

Research Article

Revisiting Myths and Confronting the Colonial-imperial Power: A Paradigm of Eco-politics and beyond

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Abstract

This article explores how revisiting mythical narratives offer a subversive outlook to nature, and how the portrayal of human-nature relationship finds a strong alignment with ecocritical studies. It brings in some ecocritical concerns, i.e., critiques on anthropocentrism and nature-human binaries and critical projections of different natural degradations as presented in three myths, in underpinning the portrayal of women, war, nature, and natural phenomena in three mythological tales. In doing so, it concentrates on the myths of Ragnarok, Erysichthon and the adaptation of Greek myth in Aeschylus's play *Agamemnon* (458 BCE). In light of the myths of *Agamemnon* and *Erysichthon*, the study intends to trace the integration of postcolonial conceptualisations of power with theo-critical lenses of eco-criticism and eco-feminism. In summary terms, all of these three theories envision a symmetry between social justice and environmental justice. In doing so, they strongly contest the European mythical anthropocene that comes to cause damage to all women, nonhuman beings and nature. Thus, as the paper examines, they critique every form of anthropocentric domination that is backed up by a binary politics, severing humankind from humankind itself, humankind from non-humankind and is cemented by the western imperial ideology of power, gender, femininity, development and technical-technological and economic advancements.

Keywords

Myth, eco-politics, postcolonialism, gender, power

1. Introduction

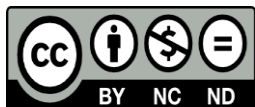
This study seeks to interlace ecocritical lenses, as revealed by these myths, with postcolonial conceptualisations of the literary-historical redressal of colonial havocs on ex-colonised world's nature and a discursive urge for an eco-political agenda of justice and equity for the suppressed people and nature. Ecocritical reading reiterates a relatedness and convergence not only among humans and nonhumans, but also

among humans. Moving away from any binary opposition, it invites an egalitarian principle of treating nonhuman beings and human beings equally in every respect, and repudiating any ethics that believes in a hierarchical categorisation of human beings. Among other things, ecocriticism, as reflected in the three myths, revisits human-nonhuman relationship and "subversively pinpoints the ways ecological afflictions have

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been perpetrated by the human world for economic pursuits, and raises the political pronouncements of eco-consciousness and eco-justice” (Rahaman 1407). Eco-critical reading is strongly instrumental in, according to Opperman, “shifting attention from the position of authority to the idea of relationality” (116). The paper deploys two Greek myths and one Norse myth. They differ from each other temporally and spatially, while they represent a strong index of environmentalism. The environmental implications of these three myths can also be extended to ecofeminist understanding of the mythical projections of gender, power, femininity and oppression.

Taken all the three myths together, it can be fairly argued that they all exhibit strong ecocritical leitmotifs. When myths are demystified through eco-critical lenses, they can attach “an avowedly political mode of analysis” and they can transport mythical realities beyond fictional facets and thus intertwine with myths “a ‘green’ moral and political agenda” (Gerrard 3). These myths correspond closely to this very aspect of ecocritical interpretation. Reading myths ecocritically can usher in what Callaghan (80) calls “an antidote to anthropocentrism” that is found to “motivate, perpetuate, and aggravate the ecological crises of our time”. The mythical tales utilised in the paper portend an ecocritical voice, while they also strongly project postcolonial understanding and conceptualisation of power, place, gender, environment and justice.

Additionally, the eco-politics formed by the eco-critical, eco-feminist and postcolonial reading, expresses an allegiance to and works in alliance with “those struggling against gender oppression, racism, homophobia and transphobia, environmental injustice, colonialism, speciesism, and environmental destruction” (35). This very practice of re-reading of myths also challenges, in intensity and profundity, self-valorising “humanist egotism” (Rahaman 1408) that presupposes the effacement of every other form of beings. And, in turn, it creates a destructive human chauvinism that results in committing any form of crime against non-dominant human groups and global nature. In the face of this colonial, patriarchal and anti-natural anthropocentric worldview, re-readings of mythical narratives advances a re-encounter with a human-centred way of the discursive world.

