

Please cite this paper as follows:

Naghdibak, F., Afrougheh, Sh., & Azizmohammadi, F. (2023). The Surviving Nature: An Ecofeminist Study of Cormac McCarthy's All the Pretty Horses. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 11 (46), 125-134. <http://doi.org/10.30495/IJFL.2023.703378>

Research Paper

The Surviving Nature: An Ecofeminist Study of Cormac McCarthy's All the Pretty Horses

Farhoodeh Naghdibak¹, Shahram Afrougheh^{2*}, Fatemeh Azizmohammadi³

¹Ph.D. Candidate, English Department, Arak Branch, Islamic Azad University, Arak, Iran
f.naghdibak@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor, English Department, Borujerd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Borujerd, Iran
shahram.afrougheh@gmail.com

³Associate professor, English Department, Arak Branch, Islamic Azad University, Arak, Iran
f-azizmohammadi@iau_arak.ac.ir

Received: January 13, 2023

Accepted: August 25, 2023

Abstract

The aim of the present study is to investigate McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses* which revolves around the relationship between John and nature with a focus on the horses. Different aspects of the novel including social, cultural, and spiritual ecology are studied. In ecocriticism, the otherness of nature is one of the main themes that signifies the gap between humanity and nature that eventually results in the destruction of the environment and nature. This study also shows how the main characters, John and Alejandra, are linked in the novel, turning the present study into ecofeminist research. The novel mostly depicts the image of John wandering in nature and searching for his identity, to be punished. Therefore, the researcher scrutinizes the link between John, nature, and Alejandra and tries to examine how the novel shows similar attitudes towards both women and nature in *All the Pretty Horses*.

Keywords: Cultural Ecology; Ecofeminism, Nature; Feminism; Social Ecology; Spiritual Ecology

طبیعت بازمانده: مطالعه اکوفمینیستی درباره همه اسب های زیبای کورمک مک کارتی
هدف از مطالعه حاضر بررسی تمام اسب های زیبا اثر مک کارتی است که حول رابطه جان و طبیعت با تمرکز بر اسب ها می چرخد. جنبه های مختلف رمان از جمله بوم شناسی اجتماعی، فرهنگی و معنوی بررسی شده است. در اکوکریتیک، دیگری بودن طبیعت یکی از مضامین اصلی است که بیانگر شکاف بین انسان و طبیعت است که در نهایت منجر به تخریب محیط زیست و طبیعت می شود. این مطالعه همچنین نشان میدهد که چگونه شخصیت های اصلی، جان و آخاندرا، در رمان مرتبط هستند که مطالعه حاضر را به یک تحقیق اکوفمینیستی تبدیل میکند. این رمان بیشتر شخصیت جان را به تصویر می کشد که در طبیعت سرگردان است و به دنبال هویت خود می گردد و در نتیجه مجازات شود. بنابراین، محقق پیوند بین جان، طبیعت و آخاندرا را به دقت بررسی میکند و سعی میکند بررسی کند که چگونه رمان نگرش های مشابهی هم نسبت به زنان و هم نسبت به طبیعت در همه اسب های زیبا نشان میدهد.
کلمات کلیدی: بوم شناسی فرهنگی؛ اکوفمینیسم، طبیعت؛ فمینیسم؛ اکولوژی اجتماعی؛ بوم شناسی معنوی

Introduction

Ecocriticism has some principles in common with some approaches such as feminism that also demand the reader to take action and have a new perspective. Ecofeminism is a study that merges these two approaches and “draws comparisons between the oppression and domination of nature with the subjugation of women. Nature and women, considered dangerous and unpredictable, need to be subdued and controlled” (Dreese, 2002, p. 9). The two approaches show that a new understanding is necessary for universal harmony.

