The fresh monsters are already breeding in my head. I try to warn you, though I know you will not listen” (Atwood, 1974: 64).

In the twentieth poem, there is a reference to Penelope, Odysseus’ wife waiting for him to return in Homer’s *Odyssey*. From a hierarchical dualist perspective, it can be argued that Penelope represents the women who are seen as passive whereas as a patriarchal depiction of men, Odysseus has the active role. Circe would like to destroy this binary opposition to change the women and men’s destiny and she starts doing this with Penelope. House (2014: 90) highlights Penelope’s function in Atwood’s story which is to keep Odysseus in “a cyclical story” where Odysseus gets stuck to his role and lives his mythical life in a circle: “You returned to her after the other war /and look what happened. /Now you are wondering /whether to do it again.” (Atwood, 1974: 65). He went back to his wife, but he left her again and now he tries to return his wife to leave her again. House (2014: 90) maintains that Circe is striving for taking Odysseus from his story and his violent role by subverting Penelope’s role and function in Homer’s story where she struggles with the suitors by saying no to them in the absence of Odysseus. Here in Atwood’s poem, Penelope assesses her choices, and she can choose a man to have sex with instead of being passive and loyal to Odysseus:

surrounded by bowls, bowls, bowls,
tributes from the suitors
who are having a good time in the kitchen

waiting for her to decide
 on the dialogue for this evening
 which will be in perfect taste
 and will include tea and sex
 dispensed graciously both at once (Atwood, 1974: 65).

As Diamond and Orenstein argue (1990: xi), Circe's Penelope is reweaving a new story in which she makes her voice heard and believed by Odysseus. In Penelope's version it can be assessed that it is aimed to create a new story and a life in which there will be no hierarchical dualities which cause Odysseus to see life from a limited gendered frame:

She's up to something, she's weaving
 histories, they are never right,
 she has to do them over,
 she is weaving her version,

 the one you will believe in,
 the only one you will hear." (Atwood, 1974: 65)

The final poem, like the first one in the sequence, is written in italics. Rozells (2020: 62-63) sees this italic form of the first poem as the foresight of Circe about Odysseus's visit to Circe's island rather than an eventuated story as it is mentioned before. Likewise, the last poem is also Circe's foresight or imagination in which Circe looks for a new way to express her individuality which is independent from the patriarchy. She talks about two different islands: "there are two islands /at least, they do not exclude each other" (Atwood, 1974: 69). According to Alessandra Occhiolini (2016), the first island has the traditional story of Homer in which Circe is victimized and her story and role are not under her control since these are given to her (7): "the events run themselves/ through/almost without us (Atwood, 1974: 69). Playing the roles written for them over and over again in a cycle, Circe and Odysseus are trapped in this first patriarchal island where they have no choice in their life and no value is given to nature. As Direnç (2008: 130) states, the first island is the field of the inherited myth that repeats itself in a cyclical way forever:

*and so forth, it is over,
 I am right, it starts again,
 jerkier this time and faster,*

*I could say it without looking, the animals,
the blackened trees, the arrivals,
the bodies, words, it goes and goes,
I could recite it backward. (Atwood, 1974: 69)*

The second island belongs to Circe's own creation. Circe creates her own world which is more peaceful. As Occhiolini (2016: 7) states that the second island cannot be a brand-new island which is totally different from the first one because Circe cannot destroy this old story where she was born but she can visualize an alternative in which there is a union between women, men, and nature rather than having a hierarchical conflict. Kroll (2001: 131) asserts that the second island is a place for Circe and Odysseus to demolish patriarchal gender roles created by culture and this island lets them be active in their lives. As Direnç (2008: 131) analyzes this second island, Atwood's Circe prepared herself for the second island; she is ready to create a new world, to produce a new story, to take actions in a new fiction which will be Circe's world where she gets rid of the old story's oppressions to begin a new story.

*The second I know nothing about
because it has never happened;
this land is not finished,
this body is not reversible (Atwood, 1974: 69–70, original italics)*

The poem continues with the physical description of the second island. Atwood destroys the negative image of the relationship between women and nature by celebrating Circe's bond with the Mother Goddess, namely nature; apples are growing, trees are amazing there. Instead of a dominant godly figure who is separate from nature, there is the Mother Goddess whose philosophy is followed by a vibrant witch woman in order to build a harmonious life with nature in this island:

*We walk through a field, it is November,
the grass is yellow, tinged
with gray, the apples
are still on the trees,
they are orange, astonishing, (...) (Atwood, 1974: 69–70, original italics)*

The end of the poem is the representation of the unification of humans and nature by sharing (Occhiolini, 2016: 7): "we lick the melted snow/ from each other's mouth" (Atwood, 1974: 70). Circe's second island is a place where the conflicts between the dualities like

male/female, culture/nature, reason/emotions no longer exist. There is peace and union between genders and nature.

In conclusion, *Circe/ Mud Poems* (1974), a re-writing of a myth, is examined via ecofeminism. It is claimed that this literary work promotes the change in patriarchal constructions which harm both women and nature in terms of power relations. The major concern of this series is to criticize how Circe's story with Odysseus has been told from a male-dominated perspective for ages. Atwood objects to the suppression of the women's voice in the ancient myths. She interprets this mythical story in accordance with ecofeminist concerns as a female poet with high sensibility of the masculine domination. In this regard, Circe's myth provides an appropriate context for the discussions related to oppressions, dualities, and the Goddess culture. In *Circe/ Mud Poems* (1974), Circe is a woman who occasionally tries to follow the path of the masculine order, and from time to time tries to find her own path. She aims to create a world where any living beings are not oppressed. The culture of the Mother Goddess celebrated in ecofeminism offers an alternative world to value nature, women, the Other and every living being on earth. In the next chapter, Circe in Miller's *Circe* will be examined through the lens of ecofeminism.

CHAPTER II

ECOFEMINIST READING OF *CIRCE* BY MADELINE MILLER (2019)

What this chapter explores is a detailed examination of Madeline Miller's *Circe* (2019) through the analysis of the patriarchy and the role of nature that contribute to the development of the main character Circe in terms of putting an emphasis on her witch identity. As it can be understood from the title, Madeline Miller rewrites the story of Circe who has a subordinate role in the traditional stories to deal with the gender issues. As a challenging work, *Circe* (2019) is written to specify "contemporary feminist concerns" as put by Banita Bevi (2020: 276). In this section of the study, patriarchal dualisms, hierarchical gender/power relations, and the women-nature relationship will be primarily addressed through the themes of female identity, rape, witchcraft and patriarchal oppression.

Born in 1978, the American author Madeline Miller served at a high school to teach Latin, Greek and Shakespeare. She studied on Classics in Brown University and has an MA degree from there. She is engaged in subordinate characters of the ancient myths. Being her first published book in 2011, *The Song of Achilles* is about Patroclus in Homer's *Iliad*. This book won the Orange Prize in 2012 and became a New York Times bestseller. *Circe* is Miller's second book which has had a massive success. According to the information given in her website, being a New York Times top best seller, *Circe* was shortlisted for the 2019 Women's Prize for Fiction and received the Indies Choice Best Adult Fiction of the Year Award and the Indies Choice Best Audiobook of the Year Award. Apart from these, in her website, it is also mentioned that *Circe* is lately being adapted into an HBO Max series (Miller). The popularity of the book is considerably visible when the awards and top lists are taken into consideration. Thus, the book has received reviews from many prominent critics such as Claire Massud from *The New York Times* (2018) and Alex Preston from *The Guardian* (2018).

