

Women, Magic, and Environment: An Eco Feminist Reading of Rachel Griffin's *The Nature of Witches*

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Abstract :

The hierarchical structure and dualistic basis of the human society breeds oppression and divides the world into the dominant and subordinate binary, which is seen in the exploitation of nature and women. The hegemony of capitalist and patriarchal narrative objectifies both women and nature, and the essence of language that is used to describe nature and women as virginal, pristine, or as a menacing and destructive power that needs to be controlled is justified. The aim of this article is to see how this trope of women and nature is deconstructed and redefined, in order to explore nuanced ways of depicting the environment, ecology, climate change and their interconnectedness in fiction, especially fantasy literature. The purpose is to usher a new way of seeing and perceiving the consequences of the destruction of the natural world, humanity's impact on environment, and the possible solutions to ecological degradation. Humanity's overconsumption of natural resources disturbs the crucial symbiotic relationship of man and nature, and fantasy through the power of allegory gives us an understanding of how we are connected to the natural world, but also of what created our disconnect – the reckless exploitation, commodification and pollution. The ecocritical focus will be directed on Rachel Griffin's novel *The Nature of Witches* (2021) through an ecofeminist perspective, of how the mythopoeic fantasy story with its quasi-religious wonder manages to dismantle the anthropocentric constructions of nature, women, and unveils an ecocentric and biocentric paradigm, along with shifting gender roles and issues of identity.

Keywords: *Women, Nature, Environment, Ecology, Climate change, fantasy, Ecofeminism*

Introduction

The pluralistic approaches in feminist criticism resists generalization regarding its methods and objectives, and this plurality is what embraces the multiple ideologies that inform the broader women's movement, which helps feminists to continue their search for patterns of oppression as well as connection. Ecofeminist literary criticism in this sense can be described as –

Ecofeminism is a perspective that sees social and environmental problems as fundamentally interconnected. Beginning with a recognition that the position and treatment of women, animals, and nature are not separable, ecofeminists make connections among not just sexism, speciesism, and the oppression of nature but also other forms of social injustice – racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, and colonialism – as part of western culture's assault on nature. (Gaard 323)

After Francois d' Eaubonne's coining of the term "ecofeminism", in literature the intersection of ecology and feminism was a relatively unexplored realm. Now, the ecofeminist perspective in literature unveils the dominant patriarchal dualistic thinking, and at the same time explores emancipatory strategies which is not just confined to critique, but which identifies and articulates liberating ideals that can be actualized in the real world, transforming lives, and help in the emergence of more hopeful ecological narratives. In this regard, two distinguished approaches needs to be adopted to understand the relationship between women and nature – cultural ecofeminism and rationalist feminism, which draws attention to existing binaries of sexual and environmental justice, analyses of power, gender, and ecology, and green queer theories that accounts for diversity as well as the relevance and necessity to generate a feminist perspective in literature, culture, and science to reassess the material and discursive connections between the human and the natural world.

Ecofeminism advocates an ethics-based approach that will necessitate sustainable and effective practices considering the moral accountability regarding the environment, species, and the world, thereby contesting the heteromascularity that perpetuates gendered dualities and bodily boundaries. Rachel Stein, in her 2010 essay "Sexual/Environmental Justice and Ecocriticism of the New Century" says that – "the field of ecocriticism will become more conscious of the need to think through our assumptions about sex and nature" (Stein 103). Recent trends in the eco-literary imagination has used this framework illuminating the varied ways in which gender, class, race mediate the experiences of people in local environments, and how the political and economic power structures are instrumental in shaping and controlling the ecology and its resources. Simply speaking, ecocriticism with a feminist perspective offers a kind of intervention in to the ongoing political narrative authorizing the plunder of the

planet – the people, animals, resources, exploitation and disruption of the ecosystem. In a world where summits on global warming, climate crisis are held regularly, we have failed to humanize the issues, and the voices crying against these problems are either muted or marginalized. There is more to be done and written regarding the disasters modern civilization has brought on this planet – forests that have been cut down or burnt, rivers dammed and polluted, air and soil poisoned by industrial chemicals, oil and gas spills, marine pollution, nuclear power meltdowns which have contaminated the fragile ecology of this world. The eco-justice movements which have sprung around the globe harkening to the responsibility of protecting the earth and its life interrelates to the ideas, words, towards promoting and discovering a peaceful, just, and sustainable way of living on this precious earth.