Ecological feminism tries to investigate the ways in which the patriarchal discourse has been the cause for the manipulation and oppression of women as well as ruining the natural environment. In this regard, both women and nonhuman nature have been traditionally regarded as the Other or the inferior by the patriarchal culture. Therefore, as social ecologists desire to confront the dictatorial systems of capitalism, ecofeminist theorists attempt to reform the manipulative systems of patriarchy:

Ecofeminists believe that we cannot end the exploitation of nature without ending human oppression, and vice versa. To do both, they reason, we must expose the assumptions that support Patriarchy and disconnect our concept of masculinity from that of ‘power over’ others and the rejection and denigration of the ‘feminine’ (Birkeland, 1993, pp. 19).

According to ecofeminist notions, Western society and the masculine world are the main reasons for the oppression of both natural entities with organic life as well as female subjects. The anthropocentric binary opposition of humanity/nature and the androcentric binary opposition of man/woman are two main binaries of this system that this research attempts to investigate.

In the binary opposition of humanity/nature, human beings are preferred and superior to nature as if they would possess nature and everything within it, for their benefit. Similar binaries have been widely developed between superior men and inferior women. These binaries have brought about similar notions of interest between feminism and ecocentrism: “The convergence is seen to arise, in part, from the fact that patriarchal culture has located woman somewhere between men and the rest of nature on a conceptual hierarchy of being (i.e., God, Man, Woman, Nature)” (Eckersley, 1992, pp. 64). However, from an ecofeminist point of view, the “conceptual hierarchy of being” is androcentrically constructed; therefore, it should be subverted and reconstructed.

From the ecofeminist point of view, nature and women have been historically known in the western patriarchal discourse. Therefore, whatever is connected with women, including feelings, animals, nature and the body have lost their values. On the contrary, all elements connected with men, such as logic, human, culture, and power have values. Ecofeminists are assumed to reveal the ways such binaries have functioned as the confirmation of the oppression of women, animals, and nature. They believe “in a western patriarchal culture, masculine constructs and values have been internalized in our minds, embodied in our institutions, and played out in power-based social relations both in our daily lives and upon the world stage” (Birkeland, 1993, pp. 17). In this regard, women’s closeness to nature, the emotional, the unreasonable, etc. are all consequences of the patriarchal discourse of oppression. Therefore, this research traces such oppression and the affinity of women with nature.

Cormac McCarthy, an American author born in 1933 in Rhode Island, later moved to Tennessee because of his father’s job. In that place, he enrolled at the University of Tennessee and majored in art. McCarthy won several awards and is regarded as a prolific author who has written several novels, plays, screenplays, and short fiction. His novels and their styles are complex and to some extent, they show dark conditions in the form of apocalyptic literature.



McCarthy became a well-known modernist writer master, and his *Border Trilogy* was amazingly attractive to both critics and readers.

The setting of *All the Pretty Horses* is west Texas as well as northern Mexico while the events happen in 1949. The subtitle shows that this title is merely the beginning volume of the three in the series. The plot of the novel is about John Grady Cole and Lacey Rawlins, who ride their horses from west Texas to northeastern Mexico. On horseback, they depart from somewhere near San Angelo in Texas and reach more than a hundred kilometers beyond, near Langtry. So they pass the border through the Rio Grande River and arrive in Mexico and get a job there as cowboys. The novel is to be studied from the ecological perspective as in an ecocritical essay on McCarthy's *Border Trilogy* Jacqueline Scoones draws attention to the novelist's "profound correlations between the ways in which humans construct their relationships with the natural world and the manner in which they construct their relationships to each other" (Buell, 2001, pp. 136-137).

