Rewriting Herstory Through Nature: Doris Lessing's *The Cleft*

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Abstract

A ground-breaking novel by Doris Lessing, *The Cleft* (2007) dwells on environmental matters under the context of ecofeminism and depicts the beginnings of the first human civilisation paving the way for the Anthropocene, or in other words, the human age, reflecting the geological transformation of the Earth by human impact. In the novel, a separate creation of men and women is pictured with a new type of society where women are the first humans pursuing an eco-friendly philosophy of life while men come to being later as intruders to the women's rule. The women object to the abrupt appearance of men violently while men similarly resort to violence and commit several crimes against women in retaliation, which lays the foundations of the first anthropocentric society. However, reconciling despite their differences, the women and the men eventually form the first unified human society leaving their permanent anthropocentric print on nature. Realising their mistakes and learning from them, this budding society endeavours to pursue an environmental-friendly way of life both for humanity and the nonhuman environment, which are indeed interdependent. This study aims to analyse *The Cleft* as a narrative of the twenty-first century accentuating the vitality of the nonhuman environment and the critical role of human beings in the ongoing process of becoming. In this sense, the novel sets a valuable example for the readers in catching the gist of the new world reality at present, the Anthropocene, and finding their intricate role in the impasse of anthropogenic environmental transformations.

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Kadının Doğa Aracılığıyla Tarihi Yeniden Yazması: Doris Lessing'in *the Cleft* Romanı

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Öz

Doris Lessing'in çığır açan romanı *The Cleft* (2007), ekofeminizm bağlamında çevresel meseleleri ele alırken, insan etkisiyle dünyanın jeolojik dönüşümünü ifade eden ve diğer bir adı insan çağı olan Antroposen'e sebebiyet vermiş ilk insan uygarlığının başlangıcını ele almaktadır. Romanda, kadınların çevre dostu yaşam felsefesiyle ilk insanlar olduğu ve erkeklerin daha sonra dünyaya gelerek kadın düzenine davetsiz olarak katıldığı yeni bir toplum türü ile kadın ve erkeklerin farklı yaradılışı tasvir edilmiştir. Kadınlar, erkeklerin aniden ortaya çıkmasına şiddetle karşı çıkarken, erkekler de benzer şekilde şiddete başvurup, öfkeyle onlara karşı çeşitli suçlar işlemişlerdir, ki böylece ilk insan-merkezci toplumun temelleri atılmış olur. Yine de, kadın ve erkekler, sonunda farklılıklarına rağmen uzlaşmaya varıp, kalıcı insan izlerini doğa üzerinde bırakan birlik ve bütünlük içerisindeki ilk insan toplumunu oluştururlar. Hatalarının farkına varan ve onlardan ders alan bu yeni toplum, aslında birbirine bağlı olan insanlık ve doğanın iyiliği için çevre dostu bir hayat sürmeye gayret ederler. Bu çalışma, insan dışındaki doğanın canlılığını ve insan türünün dünyada devam eden oluşum sürecindeki kritik rolünü vurgulayan bir yirmi birinci yüzyıl anlatısı olarak *The Cleft* romanını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu anlamda roman, okuyucunun mevcut yeni dünya gerçekliğinin özü olan Antroposen'i ve antropojen çevresel dönüşümlerinin çıkmazında kendi karmaşık rolünü anlaması açısından değerli bir örnek teşkil etmektedir

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INTRODUCTION

Grown up outside Europe and Britain and nurtured by various cultures, Doris Lessing (1919-2013) is a well-known British novelist. Due to social and political tension during her childhood and teenage years extending from World War I to World War II, Lessing adopts a distinct style in her works, which marks her success as a writer. As a feminist, socialist, ex-Marxist and eco-conscious person, Lessing is regarded marginal for expressing her opinion on the matters she finds injustice. It is rather significant that there are always “the same problems that plague Lessing’s characters in her [...] novels, in whatever time or continent they are situated” (Frankova, 2013: 240) since they tend to represent the unvoiced and the suppressed. As an ardent reader of the world agenda, Lessing prospers in her literary, political, and historical knowledge starting from her childhood. Hence, her writing career begins with *The Grass is Singing* (1949) and continues with her famous *The Golden Notebook* (1962) marking her strong position as a writer in terms of postcolonial, feminist, and environmental issues. She stands sides with the people of colour, women, and nature. With this, as one of her final works, *The Cleft* can be regarded as a sum of her general philosophy of life emphasising her feminist and eco-friendly stance.

