

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The study, entitled *Women's Resistance in Barnes's Nightwood: The Study Of Ecofeminism* delves into the complex interplay of modernist and ecofeminism themes as portrayed in Djuna Barnes's seminal work that have a significant role in the modernism movement. This introduction will provide a comprehensive overview of the research, including the background, research questions, objectives, significance, and the scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of The Study

Djuna Barnes is an important writer in American modernist literature. She is best known for her novel *Nightwood*, which was published in 1936. This novel is considered a modernist work because it uses poetic language and a non-linear story. *Nightwood* talks about human relationships, identity, and desire, especially through female characters. Barnes shows women who do not follow traditional rules about gender and sexuality. The novel is well known for its unique writing style. As stated in Djuna Barnes's biographical entry in *Women in World History*, *Nightwood* is praised for its "poetic prose and non-linear storytelling," which makes it an important modernist novel. Characters such as Robin Vote, Nora Flood, and Jenny Petherbridge represent women who live outside social norms.

Nightwood was written during the modernist period, when many writers felt unhappy with traditional values and social systems. Modernist writers often rejected old writing styles and used new techniques, such as fragmented stories and unclear meanings. These techniques show confusion and problems in modern life. Even though *Nightwood* does not directly talk about nature or the environment, it shows broken relationships and emotional suffering. These themes can be connected to ecofeminism because ecofeminism criticizes systems that control and dominate others. Because of this, *Nightwood* can be analyzed using an ecofeminist approach.

Explains by Kuiper, K (2024) Modernist texts are open to many interpretations because they do not give clear meanings. This allows readers to use different theories to understand them. Ecofeminism is one theory that can be used to read

modernist literature. Murphy (1997) states that ecofeminism “should utilize the insights of postmodernist critique, not only for its dissection of late-capitalist cultures and social formations but also for its challenges to the limitations of ecofeminism itself”. This idea supports using *Nightwood* to study oppression and resistance.

Ecofeminism developed in the 1970s, during a time when women’s rights and environmental problems became major concerns. Ecofeminism believes that women’s oppression and environmental destruction are connected. Both are caused by patriarchal systems that focus on power and control. Women are often the most affected by these systems. For this reason, ecofeminism focuses on women’s experiences and voices. This theory is useful for analyzing literary works that show women being marginalized, such as *Nightwood*.

This study uses ecofeminism by Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies as its main theory. They explain that ecofeminism did not begin in academic institutions but from real struggles in society. As Shiva and Mies (2014:38) said, “It was not the result of academic efforts, it did not arise in research institutes, it was not invented by a few gifted women scholars, but arose on the streets, in countless women’s groups, in which housewives, secretaries, students, and a few social scientists came together, who jointly, as women, wanted to fight against patriarchal exploitation and oppression.” This quotation shows that ecofeminism comes from women’s daily experiences and collective resistance, not only from theory.

Shiva and Mies also explain that ecofeminism criticizes male-centered knowledge systems. They argue that science and social studies often ignore women’s roles and contributions. As Shiva and Mies (2014:37) stated, ecofeminism, “as feminist research, was of necessity a criticism of the prevailing paradigm of science and social science, which had not only made women and their contribution invisible but was most profoundly imbued with androcentric, that is male-centered prejudices, both in its general assumptions and conceptualizations and in its theories and methods.” This idea is important in literary studies because it helps readers question whose voices are represented in a text. In *Nightwood*,

women's voices and experiences are often marginalized, which makes the novel suitable for ecofeminist analysis.

Nightwood is chosen as the main source of data in this study because it shows women's oppression and resistance clearly. The novel criticizes social rules that limit women's lives and identities. The female characters do not follow traditional roles and resist social expectations. Although the novel does not talk directly about environmental issues, its criticism of domination fits ecofeminist ideas. Therefore, *Nightwood* is an appropriate novel to analyze using ecofeminism by Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies in order to understand women's oppression and resistance.

To analyze this thesis, there are several previous studies used. The first one is a thesis titled "*Woman's Struggle against Oppressions as Viewed by Transformative Ecofeminism in Han Kang's The Vegetarian*" by Izzul Millati Umami (2018) explores the various forms of oppression—physical, psychological, verbal, and sexual—suffered by the main character, Yeong-Hye, in Han Kang's novel *The Vegetarian*. The study analyzes how these oppressions are depicted and how Yeong-Hye's resistance against them is framed within the lens of transformative ecofeminism. The research highlights the intersection between the character's personal struggles and broader themes of ecofeminism, emphasizing her rejection of societal norms, especially through her refusal to consume meat, as a form of defiance against patriarchal oppression.