The books of Cormac McCarthy's *Border Trilogy*, arranged by distribution, are *All the Pretty Horses*, *The Crossing*, and *Cities of the Plain*. Yet, these novels do not follow any fixed sequence in terms of volume or title. One could say that they are three bits of an enormous riddle, an image of the American Southwest, explicitly a region on the outskirts of Mexico that starts from Texas to Tucson in Arizona. McCarthy is introducing an image of different districts including the huge desert, vast meadow, and hilly mountains where the other pioneers settled. The three books can be read in any order with shared topics, influenced by William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, and Mark Twain. The intersection is from multiple points of view corresponding to *All the Pretty Horses*. *The Border Trilogy* is a modern Western. The border in these novels plays a metaphorical as well as a real role. The border between America and Mexico with all their differences is a place for maturity. The border represents nature, and the characters by considering anthropocentric beliefs and cultural conventions that control them, try to conquer it. McCarthy warns that man's mindless, selfish attitude and irresponsible behavior toward nature would lead him to disaster. Man's spiritual life influences his attitude toward nature. So, if man's alienation causes a spiritual crisis, this can lead to cultural and social crisis as well, and then in turn can change views of nature. In fact, culture and nature are not in opposition, but they are interconnected. Man and nature should coexist peacefully to have a harmonious life; Man's desire to dominate Nature has different responses from nature, if a man is against nature, he cannot escape the doomed failure.

Barclay Owens evaluates characters and their relevant fates in McCarthy's novels. He asserts that the *Border Trilogy* avoids many of the unsettling problems in *Blood Meridian*, although both John and Billy are similar to the kid in this regard: all find unanticipated threats in Mexico. Like the kid, the heroes of *All the Pretty Horses* and *The Crossing* are nomadic, sometimes violent, self-determining, and most fortunate in surviving potentially fatal encounters, just like the young protagonist of *Blood Meridian*. While all three stories provide the evidence for suitable and challenging moments that one expects in traditional themes of initiation and the structure one faces in a bildungsroman, the kid of *Blood Meridian* disappoints the reader as he does not accomplish the relevant maturity and awareness, or experience life-changing moments of existential splendor. And in the end, he dies ignominiously. In contrast, the reader of *All the Pretty Horses* is witness to the rite of passage that John and Billy pass through. They pass their tests with transcendent moments of honor and become experienced in the ways of the world (Owens, 2000, pp. 63).

Discussion

The whole plot of the novel depicts the relationship between man and nature in the form of both affinity and hostility. How society and man are linked with each other is highlighted and

emphasized in this novel. The philosophy of Karl Marx (1818-1883) shows the mundane aspects in which actuality and facts of economy function; as a result, every phenomenon including art, politics, religion, and sports is a product of the economy. In other words, the economy is the determining factor of every movement in society. Therefore, for Marx, culture is the representation of economic relations which is born out of a base in the society. Likewise, this novel can be read as a social work depicting the mechanism of social forces in society. As a result, “a re-reading of the writings of Marx and Engels in order to discern their attitude toward nature and technology and to find out how and to what extent they addressed the environmental problems of their day” (Eckersley, 1992, pp. 77) could help to fully realize what this novel is about to show. The author has complicated his story through symbolic elements to mirror the reality of the contemporary world in a pastoral land.

The novel starts in 1949 with the funeral of John Grady's grandfather. John who is a teenager has been brought up and developed mostly in his grandfather's ranch on the outskirts of Texas. Once the grandfather is dead, the plan of John Grady's mother is to sell the ranch since it does not make any money. The problem is that the boy's life is linked with the ranch and it would be painful to let it go. This beginning of the novel shows the ranch and the horses within it which signify that natural elements are associated with their social life. The novel reads “I'd give you all the money. You could do whatever you wanted. All the money. You don't know what you're talking about. There's not any money. This place has barely paid expenses for twenty years... Anyway, you're sixteen years old, you can't run a ranch” (Eckersley, 1992, pp. 11-12). John Grady wants to hold on to the ranch and take it since he regards it as part of his identity. Although he is told that he will not be able to run it, he does not listen and insists that he is able to handle the ranch. However, once he is disappointed that there is nothing for him in his hometown, he decides to leave the place. He cannot see himself as a separate part of the ranch and horses as he feels connected to the ranch. John Grady's love for nature, ranch, and horses originates from his unconscious that is rooted in the past. In other words, his social life which is bound to nature derives from his childhood. Nature forms a major part of the personal and collective unconscious mind. Eco-criticism should study social ecology and spiritual ecology since environmental issues can be traced back to both psychology and society. It is believed that the cause of the ecological crisis is humans' lack of understanding about the relationship between man and nature. More than lack of consciousness, the economic reasons and achieving material profits can be the other cause: “In a society that materialism is put in priority, it intensifies people's desire for wealth and resources and leads people to exploit nature. It leads to a social system that is harmful to the nature” (Wang & Li, 2015, pp. 132). John Grady's desire for nature conceptualizes the deep tie between society and the mind:

At the hour he'd always choose when the shadows were long and the ancient road was shaped before him in the rose and canted light like a dream of the past where the painted ponies and the riders of that lost nation came down out of the north with their faces chalked and their long hair plaited and each armed for war which was their life and the women and children and women with children at their breasts all of them pledged in blood and redeemable in blood only. (Eckersley, 1992, pp. 3)

What has been mentioned above regarding the idea of nature forms John Grady's desire as riding to a specific location satisfies him and watching it would be like a dream. For John Grady, running the ranch is a symbolic action as it gives a sense of power to him and he could feel powerful over nature since he would be the one who controls nature. The notion of power is not just limited to human beings. In social ecology power can be found; how humans impose power over nature and other creatures can prove the existence of power in hierarchical order as Garrard describes: “a general tendency towards the stances of ‘social ecology’ in recent criticism: it,

argues that human violence against the natural world is ultimately a product of oppressive structures of hierarchy among human beings” (Clark, 2011, pp. 89). John Grady meeting up with different people including his parents and his family’s lawyer proves his ambition and aspiration for mastery over nature. In fact, it would be his ambition and longing for mastery over nature that resulted in some harbingers. In fact, nature has a direct effect on the construction of the subject’s identity.

Human beings are mostly the product of their own nature and instinct, however, there are other factors that are significant in shaping their nature of which society is a major one. Different institutions have the power to shape human perception of the world and nature and they make a link between human perception and society. Regarding its task, Buell believes “literature-and-environment studies must develop a 'social ecocriticism' that takes urban and degraded landscapes just as seriously as 'natural' landscapes [...] Its traditional commitment to the nature protection ethic must be revised to accommodate the claims of environmental justice” (Clark, 2001, pp. 20). John Grady is the main character whose identity has been shaped according to ecocritical principles.

John Grady’s link with nature derives from the lack of communication with others, particularly with his family. Once he goes to their lawyer, Franklin, he realizes his parents have become officially separated. After a while, it can be seen that John Grady travels to San Antonio to see his mother’s performance in a play. Throughout this trip, he realizes that he is completely distant from his mother and they are not able to communicate with each other. John Grady meets his father for the last time in 1950 as they go riding together through nature. This moment would be difficult and painful for John and leave him vulnerable. Therefore, nature and having mastery over it becomes the only solution to make up for such a lack. Eventually, Jack and Rawlins decide to run away from their hometown. Their escape and running from home mark John’s tension with nature.

John and Rawlins leave San Angelo for Mexico. In the beginning, everything goes well with their trip. Indeed, life moves smoothly as they wish; a kind of life which would be best for the cowboys. They enjoy sleeping under the bare sky and continuing to advance towards a greener territory. Nature becomes a significant place for them as it brings them to their real selfhood which is associated with their national identity: “The night was almost warm. He and Rawlins lay in the road where they could feel the heat coming off the blacktop against their backs and they watched stars falling down the long black slope of the firmament” (Eckersley, 1992, pp. 20). This scene signifies the reality of natural life for the people who have always been exposed to nature. Here the binary of man versus nature can be easily realized. The tension between man and nature is suggestive of the new world that humanity has inherited. This new world is replete with an insatiable hunger for power in every realm including industry, consumerism, and new forms of slavery. This cosmic skirmish signifies the battle that modernity has brought upon humanity and the forces of darkness in the form of industrialization are in fact what is left of humanity which is no longer human.