In her work, Sydney Laseter (2020: 3) connects Miller's *Circe* with the #MeToo movement which has flourished in the USA in 2017. According to what is written on its website, this #MeToo movement was founded by the sexual harassment survivor Tarana Burke in 2006 with the purpose of supporting the sexually abused women of color and providing them some ways of healing (Burke, n.d). Heather Savigny (2020: 127) informs that in 2017, on Twitter, Alysa Milano who is an actress tweeted by writing "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet" and the next day thousands of people answered

by tweeting #MeToo. In such a way, women, encouraged by the collective action, publicly began to speak up about the sexual assaults they had experienced. The aim of this movement was, as Savigny (2020: 127) puts it, to “expose the myriad of ways in which sexism is woven into and through our mediated culture”. By disclosing what they had been through, these women started to challenge against the victim-blaming, which is one of the fundamental problems in the incidents of sexual harassments and assaults (Rogers, 2021: 1). #MeToo trend has grown into an incentive for the women to admit that it is the molester and the rapist to be blamed not the ones who are sexually harassed. In the following year, 2018, Madeline Miller published her novel *Circe*. As Laseter (2020: 57) argues, Miller uses Circe’s voice as a symbol of the power of self-expression and the ability to tell one’s story from one’s own perspective as #MeToo movement encourages women to do so. Therefore, *Circe* is a novel in which the witch goddess Circe is given a voice to tell her own story by Miller.

The novel *Circe*, which follows the growth and transformation of a woman born into a patriarchal house, is about finding one’s own identity. As Merve Altın (2020: 149) assesses, *Circe* is a novel in which “we listen to the story of Circe’s quest for growing into an independent and confident woman from an immature and exiled witch, and it becomes the story of Circe’s self-discovery”. Starting to tell her story from her birth, Circe reveals some untold facts about what happens and what she has been through. Contrary to the traditional stories such as Homer’s *Odyssey* in which she is mentioned as a one-dimensional evil witch, she talks about her thoughts and feelings like anger, fear, love, hate, jealousy, happiness which are all related to what happens to her in the patriarchal world where she lives. Madeline Miller comments on the development of Circe’s identity which Circe acquires by discovering her existing power as follows:

This is the story of a woman finding her power and, as part of that, finding her voice. She starts out really unable to say what she thinks and by the end of the book, she’s able to live life on her terms and say what she thinks and what she feels (VanRy, 2018).

As can be observed, this is a book in which the protagonist evolves from silence to noise and from noise to being heard and understood. Circe’s witchcraft can be considered as the vehicle by which she is heard. Accordingly, it can be propounded that witchcraft has an important function in Miller’s work in terms of empowerment of the female protagonist, Circe. Miller also expresses her views on witchcraft by referring Circe’s power as follows:

...somehow she invents her own power. That’s, for me, where the witchcraft comes in: she goes around the system. She says, “Okay, I don’t have any divine power, but I can create this other path to power and dissent and independence through my witchcraft (Octavian Report, 2019).

Throughout the novel, Circe is empowered by the witchcraft. As mentioned in the introduction of this present study, most of the literary analyses conducted on this novel so far focus on the revisionist mythmaking theory and how the original story was patriarchal and how it is subverted in the current novel. However, apart from the patriarchal issues, the relationship between nature and the female character also matches with the combination of feminism and ecocriticism which is called ecofeminism since Circe's bond with nature is highlighted as a source of her power. In addition to bringing this witch from the periphery to the center and giving her a world to be away from the masculinity she has been exposed to for centuries, *Circe* also challenges cultural dualities by esteeming nature through the Mother Goddess belief which is mentioned in Starhawk's (1979: 261) work as "an earth centered, nature oriented worship that venerated the Goddess, the source of life, (...), who was seen as the Horned God of hunt and animal life". Hence, it can be suggested that as a female witch, Circe becomes the inspiration for the women to embrace their connection with nature and see nature as sacred. Within this scope, Miller's *Circe* explores that as well as combating the inequalities, dominations and oppressions created by masculinity, Circe is also oriented to nature and, therefore cherishes the value of nature since she believes Mother Goddess philosophy and therefore the power of nature.

Much the same as her mother and sisters, Circe's kind is called nymph which is a name given to "least of the lesser goddesses" as Circe puts it in the beginning of the novel (Miller, 2019: 1). She also highlights how nymphs are weak, but their power is related to nature as follows: "our powers were so modest they could scarcely insure our entities. We spoke to fish and nurtured flowers, coaxed drops from the clouds or salt from the waves" (Miller, 2019: 1). In this novel where Circe's own story is told in her own language, although Circe, a nymph says she is a goddess when describing herself, she puts her own kind at the bottom of the list of gods and goddesses because they have very little power. After her birth, becoming the least favorite of the family, Circe and her appearance and voice are not liked by her parents, siblings, and the other gods. Her siblings make fun of her appearance and voice by saying to each other "*Her eyes are yellow as piss. Her voice is screechy as an owl. She is called Hawk, but she should be called Goat for her ugliness*" (Miller, 2021: 6, original italics). The discrimination of Circe through her bodily characteristics puts her at a disadvantageous position. As Altın (2020: 150) puts, Circe "was born into a man's world which valued beauty above all else.". In other words, Circe's world was dominated by men who admired beauty above everything. Altın draws attention to the importance of "beauty" in Circe's family and society to demonstrate the inferiority of Circe. This would bring the topic to Karen Warren's (2000) "Up and Down"

thinking (46). Therefore, it can be argued that Circe's unappreciated physical appearance puts her in the group of "Down" in Karen Warren's term. This is the place where she is oppressed by the beauty standards of the "Ups" in which patriarchy rules.

In the dualistic world where Circe lives, her part is not the superior or respected. Described as "apparently unmarriageable" by Catherine Macmillan (2020: 28), Circe is in a position where she's regarded as less valuable in the "*value-hierarchical thinking*" of Warren's OCF (2000: 46). This belief places a larger value on what is higher, or Up, than on what is lower, or Down. Based on this mode of thinking, Circe's culture places a great importance on beauty. As a result, whoever is thought to be attractive gets elevated. Circe has no possibility of being perceived as superior in this situation. Circe's mother, who is a proponent of this male order, dislikes her since she was born because of her gender, appearance, and personality. This is recognized when Circe tells her mother's reaction when she was born: "A girl' my mother said to him, wrinkling her nose" (Miller, 2019: 3). Circe's mother despises her demeanor as well as her beauty:

Circe is dull as rock. Circe has less with than bare ground. Circe's hair is matted like a dog's. If I have to hear that broken voice of hers once more. Of all our children, why must it be she who is left? No one else will have her [italics in original] (Miller, 2019: 35).

Also, when her parents talk about Circe's match in the future, they have no hope for a good chance of marriage for Circe: Her father says "[h]er hair is streaked like a lynx. And her chin. There is a sharpness to it that is less than pleasing." (Miller, 2020: 3). Considering that her family verbally abuses Circe, it is obvious that she is oppressed by her family. Her oppression is justified by Warren's (2000: 47) "logic of domination" which presents a sort of logic related to the dualism. In this so-called logical justification, Circe is being oppressed because she is ugly. This provides an excuse for her family to treat her as a subordinate. Fortunately, the fact that she does not fit to the community she lives in will help her personality and femininity develop and strengthen to find her identity.