The ecofeminist movement is also characterized by some quotidian customs of ritual and magic which is discussed by Roger S. Gottlieb when he talks about the aspect of spiritual deep ecology in which he expresses his view that people's "selves are not bounded solely by individuality or social group, but are partly constituted by connections to and at times with the natural world" (Gottlieb 405). This eco-spirituality emphasizes universality and connecting to the cosmic whole, which Starhawk focuses upon in order to conjoin politics, science and the sacred which she terms as "building community" with a pagan outlook and earth-based traditions pointing at the popularized "Gaia hypothesis" acknowledging the belief of the people in tribal cultures, witches, and shamans that the earth is alive. Starhawk defines magic as "the art of changing consciousness at will" (Starhawk 76), and this corresponds to the political and social angle of magic where actions of power and underlying principles of hierarchy are used to manipulate the consciousness of the people on a mass scale. Magic according to Starhawk is akin to politics as it involves the paradigms of moving energy, interconnectedness to sources of power, and changing the basic condition of reality. This conception of magic is appealing as it focuses on the transformation of the self, changing the individual consciousness, but also at the same time acknowledging the fact that changes too can manifest in the social and political sphere, of which the individual is an integral part, and the power of magic emerging from the consciousness is grounded on material and structural reality which can be used to shape a society based on the principle of power-from-within. Herein lies the paradox of magic and power, where magic grants an individual the agency to change things, but is limited to the scope of a conditioned reality where the liberal idea of a free, able individual is restricted. This dual focus on community and individual that focuses on creating an ecological selfhood which is connected with the natural changes of the world with regard for the context of human actions on the environment is what forms the core tenets of Rachel Griffin's Young Adult Fiction *The Nature of Witches*.

J M Karen Warren in *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature* (1997) asks the fundamental question that forms the very foundation of ecofeminism –

Trees, forests and deforestation. Water, drought and desertification. Food production, poverty and toxic wastes. Environmental destruction and women. And women? What do these environmental issues have to do with women? (Warren 3)

She answers her own question, speaking about the subordination, appropriation and exploitation of women and the natural world which are interconnected and extended in case of ethnicity, race, minority, the poor, the aged, differently abled, and LGBTQ communities, and the relationships between these varied aspects exists because of a certain identity logic exemplified as objectively real in discourses and material practices. Such kind of logic rests on hierarchical and dualistic binaries of mind/body, reason/emotion, and masculine/feminine, human/nature that aims to define what truly is human in contrast to the natural and biological sphere. Ecofeminism seeks to dismantle or dissolve these dominant dualisms, the othering and exclusion, striving for new associations of care, responsibility and justice where humanity does not differentiate itself from nature but regards itself as an integral, dependent part of the ecological system, recognizing and thereby acknowledging the difference but rejects the anthropocentrism based on utility values or the human/non-human binary. Hence, the interconnections between gender and ecology, between theory and practice, between spirituality and ethical action, where we can see the patterns, structures of impoverishment regarding the earth and women is a matter that requires continual critique.

Objective

The objective of this article is to find out how the standardized tropes of women and nature is deconstructed in order to unveil the myriad issues of climate change, environment, and ecology. The article analyses Rachel Griffin's Young Adult fantasy novel to explore the dynamics of human/nature, women/nature, and how the fantasy element of magic is used in order to unfurl the interconnectedness that exists between the earth, humans, and the world of nature. The focus is to offer a critical outlook regarding the anthropocentric construction of nature, and find out new sustainable ecocentric and biocentric approach through the ecofeminist perspective.

Textual Analysis

Rachel Griffin's novel *The Nature of Witches* narrates a story that tells about climate change, environmentalism, and the role women has to play in keeping the planet safe and habitable. Griffin's novel tells a story of witches whose powers are connected to the four seasons, and each witch who was born in a particular season can harness its unique elements.