The Cleft is a unique novel for re-interpreting the creation myth in favour of women and giving them their voice back in the history. The main story in the novel is accounted through the anonymous perspective of a Roman historian, who drafts the general history of humankind since the creation. Subverting the patriarchal history with the creation of women before men, the novel indeed empowers women along with nature in the face of anthropocentric oppression and power struggle which will be introduced to the island with the arrival of the Squirts, the men. The plot takes place in the prehistoric times which refers to the first ancestors of the *homo sapiens*. Through the old documents the narrator has preserved, it is assumed that the main story has prehistoric origins even though the time is not indicated in the novel. It is the responsibility of the women called Memories to preserve the origin of everything as the representatives of the oral female history (Lessing, 2007: 136¹), recalling Lessing’s post-apocalypse novel, *Mara and Dann: An Adventure* (1999). In the same manner, not much is known about the setting of *The Cleft* other than the fact that it is an island that could be Italy or Greece for the weather is generally warm throughout the year, as the narrator speculates (171).

The Cleft as a New Creation Story Signalling the Anthropocene

Rewriting the creation story of humankind, *The Cleft* represents women as the first human beings. Naming themselves the Clefts after the large rock on their island which looks like a cleft, the women are initially empowered with parthenogenesis whereas men are born later, which complicates women’s harmonious nature. In women’s terms, the birth of the first male introduces the concept of conflict into their lives as both sides display hostility towards one another. In the same manner, once the men and women come together, the culture as separated from nature is settled around sexual distinctions, dogmas and prejudices, and projects the way of how *anthropos* societies originally evolve. Representing the traditional humanism which relies heavily on anthropocentrism, speciesism, sexism and ontological as well as epistemological dualities such as body/mind or nature/culture (Clarke, 2003: 16), men cause disturbance in women’s natural lifestyle and the nonhuman environment surrounding them. In the further passages of the novel, however, Lessing reunites the women and men in their mutual respect for their bodily natures as well as the body of the environment *per se* through a green perspective and draws attention to their indispensability in the process of life-making, the future of

¹ From this point on, references to *The Cleft* in this article will be made only with page numbers.

humanity and sustainability of the Earth, which is constantly intra-active².

Likewise, the Clefts are called the ancestors of humankind by Maire, the female narrator, as an anonymous group with no individual names or family names, only categorised by their tasks. Through this, it can be interpreted that the Clefts have no greed for power nor property as opposed to the anthropocentric patriarchal discourse based on ownership and greed which shall be brought to the island by men soon (*The Cleft* Introduction). It can be deduced from human history that "material greed [always] leads to environmental crisis" (Çetiner, 2020: 35). So, anthropocentrism appears to be the origin of patriarchal dominance, racism, sexism, binary oppositions, reductionism of the nonhuman nature as well as women as follows:

Environmental philosophers have not only blamed anthropocentrism for the problems of the environment. Feminists have understood the problems of the environment to be caused by the aggressive dominance of the male. They believe that a more female caring approach to nature would solve the problems. Other philosophers view the cause of the problems to come from religious beliefs or from scientific approaches of objectivism and reductionism towards nature. (Barnard, 2006: 5)

With this, religious dogma, and the Cartesian duality of human and nature deeply rooted in the Enlightenment philosophy of Descartes that influenced the whole European idea of civilization and advancement, which triggered the Anthropocene³, or the human age, cannot be considered separate from anthropocentrism. The seventh epoch in the human history, the Anthropocene, is the human age as denoted from the etymology of the word and follows "the Holocene, [which] lasted from 11,700 years ago until, perhaps, two generations ago" (Davies, 2016: 140). Named as a geological epoch based on stratigraphic data provided through Earth sciences, the Anthropocene is also a method of literary reading by "looking at the stratigraphic and the social, the ecological and the aesthetic [...] which reveals a body of Anthropocene literature" (Reno, 2020: 7). In this regard, Lessing's *The Cleft* can obviously be read as an early Anthropocene narrative pointing the birth of the first men as the pioneers of patriarchal rule and the whole anthropocentric idea of civilisation that shall change the face of the Earth in the following centuries. Changing the notion of nature from the perspective of the *anthropos*, in other words, the powerful and influential individuals or organisations since the dawn of humanity, and especially after the late eighteenth century, when the effects of the Anthropocene were clearly observed (Crutzen, 2002: 23), Eurocentrism and anthropocentrism brought about the irreversible transformation of the Earth.