There is a growing closeness between Circe and nature which is expected from her kind: nymphs. The nymphs' connection to nature is mentioned in the very beginning of the book when Circe is talking about "modest" power of nymphs: "We spoke to fish and nurtured flowers, coaxed drops from the clouds or salt from the waves" (Miller, 2019: 1). So, those minor gods can touch on nature for small changes. Circe's admiration of nature is first understood when her father Helios takes her with him to visit his cow herbs. She gets in Helios's chariot and starts gazing around: "I leaned over the chariot's jeweled side, watching in wonder at the earth passing beneath: the rich green of forests, the jagged mountains and the wide out-flung

blue of the ocean” (Miller, 2019: 6). As is seen here, she admires in wonder and depicts the view vividly. As soon as she leaves the palace where she lives, the first thing that fascinates Circe is nature. This circumstance may provide insight into Circe's identity development. Talking about how insignificant she is and how her family bullies her due to her ugliness at the beginning of the book, Circe might signal that she can get closer to nature when she gets away from them.

Creating a link between Circe and nature, witchcraft is one of the most important themes that Miller foregrounds in *Circe* (2019). Miller explains her ideas about witchcraft and women as follows:

In the *Odyssey*, Circe is very clearly the incarnation of male anxiety about female power—the fear is that if women have power, men are getting turned into pigs. The word 'witch' is still used today as a slur against women with an amount of power that makes society nervous (Wiener, 2019).

In this sense, Miller subverts the negative perception of being a witch created by the patriarchy. Apart from being a nymph, it is her witchcraft that gives Circe a stronger identity. Being a witch seems to be the most important aspect that connects her to nature. Her ability to practice magic was born from her love for Glaucos and her jealousy for Scylla whom Glaucos falls in love with. In order to get married to Glaucos, she uses “yellow flowers that grow from Kronos’ spilled blood and turn creatures to their truest selves” (Miller, 2019: 53). In this case, by using “*wicked pharmaka*” (italics original), Circe makes Glaucos a God and turns Scylla into a monster to make her ugly and unlovable (53). According to Govers (2020: 16), her first magic symbolizes that “she is able to undermine the patriarchal court of her father”. When Circe confesses her witchcraft on Glaucos and Scylla by saying “[i]t was I who made Scylla a monster” and “I used *wicked pharmaka* to make Glaucos a god” (Miller, 2019: 53), her father, Helios does not believe Circe by saying “[d]aughter, you begin to make a spectacle.’ The words cut across the air. ‘If the world contained that power you allege, do you think it would fall to such as you to discover it?’” (Miller, 2019: 54). Her father does not believe her because he thinks that no one can create a god, especially women like Circe, as Govers suggests (2020: 17). Also, this scene is analyzed as a clear representation of patriarchy since no one believes that this kind of power could belong to a woman until Circe’s brother Aeëtes confirms what Circe has done (Govers, 2020: 17). This costs Circe to be exiled to the desert island called “Aiaia” and the whole story related to her witchcraft actually begins there.

It is noteworthy that the witchcraft in Circe’s life has a significant role on the way to establish her identity. As Banita Devi (2020: 277) puts it, “[h]er witchcraft signifies her taking control of her own life and empowering herself instead of being a bit player in a man’s

narrative”. Namely, Circe’s magic becomes the tool through which Circe makes her own decisions and realizes her female power. She tells how she feels empowered with her magic as follows: “[t]hen I learned I could bend the world to my will, as a bow is bent for an arrow. I would have done that toil a thousand times to keep such power in my hands” (Miller, 2019: 73). In the island, Circe realizes her strength which she could not discover when she was living with her patriarchal family where she was seen as inferior (Altın, 2020: 152). In other words, while being in touch with nature on the desert island, Circe has a chance to look at her capabilities.

Circe finds nature frightening and wild first, but it eventually becomes her home. Isolating Circe from patriarchy, nature helps her to view “the world as an embodied woman” without being subjected to “the problematic patriarchal discourse produced by others’ objectification of the female body”, allowing her to cultivate her mystical abilities through her link with nature (Laseter, 2020: 13). She begins to see nature as a place far from her society’s patriarchal exploitation and integrated with the existence of women. Here, Circe’s body is not important for her beauty or sexuality. Only her identity and sense of self matter. When she arrives the island Aiaia, feeling lost, she realizes that her punishment is to be alone in the wild nature itself without being guarded. She exposes her concerns as follows:

I hesitated. I was no wood-nymph. I did not have the knack of feeling my way over roots, of walking through brambles untouched. I could not guess what those shadows might conceal. What if there were sinkholes within? What if there were bears or lions? I stood there a long time fearing such things and waiting, as if someone would come and reassure me, say yes, you may go, it will be safe (Miller, 2019: 68).

Without knowing what to do, she observes the forest in a fearful state of mind by seeking someone to save her from this desperate situation. Laseter (2020: 15) asserts that she is aware of her capacity to perform her magic in her mind, and she does not even need assistance, but she has been culturally believed to feel powerless as an unimportant individual, a nymph, a woman (15). In Circe’s mind, there is a perception that a woman is always in need of help and that she cannot afford anything alone. However, nature shatters Circe’s perception created by the masculine thought. Only once she is isolated and banished to nature, she is ready to break away from her constraints (Laseter, 2020: 15). Circe decides to explore her strength in nature to survive and empower herself. As Govers (2020: 19) argues, the island enables her to develop her existing strong identity rather than give her a brand-new identity. With this strong identity, she is not easily influenced by others’ negative perceptions of her, she turns the difficulties in her favor and learns from her mistakes making her a survivor on the island. She says “I stepped into those woods and my life began. I learned to plait my hair back, so it would not catch on

every twig, and how to tie my skirts at the knee to keep the burrs off” (Miller, 2019: 71). As Devi (2020: 277) puts, her hair which she plaits represents “her lone hard work, skill, practice and sheer determination”. To rephrase it, Circe demonstrates that she will be diligent to survive in this island. Devi’s emphasis on Circe’s hair reflects her acceptance of that she cannot return her father’s palace. Besides, it symbolizes the first step of trying to make this island her home. In short, Circe first gets into the integration process to the island by changing her hair.

The more Circe learns nature, the more nature embraces her. The island, Aiaia, as a representation of the Mother Goddess becomes home for Circe. In the words of Ynestra King (1990: 112), Circe turns into an “earth-bound living being” as her connection with nature grows. She accepts her compatibility of her femininity with nature. While she learns nature, her power of witchcraft is improving as well:

Let me say what sorcery is not: it is not divine power, which comes with a thought and a blink. It must be made and worked, planned and searched out, dug up, dried, chopped and ground, cooked, spoken over and sung. (...) Witchcraft is nothing but such drudgery. Each herb must be found in its den, harvested at its time, grubbed from the dirt, culled, and stripped, washed and prepared. It must be handled this way, to find out where its power lies (Miller, 2019: 72).

Circe's relationship and harmony with nature can be assessed in the light of Witchcraft. Circe discovers her witch identity in nature by challenging female passiveness expected by the patriarchy by going back to the Old Religion where women and nature were respected and appreciated (Eisler, 1990: 23). Considering the fact that Circe is close to nature, it can be claimed that Circe is a witch who follows the Mother Goddess of Witchcraft. According to Starhawk (1979), in Witchcraft, nature and independency are valued (264). In this regard, Circe cares about nature that gives her independence, and the more she learns about witchcraft, the more she becomes attached to nature.