After several days, they realize that someone has been following them throughout their journey. Soon after they discover that he is a very young boy of thirteen who rides a pure-bred horse. The relationship between Blevins and the horse and the way he wants to handle it mirrors the deep relationship between man and nature. Rawlins belittles Blevins and threatens to kill him and take his horse. Rawlins and Jack leave the boy and continue toward their destination. Nevertheless, on the verge of entering Mexico, somewhere on the beach of the Rio Grande, he catches up with them once more and persuades them to admit him as a company. As they continue their journey in Mexico, Rawlins bothers Blevins and regards him as a novice. The tension that takes place among the characters as Rawlins wants to own Blevins’ horse shows the

anthropocentric attitude of humanity. In fact, it depicts the fact that man's desire for controlling nature would be insatiable.

Although nature is a part of the social identity of Jack, Rawlins, and Blevins, a gap might be created between man and nature sometimes. Once a storm hits, the boys are shown terribly drunk. Blevins is skeptical about storms as lightning and storm have struck them and this panic has been within his unconscious and emerges now. Therefore, he leaves his horse and his clothes behind to be away from all the metal objects on them and hides in a ravine: "If this rain hits hard there'll be a river come down through here like a train. Have you thought about that? You ain't never been struck by lightning, said Blevins. You don't know what it's like. You'll get drowned settin' there. That's all right. I ain't never been drowned before" (Eckersley, 1992, p. 59). The tension between man and nature is shown in Blevins' fear of storms as it shows more power over them.

To those ecocritics, survival without a suitable natural environment is almost impossible. Furthermore, it is highly important to know the way human beings should coexist with the environment. Here are two ways of such coexistence with nature: "Either be intimate with nature or even be subject to the changeable temper of nature, or violently to control it and even ruthlessly to conquer or transform it by every means possible" Therefore, "whether we should beautify nature according to its rule or reform it at our own will are two different views toward nature. If we cannot do it in a proper way, we will be punished by nature" (Wang, 2009, pp. 292). These two different attitudes depict anthropocentric or earth-centric ideas. As has been noted earlier, the general supposition is that nature and generally the environment are there to be beneficial to human beings. However, natural resources should at the same time be protected and the environment maintained. Nature should be regarded as an essential part of the human world. Scientifically and religiously human beings come from nature and will return to nature and be a part of it sooner or later. So Moreover, literary activists should feel committed towards nature especially ecocritics since "having a harmonious relationship with nature and seeking for an ideal living environment is the common goal of all human beings, whether from the East or from the West" (Wang, 2009, pp. 292), This is how nature responds to man's anthropocentric ambition and his exploitation of nature. Moreover, as Blevins loses his horse, it shows that man is not in control of nature and does not own it forever. The horse is found and claimed by another person which shows that having a claim over nature would be challenging for man.

John Grady wants to help Blevins. So they sneak through Encantada and attempt to steal the horse. Blevins can get his horse back, but everyone wakes up in the village and they get informed. Therefore, the armed people chase them. Then they get separated from each other and John Grady and Rawlins head south to be away from that place. Their attempt to steal the horse has brought them trouble since they are left hungry and thirsty and chased by gunmen. This is the wrath of nature towards them which has been shown symbolically. McCarthy wants to picture the reaction of nature toward the anthropocentric attitudes of men.

As mentioned earlier, John and his friend aspire to become cowboys since mentally they feel satisfaction and nature might provide them with this feeling. In other words, the other aspect of ecological crisis can be traced in man's psyche and spirit as well as economy. In this respect, "the imbalance in society and nature is also spreading to man's spiritual world. Man's spiritual crisis will lead to more serious results that humans would destroy themselves in spirits and then the world" (Wang and Li, 2015, pp. 132). To elaborate more on the role of the psyche and its relationship with environmental issues, Wang's statement is worth being mentioned here: "Ecological crisis roots from human's spiritual crisis and cultural crisis. It is human's values and aims that influence their attitude to nature. Eco-criticism should not only analyze nature in literature but should probe into the root of ecological crisis from the perspectives of spirit and

society” (Wang and Li, 2015, pp. 132). The importance of ranching life is shown in the greatness of The Hacienda de Nuestra Senora de la Purisima where the boys serve as cowboys:

THE HACIENDA de Nuestra Senora de la Purisima Concepcion was a ranch of eleven thousand hectares situated along the edge of the Bolson de Cuatro Cienagas in the state of Coahuila. The western sections ran into the Sierra de Anteojo to elevations of nine thousand feet but south and east the ranch occupied part of the broad basin floor of the Polson and was well watered with natural springs and clear streams and dotted with marshes and shallow lakes or Lagunas. In the lakes and in the streams were species of fish not known elsewhere on earth and birds and lizards and other forms of life as well all long relict here for the desert stretched away on every side. (Eckersley, 1992, pp. 82)

The description here signifies the magnificent existence of nature that surprises man. This is a natural ecology where the young Americans work as cowboys. This is a vast land which covers a major part of that place. In fact, being in possession of this natural property gives an advantage to Don Hector Rochay Villareal who is the owner, and actually, as an affluent Mexican man, nature is at his disposal and the boys desire to be part of it. John Grady shows his skill as a master horseman and he is able to tame horses. Moreover, his knowledge of horses is astonishing which buys him a particular status before the owner of that place. Unlike Don Hector, for John, having control over horses and being a rancher does not derive from economic motivations. On the contrary, John’s motivation is mostly spiritual and mental.

The social hierarchy in this novel depicts the class struggle in capitalist societies where a man might be the outcome of his choices in the contemporary time; to pursue his real nature and be part of nature or to be the victim of consumerism. This matter could be a problem for every group. The relationship between man and nature is mirrored back in the relationship among people in this novel. The relationships revolve around the concept of benefit and advantage. In other words, McCarthy depicts implicitly the growth of capitalism and consumerism within the novel. Don Hector gives a higher position to John Grady and he gets a fine. John Grady works with Don Hector to breed a new species of stallion that he has purchased. In fact, breeding a new species would be interfering with the work of nature. Don Hector, as a capitalist, wants to exploit and use nature for his own benefit. This is the link between the social aspect of life and nature.

McCarthy builds this kind of connection within the relationship between John Grady and Alejandra who is the daughter of Don Hector. On one hand, John tries to take care of Don Hector’s horses, and on the other hand, he wants to express his love for Don Hector’s daughter. John’s love for both nature and humanity is mirrored. To conceptualize this matter, McCarthy draws the love scene between John and Alejandra throughout nature. One night, Alejandra meets John secretly and they get on the horses and ride out together. They are in the lake swimming and the author attempts to associate their love with nature:

The water was black and warm and he turned in the lake and spread his arms in the water the water was so dark and so silky and he watched across the still black surface to where she stood on the shore with the horse and he watched where she stepped from her pooled clothing so pale, so pale, like a chrysalis emerging, and walked into the water... Her black hair floated on the water about her, falling and floating on the water. She put her other arm about his shoulder and looked toward the moon in the west ... (Eckersley, 1992, pp. 119)

Although humans are represented as beings separate from nature, this scene highlights the role of nature in the personal relationship between these two characters. John’s identity is practically reduced to those features that make him different from others. He wants to define both humanity and nature. John’s love affair with Alejandra displays continuity or kinship with nature, and their virtue is often identified with those features that are categorized as lovers. Nature is reflected as essential and as the background to his life. However, since at some points in his life, John has

meddled with the will of nature, he has to be punished. Now it is clear that for John both the horses and Alejandra are beautiful and desirable but they cannot be owned.

Ideology has always accompanied human beings from their very genesis. However, it was not used to be tangible for centuries. Philosophy developed an interest in ideology and consequently “the concept of ideology has come to be associated with Marxism and Weber's account of the Protestant ethic is widely thought to oppose Marx's celebrated contention” (Levine, 2004, pp. 25). Later, this concept became noteworthy to Marxists, mainly structural Marxists who were active following Karl Marx. Ideology refers to some unreal beliefs and concepts that might be physically present, but they are shown in a false manner to the subject as Hawkes states it “refers to a systematically false consciousness” (7). Ideology is to nail down people to fixed ideas and clear the differences and relativism is a “thought that seeks to reduce a mutually definitive binary opposition to one of its poles” (7). The function of ideology is significant for all the groups of creatures in the novel. In this society, the territory is occupied by different people whose cultures and ethnicity are miscellaneous.