Their power is at the peak during the season of their birth and diminishes when their season passes. The ecological balance which the witches has kept through their power is in crisis because of the climate change, unpredictable weather patterns like heat waves in the winter season which have forced the witches to use off-season magic and which in turn has caused the magic of those witches to deplete and die. The only witch who has the capability to address this problem of escalating natural disasters is Clara Densmore, who is an "everwitch", a witch who retains her power throughout the year and changes along with the seasons, but Clara is reluctant to use her volatile magic which resulted in the death of her parents and her best friend. She is weary and afraid of her magic, the cause of her trauma and loss, and she lives isolated in a cabin in the woods apart from her school. The authorities of the school pushes Clara to hone her magical potential, but when her uncontrollable magic results in the death of her teacher, she becomes determined to strip herself of the terrifying magic within her. Clara's magic, her emotions, her internal conflict, and her personality is intertwined, and throughout the story she undergoes a beautiful self-transformation accepting who she is and embraces her extraordinary power.

Magic is deeply personal, intertwining itself with all the emotions of its wielder. And, because mine is so fierce, so powerful, my training isn't enough of an outlet for it. It builds and builds and builds, and when the pressure is too great, it searches for another means of escape, gravitating towards the people I'm closest to because it recognizes the emotional connection I have with them. It is the same connection it has to me. (Griffin 30)

The school however thinks that Clara has a much larger responsibility to the world, and in order to push her further, a new teacher and his mentee, Sang, is brought into the fold to help. Sang is a spring witch who loves trees, plants, and growing things, and he is compassionate with Clara's plight which makes her to open up, and as with all humans a wonderful relationship buds between them, and at the same time Clara becomes apprehensive due to her past loss. Sang encourages Clara not to fear her magic and look at the possibilities of her untapped power which could help in restoring balance to a world which is on the cusp of an ecological collapse. The magical element of the novel may be seen as fantasy, but if we analyse it from the perspective of Val Plumwood, who says that the dominant political and economic models are inherently illogical and irrational, incapable of perceiving and recognizing "biospheric nature a unique, non-tradable, irreplaceable other on which all life on the planet depends. Because it has not fully come to terms with its earthian existence, but clings to illusions of identity outside nature, the master rationality is unable to grasp its peril" (Plumwood 194). The fantasy element in the novel thus, reflects the possibility of a meaningful,

equitable, sustainable socio-economic ecology that will bridge the gap between species and generations. Magic therefore is not an easily definable thing and there are a variety of cultural, economic, ecological and sacred aspects to it, and in the context of the novel it can be seen that there exists a Wiccan religious outlook that focuses on an ecopsychology which embraces the goal of planetary healing and rejuvenation for the purpose of sustainability, and magic as a whole denotes the complex processes of change, interdependence, and transformation that draws out the interplay of relations between the natural elements and human beings. Magic in Griffin's narrative can be described in a clear context, that is, controlling the volatile elements of nature due to environmental degradation, and solving the problem of climate crisis, and this context-bound nature of magic can be referred to Edward Evans Pritchard's conception which states that magic –

“Becomes more intelligible when it is viewed not only in relation to empirical activities but also in relation to other beliefs, as part of a system of thought; primarily not so much a means of controlling nature as of preventing witchcraft and other mystical forces operating against human endeavour by interfering with the empirical measures taken to attain an end” (Pritchard 111).

Pritchard's view shows that the ontological space between nature and society itself, the way people connect and adapt to nature, and how we are taught to empathize with all life needs to be re-evaluated in a new space, the space of undefinable magic and spirituality by decentering the overtly rational outlook, which is precisely the essence of deep ecology, as “Deep ecology bemoans our instrumental attitude towards nature and preaches that we cannot be fully human if we do not bond to something outside ourselves” (Gottlieb 378). Hence, in spiritual deep ecology magic becomes a system of communication, a psychological and individual phenomenon connected to nature, and is a form of practical knowledge suffused with different techniques where the practitioners are tied to the cycle of seasons and the changes that occur in the natural realm. In *The Nature of Witches* Clara and her companions are intermediaries who serve as a kind of bridge between the culturally defined natural world and the spiritual realm, and they are minority subjects in a world outnumbered by the non-magical users who view them as others, but they are situated in an institutional paradigm that is designed to promote the usefulness of their magic, controlling them effectively since the witches are people too, that conforms to commendable behaviour as dictated by the schemes of the non-magic users who control the resources and power.