The island Aiaia as a topographical motif contributes Circe’s coming of age as an independent woman or individual. As Macmillan (2020: 35) argues, the island allows her to live her life freely and peacefully. Although she puts her own rules by taking the control of the wild side of nature, her intention is not to dominate nature. On the contrary, she only touches on nature for the sake of creating harmony in the island. She explains this harmony as follows:

I called the pigs and scratched their bristled backs, brushed the sheep, and summoned the wolves to lie panting on my floor. The lion rolled her yellow eyes at them, but she behaved herself, for it was my law that all my animals bear each other (Miller, 2019: 134)

As stated, although Circe makes the rules in this fictional world, her dominance does not mean contempt for nature and non-human nature. Macmillan (2020: 33) maintains that

[i]n the novel, Circe's Aiaia is very much an extended domestic space, where even the wild animals, along with the wilder human male visitors, are tamed by Circe's witchcraft. Circe's first attempts at witchcraft on the island are domestic in nature.

In order to keep this domestic space safe and sound, she tames lions and wolves, and turns the dangerous male visitors into swine. Circe permits animals to dwell in peace in the magical and mythical environment of this narrative.

Additionally, Circe is happily occupied with the domestic activities that she has not done before. She says "[e]very night, I went out to dig my herbs and roots...In the morning I cut flowers for my kitchen. In the evenings after dinner, I set myself before Daedalus' loom." (Miller, 2019: 134). According to Devi (2020: 278), Circe finds out her power "in activities like weaving, cooking, looking for and grinding herbs. These are crafts traditionally related to women and labor and these take center and power in the novel" (278). Perceived as inferior in Plumwood's "rational masculine sphere", the activities she does in the island belonging to "the feminine sphere of the private, domestic and reproductive life" are celebrated by Circe and they are empowering her identity. These acts allow her to hold on to the life and to survive on her own.

Moreover, Circe starts singing with her "mortal voice" (Miller, 2019: 333) after she arrives the island. This action is crucial since it is what she couldn't do when she was living in her father's place. According to Laseter (2020: 17-22), Circe utilizes her singing "as a vehicle for thought and thus for power", allowing her to be herself without being prevented and dominated by her patriarchal family. In other words, she sings as an expression of her thoughts and a symbol of her power. From ecofeminist perspective, this "vehicle" not only demonstrates that she is no longer an oppressed woman, but also a witch who is a singer of, in Starhawk's words, "songs of power"(1974: 260). Her songs highlight her ability to be a powerful witch and express herself. As a result, Circe's voice is set free in the island. Silenced and despised at his father's house, Circe understands the value of her own mortal voice thanks to nature of the island.

Circe's voice functions as a treat to the patriarchy. When Circe confesses her spell to the Glaucos and Scylla, disturbed by this kind of power, her father Helios silences Circe by attacking her throat. Circe tells that moment by highlighting how much she was in despair: "[a]nd then the heat came, rolling over me with a sound like roaring waves, blistering my skin, crushing the breath from my chest. I gasped, but there was no air. He had taken it all" (Miller, 2019: 54). As Laseter (2020: 17-18) stresses, through physical violence, her father assaults her ability to speak up for herself because her power is seen as a threat to the masculine society.

Seen as outcast, mocked, humiliated in her own family, Circe, when the time comes, is needed by her sister, Pasiphaë who is about to deliver Minotaur who is a kind of scary monster in the Greek mythology (Miller, 2019: 90). Although her sister has given birth easily beforehand, this time she needs Circe's healing power because something is wrong with her baby. Daedalus who is visiting Circe in her island as the messenger of Pasiphaë says that "if you do not help her there is no one else who can. It is your art she wants, lady. Yours alone" (Miller, 2019: 91). Here, Circe's witchcraft is acknowledged as "art" by those who know her. This reflects that Circe's family sees her power not only as evil, but also beneficial for healing. As Starhawk (1989: 35-36) argues, there is no need to see the witches as evil because witchcraft is nothing but just practicing the Old Religion. As a representation of a priestess of The Old Religion, Circe knows nature better than everyone else and uses power of nature for good; healing and childbirth. Miller foregrounds Circe's power of healing and childbirth as a symbol of powerful nature which is the source of the witchcraft. As Circe claims, "[witchcraft] does not come from hate" (Miller, 2019: 135), by implying that it comes from nature. Additionally, although she is not on good terms with her sister, she helps her with all her efforts by combining her "art" with midwifery. As Arisika Razak (1990: 170) puts, "[t]he use of gravity, positioning, and trust and support are still essential tools of the practicing midwife. Intuition, empathy and touch are major components in [midwifery interactions]". As stated, during childbirth, a relationship based on mutual trust develops. The mother and the midwife share their feelings. The mother needs help and affection, and the midwife sympathizes with the mother who is in pain, comforts, and encourages her. Here, Circe and Pasiphaë understand each other's feelings and thoughts through the birth since the birth becomes a tool to bring together these two sisters who had no good relationship formerly.

Moreover, apart from Circe's power, hierarchical power relations of gender is also foregrounded by Pasiphaë while she is giving birth. Although she is depicted as an evil sister who makes fun of Circe about her physical appearance in the beginning of the novel, there is depth in the characterization of Pasiphaë. In this part of the novel, it is understood that she is neither pure evil, nor an obedient angel as patriarchy classifies women back then. She tells Circe that she is also another victim of patriarchy although she seems to conform into their family structure (Rogers, 2021: 33). When Circe reminds Pasiphaë that she and her brother bullied her before, Pasiphaë says that "[y]ou know nothing of Perses. Do you know how I had to keep him happy? The things I had to do?" (Miller, 2019: 127). According to Rogers (2021: 33), Pasiphaë implies that she was also sexually abused by her brother to make him pleased. She is aware of that the patriarchal family structure in her father's house represses women by subordinating

them. As Rogers (2021: 33) further asserts, Pasiphaë makes Circe realize about how clueless she is about Helios, their father, and the other men in their household. Pasiphaë tells Circe “[l]et me tell you a truth about Helios and the rest. They do not care if you are good. They barely care if you are wicked. The only thing that makes them listen is power” (Miller, 2019: 126). Astounded by these words, Circe begins to grasp that Pasiphaë also hates their family because she is also seen in the inferior position concerning the power relations in the house (Miller, 2019: 127). Pasiphaë’s words make the inferior position of women in their world even clearer. As a result, taking into consideration that only power is of importance in the sphere of men as Pasiphaë says, it can be stated that Circe’s witchcraft is accepted as power rather than female wickedness.

Circe realizes the freedom provided by the island after she helps the birth of Pasiphaë in her father's palace. She says, “[a]fter my father’s halls, the island seemed to me the wildest, most giddy freedom” (Miller, 2019: 133-134). The moment when she gets rid of oppression, she starts to sing in the island: “I did what I liked, the moment that I thought of it. I sang upon the beaches, rearranged my garden” (Miller, 2019: 134). She looks at the island and is impressed with its autonomy: “The island had never needed my hand. It prospered on no matter what I did. The sheep multiplies and wandered freely. They ambled over the grass, nudging aside the wolf pops with their blunt faces” (Miller, 2019: 159). Therefore, it can be deduced that like the island, Circe is a self-sufficient woman who doesn’t need any help from anyone. Also, she is an independent witch who continues to survive and grow despite the dominations and oppressions she has experienced. Hence, she appreciates her freedom and emancipation in the island. Starhawk (1979: 263-264) explains this characteristic of the witches who cherish nature as follows:

Because witches are oriented to earth and to life, we value spiritual qualities that I feel are especially important to women, who have for so long been conditioned to be passive, submissive, and weak. The craft values independence, personal strength, self (...).

The women who perceive nature as an extension of themselves, value independence and freedom, and cherish their own selves are referred to as Starhawk's witches. Therefore, Circe is a witch who possesses what is attributed to the witches by Starhawk.