John is socially and culturally different from Alejandra. However, these two insist on visiting each other. It is Alejandra who comes to visit John Grady in his room. Their love is a manifestation of John's relationship with nature. As their relationship fades away, Alejandra goes back to stay with her mother in Mexico City, where she lives. John Grady is told that Alejandra is sent away for education in Europe. It is only a week that John Grady realizes that Alejandra is not in Europe and she is in the ranch house. This fading relationship influences John's link with nature as he starts to realize the gap between himself and society. In other words, the social hierarchy among them could be the harbinger of greater prevention. The characters are the symbols of different classes in society which is centered on the concept of nature.

A few days later Grady and Rawlins go to the mountains because they intend to tame wild horses. Meanwhile, Don Hector has noticed the relationship between John and his daughter. Hector wants to hunt them and kill them. In fact, taming the wild horse and having a relationship with a rich girl would be perilous for John. As has been mentioned, the time comes for John Grady and Rawlins to pay back for their meddling with nature and that has been shown symbolically. They are captivated by the Mexican soldiers and taken into jail: “They spent the night with their hands chained through the stirrups of their saddles, trying to keep warm under their single blankets. They were on the trail again before the sun was up an hour and glad to be so” (Eckersley, 1992, p. 128). This implies how nature and the environmental surrounding is the direct consequence of ideological function.

The function of ideology makes these two types different since the desire of the former is satisfied within nature and the desire of the latter is fed upon the destruction of nature. Likewise, it is a criticism against the contemporary world as life in the rural area is intertwined with nature and the break with nature marks the end of rural life. However, it must be noted that this break is unavoidable and like John and his friend, they are not fully able to eschew industrial consequences since it is a constant process. For this reason, they are meticulously conservative regarding the role of nature in their social façade. The people attempt to hold the integrity of their society by keeping their ties with nature as they do not want any external factor do pollute this integrity so that the social aspect of their community is kept shining. The wrath of nature is shown symbolically in this novel. In fact, the harsh condition of the prison in which they are kept portrays the other side of nature.

A prison is a brutal place and the prisoners behave violently. Like a natural place in which man must fight to survive, John and others spend their days in a constant fight for survival. They are terribly bruised and battered, but they manage to survive. After a while, John Grady is released from prison and he meets up with Alejandra but she blows him away and he has to



forget about her. Such a gap between them results in John Grady's relationship with nature. John has realized that his punishment has mostly been triggered by taking a part of nature that has not been his. So he decides to return the horse back to its main owner. Throughout this process, John is shot and injured which stands for the rage of nature. Moreover, Blevins who pretends to be the owner of the horse is punished severely and he is executed by the Mexican soldiers. The ending of the novel might imply that although a gap takes place between John and nature, eventually they must be reunified as John is shown wandering throughout nature: "The desert he rode was red and red the dust he raised, the small dust that powdered the legs of the horse he rode, the horse he led...He rode...the small desert birds flew" (Eckersley, 1992, pp. 252).