2. Methods

This is a qualitative study based on critical analysis of three significant mythical phenomena from three distinct Western traditions. The critical dissection of the concerned mythical texts is informed by postcolonial, eco-critical, and eco-feminist perspectives. The critical introductions and readings have been first completed. Then the conceptualisations of the three theories and their inter-connections have been discussed.

Finally, the ways these theoretical underpinnings relate to the above-stated myths are analysed in the succeeding sections.

3. Result and Discussion

Myths and its Varying Forms of Politics

Counter-humanist reading and rendering of myths can offer subversive reorientations with human-nonhuman relations and human perspectives about the nonhuman world. Myths display “ambivalent” attitudes to nature and broader nonhuman beings: some myths present nature in a human-centred way, while some treat nature from the prism of non-humankind (Callaghan 2015). That said, some myths are not found to decide, normalise, determine and essentialise any truth or logic for humans – what anthropocentric epistemology has done over the centuries – in the way to demean, dominate and brutalise nonhuman and all earthlings from the time immemorial. To this end, the paper will examine how myths have been embedded in literary-critical continuum and can subvert colonial, anthropocentric and androcentric treatment of epistemology of earlier centuries. Liberal humanism sees literature or any other creative artefact as, what Matthew Arnold (xv) defined as culture in the preface of his book *Culture and Anarchy*, “the study of perfection” and “the best that’s been thought and written”. This conjures up an essentialist and deterministic view of human creativity and later on turned out to be an epistemic or cultural ethnocentrism. (Bary 2002) The “regime of truth” (Foucault 1977) originated and accentuated by Europe or global north has been validated as the epicentre of all ageless, universal and perfect creativities. Consequently, the humanist tradition also absolutifies the authority of creative texts by claiming that they are self-contained and they need not be matched or judged by other elements like history or politics.

The ahistorical and apolitical approach prevalent in human-induced literary-cultural arenas has catered for the imperialistic or epistemological politics of making the west superior and worthy of controlling others through their “best” culture (Said 1985; Memmi 2003). It also gestures toward shaping a cultural will of power in the west which culminated in colonial expansion or invasions around the world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2016; Grosfoguel 2017; Mignolo 1996). Then re-reading this sort of myths can be utilised as a counter-imperial artefact that can work for the undoing of parochial and orientalist binaries ingrained in classical and modern literature. Additionally, it espouses an epistemic pluralism and egalitarianism. Binary oppositions of race, colour, continent and gender, human-nonhuman are rejected in environmental literature. Unlike orientalist-humanist tradition of literature, philosophy and history, mythical texts do not stand out to claim to be the sole property of any continent or nation or author. The mythical tales wherein the subject matter or

content is nature can ideally become the biggest repository of equity and justice. Some myths seem to take up a dispassionate stand over human beings and other species of this universe. Conversely, the engulfing anthropocene created by human-induced creative, practical and cultural life influences a separative and discriminatory attitude towards people who live beyond the boundaries of developed countries.

It is evident that nature is a perennial source of equality and pluralism, but anthropocentric, or Euro-America-centric modern continuum of epistemology has consolidated a worldview as such that all good attributes of knowledge and sophistication are shared by the global North American and European communities (Quijano 2007). This has culminated in a colonial anthropocene, leaving the nonhuman world more subdued and brutalised by the human world. European myths, albeit being tied to this anthropocene, can be misleading and threatening signposts in establishing, aggrandizing and permeating European patriarchal heroism leading to the European modern-colonial paradigm of war. However, mythical tales can also be harnessed in upholding a paradigm of egalitarianism and justice and coexistence that can confront colonial, anthropocentric and androcentric discourses and politics.

Liberal humanist and anthropocentric treatment of nature or nonhuman beings and women and people of the global south or ex-colonised world has been interlinked with the agenda of colonial epistemology. This has been customarily complicit in hiding the vitality and desubalternising power that nature, global southern subalterns and women possess. Romanticising nature via literature serves to create fascination with nature that shapes a commodifying and ever-enduring image of nature and thus results in a conquering mentality over nature. This is what can be found in the case of colonial epistemic projections of women and other colonised beings. Instead, eco-sensitive texts aspire to inculcate a sense of belonging and connectedness with nature rather than a sense of controlling and conquering nature.