Furthermore, Circe’s connection with her island reflects Starhawk’s (1990: 73-74) “Earth-based Spirituality” indirectly conveyed by her descriptions of events. According to Starhawk’s philosophy, it should be perceived that “the earth is alive and ... we are part of her being” and the earth itself is a “living community” in which human beings become closer to nature and act together to protect and heal the Earth (1990: 73-74). Based on this philosophy,

it can be argued that Circe sees her island as alive and a living community where everything in nature is interconnected. In this regard, Circe becomes conscious about nature and sees it as a living whole. By virtue of her witchcraft, Circe's bond with nature is described by Laseter (2020: 14) as follows:

Circe's power of *pharmakeia* is able to flourish in her isolation as a result of her return to her own body. She completely immerses herself in the island and ceases to see the forest as something foreign, rather as something she is a part of.

To put it another way, Circe sees herself as a part of nature on this island isolated from her male-dominated family members. Laseter's emphasis on "*pharmakeia*" reflects the relationship between Circe and nature since witchcraft connects Circe to the island. Therefore, she enjoys being alone in nature because she lives in amity with nature. She says, "I burned cedar in the fireplace, and the dark smoke kept me company" (Miller, 2019: 71). Cedar accompanies her and makes her feel that she does not need anyone. Laseter (2020: 15) maintains that "Miller is using the connection of the female witch to nature, as a place of comfort (...)". Thanks to the bond she has established in nature, Circe moves away from the masculine sphere and has found her comfortable and safe space by adding that [w]hen I did get lonely, (...), then there was always the forest" (Miller, 2019: 71). The reason for this is that she also believes nature is alive and accompanies her. Additionally, the interconnection of The Earth-Based Spirituality is reflected by the nature's role in the story of Circe and Odysseus in the novel. The duration of Odysseus and his crew on the island depends on the season and weather conditions at sea. Regarding to this, as Odysseus decides when he and his crew will leave the island, he says "[it] will only be until spring. I will go as soon as the seas are passable. It will be scarcely any delay" (Miller, 2019: 190). As demonstrated, the favorable natural conditions play a role that affects the continuity of these two characters' relationship.

Moreover, Circe's integration with nature and living in a harmony with it can be demonstrated from the details and analogies about nature she gives while telling her story. For instance, in the beginning of the story, when she talks about how insignificant she is seen by her family, she describes herself as "nothing, a stone" which no one can realize her absence (Miller, 2019: 18). Moreover, before she discovers her identity as a witch, she depicts her life and herself as follows: "(...) all my life had been murk and depths, but I was not a part of that dark water. I was a creature within it (Miller, 2019: 19). She expresses herself best with expressions from nature. This is an illustration of how closely Circe and nature are interwoven. Another example from nature is Circe's account of her observations about the changes of Odysseus after his arrival on the island. She begins to tell the details of the season:

The winter rains began, and the whole island smelled of earth. I loved the season, the cold sands, the white hellebore blooming. Odysseus had put on flesh and did not wince so often when he moved. The worst of his tempers ebbed. I tried to find satisfaction in it. Like seeing a garden well tended, I told myself. Like watching new lambs struggle to their feet (Miller, 2019: 195).

As it can be inferred from the above quotation, Circe has included nature in her life so intensely that she does not neglect to mention nature among the events she is talking about. When describing Odysseus's change in the island, she resembles him newborn lambs trying to walk. Such nature-inspired similes demonstrate how Circe sees the earth as an integrated part of her life and as a Goddess that includes every living being and does not separate herself from them in terms of Starhawk's Earth-Based Spirituality (1990: 73-74).

Circe, who finds herself in a different identity and way of life thanks to nature, cannot completely disconnect herself from the masculine world. Like in Atwood's *Circe/ Mud Poems* (1974), there is a rape scene in this story as another turning point in Circe's life. The fact that Circe lives alienated and lonely as a woman, as Altın (2020: 153) puts it, makes her open target in the eyes of "sexual predators". Circe is singing a song when the crew turns their attention to the island. Being excited and happy to have visitors, Circe welcomes these male visitors who are tired and hungry by sympathizing with them. She perceives the men as "something torn that [she] could mend" (Miller, 2019: 161). However, Circe gets raped by the leader of the crew whom Circe shows hospitality with food and drinks. The leader of the men sounds Circe out with various questions to make sure she is vulnerable. He expects some answers ticking all the boxes for the rape: He asks "when will your husband be home? We would toast such fine hospitality" (Miller, 2019: 162). In this way, he learns that Circe has not got a husband to show up soon. He questions all the possibilities that might hinder him: "Then perhaps there is some other host we should thank? An uncle, a brother?" (Miller, 2019: 163). The fact that Circe lives alone without a man becomes a justification of the sexual assault in the minds of the men. Circe's independent life without a man to accompany increases these men's sexual desire because they think this woman is powerless. Circe describes this scene as such:

The man threw me against the wall. My head hit the even stone and the room sparked. I opened my mouth to cry out the spell, but he jammed his arm against my windpipe and the sound was choked off. (...). With his right hand, he tore my clothes, a practiced gesture. With his left, he kept his weight against my throat (Miller, 2019: 164).

This violent scene becomes the milestone that helps her female identity evolve throughout the story. As the men get full of with the food Circe provides, she notices the change in their attitude towards her. When she fills the captain's cup, she says "[t]hank you, sweet" (Miller, 2019: 163). This change in the way men call her "goes from identifying her as a being to identifying her

just as an adjective, something that is docile and pleasing” (Laseter, 2020: 41). Considering that she was previously called goddess by them, Circe grabs the wine-bowl and prepares a sleeping potion inside and mixes it into their wine just in case (Miller, 2019: 163). Circe goes to the kitchen, and she thinks to herself as follows: “You are being silly, I thought. They were surprised to find a woman by herself, that is all” (Miller, 2019: 163). Rogers (2021: 30) draws our attention to why these thoughts of Circe flow when she gets suspicious by stating that “just like many women, she desperately tries to convince herself that she is mistaken” by saying “[a]ll the men were rising now, their eyes fixed on me. And I still said nothing. Still I told myself I was wrong. I must be wrong. I had fed them. They had thanked me. They were my guests” (Miller, 2019: 163-164). Rogers (2021: 31) points out that Circe’s way of thinking is “far from fictional” on account of the fact that “women have continually been trained to ignore their own instincts when it comes to gendered violence, and to internalize the blame”. Based on Roger’s noteworthy evaluation, it can be stated that when women are sexually harassed, they first question themselves and want to be sure of themselves since the culture tends to blame the female victim for being abused. The woman who internalizes this victim-blaming attitude seeks the mistake first in herself, as Circe does.

In a similar vein, referring to the self-blame of the victims of rape, Laseter (2020: 40) states that “women are taught to view their own body as dangerous and as threatening in that it might incite a man to rape her”. In other words, women are told to regard their own bodies as dangerous because it is possible that they may provoke a man to rape them. This possibility that Laseter observes in her analysis leads women to think they are somehow guilty if they are raped. In this situation, rape can be viewed as a means of oppressing women and convincing them they belong to the lower position in the dualist system. Nymphs can be given as an example of such a mindset. Following the rape, Circe says “I am only a nymph after all, for nothing is more common among us than this” to show that Nymphs are inured to sexual violence (Miller, 2019: 164).

Circe’s wild animals are walking around, and she presents herself as a threatening witch when the other sailors come to the island. A witch hanging out with wild animals is expected to be intimidating, but there was no change in the men’s behaviors towards Circe. Circe explains this situation by stating that “I was alone and a woman, that was all that mattered” (Miller, 2019: 170). As Ester Diaz Morillo (2020: 22) highlights, Circe believes that despite her strength, men see her as an inferior being to exploit because of her femaleness. Therefore, if the word “nymph” is replaced by “woman”, it can correspond to the hierarchical power relations of the genders which place women into a lower level today (Rogers, 2021: 31).