Nevertheless, in the novel, women represent the philosophy of deep ecology and ecofeminism with their nature-friendly way of life. There are certain groups among the Clefts divided according to their responsibilities such as the Cleft Watchers, Fish Catchers, Net Makers, Fish Skin Curers, and the Seaweed Collectors. In this respect, women lead a simple life of green philosophy embracing the nonhuman environment (10, 11). The Clefts are the protectors of the nonhuman nature and the guides for green thinking as they show the men the simple way of living. The nature, or Mother Earth, turns the Clefts into mothers giving birth to both girls and boys and later, the Squirts into fathers once they come together with women. Through this union, the cycle of life is filled with vital variety (88). By the

² Coined by Karen Barad, "intra-action" depicts the interaction of humans with everything and anyone the universe (2003: 817). With this, "intra-action" is thought to be a more comprehensive term than "interaction" for depicting the inward and outward bodily relations with humans and the nonhuman as part of the phenomena of life.

³ About the historical emergence of the Anthropocene, the prevalent idea points three phases: from late eighteenth or nineteenth century to 1945 as the first phase, from 1945 to 2015 the second phase and from 2015 on as the third phase (Steffen et al., 2007: 618).

time Maire gives birth to the first baby of humanity, she takes the baby to its father's island a short while later, which is to the amazement of the men as they realise the facial resemblance between the father and the baby. They are made aware of their paternal qualities when the father grows protective and affectionate towards the baby, which is a milestone incident in the history of humanity as the concrete system of family. Therefore, the female and male members of nature contribute to life on Earth and the creativity of both sides are brought together by natural law of creation (98).

However, when the first human society emerges, it brings along anthropocentric problems such as violence and social conflict among human beings and enmity against the nonhuman environment. As *anthropos* or anthropocentric human societies are mostly associated with destructive action, violence is inevitably one of the primary and determining qualities of being human, yet the definition of human is often limited to 'man' due to androcentrism and the patriarchal oppression in social, economic, and political spheres of life (Plumwood, 2002: 100). Patriarchal system has the main purpose of dominating women along with the nonhuman environment as the weaker parties and undermining them for centuries through literal and discursive violence including the distortion and transformation of knowledge (Shiva, 1994: 17). For example, in *The Cleft*, the Squirts handle the right of producing or taking advantage of knowledge because important decisions about the group are mostly made by men depicting the onto-epistemological oppression of women by the patriarchy. Besides, women and nature are symbolically regarded as "one" for their resemblance and treated as such, in a carefree and insensitive manner by the males (Warren, 2000: 29, 33). At this point, both a movement and a theory, ecofeminism calls out to end all kind of restrictions, that is, it equates the social, political, and cultural oppressions with the oppression of nature and asserts that the only way of women's liberation is through that of nature's (Gaard, 1993: 1-2). In this respect, the strong relation between women and nature and their reproductivity along with high awareness about preserving the integrity of the nonhuman environment reflect their ecofeminist status. The women, who are oppressed in the early phases of the first human settlement, are to mentor the men about the natural way of life towards the end of the novel.

In *the Cleft*, there are two accounts reciting the marginal version of the Biblical creation myth. One of them is produced by Maire as the mouthpiece of the female society and the other is by the old Roman historian, who lives in the period of Nero. Indeed, Maire's account is presented as embedded within the historian's narration which is expected to "silence and repress" her side of the history (Cox and Reynolds, 1993: 139). With this, what invites attention is the preservation and the presentation of their narration. At first, Maire speaks as a female member of a female community providing information about both the good and the bad aspects of her people. However, she mostly has a defensive tone because she knows that the patriarchal history stigmatises and undermines female accounts (9, 10) and how "the defeated [and the weak] go down in history and disappear" (Barker 2018). She is a 'Memory' of the female society and called the protector and mouthpiece of the oral female history. At this point, oral history by women evokes several connections because it implies the natural and harmonious way of living which is not yet corrupted by culture or the already-biased (patriarchal) written history. In other words, women's community is clear from the process of knowledge transformation yet, which takes place in the patriarchal societies almost naturally since the real "natural" is already silenced or altered (Gaard, 1993: 96- 97). It calls forth the tradition, culture, and literature of the indigenous people of Africa, America, and Asia, where so-called primitive societies were enslaved and ruled by the white settlers claiming to be superior for having the written literature and history, thus finding the right to erase them from the history as if they never existed (Cox and Reynolds, 1993: 285).