A paradigm of peace and proximity rather than a paradigm of war against nature is espoused and envisioned by ecocritical literature. Nature holds a spirit of pluralism composed of humans and nonhumans. It does not transcend nature, rather it does transcend human gaze over nature which is essentially a colonial gaze – as reflected by European humanist pedigree of science, literature and philosophy. Renaissance and Enlightenment based humanism were consonant with a colonial-imperial agenda which has always worked for framing European male supremacy over non-European people and nonhuman beings (Woolfe 2009). Modernism, colonialism and two great wars all are offshoots of this tradition of epistemic war. Long's (27-51) dispassionate analyses of Frye elaborates this lens of liberal humanism and argues that myths are integral to the culture of power fetishism. Power cannot operate in isolation: it needs a

binary relationship, formed by the powerless and the powerful, and which is totally controlled and shaped by ideologies.

Seen from anthropocentric lenses, myths continue to generate one of the most substantial aspects of pro-power ideologies. This is an observation of Frye (in Russel 2000) which holds a solid validity, given that when the modern world system did not emerge, there existed power relationships among the primitive people or hunters. This power relationship was shaped then by the existing myths. So myths had their vitality all the time. They predate science, philosophy, religion and the economic or production system which constitute the superstructure or ideologies of the human world. Myths also, though born in the ancient past, partake alongside all ideology-making agencies and hence, cannot be repudiated as “untruths”. Like Frye, Mary Midgley in her book *The Myths We Live By* (162) espouses the power of myths in human life, pinpointing that “our place in the world” is guided much by a “supernatural engineer” called mythology. However, when read with non-essentialist and revisionist perspectives, myths can foster a non-classifying form of discursive realities – though human interventions through ethico-religious rituals, ethos, norms and beliefs help in shaping myths – rather they defamiliarise and deconstruct human and nonhuman realities. As Roland Barthes (143) asserts:

Myth does not deny thing, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but of a statement of fact.

From this perspective, mythical persona and happenings spring from a natural cycle but it receives its multidimensional meanings through human meanings and beliefs.

At this point, the paper borrows one of the most significant views on myths from Burke (267-268), who in his deliberation “Revolutionary Symbolism in America” affirms the riveting undertones of identification and compatibility that myths foreground. Campbell's (13-27) take on psychoanalysis in regards to myths merits critical attention. The most fascinating thing Campbell points out is that myths are the “depersonalised” dreams which are quite “symbolic” in their manifestations of a myriad of human volitions and desires of power, sex and other gratifications. The myth of the Trojan war corresponds quite accurately to this observation of psychoanalytic interpretation of myths, as posited by Campbell. Trojan war reflects a cultural will of power which has been strongly visible in the western colonial psyche and economic and cultural practices.

This myth also clarifies a culture of male gaze which debases and commodifies women and establishes a culture of feminine vulnerability. This paper is concerned with the interactions between colonial-patriarchal and anthropocentric power ideology reflected in the select myths. Laurence

Coupe's observations extend the scopes and political engagements of myths by terming myths as "a narrative that effects identification within the community that takes it seriously, endorsing shared interests and confirming the given notion of order, while at the same time gesturing toward a more comprehensive identification—that among humanity, the earth, and the universe" (6). Patsy Callaghan asserts that reading mythical stories eco-critically makes "it harder to believe in and validate the anthropocentric universe, harder to believe in rewards earned by loving ourselves the best of all (16)." The leitmotifs of the two movements make them enmeshed with a fundamental point of symbiosis; that is what Mita Banerjee (195) divulges, subverting the "flawed" ways of being in the world."

Myths and the Juxtapositions of Postcoloniality and Ecopolitics:

While postcolonialism confronts binary oppositions between the west and non-west laid out by an all-pervading orientalist gaze, ecocriticism incorporates the interrogation of human-non-human oppositions that demand an absolute anthropocentrism in every facet of the universe. Barbara Jursa in her study "Intersections between Ecocriticism and Postcolonial Studies" notes that "the ideological opposition between humans and non-humans has served as the basis for treating the subaltern as less than human and justifying western man's subjugation of the non-human world (179)." Although seemingly disparate, ecocriticism and postcoloniality can tread common grounds, which prompt Lawrence Buell to make an explicit call for "a convergence of environmental and postcolonial critique" (81) in his book *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005). As they intersect under rubrics such as "Green Postcolonialism" and "Postcolonial Ecocriticism" they seek to garner an acknowledgement of non-human victims of colonialism, which is inter-alia a system of environmental devastation.