Karen Warren (2000: 46) states that in Oppressive Conceptual Framework, “power typically is conceived and exercised as power of Ups over Downs” by naming this power perception as “‘power-over’ power”. She maintains that “[w]hen power-over power serves to reinforce the power of Ups as Ups in ways that keep Downs unjustifiably subordinated, (...) such conceptions and practices of power are unjustified (Warren 2000: 47). Circe as one of the “Downs” is oppressed by the leader as a member of “Ups”. The leader practices “power-over” power by raping Circe and this male power dominates and oppresses her. This “unjustified domination” through the rape as Warren (2000) puts, subordinates Circe as a victim. The masculinity tries to justify this oppression through Circe’s female independency which disturbs the masculine power through the “*logic of domination*” [italics in original] which Warren (2000: 47) defines as a system of arguments which supposedly justify the male oppression. This so-called logical justification is that Circe lives without dependence on any men.

Before using her power of transformation, she uses a relatively less dangerous sleep spell that allows her to defend herself by putting the enemies into sleep. The sleep potion in the men’s wine empowers Circe and turns the leader and his men who are waiting their turn to rape Circe. She couldn’t say the sleep spell but, there is more powerful magic in that potion: transformation. Her magic rises to protect herself, and she speaks her word to punish those men:

His ribcage cracked and began to bulge. I heard the sound of flesh rupturing wetly, the pops of breaking bone. His nose ballooned from his face and his legs shriveled like a fly sucked by a spider. He fell to all fours. He screamed, and his men screamed with him. It went on for a long time (Miller, 2019: 165).

The way she describes the transformation implies that she would like to show how her power manifests itself when she is hurt. As it is seen in Dilek Direnç’s (2008: 123) analysis on Atwood’s ninth poem in *Circe/ Mud Poems*, in this part of the novel, there are the reflections of traditional gender roles in the dualism; women and nature as givers and men as takers. These sailors who come to the island for a shelter and food see Circe in it and consider that they can use both nature and the woman for their benefits. Since they are in “the masculinity sphere” in Plumwood’s (2013: 213) term, they represent culture over nature with their boat. This power relation makes the sailors superior to Circe and nature. In the binary system where, one is superior to the other, the masculine sphere represents superiority. Hence, Circe and nature are here on the feminine sphere, while sailors are on the masculine sphere. Namely, Circe and nature are overcome by masculinity. As a result of this power of being a higher one, those sailors want more and more to take from the giver.

In the rest of the story, this incident causes Circe to take shelter and isolate herself in nature. For the next visitors, she is ready to transform them before they do her wrong. “I didn’t

send my animals away anymore when men came. I let them loll where they liked, around the garden, under my tables. I pleased me to see the men walk among them, trembling at their teeth and unnatural tameness” (Miller, 2019: 170). Losing her trust in men, Circe is protected by nature where the Mother Goddess gives her power. She even says “[g]ive me the honest asp, who strikes me if I trouble him, and not before (Miller, 2019: 169). Now, Circe prefers asps to a man because at least they are fair; they do not hurt until they are attacked. She becomes full of hate and revenge for the sailors after the rape: “I wanted the next crew to come, so I might see again their tearing flesh” (Miller, 2019: 168).

Circe's way of transforming and altering men's physical appearance to that of a pig due to their intention of rape her may have several interpretations. When Odysseus wonders about “[w]hy pigs” (Miller 2018: 172), Circe responds this question as follows:

After I changed a crew, I would watch them scrabbling and crying in the sty, falling over each other, stupid with their horror. They hated it all, their newly voluptuous flesh, their delicate split trotters, their swollen bellies dragging in the earth's muck. It was a humiliation, a debasement. They were sick with longing for their hands, those appendages men use to mitigate the world (Miller 2018: 172).

Here, Circe narrates that men will see such a change as an insult. Miller does not just base Circe's transformations on being an evil witch as it is seen in the traditional stories. She goes beyond that. Altın (2020: 153) assesses the basis of her transformative power as a female “self-defense”. Circe who is presented as pure evil in the old myths, is actually a woman trying to exist and defend herself in a male-dominated society. Moreover, in terms of the hierarchical dualist perspective of ecofeminism, being in the superior position, those sailors are placed into a lower level by Circe because of their malevolence. She takes their hands which they are “longing for” with which they oppress and metaphorically dominate the world. In this way, Circe tries to make the patriarchy feel what is like to be the inferior one in the dualism. Through transformations, Circe, tired of the dichotomy, puts masculinity on the back burner this time. It causes men to empathize with those in the feminine sphere. Plumwood (2013: 213) states that the sphere where those men see themselves as higher-level compared to feminine sphere “is associated with masculinity and freedom”. From Plumwood's point of view, it can be deduced that Circe takes the men out of their sphere and destroy their masculinity and freedom by turning them into swine. In a way, she “degrades” them to nature which is oppressed by men as well. Hence, they can no longer oppress women and nature and also, they can understand what is like being the oppressed one.

Macmillan (2020: 33) sees this transformation as taming “the wilder human male visitors” through witchcraft. In this way, powered by nature, witchcraft takes the men's

oppressive power and tames the men's violence. In other words, nature and women work together to undermine patriarchy. Circe says "Let them see what I am. Let them learn the world is not as they think" (Miller, 2019: 169). Circe sets her heart on change in this masculine oppression where dualities lie at its origins. As Laseter (2020: 48) puts it, "the world is actually a better place when Circe transforms them into their piggish realities". In other words, the world will be purified by destroying the masculinity seen as superior to the femininity and therefore nature. Given Circe's connection to nature, it can be inferred that Circe prefers the existence of pigs rather than men. By doing this, she tends to make those men a part of nature in a sense. It can be claimed that the power she takes from nature turns man back to nature.

Circe's transformations allude to a turnaround in patriarchy as Janice Birkeland (1993: 20) assesses the ecofeminist principles as follows:

Fundamental social transformation is necessary. We must reconstruct the underlying values and structural relations of our cultures. The promotion of equality, nonviolence, cultural diversity, and participatory, noncompetitive, and nonhierarchical forms of organization and decision making would be among the criteria for these new social forms.

These remarks about the transformations demonstrate that the change is essential in the patriarchal societies where violence, power hierarchy, and male voice exist. Circe's turning men into pigs may refer to the first step of Birkeland's "social transformation" which brings justice and peace to nonhierarchical structures and relationships between the genders and nature. Birkeland argues that simply rearranging power relationships will not solve the problem. Therefore, Birkeland (1993: 20) maintains that we must shift away from power-over relationships and hierarchies to create a respectful and equal relationships. Although Circe does not aim to create equality in terms of the transformations, her desire might be having the men sympathize with the ones they oppress.

Following the rape, Circe realizes the oppression that she is exposed to as a main problem, and she would like to destroy this tyranny deriving from the dualism. Believing that this problem must be solved from the root, Circe tells the story of Daedalus about the Cretan lords who hired him to expand their houses:

But whenever he found some problem underneath that must be first fixed, they frowned. *That was not in the agreement!*

Of course not, he said, it has been hidden in the foundation, but look there it is, plain as day. See the cracked beam? See the beetles eating the floor? See how the stone sinking into the swamp?

That only made the lords angrier. *It was fine until you dug it up! We will not pay! Close it up, plaster over. It has stood this long, it will stand longer.*

So he would seal that fault up, and the next season the house would fall down. (...) 'I told them' he said to me. (...) 'when there is rot in the walls, there is only one remedy' (Miller, 2018: 168).