As the narration proceeds, Maire provides more about the Clefts and mentions once more that

this story has never been heard because it was ignored and underestimated by the canonised history as part of the process of knowledge elimination and transformation (23). Then, the Roman historian tells the story from the patriarchal perspective and openly expresses that the original myth of creation is longer and a lot more different than the popular account. The patriarchal creation myth is shorter yet has so much importance that it is turned almost into a taboo in the society that can hardly be challenged (21). The historian reflects the background of the male account of history, yet he sides with the Clefts in the original story of creation most of the time as an outstanding historian figure of the patriarchal system. Hence, he reminds the discursive quality of knowledge and history when he mentions the subversion of the facts at the beginning of his narration (24). Then, he boldly explains the process of this transformation which contains the destruction and elimination of the original knowledge. Finally, he takes sides with the feminine version of history:

The method used by the females, the careful repetition, word by word, and then the handing down to the next generation, every word compared and checked, by a method of parallel Lines of Memories is a very efficient preserver of history... You would be surprised at the mass of material in our – I jokingly called them prisons. Yes, this, I am afraid is the joke used by us official warders of the forbidden truth. (26)

As such, the female knowledge goes under harsh restrictions as one part of the diminished marginal history and even kept under control for centuries so that it should be considered epistemologically non-existent. Thus, another history can be created by the central authority without any obstacles. In this last phase of knowledge procession, those who benefit from the hidden knowledge are destroyed or stigmatised which pushes them into the marginal and periphery space distanced from producing or propagating knowledge. In this vein, the Roman historian later adds to his account when he uncovers the creation stories produced by the patriarchal history as that the males came into being when the eagles' eggs hatched. It is much easier for the patriarchal society to accept that they are the descendants of symbolical animals like eagles or deer, though, not of females because it diminishes their dignity (142-3).

All the same, with the union of females and males, the society in the *The Cleft* becomes a scene of violence for the Clefts and the Squirts. It is an indispensable part of the society as seen first with the incident of the male babies. The Clefts are ruled by the old ones who are the only authority in their community and bear similar characteristics with the male authority in that they propagate violence when the first baby boy is born. Since the male babies depict 'the other' within the female society, the old ones feel afraid of the babies and want to kill them as soon as they first see them. In this respect, the old Clefts represent bigotry which resembles to the "prejudice" of the patriarchy towards the other, the women, the people of colour and the nonhuman nature (Kaufman, 1987: 255). Thus, the old ones command the young women to leave their baby boys to their death on the cliff or to throw them into the sea to protect their society from the threat of the unknown (18, 19, 83). As more male babies are born, the old women grow more violent and try experiments on the babies by examining their bodies and observing the adolescent males secretly from a distance. The young women, on the other hand, respect the old Clefts' words and do as they desire at first. Nevertheless, they fight with the eagles which indeed protect and carry their children to the other males after some time as they do not want to let their babies die by leaving them unprotected (28). Afterwards, the young Clefts side with the Monsters/Squirts and protect the new-born from experimentation and death, which awakens the old Clefts' wrath. Finally, the old ones crave to take the men's lives.

On the other side of the Island Cleft, the males called "Monsters" or "Squirts" commit the crime of rape, which marks the first rape in the history of humanity and one of the first murders alongside the

old Clefts' previous killing of babies. Seeing a dead person for the first time, the Monsters dispose the raped woman's body into the river clumsily which flows through the forest they inhabit. They have followed their sexual urges and killed her unknowingly. Later, the same males are plotted to death by the old ones. They are lured into the endless pit in the Cleft, where the Clefts make their monthly sacrifice. The void inside the Cleft fumes with deadly gases while the Cleft itself embodies a deep hole both of which can easily kill anyone. So, the men are cheated by the attractive girls and brought to the Cleft, where they will either be poisoned or be pushed down to smash inside the rock (126, 127). They step into the cave trusting the young women. However, just as they are about to die by gas poisoning, Maire interferes to save them. Thus, other women support her and protect the men from the wrath of the old ones. Leaving the Cleft altogether with no casualties, the two groups stare one another in relief when the old ones attack the men. At that moment, a Squirt who was to die a moment ago by poisoning crushes the head of an old Cleft and adds to the list of violence in human history (129). These incidents find reflection in history with the state of the oppressed who paradoxically call on violence to free themselves from their oppressors, who similarly practice violent methods on them (Freire, 1970: 41-42). It proves that violence only brings more violence. Afterwards, the society is rid of the dictation of the old Clefts, but destructive anthropocentric mind-set is already budding in the first society of human history.