The heart of the novel centres on the hope of a harmonious coexistence of human beings and nature which would help in stopping the prevailing environmental degradation that continues apace. The over exploitation of resources by the capitalist machine of human

civilization has destroyed the natural fabric of the planet that sustains all life, and along with this insidious deterioration of the ecosystem, climate change is now recognized as the most threatening factor with the potential of destroying all life on the planet – even the human species. The effects of deforestation and the rising levels of carbon in the atmosphere has resulted in the effects of global warming, melting of polar ice and glaciers, and desertification even in the temperate regions of the world. It has resulted in extreme weather changes like severe rainfall and storms at some places, and unprecedented drought in others which have become more aggressive and frequent. At one point in the novel, Clara talks about the rapacious greed of human beings that disrupts the balance of nature, the self-interest of rationalized economy which justifies in regarding nature as a resource to be consumed, which in turn has devastating consequences –

The shaders couldn't see past their desire for more, developing land that humans were never meant to touch, requiring control in areas that were only ever meant to be wild. And, now the atmosphere is collapsing around us. (Griffin 13-14)

The intersectional aspect of ecocriticism must be taken into account with other issues such as race, gender, and Griffin's novel well transmutes this eco-pedagogy into eco-fantasy literature which depicts environmental crisis and critiques the fact of how nature is treated as an asset or belonging that human beings try to possess. The seasonal witches in the novel depends on a reciprocal relationship with nature, fundamentally interconnected regarding their shifts and changes in magical power. Griffin constructs the self-identity of the human in relation to nature, especially the witches, but the ordinary humans who don't possess any magic are termed as “shaders” and portrayed as the materialists who exploit resources of nature without paying any heed to the damage they have done to the ecosystem in the name of progress and development. The training school for witches in the novel can be seen as an appropriate strategy for responding to the problems of climate crisis that tries to reject the binaries of men/women, human/non-human, human/nature in favour of a community and a sort of participatory democracy that heralds the rise of an eco-justice movement. The novel's narrative promotes an emotional response to the environmental crisis resisting the dominant paradigms of scientism and it is a counter-cry of resistance to critique how the capitalist scientism has disenchanting the beauty of the world relegating it to a mere source for resources and progress. Starhawk contends that eco-spirituality is rooted in three main ideas of – immanence, interconnectedness, and community, which suggests that the earth is dynamic and alive, a sacred entity of which human beings too are an integral part, and Starhawk's idea of sacred is open to interpretations and can be argued in the novel's context that how

the sacred manifests is not important, rather it opens a discourse of how deep a connection and experience can be established with the earth and the world around us. The magic of the witches reflects Starhawk's notion of interconnectedness which challenges the technocratic rationality and opens up a space for developing a new environmental ethics by joining politics, science, and the sacred aspect of nature where both teaching and healing becomes integral in heralding a change in the anthropocentric attitude of modern capitalism.

Moreover, the history of considering the earth as female, as a nurturing mother at present becomes problematic, rather the view and concern should be based on looking at nature as an autonomous, powerful long-lasting process which will pave way for an ethics of earth-care. Griffin in her novel does not equate women with nature and discards that passive romantic notion, thereby dismantling the commonly held belief that only woman has the capacity for nurturing, special powers of empathy and closeness to nature which is denied to men. She in fact poses a question, as Val Plumwood questions the gynocentric essentialism that idealizes women (certain women like witches, shamans) as the sole provider of knowledge concerning the green and wilderness. However, this doesn't negate women's connection with nature, but it creates space for women to consciously position themselves with nature. In Griffin's novel *The Nature of Witches*, the term 'witch' is used in a gender neutral way, which breaks the archetypal image of witch as rebellious women who have mysterious relationship with the nonhuman world. In the narrative of the novel the witches are both men and women free from the moral ambiguity which the term is tainted with, but they're also controlled by the capitalist power structure who views them as dangerous, but also considers them as a resource who helps in resuscitating the plundered planet with magical interventions. Clara, who is the everwitch in the novel talks about the indifference and callous attitude of the non-magical humans who aren't concerned about the witches and their toils to keep the balance in the ecosystem, and she resents them for destroying the ecology of the world through their unwonted exploitation of resources and contamination of the biosphere.