Colonial projects build on Euro-centricism and anthropocentrism, which are conjoined by the common logic and rhetoric of domination. Colonialism as well its current avatar of neo-colonialism antagonizes traditional and indigenous ways of life in tune with nature. Ecocriticism and postcolonialism join hands in exposing what Rob Nixon (2011) calls "slow violence" perpetrated against the people on the global margins and the environment. They also endeavor to highlight and ensure the recognition of environmental racism and injustice as it continues to happen since colonial times till date. The modernising project of development has its roots in colonialism and it continues to sustain itself at the expense of the environment of the developing countries, many of which are former colonies of European nations. Hence, ecocriticism and postcolonialism combine to wage discursive and critical crusades against the co-ordinated onslaught of the corporate-dominated globalized economy rooted in colonial projects and

narratives.

It is conspicuous that colonialism disrupts the native and local ways of life causing displacement of people from their traditional places of living. For instance, a lot of tribal (adivasi) people of India were forced to leave their homelands to work as laborers in other parts of the subcontinent and beyond during the British period. Such deracination of tribal people continues well into modern India in order to enable an extractivist economy in tune with the global economy dictated by the imperial west. Postcolonial ecocriticism as will be called henceforth, therefore, has to respond to the "tension between a postcolonial preoccupation with displacement and an ecocritical preoccupation with an ethics of place" (Nixon 236). It can also be used to "interpret the relation between the material and the symbolic within the ongoing effects of a colonizing modernity, which include forms of human displacement (whether by migration between regions or by disruption of one's home place by outside forces) and damage to natural environments" (Vital & Erney 9). Beside posing challenges to the multi-pronged domination of environmentally-damaging, colonially-motivated current world order, it may offer alternative ways forward that beseech a harmonious coexistence between opposing forces.

In this context, Ursula K. Heise's (2006) concept of "eco-cosmopolitanism" comes in handy as it looks to be an inclusive and accommodative form of vision that incorporates the local and the global, the human and non-human world as interconnected entities. In short, postcolonial ecocriticism can play the double role of resistance and reconciliation in order to correct the colonial excess against human and non-human communities and work toward a sustainable future reliant on environmental justice. Seen from the optic of eco-criticism and postcoloniality, the myths of Agamemnon, Erysichthon and Ragnarok can be utilised in manifesting a critical empathy for nature and nonhuman beings and concurrently a critique of an anthropocentric, androcentric and anti-environmental paradigm of war that is ingrained in colonial policy and practice. The prefatory note of Christopher Abram's book *The Evergreen Ash* (2019) affirms that Ragnarok evokes an "uncanny foreshadowing of our current global ecological crisis—the era of the Anthropocene", which "believes that nature can be mastered and treated only as a resource to be exploited for human ends" (2019). This attests a critical blueprint for understanding the ecocritical and posthuman underpinnings of the Ragnarok myth.

In this connection, the myth of Erysichthon can be pitted against the humanist construct of human beings which endorse humans as the most supreme and sacrosanct creation (homo sapiens), self-protective force (Heraclitus's version of Homo plemos), and most capable and cognitive beings (Descartes's *cogito ergo sum*). All these have propelled a negation of the very existence of nature, and propagated destructive human "will to power" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 41) over

the natural/nonhuman world. In turn, this has led to the colonisation of subalterns that has been legitimated by philosophising a “paradigm of war” (41). Hence, colonisations can be identified with human potentials and practices of interception and brutalisation on the natural and nonhuman world. King Erysichthon here appears to be a *homo polemos* (warrior, war-maker) against Demeter and her grove. And he is run by a colonial power paranoia what Sonderling calls: “I kill, therefore I am” (quoted in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 41). Likewise, in the case of Agamemnon, we encounter the archetype of colonial world order that is essentially hegemonic, rapacious and authoritative against the Achaeans and their land and nonhuman beings.