Second, a thesis titled "*Gendered Impacts of Natural Disasters Through The Lens Of Ecofeminism and Social Vulnerability: The Case Study of Haiti*" by Nadia Delic-Klevstad (2023) explores the intersection of gender, natural disasters, and vulnerability, with a focus on Haiti. It analyzes how pre-existing gender inequalities and socio-economic challenges exacerbate the impacts of climate-related disasters on women. The study employs ecofeminism and social vulnerability frameworks to highlight the need for gender-sensitive disaster management and policy interventions that prioritize women's empowerment and address structural inequalities.

Third, a thesis titled "*Spectacular Shadows: Djuna Barnes's Styles of Estrangement in Nightwood*" by Erica Nicole Bellman (2012) explores the unique narrative techniques employed by Djuna Barnes in her modernist novel *Nightwood*. The study focuses on Barnes's use of irony, spectacle, and visual artistry to craft a narrative that challenges conventional storytelling and creates a sense of estrangement. Through a detailed analysis of these stylistic elements, Bellman argues that Barnes's work invites readers to confront their own sense of alienation and the complexities of human relationships, ultimately presenting *Nightwood* as a multifaceted and enigmatic piece of modernist literature.

Fourth, a thesis titled "*Women and Ecological Crisis: A Study of Vandana Shiva's Ecofeminism*" by Anggraeni (2017) explores the interconnectedness of women's issues and environmental degradation through the lens of ecofeminism, as conceptualized by Vandana Shiva. It argues that the ecological crisis is largely driven by patriarchal and capitalist systems that exploit both women and nature. Shiva's ecofeminism advocates for recognizing the nurturing qualities associated with femininity—such as care, compassion, and sustainability—as vital for addressing environmental challenges. The thesis also examines how these ideas align with Islamic perspectives, suggesting that integrating feminine principles can offer alternative solutions to the ecological crisis.

Lastly, a thesis titled "*Women's Connectedness to Nature: An Ecofeminist Exploration*" by Sami Brisson (2017) delves into the deep-rooted relationship between women and nature through the lens of ecofeminism. It examines how patriarchal structures have historically dominated and exploited both women and the natural world, creating a dualistic perspective that separates culture from nature. The thesis argues for a reconceptualization of this relationship, advocating for a more interconnected and reverent approach to nature that challenges traditional hierarchies. It also explores how women's experiences and spirituality can contribute to a more sustainable and equitable environmental ethic.

Previous studies show that ecofeminism has been used in different areas. Umami (2018) studies women's oppression and resistance in a contemporary novel

using ecofeminism. Delic-Klevstad (2023) applies ecofeminism to real social and environmental problems, especially natural disasters. Other studies, such as Anggraeni (2017) and Brisson (2017), mainly discuss ecofeminism as a theory and do not analyze literary texts. Meanwhile, Bellman (2012) analyzes *Nightwood* by Djuna Barnes, but the focus is on narrative style and modernist techniques, not on women's oppression or resistance. Because of this, there is still a lack of studies that analyze how female characters in *Nightwood* experience oppression and how they resist it using ecofeminism, especially based on the ideas of Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies. This study aims to fill that gap.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study above, the writer focuses on the study questions below:

- 1 How do the female characters in *Nightwood* experience woman oppression through the lens of ecofeminism?
- 2 How do the female characters in *Nightwood* resist the oppression from an ecofeminism perspective?

1.3 Objectives of The Study

In light of the inquiries outlined in the preceding research questions, the study delineates its overarching goals and objectives as follows:

1. To analyze how the female protagonists in *Nightwood* experience woman oppression through the lens of ecofeminism.
2. To examine how the female protagonists in *Nightwood* resist the oppression from an ecofeminism perspective.

1.4 Significance of The Study

This study makes important contributions by raising awareness of ecofeminism and showing how it relates to both gender and environmental issues. It adds to global conversations about climate change and gender equality, encouraging people to think critically and take action. The research also helps literary studies by exploring ecofeminism in depth, offering new ways to understand the connections between women, nature, and society. Additionally, it connects

literature with environmental studies, providing fresh insights into ecological and feminist ideas.

1.5 Scope And Limitation of The Study

This study delves into the convergence of ecofeminism theory as presented by Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies within Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*. It is essential to acknowledge that the analysis may not fully encompass all nuances of the novel or the entirety of ecofeminist theory, limited only through narrator's narration and character's utterances. Additionally, the study's scope primarily focuses on the female protagonists, namely Robin Vote, Nora Flood, and Jenny Retherbridge, as representatives of ecofeminist ideals. Furthermore, the study confines itself to exploring ecofeminism within the context of the author's narrative, monologue, and dialogue as they directly relate to the study's themes.