The shaders insist that magic is our area of expertise and they don't want to get involved, don't want to be in our way. That's what they don't understand – they are in our way, a huge barricade so wide we can't get around them, their indifference so toxic it's destroying the only home we have. Magic is a stopgap, a stabilizer. It isn't a solution. We need the shaders help, but no one wants to hear they're part of the problem – that they are the problem now. (Griffin 24-25)

Griffin's novel is notable in the canon of Young Adult Fantasy Fiction because she has treated the contemporary issues of climate change and environmental degradation

with a deep ecological awareness embracing a biocentric perspective and egalitarianism which calls for a deep respect for all life forms. In the story where witches help in stabilizing the earth's environment, the eco-spirituality that transmutes to magical power contests the dominant view of viewing nature from the outlook of positivism and anthropocentrism. Clara in the novel talks about the shaders' unwillingness to accept that their policies of rapid industrialization and exploitation has harmed the environment. The strategies of 'decarbonization' and 'greening' is left for the witches to revive the destroyed places, restore climate anomalies, which the shaders view as just mere setbacks for the opportunities of further capital accumulation. When warned about the impending disaster, they deemed the witches as overly cautious – "We know you'll figure it out. You always do" (Griffin 29). What Clara and all the witches want is to obtain a new human and social identity that is in harmonious connection with nature eschewing the capitalist instrumentalization of current social and economic life. Both the material and corporeal aspect of nature is embraced into the ambit of Griffin's story where the witches are widely recognized as activists and community groupworking together emphasizing the need for solidarity and coalition between the magic users and the non-magical humans who have a large part in the environmental deterioration of the planet. It calls for a dialogue, a common dialectic that discards the technocratic rationality which views nature as the other. The ecological concerns reflected in Griffin's text thus, not only focuses on a politicized ecofeminist environmentalism, rather it draws attention to the physical, emotional, and psychological aspects of activism which explores the individual and community, agency and context, and also a spirituality which has the ability to change energy (consciousness) and enact magic. Daria Pezzoli-Olgiati in the essay "From Maeia to Magic: Envisaging a Problematic Concept in the Study of Religion" writes that, "Magic represents the most primitive strategy of the human coping with life and the world: it is the first attempt of man to dominate his hostile environment" (Olgiati 6), which in Griffin's text becomes a concrete aspect tied to real world problems and manifestations, and it acts as not a tool/strategy for domination, rather to control and heal the damage wrought by human greed upon the natural world. Magic is not infinite, it is in fact tied to the natural cycle of life and the seasons, and it acts as the fundamental stabilizing agent in a materialistic world, where men has reached an impasse, a situation where technology and limitations of scientific knowledge is of no help in the crucial moments of planetary climate crisis, and hence, all the actions and emotions, all practical activities are dependent on magical arbitration.

The community-based approach which is integral towards building an egalitarian relationship between human and nature is strongly focused in the novel. It calls for a re-evaluation of the connection between man, woman and nature. The recent wildfires of

Amazon and California resulting due to global warming has caused a lot of destruction and distress to human and wildlife alike, and as per the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) report, these fires are predicted to worsen in the upcoming decades. Griffin gives these examples in the novel to highlight the conditions of climate and weather extremes that the earth has been facing so far. Climate change creates warmer, drier conditions that enhances the spread of wildfires which results in unprecedented damages of human property as well as huge loss of animal life, mostly in case of endangered species. Almost 84 percent of wildfires are due to human carelessness, and this phenomenon has a long-term effect on the environment. The desire of humans to encroach in territories that does not belong to them, exploiting natural resources, polluting the surroundings by leaving waste, have degraded the balance that exists in the ecosystem. In the novel, Clara says that it is the earth's way of pushing back against the greed and violation perpetrated by the humans toward nature. The story of the novel stresses upon looking more deeply at the earth as a living entity, channelling a holistic consciousness to heal the damage through action, not just by mere idealizing and identifying nature as a victim of male oppression. The witches have to train hard to hone their powers and their connection to the earth and its seasons in order to safeguard the world and sustain the atmosphere, preventing any unnatural hazards.