This colonial expedition also includes the Achaean force’s “exploitation and discrimination of all kinds, both human and nonhuman, visible” (Huggan & Tiffin 16) and pushes forward an axiom of postcolonial ecocriticism: “there is no social justice without ecological justice” (35). Agamemnon could not determine any justice for the Trojan people and natural land and for his own wife Clytemnestra, daughter Iphigenia and concubine Cassandra. What is extraordinarily common in these myths is the colonial sense of space which is the nerve centre of any form of colonial regime. In this connection, Barbara Jursa’s observations can aptly pinpoint colonial spatial politics (179): “Colonization has involved the anthropocentric view of the land as property and the treatment of the colonized environment as empty space.” The expansionist and rapacious colonial project relegates the land/place of the occupied country to a privatised space which connotes every form of material profit, biopolitics of control and surveillance.

Redressal of eco-politics in myths

In Norse mythology, Ragnarok is an array of battles among gods and natural devastations which result in the doomsday of the world. In the website norse-mythology.org, Daniel Mcloy (2012) opines that Ragnarok has two popular versions: while the first one shows the termination of the cosmos following no rejuvenation, another shows a rejuvenation of the cosmos but with chaos, confusion and cruelty. It is prophesied that a winter will descend upon the world with incessant coldness and enormous dearth of food. Human beings will be “desperate” for food and basics of life, so much so that they will defy legal and moral codes of life. Mcloy (2012) further states: “...leaving only the bare struggle for survival ... It will be an age of swords and axes; brother will slay brother, father will slay son, and son will slay father.” Thus, this mythical oracle of Ragnarok has been a cultural connotation for the destruction of mankind or kings for their *hubris* or fatal crime against nature.

In Norse mythology, the myth of Ragnarok has a telling impact from the time immemorial, given that Iceland has been the crux of a volcanic hazard and this myth is always linked

with the Icelanders’ afflictions due to volcanoes. However, if this myth is eco-critically theorised, then Ragnarok, as its Norse meaning indicates, can be recognised as an epitome of the perils of an anthropocentric world system. In a human-centric world, nature and nonhuman beings have been excluded from the existential belonging of the world. This human practice of exclusionary approach to subdue nature and supreme human beings has been validated by religious, creative-critical and metaphysical thoughts. This Ragnarok myth, therefore, can be attributed to depict the dangers of our anthropocentric world. It also “exhibits the violent potential of metaphysical thought because it can justify exclusion and violent behavior toward the nonhuman” (Williams 304). It simultaneously exposes the irony lies in the myth of human superiority: human world’s power and supremacy are merely the resultant of nonhuman existence. As Deleuze posits: “Man has not always existed, and will not always exist” (131). This is revealed by the Ragnarok myth and hints a posthuman aspect of the myth which interrogates “human or any subjectivity as self-contained, sovereign, and independent” (Nayar 53) and reminds the “radical incompleteness” (Iovino, 13), potential chaos and anarchy in human world in the absence of ecological justice.

The Greek myth of Erysichthon relates the story of a king’s onslaught upon trees. According to the *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (1849), Erysichthon, a Thessalian king, cut down the “sacred grove of the goddess Demeter”, the goddess of harvest and food, to challenge Demeter and take over her place. He wanted to found a feast-hall there. Consequently, Demeter punished him by inflicting him with an insatiable hunger which drove him terribly desperate for food, so much so that he consumed all of his wealth and possession and eventually devoured himself. (Williams 1849) This myth transpires a patriarchal productivity ethos which is grounded upon a reductionist view of human power, development and nature-human binary. Jill Da Silva sees the evils of Erysichthon as a sheer *hubris* taking the shape of an anthropocentric violence on the goddess Demeter and her grove. Thus, Erysichthon precipitates his “alienation”, remains unmoved against his “loss of communion with nature” and keeps severing himself from nature in the form of “disrespect, invasion, and violent reaction” against nature. Finally he is doomed to encounter nature’s “retributive justice” (Da Silva 112-13).