Conclusion

McCarthy is a twentieth-century author whose works are mostly set throughout nature. In fact, his works are interwoven with the themes of nature. *All the Pretty Horses* can be considered a text in which natural concerns, as well as aesthetic aspects, are included. Not only does McCarthy depict the beauty of prose mixed with poetic language, but also it is filled with contemporary major concerns of which natural ones are the most significant. By the time America was facing the development of industrialization and technological achievement and consequently the enhancement of colonization throughout the universe, in *All the Pretty Horses*, McCarthy could show the interaction between humans and nature. In other words, he was completely aware of natural concerns and the mutual relationship between humans and nature. The novel is filled with distinctive concepts of nature and other natural creatures. Nature is an important layer of people's lives in *All the Pretty Horses*. The author chose the wild nature of borders in America and Mexico as the setting of this novel to account for how they and the creatures within it have interacted with each other. McCarthy shows that nature has played different roles in man's life including social, cultural, spiritual, and mental aspects. The main character, John Grady, is influenced by nature, and his interaction with nature signifies the whole relationship between humanity and natural surroundings. John becomes the symbol of anthropocentrism which signifies the human's desire to tame and take control of natural elements like horses. It has been shown that the characters' cultural and social aspects of their lives are associated with nature. The ending of the novel that depicts the disastrous destiny of John reflects the revenge of nature over human beings. At the same time, the novel attempts to demythologize the American Western myths of masculinity through the combination of ecocriticism and feminism.

References

- Birkeland, J. (1993). Ecofeminism: Linking theory and practice. *Ecofeminism: Women, animals, nature*, 13-59.
- Buell, L. (2001). The Misery of Beasts and Humans: Nonanthropocentric Ethics versus Environmental Justice. *Writing For An Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the US and Beyond*.
- Clark, T. (2011). *The Cambridge introduction to literature and the environment*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dreese, D. N. (2002). Ecocriticism: Creating self and place in environmental and American Indian literature (Vol. 15). Peter Lang Pub Incorporated
- Eckersley, R. (1992). Environmentalism and political theory: Toward an ecocentric approach. Suny Press.
- Hawkes, D. (1996). *INTRODUCTION: Ideology and the Postmodern*. In *Ideology* (pp. 13-24). Routledge.
- Levine, A. (2004). *The American Ideology*. Routledge.
- McCarthy, C. (1992). *All the Pretty Horses*. Knopf.

- Owens, B. (2000). *Cormac McCarthy's Western Novels*. University of Arizona Press.
- Rainbow, A. (2012). "Ecoliteracy, Enchantment, and Consilience". *University of Bucharest Review* Vol. XIV (Vol. II – new series), No. 1. pp. 91-100.
- Scoones, J. (2001). "The World on Fire: Ethics and Evolution in Cormac McCarthy's *Border Trilogy*." *A Cormac McCarthy Companion: The Border Trilogy*. Eds. Edwin T. Arnold and Dianne C. Luce. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, pp. 131-160.
- Wang, W. and Li H. (2015). "An Analysis of That Deadman Dance from the Perspective of Eco-criticism" *English Language and Literature Studies*; Vol. 5, No.1, pp. 10-21.
- Wang, N. (2009). "Toward a literary environmental ethics: a reflection on eco-criticism", *Neohelicon*. Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 289-298.
- Zapf, H. (2010). "Ecocriticism, Cultural Ecology, and Literary Studies." *Ecozon*. Vol. 1, No. 1, University of Augsburg, pp. 136-147.

Biodata

Farhoodeh Naghdibak is a Ph.D. candidate in English Literature at the Islamic Azad University of Arak, IRAN. Her research area is based on Eco-Criticism and ecofeminism, which are applied to American Literature.

Email: f.naghdibak@gmail.com

Shahram Afrougheh is an assistant professor of English Literature at Islamic Azad University, Borujerd Branch, Iran. He is a member of the faculty at the Humanities department. His research interests include Modern and post-modern criticism. He teaches several subjects related to literature and advising and counseling in the thesis of students a master's degree in teaching English courses in Islamic Azad University of Arak and Borujerd.

Email: shahram.afrougheh@gmail.com

Fatemeh Azizmohammadi is an associate professor of English Literature at Islamic Azad University, Arak Branch, Iran. She is a member of the faculty at the Humanities department. Her research interests include Modern and post-modern criticism, short stories, poems, and plays. She teaches several subjects related to Literature and advising and counseling in the thesis of students a master's degree in teaching English course at Islamic Azad University of Arak

Email: f-azizmohammadi@iau_arak.ac.ir



© 2023 by the authors. Licensee International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research, Najafabad Iran, Iran. This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY NC 4.0 license). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).