But a training exercise is nothing compared to the unrestrained wildfires burning through California. We're going to graduate this year, and then it'll be up to us to fight the real fires. And, they're getting worse. (Griffin 13)

The eco-pedagogy of the novel reassesses the stereotypical, patriarchal capitalist attitude towards nature rethinking about the human interconnections and interaction with the natural world. Nature is perceived as sentient, active, with needs of its own, without any human influence, though acknowledging the role of humans in the ecosystem. The spatial separation of men and women and the goal of safeguarding and preserving the environment for generations posits an ecotopian ideal. Griffin's novel doesn't locate gendered difference in biological determinations, instead it highlights the fluidity of male and female relationships with nature and each other. This is evident in the character of Clara, who identifies herself as bi-queer in her relationships, as well as in case of the character of Sang, a boy who is a witch, a spring witch, a botanist – who is ascribed the qualities of nurturing, caring, and growing. Sang, in the story discovers a way to weed out unnecessary plants without causing them shock and pain. Also, in the dynamics of change, one cannot ignore the transformative nature of both the human and the non-human, as nature and humans constantly changes and evolves, physically as well as spiritually, which is reflected in the deep connection of the witches to the earth's elements. Griffin has portrayed the power of the witches as

interconnected to the seasons which also shapes their personality – as in, Winter witches are more reserved emotionally, while summer witches are vivacious and passionate. This animistic view of human and nature interdependence is reflected in Griffin's language which she interrelates with the sun, moon, the equinox, with woman's body and tries to express the spiritual transformations of her characters. The story also delves in to the complexities of selfhood and separation, of power and magic, which allows the author for an imaginative intervention, a form of resistance, highlighting the disillusionment of current socio-political realities, and at the same time explores the ecofeminist issues of trauma and exploitation, which is apparent in the character of Clara Densmore who can't cope up with the death of her parents and her dear friend Nikki due to her uncontrollable magic.

The Nature of Witches by its merit is a text that can be termed as *écriture féminine* which represents the feminine body towards a mode of thought envisaged by Helen Cixous that questions the male-centric notion of women/nature, nature/culture and enables the female voice to manifest their unconscious hidden self, to write and speak through their bodies breaking the order of binary opposition and explore the beauty of the unconscious, which in the novel's narrative can be termed as magic that is tied to emotion, desire, and intent thereby deconstructing the value hierarchies that dominates the androcentric world. The narrative of the novel is centered around the voice of Clara, the everwitch who inhabits the fantasy and imaginary realm of magic is removed from the fixed meanings assigned by a male oriented discourse, and her character gains an access to power that is denied to any man, wherein she emerges as a source of energy, an identity by herself, "This witch appears as a sudden intrusion of a female subject, who reverses the phallic gaze, contesting the authority of the masculine position" (Sempruch 4). The otherness that Cixous emphasizes in women writing, it becomes a concrete aspect of magic that expresses the primeval, uninhibited desire to be free, to heal, to love and be loved, and Clara's bisexuality in itself deconstructs the binary opposition of masculine and feminine which defies the conventional norms, thereby assuming an identity that moves towards the limitless, which in Clara's case is controlling and harnessing the elemental magic of all the four seasons and she is able to do it through love, love for her friends, and love for her magic, which Cixous equates with the act of writing, and as a result, the narrative voice of Clara opens up space for representing both man and woman in writing which goes beyond the Cartesian dualism of phallogocentric thought as in the words of Abigail Bray, "love is about receiving the strangeness of the other...it is...an openness to the unknown, the unthought" (Bray 75). It can in fact be argued that, Griffin's novel is not just a text, but a *sext* in Cixous's terms in which there is the element of intersexuality, because in the novel we find Clara as a woman, a struggling subject and the authority of the author in the *sext* is

missing which reflects Cixous's idea that writing itself is a bisexual act, each and every identity carried by the author can be traced in the text that is free from patriarchal codes. That is precisely the reason we hear Clara speaking in a story written by Griffin, and Griffin speaking in the language of Clara, and this polyphony of voices in the text is what brings the feminine into the front of discourse where the 'I' is extricated from paternal associations, yet it has a dialogic relationship that enables the conjunction of feminine and masculine values which in relocating the I-she in cultural history becomes an intertextual affair.