This then broadens the myth’s significance and yokes it to the “Western ideologies of development” (Tiffin & Huggan 33) which has globally normalised, influenced and transmitted the subjugation of nature, or a culture of denaturalisation as a means of power and advancement. Again Erysichthon’s grudge against the goddess Demeter can be construed as a manifestation of his morbid psyche of power which unleashes its destruction on her sacred grove. So this can be termed as a reactionary malice growing out of the king’s dualistic phobia

grown out of his phallogocentric power mania and his sense of the lack of a huge ground of power practice. In winning over this phobia, the king misrepresented the goddess and her grove as a site of evil mystery. This aspect of the myth lends a dominant ecocritical lens : the king's extermination of the grove can be likened to a Western cultural-colonial trope called "ecophobia" (Estok, 16-17). This "ecophobia" involves "imagining badness in nature and marketing that imagination" (16-17). Nature is shown evil, hateful or "as an angered mother" in the wider cultural representations, for instance in Shakespearean plays, or in the Hebrew Genesis. The king here embodies a purely anthropocentric philosophy of development. Global development pedagogy is premised on the notion that "development is first and foremost human development" (Huggan & Tiffin 29). To substantiate and sustain this parochial perception of development, it has fabricated an "ecophobia" – which conceives nature to be a source of fear – as an alibi for subjugating nature. Eventually, control and damage on nature came in via European discoverers and conquerors in the guise of subduing ecophobia, and resulted in the commercialisation and commodification of nature through industrial revolution and colonialism.

Aeschylus's play *Agamemnon* (458 BCE), as adapted from Greek mythology of the Trojan war, recalls the Greek myth of Agamemnon's heroics, hubris and tragic fall. Agamemnon, the husband of Clytemnestra, is ready to set out with his troop to attack Troy in order to rescue the eloped Helen, wife of his brother Menelaus. But Artemis obstructs his voyage by staging a turbulent wind as a punishment for Agamemnon who murders her deer. To soothe her wrath, Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia and finally gets killed by Clytemnestra as revenge for her daughter's death (Aeschylus 1919). The initial hurdle of the wind depicts nature's punitive act against an androcentric world represented by the Achaean chauvinist Agamemnon. He murders Artemis's deer and the gale sent by Artemis might connote nature's punishment for human violation of nonhuman world's life protection. This play can also be set as a projection of women's deep inflictions at the hand of a megalomaniac patriarchy, as embodied by Agamemnon. Clytemnestra, Helen, Cassandra and Iphigenia – 'the other' in Agamemnon's world – were sexualised and ostracised and finally rendered suppressed from their ways of individuation. Nature is also othered and brutalised by the Achaean army. They traversed a long sea path to reach Troy disrupting the natural peace and pace of the sea. Besides, Troy had a far more age-old natural and architectural forms of civilization than the Achaeans'. Through their war, they tarnished not only Troy's physical beauty, but also its nature. This is, in essence, a war on women, Troy, her nature and innocent people.

This tradition of commodifying, dominating and

subjugating nature and women contributes to and results in a "scientific reductionism and commercial capitalism" and creative-critical scholarships on women and nature. This tradition claims to be a "dominant system emerged as a liberating force not for humanity as a whole" rather for all and everything in the world, but, in turn, becomes "a Western, male-oriented and patriarchal projection which necessarily entailed the subjugation of both nature and women" (Shiva & Mies 22-25). The wind brewing on the eve of the war can be emblematic of an ecological precaution for the Achaean troops about the devastating war they are waging against Troy and its ecology. Agamemnon and his heirs pay dearly for this colonial war against the Trojan human-nonhuman world. From this ecocritical discussion, the indication of postcolonial ecocriticism comes in which sees the invasion of the Achaean as a colonial expedition. When colonialism occupies any map or land, it also occupies and oppresses their nature, and nonhuman beings.

Environment and Women in Myths

Launched by feminist Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1974, Eco-feminism receives a very embracing definition from Mary Mellor: "... a movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world, and the subordination and oppression of women." With this given, ecofeminism then strongly coincides with critical environmentalism or literary eco-criticism because both of them are movements and both counteract humanist, anthropocentric and androcentric thoughts on environment and its creative-practical connections with women. Unlike many forms of feminism, ecofeminism is not anthropocentric. It instead debunks "normative dualisms" or an ontologically embedded binary thinking that "creates inferior others and upholds certain forms of privilege as in the human/animal, man/woman, culture/nature, mind/body" oppositions as one of the guiding signifiers that "facilitates" and "undergirds" humiliation, brutality, subjugation and existential erasure and "misrecognition" and "distorts our relationships with the earth and other animals" ("Introduction" 3). Thus, a self-serving and "self-aggrandizing ego" (Callaghan 82) emerges that aids the construction and consolidation of a cultural and practical paradigm of "injustice towards non-dominant individuals and groups." In this regard, ecofeminism is strongly affiliated with ecocriticism and postcolonialism and revisiting myths can make the interweaving connections among these three decolonising and pluralising reading techniques.