Based on this story, it can be argued that Circe remembers this story to relate patriarchy with the concerns of ecofeminism in terms of oppressions on women and nature. While those lords represent "Ups", as Warren's (2000:46) term referring to the masculinity which has a higher value than femininity and nature, the house can be seen as the patriarchal world and the rot at the base of the house symbolizes the patriarchal tyranny against women and nature as a core problem in society. Specifically, the problem in the house speaks to "unjustified dominations" of women and nature as Warren (2000: 43) puts to refer to the masculine oppressions. Instead of entirely correcting the situation, these lords who own the mansion chose to cover it up. Hence, this story puts parallelism between the men, women and nature. Men, like the lords in the story, believe they own the world, but women and nature have a subordinating role in that world. As a result, men can gain as much profit from women and nature as possible. However, the end of the story may refer to actions that women can take. As the house demolishes as a reaction ultimately, women can also destroy the male dominations and oppressions on themselves created by the patriarchy. Circe's words support this idea through the end of the story: "tear down and build again" (Miller, 2019: 168). This actively demonstrates that women should create a new strong basement for a harmonious life by destroying the male oppressions and dominations on women and nature.

As it has been mentioned before, Rozells (2020: 74) perceives Odysseus's look as a representation of the destructive power of men in Atwood's eighth poem where Odysseus appears with his war costume. In a similar vein, in *Circe* (2019), there is a criticism of war related to men's power and heroism. Since she believes that men live a short life because of wars, Circe says "[w]ar has always seemed to me a foolish choice for men" (Miller, 2020: 175). Her opinion about wars also challenges the patriarchal order which holds men an active role while women are seen as passive in terms of war culture and heroism. When she sees Odysseus's hand on his sword's hilt, Circe says "[w]eapons do not frighten me, nor the sight of my own blood" (Miller, 2019: 177). According to Altın (2020: 153), "Circe criticizes masculine interests and undermines androcentric practices in society". Namely, Circe stands against wars associated with men and masculine dominance. She "undermines" the social norms centered on masculinity like wars. This demonstrates her self-confidence since she is empowered by her witchcraft and does not have a passive role in her life as a woman anymore. Referring her strength, Circe says, "witches are not so delicate" by challenging men's tendencies towards violence (Miller, 2019: 177).

Circe tells the readers “[w]hen that first crew had come, I had been a desperate thing, ready to fawn on anyone who smiled at me. Now I was a fell witch, proving my power with sty after sty” (Miller, 2019: 183). As Altın (2020: 153) maintains, in this scene, Circe also demonstrates her self-esteem and independency. The passive Circe has gone, and she transforms herself into a powerful witch who can act against dominations. Being aware of the dualism created by the patriarchy, Circe questions her part in her life as follows: “[w]ould I be skimmed milk or a harpy? A foolish gull or a villainous monster?” (Miller 2019, 183). The first options in the questions refer to the limited roles that the patriarchy gives women in the dualism. As Ester Díaz Morillo (2020: 14) highlights, women appear to be presented in “a powerful dichotomy” which just differentiates “between the angel in the house and the fallen woman” all of the time. Morillo (2020: 14) mentions the poet Coventry Patmore’s poem from the mid-nineteenth century titled “Angel in the House” which extols the figure of the devoted and affectionate wife, “angel in the house” while she describes fallen woman as a woman who lost her innocence and can also become violent and deceptive at any time, and never succumbs to the patriarchal system. It is obvious that Circe looks for different options rather than get stuck with these roles and she answers her own questions: “[t]hose couldn’t still be the only choices” (Miller 2019, 183). In this regard, Circe’s words show that women do not have only two options anymore in their roles. The choices in life are infinite and women have the ability to get rid of the dualism and choose who they are and what they would like to be.

Another ecofeminist point of *Circe* is the theme of motherhood through Circe. Right after Odysseus leaves the island, Circe realizes that she is pregnant with their child. Circe ‘s motherhood begins with the ordeal of pregnancy. She vomits so much that her throat is torn, and the corners of her mouth are cracked. She describes this situation by saying, “[a]s if my body would cast up everything it had eaten for a hundred years” (Miller, 2019: 209). Circe, whose pregnancy process is getting more difficult with each passing day, has also a hard time during the birth. Although she suffers from too much pain, Circe gives birth to a son, Telegonus, on her own without assistance. As Altın (2020: 154) maintains, Circe, who is depicted as similar to human beings by Miller, allowing contemporary readers to empathize with her, has to deal with the challenges of parenting a child on her own without the father. Circe explains how hard and demanding it is to raise a baby as follows: “[e]very minute I had to wash and boil and clean and scrub and put to soak. Yet how could I do that, when every minute he also needed something, food and change and sleep” (Miller, 2019: 212). She constantly keeps a close watch on her baby, doing everything she can to make him feel better with her endless maternal affection. Circe’s motherhood with a lot of realistic troubles and efforts can be associated with

the eco-feminist theory on motherhood. As a mother and a witch, Circe protects, nourishes, and heals Telegonus. In the end, when he grows up, he would like to see his father by leaving the island. Although her mother feels uneasy about it, he does not feel obligated to do whatever his mother tells him just because she takes care of him and keeps him safe.

An analogy can be drawn here between Telegonus and nature. Just like baby Telegonus, nature needs to be cared for, fed, and protected by a mother as Lynn M. Stearney (1994: 153) states. Circe's motherhood illustrates the notion of protecting and mothering nature without exploiting it in terms of that she sees her son as an individual and respects his wishes and would not even think of exploiting him and his power. In her work, Sara Ruddick (1995: xi) develops a theoretical framework on "maternal thinking" which promotes the notion of "mothering as a practice or work". According to Ruddick (1995: xi), mothering should be seen as a "work" which is independent from the mothers' biological or legal ties to their children since "mothers are people who see children as 'demanding' protection, nurturance, and training; they attempt to respond to children's demands with care and respect rather than indifference and assault". Therefore, any gender can "mother" as long as they care, nurture, and protect by meeting the demands of children (Ruddick, 1995: xii). Although Stearney (1994: 153) criticizes ecofeminists because they do not mention fathers who can also protect nature by "mothering", she refers to Ruddick's ideas about motherhood and links them with nature which should be protected by all genders. As a result, Circe's motherhood sets a very good example to understand how to "mother", take care of, nature considering that her mothering with her son Telegonus. She does not consider him to be her property. Rather, she loves and protects him.

In conclusion, as expounded above, - initially oppressed, later raped -, Circe discovers her identity and freedom in nature by making her voice heard through her witchcraft. However, it is not easy to achieve this since Circe must struggle against a male-dominated society while attempting to connect with nature. Circe accepts and celebrates the eco-feminist link between woman and nature as a result of this process, which begins with her banishment to the island. In this regard, the story of Circe sheds light on some arguments of ecofeminism related to dualisms, nature/woman relationship, midwifery, and motherhood. The concepts of immanence, interconnectedness and living community outlined in Starhawk's *Earth-based Spirituality* support Circe's view of nature. Seen as worthless by the patriarchy, these concepts are embraced by Circe. Therefore, challenging what she has been taught so far, Circe acts in nature, where she creates her own identity and justice. As a result, witchcraft provides her power and allows her to determine her own destiny and to find her independence.