By the end of the novel, Clara thinks differently about her powers and the change she could bring to the world, and she transforms from someone afraid, to someone strong confident and autonomous – “Change makes me powerful, and finally, finally, I'm ready to claim that power” (Griffin 232). Throughout the novel, we see Clara fighting against her nature, it becomes clear to us that she is trying to find an identity for herself to experience the life of an ordinary human, but at the same time she rethinks of her position as devoid of her power. She attains harmony with her power, her nature as a witch, as a woman who can restore balance to a deteriorating world. It is through the medium of writing, as she reads the diary of the legendary witch Alice, trying to understand the magic and its power, and she decides to write a memoir of her own struggles and personal conflicts as the everwitch, so that those who come after her is able to understand their magic and its intricate struggles. Clara is able to liberate herself from isolation, fearfulness, and doubt, which compels her to envision how she can bridge the separation between magic and the self, attaining the marvellous connectedness to all things of creation feeling her embodied ties to the natural world, responding with emotion, and opening herself to care. This intriguing facet of Clara as a witch, practitioner of magic reflects Bronislaw Malinowski's discussions about magic and its function, which focuses on psychological aspects, on emotions, which forms the core personality of Clara as the everwitch, because her fears and trauma resulting from her best friend Nikki's death leaves her unable to harness her magic to its ultimate potential, and the rudimentary modes of behaviour, belief in her self-efficiency is engendered and transformed into a permanent form in which she accepts herself truly by embracing the pain and joy, hope and fear, instead of repressing them. Her magic becomes fluid and invigorating, and with a definitive mental strength and technique, she is able to bridge the dangerous gaps in her potential power to fulfil the important and critical pursuit of restoring balance to the degrading environment of earth. Malinowski writes that magic “enables man to carry out with confidence his important tasks, to maintain his poise and his mental integrity in fits of anger, in the throes of hate, of unrequited love, of despair and anxiety” (Malinowski 90) and, Clara reasserts this opinion as a woman at the end by emphasizing that the function of her magic is to enrich humanity's

optimism in healing the world, enhancing a faith based on hope rather than fear, and expresses the greater value for the community of sisterhood with her fellow witches rooting for steadfastness over vacillation in the gradual process of rejuvenating a damaged world.

Conclusion

The ecofeminist approach in literature, apart from addressing the issues of ecological crisis encourages the fact that nature is intertwined with our corporeal existence, challenging the idea of nature as the 'other' of reason and culture. The ecopolitics inherent in Rachel Griffin's *The Nature of Witches* with regard to the continuity between the human world and the natural world and human dependency on nature denies anthropocentrism, thereby creating space for nature to thrive as an independent entity. Through the mode of fantasy and magic, Griffin shows an animistic representation that celebrates differences rather than reversal of the paradigms of power. Helene Cixous says that writings which engages with matter and bodies has a subversive and transformative power which dismantles binary patterns and phallogocentrism, and, the act of writing the body itself that is in touch with the world has the potential to disrupt reason, challenging the domains of culture and knowledge controlled and bound by rationality. The element of magic of the witches in Griffin's novel makes the reader experience the more-than-rational, the transcendental emotion that could reconnect and embody nature within the self, opening the possibilities of bodies human and non-human in tune with the earth.

There are those voices that like a flame lowers, scarcely speaks, but moves still nearer, still nearer to the secrets of things, lowers all the way to the earth, lies down, touches the imperceptibly trembling soil, listens to the music of the earth, the concert of the earth with all things. (Cixous 10)

It is playful and poetic, but also political in the sense that it induces and inspires a practice of activism promoting a reflexive unity as a species in bringing a multidimensional approach that helps in rejuvenating the degrading environment of the planet, resuscitate the deploring climate and its adverse effect upon the human and the natural world.

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