Re-inventing and re-reading of the myths of Agamemnon and Erysichthon can "interrupt and complicate traditional, predictable, protagonist-driven readings of myths, particularly hero myths" (Callaghan 95). The myths of Agamemnon and Erysichthon can be juxtaposed in treating the subordination of nature and women, e.g., Iphigenia, Clytemnestra, Helen and Cassandra, Demeter, and the like as a potential ecofeminist

perspective. As Di Silva (112) observes, the first chapter of Hebrew Genesis speaks for the allowance of a human control over the natural world. As it reads: “God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Genesis 1:28). This sort of theological given serves to yield a motivation for subjugation and empowerment through subjugation is overtly “patriarchal and anthropocentric”, which has been instrumental to and translated into the modern machinations of dominating nature and women. To substantiate further and situate this angle of ecocriticism within western ideologies of power Anne Primavesi’s observation can aptly be cited here:

In Western religious and cultural history, matter has been distinguished from mind, nature from culture, woman from man, body from spirit, emotion from reason, earth from heaven in order to devalue one compared with the other, the devalued being described as unclean, polluting, inferior and/or nature, woman and earth could then be treated as of lesser value, lesser importance. This degradation, in the case of women, nature and the earth, was taken to justify their exploitation. (quoted in Abram 27-28)

In *Agamemnon* and *Erysichthon*, we find this western model of othering or binary-making trickeries of power over women and nature. The ecofeminist concerns unleashed by the hero myths that the humanist reading of *Agamemnon* and *Erysichthon* emanate potential interrogation of the age-old oppressive man-woman binaries that are an offshoot of the broader paradigm of a colonising anthropocene.

4. Conclusion

The above discussions now lead the paper to conclude that theoretical deciphering used to underpin the three mythical phenomena, notwithstanding their thematic nuances and differences, offer a core compatibility of myths with an ecocritical and eco-political vision that pivots on undoing man-woman, human-nature, human-nonhuman binaries and setting forth the agenda of justice for nature and nonhuman world and every form of human-nonhuman subaltern of this universe. The re-reading of three myths assessed here delineate the ecocritical views against the multitude and longitude of oppression on nature and global subalterns including women, as caused by an age-old and ongoing androcentric and anthropocentric world system. Through depicting nature’s acts of retribution and counter-reactions, the myths presage an ecocritical warning that human existence is doomed to be miserable, fragile and incomplete without making possible, through ontological and practical reflections and actions, an inclusive and reciprocal man-woman and nature-human

symmetry. What is more, the paper ascertains how – as Junquera and Moreno (3) observe – “myths have configured the world in the course of history, and how human beings have disregarded the impact of our species on the planet, even though these same myths have warned us of the dangerous impact of our non-ecological practices.” These mythical tales also set forth an eco-political vision that foments what Zapf calls for the “need to link local and personal ecologies with transpersonal and cross-cultural aspects of ecological thought in a globalized world (46).” Eco-mythical tales also serve to forecast climate dangers precipitated by post-colonial technology-based and anti-environmental human development.

Eco-feminist dimensions of the myths discussed here can be fairly situated within the trajectory of political consciousness and cultural critique that ecocriticism and postcolonialism aspires to achieve. Re-read from the prism of this theoretical trio, *Ragnarok*, *Erysichthon* and *Agamemnon* embody the colonising visage of anthropocene which is characterised by negation, subjugation and domination of subaltern humans and all nonhuman beings. What is of the essence for the the paper is its attempts to interweave the ecocritical, ecofeminist and postcolonial lenses reflected in the select mythical texts to indicate the broader binary politics and stir a political awareness at the literary-critical level to see non-human and subaltern world in the same light and with a truly pluriversal or global Southern outlook.

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