CONCLUSION

Women and nature are devalued in the patriarchal culture where dualities create the hierarchy between the human and the non-human-world. Dualities shape people's perceptions of culture and nature in terms of which is superior, and which is inferior, hence forming gender identities. To elaborate more, those dualities have roots coming from Christianity that teaches its followers that human beings and the God are discrete beings, and they can control nature. In order to deal with all these hierarchical thoughts, some ecofeminist theorists celebrate the unity of humans and nature by honoring the link between the women and nature as seen in the Old Religion through the Mother Goddess belief. Today, the Mother Goddess has become the symbol of power of women and nature. As a result, ecofeminism's purpose is not only to destroy the dualities overpowering the other, but also to "reweave new stories" that affirm the sustainability of all lives and value cultural and biological diversity (Diamond & Orenstein, 1990: xi). In the works of Atwood and Miller, the connection between the women and nature is handled in such a way that Circe the witch is depicted as ecofeminist through her closeness to nature and objections to patriarchal dualities.

In "Circe/Mud Poems", the major concern of Circe is to challenge the gender roles that are given to her and destructive male power on her life. From the beginning to the end, Circe advocates for a shift in patriarchal structures that affect women and the environment. Circe, in Atwood's portrayal, is a woman who tries to follow the way of the masculine order at times, but also tries to forge her own path. She aspires to build a world free of oppression for all living things and tries to find a way for reconciliation. In the first poem, she mentions the destructive effects of patriarchy on women by foreshadowing what is going to happen in the story. In the second poem, Circe talks about her tiredness of the stereotypical male heroes. She desires to see the men who do not have patriarchal beliefs in her life. Circe touches upon ecofeminism's binary classifications where women, nature and the Other are seen as "Down" in Warren's term (2000, 46). Circe would rather be with the ones who does not follow the path of patriarchy. In this way, she can be away from the dualities, and she would much rather be among people who have had similar experiences to her, such as being the other and valuing nature. In the third poem, Circe defends what occurred to the visitors who came to see her and were turned into swine. She says that turning the men into pigs was not her fault since masculinity might be seen as the main reason of her transformations. Plumwood's "the feminine natural and domestic

sphere” where women are represented as passive, illuminates Circe’s behavior in this poem. Besides, it can be stated that Circe’s passivity might have a role on male domination. Circe’s passivity towards the actions of the men in the dichotomy makes males more like beasts that are repressive and cruel to women and nature because she did not speak out against patriarchy. In the fourth poem, Circe is associated with nature itself. The Mother Goddess culture is reflected in this poem in terms of Circe’s witchcraft. Calling herself “a desert island”, Circe subverts the conventional representation of a witch and demonstrates that she is a witch who is connected to nature. She appreciates this relationship and highlights that woman and nature are very similar. In the fifth poem, Circe mentions how masculinity justifies its oppressions over women through “a logic of domination” (Warren, 2000: 46). Circe notes that she did not make any choice; Odysseus comes to the island with his boat and calls the shots since he justifies his superiority with his masculinity. In the sixth poem, there is emphasis on Plumwood’s “masculine rational sphere” represented by Odysseus (2013: 213). It is highlighted that Odysseus does not care about nature and its value despite Circe’s efforts to persuade him otherwise. Circe poses probing questions to Odysseus in order to remind him that there are more important qualities in life than becoming a hero, such as respect for nature’s holiness. In the eighth poem, Odysseus is mentioned by his destructive acts to the woman, and nature as the supreme power in dualism. His war clothes implicit his oppressive masculinity. In the ninth poem, the gender roles and the ecofeminist dualities are underscored. Whereas Circe is eager to share what she has in the island, Odysseus is already taking and claiming it as his natural right. In the tenth poem, Odysseus rapes Circe and this represents the “‘power-over’ power” of Warren (2000: 46). Odysseus’s rape on Circe demonstrates the unjustified overpowering of men over women and nature. In the eleventh poem, Circe tells about how she is exposed to male oppression and her identity is affected. She says that her identity is reduced and degraded. In the twelfth poem, along with losing her identity, Circe no longer has her connection with the Mother Goddess namely nature since Odysseus seizes her talisman that links her to power of nature. In the thirteenth poem, Circe comprehends she must get free of the Homeric tale in which she is trapped and enslaved. She pursues her freedom and new identities for herself. In the sixteenth poem, there is an analogical story in which there is a representation of passive Circe and exploitation of nature. At the end of the story, Circe questions the gender roles and realizes her own voice to speak up for herself. Towards the end of the series, in the twentieth poem, Circe mentions Penelope from *Odyssey* who has also a passive role in the traditional myth. Penelope writes a new story which functions to build a new life in which there are no hierarchical dualities that cause Odysseus to see life through a gendered lens. The last poems

of the series offer an alternative world to the dualistic and oppressive system. As a result, Mother Goddess culture of ecofeminism provides an alternative life in which nature, women, the Other, and all living beings on the planet are valued.

In *Circe* (2019), patriarchal dualisms, hierarchical gender/power relations, and the women-nature relationship are explored via female identity, rape, witchcraft, and patriarchal oppressions. In broad terms, *Circe* (2019) is the story of a woman who discovers her own identity. The woman goes from quietness to noise, and then from noise to being heard and understood. Playing a significant role in Miller's work, Circe's witchcraft is what allows her to be recognized and empowered. In the beginning, she suffers from the dualism which sees her as inferior due to her appearance. According to Oppressive Conceptual Framework (OCF), *value-hierarchical thinking* values the ones that are higher, or Up, more than the ones that are lower, or Down. At that rate, Circe is seen as valueless. However, Circe's existence is not just about her looks. Her witchcraft that connects her to nature determines who she is. Circe, who was oppressed at first and later raped, rediscover her identity and independence in nature by using her witchcraft to make her voice heard. Circe must, however, fight against a male-dominated culture while striving to connect with nature, which is not easy. As a result of this process, which begins with her exile to the island, Circe embraces and celebrates the ecofeminist bond between woman and environment. Circe's story illuminates several ecofeminist views on dualisms, nature/woman relationships, midwifery, and motherhood. Circe's perspective of nature is supported by the principles of immanence, connectivity, and living community expressed in Starhawk's Earth-based Spirituality. Circe embraces these principles, which the patriarchy regards as worthless. Circe interacts with nature, where she builds her own identity and justice by rejecting what she has been taught thus far. As a result, witchcraft gives her strength and the ability to control her own fate and achieve her autonomy.

To conclude, this thesis emphasizes that these two different literary works present a detailed examination of how ecofeminism works on female identity of a witch although they are two different literary genres. In both literary works, Atwood and Miller subvert the traditional story of Homer and the stereotypes of the witches who were subjected to patriarchal tyrannies and seen as evil and rewrite their own version with a female voice by grounding their story on ecofeminist views on nature, female identity, witchcraft, and motherhood. In both versions, Circe, who was marginalized in Homer's epic, is drawn to the center, and allowed to speak up for herself. As a result, these two works turn into a voice for those who are othered and marginalized. Suffering from patriarchal oppressions caused by dualities, Atwood and Miller's Circe find a place to escape from a male-dominated world in the end; nature. Both

create a new world, an island, where the Goddess culture rises. In that island, there is no hierarchical power relations of gender. Nature is the place that ends all the dualistic conflicts between two genders. “Circe/Mud Poems (1974)”, which reveals that women are placed in a powerless and submissive position compared to men due to the binary classifications, describes Circe’s female identity and her desire to see a change in gender roles. Circe objects to what has been written for her in the old myths. Addressing Odysseus, Circe frequently mentions destructive male power against women and nature. On the other hand, in *Circe* (2019), Circe depicts the growth of her female identity through nature, witchcraft, and motherhood. Although her story begins with her passivity, she does not end it the same way; she acts against the dualities and embraces nature to get power.



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