In this vein, it is observed that the Monsters become the representatives of the anthropocentrism that triggers the whole chain of the Anthropocene up to the twenty-first century as they want to control and dominate nature: the land, river, animals, and the island wholly because the nonhuman nature puts obstacles into their path of progression. With this, as opposed to Cartesian dualism, from an onto-epistemological perspective both nature and human beings are porous and equally important in the face of anthropogenic changes and transformed nature. The Anthropocene, which officially started with the Industrial Revolution, but indeed begins with the first human settlement in history, shows its intense and dramatic effects on the nonhuman nature up to present time since humankind has become a major geological force and is at the threshold of facing the "sixth major extinction event in Earth history" (Savenije et al., 2014: 319). Therefore, the new society that is built by patriarchal dominance in *The Cleft* is a clear example for the *anthropos* societies altering the geology of the Earth through agriculture, the taming of animals and settlement and causing a drastic environmental change leading to the progress of the Anthropocene.

Similarly, the men seem unaware of a land ethics, which advises the humans to treat nature in a virtuous and friendly manner (Warren, 2000: 37). Nonetheless, they hunt animals and destroy the trees for making a space for themselves when they build huts and fight against the elements of more-than-human nature. They also keep a messy lifestyle, polluting the system of nature and disturbing the aura of the forest. There is a time when the number of people on the island doubles and the present space is insufficient, which results in great violence among human beings and major destruction of the forest along with its inhabitants, the nonhuman animals (172). Accordingly, the males treat nature as their inferior when they take the island around the Cleft rock and masculinise it over time calling it theirs. They exploit the forest and the animals along with the Clefts who are born of nature. Towards the end of the novel, the men plan to run away from the women, whom they are physically attracted to but rationally distanced from, to set out on a journey of discovery. They want to possess other lands and settle in far-away countries as seen through Horsa's anthropocentric dream for the future:

'Horsa longed for his "other land", that people coming so many ages later would not know what they meant by 'longing', 'wanting', 'dreaming'.

Perhaps, if he could hear me, he might say, 'No, you don't understand. You see, I know everything there is to know about our land, every tree, plant,

bird, animal. But that other shore I saw there, gleaming like a dawn. I know nothing about that place. I have to know – don't you understand that?' (251)

It can be clearly noted that Horsa's way of thinking is the reflection of the colonial mind which prevails in anthropocentric societies.

The whole concept of male progression becomes apparent when the patriarchal leader, Horsa, scouts to see the other lands surrounding their island because he is so tired of her partner, Maronna's complaints and feels imprisoned in the limited piece of land, which includes the women's shore, Killing Rock, the Cleft, and their forest. Fuelled by his ambition for dominating the world, Horsa is determined to carry out his project. With an obvious colonial mind, he sets on to discover and possess new parts of nature, disturb the untouched lands, destroy, and pollute them (197). At this point, Horsa represents the *anthropos* of the twenty-first century that incline towards complacency and arrogance about the current state of the Earth and their part in it because "through the infancy of this new and extraordinary phase of our planet's history", human beings ignore the long-term consequences of the human-induced transformations (Zalasiewicz, 2017: 129). Hence, during his adventure, Horsa constantly tries to dominate the forces of nature, but fails each time, to his anger. He wants to pass through the forest, yet the trees are so thick and there are such fierce beasts that they do not allow Horsa's group to leave. Then, he sees an island at the far end of the land and decides to sail there with his best friend because the shiny beauty of the island fascinates him and tickles his colonial ambitions. Still, they are slammed by the ferocious waves of the sea and soon shipwreck, which causes his friend's death and leaves him crippled (203). In other words, Horsa risks losing people on the way and gets wounded during his colonial expedition. Then, he hits the land back in a pathetic state to the point where he started his brief journey. He morbidly recognises his fault that he cannot possibly dominate the nonhuman nature because it is immensely powerful and intra-active. Thus, Horsa sees the angry, destructive face of nature. Furthermore, he attempts to dominate his group of men and a few women most of whom do not pay heed to him after he is crippled. His rule has passed to another young and strong male in his group, which shows the great competition among males unlike the female society. Therefore, at the end of this failed discovery, the group gives up and sets back to their island around the Cleft. They are confused and shaken by the forces of nature, because they get continuously lost in a helpless state (248-9). At that point, they realise the extent of the influence women have on them. They come to appreciate the domestic side of some females and miss their roles in raising their babies as fathers. So, they decide to return at once to their Clefts and the island in pitiful remorse (216, 245). In the end, they reunite with the women and give way to the thought of discovery, at least for a while. Even though they have been insistent upon establishing power on nature and women at the beginning of the novel, they come to adopt more wisdom and consideration towards women and the nonhuman nature through the end, which is the first step into adopting an ecofeminist philosophy in life.

Thus situated, it is obvious in the main story of the novel that the patriarchal mind-set and its representatives carrying out destruction and inciting violence are deliberately eliminated at the course of the events, when especially the old ones are considered the origin of the evil and ruthlessness on the Island Cleft. Therefore, the novel once again reminds the amicable side of the ecofeminist principle and criticises all acts of violence and harassment committed by either men or women. However, because most of the men and women in *The Cleft* are unaware of discursive patriarchal power relationships at the beginning, it is the old ones who are the first practitioners and creators of the havoc amongst the two groups of people. In the end, it is them again who are destroyed with the part of men and the interference of the nonhuman nature that keeps its way with the reunification of men and women as partners and the collaborators of life. Similarly, with his colonial ambition, Horsa and his group of men recognise the power of nature and come to respect it after their bitter experiences.

Furthermore, through the perspective of material feminisms, the novel puts forth the wrath of nature (the revenge of Gaia) against the destructive attitudes of humankind defending itself as human beings commence with their anthropocentric way of living. Introduced in the 1970s by James Lovelock, Gaia revenge theory explains that Gaia takes revenge from the humans by creating inhospitable conditions on Earth for them through natural disasters, harsh weather conditions or illnesses until the point that the humanity realises their grave mistakes and take action to respect and protect the nonhuman nature (Lovelock, 2006: 7-9) along with its human counterparts. In the instance of the Noise, the nonhuman nature captures and leaves everything in pieces in an endless fury as if to give an unforgettable lesson to the Squirts, who treat women and nature as if they were possessions. It destroys animals and plants and changes the visible topography of the island, meanwhile scaring the groups of people to death and even driving some of them mad. Hence, human beings are reminded of their humanity and insignificance in the face of the giant Earth system⁴. They are shocked by the instant defence of nature which they have generally considered to be their greatest ally:

The 'Noise' was in fact a wind, coming from what must have been the east, one so strong, so irresistible, that they all believed at first in all kinds of supernatural intervention [...] The suddenness and the surprise of the Noise changed them all. Of course, bad things had happened before, a death, a drowning, the unfortunate beginnings of the males, but when had a murderous attack from nature, surely their friend, happened before? 'What has happened may happen again.' The Noise, the wind had taught them all how helpless they were. (138, 140)

After much struggle and violence, and lessons learned in nature, women and men settle together and form the first human community, so harmony is achieved out of discord (Mikluc, 2016: 211).

Conclusion

To sum up, projecting the story of the Clefts and Squirts as the first human civilisation, *The Cleft* depicts how a society can possibly evolve forward. In this alternate origin story, The Clefts, the women, are the first ancestors of humanity from whom the first men and other people originate. They are the matriarchal figures and the first examples of goddesses in history with their maternal qualities. They give birth to female babies at the beginning and keep a green way of life in nature, still later they bear baby boys and help increase the human population. Although they cast out all males from their female community naming them others, they atone for their faults years later and embrace the males through sensitivity and wisdom which originates from their innate connection with nature. Maire and Maronna counsel the Squirts and become potent matriarchal figures in the first society of the human history, where women guide the men and write their own history despite the patriarchal ignorance and oppression some men attempt to force on them. They remind the men the ways of pursuing a tranquil and amicable life for protecting their children, being sensitive towards women and preserving the integrity of the nonhuman nature. Despite Horsa's headiness and faulty decisions like his colonial journey resulting from his weariness of the Clefts, women finally manage to convince men to adopt a more indulgent, eco-friendly, and non-anthropocentric way of living. Eventually, the men and women cluster under the umbrella of humanity and contribute to the protection of the nonhuman environment. Thus, it can be evidently gathered from Lessing's *The Cleft* that a human society can correct its errors

⁴ Earth System is a geological term which refers to the group of complicated and interrelated physical, biological, and chemical cycles that actively procure the hospitable conditions and life on Earth (Steffen et al., 2004: 8).

and move forward adopting a green philosophy conscious of the interconnected thread of everything in life.

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